

FOURTH COMMITTEE

Budget Questions

The Finance or Budget Committee found itself faced by several difficult problems.

First came the question of the adequacy of the annual appropriations for the support of the League, the International Labour Organization and the Permanent Court of International Justice. The work of the League is growing much faster than its revenues. The nations of the world contribute less in a year for the maintenance of the body which is the chief bulwark against another world catastrophe than they spent on destruction in a single morning or afternoon in the later years of the World War. Yet the feeling of the Assembly as a whole and particularly of the Fourth Committee has been that a tight rein should be kept upon expenditure and the necessity of any fresh enterprise amply proved before being sanctioned. The total budget was accordingly set at 25,333,817 gold francs, or approximately \$4,890,000; this sum is about \$150,000 more than the budget of the previous year. This total was later reduced by \$160,000, representing half the surplus of the preceding year, and a further sum of \$280,000 has been taken from the Building Fund to reimburse those States which had been contributing to the League's maintenance before 1926, thus ensuring an even distribution of the burdens between new and old members, and between those in arrears and those in good standing. With these adjustments, Canada's net contribution for 1928 amounts to slightly less than \$156,000.

The question of arrears in payments received its annual share of consideration. The chief debit entry is that against China, but in view of civil war and financial chaos it was apparent that no immediate improvement could be expected. The remaining arrears are for minor amounts, and chiefly in the case of some of the smaller Latin-American States.

A conflict of views on two appropriations raised in acute form the question whether the opinion of the Committee concerned with the general policy of a certain proposed expenditure or the opinion of the Fourth Committee is to prevail in case of difference. Recommendations from the Second Committee for a Transportation Information Bureau and from the First Committee in connection with further researches into international law codification were disallowed by the Fourth Committee. The first conflict was solved by a joint conference in which it was agreed to postpone the credit for this year at least; the second came before the Assembly, which proved evenly divided, and was finally settled by a proposal of the Secretary General that the Council might transfer funds for this purpose from any unexpended remainder.

The New League Building

The chief financial question of the year, however, was how to ensure the construction of the new League building. The Assembly at present meets in a badly-planned and badly-ventilated hall on one side of Lake Geneva and the Secretariat, or Civil Service of the League, and the committees work in what was formerly a hotel on the other side of the lake. Proposals for constructing an adequate building have accordingly been under consideration for several years; an excellent site beyond the present Secretariat, and incidentally within convenient distance from the quarters of the Canadian Advisory Officer, has been acquired, and an international architectural competition held. Unfortunately, between the limitation of funds and the excess of competitors, the jury of architects was unable to pronounce any single plan adequate: nine plans of first merit, nine of second, and nine of third were indicated, and the problem passed on