

Ratify the Treaty.

Declare the Nation's Policy.

I gladly avail myself of the columns of the Journal to suggest a few reasons why the opponents of a colonial policy should make their fight in support of a resolution declaring the nation's purpose rather than against the ratification of the treaty.

The conflict between the doctrine of self-government and the doctrine of alien government supported by external force has been thrust upon the American people as a result of the war. It is so important a conflict that it cannot be avoided, and, since it deals with a question now before congress, it must be considered immediately. It is useless to ask what effect this new issue will have upon other issues. Issues must be met as they arise; they cannot be moved about at will like pawns upon a chess board.

The opponents of imperialism have an opportunity to choose the ground upon which the battle is to be fought. Why not oppose the ratification of the treaty?

First, because a victory won against the treaty would prove only temporary if the people really favor a colonial policy.

That a victory won against the treaty would depend for its value entirely upon the sentiment of the people is evident. A minority can obstruct action for a time, but a minority, so long as it remains a minority, can only delay action and enforce reflection; it cannot commit the nation to a policy.

When there seemed some probability of the rejection of the treaty the friends of the administration began to suggest the propriety of withholding the treaty until the new senate could be convened in extra session. As the new senate will have a considerable republican majority it would be quite certain to ratify the treaty. Thus an effort to prevent the ratification of the treaty would be likely to fail in the very beginning. But let us suppose it possible to defeat ratification in both the present and the next senate—what would be the result? Would the imperialists abandon the hope of annexing the Philippines so long as they could claim the support of the president and a majority of both houses? Could a minority of the senate prevent the annexation of Hawaii? As we are now in possession of the Philippine islands the advocates of a colonial policy might secure an appropriation sufficient to pay the twenty millions agreed upon and leave the rest of the treaty for future consideration. In other words, if the opponents of imperialism have a majority in both houses they can declare the nation's policy; if the imperialists have a majority in both houses they cannot be permanently thwarted by a minority in the senate.

A resolution declaring the nation's policy recognizes that the destiny of the United States is in the hands of all the people and seeks to ascertain at once the sentiment of the people as reflected by their representatives.

If that decision is in harmony with the policy which has prevailed in the past the question will be settled and the people will return to the consideration of domestic problems. If, however, the advocates of imperialism either postpone consideration or control the action of congress an appeal will be taken to the voters at the next election. So great a change in our national policy cannot be made unless the authority therefor comes directly and unequivocally from that source of all power in a republic—the people.

In answer to those who fear that the question of imperialism, if discussed, will draw attention away from other questions, it is sufficient to say that the people cannot be prevented from considering a question which reaches down to the foundation principles of the republic. Instead of avoiding the issue it is the part of wisdom to deal with it at once and dispose of it permanently.

Second, the rejection of the treaty would be unwise because the opponents of the treaty would be compelled to assume responsibility for the continuance of war conditions and for the risks which always attend negotiations with a hostile nation.

The rejection of the treaty would give the administration an excuse for military expenditures which could not be justified after the conclusion of peace, and the opponents of the treaty would be charged with making such appropriations necessary. It must be remembered that in case the treaty is rejected negotiations must be renewed with an enemy whose ill-will is not concealed. Who is able to guarantee the nation against new dangers and new complications? In order to form an estimate of the risks which would thus be incurred, one has only to recall the unexpected things which have happened since war was declared. Is it wise to so make the attack as to assume all the risks when the same end can be gained by a plan which throws the risks upon our opponents? If the imperialists vote down a resolution declaring the nation's policy or postpone its consideration, they become responsible for any loss of life or expenditure of money which may follow as a result of such action.

I suggest below a few reasons in support of a resolution declaring it to be the nation's purpose to establish a stable government in Cuba and the Philippines and then to give the inhabitants independence under an American protectorate which will guard them against molestation from without.

First, such a course is consistent with national honor.

Our nation owes it to the nations with which we have dealings, as well as to the inhabitants of Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines, to announce immediately what it intends to do respecting the territory surrendered by Spain.

The president has said that the only purpose our nation has in taking possession of Cuba is to assist the inhabitants to establish a stable and independent government. It can do no harm for congress to reaffirm this purpose, and it may do much good. The Cubans, having fought for independence for many years and against great odds, are naturally jealous of the liberty which they have won and no doubt should be left as to the sincerity and good faith of our government in its dealings with them. Such a declaration would not only be harmless, but it is almost made necessary by the flippant, if not contemptuous, tone in which some United States officials speak of the intelligence and patriotism of the Cubans and of their right to independence.

The duty of declaring our national policy in regard to the Philippines is even more imperative. The Filipinos were fighting for independence when the United States declared war against Spain. In the formal protest filed with the peace commissioners in Paris the representatives of Aguinaldo assert that they received friendly assurances from United States officials and acted upon those assurances in co-operating against the Spaniards. Whether or not such assurances were given, frankness and honesty should characterize our dealings with them.

If we announce to the world that we hold the Philippine islands, not for pecuniary profit, but in trust for the inhabitants; if we declare that our only purpose is to assist the Filipinos to establish a stable and independent government, friendly relations will be maintained and there will be little need of troops. If, on the other hand, the Filipinos are not to have independence, but merely a change of masters we should break the news to them at once and send over a large army to instruct them in the principles of a government which, in one hemisphere, derives its just powers from the consent of the governed and in the other derives its authority from superior force.

While our nation is not prepared to draft a complete code of laws suited to the peculiar needs

of the Filipinos we ought to be able to decide at once whether we intend to deal with them according to the principles of our own government or according to the customs prevailing among European monarchies. Even a republican congress ought to be able to choose without hesitation between a policy which establishes a republic in the Orient and a policy which sows the seeds of militarism in the United States.

The trade relations possible under a protectorate would be of more value to the United States than any which could come as the result of forcible annexation.

The people of Porto Rico have not manifested any desire for political independence and would in all probability favor annexation, yet it is only right that they should have an opportunity to choose. The resolution authorizing intervention recognized the right of the Cubans to independence. To be consistent we must also respect the wishes of the inhabitants of Porto Rico. The resolution could, without impropriety, offer annexation to Porto Rico.

In a recent interview I suggested that the United States should retain a harbor and coaling station in the Philippines and in Porto Rico in return for services rendered and added that Cuba should be asked to make a similar concession on the same ground.

Second, a resolution declaring the nation's purpose presents a plain and clear-cut issue between the theory of self-government and the colonial policy. It presents a positive, affirmative method of dealing with the question. In opposing the treaty we would be on the defensive; in outlining a policy we shall be aggressive. The strongest arguments which could be used in support of the treaty will lose their force entirely when Spain is eliminated and the American people are able to dispose of the question according to their own ideas and interests.

Third, it secures, by easier means, every end that can be secured by a rejection of the treaty.

If an officer of the law arrests a person in possession of stolen goods he can either compel the return of the goods to the owner or he can first rescue them and then return them himself. We find Spain in the possession of a title to a part of the Philippines. She has not yet conquered all the native tribes, but the title which she has acquired by force and has been held by force. We can either compel her to surrender her title to the Filipinos, as we compelled her to surrender Cuba to the Cubans, or we can accept possession and then of our own accord turn over the islands to the inhabitants. The peace commissioners might have demanded independence for the Filipinos as they did for the Cubans; if they did not properly interpret the wishes of the people of the United States the blame must fall upon them and not upon the people. Certainly seventy millions of citizens are under no obligations to abate their devotion to the ideals which they have cherished for a century in order to indorse the work of a peace commission or to approve of the instructions of an executive.

If it is urged that the ratification of the treaty imposes upon us an obligation to pay twenty millions of dollars to Spain, I answer, first, that this amount can probably be secured from the Filipinos in return for independence, and, second, that, if it cannot be secured from them, it is better to lose the amount entirely than to expend a larger sum in securing a modification of the treaty.

It is better to regard the amount paid as a contribution to liberty than to consider it the market price of land, improvements or people.

To terminate the war upon the same high plane upon which it was inaugurated is worthy of a great republic; to descend from a sublime beginning to the purchase of sovereignty (for our own profit) from a nation whose title we disputed in Cuba would lay us open to the charge of Punic faith.