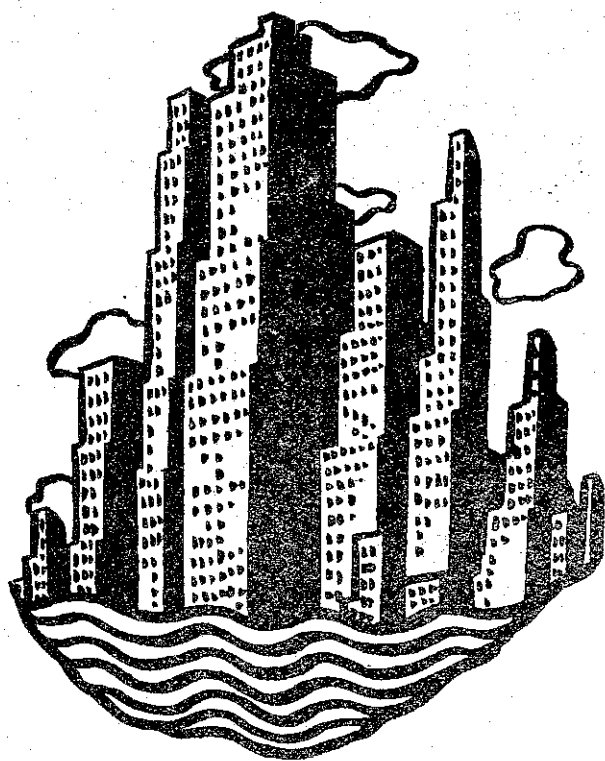


# U.S.A. Through English Eyes



An English novelist, broadcaster and lecturer on the countryside, Mr. S. P. B. Mais, was recently sent by the B.B.C. to make a complete tour of the United States. He gave weekly broadcasts from different states as he visited them, telling English listeners of his impressions and experiences. Here are some extracts from an account of his tour, taken from "Pearson's," the well-known English journal.

**M**Y first impression of New York was of a city in which there are no deaf and dumb, no cripples and no old people. Everybody is young and electrically alive. New York is very like Paris in its straight streets, but far handsomer because it is built on granite and it is on the sea. Puffs of white steam rise all the time out of the streets and from the skyscrapers' roofs.

No two studios possessed similar microphones. I had to speak into instruments that hung like spiders in mid-air, into others that were placed at oblique angles, right angles, and every sort of angle, all over the room.

These announcers had one very odd thing in common beyond their deep, musical, easily-heard voices. They were all young, all very good looking, and all recently married with very smart-looking wives and babies newly-born.

What about all this tremendous catastrophe to the N.R.A. that I was supposed to be witnessing as soon as I arrived? What about all the misery, depression and murder that the papers were continually reporting? Well, I was reporting too. And I reported what I saw, not what I expected to see.

And what I was seeing filled me with a tremendous admiration and love both for the American scene and the American people. And, finally, I was discovering the people. I had no idea that people could be so consistently kind, happy, hospitable and genuinely friendly. I like everything about them. I found that I actually preferred their speech to that of many of my own countrymen.

They indulged in no clichés, they said what they meant. Their images were as graphic as the images of the Elizabethans, their repartee of lightning speed and full of humour.

I discovered that advertising on the radio is no more offensive than advertising in a newspaper. In fact, I found the leaven of advertising as artistic and entertaining as I find the leaven of advertising in the Press at home. The advertisements of Guinness and Ethyl amuse me as much as the advertisements of the great railways and steamship companies allure me with their artistic subtlety.

Enormous sums of money are earned by public favourites among radio stars. They far outrun film stars both in their popularity and income. Even announcers are paid very highly by the advertising firms. Generally speaking, American humour is far funnier than ours. There is, for instance, no comparison between the New Yorker, which is always brilliantly, if caustically, witty, and our own too, too solid "Punch," so delightfully hit off by the New Yorker as "Paunch."

The fact that there is no redress for libel in America makes it easier for the Press and stage to be amusing. Instead of finding the churches empty, I found them all full. I attended every type of service in every type of denomination, and everywhere I found genuine devotion on the part of the people, and well-informed sermons from the pulpit. I had been led to expect the standard of American scholarship to be deplorably low, too much attempted, superficially too little achieved.

Surely the very cream of scholarship is here. Nor is the second layer by any means contemptible. I like the American attitude towards its games. I had been led to expect a nation given to gladiatorial spectacles of bloody encounters between professionals. It was not until I saw the game for myself that I realised that American football is confined entirely to amateurs—in fact to under-graduates—and that it is just a better sort of Rugger, better in that the tackling is more certain, the kicking more accurate, and the passing never fumbled.

Immense and fashionable crowds watch these games, applauding wildly. The gate money goes to pay for all other college activities. You are wrong. The Englishman does not dislike the American. He is completely ignorant about him. He builds up a picture of him based partly from what you send us over from Hollywood, and partly from sensational stories of gangsters and kidnappers. He does not take kindly to your way of speaking, though I find it invigorating and, indeed, more pleasant to listen to than our broad English; and sometimes he has been unfortunate in the type of American he has met in England. If he were to come over here and see you all at home, he would like you as much as I do.