ON THE WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES 1900

**Albert J. Beveridge**, U.S. Senator from Indiana

The year was 1900, and the United States was engaged in a controversial war to

gain control of the Philippine Islands. Many Americans opposed this first

attempt by the U.S. government to exercise imperial control over another

country. After visiting the Philippines, Senator Albert J. Beveridge (1862–1927)

delivered this speech on the Senate floor.

What were Senator Beveridge’s motives and justifications for United States imperialism?

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Mr. President, the times call for candor. The Philippines are ours forever,

“territory belonging to the United States,” as the Constitution calls them. And

just beyond the Philippines are China’s illimitable markets. We will not retreat

from either…We will not renounce our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world. And Almighty God … has marked us as His chosen people … to lead in the regeneration of the world.

It will be hard for Americans who have not studied them to understand the

people. They are a barbarous race…The Filipino is the South Sea Malay, put through a process of three hundred years of superstition in religion, dishonesty in dealing, disorder in habits of industry, and cruelty, caprice, and corruption in government. It is

barely possible that 1,000 men in all the archipelago are capable of self-government in the Anglo-Saxon sense. My own belief is that there are not 100 men among them who comprehend what Anglo-Saxon self-government even means, and there are over 5,000,000 people to be governed....

But, Senators, it would be better to abandon this combined garden and Gibraltar of the Pacific, and count our blood and treasure already spent a profitable loss, than to apply any academic arrangement of self-government to these children. They are not capable of self-government. How could they be? They are not of a self-governing race. They are Orientals, Malays...What alchemy will change the oriental quality of their blood and set the self-governing currents of the American pouring through their Malay veins?