

Introduction to *Goodbye to Law Reviews*

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We reproduce below, with kind permission of the *Virginia Law Review* and Fred B. Rothman & Co., an article titled *Goodbye to Law Reviews* that first appeared in the nineteen thirties. The article, by Fred Rodell of Yale Law School, was published in Vol 23 (1936-37) *Virginia Law Review* 38. It dealt with the deficiencies of law reviews, no doubt even such as this one now. As will become obvious on reading it is as pertinent today as in 1936.

Rodell obtained Arts and Law degrees in the USA and the UK from 1926 on, held various professorships at Yale from 1933 and was a member of bodies such as President Hoover's Committee on Social Trends and the Council for Democracy.

He either wrote for or edited journals such as *Fortune*, *The Chicago Times*, *The Progressive*, *Scanlan's Magazine*, *LIFE*, and *Harpers*. Books authored by Rodell include: *Fifty-five Men: The Story of the Constitution* (1936); *Woe Unto You, Lawyers* (1939); *Democracy and the Third Term* (1940); and *Nine Men: A Political History of the Supreme Court 1790 to 1955* (1955).

When for copyright reasons permission was sought to republish the piece I was advised during a telephone conversation with a person at the *Virginia Law Review* that copies of the article are handed out today to new law students, so to that extent the item can still be regarded as "good law".

An aspect of the review that struck me was his plea for review writers to avoid their tortuous style, circumlocution and so on and to include some humour. I was reminded of the story told by the English historian A.J.P. Taylor in his autobiography. Taylor fits the Rodell mould in that his writings are models of clarity and his jokes are funny. Taylor did much to *popularise* history but this did not always please his academic colleagues.

In 1956 he was offered the Regius Chair of Modern History at Oxford. The offer was conditional; he was told by the offerer, "Of course you must give up all this nonsense of appearing on television and writing for the *Sunday Express*." Taylor declined the position and wrote, "In the years after 1956 I ceased to count in the academic world but I had more fun." Maybe there is a message here.

Following the reproduction John Gava gives more detailed comments on it.

Responses by readers would be welcome for publishing in future issues of the Journal.