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Summary

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Nov. 12

Sujet

Subject

Weekly Conference in S.G.'s Room

Minutes of 10th Meeting. Nov. 12.

Subjects discussed :-

- 1) 1st Meeting of the Council.
- 2) Communication between British Government Departments and the Secretariat sanctioned.
- 3) Washington Labour Conference.

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Mr SCHWARTZ DIAZ FLORES

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Рез

MINUTES of a Meeting held in the Secretary General's Room, on
Wednesday, 12th November 1919, at 3.30 p.m.

Present:

The Secretary General;
Monsieur Monnet;
Dr. Nitobe;
Sir Herbert Ames;
Mr. Colban;
Monsieur Comert;
Dr. Van Hamel;
Mr. Salter;
Captain Walters.

2006

The Secretary General said that the Supreme Council had agreed that the first meeting of the Council should be held in Paris directly after the coming into force of the Treaty and should deal only with the Saar Basin Delimitation Commission. They were still discussing the question of whether the meeting should be on the same day on which the Treaty came into force, or two days later. They were also considering the possibility of the United States ratifying by that time, and now suggested that the Agenda should not be officially settled until we knew whether this will be so or not. This created an awkward situation for us, though probably the United States would not have ratified so soon. He had written to Paris, strongly urging that the present decision should be kept to. The Council could then itself decide the time, the place and the agenda for its next meeting.

He had heard from Monsieur Varlez, who said that the feeling amongst the delegates to the Labour Conference towards the League of Nations was most satisfactory. The only criticism was that the International Secretariat was too bourgeois. There would certainly be something to be said for having some labour men on the Secretariat, but he agreed that we were not representatives of any class or any party, and ought simply to try to get the best man for each job.

On the subject of communication between the British Government Departments and the Secretariat, an arrangement had been sanctioned this week by the British Cabinet. If the development was as he hoped, there would be officials in each Department entitled to correspond with their opposite numbers in the Secretariat. This correspondence would go to a central office, which would be under the/

the Prime Minister, not under the Foreign Office, though the Foreign Office will be kept informed. The Secretary of the central office had not yet been appointed, but he would probably be appointed specifically as such, and not as simply one of the Cabinet Secretaries.

The Treaty might come into force on the 25th or 27th November. A few of the Secretariat would have to go across.

Monsieur Monnet said that he desired to speak about the Labour Conference. It was faced with great difficulties, and he thought the present situation a most serious one. Monsieur Varley wrote optimistically, but the fact was that the men in Washington lacked contact with Europe and did not realise what reaction their Conference was having in Europe. When they returned and found out how little impression they had made and how the general public in Europe believed that they were doing no good at all, the reaction against the League of Nations was something he was afraid of. He took as an example the chief French Labour delegates, men of great influence in their own country, and leaders of the C. G. T. who, in spite of the strong opposition of the extremists of their party, had gone to Washington determined to do all that was possible to work in the spirit of the League of Nations. If, when they came back, they had to admit that, as the extremists had foretold, the Conference had been a failure, they would either run the risk of losing all their influence or would turn round against the League. This Conference might be, in fact, the first and last attempt at cooperation between Labour, employers and Governments, as opposed to the methods of the Internationale. The men in Washington did not realise that their work there was having no effect whatever in Europe. Ought we not to enlighten them on the situation - not officially, of course - but somehow convey to them the necessity of either coming back with some clear-cut result, or else putting the blame quite definitely on somebody. The system of Cooperation was at stake, and Labour might be thrown back on the Internationale.

Monsieur Comert explained that he had heard from Mr. Sweetser that the United States Government refused wireless facilities to newspaper/

newspaper correspondents, and gave them only the bald official communiqué of the proceedings. He called attention to the statement in this morning's Times that it had been said in the Senate that the Conference were "a pack of Bolsheviks".

Sir Herbert Ames remarked that the United States Senate was now conducting a fight against organised Labour, and that this reacted all over the world. Even where the system of cooperation was being tried, as in the Conference they were fighting it - as witness their attitude with regard to the financing of the Conference.

Monsieur Monnet said that what mattered most was the impression made here. This first experiment in cooperation, unless it were a conspicuous success would weaken the system of cooperation in general. It was essential to get some news across, whether in the form of speeches, letters, or personal notes about those taking part.

The Secretary General said that he agreed with what had been said, though the situation was perhaps not quite as black as it had been painted. We were in danger of losing Labour support as regards dealing with Labour questions. On other questions, such as disarmament, Labour would still support the League. He suggested that Monsieur Monnet should draft something to send to Mr. Fosdick on the lines proposed.

The question was raised, but not discussed, whether the Assembly, if it met at Washington, might find itself in similar difficulties.

Dr. Van Hamel suggested as a possibility that the Labour Conference might adjourn for a short period and reassemble in Europe, after publishing a full statement of what they had tried to do and what they had accomplished. It seemed wiser, however, not to suggest this to Mr. Fosdick now, but simply to state the situation as it appeared in Europe and leave it to those in Washington to choose their own line of action.

Mr. Salter said that there was some prospect of an important result/

result being reached by the Conference, but what was lacking was publicity.

Monsieur Monnet described the system now being set up by the French Government for their relations with the League. The permanent member of the Council, Monsieur Bourgeois, would have one principal assistant, who would reside regularly at the seat of the League. They would have a Central Office in Paris under Monsieur Bourgeois, but in each Department would be one man specially told off to deal with the International Secretariat. These officers would write direct to the corresponding official on the Secretariat through the Central Office.

Dr. Van Hamel said that many other Governments would be interested to know the procedure adopted by England and France. Perhaps, when officially settled it could be allowed to be generally known. Monsieur Monnet suggested that it might be announced at a Council meeting by one of the delegates and thus receive full publicity.

Mr. Salter said that he had received a cable from Mr. Fosdick a week ago, saying that there was good prospect of getting a settlement by agreement on the question of the eight chief industrial countries, and that he would cable again in about a week. He had not done so yet. If this hope were realised, it would be a great gain. If it broke down, it might be necessary to bring the matter before the Council at its first, or an immediately subsequent, meeting.

Of the memorandum prepared in his section for the Assembly, the fullest and most important part was that on currency. A really valuable collection of information on the state of the currency in different countries had been made by a number of workers, but this had been done in the expectation that the Assembly might meet at the end of November. If it met several months later, the information would to a great extent be out of date, and it would be necessary to consider the question of publishing this part of the memorandum, rather than lose the valuable work that had been done.

He remarked that the public in general anticipated that the

Council/

Council would take in hand the Russian question, as one of the first tasks. He suggested that a legal opinion should be elaborated as to the position of the League with regard to Russia.

Sir Herbert Ames said that the proofs of his draft budget had now arrived. He would circulate copies to Under Secretaries General and Directors.

He understood that it might be necessary for the League to advance funds for the work of the Saar Basin Commissions. Would this be repaid before March 31? Mr. Colban said that the question could not be answered with certainty, but it very well might be so.

He asked whether funds would have to be provided for

- (a) an International Currency Commission;
- (b) a permanent Health body;

before March 31. The answer in each case was that those bodies could not come into existence until after the Assembly had met, so that, if any charge in respect of them came into the present financial year, it could only be at the very end of it and for a small sum.

Dr. Nitobe said that, following the announcement in the Times that Japan had ratified the Treaty, and had made enquiries at the Japanese Embassy, and found that three days later the Ambassador had received official confirmation of the report. It was agreed that, in view of this, Japan might now be asked to contribute her share on the expenses of the Secretariat, and that the same might be done in the case of Brazil, whose ratification was reported in this morning's papers.

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