

to this dispute; and it particularly welcomed, on the initiative of the Prime Minister of Belgium, the suggestion that His Majesty's Government and the French Government should seek to find such a basis. It was, however, recognised that any proposals which these two Governments put forward must be acceptable to the two parties to the dispute and to the League.

It has always been in the minds of the two Governments an essential condition that, before finally pressing any terms of settlement upon the parties, those terms should be approved by the League. For the Members of the League are bound to respect and to do their utmost to apply the Covenant.

It was no easy task which the two Governments undertook, and, so far as His Majesty's Government is concerned, it had no illusion as to the difficulty. But, as I have said, with the good wishes of the Committee, the two Governments made the attempt.

Indeed, though it may well be maintained that it has proved to be, at the present juncture of events, an almost impossible task, it was proper that the attempt should be made, however invidious the task of those who had to make it. For that I make no apology. Even if this attempt is to be unsuccessful, the essential importance of conciliation remains, as the League has frequently recognised. The principle therefore was right, even if its application in this instance may not have availed.

It must be emphasised that the Paris proposals which were put forward last week were not advanced as proposals to be insisted on in any event. They were advanced in order to ascertain what the views of the two parties and of the League might be upon them, and His Majesty's Government recommended them only for this purpose. If, therefore, it transpires that these proposals which are now before you do not satisfy the essential condition of agreement by the two parties and by the League, His Majesty's Government could not continue to recommend or support them. In its view, this particular attempt at conciliation could not then be regarded as having achieved its object, and His Majesty's Government for its part would not wish to pursue it further.

M. LAVAL: The representative of the United Kingdom has just explained to you the spirit in which the French and United Kingdom Governments have been led to submit to Rome and Addis Ababa suggestions for a friendly settlement of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

Those of you who were present last week at the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen will remember, moreover, that even then Mr. Eden and I myself emphasised the fact that it was for the League of Nations to pass judgment upon our proposals.

I do not think it would be useful to explain again our initiative; it is the outcome of the encouragement we received at Geneva itself; it is prompted by our common conviction that the search for a friendly settlement is, at all times, in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Covenant.