

TRAFFIC IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

I. Far East Conference.

The Conference of Central Authorities in Eastern Countries was held under the auspices of the League of Nations from February 2nd - 13th at Bandoeng, Java, when the nine countries which had shown active interest in the preparation of this Conference were represented, together with various voluntary associations and missions, and a number of national and local associations of China, India and the Netherlands' Indies.

The Conference, after extensive discussion, arrived unanimously at certain important recommendations and conclusions. It was agreed that a closer co-operation between the authorities responsible in each country was the most essential factor for successful action against international traffic in women and children, and the suggested creation of a Far Eastern Bureau is, therefore, of major importance from a practical point of view.

Recommended.

"That a Bureau of the League of Nations should be created in the East to receive regular reports from all participating countries in regard to traffic in women and children, and to circulate such reports to all participating countries.".....

"and generally to promote collaboration between participating countries in such ways as may appear desirable to those countries."

Under the same agenda item, namely, the consideration of how more effective collaboration and wider exchange of information might be achieved between those responsible for measures against the traffic, the Conference drew attention to the lack of co-operation between the police authorities of China and the police authorities of the foreign concessions on the coast, and accordingly recommended:-

"That the League of Nations should approach all interested Governments with a view to ensuring closer co-operation between the police authorities of all Governments concerned, and with a view to the holding of local Conferences, where necessary, for the consideration of more effective measures for the prevention of traffic in women and children."

It also recommended in this connection that adequate provision should be made to enable the proper authorities to arrest traffickers on board vessels when attempts were being made to land their victims.

The Conference also passed certain recommendations after considering the question of migration, in so far as it affected the protection of migrants against the traffic.

The resolution referring to the abolition of licensed or tolerated houses might be considered the most important single declaration of the Conference. In this resolution the Central Authorities of nine Eastern Countries declared themselves:-

"in favour of abolition as a final goal" and recommended:-

- (i) "that education^{al} measures be taken for the formation of a favourable public opinion in those countries in the East in which tolerated brothels still exist."
- (ii) "that abolition should in all cases be anticipated or accompanied by administrative, medical and social measures, in order to guarantee the permanence of its success."

The Conference noted with approval the part that the voluntary organisations had played in forming a more enlightened public opinion, thus influencing Governments, and recommended:-

"that Governments should welcome practical co-operation with organisations established in their territories, in the belief that such action will be of value in securing progress along the the right lines."

The Conference heard with interest of the success which had attended the appointment of women officials in a number of countries in the East, and recommended:-

"that Governments should consider the possibility of employing a larger number of women officials on work connected with the welfare of women and children, as women with the necessary attainments and training become available".

Consideration was given to the problem of women refugees of Russian origin in the Far East who were or were in danger of becoming victims of the traffic. The Conference "desired to impress on the voluntary organisations and other bodies and individuals interested in their work, the absolute necessity of raising funds of an amount that will enable an agent of the League of Nations to be appointed in the Far East to take special charge of the co-ordinative measures necessary to secure the future of these women of Russian origin".

II. Advisory Committee on Social Questions.

A report of the Conference was subsequently submitted to the Advisory Committee on Social Questions, which unanimously adopted its recommendations and resolutions. The Committee recognised that these were the outcome of a thorough discussion by the competent authorities of the countries concerned on the basis of their long experience and their knowledge of the real situation in those areas, and it strongly recommended the Council of the League of Nations:-

"to recognise the importance and the great utility of the measures proposed in the said resolutions, and to take suitable action with a view to the earliest possible application of all these measures."

More particularly the Committee requested the Council to propose to the Assembly:-

"that it take all the necessary steps with a view to the establishment in 1938 of a Bureau to perform the functions contemplated by the Conference of Central Authorities in Eastern Countries, on the understanding that the scheme should be carried out on the most practical lines."

III. Assembly of the League of Nations.

The proposal for the establishment of a League Bureau in the Far East, which was the focus point of the discussions arising out of the Conference recommendations, was presented to the Fifth Committee of the Assembly, which agreed in principle on the need for establishing such a League Bureau in the Far East.

The matter came before the Fourth Committee of the Assembly (which deals with financial questions) and a sum of money amounting to 50,000 Swiss francs was proposed for the creation of the Bureau. It then went forward to the Supervisory Committee, but in the meantime it was ascertained that there was some disagreement in official quarters with the proposal to establish a Bureau, and a Sub-Committee of the Fifth Committee went to the Secretary-General as a deputation.

It was subsequently decided that an enquiry should be made ^{as} to localities where the Bureau could be set up, that a final report on the matter should be presented in 1938, and a decision taken then.

IV. Present position.

We beg to submit these facts for the information of members of the Conference, in order that they may know the results of the Bandoeng Conference and the steps which have since been taken to put these recommendations into effect. We feel, however, that in view of the decision to make further enquiries and to prepare a final report, in view also of the political situation in the Far East today, the establishment of the League Bureau would not be a useful subject with which to occupy the time of the Conference on the present occasion.
