

PRESIDENT: M. Paul-Boncour



PRESENT: All the Representatives of the Members of the Council and the Secretary-General.

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TENDERING HIS RESIGNATION.

The PRESIDENT read a letter from the Secretary-General tendering his resignation. The Secretary-General said that he had been contemplating this step for the past three years, and that he would be glad if his resignation could take effect at any time convenient to the Council within the first six months of 1933. He asked that the letter should be communicated to the Governments of the States Members.

Before opening the discussion on the letter, the President wished to say that he felt sure that he would be interpreting the feelings of all members in pressing Sir Eric Drummond to reconsider his decision. No member of the Council could contemplate with equanimity the departure of an official who was so essential to the activity of the League.

M. MARINKOVITCH had no doubt that Sir Eric Drummond's decision had been taken for the most serious reasons, but he would urge him to reconsider it. The publication of the letter at the present juncture would be highly injurious to the League. There appeared to be an impression among the public that all was not well with the League. Moreover, a critical moment in its



history, the Disarmament Conference, was approaching, and the functions of the Secretary-General would be all important during that period. Sir Eric Drummond had asked that his resignation might become effective next year, and the letter tendering it would be in sufficient time if it were placed before the Council at its May session. A postponement until May would also have the advantage of giving the Secretary-General time to see whether the reasons for his action were still as imperative as at present.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL assured the President and M. Marinkovitch that he had not come to his decision without the most serious consideration. As the members of the Council would see from his letter, it had been in his mind to resign for the past three years. He had, however, decided that it would not be right to resign in the first two of those years on account of the work of re-organisation of the Secretariat then proceeding, and also that he could not well resign in the last of them because that was the period of the Disarmament Conference. His resignation was due principally to personal family reasons, but there were other reasons as well. He considered that certain changes were necessary in the interests of the Secretariat itself. As to the expediency of immediate publication, he feared that if his letter were published in May it might be taken as a comment on the way in which the Disarmament Conference was proceeding. He was anxious to make it clear that his resignation had no connection with the Conference, and that was why he preferred to tender it at once. He would, of course, very much regret if it were thought that his resignation was due to the fact that the League was not in so flourishing a position as it had been a year or two ago. He did not think that that interpretation could be adopted, since, although no one could doubt his devotion to the





League, the League could not be built up on personalities.

For the foregoing reasons, he did not feel able to withdraw his letter. He would ask that even if the Council did not take a decision at once, his letter should be given to the Press, because, in spite of his endeavours to keep the matter secret, the story had already been published in certain newspapers. If, on the other hand, his letter was published at once, it would show that his decision had been taken a long time ago and had no connection with present circumstances.

Viscount CECIL keenly regretted the Secretary-General's decision, on both public and personal grounds. He feared, however, that M. Marinkovitch's suggestion was not feasible. The Secretary-General had arrived at his decision only after long and deep thought. It was, therefore, not possible to ask him to withdraw his letter here and now. In any case, if it were not withdrawn, it would certainly not remain a secret after being communicated to the fourteen representatives present at that meeting. Lord Cecil felt, however, that the Council should have an opportunity of considering the whole situation with the utmost care, and, therefore, proposed that the letter should be withheld from the press for two or three days, and that in the meantime the Council should hold another meeting to consider any suggestions that could be made to meet the situation.

The PRESIDENT observed that the members of the Council had no need for time to reflect on their regrets at Sir Eric Drummond's decision. Those regrets were certainly unanimous. It would, however, be wise to accept Lord Cecil's suggestion for an adjournment in order to consider what future action should be taken.

Viscount Cecil's proposal was adopted.