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LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Work of the Organisation for Communications and Transit between the Tenth and Eleventh Sessions of the Assembly.

REPORT OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE TO THE ASSEMBLY.

Rapporteur: M. INOUE (Japan).

Between the tenth and eleventh sessions of the Assembly, the Organisation for Communications and Transit has continued its work on various problems in accordance with its usual methods.

It is hardly necessary to summarise that work, since the report submitted to the Assembly gives a full account of the problems studied and of the stage reached in each case. It might, nevertheless, be of interest to indicate the results achieved at some of the main meetings held under the auspices of the Transit Organisation during the past year, as well as the object of some of the meetings which the Transit Organisation proposes to convene in the near future.

The European Conference of the Transport of Newspapers and Periodicals was summoned in order to give effect to the recommendations of the Conference of Press Experts which met in Geneva in August 1927, under the chairmanship of Lord Burnham. Since that date, on the initiative of the Advisory and Technical Committee for Communications and Transit, a careful survey has been made by experts of the facilities which could be granted for the transport of newspapers and periodicals, in order to obtain a better and freer intercourse between public opinion in the various countries. The International Railway Union, in particular, assisted in the preparation of the agenda of the Conference. This Conference met from November 25th to 29th, 1929, and adopted a series of measures which, when completed by agreements between railways and postal administrations, will improve the present situation.

The work undertaken by the Advisory and Technical Committee with regard to the Unification of Transport Statistics has made considerable progress during the last year. Proposals regarding the Unification of Statistics in Inland Navigation and in Maritime Navigation had already been drawn up by the Transit Committee, and during last year a fresh enquiry into these proposals was made, particular account being taken of the need for, and the possibility of, compiling railway statistics. It now seems probable that, in the course of 1931, the Transit Committee may be able to reach definite conclusions and present Governments with a comprehensive plan for the unification of transport statistics. This plan could be presented for the approval and adoption by a conference to be held in 1932. It is needless to say that, at the present stage of this work, the maintenance of a close liaison between the Transit Organisation and the Economic Organisation of the League becomes increasingly important, both with regard to the unification of Customs nomenclature and the unification of commercial statistics.

At the request of the Assembly and of the Third General Conference on Communications and Transit, the Transit Committee organised the Air Transport Co-operation Committee, which met from July 8th to July 12th, 1930. The duty of this Committee is to study all questions of international organisation in air navigation where some progress might be considered advisable and, in particular, to endeavour to promote better economic co-operation between air navigation undertakings in the various countries. Owing to the complexity of the problem before it, the Committee's first session was chiefly devoted to drawing up a definite programme of study with a view to reaching practical conclusions at later sessions. The Committee recorded its view that the present situation of civil aviation, despite the progress achieved, was not as satisfactory as the state of technical development permitted, and that it was only by means of increasingly close international co-operation that this situation could be improved. A Sub-Committee has been organised to study in detail, with the co-operation of the interested States, the constitution and operation of the main network of permanent air routes. A study of the question of postal air transport will also be undertaken at once by this Sub-Committee. The Committee, which

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had before it a comprehensive series of enquiries into the present legal and administrative situation of air navigation drawn up by experts, and which was in a position from the outset of its work to discuss frankly the most suitable methods of ensuring better development in air navigation, may already be considered as one of the most competent bodies for the consideration of international economic problems of air navigation. Its work has already aroused great interest in the circles concerned in all countries, and the Committee, when it met under the chairmanship of M. de Brouckère, received official communications from such authorities on air navigation as General Balbo, Colonel Lindbergh and Dr. Eckener.

It was noted by the Tenth Assembly that the work of the Transit Organisation on the question of the Unification of River Law and of the Unification of Buoyage and Lighting of Coasts had reached a stage of development which would permit of the convocation of special conferences to discuss these problems and to consider the possibility of concluding international agreements on these subjects. The Conference on Buoyage and the Lighting of Coasts has been summoned for October 6th, 1930, and will meet at Lisbon, on the invitation of the Portuguese Government. It seems certain that the maritime nations most concerned, whether Members or non-Members of the League, will be represented.

The Conference for the Unification of River Law will meet in Geneva on November 17, 1930.

The next special conference, which the Transit Organisation proposes to hold in March 1931, will deal with certain international questions affecting motor transport in Europe. The agenda of the Conference will include the questions of road signalling, abolition of taxes on foreign motor vehicles, and the international regulation of commercial motor transport. Such problems are of the greatest interest both for motor tourism and for the development of an economic and efficient system of road transportation. The text of the draft agreement on road signalling and on commercial motor transport has been prepared by the Transit Committee. The draft convention on the abolition of taxes on foreign motor vehicles has been prepared jointly by the Transit Committee and the Fiscal Committee of the League.

The attention of the Members of the League might perhaps be drawn to the effort thus made by the Transit Organisation to bring commercial motor transport, which has recently acquired so great an economic importance, within the scope of international regulations which provide for freedom of communications and transit, in accordance with Article 23 (e) of the Covenant, and which, up to the present, had applied chiefly to other and older means of transport, such as railway transport and navigation.

The Fourth General Conference on Communications and Transit will meet towards the end of 1931. At the request of the Tenth Assembly, the Conference will examine the problem of calendar simplification—*i.e.*, the question of the stabilisation of movable festivals and the general problem of the institution of a perpetual calendar. Since last year, national committees of enquiry have been appointed in a number of fresh countries, and there is no doubt that the Conference will be in a position to state clearly the views of the interested circles in all countries and to define the attitude of the various Governments. The Transit Committee, in preparing for the deliberations on this subject at the Conference, has pointed out that the free decision of the religious authorities with regard to the religious aspects of such problems would not be interfered with by the Conference, and has expressed its conviction that, this being the case, the discussions between Governments and between experts will refer only to the social and economic aspects of the question.

The agenda of the Fourth General Conference includes also the question of grave occurrences of a general character affecting routes of communication. It is also possible that, at a later stage, other items may be included in the agenda, particularly in relation to the work entrusted to the Transit Organisation as a result of the Conference on Concerted Economic Action.

The Assembly will no doubt note with satisfaction the progress made in the work of the Transit Organisation since the last Assembly and the prospects of future work, and I therefore have the honour to submit to the Assembly the following draft resolution:

“ The Assembly:

“ Takes notes of the work undertaken by the Organisation for Communications and Transit between the tenth and eleventh sessions of the Assembly, and of the programme of work adopted by the Transit Organisation for the year following the eleventh session of the Assembly; and

“ Expresses its confidence that the Members of the League will do their utmost to assist in the development of this work and will, in particular, do everything in their power to ensure complete success for the international conferences which will be held under the auspices of the Transit Organisation between the present and the next session of the Assembly. ”