

The London Naval Conference sat from January until the end of April, 1930; only Great Britain, the United States of America and Japan reached a complete agreement. France and Italy did not find it possible to join the other three Powers; generally speaking, Delegates of the Naval Powers in London considered that there was nothing to be gained by re-convening the Preparatory Disarmament Commission before the political atmosphere had cleared a little. It was therefore decided not to convene the Commission until November.

The Third Committee thus found itself in an entirely different position to that of last year. Then controversy was rife over the date of the next session of the Preparatory Commission; now the date was fixed. The effect was to curtail the discussion on disarmament—all Delegates agreed that the next session of the Preparatory Commission should be the last, and that the Disarmament Conference should meet as soon as possible.

On the general subject of disarmament, the Delegates of Norway, Germany, Hungary and China were pessimistic. Most of the other Delegates did not commit themselves to an appreciation of the work already accomplished; they repeated simply that their Governments were anxious for a speedy solution of the disarmament problem.

The Delegate of Norway said that he had been waiting for ten years for Article 8 to be carried into effect, both in its spirit and in its letter. The hour was critical; so far nothing had been done in the way of disarmament, and the obligations under Article 8 were sacred. He thought it was possible to achieve some measure of disarmament in the present state of security; public opinion expected much, and to his mind was still waiting.

The Delegate of Germany (Count Bernstorff) stated that his lack of optimism might be due to the fact that he had been coming, with optimism, for five years to the sessions of the Preparatory Commission, each time going away with no results. Up to the present he could say that the Preparatory Commission had done nothing. He regretted having to say this just as much as he regretted having to say at the last session of the Preparatory Commission that his Government would disclaim responsibility for the work of that Commission, believing that the results were so small that one could not speak of any reduction of armaments, let alone of disarmament. He asked that the Disarmament Conference be convened for 1931.

The British Delegate (Viscount Cecil) thought it was an exaggeration to state that the Preparatory Commission had done nothing so far; it had made very considerable progress towards the conclusion of the task which was entrusted to it. Although he was as anxious as anyone that the Conference should meet as soon as possible, he did not think it should be convened before adequate preparation had been made so that success would be achieved.

The Delegate of France agreed with the German Delegation that it was desirable that the Disarmament Conference should take place if possible in 1931, but added that it was the Council which had to undertake the responsibility of convening this Conference, and that the Committee should avoid trespassing on the province of duties of the Council.

The Canadian Delegate (Sir Robert Borden), who spoke on the general subject of disarmament at a plenary meeting of the Assembly instead of before the Third Committee, expressed disappointment and made an appeal for more rapid progress in the reduction of armaments.* He said:—

“I realize the complications that exist in Europe and elsewhere, and I recognize the earnestness of the efforts which have been made to carry out this purpose of the Covenant of the League of Nations. But I ask

* Although Sir Robert Borden's statement was not made before the Third Committee, it is mentioned here and an extract from it is included, in order to complete the report from Canada's standpoint, by incorporating in it the views of the Canadian Delegate on disarmament in general.