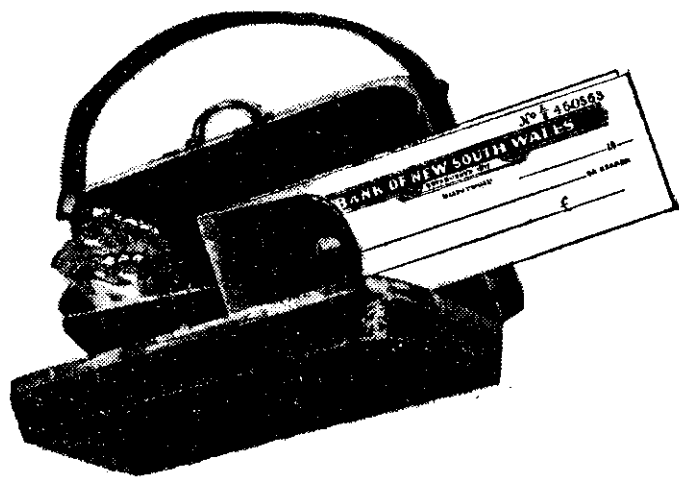


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A COUNTRY LIKE HOME

# Un-Mexican Activities: Too Many Men

MOST forms of emotional instability don't bother the mass of Mexicans, although they are mortally afraid of physical illness, wearing anti-infection masks in the street if a neighbour has a touch of rheumatism. But public performances by the feeble-minded which would freeze Anglo-Saxons with embarrassment arouse no interest in the Mexican street crowd. It is very rare for a rural or small town family to want to commit one of its members to a mental hospital, perhaps partly because mental hospitals are also very rare, but mainly on account of close family feeling and respect for differences in individual behaviour. The Mexican psychotic, accepted as part of the family, has little reason to become violent, and seldom seems to become so. The Mexican is therefore likely to become aggrieved when confronted by gringo psychotics who, in one way or another, are anti-social. Gringo drunks are common enough in the border regions, and when violent are handled violently by the cops, but I have never seen Mexicans so outraged and baffled as the ones who were run down by a girl we knew at La Rosa who had a taste for too many men, and particularly Latin types. Her father had passed on to her an inexhaustible fund of energy. He was a research chemist who fizzed like a rocket from city to city organising opposition to schemes for mass fluoridation of drinking water supplies. He maintained that the thing was being done the wrong way. The type of fluorine salt commonly used in these schemes was not in acceptable molecular arrangement for beneficial absorption by the human body. Indeed, he referred to it as rat poison, and promised dire end results for those who took it for twenty years or so. He had developed a much more compatible molecular arrangement, closely resembling the form which fluorine salts take when they are naturally present in the soil. He was prepared to sell this compound to individuals, who for a moderate price wished to overcome their fluorine deficiencies. He did not recommend its use in the mass. He had this information printed on handbills, together with violent denunciations, bursting with capital letters, of mass fluoridation. At meetings he was apt to quote himself by name in the third person: "That great authority, that famous research chemist, Professor Bronner, condemns these proposals as criminal. . . ." And so on. Bronner's polemic made the going tough for the moderate opposition, and he was occasionally thrown out of meetings by unanimous consent. El Profesor Szekely, essentially a moderate man, was on Bronner's mailing list, and was polite and patient when Bronner drove into La Rosa one morning with his daughter Louise and a car load of handbills and bottles of fluorine salts. He distributed a lot of these free, because he was among friends, he said. Szekely managed to prevent him from giving a formal lecture to the guests by sitting patiently and taking a formal lecture himself in his study. Bronner then distributed more handbills, embraced several guests in the name of the cause, and drove off, leaving his daughter to

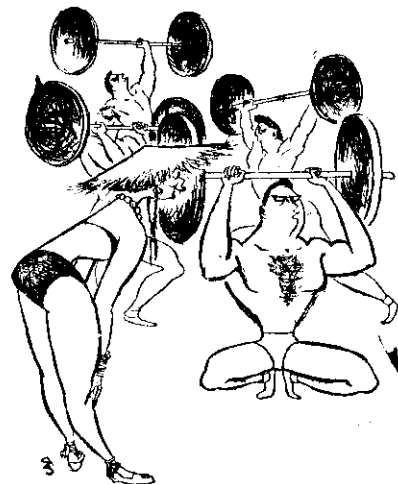
stay a while. "I guess she needs a rest," he said; "she'll be among friends here." Szekely, who knew nothing about Louise, said she'd be most welcome to stay as long as she liked.

Louise spent the rest of the day in and around the swimming pool, and developed bright red sunburn, which she said wouldn't interfere with her sleep because she didn't sleep much, anyway. Nobody could persuade her to retire, and at 11.30 p.m., long after the electric light plant had been switched off, she was still popping in and out of the darkness in her bathing suit, visiting everybody who still showed a light. Finally Norma, the hostess and nurse, placed a heavy hand on top of her head and shoved until she was stretched out on the couch in Norma's house.

She was off again at sunrise, still in her bathing suit, her sunburn glowing like a neon sign. She made a direct attack on four muscle men, exercising with barbells on the volley ball court. They brushed her off equally directly. "We live right," one of them explained dead pan. "Beat it, sugar, we're busy."

So Louise turned her attention to Mexicans. She waylaid the cowboy from the neighbouring ranch, who rode singing along the hill every morning after his cows. They galloped off on his horse, tandem. However, about breakfast time she came back alone on the horse, and a while later the vaquero limped in to complain to El Profesor. After breakfast I found my friend Jesus Maria Domingo Villorresi hiding in the warehouse in a shaken condition. "She does not show respect," he muttered. Then she got away to Tecate, and by noon the police patrol car brought her back with two cringing cops and the Commandante, who besought Szekely to keep her close, because she was too dangerous to have in gaol. We had a time of hazard until Professor Bronner was located, and drove her off again, scattering handbills. A few weeks later we got an invitation, in mass, to the wedding of Louise Bronner and the son of an Indian chief, somewhere in Arizona. Bronner said he was glad to invite all his friends. There was plenty of space on the Reservation.

—G. leF. Y.



"Beat it, sugar," said the muscle-men, "we're busy"

N.Z. LISTENER, MARCH 29, 1956.