

Primary Source Reading 4-1 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Anti-Imperialist League**▣ About the Selection**

The Anti-Imperialist League was founded in Boston in 1898. It had 500,000 members at its height in 1899. This selection comes from its "Platform of the American Anti-Imperialist League." The League issued the platform at its Chicago Conference on October 18, 1899. However, President McKinley's popularity, economic interests, and a sense of national pride proved too strong for the League to stop what it believed was unjust American colonization.

Reader's Dictionary

despotism: system of government in which the ruler has unlimited power

impunity: without punishment

Manila: capital of the Philippines

subjugation: conquering

GUIDED READING

As you read, determine the League's main objection to American expansionism. Then answer the questions that follow.

We hold that the policy known as imperialism is hostile to liberty and tends toward militarism, an evil from which it has been our glory to be free. We regret that it has become necessary in the land of Washington and Lincoln to reaffirm that all men, of whatever race or color, are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We maintain that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. We insist that the subjugation of any people is "criminal aggression" and open disloyalty to the distinctive principles of our government.

We earnestly condemn the policy of the present national administration in the Philippines. It seeks to extinguish the spirit of 1776 in those islands. We deplore the sacrifice of our soldiers and sailors, whose bravery deserves admiration even in an unjust war. We denounce the slaughter of the Filipinos as a needless horror. We protest against the extension of American sovereignty by Spanish methods.

... We urge that Congress be promptly convened to announce to the Filipinos our purpose to concede to them the independence for which they have so long fought and which of right is theirs.

... Much as we abhor the war of "criminal aggression" in the Philippines . . . we more deeply resent the betrayal of American institutions at home. The real firing line is not in the suburbs of Manila. The foe is in our own household. The attempt of 1861 was to divide the country. That of 1899 is to destroy its fundamental principles and noblest ideals.

The training of a great people for a century, the aspirations for liberty of a vast immigration are forces that will hurl aside those who in the delirium of conquest seek to destroy the character of our institutions.

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We deny that the obligations of all citizens to support their government in times of grave national peril applies to the present situation. No administration may with impunity ignore the issues upon which it was chosen, deliberately create a condition of war anywhere on the face of the globe, debauch the civil service for spoils to promote the adventure, organize a truth-suppressing censorship, and demand of all citizens a suspension of judgment and their unanimous support. While it chooses to continue the fighting, representative government itself is imperiled.

We propose to contribute to the defeat of any person or party that stands for the forcible subjugation of any people. . . .

We hold with Abraham Lincoln, that "no man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent. When the white man governs himself, that is self-government, but when he governs himself and also governs another man, that is more than self-government—that is despotism." Our reliance is in the love of liberty which God planted in us.

Source: *Living Documents in American History, Volume 2: From Reconstruction to the Outbreak of World War I*. New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1968.

READER RESPONSE

Directions: Answer the following questions on the lines below.

1. What are the League's objections to imperialism?

2. To what other war does the League compare the war in the Philippines?

3. How does the League propose to end imperialism?

4. **Critical Thinking** Many Vietnam veterans were treated poorly when they returned to the United States because they were part of a war that many thought was unjust. What is the position of the Anti-Imperialist League toward the U.S. soldiers serving in the expansionist wars?

