

basis for further discussion at a conference to be called at The Hague to which all nations shall be invited and which shall be organized by the Government of the Netherlands acting in coöperation with the League of Nations. The report reflects an important change of opinion in so far that the inability of the Governments of United States and of Great Britain to hold out any hope of ultimate ratification on their part is no longer regarded as an impediment in the path of progress by the other nations. As the Uniform Negotiable Instruments Law varies so slightly from the system in force in Great Britain and in the British Colonies and Dependencies, the adoption of a uniform code for all other countries would leave only two great systems prevailing throughout the world, the Anglo-American and what, for lack of a better term, may be called the Continental System. This in itself would be a great advance and would make for certainty and stability in international and financial transactions. However, the committee of legal experts insists upon the importance of having the presence and coöperation of representatives of the Anglo-American group, with a view to coördination wherever possible. Sir Mackenzie Chalmers is of the opinion that the rules adopted in 1912 were already a closer approach to the Anglo-American system than any of the codes of the several countries of Continental Europe or of Latin-America. A "progressive assimilation" should, therefore, not be unthinkable, and the work of the proposed conference would then be one of consolidation of similar systems, with a tendency to approach the Anglo-American rules wherever practicable. In the words of the committee of experts, "It is wise to harvest that which is ripe and to allow to ripen that which is not."

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DANISH LEGISLATION PROTECTING MINORITIES

An admirable illustration of both just and generous treatment of an alien minority is to be found in a brief pamphlet recently published by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, entitled: *The German Minority in South Jutland — A Summary of the Danish Legislation.*

It will be remembered that the Treaty of Versailles provided that the boundary between Germany and Denmark should be fixed in conformity with the results of a plebiscite to be taken in two separate zones, the more northern of which only was transferred to Denmark on that basis. Unlike the case of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other states to which alien minorities were assigned, Denmark was not required by the Treaty of Versailles to enter into a separate treaty of guarantee defining the protection to be accorded to the German minority. This was due, the present pamphlet informs us, to the liberal character of the Danish legislation already in existence, which applied to all Danish subjects irrespective of language or nationality. This legislation was based upon the Danish Constitutional Act and

offered guarantees in respect to religious liberty, education, freedom of the press, and freedom of association and of assembly. Moreover, the system of proportional representation afforded a minority ample opportunity to secure just representation in the Danish Parliament. There are, therefore, in Denmark no minority laws in the strict sense, although a number of the older laws have been supplemented or modified to meet the special conditions arising from the transfer of northern Schleswig (South Jutland) to Denmark.

It is in the field of education that the chief difficulty in respect to the position of minorities arises. The Danish laws provide that in towns the elementary schools shall be divided into two sections, in one of which Danish is the language of instruction and in the other German, parents being given free choice between the two sections. Where Danish is the language of instruction a fixed number of lessons weekly is given in German, and *vice versa*, although it is not obligatory upon parents to have their children attend these lessons. In the country districts and boroughs the language of instruction depends upon the language of the particular school district, provision being made as in the towns for special lessons in the language which is not the language of instruction. The administration of these provisions is in the hands of local school committees elected by proportional representation, subject to the higher control of the national Ministry of Education. Thus there is a practical as well as a legal guarantee against unfair treatment. In addition, private schools may be conducted and, when conforming to the same standards of education, they may enjoy the same state grants as are given to the national schools. In respect to higher education provision is made that the older pupils may bring their elementary schooling to a normal close without changing the language of instruction. This is done by establishing special classes in German for those students who express a desire to finish their instruction in that language.

Owing to the fact that the German minority in Denmark shares the religious belief of the rest of the population, the protection of freedom of worship is limited to securing facilities for the conduct of religious services in German in the Danish national churches. In respect to legal procedure before the courts and the administration of the law in general, the fact that Danish is with few exceptions everywhere understood and spoken by the German minority makes it possible to have the proceedings conducted normally in Danish, resort being had to a public interpreter only where the party concerned gives an assurance that he is not familiar with Danish.

The minorities problem in Denmark is, indeed, a relatively simple one and does not involve many of the features which make the problem so difficult of solution in Central and Southeastern Europe. Nevertheless, the liberal character of the legislation put into effect in Denmark reflects credit upon the statesmanship of Denmark's rulers and upon the democratic spirit of the people.

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