

Walter Cronkite

Promotes Democratic Federal World Government

*Speech Given Upon Receiving the Norman Cousins
Global Governance Award*



Walter Cronkite, one of our country's most esteemed journalists, was the Managing Editor and Lead Anchor for CBS Evening News for over two decades. He has been called "America's most trusted figure."

I am greatly honored to receive this award for two reasons: first, I believe as Norman Cousins did that the first priority of humankind in this era is to establish an effective system of world law that will assure peace with justice among the peoples of the world; second, I feel sentimental about this award because half a century ago Norman offered me a job as spokesman and Washington lobbyist for the World Federalist organization, which was then in its infancy.

I chose instead to continue in the world of journalism. For many years, I did my best to report on the issues of the day in as objective a manner as possible. When I had my own strong opinions, as I often did, I tried not to communicate them to my audience. **Now, however, my circumstances are different. I am in a position to speak my mind. And that is what I propose to do.**

Those of us who are living today can influence the future of civilization. We can influence whether our planet will drift into chaos and violence, or whether through a monumental educational and political effort we will achieve a world of peace under a system of law where individual violators of that law are brought to justice.

For most of this fairly long life I have been an optimist harboring a belief that as our globe shrank, as our communication miracles brought us closer together, we would begin to appreciate the commonality of our universal desire to live in peace and that we would do something to satisfy that yearning of all peoples. Today I find it harder to cling to that hope. For how many thousands of years now have we humans been what we insist on calling "civilized"? And yet, in total contradiction, we also persist in the savage belief that we must occasionally, at least, settle our arguments by killing one another.

While we spend much of our time and a great deal of our treasure in preparing for war, we see no comparable effort to establish a lasting peace. Meanwhile, emphasizing the sloth in this regard, those advocates who work for world peace by urging a system of world government are called impractical dreamers. Those "impractical dreamers" are entitled to ask their critics, "what is so practical about war?"

It seems to many of us that if we are to avoid the eventual catastrophic world conflict **we must strengthen the United Nations as a first step toward a world government with a legislature, executive and judiciary, and police to enforce its international laws and keep the peace.** To do that, of course, we Americans will have to yield up some of our sovereignty. It would take a lot of courage, a lot of faith in the new order, but the American colonies did it once and brought forth one of the most nearly perfect unions the world has ever seen. The circumstances were vastly different, obviously. Yet just because the task appears forbiddingly hard, we should not shirk it. We cannot defer this responsibility to posterity. Democracy, civilization itself, is at stake. **We must change the basic structure of our global community from the present anarchic system of war and ever more destructive weaponry to a new system governed by a democratic U.N. federation.**

Let's focus on a few specifics of what the leadership of the World Federalist movement believe must be done now to advance the rule of world law. For starters, we can draw on the wisdom of the Framers of the U.S. Constitution of 1787. The differences among the American states then were as bitter as differences among nation-states in the world today. In their almost miraculous insight, the Founders of our country invented "federalism," a concept that is rooted in the rights of the individual. Our federal system guarantees a maximum of freedom but provides it in a framework of law and justice. Our forefathers believed that the closer the laws are to the people, the better. Cities legislate on local matters; states make decisions on matters within their borders; and the national government deals with issues that transcend the states, such as interstate commerce and foreign relations. That is federalism.

Today we must develop federal structures on a global level. We need a system of enforceable world law -- a democratic federal world government-- to deal with world problems. What Alexander Hamilton wrote about the need for law among the 13 states applies today to the approximately 200 sovereignties in our global village: "To look for a continuation of harmony between a number of independent unconnected sovereignties in the same neighborhood, would be to disregard the uniform course of human events, and to set at defiance the accumulated experience of ages." Today the notion of unlimited national sovereignty means international anarchy. We must replace the anarchic law of force with a civilized force of law.

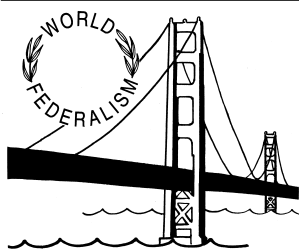
Ours will neither be a perfect world, nor a world without disagreement and occasional violence. But it will be a world where the vast majority of national leaders will consistently abide by the rule of world law, and those who won't will be dealt with effectively and with due process by the structures of that same world law. We will never have a city without crime, but we would never want to live in a city that had no system of law to deal with criminals.

Let me make three suggestions for immediate action that would move us in a direction firmly in the American tradition of law and democracy.

1. Keep our promises: We helped create the U.N. and to develop the U.N. assessment formula. Americans overwhelmingly want us to pay our U.N. dues, with no crippling limitations. We owe it to the world. In fact, we owe it as well to our national self-esteem.
2. Ratify the Treaty to Ban Land Mines, the Law of the Sea Treaty, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Most important, we should sign and ratify the Treaty for a permanent International Criminal Court. That Court will enable the world to hold individuals accountable for crimes against humanity.
3. Consider the possibility of a more representative and democratic system of decision making at the U.N. This should include both revision of the veto in the Security Council and adoption of a weighted voting system for the General Assembly. The World Federalists have endorsed Richard Hudson's Binding Triad proposal. George Soros, in "The Crisis of Global Capitalism," has given serious attention to this concept which would be based upon not only one-nation-one-vote but also on population and contributions to the U.N. budget. Resolutions adopted by majorities in each of these areas would be binding, enforceable law. Within the powers given to it in the Charter, the U.N. could then deal with matters of reliable financing, a standing U.N. peace force, development, the environment and human rights.

Some of you may ask why the Senate is not ratifying these important treaties and why the Congress is not paying our U.N. dues. As with the American rejection of the League of Nations, our failure to live up to our obligations to the U.N. is led by a few willful senators who choose to pursue their narrow, selfish political objectives at the cost of our nation's conscience. The only way we who believe in the vision of a democratic world federal government can effectively overcome this reactionary movement is to organize a strong educational counteroffensive stretching from the most publicly visible people in all fields to the humblest individuals in every community. **That is the vision and program of the World Federalists.** The strength of the World Federalist program would serve an important auxiliary purpose at this particular point in our history. There would be immediate diplomatic advantages if the world knew that this country was even beginning to explore the prospect of strengthening the U.N. We would appear before the peoples of the world as the champion of peace for all by the equitable sharing of power. This in sharp contrast to the growing concern that we intend to use our current dominant military power to enforce a sort of pax Americana.

Our country today is at a stage in our foreign policy similar to that crucial point in our nation's early history when our Constitution was produced in Philadelphia. Let us hear the peal of a new international liberty bell that calls us all to the creation of a system of enforceable world law in which the universal desire for peace can place its hope and prayers. As Carl Van Doren has written, "History is now choosing the founders of the World Federation. Any person who can be among that number and fails to do so has lost the noblest opportunity of a lifetime."



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