REPORT BY M. LEON BOURGEOIS

ON THE RESOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY WITH REGARD TO ARMAMENTS

Adopted by the Council of the League of Nations on February 25, 1921.

At its Meeting of December 14th, 1920, the Assembly voted three
Resolutions and adopted a recommendation contemplating certain
measures to be taken by the Council with regard to the question
of armaments.

The Secretary General's Memorandum of January 26th, 1921, may
serve as a basis for the discussions of the Council, and supply
it with the material for the decisions which it must take.

In the report which I have the honour to submit to the
Council I shall consider the questions which are brought before it
in the same order as they were brought before the Assembly.

RESOLUTION I OF THE ASSEMBLY

RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE TRAFFIC IN ARMS AND
ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL OFFICE OF CONTROL.

(1) The Committee, (i.e., Committee No. 5 of the Assembly) having
received a report of Sir Cecil Hurst on the Convention for the
Control of the Trade in Arms and Ammunition which was signed at
Saint-Germain on September 10th, 1919, by the United States of
America, Belgium, Bolivia, the British Empire, China, Cuba, Equador,
France, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Fiji, Italy, Japan and other
Powers, and being greatly impressed by the value of this Convention
as an instrument of civilisation, and by the evils which would ensue
from its non-observance, are anxious that the signatory Powers should
proceed without delay to ratification and to the establishment of the
International Office of Control contemplated by the Convention.

(2) The Committee notes that the signatory Governments declared in
a Protocol that it was contrary to the intention of the High
Contracting Parties and to the spirit of this Convention that,
pending the coming into force of the Convention, a contracting party
should adopt any measure contrary to its provisions.

(3) The Committee notes, however, that it has not been possible for
the Powers to give full effect to their Protocol, and that to the
present....
present time the Convention of Saint Germain has had no effect save upon the traffic in arms in the certain special areas specified in the Convention.

The Committee would therefore urge that the Assembly should declare its high sense of the gain to civilisation which would ensue from a strict control of this traffic and should invite the Council to urge upon all Governments without delay speedy ratification of, or adhesion to, the Convention.

The Convention can probably be ratified as soon as the Principal Powers concerned have concluded an agreement for the simultaneous application of this Convention.

With this in view, the Council might send a letter to all the signatories of the Convention to propose the periods within which the ratification should take place, with the agreement of the parties concerned. A similar letter might be sent to the States which are not signatories of the Convention asking them if they would be prepared to sign in and to ratify it within the same periods.

The Convention places the International Office which is instructed to co-operate in the carrying out of certain of these measures under the authority of the League of Nations. There exists at Brussels an office administered by the Belgian Government, which carries out the same duties with regard to the application of the Convention of July 2nd 1890. Until the new Convention has been ratified and until its results become apparent, it is difficult to indicate with any precision the importance of the duties which will fall to the International Office of Control.

For reasons of prudence and economy, I would propose to the Council for the moment to make use of the organisation already in existence. The Council might ask the Belgian Government to be so good as to continue, for the moment, to perform these duties on behalf of the League of Nations. The office might also be entrusted with the application of measures relative to the traffic in arms which might subsequently be taken, if the Council thought well to entrust it with this task.
If the Belgian Government acceded to this request and continued the activities of the existing office, the latter might be asked to send every three months to Geneva a detailed report to the Permanent Advisory Commission since, by the Rome resolution, we have already referred this matter to it. The report would be published by the Commission with any appropriate comments.

The expenses of the Office would, under the terms of this arrangement, continue to be borne by the Belgian Government, though the latter would be free, at its convenience, to transfer the Office to the Seat of the League of Nations.

RESOLUTION II
PRIVATE MANUFACTURE OF MUNITION AND WAR MATERIAL

Whereas the Covenant formally denounces the evil effects of the private manufacture of munitions and of war materials, the Committee suggest that the Assembly should request the Council to invite the Commissions referred to in the following resolution to investigate without delay this serious problem. They also suggest that attention be given to the question as to whether the International Office of Control for the Traffic in Arms when erected could not also be utilised so as to obviate the evils arising from the private manufacture of arms to which reference is made in the Covenant.

The study of this problem will be undertaken by the Permanent Advisory Commission, to which the Covenant entrusts this matter. The problem might also be dealt with by the Temporary Commission which the Council will decide to establish in accordance with Resolution III of the Assembly, which I shall consider later.

As to whether the International Office of Control for the traffic in arms, once it was set up, would also serve to remedy the evil effects of the private manufacture of munitions and of war material, that is a delicate and still very doubtful point, in respect of which judgment must at any rate be reserved until the Council has received reports from the Commission concerned. Indeed, one must in the first place define what are the "evil effects" of this private manufacture, and what exactly is to be understood/
understood to-day by the expression "munitions and war materials."

Apart from the material which can only be used for actual fighting (guns - rifles - munitions), modern warfare calls for the employment of all kinds of material intended to satisfy peace-time requirements and yet indispensable to the development of military operations - e.g. material for railways, commercial aviation, merchant marine, post and telegraph, motor cars, agricultural tractors and chemical products, all of which materials or products can be used for war-like purposes with, or without, previous adaptation. On the other hand, as it is impossible for armies to possess, in time of peace, the enormous amount of material required by modern war, it is to industrial mobilisation that Governments will turn in time of need, in order to procure this material. It may, therefore, be said that a nation's fitness for war does not now depend merely upon its peace-time armament, but chiefly upon its industrial strength.

This simple statement of the problem shows how difficult it will be to devise measures of control which will be both efficient and acceptable by the Governments concerned. On this subject, we can only wait for the Reports of our Commissions.

RESOLUTION 111 OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Committee, being convinced that the maintenance of peace demands the reduction of armaments, in accordance with the principles set forth in Article VIII of the Covenant and in the Preamble of Paragraph 5 of the Treaties of Peace, of Versailles, St. Germain and Neuilly, which declare that the disarmament of certain Powers Signatory to those Treaties, be provided for "in order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations."
and associating itself with the pronouncement of the Supreme Council of March 8th last:

"That in order to diminish the economic difficulties of Europe, armies should everywhere be reduced to a peace footing, that armies should be limited to the lowest possible figure, compatible with national security, and that the League of Nations be invited to examine proposals to this end, without delay";

and with the Resolution of the International Financial Conference at Brussels

"Recommending most earnestly to the Council of the League of Nations the desirability of conferring at once and agreeing with the several Governments concerned with a view to securing a general reduction of the existing burdens which, on their existing scale, armaments still impose on the impoverished peoples of the world, sapping their resources and impeding their recovery from the ravages of war;"

realising on the other hand, that a complete and comprehensive scheme of disarmament depends upon the following conditions:

First, under the responsibility of the Powers Signatory to the Treaties of Peace, upon the complete fulfilment of the reduction of armaments imposed by the above-mentioned Treaties upon certain of these Powers; secondly, upon the exercise as occasion may demand, of the right of investigation accorded by these Treaties, to the Council of the League of Nations, in order to maintain this reduction; and, lastly, on the collaboration of the other great Military Powers which have, hitherto, remained outside the League;
Inviting the Council:

(a) To request the Permanent Advisory Commission for Military, Naval and Air Questions, rapidly to complete its technical examination into the present conditions of armaments.

(b) To instruct a temporary Commission, composed of persons possessing the requisite competence in matters of a political, social and economic nature, to prepare for submission to the Council in the near future, reports and proposals for the reduction of armaments as provided for by Article VIII of the Covenant.

(c) To form within the Secretariat, a Section to serve as a centre of information for the Commission in question, and also as a channel for the publication and exchange of the information referred to in the Covenant.

(d) To consider the mechanism, by means of which the military information to be exchanged under the provisions of Article VIII of the Covenant could be verified, in the event of the principle of mutual verification by Members of the League being confirmed by an amendment to the Covenant."

The Permanent Advisory Committee for Military, Naval and Air Questions has already begun to consider the question of the reduction of armaments, in accordance with the duty expressly imposed upon it by the Covenant (Article IX), and it has submitted a first opinion to the Council in its Report of December 11th, at Geneva. But the problem is one which calls for extensive and profound study, carried out with a view to finding progressive solutions. These solutions are themselves in the nature of conditions, some of which, such as the execution of the Military, Naval and Air
Clauses of the Treaties, are outside the scope of the League, while others, such as the enforcement of the execution of these Clauses by means of the exercise of the right of investigation, will, one day, come within its sphere. When the Council, on December 11th, 1920, adopted the procedure proposed by the Advisory Committee with regard to the efficient exercise of the right of investigation, it took a step towards finding a solution of the question of the reduction of armaments. It may be said that by doing so, it has removed, in advance, one of the objections put forward by the Governments against the carrying out of Article VII. In this connection, moreover, the standard questionnaire adopted by the Council on the suggestion of its Advisory Commission, will facilitate the application of Article VII as soon as it is possible to exchange the information referred to in this Article. These are the efficient measures which the Council has so far been able to take, thanks to the work of the Advisory Commission. Moreover, on December 11th, the Council invited the Commission to continue its work and it has, therefore, no new instructions to give it with regard to this question.

The Permanent Advisory Commission, which includes very distinguished experts on military, naval and air questions, has, in addition, the right - by virtue of the Resolution taken on May 19th, 1920 - to call in civilian experts, whose assistance it may consider indispensable. As a matter of fact, the Commission is not hindered in its work by any lack of expert knowledge, but rather by the policy of the Governments and the conditions laid down by them with regard to any undertaking relating to a definite reduction in armaments.
These conditions are familiar to the Council, and the Assembly itself declared that the question of the limitation of armaments depended upon them in the first place.

It will take time to realise them, but this essential work will be carried out, and will continue to engage the attention of the Council during its progressive stages.

The Assembly, however, called in addition for the temporary institution of a Commission possessing the necessary competence in political, social, and economic questions, to enable it to undertake the study of this problem in collaboration with the already existing permanent Committee. In deciding on the institution of this Commission its evident desire was that the question should be considered from a high social point of view, while, at the same time, technical considerations and material facts should be taken into account. In this connection, the goal would seem attainable if the third solution suggested in the memorandum of the Secretary General were adopted. I therefore propose to the Council to set up a temporary Mixed Commission, comprising a certain number of distinguished political personalities of undisputed authority, and also some technical Members from the already-existing organisations of the League, namely:—

The Permanent Advisory Commission.

The Economic and Financial Sections of the Provisional Economic and Financial Commission.

And the Governing Body of the Labour Office.

This Commission would be able to co-ordinate its work with that of the technical organisations and, especially, with that of the Advisory Commission on Military, Naval and Air Questions.
In this way, it would be possible to avoid the disadvantages mentioned in the Memorandum of the Secretary-General, of setting up a new organisation between those of the Advisory Commission and the Council.

The Secretariat of this temporary Commission must not take the place of the permanent secretariat of the Advisory Commission which the Council at Rome, on May 19th, decided should be exclusively composed of technical officers, owing to the technical character which it intended to give to the Advisory Commission. According to the provisions of the Covenant, it is the duty of the permanent technical secretariat to carry out the exchange of information with regard to the scales of armaments and military, naval and air programmes.

There can, therefore, be no question of modifying the Secretariat; but the Secretary-General should form a civilian secretariat in order to enable the work of the new provisional Commission to be carried out. It would seem that these two Secretariats might together form the special section of the Secretariat-General which the Assembly asked us to set up.

The Assembly proposed in the last paragraph of Resolution III:

"To consider the mechanism by means of which the military information to be exchanged, under the provisions of Article 8 of the Covenant, could be verified, in the event of the principle of mutual verification by Members of the League being confirmed by an amendment to the Covenant".

This is a question of primary importance, the solution of which the Secretary-General should find a civilian secretariat in order to enable the work of the new provisional Commission to be carried out. It would seem that there are Secretariats which might together form the special section of the Secretariat-General which the Assembly asked us to set up.
which alone will permit of a really effective reduction in armaments. You will permit me to remind you that it was the subject of one of the two French Amendments.

It would, moreover, seem altogether legitimate, as suggested in the Memorandum of the Secretary General, to ask for an opinion from the Permanent Advisory Commission, with regard to this point. As the representatives of their respective Governments, the Members of this Commission could give us the views of their Governments upon this subject, and facilitate the work of the League when the amendment contemplated by the Assembly comes up for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION.

Pending the full execution of the measures for the reduction of armaments recommended by Article VII of the Covenant, the Assembly recommends that the Council to submit for the consideration of the Governments the acceptance of an undertaking not to exceed, for the first two financial years following the next financial year, the sum total of expenditure on the military, naval and air services provided for in the latter budget, subject, however, to account being taken of the following reservations:

(1) Any contributions of troops, war material and money recommended by the League of Nations, with a view to the fulfilment of obligations imposed by Article 15 of the Covenant or by Treaties registered by the League.

(2) Exceptional conditions notified as such to the Council of the League of Nations in accordance with the spirit of paragraphs 2 and 6 of Article VIII of the Covenant.
I suggest to the Council that it should simply send this recommendation to the Governments of all states Members of the League on behalf of the Assembly.

Should the Council adopt the conclusions contained in my Report, I would suggest that it should take the following decisions:

The Council resolves:

1. to send to the signatories of the Convention relating to the Traffic in Arms the letter drawn up by the Secretary General (Annex 2a to his Memorandum of January 26, 1921).

2. to send to Members of the League which have not signed the above-mentioned Convention the other letter also drawn up by the Secretary General (Annex 2b to his Memorandum of January 26, 1921).

3. to ask the Belgian Government to be so good as to entrust the "Bureau International" of Brussels with the application of the measures relating to the traffic in arms and munitions, thus temporarily carrying out the duties allotted to the International Office contemplated by the Convention of St. Germain. The above-mentioned Brussels Office shall be requested to send a detailed report every three months to the Permanent Advisory Commission at Geneva. This report shall be published by the Commission, together with all necessary comments.

The expenses of the existing International Office shall continue to be borne by the Belgian Government, which shall be free, should it so wish, to transfer it to the Seat of the League of Nations.

4. that the Permanent Advisory Commission, acting in conjunction with the temporary Commission mentioned in the following Resolution shall study the question of the private manufacture of munitions and of war material as contemplated by Article 8 of the Covenant and shall submit a report on this
subject to the Council.

(5) that a temporary Commission shall be formed for the purpose of submitting to the Council in the near future all evidence and proposals connected with the question of the reduction of armaments contemplated by Article 8 of the Covenant, due consideration being paid to the pre-existing conditions upon which the Assembly has made the definite and general limitation of armaments dependent.

This Commission shall include:

6 persons of recognised competence in political, social and economic matters:

12 members of the Permanent Advisory Commission for Naval, Military and Air Questions, selected by this Commission:

4 members of the Provisional Economic and Financial Commission selected by this Commission;

6 members of the Governing Body of the International Labour Office, of which three members shall be employers and three workmen representatives, selected by the Governing Body of the Office.

(6) that the Secretary General is authorised to form the civilian secretariat of the temporary Commission for the duration of this Commission, and the section of the Secretariat which shall include the secretariats of the two Commissions.

(7) that the Permanent Advisory Commission shall study the policy of mutual verification and of the procedure to be adopted for the mutual verification between Members of the League of Nations of information of a military nature exchanged in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant, assuming that such verification is rendered admissible by an amendment to the Covenant.

(8) that the Council requests the Secretary General to send to the Governments of States Members of the League the recommendation adopted by a majority of the Assembly with regard to the limitation of naval, military and air expenditure during the two financial years following the next Budget and to ask them to be as good as to inform him before May 1 what action they propose to take with regard to this recommendation.