

II. The South African War, empire and the *Irish World*, 1899–1902

ÚNA NÍ BHROIMÉIL

When the South African War broke out in 1899, the United States had just concluded the Spanish American War, and was engaged in the process of taking the Philippine islands from Spain and quelling Filipino resistance. The country appeared to be abandoning its previous inward looking strategy and was beginning to expand overseas. These developments became noteworthy topics in the pages of the *Irish World* during the years 1899–1902. Published weekly in New York and edited by Patrick Ford, the *Irish World* had a circulation of 125,000 in the 1890s. The paper was primarily read by the American Irish and had an Irish nationalist and a socialist agenda obvious from its full title – the *Irish World and Industrial Liberator*. Regarding England and its empire as the enemy of Ireland and the Irish, the *Irish World* could not countenance the notion that its beloved republic of America might take on an imperial mantle and come to resemble in any way the old enemy. Neither could it conceive of American support for England, either formally through an Anglo-American alliance or tacitly through lack of support for the Boers. The Boers, after all, were not merely fighting England but were ‘sister republics’. The paper’s response thus had to be more sophisticated than a simple anti-English tirade. It linked the war in South Africa with the cause of all nations struggling against the might of empire and urged the United States, which had once banished the English empire from its shores, to desist from joining the ranks of the imperial powers.

The main audience and readership of the *Irish World* was Irish American, and the general mood of the paper was anti-English and pro-Boer.¹ Irish Americans’ natural inclination was to be anti-English. Irish American nationalism relied on a sense of ethnicity generated by English rule in Ireland, reinforced by bitter memories of the Famine and nourished by anti-Irish prejudice in America.² Irish American nationalism was resurgent in 1900 as Clan na Gael reunited under the leadership of John Devoy and Daniel Cohalan³ – indeed, Francis M. Carroll suggests that Clan na Gael sought to fight the

¹ See for example *Irish World* (hereafter *IW*), 7 Oct. 1899. ² Thomas N. Brown, *Irish American nationalism, 1870–1890* (Westport, Conn., 1966). ³ Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and exiles: Ireland and the Irish exodus to North America* (New York, 1985); Alan J. Ward, *Ireland and Anglo-American relations, 1899–1921* (Toronto 1969).

British empire in America by opposing the South African War.⁴ The *Irish World* for its part proclaimed that a good general rule for Irishmen was 'to take, in all wars, controversies and disputes the side that England is against, the moral certainty being that in every case it will be found to be the honest side'.⁵ When respected Irish leaders such as Michael Davitt denounced England's treachery towards the Transvaal the attitudes of Irish Americans were unambiguous. The *Irish World* carried many reports from meetings around the country, a typical example of which was headed 'Chicago mass meeting in sympathy with heroic Boers'. According to this report, the meeting passed 'resolutions of sympathy with the Boers and of undying hatred for England'. The resolutions were followed by 'musical numbers . . . which were well received by the audience which filled the hall'.⁶ St Patrick's Day resolutions were particularly trenchant and the *Irish World* printed pages of resolutions and promises of aid:

The convention of Irish societies of San Francisco . . . announced that [it] had been decided to donate the profits of the entertainment to the . . . Boer fund for widows and orphans.

Resolved that we Irish Americans of the city of Cleveland, O., in mass meeting assembled have not forgotten the trails of blood, ruin and desolation that cruel and pitiless England left upon sad and sorrowful Ireland . . . that to the Boers we extend our best wishes in their contest for the preservation of country, home and fireside.⁷

The mention of the Boers by Mr Langtry (Springfield) was the signal for long applause, the women joining heartily with the men.⁸

St Patrick's Day parades also gave Irish Americans an opportunity to display publicly their sympathy for the Boer cause and Boer flags were flown and carried, particularly in the New York parade.

At an early hour Irish flags were flung to the breeze from window, balcony fire escape and housetop, side by side with the stars and stripes and the Transvaal republic flag the latter to show sympathy of the people for the struggling Boers.⁹

Boer flags carried in streetparades – New York's friendly sons cheer the Boers and hiss England.

⁴ Francis M. Carroll, *American opinion and the Irish question, 1910–23: a study in opinion and policy* (Dublin and New York, 1978). ⁵ *IW*, 25 Nov. 1899. ⁶ *IW*, 9 Dec. 1899. ⁷ *IW*, 3 Mar. 1900. ⁸ *IW*, 30 Mar. 1901. ⁹ *IW*, 23 Mar. 1901.

In Chicago ... Although the green field with the golden harp was in the ascendant, there were plenty of American flags and the four colored banner of the Boers. Many of the marchers wore Boer badges.¹⁰

Flags and badges were constant features of the *Irish World's* coverage of the support for the Boers. The paper carried a drawing of the Boer Irish Brigade crossing VanBrands Square in Johannesburg carrying a flag with an inscription 'Remember Mitchelstown' and the following week carried a bigger version of the same drawing on the front page with the caption given to it by the *London Illustrated Graphic* – 'Traitors!' The *Irish World* reminded its readers that Mitchelstown recalled 'an atrocious affair in Land League days when England's armed ruffians murdered defenceless men women and children' and that the volunteers represented in the drawing were in fact true Irishmen as 'every Irish man the world over ... must be an enemy of the British empire'.¹¹ This belief appeared to be borne out by a cable from Michael Davitt in Dublin the same month headed '10,000 people in Dublin cheer Boers and groan Chamberlain' on the occasion of Chamberlain's visit to Dublin. Davitt reported that the crowd displayed the Transvaal flag opposite Dublin Castle until the police captured it. The editor of the *Irish World* added insolently that it was 'the only Boer flag taken by the British so far'. That December the paper printed a picture of Paul Kruger holding aloft the Boer flag with the victories of the Boers against the British inscribed on a pennant above it. The text below wished 'A happy new year to the Boers! May they continue to win victories till their standard sheet floats in triumph and England's blood stained colors are in the mire!'¹²

The paper was keen to display publicly its support for the Boers. In January 1900, in response to a letter to the editor suggesting that the *Irish World* should advocate the flying of the Boer flag from the homes of all sympathizers, the editor responded that 'The idea of displaying the flag is a good one. From the windows of the *Irish World* office, the Boer flag, with the Stars and Stripes and Ireland's standard of Green flies every day.'¹³ Should a less ostentatious symbol of support be required the paper carried advertisements for Boer buttons containing a portrait of 'Oom Paul' Kruger and the slogan 'Success to the Boers'. Because the Canadian customs officials had confiscated several thousand buttons, declaring them seditious and treasonable, the makers (who also made St Patrick's Day buttons, badges and novelties) believed that they should be worn 'by every lover of liberty the world over'. Alternatively, sheet music for the song 'The Gallant Boers' could be purchased and played in the privacy of one's own parlour.¹⁴

¹⁰ *IW*, 24 Mar. 1900. ¹¹ *IW*, 2 and 9 Dec. 1899. ¹² *IW*, 30 Dec. 1899. ¹³ *IW*, 13 Jan. 1900. ¹⁴ *IW*, 10 Mar. 1900.



Probably the strongest demonstration of Irish American support for the Boer cause was the departure of an ambulance corps under the auspices of the Red Cross society for service with the Boer army in the Transvaal in February 1900. The United Irish societies of Chicago and the Irish societies of Massachusetts equipped the ambulance corps, many of whom had been volunteers during the Spanish American War.¹⁵ Although travelling as an ambulance corps the *Irish World* admitted in September 1900 that the Irish American brigade had seen more fighting and military action than medical service:

The casual visitor dropping in upon the boys will not realize that he is in the presence of an ambulance corps, for all the talk is reminiscent of service in the trenches and saddle, and he will have to search industriously for anything in the camp that looks like a litter. But he will see all sorts of rifles and revolvers.¹⁶

There were six physicians and a nurse in the company. The remainder of the fifty eight men who left were designated as litter bearers but 'the Boers having no place in their army for them in this capacity ... went into the field as part of the Boer fighting force as soon as they could get guns'.¹⁷ On their return to Chicago, when 5,000 people welcomed them home at the Rock Island railroad station, M.V. Gannon defended the corps for having enlisted in the ranks of the Boer army as 'it was the inalienable right of every Irishman to take up arms against the soldiers of England wherever he found them engaged in war'.¹⁸ As the war progressed the enthusiasm of the Irish Americans for the Boer cause did not waver and it was boosted by visits from such pro-Boer stalwarts as Maude Gonne and Major John MacBride, who arrived in the United States in February 1901 to lecture on the war and to stop recruitment for the British army.¹⁹

One Boer trait that might not initially have endeared them to Irish Americans was their Protestantism. The *Irish World* denied however that this meant that the Boers were anti-Catholic, and it printed reports from people who had been to South Africa and who had first hand experience of the Boers. One of these reports was from Father James O'Haire, a former missionary in South Africa who had been, according to his own account, in almost daily contact with the Boers. He reported that he had never been denied hospitality by Boer families, and that room was always given to him in Boer houses to celebrate mass for the few Catholics living in remote places. He added that grace was always said before meals in Boer homes and that he was on many occasions 'politely asked by the Boer if I would read the Bible

15 *IW*, 24 Feb. 1900. 16 *IW*, 15 Sept. 1900. 17 *IW*, 24 Nov. 1900. 18 *IW*, 1 Dec. 1900.
19 *IW*, 2 Feb. 1901.

and say some prayers for them which I always did'.²⁰ Another man, John O'Connor, 'a fine looking and sturdy Boer soldier, American by birth and citizen of the Transvaal by adoption' stated to the *Irish World* that 'The Boers are Christians and always treat the traveller kindly. They have more feeling for the poor than the British.'²¹ Dr Leyds, the Boer's European agent, had written a letter to William Redmond denying that Catholics were forbidden to hold office in the Transvaal, and giving the names of four Catholic officials of the Boer government.²² The Irish Americans were therefore reassured that they were supporting a pious people. Indeed, one editorial suggested that the Boers were lucky to be Protestant, as religion was one thing that the English wouldn't try to take from them as they had in Ireland.²³

This empathy with the Boers was highlighted in other ways also. As early as November 1899 the *Irish World* remarked on Boer kindness to prisoners of war and contrasted Boer treatment with that of the English. In an article stating that 'British officers in hospital at Glencoe show their appreciation for the extreme kindness shown them by Boer officers and men' the paper contrasted this attitude with Kitchener 'who in carrying brutality to its utmost in Egypt gave orders to kill the wounded'.²⁴ This comparison continued throughout 1900 with headlines contrasting 'England's butchers and "pigstickers"' with 'Boers kind to prisoners'.²⁵ The Irish brigade in the Transvaal had also testified to the 'tenderness of Boers for their wounded foes'.²⁶ The English, whose 'savagery is inbred', meanwhile not only treated their prisoners badly but extended their cruelty to the most vulnerable of all, Boer women and children.²⁷ This theme became more pronounced throughout 1901. British brutality was condemned as 'foul and cowardly murder', not only by Irish nationalists such as Bishop O'Dwyer of Limerick but also by others in the Transvaal. The Reverend Dr H.D. Von Brockhuizen, Mrs Botha's pastor, quoted an official report made by Dr Ronald P. McKenzie of the British army to the British government on conditions in the camps: 'the conditions are horrible, the death rate appalling and the food furnished wholly unfit to eat'.²⁸ More graphic were the reports by Emily Hobhouse, the delegate in South Africa to the Distress Fund for South African women and children, often reprinted by the *Irish World* from the *London Daily News*. These reports, according to the *Irish World*, should 'send a thrill of horror throughout the civilised world', describing as they did 'the sort of war England is making on women and children in South Africa'.²⁹ According to the editor, these women and children were submitted to torture because:

20 *IW*, 17 Mar. 1900. 21 *IW*, 5 Oct. 1901. 22 *IW*, 25 Nov. 1899. 23 *IW*, 7 Oct. 1899. 24 *IW*, 4 Nov. 1899. This is a reference to the British campaign in the Sudan – see chapter 2 above. 25 *IW*, 10 Feb. 1900. 26 *IW*, 21 Apr. 1900. 27 *IW*, 5 Jan. 1901. 28 *IW*, 22 June 1901. 29 *IW*, 29 June 1901.

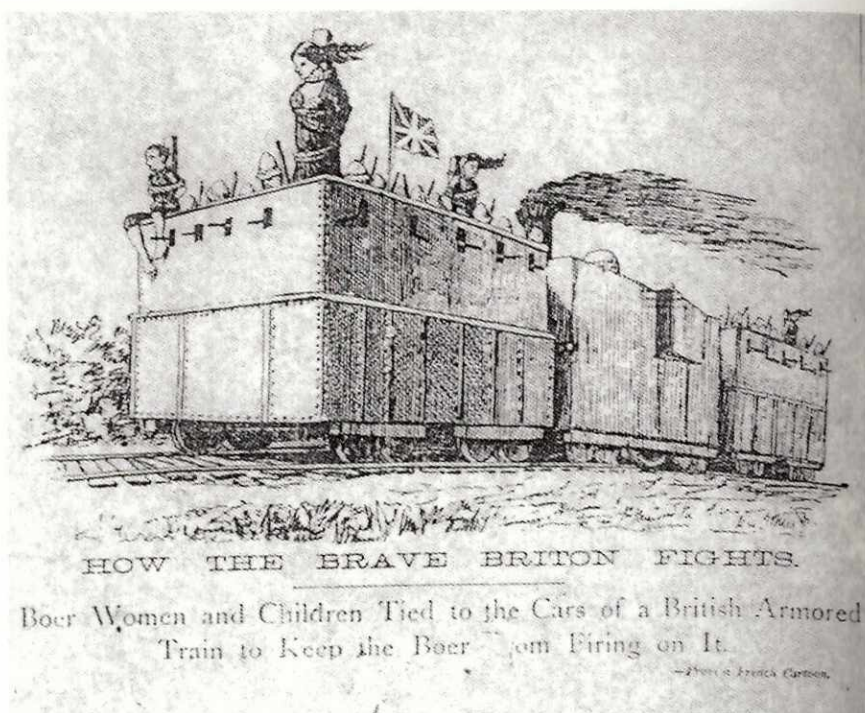


BRITISH WARFARE UP TO DATE.

GENERAL LORD CHUMLEY-CHUMLEY — "Forward, me brave lads! Those Boers wont dare to shoot their own women and children, dontcherknow!"

From N. Y. Journal

5 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 26 April 1902. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland



6 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 4 January 1902. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons are perilising [*sic*] their lives in defence of their native land. Not able to conquer these brave fellows on the field of battle, England's representatives in South Africa basely seek to conquer them by letting them know that if they do not let down their arms their loved ones who are in the power of the enemy will be slowly done to death.³⁰

From 1901 on, a dual theme can be seen in the reports in the *Irish World*. On the one hand, the horrors of the camps were described in great detail and the headlines became unequivocal: 'Horrors of British "refuge camps"'; 'Appalling conditions prevailing at the "concentration camps"'; 'England's murder pens'; 'England's murder camps'; 'England's death traps'; 'England's assassination camps'.³¹ Conditions at the camp were detailed. 'No furniture, no bedding, no decent food, burned by the sun and soaked by the rain, women grow to living skeletons and children sicken and die by the scores.'³²

³⁰ *Ibid.* ³¹ *IW*, 13 July, 3 Aug., 28 Sept., 23 Nov. and 21 Dec. 1901; 8 and 15 Feb. 1902.
³² *IW*, 13 July 1901.

The *Irish World* reported that 'ten thousand Boer children [had been] murdered within eight months in Kitchener's refuge camps'.³³ The paper also alleged that the camps were evidence of the cowardice of British soldiers. Two cartoons depicted the use the British were making of the Boer women and children. In one soldiers were portrayed fighting with women and children strapped to their bodies.³⁴ In January 1902 the *Irish World* also reproduced a French cartoon depicting a British armoured train with Boer women and children strapped to the carriages and with a caption – 'How the brave Briton fights'.³⁵ In April the paper carried a cartoon on its front page depicting the British shooting of the wounded Boer general, Commandant Scheepers, who was unable to stand for his execution because of appendicitis. He was tied to a chair and 'riddled with bullets by a detail of coldstream guards, firing at ten paces. He was buried where he fell, the chair broken up and thrown into the shallow grave on top of him while the band played on.'³⁶

Although the *Irish World's* criticism of England was trenchant and unrelenting, the paper sought at all times to stress the allegiance of the American Irish to America and to the republican ideals of the founding fathers. While the loyalty of hyphenated Americans to the United States was not addressed as comprehensively as it would be during the period 1914–18, many of the arguments deployed during the First World War were inadvertently rehearsed during the conflict in South Africa.³⁷ The notion that the Boers were defending two small republics against the might of the British empire was reiterated again and again in the *Irish World*. Chamberlain and Rhodes were determined to 'destroy the little republic which blocks [the] British scheme of domination in Africa' according to the editor in May 1899.³⁸ The description of the Boers and their republics was consistent over the term of the war. The Boers were constantly referred to as 'brave' or 'heroic', the republics as 'little' or 'small' and England as rapacious and tyrannical.³⁹ In a cartoon taken from the *Pittsburgh Post* and reprinted in the *Irish World*, republicanism was portrayed as having sunk so deeply into the Boer republics that it was impossible for anyone, even John Bull, to wipe it out.⁴⁰ According to the *Irish World*, a shared republicanism should have led Americans to sympathize with the Boers, rather than kow-tow to the subjects of a foreign monarch who had been banished from the newly created American republic in the eighteenth century.

33 *IW*, 8 Feb. 1902. 34 *IW*, 26 Apr. 1902. 35 *IW*, 4 Jan. 1902. 36 *IW*, 12 Apr. 1902. 37 Edward Cuddy, 'Irish Americans and the 1916 election: an episode in immigrant adjustment', *American Quarterly*, 2:21 (summer 1969) 228–43; William M. Leary Jr., 'Woodrow Wilson, Irish Americans and the election of 1916', *Journal of American History*, 1:54 (June 1967) 57–72. For a more general discussion on ethnicity and loyalty see Yossi Shain, 'Ethnic diasporas and US foreign policy', *Political Science Quarterly*, 5:109 (winter 1994/5) 811–41. 38 *IW*, 20 May 1899. 39 See for example *IW*, 19 and 26 Aug. and 23 and 30 Sept. 1899. 40 *IW*, 27 July 1901.



7 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 27 July 1901. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Blood is thicker than water and these South African republicans are of the same blood with the New York and New Jersey immigrants of Holland and of Dutch Huguenot descent who fought England in the American revolution and again in 1812 when England still claimed a suzerainty right to search American vessels.⁴¹

This comparison between what the British were doing to the Boers and what they had done to the Americans was regularly made in the *Irish World*. In November 1899 for example a drawing appeared which represented visually the number of British soldiers in South Africa, and stressed that Britain has

⁴¹ *IW*, 16 Sept. 1899.

sent a force to crush the Transvaal three times larger than that which 'came to destroy the Americans'.⁴²

American success in repulsing the British and resisting the empire in 1776 and again in 1812 should have made them forever wary not just of the British but also of overseas expansion in general, according to the *Irish World*. To remind the Americans of their history of clashes with the British the *Irish World* quoted from Herbert Paul, the London correspondent of the *New York Herald*.

The language of the Marquis of Salisbury in the House of Lords which was almost textually reproduced by his son Lord Cranborne in the Commons, was very much the same as that used by Lord North and his colleagues at the time of the American war. Mr Balfour's was slightly milder and more sympathetic in tone but its substance was identical.⁴³

Certainly this invocation of Lord North might have reminded Americans of the revolution but a starker depiction was outlined in a headline in the *Irish World* in March 1901, when the paper carried a quote from Judge Pennypacker of Philadelphia.

As in 1814 he (the Englishman) burned the house of President Madison and the Capitol at Washington with its archives, books and papers, so today, with like gratification and futility he burns the home of de Wet.⁴⁴

Again and again links between the American revolution and the war in Africa were reiterated. In September 1901 in an article entitled 'American revolutionists and the Boer patriots' the paper made connections between the 'fighting burghers' and George Washington's actions during the winter of 1777-8.

The American revolution has had and is still having a powerful moral influence upon the South African war. The Boer generals are known to be closely acquainted with the history of General Washington and they derive great inspiration from the story of the hardships the colonists endured in the seven year struggle for liberty. In this dark hour de Wet, Botha and Steyn undoubtedly remember Valley Forge and are determined to continue the war, as the Americans did, at any cost to the bitter end.⁴⁵

And as surely as the Americans won under Washington, the Boers would also beat the British.

⁴² *IW*, 18 Nov. 1899. ⁴³ *IW*, 5 Jan. 1901. ⁴⁴ *IW*, 2 Mar. 1901. ⁴⁵ *IW*, 11 Sept. 1901.

Interestingly, in an article detailing Michael Davitt's proposal for 'A national address from Ireland to President Kruger', the *Irish World* stated that although Paul Kruger was the very antithesis of the Irishman, he could be favourably compared with Abraham Lincoln.

Since Abraham Lincoln, there is no such figure as this great old man in modern history. His faith, his courage, his hopefulness, his coolness, his indifference to the sneers of his enemies, his belief in the righteousness of his cause, his splendid patriotism – they all went to make up a character worthy to be the head of a brave and gallant nation rightly struggling to be free, and especially worthy to be the head of the burghers of the Dutch republics, the bravest of the brave.⁴⁶

If appeals to American republicanism and history were not enough to swing American support, then similarities between the Americans and Boers as people might convince the Americans, according to the paper. This likeness was brought out very clearly in a poem entitled the 'Song of the Farmer men' which was written for the *Irish World* by E. Tone. The concept of the Boers as farmers was one that appealed to the *Irish World*, reflecting the American image of itself as at heart a nation of yeoman farmers, despite industrialization and urbanization. The farmer metaphor also likened the Boers to the Irish peasants who were and had been fighting the empire for a long time, albeit without much success. These three themes came together in the poem.

There was a day, a long time ago
 When the men on Concord common
 Left plough and spade to lend their aid
 To freedoms cause and honor.
 And when on Bunker hill they stood
 Like stone wall, firm and steady,
 The Saxon ranks could play no pranks
 For the farmer men were ready.

In Wexford fields in 'ninety-eight'
 The farmer men were reaping
 When the 'boys' swept down from the hill tops brown
 Of gallant Wicklow greeting.
 And like brothers true, the green and blue,
 Stood with pike and gun together,
 Till the Saxon host paid well the cost
 With their blood on Irish heather.

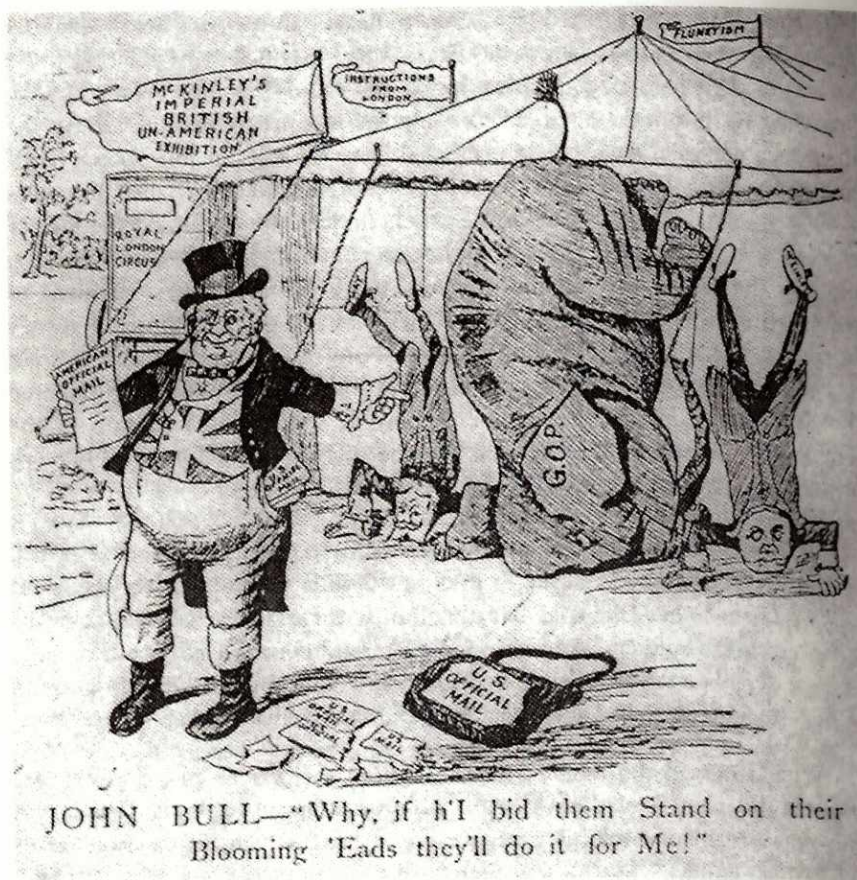
The British were described as 'Saxon redcoat dandys [*sic*]' with 'dancing plumes' on their heads whereas the Boers were described as having 'big brave hearts' in their breasts and 'rifles, quick and handy' in their hands as they 'marched forth to fight for freedom'.⁴⁷ As the war progressed the idea of the Boers as a nation of farmers was expressed more directly. In July 1900 a headline in the *Irish World* declared that there stood '250,000 trained butchers against 30,000 farmers' although the article underneath expanded the farmer class to include 'clerks, attorneys, shopkeepers and schoolboys'.⁴⁸ In fact, towards the end of the war the image of the Boers as farmers was used to convey the differences between the British as imperialists and the sturdy Boers. In a front-page drawing captioned 'King Edward's imperialists yield to President Kruger's farmers', published in March 1902, the paper depicted the destruction by the Boers of a convoy of wagons at Vodonop in the Transvaal.⁴⁹ Again, in an article on the end of the war in June, the bravery of the Boer farmers was extolled by the *Irish World*.

For two years and eight months a brave people numerically weak have withstood the might of a world wide empire. Thirty thousand farmers have held at bay for almost three years half a million of English soldiers. And now when the end comes they do not surrender like cravens but on terms which would never have been granted them if they had not given England good cause to fear them.⁵⁰

What annoyed the *Irish World* throughout the war more than anything else was the attitude of the American administration towards the Boers. Not only was President McKinley supportive of the English in 'her defense of her eastern empire', but he was abandoning the very concept of a republic, imitating the British and attempting to transform the United States into an empire by subjugating the people of the Philippines. In July 1899, the paper carried a statement by George S. Boutwell, governor of Massachusetts, headed 'William Mc Kinley denounced as a greater criminal than Jefferson Davies'. Quoting from the statement the *Irish World* highlighted the fundamental issue as it saw it. 'The founders of this government preferred republicanism and peace to imperialism and war. President McKinley and his supporters are engaged in an effort to revise their work and to reverse their opinion.'⁵¹

'Imperialism' and republicanism were wholly incompatible in the opinion of the *Irish World* and this was to be a consistent theme throughout the war. The links between the war in South Africa and the war in the Philippines were repeatedly highlighted, as was the charge that the United States was attempting to model itself on the old enemy, England. The 'cant

⁴⁷ *IW*, 10 Feb. 1900. ⁴⁸ *IW*, 14 July 1900. ⁴⁹ *IW*, 8 Mar. 1902. ⁵⁰ *IW*, 7 June 1902. ⁵¹ *IW*, 22 July 1899.

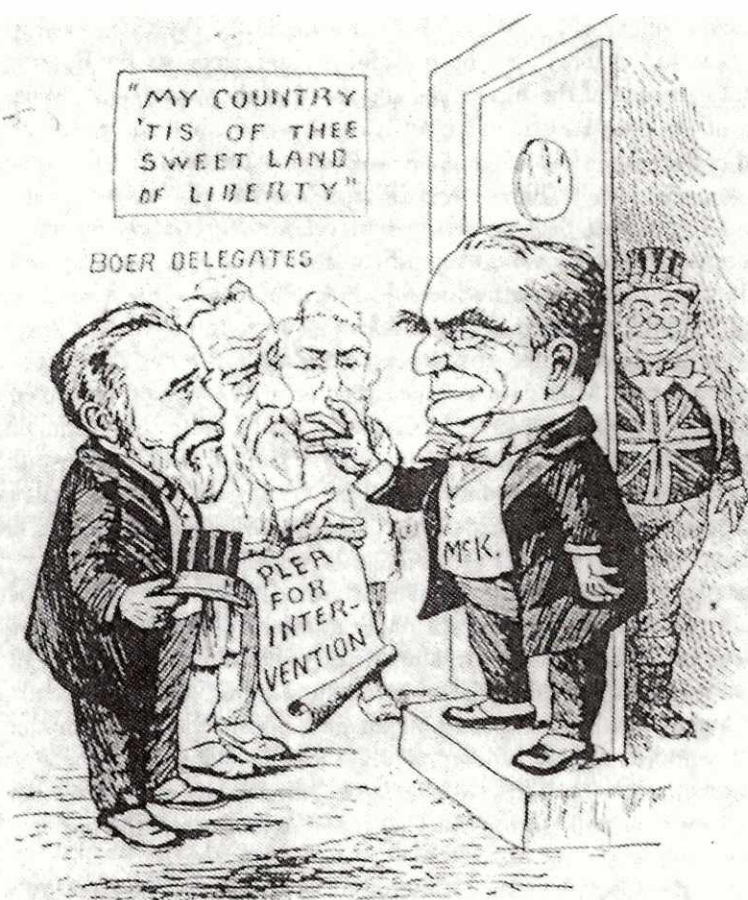


8 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 10 March 1900. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

and humbug' that suggested that empire and civilization went hand in hand was 'borrowed from England'.⁵² Cartoons carried in the *Irish World* in March and June 1900 demonstrated just how much in thrall to the British the paper believed McKinley's administration to be. In March, John Bull had McKinley, his secretary of state, John Hay and the entire Republican party (which was symbolized by an elephant) standing on their heads.⁵³ In June, a cartoon reprinted from the *New York World* depicted McKinley refusing to receive or listen to the Boer delegation in America as John Bull stood behind McKinley's door, clearly in charge.⁵⁴

The Boers sent envoys to the United States twice during the war, to appeal to the government and people of the United States for assistance.

⁵² *IW*, 25 Nov. 1899. ⁵³ *IW*, 10 Mar. 1900. ⁵⁴ *IW*, 2 June 1900.



McKINLEY:—"Very Sorry, Gentlemen. Can't See You Now. I'm too Busy."

9 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 2 June 1900. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

Although a warm welcome was extended to the delegates by the common council in Boston and by the municipal assembly of New York, the White House reception was low key. The delegates were received as casual visitors and met only by the president and secretary of state. The *Irish World* was outraged that 'the official head of the greatest republic in the world who in virtue of his official position, should be the foremost champion of Boer independence, has not lifted a finger to aid the cause of the Boers'.⁵⁵ When Colonel

⁵⁵ *IW*, 22 Sept. 1900.

Lynch, commander of the Second Irish Brigade in the Boer army visited the United States in October 1900 he spoke of the amazement of the Boers at the unfriendly attitude of the Americans and asked of the *Irish World*: 'What has become of the boasted banner of American liberty? Shall the generous and devoted enthusiasm of a Lafayette be scoffed at as out of date and ridiculous in this material age?'⁵⁶ The second Boer delegation in 1902 was more circumspect about what they wanted to achieve. The *Irish World* reported that the delegates did not want the United States to intervene in the South African war, but wished that the authorities in the United States might request that 'civilised warfare be insured in South Africa'.⁵⁷ This time President Roosevelt was not criticized about the envoys' reception, although the paper reported that General Anson Mills gave a dinner at home in Washington for the envoys to which senators, representatives in Congress, army officers and distinguished citizens were invited. According to the report General Mills was 'inspired to this act of courtesy by the desire to show the visitors that they have the good will and sympathy of Americans of high standing in public and private life in the gallant fight the republics are making for existence'.⁵⁸

The paper also maintained that the United States had in fact abetted England by initially recognizing the annexation of the Boer republics and by providing a supply base for England throughout the war. Officers of the British army had travelled to America for the purpose of selecting and purchasing horses, established a camp depot for the collection and shipment of horses and mules and demanded protection for the facility lest it be attacked by Boer sympathizers. This led the *Irish World* to question if in fact the United States was still a colony of England.⁵⁹ According to the paper,

the great republic to which all men struggling for liberty were wont to look for moral support has so far fallen behind its high estate as to aid and abet a pirate empire in the work of exterminating a brave people who are battling to perpetuate and transmit to their children the inestimable blessing of self government. Hide it as we may, the ugly fact protrudes itself that by such aid ... we are England's partners in her attempt to exterminate the Boers.⁶⁰

The *Irish World's* attitude towards President McKinley was encapsulated in its call for the election of William Jennings Bryan to the presidency in the autumn of 1900. In an editorial in August entitled 'Republic or imperialism' the reasons for supporting Bryan were outlined. 'A vote for him means a vote against imperialism and a British alliance. In other words, it means a vote for the perpetuation of the republic which is so seriously threatened by imperi-

⁵⁶ *IW*, 20 Oct. 1900. ⁵⁷ *IW*, 22 Mar. 1902. ⁵⁸ *Ibid.* ⁵⁹ *IW*, 12 Apr. 1902. ⁶⁰ *IW*, 22 Feb. 1902.

alism.⁶¹ In articles entitled 'Vote for Americanism' and 'Stand by the republic' the *Irish World* exhorted Americans to choose Bryan and to guard against the beginning of the end of the republic.

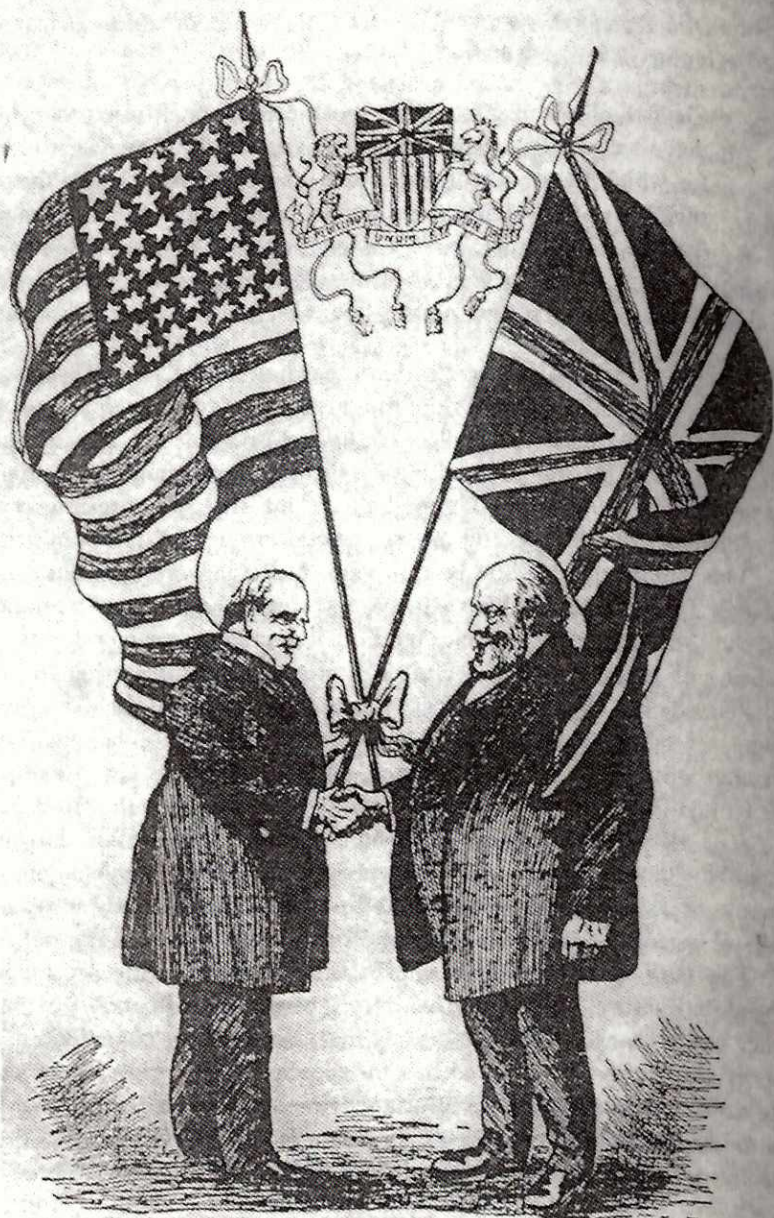
Shall the form of government born of the constitution of 1788 and defended in 1812 against England's rapacity by American valor, and for which thousands of lives were sacrificed from '61 to '65 – shall this form of government to use the phraseology of Lincoln 'perish from the face of the earth'? The answer to this question will be given by fifteen million voters when they cast their ballots at the November election for or against imperialism which is the issue of issues.⁶²

The danger of McKinley's re-election according to the *Irish World* was not only that 'imperialism' would ride 'roughshod over the principles and traditions which the American people have hitherto regarded as sacred' but also related to where the trappings of empire such as a big standing army and foreign alliances would lead the United States. Thus the paper urged 'every *Irish World* man to do his duty' and to 'get one convert at least' to Bryan's cause.⁶³

This campaign was, however, in vain. McKinley won the election and the *Irish World* castigated his victory as a triumph for 'England's candidates' and the 'Anglo-American alliance' and carried, under a cartoon depicting the merging of England and the United States, a report asserting that Lord Salisbury hailed McKinley's election as a victory for the British empire.⁶⁴ The paper subsequently continued to assert that, far from upholding the constitution with which he was entrusted, McKinley was seeking to subjugate the United States to the whim of England. A drawing on the front page of the *Irish World* in December showed the Union Jack unfurled from the Capitol building in honour of the centennial anniversary of the founding of the seat of government in Washington, and two inserts reminded the readers of Valley Forge and the 'burning by the British of the National Capitol'.⁶⁵

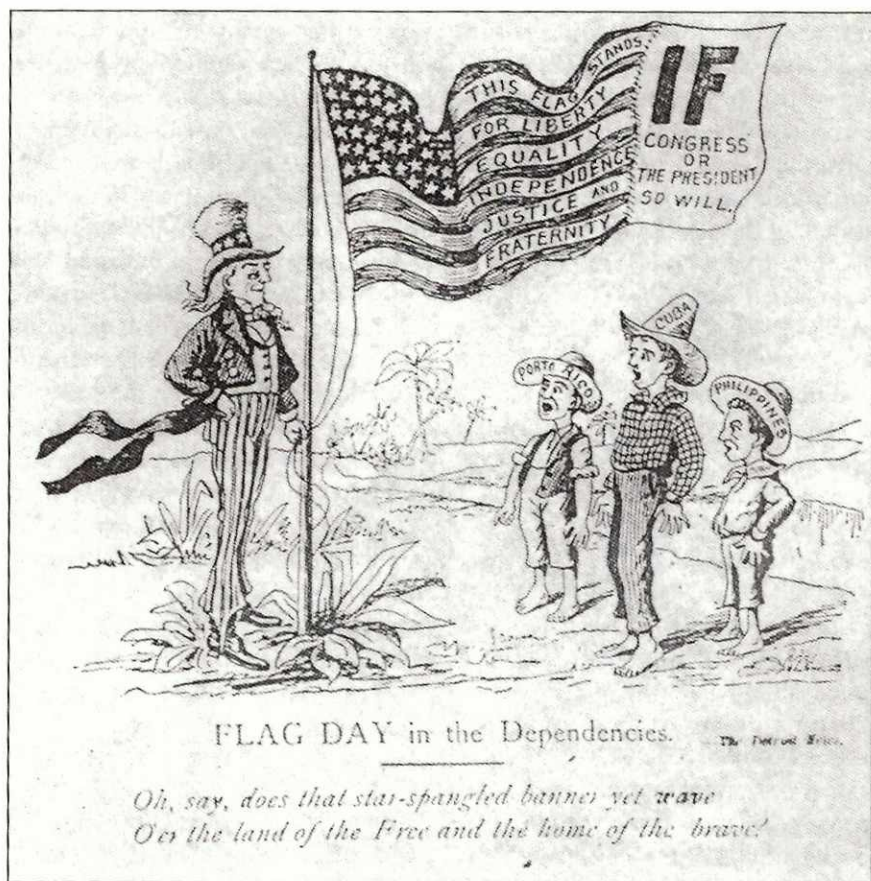
The *Irish World* hoped that, with the accession to the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt following McKinley's assassination in 1901, government policy would change. While recognizing that Roosevelt was committed to overseas expansion, the paper noted that his speeches and writing always showed him to be 'animated by a spirit of distinct Americanism'. It claimed that 'there will be no yielding on the part of Theodore Roosevelt if there should be an attempt to sacrifice the national interest to gratify Anglomania'.⁶⁶ These hopes were perhaps inevitably disappointed. Roosevelt proved willing to continue McKinley's policies in the Philippines. To the *Irish World*, America seemed to be taking on all the worst characteristics of the British empire. While the

61 *IW*, 25 Aug. 1900. 62 *IW*, 6 Oct. 1900. 63 *IW*, 3 Nov. 1900. 64 *IW*, 10 Nov. 1900. 65 *IW*, 22 Dec. 1900. 66 *IW*, 21 Sept. 1901.



SALISBURY TO MCKINLEY: "Let Us Shake!"

10 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 17 November 1900. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland



11 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 6 July 1901. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

English were 'shooting down liberty in South Africa' the United States was doing the same in the Philippines – 'both governments were operating along parallel lines'.⁶⁷ Worst of all, the Americans were imitating the barbarity of the Spanish in Cuba and the British under Kitchener in South Africa, setting up concentration camps in the Philippines, torturing Filipinos and shooting women and children.⁶⁸ In an effort to illustrate the hypocrisy of the administration's imperialist policies in July 1901 the *Irish World* reprinted a cartoon from the *Detroit News* depicting Flag Day in the American dependencies. The cartoon depicted Uncle Sam hoisting the Stars and Stripes, stating that it stood for liberty, equality, independence, justice and fraternity 'if Congress or the President so will'. Meanwhile the ragged natives of Puerto Rico, Cuba

⁶⁷ *IW*, 13 Jan. 1900. ⁶⁸ *IW*, 21 Dec. 1901; 3 May 1902.



12 Cartoon from the *Irish World*, 5 July 1902. Reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

and the Philippines stood by.⁶⁹ Most damning of all was a drawing printed on the front page of the paper following the passing of the Philippine bill in 1902, depicting the establishment of the American republic, symbolized by an eagle, with the aid of France in 1782. A smaller image portrayed the same bird attacking the Philippines. The drawing was captioned 'the bird of freedom vs. the vulture – France establishing the American republic in 1782; America crushing the Filipino republic in 1902'.⁷⁰

The *Irish World* meanwhile reported denunciations of England by France, Russia and Germany, claiming that hostility to Great Britain was 'almost uni-

⁶⁹ *IW*, 6 July 1901. Interestingly the next issue of the *Irish World* was suppressed and its sale prohibited in Massachusetts and Connecticut on foot of a complaint about the desecration of the flag. See *IW*, 13 July 1901. ⁷⁰ *IW*, 5 July 1902.

versal⁷¹, and noted that money was being raised in Holland to send a corps to aid the Boers.⁷² The paper also reported that the Holland society of New York, in a letter to the editor, had specifically requested the support of 'the people of Irish and German origin' for the Boers, and hoped that 'everybody, except Anglomaniacs and fools' would lend a helping hand.⁷³ The *Irish World* carried reports of meetings of German Americans supporting the Boer cause and opposing 'imperialism', which 'it was asserted meant militarism, and militarism had been the cause of a great number of Germans leaving the Fatherland'⁷⁴ At a packed Chicago pro-Boer meeting in December 1901, which was organized by the American Transvaal League and addressed by Bourke Cockran, nineteen German musical societies opened the proceedings with a song.⁷⁵

Indeed, the *Irish World* insisted at all times that, in spite of the administration's support for the British, American sentiment more generally was in fact pro-Boer and against the English, as evidenced 'by the large and enthusiastic pro-Boer meetings that have been held in various cities of the Union. These manifestations of American sympathy are forcing the English press to acknowledge that the pro-British attitude of the McKinley administration does not represent the views of the American people.'⁷⁶ Certainly some of the meetings reported by the *Irish World* were well attended. One New York meeting, held under the auspices of the New York Committee to Aid the United Republics of South Africa, saw twelve thousand people assembled to denounce England and the Washington administration and cheer the Boers and Ireland.⁷⁷ The Metropolitan Temple in San Francisco was 'filled and the streets blocked with thousands of Boer supporters' at a meeting to 'extend moral and material aid to the struggling little republics of South Africa' in January 1900. According to the report, flags of every nation on the globe 'barring the banner of England and the dragon of China were used to decorate the interior of the hall'.⁷⁸ As the war progressed, meetings were held around the country to protest against the concentration camps in South Africa and to contribute money, medicine and clothing for the sick and needy in the camps. The paper reported that the Women's South African League of New York organized concerts, the proceeds of which were sent to the relief funds for the women and children in the concentration camps.⁷⁹ An organization was formed in Jersey City 'to raise funds for the suffering women and children', prompted by 'the almost daily reports in the public press of the deplorable conditions existing in the concentration camps in South Africa'.⁸⁰ Governor Yates of Illinois issued a proclamation announcing the formation of a committee to hold and distribute funds.⁸¹ In Philadelphia, \$5,000 was collected at a meeting to send 'an American relief ship laden with food, clothes and medicine for the unfortunate victims of war'.

71 *IW*, 21 Oct. 1899. 72 *IW*, 11 Nov. 1899. 73 *IW*, 7 Oct. 1899. 74 *IW*, 21 July 1900.
75 *IW*, 14 Dec. 1901. 76 *IW*, 13 Jan. 1900. 77 *IW*, 3 Feb. 1900. 78 *IW*, 20 Jan. 1900. 79
IW, 22 Feb. 1902. 80 *IW*, 12 Apr. 1902. 81 *IW*, 14 Dec. 1901.

The subscription list was headed by the German societies who subscribed \$1,500 and the Ancient Order of Hibernians who subscribed \$1,000.⁸² The ship was to sail under an American flag and there was 'a general outburst of enthusiasm' when this was announced. Indeed a meeting in Cleveland of 2,500 people in March 1900 epitomized the fusion of loyalties present at the meetings:

The armory was profusely decorated with the flags of the United States, Ireland and the Transvaal, while pictures of Kruger, Joubert, Robert Emmet and others were conspicuous. Miss Julia Ryan led the audience in singing "The Stars and Stripes Forever" and "God Save Ireland".⁸³

The cause of the Boers and Ireland were viewed as one, as they were both fighting the might of the British empire. The cause of the Americans and the Boers were also believed to be as one, as they were both republics. The Irish Americans therefore, with Irish blood and American citizenship, were duty bound to aid the Boers.

Without doubt, the American Irish were galvanized by the South African War. With the reunification of the Irish Parliamentary Party under John Redmond, they were poised once again to support actively Irish political nationalism. Yet, throughout the war, the cause of Ireland, while important to the *Irish World*, had not been the primary issue. Certainly, there was an expectation that the American Irish were intrinsically anti-English because of their history and because of the manner of their emigration. But the *Irish World* drew on the experience of its American Irish readers of American republicanism at least as often as it drew on their Irish origins, and used their condition as citizens of a republic to exhort them to support the Boers. The paper also resisted the tendency of the US administration to turn to imperial ambitions of its own. The *Irish World* urged its readers to vote against McKinley because he was regarded as an imperialist. When an Irish American Union was formed in New York to fight militarism and 'imperialism' the paper was quick to support it, declaring that the Irish Americans 'would insist that this country should continue to be a republic and that the flag of America should wave over no man who was not a free man. We wanted no colonial policy and wanted no territory annexed to the United States out of which states could not be formed.'⁸⁴ Therefore, unlike much criticism of the British empire in Ireland itself, the American Irish attitude to the South African War was not designed purely with Ireland in mind, and extended to a more general critique of empire, including American overseas expansion. None of this was incompatible with the paper's continued condemnation of England. *The Irish World* regarded England as the proponent and epitome of empire. As long as America appeared to be aping the hated enemy, overseas expansion would be seen by the American Irish to be wrong.

82 *Ibid.* 83 *IW*, 3 Mar. 1900. 84 *IW*, 1 Sept. 1900.