

THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

A REPORT on the work of the League of Nations, 1941-42, which has been submitted by the Acting Secretary-General, well indicates the valuable contribution which the League should be able to make to the solution of problems of reconstruction, European relief, and the like, apart altogether from whatever value its organization and machinery may possess as a starting point for a fresh attempt to organize peace and to plan international co-operation.

Dealing first with economic, financial and transit questions, the report notes that the League's World Economic Survey, its Statistical Year-book and the *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* have been maintained, and while the headquarters at Geneva have specialized on European developments, the part of the Economic, Financial and Transit Department sent on mission to Princeton follows the course of events in the rest of the world. In addition to the three pivotal publications already mentioned, the Secretary-General proposes to publish this year the statistical part of the work previously published in two volumes under the title "Money and Banking".

In regard to post-war economic problems, the programme visualized for 1942 is guided by three principles. Since the future must be built on the past, it is essential before planning and projecting that building to ascertain the causes of success or failure in the recent past, and to learn and apply the lessons which may be deduced from the past. Secondly, such evidence must be supported by an adequate basis of fact, the relevant information being collated and analysed to assist those responsible for the formulation of policy to frame their own judgment on them. Thirdly, the care of the social and economic issues of the future is likely to be the problem of social security, and the means by which control of the two groups of dynamic forces at present discernible in modern society may be rendered effective should therefore constitute the central thread of all constructive thinking for the future, and all future policies must be considered in the light of their probable effect on economic stability, on demographic conditions, and on social security. The programme includes commercial studies, one of which, "Europe's Trade", has already been published, studies on raw materials such as obstructions to free access, control schemes, raw-material shortages and surpluses at the end of the War of 1914-18 and on proposals to secure equal conditions of supply or prevent violent fluctuations in price, as well as on the whole experience of relief and reconstruction. In regard to agriculture, a careful study is being made of current agricultural developments in war areas and elsewhere. International currency problems, economic depressions and social security and demographic questions are also receiving attention, as well as transport in relation to post-war relief and reconstruction and the preparatory examination of the future international organization of transport. A full programme of studies on European demographic problems is outlined in the report.

In regard to social and humanitarian questions, the Secretary-General's report describes the way in which the Health Section continues to deal with questions of epidemic disease. The service of Epidemiological Intelligence and Public Health Statistics has continued, with interruptions, and Singapore Bureau has now been re-opened in Australia, where it is carrying on within the limits imposed by war con-

ditions. The *Weekly Epidemiological Record* has appeared regularly at Geneva without any interruption and an annual Epidemiological Report was distributed at the end of 1941. The standardization of sera and of vitamins has continued, and results of the latest research conducted under the Commission were published in 1941 in the *Bulletin of the Health Organisation*. The Health Section is also endeavouring to ascertain the effect of food rationing on the general level of health of European populations, and has supplied information on numerous health questions such as the effect of the War on the health situation, typhus, tuberculosis, feeding and nutrition, etc.; reference is made to the future opportunities for action which the field of nutrition appears to offer the Health Organisation.

Activities in regard to the control of the drug traffic have been essentially maintained, and the Permanent Control Opium Board continues to watch the international trade in narcotic drugs on the basis of statistical information supplied by Governments. The Child Welfare Information Centre has been maintained and intellectual co-operation has continued in the United States, where the national committees of that continent held their second conference at Havana in November 1941. The programme included the examination of the basic principles upon which intellectual co-operation depends: improvement of copyright regulations; removal of obstacles to cultural and intellectual exchange, such as high duties on books, excessive postal rates. International assistance to refugees is being continued on the lines laid down by the Assembly in September 1938, and brief reference is made to such matters as mandates, slavery, the protection of minorities and the registration of treaties where the League's administrative work has been interrupted or restricted by the War.

The report includes an analysis of the League's budget and of the reduction in the staff of the secretariat, but gives an encouraging and indeed surprising picture of the maintenance of economic, social and humanitarian activity and of the conservation of reserves in readiness for the resumption of co-operation and the handling of reconstruction problems.

MAN-POWER IN THE NATIONAL FIRE SERVICE

IT seems clear, from the thirteenth report of the Select Committee on National Expenditure, dealing with the National Fire Service, that the administration of the Service is already under close scrutiny from within, and that active steps are already being taken to discover ways and means of simplifying the administration and reducing the staff. Centralization of the administration at area headquarters requires speeding up in urban areas, while in rural areas decentralization is the recommended policy, with a more direct connexion between region and division. Amalgamation of some of the administrative posts, such as establishments and stores, appears to be possible, and experience in Scotland should provide a useful guide as to some of the possibilities in this direction.

The question of man-power is one of the major problems considered by the report. Partly it is approached from the point of view of utilizing in