

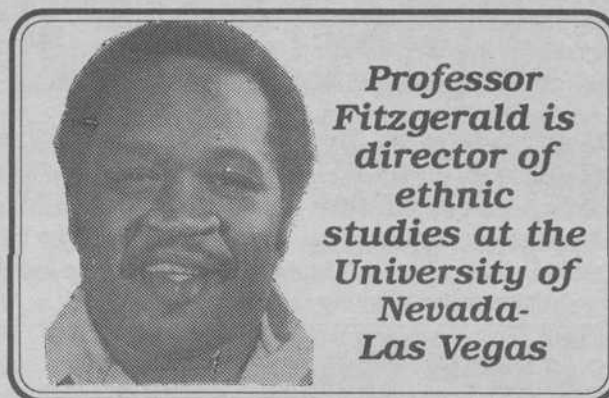
# THEY AND WE AND THEY

It was a quarter of a century ago that I read Allen Nevin's *When The Cheering Stopped*. It was the first detailed account of the life of President Woodrow Wilson that I had had occasion to read. Even at that, the book primarily addressed a small portion of the man's life; World War I and its aftermath—especially his attempts to organize the League of Nations and to arouse Americans to a recognition of their need to allow the United States to participate in the effort.

Wilson has first been elected President in 1912 and re-elected in 1916 with the slogan; "He kept us out of war." The people loved him—most of them anyway. He had been a big disappointment

to black America but that's another story. He had kept the country out of the affairs of the Mexican Revolution and the doings in Europe which had already erupted into war. With the sinking of the Lusitania, however, in 1915 and subsequent attacks on other shipping in which there was loss of American lives, the eventual resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, the Sussex Affair, the Zimmermann Note all contributed to pulling the United States, finally, on April 6, 1917 to formally declare war on Germany and her allies. The war was relatively short and ended with an armistice on November 11, 1918.

For the while that the war



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by Professor Roosevelt Fitzgerald

waged, around the country could be seen parades, military gatherings, and patriotic songs could be heard. At once he had kept us out of war and then successfully carried us through the war. When the soldiers returned, they were greeted with tumultuous parades. Along the main thoroughfares of every town and city there were parades and cheering throngs.

Sergeant York became a national hero and everyone with a voice sang, in perfect harmony, Cohen's "Yankee Doodle Dandy" and in the wee hours could be heard the refrain; "And we won't back until it's over over there." Then the cheering stopped. His star fell and then he was gone.

I know a little bit about Winston Churchill. Who could forget the face. Now, there's a lot about him which I do not like. His views on British imperialism, his treatment and perception of Africans, his refusal to meet with Ghandi on the latter's visit to London concerning British treatment of people of color in both Africa and India all fall within the category of dislike. I won't talk about those matters not—that's another story. What I want to talk about, briefly, is his stint as Prime Minister of England dur-

ing the war years.

Following Dunkirk and the subsequent bombing of England, especially London, which ensued, the morales of many of his countrymen began to sink. He rallied them with his speeches and the posture which he maintained. We have all heard of how he told the people of England not to lose heart but to bear up.

He encouraged them to not give in to the opportunities to despair. He told them that if they did the things which they had to do that they would be able to ward off the Nazi hordes and that one day, of their efforts, others would say; "That was our finest hour." Had not the British held on as long as they did the outcome of World War II could very easily have been substantially different.

He visited troops and he also met with the other two members of the Big Three; FDR and Stalin. He managed to gain first logistical support from the United States and finally the actual involvement of the United States in the European phase of the war. As he managed each of these, Englishmen hailed him where ever he went. They realized, even his detractors, that without him, that all would be

lost for England. Lend-lease, money, supplies soldiers, alliances—all came about as a result of his efforts. None of the citizens could deny the results of his efforts. The war ended in 1946 and he was everybody's hero. They had their parades, and people waving and cheering. A year later the cheering stopped. Churchill was replaced and then he was gone.

They say that Nostradamus was pretty good at predicting the future. I've never read any of his stuff. I've never wanted to know what was going to happen in the future. Those things which we know are going to happen anyway, if we stay alive: waking up, getting up, cleaning up, going to work, working, rush hour traffic, rising prices especially on stamps, not ever finding parking places where you want one, and so on are sufficient to take a sizeable portion of the surprise element out of life.

If I knew much more of what the future holds why would I want to wait around to see it play itself out?

Victor Hugo was pretty good at predicting the future too. He did not do it in the manner that Nostradamus did but he did it just the same. A hundred years ago he published *Les Miserables* which is one of the truly remarkable books of all time. It has a universal quality about it which touches, either directly or indirectly, the lives of many people. The protagonist finds himself entangled in a justice system which has no heart. Out of sheer desperation, Jean Valjean steals a loaf of bread in order that his younger sister can feed her children.

He is arrested and brought before the magistrate. GUILTY!!! He spent a number of years in

prison at hard labor but finally is released.

Upon his release he goes straight and makes something of himself but he fails to maintain the necessary contact with the justice system (Parole Officer, etc.) in France as he should. Enter Inspector Javert. Javert spends the next several years hounding Valjean—day in and day out.

There is never any relief. Valjean is constantly looking over his shoulder; wondering when and where. All the while that the Inspector is driving this bread loaf thief of long ago mad, major crimes are taking place all over the place but Javert has a fixation on Valjean. He can see nothing else. He is especially miffed because Valjean has made a life for himself. He is well liked and respected by his townspeople.

He is generous. Many will testify of the times that he has helped them but, still, Javert seeks to break this man. He seeks to him not only because of his own background but also because with Valjean, Javert would not exist—his whole reason for existing is to hound, harass, intimidate, to ground into the ground, to be the cause of the loss of respect which Valjean has because he has it not. Javert is certainly not above reproach and his behavior toward and treatment of Valjean places him beneath contempt.

How did Victor Hugo know, a hundred years ago, that Javert would appear, or reappear, under the guise of the NCAA? How did Victor Hugo know that this time around Valjean would be substituted for with someone named Jerry Tarkanian?

How did Allen Nevens know to select that title for the book? Like with Wilson who one year was a hero and the next a scapegoat or with Churchill who one year was instrumental in winning a world war only to be tossed out of office the following year; Tarkanian finds himself in one moment at the top of the mountain—ironically at the mile high city of Denver and being given a hero's welcome upon his return one year with thousands of people lining the streets and sports arenas hailing his name. One year waving his arms in triumph and then the cheering stopped. He was forced to abdicate. Then he was gone.

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