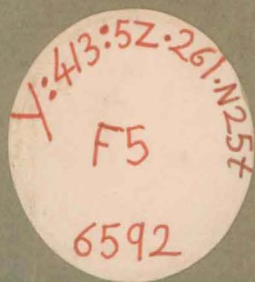


ASSAM CONGRESS
OPIUM ENQUIRY
REPORT □ □ □ □ □

SEPTEMBER, 1925

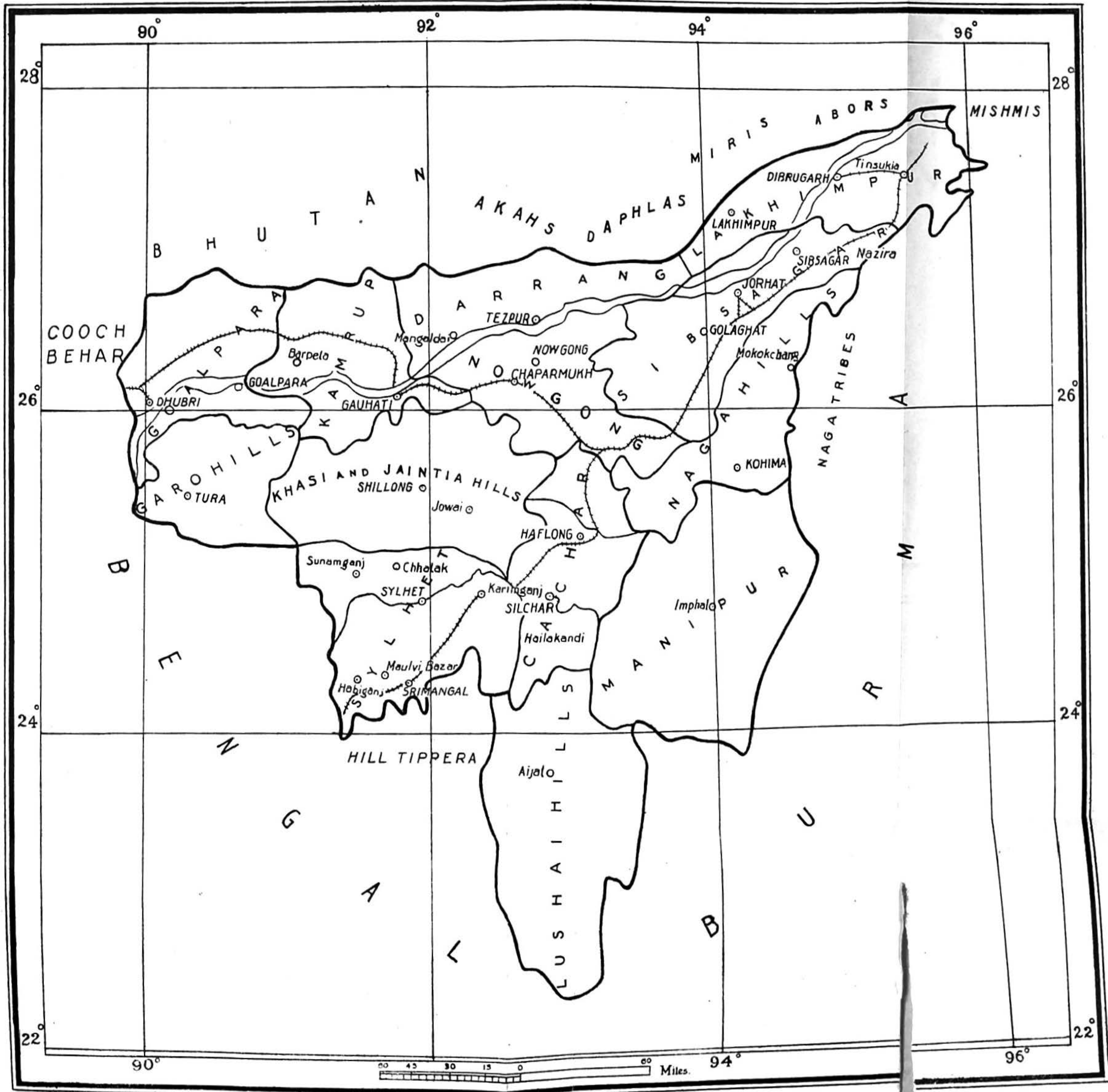


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or two shillings post free*

ASSAM



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INTRODUCTION.

The origin of the present Opium Enquiry is partly to be found in the preparations for the World Conference at Geneva in 1924-1925. The reform proposals at that Conference, with which the Indian people as a whole were fully in sympathy, were grouped under two main heads: (1) the complete abolition of opium smoking, (2) the reduction of opium consumption to the medicinal and scientific needs of the world. When the question of the internal consumption of opium in India came forward among public workers, it was clear from practical experience that both in opium smoking and in opium eating for non-medicinal purposes, Assam held by far the blackest records in India.

It is necessary to explain that the full medical requirements of each 10,000 of the world's population, according to the League of Nations, are 6 seers, or 12 pounds avoirdupois. Having regard to this index figure, we find the following rates of consumption in the five upper districts of Assam:—

District.	Population.	Issue of Opium in seers.	Consumption in seers per 10,000.
Kamrup	... 762,671	3,472	45.524
Darrang	... 477,935	5,101	106.729
Nowgong	... 397,921	6,909	173.627
Sibsagar	... 823,197	9,133	110.945
Lakhimpur	... 588,295	11,176	189.972
Sadiya Frontier Tract.	... 39,531	937	237.029
Balipara Frontier Tract.	... 3,819	52	136.161

It will at once be seen how altogether excessive the sale of opium has become in these districts. Furthermore, it needs to be stated, that if the figures had been taken before the Non-co-operation Movement began, in 1921, the consumption, as shown above, would have been far greater still, the number of seers consumed at that time being between 200 and 300 per 10,000.

When we turn to the question of opium smoking, the state of things is no less serious. In the Botham Committee Report,

drawn up in 1913, but only recently made public, the following statement is made concerning opium smoking with regard to the five districts of Assam mentioned above :—

“Probably, over the five districts, one half would be a moderate estimate of the proportion of those now smoking to the total number of consumers. Many witnesses place the proportion much larger, but it is likely that their estimate is exaggerated.”

Since this state of things was fairly widely known in India among the public workers, it appeared to be of great importance to make a detailed enquiry into opium smoking and opium eating among the indigenous races in Assam, in order to present the facts before the Opium Conference, when it should meet at Geneva in November, 1924. For that purpose, I was asked by the All-India Congress Committee to undertake an investigation in Assam with the help of the Congress workers in that province, and if possible to bring out a Report in time for the Geneva Conference. With that object in view, I went up to Assam in May, 1924, and helped to form an Enquiry Committee, which should make full investigation in conjunction with all other political parties in the province.

It had been my intention personally to take part in the Enquiry, as a member of the Committee, but I was called away to the Far East in order to accompany the poet, Rabindranath Tagore, on his tour in China and Malaya. The Enquiry, however, was not delayed on this account; and all through the monsoon weather of last year, under the greatest difficulties and hardships, the members of the Committee steadily went on with their work. After my return from the Far East, very serious and important duties prevented the Report from being finally revised and concluded by means of a personal visit, which I had intended to make in the month of October. Nevertheless, the preliminary evidence, that had been obtained, was sent in an abbreviated form to Geneva and circulated among the members of the Conference. Also, through the press, some of the facts concerning opium smoking and excessive opium eating in Assam were made widely known. After the Geneva Conference had finished its sessions, one delay after another occurred, until at

last in the months of April and May it was possible for the Committee to reassemble and for me to pay a visit personally to Assam, and to remain there for several weeks, corroborating the evidence and revising all the conclusions. Many sessions of the Committee were held late in April and in the month of May at which I was present; and when everything on the spot had been done, the Secretary accompanied me to Santiniketan in order to complete the work.

Although the Report, which is now presented to the public, has thus been much delayed and the difficulties connected with it have been greater than had been originally expected, yet the facts which have now become clear through the work of the Committee should convince, not merely the Government of Assam and the Government of India, but also the Opium Advisory Board which is in permanent session at Geneva, that the official contentions brought forward at the Geneva Conference itself about India, when it was stated, (1) that opium smoking (outside Burma) was practically non-existent, (2) that opium consumption was not in serious excess of the medical needs of the population, are both proved definitely wrong. Furthermore, it is hoped that the work that has been done by the Committee and the evidence which has been collected will be a potent instrument in the hands of reformers in Assam in their great struggle to put down altogether the opium evil among the indigenous population and the Hill tribes.

It is a satisfaction to know that the work which has thus been undertaken by reformers in Assam has already led to other enquiries being inaugurated in other parts of India, where the opium consumption is markedly in excess of the medical requirements. In Orissa, in Godavari Delta, in the central Punjab, in Sind and Gujarat, enquiries on the lines of the present investigation in Assam are now being set on foot, and an examination of the consumption at the industrial centres is also being started. Little by little in this way, by persistent work, in which the co-operation of the Government wherever possible will be invited, we hope that the consumption for the whole of India will be so reduced as practically never in any area largely to exceed the average consumption laid down in accordance with

the League of Nations' index figure. If this aim can be accomplished, then the difficulty in remote villages with regard to the demands of a Dangerous Drugs Act, by which opium should only be sold under medical prescription, may be obviated. It may be found possible to keep the consumption down within the League of Nations' limit, in the agricultural areas, without the need of any Dangerous Drugs Act at all. In the towns, however, where medical prescription could easily be obtained, and where the dangers of excessive consumption among the labouring classes are already alarming, it may be found possible to bring into force a Dangerous Drugs Act, and to prohibit the use of opium altogether, except under medical prescription.

It needs to be stated that our aim throughout is to bring the great population of India in the East under the same conditions which prevail in every country in the West. We believe that if opium, as a poison, is regarded as a dangerous drug in the West, it should equally be regarded as a dangerous drug in the East. We do not think that human nature in the East is different from human nature in the West. If there is no objectionable restriction of personal liberty in the imposition of a Dangerous Drugs Act in the West, then there can be no danger to personal liberty by such restriction in the East.

In conclusion, I wish to express my sincere admiration for the devoted courage and perseverance of the workers on the present Committee, who have sacrificed time and ease and leisure and business occupations in order to do this service to their country. I feel certain that their labour will be rewarded by the triumph of their cause and that opium will soon be strictly prohibited in Assam.

C. F. ANDREWS.

SANTINIKETAN.

ASSAM OPIUM ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.

PRESIDENT:

SJT. KULADHAR CHALIHA, B.L., M.L.C.,
*President of the Assam Provincial
Congress Committee.*

MEMBERS:

- *SJT. TARUN RAM PHOOKAN, BAR-AT-LAW, M.L.A.
(*Gauhati*).
- SJT. NABIN CHANDRA BORDOLOI, B.L. (*Gauhati*).
- SJT. KRISHNANATH SARMA, B.L., *Secretary of the
Assam Provincial Khadi Board.* (*Jorhat*).
- SJT. AMBICAGIRI ROY CHAUDHURI, *Editor of
"Chetana"* (*Gauhati*).
- *SJT. OMEO KUMAR DAS, B.A., *Editor of
'Assamiya'* (*Dibrugarh*).

SECRETARY & MEMBER:

SJT. ROHINI KANTA HATI BARUA, B.A., M.L.C.,
*Secretary of the Assam Provincial Congress
Committee.*

*Sjt. T. R. Phookan felt it necessary for a time to resign his membership owing to his being frequently away from Assam to attend the sittings of the Legislative Assembly in Delhi and Simla. He assisted the Committee, however, when it reassembled in April and May, 1925.

Sjt. Omeo Kumar Das, Editor of 'Assamiya', could not attend the Committee during its sessions in 1924 owing to illness, but worked with the Committee when it reassembled in April and May, 1925.

CO-OPTED MEMBERS.

1. SJT. T. P. CHALIHA, B.A. (CAL.), LL.B. (LON.),
BAT-AT-LAW, M.L.C., *Chairman, Sibsagar Local
Board (Sibsagar).*
2. SJT. DURGAPRASAD BORTHAKUR, B.L., *President,
District Congress Committee (Sibsagar).*
3. SJT. PRASANNA KUMAR BARUA, B.A. (Dibrugarh).
4. MAULVI FAIZNUR ALI, B.L., M.L.C., *Leader
of the Assam Nationalist Party of the Assam
Legislative Council (Dibrugarh).*
5. SJT. SARBESWAR BARUA, B.L., M.L.C., *President,
District Congress Committee, N. Lakhimpur.*
6. SJT. CHANDRANATH SARMA, B.L., *Pleader (Tezpur).*
7. DR. JYOTISH CHANDRA DAS, B.Sc., M.B. (CAL.),
L.M. (DUBLIN), *Medical Practitioner, Gauhati.*

During the months of April and May, 1925, when the closing sessions of the Committee were held, Mr. C. F. Andrews was co-opted as a member and attended all meetings.

QUESTIONNAIRE.

1. Can you give any historical synopsis as to how and when opium, or poppy cultivation, was first introduced into Assam and the effects of the opium habit on the people up to the advent of the British in 1826?

2. What was the attitude of the Ahom kings towards the opium habit and poppy cultivation? Was the habit prevalent amongst the common people or was it confined to the higher classes as is generally believed?

3. What was the policy of the British Government from—

- (1) 1826 to 1860 when the poppy cultivation was prohibited,
- (2) 1860 to 1874 when license-fee was first levied,
- (3) 1874 to 1894 when the Royal Commission on Opium submitted its report,
- (4) 1894 to 1912 when the Botham Committee sat,
- (5) 1912 to 1921 when the Non-co-operation movement was started?

4. Can you support your statement by any statistics? If so, please give them in detail.

5. What was the effect of the Non-co-operation movement on this opium habit?

6. Do you think that Government have ever had any policy of systematically reducing the opium consumption in Assam? Do you know the Botham Committee's recommendations? Was any effect given to those recommendations?

7. Will you state how the Government policy has affected the Assamese people and neighbouring hill-tribes?

If the effects are baneful and disastrous to the people, are you in favour of total prohibition of sale and consumption, except for medicinal purposes?

If so, how would you effect it? Please give your suggestions.

8. (a) Can you trace any moral, physical and economic effects of the consumption of opium by the purely Assamese population and by the hill and other tribes? What, in your opinion, will be the percentage of opium-eaters amongst the Assamese and other tribes?

(b) Have you got any personal experience of the people who are addicted to the opium habit and under what circumstances they generally contract the habit first?

9. Do you advocate any legislation in favour of total prohibition of opium? If so, please give your outlines?

10. What acts of repression were committed by the Government against the temperance workers in the great movement of 1921? What was the object of the opposition by Government?

ASSAM OPIUM ENQUIRY COMMITTEE REPORT.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT.

To

THE PRESIDENT, ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE.

SIR,

We, the members of the Assam Opium Enquiry Committee, having been appointed by the Assam Provincial Congress Committee in its sitting of the 20th June, 1924, to enquire into the opium habit, "which has caused misery, unhappiness, physical and moral degradation," among the Assamese people in general, beg to submit the following Report :—

In considering the matters referred to us, we have throughout borne in mind the terms of reference which laid stress on the "misery, unhappiness, physical and moral degradation," which the opium habit has caused amongst the Assamese people in general, and also on the fact that the Government policy regarding this problem is disapproved of by all schools of political thought in Assam.

We assembled at Jorhat on the 27th June, 1924, and addressed ourselves, in the first instance, to the task of revising and finally approving the terms of the provisional questionnaire, which had been drawn up by the Secretary of the Committee to ascertain the trend of representative non-official opinion on the subject comprised within our terms of reference. The distribution was undertaken on our behalf by the Assam Provincial Congress Committee, and it was also published widely in the press. We examined in all 325 witnesses in public and 20 submitted their written statements, making 345 witnesses in all who gave evidence.

The Committee started its itinerary on the 5th July, 1924, and the distance covered by it approximated to 1250 miles. Pressure of time and business, and considerations of economy led us to decide not to visit Golaghat, Mangaldoi, Barpeta, Goalpara and Dhubri. We concluded our itinerary on the 29th September, 1924.

In making this enquiry our difficulties have been many. Especially during the rainy season in Assam, we had to travel in the interior under the most trying circumstances, taking the help of all possible forms of conveyance, from a buffalo-cart to a small dug-out. Sometimes we found ourselves in small country boats, on a vast sheet of water, and sometimes in the midst of big jungles. Owing to these difficulties, on some occasions, we failed to reach our destination, in accordance with our published programme, because the boatmen lost their way in the flooded jungles. For these shortcomings, we owe an apology, especially to the people of Dhakuakhana and North Lakhimpur.

Out of the witnesses examined, and those who have submitted written statements, there were as many as 26 Government pensioners, 6 Rai Bahadurs, 3 Rai Sahibs, 1 Khan Sahib, 11 Chairmen of various Municipalities and Local Boards of the Province, 12 Jail-visitors, 15 Medical men, 7 Kavirajes (medical practitioners practising Ayurvedic treatment), 6 Mauzadars (Revenue Collectors), 2 Editors of local newspapers, 54 Opium-eaters, 18 ex-opium-eaters, 6 women (including 3 opium-eaters). Over and above the examination of witnesses, we personally inspected villages, which were typical from the point of view of opium addiction. The inspection notes of one typical village are printed in Appendix I.

We take this opportunity of recording our sincere and deep appreciation of the trouble and labour undertaken by Mr. C. F. Andrews, in coming down on different occasions to Assam in order to infuse into us an earnest and practical desire for an enquiry of this nature, and finally to conclude the enquiry by revising the whole of our proceedings after a long stay in Assam. We also thank him for his efforts in obtaining help for us from the members of All-India Congress Committee, who

passed an important resolution protesting against the opium excise policy of the Government of India and supporting an enquiry into the opium habit in Assam. Furthermore, we would here express our special gratitude to him for his very arduous task in thoroughly revising this Report itself and writing an introduction to it, which explains the nature and importance of the subject. Without his expert aid and experience, we should have found it very difficult to carry through our work to its conclusion and to present concisely the facts which we have obtained.

We also wish to express our thanks to the witnesses, who so kindly appeared before us and submitted to our examination. The considered and exhaustive nature of their statements has been of the greatest possible assistance to us in forming our conclusions. We gladly record our obligations to the various District Congress and other Committees; to public bodies and prominent men for their courtesy in placing office rooms and other accommodation at our disposal and generally facilitating the examination of our witnesses and helping us in every way for the accomplishment of our Enquiry.

As this is the first investigation of a non-official character conducted in Assam by our body of workers, we would apologise beforehand for its deficiencies in many important respects, of which we ourselves are fully conscious. We hope, nevertheless, that, in spite of these, it may adequately serve the purpose for which it is required, namely, to give full public information concerning the opium sale, consumption and addiction in Assam. It must be remembered that this Enquiry was conducted for the most part in the Assamese language. It would have been far easier for us, therefore, to reproduce our evidence and our own comments in the vernacular of our province. But as we have a larger purpose to serve, we have been obliged to translate everything into English. While the Report gains a wider circulation in this manner, we are painfully aware at the same time that it loses vigour and freshness.

We should make clear at once in this preliminary statement, that we have attempted throughout to carry through our investigations on non-party lines. Our sympathy with the Non-

co-operation Movement we frankly acknowledge. Yet, as our list of witnesses will clearly prove, we have gone far beyond the bounds of that movement in gathering our information. We have found out, beyond any shadow of doubt, that the opium evil in Assam is regarded as a national disaster, under the shadow of which our whole national life is darkened. We have had no difficulty, therefore, in obtaining help in our enquiry from every party in the country. To the best of our ability we have endeavoured to keep out of our Report anything which would not be agreed to by those who may differ from us in politics, but are one with us in the desire to set our country entirely free from the opium habit.

CHAPTER II.

ASSAM AND ITS PEOPLE.

Assam is situated in the furthest eastern corner of India and is bounded on the north by the Bhutan Hills and the Himalayas, on the south by Manipur State and Bengal, on the east by Burma and on the west by Bengal. The Chinese frontier is not far distant on the east and the Tibetan frontier comes near on the north. The opium question mainly affects the people living in the Brahmaputra Valley which forms the northern section of the Province. This valley is also called the Assam Valley.

The Assamese speaking people are residents of the six districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Darrang, Nowgong, Kamrup, and Goalpara. The tiny districts of Balipara Frontier Tract and Sadiya Frontier Tract, which are really continuations of Darrang and Lakhimpur districts, contain a small number of Assamese people. The old Assamese kingdom consisted of all these districts. The districts of Cachar and Sylhet, though now politically included in the province of Assam, are mainly Bengali-speaking and are not seriously affected by the opium habit. In fact, the district of Sylhet has one of the lowest rates of consumption in India.

In addition to the Assamese speaking race, the Brahmaputra Valley is also inhabited by (1) Mikirs (1,11,529) who are mainly residents of the Hills of Nowgong, Kamrup and Sibsagar; (2) Kacharis (2,03,533) who inhabit the plains of Darrang, Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Goalpara and Sibsagar; (3) Garo (22,526) who occupy the sub-montane tracts of the Assam Valley; (4) Miris (65,284) who reside on the banks of the Brahmaputra and other rivers of the Assam Valley up to Darrang. These tribes speak their own tongue at home, but speak Assamese on all other occasions, and are included in the Appendix XIII. as indigenous people of Assam. Except those mentioned above, there are other people or tribes such as Khamptis, Singphos, Mishmis and Daftlas, who inhabit the hills

of Assam and its borders, though their number is very small. They are also included in the category of the indigenous population in our calculation.

The following tables give the population (a) of the province (including Sylhet and Cachar which are Bengali speaking), (b) of the Assam Valley, (c) of the indigenous inhabitants of Assam proper.

(a) Population of the Province.

1881	...	...	5,129,391
1891	...	...	5,477,880
1901	...	...	6,126,945
1911	...	...	7,060,945
1921	...	...	7,990,246

This table includes the population of Manipur State as well.

(b) Population of the Assam Valley, including Garo Hills, given in lakhs.

1881	...	...	23,53,495
1891	...	...	25,87,228
1901	...	...	27,42,162
1911	...	...	32,48,319
1921	...	...	39,91,682

(c) Assamese speaking population including the bilingual tribes of the Hills and plains.

1881	...	...	19,20,726
1891	...	...	18,26,549
1901	...	...	17,73,484
1911	...	...	20,23,972
1921	...	...	21,13,569

From 1881 to 1901 there was a steady decrease in the indigenous Assamese speaking population.

This was chiefly due to the diseases of kala-azar, cholera, small-pox and malaria. Taken as a whole, according to the census returns of 1891 and 1901, the indigenous population of the Assam Valley decreased by 5.4 per cent. between the years 1881 and 1891, and by a further 6.4 per cent. between the years 1891 and 1901. Only very slowly since the year 1901 has there been any recovery and the natural increase is still below the normal growth of population under average conditions.

It is among the indigenous Assamese race that the opium habit chiefly prevails and especially among the Hill tribes as they come down and settle in the plains. This one fact, that the opium habit is practically confined to the indigenous population, as a vicious habit of life, must be constantly borne in mind while reading this Report. For this reason, the itinerary of the present Commission was confined to the districts where the Assamese population was most numerous, and all the witnesses were taken from these districts. We note that the same practice was followed by the Government Commission of 1913 of which Mr. A. W. Botham was the chairman. The sixth district of Goalpara, which has a considerable population of Assamese, was not included by the Botham Commission in their investigations, because there is now very little opium taken there, even by the Assamese themselves. The facts concerning Goalpara will be discussed in Appendix XV. The problem is considered also in the Imperial Gazetteer which is quoted in Appendix V.

The most serious factor of all, with regard to opium consumption in the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, is that the evil has become most deeply rooted among the agricultural village population and the Hill tribes. The educated classes in the towns are practically immune. But in remote villages, such as those in North Lakhimpur, which are away from the centres of education in the towns, the opium habit has become ingrained and whole villages are subject to opium addiction. We have visited such remote areas and have found that the Government figures for opium consumption provide a record of the indolence and degradation of the village people. In proportion to the rate of opium consumption the deterioration of the villages is manifest. We have also found that the immigrant population in these areas, so long as it does not take to opium, remains healthier and more industrious than the indigenous population. At the same time, in certain areas where the immigrants have lived for a long time in contact with opium addicts, they also have contracted the opium habit with the same harmful effects.

It is necessary to repeat, by way of special emphasis, that in

all that follows in this Report; one supremely important feature, for statistical purposes, must be never lost sight of for a moment. *We are not dealing with the whole population of Assam* (which now numbers eight million people and includes the populous districts of Sylhet and Cachar), but only with the Brahmaputra Valley and the surrounding hills. Even in the Brahmaputra Valley, we are dealing chiefly with the indigenous Assamese population, and those Hill tribes which come down into the valley for the opium drug. We shall discuss at length the problem of the effect of opium consumption upon the neighbouring tea-garden labourers and other immigrants; for it raises great and important issues. But the problem which will demand the main part of our attention will be the reduction of consumption among the agricultural Assamese villagers and the Hill tribes. The five districts which are chiefly affected are: Kamrup, Nowgong, Darrang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. Of these five districts, the average records, over a period of fifty years, show clearly that Kamrup is the least heavily infected; that Darrang comes next; and that Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur are the worst.

CHAPTER III.

OPIUM CONSUMPTION IN ASSAM.

The opium poppy was already known to the Greeks in the first century, and then to the Arabs and Persians, from whom it came to India probably during the Moghal period. The royalty and the nobles of the court of Delhi indulged in this drug, as it was commonly believed to vitalise the system. The prevalence of the opium habit in certain parts of the north of India is probably due to the spread of the drug to the common people from the Moghal court.

During the latter part of the Seventeenth Century, when the Moghals came into contact with the kings of Assam, it is possible that they sometimes sent '*affing*' (opium) as a present to the Assam Royal Court, and that from about this time the habit first came to be known in Assam. This theory is based more upon common report than on any authentic document, because in the daily records of the Ahom kings called 'buranjis,' no one has come across anything indicating the prevalence of the opium habit or even the receiving of such presents from the Court at Delhi. If the custom had been as common as now, or only slightly less, there would have certainly been some reference to opium, because these chronicles took care to describe the minutest details of the royal functions and the events of each day.

Naturally we look also into the Vaishnava literature of Assam, which is so rich in ancient documents, in order to find any reference in them to the opium habit among the people. But there, too, we fail to find any reference either to poppy cultivation or to opium addiction.

Though the omission in the chronicles and the Vaishnava literature cannot be conclusive as to the non-prevalence of the opium habit, yet it indicates fairly that the custom, if it existed at all, was certainly confined to the Royal Court and the nobles. That the Royal Court indulged in it at the end of the Eighteenth Century can be gathered conclusively from the Report of

Captain Welsh, in 1792, to Lord Cornwallis. He describes the king, Gaurinath Singha, as "a poor debilitated man, incapable of transacting business, always either washing or praying; and, whenever seen, intoxicated with opium". Again, in Captain Welsh's Report we read further, that he required a 'few boat-loads of opium' for sale, because it was useful for the purchase of rice, etc., for the troops. But these references do not give us the exact date when opium was introduced into Assam. It can, however, be safely inferred from them that the habit was there before the British actually occupied the country.

The history of the poppy cultivation after this epoch is fairly well-known. It is said that when Gaurinath Singha failed to rule the country properly, the Morans and Moamarias, the two religious sects, rose in rebellion; the small chiefs at Bijni and Beltola wanted to carve out kingdoms for themselves from the effete kingdom of Assam. To effect this, Krishnanarayan, the son of the murdered king of Darrang,—one of the Koch chiefs,—brought some Barkandazes, (mercenary soldiers) mainly Rajputs, from Northern India and Behar, who were more or less addicted to opium. These Barkandazes, after creating a reign of terror in Kamrup, remained with the Koch kings at Beltola, four miles from Gauhati, where they grew the opium poppy for the first time in the history of Assam, during Lakshmi Singha's reign, about the year A.D. 1795.

In the petition of Moniram Dewan, on behalf of himself and others, incorporated in Mills' Report in the year 1853, the following passage is worth mentioning :—

"In Lakshmi Singha Raja's days, poppy seeds were first introduced from Bengal and first cultivated at Beltollah; but during his time opium was used only by a few respectable persons and not by the lower orders".

As Moniram Dewan was undoubtedly one of the outstanding figures in Assam at that epoch and a man of remarkable knowledge and intelligence, it is not likely that he would have made this statement without accurate information, which he could easily have gathered from those who knew the facts.

Captain Butler also supports the same historical position. In his book called "Travels and Adventures in Assam," published in 1853, we find the following reference to opium :—

"Opium, it is said, was first introduced into Assam in 1794, when our troops assisted the Rajah against the Muttocks".

The above passages indicate that the cultivation of the poppy was practically unknown in Assam before it was introduced by the Rajput troops, who were brought into Assam either by the Koch chiefs or by the British.

Even at that time, the opium poppy was not so widely cultivated as in later years, as will be obvious from the following observations of Moniram Dewan in another petition :—

"Cultivation of the opium poppy was put down with a very strong hand by the Borgohains and Buragohains of the Assam Administration".

This suppression of poppy cultivation at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century was effected chiefly by a preventive tax of Rs. 12/- per poorah of land (*i.e.*, 3 acres) under poppy cultivation. This amount, according to the present value of money, would be about sixty to a hundred rupees. The exceedingly high tax probably succeeded in keeping down the cultivation to a comparatively low level.

When finally the British came in 1826, after the Treaty of Yandabu, they turned their first attention to the establishment and consolidation of their power. From 1826 to 1860, they practically followed a policy of drift on the opium question. Their one care was to introduce their own opium for revenue purposes in order to undersell the indigenous product. Government opium was sold at Rs. 5/- per seer in 1835. The new Administration did nothing to check the opium habit or even the cultivation of the opium poppy. It allowed the terrible evil to spread among the people, who had just come under their power after a century of feuds and internecine wars.

For nearly thirty years, this policy of drift continued. The new Government was quite prepared to obtain a portion of its revenue out of the vices of the people and to leave these evil

habits undisturbed. This attitude of indifference continued until the publication of Mr. Moffat Mills' Report in 1853. Mills' Report on Assam was emphatic in its condemnation of the opium evil.

From 1853-1860, Mr. Moffat Mills' Report was discussed and canvassed, and at last action was taken. In 1860, Opium was made a Government monopoly in Assam, and it became a criminal offence to cultivate the opium poppy in the province.

Even in those remote days, Indian leaders of prominence denounced the indifferent attitude of the Government. At the same time they did not countenance the establishment of a Government opium monopoly. In his petition to the Government, in 1853, Moniram Dewan writes, 'The introduction of the Government opium into the province will have to be put a stop to and the people allowed to grow their own drug. But some method ought to be invented by the Mohamuntree Saheb (*i.e.*, King's representative) for the eventual eradication of opium cultivation by a gradual reduction, at the rate of one in twenty per annum.' (Mills' Report).

About the same time, Anandaram Dhekial Phookan wrote as follows:—"An extensive introduction of opium, however, leads us to conclude, that the measure will be productive of other effects than the extirpation of the drug from the country." (Mills' Report).

The introduction of the Government opium, and the effort to undersell the local product did indeed have consequences other than the extirpation of the evil. In answer to the argument for the monopoly, Anandaram Phookan replied, that by abolishing the production of opium in Assam itself, and by rendering it dearer, the use might indeed be rendered less universal. But he adds: "We would beg to submit that the people will never shrink from the use of the drug, as long as they continue to obtain supplies of it, and they would seldom consider themselves too poor to purchase it."

In spite of these protests the Government monopoly was at last introduced, and poppy cultivation was abolished at the same time, in 1860. But there was no earnest effort made, as Moniram Dewan had suggested, to eradicate the evil within any

specified time. How great the evil had become can be easily gathered from some representative opinions of officials, then in the country, which we quote below :—

Dr. John Barry, the Civil Surgeon of Goalpara, wrote on the 7th May, 1853 :

“The cultivation of poppy along with the Government sale of opium, is an unmitigated evil, a grievous curse to the people of this country. It is appalling to see fathers and children of a single family sunk in depravity and callous inaction; but when a community is thus incubused, a nation, indeed, politically, morally and socially benighted, we are bewildered and amazed that a mild and enlightened Government, such as ours, should have permitted such a state of things to be created, much less to exist, in any province for a single day”.

Dr. John Maclean, Assistant Surgeon of Gauhati, writing on the 17th May, 1853, stated that the habit of taking opium was practised by men, women and children, and in most instances to an excessive and injurious degree.

From these statements and others, which will be found in Appendix VI, we can infer that the evils connected with opium were thoroughly well known in Government circles, but in dealing with these evils the Government were determined not to surrender one of the most lucrative sources of revenue. Therefore in 1860, as we have related, the poppy cultivation by private individuals in Assam was suppressed, “as experience has shown that to allow every man to grow his plant and manufacture the drug unrestrictedly is injurious to the morals of the people. Opium they should have; but to get it they should be made to work for it.” (Mills’ Report). This means, in plain words, that the Government of Assam was determined to continue its opium revenue.

The year 1860 is an important one; for in that year the restriction took the shape of prohibition of private cultivation and manufacture. But the licenses for the retail vend of Government monopoly opium were granted, *free of charge*, to

all respectable persons applying for them, thus making the Government opium as easily available as possible. In fact, we find, in 1873-74, there were as many as 5,137 opium shops in Assam. The number of villages in Assam Valley, according to the census of 1881 was 6776, and though the census figure of villages for 1872 is not forthcoming, we can take it for granted that the number of villages did not differ to any great extent from that of 1881. Thus there were nearly the same number of shops as there were villages. So the drug was made accessible in almost every village. Nearly one person in every village held a Government license. We must remember also that these opium shops licensed by Government were often nothing less than opium dens, because smoking was allowed to go on in these shops till March, 1892.

The Government, in 1874, introduced the system of *fixed license fee*. Under this system any person could open any number of shops he liked, when once he had paid the fee.

The Mahal system was introduced in 1877. Under this system the right to sell opium in a particular mahal, (or revenue division) in Assam proper, was given to the purchaser of the license. He was allowed exclusively to sell opium at a definite number of places *within the Mahal*. The places of sale were movable within the area purchased under the license.

This Mahal system, however, did not work satisfactorily, as the authorities could not exercise sufficient control on the mahaldars for reasons inherent in the system. So the Government reverted to the old system of licensing individual shops in 1884. Meanwhile, the number of shops holding a license had been very considerably reduced. The Government sold licenses to the highest bidder, at a public auction, and thus brought in each year more and more revenue to the coffers of the State. The number of licensed shops for each decennial period will be found in Appendix X and the reduction of shops will be referred to again later in detail.

The raising of the price of opium was another cause of the rise of revenue year after year. The authorities continued to increase the price of opium till March 31st, 1921, when, through

force of circumstances, which were brought about by the workers of the Non-co-operation Movement (as will be detailed in another chapter), the Government at last resorted to the rationing of shops and the vend-fee-per-seer system, by which the shops licensed were allowed only to sell a certain fixed quantity per month and at a certain fixed price per seer.

In addition to the method of high license and high price for opium sold, the general policy, from 1872 onward, was to reduce the facilities for obtaining the drug by decreasing the number of shops where opium could be obtained. But though the shops were reduced from 5,131 in 1873-74 to 306 in 1919-20, the consumption was very nearly the same after a lapse of 45 years, namely, 1856 maunds for 1873-74 and 1748 maunds for 1919-20, as the following table will show :—

Year.				Consumption in maunds.
1875-76	..	...	...	1874
1885-86	..	...	...	1446
1895-96	...	...	...	1377
1905-06	..	...	...	1415
1915-16	...	...	...	1560
1919-20	...	...	...	1748

The decrease in consumption after 1920 will come before us in a later chapter.

We learn from the Excise Reports that from 1881 to 1901 the slight variable decrease in consumption was due to the many disasters, by disease, famine and earthquake, which caused the decline in the indigenous population already noticed. As soon as prosperity returned, the consumption immediately began to rise. This fact is noticed in many of the Excise Reports from 1900 to 1921. When the year 1919-1920 had been reached, the consumption of opium was 17 per cent in excess of the consumption for 1885-86, although the indigenous population had increased by only 10 per cent. It was after 1920, when public interest was roused by the Non-co-operation Movement, that consumption rapidly declined. The history of this later period from 1920-1925 will be considered separately in the next chapter

The following table gives the price of opium per seer in different periods from 1835 to 1924 :—

1835	...	Rs. 5 per seer.
1860	...	„ 14 „
1874	...	„ 22 „
1884	...	„ 32 „
1894	...	„ 37 „
1904	...	„ 37 „
1914	...	„ 45 „
1924	...	„ 65 „

In spite of this steady rise in the price of opium, we have already seen that from 1881 to 1921 the consumption merely wavered, now going up and now going down according to the prosperity or adversity of the season. So neither the decrease in the number of shops, nor the raising of the price of opium, nor the change in the method of licensing, had any appreciable effect on the consumption of opium in the Assam villages and among the Hill tribes.

During the whole of the period, from 1881 to 1921, the Assam Government appears definitely to have accepted the official formula of the Government of India, repeated in Government documents, that the aim in view must always be, 'Maximum of revenue with minimum of consumption.' But the figures of revenue and consumption when put side by side will leave no room for doubt, that though the revenue was always rising, the consumption went on much as before.

The following table of figures will show the revenue and consumption side by side :—

Year.	Opium Revenue.	Opium consumption.
1875-76	... Rs. 12,25,141	1874 Maunds.
1885-86	... „ 16,75,363	1446 „
1895-96	... „ ...	1377 „
1905-06	... „ 19,55,706	1415 „
1915-16	... „ 30,53,933	1560 „
1919-20	... „ 38,37,125	1748 „
1920-21	... „ 44,12,308	1614 „

It will be seen at a glance from this illuminating table

that nothing interfered with the steady rise of revenue from 1875 to 1920. The rise was quite consistent and the 12 lakhs of 1875 became 44 lakhs in 1920. These statistics form a remarkable vindication of Anandaram Dhekial Phookan's statement in 1853, that "the people will never shrink from the use of the drug so long as they continue to obtain supplies of it, and they would seldom consider themselves too poor to purchase it."

When we turn to the other side of the statistics and consider what efforts were made to ensure the minimum of consumption, we are met with a totally different state of things. Here, only half-hearted efforts were made with insignificant results. Though Moniram Dewan in 1853 had pointed the way to rationing, and had even proposed a diminution by one-twentieth per annum, his suggestion was never adopted. Even after April, 1921, when rationing at last began, it was only of shops and not of individuals. The Assamese people and the Hill tribes were able to get as much opium as they liked, so long as the shop ration remained unexhausted. Even the registration of opium addicts, which had been fairly successful among the neighbouring Burmese race, was strongly resisted by the Government of Assam. It is difficult to believe that revenue considerations had nothing to do with the refusal of the Administration for so long either to ration or to register. Both expedients had been tried in other countries and there was abundant evidence to show that they were likely to be successful in Assam. Yet as late as April, 1921, after the popular movement had been launched and the Reform Councils had been formed, we find the Assam Government refusing to accept the complete rationing and registration resolution of the Rev. J. Nichols Roy which would have brought the Government opium monopoly in Assam to an end in ten years by reductions at the rate of ten per cent. per annum.

It is true that since that refusal of April, 1921, the Government has itself taken the initiative and begun at last to ration and to register. But how dilatory and half-hearted it still is, and how bent upon maximum revenue, may be seen from the revenue figure of 1923-24 which is over 36 lakhs of rupees, or 300 per cent. higher than the revenue of 1875-76. A slight

indication may also be given by the statement of one of our village witnesses on May 6th, 1925, in a village near Tinsukia. He had not yet been either registered or rationed, and he had been able to purchase during the month of April that year 28 rupees worth of opium for himself and for his wife. The maximum of Government revenue was exacted in the case of such a miserable villager; but where was any attempt to reduce consumption?

It has become evident to us in the course of our enquiry that while the 'maximum of revenue' has always loomed large in the eyes of Government officers, the 'minimum of consumption' has been dealt with only half-heartedly. The authorities have congratulated themselves when there was an increase in the opium revenue attributing it to the prosperity of the people. The weight of revenue considerations has continually overbalanced moral and humanitarian considerations.

Yet, while stating thus clearly our deduction from the evidence of the past, we would gladly recognise that the increasing weight and pressure of public opinion has been having its wholesome effect upon Government itself in the years that have succeeded the Non-co-operation Movement. The utterances of responsible Government officials in the Legislative Council to-day differ very much indeed from those that were made only a few years ago. The feeble attempt at rationing and registration which began in April, 1921, has been extended and increased. Yet even in recent years the ration for all the licensed shops, offered by the Government of Assam to the opium salesmen, has always proved at the end of the year to be much in excess of the actual amount consumed, thus showing that the Government authorities are still lagging behind public opinion in this matter. What is therefore needed at the present time is not so much the recognition of the principle of rationing and registration, but rather an immediate quickening of the pace and a definite time limit for the introduction of complete prohibition.

NOTE.—The Botham Committee Report which was received by us in June, 1925, after this chapter was written, will be dealt with in the Appendix. We have, however, used this Report and embodied passages of some length in our chapter on Opium Smoking.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT.

It was in the year 1920 that India saw the great movement of non-violent Non-co-operation under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

Sjt. N. C. Bordoloi, who had gone at an earlier date to England in order to plead for the grant of Reforms to Assam, attended the special sitting of the Indian National Congress in September, 1920, under the presidency of Lala Lajpat Rai, with a band of young men from Assam and there opposed the Non-co-operation Resolution as put forth by Mahatma Gandhi. However, on their return, a special sitting of the Assam Association, which was then the only effective political organisation in the province, was held, and the Non-Co-operation programme was fully adopted with the reservation that schools and colleges in Assam should not be boycotted. After that, Sjt. N. C. Bordoloi and others began to work at Gauhati in right earnest, and gradually Congress Committees were formed throughout the province.

In June, 1921, prominent leaders of Assam went to attend the Bombay session of the All-India Congress Committee and requested Mahatma Gandhi to visit Assam and see things with his own eyes. In compliance with this request, Mahatma Gandhi visited Assam early in August, 1921, and delivered his message. It was a message of hope and love,—hope for those who had been slaves to the drug habit, and love for the depressed and down-trodden. Fired with enthusiasm, hundreds of young men took up the temperance work and preached against opium, ganja, and other drug habits.

Till November, 1921, they carried on their work of temperance reform without any great hindrance from the Government except that they were watched by the police wherever they went, and the officials did their best to counteract their efforts by organising anti-non-co-operation leagues, like

the Aman Sabhas elsewhere. Some Government supporters tried to belittle Mahatmaji himself. But, in spite of these hindrances, the work of temperance was carried on steadily, peacefully, and with great enterprise and success.

Every Sub-division had its District Congress Committee. Under this Committee there were different Local Congress Committees. The workers of these Committees bore the brunt of the struggle and suffered most during the latter part of the year 1921, when the persecution began.

These workers preached temperance in the villages, held meetings all over the province, and took advantage of the social and religious gatherings where they carried the message of prohibition which Mahatmaji had preached during his visit. Adhering strictly to the principle of non-violence, they stood outside the excise opium shops and implored the village people not to buy the drug.

After the visit of Mahatmaji to Assam in the month of August, 1921, the temperance workers, as we have related, received an additional impetus. They worked heart and soul, in spite of the repressive acts of the police and others in some places. The masses of people in the villages heard with gladness and devotion the words of Mahatmaji, and khaddar-clad persons became known as 'Gandhi-men.' Throughout the length and breadth of the country the workers were received on this account with deep respect.

The result of their strenuous work was that in 1921-22 the consumption of opium dropped from 1614 maunds to 1013 maunds, a reduction of 601 maunds within 12 months. Other intoxicants were reduced in the same proportion. The Government became nervous, lest there might be a further fall and a permanent reduction in the excise revenue.

Ganja dropped from 632 maunds 29 seers in 1920-21 to 452 maunds 18 seers in 1921-22, a fall of 180 maunds 11 seers, and in 1923-24 it stood at 344 maunds which is 45.7 per cent. less than in 1920-21.

The consumption of country liquor in 1920-21 was 304,572 L. P. Gallons which fell to 154,349 L. P. Gallons in 1921-22, or a reduction of 49.9 per cent., but it rose to 191,421 L. P.

Gallons in 1923-24. The consumers of country liquor were mostly tea-garden labourers, who come from outside the province from other parts of India. There is a certain amount of difficulty in having access to the labourers and this is highly detrimental to all temperance work. All the same, the reduction showed a consumption 37 per cent. less than that of 1920-21. The following table is given for easy comparison :—

	1920-21	1923-24
Opium ...	1,614 Mds.	884 Mds.
Ganja ...	639 „	344 „
Country liquor ...	304,572 L.P. Gallons.	191,421 L.P. Gallons.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act was promulgated in Assam on the 21st of November, 1921, which practically made picketting illegal. As many as 1100 workers out of the comparatively small Assamese population were shut up in the different prisons. Amongst these were lawyers, tea-planters, graduates, college students and young patriotic men from the villages. The last mentioned were the chief sufferers in these Government acts of repression. The prominent workers were shut up in the jails either for disseminating seditious matters or for being members of unlawful assemblies. In spite of this, enthusiasm continued among the Assamese people and there was a continuous decline in the consumption of opium and ganja.

The argument of the Government was then, as it is now, that the object of the Non-co-operators was not temperance reform, but simply the embarrassment of the Government. The authorities surmised that the attempt was being made to decrease the revenue. But the object of the Non-co-operators was not aimed at the revenue directly; it was a movement of genuine temperance reform among the people. They sought to purify their own countrymen from their vicious drug habits, especially opium, from which they saw their country suffering so terribly. This scourge they wanted to get rid of. The resultant effect of their efforts was indeed to reduce Government revenue and indirectly to embarrass the Government; but the Government is to blame for entangling itself so much with Excise Revenue.

We asked some of our witnesses concerning this point. They were mainly those who disagreed with the political views of Non-co-operators, and almost all of them had good words for the workers of the Non-co-operation Movement in their temperance activities. They declared that Government itself was seriously in the wrong from relying upon its Excise Revenue.

We have instances of testimony to the good effects of the temperance movement such as the following :—

“When we succeeded in eradicating the evil habit of the opium consumers, their relatives and parents used to shower blessings on us with all their hearts and even the addicts used to thank us for the task we had undertaken.”

This testimony to the good intentions and good effects of the non-co-operation workers has been general among those whom we have examined. In village after village, where the opium consumption has decreased, we were told that the reform began owing to the temperance workers in 1921. We were ourselves surprised, in the course of our journeys, to find how far the popular movement had penetrated into the very depths of the country. In the remotest places, when we asked the people how they had been taught to abandon their opium habits, they informed us that Mahatma Gandhi's men had come to them and told them. Practically the whole of the Assamese population was reached for the first time by the message that the consumption of opium was an evil which ought to be abandoned.

The question has often been raised how far the influence of the Non-co-operation Movement has continued. We found no signs of any serious set-back to the prohibition campaign in more recent years. Rather, we regard it as certain that among the educated at least the anti-opium sentiment has grown in intensity and depth since Mahatma Gandhi's visit. Among the villagers, it is true, the enthusiasm has in a measure subsided and a further effort is needed to carry through the work that has already been begun. But in making this further effort it is probable that the workers will no longer have to meet with the

hostility of the Government which they faced with courage in 1921. It may even be hoped that the Government itself at last will recognise the growing force of public opinion and take steps to comply with it.

CHAPTER V.

TEA GARDENS AND HILL TRIBES.

We shall, in this chapter, examine first of all how far the opium habit has spread amongst the ex-tea-garden labourers. The tea-garden labourers generally are a conservative people who change their habits very slowly, but once they do so it is difficult to turn them away from the new habit formed and it will be the work of a generation to get rid of such a habit if it once takes root.

Some witnesses before us told us that the habit is growing amongst the ex-tea-garden and tea-garden labourers, especially in the Sub-divisions of Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur. We ourselves examined some labourers of tea-gardens who took opium. In the North Lakhimpur Sub-division about 30 per cent. of the opium consumers are said to be tea-garden and ex-tea-garden labourers. They form the habit by coming into contact with their Assamese neighbours. Our evidence is not sufficient to speak positively, but there are signs in certain parts of the Assam Valley that the habit is actually growing among them. We are further confirmed by the Excise Reports of the Province, some extracts from which we quote below :—

“For several years past opium shops have been situated on some of the tea-gardens in the Assam Valley Districts. As there was reason to believe that the imported coolies of one or two gardens were acquiring the opium habit, special enquiries were instituted in the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Nowgong as being those most affected.”*

We find in the Excise Report for 1912-13, page 6, that ‘In this district (Lakhimpur) and more especially in the North Lakhimpur Sub-division, it is reported that coolies in some gardens are unfortunately taking to opium.’†

*Excise Report, page 15, 1906-07.

†Assam Excise Report for 1916-17, page 7, *vide* Appendix XVIII.

Again we read :—“The increase in Kamrup is attributed partly to the spread of the habit among the ex-garden coolies and partly to other causes.”*

In 1920-21 we find the Sub-divisional Officer of North Lakhimpur writing that the garden coolies were becoming addicted to it and the managers of tea-gardens were taking vigorous steps to check the opium habit.†

These extracts which might be multiplied clearly show that these most conservative people tend to break their old habits and take to a new vice which they find common among the Assamese in the midst of whom they live. It becomes a serious question, therefore, how far the Government of Assam is justified in encouraging the recruiting of fresh immigrants on the one hand and allowing them to become infected with the opium poison on the other.

The following quotations from the Botham Committee Report throw some light on the consumption of opium by the tea-garden labourers, though they depict only a side-view of the situation :—

“Two hundred and one managers were good enough to send replies to the series of questions which the Committee circulated. Eighty-three of them report that consumption is on the increase in the case of ganja and 53 in the case of opium.

“The number of managers who report that 5 per cent. or more of their labour force are opium consumers is only 24, and half of these consider that none of the consumers are injuriously affected by the drug. On most gardens, therefore, the opium question is not a serious one, but there are a few notable exceptions. The worst is apparently the Dejoo garden in North Lakhimpur, where Mr. Story, the manager, reports that among the coolies who have been more than two or three years on the garden, about 98 per cent. of the adults and a number of the children take the drug. The garden has in former days been particularly subject to dysentery and cholera and Mr. Story attributes the large extent of the vice to opium having been distributed years ago as a remedy. It is, however, not uncommon

*Assam Excise Report for 1917-18, page 8, *vide* Appendix XVIII.

† do. 1919-20, do. do. XVIII.

for certain unhealthy gardens to acquire the opium habit becoming imbued with the Assamese belief in the medicinal virtues of the drug. Another garden in which large opium consumption and unhealthiness go hand in hand is the Namsang division of the Jaipur Tea Company. The manager says, "The garden is on the Government 'black-list' for sickness and I put down the whole cause to opium."

Our Enquiry Committee has considered it necessary also to examine as far as possible how far the habit has spread among the hardy and virile races of the Hills of Assam.

In the district of Lakhimpur we find the Abors, Miris, Mishmis, Khamtis, Singphos, and Daflas inhabiting the border lands of the frontiers of Assam. The first four tribes live in the Sadiya Frontier Tract and beyond them. The index of consumption for the Sadiya Frontier Tract is as high as 237.029 seers for each 10,000 population which is the highest on record in India.

"The opium habit is excessive among the Turaon and Miju Mishmis; and Miris, Khamtis and Singphos are saturated."*

It is said that the habit is being checked among the Abors, but we have not sufficient evidence to confirm this.

The Daflas mainly inhabit the borders of the Districts of Lakhimpur and Darrang and the opium habit is prevalent amongst them.

The Mikirs inhabit the Districts of Nowgong, Kamrup and Sibsagar, and their number is 1,18,629. So far back as 1892, Mr. Driberg in giving evidence before the Royal Commission said that as many as 80 per cent of these people were addicted to the opium habit, † by which he evidently meant 80 per cent. of the adult population. We examined some Mikirs in Nowgong, and also some witnesses in Nowgong and Gauhati who have dealings with the Mikirs and have them as tenants. Their evidence only strengthens the view we have taken. This view gets corroboration in the Excise Reports of 1907 to 1911 and 1919-20. The Mikirs are producers of lac, and whenever there is a good trade in this product, the consumption of opium increases.

*Assam Excise Report, 1919-20, page 6.

†Vide Driberg's evidence before Royal Commission, page 275.

Miris (in the plains).—The number of *Miris* in the plains is 65,289. They mainly inhabit the banks of the Brahmaputra and other rivers and streams of the Assam Valley up to the Darrang District. We have already mentioned about their fellow tribesmen in the Hills, but those living in the plains are much addicted to the habit and the evidence of *Miri* witnesses goes to show that they are worse than their Assamese neighbours.

Khasis.—The number of the Khasi population is 1,24,053. "The prosperous condition of the raiyats is reflected in the increased receipts from opium,"—so says the Excise Report of 1907-08. This is specially true with regard to Mikirs and other aboriginal tribes of the Nowgong and Khasi Hills Districts. There is clear indication that the tribes in the Khasi Hills are getting the addiction more and more. On a special enquiry being made in 1910 into the matter by the Deputy Commissioner of the Khasi Hills, it was found that comparing the increased sales with the more or less stationary population, opium eating and smoking were seriously on the increase among the inhabitants of these Hills. The evidence of a prominent Khasi gentleman, the Rev. J. Nichols Roy, also points to the same view.

This initiation of the Khasis into the opium habit is of recent origin. We read the following in the report of W. J. Allen, Esq., Member, Board of Revenue, on deputation, to A. R. Young, Esq., Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated Cherrapoonjee, the 14th October, 1858 :—

"I found that, for the last eight or ten years, it has been the practice to grant a license for the retail vend of opium at this station exclusively to the person who contracted to supply the ration for the Jails. The license seems to have been given with the view of indemnifying the Contractor, by the profit of selling opium, for any loss that he might sustain in supplying the ration. I directed the Principal Assistant Commissioner to discontinue this irregular practice, and to grant opium licenses in conformity with the Circular orders of the Board of Revenue.

"No opium is sold at the office of the Principal Assistant Commissioner. The licensed dealer procures whatever opium he requires from the Sylhet Collectorate at the price current in that station. There is, in fact, very little demand for the drug

in this district. The Cossyals (Khasis) do not use it; the only purchasers seem to be the up-country and Assamese sepoy of the Battallion, and the servants of the European residents at the station. Only one opium license has been taken out during the year." Again, in W. W. Hunter's Statistical Account of Assam, Vol. II, page 243, we read as follows:—

"In 1876-77 there were in all 18 licenses in force—4 for imported spirituous and fermented liquor, 1 each for madak and chandu, 2 for ganja and 10 for opium. The Khasias and Syntengs are not addicted to the use of intoxicating drugs, which use is confined to the people from the plains residing in British Territory."

In spite of this earlier evidence it now appears certain, as we have said, that opium addiction has spread among the Khasias with serious results. In the year 1910-11, for instance, the Excise Commissioner reported an increase in consumption of $8\frac{1}{2}$ maunds. Another increase of 5 maunds is reported in the year 1913-14. In subsequent years, consumption wavered, but there was no decided and definite check until rationing was introduced early in 1921.

Nagas.—The population of the Nagas is 2,20,619. They inhabit the Naga Hills and the borders of the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts. While the figures given by Government about the opium sold in the Naga Hills are themselves conflicting, one thing becomes quite certain that the consumption has been increasing.

Kacharis.—The Kacharis mainly inhabit the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang. They also live in the districts of Sibsagar, Nowgong and Lakhimpur. They are a hardy well-built race, but opium is undermining their constitution. We read in the Excise Report of 1908-09 that the opium habit among them prevails to a regrettable extent.

We find from the above that the opium habit is spreading amongst the Hill tribes. The worst sufferers are the Mikirs and Kacharis and the tribes inhabiting the Sadiya Frontier Tracts. There is also a serious danger of the opium habit spreading among the Khasis round Shillong.

CHAPTER VI.

OPIUM SMOKING.

Opium is taken in Assam in two forms : (1) that of eating, (2) that of smoking. In the Assamese language these are called '*kanikhowa*' and '*kanipankhowa*' respectively.

When opium is eaten in small pillules, or made into a decoction by mixing it with water, the process is known as '*kanikhowa*' or '*kanimolikhowa*'. When it is smoked, after mixing the opium decoction with dried betel-leaves, the process is known as '*kanipankhowa*.' The following is a description of the process by which opium is prepared for smoking.

A quantity of opium is taken according to the requirements of the smokers. It is put on a ladle, or spoon, called a *heta*, along with some water, and then heated for some time, so that the decoction may be of the required consistency. The impurities are taken out of the decoction by removing them with cotton wool. This process requires about twenty to thirty minutes. After pouring out the decoction from the '*heta*' into a small pan, it is cleaned and washed and kept separately.

Then again the same decoction is heated for some 30 minutes, until it is converted into a sticky paste. This is kept carefully aside.

Some betel leaves are cut into fine pieces and dried on broken pieces of an iron pan, called "*kerahi*", until all are dried to the required degree. This process takes about 15 to 20 minutes. Then the opium decoction and the fried betel-leaves are mixed up together and heated, until the leaves show a greenish brown tint, when it is ready.

Very small quantities of this preparation are taken at a time for smoking. They are put on a bamboo pipe called "*Hoka*" (*hookah*) which is made up of one wider piece of bamboo and one much narrower piece stuck into the broader piece in the shape of the letter V with one arm prolonged downwards. The narrower piece is much the shorter and into this

the prepared opium is placed for smoking: the mouth of the smoker is put to the top of the broader piece.

As soon as one part of the mixture is smoked through another is put in, and so the process goes on through the night until the consumers have smoked to the required depth of intoxication. After each pull at the 'hoka,' sweet things are taken, such as plantains, sugarcane, or sweet tea, possibly to get rid of the bitter taste. Some say that it is to get the smoke into the stomach.

This process of smoking is very alluring to young men, who ask to be allowed to take their pull. There was evidence given to us that addiction began in this manner.

Opium smoking is a common practice in Assam. It can even be said that most of the new addicts begin their habit by smoking, though it is not possible to ascertain the exact number. We naturally have no figures to show the proportion of opium which is consumed for smoking and for eating, because no record is taken. Yet it might roughly be estimated that the figures for smoking and eating are normally about one-third to two-thirds respectively. In one place we found that the proportion of smokers to eaters was that of 8 to 22, which would roughly bear out the figures we have suggested.

The number of opium smokers has always formed a considerable portion of the indigenous Assamese population. The younger section of the community gradually gets into the habit of opium smoking, which ultimately leads to addiction. The reason why opium eating is more common, at later stages, is probably because the preparation of opium for smoking takes a considerable time and therefore opium eating is more convenient.

Since the writing of this Report, the Government of Assam, in response to repeated questions in the Assam Legislative Council, has at last allowed the Report of the Botham Committee to be made public and a copy has been received by the Chairman of our Enquiry Committee. The statements contained in this Report with regard to opium smoking in Assam bear out the conclusions already arrived at by the members of our Committee. As the subject is of very great importance and misleading

accounts were given by Mr. John Campbell at Geneva it has been considered advisable to re-print in the body of our Report some paragraphs from the Botham Committee Report itself as follows :—

“Amongst those who take opium for pleasure only, and not as a remedy for certain specific diseases, consumption in the form of smoking is almost universal to this extent, that almost all smoke in the first instance and only take to other forms of consumption after they become confirmed opium-takers and find that they cannot afford the time or the money required for smoking. On this point the evidence is unanimous and conclusive. It is more difficult to get an accurate estimate of the relative proportions at any one time of those who smoke and those who consume in other ways. This depends largely on the general prosperity of the consuming classes. When times are good and money easy to obtain, smokers do not feel the pinch so soon as when times are bad, and the stage at which smoking has to be given up and the less expensive form of consuming the drug substituted is postponed. Similarly, the poorer classes have to give up smoking sooner than those who are fairly well-to-do. Probably over the five districts one half would be a moderate estimate of the proportion of those now smoking to the total number of consumers. Many witnesses place the proportion of smoking as much larger, but it is likely that their estimate is exaggerated, partly because the evils of smoking bulk large in their view, and partly because they are apt to confuse the number of those who have been smokers with the number of those who are at the present time smokers. From the report of managers it appears that the proportion of smokers to opium eaters is much the same on tea gardens as amongst the indigenous population.

“It is to be noted that the form of opium smoking everywhere prevalent in Assam is that known in other parts of India as “madak”. The opium is boiled down with a little water to the consistency of a paste and then mixed with the shredded and fried leaves of betel, or less commonly, guava or other plants. The form known as “chandū” does not exist in Assam. Opium

smoking is generally looked upon with more disapproval than opium eating, partly because it is considered to be more injurious, and partly because it is far more expensive both in time and money. The process of preparation is a long one, and the actual smoking naturally takes longer than swallowing a mixture of opium and water, and the consequence is that the working day of the opium-eater is very contracted. The difference in expense between the two forms of consumption is shown in the statement of witness number 197 (no doubt an extreme case), who required three-fourth of a tola daily as a smoker, and is now content with eating one sixteenth of a tola daily.

“Opium smoking has undoubtedly increased very largely in Assam since the prohibition of poppy cultivation in 1860. Witness No. 231—a “Dewan” of the Assam Company whose memory goes back to that time and who is a reliable witness,—says that only about five per cent. of the consumers at that time were smokers. Probably the form in which opium was then commonly manufactured was not convenient for this form of consumption. The habit is not increasing—as compared with opium eating—now, because it has already reached the maximum and practically every consumer smokes if he can afford to do so.

“The habit is very commonly practised in company. There is nothing of the nature of regular “Opium dens”, but smokers frequently meet in the house of one or other of their number, and smoke together. There is a good deal of evidence that these smoking parties are looked on with disfavour. One reason is that at such meetings young men commonly acquire the opium habit; and another is that these parties of smokers are not infrequently suspected of being responsible for organizing petty thefts in the village in order to get the means of indulging in the luxury. The habit is increasingly common at such social gatherings as marriages and funerals, at which fashion required opium to be distributed for the use of opium consumers. Of recent years also a ceremony purporting to be of a semi-religious nature—the ‘Kania Seba’—has been introduced among the more ignorant classes at which opium consumers are assembled and opium distributed with the object of averting sickness or other

impending trouble. The distribution and consumption of opium is also common at 'Namgoa' or religious services. The semi-religious uses of the drug appear to be purely the invention of interested opium consumers, and have no authority in the Sastras. They are reprobated even when acquiesced in by the better classes and they undoubtedly set a bad example to the young and tend to spread the opium habit".

The paragraphs which we have quoted from the Botham Committee's Report appear to us to agree with the evidence which we ourselves have gathered. It will be noticed that while we had estimated the proportion of opium smokers to opium eaters in Assam as one third, the Botham Committee is inclined to estimate it at one half. Our evidence corroborated two important points in their findings :—

- (1) Almost all opium addicts among the village population began their opium habits by smoking rather than by eating.
- (2) The reason that the opium smoking habit is so often abandoned later is because of the inconvenience of the preparation and the difficulty of the smoking process compared with that of eating.

In Appendix XVII we have given further paragraphs from the Botham Committee's Report with regard to opium smoking and have made comments upon them.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GOVERNMENT CONTENTION.

(1) One of the Government contentions is that if reduction is carried beyond a certain limit the opium consumers will turn from this drug to ganja.

We recognise that from an *a priori* point of view this might have been thought not unlikely to occur, and there are indications of such a danger, in the past, in the Kamrup district. But when we come to examine the more recent figures we find that this has not happened since the Non-co-operation Movement began. Let us take the figures for the years 1919-24. In 1919-20, opium consumption was at its highest point since 1877, with 1748 maunds, and the consumption of ganja was 665 maunds for that year. After that date on both sides there has been a steady decline. We give below a comparative table for consumption of opium and ganja from 1919-20 to 1923-24—

Year.	OPIUM. Maunds.	GANJA. Maunds.
1919-20	... 1,748	665
1920-21	... 1,614	632
1921-22	... 1,013	452
1922-23	... 965	389
1923-24	... 884	344

From the above table we find that the consumption of opium and that of ganja have been going down together, and there has been no rise in the consumption of ganja as feared by the Government. It may be added that the decrease has been chiefly due to the temperance workers and the effectiveness of their work.

In 1923, there was an increase of 16 maunds 17 seers in consumption in the Assam Valley, but this has been satisfactorily explained by different Districts Officers as due to reasons other than that of opium consumers turning from opium to ganja. (*Vide* Assam Excise Report for 1923-24, page 5 and Appendix XVIII).

(ii) Another Government contention is that any further reduction in consumption and rationing of shops is certain to lead to smuggling of opium. Let us examine the classified statements of the more important offences under the Opium Laws from 1917-18 to 1923-24, and see if there has been any increase of the offences under different heads. This will give us a clearer indication than anything else. A table is given below :—

Year.	Unlicensed sale of Opium.	Illicit possession of Excise Opium.	Total Consumption of Opium.
Year.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.
1917-18	39	77	1,515
1918-19	35	69	1,574
1919-20	38	82	1,748
1920-21	21	57	1,614
1921-22	7	24	1,013
1922-23	6	33	965
1923-24	9	29	884

First, let us examine the figure for the unlicensed sale of opium. It came down almost abruptly from 38 in 1919-20 to 9 in 1923-24. Let us take the next item, 'Illicit possession of Excise Opium'. This offence is very common, but all the same it was reduced from 82 to 29. From 1920-21 to 1923-24 in spite of the decrease in consumption, there was a marked decrease of offences, which clearly goes against the Government contention that more opium will be smuggled into the country if there be a rapid reduction in the rationing or consumption of opium. The total number of offences against the Opium Laws is given below :—

Year.	Offences.	Year.	Offences.
1914-15	86	1919-20	123
1915-16	85	1920-21	77
1916-17	131	1921-22	50
1917-18	137	1922-23	50
1918-19	111	1923-24	49

The illicit poppy cultivation in 1921-22 had been, it is said, 'started at the instigation of the Non-co-operators, who gave out that under the new regime there would be no restriction on such cultivation.' The Non-co-operators hardly made any defence on such a charge because it was so utterly ridiculous. The

object of the whole movement was to make the people abstain from drugs and liquors; and the figures for consumption of excisable drugs from 1921 onward will clearly bear this out. There is no reason of any kind whatever why the Non-co-operators should have sought to encourage illicit poppy cultivation. On the contrary, the rousing of the public against the opium habit directly led to the detection and suppression of illicit poppy cultivation, since it was no longer possible to conceal it against public opinion of the neighbours.

The real danger to the country districts of Assam is not so much from internal cultivation of poppy as from the smuggling of opium into the country from outside, especially the Malwa Opium which is brought in by the traders and merchants. We would submit, however, that from the evidence which we received, including that of Excise officials, the prevention of smuggled opium is most of all a question of further expenditure of the opium revenue on the work of detection. If it were once decided by the Government that a greater portion of the revenue obtained by the opium monopoly would be used directly for the purpose of preventing opium smuggling and decreasing the opium vice, instead of being used as ordinary revenue, we should soon see the end of smuggling on an extended scale.

(iii) It has been contended by the Government that as there was a sudden drop in 1921-22, it is likely that there may be a reaction later on.

We shall take a few outstanding facts which will go to show that there is no cause for fear of such a reaction. The decrease from 1748 maunds to 1614 maunds and then to 1013, 965 and 884 maunds clearly indicates that the decrease is taking its normal turn, and will go on if a firm and sympathetic attitude is adopted. The public is only apprehensive lest there be any undue concession to the wishes of the opium eaters, who necessarily are likely to clamour for more opium if it can be had. The fact appears to be proved, that, while with an apathetic public opinion the danger of a reaction may be feared, on the other hand, when public opinion is awake and active, then thorough and permanent reforms may be carried through without any retrogression.

We feel very strongly indeed that nothing will be done whole-heartedly in the way of opium reduction until the intimate connexion between the income derived from the sale of opium and the general Revenue of the Province is finally and completely severed. This, we would submit, can only be done if the money derived by Government from the sale of opium is used directly in putting an end to the opium traffic.

We give below the actual present condition of affairs in a statistical form, for the years 1921-22, 1922-23 and 1923-24 respectively :—

Year	Total Revenue.	Excise Revenue.	Opium Revenue.	Transferred Departments.	Education Expenditure.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1921-22 ...	2,43,33,000	61,57,746	38,19,710	57,57,000	22,91,913
1922-23 ...	2,18,88,000	56,81,294	34,94,585	55,36,000	22,63,000
1923-24 ...	2,25,65,000	62,24,774	37,13,841	53,11,000	22,47,000

It is clear from this statement that the expenditure on the Transferred Departments is a little less than the total Excise Revenue of the province.

A further table may be given showing the percentage of the Excise Revenue to the total revenue for different typical Provinces in 1920-21 and 1923-24.

	1920-21.	1923-24.
Bengal ...	22.8	20.6
Madras ...	27.6	39.8
Bombay ...	39.8	28.7
Behar and Orissa ...	26.7	34.7
United Provinces ...	15.7	12.7
Punjab ...	10.8	11.4
Assam ...	39.8	28.7

It is evident from these statements that the percentage of Excise Revenue to total revenue in 1920-21 was the highest in Assam and Bombay Presidency. In the Bombay Presidency this high figure is probably due to the excessive drinking among the mill-hands. While it is satisfactory that the very high proportion of revenue derived from Excise has been diminished in Assam, yet the present figure of 28.7 per cent. cannot be regarded as a healthy sign of sound provincial economy.

We have asked our witnesses, whether they are prepared to forego any benefit derived from the Excise Revenue, and whether they would suggest any means to compensate for the loss of the opium income. Their unanimous opinion is that they are prepared to forego any benefits derived from the opium revenue, if only they are able to get rid of the opium evil. Indeed they go still further to the length of suggesting some other form of taxation, such as a small tax on tea.

We refrain from making any suggestion, whether, in these circumstances, either fresh taxation, or retrenchment, or both, would be desirable to make up the loss of revenue in consequence of the abolition of the opium traffic, as this is not within our terms of reference. Furthermore, we believe that any suggestions or recommendations of this nature belong more to the province of politics than to temperance reform. But we can say this much, that the loss of revenue would undoubtedly, in a few years time, be more than compensated by the greater industrious activity of the consumers after giving up the deleterious drug of opium.

(iv) Lastly we find it repeatedly stated in the Government defence of its own opium policy, that the people require opium in order to protect themselves from the diseases which are prevalent in a very damp and malarial climate like Assam, and that to deprive the Assamese people in remote villages of their unrestricted use of opium would be to subject them to great hardship and even to danger of fatal illness. This argument was brought forward by Mr. Cosgrave in the Legislative Assembly, and also by Mr. Clayton at the Geneva Conference, on behalf of the Government of India's position. It was also strongly affirmed that such interference with the liberties of the people would be resented by the Indian villagers themselves.

In answer to this contention, it may be stated that there is no desire on the part of the reformers to prevent the use of opium under medical prescription; for its medicinal use is regarded as entirely legitimate, and when prohibition comes into force every thing should be done to allow for that medicinal use being carried out even in remote villages. But it may be pointed out at the same time that in the whole of the medical

evidence given by our witnesses, among whom were many doctors with a life-long experience of Assam conditions, there was not one who advocated the free use of opium by illiterate villagers as a cure for the diseases prevalent in Assam. On the contrary, they pointed out to us that opium addiction among the Assamese villagers reduced the power of resistance and rendered severe attacks of infectious diseases, such as kala-azar and cholera, more liable to end fatally.

It is impossible for us to enter at length into the whole medical question, but it will be sufficient for our present purpose to say, that this Government contention now carries no weight, either with the educated people of Assam, or with the bulk of the village population. Whatever may have been the opinion in the past concerning the use of opium to ward off ague or cholera, public sentiment is strongly against its unrestricted use to-day. The immigrant populations, which enter Assam, are recognised as remaining more healthy than the indigenous population only so long as they refrain from the opium drug. When they become addicted to opium, then they too sink in the scale. At the time when the Assamese race itself had not become subject to the opium habit, it was strong and vigorous. To-day it is debilitated and outworn owing chiefly to opium addiction.

The proof of this experience has finally convinced the Assamese people that the opium habit is bad and that if continued it will be the ruin of their race. Therefore, the Government contention that the village people would strongly object to the restriction of the use of the drug and might even cause disturbance, if opium were further reduced, is regarded by us as groundless. The general evidence that we received went to confirm this opinion and to show that restriction of opium consumption would not be resented by the villagers, but on the contrary be welcomed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TREATMENT OF ADDICTS.

Of the 325 witnesses examined, only 71 witnesses were afraid of the temporary hardship that would ensue if consumption were restricted to medical and scientific needs. The rest do not apprehend any hardship. Those who are apprehensive of hardship, however, admit that it is no injustice for opium eaters to be deprived of the opportunity to do themselves harm and to be thus cured of their disease themselves and prevented from infecting others. There are three points to be practically considered with regard to the final extinction of the opium habit among the consumers: (1) How to make provision for a reasonable warning to be given to the opium eaters below a certain age. (2) How confirmed addicts above a certain age should be treated. (3) How the Government may adjust itself to the new situation of reduction in opium revenue.

Among 17 of the 71 witnesses who, not being themselves addicts, specially feared the consequences to the opium eaters themselves, if the prohibition of opium sales were adopted immediately as a Government policy, there is a difference of opinion. Two witnesses are of the opinion that opium eaters, above the age of 50 years, should be allowed to have opium under strict medical supervision, and below that age all rations should be immediately stopped. Three witnesses are in favour of immediately restricting opium to people below 40 years of age, and above that age it should be allowed under strict medical test. Two witnesses again are in favour of prohibition within three years, two in favour of prohibition within ten years, one in favour of restricting opium below thirty years of age. The other fifty-four witnesses, who were apprehensive of hardship, are themselves opium eaters. But at the same time they unanimously hold the view, that the opium traffic, as it exists to-day, should be immediately prohibited, so that their children might not take to it. Ten of them suggested that they are prepared to suffer the hardship of

immediate deprivation, if total prohibition would save the coming generation from the drug. When questioned as to what made them continue it, their obvious reply was:—"As it is easily available, we cannot refrain from getting it."

The great majority of our witnesses point to the fact that in most cases there is no very great hardship, except a temporary one, in breaking through the addiction, and they urge that the sale and consumption of opium should be immediately stopped. We are bound to regard this as honestly given testimony, if a general judgment is to be formed. It is to be noted here that the evidence of those who themselves broke free from the habit, during 1920 and 1921, leads us to believe that it is often an exaggeration to say that extreme hardship or physical injury would be caused by compulsory withdrawal of opium.

While there would undoubtedly be temporary hardship and physical suffering, the benefits would probably be more than compensated by the prosperity of the people and should be cheerfully faced. But if a compromise is sought to be made between two sets of opinion in Assam, an agreement might be reached on the formula that opium should be immediately prohibited in case of all addicts below the age of forty, except in such instances as are certified under medical prescription. Above that age, it might be allowed for the time being, with medical supervision and inspection. The names of all opium eaters above the age of forty should be registered and their rations fixed. In this manner, every effort would be made to prevent any more persons from becoming addicts and to limit the use of opium to medical requirements only. Our evidence shows, that even the opium eaters themselves are thoroughly ashamed of the habit, and the continuance of the opium traffic by a civilised Government is strongly condemned. The extent of the popular feeling against it can be estimated by the action taken by people of all shades of opinion during the movement of 1921.

The Indian non-official members of the Legislative Council are practically unanimous in condemning the opium excise policy and look forward to a time limit for non-medical consumption and to an immediate registration of confirmed addicts.

In Assam it may be asserted generally that there is one common opinion on this question. All are for prohibition. Only questions with regard to the time limit for final prohibition vary slightly. The mass opinion on the subject is perhaps nowhere in India so strong and articulate as it is in Assam. Out of the total of 325 witnesses, orally examined, 207 are representatives from Assamese villages. Again, after a classification of the 996 men convicted and imprisoned, under the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, mainly for picketting the opium shops, we find that as many as 700 were people from villages. Such was the depth of feeling against opium. These figures prove that the Assamese village people were willing to undergo the hardships of a jail life in order to stop the opium traffic.

CHAPTER IX.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

In conclusion, we would recommend that the following steps be taken :—

- (1) The sale of opium and its derivatives should be ultimately limited to the medical and scientific needs of Assam.
- (2) Provision should be made for confirmed addicts above the age of forty, enabling them to procure a rationed amount of opium, their names being registered for that purpose.
- (3) All opium addicts, who are under forty years of age, should be dealt with as medical patients. Wherever opium is needed by them, it should be given only under the order of a fully qualified doctor, the medical permission to obtain it being subject to quarterly renewal.
- (4) These changes should be carried out within the next five years. At the end of five years, opium should be placed on the list of poisons under a Dangerous Drugs Act, and treated as such for all inhabitants of Assam.

While much depends on the Government action, we feel that no progress can be made without the education of public opinion. The Non-co-operation movement showed what a great advance could be made in opium restriction by voluntary effort and public propaganda. The decrease in consumption in a single year is a proof of what can be done by these methods. This work needs to be still further promoted and sustained.

We, therefore, appeal to all those who desire the welfare of Assam to organise themselves into anti-opium societies and to advocate opium prohibition amongst the people in general. This will lead to the education of public opinion against the opium evil and create a moral atmosphere, without which no

great success can be achieved. Every avenue of approaching the illiterate masses, who are the greatest consumers, should be employed. Especially necessary is the careful training of the young children in all the elementary schools of the Assam Valley and among the Hill tribes. We would invite the co-operation of all sections of the community in this educational work, and we would specially appeal to the missionaries to help us in organising temperance societies among the Hill tribes with whom they are closely connected.

Finally, we would venture to ask Mahatma Gandhi once more to come to Assam and put himself at the head of a great anti-opium campaign to be carried on by entirely peaceful means.

(Sd.) KULADHAR CHALIHA.
 ,, TARUN RAM PHOOKAN.
 ,, NABIN CHANDRA BORDOLOI.
 ,, KRISHNA NATH SARMA.
 ,, AMBICAGIRI ROY CHAUDHURI.
 ,, OMEO KUMAR DAS.
 ,, ROHINIKANTA HATI BARUA.

APPENDIX I.

Inspection notes at Tinsukia, Borpathar, Nadial Village.

The Nadial village is situated just a mile from the Tinsukia Railway Station. This is a typical opium village. There is practically no family which is free from this habit. Almost all the opium eaters are reduced to pauperism. Many of them have parted with their landed properties and are reduced to a state of destitution. Several families have removed elsewhere. The condition of the thatched huts is miserable ; walls are worn out and not repaired ; the thatch is falling off from the roofs, which cannot protect the inmates from the rains and winds. The paths leading to their houses are full of mud and clay and it is impossible to enter their courtyard. We saw one young boy under 15 who had taken to this habit. This village is a typical one. We believe there are hundreds of villages like this all over Assam. The following are some details which we have kept :—

Jogara and his wife took half a tola of opium daily. There is no other member. They have got one small granary, two huts—the thatch over the roofs is falling off, walls decayed and worn out.

Bholou.—We met him while he was taking his morning dose. He has one hut where he smokes, sleeps and does all other things. There is another shed for his only pair of bullocks. We had to wait some time before he came out of his hut. It is almost impossible to walk along the path leading to his hut. The cultivation of his land is done by his wife and children. He requires one tola of opium in a week.

Two families have gone out elsewhere by selling their homestead, and garden labourers are settling on their lands.

Sukabar, Piabar, Punaram and their mother all smoke opium. They are brothers, but live separately from one another. Each of them has one hut in which he sleeps, cooks, smokes, etc. They have no cultivation.

Bhadreswar, aged about 22 years, took opium ; his mother also is addicted to this habit.

Labhit, a boy of about 15 years, takes opium. We personally saw him ; the ribs of his chest can be counted. His appearance is emaciated.

All these people have a suspicion and fear, which we noticed in their looks and manner when answering our questions. They all say that opium habit is bad ; it is disastrous ; it is eating away the vitals of their race ; but as regards themselves they want medicine for the removal of the habit.

The list of names was very kindly supplied by Babu T. C. Roy. The conditions of these people are truly described. One opium

eater gave a stroke to his wife just below the neck with a *dao*, and she narrowly escaped death. We saw the mark upon her. They have got only one little son, aged about 5 years, sickly, pale and with a big stomach. Their house has fallen down through neglect and one small hut has been erected for them by the uncle of the wife who is well-to-do and lives at a distance. The quarrel which ended in a stabbing affray arose about opium.

Almost all the villagers are day labourers. They earn only to buy their daily dose of opium. There is one literate man amongst them who has read up to the 4th class and acted as a forester for several years. He took opium and his wife with his children left him. They earn, but do not support him. He has taken another wife. Sjt. Manick Chandra Hazorika and Babu T. C. Roy tried their best to bring all the little boys of the village for the purpose of taking their photos, but they did not come.

This village belongs to the Muttock Community. Sjt. K. Chaliha and myself inspected the above village.

(Sd.) K. SARMA.

13-7-24.

I inspected this village on May 6, 1925 and found the information correct as far as I was able to check it. The forester informed me that the opium consumed by himself and his wife cost him 28 rupees per month.

(Sd.) C. F. ANDREWS.

6-5-25.

APPENDIX II.

THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT.

Statement of Sjt. N. C. Bordoloi.

It was in the year 1920 in the month of September about ten months after my return from England, where I went as a Moderate to obtain reforms for Assam, that a band of Assamese gentlemen went to Calcutta under my lead to attend the Special Congress which was held under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai. It may seem like a paradox, but all the same it is quite true, that myself and the other gentlemen, who went as delegates, opposed the Non-co-operation resolution as put forth by Mahatma Gandhi. On our return to Assam a special sitting of the Assam Association was held at Gauhati. That meeting was attended by the late Hon. Ghanasyam Borooah and Rai Bahadur Nilambor Dutta. It was the

sense of the whole house that Non-co-operation on some of the items should at once be adopted in Assam. The items were as follows:—

- (1) To restrict the minimum quantity of the excisable articles of Assam.
- (2) To use hand-spun and other Swadeshi cloths.

The boycotting of schools and colleges was pressed by Sreejut Trigunachara Borooah, but the sense of the house was distinctly against it and so the resolution was defeated.

After that I began to work in the Kamrup District accordingly. My first lecture was delivered in November, 1920, in the Nalbari circle, in Kamrup, at a place called Belsor. At that meeting, for the first time, the people about five hundred heard the message of Mahatmaji from my lips. I specially directed my attention towards opium, ganja and liquor habits and also against the use of cigarettes. There was not the least shadow of violence in speech or deed, but the hearts of the simple Assamese people were touched on that day by Mahatmaji's message, and their imaginations were fired to catch a glimpse of that great Rishi. Many persons broke their ganja pipes even in that meeting and threw away their cigarettes from their pockets.

Then a band of selfless workers very rapidly organised meetings all over the district. Within a month cigarettes disappeared, people having made bonfire of them voluntarily. In December, a number of delegates attended the Nagpur Congress and a number of college students from Gauhati attended a Students' Conference there. Students returned ahead of me and on my return I found the Gauhati College in a ferment, the prominent lead being taken by the late Sjt. Chandranath Sarma. Circumstances compelled me to call out boys from the College, only those who would work for the country and go to jail if necessary. Mr. Phukan and Mr. Chaliha and myself requested the boys not to strike *en masse*. The boys, however, in their excitement, did not hear our injunctions and came out in large numbers, only to go back again after a month. The small fraction which remained outside took up the temperance work in earnest, because they thought this was very important politically, economically and morally. Sreejut Kanak Chandra Sarma after returning from Nagpur began to tour day and night and lecture all over the Nowgong District against drink and opium; and his achievements during January to April, when I went to Nowgong, were remarkable. Convinced by his arguments opium eaters gave up the habit and surrendered their ladles, pans and bamboo *hookas* even in the meetings. It made my heart glad to see hundreds of these trophies in the Congress Offices. I found in April at Jorhat the same excitement prevalent among the people and an energetic band of workers there had already begun their work in right earnest under the leadership of my friend Mr. K.

Chaliha. About the 20th April, 1921, I went to Dibrugarh and the first thing I heard there was that the effect of Sjt. Padmanath Jain's visit was so great that many of the Mahaldars, both vendors of opium and liquor, were almost ruined for want of custom. As a matter of fact, during the months of January to April, 1921, Lakhimpur district must have been worked the hardest and next Nowgong and then Kamrup. Mahatmaji visited Assam in August. The holy name of the great saint worked miracles in the hearts of the simple Assamese. Even before his advent within a fortnight nearly the whole Assam became Khaddar-clad. The spinners and weavers at Aligarh must have made huge profits by supplying hundreds of parcels of Khaddar in the different districts of Assam. His visit and its effect upon the masses cannot be described. Those who saw it even now remember the enthusiasm with a thrill. The three months after he had left, *viz.*, September, October and November, 1921 had practically concentrated in them the progressive realisation of the highest ideals of freedom, morality and sacrifice for the country. Spinning wheels plied all over Assam in thousands and picketting of opium and liquor shops went on most peacefully, only the police breaking the peace now and then. Congress offices were established all over the province and selfless bands of young men went to the farthest villages in the interior, carrying the message of the *charka* and temperance. People felt that they were men and understood their rights. They did not make low salaams to the Europeans and Government officials. They ceased to be servile and it was too much for the ruling race. They saw in these harmless Congress workers a band of violent revolutionaries. The Cr. Law Amendment Act which was meant to check the blood-thirsty murderers and revolutionaries of Bengal was introduced to checkmate the Non-co-operation movement and the result is well-known. All who were self-sacrificing were clapped into the jail. All the leaders, including Messrs. Phukan and Chaliha were imprisoned on the flimsiest offences. On my return from jail in June, 1923, although much depressed, the movement was not quite dead. The Gaya split killed the movement about 14 annas, but two annas still remained, and I can say that the consumption of opium and ganja did not go up much. As the movement was directed for a specific purpose, after the purpose had been served the reaction soon took place.

My idea is that these opium and ganja habits ought to be immediately stopped by legislation. Mere professions of pity and sympathy for the poor opium-eaters on the part of the authorities seem to me futile. How many opium-eaters who go to jail die for want of opium? No one died during the Non-co-operation movement when we induced them to give up opium; and I am quite sure no one will die if opium be totally prohibited from tomorrow, except for medicinal purposes. If a few,

however, die from not being able to take opium, I believe the world will not be the poorer. Those people are already living the life of the dead for all purposes. If humanitarians think that it would be cruel, medical opinion in some extreme cases (when reported) may be taken and relief granted. I do not believe in rationing. So long as there are shop licenses sold by public auction smuggling in large quantities will go on.

APPENDIX III.

PERIODS OF OPIUM POLICY.

1826-1860

Non-intervention period.

Poppy cultivation by private persons side by side with Government sale of opium.

1860-1874

Government Opium Monopoly began.

Opium sold from the Government Treasury without any restriction.

Licenses given freely to respectable persons without payment.

1874-77

'Fixed License Fee System.' Under this provision any person could open any number of shops for the retail sale of the drug on the payment of a fixed sum for each shop.

1877-1883

The so-called Mahal system was introduced. Under this system "the right to sell opium in a particular Mahal was put up to auction" and the purchaser was given the exclusive right to sell opium at a definite number of places, the sites of which were movable within the area purchased by him.

1883-1894

Individual shop-licenses were sold and the price of opium was raised.

1894-1913

The Royal Opium Commission decided against opium-smoking as injurious.

Consumption begins to rise again after 1900.

1913-1921

The Botham Committee reported to Government against opium-smoking.

Treasury price of opium was raised.

Other important changes were made in accordance with the Botham Committee's recommendations, but consumption increased.

1921-24

The Non-co-operation temperance movement was started under Mahatma Gandhi.

Government undertook the rationing of shops and commenced registration in Hill districts.

1924-1925

More drastic rationing. Registration to be made universal in the five districts within two years.

APPENDIX IV.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS IN THE ASSAM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REGARDING OPIUM.

30th July, 1924.

EXCISE SHOPS.

104. *Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha asked—*

Are the Government aware that the excise shops at the towns of Jorhat, Sibsagar and Golaghat are situated in or near the public market? If so, do the Government intend to remove these shops from such a public place?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

The answer to the first part of the question is in the negative.

Under the rules, the Municipal Boards and the public are consulted before the settlement of an excise shop in a Municipal area, and the Deputy Commissioner is bound to consider any objection raised to the location of any such shop. Government are not aware that any objection was preferred and overruled in respect of the shops mentioned and see no reason to interfere.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha—

May I know if the Government have enquired the distance of these shops from the public road?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster—

Government have no information.

RATIONING OPIUM SHOPS.

109. *Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha asked—*

Will the Government be pleased to state whether the Commissioner, Assam Valley Division, delegated his power of rationing opium shops to the Deputy Commissioners?

Have the Deputy Commissioners since the delegation increased the rationing of opium shops?

Will the Government be pleased to state the increase in the quantity of opium thus rationed either under orders of the Commissioner, Assam Valley Division, or by the Deputy Commissioner from January, 1924 to 30th June, 1924?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

Commissioners have been empowered to authorise Deputy Commissioners to vary from time to time the ration of any individual shops provided that the district ration is not exceeded.

Government have no information as to the delegation of authority made by the Commissioner of the Assam Valley Division under this permission, nor as to any orders passed by the Deputy Commissioners under the delegated authority. If the Hon. member requires information regarding changes in the ration of particular shops, Government will enquire.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha—

Will the Hon'ble Member enquire from the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar whether the ration for the district of Sibsagar has been increased by one maund per month? Whether the Deputy Commissioner, or the Commissioner, or the Administration has increased the ration for that district by one maund per month?

Mr. Webster—

An enquiry will be made.

20th September, 1924.

REDUCTION OF RATIONING OPIUM.

Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan asked—

105. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state whether ten per cent. reduction of rationing opium annually is being carried on in every district and in every shop?
- (b) Will the Government be pleased to state whether the Pass Book System has been introduced in any area for rationing the opium eaters in the plain districts?
- (c) To what end the census taking of the opium eaters is being continued?

- (d) Was not gradual personal registration of opium eaters declared to be the accepted policy of this Government under Sir J. Beatson Bell's regime?
- (e) If so, do the Government now intend to give effect to that policy?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

- (a) No. The policy of Government is to reduce the shop rations gradually but firmly, but they have never undertaken to effect a reduction of ten per cent. per annum.
- (b) It has been introduced experimentally in the Goalpara District.
- (c) As a check on illicit sales, as a mild deterrent in the case of consumers who shun publicity; and as affording data for future action.
- (d) Sir J. Beatson Bell at one time hoped to be able to work out a scheme of personal registration to be gradually introduced throughout the Assam Valley, but the difficulties that confronted his Government in the execution of that policy were explained in Mr. Edward's Speech in Council on the 13th March, 1920 and in their Resolution No. 4452F., dated the 23rd May, 1921.
- (e) The extension of the experiment to Goalpara is a step in this direction, but the time is not ripe for rapid advance.

Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan—

Will the Government be pleased to state what announcement they made after the resolution of the Rev. J. N. Roy on the opium question was passed? Did not the Government announce that they were not going to give effect to the whole resolution, but that a 10 per cent. reduction would be given effect to henceforth?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster—

I regret I have not got the terms of the resolution with me or the statement made on behalf of Government. But my recollection is that the undertaking given by Government was that the reduction of 10 per cent. would be made in the forthcoming year. As to future years, I cannot find that Government ever undertook to make a 10 per cent. reduction year after year.

Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan—

May I take it that the effect of that resolution was only that Government was prepared to make a reduction of 10 per cent for one year?

Mr. Webster—

The Hon'ble Member is correct. There is no question of a definite reduction of 10 per cent. year to year. In subsequent years, the reduction will be made in such manner as the Government consider practicable.

Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan—

Then, Sir, we are not sure whether 10 per cent. reduction will be given every year.

Mr. Webster—

The Hon'ble Member is quite correct.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha—

At what rate is reduction supposed to be carried out?

Mr. Webster—

We propose to reduce as fast as we think practicable without encouraging smuggling to such an extent as would defeat our object.

Sjt. Kamakhayaram Barua—

Can the Hon'ble Member give an idea of the time within which reduction will be made?

Mr. Webster—

I regret I am no prophet.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua—

Will the Government be pleased to state why the pass-book system was introduced in Goalpara and not in other districts?

Mr. Webster—

The main reason was that comparatively small amount of opium was consumed in that district, and we thought that the practical difficulties that we should encounter in giving effect to the system in the Upper Assam districts will not be so great in the Goalpara District.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua—

May I take it then that the Excise policy of Government is mainly based on considerations of revenue?

Mr. Webster—

The Hon'ble Member would not be justified in drawing that inference.

Sjt. Kamakhayaram Barua—

May I enquire what difficulty exists in introducing that system in the upper districts.

Mr. Webster—

I have taken a long time to explain. There is a resolution coming up very soon dealing with this matter in connection with which the whole thing will be explained. I may say now that we shall require a very large and expensive staff in order to enforce the system.

Sjt. Mahadev Sarma—

May I enquire what circumstances led Government to come to the

conclusion that the time was not ripe for introducing the system in those districts?

Mr. Webster—

I would again suggest to the Hon'ble Member that it will be better to wait till the matter is discussed on the resolution that will be soon coming up.

Sjt. Kamakhya Barua—

That resolution might not be coming up at all in this session.

Mr. Webster—

It comes to this that so long as opium is produced cheaply in other parts of India and can be smuggled into Assam from China and sold here and opium poppy can be grown, we cannot possibly go very fast in the direction of reducing the present consumption without enormous expenditure and an expensive excise staff.

Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan—

Have the Government of Assam written to the Government of India informing them of their own difficulties in the matter?

Mr. Webster—

The answer is in the affirmative.

26th September, 1924.

EXCISE SHOPS.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha—

149. Are the Government considering the desirability of asking for the information which they undertook to supply with regard to question 104 of the 30th July, 1924?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

The information has been obtained. In Jorhat town the country spirit, ganja and opium shops are about 1200, 250, and 200 yards respectively from the public market.

In Sibsaigar, the country-spirit, ganja and opium shops are about 330, 330 and 430 yards respectively, from the public market.

In Golaghat, the country spirit shop is about 590 yards from the market and the ganja and opium shops are close to the market.

In all these towns the shops are near the public road.

The Municipalities concerned raised no objection to the location of any of these shops.

26th September, 1924.

RATION OF OPIUM SHOPS.

Sjt. Sarbeswar Barua asked—

166. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state if it is a fact that the rations of the opium shops have been recently increased and are again going to be further increased?

(b) If so, will the Government be pleased to lay on the table a statement showing the extra quantities of opium allowed in each Sub-division and also the limit, if any, to which they propose to ration each Sub-division?

(c) Is it a fact that the authorities propose to open a new opium shop at Rangajan at a distance of 4 miles from the shop at North Lakshimpur town?

(d) Are the Government considering the necessity of licensing each opium-eater fixing the individual ration and providing for a steady and gradual reduction of the same?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

(a) Commissioners have been empowered to authorise Deputy Commissioners to vary from time to time the ration of any individual shop provided the district ration sanctioned by Government is not exceeded. In the district of Sibsagar, the Deputy Commissioner has sanctioned an increase of the ration in the case of certain shops but has not thereby exceeded the district ration. This may have occurred in other districts.

(b) Government have no information as to the increases allowed for particular shops in the several sub-divisions. In no circumstances, however, will the district ration be exceeded. The rations fixed for each district are as follows:—

			Mds.	Srs.
Goalpara	...	...	4	0
Kamrup	...	...	91	0
Darrang	...	...	126	0
Nowgong	...	...	185	0
Sibsagar	...	...	250	0
Lakshimpur	...	...	273	0
Cachar	...	...	21	0
Sylhet	...	...	5	28
Khasi and Jaintia Hills	...	...	23	4
Naga Hills	...	...	17	28
Sadiya	...	...	26	28
Balipara	...	..	1	20

(c) The Government have no information.

(d) The Hon'ble Member is referred to the answer given to the question asked by Sjt. Nilmoni Phokan at this session.

Sjt. Kamakhyaram Barua—

May I know what are the reasons for increasing the rations of individual opium shops?

Mr. Webster—

If the Hon'ble Member will tell me to which particular shop he is referring, I shall endeavour to obtain the information.

Sjt. Kamakhyaram Barua—

The Hon'ble Finance Member has stated in his answer that in some shops, in the Sibsagar District, the rations have been increased. May I know the reasons why the ration was increased in those cases?

Mr. Webster—

A few cases have been enquired into. The reason why extra ration was given to certain shops was that the existing ration was insufficient to meet the requirements of persons who were in the habit of going to the shops in question, with the result that the whole ration was sold before the end of the month and consumers were put to great inconvenience.

Sjt. Kamakhyaram Barua—

What steps do Government propose to take to decrease the consumption of opium in such cases?

Mr. Webster—

This, Sir, is not a question that arises.

Sjt. Kamakhyaram Barua—

Will the Hon'ble President kindly give a ruling? My question is—what steps do Government propose to take to cut down the consumption of opium? This is in connection with question 166(a).

Mr. Webster—

It is entirely a new question—What Government do at present is to fix the maximum ration of the district. Within that maximum limit, it is left to the district officer, subject to the control of the Commissioner, to distribute the ration between different shops, but in Sibsagar the total amount distributed came to less than the maximum ration allowed to the district. In fact the Deputy Commissioner was keeping the shop ration to the lowest possible limit, and while keeping within the maximum limit of the district has allowed a little more to this particular shop.

Babu Brojendra Narayan Chaudhuri—

Are there any fixed rules to guide the officers in estimating the rations?

Mr. Webster—

No, Sir, not beyond the fact that we ascertain the minimum quantity required to satisfy the needs of the local consumers.

Babu Brojendra Narayan Chaudhuri—

Is there any list of the regular consumers kept in the district office?

Mr. Webster—

There is, Sir, the census of opium eaters taken by mauzadars. There are also the sale registers kept by every opium vendor. These two, as the House is aware, were carefully considered before the general scale of shop rations was introduced.

Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan—

Do these registers tally?

Mr. Webster—

I am aware, they do not in some cases. I can't say whether they do in any case.

Babu Brojendra Narayan Chaudhuri—

May I take it that the rationing and the distribution of the ration amongst the shops is largely in the discretion of the Deputy Commissioner?

Mr. Webster—

The answer is in the affirmative.

Sjt. Bepin Chandra Ghose—

Will the Government be pleased to state whether the Garo Hills consumers get any opium at all?

Mr. Webster—

The answer is in the negative unless they get it from outside.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua—

The reply to question (c) is that Government have no information. Did the Government make an enquiry?

Mr. Webster—

Government have made no enquiries.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha—

Are there special reasons for not making an enquiry.

Mr. Webster—

I saw no object in making an enquiry. If there is any objection, the first thing to be done is to approach the Sub-divisional Officer, from whose decision an appeal lies to the Deputy Commissioner, and from the Deputy Commissioner's decision to the Commissioner and then to the Government.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha—

May I take it that if an objection is taken by a member of this House, it will not be heard at all? May I take it that way?

Mr. Webster—

The answer is in the negative.

27th September, 1924.

OPIMUM REVENUE.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua asked—

169. Will the Government be pleased to state the amount of (1) opium consumed and (2) opium revenue in each district of the Province of Assam in the year 1923-24, giving the figure for each Sub-division of the districts separately?

RATIONS OF OPIUM.

170. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state the amount of fixed sanctioned rations of opium of the following opium shops in the district of Nowgong—(1) Baithangsaw, (2) Lumding, (3) Diphu.

(b) What was the amount actually sold by the vendors in each of the above shops in the months of June, July and August, 1924 giving the figure for each month separately?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

169. A statement is laid on the Library table. (See Appendix XII).

Sub-division figures for the Surma Valley have not yet been received and district totals have, therefore, been given. Sub-divisional figures of that Valley will be communicated to the Hon'ble Member, if he so desires.

170. (a) and (b) The figures are as follows:—

RATION.		SALES.					
		June.		July.		August.	
		Srs.	Ch.	Srs.	Ch.	Srs.	Ch.
Baithalangsaw ...	45 Seers per month	14	11	14	4	13	0
Lunding ...	25 " " "	25	0	25	0	25	0
Diphu ...	15 " " "	15	0	13	2	14	11

The low figures of sales in the first named shop are attributed to the failure of the lac crop and consequent low purchasing power of the people.

SETTLEMENT OF OPIUM RATIONS.

Mr. T. P. Chaliha asked—

177. (1) Will Government be pleased to state on what principles and by whom the opium rations for individual shops are settled for any particular year?

(2) Will the Government be pleased to state the rations for the different shops which were announced at the auction sales and the license originally issued to the mahaldars for the year 1924-25, for the districts of Sibsagar and Lakshimpur?

(3) Will the Government be pleased to state the district rations for these two districts sanctioned by the Excise Commissioner at the time for the purpose of the auction sales for the year 1924-25?

(4) Is it a fact that the district authorities have increased or offered to increase the rations of individual shops since the date of last auctions?

(5) Was the district ration of opium for 1924-25 fixed leaving a margin over for the ration of individual shops, as announced at the time of the last auctions?

(6) If such margins are allowed, will Government be pleased to state the reasons for doing so?

PRICES OF OPIUM.

178. (1) Will Government be pleased to state on what principles and by whom are the upset prices of opium shops settled?

(2) Is it not a fact that in many cases, opium shops are settled at Rs. 138/- to Rs. 139/- per seer on the vend-fee system, while the prescribed retail price for opium is only Rs. 140/-?

(3) Is it not a fact that opium mahaldars have to deposit securities in cash at the rate of Rs. 130/- per seer of opium, and have to pay the wages of gomostar and to meet various expenses?

The Hon'ble Mr. J. E. Webster replied—

177. (1) Rations for individual shops are fixed by the Deputy Commissioners, subject to the control of the Commissioner. The ration is fixed in consideration of the requirements of the consumers served by the shop. Deputy Commissioners, when authorised by the Commissioner to do so, have power to vary from time to time the ration of an individual shop in their districts, provided the total ration sanctioned by the Government for the district is not exceeded.

(2) The information is not available.

(3) The ration sanctioned for the district of Sibsagar is 250 maunds and for Lakhimpur 273 maunds. As already stated, the amount of the total rations fixed for the shops at the time of settlement is not known.

(4) In the district of Sibsagar, the Deputy Commissioner has increased the monthly ration of certain shops but has not thereby exceeded the total ration for the district. Government have no information in respect of other districts.

(5) and (6) In fixing the ration for each district Government had no intention of leaving a margin to be added to the ration for individual shops. As already explained, it was left to the Deputy Commissioner to distribute the district ration among individual shops, subject to the maximum ration fixed for the district not being exceeded.

178. (1) The upset or the reserved price is fixed by the Deputy Commissioner subject to the sanction of the Commissioner.

(2) The maximum retail price of opium is Rs. 140/- per seer and the orders of Government are that opium shops should not, except for very special reasons, which should be recorded, be settled at a figure which will allow a margin of profit of less than Rs. 3/- a seer.

(3) Each vendor is required to deposit at the time of settlement as security a certain sum to be fixed by the Deputy Commissioner with the sanction of the Commissioner. The amount of security shall not be less than one month's vend fees on the full ration of the shop nor more than two months' fees. Government have no information as to the amount of security demanded in individual cases.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua—

Will the Government take it from me that almost all shops in the Jorhat Sub-division are settled at Rs. 139 per seer and it leaves only a margin of Re. 1/- per seer?

The Hon'ble Mr. Webster—

If the Hon'ble Member wishes further enquiries to be made, we will make them.

17th March, 1925.

Sjt. Mahadev Sarma asked—

OPIMUM POLICY.

223. (a) Have the Government of Assam seen the answer given regarding opium policy in the Indian Legislative Assembly at Delhi by Sir Basil Blackett on 27th January, 1925?

(b) Have the Government of India been consulted by the Government of India on the statement made by Mr. Walton, the representative for India in the Geneva International Opium Conference, that Burma is the only province in which opium is smoked to any large extent?

224. (a) Has the attention of the Government been directed to the statements made by the same member that opium is a transferred subject in every province in India?

(b) Does it hold good in our province also?

(c) Do the Government propose officially to refute this statement?

The Hon'ble Sir William Reid replied—

223. (a) Yes.

(b) No. This Government and the Government of India are aware that a good deal of opium is smoked in Assam.

224. (a) Yes.

(b) No.

(c) The Government of India must know that excise in this Province is a reserved subject, but this will be brought to their notice.

Sjt. Mahadev Sarma asked—

OPIMUM ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

225. (a) Is it a fact that the Botham Committee's Report on Opium has not yet been published?

(b) Will the Government be pleased to state the reason for it?

(c) Is it a fact that the recommendations of the Committee were mostly against the present policy of the Assam Government?

The Hon'ble Sir William Reid replied—

225. (a) and (b) The report as a whole was not published, but the findings of the Committee and their recommendations were published in April, 1914. Extracts dealing with opium smoking were also published in November, 1921. In the debate on the Rev. J. J. Nichols Roy's resolution in the Council session of March, 1921, the Government expressed their readiness to print and circulate the report if this was desired, and are ready to do so now.

(c) No.

Sjt. Mahadev Sarma asked—

·NAMES OF MEMBERS OF THE OPIUM ENQUIRY COMMITTEE.

226. (a) Will the Government be pleased to state the names of the members of the Botham Opium Enquiry Committee?

(b) What was the total number of the witnesses examined and the places where the examination took place?

(c) Was the examination in camera or in public?

(d) What was the total expenditure met by the Government for this Opium Enquiry Committee and the number of days the committee toured.

(e) What was the actual amount paid to each member of the Committee as travelling allowances?

(f) Did the Committee contain any Non-Official member? If not, was any Non-Official Member co-opted in any of its sittings in any place?

The Hon'ble Sir William Reid replied—

226. (a) 1. Mr. A. W. Botham, I.C.S. (President).

2. Sreejut (later Rai Bahadur) K. P. Chaliha.

3. Maulvi (now Khan Bahadur) Kutubuddin Ahmed.

4. Sjt. (now Rai Bahadur) R. N. Phookan, Extra-Asst. Commissioner.

(b) The Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, tea garden managers, and the Adhikar Gorains of the leading sadras were consulted by letters. The Committee also examined 482 witnesses; centres being Gauhati, Nalbari, Barpeta, Kalaigaon, Mangaldai, Tezpur, Dibrugarh, Dumduma, Dakshipur, Sonas, Nazira, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dinajpur, Kamrup and Nowgong.

(c) Probably both. The committee had discretion to treat as confidential the evidence of any person.

(d) Rs. 5,346. The committee met and began work on the 6th January and finally separated on 27th February, 1913.

(e) The total expenditure on travelling allowance was about Rs. 1,786. Details are not available.

(f) The composition of the committee has been given.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

4th March, 1925.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua asked—

36. (a) Have the Government of Assam seen the report in the press sometime in the month of November last to the effect that Mr. John Campbell, the representative of the Government of India in the League on Nations Opium Conference in Geneva, that there is practically no opium smoking in India?

(b) Are the Government of Assam in a position to say that there is no opium smoking in Assam?

(c) If the above answer be in the negative, had the Government of Assam any correspondence with the Government of India to ascertain the authenticity of such a statement made by their representative at Geneva? If not, why?

(d) If the Government are sure about the authenticity of the said statement, have they contradicted it and written to the Government of India that such a statement as far as Assam is concerned is not true?

37. (a) Did the Government of India ask for any information of the Government of Assam on the question of opium during the course of last four years and lately also?

(b) If the answer be in the affirmative, will the Government be pleased to place copies of their opinions on the table of the House?

(c) Did the Government of Assam take into consideration the non-official view on the subject before submitting their opinion to the Government of India?

The Hon'ble Sir William Reid replied—

(a) The Government have noticed in the press a statement ascribed to Mr. Campbell at the meeting of the Opium Conference of November the 6th last at Geneva to the effect that the problem of opium smoking did not exist in India. Without the records of the proceedings, which they have not yet received, they are not prepared to assume that Mr. Campbell has been correctly reported.

(b) This Government are aware that opium is smoked in Assam and the Government of India must also be aware of this.

(c) and (d) The questions do not arise.

Sjt. Rohini Kanta Hati Barua—

Have the Government of Assam taken any steps to make the Government of India aware of such things?

The Hon'ble Sir William Reid—

We have Sir, on two or three occasions addressed the Government of India about opium smoking. If the Hon'ble Member wishes that we should bring this misstatement to the notice of the Government of India, we shall readily do so.

37. (a) Yes. The Government of India have asked for the opinions of the Government of Assam on several occasions during the last four years.

(b) The rules do not allow the publication of such correspondence.

(c) The Government of Assam are aware of the views expressed in the Legislative Council and elsewhere on subjects connected with opium

and have always taken pains to see that those views are made known to the Government of India. The policy of this Government has been repeatedly stated and is unchanged.

7th March, 1925.

Sjt. Kuladhar Chaliha asked—

83. Have the Government adopted the resolution of Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy regarding the abolition of opium from the province within 10 years? If so what effect was given to his resolution?

The Hon'ble Sir William Reid replied—

83. The Hon'ble Member is referred to this Government's Resolution No. 4452F, dated 23rd May, 1921, to their resolution on Excise Administration for the years 1920-21, 1922-23 and 1923-24 and to the statements repeatedly made on their behalf in this Council. While unable to give full effect to the resolution adopted by the late Council, the Government have gone a long way in that direction. During the past five years the ration has been steadily reduced. The system of registering consumers of opium and allowing sale only to registered consumers has been introduced in the Sadiya Frontier Tract, the Naga Hills, the North Cachar Hills and the Goalpara District. It has been decided to extend the system to the Kamrup District from 1st July, 1925 and to the other four Assam Valley Districts from the 1st April, 1926.

APPENDIX VI.

OFFICIAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING OPIUM IN ASSAM.

STATEMENT RELATING TO GOALPARA.

The inhabitants of this district are unusually temperate. They consume very little opium or ganja, and are fairly moderate in the use of country spirit. How marked is the difference between the eastern and western end of the Assam Valley can be judged from the fact, that though the population of Lakhimpur in 1901 was only about four-fifths of that of Goalpara, the excise revenue of Lakhimpur in 1903-04 was more than eight times as great. The principal cause of this remarkable difference is the enormous quantity of opium consumed in Lakhimpur.

Prior to 1860, no restriction was placed upon the cultivation of the poppy. The evil effects of unrestrained indulgence in opium were undeniable and in that year poppy cultivation was prohibited, and the drug was issued from the treasury, the price charged being Rs. 14 a seer. This was raised to Rs. 20 in 1862, Rs. 22 in 1863, Rs. 23 in 1873,

Rs. 24 in 1875, Rs. 26 in 1879, Rs. 32 in 1883, and Rs. 37 in 1890, the price at which it now stands. While Assam was under Bengal, Government licenses for the retail vend of opium were issued free of charge. In 1874, a fee of Rs. 12 per annum was levied on each shop, and in the following year it was raised to Rs. 18. Between 1877 and 1883, the right to sell opium in a particular Mahal was put up to auction, but this system was found to be unsatisfactory; and in the latter year the individual shops were sold, as is done at the present day. The general result of the Government policy has been enormously to reduce the facilities for obtaining the drug. In 1873-74, there were in the district 250 shops for the retail vend of opium; thirty years later there were only 24.

The figures are as follows: In 1873-74, there was a total consumption of 84 maunds. This was reduced to 29 maunds in 1880 and to 22 maunds in 1890. In 1900 the quantity consumed was only 8 maunds. These figures show that there has been an extraordinary decrease in the quantity of opium consumed in the district. At the present day, the amount is insignificant, but at no time was the drug really popular in Goalpara. In 1873-74, the number of maunds consumed was not much more than one-fifth of the number in Lakhimpur, though the latter district had not one-third of the population of Goalpara. The reduction in the number of retail shops and the imposition of a heavy duty seem to have succeeded in almost killing out a habit which had never taken a firm hold upon the people. Opium is not a popular drug in North Eastern Bengal, of which Goalpara really forms a part, and in 1901-02 only 8 maunds were issued in the neighbouring district of Jalpaiguri, and 52 maunds in Rungpur. (*Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. III, Chapter 7, Page 124, Pub. 1905*).

STATEMENT RELATING TO NOWGONG.

Few events of historical interest have occurred in Nowgong during the time that it has been administered as a British district. In 1835, the revenue amounted to Rs. 60,475 and the expenditure to Rs. 35,622. Ten years later the revenue had risen to Rs. 1,31,000, but then ensued a period of complete stagnation and in 1853 it was less than it was in 1845. The causes of this stagnation were said to be "frequent high inundations, repeated visitations of cholera and small-pox carrying off thousands, and the licentious habits of the people." The term "licentious habits" apparently refers to the use of opium, this being a drug to which the inhabitants of Nowgong have always been addicted, as the people could hardly be described as 'licentious' in the sense in which that word is usually employed. The appalling results of kala-azar are described in the following chapter, but it is significant to find that the local officers even in the fifties were far from hopeful with regard to the future of the

Assamese. In 1854, Major Butler wrote as follows:—"In no district in Assam are the people in more prosperous circumstances than in Nowgong. Rice, their common food, is cheap and abundant; numerous rivers and lakes afford a plentiful supply of fish; their gardens furnish vegetables and fruit; and the climate rendering but little clothing necessary, with a trifling revenue to pay, they have every reason to be satisfied and contented; and I believe they are grateful for the protection of the British Government. With all these advantages, however, they are a licentious and degraded race and appear degenerating rapidly. Numbers of children die annually and the period of their existence seems diminishing. Few adults obtain old age and we almost despair of the population increasing, or of their condition being ameliorated by education, or the acquirement of more industrial habits." (*Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Pages 55—57*).

.....In 1873-74 there were in the district 867 shops for the retail vend of opium, whereas in 1903-04 there were only 134.

The following figures show the extent to which the consumption of the drug has been affected by the raising of the rate of duty—In 1873-74, 284 maunds; 1879-80, 179 maunds; 1889-90, 243 maunds; 1899-1900, 168 maunds; and 1902-1903, 191 maunds. The population, in the first and the last years of the series, was about the same, though the number of aboriginal tribesmen, who are the chief consumers, was probably smaller in the latter year, but the quantity of opium issued was only two-thirds of the amount sold in 1874. Prior to 1860, when there were no restrictions upon the cultivation of the poppy, the opium habit had taken a firm hold upon the people and, even though it was taxed, habitual eaters were unable to forswear the drug. But the steady rise in price and the diminution in the number of shops naturally tended to restrict consumption and to deter the younger generation from taking to the habit. During the first half of the century, opium probably cost the people about Rs. 5 a seer. Since 1890, the price has varied from 40 to 50 rupees a seer, and it is only natural, that such a heavy increase in the cost should be attended with a decrease in the amount consumed. (*Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Page 197 and 198*).

From Table XII it will be seen that excise furnishes nearly three-eighths of the total revenue of Nowgong, and that five-sixths of the excise receipts are derived from the sale of opium. Prior to 1860, no restriction was placed upon the cultivation of the poppy, but the evil effects of unrestrained indulgence in opium were undeniable, and, in that year, poppy cultivation was prohibited, and the drug was issued from the treasury, the price charged being Rs. 14 a seer. This change was bitterly resented by the people, and cost the life of the Asst. Commissioner, Lieut. Singer; but the story of the Phulaguri riots has already been told in the chapter on the history of the district. The price was quickly

raised to Rs. 20 in 1862, Rs. 22 in 1863, Rs. 23 in 1873, Rs. 24 in 1875, Rs. 26 in 1879, Rs. 32 in 1882, and Rs. 37 in 1890, the figure at which it now stands. While Assam was under the Bengal Government, licenses for the retail vend of opium were issued free of charge. In 1874, a fee of Rs. 12 per annum was levied on each shop, and in the following year it was raised to Rs. 18. Between 1877 and 1883, the right to sell opium in a particular mahal was put up to auction, but this system was found to be unsatisfactory, and in the latter year the individual shops were sold, as is done at the present day. The general result of the Government policy has been to enormously reduce the facilities for obtaining the drug. (*Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Pages 196 and 197*).

Opium is said to have been introduced by some of Capt. Welsh's soldiers and to have been first used as a specific against bowel complaints. The poppy was first cultivated at Beltala near Gauhati and the drug which first was regarded as a medicine soon enslaved the Assamese.

(*Vol. VI, Nowgong, p. 196*).

APPENDIX VII.

EXTRACTS FROM MR. MOFFAT MILLS' REPORT.

The following extracts are taken from Mr. Moffat Mills' Report to the Government in 1853 concerning conditions in Assam. He had the benefit of being able to obtain first hand information concerning each District. He gives the following supplementary statements in different Appendices:—

It is contended that the Assamese peasant is apathetic and indolent, that he is satisfied with an easily attained competency and that without a large increase of population, which is at present checked by the ravages of cholera and epidemic disease, by the inordinate use of opium and the licentious habits of the people, there is no prospect of extending cultivation in any considerable degree. (P. 5, §23).

The tendency of the present system is to erect the Ryots into Zemindars. The practice of sub-dividing lands and the apathetic opium-eating habits of the Assamese are against the prospect of ever realising this hope, and I feel assured that it is bootless to rely on the exertions of the Ryots alone for extension of cultivation even in a limited degree. It is admitted that they should cultivate more than they do, and in some parts they do not raise sufficient for their own consumption. (P. 9, §35).

As regards the barriers to improvement which it is within the power of Government practically to diminish or remove, the greatest is the immoderate use of opium. The correspondence is before the Government, and I need not descant on the opinions of the Collectors on the subject. All agree, the Sub-Assistants, the Collectors, the Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner, as also the late Deputy Commissioner, Colonel Matthie, that something should be done to check the immoderate use of the drug, and rescue at least the rising generation from indulgence in a luxury which destroys the constitution, enfeebles the mind, and paralyzes industry. Moreover, the indulgence has been so abused as to cause the Ryot to disregard the culture of the more valuable products, and to take large advances to be repaid in opium, which, owing to the uncertainty of the seasons, oftentimes entails great loss, and establishes a demoralizing system of gambling.

Judging from my own personal observations, I am of opinion that the picture drawn by the Collectors is not over-coloured; three-fourths of the population are opium eaters, and men, women, and children alike use the drug. At the same time, I must state that I witnessed very little of the terrible effects of eating it in the appearance of the people. The use of opium has with many become a necessary of life, and in a damp country like Assam it is perhaps beneficial if taken with moderation, but experience has shown that to allow every man to grow the plant and manufacture the drug unrestrictedly is most injurious to the morals of the people. Opium they should have, but to get it they should be made to work for it.

Three courses are proposed for adoption; the introduction of the Opium Regulations into the Province, and placing cultivation consequently under surveillance; the immediate suppression of the cultivation altogether; the gradual extinction of the cultivation by means of an increasing assessment on the lands. The latter remedy is that proposed for adoption by the Board. The objections to it are, firstly, that it is impolitic to assess lands with reference to the products grown on them, but a great evil requires a sovereign remedy, and I think we should be justified under the circumstances in departing from this sound principle; secondly, that grown as the plant is, chiefly on sequestered *churs* and amongst forests, on spots freshly cleared out, it would be almost impracticable to prevent concealment of cultivations; thirdly, that the higher rate of taxation could only be fixed on the lands as the leases expired, and the introduction would not be simultaneous and general.

It seems to me that the simplest and most effectual plan is to suppress the cultivation at once, and pour into the station and into the Mofussil, at certain places, a sufficient quantity of Government opium for the consumption of the people. The Collectors are generally in favour of the Board's proposal, chiefly because there would be a great difficulty in

setting down a number of shops in some parts, and the people might suffer in consequence.

Moreover, it is stated, that if the tax on Government opium were high, there might be concealment of lands, but the poppy land would not bear any great assessment at the reduced rate of the Government drug, and the cultivation would soon cease.

Referring to the opinion of the authorities on this point, I would preliminarily adopt the Board's proposition, taking care at the same time to have a sufficient quantity of the drug in readiness to supply the wants of the people. It is probable that the cultivation would rapidly decrease when Government opium can be bought cheaper and the intention of Government to raise the assessment, and eventually to interdict the cultivation, is made known.

The suppression of the growth of poppy would greatly extend cultivation. Captain Butler informed me that in lieu of one poorah of Kanee the same amount of labor would cultivate ten of Sursoo, Maskalai, or Ahoo Dhan. This would greatly benefit the country and the people. A greater extent of land would be cultivated, which would enhance the revenue, and the Ryots would reap the advantage of increased trade. The moderate price at which opium is sold will, I think, stop the clandestine importation of the drug.

From the enquiries I have made from the different Collectors and the people, I do not think the capabilities of the Province are such as to admit of the production of opium on a large scale, with a view to the establishment of an Agency, while the difficulty of procuring labor would operate against the carrying on of a factory, nor is there any reason to believe, considering the small quantity of the Government drug sold among an opium-eating people, that it is exported to the Eastward towards the Chinese territory. (Page 19 to 21. § 65—72).

From Major Velch's Report on Assam (taken from Moffat Mills' book).

12th. I have already adverted to the ease with which the Assamese can provide for their moderate wants, and their little inclination to exert themselves further. It, therefore, becomes an object for consideration, as to what can be done to stimulate their industry, either through their present wants or other means. One want they have, and that amounting to a craving, which has hitherto been the bane of Assam, and which if it cannot be turned into a blessing, may at least be mitigated as an evil by using it as a stimulus to industry; this is, I need scarce say, the universal and excessive addiction of the Assamese to opium-eating.

13th. For as the climate of Assam, as far as I can judge, is not very favourable to the growth of the poppy, I believe that the time and labor the Assamese now bestow on its culture, if devoted to other products

fit for export (such as surso, jute, reah, cotton, mogah, etc.) would not only enable them to purchase all the opium they require cheaper than they can grow it, but afford a handsome profit, bring a greater breadth of land under cultivation, and conduce to the general prosperity of the Province.

14th. I would, therefore, strongly urge that Assam be placed on the same footing in respect to opium as the adjoining district of Rungpoor in Bengal, either at once, or by such intermediate steps as would bring this about in the course of three or four years at most. (Appendix C, § xii and xiii).

From Lieut.-Colonel Mathie's Report (taken from Moffat Mills' book).

The evil that has resulted to the Assamese, particularly the lower classes, from the inordinate use of 'kanee', caused by the absence of all restraint on it, is beyond doubt very extensive. The Commissioners and the Collectors have given a very clear and correct description of it, so I need not repeat it. One attempt to check it has lately been made by the introduction of the Behar drug, which has been disposed of by the Collectors at a very cheap rate, cheaper than kanee is sold for, but it has met with no success, as nearly all the Collectors report the cultivation has not decreased: although the sale of the Government opium has been extensive. It has, however, been productive of some good, as the confirmed 'kaneeahs' are now perfectly aware that they can purchase opium at a moderate rate near their homes from the Collectors. The most effectual checks of all, in my opinion, may be applied now without apprehension of bad results, *viz.*, the imposition of a high tax on poppy cultivation for a short time, and eventually a prohibition of it altogether. I think that for one year it might be assessed at double the rate for the finest rice lands, from next year at treble the rate, and that after two years the cultivation might be stopped altogether, and the regulations respecting it in force in Bengal might be extended to Assam, but great care must be taken that the Collectors always have a large supply of the Behar drug, and that they make the sale of it as extensive as possible. With some portion of the present generation, 'kanee' is really a necessary of life; they positively could not exist without it, and I am perfectly sure that no checks that could be devised would ever cure them of taking it in large quantities. Stopping the cultivation will be of use chiefly to the next generation, and partly to such of the present as have not yet learnt to use it intemperately. I perfectly agree with the local authorities in thinking, that aiding in the cultivation and preparation of kanee gives the Assamese a relish for it, and that the practice of itself has created a large number of 'kaneeahs', or confirmed opium-eaters.

Whatever rules may be prescribed to bring into effect such checks will, I think, be sure to be carried out carefully, and therefore be attended with beneficial results, as they accord with what all the local Revenue authorities have themselves recommended.

The residents of the Nowgong, Seesagar and Muttock districts are more addicted to 'kanees' than those of the Kamroop and Durrung divisions. It is the poorer classes who become emaciated from taking opium, as they will often forego all other kinds of sustenance to obtain it. The higher classes who are addicted to it keep their condition very well, because they take their usual food besides, and are not exposed as the poor are. No person on merely seeing them would ever suspect the respectable portion of the Assamese of taking opium to excess. (Appendix D XVI).

Anandaram Dhakeal Phookan's Report (from Moffat Mills' Report).

The growth of the poppy in Assam has, for some time past, engaged the attention of the Government. Large quantities of Government opium have of late been imported; and the expediency of abolishing the cultivation of poppy by the people is at present under consideration. We are not aware of the precise intention of the Government on the subject. Whether, by interdicting the culture of the drug by the people, the Government contemplates to expel the general use of opium from the country, or whether the Government proposes to substitute its own in lieu of the Native Opium, we are alike ignorant. The extensive introduction of Government opium, however, leads us to conclude that the measure will be productive of consequences other than the extirpation of the drug from the country. If it be advanced, that by abolishing the production of opium in the country, and rendering it dearer to the people, the use will be rendered less universal, we would beg to submit that the people will never shrink from the use of the drug as long as they continue to obtain supplies of it. As a striking illustration of the truth of this position we would beg to point out the Chinese nation. Notwithstanding the most severe and sanguinary laws promulgated by the Chinese Government against the use of opium by the Chinese, the whole empire has fallen a victim to the baneful drug.

The universal use of opium has converted the Assamese, once a hardy, industrious and enterprising race, into an effeminate, weak, indolent, and a degraded people. It has been universally the sole cause of undermining the health and physical constitution of the whole population. It is used by the young as well as by the old. Women themselves are often not excepted; and in many parts of the country, opium is freely administered to infants and children. It is, therefore, high time for the Government to

provide speedy and effectual remedies to preserve the country from utter ruin and degradation. Opium was not so generally used in Assam a century back. Some fix the year 1792, the year of Captain Welsh's deputation to Assam to restore the reigning Rajah to his throne, as the time at which opium was introduced into the country. Without insisting on the truth of this account, we feel confident in asserting, that before the accession of the British power, twenty-eight years ago, the use of opium was not half so universal. We are, therefore, of opinion that strenuous measures and timely remedies will soon enable the people to recover their former state.

We conceive that no other remedy than the gradual diminution of the supply of opium can produce the desirable effect. The tree *will* grow so long as the root is not destroyed. The source must be completely exhausted, and the introduction of fresh supplies from out of the country carefully suppressed. To secure this the growth of the opium in the country must be so crushed as eventually to lead to its total extinction. A sudden and total abolition of the culture of opium, however, will not only entail the loss of numerous lives, but would subject the people to much calamity and unhappiness. Even with the present abundance of opium, numerous poor people die of dysentery from the want of the drug ; and when it is abolished, a great number will not have the means of purchasing it, as they now raise it in their own gardens at a trifling cost. We have, therefore, to submit, that in the first place the importation of Government opium be discontinued, and that in the second, the poppy cultivation be subjected to a heavy taxation. An over assessment will deter those who cultivate it for the sake of realising money by its sale, a practice which is at present extensively carried on. The cost of labour, together with an excessive taxation, will leave little or nothing to the cultivator as an adequate recompense for his trouble, and the culture of opium will then be an object not of luxury or gain, but of absolute necessity. None but those who cannot actually subsist without it will ever think it worth their while to cultivate it. It will thus become gradually less abundant and more scarce. The old will be sparing in its use, and the young less eager to become its prey. So that it is to be confidently hoped, that in the course of another half century, when the old generation fades off, young Assam will be completely freed from the temptations of so deleterious a drug.

We are of opinion that the enhancement of the opium tax should be gradual, commencing from 4 to 10 Rs. per poorah or more, and that the assessment be comparatively lightened in those districts where its use is more universal. For instance, the tax should be heavier in Kamroop, where the use is less general, than in Shibsagur or Nowgong. (Appendix I, p. xliii & xliv).

*Dr. John Barry's Report (Civil Surgeon, Goalpara District).**Goalpara District—*

But till this is done, I reiterate my conviction, that the cultivation of the poppy, and the Government sale of opium, is an unmitigated evil, a grievous curse to the people of this country. It is appalling to see the fathers and children of a single family sunk in depravity and callous inaction, but when a community is thus incubused, a nation indeed, politically, morally and socially benighted, we are bewildered and amazed that a mild and enlightened Government such as ours should have permitted such a state of things to be ever created, much less to exist, in any of her Provinces for a single day.....The male adults, from fatuity and incapacity, become drags and encumbrances, while at the same time they are rendered impotent in perpetuating their species, and the offspring that happen to be born to them are weak, stunted and often decrepit, as wretched and perhaps more miserable than their fathers were. Whether we view the condition of the Assamese and their country as philanthropists or statisticians, it is piteous and deplorable and calls for amelioration, for unless it is apprehended, obviated and remedied, how, let me ask, are the magnificent resources of this beautiful valley to be brought to light and developed? The Province in itself is rich in everything that can make a country wealthy, except in population, and without this she is impoverished and degraded to the lowest degree. That there are other influences at work in this Province which are unfavourable to the growth of the census, besides that proceeding from opium, I do not deny, and the principal of these, I need not hesitate to say, are cholera and small-pox. Of the first, I shall briefly say, that it commits ravages everywhere, but chiefly let it be noticed, among those classes inordinately given to the use of opium. (Appendix E, p. viii).

Kamrup District—

The excessive and almost universal habit of taking opium has caused great demoralization of the people and indisposed them to much agricultural labour. (Kamrup, page 9).

The Magistrate recommends that a certain quantity of opium be given to the opium-eaters when first admitted. The sickness and mortality in the Jail are great, and are mainly attributed to opium, the use of which is common among the class from which the prisoners are chiefly drawn. The Civil Surgeon supports the Magistrate's proposition, and suggests that opium-eaters should be exempted from labour for one month after entering the jail, and sent to Hospital for the purpose of undergoing a course of preparatory treatment. (Page 16, para. 55).

Assistant Surgeon McLean's Report on Kamrup.

With regard to the causes of sickness and mortality, which have their origin in the general habits and mode of living of the native populations, but little need be said. The misery in which a larger proportion of the Assamese live, the scantiness and bad quality of their food, consisting in great part of green, unripe vegetables and fish in an advanced stage of decomposition when these articles are procurable, the insufficiency of their clothing, and the defective nature of their lodging, serve to produce much of the sickness which prevails among them. But powerful as is the influence of these circumstances, and difficult as it is to counteract their influence, there is one thing of all but universal occurrence among them, which renders it almost hopeless to make any attempt to ameliorate their condition, and to which may be traced, either directly or indirectly, the greatest part of the disease and wretchedness existing among the lower classes, not only here, but throughout the length and breadth of the Province.

I refer to the habit of opium eating, which is practised by men, women and children, and in most instances to an excessive and most injurious degree. The effects of opium when used in moderation, upon the system, can hardly be pronounced hurtful, that is, to an appreciable extent, but there are few cases in which the consumption is limited to a small quantity, as the habit grows so much upon the victims of it, that they find it impossible to restrain their appetites, which, as it must be gratified at any price, leads to much distress as well as crime. For the unfortunate wretches who are given to it, finding that without their accustomed stimulus they are incapable of the slightest exertion, and preferring the want of not only the comforts but the necessaries of life, to being deprived of it, part with everything they have to enable them to continue a while longer their indulgence in it ; at last, helpless and destitute, and desperate from the suffering to which they are subjected, they take to dishonest courses and terminate their career in jail, or are carried off by some of the common diseases of the country, dysentery, cholera or fever. That the effects of this pernicious custom have not been over-rated by me, can be fully satisfactorily proved. At present, I shall merely state, with reference to this assertion, that, in the jail here, where the strength is on an average not more than 160, the mortality from dysentery alone is more than what occurs in the Military hospital in a body of men averaging about 400 strong from all diseases.

These are facts which cannot be disputed, and they afford, I would submit, satisfactory evidence, that the cause of this excessive mortality in the complaint, under notice, occurring in a body of men who have every attention paid to them as far as their physical comforts are concerned, must be sought for in their habits and mode of life previous to their

imprisonment, and of these there is none, as far as I can see, except the custom, above noticed, capable of exercising upon the diseases to which they are subject, an influence so general and so often attended with fatal consequences. (Page 34, App. x, Kamrup).

The causes of sickness and mortality which have been noticed under this head are but sparingly susceptible of improvement. Opium-eating, which operates more powerfully than any of the others, can be remedied only by the suppression of the cultivation of the poppy throughout the whole Province. How this should be done, or whether under present circumstances, any interference with the regulations which at present exist on the subject would be advisable, it would be presumption on my part to say. I may, however, be permitted respectfully to express my opinion, that as long as matters remain *in statu quo*, so long will the Assamese continue a set of weak, sickly, miserable wretches, and that the arrangement, in question, if gradually and judiciously brought into operation, would be attended with not the slightest danger to life, while the positive advantages to be derived from it would be incalculably great. (Kamrup, p. xxxvii).

.....A careful investigation of their previous habits and mode of living has forced upon me the conviction, that those customary circumstances are mainly referable to opium, the use of which is exceedingly common among the class of men from which they are chiefly drawn. It is true that a few months of the ordinary prison fare, generally effect a surprising improvement upon their personal appearance; the majority of them becoming sleek, fat, and, to judge from their looks, strong and healthy. But it is equally certain that this improvement is apparent. Their constitutions, ruined by debauchery and intemperance, are unable to resist the shock of any serious attack of disease more especially affections of the stomach and bowels, to which, as already noticed, they are strongly predisposed, and past experience leads to the conclusion, that as long as opium is so largely used in the Province, so long will the rates of sickness and mortality continue undiminished. (Kamrup, p. xxxviii).

Durrung District—

The present Collector states that the causes which have operated to retard the increase of cultivation and population generally are, first, the oppression of the fiscal officers; secondly, the facility afforded to the Ryots, under the present system of management, of emigrating from one mouzah to another, and from one district to another, to avoid the payment of revenue; thirdly, the mortality occasioned by cholera and other epidemic diseases; fourthly, the apathy and indolence of the Assamese race, which is greatly superinduced by the inordinate use of opium; fifthly, the emancipation of domestic slaves by Act V of 1843, which proved the ruin

of many respectable families and drove them to throw up their lands ; sixthly, the destruction of cultivated land by the constant inundations of Brahmapootra. (Durrung, page 12, para. 54).

Nowgong District—

The sale of ganja and spirits is not taxed in this district. The quantity of opium sold is very small, in consequence of the preference given to Kanee. The Collector states that the quantity grown in the district is estimated to be about 400 maunds ; the land under poppy cultivation last season was 7,970 beegahs 1 c. 16 p. (*Nowgong*, page 12, para 51).

Seesagar District—

The excise duties have not been introduced into this District. Opium is only retailed, and the quantity sold from September, 1850 to the 11th of June, 1853, is 110 maunds, and the profit after deducting the original cost of manufacture at five rupees and eight annas per seer is Rupees 19,800. The Collector states that a much larger quantity of opium would have been sold in 1850-51 and 1851-52, had there been opium in store ; all the Government opium was bought up, and the drug indented for had not arrived. The crop was short, and kanee at the time sold in the bazar from fifteen to twenty Rupees per seer.

.....The Collector states that from fifty to sixty per cent. of the population are opium eaters, and is of opinion that were the growth of the poppy prohibited and the Government opium only sold, the consumption would materially decrease ; grown as it is now in every man's garden, it has in their eyes little or no intrinsic value ; the case would, he thinks, be far different, when it had to be purchased with ready money. (Seesagar, p. 11-12, paras. 49 and 50)

Moniram Borua Dewan's Petition—

.....The abolition of old customs and establishment in their stead of Courts and unjust taxation ; secondly, the introduction of opium in the district, for the gratification of an opium-eating people, who are daily becoming more unfit for agricultural pursuits.....(Seesagar, Appendix K. B., page lxvi).

.....The introduction of Government opium into the Province will have to be put a stop to, and the people allowed to grow their own drug. But some method ought to be invented by the Mohamuntree Sahib for the eventual eradication of opium cultivation in the Province by a gradual reduction at the rate of one in twenty per annum, as the drug cannot be suddenly interdicted among those who have been under its baneful influence. (Appendix L, page lxvii).

Account of Dr. W. B. Long, Civil Surgeon, Seebasagar—

Before closing this short notice of the diseases incidental to the natives and others resident in Assam, it will be necessary to allude to the effects which the habit of opium-eating induces, since it is one, albeit universally prevalent, amongst the young as well as the old of both sexes. I am, I believe, right in stating, that 70 per cent. of the total population use opium in daily quantities, varying from a few grains up to three tolas weight and more each man ; while there are, it is true, few who consume the minimum quantity. The average consumption daily by each for all is, perhaps, between one and two annas.

The habit reacts very injuriously on the people ; it renders them listless and apathetic ; weakens their digestive system and produces congestion of the brain and other organs particularly of the liver and kidneys. There has before been noticed the liability to severe congestive inflammation of the lungs, to which opium-eaters are liable after slight labour.

So long as the opium-eater is able to procure good and nourishing diet, suited to his system, and to provide himself with proper clothing and comfortable lodging, the evil effects of the drug are not so speedily seen as in the case of his poorer brother, who, to obtain the means of indulging in the vicious habit, is obliged to stint himself in wholesome food and go badly provided as to lodging and clothes ; but even in the more comfortable class, the evil day is only put off. At length, under the use of opium, the system gives way ; the bowels become torpid ; the liver and kidneys congested ; the circulation of the blood sluggish, and the brain unfitted for the healthy performance of its functions, torpor of mind and body becomes established and goes on increasing, till dropsy or some other disease comes to close the scene. The offspring of such a race is degenerate, weak and sickly.

In a climate like that of Assam, human life is of less value than in that of a drier country. The evil effects of a warm and moist climate on man are increased by this pernicious habit of the people. I do not wish to offer any opinion on the question as to whether the use of opium in small and moderate doses, with good and generous diet, comfortable lodging, might act beneficially or otherwise. This, as regards the Assamese, is not the question ; for amongst them opium is not so used. Under any circumstances, the good, which the use of opium as a luxury might be capable of effecting, is problematical. In Assam the evil it produces is obvious and tangible. It would, I believe, be well, if Government in its wisdom, would determine to prohibit the growth of the poppy, in this Province, under any circumstance.

I am given to understand that the unlimited growth and unrestricted use of opium amongst the peasantry of Assam are not of very old date. Formerly, under the iron sway of some of their Governors, the lower

orders in Assam, I am informed, were not permitted to grow the poppy, or to use opium in any way. The present race of opium-eaters could not, it is probable, do without using opium, but now that the Abkaree drug has become known to the people and its use not objected to by them, those who must have it, could find no difficulty beyond the necessary one of providing themselves with the means for its purchase, (itself a counter-irritant to the listlessness of opium), of supplying themselves with a substitute for 'kani'. After a time the present race of 'Kaniyas' will become extinct and a new set of people will grow up, free from this vicious habit,—men, it is to be hoped, who will possess more energy and more stamina, more action and more of preserving industry, with resolutions and tempers determined to turn to the best account, the many, the abundant, the valuable and important resources for acquiring wealth, with which their rich and luxurious valley teems on every side of them. (Sibsagar, Appendix L, page lxxxiii and iv).

Lakhimpur District, Moffat Mill's Account—

The Government opium has been sold in the District since 1848-49. The revenue derived from it is shown below, but the introduction of the drug has not had the effect of diminishing the cultivation of the native drug. The quantity of land sown with poppy for the last three years (for which years only returns are forthcoming) is stated as 1,276 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres for 1850-51, 1,676 for 1851-52 and 1,566 for 1852-53, but the accuracy of the statement is open to question, as the Merees cultivate it in the densest jungle, and it is difficult to find out the cultivation, but Captain Dalton reports that he has ascertained that last year 153 maunds of native opium passed from the cultivators into the hands of the merchants, who retailed it again into the District.

1848-49	929	15	9	This is the nett proceed of the sale after deducting the price of opium at 5-8 per seer.
1849-50	3,705	4	9	
1850-51	11,412	0	0	
1851-52	6,952	0	0	
1852-53	10,552	0	0	
TOTAL RS. 33,552 4 6				

APPENDIX VII.
STATISTICS OF ASSAM, 1853.

(Reproduced from Mills' Report.)

No.	Name of Zilla	Total area including Hills and Forests, etc.	Area of cultivation	Nett Revenue			Popula- tion	No. of inhabitants in each sq. mile of total area	Amount of taxation on each Individual		
				Sq. miles	Sq. miles	Rs.			A.	P.	Lacs	Rs.	A.	P.
1	Kamroop	3,345	562	2,95,993	3	9	387,775	116	0	12	6
2	Nowgong	8,712	276	1,30,437	3	1	241,300	28	0	8	8
3	Durrung	2,844	346¾	1,52,795	6	9	185,569	65	0	13	3
4	Sibsagar	5,440	256%	1,19,032	6	4	159,573	30	0	12	0
5	Luckimpore	9,900	134	43,714	1	1	85,296	9	0	8	0
	Total of Assam proper ...	30,241	1,575	7,41,972	5	0	1,059,513	35	0	11	0
6	Goalpara	4,104	677	12,836	3	8	114,638	34	0	1	5
	Grand Total	34,345	2,252	7,54,808	8	8	1,201,151	35	0	10	0

Opium Revenue—Goalpara, Rs. 40,180 in 1853-54, Durrung, Rs. 1,386 (nett profit in 1852-53), Luckimpore Rs. 10,552 (nett profit in 1852-53). Figures for other districts are not available.

Goalpara formed a part of Bengal till 1822 and is permanently settled with the Zamindars.

APPENDIX VIII.

CONSUMPTION BY CASTES AND TRIBES.

(From Royal Commission on Opium, Volume II.)

Districts	Population	Consumption	PRINCIPAL OPIUM EATING TRIBES AND CASTES													Proportion of opium eating to total population	
			Chutiya	Dom	Ahom	Ganak	Kalita	Keot	Lalung	Mikir	Miri	Salai	Jugi	Koch	Hari		
		Md.															
Kamrup	6,34,249	150	1,036	14,826	475	5,967	129,939	34,239	2,375	13,595	218	7,832	17,406	97,641	3,725	53.38%	
Durrung	3,07,761	200	3,546	7,988	3,135	8,121	19,468	14,239	22	2,362	2,749	1,065	18,795	54,045	1,846	46.41%	
Nowgong	3,44,141	211	10,468	26,223	5,265	248	24,034	20,553	46,658	47,881	243	207	21,792	49,790	2,997	76.37%	
Sibsagar	4,57,274	357	54,487	23,564	97,465	2,081	34,470	20,615	5	1,144	15,579	6	6,221	25,554	2,595	63.79%	
Lakshimpur	2,54,053	329	17,206	12,185	46,869	170	4,694	2,457	569	21	18,940	5	948	6,005	879	47.13%	
Total ...	19,97,478	1,242	86,743	84,786	1,53,209	16,587	212,605	90,103	49,629	65,003	37,429	9,115	65,162	2,33,035	2,042	57.85%	

APPENDIX IX.

STATEMENT CONCERNING OPIUM TAXATION, 1904-1924.

Incidence of opium taxation for the whole of Assam, and for the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Nowgong and Darrang, from 1904-05 to 1923-24.

Year	Incidence of taxation per head of population for whole Assam	Incidence of taxation per head of population in the district of Lakhimpur	Incidence of taxation per head of population in the district of Sibsagar	Incidence of taxation per head of population in the district of Nowgong	Incidence of taxation per head of population in the district of Darrang
	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.
1904-05	0 5 3	1 7 8	0 12 10	1 2 6	...
1905-06	0 5 11	1 9 0	0 13 5	1 3 0	0 12 3
1906-07	0 6 4	1 8 11	0 14 0	1 6 6	0 13 4
1907-08	0 7 0	1 10 6	1 0 1	1 8 9	0 13 10
1908-09	0 7 1	1 12 3	0 15 8	1 7 4	0 14 10
1909-10	0 6 9	1 13 9	1 0 2	1 4 1	0 14 7
1910-11	0 7 1	1 14 9	1 0 9	1 5 9	9 15 11
1911-12	0 6 1	1 9 5	0 15 4	1 2 1	0 13 1
1912-13	0 6 8	2 1 1	1 0 8	1 5 0	0 14 7
1913-14	0 6 8	1 12 4	1 1 11	1 5 3	1 0 6
1914-15	0 6 8	1 14 3	1 2 5	1 6 11	1 1 3
1915-16	0 6 8	1 14 5	1 1 11	1 7 2	1 2 2
1916-17	0 7 2	2 2 4	1 0 1	1 2 1	1 2 0
1917-18	0 7 0	2 4 1	1 2 0	1 6 3	1 2 1
1918-19	0 7 1	2 5 6	1 2 1	1 10 1	1 3 1
1919-20	0 8 1	2 8 10	1 3 9	2 3 8	1 3 8
1920-21	0 8 11	2 2 4	1 2 1	1 14 3	1 2 7
1921-22	0 8 2	2 3 2	1 2 0	1 9 11	0 13 11
1922-23					
1923-24	0 8 0	1 13 5	1 2 0	1 12 11	1 0 4

APPENDIX X.
OPIUM STATEMENT FOR ASSAM PROVINCE.
(Royal Commission on Opium Vol. II).

Year	Opium shops	Modak and Chandu shops	Opium Consumption			Opium revenue	Population	Opium consumption per head	Opium taxation per head
			Md.	Srs.	Ch.					Rs.	Tolas	Rs. A. P.
1873—74	5,070	67	1,856	32	0	11,71,816	4,940,972	1.45	0 4 1
1874—75	3,977	58	1,837	11	0	11,93,683	...	...	...
1875—76	3,151	62	1,874	38	0	12,25,141	...	...	...
1876—77	2,833	55	1,793	38	0	12,33,300	...	...	...
1877—78	1,271	52	1,634	16	6	13,85,551	...	...	...
1878—79	1,342	55	1,655	19	0	15,60,642	...	...	...
1879—80	1,367	56	1,618	32	0	15,83,927	...	...	...
1880—81	1,397	...	1,685	33	7	16,37,510	4,881,426	1.11	0 5 4
1881—82	1,404	...	1,582	37	6	15,53,600	...	...	...
1882—83	1,373	...	1,738	10	13	16,48,207	...	...	...
1883—84	1,318	34	1,404	9	7	16,54,704	...	...	...
1884—85	1,283	34	1,482	10	0	16,99,348	...	...	...
1885—86	1,250	35	1,446	16	5	16,75,363	...	...	...
1886—87	1,175	38	1,446	36	1	16,75,147	...	...	...
1887—88	1,067	37	1,416	32	3	16,34,313	...	...	...
1888—89	989	36	1,411	75	15	16,42,652	...	...	...
1889—90	990	36	1,496	24	15	17,44,366	...	...	...
1890—91	946	33	1,308	13	8	18,11,610	5,433,199	.77	0 5 3
1891—92	953	24	1,369	25	4	19,16,369	...	...	...
1892—93	866	16	1,333	29	2	18,73,063	...	...	...

[*Note—By the Committee—In examining this and the following tables it must be remembered that the figures for population include immigrants who are not originally opium eaters or smokers.*]

APPENDIX X—(Contd.)
 OPIUM STATEMENT FOR ASSAM PROVINCE
 (Excise Department Reports)

Year	Shops	Consumption			Revenue from opium	Excise revenue	Population	Consumption per head	Opium Taxation per head
		Mds.	Srs.	Ch.	Rs.	Rs.	Tolas	Rs. A. P.	
1897-98	662	1,228	0	0	...	16,77,612	...	...
1898-99	662	1,237	0	0	...	16,96,692	...	...
1900-01	...	1,291	19	4	18,04,382	29,32,579	...	...
1901-02	775	1,227	37	7	17,23,238	28,83,238	5,759,444	...	
1902-03	767	1,274	1	0	17,79,917	28,89,272	...	...
1903-04	752	1,348	23	0	18,56,460	30,06,518	...	...
1904-05	744	1,382	15	0	18,99,306	30,47,118	...	...
1905-06	728	1,415	4	7	19,55,706	31,76,346	...	0 5 3	
1906-07	698	1,514	17	0	20,96,850	32,98,018	...	0 5 11	
1907-08	610	1,717	34	0	23,26,979	35,98,474	...	0 7 0	
1908-09	495	1,640	17	0	23,50,894	36,34,162	...	0 7 1	
1909-10	443	1,539	23	0	23,64,761	39,10,840	...	0 6 9	
1910-11	416	1,511	35	0	24,90,828	42,04,990	...	0 7 1	
1911-12	409	1,506	39	0	25,22,355	44,50,807	6,622,431	0 6 1	
1912-13	402	1,557	8	0	27,38,307	47,62,593	...	0 6 8	
1913-14	397	1,589	22	0	29,17,470	52,51,867	...	0 6 8	
1914-15	370	1,630	35	0	30,53,498	53,79,936	...	0 6 8	
1915-16	356	1,500	32	0	30,53,933	53,94,136	...	0 6 8	
1916-17	348	1,556	9	0	31,38,948	55,23,631	...	0 7 2	
1917-18	330	1,515	26	0	31,48,144	53,71,799	...	0 7 0	
1918-19	334	1,574	26	0	33,91,522	59,27,798	...	0 7 1	
1919-20	315	1,748	4	0	38,37,125	67,25,221	...	0 8 1	
1920-21	306	1,614	35	0	44,12,308	73,36,182	7,606,230	0 8 11	
1921-22	298	1,013	0	0	38,19,710	61,57,746	...	0 8 2	
1922-23	295	965	6	7	34,94,535	56,81,294	...	...
1923-24	298	884	20	0	37,13,841	62,24,778	...	0 8 0	

APPENDIX XI.
 OPIUM STATEMENT FOR DURRUNG DISTRICT.
 (Excise Department Reports).

Year	Shops	Consumption	Revenue from opium	Population	Consumption per head	Opium taxation per head
		Mds. Srs. Ch.	Rs.		Tolas	Rs. A. P.
1901—02	100	155 1 0	234,261	337,313	1'43	...
1905—06	98	187 20 0	258,410	...	1'77	...
1910—11	55	190 2 0	326,311	377,314	1'61	0 12 3
1911—12	...	...	...	...	...	0 15 11
1912—13	54	186 38 0	345,679	...	1'58	0 13 1
1913—14	54	212 4 0	390,423	...	1'79	0 14 7
1914—15	54	209 29 0	406,502	...	1'78	1 0 6
1915—16	50	212 25 0	429,888	...	1'80	1 1 3
1916—17	49	212 20 0	445,674	...	1'80	1 2 2
1917—18	...	...	...	...	...	1 2 0
1918—19	47	198 7 0	457,023	...	1'68	1 2 1
1919—20	48	215 13 0	474,161	...	1'82	1 3 1
1920—21	47	210 33 0	584,786	476,442	1'41	1 3 8
1921—22	...	...	...	...	...	1 2 7
1922—23	44	130 13 0	462,302	...	'87	0 13 11
1923—24	44	121 4 0	486,268	...	'81	1 0 4

APPENDIX XI—(Contd.)
 OPIUM STATEMENT FOR LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT.
 (Excise Department Reports).

Year	Shops	Consumption	Revenue	Population	Consumption per head	Taxation per head from opium
		Mds. Srs. Ch.	Rs.		Tolas	Rs. A. P.
1901—02	138	354 17 1	5,13,615	371,396	3'05	
1905—06	140	398 2 0	5,81,857	...	3'42	1 9 0
1910—11	55	416 28 0	7,14,713	646,236	2'97	1 14 9
1911—12	...	...	...	...	...	1 9 5
1912—13	55	442 14 0	8,27,333	...	3'17	2 1 1
1913—14	55	392 8 0	8,32,549	...	2'81	1 12 4
1914—15	55	450 15 0	9,04,652	...	3'22	1 14 3
1915—16	54	450 38 0	8,93,696	...	3'23	1 14 5
1916—17	53	465 6 0	9,49,147	...	3'33	2 2 4
1917—18	...	...	...	...	...	2 4 1
1918—19	55	499 7 0	10,46,914	...	3'57	2 5 6
1919—20	54	573 29 0	11,89,329	...	4'11	2 8 10
1920—21	54	468 15 0	12,66,286	...	2'55	2 2 4
1921—22	...	...	...	586,577	...	2 3 2
1922—23	47	307 30 0	10,28,860	...	1'68	...
1923—24	47	281 17 0	10,79,587	...	1'52	1 13 5

APPENDIX XI—(Contd.)
 OPIUM STATEMENT FOR SIBSAGAR DISTRICT.
 (Excise Department Reports.)

Year	shops	Consumption			Revenue	Population	Consumption per head	Taxation per head from opium		
		Mds.	Srs.	Ch.				Rs.	Tolas	Rs.	A.	P.
1901—02	189	342	3	0	4,63,163	597,969	1·82			
1905—06	186	374	5	7	4,99,843	...	2·002	0	13	5
1910—11	108	406	35	0	6,27,860	694,299	1·81	1	0	9
1911—12	...	...			...	...	...	0	15	4
1912—13	106	420	13	0	7,20,323	...	1·97	1	0	8
1913—14	107	436	33	0	7,75,708	...	2·001	1	1	11
1914—15	106	429	12	0	7,93,200	...	1·99	1	2	5
1915—16	99	395	16	0	7,72,935	...	1·82	1	1	11
1916—17	97	394	18	0	8,04,698	...	1·82	1	0	1
1917—18	...	...			...	...	...	1	2	0
1918—19	90	386	27	0	8,31,261	...	1·81	1	2	1
1919—20	84	423	12	0	9,21,459	...	1·98	1	3	9
1920—21	84	369	15	0	10,05,093	823,197	1·43	1	2	1
1921—22	...	...			...	...	...	1	2	0
1922—23	80	246	22	0	8,97,946	...	·95	...		
1923—24	80	226	31	0	9,34,033	...	·88	1	2	0

APPENDIX XI.—(Contd.)
 OPIUM STATEMENT FOR NOWGONG DISTRICT.
 (Excise Department Reports).

Year	Shops	Consumption	Revenue	Population	Consumption per head	Taxation per head from opium
					Tolas	Rs. A. P.
1901—02	149	Mds. Srs. Ch. 166 28 0	Rs. 2,30,280	261,160	2'04	...
1905—06	137	229 20 0	3,10,579	...	1'28	1 3 0
1910—11	82	224 27 0	3,57,755	303,596	2'36	1 5 9
1911—12	...	...	...	...	...	1 2 1
1912—13	74	234 28 0	3,99,888	...	2'47	1 5 0
1913—14	73	254 28 0	4,30,537	...	2'68	1 5 3
1914—15	47	246 9 0	4,35,081	...	2'56	1 6 11
1915—16	47	232 38 0	4,39,135	...	2'45	1 7 2
1916—17	47	217 4 0	4,21,901	...	2'28	1 2 1
1917—18	...	...	...	...	...	1 6 3
1918—19	45	241 23 0	5,09,023	...	2'54	1 10 1
1919—20	45	277 24 0	6,06,145	...	2'92	2 3 8
1920—21	43	269 0 0	7,85,231	397,921	2'16	1 14 3
1921—22	...	...	...	...	...	1 9 11
1922—23	42	163 5 0	5,86,867	...	1'28	...
1923—24	42	159 18 0	6,85,060	...	1'27	1 12 11

APPENDIX XII.

Opium Statement for the Sub-divisions of Assam in 1923-24.

(Given in reply to a question in the September Session, of 1924, of the Assam Legislative Council.)

Sub-divisions or Districts	Consumption			Opium Revenue	Consumption per head	Opium taxation per head	Population
	Mds.	Srs.	Ch.	Rs.	Tolas	Rs. A. P.	
Dhubri	23	37	0	10,774	017	0 0 3	551,351
Goalpara	1	26	0	5,827	025	0 0 5	211,172
Gaubhati	67	14	0	2,85,552	37	0 7 11	576,156
Barpeta	8	25	0	36,657	14	0 3 1	186,515
Tezpur	58	5	0	2,39,399	64	0 13 4	285,969
Mangaldoi	68	0	0	2,46,869	113	1 4 7	191,473
Nowgong	158	36	0	6,85,060	127	1 11 6	397,921
Jorhat	48	32	0	1,97,798	51	0 10 5	301,752
Golaghat	62	10	0	2,67,586	85	1 2 5	232,154
Sibsagar	95	0	0	4,05,827	105	1 6 5	289,291
Dibrugarh	195	8	0	8,23,208	134	1 12 4	464,487
North Lakshimpur	59	25	0	2,56,379	156	2 1 7	122,090
Total Assam Valley Division	821	18	0	35,60,936	67	0 14 2	3,991,681
Cachar	21	21	0	97,299	13	0 3 1	500,484
Sylhet	6	26	0	28,119	008	0 0 2	2,541,341
Khasi and Jaintia Hills	21	32	0	50,653	28	0 3 3	243,263
Naga Hills	18	10	0	14,012	26	0 1 4	160,960
Total Surma Valley and Hill Division	63	9	0	1,90,083	169	0 1 11	3,446,048
Sadya Frontier Tract	21	17	0	85,700	173	2 2 7	39,531
Balipara	1	19	0	5,310	123	1 6 2	3,819
Manipur	2	38	0	5,310	024	0 0 2	384,016
GRAND TOTAL	910	21	0	38,47,339	36*	0 7 8*	7,990,246

* Including Manipur.

APPENDIX XIII.
INDEX FIGURES AT EACH CENSUS.
 (Per 10,000 people in seers.)

	Assam Province	Assam Valley	Indigenous Assamese population
1881	Srs. 123·4	Srs. 255·9	Srs. 313·4
1891	95·5	183·7	267·2
1901	84·3	177·7	274·9
1911	85·5	172·7	277·1
1921	81·1	151·9	286·9

POPULATION, CONSUMPTION AND REVENUE AT EACH CENSUS.

	Assamese speaking population	Percentage of growth or decrease	Assam Valley Population	Total for Assam	Total Consumption for Assam	Total Revenue
1881	1,920,726	...	2,353,495	5,129,391	Mds. 1,582	15,53,600
1891	1,826,849	-5·4	2,587,228	5,477,830	1,308	18,11,610
1901	1,773,484	-2·9*	2,742,162	6,126,945	1,291	18,04,382
1911	2,023,972	+14·1	3,248,319	7,060,521	1,511	24,90,828
1921	2,113,569	+4·4	3,991,682	7,990,246	1,614	44,12,308

* In page 20 of Census Report for 1911, Vol. III. (Part I) the percentage of decrease has been estimated at 6·4, but as our estimate of the indigenous Assamese population appears to be more correct, we put it at—2·9.

APPENDIX XIV.

Extracts from Evidences of Witnesses.

EX-OPIUM EATERS' OPINIONS.

Witness No. 18. Sjt. Holiram Phukan, Mahmora Manza, Late Mauzadar of Khaloighogra, Seeksagar—

"I used to smoke opium. I smoked for 5 years. During the Non-co-operation Movement, I gave up the habit.

I am for legislation and total prohibition. I feel better now than before, since I have given up the habit. Except occasionally, I feel more strengthened.

"I did not find any hardship in giving up the habit and many of my co-villagers also gave up the habit."

Witness No. 19. Sjt. Bihuram Chetia, Mahmora, Seeksagar, age 55—

"I was an opium-eater for 30 years. I have given it up now, as the volunteers of the Non-co-operation Movement prevailed on me to give up the habit. I did not suffer much difficulty at the time of giving up the habit. I feel better and more energetic.

"I wish that opium should be totally prohibited and there should be a law preventing opium-eaters from taking it."

Witness No. 25. Also favours prohibition—

Witness No. 31. Dona Gohain, Koergaon, Mahmora—

"Opium should be totally prohibited, otherwise our children may take to it."

Witness No. 40. Sjt. Lokenath Kakoti, Charing, Seeksagar, Head Mohorer, Bonomali Tea Estate—

"I did not feel any inconvenience when I gave it up. It is not a fact that a man will suffer if he gives up opium all at once. I support total prohibition of opium from our Province and that immediately."

Witness No. 68. Sjt. Manik Chandra Hazarika, Landholder, Tinsukia, age 40—

"Opium-eaters lose the virile power after using opium for sometime and it deadens almost all senses. If young people take opium, they will not know what youth is. I have spent more than forty thousand rupees and I have ruined myself during this period. I have sold the greater portion of the valuables to the Marwaris and other people.

"The only remedy to keep this martial race (*i.e.*, the Muttock Community to which the witness belongs) is to stop the opium traffic at once and prohibit the consumption and sale of opium."

Witness No. 71. Mekheli Ahom, Gohaingaon, Jamira Mauza, Dibrugarh—

“It is a fact that opium affects very much the virile power. I felt it, when I used it. This I say from my own experience.

I wish that opium should be totally prohibited from our country.”

Witness No. 201. Maulavi Niharbar Sheikh, Silaghutegaon, Mauza Bataghilla, Nalbari, age 82 years—

“I was an opium-eater for 45 or 50 years. In giving up the habit I suffered for 3 or 4 days and then diverted my mind to some religious work. I used to attend Masjid daily. In my opinion opium should be prohibited. The sooner it is prohibited the better.”

OPIUM-EATERS' OPINIONS.

*Witness No. 12. Minaram Ahom, Koetpur, Seepsagar, age 44—
Seepsagar—*

“I will not allow my son to contract the habit. I have become weak and emaciated and suffered the consequence of the habit, so I would not allow my son to eat opium. I think it is a great evil, so I shall never allow the use of the drug to my son.

If old and diseased people are allowed to take opium, then I shall favour legislation for total prohibition of opium.”

*Witness No. 14. Madharam Koch, Noali Christiangaon, age 54,
Seepsagar—*

“I spend about Rs. 6/8/- per month for my opium. I earn daily about -/10/- (annas ten) as a day-labourer with a little extra. I shall not allow my sons and daughters to contract the habit, as I have become a wreck myself. I have no lands at all, neither do I cultivate any land on rent. I am living on the land of my father-in-law.”

Witness No. 15. Sondar Ahom, Cherekapar, Seepsagar, age 65—

“I was advised by a Fakir to use opium as a medicine for cough. The Fakir himself used opium. I began the habit before I married. I had two sons by my wife. I got from my father 5 puras of land, but I have none now. If I find any remedy, I shall give up the habit.”

Witness No. 20. Dhananath Gaonbura, Mohan-deodhai, Seepsagar, age 68—

“I favour prohibition and I know it is for the good of the people.”

Witness No. 23. Pholi Deodhai, Kharghariagaon, Seepsagar—

“It will be a great good if the opium is totally prohibited from our country. I shall never allow my children to take any opium.”

Witness No. 24. Makhor Mohan, Maranjangoan, Seeksagar, age 48—

“I know opium is a great evil. I shall be glad if opium is totally prohibited as no one will get it then.”

Witness No. 26. Dhenuram Mandol, Moranjangaon, age 70 years—

“It is my firm belief, that if opium is totally prohibited it will be doing a great good to the country ; but for very old people, there should be an exception and doctors should certify that there is a necessity.

I think the number of opium-eaters has increased now more than before. By coming in contact with bad companions, they contract the habit.”

Witness No. 27. Favours prohibition—

Witness No. 29. Kanduram, Kharghoria, age 36—

“I would wish that opium should be prohibited, but I shall feel it hard.”

Witness No. 30. Hari Ahom, Sengeligaon, Mahmora—

“I am for total prohibition of opium from our country and praying God for this consummation.”

Witness No. 32. Kameswar Mohan, Mahmora, age 45—

“It is good if the opium is totally prohibited, but we shall probably suffer, that is my fear. I shall never allow my children and relatives. I have got bitter experience.”

Witness Nos. 33 34. Also favours prohibition.

Witness No. 35. Khan Mohan, Mahmora, age 40—

“I would like if opium is prohibited totally. I may feel it hard, but it will do good to my children and relatives.”

Witness No. 43. Premia, Wife of Kartick—a garden-labourer, Timon Tea Estate, age 40—

“I have been using opium for 10 years and I started the practice when I came to Timon. I was ill and my husband, who is an opium-eater, advised me to take opium.”

“I have one piece of Sari and I wear torn clothes at home. I shall not allow my son to take opium.”

Witness No. 46. Pokhon Borai, Chapmora, Mahmora, ex-tea-garden labourer, age 63—

“I eat opium. I first took it about 17 years ago. I had some illness and one Mohora who is himself an opium-eater advised me to take opium and from that time onward I have been using it.

I think if opium is prohibited from our country, it will do good to our men ; but the diseased should be given opium under prescription of the doctor."

Witness No. 49. Kolai Ahom, Pohuchungi, Mahmora, age 40—

"I should like total prohibition. If none were to get it, we should give it up at once and easily."

Witness No. 54. Lakhi Medhi, Chutia Karigaon, Bamamali—

"Opium has reduced me to skeleton. I think I shall die, if I am not given opium. It is good for our people if the opium traffic is prohibited."

Witness No. 55. Pithu Goonbura, Chutia Karigaon, Baruasali, age 65—

"I am a Government Goanbura (village headman). I shall not allow my sons to take it, as I have suffered terribly. I wish that opium should be totally prohibited as the country is suffering from its effect."

Witness No. 57. Rongai Ahom, Chutia Karigaon, Baruasali, age 50—

"If opium is prohibited, it will be good for our next generation. We shall feel it hard. If there be legislation, then, I think, I should be obliged to give it up."

Witness No. 65. Manuram Nadial, Tinsukia, age 44—

"I should like it if opium is prohibited. As there are opium-shops at hand, I buy and take opium. If I could not get it, I would not take it."

Witness No. 67. Bangali Chulia, Bajaltoligaon, Rangagora, age 25—

"If I am given medicine for my cough, I may give up the habit of opium-eating. This habit has brought ruin to our country. I shall not marry."

Witness No. 91. Dolairam Das, Dibrugarh, age 52—

"I have been using opium from the age of 19 years. I have not married as I have not enough to save and marry. I wish that opium should be totally prohibited from Assam, even if I die in consequence of this prohibition. I am prepared for it, but I shall have the satisfaction to know that my country is rid of this great demon."

Witness No. 122. Harakdhvaj Chetri—(a Nepali boy) aged 16 years, Dhakuakhana, North Lakshimpur—

"I smoke opium. I have been using opium for 3 years. My mother takes opium and she taught me to take it. I was very young when I first tried to have a pull or two. I have a sister who also takes it. Her age is about 35 years. My sister's husband also takes it.

If opium is stopped, I shall be able to give it up."

Witness No. 196. Apati Koch, daughter of Kanthi Koch, Sayani Mauza, Polasbari—

"If opium is not made available, I should like it ; and I shall not get it any more."

Witness No. 227. Sonpahi Koch, Mandalpara, Panduri Manza, Rangia, Kamrup—

"I have been smoking opium for 3 years. I wish with all my heart that opium should be abolished. If opium is not sold, it is all the better. I do not like that opium should be allowed for use. The poor will be saved. As opium is available, so I use it."

Witness No. 272....Langtu—a Mikir, Duarsalonghaon, Jakhlabandha—

"I am a Mikir. If opium is abolished, I shall be glad and sad at the same time. I shall be glad because my money will be saved, but I shall be sad, because we shall feel like dying for a month. Opium has made us thin, but if we give it up, we might improve in health."

Witness No. 336. Sjt. Bolinarayan Goswami, religious preacher, Bataghilla Mauza, Nalbari, Kamrup—

"I take opium. I have been using it for about 30 years. I should wish that opium should be stopped and personally do not care if I die, as it will do a great good to the country."

OPINION REGARDING NON-VIOLENT PREACHING OF TEMPERANCE.

✓ *Witness No. 61. Sjt. Tarini Prosad Barua, Tea-planter, states—*

"The temperance workers during the Non-co-operation Movement were imprisoned under some plea or other. So far as I observed, I did not see anything in them which could be called objectionable."

✓ *Witness No. 17. Sjt. Jadav Prosad Chaliha, B.Sc., Tea-planter and Proprietor of several tea-gardens, states—*

"The effect of the Non-co-operation Movement, so far as the temperance side was concerned, was marvellous on the people—in matters of all sorts of drugs and spirituous liquors. But the Government imprisoned the workers and did everything to suppress the Movement only for their revenue. In fact, many gentlemen were deputed by the Government to lecture against the temperance propaganda. This shows the mentality of the Government which cares very little for the well-being of the people they govern.

I did not find any temperance workers doing anything violently, or illegally, that could be taken exception to. Some of the European planters sided with the Government and brought pressure on them to suppress the Movement by allegations which are unfounded and brought such charges which cannot be brought under any provision of law. But all the same, the workers were huddled in jail under some pretext or other by the Government."

Witness No. 86. Sjt Laxmi Nath Phukan, Editor of the "Times of Assam," states—

"I don't approve of the methods adopted by the bureaucracy in suppressing the Non-co-operation Movement and its activities."

Witness No. 167. Sjt. Harakanta Goswami, Lawyer, states—

"I did not find the workers of the Non-co-operation Movement taking to any illegal method or methods other than peaceful."

Witness No. 172. Sjt. Kamakhya Ram Barua, B.L., M.L.C., states—

"Government admitted it in their report that the reduction was mainly due to the action of the Non-co-operation Movement, but the Government attributed motives other than laudable, *i.e.*, they said the non-co-operation workers wanted to harass the Government, which is absolutely false. I know it for certain that the non-co-operation workers were actuated by the best of motives in launching the temperance movement in Assam."

Witness No. 183. Sjt. Gopinath Bardoloi, M.A., B.L., Pleader, states—

"The policy of the non-co-operators was not directly to embarrass the Government, but to purify the people of an evil, which had eaten into their very vitals, irrespective of the loss of revenue. To my knowledge there had not been any case of intimidation by the workers."

Witness No. 187. Sjt. Jogendranath Barua, B.L., states—

"I do not think that the object of the non-co-operation temperance workers was to embarrass the Government but to save the people from the pernicious habit."

Witness No. 305. Sjt. Deveswar Chaliha, Pleader, states—

"The reduction after 1920 is due to the self-sacrificing zeal of the non-co-operators and not of the Government.

In the many prosecutions of peaceful temperance workers I am of opinion that Government is trying to increase the consumption and is afraid of any reduction which might ensue from the peaceful temperance workers. I do not think that the prosecutions were at all justified and

I am strongly of the opinion that those imprisoned were neither criminally nor civilly liable.

If they had any real intention of reducing the consumption, they would have certainly appreciated the non-co-operation workers and would not have prosecuted them. No Government, which has the interests of the people at heart, would have prosecuted them."

Witness No. 309. Sjt. Bishnu Chandra Baroah, M.A., B.L., Pleader, states—

"I do not subscribe to the view that the intention of the non-co-operators was to embarrass the Government only."

✓ *Witness No. 312. Sjt. Krishna Kanta Bhattacharjya, Editor, the "Assam Bilasini," states—*

"The public sense was roused and the workers carried the message of temperance in a very orderly and peaceful manner. The object of the non-co-operators was to raise the people morally and I find an appreciable improvement in the condition of the people generally."

✓ *Witness No. 166. Sjt. Bishnuram Medhi, M.Sc., B.L., Pleader, states—*

✓ "The object of the Government in suppressing the Movement was to make up the loss of revenue caused by the temperance workers."

✓ *Witness No. 184. Sjt. Gaurikanta Talukdar, B.L., Pleader, states—*

"As far as I can guess the primary object of the interference was the apprehension of the Government that revenue would be lost.

Witness No. 318. Sjt. Purnananda Sarma, B.L., Pleader, states—

"The policy of the Government in checking and imprisoning the workers of non-co-operation was, to my belief, to prevent the loss of revenue derived from this baneful drug which is killing a section of our people."

'BREAKING THE HABIT.'

Witness No. 1. Sjt. F. C. Gogoi, Retired Inspector of Police, Hony. Magistrate—

"I was in charge of the Jorhat Jail in the year 1883 or thereabout. Some opium-eaters complained that they would not live if they did not get opium. The inconvenience is purely mental. I think no physical harm will be done if opium is totally prohibited."

Witness No. 2. Sjt. Khirodeswar Barthakur, Chief priest of Siva-dol, Seeksagar—

"I do not think that the opium-eaters would die, if they gave up the habit."

Witness No. 7. Sjt. Tirtheswar Buragohain Phukan, Land-holder, President of the Ahom Association, Seeksagar—

“I do not consider it is difficult to give up the habit. I have personal experience of this. I was instrumental in eradicating this evil in 3 or 4 cases. They are all bhadrals and used to smoke opium. They did not find any difficulty in giving it up, except mental inconvenience for a week.”

Witness No. 8. Sjt. Lakshmikanta Barua, B.L., Pleader, Ex-President of the District Congress Committee, Seeksagar—

“I know numerous instances of men giving up the habit without any real hardship. People improved in health, appearance and prosperity, after they gave up the habit.”

Witness No. 10. Sjt. G. N. Barooah, B.L., Secretary, Bar Association, Seeksagar—

“I have never heard that any man died in giving up the habit all at once. Two confirmed opium-eaters suddenly gave up opium without any injury to themselves, to my knowledge.”

Witness No. 17. Sjt. Jadav Prosad Chaliha, B.Sc., Proprietor of several tea-gardens in Seeksagar—

“I had some share in eradicating this evil from our fallen brothers and I was successful in making many opium-eaters leave the habit. I found generally that they can leave the practice of opium-eating without serious injury to themselves.”

✓ *Witness No. 52. Sjt. Bhabani Prosad Barua, Tea-planter and Mauzadar, Bhuyankhat, Seeksagar—*

“I did not hear that there was any injurious after-effect on their health after they gave up the habit.”

Witness No. 75. Sjt. Sibram Sarma, B.L., Pleader, President of the Bar Association—

“I did not hear a single instance in which any man suffered in his health for giving up the habit.”

Witness No. 78. Sjt. Rai Saheb Gongaram Chaudhury, Excise-mahaldar, Dibrugarh—

“I have not seen instances where the health of any opium-eater has deteriorated for giving up the opium habit ; on the contrary, the opium-eaters improved in health.”

Witness No. 82. Sjt. Bachalal Barua, Mauzadar, Dibrugarh—

“There is not a single case of death or any case of fatality coming to my notice from giving up the habit all at once.”

Witness No. 103. Sjt. Laksheswar Barua, B.L., Secretary, District Congress Committee—

“I worked in 30 villages and I was successful in persuading many to give up the habit and actually weaned them from the addiction. From my experience it is not difficult to give up the habit except some physical uneasiness for a week, which, if they bear ; they can easily overcome and be new men.”

Witness No. 118. Sjt. Konnath Phukan, Land-holder, Retired Mauzadar, Dhakuakhana, age 84 years, North Lakhimpur—

“I was instrumental in eradicating opium from six men by using a mixture. One was about 60 years old who gave it up. They did not suffer at all, when they gave up the habit. Many have improved in health.”

Witness No. 174. Dr. Bepin Behari Bora, L.M.S., Government pensioner, sometimes Officiating Civil Surgeon—

“From my experience in jails and hospitals, my opinion is that no injury will be caused by suddenly giving up the opium habit.”

Witness No. 264. Sjt. Haladhar Bhuyan, Secretary, District Congress Committee, Nowgong—

“From my experience, I can say that habitues can give up the habit, if they wish, without any physical injury to their health.”

✓ *Witness No. 275. Sjt. Paramananda Agarwalla, Tea-planter, Tezpur—*

“For three days the opium-eaters suffer when they give it up and then they gradually come round. My information is that some of those who gave up the habit have improved in health.”

Witness No. 310. Maulvi Keramat Ali, Pleader, Chairman, Municipal Board, Jorhat—

“There is temporary discomfort in giving up the habit. No physical injury results from leaving off the consumption of opium and I find an appreciable improvement in health and moral character after the addicts give up the habit.”

MEDICAL OPINION ON THE EVIL EFFECTS OF OPIUM HABIT.

Witness No. 80. Dr. Umesh Chandra Mukherjee, Medical Practitioner for 39 years, Dibrugarh—

“Opium does not possess any prophylactic action against fever, malaria or kala-azar. It is mere cant to say that opium is necessary in

a damp, humid climate like ours. I have been here for the last 39 years and I have not felt it necessary to prescribe opium for the humidity of the climate or for anything else excepting diabetic patients."

Witness No. 161. Maulavi Tazuddin Bora, Medical Practitioner, North Lakshimpur—

"It is not a fact that opium is a preventive against fever, malaria or kala-azar. It is not necessary to take opium in a damp place like ours as I have seen from observation that non-opium-eaters can work and stand the climate better than the opium-eaters."

Witness No. 174. Dr. Bepin Behari Bora, L.M.S., Government Pensioner, sometimes Officiating Civil Surgeon—

"I do not consider that opium has prophylactic action against kala-azar and malaria. I do not think that opium is necessary in a damp and humid climate like that of Assam. Its use will rather predispose people to the attack of kala-azar and malaria in as much as opium will reduce the sensibility and make them sleep without any mosquito curtains in insanitary surroundings full of mosquitos.

Opium-eaters are difficult patients. Firstly, they have not the patience to continue the treatment ; secondly, they think that opium is the only remedy for their ailments.

Purgatives generally have not the desired effect on those who are accustomed to the habit for a long time and as such it is difficult to treat many diseases from which they suffer. Opium-eating certainly lowers the vitality of the people."

Witness No. 180. Sjt. Baroda Charan Sen, Ayurvedic practitioner, Gauhati—

"I have come across opium-eating patients specially amongst the Marwaris. I found in my experience that medicines are of little use to such patients, specially when they suffer from bowel complaints, such as dysentery, diarrhoea, etc. In other cases, where it is necessary to move the bowels, a stronger dose of medicine than usual is needed to have the required result.

Specially in dysentery cases, habitual moderate use of opium retards recovery of illness. With those who take extremely small doses, it may not retard recovery.

I am decidedly of opinion that opium does not possess any prophylactic action against malaria or kala-azar. Opium is not at all necessary in a damp and humid climate like that of Assam. It has a depressing effect on the constitution."

Witness No. 185. Sjt. Krishna Kanta Adhikari, Ayurvedic practitioner, Gauhati—

“I have been practising for 25 years and in the course of my practice I came in contact with opium-eating patients. They take a little longer time due to their habit in recovering from their ailments than ordinary patients. As opium is a strong poison and the effects of opium continue for a long time, so it retards the action of other medicines.”

Witness No. 188. Maulavi Abu Bokr Ayaz, M.C.P. & S., L.C.M.S., Medical practitioner, Gauhati—

“We generally find it difficult to move the bowels of opium-taking patients which necessarily retards the action of the medicine on them. The medicines act slowly and take a day or two longer to give the necessary result than on ordinary patients. Opium does not possess prophylactic action against malaria or kala-azar.

“Opium is not at all necessary in a damp and humid climate like that of Assam.”

“I favour a Dangerous Drugs Act for the Province.”

Witness No. 303. Sjt. Thanu Chandra Barua, Kaviraj (Ayurvedic practitioner), Jorhat—

“Opium has no prophylactic action against Malaria or Kala-azar. Habitual moderate use of opium retards recovery in illness except possibly cough. Opium causes depression. 15 to 20 grains will be sufficient to kill a man.

“I am emphatically for total prohibition immediately, except for medicinal purposes. I favour a Dangerous Drugs Act.”

Witness No. 320. Dr. Benode Behari Sen Gupta, Medical practitioner, Jorhat—

“I am sure, opium has no prophylactic value against malaria or kala-azar, but, on the contrary, the opium habit reduces the resisting power against such infection as it depresses the vitality in many respects.

The habit retards recovery in every illness by deterioration of the resisting power and vitality, which are the principal factors of recovery, and on account of ineffectiveness of the drugs on such bodies by which we treat them.

I consider it desirable to have a Dangerous Drugs Act enacted for Assam especially with regard to opium.

Fifteen grains will be quite sufficient to kill a man if it is taken at one time, except in the case of habitues.”

NOTE.—Ten Government Medical Officers of high rank submitted their written statements to the Committee, but as the same were not transmitted to the Committee through the proper channel, as required by the Hon'ble

Minister in charge of the Medical Department, we could not incorporate them in the Appendices. But all the same we may state generally that their opinion was to the effect that the opium evil in Assam is a great harm to the country which requires a strong remedy to overcome.

OPINION ON TOTAL PROHIBITION.

Witness No. 1. Sjt. F. C. Gogoi, Retired Inspector of Police, Hony. Magistrate, Seesagar—

“I am decidedly in favour of total prohibition.”

Witness No. 2. Sjt. Khirodeswar Barthakur, Chief priest of Siva-dol, Seesagar—

“I am emphatically of opinion that opium should be prohibited totally from Assam. It is not essential even for dysentery.”

Witness No. 3. Sjt. Jadunath Katkie, Proprietor of the Seesagar Industrial Institute—

“I am emphatically for total prohibition without any qualification whatever.”

Witness No. 4. G. G. Phukan, Esq., Land-holder, Seesagar, age 87 years, Ex-President of the Assam Association, Late Chairman of the Seesagar Municipality—

“I have no objection to total and immediate prohibition, if the confirmed opium-eater can bear it.”

Witness No. 5. Sjt. Ratnadar Barua, Retired Deputy Inspector of Schools, age 82 years—

“I am emphatically of opinion that opium should be prohibited except for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 6. Sjt. Hemnath Sarma, Head Master, Jhanji M. E. School, Seesagar—

“I am emphatically and deliberately of opinion that opium should be prohibited and that immediately and there should be strict legislation.”

Witness No. 7. Sjt. Tirtheswar Buragohain Phukan, Landholder, President of the Ahom Association, Seesagar—

“I am of opinion that opium should be totally prohibited, except for medicinal purposes, from the Province of Assam.”

Witness No. 8. Sjt. Lakshnikanta Barua, B.L., Pleader, Ex-President of the District Congress Committee, Seesagar—

“I am absolutely for total prohibition of opium from Assam, except for medicinal and scientific purposes, and that immediately.”

Witness No. 9. Sjt. Taranath Sarma, Secretary, Dharma-Alochani Sabha, Seesagar—

“I am of opinion that opium should be totally prohibited from our country except for medicinal purposes. So far as I could gather, our society is of the same opinion.”

Witness No. 10. Sjt. G. N. Barua, B.L., Secretary, Bar Association, Seesagar—

“I am strongly of opinion that opium should be totally prohibited from our Province except for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 11. Sjt. B. N. Hazarika, Pleader, Chairman of the Seesagar Municipality—

“I am for total prohibition, but those people who are near their graves should be allowed to use it under medical prescription.”

Witness No. 16. Sjt. Tariniprosad Barua, Tea-planter, Seesagar—

“I am out and out for total prohibition and that at once. I am not for gradual abolition as that has a tendency to perpetuate the evil.”

Witness No. 17. Sjt. Jadav Prosad Chaliha, B.Sc., Proprietor of several tea-gardens in Seesagar—

“I am for strict legislation, such as a Dangerous Drugs Act, as in other countries.”

Witness No. 21. Sjt. Muktanath Kakoti, Mahmora, Gaonbura (Village Headman)—

“From my experience amongst the villages I am entirely in favour of total prohibition except for medical purposes.”

Witness No. 41. Srijuta Nikunjalata Chaliha (Wife of late Rai Bahadur Kaliprosad Chaliha, Government Pleader, Upper Assam)—

“I am of opinion that opium should be totally prohibited from Assam. It has been causing ruin to our country. So far as I know, our ladies are decidedly against the continuance of the traffic. The Mohila-Samilani of Seesagar, so far as I know, will be against the continuance of this immoral traffic.”

Witness No. 42. Sjt. B. P. Chaliha, Tea-planter, Seesagar—

“Opium should not be allowed to be sold under any condition whatever except for medicinal purposes which should again be prescribed by a duly qualified doctor.”

Witness No. 45. Sjt. Hinduram Gaonbura (Village Headman), Mahmora—

“I should like that opium should be prohibited as it affects our future generations.”

Witness No. 52. *Sjt. Bhabani Prosad Barua, Tea-planter and Mauzadar Bhuyankhat, Seeksagar—*

“I am in favour of total prohibition, but if qualified doctors certify that use of opium is necessary in certain cases they may be allowed. But this test should be very strict.”

Witness No. 53. *Sjt. Rajkishore Ghose, a Bengali land-holder living at Sapekhali, Seeksagar, for 25 years—*

“I want that opium should be totally abolished and that at once. If the opium evil continues, the Assamese race will be extinct. Of course it should remain for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 62. *Sjt. Khogeswar Barpatra Gohain, Contractor, Tinsukia—*

“I advocate total prohibition of opium except for medicinal purposes and this should be done immediately and there should be strict legislation.”

Witness No. 66. *Sjt. Someswar Barua, Tea-planter, Tinsukia—*

“I am emphatically for total prohibition except for medicinal purposes. I am for unqualified prohibition and that immediately.”

Witness No. 68. *Sjt. Manik Chandra Hazarika, Landholder, Leading man of the Muttock Community, Tinsukia—*

“The only remedy to keep this martial race is to stop the opium traffic at once and prohibit the consumption and sale of opium in Assam and India.”

Witness No. 74. *Sjt. Lohoram Koer, President of the Ahom Association, Dibrugarh—*

“In my opinion, opium should be totally and immediately prohibited from our country. There should be strict legislation.”

Witness No. 76. *Sjt. Rajanikan'a Bardoloi, Tea-planter, Retired Extra-Assistant Commissioner, Dibrugarh—*

“If I had the power, I would have it at once stopped. I am in favour of gradual prohibition. Government should take such steps as would gradually reduce the number of consumers and would not allow any one to become a new consumer. I am not in favour of doing anything immediately. I should allow 10 years at the utmost. My suggestions are that the price should be prohibitive ; rations should be lessened ; let each have a license like the gun license. People under fifty years should be prohibited to use opium at once except under prescription, if necessary. I would confine granting individual licenses to the people of the age of fifty years and over.”

Witness No. 75. Sjt. Sibram Sarma, B.L., Pleader, President of the Bar Association, Dibrugarh—

“I am for total prohibition except for medicinal and scientific purposes and that at once.”

Witness No. 77. Sjt. Rai Saheb Gunagovinda Barua, Government pensioner—

“I should give licenses to all opium-eaters and reduce gradually year by year and within ten years the sale and consumption should be totally prohibited. Smoking ought to be stopped at once and without any difficulty, and there should be strict legislation to that effect.”

Witness No. 78. Sjt. Rai Saheb Gongaram Chaudhury, Excise-Mahaldar, Dibrugarh—

“I am for total prohibition at once except for aged people of over 50 years who are ill or diseased.”

Witness No. 80. Dr. Umesh Chandra Mukherjee, Medical Practitioner for 39 years, Dibrugarh—

“I am for total prohibition and that immediately. I want a Dangerous Drugs Act, specially in Assam and in India.”

Witness No. 82. Sjt. Bachalal Barua, Mauzadar, Dibrugarh—

“I advocate total prohibition except for medicinal and scientific purposes. I make no exception.”

Witness No. 83. Sjt. Rai Bahadur Nilambar Dutta, Tea-planter, Chairman of the Municipality, Dibrugarh—

“The present system of recording the names of purchasers by vendors, I believe, will not increase the number of new consumers, as the village people generally are afraid of getting their names registered.

I have no experience that the people are really afraid of this. I use the word ‘believe’ deliberately as I cannot cite any instance.”

Witness No. 84. Miss M. G. Campbell, Lalbagh, Lucknow—

“If I am assured that there will be no injurious effect on health, I shall be for total prohibition of opium here also. The opium question in Assam is very serious and those who love the country should work rapidly for the abolition of the traffic.”

Witness No. 86. Sjt. Laxminath Phookan, Editor the “Times of Assam”, Dibrugarh—

“I am out and out for total prohibition of the traffic from Assam, except for medicinal and scientific purposes. The sale and consumption should at once be stopped.

Witness No. 90. Sjt. Ramprosad Gohain, Landholder, Dibrugarh—

"I want legislation that those who are under 30 years should be given six months' time; after that they should be penalised.

Those who are above 30 years, should be allowed to eat for their lifetime. I say this, because I am afraid they will take to liquor and they may suffer. I was instrumental in eradicating the evil from 10 to 12 persons; none of these persons from whom I eradicated the evil liked to drink. If opium is prohibited, the opium-eaters will turn into useful citizens. I favour total prohibition of the sale and consumption of opium."

Witness No. 92. Sjt. Narsingdas Agarwalla, Merchant, Tinsukia—

"If the sale, import and consumption are prohibited from Assam, it will do a great good to the poor Assamese."

Witness No. 93. Sjt. Baishnavananda Chandra Deka Goswami (religious head), Dibrugarh—

"I can on no account support the continuance of the traffic; so I advocate the complete stoppage of the sale and consumption of opium and that immediately except for those who may be certified by the doctor that it is essentially necessary. But this should be very strict and should not be abused under the cover of this exception."

Witness No. 96. Sondar Gaonbura (Village Headman), Bogdong Mauza, Dibrugarh—

"The Government should stop the sale of opium except for medicinal purposes."

Witness No. 101. Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan, B.A., M.L.C., Dibrugarh—

"To remedy this evil, I shall refer to Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy's scheme as given in his Council speech dated 22nd March, 1921.

I want total prohibition of opium for all except for the confirmed existing opium-eaters for whom it should be rationed under strict registration system by issuing pass books, as I moved in the Council session of September, 1922. Further it should be clearly declared by Government that total prohibition should come even in the case of those confirmed opium-eaters at the tenth year of the enactment.

The main idea for making the exception is that the health of the opium-eaters may be injuriously affected, if it is stopped all on a sudden.

If it is practicable, I have no objection to stop the sale and consumption at once. I think for some time at least 50 per cent. of the opium-eaters will suffer excruciating pain and their families will suffer. They may also suffer from other ailments.

Registration is the only means, I think, according to my idea."

Question—President—

“If legislation is passed, that any man smoking or eating opium will be sentenced to six months’ imprisonment, do you think, it will have a deterrent effect on the practice?”

Answer—

“I do not know. I say that I shall not suggest such a drastic measure, even for deterrent effects.”

Sjt. N. C. Bordoloi—

“You have seen opium-eaters coming from jail who gave up the habit and did not suffer any way in their health.”

Answer—

“I have seen opium-eaters coming out of the jail apparently not suffering much in health. It is also suspected that they manage to get some doses of opium now and then somehow.

There may be a possibility of shortening the period from 10 years.”

Witness No. 103. Sjt. Laksheswar Barua, B.L., Secretary, District Congress Committee, Dibrugarh—

“I am absolutely for total prohibition except for medicinal and scientific purposes.”

Witness No. 107. Sjt. Govinda Nath Bora—a Deori (a tribe living in the outlying parts of Assam), Sissimukh, Dibrugarh—

“I shall be very glad if opium is totally abolished, otherwise it is possible that we may also get the habit.”

Witness No. 111. Maulavi Bahadur Ali, Dhakuakhana, North Lakshimpur—

“Many of the Assamese opium-eaters have turned thieves, etc. Opium will lead us to ruin if it is not stopped.”

Witness No. 116. Sjt. Trahiram Chutia, Member, Village Panchayat, Dhakuakhana, North Lakshimpur—

“I am for total prohibition without any qualification except for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 118. Sjt. Konnath Phukan, Land-holder, Retired Manzadar, Dhakuakhana North Lakshimpur, aged 84 years—

“Opium has done the greatest mischief to us and it is a disgrace that we take opium. One of the chief causes of our ruin is opium-eating.

I should like that opium should be totally prohibited from our country.”

Witness No. 126. Boga Miri, Dhakuakhana, North Lakshimpur—

“It will be a great relief to my community if the sale of opium is prohibited and people are not allowed to consume.”

Witness No. 135. Sjt. Robi Chandra Hazarika, Contractor, Land-holder, North Lakshimpur—

“I consider it a very good thing, if opium is totally prohibited from our country. The sale, consumption and import should be totally stopped in Assam.”

Witness No. 136. Maulavi Zubed Ali, Mauzadar, North Lakshimpur—

“According to my idea, opium should be totally prohibited. I fear a time will come when it will be difficult to realise the land revenue owing to this habit.”

Witness No. 143. Sjt. Nilakantha Gohain Barua, Land-holder, North Lakshimpur—

“I am for total prohibition except for medicinal purposes. There should be no sale, consumption, import of opium in our country.”

Witness No. 147(a). Sabhar Brahman—A Nepali-settler, aged 50 years Dhakuakhana, North Lakshimpur—

“I am out and out for immediate total prohibition; and even if the opium-eaters die in giving up the habit I do not care. The sooner it is prohibited, the better for my countrymen living in Assam.”

Witness No. 155. Sjt. Haribor Das, Retired Inspector of Police, North Lakshimpur—

“There should be strict supervision of those who will be granted licenses and this should be terminated within ten years. I put the limit of ten years because by that time existing opium-eaters will die out.

Licenses should only be issued under a medical prescription. No one should be allowed to take opium and have a license without having the certificate of the doctor, stating that it is necessary for the opium-eater and also the quantity that he should be given.”

Witness No. 156. Sjt. Rajanikanta Khargharia, Secretary, District Congress Committee, North Lakshimpur—

“Strict legislation is necessary and the opium trade should be abolished from our country totally and at once. For medicinal purposes, it may be allowed.”

Witness No. 157. Sjt. Ratneswari Phukanani, wife of the late Tuaram Phukan, North Lakshimpur—

“I wish that opium should be totally stopped ; then only the country may rise. I am for total and immediate prohibition of opium from our province except for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 160. Maulavi Sahadat Ali, Merchant, Honorary Magistrate, North Lakshimpur—

“I leave the matter entirely to the Government. It is best to abolish the opium traffic. It will do us great good if the traffic goes.”

Witness No. 161. Maulavi Tazaddin Bora, Medical practitioner, North Lakshimpur—

‘I am in favour of the Dangerous Drugs Act in Assam.’

Witness No. 164. Pratab Singh—an ex-tea-garden labourer ; Chatakpur gaon, North Lakshimpur—

“This opium habit is ruinous to our people. I am out and out for total prohibition and that immediately.”

Witness No. 165. Sjt. Gopendralal Das Chaudhury, B.L., M.L.C., Deputy President of the Assam Legislative Council—

“Certainly I am in favour of legislation for total prohibition of opium except for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 170. Rai Bahadur Krishna Chandra Chaudhuri, Retired Extra Assistant Commissioner, Chairman, Gauhati Municipality—

“I favour total prohibition of opium to persons below the age of 50 and above that age they may be allowed to use it, as I consider that they use it to keep up their health. Beyond that age, I think, people will not take opium for pleasure. I am in favour of prohibiting opium-smoking of any kind immediately, irrespective of age or class.

“If the doctors are allowed a discretion to give opium to people above the age of 50, I shall be satisfied and I am prepared to modify my view which I gave a little before.”

Witness No. 169. Maulavi Faiyazuddin Ahmed, Pleader, Vice-chairman of the Gauhati Local Board—

“I favour the total prohibition of opium immediately from our country.”

Witness No. 171. Sjt. Bishnuprosad Sarma, Chief-priest of the Kamakhya temple—

“In my opinion, the opium trade and consumption should be abolished from Assam immediately.”

Witness No. 172. *Sjt. Kamakhyaram Barooah, B.L., M.L.C., Gauhati—*

“I would prohibit the sale of opium except for medicinal purposes.”

Witness No. 173. *Sjt. Nobin Ram Phookan, Landholder, Gauhati—*

“I am decidedly of opinion that opium must go from Assam as soon as possible, otherwise there is no hope of our regeneration.”

Witness No. 174. *Dr. Bepin Behari Bora, L.M.S., Government Pensioner, Sometime Officiating Civil Surgeon—*

“I am for total prohibition of the trade and consumption in Assam except for medicinal and scientific purposes.”

Witness No. 180. *Sjt. Baroda Charan Sen, Ayurvedic practitioner, Gauhati—*

“I consider it desirable to have a Dangerous Drugs Act for Assam, specially with regard to opium.”

Witness No. 181. *Sjt. Kaliram Barman, B.L., Pleader, Secretary, District Congress Committee—*

“I am emphatically of opinion that opium must go from Assam immediately if we are to rise as a nation. I am for total prohibition and that immediately except for medicinal and scientific purposes.”

Witness No. 187. *Sjt. Jogendranath Barua, B.L., Secretary of the Assam Association—*

“I want total abolition of the trade and consumption and sale from our Province except for medicinal and scientific purposes.”

Witness No. 198. *Sjt. Dhanadev Goswami, Polasbari, Kamrup—*

“In my opinion, opium should be abolished from our country. There should be no sale or consumption of opium in our country.”

Witness No. 207. *Sjt. Harendramalla Barua, Land-holder, Nalbari—*

“In my opinion, opium should be prohibited from our country as soon as possible.”

Witness No. 216. *Sjt. Protap Chandra Goswami, Satradhikar of Nalbari Satra, and Land-holder, Ex-president of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee—*

“I advocate the abolition of the opium traffic from Assam except for medicinal and scientific purposes. I advocate strict legislation as well.”

Witness No. 221. *Maulavi Abdul Ali, Merchant and Land-holder, Nalbari—*

“If the opium-eaters do not suffer any injury in health, I have no

objection if the traffic is stopped immediately, except for medicinal and scientific purposes."

Witness No. 231. Sjt. Abhoyakanla Gohain, Government-pensioner and Contractor, Nowgong—

"In my opinion, the opium traffic should be immediately abolished, if we mean to rise as a race. It should be given for medicinal purposes only."

Witness No. 252. David Mikir, Mauzadar, Kuthoribag, Nowgong—

"If opium is abolished, it will do us great good and especially benefit the Mikirs. Opium should be totally prohibited from our people as soon as possible."

Witness No. 254. Sjt. Taktamall Maheswari, Merchant, Member, Local Board, Municipality, Nowgong—

"If opium is abolished, it will conduce to the welfare of the Assamese people in general. Those who are above fifty will find it difficult to leave off the habit; they may be given opium. If it is possible to give up the habit and doctors can supervise the doses then it can be so reduced gradually that the habitue may give up the habit after sometime. It should be left to the discretion of the doctors."

✓ *Witness No. 262. Maulavi Nuruddin Ahmed Khan Shaheb, Pleader, Nowgong, Vice-Chairman, Local Board—*

"Personally speaking, I would immediately stop the traffic in opium but in consideration of the dislocation of the administration for the immediate stoppage of revenue and the hardship that might be felt by the consumers, I would gradually diminish the consumption and stop it entirely within a period of, say, three years."

Witness No. 263. Sjt. Bishnu Charan Bora, B.L., M.L.C., Mauzadar, Nowgong—

"I advocate total abolition of the traffic from our Province except for medicinal and scientific purposes."

Witness No. 265. Sjt. Bhadreswar Barua, B.L., Chairman, Municipal Board, Nowgong—

"I am in favour of total prohibition as soon as possible. I should give time to the Government,—anything between six to twelve months to adjust themselves and to make necessary legislation."

Witness No. 268. Sjt. Jogesh Chandra Khound, Businessman, Jakhla-bandha, Nowgong—

"I advocate total prohibition of the traffic; otherwise our agricultural classes will be extinct."

✓ *Witness No. 275. Sjt. Paramananda Agarwalla, Tea-planter, Tezpur—*

"It is certainly desirable that opium should be prohibited from our country except for medicinal purposes as it leads to our degradation and ruin."

Witness No. 281. Sjt. Jyotish Chandra Bose, Land-holder and Honorary Magistrate, Tezpur—

"There should be legislation to penalise opium consumption below forty and above that age some consideration should be shewn to opium-eaters who use it strictly for medicinal purposes. This should be certified by a qualified doctor so that they may not abuse the exception. This test should be strictly applied."

Witness No. 283. Sjt. Rai Shaheb Padmanath Gohain Barua, Editor, 'Assam-Banti,' Chairman, Municipal Board, Tezpur—

"Taking in view the present condition of the Assamese people, it should be prohibited totally from our country by all practical and vigorous means. I am for immediate but practical prohibition. I should require, for this, immediate legislation penalising all opium-eating and consuming."

Witness No. 284. Rai Bahadur Monomohan Lahiri, Pleader, Tezpur—

"I am for gradual prohibition and I think it can be stopped within the course of 5 years if we take vigorous measures. I advocate individual licensing which should terminate within 1 year to 5 years. I should not allow opium to a man under forty. After five years no opium should be sold to anybody except under medical advice."

Witness No. 292. Rai Bahadur Betharam Sarma, Government-pensioner, Tezpur—

"I advocate total prohibition except for medicinal purposes. Those above fifty should, if necessary, be given under medical prescription only. The time and the quantity should be at the discretion of the doctor for those above 50 years.

I favour a Dangerous Drugs Act as I find sometimes people commit suicide through this agency."

Witness No. 299. Sjt. Ganganath Barkataky, agriculturist, Sootea, Tezpur—

"Opium has demoralized and dehumanised us and so I emphatically advocate total prohibition and abolition of opium immediately."

Witness No. 308. Sjt. Ramakanta Barkakoti, B.L., Government-pensioner, Jorhat—

“I am for total prohibition of the opium traffic from our Province except for medicinal purposes. Opium should only be sold by druggists under medical prescription.”

Witness No. 309. Sjt. Bishnu Chandra Barua, M.A., B.L., Secretary, Bar Association, Jorhat—

“I advocate immediate total prohibition except for medicinal and scientific purposes. It should be sold by the druggists and chemists under medical prescription.”

Witness No. 310. Maulavi Keramat Ali, Pleader, Chairman, Municipal Board, Jorhat—

“I advocate prohibition with the limitation that those persons who cannot do without opium without risking their health should be given the option to have their dose of opium. I have advocated medical prescription but I am afraid of corruption.

I should leave to the doctors to judge whether there is any risk of health to consumers and only if it is certified by them, I should give opium.”

Witness No. 312. Sjt Krishna Kanta Bhattacharyya, Editor, the ‘Assam-Bilasini,’ Jorhat—

“I am of opinion that opium should be totally prohibited from our country at once.”

Witness 317. Sjt. Akshoy Chandra Sen, B.L., Pleader, Jorhat—

“My idea is that the traffic should be abolished by a course of gradual restriction, say, within 5 years. By gradual restricted sale, I should effect the abolition within the period mentioned above and I should want the gradual reduction of the production of opium as well as in India. My impression is that a programme should be made as to what quantity should be sold in each year which should be gradually reduced in the following year so that within the time so fixed the traffic should be abolished totally. There should be registration of opium-eaters and no person whose name is not in the list should be allowed to purchase opium. I should leave the sale of the drug to the vendors as usual.”

✓ *Witness No. 316. Rai Bahadur Krishna Kumar Barua, Tea-planter, Late Chairman, Municipality, Jorhat—*

“I should say that the traffic should be gradually prohibited as early as possible, say, within 5 years. I should prefer it, if it can be done without injury to the inveterate smokers much earlier.”

Witness No. 323. Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy, B.A., M.L.C., Preacher, Shillong—

“My opinion is, as soon as possible, opium should be prohibited from our country. The opium addicts ought to be under medical advice. If there be no physical injury to the addicts from the sudden prohibition, I should be in favour of total prohibition immediately. Those people who are addicted to the habit for a long time and who are old, I should leave to the discretion of the doctors for the period for which they may be allowed to continue the habit.

I am in favour of a Dangerous Drugs Act for Assam.”

Rai Bahadur Kali Charan Sen, B.L., Government Pleader, Lower Assam, Gauhati, in a statement to the Committee, writes—

“I am in favour of the total prohibition of opium for purposes other than medicinal.”

IS THE POLICY OF GOVERNMENT BASED ON CONSIDERATION OF REVENUE?

Witness No. 1. Sjt. F. C. Gogoi, Retired Inspector of Police, Hony. Magistrate, Sibsagar—

“The Government is keeping up this evil for only revenue purposes.”

✓ *Witness No. 4. G. G. Phukan, Esq., an old man of 87 years and a landholder, Ex-President of the Assam Association, late Chairman of the Seeksagar Municipality, states—*

“Particularly I blame the Government for the policy of selling opium in the present manner by which they have increased the number of opium-eaters and have given greater facilities for obtaining this pernicious drug and this policy of the Government has caused the ruin of Assam. I can give no other interpretation of this wasteful policy of exploitation of the people by the Government. I believe I am one of the most loyal subjects of the British throne, but this wasteful and exploiting policy of the Government, gradually adopted since after the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria the Good, which has assumed its worst type since the introduction of the Reforms in India, has bled and broken my heart and to this cause I attribute the great discontent which has been prevailing at present in India.”

Witness No. 7. Sjt. Tirtheswar Phukan, an old man of 82, a landholder and the President of the Ahom Association, states—

“The object of the Government is to get revenue as much as possible. They are following a policy of exploitation”.

Witness No. 11. Srijut B. N. Hazorika, Pleader and Chairman of the Sibsagor Municipality states—

“It is obvious that the Government have been keeping up the traffic for purposes of revenue only.”

Witness No. 75. Sjt. Sibram Sarma, B.L., President of the Dibrugarh Bar Association, states—

“The policy of the Government was to get more revenue from the people. I do not think that they made any attempt to reduce the consumption of opium. I don't think that the Government showed any consideration for the people”.

Witness No. 86. Sjt. Laxminath Phukan, Editor of “Times of Assam,” states—

“The Government is carrying on the trade evidently for purposes of revenue”.

Witness No. 170. Sjt. Rai Bahadur Krishna Chandra Choudhory, Retired Extra Assistant Commissioner, Chairman of the Gauhati Municipality, states—

“I do not believe the Government adopted any whole-hearted measure to check the consumption. The increase of the price of the retail opium or increase of the license will not, I believe, check the consumption.”

Witness No. 172. Sjt. Kamakhya Ram Barua, M.L.C., states—

“Government is keeping up the trade for the sake of revenue.”

Witness No. 187. Sjt. Jogendra Nath Barua, B.L., General Secretary of the Assam Association, states—

“For purposes of revenue the Government is keeping up the traffic. I think the reasons given by the Government in support of the policy are not tenable and sound”.

Sjt. Rai Bahadur Kalicharan Sen, B.L., Government Pleader for Lower Assam, in a statement to the Committee, while strongly advocating total prohibition for purposes other than medical, writes—

“There will no doubt be a large decrease of public revenue, but I don't think there is any justification for levying revenue at the expense of the moral and material prospects of the people”.

Witness No. 262. Khan Sahib Nuruddin Ahmed, Pleader, Nowgong, states—

“The question of revenue ought not to stand in the way of altogether abolishing the traffic. If the Government cannot manage without the

proceeds derived from this traffic they should try to collect the same by other means".

✓ *Witness No. 275. Sjt. Pramananda Agarwalla, Tea-planter, Tezpur, states—*

"I cannot say that Government has adopted any method of systematically reducing consumption. They are afraid to lose the revenue".

Witness No. 283. Sjt. Rai Sahib Padmanath Gohain Barua, Editor of the Assam Banti, Chairman of the Tezpur Municipality, states—

"There were no systematic efforts to reduce the consumption by the Government. Some random steps were taken without any good results. The enhancement of price has not the effect of reduction of consumption ; on the contrary, it impoverishes the already impoverished consumers of opium".

Witness No. 309. Sjt. Bishnu Chandra Barua, M.A., B.L., Secretary of the Bar Association, Jorhat, states—

"Except for revenue purposes I know of no other object in keeping up the opium trade".

Witness No. 310. Maulavi Keramat Ali, Pleader, Chairman of Jorhat Municipality, states—

"Government is more anxious for the opium-eaters than for public opinion".

OPINION WITH REGARD TO COMPENSATING THE LOSS OF REVENUE DUE TO IMMEDIATE TOTAL PROHIBITION.

Witness No. 74. Sjt. Loboram Koer, President Ahom Association, Dibrugarh, states—

"I should rather like to forego many of the present-day benefits than be educated from the revenue of opium."

Witness No. 75. Sjt. Sibram Sarma, B.L., states—

"I should prefer to abandon many of the present-day benefits, such as good roads, telegraph, railways, etc., than to have this revenue derived from this immoral traffic.

Tea can be taxed to make up partly the loss of revenue from opium. From the land revenue itself the loss will be made up after a few years by new settlement without enhancing the present rate of assessment."

Witness No. 86. Sjt. Laxminath Phukan, Editor "Times of Assam", states—

"I am not going to have the benefit derived from the income of this

traffic by drugging my own people, and if there be no alternative I should like to be taxed as may be thought fit by the representatives of the people. There is enough room for retrenchment in almost all the departments. If any taxation is necessary, the first item I should tax is tea, from which the companies and the capitalists are making 100 per cent. profit and in the present state of prosperity of the trade the tax will be hardly felt. 4 to 6 pies per lb. should be the tax assessed on tea."

Witness No. 88. Sjt. Durganath Changkakoti, Pleader, states—

"By means of retrenchment in various departments I should effect economy and carry on the administration. I think tea should be taxed, at least when the trade is enjoying so much prosperity, if there be necessity of further taxation."

Witness No. 166. Sjt. Bishnuram Medhi, M.Sc., B.L., Pleader, states—

"The loss of revenue due to total prohibition may be made up by retrenchment in the working or working expenses of the present Government which is top-heavy or by an assessment of a small tax on tea or jute. I do not like to barter anything for any benefit that may accrue from this opium traffic."

Witness No. 168. Sjt. Suresh Chandra Banerjee, Land-holder, Gauhati, states—

"If the Government ear-marks the entire opium revenue for education I would not hear of it. *Garu mere juta dan* (meaning—to kill a cow in order to make a gift of a shoe) I do not want it."

Witness No. 180. Sjt. Barada Charan Sen, Gauhati, states—

"I should not prefer to keep the income even if the revenue derived from opium is spent on education, as I do not want to poison my countrymen and derive any benefit thereby.

The loss of revenue of opium may be compensated by 6 pies tax per lb. of tea which I think will appreciably make up the loss."

Witness No. 186. Sjt. Upendra Nath Sen, M.A., B.L., Pleader, Gauhati, states—

"The loss of revenue should be made up by retrenchment and tax on cigarettes, liquor, etc."

Sjt. Rai Bahadur Kalicharan Sen, B.L., Gauhati, in a statement to the Committee, writes—

"There will no doubt be a large decrease of public revenue, but I do not think there is any justification for levying revenue at the expense of the moral and material prospect of the people."

Witness No. 286. Sjt. Annadakumar Padmapati, M.A., B.L., Pleader, Tezpur, states—

“Even if the administration suffers a little it ought to be ready for the sacrifice. I cannot think that Government will ever suggest that the entire opium revenue will be ear-marked for education and other nation-building purposes.”

Witness No. 292. Sjt. Rai Bahadur Betharam Sarma of Tezpur, states—

“We do not want education, sanitation, etc., out of opium revenue by poisoning our own men. The revenue will be, in time, more than compensated by the activities of about a lakh of consumers.”

OPINION ON GOVERNMENT MEASURES.

Witness No. 1. Sjt. F. C. Gogoi, Retired Inspector of Police, Honorary Magistrate, Seesagar—

“My opinion is that a decrease in the number of shops and increase of the sale price do not reduce the consumption of the quantity of opium.”

Witness No. 4. G. G. Phukan, Esq., Land-holder, Sibsagar, Ex-President of the Assam Association, Chairman of the Seesagar Municipality—

“The measures adopted by the Government are for mere show and cause great economic hardship to the people without any compensating advantage.”

Witness No. 5. Sjt. Ratnadhār Barua, Retired Deputy Inspector of Schools, age 82 years—

“The reduction of the number of shops and the increase of the price of opium have not led to the decrease of consumption.”

Witness No. 9. Sjt. Taranath Sarma, Secretary, Dharma-Alochani Sabha, Sibsagar—

“I do not think that the enhancement of price has led to any decrease in the number of consumers.”

Witness No. 10. Sjt. G. N. Barooah, B.L., Secretary, Bar Association, Seesagar—

“The decrease in the number of shops and the gradual enhancement of the retail price of opium have not had the effect of reducing the consumption of opium.”

✓ *Witness No. 16. Sjt. Tarini Prosad Barua, Tea-planter, Seesagar—*

“The enhancement of the retail price of opium has not reduced the

number of consumers or quantity of consumption. I have experience of opium being sold from -/10/- (annas ten) per tola to Rs. 1/12/- per tola, and in spite of this enhancement, there has been hardly any decrease in the consumption."

✓ *Witness No. 17. Sjt. Jadav Prosad Chaliha, B.Sc., Proprietor of several tea-gardens in Seesagar—*

"In spite of the decrease in the number of shops and increase of the retail price of opium, there was no reduction in the consumption of the quantity of opium or consumers up till 1921, when we launched the great Non-co-operation movement, after which there was a decided decrease."

Witness No. 21. Sjt. Muktanath Kakoti, Mohmora, Gaonbura (village headman)—

"I do not find any decrease in the number of consumers from the enhancement of price."

Witness No. 41. Sjt. Nikunjalata Chaliha (wife of the late Rai Bahadur Kaliprosad Chaliha, Government Pleader, Upper Assam)—

"I do not believe that increase of price has any effect in reducing the number of opium-eaters."

✓ *Witness No. 52. Sjt. Bhabani Prosad Barua, Tea-planter and Mauzadar, Bhuyankhat, Seesagar—*

"The increase of the price of opium has impoverished the opium-eaters and has not decreased the number of consumers, so far as my experience goes; so I don't think that the enhancement of price has any deterrent effect."

Witness No. 53. Sjt. Rajkishore Ghose, a Bengali Land-holder, living at Sapekhali, Seesagar for 25 years—

"The enhancement of the price had not any deterrent effect, but the Non-co-operation movement checked the habit a great deal."

Witness No. 62. Sjt. Khogeswar Bahatragohain, Contractor, Tinsukia—

"The increase of the price of opium has not decreased consumers but decreased the lands and properties of opium-eaters."

Witness No. 68. Sjt. Manik Chandra Hazarika, Land-holder, Leading man of the Muttock Community—

"The increase of price has no effect."

Witness No. 74. Sjt. Loboram Koer, President of the Ahom Association, Dibrugarh—

"The increase of the price of opium has not affected the number of consumers."

Witness No. 82. Sjt. Bachalal Barua, Mauzadar, Dibrugarh—

“The increase of price of opium has not caused a decrease in the number of opium-eaters.”

Witness No. 86. Sjt. Laxminath Phukan, Editor, the “Times of Assam”, Dibrugarh—

“Up to 1920, the measures adopted by Government had not the effect of reducing the consumption of opium. The substantial reduction in 1921-22 was mainly due to the activities of the workers of the Non-co-operation movement.

“Even if the system of registration is carried out to its logical consequence, it will not eradicate the evil.”

Witness No. 101. Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan, B.A., M.L.C., Dibrugarh—

“The present policy of the Government, *i.e.*, maximum of revenue and minimum of consumption, has not had, I am afraid, the desired effect. And I think the Government should adopt a new policy which I have indicated.”

Witness No. 168. Sjt. Suresh Chandra Banerjee, Land-holder, Gauhati—

“The increase of the price of opium does not decrease consumption, but on the contrary, it increases the poverty of the opium-eaters who have to pay higher prices for it.”

Witness No. 170. Sjt. Rai Bahadur Krishna Chandra Chaudhuri, Retired Extra Assistant Commissioner, Chairman, Gauhati Municipality—

“I do not believe that the Government have adopted any whole-hearted measure to check the consumption. Mere increase of the price of the retail opium or increase of the license-fee will not, I believe, check the consumption.”

Witness No. 187. Sjt. Jogendranath Barua, B.L., Secretary of the Assam Association, Gauhati—

“The increase of price (of opium) has not tended to the decrease of consumption up to 1919-20. The reduction of consumption after 1919-20 is due to the activities of the Non-co-operation movement.”

Witness No. 216. Sjt. Protap Chandra Goswami, Satradhikar of the Nalbari Satra, Land-holder, Ex-President of the Assam Provincial Congress Committee—

“The policy of the Government had not the effect of reducing consumption till 1920 when the Non-co-operation movement checked the habit and reduced consumption.”

Witness No. 262. Maulavi Nuruddin Ahmed, Khan Shaheb, Pleader, Vice-Chairman, Local Board, Nowgong—

“Without doubting the good faith of the Government in working for the ultimate extinction of the traffic, the steps they have taken up-to-date, to my mind, are not sufficient and effectual.”

✓ *Witness No. 275. Sjt. Paramananda Agarwalla, Tea-planter, Tezpur—*

“The increase of price of opium had not the effect of reducing consumption till 1920. After this the subsequent decrease is due to the Non-co-operators, who carried on the propaganda against opium.”

Witness 283. Sjt. Rai Shaheb Padmanath Gohain Barua, Editor, 'Assam-Banti,' Chairman, Municipal Board, Tezpur—

“There was no systematic effort to reduce the consumption by the Government. Some random steps were taken without any good result. The enhancement of price had not the effect of reduction of consumption; on the contrary it impoverished the already impoverished consumers of opium.”

Witness No. 308. Sjt. Rama Kanta Barkakoti, B.L., Government-pensioner—

“I think the enhancement of the retail price and decrease in the number of shops have not had so far the desired effect of reducing consumption.”

Witness No. 312. Sjt. Krishnakanta Bhattacharyya, Editor, 'Assam-Bilasini,' Jorhat—

“There has been no systematic attempt to reduce the consumption and the measures adopted are more for show than effectual reduction. The policy adopted by the Government is ineffective.”

✓ *Witness No. 316. Sjt. Rai Bahadur Krishna Kumar Barua, Tea-planter, late Chairman, Municipality, Jorhat—*

“Government measures proved ineffectual to suppress the consumption as far as I gather from the Government figures. I believe, the traffic is kept up for revenue purpose. Government should find some other means in place of this revenue.”

Witness No. 323. Rev. J. J. M. Nichols Roy, B.A., M.L.C., Preacher, Shillong—

“I am not satisfied with the policy of the Government with regard to the excise generally. My resolution, though carried by the Council and welcomed by the country at large, was not given effect to, save that they have said that they recorded the names of the consumers.”

PHYSICAL, MORAL, AND ECONOMIC CONDITION OF
OPIUM-EATERS.

Witness No. 1. Sjt. F. C. Gogoi, Retired Inspector of Police, Hony. Magistrate, Seesagar—

“The opium-eaters were physically weak and inactive. They used to send out their little children to plough their land and themselves remained at home.

“The effect of opium consumption, so far as I have observed, is baneful and disastrous on the Ahom and other populations and the hill-tribes.

“Generally they pledge utensils, ornaments, etc., for their drug. Opium-eaters are generally looked down upon by society. My experience is that their statements (in courts) can be had for a quarter of a tola of opium.”

Witness No. 2. Sjt. Khirodeswar Barthakur, Chief-priest of Siva-dol, Seesagar—

“They will try to secure opium, even if it is necessary to steal, or commit dacoity, or by begging. They can stake their honour and everything for this habit.”

✓ *Witness No. 4. G. G. Phukan, Esq., Landholder, Seesagar, age 87 years, Ex-President of the Assam Association, Chairman of the Seesagar Municipality—*

“In short they are capable of doing any dishonest thing to buy opium. Opium-eaters are the most dishonest people and a set of liars.”

Witness No. 6. Sjt. Hemnath Sarma, Head Master, Jhanzi M. E. School—

“They look thin and hungry. The opium-eaters are quite untrustworthy and unreliable.”

Witness No. 7. Sjt. Tirtheswar Buragohain Phookan, Landholder, President of the Ahom Association, Seesagar—

“The opium-eaters have swollen eyes, black lips and dark appearance. They are not capable of work, and can only work under the influence of the drug. Opium-eaters are not afraid of their life or their principles and they are unreliable and untrustworthy. I consider that this habit has ruined our country.”

Witness No. 10. Sjt. G. N. Barooah, B.L., Secretary of the Bar Association, Seesagar—

They are very easily distinguished from other people. They are generally ill-clad and ill-fed. They generally tell lies and commit petty thefts. I found that opium-eaters are habitual perjurers.”

Witness No. 11. Sjt. B. N. Hazarika, Chairman of the Seesagar Municipality, Pleader—

“I find the opium-eaters generally become weak, and dwindle down to mere skeletons after some time. They acquire a peculiar gait and manner which are distinguishable immediately at sight. The opium-eaters are generally very badly off. They become a burden to their family and society. Most of the opium-eaters are thieves and they are generally perjurers.”

✓ *Witness No. 16. Sjt. Tarini Prosad Barua, Tea-planter, Seesagar—*

“Generally the opium-eaters are lazy and sickly. The opium-eaters are generally a set of liars and can be hardly relied on.”

✓ *Witness No. 17. Sjt. Jadav Prosad Chaliha, B.Sc., Proprietor of several Tea-gardens in Seesagar—*

“Opium-eaters are generally vicious in their habits. They can do anything and go to the length of any measure for a dose of opium. They pledge utensils and other things in the Marwari's and other shops for a mere trifle.”

Witness No. 21. Muktanath Kakoti, Mahmora, Gaonbura (Village Headman)—

About 50 per cent. of the opium-eaters are unable to maintain their families. This is due to the opium habit. They cannot cultivate their lands in time and do other duties.”

✓ *Witness No. 41. Srijuta Nikunjalata Chaliha (Wife of the late Rai Bahadur Kaliprosad Chaliha, Govt. Pleader, Upper Assam)—*

“I have seen women also who take opium. They look haggard and miserable and they are obliged to leave their children and home for opium.”

✓ *Witness No. 42. Sjt. B. P. Chaliha, Tea-planter, Seesagar—*

“The opium-eating coolies generally fail to attend their duty in time. I found them very often telling lies and alleging a false plea for their absence.”

Witness No. 45. Sjt Henduram Gaonbura (Village Headman), Mahmora—

“There are exceptions, but most of the opium-eaters have been reduced to abject poverty.”

Witness No. 52. Sjt. Bhabani Prosad Barua, Tea-planter and Mauzadar, Bhuyankhat, Seesagar—

“About 70 per cent. of the homesteads are affected with this habit in

my Mauza. Most of the revenue defaulters in my Mauza are opium-eaters. The houses of opium-eaters are in a very wretched and miserable condition. They are always in rags and the womenfolk are reduced to nudity owing to the opium-eating habit of their husbands. The opium-eaters are generally liars and many of them are suspected of being thieves."

Witness No. 63. Sjt. Kaliram Datta, Head Master, Tinsukia M. E. School—

"I can tell even when a student is reading that he is the son of an opium-eater. His voice is weak, generally he is lazy, he will take a little time to stand up."

Witness No. 66. Sjt. Someswar Barua, Tea-planter, Tinsukia—

"The percentage of opium-eaters amongst them (Muttocks) will be 70 to 80 per cent. of the adult males and 30 per cent. of females."

Witness No. 68. Sjt. Manik Chandra Hazarika, Land-holder, Leading man of the Muttock Community—

"Our Gossains (religious preachers) are also addicted to the opium habit. They are the root of this evil amongst us. The Dinjoi Gossain used to distribute opium to his disciples in place of *prasad*. I put it that 90 per cent. of our people are addicted to this opium evil."

Witness No. 74. Sjt. Lohoram Koer, President of the Ahom Association, Dibrugarh—

"The opium-eaters have not sufficient food to eat, neither they have enough clothes for their families. The opium-eaters are lazy and naturally by false pretext they will try to have their dose of opium."

Witness No. 75. Sjt. Sibram Sarma, B.L., Pleader, President of the Bar Association, Dibrugarh—

"An opium-eater looks pale, anæmic, as if he is suffering from some wasting disease. Their economic condition is most deplorable. They are generally unreliable and untrustworthy. They even take to petty thefts and pilfering and other dishonest means to maintain themselves."

✓ *Witness No. 80. Dr. Umesh Chandra Mukherjee, Medical Practitioner for 39 years, Dibrugarh—*

"The younger the consumer the greater is the injury done to the constitution. People having the opium habit are difficult patients and medicines do not act on the opium-eaters as effectively as in ordinary cases. We give purgatives to opium-eaters but they hardly act."

Witness No. 84. Miss G. M. Campbell, Lalbagh, Lucknow—

“I can tell you about the people purchasing opium—they are thin, emaciated and their eyes have a sort of wild look. They all looked like poor people to me. The people who went to the opium shop were not so neat and clean as the other people who went to the bazar.”

Witness No. 86. Sjt. Laxminath Phookan, Editor Times of Assam, Dibrugarh—

“The opium-eaters and smokers are, as a class, thin and emaciated and look like hungry people. They have a peculiar bend towards the front ; cheeks are pale, eyes sunken, and lids drooping. The general and current belief is that they are as a class not very trustworthy.”

Witness No. 101. Sjt. Nilmoni Phukan, B.A., M.L.C., Dibrugarh—

“Most of the opium-eaters and smokers are physical wrecks. They dress very slovenly and wear tattered rags. In short, they are human skeletons. Most of them are wretchedly poor. I know they pledge little articles of domestic use and ornaments of their wives for opium.

There is an adage in Assamese that opium-eaters cannot be believed. I am positively of opinion that this habit has affected the moral, material and economic condition of the masses and I believe that this is leading our peasantry to ruin.”

Witness No. 136. Sjt. Boga Miri, Dhakuakhana, North Lakshmipur—

“There are numbers of Miri villages in this Sub-division. Almost all the villages are affected with this. They are a healthy people. Opium has affected their health and reduced many of them to paupers and many have taken to stealing.”

Witness No. 136. Maulavi Zubed Ali, Mauzadar, North Lakshmipur—

“As a race, the Assamese are going down owing to this habit. I had occasion to attach the houses of opium-eaters. I did not find anything except a few broken and useless wares which cannot be pledged or pawned.”

Witness No. 162. Maulvi Abdur Rohman Barua, Merchant and Landholder, North Lakshmipur—

“Our firm had opium shops for about fifty years and I remember for 20 years myself. Now-a-days 75 per cent. of the opium-eaters are ex-tea-garden coolie settlers.”

Witness No. 168. Sjt. Suresh Chandra Banerjee, Landholder, Gauhati—

“10/16 of the Mekirs are addicted to the opium habit according to my opinion.”

Witness No. 170. Sjt. Rai Bahadur Krishna Chandra Chaudhuri, Retired Extra Assistant Commissioner, Chairman, Gauhati Municipality—

“They are physically weak and indolent and poverty-stricken. As a Magistrate I can say that petty thefts are generally committed by low-class opium-eaters when they cannot afford to have their daily dose.

On the whole, the effect of opium is disastrous on our people, specially on the people of Nowgong, Seesagar and Lakshimpur.”

Witness No. 231. Sjt. Abhoyakanta Gohain, Government-pensioner and Contractor, Nowgong—

“I am a contractor. I never employ opium-eating labour because they are lazy, indolent and cannot work.”

Witness No. 252. T. David Mikir, Mauzadar, Kuthoribag, Nowgong—

“Opium has done wrong to my community.”

✓ *Witness No. 263. Sjt. Bishnu Charan Bora, B.L., M.L.C., Mauzadar, Nowgong—*

“They cannot be relied on; they have got rarely any sense of responsibility. The Assamese opium-eaters are bad workers.

I find generally some difficulty in realising revenue from the opium-eaters. Invariably I find that many of the opium-eaters are included in the defaulters' list. This is due to their opium habit.”

Witness No. 275. Sjt. Paramananda Agarwalla, Tea-planter, Tezpur—

“The consumers are weak, emaciated, lean and thin. They lack courage and boldness. They are useless and cannot work. Generally the consumers are very poor.”

Witness No. 281. Sjt. Jyotish Chandra Bose, Landholder and Hony. Magistrate, Tezpur—

“The opium consumers are degraded morally and physically. Generally the opium consumers are poor. The effect on the Assamese population is very disastrous.”

Witness No. 309. Sjt. Bishnu Chandra Barua, M.A., B.L., Secretary, Bar Association, Jorhat—

“They seem an unnatural body of men who are callous to their responsibilities and quite indifferent to the social and manly duties of maintaining their wives and children.”

APPENDIX XV.

THE PROBLEM OF GOALPARA.

The problem of opium consumption in Goalpara District is one of the most interesting studies when considering the opium question in Assam. We read in the earliest reports about Assam that Goalpara was very deeply infected with the opium evil. Indeed little difference was made in these reports between Goalpara and the five Assamese districts to the east of its borders. But when we come to actual figures of opium consumption, which are fairly reliable and accurate, we see at once that the consumption of opium in Goalpara, even in the earliest days of statistics, was hardly one third of that of the other Assamese districts. Compared with Lakhimpur and Sibsagar it hardly amounted to one-fifth.

What is, however, of the greatest interest and importance is this, that while the other districts of Assam remained fairly steady in their opium consumption, that of the Goalpara district steadily declined, until to-day it is a negligible quantity. In order to show this in round figures it may be stated that while the index figure of Lakhimpur is 190, the index figure of Goalpara is only 2. Kamrup is the next district to Goalpara in the Assam Valley. Here again, there has been a considerable decline, though not so decisively marked as in Goalpara itself. To-day Kamrup has declined to the index figure of 45. Nowgong to-day has an index of 173. Yet in 1873 the consumption in Kamrup and Nowgong was practically the same, standing at 290.

What are the reasons, why these two outer districts of the Assam Valley, which lie towards the West, are throwing off the opium habit, while the four inner districts towards the East are retaining it? What again is the ultimate reason, why in Goalpara itself the evil has now completely disappeared?

First of all, we notice that Goalpara was the first of the districts to come directly under the British rule, and it was settled and administered far earlier than the other districts. Kamrup district came second to Goalpara in this respect. The four other districts which lie farther up the Assam Valley remained for a long time practically unadministered.

It is true that the mercenary soldiers under the British were the people who first introduced poppy cultivation on a large scale into Assam, and it is also true that Goalpara was the first district to be sown with the poppy. This may account for the fact that, in the early days, before Mr. Moffat Mills wrote his Report, every observer spoke of Goalpara as highly infected with the opium vice. But all the same, by the year 1873, the actual facts of opium consumption, when registered for the first time and statistically examined, showed that this long-settled district had not actually become so infected as the other districts. It may be well to give

at this point the list of figures for consumption in the different years from 1873—1900 as follows:—

CONSUMPTION.				
	1873-74	1879-80	1889-90	1899-1900
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.
Goalpara ...	84	29	22	8
Kamrup ...	290	234	170	121
Nowgong ...	284	179	243	168
Darrang ...	237	275	207	179
Sibsagar ...	460	463	397	368
Lakhimpur ...	383	329	359	374

Here from these lists it is abundantly evident that the Goalpara consumption of opium stands on a completely different footing from that of any other district. As we have said above, the district which comes nearest to it by way of analogy is Kamrup; but while Kamrup consumption during this period had only decreased by a little more than half, the consumption in Goalpara had decreased from 84 to 8 maunds, or to one tenth of the previous amount.

Certain features of the Goalpara District may now be mentioned as partly accounting for the rapid change which has taken place in that district.

(a) The soil of Goalpara is far poorer than that of any other district of the Assam Valley. The people are far more hardy and hardworking. They are also living close to the borders of Bengal, and the intercourse with the Bengali population is continuous and constant. Therefore, we are in a certain sense dealing with a different type of agricultural population from that of other districts of the Assam Valley, though many of those inhabiting Goalpara are still Assamese by birth.

(b) Goalpara is the only district in the Assam Valley that is settled agriculturally on the permanent settlement basis instead of on the basis of peasant proprietorship and temporary settlement. The Zemindars in Goalpara are very much the same as the Zemindars in East and North Bengal. It is quite possible that this permanent settlement with the full Zemindari system has affected the character of the population. As the opium consumption in all the districts is almost entirely among the villagers and not among the educated classes, this fact,—that Goalpara is the only permanently settled district,—must have its own significance.

(c) In Goalpara, one of the most prominent castes or races is that of the Kacharis. These have long been established in their religion and social customs, and even though it may be the case that during the first half of the 19th century they fell under the opium habit, yet it seems never to have become so firmly rooted among them as it did in some other parts

of Assam Valley. One interesting point is this, that the Kacharis furnish soldiers for the Indian Army who rank with the Gurkhas. As the recruits have gone abroad into other parts for service they seem to have gradually given up some of their opium habits. This constant intercourse with the outside world has probably been one of the causes why the opium habit is so rapidly declining in Goalpara itself compared with other districts.

(d) In Goalpara there has been a very large change of population, during the years 1870-1900, when the district suffered from Kala-azar, cholera and other diseases. Between the years 1880 and 1900 it is estimated that over 30 per cent. of the old population died. A new population came in from East Bengal especially from the Mymensingh District to take the place of the old. These new emigrants were entirely free from the opium habit and their presence and their strong competition with the Assamese agriculturists undoubtedly effected a great change in the opium habits of the Assamese indigenous race itself.

APPENDIX XVI.

NOTE ON 'THE BOTHAM COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

The Botham Committee's Report, though submitted to Government on the 18th April, 1913, was only issued to the general public in June, 1925, in spite of the repeated demands for its publication from Members of the Legislative Council. Since the copy, which is now in our possession was sent to us, after this Report was written, it was considered advisable to add a note in the Appendix, instead of commenting on it fully in the body of our own Report.

The Botham Committee examined in all 482 witnesses of whom more than half were Government officials. The evidence itself has not been published.

The terms of reference to the Botham Committee were as follows:—

- (i) The extent to which opium smoking is prevalent, whether or not consumption in this form is increasing and, in particular, the extent to which it is practised in public gathering.
- (ii) The measures which should be undertaken in order to suppress the habit of opium smoking in company; the probable result of such measures including the extent to which they are likely to be effectual and the light in which they will be viewed by the people themselves as well as the extra establishment—excise or police—which may be necessary to enforce prohibition of opium smoking in company.

- (iii) The extent to which a moderate limit of consumption is exceeded by opium-eaters or smokers and the classes, if any, amongst whom excess is prevalent.
- (iv) The extent to which further restrictions on the sale of opium would involve danger of diverting consumption to more deleterious stimulants.
- (v) The applicability of a system of registration of opium consumers to Assam and the extent to which such a system would be supported by public opinion.
- (vi) (1) The reduction of the maximum limit of private possession of opium smoking preparations ;
 - (2) the reduction of the maximum limit of possession of opium ;
 - (3) the enhancement of the treasury issue price ;
 - (4) minor reforms, such as the reduction of the number of shops, further restriction of the hours of sale and raising of the purchaser's minimum age.

With regard to the Committee's findings on (iv) and (v) we quote the following from the body of its report :—

“The Committee is satisfied that severe restriction on opium, without similar restrictions on ganja, would divert consumption from opium to ganja. The process has already advanced far in Kamrup, where the younger generation is taking to ganja instead of to opium. All the Kamrup witnesses agree that the opium habit is declining amongst the Hindu Assamese of that district and that the ganja habit is fast increasing amongst the same class. The consumption of ganja in the district increased from 68 maunds in 1904-05 to 126 maunds in 1909-10, and the evidence is that the increase is due to the Assamese. Witness No. 25—a retired tahsildar living in the interior of the district,—goes so far as to say that all cultivators amongst the Assamese smoke ganja. The same process is to be seen, though at present not to the same extent in Darrang, Sibsagar and Nowgong, and it is not entirely absent in Lakshimpur. Apart from the comparative injuriousness of opium and ganja, there is a special danger from the latter drug in that it has certain religious associations, and its use, whether for that reason or because its injurious effects are less appreciated than those of opium, carries far less opprobrium even amongst the higher and more educated classes than that of opium. Instances are quoted (*vide* witnesses 11 and 12) of opium consumers exchanging the use of opium for that of ganja, but such cases are not common, and the danger is lest the rising generation of classes which have been accustomed to opium should take to ganja.

“In the case of aboriginal races, such as Mikirs, Kacharis, Miris, Lalungs, and of certain Assamese castes, such as Desdhais, Chaodangs and low caste Ahoms, consumption is likely to be diverted to alcohol rather than to ganja. All these are liquor-drinkers at present, but there is

evidence that opium consumers amongst them drink less liquor than those who have not acquired the opium habit."

About this contention, that if reduction is carried beyond a certain limit, the opium consumer will turn from this drug to some more deleterious intoxicant such as ganja or alcohol, we have already written. A glance at the figures for consumption of opium and of ganja and alcohol, which we have given elsewhere* will shew that, *where strong public opinion is in force against all intoxicants*, as in the days of the Non-co-operation Movement, such a danger of transference from one poison to another is not serious. At the same time, the figures given for the increase in ganja from 68 to 126 maunds in 5 years in Kamrup District have to be carefully considered. It appears that the Committee could cite only two witnesses who could testify to opium consumers exchanging the use of opium for that of ganja, and they say "such cases are not common."

As regards the fifth term of reference, concerning the applicability of a system of registration of opium consumers and the extent to which such a system would be supported by public opinion, the Committee did not give us to understand the number of witnesses who were actually in favour of "registration," but only says, "the system outlined by most of the witnesses who advocate registration is very much that which has been in Burma since 1893-94." The Committee summarily dismisses all arguments in favour of registration when it says, "The President agrees with the majority that the evil has not been proved to be a common one amongst boys and he does not think that the elaborate machinery of registration should be established in order to remedy an evil, which is not at present a serious one, and, so far as it does exist, is likely to be checked by the prohibition of smoking in company. Registration, however, to this extent (apart from restriction of issues or from prohibition), would not be a very serious undertaking."

In this connection it is to be remarked that though the Committee definitely gave its opinion in favour of "prohibition of smoking in company," the Government appear to have paid little heed to it and gave the public no benefit of knowing the Committee's findings till quite lately.

As regards the sixth term of reference, the Committee was not in favour of further reduction of the maximum limit of private possession of opium-smoking preparation and of the maximum limit of the possession of opium, but suggested some minor measures, such as the enhancement of the treasury issue price of opium, partial reduction of number of shops in some districts and the raising of the age of purchasers from 14 to 20 years.

	1920-21.		1923-24	
*Opium	...	1614 Mds.	...	884 Mds.
Ganja	...	639 "	...	334 "
Country-spirit	...	304,572 L. P. Gallons	...	191,421 L. P. Gallons.

But the Government while giving effect to the measures suggested by the Committee, further reduced the limit of private possession and of retail sale from 3 to 2 tolas and of individual possession of smoking preparation from 1 to $\frac{1}{2}$ tola and also of collective possession of opium from 5 tolas to 2 tolas, which measures the Committee were not in favour of.

Although these measures were put into effect by the Government as far back as in 1913, they did not contribute to a reduction in consumption in later years. The fact that after all the labours of the Committee there was no reduction in consumption and the demand for opium remained as before, is sufficient to show that the Committee's recommendations were not drastic enough to meet the demands of growing public opinion.

It was left to the workers of the Non-co-operation movement, fired with enthusiasm after the visit of Mahatma Gandhi in August, 1921, to effect a reduction in consumption of opium from 1614 maunds to 1013 maunds in a single year, a reduction of 36 per cent. Now the consumption stands at 884 maunds—a reduction of 100 per cent. from the figure of 1919-20. This is a permanent reduction. We have detailed elsewhere the effects of Non-co-operation Movement on the opium habit.

At the same time the Government, in their desire to show that they were also with public opinion, introduced rationing of shops from 1st April, 1921. Rationing of shops itself does not lead to much if it is not followed by an individual rationing of consumers. At the same time the present rationing appears to be too liberal to act as a deterrent to individual consumers, as is evident from numerous questions put by non-official members of the Assam Legislative Council to the Government and their answers printed in Appendix IV.

APPENDIX XVII. ✓

NOTE ON OPIUM SMOKING AND THE BOTHAM REPORT.

While our Committee has come to practically the same conclusions concerning the frequency of the evil of opium smoking, we consider the paragraphs which follow in the Botham Committee's Report, with regard to the effects of opium smoking, as wholly underestimating the physical and moral breakdown which occurs. Here it will be best to quote definitely from the Government Report itself as follows:—

"In considering the extent to which excess in opium taking is prevalent, the Committee, as was to be expected, is confronted by a mass of conflicting evidence. At opposite extremes are the views of Witness No. 310.

a Bengali pleader, long resident in Assam—that 95 per cent. of the consumers suffer in health, as well as in pocket, from the habit, and of No. 368, a mauzadar, speaking of his own mauza only—that none of the consumers have been injured. Generally speaking, the educated residents in towns say that excess is common, whilst persons residing in the mufassil, from mauzadars downwards, hold that it is rare. In estimating the value to be attached to these respective views, it has to be remembered that the opium habit is now a days almost extinct among the educated classes (*vide* evidence of Witness No. 377—Rai Saheb Dondadhar Barua). Educated witnesses, therefore, unless their duties bring them much in contact with the consuming classes, have comparatively little first-hand knowledge of the habit, and what they have is derived largely from the observation of consumers from the lower strata of town life, which might be expected to yield a larger proportion of excess than the community generally. Moreover, the subject is naturally one which lends itself to exaggeration; and the combination of a lack of first-hand knowledge of the habit with a praiseworthy ardour for the reformation of abuses can only give rise to exaggerated views. Mr. D. P. Copeland, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Witness No. 16), with thirty-five years' service in Assam and with much experience of the opium-consuming classes, says:—"Nearly all take opium in moderation. There are very few Bar-Kaniyas, perhaps 3 or 4 per cent. I consider that the rest of them find no harm whatever in the drug. I call it a harmless vice." Witness No. 340—a mauzadar, says:—"Opium has not done much harm to the Assamese; it has not done them any good". No. 110—a muktear, says:—"The majority of opium consumers are moderate; and it is only a small minority which goes to excess and suffers harm." Srijut Bhawani Charan Bhattacharjya, an Honorary Magistrate of Tezpur and an *ex-tahsildar*, 70 years of age, says, that moderation is the rule amongst all classes and excess the exception. That moderation is not only possible, but common, was evident from the appearance of the great majority of Gaonburas who appeared before the Committee. Most of these were consumers of opium, but it was the exception to find among them any appreciable appearance of injury from the habit. The Committee made special enquiries as to the existence and number of cases in which persons have been absolutely wrecked in health through over-indulgence in the drug. The great majority of witnesses replied that they knew no such instances, and where instances were cited, it not infrequently transpired that the victim had been broken down by disease (in one case he had a congenital deformity, *vide* No. 39) before he took to opium at all. More than one of the answers displayed the tendency to exaggeration referred to above. Witness No. 209, for instance, cited two instances, but the victims on production before the Committee were found to be hale and hearty old men! That such instances sometimes

occur the Committee does not doubt, but it is satisfied that they must be very rare.

“The conclusion at which the Committee arrived is as follows—Instances in which opium has had an extremely serious effect—an effect which might be called “terrible”—on the consumer are very rare and occur almost entirely: (1) amongst smokers and (2) amongst those who acquire the habit before maturity. A moderate limit of consumption is rarely exceeded amongst those who eat or drink opium. Amongst smokers of all classes there is a strong tendency to excess in so far as that the habit wastes more time and money than most consumers can afford, and that it induces indolence which, in conjunction with the waste of time and money, reduces them to poverty, which in its turn has an injurious effect upon their health. In the majority of cases smokers are physically and in capacity for work inferior to non-consumers. Amongst the more primitive and ignorant classes, such as Mikirs, Kacharis, Mataks, and low class Aoms—the tendency to excess grows as increased means give greater opportunity of indulgence.”

In commenting on this passage in the Government Report, we would state that we have ourselves visited village after village and have interviewed villagers in very large numbers beyond those whose actual written statements were taken down. Our members also, being Assamese by birth and widely acquainted with the agricultural conditions of Assam, have had unique opportunities for many years past of seeing things with their own eyes. There is not one of us who would endorse the statement of Mr. Copeland that opium smoking is a harmless vice. Nor would any one of us agree that nearly all who smoke take opium in moderation. While visiting different areas of the country we saw villages in which not merely one or two persons were harmed by the opium habit, but a whole village had sunk down in moral tone and the appearance of indolence was everywhere visible. We have given a summary of the evidence submitted to us by all sorts and conditions of village people. If required, we shall gladly re-print the evidence in full. While therefore our Committee would agree with the Botham Committee on the whole as regards the prevalence of opium smoking, it would not agree with regard to the evil caused by the opium habit. Still further, we should regard the remedies proposed as entirely unsatisfactory and unconvincing. Since the Botham Committee gave its report, remarkable changes have come about in public opinion. The Botham Committee states as follows:—

“The use of opium is at any rate not incompatible with the religion of the great majority of Assamese, as is evidenced by its frequent and increasing use in Namgaos or religious services, nor is it discountenanced by national sentiment. It is true that the educated majority now disapprove of it, but very few of them discountenance it. Even educated

Assamese give in, against their better judgment, to the fashion of providing opium at marriages and similar festivals (Witness No. 160). A leading light in the educational world (Witness No. 362) tells a story, with the object of showing the venality of the professional opium vendor, which shows still more clearly how little even the most educated Assamese 'discountenance' the habit."

Such a statement as this could not possibly be made with regard to the Assamese educated public to-day. The truth is evident on all sides that educated public opinion is now in advance of Government official opinion and that restrictive legislation would not only be agreed to, but actively demanded, by the educated public. Mr. Botham himself states in the Report as follows:—

✓ "The small extent, however, to which the educated class discountenance the opium habit at present shows that the support which any severe measures would obtain from public opinion would not be considerable. In this connection, the proceedings of an Anti-opium Conference held at Dibrugarh in 1907, and the action taken thereon, are instructive. Two measures were resolved on with the object of combating the evils attendant on the use of opium. One was to submit a memorial to Government, asking for the habit to be checked; the other was to form an "Assam Temperance Association" with permanent committees in each town and subdivision of the Valley. The first measure has been carried out; but nothing whatever has been done towards putting the second into effect."

While Mr. Botham might be able to take up this position in 1913-14 we are convinced that he himself would revise his opinion if he were allowed to do so in the year 1925.

With regard to the final paragraph of the Government Committee's Report, our own Committee is in complete agreement. The Opium section of the Botham's Committee's Report ends as follows:—

"Finally, the Committee ventures to endorse the second resolution of the Dibrugarh Anti-opium Conference of 1907; namely, that a Temperance Association should be organised to educate public opinion in Assam in connection with the use of intoxicants."

As will be seen from many passages in our own Report we wholly agree with the need that exists for organising public opinion in Assam. We trust, therefore, that in the future the Government itself will not stand in the way of such organising of public opinion on the opium question or impose repressive legislation leading to the imprisonment of workers.

APPENDIX XVIII.

EXTRACTS FROM GOVERNMENT EXCISE REPORTS.

Excise Report, 1901-02, page 6.

The total quantity of opium issued from the treasuries during the year was 1,222 maunds 37 seers 7 chattaks. The actual consumption in the province was 1,205 maunds 17 seers 7 chattaks, against 1,291 maunds 19 seers 4 chattaks in 1900-1901. The consumption of opium has steadily decreased since 1899-1900 and the figures this year are the lowest on record. The decrease is noticeable in almost every district. In Kamrup and Cachar, the explanation given is the scarcity that prevailed during the year. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang remarks this also, but ascribes a great deal of the decrease to smuggling. Smuggling of Bengal opium is the reason given by the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar. The Sub-divisional Officer of Jorhat still maintains that the spread of education and a growing distaste for opium among the younger generation of Assamese are taking effect. The Deputy Commissioner does not accept this explanation and points out that for two years there have been practically no prosecutions in Jorhat for real offences under the Opium Act, which indicates that there is no check on smuggling. The Deputy Commissioner of Lakshimpur, where the decrease in consumption is most marked, gives no explanation whatever. Consumption in the North Lakshimpur sub-division for the last ten years has been fairly steady. In the Sadar Sub-division the figures for the year under review are lower than for any year except 1897-1898. There is no doubt whatever that the cause of this is smuggling. The number of opium-eaters has certainly not diminished. It must, on the contrary, have increased, as the recent census figures show an increase in the indigenous population.

Excise Report, 1903-1904, page 5.

The actual consumption was 1335 maunds 3 seers, against 1274 maunds 1 seer in the preceding year. During the last two years, there has been an increase of about 10 per cent. in the opium consumption of the Assam Valley which is attributed by the Commissioner to returning prosperity. Mr. Melitus writes—

‘The bulk of the consuming population being Assamese agriculturists, the causes affecting consumption of opium are much the same as those affecting growth and decrease of Assamese cultivation. Good agricultural seasons, absence of natural calamities, exceptionally good health (save in one Sub-division) and increase of Assamese population, are the chief causes which are now at work increasing both the consumption of opium and the cultivation of the Assamese people.’

But this increase leaves consumption very markedly less than it was a generation ago: indeed it appears that the quantity annually issued is 30 per cent. less than it was in 1873-74. The increase in the treasury price of opium, and the enhancement of land revenue have contributed to this decrease; but apart from these causes, the Commissioner thinks that the opium habit is slowly but steadily diminishing amongst the Assamese, as the result of increased demand for other imported articles of luxury, due to improved communications and the spread of education. He suggests that cigarette smoking which is now becoming fashionable may keep many of the rising generation from taking to opium.

Excise Report, 1904-1905, page 6.

The actual consumption was 1,368 maunds 35 seers, against 1,335 maunds 3 seers in the preceding year. During the past three years, the consumption of opium has been steadily increasing in the Assam Valley Districts: but it remains less than it was 20 years ago. In two districts—Darrang and Kamrup—there was a fall, which in the latter case appears to be chiefly due to the non-settlement of a large number of shops. It is stated that in the Barpeta Sub-division of this district opium is giving way to ganja. The opium revenue for the province per 10,000 of population in 1904-1905 was Rs. 3,301, but the contributions of the several districts vary greatly. In Lakshimpur it reached the large sum of Rs. 14,817, in Nowgong it was Rs. 11,622 and in Sibsagar Rs. 8,076. At the other end of the scale come Sylhet, with a revenue of only Rs. 105 and Goalpara with Rs. 320 per 10,000 of population.

Excise Report, 1905-1906, page 21.

The consumption of opium has been steadily increasing in the Assam Valley since 1901-1902, but this year's increases whether in the whole valley or in the various districts, are considerably below the increases which have occurred. The total issues of opium (to the nearest maund) for this Division were in the year 1873-74, 1759 maunds, and this amount was gradually reduced, while revenue steadily increased, to 1135 maunds in 1901-02. Since then the issues have been 1,192 maunds in 1902-03, 1252 maunds in 1903-04, 1,286 maunds in 1904-05 and lastly 1,329 maunds in the year under report. The yearly increases have been respectively 57, 60 and 43 maunds. The largest district increase, 16 maunds in Lakshimpur, is much below the increase of 24 maunds in Nowgong in 1902-03. The main causes of increased opium consumption are those which have been assigned by the late Commissioner, Mr. Melitus, for the last three years, viz., a series of good seasons and good public health following a decade characterised by "bad seasons, earth-quakes, floods, and other calamities, kalazar, general unhealthiness and decrease of Assamese population." In Nowgong, where the floods were very severe, the

consumption in the district remained practically stationery, the nominal increase being due to extra issues at the end of the year and to some Sibsagar shops having taken their supplies from Nowgong treasury. The Deputy Commissioner, Lakshimpur, is of opinion that the "increase is due probably to a certain extent to the increase of opium-eating amongst the coolies, also to the more efficient supervision of the retail shops." There is ground for believing that the same reasons hold good of Sibsagar district, although the only reason given by the Deputy Commissioner is that many opium-eaters of the adjoining districts Nowgong and Lakshimpur resorted to Sibsagar shops because the retail price of opium was lower. In Darrang the increase is attributed specially to better supervision and the prevention of smuggling. These causes may have contributed to the increase in varying degrees, but as the consuming population consists mainly of indigenous Assamese, it is clear that the first and chief cause of increased consumption must lie in their general prosperity. It is generally reported that the spread of education is checking the opium habit and that the taste for imported luxuries reduces the cash available for the purchase of opium. This consideration may explain why the increase is not as large as it was a few years ago. It must also be remembered that parts of several districts suffered from floods during the year. To what extent tea-garden coolies are becoming opium-eaters is a question which will receive careful enquiry. If opium shops offer coolies facilities for obtaining the drug, they must be removed to greater distances from gardens.

Excise Report, 1906-1907, page 15.

Opium shops near tea-gardens in Assam—

In several years past opium shops have been situated on some of the tea-gardens in Assam Valley districts. The licenses have generally been granted at the instance of the garden Kayahs, one of whom is to be found on almost every tea-garden. A certain number also of the other shops for the supply of the indigenous population of the tea districts have been located in the vicinity of tea-gardens. As there was reason to believe that the imported coolies of one or two gardens were acquiring the opium habit, special enquiries were instituted in the districts of Lakshimpur, Sibsagar and Nowgong as being those most affected and as a result a large number of opium shops were abolished with effect from the 1st April, 1907, viz., 38 in Lakshimpur, 18 in Sibsagar and 24 in the Nowgong districts. In addition to those, the sites of 15 shops in Sibsagar and 4 in Dibrugarh were moved from the neighbourhood of tea gardens. Further enquiries into the matter are being made during the present year and if necessary more shops will be closed or moved. There appears to be no ground for the apprehension that the tea-garden coolies are generally taking to opium instead of country liquor, though this has occurred in some cases.

Page 16.

In the Assam Valley Division the increase, 106 maunds 36 seers, was the largest and it was shared by all the districts except Lakshimpur where there was a decrease of 1 maund 16 seers. * * * Of the districts Nowgong is responsible for the largest increase, 45 maunds 31 seers, next comes Kamrup with 33 maunds 7 seers followed by Darrang and Sibsagar with 17 maunds 5 seers and 11 maunds 26 seers respectively. * * * That in Nowgong is explained by the Deputy Commissioner "to be result of the recovery of the people from the effects of kala-azar and the growth of the lac business which has added largely to the resources of many Mikirs." The increase was very marked in the Mikir Hill shops and there is no doubt but that this was due to the good lac and cotton season. The Deputy Commissioner, Kamrup, explains the increase in his district as being due to the reduction in retail sale prices generally during the year and to good prices obtained by the rayats from the sale of paddy and mustard which allowed them a larger cash margin to spend on opium. To the last as well as to the increase in jute cultivation and the high prices obtained for the crop, the increase in Darrang has been ascribed. One of the reasons given by the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar for the increase in his district is that the retail price of the drug ruled lower than in Dibrugarh, a circumstance which had probably tempted consumers of the latter district to obtain their requirements from Sibsagar. This may also account for the decrease in the Lakshimpur district. The Deputy Commissioners of both Kamrup and Nowgong consider that the number of opium-eaters is on the increase. It is certain that when cash is plenty, consumers can afford to purchase larger supplies of the drug, but whether the habit is spreading is more doubtful as many well-informed persons are of opinion that with the spread of education opium-eating is going out of fashion. The fact that in Lakshimpur there was a decrease and in Sibsagar a comparatively small increase in consumption, these two districts being the chief tea-producing areas in the Assam Valley, indicates that there can have been no general spread of the habit among the tea-garden coolie population, who are the chief supporters of the liquor shops. In this connection the Deputy Commissioner, Seesagar, remarks:—

"I think the fact that the consumption of opium has continued to rise, in spite of the extraordinarily high price of the food grains prevailing during the year, goes to show that the native population is responsible for the increase rather than tea-garden coolie. The tea-garden coolie is generally a consumer and not a producer of food-grains and the famine prices for rice can have left him little money to spare this year for luxuries; and if the increase in the consumption of opium during the last few years had been due to him, a set-back might have been expected this year."

These arguments have considerable force and they apply equally well to the other tea-districts in the Assam Valley.

Excise Report, 1906-1907, page 17.

The Deputy Commissioner has been asked to report what measures he would propose in order to check consumption among these hill people. There is stated to be a certain amount of hawking of opium by vendors in the North Cachar Hills. This is an objectionable practice, but it is difficult to stop in so remote a tract.

Excise Report, 1907-1908, page 12.

The increase in the Assam Valley districts was distributed as follows:—Kamrup 23 maunds 13 seers, Darrang 16 maunds 16 seers, Nowgong 28 maunds 13 seers, and Sibsagar 72 maunds 14 seers. In Lakshimpur there was a decrease of 12 maunds due to the high retail prices charged in the Sadar Sub-division which drove many consumers to the border shops in Seesagar for their supplies, a fact which accounts to a considerable extent for the larger consumption in the latter district. Generally throughout the valley high prices were obtained for agricultural produce. The cultivation of jute also is extending and the lower districts of the Valley are recovering from the effects of Kala-azar and of the earth-quake of 1897. The prosperous condition of the rayats is reflected in the increased receipts from opium. This is especially so with regard to the Mikirs and other aboriginal tribes in the Nowgong and Khasi Hills districts and the North Cachar Hills Sub-division of Cachar who have derived large profits from the lac trade.

Page 13.

Perseverance in the policy of gradually enhancing the price of the drug and of diminishing the number of places of vend, appears to be the surest and safest method of checking consumption. But it is necessary to proceed cautiously in both directions, since any sudden rise in retail prices might not only result in the establishment of an organised smuggling trade, but would also be liable to drive consumers to substitute ganja for opium. The latter danger is by no means a fanciful one, especially as a tendency in this direction is even now reported from Kamrup.

Excise Report, 1908-1909, page 14.

In the Assam Valley, the net decrease was 51 maunds, though consumption was greater by 7 maunds 23 seers in Lakshimpur and by 2 maunds 24 seers in Darrang. There was a falling off of 23 maunds in Nowgong and of 9 maunds 35 seers in Kamrup. Portions of Nowgong suffered to some extent from a partial failure of crops and the lac trade sustained a severe check owing to a fall in prices which affected the

purchasing power of the Mikirs in Nowgong, the decrease in which district occurred almost entirely in the Mikir Mauzas of Rangkhang and Langfer. The Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup ascribes the smaller consumption of opium as being to some extent due to the consumers of the Lakshimpur district transferring their custom to the border shops in Seesagar, owing to the high retail prices ruling in the Dibrugarh sub-division. On several occasions persons were arrested with unauthorised quantities of opium in their possession, which they had purchased from Seesagar shops for importation into Lakshimpur. This, as well as the explanation offered by the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar, namely, that the Dibrugarh shops had reduced their prices, helped to restore to the latter the custom of their constituents. I may add that the decrease of 28 maunds 3 seers in Seesagar occurred entirely in the Sader Sub-division. It is remarkable what distances Assamese consumers will travel in order to obtain some advantage in retail prices. The loss of time involved does not seem to occur to them. The manager of a tea-estate employing a number of Mikir coolies informed me a few days ago that his Mikirs transferred their patronage from the local shop to one many miles off, which had lowered its prices, even though they lost a day's wage by doing so.

Enquiries were made during the year into the extent to which opium smoking prevails in this Province. The reports of almost all District Officers were to the effect that with the exception of some people of the lower class in Eastern Bengal and of certain aboriginal tribes in Assam such as Miris and Cacharis, who inhabit the more malarious submontane tracts and among whom the opium habit prevails to a regrettable extent, smoking is not on the increase and as regards Eastern Bengal is gradually disappearing. The Deputy Commissioners of Kamrup and Darrang consider that smoking is on the increase among the aboriginal tribes and the Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong, thinks that the increase is common to all classes of consumers. The Deputy Commissioners of the three other districts in the Assam Valley report that the habit is not spreading. Many persons who smoke opium also eat it on occasions and *vice-versa*; therefore, it is difficult to form an estimate of the proportion which smokers bear to the general body of the consumers. But as smoking is more expensive than eating and requires more time, the extent to which it is indulged in depends a great deal on the amount of the spare cash and leisure at the disposal of consumers. The reports are, on the whole, reassuring.

Mr. Williamson, Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, informs me that a large quantity of Chinese opium is consumed by the hill tribes bordering on his charge, and has specially mentioned in this connection the Rangkhang Nagas, near Margherita and Miju and Digaru Mishmis on the Upper Lohit-Brahmaputra. Among the latter, opium is imported by Tibetan traders. The existence of this trade on our very borders, if not

within them, is a grave menace to our policy of checking consumption by raising retail prices, for it is evident that a point must eventually be reached at which the smuggling of opium on a large scale will become profitable.

Excise Report, 1910-1911, page 11.

In the Assam Valley, the fall was only 8 maunds. In the Lakshimpur district, consumption decreased by 18 maunds 9 seers and in Kamrup by 5 maunds 28 seers. These reductions were counterbalanced by Nowgong where there was an increase of 11 maunds 6 seers. In Seeksagar and Darrang there were small increases of 2 maunds 31 seers and 2 maunds 35 seers, respectively. There was a revival of the lac and cotton trades which benefited hill consumers generally and in Nowgong the opening of Khedda operations and the fact that consumers are getting accustomed to the higher retail price are mentioned as the causes of increased consumption. In the Lakshimpur district, higher retail rates are ascribed as the reason for the contraction in the issues of opium. In the Khasi Hills district consumption rose by 8 maunds 20 seers. A special enquiry was made into the matter by the Deputy Commissioner who reported as follows:—

“There can be no doubt on comparing the increased sales with the more or less stationary population that opium-eating and smoking are on the increase among the inhabitants of these Hills.” The present Deputy Commissioner considers that the increase is due to the high price of cotton. The abolition of one shop was proposed and has been given effect to from the beginning of the current year 1911-1912.

Excise Report, 1912-1913, page 1.

3. (1) With certain omissions, the Eastern Bengal and Assam Excise Act I of 1910 and the rules framed thereunder were extended to the North Cachar Hills sub-division of the Cachar district, the Dibrugarh Frontier Tract of the Lakshimpur district, the Mikir Hills Tract in the Nowgong and Seeksagar districts and the Garo Hills district.

(2) Up to the year under report, an opium vendor could purchase or sell to another vendor, wholesale, a seer of opium at a time. This privilege was withdrawn, as it was found that the concession was much abused.

(3) The limit of private possession and retail sale of opium was, with effect from the 1st April, 1913, reduced from 5 to 3 tolas.

Page 5.

In spite of the further enhancement of the Treasury price from Rs. 40/- to Rs. 42/- in the four chief opium-consuming districts and of the increase in license fees, consumption of opium rose. The total for the province

was 1551 maunds 8 seers, against 1506 maunds 39 seers in 1911-12, showing an increase of 2.9 per cent. All the districts except Sylhet, Darrang, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and the Naga Hills shared in the increase. It was actually, though not relatively to the district consumption, the greatest in Lakshimpur where it amounted to 16 maunds 3 seers or 3.1 per cent. of the previous year's consumption. Though the province as a whole showed a slight fall in consumption during the previous year, Lakshimpur then showed an increase of 2.6. In this district and more specially in the North Lakshimpur Sub-division, it is reported that coolies in some gardens are unfortunately taking to opium. In Kamrup there was an increase of 14 maunds 13 seers or 10.5 per cent.; this however was due, partly at least, to purchases by people from Darrang, where high retail prices ruled. Cachar showed an increase of 11 maunds 1 seer or 21.3 per cent. which is attributed to lower retail prices. Last year prices were high and consumption fell by 13 per cent. The total consumption of the district was only 62 maunds 29 seers. In Seeksagar and Nowgong, the increase was comparatively small and may fairly be attributed to growth in population and prosperity, while in Goalpara consumption is almost stationary. In no district consumption fell by any large amount and such decrease as there was may mainly be ascribed to the closing of shops; a reference has already been made to Darrang. While the consumption of opium is undoubtedly, to some extent, an index of prosperity, the growth cannot be regarded as a matter for congratulation. Various steps, including the raising of the treasury price and the closing of shops have been taken, of recent years, with a view to checking it. The whole subject is, however, now under consideration.

Excise Report, 1913-1914, page 1.

3. (1) With reference to paragraph I of the resolution on the last year's Excise Report, the following reforms have been brought into force from 1st April, 1914, to give effect to the recommendations of the Committee, appointed in 1913, to enquire into certain aspects of opium and ganja consumption:—

(a) The treasury price of opium has been raised from Rs. 42/- to Rs. 45/- per seer in the districts of Lakshimpur and Seeksagar and from Rs. 37/- to Rs. 40/- in the plains portion of the district of Cachar.

(b) The limit of private possession and of retail sale has been reduced from 3 tolas to 2 tolas in the plains districts in the case of opium.

(c) The limit of manufacture or individual possession of smoking preparations of opium has been reduced from one tola to half a tola and the collective limit of possession by two or more persons assembled together has been reduced from 5 tolas to 1 tola.

(d) The minimum age for purchase has been raised from 14 to 20 years in the case of opium.

(e) The number of licenses for the retail vend of opium in Nowgong has been reduced from 73 to 47.

Page 6.

Consumption increased by 38 maunds 14 seers or 2.4 per cent. The increase in Darrang, 25 maunds 8 seers or 13.6 per cent. was the highest and was attributed to low retail prices and to the more prosperous condition of the consumers, who are mostly cultivators, and hence benefited by the rise in the price of rice. The increase of 22 maunds 35 seers or 9.5 per cent in Nowgong is ascribed to general prosperity and the better out-turn of jute and other articles. The increase of 16 maunds 37 seers or 11.2 per cent. in Kamrup is attributed to the larger consumption by ex-coolies and Gurkhas inhabiting sub-montane tracts while the increase of 15 maunds 37 seers or 3.7 per cent. in Seeksagar is attributed to the larger consumption by the Mikirs of the Golaghat Sub-division. * * * The reason for the increase in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of 5 maunds 8 seers or 23.0 per cent. is not clear and the matter is under enquiry. The decrease of 54 maunds 12 seers or 12.2 per cent. in Lakshimpur is remarkable. The Deputy Commissioner attributes it to higher retail prices and to the diversion of custom to the border shops of the Seeksagar district where lower retail prices prevailed. As noticed in the last report, the opium habit is spreading among tea-garden coolies in the Lakshimpur district, especially in the North Lakshimpur Sub-division. The Deputy Commissioner has remarked :—"The habit is almost as bad as amongst the Assamese. With a view to checking this growing evil the shops have been located as far from tea-gardens as practicable. The number of shops has also been considerably reduced in the past few years."

Excise Report, 1914-1915, page 6.

Consumption increased by 41 maunds 13 seers or 2.6 per cent. The highest increase of 63 maunds 21 seers or 16.3 per cent. occurred in Lakshimpur and has been attributed to cheaper retail prices and the spread of opium habit among tea-garden coolies. The increase of 9 maunds 20 seers or 5.7 per cent. in Kamrup was attributable to the spread of the habit among the sub-montane people especially among those who are ex-garden coolies. Smuggling to some extent is also suspected. The increase of 6 maunds 37 seers in the Naga Hills has been attributed to smuggling; the inclusion of Dimapur shop within the jurisdiction of that district is also a contributory cause. Seeksagar with a decrease of 15 maunds 39 seers or 3.6 per cent. heads the list. Enhanced retail prices have been assigned as the cause. The decreases of 9 maunds 5 seers in Nowgong and 4 maunds 5 seers in Darrang are attributable partly to poor trade in jute, cotton and lac and partly to consumers having resorted to Kamrup shops on account of the lower retail

prices there. The decrease of 4 maunds 20 seers or 16.2 per cent. in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills was due to better supervision. Consumption in this district appears now to be about normal: there was increased consumption last year in the Jowai Sub-division on account of the prosperity of the people. The decrease of 28 seers or 6.3 per cent. in Goalpara has been ascribed by the Deputy Commissioner to higher retail prices which sent the border consumers to the Kamrup shops, where the price was lower, while the decrease of 4 maunds 5 seers or 1.9 per cent. in Darrang has been explained to be due to ordinary fluctuations.

Excise Report, 1915-1916, page 6.

There was a decrease of 70 maunds 3 seers or 4.4 per cent. in consumption. All districts, except the Naga Hills and Darrang where the consumption showed an increase of 4 maunds 10 seers and 7 seers respectively, were responsible for the decrease.

The increase in the Naga Hills was due to the reopening of the Sonapur shop. Of the decreases the highest was in Seeksagar 33 maunds 27 seers. Then comes Lakshimpur with a decrease of 10 maunds 23 seers. In both these districts the causes assigned were higher retail prices and the rise in the price of food-grains which left but little margin for luxuries. The decrease of 10 maunds in Nowgong was attributed to depression in jute, cotton and lac business and to the higher price of food-grains. The decrease of 7 maunds 27 seers in Cachar and of 6 maunds 36 seers in Kamrup were attributed to good preventive work and to the check given thereby to smuggling. The decrease of 3 maunds 16 seers or 17.1 per cent. in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills was also attributed to good preventive work and to the fact that consumption in the Jowai Sub-division resumed its normal level. In the remaining districts the variations were too small to call for comment.

Excise Report, 1916-1917, page 7.

There was a further decrease of 4 maunds 23 seers in consumption. The greatest increase of 30 maunds 1 seer occurred in Lakshimpur and is attributed to the spread of opium habit among the tea-garden coolies, especially in the gardens in the North Lakshimpur Sub-division. The Deputy Commissioner remarks that in some gardens, the habit is as bad as amongst the Assamese, but at the same time consumption even now is not as great as it was two years ago. The increase of 9 maunds 9 seers in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills is attributed to the prosperous condition of the Bhoi people who are said to have a flourishing trade in lac, while the increase of 4 maunds 23 seers in Darrang is attributed to the influx of Cachari labour in the Mangaldoi gardens. The highest decrease of 26 maunds 22 seers occurred in Kamrup and is attributed solely to an all-round increase

in the retail price of the drug. The decrease of 10 maunds 15 seers in Nowgong is attributed to the same cause and also to the expensiveness of living and depression of trade generally. The decrease of 24 seers in the Naga Hills is attributed to the stringent measures adopted to check consumption. In the remaining districts the variations do not call for any comment.

Excise Report, 1918-1919, page 8.

Consumption of opium has increased by 59 maunds during the year under review. All the districts except Sylhet, Darrang and the Naga Hills were responsible for the increase. The increase of 22 maunds 30 seers in Lakshimpur was the largest and was attributed mainly to the increase of population. I do not wholly agree with this view. I stated last year and I adhere to my statement that the issues in Lakshimpur do not represent legitimate consumption only—quite a considerable quantity is smuggled out. Cases of unlawful possession of opium from this district have been detected in Bengal, while in two cases 13 seers of opium were discovered in the possession of Chittagong smugglers in Dibrugarh. The increase in Nowgong mainly occurred in the shops visited by the hill people. Trade in general is also said to have been dull, but the hill products fetched a very good price and this fact helped to increase consumption by 17 maunds 9 seers in that district. The increase of 13 maunds 3 seers in Kamrup is attributed to purchase by the border people of the Mangaldoi Sub-division of the Darrang district and to the spread of opium habit among ex-garden coolies and the Gurkhalis settled in the sub-montane area. As I have said in the preceding paragraph, the retail price in this district was very low. The increase of 8 maunds 38 seers in Seebagar is ascribed to a partial recovery of consumers from war conditions and to the prosperity of the Mikirs. The increase of 3 maunds 10 seers in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills is due to the prosperity of the people on account of the good harvest of lac in the Bhoi part of the Jowai Sub-division. There was an increase of 2 maunds 14 seers in Cachar. The emigration of coolies addicted to opium from Orissa to some of the tea-gardens is said to have increased consumption. The increase of 16 seers in Goalpara calls for no comment.

The decrease of 6 maunds 20 seers in Darrang has been ascribed to higher retail price which most probably sent the consumers of the Mongaldoi Sub-division to the Kamrup shops.

Excise Report, 1919-1920, page 1.

In the Legislative Council on March 13th and April 8th, 1920, the question of the registration of opium-eaters was debated. The following resolution was put and lost by 11 votes to 5 on the votes of non-official members only:—

“This Council recommends to the Chief Commissioner that in order

to suppress the opium habit amongst the people of Assam and ultimately to eradicate it or bring it down to an unavoidable minimum, he may be pleased to introduce a system of personal registration of opium-eaters at least in the districts of Lakshimpur, Seesagar, Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup and the Balipara Frontier Tract; that the system of registration be continued in the Sadiya Frontier Tract and that the system of rationing shops be strictly enforced in the rest of the province."

Pages 5 and 6.

The amount of excise opium consumed rose from 1,574 maunds 26 seers to 1,748 maunds 4 seers. The Assam Valley Districts were mainly responsible for the increase.

The highest increase, viz. 54 maunds 21 seers (10.7 per cent.), was in Lakshimpur and was attributed to "the growth of population, the spread of opium habit amongst the immigrant population, the steadily increasing demand of the frontier hill tribes and to smuggling on a large scale by Chittagong Mahomedans."

Next comes Nowgong with an increase of 42 maunds 15 seers (16.9 per cent.) due to "circulation of more money among the rayats as a result of high prices of local products, lac and dhan."

An increase of 29 maunds 13 seers (19.7 per cent.) in Kamrup was attributed to "favourable agricultural conditions" and to the spread of the habit among "some ex-garden coolies who are settling down in sub-montane tracts and the Gurkhas living there."

In Seesagar there was an increase of 28 maunds 25 seers (7.8 per cent.) which was attributed partly to "the smuggling of opium from some shops near the railway or steamer line and partly to the better condition of the Mikirs."

A system of registration of opium-eaters was introduced in 1918-19 in the Sadiya Frontier Tract. The Political Officer writes as follows:—

"No change in the number of shops which are 6—Sadiya, Saikhowaghat, Lazum, Chowkham, Pasighat, Laimakuri. Retail sales at Chowkham, Pasighat and Laimakuri are only made to registered persons on production of their passes. The numbers of registered persons and the total amount of opium for which they are registered are—Chowkham 185 persons 822 tolas, Pasighat 196 persons 806½ tolas, Laimakuri 89 persons 266½ tolas respectively. It is proposed to extend the registration to all shops and to simplify the procedure—steps are being taken accordingly. Retail price at Chowkham and Pasighat was annas 14, at Sadiya and Saikhwa Re. 1-2, at Laizum Laimakuri Re. 1."

"The opium habit is excessive among Turoan and Miju Mishmis and Miris, Khamtis and Singphoes are saturated. The new registration is checking it though very slowly and with the extension of control further success will come. It is being checked among the Abors."

"Madak and Chandu are not used in the Sadiya Frontier Tract.

"That there is opium brought into the district is probable, but with the cost in Lakshimpur being greater than the local rate, we may look for a decrease in all but smuggled opium. I believe that there is a large amount smuggled through Margherita and other bordering villages to the Khamti and Singpho country but have not yet got any proper proof. I am told that transborder tribesmen from Borkhamti and from the Hukong Valley smuggled large quantities via Margherita and even from as far as Titabar, Assam Bengal Railway, in the cold weather of 1918-19 owing to an almost complete failure of the Borkhamti crop (Hkamtilong) which was attacked by insect blight."

Excise Report, 1920-1921, pages 6 and 7.

(v) All the opium shops of the Province have been rationed and the vend-fee-per-seer system of settlement introduced in most districts. Under this system the maximum retail price per tola of opium has been fixed at Rs. 1/6 and Rs. 1/8 according to local conditions.

Consumption of opium decreased by 133 maunds 9 seers, the amount consumed being 1614 maunds 35 seers as against 1748 maunds 4 seers in the preceding year. All the districts except Kamrup and Nowgong, where the consumption showed an increase of 10 maunds 38 seers and 5 maunds 19 seers, respectively, were responsible for the decrease. The increase in Kamrup was due to the fact that the shops were too liberally rationed. As regards the increase in Nowgong, the Deputy Commissioner writes, "the increase in consumption was due to the unusually high lac market and would have been considerably more, but for the rationing of most of the Mikir Hill shops." The highest decrease, 85 maunds 10 seers, was in Lakshimpur and is attributed to "rationing the shops". The Deputy Commissioner Lakshimpur remarks, "the consumers have reduced their doses on account of high retail prices. The Sub-divisional Officer, North Lakshimpur, reports that the managers of the tea-gardens in his Sub-division are taking vigorous steps to check opium habits among garden coolies who "were becoming addicted to opium." Next comes Seeksagar with a decrease of 48 maunds 17 seers and the Khasi and Jaintia Hills with 5 maunds 13 seers. In both these districts "rationing of shops checked the growing consumption of the drug." Then comes Darrang with a decrease of 3 maunds 23 seers followed by Goalpara with 2 maunds 14 seers, the Naga Hills with 1 maund 35 seers. In those districts the higher retail prices charged by the vendors and the closure of some shops affected the consumption.

Registration of Opium-eaters—

The system of personal registration which was introduced in some of the opium shops in the Sadiya Frontier Tract was extended to the shop

in the Balipara Frontier Tract and to that at Kohima in the Naga Hills. The result of the action taken is described by the Political Officer, Sadiya and the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills as follows:—

Sadiya Frontier Tract—

“The Registration system was continued for the shops at Choukham (for Khamtis) and Pasighat (Abors) and to some extent (for hillmen) at Laimakuri. All data have been collected for the introduction of system into the other shops. This was facilitated by the appointment of an Excise Inspector (temporary) but the Press have up to date not been able to supply the Consumer’s pass books. The Registration is briefly—No pass book, no opium; the consumer is rationed for a monthly amount; all sales to him must be entered at the time by the vendor on whom the onus rests of seeing that the monthly amount is not exceeded. With the strict supervision, illicit sales have undoubtedly largely decreased and the result is that the monthly rationed amounts for the various shops do not prove sufficient. This was noticeable among the Khamtis and others during the harvest season. They had a good crop and plenty of money and Chaukham being a rationed shop, they could not get more than a fixed amount of opium—and that only by registered consumers. They soon found difficulty in keeping a lot of the labour who demanded opium, which difficulty was increased by the fact, that they were not able to secure opium in any quantity from the shops in the Lakshimpur district which presumably were also rationed. The demand of the opium shop at Sadiya which is rationed for its monthly amount, but where sales are yet made to all comers, proved much in excess of the supply during the early cold weather months. They (the Khamti) got over it all right and notwithstanding their many statements that “death would ensue if they do not get more opium”, I have not heard of any mortality from this cause.”

Naga Hills—

“The system of personal registration has been started in this district and Kani Puja has been stopped by local executive orders. It is hoped that this, aided by the introduction of the rationing system, will prevent the spread of the opium habit. The former executive orders restricting opium-eating in the Ao country still hold good.”

“At Kohima all opium-eaters are registered. The Mahaldar keeps an account for each individual who is given a pass showing the quantity allowed in a month. After the consumer makes his purchases, the mahaldar enters the sales on his pass and in the accounts kept by him in his shop. He carries these totals to his daily account and at the end of each month he submits his accounts to my office on forms supplied by me. To the casual visitors and travellers between Manipur and Dimapur

the mahaldar is allowed to sell opium on slips issued by me. For this he keeps a separate account and submits this account to me at the end of each month."

Excise Report 1921-22, page 1.

The consumption of country spirit, ganja and opium decreased considerably during the year, under report, the percentage of decrease being 49.9, 28.4 and 35.8 respectively. All the districts of the province were more or less responsible for the decrease. The main causes were the higher retail prices of liquor and drugs, the picketing of excise and opium shops and the intimidation of consumers by the Non-co-operators and the unpopularity of 67 U.P. liquor. If the decrease in consumption had been due to a genuine temperance movement, it would only be a matter for congratulation. There are many keen temperance reformers in the province and they have the sympathy of the Department in their efforts. The object of the Non-co-operators, however, was not temperance reform, but to embarrass Government, and they shrewdly enough concluded that one of the effective ways of doing so, was to attack the excise revenue. All the consumers, especially the opium-eaters, feel the effect of the higher retail prices, and one of the most telling arguments used by the Non-Co-operators in their propaganda work was that under the new regime, various dates for the beginning of which were fixed, there would be no excise department and everyone would be allowed to grow his own opium and ganja and manufacture liquor without any restriction. On account of a vigorous action taken by the Government in the latter half of the year, and the non-fulfilment of the promises made, the Movement became gradually discredited and towards the end of March conditions were more or less normal again.

Excise Report, 1922-1923, page 5.

The cost price and the treasury price per seer of opium have been raised from Rs. 23/- to Rs. 30/- and from Rs. 68/- to Rs. 75/- respectively and the maximum retail price per tola of opium fixed at Rs. 1/12 with effect from 1st April, 1923.

(ii) In supersession of the practice of realising two months' fees in advance at the time of settlement, the system of depositing a certain sum, not less than one month's fee, as security by the vendors of the excise and opium shops settled under the vend-fee system has been introduced. Vend fees will be paid in at the time of issue along with duty.

(iii) The system of restricted auction of excise and opium shops has been abolished.

(viii) In order to check malpractices, license holders of ganja and opium shops have been ordered to keep scales of approved pattern and to weigh the drug in the presence of purchasers.

(i) The Deputy Commissioners have been authorised to vary the ration of any opium shop from time to time provided that such variation does not involve an excess over the district ration.

(ii) As an experimental measure, it has been ordered that no opium in the district of Goalpara will be sold by retail vendors to any one who has not obtained a pass from the Deputy Commissioner.

(iv) As an experimental measure, a system of settling opium shops by tender in the district of Sibsagar was introduced.

The system of registration of opium-eaters continued. During the year a census of opium-eaters and of the quantity of opium consumed was taken. In spite of some inevitable omissions the results were fairly satisfactory. More complete information than ever before is now at hand and this will be most valuable if and when further steps in advance are taken. As a result of the census the ration for each shop was fixed. The advisability of continuing to prescribe the maintenance by licensed vendors of the registers of consumers and consumption was considered. It was recognised that the maintenance of these registers caused a certain amount of local irritation and apprehension. Experience, however, showed that registration tended to deter people from taking to opium. With this object and with a view to afford some check over illicit practices the licensed vendors have been ordered to continue to maintain the registers. In the Naga Hills opium is issued to all regular consumers only on the presentation of a ticket or pass book. The ticket system is in force also in the North Cachar Hills.

Excise Report, 1923-1924, page 7.

The system of maintaining the register of opium consumers was continued during the year. Since the rationing system has been introduced, consumption of opium is not spreading. In the Naga Hills opium was issued to all regular consumers only on the presentation of a ticket or Pass Book.

Page 5.

The consumption of opium fell from 899 maunds 4 seers in 1922-23 to 821 maunds 18 seers during the year. Practically all the districts were responsible for the decrease. The decreases were as noted below :—

24 maunds 23 seers in Lakshimpur.
 22 maunds 11 seers in Sibsagar.
 13 maunds 33 seers in Nowgong.
 10 maunds 33 seers in Kamrup.
 6 maunds 16 seers in Darrang.

The increase of 10 seers in Goalpara was more apparent than real as 23 seers of opium were issued from that district under special orders for the use of persons engaged in the Kheda operations in the Garo Hills district. The same general causes, *viz.*, the steady reduction of the ration, the higher retail price of the drug and the registration of the names of the purchasers as reported last year are given. "The poor crop of lac and of hill products generally" in Nowgong and the fact that "a number of opium shops" in Sibsagar "remained closed from time to time every month for want of opium after the full ration had been sold out" are given as subsidiary causes. The question of increasing the ration of such shops is now under the consideration of the Deputy Commissioner. In the district of Sibsagar, the opium vendors were prohibited from selling opium to the Nagas of the Naga Hills. Many of the consumers especially in the Golaghat Sub-division have, it is reported, owing to the high retail price of opium, reduced their doses. The Deputy Commissioner of Lakshimpur makes the following remarks:—

"The consumption has decreased but I cannot regard it as satisfactory as I should have done. Malwa opium has found its way into the district and is being sold illicitly in remote and out-of-the-way places. Further rationing should be restricted for the present and the shops allowed to have their normal demand."

GLOSSARY OF PECULIAR TERMS USED IN THE REPORT
AND APPENDICES.

- ✓ Abkaree—Excise.
- Abor—A hill-tribe inhabiting the hills at the north-east corner of Assam.
- Affing—Opium.
- Ahom—A Mongoloid tribe who ruled over Assam from the thirteenth to the beginning of the nineteenth century.
- Aman-Sabha—A counter-organisation of the people set up by the supporters of the Government, during the Non-co-operation Movement.
- Barkandazes—Mercenary Soldiers.
- Borgohain—One of the three ministers of the Ahom Kings of Assam.
- Buragohain—Another of the three ministers of the Ahom Kings.
- Buranji—History.
- Chandu—A preparation of opium for smoking mainly used by the Chinese.
- Chur—A small area cut off from the banks in the bed of a river.
- ✓ Criminal Law Amendment Act—An Act in British India, by the provisions of which the executive is empowered to declare any association in the country unlawful and to prosecute any member of such associations.
- Daffâ—A hill-tribe inhabiting the hills below the Himalayas.
- Dào—A big knife.
- Deputy Commissioner—The Chief Civil Officer in charge of a district in British India.
- Dewan—The chief official in a State.
- Dhan—Rice crop.
- Ganja—A preparation from the flowers of the hemp.
- Heta—A ladle.
- Hoka (Hooka)—A pipe in which smoke is passed through water.
- Kala-azar—An epidemic disease prevalent in East Bengal and Assam.
- Kani (or Kanee)—Opium.
- ✓ Kania (or Kaneeahs)—Opium-consumer. (The word is used for both opium-eaters and opium-smokers).
- Kani Khowa (or Kanimoli Khowa)—Opium-eating.
- Kanipan Khowa—Opium-smoking.
- ✓ Kavirajes—Medical practitioners practising Ayurvedic system of medicine.
- ✓ Kania-seba—An entertainment of opium-smokers.

- Kayas—Traders from Marwar.
- Kerahi—A pan made of cast-iron.
- Khamtis—A hill-tribe inhabiting the sub-montane tracts of the Lakshimpur district.
- Khan Saheb—A subordinate title conferred on Mohammedans by the Government.
- Legislative Assembly—The law-making body under the Government of India Amendment Act, 1919, for the whole of the British India, where the principle of the responsibility of the Ministers to the House has not been introduced.
- Legislative Council—The law-making body in the provinces of the British India, under the Government of India Amendment Act, 1919, where the principle of responsibility of the Ministers to the House has been introduced to a very limited extent.
- Madak—A preparation of opium with calcined leaves of certain plants.
- Mahal—A sub-division of a district.
- Maskalai—A kind of pulse.
- Maund—A weight = 82.28 lbs.
- Mauzadar—A revenue-collector.
- Miris—A tribe inhabiting the banks of the Brahmaputra and other rivers of the upper districts of the Assam Valley.
- Mishmis—A hill-tribe inhabiting the hills on the border of the Lakshimpur district.
- Moamorias }
Muttock } A religious division of a Mongoloid tribe in Eastern Assam.
- Morân—A Mongoloid tribe in Eastern Assam.
- Moga (or Mogah)—Yarn or cloth made from a kind of cocoon.
- Mohamuntree Saheb—A King's chief representative.
- Nângoâ—A religious ceremony where hymns are sung in chorus.
- Poorah (or Pura)— $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres.
- Prasad—Fruits etc. distributed after a religious ceremony is over.
- Rai Bahadur—A title conferred upon Hindus by the Government.
- Rai Saheb—A subordinate title conferred upon Hindus by the Government.
- Rayats—People.
- Reah (or Riha)—A kind of plant, fibres of which are used in making ropes.
- Rishi—A sage.
- Rupee—A silver coin now worth about 1s. 4d.
- Seer—A standard weight = 2.057 lbs.
- Singphos—A hill-tribe inhabiting the hills on the border of the Lakshimpur district.
- Sursoo—Mustard-seed.
- Swadeshi—Country-made.
- Tola—A standard weight of 180 grains.

Transferred Departments—Departments in the Provincial Governments of British India under the Government of India Amendment Act, 1919, which are under the control of the Ministers responsible to the Legislative Council. (In Assam, Excise is not a 'transferred department'.)

Turaon—A tribe living in the sub-montane tracts of Sadiya Frontier Tract

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