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"Opposition to President McKinley's Administration is the Real Motive":

Henry R. Gibson's 1899 Speech on Imperialism and the Hypocrisy of Southern Democrats

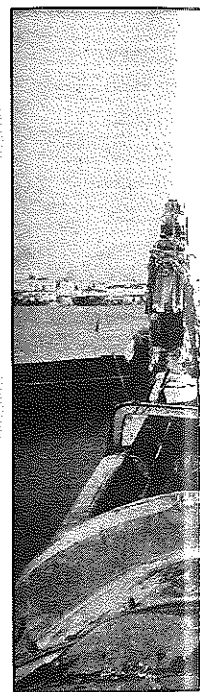
By David C. Turpie*

On January 25, 1899, Henry R. Gibson (1837-1938) took the podium on the floor of the House of Representatives to explain his support for the annexation of the Philippines. A Republican congressman from East Tennessee's second district, Gibson was a proponent of protectionist measures, voted to declare war on Spain the previous year, and supported the annexation of Hawaii.¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States had developed into a modern, industrial nation. As a result, many Americans believed that the country needed to project its power beyond North America and join European countries in their search for markets and resources on other continents. Like most of his fellow Republican congressmen, Gibson believed that imperial expansion was in the best interest of the United States, and his constituents in East Tennessee. However, Gibson believed that political interests, specifically southern Democrats who did not support President William McKinley's policies, were interfering with

* The author is the editor of the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*. He received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Maine in 2010. From 2002 to 2003, he worked for the East Tennessee Historical Society as the assistant museum store manager.

¹ Mary U. Rothrock, ed., *The French Broad-Holston Country: A History of Knox County, Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1946), 420-21; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (Washington, D.C.), available at, <http://bioguide.congress.gov>. Gibson was a native of Maryland, but moved to East Tennessee soon after his service in the Union Army during the Civil War. He served in Congress from 1895 to 1904. In his retirement, Gibson wrote the highly influential *Gibson's Suits in Chancery* (Knoxville, 1907), worked on revising the *Code of Tennessee*, edited the *American and English Encyclopedia of Law and Practice*, and published several works of poetry including *The Ban of Baldurbane: An Epic* (Boston, 1912). He died in 1938 at the age of 100.

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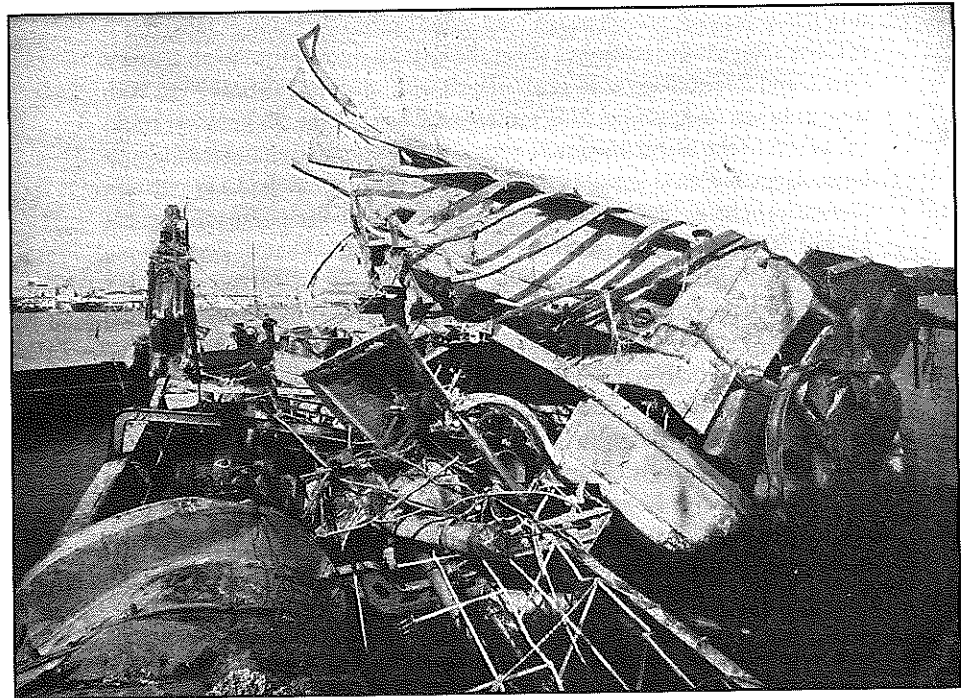
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the U.S. annexation of the Philippines. For many imperialists like Gibson, annexation was the destiny of the United States following its victory in the Spanish-American War.

The Philippines had come into the possession of the United States as a spoil of war. In the spring and summer of 1898, the United States fought a brief war against Spain. The war, it was claimed, was waged to end brutal fighting in Cuba, which had been going on since 1895. Cuban insurgents had been fighting against repressive Spanish colonial rule for more than three years and had more than held their own. Historians debate American motives for the entering the war. Was it to avenge the explosion of the USS *Maine*, which had occurred in Havana Harbor in February 1898? Was it to help the Cubans gain independence and free the poor *reconcentrados*—Cubans who were rounded up in Spanish concentration camps? Or was there an underlying motive, one in which the United States actually benefitted—especially economically—from defeating Spain?²



On February 15, 1898, the USS *Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor, killing over 250 Americans. Two months later the Spanish-American War began. Trumbull White, *Pictorial History of Our War with Spain for Cuba's Freedom* (n.p., 1898), 25.

² See, David Turpie, "The Failure of Reunion: The South and Republican Foreign Policy, 1898-1902" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maine, 2010), 4-8.

Regardless of what actually precipitated American intervention in Cuba, the United States declared war against Spain in late April 1898. In an effort to defeat the Spanish, American leaders expanded the war effort to several Spanish colonies, including the Philippines. Like the Cubans, the Filipinos had been revolting against Spanish rule and fighting for national independence. In fact, the first battle of the Spanish-American War was a naval battle in Manila Bay in the Philippines. Many Americans were shocked to read in their newspapers on May 2, 1898, that the first battle in the war to free Cuba took place on the other side of the globe in Asia. Throughout the four-month Spanish-American War, the Filipino rebels were led to believe that the Americans were liberators helping them gain independence from their common enemy, the Spanish. The Spanish-American War ended in August 1898, with the ouster of Spain from most of its last remaining colonies around the globe, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines.³

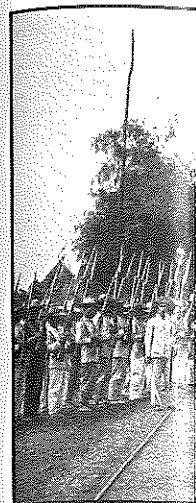
Congress initially declared that Cuba would be given independence at the conclusion of the war. The government kept this promise and gave Cuba nominal independence, although the United States effectively dictated much of Cuba's foreign and economic policy throughout the early twentieth century. Guam and Puerto Rico were small islands with small populations, and both were annexed and became U.S. territories. That left the Philippines, by far the largest of the island nations in question. Made up of thousands of islands (some large, but most small) in the Pacific, the Philippines had a population of nearly eight million people, about one-tenth of the population of the United States. While the decisions regarding the fate of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Guam were made with little discord, the fate of the Philippines led to a national debate that centered on the future of the republic as much as it did on the future of the eight million Filipinos and their fight for independence.⁴

Following the conclusion of the war, representatives from the United States and Spain met in Paris to write a peace agreement—one that included the transfer of the Philippines from Spain to the United States. The Treaty of Paris was finalized in December 1898, and then needed the approval of the governments of Spain and the United States. In the latter country, that meant the Senate would have to approve the treaty. Needing a two-thirds majority, the treaty passed by one vote, 57-27. Southern Democrats, including Tennessee's two senators, constituted a majority of the votes against the treaty.⁵ Their opposition stemmed solely from the provision that ceded the Philippines to the United States. Two days before the final vote

³ David F. Trask, *The War with Spain in 1898* (Lincoln, NE, 1981), 95-107, 391-410.

⁴ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of American Foreign Relations to 1913* (Wilmington, DE, 2002), 253-63.

⁵ Turpie, "Failure of Reunion," 165-87. The tally for southern senators (from the former Confederate states) was 14 opposed and 8 in favor.



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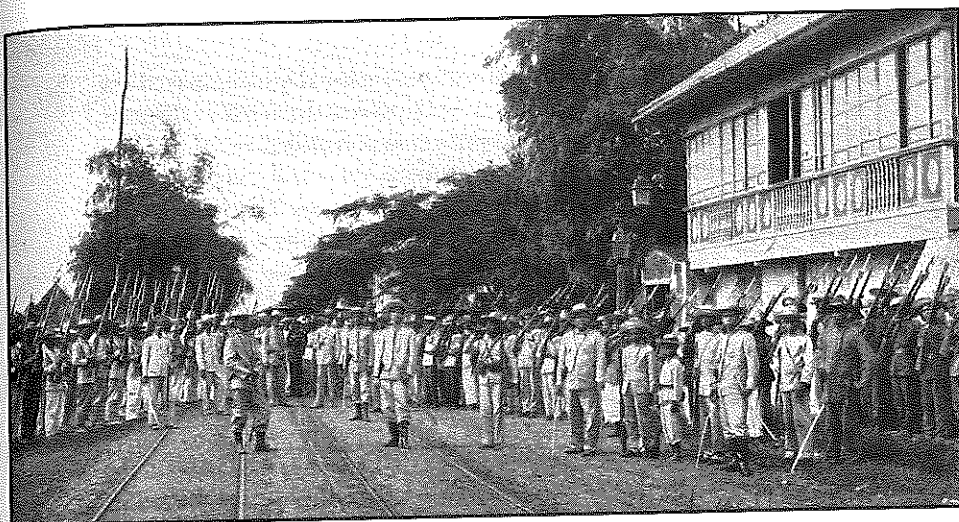
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and American intervention in Spain in late April 1898. In 1898, the United States expanded the war effort to include the Philippines. Like the Cubans, the Filipinos were fighting for national independence. The Spanish-American War was a war in which many Americans were shocked at the first battle in the war to take place in Asia. Throughout the war, no rebels were led to believe that they would gain independence from Spain. The Spanish-American War ended in 1898 with the loss of its last remaining colonies, Guam, and the Philippines.³ The United States could be given independence at the time of this promise and gave Cuba independence. The United States effectively dictated much of the early twentieth century. The United States had small populations, and both the United States and the Philippines, by far the largest, made up of thousands of islands. The Philippines had a population of about one-third of the population of the United States. The fate of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines led to a debate in the United States as much as it did in the Philippines for their fight for independence.⁴ The United States representatives from the United States agreed—one that included the United States. The Treaty of Paris then needed the approval of the United States. In the latter country, the treaty. Needing a two-thirds vote. Southern Democrats, who had a majority of the votes, voted solely from the provision that the United States two days before the final vote

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During the Spanish-American War, Filipino soldiers fought alongside American forces to end Spanish rule. However, as the terms of peace were finalized fighting broke out between Filipino nationalists and American forces. William Jennings Bryan, Republic or Empire? The Philippine Question (Chicago, 1899), 79.

was taken in the Senate, fighting broke out in the Philippines between U.S. troops and Filipino nationalists led by Emilio Aguinaldo.⁶

On November 30, 1898, the *Knoxville Journal and Tribune* posed a question regarding the fate of the Philippines that must have been on the minds of many Americans: "What will we do with them and how shall they be governed?"⁷ The debate over Philippine annexation sparked an immense controversy across the United States, one which created two general camps known as imperialists and anti-imperialists. Imperialists, those who supported the annexation, did so mostly because of the commercial and strategic advantages that they believed would accrue to the United States. Some in the imperialist camp believed that the United States had a moral duty to spread "civilization" to the Filipinos. This was particularly the case for some Protestant ministers and missionaries who hoped to convert Filipinos, most of whom were Catholic, to the "proper" religion of Christ.⁸ But, in general, the imperialist cause rested on political, economic, and strategic

⁶ The Philippine-American War officially lasted from 1899-1902, although small groups of Filipino insurgents continued to fight U.S. forces in the islands for another decade. See, Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence, KS, 2000); James R. Arnold, *The Moro War: How America Battled a Muslim Insurgency in the Philippine Jungle, 1902-1913* (New York, 2011).

⁷ "The War is Over," *Knoxville Journal and Tribune*, November 30, 1898, 4.

⁸ See, Kenton J. Clymer, *Protestant Missionaries in the Philippines, 1898-1916: An Inquiry into the American Colonial Mentality* (Urbana, IL, 1986); Julius Pratt, *Expansionists of 1898: The Acquisition of Hawaii and the Spanish Islands* (1936; reprint, Chicago, 1964), 279-316.

arguments.⁹ Many Republicans believed that their party had directed the popular war against Spain and should not give away the spoils of that war. More importantly, many in the business community smelled profits, not only in the Philippines, but in nearby China.¹⁰

Those against the annexation of the Philippines called themselves anti-imperialists, and they offered a number of reasons to explain their opposition to American rule over the Philippine archipelago. First, they focused on the racial issue of annexation. The anti-imperialists believed that the Philippines could never become a state, because the darker-skinned, and therefore "inferior," Filipinos could not reasonably be expected to become American citizens.¹¹ Thus, the Philippines would have to remain as a colony, but the Constitution did not seem to allow for colonies. Anti-imperialists often bemoaned the denial of voting rights to Filipinos were their country to become an American colony. All governments, as Thomas Jefferson argued in the Declaration of Independence, derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed. Anti-imperialists argued that Americans would be turning their backs on their own principles if they kept the Philippines as a colony. Keeping the Philippines as a colony presented other problems, as well. It was expensive to run an empire, anti-imperialists argued, because a large standing army would be needed to control colonies. The costs of empire building, they believed, might even restrict domestic improvements and reforms.¹²

Historians have generally viewed anti-imperialism as an amorphous movement that was not defined by partisanship. To some extent this portrait is true. There were, in fact, many older Republicans who cooperated with the numerous Democrats and Populists to oppose what they considered to be a

⁹ Three works from February 1899, demonstrated both the moral and economic arguments of the imperialists. See, Max Tarnow, "The Economic Condition of the Philippines," *National Geographic Magazine* 10 (February 1899): 33-64; Henry Howe, "The Philippine Islands—Our New Possessions," *The New South* 1 (February 1899): 33-39; Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippine Islands," *McClure's Magazine* 12 (February 1899): 290-91.

¹⁰ See, Thomas McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago, 1967); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca, NY, 1963); Warren Zimmerman, *First Great Triumph: How Five Americans Made Their Country a World Power* (New York, 2002); Paul T. McCartney, *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898, and the Rise of American Imperialism* (Baton Rouge, 2006).

¹¹ This racially based justification had been used by anti-imperialists as early as 1870, when President Ulysses S. Grant's administration attempted to annex the Dominican Republic. See, Eric T.L. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

¹² See, Fred Harvey Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States, 1898-1900," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 22 (September 1935): 211-30; E. Berkeley Tompkins, *Anti-Imperialism in the United States: The Great Debate, 1890-1920* (Philadelphia, 1970); Robert Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists, 1898-1900* (New York, 1968); Richard Welch, *Response to Imperialism: The United States and the Philippine-American War, 1899-1902* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1979); Osmos Lanier Jr., "Anti-Annexationists of the 1890s" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1965).

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¹⁶ *Business Farmers' M* Congress, 3rd sessi



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greedy land-grab and the subjugation of a foreign people. An Anti-Imperialist League was founded in Boston in 1899, and members of this league included well-known Americans from a variety of political backgrounds.

Although historians often describe the anti-imperialist movement as being non-partisan, the imperialism issue at the end of the nineteenth century was a partisan issue. Most Republicans supported U.S. imperial expansion, including the takeover of the Philippines; Democrats generally did not. During the Gilded Age, "political parties dominated American politics. Voters believed that there were important ideological differences between the major parties." In many ways, party loyalty represented group identity for many social groups.¹³ This was certainly true for most white southerners in the former Confederate states, a majority of whom were Democrats in the 1890s. The available evidence points to the fact that most white southern Democrats opposed the U.S. takeover of the Philippines.¹⁴ At the very least, southern Democrats in Congress typically represented a large anti-imperialist voting bloc.¹⁵

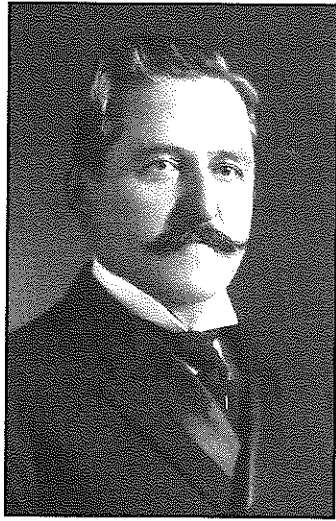
The South stood to gain the least by acquiring tropical colonies halfway around the world. The annexation of the Philippines potentially threatened to undermine the southern agrarian economy and the southern racial order. White southerners feared that resources and products from new territories would affect domestic prices, especially for agricultural commodities. The *Business Farmers' Magazine* of Knoxville, for example, argued that "the resources of the United States are sufficient to keep our people profitably employed for many years to come. We have only begun to explore our latent wealth. . . . We don't want the Philippines."¹⁶ White southerners also feared that darker-skinned Filipinos might become citizens with voting rights, which threatened the racially based segregation and exclusion of African Americans in southern society.

¹³ Worth Robert Miller, "The Lost World of Gilded Age Politics," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1 (January 2002): 50-51.

¹⁴ See, for example, Marshall E. Schott, "The South and American Foreign Policy, 1894-1904: Regional Concerns during the Age of Imperialism" (Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1995).

¹⁵ See, Edwina C. Smith, "Southerners on Empire: Southern Senators and Imperialism, 1898-1899," *Mississippi Quarterly* 31 (Winter 1977-1978): 89-107; Leonard Schlup, "Imperialist Dissenter: William B. Bate and the Battle against Territorial Acquisitions, 1898-1900," *Southern Studies* 6 (Summer 1995): 61-84; Leonard Schlup, "Hernando DeSoto Money: War Advocate and Anti-Imperialist, 1898-1900," *Journal of Mississippi History* 60 (Winter 1998): 315-39; Lala Carr Steelman, "Senator Augustus O. Bacon, Champion of Philippine Independence," *East Carolina Publications in History* 2 (1965): 91-113; David Turpie, "Howling Upon the Scent of Another Victim: Senator Edward W. Carmack, the Philippine Issue, and Southern Opposition to Imperialism," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 68 (Winter 2009): 411-32; Joseph A. Fry, "John Tyler Morgan's Southern Expansionism," *Diplomatic History* 9 (Fall 1985): 329-46; Joseph A. Fry, *John Tyler Morgan and the Search for Southern Autonomy* (Knoxville, 1992), 154-97.

¹⁶ *Business Farmers' Magazine* (Knoxville), August 1898, reprinted in *Congressional Record*, 55th Congress, 3rd session, 1065.



Similar to other Republicans in East Tennessee, Charles W. Dabney, the president of the University of Tennessee (1887-1904), supported American annexation of the Philippines and other overseas territories. University of Tennessee Special Collections.

This partisan divide over the potential annexation of the Philippines was especially obvious in East Tennessee—a Republican stronghold within the largely Democratic South.¹⁷ Like other white southern Democrats, most Democrats in East Tennessee were anti-imperialists and opposed to the foreign policies of the McKinley administration. Robert W. McKee, an anti-imperialist Democrat from Greeneville, asked in mid-February 1899, could anyone “arrest this hellward gallup of the [McKinley] Administration?” McKee believed that President McKinley was “liable to impeachment” for waging such an unjust war in the Philippines.¹⁸ In contrast to the majority of their white southern counterparts, most East Tennesseans were Republicans in the 1890s, and, therefore, they generally supported Republican foreign policies, including the creation of an overseas empire.¹⁹ Charles W. Dabney, the president of the University of Tennessee, for example, believed that “we must care for the Conquered islands in some way. Then we must develop a Colonial policy & a Colonial bureau.” America’s new possessions, such as the Philippines, Dabney argued, “will bring us new

fields of industry, new customers & new friends. It will open the way for American missionaries and teachers. It will promote the cause of liberty & good government.”²⁰

The arguments for overseas territorial expansion made by Dabney in a private letter were also made in the halls of the Capitol by many Republicans, including East Tennessee’s two Republican representatives in

¹⁷ Paul H. Bergeron, Stephen V. Ash, and Jeannette Keith, *Tennesseans and Their History* (Knoxville, 1999), 204-209.

¹⁸ Robert McKee to Benjamin R. Tillman, February 14, 1899, Series 3, Box 12, Folder 166, Benjamin R. Tillman Papers, Special Collections, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina.

¹⁹ According to historian Gordon B. McKinney, “All available evidence indicates that both the [Spanish-American] war and the new empire were popular among the mountain population.” See, Gordon B. McKinney, *Southern Mountain Republicans, 1865-1900: Politics and the Appalachian Community* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1978), 187.

²⁰ Charles W. Dabney to Mary Chilton Sumter Dabney, June 4, 1898, Dabney Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

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, June 4, 1898, Dabney Family Papers,

the House in 1898-1899, Walter P. Brownlow and Henry R. Gibson. Both
men gave speeches in favor of Philippine annexation in January 1899.²¹ Their
similar speeches focused on discrediting the opposition’s arguments against
annexation of overseas territory before turning to the benefits of annexation.
What follows is an excerpted version of Representative Gibson’s speech in
the House from January 25, 1899.

SPEECH
OF
HON. HENRY R. GIBSON
OF TENNESSEE,
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Wednesday, January 25, 1899.²²

Mr. Chairman: There are grave problems to-day confronting
our country; and it becomes us, in the solution of those problems,
to use every power of our minds and be guided by our highest
regard for the welfare of our common country.

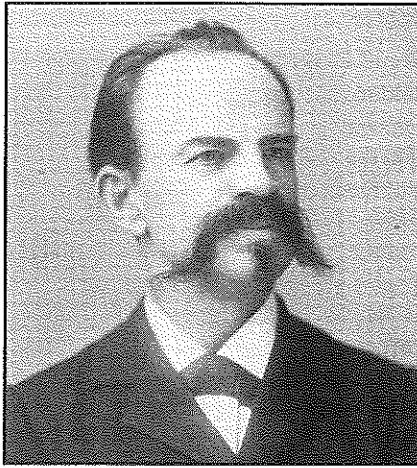
Now, Mr. Chairman, I come to the most difficult of the
problems that confront us, and that is our relations to the
Philippine Islands.

I wish to discuss this problem in all its phases, and as their
annexation to the United States is one of these phases I will say a
few words on that point, not that I intend here and now to commit
myself to their permanent annexation, because I have not yet
reached a conclusion on that point. The matter is too momentous
for a hasty and uninformed judgment. The time has not arrived to
pass on that question. We must take time to acquire information
and consider.

I wish it understood, however, that I am one of those who
implicitly believe that we have both the right and the power to
permanently annex these islands. There was a day ninety-six years
ago when this objection was open to argument, but we have done
too much annexing to raise the constitutional question now. That
question has been settled seven times: First, by President Jefferson,

²¹ Both speeches were made during the congressional debates about the expansion of the
army in the wake of the mishaps and chaos of volunteer mobilization during the Spanish-
American War. However, Brownlow and Gibson spent much of their time discussing the
annexation of the Philippines.

²² *Congressional Record*, 55th Congress, 3rd session, appendix 104-111.



Henry R. Gibson, a Republican congressman from East Tennessee's second district, made frequent addresses in support of overseas expansion. In Congress he voted for protectionist measures and the annexation of the Philippines. *Autobiographies and Portraits of the President, Cabinet, Supreme Court and Fifty-Fifth Congress (Washington, D.C., 1898), vol. 2.*

in 1803, when he annexed Louisiana; second, by President Monroe, in 1819, when he annexed Florida; third, by Congress, in 1846, when it annexed Texas; fourth, by President Polk, in 1848, when he annexed California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico; fifth, by President Pierce, in 1854, when he annexed the Mesilla Valley²³; sixth, by President Johnson, in 1867, when he annexed Alaska; and seventh, by this Congress, when, in 1898, it annexed the islands of Hawaii, neither of the last two being annexations of contiguous territory.

In light of these facts it is a waste of time to discuss the constitutional right of annexation. Those who dispute this right are the intellectual descendants of those who, hundreds of years ago, disputed that the earth was round, that the stars were fixed,

that the sun was stationary, and that the planet revolved. . . . To argue with these men is a waste of time, an insult to reason, and an outrage on patience.

But we are told [by anti-imperialists] that the "consent of the governed" is the foundation of all just governments, and that we would violate the Declaration of Independence if we annexed the Philippines without their consent. Now, Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence and ought to have known its meaning, annexed Louisiana without even consulting its inhabitants, and not only without their consent, but in spite of their dissent.

It is true that the Declaration of Independence says that "all governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," but the Constitution does not so provide. Neither is the proposition correct in every instance. At the time the Declaration was made there was no thought of obtaining the "consent" of the Indians or negroes.

²³ Gibson was referring to the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, in which the United States purchased from Mexico much of present-day southern Arizona and part of present-day southern New Mexico.

When he annexed Louisiana; President Monroe, in 1819, annexed Florida; third, by in 1846, when it annexed Utah, by President Polk, in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, by President Pierce, in the Mesilla, by President Johnson, when he annexed Alaska; and, by this Congress, when, it annexed the islands of the last two being contiguous territory. It is a waste of these facts it is a waste to discuss the constitutional annexation. Those who are right are the intellectual of those who, hundreds of years, disputed that the earth that the stars were fixed, the planet revolved. . . . To an insult to reason, and

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The Indians to-day have no voice in the Government; and in the negro States their "consent" is not only not obtained, but is actually denied. And what is most strange, the men who pretend to be so indignant about governing the Filipinos without their "consent" are the very men who are most anxious to govern the negroes without their "consent!" Is an Asiatic Filipino who lives 10,000 miles from here entitled to any more rights than an American negro who lives next door to us? Why is it, Mr. Chairman, that some of these men who rave so for fear the Filipinos will be governed without their consent rave just as furiously when the negroes insist on not being governed without their consent?

Why do these professed champions of liberty insist on saying "turkey" to the Filipinos and "buzzard" to the negroes? What is sauce for the Philippine goose ought to be sauce for the African gander. I can not quite understand the hearts of those men who so dearly love the yellow Filipino whom they have never seen, and yet do not love the yellow negro whom they have seen. If the Filipinos are entitled to self-government, then the negroes are; and yet some of these men who are pretending to be so indignant because the savage, half-naked, heathen Filipino is to be governed without his consent are just as indignant when a civilized Christian negro asks not to be governed without his consent. Surely the charity of these lovers of the Filipinos does not begin at home.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Chairman, even in our own country government is not always based on the "consent of the governed...."

From 1861 to 1865 we waged a terrible war against the Confederate States because they would not "consent" to remain any longer in the old Union. And after the war we disfranchised them, so they would be unable to express their dissent.

Where would the United States of America be to-day if the first white men who landed on our coast had sailed away because the Indians objected to their coming? . . .

Where would be my own State of Tennessee if it had been necessary for Sevier, Shelby, and Robertson to obtain the "consent" of the Indians who lived within its boundaries? Where would be all the States?

Now, Mr. Chairman, are these men who deny the rights of yellow skins in America really anxious to defend the rights of yellow

skins in Asia? Do the men who despise the negro in America truly love the Filipino in Asia? If the Filipinos were as numerous in the South as are the negroes, would these gentlemen who now champion their right to self-government be as loud-mouthed in their behalf as they are to-day? Do we not know, Mr. Chairman, that if the negroes were in the Philippines and the Filipinos were here these same advocates of self-government would be caressing the negroes and oppressing the Filipinos?

This being so, Mr. Chairman, what is the secret of this pretended friendship for the Filipinos?

Opposition to President McKinley's Administration is the real motive and mainspring of their opposition . . . these champions of Asiatic barbarians behold the ship of state, commanded by William McKinley and manned by an American crew, every mast sound, every sail whole, every rope tight, sailing proudly on the sea of prosperity and about to enter the harbor of national safety. And as the grand old ship of state sails by, towing three small ships named Cuba, Porto Rico, and Philippines, these pretended friends of self-government call out to the men in the three small ships: "Cut loose from McKinley's ship! Don't let him tow you into the harbor! Rebel, resist, fight to the last, and we will help you all we can!" Not that they love the people of Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines, but they hate McKinley and hate his ship and hate his crew.

But someone asks, "What will you do with the Philippines? Will you admit them as States into the Union?" I answer quickly, Never, as States, in our day. We will hold them as Territories. We will do all we can to civilize and Christianize them. We will establish schools and churches, construct roads, erect factories, open mines, build telegraphs, all of course at their own expense, and give them just as much participation in their own government as they are capable of. And when, in the process of evolution, they become capable of self-government, we will give them national independence with our blessing and good wishes. But, Mr. Chairman, let us do our duty in our day and leave the future to be taken care of by men of the future. All wisdom and patriotism will not be buried in our graves. The great and good God, who has cared for our country in the past, will raise up men in the future well able to deal with the Philippines in a manner suitable to our honor and welfare and compatible with the course of humanity. . . .



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The Philippines, Mr. Chairman, are more than a thousand islands, little and big, with about 114,000 square miles and 7,000,000 people. These islands are in close reach of India, Malay, China, and Japan, countries that contain one thousand millions of human beings, three-fourths of all the people in the world. And the great commercial nations of the earth agree that the nation that owns these islands will control a large part of the commerce of the Eastern world. Our commerce now is immense. We shipped away from our country and sold in foreign lands last year over one thousand millions of dollars' worth of the products of our fields and factories. We are knocking at the doors of all the nations of the earth and offering them the surplus stores we have to sell. Every dollar's worth of goods we sell in a foreign land is that much gained. The Philippines will give us a grand base of operations at the very doors of India, China, and Japan, and will give us their trade. We will sell them our cotton, corn, wheat, beef, and bacon, and enormous will be the profit thereof, soon aggregating hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

My solution of the Philippine problem is this: If those fifty or sixty thousand people out there who are claiming to represent 7,000,000 people,²⁴ if they get a little too fresh, I would squelch them; I would turn enough grapeshot and canister into their ranks to teach them that the American Army and the American flag are not things to be trifled with, and that they who interfere with us do so at their peril.

Less than a week later, Tennessee's other Republican congressman, Walter P. Brownlow, followed with similar arguments for overseas expansion and the annexation of the Philippines.²⁵ The issue of imperial expansion in 1898-1899, especially the annexation of the Philippines, was a partisan issue. In an effort to win public support and congressional votes, Republicans in Congress, such as Gibson and Brownlow, often made the argument that America had never been a land in which the consent of the governed had been taken very seriously.²⁶ While Democrats paid lip service to "the consent of the governed" as a way to convince the American public that imperial

²⁴ Here Gibson was incorrectly claiming that the nationalist movement in the Philippines led by Emilio Aguinaldo had only about "fifty or sixty thousand" members.

²⁵ *Congressional Record*, 55th Congress, 3rd session, appendix 88-90.

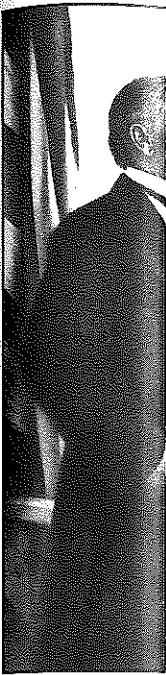
²⁶ See, "Territorial Government," *Knoxville Journal and Tribune*, December 5, 1898, 4.

expansion in the tropics was against American ideals, most Republican congressmen dismissed such arguments as being quaint and simply not historically accurate. In other words, Republicans admitted that their policies would deny the Filipinos the right to consent to who governed them, but the practice of denying people a voice in the government was a perfectly legitimate American tradition to continue.

During these debates, Republican congressmen targeted white Democrats from the South because they were usually, as a group, the staunchest opponents of Philippine annexation. White southern Democrats were also as guilty as anyone of ignoring the consent of the governed—especially in the late 1890s as Jim Crow laws instituted racially based segregation of public facilities and disfranchised African American voters throughout the South. Thus, Republicans often noted that southern Democrats were hypocritical for arguing that the United States should not annex the Philippines because it violated the rights of others, who had not consented to be governed. The political bickering in Congress did nothing to stem the tide of Anglo-Saxon domination at home or abroad. Despite the Republicans' attempt to embarrass white southern Democrats for racial segregation, the debates did not improve African Americans' position in southern society. And, despite attempts by the Democrats to embarrass Republicans for conquering a foreign people, the subjugation and annexation of the Philippines moved forward.

Gibson and other Republicans argued that the annexation of the Philippines would be beneficial to the Filipinos, who allegedly needed American help in climbing the ladder of civilization. But, more importantly, annexation would be beneficial to Americans, and especially help boost the economy by getting American companies closer to the Asian market, especially in China. But, how much did Philippine annexation truly benefit Gibson's constituents in East Tennessee? The vaunted China market never produced the riches for American companies as many, including Gibson, predicted. His January 1899 speech in favor of Philippine annexation reminds us that the issue of imperial expansion at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century was largely a partisan issue on the national stage. Because overseas expansion was a Republican foreign policy, most Republicans in Congress and the nation ultimately supported the annexation of the Philippines in 1898-1899. The East Tennesseans who supported the annexation of the Philippines likely did so because of their political allegiances and not because of the alleged benefits to the Filipinos or themselves.

The policies of the McKinley administration ushered the country into the modern era as a global power. Because of the demands of modern capitalism, Europeans had struck out into the world in a fit of imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century (what is often called the "new imperialism"). The Republican foreign policies of the late nineteenth and



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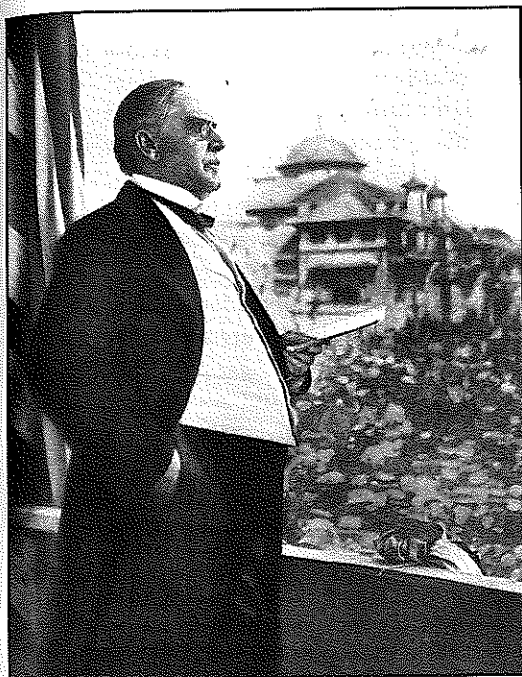
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During President William McKinley's administration the United States obtained an overseas empire and emerged as a world power. Charles S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley* (Boston, 1916), vol. 2.

early twentieth centuries led the United States into an imperial race in search of markets and resources. Although the underlying motives for imperial expansion were economic and strategic, imperialists often described their policies in terms of "spreading civilization" to the "heathen races" of the globe.

Yet, although white Americans imperialists (like their European counterparts) saw their modern, Western

civilization as being superior, many American imperialists paradoxically worried that American men had become over-civilized. Gibson, for one, argued in a February 1900 speech in Congress:

In this day some of us Americans [men] have become so effeminate, either through wealth, or through excess of civilization, or through refinements of political or theological polemics, that they dread boarding a ship to go to the Philippine Islands, when their forefathers girded up their loins, saddled their horses, packed their mules, yoked their oxen to their own wagons, and took their wives and their children, traveling on foot 3,000 miles across plains and deserts, across mountains and valleys, across creeks and rivers, among Indians and wild beasts, in order to reach California; and they were not afraid.²⁷

In his January 1899 speech, Gibson argued that America's civilization was worth spreading—it would bring modern conveniences and institutions to the "less civilized" Filipinos. Yet, Gibson, and many other leading men of his day, also worried that American men were becoming too modern and too civilized. It was an interesting and dichotomous argument that imperialists made—and one that was hotly debated between 1898 and 1902.

²⁷ Gibson speech quoted in Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (New Haven, CT, 1998), 140-41.

Anti-imperialists lost the battle over annexation, but in some ways they won the war. Although the United States formally annexed the Philippines in 1899, and held it until World War II, the country never amassed a large overseas empire like Britain, France, or other western European nations.²⁸ By 1900, the U.S. overseas empire consisted of roughly 125,000 square miles. By contrast, Britain controlled nearly five million square miles of territory in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. As a result, the U.S. government never developed a colonial bureau, as the European powers did.²⁹ Instead, U.S. policymakers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries opted for informal empire and nation-building rather than formal territorial rule in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

²⁸ See, Love, *Race Over Empire*, 196-200.

²⁹ David Mayers, *Dissenting Voices in America's Rise to Power* (Cambridge, UK, 2007), 216.

