

Section.

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## Summary

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Nov. 26

Suiet

Subject

Weekly Meeting of Secretary

General and Directors.

Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting. Nov. 26<sup>th</sup>

Subjects discussed:-

1) Situation in United States.

2) The Seat of the League

3) Finances of the League etc.

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Minutes of a Meeting held in the Secretary-General's  
Room, on Wednesday, 26th November, 1919, at 3.30 p.m.

Present: -

The Secretary-General.  
Dr. Nitobe.  
Sir Herbert Ames.  
Mr. Colban.  
Mr. Mair.  
Captain Walters.

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1. The Secretary-General said that the chief point of interest was still the situation in the United States. The letters which he had received from Mr. Fcsdick were very gloomy, and inclined to the view that the Treaty and the League would be the points upon which the next Presidential election would turn, and that thus nothing could be finally settled before November 1920. This was not borne out by the views expressed by Mr. Polk, or the information sent from Washington by Lord Grey. They both expected a compromise - that is, if the President would yield at all. The great danger lay in the fact that both sides seemed to think it a favourable ground to fight the election on. His personal opinion was, that it would be much better to have America in, even with at first very stiff reservations, than that she should stay out of the League altogether.

2. Coming into Force of the Treaty. The Supreme Council's hope that it would come into force on December 1st had not been recanted; but it was evidently hopeless. The impression in Government circles here was that it would not come into force before January 1st.

Mr. Mair said the "Morning Post" had published this date some days ago, and explained that it was what their correspondent had heard in Paris.

The Secretary-General said there was something to be said for a fixed date, and one which made some appeal to the popular imagination.

Mr Polk had definitely agreed that the President should summon the Council to meet two days after the coming into force of the Treaty. If the first Council meeting did not take place before January 3, the

question/



question arose whether we ought to adhere to the strictly limited Agenda for the meeting or to think of extending it. On the whole, he was inclined to adhere to the existing plan, especially as it would be difficult, if it were decided to extend the Agenda, to settle what additional subjects should be brought in. The Council could, if they wished, discuss informally where the next meeting should be, and what Agenda it should take.

Mr. Colban agreed with this view. In particular, he thought it inadvisable for the Council to discuss the Saar Basin Governing Commission without having time to think it over first. Otherwise, we should be faced by majority decisions - which, though in theory valid, would in practice be disastrous.

On the question of publicity, the Secretary-General said that he hoped we should get the Council to agree beforehand to the admission of the press. Could we make out a good case in the Press for thus limiting the Agenda?

Mr. Mair said he felt no doubt on this point. The League, as a democratic institution, must provide its own material to work on. He felt sure that we should have a cordial reception from the Press. The only difficulty he ever met with was the shortage of information to give them.

3. The Secretary-General said that the Foreign Office had received a telegram, which he had not yet seen, from Switzerland, saying that the Swiss Government was most anxious to join the League as quickly as possible. He did not know the reason for this, but thought it might possibly be due partly to an interview which he understood Monsieur Bourgeois had given to a Belgian newspaper man, in which he said that the headquarters of the League would be at Brussels until Geneva was ready. The telegram said that the Swiss Government had waived the stipulation that the referendum should be held until the five Principal Allied and Associated Powers had ratified the Treaty.



He was anxious to hear the views of the meeting on the question of whether Brussels should be the League headquarters for about eighteen months or two years. During that period, the working of the League would depend very much on the close cooperation of the Western Powers. For all the Western capitals, Brussels was much more convenient than Geneva, while, for the more distant ones, the difference of a few hours either way was of no account. On the other side might be urged: (1) that it was better to get settled down where we meant to stay; and (2) that the more radical elements, particularly in America, might say that this action showed the League to be a League of victorious Allies. From the practical point of view, he thought the gain outweighed the disadvantages.

Mr. Mair said that for the Information Section, Brussels was greatly superior. Geneva went by Central European time, which was distinctly a handicap for dealing with America. In the United Kingdom Brussels would be more popular as a capital than Geneva.

The Secretary-General said that it was essential that it should be made perfectly clear that we were eventually going to Geneva.

Mr. Colban said that, as regards the ex-neutral powers, he thought that there would be no objection. Nor did he think it would hurt from the point of view of the accession of Germany.

Sir Herbert Ames said that from the American point of view he thought Geneva much the better. Over there they thought of Geneva as neutral, and of Brussels as being full of hate against the Central European Powers. Could eventual German members of the Secretariat or a German delegation reside in Brussels?

The Secretary-General said that evidently no decision on the matter could be reached until it was certainly known what the United States would do. The question was raised as to whether the matter would have to be settled in the Council by unanimous vote, or whether it could be treated as a matter of procedure.

Sir Herbert Ames./



Sir Herbert Ames said that he feared it would be difficult, once in Brussels, to leave it. The same arguments as applied today would apply two years hence.

The Secretary-General thought that in two years the League would have greater drawing power than now. Communications, too, with Geneva would be much better than at present, and the political centre of gravity would be shifted further eastward. Reference was made to the park and buildings which the Belgian Government had offered to the League. It appeared doubtful whether they would lend them for what was avowedly only a temporary occupation.

4. As regards the Labour Conference, the Secretary-General said that reports agreed that this was going well, and the communiqués had much improved, as the result of Monsieur Monnet's telegram.

Mr. Mair said that since the improvement in the communiqués very good publicity had been given to the Conference. Even the "Daily Herald" had a leading article on it.

5. Finance. Sir Herbert Ames thought we could carry on until the Treaty came into force in January, if it should be postponed until then. He hoped that some of the letters recently sent out would produce some results. He had received a bill drafted for the French Parliament, providing for a part of the French Government's contribution to the League, but he did not know whether it had been passed or not.

6. Mr. Mair said that Monsieur Gemert was going to Brussels on Saturday for the meeting of the League of Nations societies, such as the League of Nations Union, etc.

7. Mr. Colban said that he had received confidentially information that the Norwegian Government would postpone consideration of Norway's joining the League until January. The reasons for this he did not know, but they were probably: (1) the attitude of the United States, and (2) the postponement of the coming into force of the Treaty.



Some discussion followed on the effect of the American reservations, if passed, on other Powers. They would presumably have the right to reconsider their position, and to make reservations of their own. What would be the position of the thirteen invited States? The Secretary-General said that this was a nice point, because these thirteen States had to accede without reservation, which was not strictly true of the signatories. The Chilean Government, in declaring its adhesion, reserved the right to consider any reservations made by other members in joining the League. No doubt other invited States would have the right to do the same. As regards the signatories, it appeared that those who had ratified without reservations could not now go back on that decision.

8. Dr. Nitobe said that he had seen Admiral Sir J. Parry, and also Sir William Collins. The former is taking steps to draft a Convention relating to the Hydrographic Bureau. He intended to arrange an interview between Admiral Parry's representative and Dr. Van Hamel on his return. On the question of whether such a Convention ought to be put forward by a Government, the Secretary-General expressed the opinion that this would most naturally be done by the Government in whose capital it was first promoted - i.e., in this case, Great Britain.

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Sunderland House,  
Curzon Street,  
LONDON, W. 1.

27th November, 1919.



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