

DISTANT POSSESSIONS: THE PARTING OF THE WAYS (EXCERPT)

By Andrew Carnegie

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a wealthy industrialist and philanthropist. He was a vice president and generous financial supporter of the Anti-Imperialist League from its formation in 1898 until his death. He was also a member of the Philippine Independence Committee (1904) and a vice president of the Filipino Progress Association (1905-1907). He wrote this article for a magazine, explaining to Americans why he thought imperialism was wrong.

Twice only have the American people been called upon to decide a question of such vital import as that now before them.

Is the Republic, the apostle of Triumphant Democracy, of the rule of the people, to abandon her political creed and endeavor to establish in other lands the rule of the foreigner over the people, Triumphant Despotism?

Is the Republic to remain one homogeneous whole, one united people, or to become a scattered and disjointed aggregate of widely separated and alien races?

Is she to continue the task of developing her vast continent until it holds a population as great as that of Europe, all Americans, or to abandon that destiny to annex, and to attempt to govern, other far distant parts of the world as outlying possessions, which can never be integral parts of the Republic?

Is she to exchange internal growth and advancement for the development of external possessions which can never be really hers in any fuller sense than India is British or Cochin China French? Such is the portentous question of the day.

Two equally important questions the American people have decided wisely, and their flag now waves over the greater portion of the English-speaking race; their country is the richest of all countries, first in manufactures, in mining, and in commerce (home and foreign), first this year also in exports. But, better than this, the average condition of its people in education and in living is the best. The luxuries of the masses in other lands are the necessities of life in ours.

There are two kinds of national possessions, one colonies, the other dependencies. In the former we establish and reproduce our own race. Thus Britain has peopled Canada and Australia with English-speaking people, who have naturally adopted our ideas of self-government.

With dependencies it is otherwise. The most grievous burden which Britain has upon her shoulders is that of India, for there it is impossible for our race to grow. The child of English-speaking parents must be removed and reared in Britain. The British Indian official must have long respites in his native land. India means death to our race. The characteristic feature of a dependency is that the acquiring power cannot reproduce its own race there.

If we could establish colonies of Americans, and grow Americans in any part of the world now unpopulated and unclaimed by any of the great powers, and thus follow the example of Britain, heart and mind might tell us that we should have to think twice, yea, thrice, before deciding adversely. Even then our decision should be adverse; but there is at present no such question before us. What we have to face is the question whether we should embark upon the difficult and dangerous policy of undertaking the government of alien races in lands where it is impossible for our own race to be produced.

As long as we remain free from distant possessions we are impregnable against serious attack:

I am no "Little" American, afraid of growth, either in population or territory, provided always that the new territory be American, and that it will produce Americans, and not foreign races bound in time to be false to the Republic in order to be true to themselves.

Shall we attempt to establish ourselves as a power in the far East and possess the Philippines for glory?

The glory we already have, in Dewey's victory overcoming the power of Spain... The Philippines have about seven and a half millions of people, composed of races bitterly hostile to one another, alien races, ignorant of our language and institutions.

Americans cannot be grown there. The islands have been exploited for the benefit of Spain, against whom they have twice rebelled, like the Cubans. But even Spain has received little pecuniary benefit from them. The estimated revenue of the Philippines in 1894-95 was £2,715,980, the expenditure being £2,656,026, leaving a net result of about \$300,000. The United States could obtain even this trifling sum from the inhabitants only by oppressing them as Spain has done. But, if we take the Philippines, we shall be forced to govern them as generously as Britain governs her dependencies, which means that they will yield us nothing, and probably be a source of annual expense. Certainly they will be a grievous drain upon revenue if we consider the enormous army and navy which we shall be forced to maintain upon their account.

Source:

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