Shanghai Opium Conference Encyclopedia Article

Shanghai Opium Conference

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Shanghai Opium Conference

The 1909 Shanghai Opium Commission was the first multinational drug-control initiative. Through the encouragement of President Theodore Roosevelt and the organizational skills of Bishop Charles H. Brent, the United States convened this meeting of thirteen countries at Shanghai, including Great Britain, Japan, China, and Russia, to address the illegal production, trade, and use of OPIUM in China.

As a commission the participants could only recommend actions necessary to prevent opium trafficking and abuse but could not make binding international agreements. However, the participants passed resolutions urging national governments to enact measures to curb opium smoking in their countries, initiate regulation of opium use for nonmedical purposes, ban the export of opium to countries that prohibited importation, and control the manufacture and distribution of opium derivatives.

The commission was the first effective step taken by the international community to combat drug abuse. It served as a catalyst for countries to pass domestic legislation addressing drug problems within their borders. Most important, the commission united countries in an international cooperative effort to address the problem of the opium trade. The work of the commission led to the convening of the Hague Opium Conferences (1912-1914) and to the adoption of the 1912 International Opium Convention, sometimes called the Hague Opium Convention, and succeeding treaties that effectively restricted opium production and trade to legitimate purposes.

See Also

Asia, Drug Use In; International Drug Supply Systems; Opioids and Opioid Control: History; Psychotropic Substances Convention of 1971; Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs)

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