

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

WILLIAM CULLEN DENNIS

December 22, 1878–September 14, 1962

William Cullen Dennis was one of the historic figures of the American Society of International Law. Respected by all who knew him, loved by many colleagues and by thousands of students, he was that rather rare and very precious combination of a hard-headed lawyer and ardent advocate of the peaceful settlement of international disputes.

Dennis was born in Richmond, Indiana, on December 22, 1878. He died on September 14, 1962, in Richmond, after a heart attack suffered on a hiking trip with an old friend in one of the Indiana State parks.

Dennis' later years were devoted to the world of education. He became President of Earlham College in 1929 and retired as President Emeritus in 1946. He had very materially concerned himself extensively with local affairs in Richmond up until the time of his death. He had undertaken, strenuously and successfully, the strengthening and development of Earlham, one of the leading private colleges in the country, especially during the difficult years of 1930–1940. He established at the college an Institute of Polity to deal with foreign affairs of the United States, and himself taught a course in his favorite subject, international law; he also conducted an evening class for Earlham students and for Richmond residents on current events. He had previously taught at American University in Washington, D. C., and at Columbia, George Washington, Illinois and Stanford Universities. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

It should be recalled that Dennis as a young man had had an exceptional academic career. He began by study at home, but soon—1889 (at the age of 11)—went to Bonn and entered the very severe German gymnasium training. He then moved to the Royal High School in Edinburgh—hardly less severe. He returned to Earlham and took his Bachelor's degree in 1896. He then transferred to Harvard, where he took a Master's degree in 1898 and his law degree in 1901, at the age of 22. In later life he received honorary degrees from Earlham, Depauw, Indiana and Butler Universities and Wabash College.

Mr. Dennis was a Quaker. He was a member of the Friend's Church of West Richmond, a trustee of Bryn Mawr from 1912 to 1929, and became President of the Indiana Association of Church-Related and Independent Colleges in 1939. Personally, though a liberal-minded individual, he was a firm opponent of what he regarded as evil in human relations, including Communist dictatorship anywhere and everywhere. He was a devoted Republican and often served as a delegate to State Republican Conventions. He took an active part in local civic affairs—the Richmond Rotary Club, the Columbia Club of Indianapolis—and was a member of the Cosmos Club in Washington. He was a member of the American Bar Association

and of the Indiana Bar Association, and had served as the Chairman of the Committee on Pacific Settlement of International Disputes of the ABA Section on International and Comparative Law.

Dennis was an enthusiastic outdoors man and hiker, and a student of nature. He always resented somewhat the confinement of the city.

Prior to his return to Richmond in 1930, Dr. Dennis had been in private law practice in Washington from 1911 to 1917 and 1920 to 1929. After retiring as President of Earlham in 1946 he resumed his practice in Richmond. Arbitration and pacific settlement may be said to have been his predominant concern both intellectually and even emotionally. In 1901-1902 Dennis was Secretary of the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration. It was at such a conference in 1905 that the idea of forming the American Society of International Law was first broached and developed by an informal committee composed of Robert Lansing, James Brown Scott and George W. Kirchwey. On many occasions Mr. Dennis acted as counsel to the United States Government and as its agent in international arbitrations. He was an Assistant Solicitor in the Department of State from 1906 to 1910, under Solicitors Scott and Reuben Clark, respectively. He was also legal adviser to the Chinese Government from 1917 to 1919. While in the Department he worked with Secretaries Root and Knox, and afterwards with Secretaries Hughes and Kellogg, Chief Justice Edward White and General Pershing. He was of course a close associate of Dr. Scott and worked closely with Chandler P. Anderson and his old friend, J. Reuben Clark, Jr., when the latter was Under Secretary of State.

Dennis was agent for the United States Government in the arbitration of the *Orinoco Steamship* case between the United States and Venezuela before the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague in 1909-1910; in the *Chamizal Arbitration* between the United States and Mexico before the Joint Boundary Commission, 1910-1911; and in the arbitration of the *Norwegian Ship Claims* between the United States and Norway at The Hague in 1921-1922. He was a member of one of the International Commissions of Inquiry established under the Bryan treaties of 1914 for the advancement of peace; secretary to Chief Justice White in the latter's capacity as sole arbitrator in the *Costa Rica-Panama Boundary Arbitration*, 1911-1914, and general legal adviser to the American members of the Plebiscitary and Boundary Commissions of the *Tacna-Arica Arbitration* between Peru and Chile, 1925-1926. He was also special counsel to the Department of State at the Preliminary Conference on Communications, 1920-1921, and counsel for the United States on the British-American Claims Commission, London, 1923.

Mr. Dennis was one of the charter members of the American Society of International Law and later one of its Vice Presidents. At the time of his death he was an Honorary Vice President. He served a number of terms on the Executive Council from 1921 to 1933 and was Corresponding Secretary of the Society from 1924 to 1930. He was also an active member of the Board of Editors of the *American Journal of International Law* from 1925 to 1930, and an honorary member after 1946.

Perhaps one of the most significant activities of Dr. Dennis in connection with the Society was his activity as Chairman of the Society's Special Committee on Enlargement of the Scope of the Publications of the Department of State, when, in co-operation with representatives of Committees of the Conference of Teachers, American Political Science Association, American Historical Association, and the Association of American Law Schools, he appeared before the Director of the Budget, and presented their case so well that a substantial amount (for those days—1929) was included in the State Department budget for fiscal 1930. As a result, the publication division of the State Department was expanded, and the documents, treaties, diplomatic notes, reports of conferences, arbitrations, and hearings before the Committees on Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs of Congress, were subsequently printed and made available to the public by the Department of State and the Government Printing Office. The *United States Treaty Series*, *Treaties and Other International Acts*, the *Department of State Bulletin*, Press Releases, Conference Series, Arbitration Series, and other sources of information relating to the foreign relations of the United States, as well as the accelerated publication of *U. S. Foreign Relations*, are the direct fruits of this work.

Unfortunately Dr. Dennis was too busy to write very frequently or very fully for the *JOURNAL* or elsewhere; a list of his contributions to the *JOURNAL* and *Proceedings* of the Society is appended to this comment.

William Cullen Dennis served his fellow man faithfully and well in the cause of international peace and order.

PITMAN B. POTTER

- “The American Journal of International Law for January, 1908,” 1 A.J.I.L. 944 (1907).
- “The Necessity for an International Code of Arbitral Procedure,” 7 A.J.I.L. 285 (1913).
- “The Chamizal Arbitration Award,” 5 A.J.I.L. 709 (1911).
- “Diplomatic Correspondence Leading up to the World War,” 9 A.J.I.L. 402 (1915).
- “Extraterritoriality and the United States Court for China,” 1 A.J.I.L. 469 (1907).
- “The Arbitration Treaties of 1911 and the Senate Amendments,” 6 A.J.I.L. 614 (1912).
- “Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration,” 2 A.J.I.L. 615 (1908).
- “The Orinoco Steamship Company Case before the Hague Tribunal,” 5 A.J.I.L. 35 (1911).
- “The Rio de la Plata Dispute over Jurisdiction between the Argentine Republic and Uruguay,” 1 A.J.I.L. 984 (1907); 4 *ibid.* 430 (1910).
- “The Effect of War on Treaties,” 23 A.J.I.L. 602 (1929).
- “Extraterritoriality in China,” 18 A.J.I.L. 781 (1924).
- “The Settlement of the Nanking Incident,” 22 A.J.I.L. 593 (1928); 23 *ibid.* 120 (1929).
- “Projects on Pacific Settlement and the Pan American Court of Justice of the American Institute of International Law,” 21 A.J.I.L. 137 (1927).
- “The Sinking of the *I'm Alone*,” 23 A.J.I.L. 351 (1929).
- “Treaty regulating Tariff Relations between the United States and China,” 22 A.J.I.L. 829 (1928).
- “The Venezuela-British Guiana Boundary Arbitration of 1899,” 44 A.J.I.L. 720 (1950).
- “International Organization: Executive and Administrative,” 1917 Proceedings 91.
- “Extraterritoriality and Foreign Concessions in China,” 1930 Proceedings 194.
- “The Doctrine of Rebus Sic Stantibus,” 1932 Proceedings 53.