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Written by Paul Goldstein

The nineteenth-century setting out of which the international movement to control the traffic in
narcotics arose was not confined to the specific question of opium. A major characteristic of that
century was the tendency toward increasing cooperation in the international sphere on a variety
of subjects. The Congress of Vienna, the Concert of Europe, the Hague and various other
multilateral conferences, and the public international unions consisting of agencies concerned
with multifarious problems in fields considered nonpolitical were all examples of this cooperative
spirit. Most significant for this study was the extension of international consideration to
nonpolitical questions. This represented an expansion of the subject matter of international
relations and was marked by new types of participants in international affairs. Experts and
specialists in technical and professional fields, government officials outside the foreign offices,
and representatives of private interest groups and humanitarian organizations vied with the
traditional diplomats in international negotiations, and sometimes replaced them. Among the
problems which might be designated nonpolitical which were the subjects of such negotiations
in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the slave trade and the traffic in women,
obscene literature, liquor, and dangerous drugs. These matters were humanitarian; yet insofar
as they required political activity for their ultimate solution, they were also political. Since the
drug problem affected the interests of the particular states involved to a greater degree than
most of the other questions, it was in that sense the more political. Its political character was
enhanced by the fact that it was often entwined with other more definitely political issues.

The immediate sources to which the international antidrug campaign can be traced, however,
were involved primarily with opium and kindred matters. Principal among these were the reform
movement in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the anti-opium agitation
in England; the concern of reformers in the United States with the prevalence of liquor, opium,
and kindred vices among peoples in so-called pagan lands which were viewed as largely the
results of the spread of Western civilization to those areas; and the discovery by the United
States of an opium problem in the recently acquired Philippine Islands.

The reform movement in China began about 1898 as an effort to strengthen and modernize that
nation so as to enable it to cope with both its internal and external problems. Three main factors
inspired and gave impetus to the movement: the defeat of China by Japan in 1895, the
continuing incursions of the Western powers, and the Boxer Rebellion which served to convince
the court officials of the Empress Dowager of the necessity of reforms along Western lines in
order to resist these powers and hold the loyalty of the Chinese masses. Among the major
improvements undertaken were the revision of the educational system, the strengthening and
modernization of the armed forces, constitutional reform through the gradual introduction of
elective institutions on the Western model, and the reform of the imperial finances. By far the
most intensive of the reforms undertaken, and the most successful, was the movement to end
the trade in opium and to suppress its production and consumption domestically.
Since early in the eighteenth century the Chinese government had maintained a posture of opposition to the traffic in opium and its use. Even after the legalization of the Indian-Chinese trade in 1858, the Chinese government continued to assert its moral objections to the trade and made several representations to the British government to bring it to an end. The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a considerable strengthening of the government's position by the development of public sentiment in China against the vice. American missionaries, by their ceaseless campaign against the use of the drug, played a major role in creating this sentiment. In 1906, for example, in a meeting with the Chinese foreign office arranged by the American minister on orders from the State Department, the Reverend Hampden C. Du Bose, an American missionary in China, was instrumental in getting an antiopium campaign started.4 Sentiment against the traffic in and consumption of the drug spread through all classes of the population. Contributing to its growth was the report of the American Philippine Opium Committee in 1904 which was translated and circulated throughout the Empire. Also furthering the movement was the agitation in England against the traffic between India and China.

The Empress Dowager launched the antiopium campaign in 1906 when in May of that year a consolidated tax on opium cultivation previously in use in seven provinces and designed to be prohibitory was extended to all of China. This was followed in September by an imperial proclamation setting forth a plan for the gradual suppression of the cultivation and use of opium within ten years. This was supplemented a month later by regulations to put the policy into effect. The government then turned its attention to the Indian-Chinese traffic.

In January 1907, the Chinese government submitted six proposals to the British government. These called for the reduction by one-tenth annually of the amount of Indian opium imported into China so that by 1916 both the Indian trade and domestic cultivation should come to an end; the stationing of a Chinese official at Calcutta to watch the trade; a doubling of the duty on the opium exported from India; the suppression of smuggling from Hong Kong to China; and the suppression of opium dens and of the sale of morphine instruments in the foreign concessions in the same manner as they were suppressed in the rest of China. The British, who as early as 1905 had already intimated through officials of the government of India that they would be receptive to proposals to reduce the Indian export, met the Chinese more than halfway. The agreement signed in 1907 between the two powers provided essentially what China had requested. Using the period 1901-1905 as a base, the two powers agreed to the annual reduction over a period of ten years of the quantity of opium exported from India by 10 percent of the average annual Indian export (5100 chests); the stationing of a Chinese official at Calcutta for observation but not interference with the trade; the prohibition of the import and export of prepared opium between Hong Kong and the mainland; and the suppression of smuggling. In addition, China expressed satisfaction at the orders issued to British consuls to take measures against opium dens in the British concessions. The agreement was to undergo a trial period of three years, after which if it were established that China’s campaign against domestic
production was being effectively pursued, it should be renewed for the remaining seven years.5

When the Ten Year Agreement came up for renewal in the latter part of 1910 negotiations were complicated by the question of what to do with the 1800 chests of opium in bond which had accumulated by virtue of the fact that although the amount of opium exported from India had been reduced by one-tenth annually, the amount imported into China had actually increased, having been attracted thither by higher prices resulting from the decline in domestic production. As a matter of fact, 570 more piculs of opium were imported into China in 1909 than in 1908. The British wanted another three-year probationary period, but the Chinese demurred. The resulting accord of 1911 provided for the continuation of the agreement to 1917, during which time the reduction of production of opium in China was to proceed pari passu with the reduction of the export from India. The export from India was to cease before 1917 if China completely suppressed poppy cultivation before that time. In addition, any province would be released from the obligation of accepting Indian opium when it could prove that it had thoroughly eliminated the cultivation of the poppy and the" importation of native opium. British officials were to be allowed to travel throughout China to observe the progress of suppression. Other terms provided that China would be permitted to tax Indian opium at 350 taels per chest, that chests designed for China be covered by export permits, and that responsibility for the surplus opium in bond be assumed by Great Britain and that its entrance into China be charged against the amount exported from India to China over a three-year period.' It is significant that in 1913 the British announced that they were ceasing to export opium from India to China, an announcement which was based on evidence that only a nominal amount of poppy cultivation still existed in China.' This was a tribute to the great success of the antiopium campaign which had been launched a scant seven years earlier.

Meanwhile, China had given attention to another aspect of the narcotics problem. As the antiopium campaign progressed, the use of morphine in the form of antiopium pills or through subcutaneous injections in the place of opium had become of increasing concern. In the commercial treaties with Great Britain and the United States in 1902 and 1903, respectively, there were included provisions against the importation of this type of drug and the instruments for its injection.8 In January 1909, after obtaining the consent of the other treaty powers, China put into effect the prohibition of the importation and manufacture of the drug. Through this action, coupled with the successful campaign against domestic opium production and the Indian-Chinese traffic, China had by 1911 thoroughly proved the sincerity of its determination to end the opium menace. This demonstration of singleness of purpose against tremendous odds helped to create a favorable climate for international consideration of the problem. The British argument, used in years past, that China merely wanted to end the Indian-Chinese trade in order to increase domestic production lost all force. China's progress in combating the vice was watched closely by the Western powers, particularly by Great Britain and the United States, and public opinion in both countries encouraged and applauded her efforts.
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Ever since the Opium War in 1839 sentiment in England against the opium traffic, fostered by reports of missionaries, literature on the subject, and debates in Parliament, had steadily grown. With the formation of the Anti-Opium Society in 1874, renewed impetus was given to the agitation. Primary emphasis was placed on Great Britain's role in fostering the vice on China. The agitation reached its threshold in 1893 when a royal commission was appointed to investigate the opium situation in India as to the feasibility of curbing the growth, manufacture, and trade of the drug. The commission's report in 1895 whitewashed and rubber-stamped the existing situation. It had the effect of vindicating the Indian government and of quieting the agitation in Parliament against the trade for ten years. It constituted a definite check on the antiopium movement in England, although expressions against the trade did not entirely cease.

The revival of the antiopium movement in England came contemporaneously with and partly as a result of the stirrings in China and the increasing attention given by the United States to the problem, especially in the Philippines. The Philippine Opium Committee, which traveled throughout the Far East in 1903-1904, presented a report whose conclusions were almost exactly the opposite of those of the Royal Commission of 1895. The Philippine Committee was very critical of the way the British handled the opium question in their Far Eastern possessions. A softening of the official British policy was foreshadowed in 1905, however, when, as previously mentioned, officials of the Government of India let it be known that the question of the Indian-Chinese trade was open for negotiation with China. Prospects in this regard were considerably brightened by the Parliamentary elections of 1906 whereby 250 candidates pledged to support the antiopium cause were elected to the House of Commons. Thus on May 30, 1906, the following resolution was moved in that body: "That this House reaffirms its conviction that the Indo-Chinese opium trade is morally indefensible, and requests His Majesty's government to take such steps as may be necessary for bringing it to a speedy close." In the ensuing debate much attention was given to the report of the Philippine Opium Committee, which was contrasted favorably to that of the Royal Commission. The resolution was passed unanimously. The change in the attitude of the British government did not escape the notice of the United States and was a factor in the American decision to initiate an international investigation of the opium problem.

The relations between Great Britain and China on the opium question formed an essential aspect of the international campaign against the drug traffic initiated by the United States in 1906. As a matter of fact, the improvement in those relations as contributed to and evidenced by the Chinese reform movement and the antiopium agitation in Great Britain supplied the necessary favorable atmosphere in which the successful launching of the campaign was assured. Without this favorable setting, the American proposal for international consideration of the drug question would most likely have been ignored or rejected. The American decision, however, had its roots in several factors, not all directly confined to opium, in which Americans evinced a special interest. Among these factors were the concern of Americans — missionaries and their associates particularly—with the moral aspects of liquor and opium not only in China but among so-called pagan peoples in general; the desire on the part of the American government to see a strong, independent and prosperous China as a factor of stability and trade opportunity in the Far East; and the rather sudden realization that in the Philippines the
United States had a Far Eastern drug problem of its own.

The United States has often been chided for conducting its foreign relations on a moralistic rather than a realistic political basis, giving to matters of secondary importance the character of vital interests and thus suffering adverse effects in the long run. Many cite aspects of our twentieth-century China policy as an example. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that some good often comes from America's moral excursions into politics. The fact is that many of the problems of international relations are intrinsically moral in themselves and must be dealt with accordingly. Some are extensions of domestic conditions that can only be ultimately solved through international action. Many of the humanitarian problems already mentioned are examples of these conditions. Another circumstance gave a moral flavor to many of the problems cited—the fact that the nineteenth and early twentieth, centuries constituted a period of great missionary activity in so-called pagan lands. This period was also an age of imperialism, in which the Western nations carried the many facets of their civilization, including their vices, to these pagan lands. Consequently, the missionaries found themselves not only concerned with civilizing and Christianizing their charges but sometimes, as a matter of self-defense, with protecting these people against the vices of their own civilization. Thus they pressured their respective governments to take action to control and prohibit the activities of their less morally inclined and more commercial-minded compatriots.

Of particular concern to the missionaries, and viewed in the same light as opium, was the liquor traffic. Their opposition to the corruption of the natives by alcoholic beverages received the hearty support of prohibition and temperance advocates at home. Consequently, in the 1890's and the early 1900's several multilateral treaties were concluded which prohibited the sale of such beverages to certain of the peoples of Africa. The United States became a party to these conventions. It adhered to the Congo Treaty of 1890 which established a liquor-free zone in the Congo," and to the Brussels Treaty of 1899, which sought to increase the tax and price on liquor to a level that would be prohibitory for all the natives of Africa!" Although these treaties contained no reference to opium, primarily because the drug was not a problem in the areas involved, the missionaries and other reformers considered the opium traffic to be within the same general category as the liquor traffic but more harmful. Thus, in the first decade of the twentieth century the United States, in response to the importunings of these reformers, urged the inclusion of prohibitive measures against the sale of opium in the antiliquor treaties. After 1900 the matter was continuously before both Congress and the State Department.

On January 4, 1901, the Senate adopted a resolution submitted by Henry Cabot Lodge:

That in the opinion of this body the time has come when the principle, twice affirmed in
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international treaties for Central Africa, that native races should be protected against the
destructive traffic in intoxicants should be extended to all uncivilized peoples by the enactment
of such laws and the making of such treaties as will effectively prohibit the sale by the signatory
powers to aboriginal tribes and uncivilized races of opium and intoxicating beverages.14

This resolution was supported by a petition signed by numerous individuals, reform societies,
and missionary groups addressed to all the governments which had signed the treaties of 1890
and 1899. Accompanying the petition was a letter from former President Benjamin Harrison
supporting the principle of the appeal and including a paragraph from his opening address at
the Ecumencial Missionary Conference held in New York City in April 1900, in which he
bemoaned the fact that the missionary effort in foreign lands had been hampered by those who
carried "rum and other corrupting agencies . . . with our boasted civilization" to those lands.
Indicative of the growing interest in the kindred problems of liquor and opium was the great
demand for copies of the resolution!5

Without awaiting action by other nations, Congress passed a bill in 1902 forbidding Americans
to sell firearms, opium, and intoxicating liquors to the inhabitants of Pacific islands having no
civilized government." In the meantime Secretary of State John Hay, in response to the Lodge
resolution and the importunings of a group of reformers referred to as the Native Races
Deputation, had proposed to the British government that it join with the United States in
submitting a treaty to the other powers prohibiting the sale of intoxicants and opium to all
uncivilized races. Great Britain made no reply to this proposal, presumably because of her
involvement in the Boer War." The United States did not drop the matter, however. In October
1906, on the occasion of the Brussels Conference for the revision of the rules relating to the
liquor traffic in Africa, the United States again raised the question. President Roosevelt sent a
message to the conferees urging the adoption of measures "for the universal prevention of [the]
liquor and opium traffic with all uncivilized tribes and races." Supplementing Roosevelt's
message, the State Department sent to the American minister at Brussels for transmission to
the conference copies of the Senate resolution of 1901 and Hay's endorsement of it, along with
the petition of the Native Races Deputation and various other publications, so as to show the
"wide interest of the American people" in the matters mentioned." Thus by the end of 1906 the
American government and people, on strictly humanitarian grounds, had committed themselves
through treaties, legislation, and a resolution of Congress, and by representations to foreign
governments, to the principle of international action to control the traffic in the twin intoxicants of
alcohol and opium for the benefit of unprotected peoples. Meanwhile pressure for similar action
was coming from another direction, where the principal motivation was concern for the people of
China.

It is impossible to gauge how far America's interest in China's opium problem constituted a part
of the general American concern for the well-being of China. The United States desired a
strong, stable, and prosperous China able to resist the incursions of foreign powers and
providing opportunities for mutually profitable trade relations. This was the essence of the Open
Door policy. As already pointed out, American diplomatic officials in China in the nineteenth century had contended that opium was a formidable barrier to the fulfillment of this desire. They made much of the fact that the opium problem was sapping the economic strength of China to the detriment of foreign trade and that its suppression was a sine qua non for the regeneration of China, not only economically but politically and socially as well. American business interests in both the United States and China followed this line of thought, and American missionaries and other reformers hammered the point home again and again. And during the course of the international movement against the traffic the State Department toyed briefly with the idea of promoting the release of China from stifling treaty obligations which compromised China's independence and freedom of action through the medium of the fight against opium.

It was the American missionaries in the Far East, however, who played the greatest part in inducing the United States to take the lead in the movement against the traffic. So great was their role, evoking the inauguration of the movement, and in promoting the early work once the movement had been started, that in its early stages the international campaign might quite appropriately be referred to as a missionary movement—or better still, as missionary diplomacy. In China missionaries had perhaps more influence on American policy than anywhere else in the world, both as objects of American interest in the area and as shapers of American public and official opinion in behalf of China and the Chinese people. Through their reports to their churches and sponsors in America, through personal correspondence with friends, and through missionary and religious journals they stimulated public opinion favorable to the Chinese and highly sympathetic to their problems. By frequent contact with American diplomatic and consular officials in China, consultation on their visits to America with State Department officials, and letters and cables to the President, the State Department, and members of Congress, they also often helped shape American official policy in regard to China."

On no issue did the missionaries exercise greater influence in both public opinion and official policy than on the opium question. The literature indicating their concern is extensive. They, along with other foreign missionaries in China, presented petitions, memorials, addresses, and articles and reports to the press on the problem. As a group they constituted themselves as an antiopium society. They established hospitals and clinics for the curing of addicts, and excluded from membership in their organizations and in the native churches the cultivators, manufacturers, sellers, and consumers of opium. They took the lead in establishing antiopium societies—for example, the Anti-Opium League, whose first president, the Reverend H. C. Du Bose, was an American missionary." Unlike the British missionaries, the Americans had no opposing vested interests competing for the support of the government and people at home. Therefore they were listened to. Besides, they had a material stake in the solution of the problem. Hostile Chinese delighted to point out the contradiction between their Christianizing efforts and preachments and the fostering of the opium trade by their countrymen. Furthermore, because the opium trade and missionary activity were both protected by foreign force, they were associated together as similar evils.22 Occasionally, however, some recognition was given to the missionaries for their work in opposing the traffic and habit. On a visit to America in
1896 Li Hung Chang praised the American missionaries for their struggle against the vice. 23

At the beginning of the twentieth century the missionary effort to get the United States officially involved in the campaign against opium was redoubled. The petition that the Native Races Deputation had presented to Secretary Hay in 1900 had been prepared by two former missionaries who had hoped that at the conclusion of the Boxer Rebellion, when international questions concerning China would be opened, an opportune occasion would arise to bring international pressure on Great Britain to end the Indian-Chinese traffic. In September 1904 the International Reform Bureau, an organization interested in various social reforms, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. and headed by the Reverend Wilbur F. Crafts, thought that a similar opportunity would be presented at the close of the Russo-Japanese War. Therefore the old petition, supplemented by additional signatures not only from religious and reform organizations but from business interests as well, was again presented to Secretary Hay on November 10 by a delegation of reformers who appeared before him. They stressed the moral evil of the traffic, but placed special emphasis on the detrimental effect which opium had upon trade, declaring that "the development of China means the development of commerce with China; the decay of China, the decay of commerce with China." 24 The reformers obviously thought that the appeal to the pocketbook would make a greater impression than the mere denunciation of the trade on humanitarian grounds. This emphasis on the effect of opium on commerce was to remain a characteristic feature of the remonstrances against the trade.

Secretary Hay was deeply impressed with the speakers who appeared before him and with the petition they presented. He promised to take their views into consideration, but expressed the opinion that "much more was to be hoped from an aroused public opinion" than from official action. 25 The opinion of which Hay spoke was already building up—in the United States, Great Britain, and China. The opportunity for official action came when the United States discovered that it had more than just a moral concern in China's plight, that in the Philippines there also was an opium problem the solution of which depended in large measure upon the solution of the problem in China.

When the United States acquired the Philippines in 1898, the farming out or contract system of opium regulation which the Spanish had established in 1843 was in effect. Under this system the right to sell opium was sold to a wholesale dealer who purchased the right at public auction. The opium was then retailed by his agents to the people. Its sale to and use by the Filipinos, however, except for medical purposes, were strictly prohibited. Licensed opium-smoking dens could be maintained for the patronage of Chinese only. The object of the system was twofold: to raise revenue and to prevent addiction among the Filipinos. Total prohibition involving the Chinese population was believed un-attainable. Under the system, Spain received annually about $600,000 silver, while the burden of preventing smuggling was placed on the contractor, thus relieving the government of the necessity of maintaining an expensive revenue service.
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The system was well enforced and the use of opium by the Filipinos was negligible.26

When the United States took possession of the islands the Spanish system was discontinued. The only substitute was the placing of a tax on the drug and the requirement that all towns forbid the establishment of opium dives. The result was a marked increase in opium consumption, especially among the Filipinos. In 1903 there were 190 opium shops in Manila alone.27

As early as 1899 the American missionary, the Reverend Hampden C. Du Bose of Soochow, China, called the attention of the American government to the opium situation in the islands. Declaring that the United States had a great responsibility in the matter, he set forth the principle which was to become the basic tenet of American policy throughout the international movement, that “there can be no judicious use of opium save as administered by a physician. . . .”28 Du Bose’s letter made the rounds of those organs of the executive branch of the government concerned with the Philippines—the President, the State Department, the War Department, and the Treasury Department—and finally ended up with the Collector of Customs for the Philippines. This official recommended the reestablishment of the farming-out system. He contended that as the use of opium was confined mainly to the Chinese and was impossible to stop, a high tariff on the drug as suggested by some, which would be designed to raise its price beyond the reach of the poorer Chinese, would merely cause smuggling, an art at which the Chinese were adept and which would be facilitated by the extent and peculiarities of the Philippine coastline. His conclusion was that "as a business proposition I should say that more net revenue would accrue to the Government from the contract system than from any other that can be devised, and it will entirely relieve the Government from the necessity of maintaining an expensive Secret Service Department to prevent the smuggling of opium."29 But there was more than just “a business proposition” involved. The views of the Collector of Customs were proscribed by the Secretary of the Treasury on the ground that the contract or farming-out system was "foreign to our administration of the revenue." He therefore recommended that no change be made in the existing practice by which opium was admitted as a legitimate article of commerce on payment of the duties imposed by the tariff act of 1897.3° The War Department endorsed the Secretary’s views. Furthermore, by the Philippines Customs Administrative Act of February 6, 1902, which removed the prohibition, so far as the Philippines were concerned, imposed by the Sino-American treaty of 88o, Chinese were permitted to import opium into the islands.

By early 1903, however, the Philippine Commission, the civil government of the islands, had decided that the contract system would be best for the islands after all. The prevailing system of regulating the sale of opium by taxation and the issuance of licenses to those who were engaged in selling it, somewhat analogous to the manner in which liquor was regulated, was now deemed insufficient. The justifications for the proposed reinstitution of the contract system
were the same as those given by the Collector of Customs in 1899. In the words of H. C. Ide, the Secretary of Finance and Justice, the purpose of the bill then drafted "is not to increase or diminish the sale of opium but to regulate it in such a manner that the whole operation of the system can be known to the Government and to secure a large revenue from a source not now available." 32

The bill to reestablish the contract system, as introduced in the Philippine Commission, restricted all transactions in opium from importation to consumption (except medicinal opium prescribed by a physician) to full-blooded adult Chinese. The monopoly concession for the importation, preparation, and sale of the drug was to be awarded triennially to the highest bidder, who was required to give a bond of $50,000, and importation and preparation of opium was confined exclusively to Manila. Only licensed agents of the concessionary could engage in retail transactions, and records of all transactions had to be kept by them and the concessionary. Pharmacists and druggists, however, could import opium for medical purposes and put up preparations containing it and sell them on the prescription of a physician. Revenue derived by the government from these transactions (except for the license fees of opium dealers, which were to go to the municipality in which the dealer did business) was to be used as an educational fund to pay the expenses of Filipino students sent to study in the United States by the insular government, to pay the salaries of the Filipino teachers who were paid out of the insular treasury, and to finance the construction of school buildings.33

The bill almost immediately aroused a chorus of protests from various residents of the Philippines, and these protests were soon echoed in America. As a new imperial power, the United States, for both domestic and international reasons, wished to avoid the charge of copying the example of the "perfidious British" in fastening the opium habit on a dependent people. Therefore, the first group of protests to reach Washington caused Secretary of War Root to cable to Taft, the Civil Governor of the Philippines, warning him that American public opinion would not sanction a bill regulating the opium traffic which could be interpreted as promoting that traffic.34

As the bill moved rapidly toward passage by the Philippine Commission, appeals were made directly to President Roosevelt. Two weeks before the "third reading" of the bill, Bishop Homer C. Stuntz, the Methodist presiding elder in Manila, sent a cablegram to Crafts of the International Reform Bureau urging him to approach the President immediately in the matter.33 Crafts sent several communications to President Roosevelt and then set out to organize what became a highly effective protest movement. On June 11, with only four days remaining before the bill was due for final passage, the International Reform Bureau had two thousand petitions printed on telegraphic blanks. These were sent to influential persons throughout the country, who signed and mailed them to the President.36 By this time Roosevelt had already responded to Crafts's remonstrances. Disturbed by the import of the proposed law, he demanded a full report on the matter from the War Departments' Root thereupon ordered the postponement of final passage of the bill pending receipt and study of a report from the Philippine Commission,
not only on the situation in the Islands but also on how the subject was treated in Japan and Burma."

The postponement of the passage of the bill gave the opposition in both the United States and the Islands time to crystallize. The President and the State Department were inundated with petitions and other forms of protest from ministers, churches, missionaries and missionary societies, businessmen, congressmen, educational institutions, temperance and prohibition societies, and other various and sundry individuals from all over the country. Their remonstrances included assertions that the proposed monopoly would increase the traffic in and consumption of opium because the monopolist would try to increase sales in order to increase profits; that to prohibit the use of opium by Filipinos while allowing the Chinese to use it would be both ridiculous and immoral; that the United States would be following the bad example of England and would be thus departing from its traditional policy in regard to the traffic; and that in general the bill was simply bad morals and bad policy. The petitioners favored instead the adoption of a system of prohibition similar to that which then prevailed in Japan.

The protests eventually reached such volume that in order to dispel any notion that the government in Washington approved the bill, the War Department, with the endorsement of President Roosevelt and Governor Taft, considered publishing the correspondence between the Department and Taft on the issue. Roosevelt and Root had expressed reservations about the bill from the beginning. On June 17, Root again informed Taft of the vigorous opposition in America to the bill. He suggested that the Philippine Commission consider the feasibility of absolute or qualified prohibition of the importation of opium into the islands, a step which he believed Congress would be inclined to make possible by the removal of any barrier in the customs law to such action. About three weeks later he came out fully against the proposed monopoly bill, citing essentially the same arguments against it as those made by the protesters. He recommended instead that a law be passed prohibiting all importation of the drug, except for medical purposes, and confining all retail transactions to sales between druggists and to persons specifically licensed to purchase the drug. Importers and druggists should be required to keep a record of all their transactions.

While the government in Washington was attempting to clarify its position, the Philippine Commission was holding hearings to ascertain the opinion of the islands' residents. Four main groups were concerned with the monopoly bill: the Filipinos, the Chinese, the missionaries, and the Commission itself. In general the Filipinos did not object to the proposal, since it constituted essentially a restoration of the Spanish system, which had been effective in preventing the spread of the habit among them. Taft claimed that "not a single Filipino or Spanish paper . . . opposed the bill."43
The Chinese in general opposed the proposed legislation. Their opposition stemmed from mixed motives. In fact, the first protest to reach Washington came from the Chinese consul-general in Manila on behalf of Chinese dealers in the drug, who naturally opposed the establishment of a monopoly of transactions in the drug, because this arrangement would put them out of business. A later petition from Chinese merchants argued against the proposed monopoly system on the grounds that the monopoly would raise the price of opium to the detriment of poor Chinese, who would either die or try to secure money illegally in order to purchase the drug. It was further contended that the monopolist's desire for profit would lead him to sell opium to Americans and Filipinos, and that his agents would falsely accuse others of smuggling, and under the guise of examining a person's goods for suspected opium, would rob innocent people of their possessions. Still another petition, containing 561 signatures, many of them fictitious, argued against the bill on moral grounds, contending that the contract system would increase the use of opium, debauch their countrymen, and encourage the consumption of the drug among young men by giving it an air of respectability.

To fight the bill more effectively, Chinese merchants hired an American, Major W. H. Bishop, as counsel. He was given 6,000 pesos with which to conduct the campaign. Bishop circulated petitions drawn up by the Chinese merchants among the Chinese; to many of these papers fictitious names were attached. He also paid for telegrams sent to Washington by the three American newspapers in Manila and by other individuals protesting on moral grounds against the bill. In testimony before the Philippine Commission he admitted that his clients really wanted the licensing of opium dens, but that they would prefer prohibition to the contract system because prohibition could be more easily evaded. It is therefore clear that Chinese opposition to the bill was not based primarily on humanitarian considerations but on the fear by the consumers of a rise in the price of opium and the fear on the part of merchants and opium dealers of being put out of business.

The leading and most effective opposition to the proposed monopoly bill came from the American missionaries in the islands. Their protestations were led by the Methodist presiding elder, Bishop Homer C. Stuntz, and by the Episcopal bishop of the Philippines, Charles H. Brent. Listened to perhaps with the greatest respect was Bishop Brent, who had accompanied Taft and several other members of the Philippine Commission on their journey to the islands in 1902. As his views were typical of those of the missionary body, some extended consideration of them is justified.

Bishop Brent regarded the opium question as essentially a moral question and transactions in the drug as a "social vice . . . a crime." He believed that the monopoly system would cause an increase in the consumption of opium, from both legitimate and illicit sources. He also objected to the system on the ground that the government would be deriving revenue from a "polluted source" whose use for educational purposes would be a case of destroying character to build
up character. He urged the American government to take advantage of the opportunity "to create a new era in opium legislation in the East" by having the Philippine Commission go to the limits of its authority in suppressing the traffic in and consumption of the drug."

Taft and the Philippine Commission favored the bill and were prepared to enact it into law. They regarded the bill as a forward step in preventing the spread of the drug habit among the Filipinos. As the system had been successful in this regard under the Spanish, they contended that to make the drug permissive to the Chinese, who constituted only about 2 percent of the population and of whom they claimed nearly half were already addicted, was a small price to pay for the achievement of what they deemed to be the greater goal. They defended themselves against the charge of wanting to follow the example of the "perfidious British" by pointing out that the Anglo-Indian system was maintained solely for revenue, while the motive behind the system advocated by them was solely restrictive, revenue being only incidental to the enforcement of the system. As they saw the matter, the only "practicable" restraint on the use of opium would be an increase in its price beyond the purchasing power of the bulk of the consumers, a result which they believed the monopoly system would effect. They reiterated the argument made as early as 1899 that because of the personal motive and knowledge of the monopolist, smuggling would be a minor problem. They criticized the opponents of the bill, in the case of the missionaries who were prohibitionists on principle, as lacking a proper understanding of the Far Eastern opium situation, and in the case of the Chinese dealers and consumers, as being motivated by ulterior considerations.°

The members of the Philippine Commission opposed a policy of prohibition for the islands. Their objection to such a policy was based on the contentions that it would lead to the corruption of the police and customs service which were already subjected to great temptations owing to Oriental conditions, and to the blackmail and persecution of Chinese by Filipino municipal authorities. In addition it would induce smuggling which would be almost impossible to suppress, and by confining the sale of opium to druggists, it would spread the habit among the Filipinos, since most of the druggists were Filipinos whose stores, like the country stores in the United States, were gathering places for the people. They argued further that most of the Chinese used opium moderately as a sedative and that "the effects are probably not worse than those of liquor among Americans."50

The arguments on both sides of the question merely foreshadowed the positions taken by the contending sides during the international campaign. In the case of the Philippines, these views were sincerely held. Taft and the Commission, however, realized that the American public regarded opium smoking in a somewhat different light from the way they regarded the liquor habit. They were conscious, too, not only that the fate of the proposed bill depended on American public opinion, but that the American people were watching, many critically, how the United States conducted its first experiment in colonial rule. They therefore did not wish to
discredit this experiment by insisting on a system of opium control which was regarded by most Americans as both "bad morals and bad policy" and contradictory to the blessings which many had claimed would come to the inhabitants of the islands from the imposition of American civilization on them. The administration in Washington, which had played so great a role in the acquisition of the islands, also wished to avoid any action that would possibly discredit America's imperialist venture.

As a result of these considerations, the Philippine Commission, though refusing to yield to the clamor for prohibition, nevertheless suggested an alternative to the proposed contract system. They recommended a plan whereby a high license would be imposed on wholesale and retail dealers and the sale of opium to Filipinos would be prohibited. They felt that such a high license system would, by raising the price of the drug beyond the reach of the poorer consumers, bring about a decrease in its traffic and consumption. Fearful, however, that because of a lack of understanding of the Far Eastern situation the American public would not even accept this compromise, they suggested that before the government adopted what they regarded as the unwise prohibition system, a commission be sent to other Far Eastern territories to investigate the operations of systems in those areas. Root and Roosevelt approved both the proposition of a high license system and the idea of a commission of inquiry. Pending the conclusion of the investigatory commission's work the proposed monopoly bill was tabled.

The Opium Committee appointed by Taft to investigate the opium situation in other Far Eastern territories consisted of two physicians, Major Edward C. Carter, Commissioner of Public Health of the Philippines, and Dr. José Albert, a prominent Filipino physician, and Bishop Brent. They were instructed to gather information on the laws governing the importation, sale, and use of opium and the effect of these measures in either limiting or encouraging the use of the drug and to ascertain the number of consumers and their proportion to the total population, the amount of opium consumed, the manner in which it was consumed, its price, the effect of its use on different races, the amount smuggled, and the annual value of the monopoly concessions where they existed.

The itinerary of the committee included Japan, Formosa, Shanghai, Singapore, Burma, and Java, thus touching the possessions of Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands as well as China and Japan. Their investigation lasted five months—from August 17, 1903, to January 1, 1904. Two of these months were spent in Japan and Formosa, the areas to which they gave the fullest attention.

As a result of its labors the committee concluded that the opium situation was one of the gravest, if not the gravest, of problems in the Far East, with possible solutions to be affected by
the fact that it was "a prolific source of revenue." They were most commendatory of the Japanese system of control, in both Japan and Formosa, and most condemnatory of the British. Their attitude toward the British system was expressed thus:

The laws in the English colonies visited, Burma excepted, accomplish the purpose for which they were drafted. The drift of the report of the royal commission represents the official mind of Great Britain in the Orient, and it is to the effect that (1) the use of opium is not necessarily injurious to orientals, in some cases possibly being beneficial; (2) when it obtains as a fixed habit it is useless to try to extirpate it; and (3) as it affords a means of revenue, the government may as well as not seize the opportunity it gives of swelling its credit. As carefully drawn laws protecting trade interests they are above criticism... They do not pretend to be laws for the protection of the people against a vice, but rather commercial regulations guarding a branch of commerce.56

The committee spent so much time examining the Japanese system of regulation because this was the system which the missionaries and other reformers were urging for the Philippines. In Japan the importation, manufacture, and distribution of opium and opium preparations were under strict government control and were restricted to medical purposes only. The government designated the private manufacturers who could make the opium preparations. These could then be purchased by government-appointed wholesalers, who had to be druggists or pharmacists. Druggists and physicians could purchase the drug from the wholesalers only by certificate, and it could be dispensed only on a physician's prescription." Because of the rigid enforcement of this system, backed by public opinion, there was no opium problem in Japan, not even among the 8,000 Chinese residents. The committee was quite impressed with this system and with the fact that Japan was the only-area they visited in which the opium question was viewed "solely as a moral problem" whose control was unencumbered by "(commercial considerations."58

In Formosa the situation was different. There the Japanese were confronted with a population the bulk of which was Chinese and among whom opium addiction was widespread. Indeed, the habit had reputedly spread from Formosa to mainland China. There the Japanese were endeavoring to stamp out the use of the drug through a system of progressive prohibition of which the features were a government monopoly, the licensing and registration of users, and an antiopium propaganda campaign conducted especially in the public schools.58 This was the system which the committee recommended for the Philippines. As to the other methods of regulation which they had observed, they rejected the high-tariff or high-license system on the grounds that it merely enhanced the price, promoted smuggling, and gave the government an interest in the revenue aspects of the trade. They denounced the local option system as "not suitable in any way to the opium traffic." Against the farming or contract system they directed the traditional arguments relative to the increased use of opium, the encouragement of
smuggling, and the tying of the government to the opium revenue.60

The committee’s observations on the effects of a system of immediate prohibition were partly based on experience in Hawaii, where the attention of the government had been drawn to the opium situation as early as 1892. It was then reported that the opium traffic was widespread and that it was being promoted with the connivance of police and customs officials.61 In 1897 the importation, sale, and use of opium were prohibited except for medicinal uses. According to the High Sheriff of the Hawaiian Islands, while this system was in force, the blackmailing of opium addicts was extensive. The law was repealed as of April 1, 1903, after which there was no restriction on the use of the drug. The result was an increase in consumption but not, to the extent anticipated. The High Sheriff concluded that Hawaii was probably better off without the law.62 The committee concluded that immediate prohibition was impracticable for areas where the habit was already entrenched, since it would cause intense suffering among the existing addicts and make them victims of blackmail.63

For the Philippine situation, therefore, which the committee maintained was not as “grave a social calamity ... as ... in neighboring territories,” a system of progressive prohibition and government monopoly modeled on the Japanese system in Formosa was recommended. This would embody, as already stated, an exclusive government monopoly of the importation and wholesale and retail transactions of the drug. After three years, strict prohibition, except for medical purposes, would be put into effect. During the three-year period of progressive prohibition, the drug, except for medical purposes, would be dispensed in limited quantities and only by salaried officials of the government solely to chronic adult male workers who would be registered with and licensed by the government. Free treatment would be given to those desiring it, while “incorrigible offenders” would be punished or expelled from the islands. The young would be discouraged from using the drug by an educational campaign against it and by prohibitive legislation."

An informal copy of the report of the Opium Committee was made available for the use of Congress in considering a revision of duties on opium and other commodities imported into the Philippines. The result was the passage of a law by Congress on March 3, 1905, providing that the total prohibition of the importation, sale, and use of opium, except by the government and for medical use only, should go into effect after March 1, 1908. The Philippine Commission was empowered in the meantime to prohibit entirely or adopt whatever other measures it deemed feasible relative to transactions in and use of the drug. The sale of opium to Filipinos, however, except for medicinal uses, was forbidden."

For the three-year period prior to the going into effect of strict prohibition, the Philippine
Commission, with the approval of President Roosevelt and the War Department, decided to institute the high-license system. They thus rejected the recommendation by the Opium Committee of a system of government monopoly, which, as had been earlier pointed out, was foreign to the American tradition. With the suggestions and under the prodding of Taft, now Secretary of War, the High License Act was enacted on March 8, 1906, to go into effect three weeks later. Only the clergymen, who desired prohibition, and Bishop Brent, who desired a government monopoly, opposed the bill, but in view of the short time remaining before total prohibition was to go into effect, the objections were not strenuous.

The Act in question repeated the Congressional prohibition of the sale of opium to Filipinos, confining its use to adult male Chinese, who were required to take out a "habitual user's certificate" costing 5 pesos. Heavy annual license fees of 1,000 pesos for wholesalers and 200 pesos for retailers were imposed. In addition, wholesalers were required to pay a specific tax of 2 1/2 pesos per kilo on crude opium and 7 1/2 pesos on prepared opium. Strict government scrutiny of imports as well as of wholesale and retail transactions was provided. Revenue derived from the license fees and specific taxes was to constitute a special fund for an antiopium educational campaign, hospital treatment of addicts, payment of informers, financing of the education of Filipino students in the United States, payment of the salaries of insular school teachers, and construction of school buildings.

This Act was followed by another in October 1907 which was designed to ease the transition to total prohibition. Provisions were made for the establishment of official dispensaries under the joint supervision of an opium dealer and an internal revenue officer to supply opium in decreasing quantities monthly to users whose licenses were increased in price monthly. Although there was some opposition to the measures from merchants, shipping firms, and opium-dive keepers, public opinion strongly backed the acts.

About 12,700 user's certificates were issued under the Act of 1906, although a conservative estimate of the number of Chinese smokers alone was in excess of 20,000. It was claimed that by March 1908, about 40 percent of the users had given up the habit and that many others had become moderate users. Prohibition, however, by no means brought an end to the opium problem in the islands. The traffic went underground, and the efforts to suppress smuggling and illicit opium dens were only moderately successful. Authorities claimed that effective enforcement was often frustrated by the lenient sentences imposed on violators by the courts, the average fine being about 269 pesos and the average term of imprisonment about four months. Much progress was made, however. In 1911 the number of Chinese addicts was estimated at 5,000 while the number of Filipino users was set at less than 5 percent of the estimated 4,000 users in 1906. Thus total suppression had not been achieved, and the likelihood of it being achieved in the near future was slight. Daily arrests and convictions continued, and old addicts returned to the vice.
Because prohibition forced the traffic in and consumption of the drug underground, it is impossible to determine with accuracy the extent of the problem in the Philippines after 1908. During the next three decades, Philippine officials contended the problem was not a serious one. The islands, however, remained in the international limelight. During the course of the international movement to control the drug traffic, the Philippines stood as the concrete expression of the American attitude and policy toward the trade in the Far East. It was the only area in the Orient where a Western nation had adopted prohibition, a system which the other Western powers deemed neither practicable nor desirable for their Far Eastern possessions, and which they were anxious to discredit. Furthermore, the Philippines revived America's material interest in the whole Far Eastern drug situation. As long as opium consumption and the traffic were allowed and even fostered in surrounding areas, the Philippines could never hope to be entirely free of the vice. Smuggling of opium into the islands from other Far Eastern territories, particularly from the British possessions of Hongkong, Singapore, and North Borneo, which themselves were largely supplied with the drug from India, constituted a continuous problem.

A recapitulation of the influence of the report of the Philippine Opium Committee on Chinese and British opinion is feasible here. The contrast between the committee's report and the report of the Royal Commission in 1895 is representative of the difference in the official American and British views. Whereas the British report held that the use of opium was not necessarily injurious to Orientals, the American account contended that its use constituted "one of the gravest problems in the Far East." The futility of trying to suppress a long-standing social habit was stressed in the British document, whereas the necessity for immediate action to end the practice was emphasized by the Americans. The British placed revenue considerations in the way of ending the traffic, whereas the Americans held that no amount of revenue could justify the continued degradation of a people for which the traffic was responsible. In short, the Royal Commission's report whitewashed the traffic, while the Philippine Opium Committee's report condemned it unreservedly.

The conclusions of the Philippine Opium Committee corresponded very closely to those uttered by Henry J. Wilson, a member of the Royal Commission, who had filed a minority report to that of the commission. He requested a copy of the Opium Committee's report for use in the pending debate in the House of Commons on the question in 1906. As already pointed out, parts of the report were quoted several times to buttress sentiment for ending the Indian-Chinese traffic. In China the report was translated by a missionary and circulated throughout the empire.

That the influence of the work of the Opium Committee would extend beyond the confines of the Philippines was foreseen by Bishop Brent. Even before the committee was formed he had
urged that the United States set an example in legislation in the Far East on the opium question.77 And during the course of the committee's itinerary he wrote: "The opium traffic is admitted to be the gravest moral question in the East, and I only hope that the result of our work will have something beyond local value, as people seem to think it will."78 The language and spirit of the committee’s report bears very strongly Brent's imprint. To him must go the credit for seeing that their work would indeed be of more than local value. He was cognizant of the varied but convergent influences—in China, Great Britain, the United States, and on the international level—which were creating an environment in which the idea of international consideration of the opium question might be favorably received. He was discerning enough to realize that through the injection of the Philippine problem as an added component into the general opium situation in the Far East, the material basis for such international consideration might be established.


3. Numerous treatises on China cover the opium reform movement there. The following discussion, however, unless otherwise indicated, is based on Cameron's work (cited above), pp. 136-159.


5. For the text of the agreement see John V. A. MacMurray (compiler and editor) Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, 1894-1919 (2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), I, 865-866.
6. Ibid., pp. 861-864.


9. For the antiopium agitation in Great Britain, principal reliance has been placed on Wen-tsao Wu, op. cit., passim, and on Owen, op. cit., pp. 311-328,333-335.


11 Quoted in Wen-tsao Wu, op. cit., p. 150.


13. Ibid.


15. For the deliberations on this resolution in the Senate see U.S., Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 2nd Sess., 1901, XXXIII, Part I, 526, 528; Part 2, 2291,

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19. Ibid., pp. 53-55.


23. Dennis, op. cit., p. 129.


27. Ibid., pp. 3-4. See also "Memorandum Showing the Results Obtained in Enforcement of Laws Aimed at the Total Suppression of the Opium Habit in the Philippine Islands." Records of United States Participation in International Conferences, Commissions, and Expositions, National Archives, Record Group 43, Entry 33. Because the material used in this study is State Department material, it will be cited below by the symbol SDR followed by Record Group (RG) and Entry (E) numbers.

28. Extract from a letter of Reverend H. C. Du Bose transmitted to the President by Senator McLaurin, enclosed in Frederic Amory (Chief, Bureau of Foreign Commerce) to John C. Scofield (Chief Clerk, War Department), Sept. 22, 1899, file 1023—1, 2, 3. Records of the Bureau of Insular Affairs of the War Department, RG z26. Records in this group are cited below by symbol BIA followed by file number with a dash separating the specific item from the series number.

29. The Collector of Customs, Philippine Islands to the Secretary of War, Dec. 21, 1899, BIA 1023-1,2,3.

30. Secretary of the Treasury to the Secretary of War, April 2, 1900, SDR 1023-3.


32. Memorandum by H. C. Ide, enclosed in Secretary of War Root to Secretary of State Hay, May 16, 1003, BIA 1023-7.
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34. Root to Taft, June 5, 1903, BIA 1023-10.

35. Legislative Committee, International Reform Bureau to President Roosevelt, June 5, 1003, BIA 1023-16.


37. Roosevelt to the Secretary of War, June 6, 1903, BIA 1023-14.

38. Colonel Edwards, Chief of Bureau of Insular Affairs to Taft, June 9, 1903, BIA 1023-25.

39. Root to Roosevelt, July 18, 1903; Root to Taft, July 22, 1903, BIA 1023-49; B. F. Barnes, Acting Secretary to the President to Root, July 20, 1903, BIA 1023-50; Taft to Root, July 23, 1903, BIA 1023-51.

40. See above, pp. 34-35.

41. Root to Taft, June 17, 1903, BIA 1023-25.

42. Root to Taft, July TO, 1903, ibid.
43. Taft to the Secretary of War, July 1, 1903, BIA 1023-46.

44. Copy of Memorandum of the Chinese Legation, Washington to the Secretary of State, April 22, 1903, BIA 1023-6.

45. Acting Chinese Consul General to A. W. Ferguson, Executive Secretary, May 19, 1903, BIA 1023-86.

46. See "Petition B," BIA 1023-95. Two hundred and eight of these signatures were written by the same hand. Twenty were not names at all.

47. Taft to the Secretary of War, July 13, 1903, BIA 1023-46.

48. Brent to James F. Smith, Commissioner of Education of the Philippines, Manila, July 6, 1903, BIA 1023-68. Copy also in L.C., Bishop Charles H. Brent Papers, Box 6.

49. The views of Taft and the Commission were set forth in a long despatch from Taft to Root, July 13, 1903, BIA 8023-25, 46.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. Root to Taft, July 14, 1903, BIA 1023-25.
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54. Ibid., pp. 1 1-17.  55. /bid., p. 19.

56. /bid., p. 49.

58. Ibid., pp. 21-24.

57. /bid., pp. 215-220.


60. Ibid., p. 52.

61. Hawaiian Islands, Legislature, Special Committee on Opium, Report of Special Committee on Opium to the Legislature of 1892, Acting Under Resolution of Honorable J. H. Waipulani [Honolulu, 1892].


63. Ibid., J. 52.

64.1bid., pp. 53-55.
65. Ibid., p. 54.

66. Luke Wright, Governor General of the Philippines, to Secretary of War Taft, Jan. 8, 1905; Taft to Wright, Jan. 8, 1905, BIA 1023-11.


68. "Memorandum Showing Results obtained in the Enforcement of Laws Aimed at the Total Suppression of the Opium Habit in the Philippine Islands," SDR RG 43, E 36.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

73. See, for example, Francis Burton Harrison, Governor General, to Hamilton Wright, May 28, 1914, SDR 43, E 36; Frank R. McCoy to Mrs. Wright, May 4, 1926, BIA 1023-270; Frank McIntyre, Chief of the Insular Bureau, to Governor General Leonard Wood, April 15, 1926, BIA 1023-268; Wood to McIntyre May 27, 1926, BIA 1023-271.

74. See for example Arthur Woods, Assessor on the Opium Advisory Committee of the League of Nations, to Secretary of War Dwight F. Davis, July 2, 1927, BIA
75. Henry J. Wilson, M.P., to the Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, April 10, 1906, BIA 1023-143.

76. See above, p. 22. See also Brent to F. C. Shattuck, Manila, May 27, 1907, Brent Papers, Box 6.

77. See above, p. 38.

78. Brent to Bishop Hall, Manila, Nov. 13, 1903, Brent Papers, Box 6.