

The Scottish Press and the Anglo-Boer War: The *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman* (1899-1902)

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Introduction

Expressions of national identity are often found in the media, and during the Anglo-Boer War, the Scottish press played a significant role in forming ideas regarding Scotland's views on imperialism, nationalism and liberalism. However, not all newspapers held the same views on Scotland's (or indeed Britain's) participation in the war, because of the different interpretations of terms such as those mentioned above. Concepts like imperialism and liberalism, along with the idea of Scottish nationalism to a lesser extent, was widely used in political circles, as well as in the press – specifically in the editorials of the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman*. However, the editors of these two newspapers held very different, but definite views on these terms. To further complicate matters, the definitions of words such as patriotism, loyalism and liberalism seem to be in a constant state of flux.¹ For the purposes of this article, the dynamic nature of Scottish nationalism, liberalism and loyalism will be analysed from 1817, the year *The Scotsman* was founded, until 1902, the year the Anglo-Boer War ended. The main focus, however, falls within the period of the Anglo-Boer War, 1899 to 1902, in order to analyse how the editorials of the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman* influenced perceptions regarding patriotism, imperialism and liberalism during a time of war when many Scots regarded the definitions of these terms in a specific manner to be very important.

Although the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320 is interpreted by some as an obvious and deliberate expression of patriotism following the Wars of Independence between Scotland and England, this specific form of patriotism did not last and continued to change as the relationship between Scotland and England changed.² The main reason for this, was that the concept of Scottish nationalism was to some extent indefinable as it had different meanings for different spheres of Scottish society.³ When James VI became James I of England in 1603, Scotland was set on a path of subservience to England, as more and more political power shifted to London. By 1707, the Union of Parliaments between Scotland and England seemed to confirm Scotland's lesser role as they were left with insignificant powers regarding their Kirk, law and education. To confuse the issue of Scottish nationalism even more, the language and culture of Scotland and England seemed to absorb each other, a process accelerated by the Industrial Revolution.⁴ Although many Scots protested against

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1 M Higgins, "The articulation of nation and politics in the Scottish press", *Journal of Language and Politics*, 3, 3, 2004, p 464

2 Higgins, "The articulation of nation and politics in the Scottish press", p 465

3 C Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism* (Routledge, London, 1994), pp 8-9

4 C Haws, "The dilemma of Scottish Nationalism in Historical Perspective", in *Scottish Studies Publications of the Scottish Studies Centre of Johannes Gutenberg Universität Mainz in Gernersheim*, p 21

assimilation with England, the protests came in a disunited fashion and had no great effect. By the time the Anglo-Boer War started in 1899, Scottish nationalism was even more fractured than during 1820, as economic issues and imperialism further complicated the matter. For many Scottish soldiers, British Imperial wars presented an opportunity to regain a part of Scotland's proud pre-1603 past and many young – mostly working-class – Scots grabbed the opportunity presented by the Anglo-Boer War to recreate Scotland's romantic past.⁵ However, in recreating the ideas of the past, these soldiers also contributed to imperialism, a thoroughly British concept in which Scottish engineers, doctors and missionaries participated long before 1899.⁶ The Scottish middle classes, aided by sentimental expressions of nationalism from authors such as Sir Walter Scott, and the Home Rule Movement of 1866, saw the Anglo-Boer War as an opportunity to emphasise Scotland's ideological independence from England, while the upper classes seemed for the most part to support the war and the idea of imperialism, as their military successes would consolidate their standing in British society, confirming Scotland's role as a worthy part of Britain and raising Scotland from its subservient role. Once Scotland confirmed through participation in the war its allegiance to imperialism, devolution was pushed back until 1999.⁷

The Boers' role as the common enemy during the war did not act as a unifying force for Scotland's fractured nationalism and pro-Boers, Unionists and Imperialists confronted each other at public meetings and through the press. An analysis of the different views held by the editors of *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman* regarding the changing perceptions of loyalism, liberalism and to a lesser extent Scottish nationalism, indicates that both editors regarded themselves to be loyal subjects of Britain, but their editorials indicate that their understanding of these terms differed widely. The editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News*, Hector Macpherson, found himself labelled pro-Boer, as he believed participation in the war would harm Britain's reputation as an imperial country. On the other hand, Charles Cooper, the editor of *The Scotsman*, regarded Britain's entry into the war as essential, as failing to do so would lower Britain's standing among other imperial countries.

The pro-Boer label

The term pro-Boer was first used in the *Daily News* in 1896,⁸ following the Jameson Raid.⁹ According to Auld, the common characteristic of pro-Boers was the “refusal to share responsibility for war rather than outright opposition to it”.¹⁰ Davey describes pro-Boers as working in the interest of Britain by opposing war and in trying to find a peaceful way to resolve the disagreements between the British and the Boers.¹¹ However, the editorials of *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News* show that the term pro-Boer was so loosely defined, that it could be adapted by anyone to

5 Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism*, p 61

6 K O Morgan, “The Boer War and the media (1899-1902)”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 12, 1, 2002, p 10

7 Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism*, pp 22-23; Higgins, “The articulation of nation and politics in the Scottish press”, p 467

8 The Jameson Raid started on 29 December 1895 and on New Year's Day 1896, Jameson surrendered T Pakenham, *The Boer War* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979), p 580

9 A Davey, *The British Pro-Boers 1877-1902* (Tafelberg, Cape Town, 1978), p 9

10 J W Auld, *Pro-Boer Liberals in Britain during the Boer War, 1899-1902* (Stanford University, Stanford, 1970), p 27

11 Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, pp 9-11

achieve their aims, as there was no political home for pro-Boers. A Unionist editor would therefore be in a position to refer to rival editors as pro-Boer in order to create the idea that they were publishing propaganda in favour of the Boers. At the same time, the so-called pro-Boer editors could justify their editorial stance while rejecting the notion that they were in favour of the Boers winning the war. The use of the term pro-Boer by the two newspapers under discussion links with the idea that politicians used the term to accuse their Liberal opponents of betraying the country and of being unpatriotic.¹² The two newspapers also reveal that Unionists and Liberals had different ideas regarding the term patriotism. For Unionists, the idea of patriotism included defending British Imperialism, while the leader of the Liberal Party, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman,¹³ regarded patriotism as synonymous with Britain's responsibility to maintain its image as a country that functioned in an ethical manner, especially as it was regarded as a powerful colonial empire that had, according to some, moral responsibilities on the international stage. Many pro-Boers believed that the war against the Boer Republics was not justifiable and that it was just an excuse to promote the interests of capitalists such as Cecil John Rhodes, who attempted to influence politicians such as Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, and Alfred, Lord Milner, Governor of the Cape Colony and High Commissioner of South Africa, in order to optimize the financial potential of his mining interests.¹⁴

The newspapers: *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News*

The Scotsman was launched by William Ritchie, a solicitor, and Charles Maclaren, a customs official, on 25 January 1817 as a Liberal publication which saw itself as “a champion of free and often, blunt speech [which] vigorously attacked government”.¹⁵ However, soon after *The Scotsman*'s launch in 1817, it was forced to include more advertisements to keep its price down and its circulation up.¹⁶ Although it continued to identify with radical elements, it also managed to maintain a safe balance between opposing political sides that allowed it to see an “alliance profitable to the Whigs and to the cause of reform”¹⁷ as its way forward. In a way, *The Scotsman*'s flexibility regarding political allegiances reflects Scotland's multi-faceted nationalism. Charles Alfred Cooper became *The Scotsman*'s editor in 1880, having previously worked as the newspaper's London correspondent.¹⁸

In 1873 three brothers, Hugh, James and John Wilson, established the *Edinburgh Evening News*. Their newspaper had a distinctly Liberal outlook and “appealed to the staunch Liberalism of the middle and working-classes”.¹⁹ Hector Macpherson became a journalist with the *Edinburgh Evening News* in 1877, and was promoted to the position of editor in 1894.²⁰

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- 12 B Porter, “The Pro-Boers in Britain”, in P Warwick and S B Spies (eds), *The South African War The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (Longman, London, 1980), p 240
 - 13 Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman became leader of the Liberal Party in 1899
 - 14 Porter, “The Pro-Boers in Britain”, pp 241-243
 - 15 A Morris, *Scotland's Paper the Scotsman 1817-1992* (The Scotsman, Edinburgh, 1992), p 9
 - 16 R M W Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland: A Study of its First Expansion 1815-1860* (George Outram & Co Ltd, Glasgow, 1946), p 36
 - 17 Cowan, *The Newspaper in Scotland*, p 50
 - 18 Morris, *Scotland's Paper*, p 31
 - 19 H Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson, the man and his work. A Memoir* (W F Henderson, Edinburgh, 1925), p 9
 - 20 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, pp 8, 13

While both of these newspapers claimed to be Liberal at the time of their establishment, fifty-six years passed between the launching of *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News*, during which time the definitions of terms such as liberalism and patriotism changed among editors, politicians and readers. During the early 1800s, when *The Scotsman* was created, patriotism and liberalism were seen as anti-government ideologies that could be used against the government and “that could lead all too easily to prison”.²¹ On the other hand, by the time the *Edinburgh Evening News* was established in 1873, patriotism had lost its associations with radicalism and liberalism, and Government had started to use the term to promote ideas of empire and unity among Britons.²² The change in perception regarding notions of liberalism, radicalism and patriotism, was reflected in *The Scotsman*’s stance throughout the years and radically contrasted with the *Edinburgh Evening News*’ viewpoints between 1899 and 1902.

Although Macpherson was not able to attend university, he read the works of philosophers like Herbert Spencer and Thomas Carlyle, which led him to combine “the moral fire of the one with the scientific orderliness and logic precision of the other”.²³ Although Macpherson was disappointed when he was advised not to follow a purely literary career,²⁴ the setback gave him the motivation to commit himself to journalism.²⁵ Macpherson’s dramatic and emotional editorials reflected his creative approach to journalism, while Cooper, on the other hand, expressed set ideas about journalism and its role in society. He believed, for instance, that it was not ethical to publish statements of politicians if he did not have their explicit permission to do so; a principle that may have inhibited his editorials. Cooper also regarded journalism as having an important role regarding public discussion and the role of newspapers in the control of public opinion. He was convinced that “if the public tastes and the general development be not watched – nay, if they be not helped, decay will set in”.²⁶

Cooper and McPherson had very different views concerning Scotland’s place in the Anglo-Boer War. Macpherson strongly disagreed with the foreign policies of Government, while Cooper supported the war, contrary to the Liberal ideal of opposing military “adventurism” as the Liberal Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone put it.²⁷ The reason for the two editors’ different viewpoints, can be traced back to the election of 1886 and the split among Liberals concerning Irish Home Rule. During the elections of 1886, the Liberal Party lost the general election due to Gladstone’s insistence on Irish Home Rule, which was viewed by some as a “hopeless obsession”.²⁸ Gladstone’s success during the 1886 election depended a lot on the

21 H Cunningham, “The Language of Patriotism 1750-1914”, *History Workshop Journal*, 12, 1981, p 16

22 Cunningham, “The Language of Patriotism 1750-1914”, pp 8-9, 16-17

23 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, p 33

24 Despite Macpherson’s disappointment at not being able to devote all his time to literature, he continued to write throughout his life. The titles of his texts reflect the ideas and the people who had an influence on him. Among his published works are: *Right Hon W.E. Gladstone his political career*; *Adam Smith*; *Books to read and how to read them*; *Century of intellectual development*; *A Century of political development*; *The Gospel of Socialism*; *Herbert Spencer*; and *Scotland’s debt to Protestantism*.

25 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, pp 10, 13

26 C A Cooper, *An Editor’s Retrospect fifty years of newspaper work* (Macmillan, London, 1896), p 177

27 M Winstanley, *Gladstone and the Liberal Party* (Routledge, London, 1990), p 6

28 Winstanley, *Gladstone and the Liberal Party*, p 61

publicity and support he gained from newspapers. At the time, the *Edinburgh Evening News* expressed its support for Gladstone by saying that Home Rule “travels on the lines approved by all our wisest politicians [and] is not his [Gladstone’s] purpose rational and patriotic.”²⁹ However, *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, who had traditionally supported Gladstone, opposed him in 1886 because their editors were not in favour of Home Rule.³⁰ In Edinburgh, *The Scotsman* took the lead in abandoning Gladstone and the Liberals by openly disagreeing with Home Rule as Cooper saw the situation as one of loyalty towards Britain and Imperialism.³¹ Cooper believed that Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill “broke up the Liberal Party and gave birth to the Unionist Party. Men who have worked against each other all their lives were thrown together and have worked hand in hand for the maintenance of the Union”.³² The decision to abandon the Liberals was not an easy one for Cooper, and he described the matter as a “painful time [and that] the course taken by the *Scotsman* in opposing Mr Gladstone was much commented upon, and not favourably”.³³ Much of the unfavourable comments on *The Scotsman*’s change of allegiance came from the *Edinburgh Evening News*. Macpherson, still a journalist during the 1886 election, “was a keen Liberal of the Gladstonian school”³⁴ who admired Gladstone and wrote a pamphlet on him which Gladstone himself described as “too indulgent”.³⁵ Macpherson had very strong views concerning Liberalism and he would not let himself be influenced by politicians. When Gladstone resigned in 1894, Macpherson supported, and often discussed contemporary issues with Gladstone’s successor, Lord Rosebery.³⁶ However, due to political differences, Macpherson referred to Rosebery as a “Liberal by profession, but a Tory and Jingo by instinct”.³⁷ Macpherson also saw no reason not to confront the views of politicians such as Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, whose status as leader of the Liberal Party offered no protection against criticism from Macpherson.³⁸

When Scottish soldiers started arriving in the Boer Republics, many could identify to some extent with the Boers, as the Boer way of life and their religious background were akin to that of the Scots. In a similar way, some Boers regarded Scots as potential allies against the English, a mutual enemy to both nations during different times in history. People like the liberal Scottish politician, G.B. Clarke,³⁹

29 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 9 April 1886, p 2

30 S Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain 1: Nineteenth Century* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1981), p 286

31 Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, p 283

32 Cooper, *An Editor’s Retrospect*, pp 399-400

33 Cooper, *An Editor’s Retrospect*, p 407

34 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, p 8

35 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, p 12

36 Lord Rosebery was Prime Minister from 1894 to 1895. From 1898, he tried to modernize the Liberal Party by introducing the concept of Liberal Imperialism among younger members *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 5 April 2005

37 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 12 October 1899, no page

38 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, pp 14-15

39 G B Clark was born in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, and became a Member of Parliament in London. He supported the Boers during the first Boer War of 1880 and 1881 and during the second Boer War he became a member of the anti-war Transvaal Committee. Clark was also a founding member of the Scottish Home Rule Association in 1886. Clark’s support for the Boers eventually ended his parliamentary career in 1900. Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, pp 24, 72; *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 2 July 2009

and S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner attempted to make the most of the potential camaraderie between the two nations.⁴⁰ Following his lecture tour of Scotland in an attempt to gain support for the Boers, Cronwright-Schreiner praised Macpherson's anti-war efforts as "magnificent work" in his book *The Land of Free Speech*.⁴¹ However, Cronwright-Schreiner's comment referred to Macpherson's editorial comments on the riots and violence that characterised his lecture tour, and not to Macpherson's ability to convince the public of the anti-war message. By analysing the editorials in *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman*, it becomes clear that Cronwright-Schreiner and many Scottish and Boer soldiers were naïve in their view that the Boers and Scots faced a mutual enemy in the English, a result that may be attributed to the many vague definitions for the term pro-Boer. It is more likely that those who referred to the Boers as "our friends the enemy"⁴² were caught up in the emotional tumult of war, or they were simply trying to cope with their situation by using sarcasm and/or humour. Others, such as Sir John Gilmour,⁴³ initially viewed the Afrikaners in the Cape in a slightly romantic way by describing them as "quite nice and most of them pretty cute, in fact I should say they are uncommon [sic] like what the Scotch Farmer must have been 100 years ago"⁴⁴ However, Gilmour's attitude changed by the time his regiment reached the Transvaal, and of the Boer women there he said "How I hate them, nasty, ugly, spiteful wretches, worse by far than the men, and no womanly ways at all"⁴⁵.

Like other so-called pro-Boers, Macpherson regarded his opposition regarding the war as being in the interest of Britain. His editorials clearly indicate that he was concerned about Britain's standing in the world and that he thought the war was immoral and wrong. He not only refused to take responsibility for the war, he continued to blame Government for allowing the country to become involved in such a situation. It would be safe to say that Macpherson, like many other pro-Boers, was not pro-Boer, but simply anti-war. With regard to the perceived exploitation of the Boer Republics' mineral resources, Macpherson believed that capitalists such as Cecil John Rhodes, a wealthy mining entrepreneur and Prime Minister of the Cape Colony at the time of the Jameson Raid,⁴⁶ was largely responsible for the events that eventually led to the war. Macpherson agreed with Leonard Courtney⁴⁷ that "the root of the whole matter [was] the Jameson Raid and the whitewashing of Mr Rhodes"⁴⁸ when it became clear that Rhodes and Jameson had planned the Raid together.⁴⁹ Macpherson's objective was to motivate the Liberal Party to take a stronger position against the Conservative Government. His concern for the welfare of the Boers was

40 Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, p 80

41 S C Cronwright-Schreiner, *The Land of Free Speech. Record of a Campaign on behalf of peace in England and Scotland in 1900* (Kessinger Publishing, London, 1906), p 117

42 T Dewar, *With the Scottish Yeomanry. Letters written from South Africa during the war of 1899-1901* (T Buncle & Co, Arbroath, 1901), p 155

43 Sir John Gilmour was a Scot from the Fife district and President of the Scottish Union of Conservative Associations *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 2 July 2009

44 P Mileham (ed), "Clearly my Duty" – *The letters of Sir John Gilmour from the Boer War 1900-1901* (Tuckwell Press, East Lothian, 1996), p 24

45 Mileham (ed), *Clearly My Duty*, p 103

46 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 5 April 2005

47 Leonard Courtney was the Chairman of the South Africa Conciliation Committee

48 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 October 1899, p 2

49 I R Smith, *The Origins of the South African War 1899-1902* (Longman, Essex, 1996), pp 78, 95

not his priority, and therefore accusations against him as pro-Boer were most probably attempts by Conservatives and Unionists to gain political influence.

In June 1899, less than six months before the war started, the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, told Queen Victoria that the public would not support a war against the Boer Republics. By presenting the Boers in a negative light and by highlighting the imperial aspect in its text, *The Scotsman* followed the general tendency of most other Conservative and Unionist newspapers by promoting the idea of war among its readers, by emphasising the “warlike intentions and general backwardness of the Boers”.⁵⁰ The Conservative and Unionist press made it clear that southern Africa was an essential part of the Empire because it represented an ideal model for imperialism.⁵¹ On 11 October 1899, the day the war started, the *Edinburgh Evening News* stated that “In time of great public excitement, especially when patriotic sentiment holds sway, reason has little or no influence upon the popular mind”,⁵² which shows that the *Edinburgh Evening News* was aware of the Conservative propaganda and the effect it had on public opinion. Macpherson also knew that patriotism was defined and used by the Conservatives and Unionists to bolster the ideology of imperialism. Expanding the British Empire, according to Government supporters, was the duty of all patriots. The *Edinburgh Evening News* obviously did not equate the patriotism with imperialism, nor did it see patriotism in the same way as *The Scotsman*, because the *Edinburgh Evening News* did not believe that patriotism and imperialism went hand in hand. A few days after war had been declared, *The Scotsman* stated that “The Boers no longer wished, if they had ever really wished, for a pacific settlement. It [the ultimatum] seemed expressly calculated to provoke the Imperial Government to a declaration of war”.⁵³ *The Scotsman*’s statement not only reflected its position of support for the war, it also implied that the Boers were eager to start a war aimed at rejecting British Imperialism.

The Scotsman and the *Edinburgh Evening News* are relevant to this article as their editorial policies and their expressions concerning liberalism, radicalism and patriotism reflect to a large extent how the understanding of these concepts changed among Scottish readers and British politicians alike from the founding of the newspapers – in 1817 and 1873 respectively – to the outbreak of the war in 1899, which in turn influenced and directed the editorials during the war between 1899 and 1902. When *The Scotsman* was founded in 1817, it positioned itself as a newspaper with “liberal ideals”⁵⁴, but by 1899 it was a newspaper that reflected the government’s view of patriotism and of defending the Empire at any cost. It was exactly this view that Macpherson saw as jingoistic and as fanning the flames of war.

50 A Thompson, “Imperial Propaganda during the South African War”, in G Cuthbertson, A Grundlingh and M L Suttie (eds), *Writing a Wider War* (Ohio University Press, Athens, 2002), p 307

51 D O Helly and H Callaway, “Journalism as active politics: Flora Shaw, *The Times* and South Africa”, in D Lowry, (ed), *The South African War reappraised* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000), p 63

52 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 October 1899, p 2

53 *The Scotsman*, 14 October 1899, p 1

54 See <http://archive.scotsman.com/scotsman.cfm>, accessed on 2 July 2009

Black Week

The Scotsman's editorial policy of supporting the war and imperialism was tested when news of Britain's terrible losses at Stormberg, Colenso and Magersfontein during the first months of the war reached Britain. Henry Asquith, who became the leader of the Liberal Imperialists in 1901⁵⁵, first referred to the defeats as "Black Week", a term which described the anguish and humiliation at the Empire's apparent inability to take control of a military situation which the Unionists and Conservatives initially referred to as a "tea-time war".⁵⁶ According to Wemyss Reid, Black Week would "open the eyes of our Jingo journalists to some of the risks which a great Empire runs when it enters upon a serious military expedition".⁵⁷ *The Scotsman*, however, warned that, without proper consideration, the telegrams may lead to "hasty criticisms [and that] a certain class of people ... proceed at once to criticise the General who has fought the battle, and to make assumptions for which there is usually no warrant".⁵⁸ It is very possible that Cooper was referring to Macpherson, who, each day, seemed to find new ways with which to attack the methods of the generals involved in Black Week.

On receiving the news of the first telegram from General Gatacre at Stormberg, *The Scotsman* realised that the bad news of the Battle of Stormberg could possibly change the way in which the public viewed the war, and it was careful not to lay the blame with Gatacre, or to seem negative about the setback. It approached the news with caution, saying that:

[T]he news is grievous, obviously a false step has been made and it is possible that treachery has been at work among the guides employed. But, with the forces we have now in South Africa, the error should soon be repaired.⁵⁹

By laying the most of the blame with a local guide, *The Scotsman* avoided direct criticism of Gatacre, who ordered an attack after a long night march to capture a railway junction near Stormberg. Gatacre found himself in a difficult position due to misunderstandings regarding orders and lack of communication. The result was that Gatacre's men were defenceless when they were confronted by a strong Boer force.⁶⁰ Gatacre explained his defeat at Stormberg in a telegram saying that he was "misled to enemy's position by guides and found impracticable ground".⁶¹

The Edinburgh Evening News, however, took a much less sympathetic view of the situation, and stated: "The Boers have given the energetic General Gatacre a

55 Henry Asquith had a legal background, but also wrote articles for, amongst others, *The Spectator*, wherein he expressed his anti-conservative views. He became Prime Minister in 1908. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 16 March 2005

56 Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp 248, 572

57 Wemyss Reid was a journalist for the *Leeds Mercury* and wrote a monthly column, "The Newspapers", on important stories that appeared in newspapers for the journal *Nineteenth Century*. Wemyss Reid quoted in P M Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire Public Discourse and the Boer War* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999), p 10

58 *The Scotsman*, 15 December 1899, p 6

59 *The Scotsman*, 11 December 1899, p 6

60 B Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902* (Arnold, London, 1999), pp 122-124

61 Official despatch from War Office, quoted in *The Scotsman*, 11 December 1899, p 7

surprise. His attempt to take the Stormberg has failed, and, according to the general's own account, nearly 600 men of his only too small force are missing".⁶² The next day, the *Edinburgh Evening News* continued in the same critical manner and included the British public's jingo spirit in its criticism of the war when it stated:

[I]t is only about two months ago since the people in this country were delirious with joy over the prospect of war with the Boers. Majuba Hill was to be avenged, and British soldiers were to spend Christmas in Pretoria under the shelter of the British flag. Well, Majuba Hill has not been avenged, and while it is true the British soldiers will spend Christmas in Pretoria, it will be as prisoners, not as conquerors.⁶³

In this instance, Macpherson's sarcasm emphasises his anti-war stance and his belief that if Britain had not entered into war, the Scottish regiments would not have found themselves in the disastrous circumstances that developed during Black Week. The bluntness of the article also shows that the *Edinburgh Evening News* was prepared to risk alienating potential readers – of whom the majority were pro-war – to bring its anti-war message across.⁶⁴ Clearly Macpherson was committed to his view to such an extent that he was not willing to compromise in order to gain a wider readership. The military setbacks seemed to suit Macpherson as he used the opportunity to justify his anti-war opinion. His supposed lack of sympathy with the Scottish regiments confirmed his status as a pro-Boer editor among many readers. The Highland newspapers, which had to report the losses to the families of those who died at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso, seemed to be more conscious of their readers' feelings, and emphasised the bravery of the Highland Brigade. The *Highland News* reported that the Highlanders "held their ground with great gallantry"⁶⁵ and the *Oban Times* referred to the "splendid behaviour of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders"⁶⁶, while the *Inverness Courier* pointed out that "The death of General Wauchope is felt as a personal loss throughout Scotland".⁶⁷ Although most British newspapers were considered pro-war and imperialist, these comments also show that the Scottish newspapers could be imperialist and pro-war, while at the same time promoting Scottish Nationalism.⁶⁸

As events unfolded during Black Week, *The Scotsman* continued to avoid direct criticism, stating that "there is a certain loss of prestige involved that is, to say the least, irritating".⁶⁹ The tone of the *Edinburgh Evening News* became more sarcastic towards anyone who agreed with the government's foreign policy. Even clergymen did not escape Macpherson's wrath as he described those who supported the war as "traitor[s] to religion [and as] contemptible creature[s] who, while professing loyalty to the Founder of Christianity deliberately stabs Him under the fifth rib"⁷⁰. Towards the end of Black Week, *The Scotsman* turned its attention to pro-Boers and stated:

62 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 December 1899, p 2

63 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 December 1899, p 2

64 Morgan, "The Boer War and the media (1899-1902)", p 10

65 *The Highland News*, 16 December 1899, p 5

66 *The Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser*, 16 December 1899, p 5

67 *The Inverness Courier*, 15 December 1899, p 4

68 Morgan, "The Boer War and the media (1899-1902)", p 5

69 *The Scotsman*, 12 December 1899, p 5

70 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 December 1899, p 2

[T]he Boer Government had resolved from the time of the Conventions⁷¹ to get rid of British supremacy ... After this exposure of their [the pro-Boers] inaccuracy⁷², who can trust any of the assertions of the pro-Boers? if our Government is to be blamed at all, it must be blamed for not having made war earlier It did not make this war: the Transvaal forced it upon us⁷³

In an attempt to emphasise the inevitability of the war, *The Scotsman* also tried to explain, in its view, the potential benefits of war and that during long periods of peace the “moral fibre of the community is slackened [and] cheating becomes elevated to the dignity of ‘financing’”⁷⁴. It seems odd that Macpherson did not take the opportunity to refer to Cooper’s use of the word “financing”, as many pro-Boers regarded capitalism as being at the heart of the cause of the war.⁷⁵ Macpherson’s response to *The Scotsman* suggests that he was simply not aware of the capitalist conspiracy theory – which is highly unlikely – or that he merely wanted to distance himself from being labelled pro-Boer. In response to Cooper’s statement, the editorial of the *Edinburgh Evening News* replied:

We have all along been under the impression that the war had something to do with South Africa War was declared as inevitable on account of the political corruption of the Boers We are now told by the “Scotsman” that it was inevitable on account of the moral corruption of the British A long spell of peace, according to the “Scotsman” has had a demoralising effect on the morale of the British people, and nothing short of war can effect a remedy⁷⁶

As Black Week came to an end, the war seemed to enter into a slump and the quiet period gave Macpherson and Cooper a chance to evaluate the events of Black Week and to review Britain’s position as an imperial power. *The Scotsman* relied on their readers’ loyalty towards the Empire and stated that “the duty of the country is to take the reverse, ... with calmness and fortitude”,⁷⁷ and that “the calm temper, the strength of will, and the ardent and resolute patriotism of all ranks and races of the Queen’s subjects [would allow them to] go forward to new triumphs of empire”.⁷⁸ Macpherson and Cooper agreed that Britain should win the war and Macpherson called for the “best military brains of the country, whether they are in the head of Sir William Lockhart, Sir Evelyn Wood, Lord Kitchener, or anyone else”⁷⁹ to take over from Buller to prevent demoralisation in the Army. However, Macpherson predicted that the British Empire would lose South Africa just as it had lost North America in the previous century.⁸⁰ He believed that history had shown that the

71 The Conventions of Pretoria 1881 in which Britain gave suzerainty to the ZAR after the Transvaal War of 1880-1881 J C Smuts (Attorney-General of the ZAR), however, claimed that Britain did not have any suzerain power over the ZAR after the London Convention of 1884, when the details of the suzerainty changed Smith, *The Origins of the South African War*, p 173

72 The “inaccuracy” refers to the opinion among most Liberals, especially the more radical among them, that the war was avoidable and that the dispute between the ZAR and Britain could have been resolved through negotiations R Price, *An Imperial War and the British Working Class. Working-Class Attitudes and Reactions to the Boer War 1899-1902* (Routledge & Paul, London, 1972), p 237

73 *The Scotsman*, 14 December 1899, p 6

74 *The Scotsman*, 13 December 1899, p 6

75 Porter, “The Pro-Boers in Britain”, p 242

76 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 15 December 1899, p 2

77 *The Scotsman*, 16 December 1899, p 8

78 *The Scotsman*, 19 December 1899, p 4

79 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 16 December 1899, p 2

80 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 16 December 1899, p 2

idea of an empire was a futile one, and that “Rip Van Winkles like Mr Chamberlain and Lord Rosebery might be left to maunder [sic] in their confused slumbers were it not for the fact that by their ignorant babble they have inflamed the public with the old idea that a nation’s prosperity depends upon its domination over all other nations”.⁸¹ A few days later, he went even further and declared that Britain should “enter into negotiations for a settlement of the dispute [because] we are really the culprits”.⁸²

The *Edinburgh Evening News* saw the disasters of Black Week as an opportunity for the anti-war opinion to be given a fair hearing. Macpherson felt that anti-war speakers would no longer be seen as “wild anti-patriots”⁸³ after Black Week. He hoped to mend the divisions in the Liberal Party through his editorials, and to convince the Liberal Imperialists and Campbell-Bannerman of the need to take a decisive stand against the war.⁸⁴ In the same article in which the *Edinburgh Evening News* had announced the defeat at Stormberg, the Liberal Party divisions were addressed, by stating that a “pitiful delusion is paralysing the Liberal Party [and that the party was allowing men] however weak about the knees, however wanting in pluck and stamina”⁸⁵ to be recruited. Clearly Macpherson did not approve of moderate views within the Liberal Party, but his radicalism did not mean he stood in favour of a Boer victory. He accepted that, while the war may not have been inevitable, it had to be brought to a conclusion in favour of Britain.⁸⁶ Therefore, the *Edinburgh Evening News*’ unguarded criticism shows that it felt it had nothing to lose by making blunt statements in an effort to influence those who supported the war. *The Scotsman*’s milder approach indicates that it felt confident in its political views and the majority support among the public that the Conservatives and Unionists enjoyed during the war.

The Scorched Earth Policy and the concentration camps

On 18 December 1899, Field-Marshal Lord Roberts became the new Commander-in-Chief when he replaced Sir Redvers Buller, or “Sir Reverse Buller”,⁸⁷ as the latter became known among some of the rank and file. On 10 January 1900, Roberts arrived in Cape Town, accompanied by the new Chief of Staff, General Lord Kitchener. The Roberts and Kitchener “imperial steam roller”⁸⁸ consisted of about 40 000 men, 100 guns and a cavalry under the command of Lieutenant-General French.⁸⁹ Events quickly turned in favour of the British Army as they relieved Kimberley, captured 4 069 Boers under General P.A. Cronjé,⁹⁰ annexed the

81 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 18 December 1899, p 2

82 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 29 December 1899, p 2

83 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 December 1899, p 2

84 S. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, p 384

85 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 11 December 1899, p 2

86 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 15 December 1899, p 2

87 N. Riall (ed), *Boer War. The letters, diaries and photographs of Malcolm Riall from the war in South Africa 1899-1902* (Brassey’s, London, 2000), p 51

88 Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p 311

89 Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp 244-245, 312

90 Cronjé was the general who faced Methuen at the Battle of Magersfontein on 11 December 1899 during Black Week. D. Hall, F. Pretorius and G. Torlage (eds), *The Hall Handbook of the Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902* (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 1999), p 130

Orange Free State and finally took Pretoria in June 1900.⁹¹ During this time, Kitchener issued two proclamations that stipulated that Boers who surrendered and took an oath of neutrality, would be allowed to return to their homes.⁹² Despite the low morale among the Boers and Roberts' belief that the war had come to an end, many Boers decided to support their leaders and continue with the war by embarking on a guerrilla strategy that would both prolong the war and cause the British to introduce extreme measures in an effort to end it.⁹³ Roberts ordered the destruction of farms belonging to Boers who had broken or refused to take the oath of neutrality. However, many farms were burned regardless of the status of the owners.⁹⁴ Roberts' aim was to prevent civilians, in other words women and children on the farms, from giving shelter and food to the Boer guerrilla fighters, and he was praised by the British Government for his new policy that would, it was believed, finally put an end to the lingering war. Roberts' efforts, however, merely strengthen the Boer resolve to continue with the war, despite criticism against the policy from British officers in South Africa, as well as from the press, notably from the *Edinburgh Evening News*.⁹⁵

The controversial issue of the Scorched Earth Policy and the concentration camps that resulted from the strategy, once again tested editorial policies of Unionist and Liberal newspapers. The policy compelled Conservative and Unionist newspapers to defend Government decisions and saw the policy, like Government did, as a means to an end. Emily Hobhouse, a prominent member of the anti-war South African Women and Children's Distress Fund,⁹⁶ wrote a report on the poor conditions and the high death rates among Boer women and children in the camps. This report had the potential to turn public support of the war against Government, as the contradictions of British Imperialism would become clear, which was probably the reason why the Unionist press devoted much less column space to the report than Liberal newspapers did.⁹⁷ The Liberal press was extremely critical of the Scorched Earth Policy and the concentration camps, while the Conservative and Unionist newspapers continued to support Government by taking the view that "whatever the British did for the women and children in the camps was more than they deserved".⁹⁸

News of high death rates in the camps started to reach Britain during the early months of 1901. In anticipation of criticism from the press and the public, St John Fremantle Brodrick, who became Secretary for War after the 1900 election⁹⁹, wrote to Kitchener asking him to provide information that could be used to justify the

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- 91 Roberts decided not to go to Natal to assist Buller, who was to face 25 000 Boers in the Ladysmith area. Roberts instead decided to advance towards Bloemfontein, the capital of the Free State, and to relieve Kimberley on the way. Roberts was also under pressure from Rhodes, who was trapped in Kimberley. The Boer victory over Buller at Spion Kop also influenced Roberts' decision and he ordered Buller to remain on the offensive until reinforcements arrived. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp 317-318, 432
- 92 S B Spies, *Methods of Barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and Civilians in the Boer Republics January 1900-May 1902* (Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 1977), p 18
- 93 Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp 435, 581
- 94 Spies, *Methods of Barbarism?*, p 18
- 95 Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902*, p 192
- 96 The South African Women and Children's Distress Fund was part of the South African Conciliation Committee. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 16 March 2005
- 97 Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, pp 35-40
- 98 Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, p 33
- 99 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 26 March 2005

concentration camp policy.¹⁰⁰ However, Kitchener considered civilian and administrative matters as of secondary nature and he wanted to implement effective measures that would end the war at any cost. As the effects of the intensified Scorched Earth Policy under Kitchener began to take hold, the size of the camps grew as more civilians were being forced off their farms. Although the British Government took the view that they were providing a service to the destitute Boer Republic civilians,¹⁰¹ the fact remains that the camp system and the consequent exposure of the system's shortcomings in the British press fuelled the anti-war campaign and created a new awareness of the "methods of barbarism"¹⁰² as expressed by Campbell-Bannerman.

In Britain, Chamberlain felt obliged to defend the policy in Parliament, while Milner felt that they would do more damage to their standing among the public if they were to change the policy. In an effort to minimise the damage done by pro-Boer criticism on the camps, the War Office appointed the Fawcett Commission to investigate the conditions in the camps. Outside of Parliament, the news on the conditions in the camps led to a renewed battle between the Liberal and the Unionist newspapers and the editors of the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman* both contributed in ways that emphasised their awareness of the "same sentimentalism and belief in British traditions and values working against government policy when it came to a very different kind of war news."¹⁰³

The matter of the camps was discussed in Parliament on 17 June 1901, when David Lloyd George, a Liberal politician, who disapproved of the war from the start,¹⁰⁴ warned Members of Parliament that it would not be possible to make loyal British subjects of the Boers because "brave men will forget injuries to themselves much more readily than they will insults, indignities, and wrongs to their women and children".¹⁰⁵ Brodrick, on the other hand, not only defended the camps as a necessity to protect the Boer women and children, but blamed the bad infrastructure, the medical ignorance among Boer women concerning hygiene and modern medicine, and the Boer guerrilla fighters for the bad conditions in the camps and the high death rates. Just like Hobhouse, who referred to the debate as a "cold cruelty",¹⁰⁶ McPherson also vented his anger about the parliamentary debate when he asked: "does anybody for one moment suppose that the Boers do not know the state of things in these camps? Does it require a discussion in the British Parliament to tell them their children are dying like flies from overcrowding, heat, and insufficient or unsuitable food?"¹⁰⁷ Macpherson went on to criticise *The Scotsman* who made its support for the concentration camps clear when Cooper stated that, during the debate, the Liberals "distorted facts furnished to them on official authority, and they padded out their dirty case with statements, probably half lies, which they must have received from Boer or pro-Boer sources".¹⁰⁸ Cooper was especially critical of Campbell-Bannerman and added his name to a "black list"¹⁰⁹ of Liberals who believed that

100 Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p 494

101 Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902*, p 220

102 Nasson, *The South African War 1899-1902*, p 222

103 Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, p 33

104 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 28 March 2005

105 Hansard, 4, 95, 11-26 June 1901, column 581

106 Hansard, 4, 95, 11-26 June 1901, column 581

107 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 June 1901, p 2

108 *The Scotsman*, 18 June 1901, p 4

109 *The Scotsman*, 19 June 1901, p 8

Government was guilty of neglect. Furthermore, *The Scotsman* followed the general line of argument that most Conservatives followed when they defended the concentration camp policy, namely that the Boers brought the situation upon themselves and that the women and children in the camps received better treatment than did the British soldiers who were in South Africa fighting for the good of the Empire. *The Scotsman* stated that “the stoppage of it is in the hands of the Boers. Let them make peace and it will all be over. If they will not make peace, then let there be an end of the whining and whimpering over sufferings of which they are the real authors”.¹¹⁰

Before the parliamentary debates, Emily Hobhouse tried to convince Brodrick of the seriousness of the situation in the camps, but when he defended the camps in the House of Commons soon after their meeting, she met with Campbell-Bannerman to discuss the matter. Campbell-Bannerman took the view of the radical pro-Boer side of the Liberal Party.¹¹¹ At a dinner party, Campbell-Bannerman made his feelings known when he referred to the concentration camp policy as “methods of barbarism”.¹¹² *The Scotsman*, on the other hand, accused Campbell-Bannerman of lying about the camps and said that he had “no authority for the statement [on methods of barbarism], and it is certainly false”.¹¹³ The *Edinburgh Evening News*, happy that Campbell-Bannerman was at last “doing his duty”,¹¹⁴ believed that the Scorched Earth Policy and the concentration camps would only lead the Boers to

take the first opportunity of throwing off the British shackles [and that] permanent peace after war is usually secured by impressing an enemy with a proper respect for his adversary's strength; but in this war that respect has not been established, for in conquering the British have always appealed to numbers, ... not depended on military prowess, but on the torch and military eviction agents The Boer surrenders just now are quite as hollow as our military successes¹¹⁵

The opposing views regarding the Scorched Earth Policy and the concentration camps of *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News* show that although the *Edinburgh Evening News* displayed greater concern for the Boers, neither of the two editors realised or understood how the Boers viewed the matter. The Boers believed that their suffering on the battlefield and in the camps was God's will and that God would decide when the war would be ended. The Boers' devoutness made them more determined to see the war through to the bitter end.¹¹⁶ Later, *The Scotsman* blamed Liberals, pro-Boer reports, meetings and speeches such as Campbell-Bannerman's for motivating the Boers to carry on with their struggle:

110 *The Scotsman*, 20 June 1901, p 4

111 Hobhouse's report was circulated among the rest of the MP's in June 1901 Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp 503-504

112 Campbell-Bannerman quoted in Pakenham, *The Boer War*, p 508

113 *The Scotsman*, 17 June 1901, p 6

114 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 June 1901, p 2

115 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 June 1901, p 2

116 Although there were periodical disagreements among the Boer leaders about the possibilities of discussing ways to end the war, the Boers decided on two separate occasions (in April 1901 and June 1901) to continue with the war effort, despite knowing that their decision would involve further suffering for women and children in the camps F Pretorius, “Afrikaner Nationalism and the Burger on Commando”, in G Cuthbertson, A Grundlingh and M Suttie (eds), *Writing a Wider War* (Ohio University Press, Athens, 2002), pp 73, 80-81

Let no one suppose that these [pro-Boer] meetings and the comments upon them by the pro-Boer Press are not brought under the notice of Mr Kruger and his friends ... Not only are these reports brought before the Boers, but their importance is magnified. Thus the Boers are induced to keep the field, and those patriotic Britons who met under the chairmanship of Mr Labouchère¹¹⁷ have the gratification of knowing that they are adding every day to the expenditure of their country's money, to the sacrifice of many of the lives of their countrymen, and to a state of misery which must follow on the continuance of the war in South Africa¹¹⁸

Macpherson believed that “those of us who looked more deeply into the state of matters distrusted the Government's fictitious establishment of peace,¹¹⁹ denounced annexation, and prophesied a long spell of guerilla [sic] warfare”.¹²⁰ At this stage *The Scotsman* based its articles on a report by Reverend Andrew Brown, a British subject in Johannesburg. Brown's report blamed the high death rate on a measles epidemic, which was partly true, but his statement that those in the camps had better food and clothes than they would have if they had been at home, for most Boer families who found themselves in the camps, was simply not true, as the food provided in camps was mostly of a very bad quality or grossly inadequate, as Kitchener did not consider all the implications when he decided to extend the camp system.¹²¹ The *Edinburgh Evening News* noticed that the Hobhouse report was being omitted from *The Scotsman's* pages and said that Cooper “imagine[d] it good policy to keep from the knowledge of these things that is prolonging and embittering the war [because] no discussion now can make the hell in South Africa any worse”.¹²² On 20 June 1901, *The Scotsman* admitted that Campbell-Bannerman's barbarism speech was based on Hobhouse's report, but went on to discredit her report because it was commissioned by a pro-Boer organisation. Cooper went on to remind his readers that “you cannot make war with rose water”.¹²³

When the war finally came to an end, Macpherson's editorials became increasingly resentful. Macpherson believed that the peace terms provided proof that his assertions about the war had been correct since the start. He continued to lay the blame with important role players, especially Lord Milner, of whom he said that “he could not bring the war to a close without the aid of Afrikaners [sic]... Wiping out the Dutch, as a patriotic British policy, is confessed a failure by the very man who was its most ardent exponent”.¹²⁴ Macpherson also pointed out how the Conservative and Unionist press changed the way they portrayed Boers. During the war, Boers were described as “inhumane wretch[es]”¹²⁵, but when peace was concluded, the image of Boers were promoted to “a foeman worthy of our steel, a brave man who is

117 Henry Labouchère was a Member of Parliament and a journalist. He was considered to be a left-wing radical who was active in organising pro-Boer meetings for speakers such as the South African statesman, JX Merriman and J.W. Sauer, a Cape politician, during 1901 Davey, *The British Pro-Boers*, p 106

118 *The Scotsman*, 21 June 1901, p 4

119 Lord Roberts proclaimed the annexation of the Transvaal on 25 October 1900 and shortly afterwards returned to Britain, believing that the war was as good as over. Lord Kitchener succeeded Roberts as Commander-in-Chief on 29 November 1900. Pakenham, *The Boer War*, pp 458, 581

120 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 June 1901, p 2

121 F. Pretorius (ed), *Scorched Earth* (Human & Rousseau, Cape Town, 2001), pp 46-47

122 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 June 1901, p 2

123 *The Scotsman*, 20 June 1901, p 4

124 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 June 1902, p 2

125 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 June 1902, p 2

conquered but not disgraced, a man who is worthy of taking his place beside the Briton".¹²⁶ As if to confirm Macpherson's conclusions, *The Scotsman* declared that "the most stubborn and most valiant of the Boers have been brought to bend unanimously to our will".¹²⁷ Cooper also emphasised "the tact, the knowledge, and the patience of Lord Milner and Lord Kitchener"¹²⁸ before he had any knowledge of what the peace terms amounted to, showing his uncritical patriotism towards Government. When *The Scotsman* was informed of the details of the peace agreement, it stated that "it is peace generous to a brave, though conquered, enemy".¹²⁹

The *Edinburgh Evening News*, although very critical towards Government, never stated that it wanted the Boers to win the war. During the early stages of the war, the *Edinburgh Evening News* said that "We can only win decisively if we resolutely and always fight to a finish".¹³⁰ The newspaper also stated that "self-sacrifice to a superb degree has been shown by all classes in the country. Drive back the Boers we must before any word of peace is spoken".¹³¹ On 5 March 1900, the *Edinburgh Evening News* declared that "it would be a ghastly commentary on mob wisdom and press patriotism if we lost South Africa as we lost North America".¹³² Furthermore, despite the *Edinburgh Evening News*' criticism of army generals, it did not condemn the rank and file for carrying out their orders.¹³³ Attempting to give a balanced view of how the soldiers reconciled themselves with burning farms, Macpherson mentioned the "proportion of brutes to be found in all ranks and in all uniforms"¹³⁴, but added:

[W]e believe there has never gone out from this country an army the bulk of which was so intelligent or so well-behaved ... We should not be doing justice to the men if we did not give them credit for many little acts of charity – infringements of orders, and punishable as such – which have even in small measure mitigated the horrors of the prison camps; [and that] Justice to the men implies no condonation [sic] of ill-considered measures which have ended inevitably in enormous cruelty and suffering. It is like the Government to shelter their own stupidity behind the humanity of the British soldier, just as with the bravery and the blood of the soldier they sought to expiate their initial strategic blunders in the war.¹³⁵

Conclusion

It would seem as if Macpherson expressed greater concern for the Boers' wellbeing in the editorials of the *Edinburgh Evening News*, compared to the *The Scotsman*, who, like many other Conservative and Unionist newspapers, preferred to focus on the political developments in Britain. However, issues such as the ideas of patriotism and loyalty to the Crown remained at the centre of the debates between *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News*. The main argument between these two editors was not

126 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 3 June 1902, p 2

127 *The Scotsman*, 2 June 1902, p 5

128 *The Scotsman*, 2 June 1902, p 5

129 *The Scotsman*, 3 June 1902, p 4

130 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 December 1899, p 2

131 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 8 January 1900, p 2

132 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 5 March 1900, p 2

133 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 13 June 1901, p 2

134 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 June 1899, p 2

135 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 22 June 1899, p 2

centred on the merits of loyalty, patriotism, imperialism or nationalism, but on the different interpretations of these terms. Both editors viewed loyalty and patriotism as admirable traits and both tried to convince their readers that their editorial policies were based on these principals. The issue was so important to both editors that Cooper even managed to temporarily distract Macpherson from the horrors of the war and the concentration camps and pull him into a debate on the decline of the Liberal Party by referring to patriotism in one of his editorials.¹³⁶ Cooper started off by referring to Campbell-Bannerman as “flagrantly anti-patriotic [and] if Sir Henry did not act with the intention of driving the Liberal Imperialists to secession, he is the blindest political leader that ever lived”.¹³⁷ A day later, *The Scotsman* seemed to be vindicated when it announced that, according to their London correspondent, the “Liberal Imperialists have addressed a formal protest to Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, dissenting from the views of the war expressed by him in his [methods of barbarism] speech”¹³⁸. The *Edinburgh Evening News* responded by referring to *The Scotsman*’s criticism as “weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth [and noted that] especial fury is directed against those [Liberals] who at the General Election accepted annexation as a fact accomplished [and that] according to the ‘Scotsman’, it is inconsistent for a Liberal to have accepted annexation, yet to want to discuss the prison camps”.¹³⁹ The *Edinburgh Evening News* defended the Liberals by saying that their acceptance of annexation of the Boer Republics was due to the fact that they were “solemnly assured by the Government, on the authority of Lord Roberts, that the war was ended, that annexation was justified”.¹⁴⁰

The vagueness surrounding the term pro-Boer further tended to lead to situations where politicians and newspaper editors used it for political gain or to increase readership. This point was illustrated by *The Scotsman* when it asked “would it be unjust to say that the pro-Boers are pro-Boer because they are anti-Chamberlain? Would it be going too far to say that they see the whole South African business as a dispensation of Providence to deliver Mr. Chamberlain into their hands and to accomplish his political destruction?”¹⁴¹ To most Unionist newspapers, pro-Boer editors were anti-British and therefore portrayed as unpatriotic, disloyal or even as traitors to their country. However, many pro-Boers simply expressed anti-war or anti-imperial ideas and viewed themselves as patriotic because of their statements. Macpherson’s reputation as a pro-Boer was based on this misinterpretation of terms. Macpherson considered himself a patriot, but his definition of patriotism differed from that of the Conservatives and Unionists. Macpherson’s dislike of the term pro-Boer also indicates that he did not identify with the term and did not regard it to apply to him or his newspaper. When Eugene Wason, the Liberal MP for Clackmannan and Kinross accused the *Edinburgh Evening News* of being pro-Boer, Macpherson replied that “we do not know what Mr Wason means by the term ‘pro-Boer’”.¹⁴² Macpherson explained that because Wason considered the war to be unjust, and because

136 Krebs, *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire*, p 37

137 *The Scotsman*, 18 June 1901, p 4

138 *The Scotsman*, 19 June 1901, p 8

139 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 June 1901, p 2

140 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 19 June 1901, p 2

141 *The Scotsman*, 14 December 1899, p 6

142 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 15 December 1899, p 2

Thomas Shaw¹⁴³, an anti-war speaker, had been supporting Wason, he had no right “to sneer at a newspaper as pro-Boer while he accepts the aid of a pro-Boer speaker”.¹⁴⁴ This statement not only showed Macpherson’s indignation at being labelled pro-Boer, it also emphasises the divisions among Liberals.

With regard to imperialism, Macpherson wanted South Africa to remain a part of the British Empire, but at the same time he did not agree with Government that a war was the way to secure loyalty. Furthermore, Macpherson’s allegiance to Britain was illustrated by his refusal to condemn the soldiers who participated in the war by reserving his criticisms for the politicians, capitalists and army generals. By supporting the rank and file in his editorials, he aligned himself with the working class, possibly hoping to counteract the Jingoist propaganda and imperialist ideology that they were subjected to.¹⁴⁵ Looking at Macpherson with this evidence in mind, it becomes obvious that he was not pro-Boer in the sense that he supported the Boers. Macpherson was opposed to the war because he believed, like many other opponents of the war, that it was unjust and that it would be to the detriment of Britain’s reputation as a world power. According to Macpherson, British capitalist ventures in South Africa and the methods Britain used in the war was immoral and unfair.¹⁴⁶ Like Gladstone, Macpherson believed in “mutually beneficial links”¹⁴⁷ between Britain and its colonies and saw war as “a step back to savagery, to a loosening of the moral ties that bind society into an organic whole”.¹⁴⁸ Macpherson’s view that “the colonies are to all intents and purposes Republics, and their sturdy democracy will resent being placed in the position of subjects”¹⁴⁹ resulted in the accusations of pro-Boerism against the *Edinburgh Evening News*. However, Macpherson’s complex point of view was illustrated when he warned, in the same editorial, that Britain’s reputation was at risk. In his unique style, he warned his readers: “do not let us make world-wide asses of ourselves by assuming the trinkets and gew-gaws [sic] of Empire just at the moment when the reality of Empire threatens to pass away from us”.¹⁵⁰

Although *The Scotsman* and the *Edinburgh Evening News* presented two very different points of view on the war, their readers could not necessarily be classified as either Liberal or Unionist on the basis of their choice of newspaper. Koss pointed out that many readers of the *Manchester Guardian*, for example, bought the newspaper for the transatlantic commercial reports and that it is not possible to determine how much of the *Manchester Guardian*’s pro-Boer sentiments were “absorbed by osmosis”.¹⁵¹ The same may be true with regard to *The Scotsman*, which devoted the first four or five pages of each issue to a “Money and Commerce” section, while the *Edinburgh Evening News* considered politics more newsworthy and published its

143 Thomas Shaw was the Liberal MP for Hawick from 1892 to 1909. Shaw was opposed to the Boer War and in favour of Home Rule. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, accessed at www.oxforddnb.com on 10 June 2005

144 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 15 December 1899, p 2

145 P. Kaarsholm, “Pro-Boers”, in R. Samuel (ed) *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity I: History and Politics* (Routledge, London, 1989), p 119

146 Kaarsholm, “Pro-Boers”, pp 110-111

147 Winstanley, *Gladstone and the Liberal Party*, p 6

148 Macpherson, *Hector Macpherson*, p 19

149 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 29 June 1901, p 2

150 *Edinburgh Evening News*, 29 June 1901, p 2

151 Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press*, p 416

editorials on page two of each edition.¹⁵² The analysis into the way in which the two newspapers reported on the war, was therefore based on the political convictions of the two editors, Hector Macpherson and Charles Cooper, and not of their readers.

Conservative and Unionist newspapers took on the task of building confidence in the military strength and in the wisdom of going to war. Many Unionist newspapers excluded information from their articles that could have had a negative effect on public opinion concerning the war. The Liberal newspapers, on the other hand, were faced with the ingrained ideology of imperialism and jingoism that developed through a long tradition of militarism during the expansion of the empire. Furthermore, British society, for the most part, had become militarised through successful colonial campaigns. The role of the British Army was not only closely linked with the hierarchical structure of British society, but also with imperialism. If the Liberal press wanted to convince their readers that the war in South Africa was unnecessary, they also had to convince them that imperialism – or at least the military aspect thereof – would have to be abandoned,¹⁵³ and this is something which Macpherson was not willing to do, as he did not want Britain to lose its empire as a result of wars such as the one in South Africa.

Throughout these debates between Cooper and Macpherson, Scottish nationalism became even more fractured and difficult to define, as devolution in Scotland was at odds with what was happening – Scotland could not regain its pre-1603 status without supporting relying on imperialism to provide the means to do so. By supporting imperialism, the Scots automatically supported the union between Scotland and England.

Abstract

While the Anglo-Boer War was raging in South Africa, another war was being fought between two newspaper editors in Scotland. The so-called pro-Boer editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News* and the Unionist editor of *The Scotsman* faced each other across a battleground littered with sarcasm, misunderstandings, misinterpretations of terms and a stubbornness which prevented the two editors from providing an accurate picture of the war and further confusing the already muddled understandings of terms such as patriotism, imperialism and liberalism. Although both editors confronted important issues such as Black Week and the Scorched Earth Policy, it is clear that these topics were used merely as a cover for matters such as loyalty and patriotism towards the British Empire. When *The Scotsman* accused the *Edinburgh Evening News* of being pro-Boer, the editor of the *Edinburgh Evening News* firmly rejected the allegation as unwarranted; however, the *News*' continued anti-war stance seemed only to confirm its pro-Boer status among readers and unionist newspapers such as *The Scotsman*. By comparing the two different editorial approaches, the article attempts to indicate the extent to which a major event such as the Anglo-Boer War emphasized ideas of Scottish national identity, and the role the Scottish press played in this ongoing debate.

152 The *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman* both used the front cover page as advertising space

153 K T Surridge, *Managing the South African War, 1899-1902 – Politicians versus Generals* (Boydell, Suffolk, 1998), pp 57-63

Opsomming

Die Skotse perswese en die Anglo-Boereoorlog: Die *Edinburgh Evening News* en *The Scotsman* (1899-1902)

Terwyl die Anglo-Boereoorlog in Suid-Afrika gewoed het, het 'n ander oorlog tussen twee koerantredakteurs in Skotland afgespeel. Die sogenaamde pro-Boer redakteur van die *Edinburgh Evening News* en die redakteur van *The Scotsman*, wat 'n Unionistiese benadering ondersteun het, het mekaar die stryd aangesê op 'n slagveld bestrooi met sarkasme, misverstande en misleidende interpretasies van terme. Die hardkoppigheid van beide redakteurs het verder verhoed dat hulle 'n akkurate beeld van die oorlog kon gee, wat weer daartoe bygedra het dat nog misverstande oor terme soos patriotisme, imperialisme en liberalisme ontstaan het. Hoewel beide redakteurs belangrike gebeure soos Swart Week en die Verskroeiende Aarde Beleid aangeroen het, is dit duidelik dat die insidente bloot gebruik is om sake soos lojaliteit en patriotisme jeens die Britse Ryk aan te spreek. Die *Edinburgh Evening News* het *The Scotsman* se bewering dat eersgenoemde pro-Boer is, op ondubbelsinnige wyse as ongegrond verwerp, maar wel volgehou met uitsprake wat dit duidelik gemaak het dat die *Edinburgh Evening News* anti-oorlogsgesind was. Koerante soos *The Scotsman* het dus die redaksionele standpunt van die *Edinburgh Evening News* as bevestiging van sy pro-Boer status beskou. Deur die benadering van die twee redakteurs aan die hand van hulle hoofartikels te vergelyk, poog hierdie artikel om vas te stel tot watter mate die oorlog in Suid-Afrika idees oor Skotse nasionale identiteit beïnvloed het, asook watter rol die Skotse perswese in dié voortslepende debat gespeel het.

Key words

Anglo-Boer War; Charles Alfred Cooper; Conservatism; *Edinburgh Evening News*; Hector Macpherson; imperialism; Liberalism; patriotism; pro-Boer; Scotland; Scottish press; *The Scotsman*; Unionist.

Sleutelwoorde

Anglo-Boereoorlog; Charles Alfred Cooper; *Edinburgh Evening News*; Hector Macpherson; imperialisme; Konserwatisme; Liberalisme; patriotisme; pro-Boer; Skotland; Skotse perswese; *The Scotsman*; Unioniste.