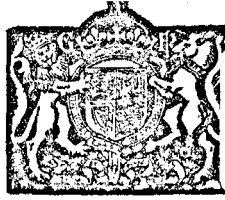


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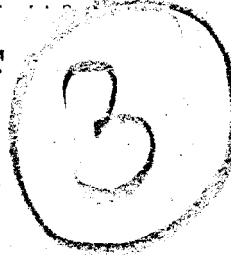
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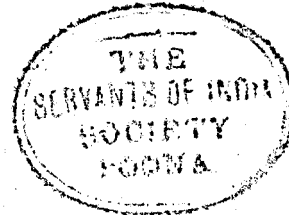
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REPORT

OF



THE ASSAM OPIUM ENQUIRY
COMMITTEE.



1933.

Note.—Replies to the questionnaire have been printed in a separate volume. The oral evidence comprises three volumes:—Volume I, Jorhat and Dibrugarh; Volume II, Nowgong, Tezpur and Gauhati; Volume III, Sylhet, Silchar and Haflong.

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APPENDIX.

OPIUM RESTRICTION POLICY IN CEYLON.

L Demi-official letter No. 281-O.C., dated the 18th August 1933, from the Secretary, Assam Opium Enquiry Committee, to the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services, Colombo.

I was interested to find from a recent newspaper report of which I enclose a copy that in Ceylon there is a system of annual 5 per cent. reduction in the amount of opium allowed to registered consumers. As you may be aware the opium problem is one of considerable magnitude in Assam. The present policy is to endeavour to extinguish the habit by making an annual 10 per cent. cut in the rations of registered consumers under 50 years of age who constitute about half the total registered consumers of 67,000. Already the cut has been made for five years. At the present moment a Committee is sitting to review the present policy and to suggest any modifications that may be required, particularly in view of the fact that the smuggling of contraband opium may endanger the success of the policy.

The Committee would be grateful if you could send any documents showing on what principle the 5 per cent. cut is effected, how long the cut has continued, and to what extent the policy has been a success.

Enclosure.

Colombo, August 15.

The progressive decline of the opium habit in Ceylon is illustrated in statistics quoted by the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services in his administration report for 1932.

During the year under review, no new consumers registered though none of the 51 depôts at present in existence were closed. The total number of registered consumers served from depôts in the island declined to 4,108 compared with 4,746 in 1931 and 5,244 in 1930.

The considerable decrease in sales recorded is partly due to the annual 5 per cent. reduction in the amount of opium allowed to consumers and partly to deaths among consumers.

2. Letter No. H.1791, dated the 28th September 1933, from the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services to the Secretary, Assam Opium Enquiry Committee.

With reference to your letter No. 281-O.C., dated the 18th August 1933, I have the honour to state that the 5 per cent. reduction in the allowance to opium consumers has been in force in Ceylon since March 1st, 1928. This reduction was effected by a notification by His Excellency the Governor under section 14 of the Opium Ordinance of 1910, copy of which is hereto annexed. It will be observed that the reduction of 5 per cent. is effected annually on the original allotment to the consumer. The annual reduction is effected in respect of all consumers irrespective of age.

2. This reduction was enforced owing to the decision of the Government of India to restrict the export of opium from India to Ceylon by 10 per cent. stages from 1927 onwards terminating in 1935, after which year export from India to Ceylon will finally cease. The reduction was therefore a matter of necessity rather than of deliberate policy. The allowances were however reduced by 5 per cent. only, since it was expected that the annual reduction by death of the number of existing consumers would compensate for the other 5 per cent.

3. As above stated, the cut has now been in force for 5½ years, and the issue to consumers is at present 70 per cent. of the registered quantity.

4. As stated in paragraph 2 no deliberate policy is involved, but had such been the aim of the notification it might reasonably be said that the policy had been successful, assuming always that the consumers have been unable to make up the deficit from illicit traffickers in opium, of whom a considerable number are known to exist in Ceylon. There have been comparatively few complaints about the reduction, and in only four individual instances has it been necessary for His Excellency the Governor to suspend the annual cut. Such cases have *invariably been those of persons of over sixty years of age* whose infirmities have, in the opinion of responsible Government Medical Officers, justified the suspension of the progressive reduction in their favour. Even in such cases the suspension is not made final, but the consumers concerned are required to satisfy the Medical Officer annually that the continuance of such suspension is justified.

5. Though the information is not specifically called for, you may be interested to know that the registration of consumers was inaugurated in 1910, in which year there were 21,205 registered consumers, and that there were on December 31, 1932,

4,108 consumers. The registration of fresh consumers has been entirely stopped. Despite the exercise of the utmost vigilance possible the existence of a large extent of unguarded coastline combined with a regular trade with South India both in steamers and in small sailing boats offers considerable opportunity for the smuggling in of illicit opium, a good deal of which reaches the consumer, though no doubt at an enhanced price which in itself should tend to check consumption.

6. In addition to the registered consumers certain registered Ayurvedic physicians are also supplied with strictly limited quantities of opium for use in their prescriptions. The issue for this purpose amounts, on the average of the last three years, to 265 lbs. annually. There are at present 3,443 such physicians registered.

Enclosure.

Published in Government Gazette No. 7631 of 24th February 1928.

"THE OPIUM ORDINANCE, 1910."

Rule made by His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council under Section 14 of "Opium Ordinance, 1910."

By His Excellency's Command,

A. G. M. FLETCHER,
Colonial Secretary.

Colonial Secretary's Office, Colombo,

21st February 1928.

RULE.

From and after March 1, 1928, the monthly allowance of opium specified in the certificate of registered consumers shall be subject to an annual reduction of 5 per cent. of such allowance.

A. G. P. (Excise) No. 10-350-16-10-1933.