

Had feelings about the Norwalk Petition

The Saturday Review

OF LITERATURE

25 West 45th Street, New York 19, N. Y.



Norman Cousins, Editor

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May 20, 1947

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Your consistent championing of the United Nations both at the U.N., and in the shaping of American public opinion prompts me to write this letter. I wonder whether you have heard about the Norwalk, Conn., Petition to strengthen the U.N. As one of the originators of that petition, I am anxious to call it to your attention, though I am sure you have probably read about it in the many newspaper reports and generous editorials - most conspicuous of which have been the attention and support given it by the New York Herald Tribune.

By way of background, it should be pointed out that the originators of the petition were well aware of the limitations of that medium. They knew that the weight of names alone carried little meaning. Too many petitions have been signed without sufficient understanding of what was actually proposed.

That is why the 15,000 signatures on the Norwalk Petition (out of an eligible population of 22,000) is of less importance than the fact that they were preceded by an intensive four-month campaign of public education. By means of special meetings, lectures, movies, exhibits, and personal visits, the people of Norwalk were acquainted with the critical importance of the United Nations idea. They were told of its weaknesses and strengths, its opportunities and responsibilities. Special emphasis was given to the problem of atomic control.

THE SATURDAY REVIEW
PUBLISHED BY
NORMAN COUSINS
25 WEST 45TH STREET
NEW YORK 19, N. Y.

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In terms of organization, support in Norwalk cut across all party and denominational lines. The entire community mobilized behind the principle of world law and the machinery to make and enforce such law. Church, Civic, business, and labor groups joined forces. A "World Law Week" in Norwalk was officially proclaimed by Mayor Kelly during which the petitions would be circulated and signed. Three hundred citizens set aside the entire week for full-time work on the petition. They went from house to house, carefully explaining the petition and the reasoning in back of it.

In brief, the petition calls upon the United States government to propose and support strengthening amendments to the United Nations Charter under articles 108 or 109. Those amendments would seek to give the U.N. compulsory jurisdiction through preponderant force if necessary, with jurisdiction over the individual limited to matters specifically in the area of world security, such as control over atomic weapons and all weapons adapted to mass destruction.

On June 3, we plan to hold a dinner in Norwalk for the community leaders who gave so much time to the Norwalk Petition. It would be a wonderful thing for the city of Norwalk if we could read from you a message of greeting and, if you think well of it, commendation for the objectives of the petition.

My high regard and admiration for all your good work.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
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