

FOURTH COMMITTEE
(Budget and Financial Questions)

The Budget for 1932

The general discussion on the budget was particularly thorough and detailed. More than thirty members spoke, and all except the Spanish and Lithuanian delegates emphasised the necessity of economy, laying special stress on the fact that, at a time when each State was making every effort to reduce public expenditure, the League should adopt the same policy.

It was generally recognized that the increase in the budget of the League was due to appropriations voted for the Disarmament Conference in 1932, and that these appropriations should not be affected by any measures of economy that might be taken. Further, it was agreed that the proposed economies should not interfere with the essential work of the League, which, in 1932, would have to concentrate its efforts on disarmament and the problems presented by the economic depression.

The draft budget was referred back to the Supervisory Commission who made a detailed study of every item of the budget and then submitted to the Fourth Committee proposals providing for a reduction of 2,604,999 gold francs from the first estimate of expenditure.

The Commission's report made it clear that the proposed reductions were not to be regarded as implying that the estimates for expenditure entered in the original budget were superfluous or extravagant. The revised budget was designed to meet the abnormal conditions which had developed, and provided, in many cases, for the postponement of work rather than for its abandonment.

As regards conferences and meetings, the Commission was guided by the following principle: Whenever a meeting originally fixed for 1932 could, without serious inconvenience, be postponed to a subsequent year, the credits provided should be suspended. Similarly, when credits had been appropriated for two or more meetings of a committee during the year, it should in many cases be possible to re-arrange the schedule of meetings with a view to reducing expenses. In other cases, it was agreed to reduce the length of the session and the number of experts, etc., to be invited to take part in it. All committee minutes, except those of the Assembly, the European Union Commission and the Permanent Mandates Commission, should be discontinued.

When unanimously approving the Supervisory Commission's report, the Fourth Committee thought it advisable to examine chapter by chapter the budget as modified. During this discussion, interesting suggestions were made by several speakers, some of which will be followed, the Secretary-General or the Chairman of the Supervisory Commission having declared themselves in their favour. The latter stated, for example, that the Supervisory Commission proposed to consider, before the next Assembly, the question of the League's branch offices in certain cities other than Geneva. Further, the Secretary-General agreed to a proposal that a clause should in future be embodied in the contracts of the staff to the effect that salaries might be varied by decision of the Assembly.

The budget as voted amounts to a total of 33,687,994 gold francs or a little under seven million dollars (as against 31,637,501 gold francs in 1931), subdivided as follows:

	Gold Francs
Secretariat and special organisations	19,174,317
International Labour Organisation	8,792,290
Permanent Court of International Justice	2,663,702
Nansen International Office for Refugees	297,763
Buildings at Geneva	1,148,899
Pensions	1,011,023