

FIFTH COMMITTEE
(Social and Humanitarian Questions)

Penal and Penitentiary Questions

The Committee had before it the Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of prisoners, revised by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission in the light of the observations of the Governments and organizations consulted; and also a Report prepared by the Secretary General, at the request of the 1932 Assembly, on the activities of seven private international organizations and the current work of certain Committees of the League dealing with penal and penitentiary questions.

It was decided that the revised text of the Standard Minimum Rules should be submitted to Governments and that they should be asked whether, in view of their existing or proposed laws and regulations, they are in a position to consider the approval and the practical application of these rules in whole or in part. The question of an international convention on the treatment of prisoners has been left over pending a final decision on the Standard Minimum Rules.

Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People

The Fifth Committee discussed briefly certain matters relating to the reorganization of the Advisory Commission for the Protection and Welfare of Children and Young People. It noted that the field of work of the Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children was clearly defined, while that of the Child Welfare Committee was not. It considered that the latter Committee should be a centre of information, a centre of studies and a centre of action, and proposed that a plan of work for the Child Welfare Committee should be prepared as soon as possible, with particular reference to the work of its secretariat as a "documentation centre."

It was considered that the funds available for the Advisory Commission were not sufficient to enable it to perform the duties devolving upon it, and the hope was expressed that these funds would be increased as soon as possible.

As regards the composition of the Advisory Commission, which consisted of nine European and three non-European members, many delegates agreed with the suggestion made at the Commission's last session that the three new members to be added to the Commission should be appointed from among non-European countries. The Netherlands delegate made a reservation to the effect that the expression "non-European countries" should be interpreted as meaning countries entirely or partly outside Europe. Several delegates, including Dr. Riddell, opposed this interpretation, considering that European countries with colonies outside Europe should not be eligible for appointment to seats intended for non-European countries.

The Committee expressed the view that it would be advisable eventually to introduce a system of rotation among both the Government members and the assessors attached to the Advisory Commission.

The Committee noted that, during the past year, the *Child Welfare Committee* has continued its studies relating to the protection and education of blind children and the status of illegitimate children, and has begun to study, in collaboration with the International Labour Office, the effects of the economic crisis and unemployment on children and young people. The interest and importance of this work at the present time were emphasized by many speakers, including Dr. Riddell, who spoke of the attention being given to this matter in Canada.

The Committee expressed the hope that, as soon as circumstances permit, the Child Welfare Committee will be provided with the funds it requires to develop its activities.