

# **ATLANTICA**

**The Legislative History of the Atlantic Union  
Movement in the U.S. Congress and Beyond  
(1939 - 1980)**

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## **Introduction**

This publication documents a legislative attempt to transform the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) into an Atlantic Union based on federalist principles from 1949 to 1980. It also explores an attempt to transform the United Nations (UN) into a world federation. You cannot understand American foreign policy today without knowing the history of these movements.

## Chapter 1 – The Roosevelt Years

Before Clarence K. Streit penned *Union Now* he was a journalist by education and trade. He covered the failing League of Nations for *The New York Times* in the 1930s after studying at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Streit was no stranger to war and peace issues. He volunteered for service with the 8th Railway Engineers in France at the start of World War I, and later transferred to the U.S. Army intelligence service at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. He was uniquely positioned to see the politics behind the Treaty of Versailles. According the Streit –

I had access there to many highly secretive official documents, not only the daily record of the secret meetings of Wilson, Lloyd George, Clemenceau, etc., but daily dispatches between the President and American generals on all fronts, our diplomats, and Washington (on the home and Senate situation). I was in an unusual position to see daily what was really happening, and how little the press or public knew of this, and to see, too, from the inside how propaganda was being handled abroad and at home (*Union Now*, 1939).

Over time, Streit grew tired of reporting on the failures of the League to contain Nazi Germany. Unwilling to wait for the world to change, he decided to hang up his journalism career and become a political activist. In 1939, Streit proposed the Atlantic Union idea in *Union Now* to defend and extend the blessings of individual liberty as the sine qua non of world peace –

*The way through is Union now of the democracies that the North Atlantic and a thousand other things already unite – Union of these few peoples in a great federal republic built on and for the thing they share most, their common democratic principle of government for the sake of individual freedom.*

This Union would be designed (a) to provide effective common government in our democratic world in those fields where such common government will clearly serve man's freedom better than separate governments, (b) to maintain independent national governments in all other fields where such government will best serve man's freedom, and (c) to create by its constitution a nucleus world government capable of growing into universal world government peacefully and as rapidly as such growth will best serve man's freedom.

By (a) I mean the Union of the North Atlantic democracies in these five fields:

- a union government and citizenship
- a union defense force
- a union customs-free economy
- a union money
- a union postal and communications system.

By (b) I mean the Union government shall guarantee against all enemies, foreign and domestic, not only those rights of man that are common to all democracies, but every existing national or local right that is not clearly incompatible with effective union government in the five named fields. The Union would guarantee the right of each democracy in it to govern independently all its home affairs and practice democracy at home in its own tongue, according to its own customs and in its own way, whether by republic or kingdom, presidential, cabinet or other form of government, capitalist, socialist or other economic system.

By (c) I mean the founder democracies shall so constitute The Union as to encourage the nations outside it and the colonies inside it to seek to unite with it instead of against it. Admission to The Union and to all its tremendous advantages for the individual man and woman would from the outset be open equally to every democracy, now or to come, that guarantees its citizens The Union's minimum Bill of Rights.

The Great Republic would be organized with a view to its spreading peacefully round the earth as nations grow ripe for it. Its Constitution would aim clearly at achieving eventually by this peaceful, ripening, natural method the goal millions have dreamed of individually, but never sought to get by deliberately planning and patiently working together to achieve it. That goal would be achieved by The Union when every individual of our species would be a citizen of it, a citizen of a disarmed world enjoying world free trade, a world money and a world communications system. Then Man's vast future would begin.

After *Union Now* was published by Harper & Brothers in March of 1939, Streit set up a nonprofit organization called Federal Union, Inc., and launched the *Atlantic Union Bulletin*—which later evolved into *Freedom & Union: Magazine of the Democratic World*. He initially focused on educating the public on the principles of individual freedom and federal union. He then proceeded to convince President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to call an Atlantic constitutional convention.

Streit believed that the federal convention approach used by America's Founding Fathers was the best way to establish an Atlantic Union. He suggested that the President invite other civil liberty democracies to send representatives to the convention to draft a transatlantic constitution based on federalist principles. Participating nations would then ratify it in accordance with their respective constitutional procedures.

Streit argued that the American people needed to exercise their sovereignty rather than surrender it. He interpreted the American Declaration of Independence to mean that individuals were sovereign, regardless of where they were born. He argued that nations were no more sovereign than kings, or the free and independent States predating the Constitution of the United States. He believed that the individual was the basic unit of federalism, not states.

A sense of urgency inspired Streit to call on the President to take the lead. He hoped that an Atlantic Union could be established in time to contain Nazi Germany—but he was obviously too late. World War Two started months after *Union Now* was first published. There still was time, however, to save Western Europe if the United States entered the war sooner rather than later. Naturally, many Americans were suspicious of his motives.

On October 3, 1940, Senator Rush Holt of West Virginia exposed Streit on the floor of the Senate as a member of a Rhodesian conspiracy to save the British Empire. The Atlantic Union idea, after all, was popular among Rhodes Scholars seeking Anglo-American reunification. Senator Holt cited media reports that Streit enjoyed private conversations with President Roosevelt about an eventual alliance with Great Britain. Streit would later reveal that Roosevelt expressed interest in the Atlantic Union idea during these conversations.

Other British elites favored the Atlantic Union idea as well. Phillip Kerr (Lord Lothian), for example, endorsed *Union Now* in 1939. He was a Secretary of the Rhodes Trust and an advocate of British Imperial Federation. When Lothian endorsed Streit's book, he was the British Ambassador to the United States (June of 1939 until his death in December of 1940). The British desperately needed the United States to either enter the war, or sell, lend, or lease them military aid.

Roosevelt opted for lend-lease rather than Atlantic Union. It was far easier to convince Congress to reverse neutrality laws than betray the parting wisdom of President George Washington on entangling alliances. American companies were anxiously waiting for the opportunity to sell war

goods and services to the British – and to the Russians for that matter.

Across the Atlantic, British elites were already familiar with the concept of international federal union. From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, British Imperial Federalists called for the consolidation of the British Empire into a superstate based on federalist principles. They would later embrace the vision of Benjamin Franklin Trueblood and the World Federation League of the New York Peace Society in 1910. Thirty years later, British elites hoped that a European union of sorts could save Britain from Nazi Germany.

*Union Now* inspired the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Winston Churchill, to propose Anglo-French Union in June of 1940 at the suggestion of Jean Monnet. With the full endorsement of the French Undersecretary of War, Charles de Gaulle, Churchill proposed the following idea to the Prime Minister of France, Paul Reynaud –

At this most fateful moment in the history of the modern world the Governments of the United Kingdom and the French Republic make this declaration of indissoluble union and unyielding resolution in their common defence of justice and freedom, against subjection to a system which reduces mankind to a life of robots and slaves.

The two Governments declare that France and Great Britain shall no longer be two nations but one Franco-British Union. The constitution of the Union will provide for joint organs of defence, foreign, financial, and economic policies. Every citizen of France will enjoy immediately citizenship of Great Britain, every British subject will become a citizen of France.

Both countries will share responsibility for the repair the devastation of war, wherever it occurs in their territories, and the resources of both shall be equally, and as one, applied to that purpose.

During the war there shall be a single war Cabinet, and all the forces of Britain and France, whether on land, sea, or in the air, will be placed under its direction. It will govern from wherever it best can. The two Parliaments will be formally associated.

The nations of the British Empire are already forming new armies. France will keep her available forces in the field, on the sea, and in the air.

The Union appeals to the United States to fortify the economic resources of the Allies and to bring her powerful material aid to the common cause.

The Union will concentrate its whole energy against the power of the enemy no matter where the battle may be. And thus

we shall conquer.

General de Gaulle delivered Churchill's proposal to Reynaud who then presented it to the French cabinet. They refused to federate with a corpse. Anglo-French Union was rejected with prejudice. General de Gaulle would later become the leader of the Free French Forces during the Nazi occupation of France – after he was court-martialed for treason!

After France fell, Streit released another version of his book entitled *Union Now with Britain* in 1941. Great Britain, the mother of America, had to be saved. His book helped President Roosevelt overcome the patriotic lore of the American Revolution – and the War of 1812 – in preparation for an emerging Anglo-American rapprochement.

President Roosevelt convinced the U.S. Congress to pass the Lend-Lease Act in 1941. They reversed America's neutrality laws at the behest of Churchill and Stalin. Conservative anti-interventionists, such as Senator Robert A. Taft, opposed lend-lease. They suspected it was only a matter of time before the United States would be forced to enter the war. This is, after all, how the United States got sucked into the First World War.

The Lend-Lease Act was quickly followed by the signing of the Atlantic Charter in August of 1941. President Roosevelt sent a clear message that if the United States entered the war, an Anglo-American world order would follow Allied victory. Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to the following eight principles –

First, their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other;

Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;

Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them;

Fourth, they will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity;

**Fifth, they desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement, and social security.**

Sixth, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the



means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want;

Seventh, such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance;

Eighth, they believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come to the abandonment of the use of force. **Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential.** They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measure which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

The Atlantic Charter translated into free trade and world economic development, national disarmament, and the establishment of a new security architecture to keep the peace. The race was on to shape the new world order. It would either be formed by Nazi or Soviet conquest or Western consent. To get a seat at the drafting table, America needed to enter the war.

After the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, it was up to Streit to make his case that the Atlantic Union idea could deliver on the goals of the Atlantic Charter. Streit, however, had to share the stage with other proponents of world federation who placed their emphasis on world law and national disarmament. He was at a major disadvantage because his initial focus was placed on advancing individual freedom rather than disarmament.

To advance their cause, Streit and company advertised the Atlantic Union idea in leading newspapers. For example, in January of 1942, former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Owen J. Roberts joined Streit in cosigning a petition published in the *Washington Evening Star* calling on President Roosevelt to establish a "World United States." Notable cosigners included Robert Woods Bliss, Grenville Clark, Russell W. Davenport, John Foster Dulles, Harold L. Ickes, and Donald C. Roper.

With these politically-connected elites in his corner, Streit was uniquely positioned to influence American foreign policy after the war. The Atlantic Union idea, however, was inconsistent with President Roosevelt's decision to work with Stalin. Allied victory, after all, was ultimately dependent on Soviet contributions to the war effort.

In 1944, President Roosevelt pursued the Bretton Woods and United

Nations (UN) systems. Atlantic Union was too risky given the circumstances of the war and the emergence of weapons of mass destruction. The last thing he wanted to do was antagonize Stalin. Ultimately, the nation-state system proved to be extremely resilient—at the insistence of the Soviet Union.

At Bretton Woods in July, Britain and the United States fell way short of establishing a sound world currency. They opted for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) instead. An International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IRBD) and an International Development Association (IDA) was set up to reconstruct Europe and provide economic assistance to developing nations. Together they are known as the World Bank.

Moving on to Dumbarton Oaks held in August and September of 1944, a charter for a collective security organization was drafted. The proposed charter would establish a Security Council (SC) and a General Assembly (GC). In theory, the Security Council would keep and maintain the peace after nations disarmed, and the General Assembly would serve as a world forum. Proponents of world government were not impressed.

President Roosevelt passed away on April 12, 1945, months before the United Nations was realized. Power was now in the hands of Harry S. Truman. It was his responsibility to oversee the conclusion of the Second World War, and the ratification and implementation of the United Nations Charter. Standing in his way were conservative anti-interventionists in the Senate.

## Chapter 2 – The Truman Years

In August of 1945, President Truman decided to drop two atomic bombs on Imperial Japan. The horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki finally ended World War Two. The level of destruction, suffering, and fear caused by the war is hard for Americans to imagine today. It was estimated that over 60 million people were killed—many of them were civilians. During the war, Nazi Germany exterminated millions of Jews as if they were subhuman. Imperial Japan tortured and raped its way through parts of China, Korea, and South-East Asia. The Soviet Union systematically murdered millions who opposed them. Back in the United States, American's longed for the return of their sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers.

President Truman's decision to publicly display the horrific power of atomic warfare made the ratification of the United Nations (UN) Charter a *fait accompli*. Nationalists and anti-interventionists in the Senate were unable to prevent its ratification. The American people were terrified of the prospect of a third world war. They believed it was only a matter of time before the Soviet Union would develop its own weapons of mass destruction. The United States Congress was ripe for the world government movement.

On the same day the United Nations was established, October 24, 1945, Senator Glenn Taylor of Idaho introduced a world government resolution at the behest of the Committee to Frame a World Constitution (CFWC). The CFWC was led by Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins of the University of Chicago. Other members included G.A. Borgese, Mortimer J. Adler, Stringfellow Bar, Robert Redfield, and Rexford G. Tugwell. These presumptuous intellectuals set out to draft a sample constitution for the world. They later published monthly articles on world government in their magazine—*Common Cause: Journal of One World*.

The CFWC was known for their comprehensive, or maximalist, approach to world government. They were out of touch with political reality. Grenville Clark and Robert Lee Humber suggested that the United States pursue a more limited, or minimalist, world federation instead. Clark previously called for a "World United States" with Clarence Streit in 1942, and Humber was known for his campaign to convince state legislatures to adopt world government resolutions with considerable success.<sup>1</sup> As an implementation strategy, world federalists favored transforming the UN

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<sup>1</sup> See Baratta, Preston. *The Politics of World Federation*

into a world federation with defined and limited powers in the field of war prevention.

The world federalist idea was a non-starter because the United States had to work with Russia to achieve it. Ironically, Stalin was unwilling to play along because he refused to share power with anyone. The Soviets knew that only a handful of world federalists in the United States were communist sympathizers – the rest were Keynesian capitalists. Like Lenin, Stalin was probably not a fan of so-called “fellow travelers” in the peace movement. He likely viewed them as “false friends of the people, namely moderate-socialist or social democratic leaders (in other words, non-Communist left-wing).”<sup>2</sup> Of course, Stalin despised the Atlantic Union idea as well.

The Atlantica strain of the world federalist movement had a much easier path to follow. The Soviet Union could not veto the establishment of an Atlantic Union, and Stalin was in no position to use preemptive war to prevent Atlantic unification. The United States, after all, held an atomic monopoly at the time, and the Soviet Union was too weak to wage war.

Two parallel paths toward world federation thus emerged in 1945. Grenville Clark placed his emphasis on strengthening the United Nations into a world federation, and Streit continued to advance the Atlantic Union idea as a liberating approach to democratic world federation. Stalin viewed both movements as expressions of American imperialism.

In February of 1946, George Kennan made it clear in his famous “long telegram” that the Soviet Union was not going to cooperate with the Anglo-American design of the Bretton Woods and United Nations systems. Stalin had a world order strategy of his own. He feared capitalist encirclement as much as the United States feared the spread of communism.

To prevent another European war and prevent the spread of communism, Winston Churchill called for the establishment of a United States of Europe in September of 1946. Now there were three international federalist proposals to contend with: United States of Europe, Atlantic Union, and world federation. On March 21, 1947, Senators Fulbright and Thomas endorsed Churchill’s call for a federal Europe –

*Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring),  
That the Congress favors the creation of a United States of Europe,  
within the framework of the United Nations.*

The Senate did not pass the above resolution, but it eventually became a

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<sup>2</sup> George Kennan, *The Long-Telegram*, 1946

guiding principle of the Marshall Plan and American foreign policy.

Demand for a General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and an International Trade Organization (ITO) to oversee it, intensified as a result of the Cold War. Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs William L. Clayton was actively involved in negotiating the GATT. He also spearheaded the ITO project inspired by the UN Economic and Social Committee in 1946. After the GATT was signed in October of 1947, Clayton would later shape the Marshall Plan.

While President Truman was advancing free trade, proponents of world federation were trying to prevent another world war. In February of 1947, Grenville Clark and Robert Lee Humber consolidated world federalist groups around the country into the United World Federalists (UWF). In November of 1947, the UWF proposed that a world federation should have the following principles and powers –

St. Louis, Mo., November 1-2, 1947

Resolved, That a world federal government must initially be based upon the following principles and include the following powers:

#### PRINCIPLES

1. Membership: Participation in the world federal government should be open at all times to all nations without the right of secession.

2. Reservation of powers: All powers not delegated to the world federal government should be reserved to the nations and their peoples in order to guarantee to each nation its right to maintain its own domestic, political, economic, social, and religious institutions.

3. Enforcement of world law: World law should be enforceable directly upon individuals.

4. Balanced representation: Representation in the legislative body should be determined upon a just formula recognizing population, economic development, educational level and other relevant factors; each representative to vote as an individual.

5. Bill of rights: The world constitution should include a bill of rights assuring equal and adequate protection to persons affected by the constitution and laws of the world federal government.

6. Revenue: The world federal government should have authority to raise dependable revenue under a carefully defined and limited but direct taxing power independent of national taxation.

7. Amendments: Reasonable provisions should be made for amendment of the Constitution.

## POWERS

Such legislative, executive, and judicial powers as may be found necessary to the preservation of peace should be delegated to the world federal government. These should certainly include at least the following provisions which should be incorporated in the world constitution itself:

1. Provisions prohibiting the possession by any nation of armaments and forces beyond an approved level required for internal policing.

2. Provisions requiring control by the world federal government of the dangerous aspects of atomic energy development and of other scientific developments easily diverted to mass destruction.

3. Provisions requiring such world inspection, police and armed forces as may be necessary to enforce world law and provide world security.

4. Other powers: We recognize that although some world federalists believe that such limited powers would be sufficient as a beginning, others are convinced that any world organization to be effective, even at the start, must have broader powers to bring about peaceful change in the direction of a free and prosperous world community. Such differences as exist among world federalists on this point are mainly questions of timing. There is full agreement that we should move as rapidly as possible to a world federal government with authority and power to legislate on other basic causes of international conflict.

The UWF later convinced the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs to conduct hearings on the *Structure of the United Nations* in May of 1948. The purpose of the hearing was to explore —

how to the strengthen the United Nations so that it can become what the war-weary, disillusioned and apprehensive peoples of the world believed it was and want it to be, namely, a mechanism whereby disputes between nations can be settled equitably, with sufficient moral and military force to prevent aggression and maintain peace.

The committee invited Cord Meyer, Jr., Thomas Finletter, and W.T.

Holliday testify on behalf of the UWF. Although focus was placed on the United Nations, Streit and company were invited to present the Atlantic Union idea.

During the hearings, Streit made his first jaw-dropping speech before the Committee on Foreign Affairs. He argued that the Atlantic Union idea was more aligned with the realities of the Cold War than the world federalist proposal. He also made sure the committee understood that the eagle does not nibble and gnaw –

None of us would take the mouse as our national emblem. Why, then, do so many Americans tackle momentous matters as a mouse does a piece of cheese, beginning with a nibble, and when that proves too little, taking another nibble, and another – until the trap springs shut?

Cash-and-carry, selective service, 47 destroyers, lend-lease – never a measure bold enough to achieve the difficult feat of winning by measures short of war. Fulbright resolution, United Nations, British loan, Cabinet members testifying in January we must spend billions either on European recovery or on a restored draft, and already the draft is up for resurrection, and we are asked to double defense expenditure, prop up the Charter with amendments and alliances, prepare for military lend-lease. Again the policy of nibble and gnaw, when the only possible way to win without war is to be bold.

The American emblem, after all, is the eagle. The eagle sees from afar, lives by strokes that are bold. We are not mice; we are men. We have made ourselves jaws that grind mountains to powder; we measure out bites in tons. What we have done mechanically we can do morally, and by so doing add greater glory to the meaning of man. I propose that we rise to this occasion.

Streit further stressed that the purpose of world organization should be to safeguard freedom –

At first glance, peace seems to be the main objective, but, I submit, this will not bear second thought. Peace we all desire, but we shall not get peace by deluding ourselves and the rest of the world into believing that peace is our main objective. There is something – as Mr. Dulles said earlier today in answering this question – that Americans desire more even than that and that is equal individual freedom.

Of course, Streit concluded that Atlantic Union was the best way to

ensure that freedom comes first—

If we have the courage of our convictions, our problems come down to this threefold how: (1) How to develop more freedom in the world? (2) How to make sure the bulk of the world's armed power is governed by freedom? (3) How to put more power, particularly productive power, behind freedom? To each of these questions I find this one answer:

Federate the freest fraction of mankind in a great union of the free, and thereafter extend this federal relationship to other nations as rapidly as this proves practicable until the whole world is thus governed by freedom.

After his testimony, Streit and company submitted the following outline of the federal union plan—

The federal union plan would secure freedom, recovery, and peace by uniting the United States and other civil liberty democracies in a federal union of the free, modeled on the United States Constitution. This new republic would be the nucleus for a world government. That is, it would be designed to grow by federating with other nations as this became practicable, much as the United States grew from 13 to 48 States. Pending its growth into a government of, by, and for all people on earth, it would be a member of the UN.

Civil liberty democracies are those nations that have proved most capable of assuring the individual freedom of speech, press, and other basic liberties covered by our term, bill of rights. They include the United States, Canada, Britain, Eire, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, Australia, the Union of South Africa. You might add a few more. As the free peoples center mainly on the Atlantic, their union is often called a trans-Atlantic union.

A federal union of the free is an interstate government so made as to keep you, the citizen, free and sovereign. In the union, as in your nation or state, you elect the lawmakers, and their laws are enforced on you individually. Power is divided between the union and your national government with a view to advancing thereby your liberty, prosperity, peace. The division of powers between the union and the national governments, and the character of the union's executive, legislative, and judicial departments, would be decided by a constitutional convention, subject to ratification by each democracy.



The union's powers should include the sole right to conduct foreign relations, maintain armed forces, issue currency, regulate commerce and communications between member nations, grant union citizenship. It should, of course, have the power to tax, and to uphold the bill of rights.

The first federal union of the free was formed by the United States. The Swiss, Canadians, and South Africans have made successful multilanguage federal unions. Freedom for all men equally through an ever-growing federal union of the free—that, in short, is the federal-union plan.

The State Department was skeptical of the Atlantic Union idea because it could undermine their efforts to inspire a federal Europe as well as destroy the United Nations. At the time, the United Nations was the only organization keeping the peace. Secretary of State George C. Marshall stressed the continued importance of working with the Soviet Union—

suggestions that a revised United Nations, or some form of world government, should be achieved, if necessary, without those nations which would be unwilling to join, deserves special attention. Such a procedure would likely destroy the present United Nations organization.

After the hearings, Streit and company decided to pursue a more effective congressional strategy. Their new goal was to convince Congress to pass a resolution calling on the President to convene an Atlantic constitutional convention. Their plan was suspect considering that the American people never granted Congress or the President the power to establish an Atlantic Union. Such power is reserved to the people under the 10th Amendment.

Streit was now sailing in uncharted waters as Federal Union was not structured to lobby Congress. A new skipper was needed for this initiative. Will Clayton volunteered after the European Recovery Plan (Marshall Plan) passed and the Senate rejected his International Trade Organization (ITO) initiative in 1948.

After leaving government service, Clayton endorsed the Atlantic Union idea. He wanted to create a fair international economic order. For example, Article 7, Section 1 of the proposed ITO Charter was designed to address potential regulatory bottom feeding—

The Members recognize that measures relating to employment must take fully into account the rights of workers

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