



A critique of Walter Cronkite

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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 [one] world government patterned after our own government with a legislature, [executive](#) and judiciary, and police to enforce its international laws and keep the peace.

– Walter Cronkite

Walter Cronkite, the legendary TV anchorman, died on July 17. To most Americans over the age of 50, Cronkite was the always-invited guest at the dinner [table](#) as the family sat down to eat in the 1960s and 1970s, the heyday of CBS News. As a young boy, I remember watching Walter Cronkite with my father every evening at 6 p.m. I remember his silver mane, his deep, gruff baritone voice and his [trademark](#) authoritative mannerisms that commanded respect. He seemed to me like the General George Patton of [network](#) news.

The American public believed that if Cronkite reported it, it must be true. If it wasn't true, then when Cronkite reported it, it became the truth. That was how a 10-year-old kid viewed Cronkite. Multitudes of politicians, activists, journalists, academics and ordinary Americans who mourned his death expressed that same singular belief in Cronkite's omniscience regarding any news event he reported on.

Yet, can we separate the man from the myth?

Regarding Cronkite's coverage and overt criticisms of the Vietnam War during its waning days, who can forget the normally unflappable President Lyndon Johnson's

lament – "If I've lost Walter, I've lost middle America."

Joseph Farah's book "Stop the Presses: The Inside Story of the New Media Revolution" explains why traditional news sources are gasping for breath amid Internet, talk radio phenomena

It was Cronkite who first told us of the Kennedy assassination on that fateful day, Nov. 22, 1963, as he choked back his tears and removed his glasses to compose himself. Yet, older Americans can remember the storied early years of Cronkite's [career](#): Pearl Harbor, D-Day, the Nuremberg Trials and his work as an embedded news correspondent during the celebrated D-Day invasion on the shores of Normandy, France. Also, it was Cronkite who interviewed the legendary World War II general Dwight Eisenhower right there in his jeep.

This brings me to a profound irony.

How did the venerable Walter Cronkite, the sagacious and grandfatherly "voice of America" descend from the jeep of the supreme commander of the Allied forces at Normandy, France in June 1945 to shuttling around Bill and Hillary Clinton on the back of his boat off the coast of Maine in August 1998? Was Cronkite indeed the "most trusted man in America" when he read the news, or was he merely a propagandist, a closeted radical liberal underneath that affable, all-American facade? I believe he was the latter.

There is an old saying: *The devil's greatest trick is to make people believe that he doesn't exist.* In my opinion, Cronkite's greatest (or most infamous) legacy during his storied 50-year career as a journalist was to make most Americans believe he was a blue-blooded patriot; a political "progressive" who represented the best ideas of what it was to be an American – liberty, freedom, intelligence, respectability, trustworthiness, unimpeachable character.

Yes, I believe that Cronkite in the early days represented many of the virtuous ideals of Americanism; nevertheless, I believe Cronkite was a hardcore liberal even then. Not the kind of radical liberal, socialist or Marxist hell bent on nihilism and revolution, but like a huge number of Americans born after 1900 who were raised on the egalitarian sophistry of the progressive movement including FDR's "New Deal" and LBJ's "Great Society." Cronkite was intellectually and politically a progressive.

(Column continues below)

On this point the father of American Progressivism, President Theodore Roosevelt (1901-09) in a speech titled, "The New Nationalism," used the curious phrase, "human welfare" and further said, "Personal [property](#) is subject to the general right of

the [community](#) to regulate its use *to whatever [degree](#) the public welfare may require it.*” Although these are the words of Roosevelt, a Republican, they could just have easily been uttered by a Mussolini, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, or by progressives like Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann or Walter Cronkite.

The hydra tentacles of progressivism are long, intricate and omnipresent. Recall that it was Theodore Roosevelt who later ran on the "Bull Moose" or "Progressive" Party ticket against Howard Taft in 1912. For more than a century Progressivism was, and continues to be, the major political philosophy of Congress, which makes *Progressive Candidate A* (a Democrat) vs. *Progressive Candidate B* (a Republican) virtually indistinguishable in a typical election campaign.

Indeed, Cronkite exemplifies progressive ideals of egalitarianism (equality of results, not access), statism, radical liberalism and "statolatry" – the worship of the state or the idea that all laws, policies, ideas, legislation and programs must be generated in furtherance not of individual rights and liberties, but toward the predominance of the state being superior to the will of "We the People."

In conclusion, one can see Cronkite's socialist and progressive philosophy encapsulated in his famous statement: *"The failure to give free airtime for our political campaigns endangers our democracy."* Campaign egalitarianism was Cronkite's *cause célèbre* and he spent many years and much political capital trying to achieve it. Alas, thankfully he failed in this endeavor.

In a free society based on individual choice, to demand that privately owned news [networks](#) which are publically traded [corporations](#) with board of directors and shareholders, *must* give free airtime to political campaigns sounds good and equitable, but just below the surface are despicable anti-capitalist and anti-freedom of speech suppositions. The evil intent is that Cronkite and his fellow journalist commissars will dictate who is a "viable" political candidate and how much air time they will get. Indeed Stalin called his state-controlled media entity "Pravda," liberal Democrats call theirs— ABC, CBS, NBC, MSNBC, the New York Times, Time Magazine, Newsweek, "equal time" or the "Fairness Doctrine."

While I think there was much to admire in the journalist career of Walter Cronkite, overall his liberal legacy of progressivism and the anti-freedom socialist ideas he bequeathed to America are definitely not the actions of a beloved, venerable journalist, but the Machiavellian tactics of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

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