

## CORRESPONDENCE AND COMMENT

*Louis Filler*

YOU MAY TAKE it as a compliment that I am writing this comment upon your article, "Immortal Mr. Dooley," by Francis Russell. This is the second article to take off from my *Mr. Dooley: Now and Forever*, and the first article or review of the book I have troubled to treat seriously; and not so much for itself—this may be of limited interest—as for its relations to your overall purposes. The other article appears in the October 1, 1956, issue of the *New Republic*, "The Poised Shillelagh," by one William Esty, and was followed up by a variety of letters from readers of that publication. The entire plot contained elements which seemed to me beneath contempt. Although I must confess to being what a fellow-traveler once called (he was not being complimentary) "really a liberal," and committed to something somewhere between the different things I think Thoreau and Lincoln had in mind, there is no question but that conservatism is the dynamic intellectual movement today on our national scene, such as it is, and merits thought and consideration.

It does not trouble me that Mr. Russell has no regard for my views, or for my Progressive Era—I call it mine because, with a book in print on the subject, I know no one else who wants it; a variety of people try to exploit it from time to time. Mr. Russell is more than welcome to his opinions, and I see no purpose served by challenging them. I look forward to nothing more than a multiple-form of opinion. However, there is a major difficulty with Mr. Russell's article. You will note above that I refer to the article by the *New Republic* scrivener as contemptible. But you cannot know, from my comment, what it is that, in my opinion, makes it contemptible. Let

it suffice for present purposes that the article does not see anybody like the Finley Peter Dunne envisioned by Mr. Russell. Mr. Esty, and his enthusiastic readers, seem to assume that Dunne, had he had the good fortune to be living in recent years, would have voted for Stevenson, and possibly for Wallace, in a previous election. They were not made aware of Dunne's friendship with Warren G. Harding, and only hazily and unmeaningfully of his army of other, shall we say, not radical friends.

But neither would your readers realize, by reading Mr. Russell's article, that Dunne was a partisan of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Now, I realize that Mr. Russell does not think such facts are important: he is more concerned for what he deems to be the more profound facts of Dunne's essential conservatism. Mr. Russell thinks I am interested in presenting Dunne as "one embodiment of the reformist progressive era." This is not quite accurate, as it happens; but more important is the fact that he has not thought the matter through. He cannot explain the fact that Dunne's high noon exactly parallels the era of the muckrakers, and that the rest is largely anti-climax.

I suggest that this is more "profound" a fact than that which Mr. Russell has excerpted from the solid body of Dunne's work for the delectation of your readers. It is not my interest to make conservatives into liberals, or liberals into anything else. But we have, I believe, a vast amount of defining to do, if we are to put our houses into order, and a stop to the senseless horrors of such modern careers as I could mention which disgrace both our radical and conservative traditions.

The answer is, I believe, to root our convictions in tangibles. History is one of those merciless and ever-present tangibles; and it is shallow to pass off the era of the progressives with a knowing you-and-I-know-what-

a-cheap-pragmatic-show-that-was wink—as shallow as it would be to treat so the era of the abolitionists.

Have a look at the Progressive Era, sometime, reserving the preconceptions. You may be surprised to discover how many roads and byways it offers—how many of them are open and populated, and dangerous but invigorating to explore. You will find other challenges besides that presented by Finley Peter Dunne: remarkable personages whom you will no more recognize from the clichés than you can recognize seasoned literary works by glancing at the incredible covers of the paperbacks.

*Know thy neighbor*, I suggest. Love and contempt take care of themselves; the only problem is with their quality.

—LOUIS FILLER  
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### *Dean Terrill*

THE POWERFUL study of Mr. Frederick D. Wilhelmsen (“History, Toynbee, and the Modern Mind: Betrayal of the West,” *MODERN AGE*, Vol. 1, No. 1), analyzing the non sequiturs and emptiness of the modern Liberals’ fiat as to the “meaning of history,” calls to mind their misuse of words as they endeavor to establish the bases for their dogma.

Words expressing concepts of the intellect, the emotions, and the spirit seldom carry the same meaning in any two eras and, equally or less often, to any two persons. Thinking persons, sooner or later, realize this troublesome fact, but few keep it in their consciousness. Most of us engage furiously in argument centered upon such a word, assuming all so engaged are dealing with an identically understood concept when rarely is such the case. Fewer still, perhaps, are those who have sought to understand the basic reason for most such common misunderstandings, which is that just as no two eras are identical, neither are any two persons. The antecedent and existing factors that shape an

era necessarily give color and form and content to words such as government, love and God, as do the capacity and environment of the person who hears or speaks these words. Thus, it is the inequality, the lack of sameness, between eras and individuals that makes for lack of common understanding of the meaning of such words.

It is indeed ironical that the inevitable inequality of individuals, both of heredity and environment, is the cause of the greater part of the furious dissension and discord now rampant as to the words “equal” and “equality”; and that, on the college campus, where there might be expected to be less of such misunderstanding, the confusion is more pronounced, even more so, perhaps, in the faculties than among the students.

How is it possible for college administrations to base any program or policy upon the “equality” of all students when they, better than most, must know that no two members of the student body are equal, either physically, intellectually or morally? Yet some, even of ancient and honorable name, have done so—and have thereby misled the uncritical of their students into blind acceptance or rejection, as the case may be, of social ideas and relationships that must, for shorter or longer periods, profoundly affect their thinking and feeling as to many important aspects of both academic and later life.

It is the height, either of stupidity or of baseness, to equate the right of equality under law with equality of individuality. The latter is a self destructive phrase. The essence of individuality is uniqueness—singularity—a necessary absence of identical plurality. One individual cannot be equal to, the same as, another individual. By reason of the Fourteenth Amendment of our Constitution (but such is not provided by laws of India) no State may deny to any person the equal protection of the laws. No responsible American contends otherwise. But thinking Americans must contend that this humane injunction shall