

WAR IS ILLEGAL

To wish there were a law against war seems a pipe dream. President Trump has said he would not take nuclear weapons off the table, and he wants to add \$54 billion to 2016's defense budget of \$585 billion--not counting the \$12.6 war billion hidden in the Energy Department to maintain America's nuclear weapons stockpile or its \$5.8 billion to clean up the environmental consequences of producing nuclear weapons.

Just to get a feel for the magnitude of taxpayer money devoted to war, if dollars were seconds, as John Allen Paulos asks us to imagine in his book "Innumeracy," "it takes only about eleven and a half days for a million seconds to tick away, [but] almost thirty two years for a billion seconds to pass." We can say the Department of Defense spends lifetimes of money on war. But take heart. Far from fantasy, it turns out there already is a law against war. Really. And it's still on the books.

"When the World Outlawed War" is the title of the volume David Swanson wrote to tell the story of the Kellogg-Briand Pact whose goal is to renounce war as a solution to problems between nations. Frank B. Kellogg was US Secretary of State from 1925-29 when Aristide Briand was the foreign minister of France. The pact made aggressive war a crime. Swanson points out that in the culture of the 1920s before the military-industrial complex existed, it was cool to be against war. Even the robber barons supported peace.

The US Senate voted 85 to 1 in favor of ratification of the Pact that was signed in Paris August 27, 1928, Swanson reports, with nine senators not voting. On that date thirteen other nations also signed the pact. Two days later President Coolidge signed the treaty into law. After forty-seven more nations signed on, the illegality of war became an almost universally supported law. It became, too, the basis for the crime against peace.

How can we obey the law against war if we don't know about it? If we've never read the Declaration of Independence or the US Constitution or Bill of Rights or discussed what government is for or what a law is or are unaware of the history of war and weaponry? If we don't know about the psychology behind violence? We need good teachers.

All Americans could commit to memory those famous words first drafted by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men"

As Lincoln saw it, the Constitution of the United States is not a stand-alone document but is meant to be read through the eyes of the Declaration of Independence. (See <http://www.mrlincolnandthefounders.org/commentary/>.) What is government except an organization for securing our rights, that is, keeping our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness safe? The government does this by writing laws and enforcing them. What is law but the line drawn to keep us from infringing on other people's rights and they from infringing on ours?

According to the legal dictionary, "although they are not laws, regulations have the force of law, since they are adopted under authority granted by statutes, and often include penalties for violations." Right out of the gate, not long after his inauguration, President Trump, believing rules for corporations have "gotten out of control," promised that "we're going to be cutting regulation massively" by 75 percent or "even more," as CNBC reported.

George Lakoff, retired professor of Cognitive Science and Linguistics at Berkeley and now Director of the Center for the Neural Mind & Society, brings us back to the Declaration of Independence when he says that we would understand the word "regulation" better if we substituted the word "protection" for it. The protections (instead of regulations) of the Food and Drug Administration, for example, are to keep animals and us safe from such things as defective medical devices, cancer, poisoning, addiction, and irradiation.

"From the viewpoint of corporations and other businesses," Lakoff says, 'regulations' are limitations on their freedom to do whatever they want no matter who it harms, but from the public's viewpoint, a regulation is a protection against harm done by unscrupulous corporations seeking to maximize profit at the cost of harm to the public."

How can we obey the law against war? First, to acknowledge the law, and to speak out against war. To recognize that our real enemy is not another nation. Our real enemy is ignorance, and the antidotes to ignorance have always been consciousness and education.

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