

The Organisation of the League

In the beginning there were 42 member states. By 1926 (when Germany joined), membership had risen to 55 member states.

The major organs of the League were:

The General Assembly

The General Assembly contained representatives (or delegates) of all the member states. Each country had one vote. The Assembly met annually; its function being to decide general policy. The Assembly also handled the finances of the League. Any decisions taken by the League had to have the unanimous support of all the member states.

The Council

The Council was a much smaller body than the Assembly. It was required to meet at least three times a year. The

Council contained four permanent members and four elected members. The four permanent members were:

1. Britain
2. France
3. Italy
4. Japan

The United States would have been a permanent member if she had joined.

The four elected members were chosen by the General Assembly and served on the Council for a term of three years. The number of non-permanent (elected) members had risen to nine by 1926.

The Council's function was to deal with specific political disputes as they arose. In other words, it was the Council's

task to keep the peace between disputing nations.

The Council required unanimous support on all decisions (which was often difficult to get).

The Permanent Court of International Justice

This was the League's Court. It was based at the Hague, in Holland, and consisted of 15 judges of different nationalities. The Court of International Justice dealt with legal disputes between nations rather than political ones.

The Secretariat

This was the bureaucratic organ of the League. It handled all the paperwork, prepared agendas and reports, and was responsible for publicity. The first chairman of this body of civil servants was Sir Eric Drummond of Britain.

Various Commissions & Committees

1. The Mandates Commission kept watch on the German and Turkish colonies which had been put under the temporary rule of Britain and France (as mandates).
2. The Disarmament Commission worked to persuade the member nations to reduce the size of their armed forces and their stocks of weapons. Aggression was considered to be less likely to occur if member states did not have the means to make war.

3. There were also Committees which dealt with:

(a) International labour

(b) Health

(c) Economic and Financial organisation

(d) Child welfare

(e) Drug abuse

(f) Women's rights