



# AMERICAN in GLASSHOUSES

by Leslie James

This is a book to end all books about America — an impudent, hilarious “portrait” of America snapped through a broken lens, reflecting the out-of-focus vision of Englishmen who believe all they hear about America.

Readers will lose their heads over this book — either laughing them off, or blowing their tops off. As the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) expressed it when the book exploded over England:

“Europeans who sum up America and the Americans either in slogans or formulas deserve this book. It is an extremely tart and funny rejoinder to vulgar errors about America, whether they are held on one side of the water or the other. It is as if Mark Twain, Mr. Dooley, Hymie Kaplan, and the Marx Brothers had cooperated to write an academic thesis on such themes as the tendency towards overproduction in private American capitalism or sexual behaviour in America.

“The fake footnotes and the statistical tables are the funnier for their deadpan style. A book that starts seriously to discuss why, for instance, the female neckline in American films must be higher than in the British, and then explodes uproariously into pseudo-anthropological explanations, is manna from Heaven to the reviewer of ponderous volumes of Americana.”

“Every page is good for a laugh . . . The book is one to have, read and reread.”

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L E S L I E   J A M E S

Americans  
in  
Glasshouses



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## F O R E W O R D

This book has been written to standardize, once and for all, the diverse impressions about America in European minds—for the confusion which exists abroad about America is equalled only by the confusion in America itself.

Only if Europeans—especially the English—have a real understanding of America, will they be able to teach Americans to conduct themselves in the manner English gentlemen thought other Englishmen should conduct themselves, when England was the leading Power in the world.



I

THE WAY THEY ARE



ONE has only to observe the American tourist's reluctance to ride with dignity and unconcern one or two stops beyond his bus-ticket to realize that Americans have very primitive personalities indeed.

It is plain from what one sees of Americans in England that there will be no success at reforming America along European lines until one knows what it is, deep down in the psychological make-up of the American, that makes him click . . . click . . . click all day, when he might be talking about the weather, waiting to get a telephone installed, and generally living life in the English way, instead of photographing it from beneath a broad-brimmed hat.

The American one sees in England is rude without the palliative of being predictably, consistently rude. He is savage about *Punch* but sighs sentimental appreciations about the draughty old village church which every

resident takes for granted. He is alarmingly and unforgivably quick to concur after one has summoned all one's modesty and self-depreciation to say, charmingly, "I expect you find England a bit bare." He is irritated by persons who seem interested in him only because he is an American, and even more irritated by any suggestion that he seems in any way un-American.

Unlike Britons, Americans behave differently abroad from the way they do at home. When we examine the behaviour of Americans in the United States with the clinical and cold detachment most British analysts have employed in generalising about the American personality, we find an assortment of eccentric behaviour that is, to say the least,<sup>1</sup> un-British.

First of all, Americans move. They always seem to be racing against time. They work at a mad pace. They bolt their food. Instead of drinking to light a fire inside them, they drink as if they were putting one out. The Englishman, proceeding through life at a sophisticated glacial pace, wonders what it is that impels, compels and propels Americans to live more like jumping beans than men.

The beginning of the answer is that Americans have no past, no tradition, no class system and no planners<sup>2</sup> to

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<sup>1</sup> And the most.

<sup>2</sup> The effects of the lack of planners in America are more fully discussed below. (See Planners, Ruin of America Due to Lack of.)



tell them in advance what they are and how they ought to behave. They cannot, for example, live long lives of polite understatement like the British, simply because "it has always been done." In America, nothing has always been done.<sup>3</sup>

Equally unhelpful to the American who wants to know how to behave is the lack of a well-defined class-system. Hence the prevalence in America of that old-fashioned philosophy of the pre-planning age, which holds that all are equal. The American believes at birth that he can rise to be anything. This means that he can count definitely on nothing. He cannot mould himself from childhood to fit the behaviour-requirements that his future class or occupational position will impose on him.<sup>4</sup>

The American is so emotionally preoccupied with deciding *how* to live his life that he cannot achieve the

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<sup>3</sup> For a notable exception, see later in this chapter, *Sex in America, Practice of*.

<sup>4</sup> Compare this with Britain, where children who will become lawyers are trained to talk elegantly on subjects they don't know about; while those who will become Civil Servants are taught to elegantly not talk about things they do know about; where middle-class girls are trained to memorize the names, localities and interiors of places of fashion they will never enter; and where children who will become advanced intellectuals are trained to read (and write) so that they automatically skip figures.

spontaneity and poise of the Englishman who (of course) need never consider the question.<sup>5</sup>

Since there is nothing to tell him how to behave, the American is always unsure whether he has a personality at all. At the core, he is never sure whether he is someone. His entire life is spent seeking reassurance on this point.

There are many evidences of this fact in American behaviour. Americans like to receive letters, for example, particularly in the morning, since receiving a letter addressed to them makes them think they really are someone. The clinching piece of evidence, however, is that Americans like to eat. Eating serves a clear-cut function in America. Americans would feel unhuman if they did not eat. By putting a large piece of steak in his mouth, the American becomes convinced that he is really alive.<sup>6</sup> The Briton—who never questions his existence as long as he follows tradition or the rules of class behaviour—does not need, like, or get steak.<sup>7</sup>

Their gnawing doubts whether they “are anybody”

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<sup>5</sup> The superiority of the British in this and all other respects is easily (and frequently) proved by comparing the average American factory worker with the average honours graduate of Eton and Oxford. The average American never seems to possess the culture and poise of the British social and intellectual élite.

<sup>6</sup> In the South, and other poor regions of America, Coca-Cola is a substitute for food.

<sup>7</sup> That is one reason why Britain can afford rationing, and Americans cannot.

thus lie at the root of the personality problems of Americans. At the level of surface behaviour, this results in that distinctively American way of life under which Americans feel they are competing with every other American. This comes about because the American needs recognition from others before he can feel he really is somebody. There being no cultural, traditional or class standards—from the upholding of which the American can get self-appreciation—he can only gain recognition and measure his successfulness by competing well against other Americans who were born the same time he was.

Owing to the notorious lack of standards in America, this competition is merely quantitative. Life for an American is an endless race to accomplish numerically more—no matter what—than the millions of others of his own age. That is why Americans never stop rushing and why they have the un-British habit of “doing things.” Doing things serves a clear-cut function for Americans.

Once this basic concept is understood, one can account for the many queer actions every Englishman<sup>8</sup> knows take place in America. It is well known, for example, that Americans deal only in numbers representing real things or in concrete objects representing numbers. They respect nothing else.

To have a lot of money, for example, is considered a

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<sup>8</sup> Especially those who have *not* been to America, and who can therefore see a wood without any trees.

good thing in America. Americans are even known to feel happy if they are given several hundred-dollar bills. This is the main reason why Americans completely ignore economic science; why, for instance, they refused to do anything about their post-war inflation. They wanted to have bills of large denominations in their pockets. They did not care what goods they could get with them.

Even beauty is statistically measured in America. Amplitude and plentitude, tenuousness and sinuousness, are "plotted." The lines, or curves, of Jane Russell have made her the most beautiful girl in her age-group. When Americans want to say a girl is pretty, they shun poetic imagery and say, "She's a perfect 36!"<sup>9</sup> One frequently overhears an American man saying to another: "Who was *that pretty number* I saw you with last night?"

Englishmen do not always understand the American quest for numerical certainty. They are often shocked by Americans who respond to a politely vague invitation to "come to dinner some time" by asking "When?"

Unlike the British—who devised the rules for cricket so that matches could end without either side winning—Americans want to be sure what goes on. They want to know who wins and "what the score is."<sup>10</sup> They even

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<sup>9</sup> No one could ever think of applying this term to the average British girl.

<sup>10</sup> This may be related to the fact that Americans never have to play the Australians at cricket.

plan, build, name and number their streets consistently. This is rightly regarded as unimaginative in England, where half the streets are named High Street, a quarter are not named at all, and the rest given names in duplicate—so that going to dinner at a friend's house is a quiz or puzzle rather than an occasion for eating. (*See Eat, American Tendency to.*)

Because they must compare their accomplishments with those of others in their age-group, Americans are extremely sensitive about their age. They alone, of all peoples, take great pains to conceal it. That is because the degree of accomplishment which puts one in the lower quarter of one's own age-group would, if one were thought a year younger, put one almost at the head of the list. Americans make intense efforts to appear younger than they are. The shrill, boisterous, adolescent behaviour which frequently makes Europeans say "Americans behave like children" is, in fact, a purposeful disguise. The shrewd Americans hope it will lead others to think that they really *are* children.<sup>11</sup>

American women make Amazonian efforts to falsify their age.<sup>12</sup> When American women get beyond the age at which it is still decent for men to flatter them about

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<sup>11</sup> Americans are always hostile to those of their own sex from lower age-groups who overtake them. This accounts for the peculiar American detestation of Mickey Rooney and several other child stars, so dear to British film-goers.

<sup>12</sup> No such action by Englishwomen has been publicly recorded.

their youth, they turn to self-flattery, and call themselves collectively "the girls." American men of the same age tell their wives on returning home that they have been "out with the boys."<sup>13</sup> American men also flatter younger women by calling them "Baby" or "Babe," and the woman reciprocate by saying, "How's the boy?" to men.<sup>14</sup>

Americans compete not only individually but by families.<sup>15</sup> This has already been discovered by one acute British observer who has described how, except in Texas,<sup>16</sup> American parents prefer to have their children eat a lot and get higher marks in school than other children.<sup>17</sup>

The major form of social competition in America,

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<sup>13</sup> This is not always true; in fact, seldom.

<sup>14</sup> Americans always call each other by their Christian names immediately after meeting, to preserve the fiction of nursery youthfulness.

<sup>15</sup> The Americans in the "lower classes," unlike the poorer people elsewhere, compete for the highest total of children. Consequently, the birth of the Dionne Quintuplets caused quite a stir in America. It did not, of course, in England—where everyone knew something like that would happen once Canadians were given self-determination.

<sup>16</sup> Few European social analysts go to Texas. The customs there are not conducive to research. It is one of the few States where it is legal to shoot a man who takes out one's wife.

<sup>17</sup> It is quite otherwise in England.

however, is the party, the cocktail party, or the dinner.<sup>18</sup> Here the competition is also numerical, the object being to feed the guests larger amounts of food and drink than other hosts do. Such parties—which account for the notorious vulnerability of the Americans to ulcers, stomach trouble, high blood-pressure and other ailments—are reported in the local newspaper the next day. The reports list the total food and liquor consumption, and the ten guests with the highest total food and liquor consumption during the evening.

Such parties serve a manifold purpose for the development of the American personality. They enable the host to compete with other hosts, the guests to compete with other guests, and everyone to spend the time between courses or drinks conversationally “feeling out” the others to see how much they have accomplished, what their age is, and how much they can eat.<sup>19</sup>

For the American must not only rush his life away by

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<sup>18</sup> Americans have no gift for conversation. (*See Conversation in America, Dearth of.*) So in self-defence, they have invented many kinds of parties to take up the conversational slack: hay-rides, strawberry festivals, progressive dinner parties, reactionary dinner parties, treasure hunts, come-as-you-are parties, stay-where-you-are-and-we'll-come parties, etc.

<sup>19</sup> Cocktail parties are not regarded as places to exchange opinions on weighty public or professional subjects, as they are in England.

competing in "doing things." He must also keep track of all the other Americans of his own age group, and what they are accomplishing.

That is why Americans always talk with strangers and strike up conversations in trains, which every proper Briton knows were meant to be ridden in, not talked in. Everyone is a potential competitor. Therefore Americans must talk to everyone.

Their need to "check up on" other Americans ends in everyone in America knowing almost everyone else. That is why it is permissible to ask any American one meets whether he knows one's cousin Ethelred in Deep Gulch, Arizona. If Ethelred is in the American's age-group, the odds are he does.

This introductory survey shows that the American leads a purposeful, self-conscious, hectic, and unenviable life. He is so rushed in competing, and so busy trying to find out how to conduct his life, that he never has time to live it. He is always taking photographs, in the hope that at some future date he can go through his photograph album and see what his life was all about. What a huge photo album, or vast film, kept from an American's birth, would consist of can be gauged from the brief genetic view of an American's early years which follows.

When English babies are lying damply and lazily in their prams, learning to talk (or not), American infants have already been thrust into that competitive struggle with their coevals which they must wage for the rest of their unnatural lives.



When English children are earnestly and thoughtfully acquiring the general and technical knowledge for which their eager minds thirst, Americans are being forced into parties, contests, "extra-curricular activities"<sup>20</sup> and games of "spin-the-bottle."<sup>21</sup> While English youths are conducting tentative, and gentle, courtships in cinemas, under hedges, in parks, or in pubs, Americans tear wildly from date to date, dance to dance, car to car, city to city, and bed to bed. When, his mate chosen, his life's routine mapped out, the Englishman contentedly relaxes into monogamous matrimonial monotony, the American is still at it—trying to out-drink, out-work, out-eat, out-smoke, out-love and out-live all his contemporaries.

After a few years' practice, taking away toys from his mates, trying to drink their milk, and hitting them over the head when displeased,<sup>22</sup> the American child passes into school. By then, he is well trained in the pattern of competitive and numerical materialism. Ignoring the

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<sup>20</sup> Extra-curricular activities: sports, clubs, games, school newspapers, magazines, etc., which take up the time of American children at school, and prevent their developing a taste for the leisure-time reading of Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, etc. (*See Culture, American—Lack of.*)

<sup>21</sup> A so-called "kissing-game," or forcing device, to make young Americans sex-conscious; it is usually taught by their parents.

<sup>22</sup> Only American babies are aggressive. (*See Aggression, American, Distressingly Widespread Existence at All Ages of.*)

reading, writing, arithmetic, and other academic subjects, which are taught largely for form's sake,<sup>23</sup> he plunges, as he is expected to do, into the many activities and contests<sup>24</sup> which form the important part of American school life. Unable to relax in the comfortable certainty that by the time he is twelve or thirteen the type of education he can receive will be definitely settled,<sup>25</sup> he is often forced to wait until he is eighteen before his parents and teachers feel qualified to make a final decision about his ability.

In the rugged competition of the American schools, the weaker may fall by the wayside early. Children who win too few contests; children who fail to get enough Valentines on St. Valentine's Day; girls who do not have enough "Coke-dates" (*see below*); highschool boys who are not suspended from school several times for smoking or for driving a car without permission—all these leave school early, their chances to enter the American élite badly crippled.

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<sup>23</sup> And to impress prospective European immigrants. (*See Chapter III.*)

<sup>24</sup> Success in contests is also numerical. It is measured not by *which* distinctions are awarded each child but by *how many* he gets. A child voted the least likely to succeed, the homeliest, the biggest pest, the one who wears the most tattle-tale grey shirts (or dresses) and the one the class would least like to be with on a desert island, is much more successful and sought-after than a child who collects only three titles: handsomest, most likely to succeed, brightest.

<sup>25</sup> As he could in Britain.

The swift who are still in the race must keep going. Running rapidly, in order either to advance or merely to keep their old places, they find themselves at the age of seventeen or eighteen in what the Americans call "college."<sup>26</sup> After swallowing goldfish, joining Greek-letter societies,<sup>27</sup> going to lectures, accompanied by swing-bands, and destroying college property, the most vigorous finally emerge with a B.A. degree and a better chance of living in suburbia than most Americans.

Sex in America can never be the lovely and uninhibited expression of tender emotion it was meant to be. For Americans, sex is not sex. It is only another way of vying with their equals, competing with them—and trying to outdo them.<sup>28</sup>

The anomalous American introduction to sex, called "dating," revolves in its early days around a curious American institution called the "drug-store." Although they have had before them for centuries the example of that superior meeting-place for people of *all* classes in

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<sup>26</sup> Or sometimes, with typical American exaggeration, University: thus, Harvard University, Yale University. (*See Exaggeration, American, Prevalence of.*)

<sup>27</sup> Often the only Greek symbols ever seen in American universities.

<sup>28</sup> So deep-rooted is the American admiration for numerical success that a man who has had affairs with many women, although sometimes publicly referred to with disapproval, is profoundly respected by his fellows. This type of ambition, respect and hero-worship is unknown in Europe.

Britain, the pub, the Americans obstinately cling to the "dry" drug-store as their one social centre.<sup>29</sup>

Drug-stores maintain their enormous size and popularity in American life because sooner or later, everyone shows up in one. There is no better place for the perpetually self-measuring Americans to learn what their neighbours are doing and how they "stack up against them." Many Americans devote one day a month to the drug-store. Time passes quickly, for, besides comparing themselves with other people and getting information from the soda-fountain clerk, Americans can eat any and all meals, drink (not alcohol), read the books, test alarm clocks, listen-in, prod pressure cookers, swallow aspirins, make telephone calls and write post-cards.<sup>30</sup>

So when young Americans, against their own inclinations, are pushed into making appointments with members of the opposite sex (*i.e.*, dating), they naturally begin the process at their neighbourhood drug-store. Since most of the things needed (or wanted) on a date are sold here, drug-stores play an all-important part in American social life, even when its pattern has widened

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<sup>29</sup> A good example of American contrariness. Although all Americans (except prohibitionists) drink too much, their drug-stores are not licensed to sell liquor at the soda-fountain. In some States, they may sell it in bottles, which must then be taken away and consumed elsewhere.

<sup>30</sup> The more modern drug-stores have swimming-pools and ski-jumps.

from "Coke-dates" to the movies, dancing, parties and week-end trips to Atlantic City.<sup>31</sup>

So hot is the pace of American life that few young Americans dare to wait until marriage to experience sex relations.<sup>32</sup> Caught between the remnants of a Puritan tradition and their competitive needs, they have devised a sex-compromise, variously known as necking, petting, "smooching," "pitching woo," and so on. This unusual procedure is an abbreviated form of love-making, although it is not correct to call it (as exasperated visiting Europeans have done) merely "another damn American labour-saving device."<sup>33</sup> Depending on the zest with which its practicers pursue it, it passes over, sooner or

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<sup>31</sup> Similar in content and purpose to a week-end at Brighton.

<sup>32</sup> For fear some of their age-mates will jump the gun and beat them to it.

<sup>33</sup> Necking (to use only one of its many terms) may take place anywhere—in the movies, in the park, on the back porch. The most popular place is an automobile (*see Automobiles, American, Large Size of*) parked in a country lane generally known as "Lovers' Lane." (*See Standardisation, American.*) It is customary for adolescents to attach large glare-flashlights to the front of their cars and cruise up and down these lanes, startling and counting the neckers. Towns frequently have contests with each other, based on how many neckers appeared in their town (and immediate environs) during the summer months. The numerical competitiveness is seldom absent for long.

later, into that kind of lovemaking which can be recognized by Europeans.

As Europeans know, Americans of both sexes are poor lovers. They bring to love-making, as to all other activities, two qualities only: energy and speed. Admirable as such qualities are in turning out unwanted consumer goods (*see* Industry, American), they are not adequate substitutes for the gloom which is so necessary for successful love-making.<sup>34</sup>

The chief inhibitory factor in all American sex-relations is that Americans of both sexes are always too self-aware, too terrified that they are not doing as well as their age-mates. This fear finds concrete expression in concern about the "date-rating score."

At twelve or thirteen, when he (or she) has his (or her) first date, the American child is initiated into the "date-rating system." From then on, in lieu of identity cards, Americans carry small, individual date-rating cards, and keep their scores up to the minute. The scoring-table is posted in various public buildings (like post offices). It is seldom, however, referred to, since most Americans have the schedule memorized by the time they have been dating for a year or so. An abbreviated version of the scoring-table appears on the opposite page.

To obtain a marriage licence in most American States, a minimum date-score is required. Since to be

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<sup>34</sup> And so characteristic of love-making in Britain.

DATE-RATING SCORE TABLE<sup>35</sup>

ACTIVITY	SCORE
"Coke" and talk (afternoon) .. ..	0.5
(evening) .. ..	1.0
Movies, food/drink, talk (after 6 p.m.) ..	2.0
(before 6 p.m.) ..	1.5
Dancing, food/drink, talk .. ..	3.0
"Late date" (a) .. ..	4.0
"Late date" (carried to breakfast) ..	6.0
Flowers, candy or present employed ..	Negative (b)

(a) *Late date*: A date which takes place *after* the last publicly scheduled date of the day.

(b) It is considered quite permissible to send flowers, candy, or a present, but—depending upon what is sent—a certain amount must be subtracted from the point score.

permitted to marry young<sup>36</sup> is considered a mark of great distinction, most Americans put in the major part of their adolescent years accumulating high scores, instead of in more (intellectually) stimulating pursuits.

Most Americans—numerical, quantitative and repetitive as ever—like to marry as often as possible. Considerable ill-feeling exists toward individual States which have deliberately made divorce easy (in order to

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<sup>35</sup> This table is much abbreviated. To keep one's card accurately (and one's competitors are vigilant to see that one does), many complicated mathematical calculations are necessary.

<sup>36</sup> That is, to have a high date-score.

allow their inhabitants to get higher scores with less effort). Some States have retaliated by refusing to recognize these easy divorces (and the scores, too). The agitation for a uniform divorce law for the entire country is usually started by reformers from the less-privileged States, who object to the unfair discrimination.

But marriage in America, unlike marriage in other countries, does not mean that one has reached a quiet harbour. Far from it. In America, problems merely begin with marriage (*see* The American Family). Nor does the competitive need to excel disappear. To some extent, it is switched into other channels than sex. But not entirely. Many Americans, not satisfied with their pre-marital date scores or simply unable to free themselves from old habits, continue grimly and determinedly along old paths. (*See* Adultery, American.)

It is not to be thought, from this, that Americans are immoral. They are not; at least, no more so than other people. Their lapses come not from lust but from lack of self-assurance; not from lasciviousness but from loyalty to the American competitive system.

The saddest part about the sex-life of the Americans is that they do not enjoy it at all. They would probably like nothing better than to live in England, where the minimum of such activity is expected.



II

THE WAY THEY WORK



*“ . . . visualize the scientifically efficient factory of the American business combine . . . producing in enormous quantities standardized commodities of respectable quality . . . designed to satisfy, in the main, merely the animal instincts of self-preservation, the desire for common pleasure, and the greed for power.”—BEATRICE WEBB: My Apprenticeship.*

*“ . . . the productive capacity of the boot and shoe industry was raised to three times what the country could have absorbed if every American bought all the boots he or she could fairly need.”—D. N. PRITT: Star Spangled Shadow.*

WHEN they look down on America's hectic industrialism (knowing that the American, no matter how rich, is rather to be pitied than envied) Europeans are grateful that Americans, and not Europeans, are the wealthiest people in the world.

Americans produce so much that, besides the competitive race, their life is a frantic race to consume what they produce. Europeans know that Americans, in gaining their wealth, have become as culturally barren and impersonal as the machines they operate.

The average American is drowning in a sea of standardized abundance. He must thrash and kick his life away, consuming and wasting, to keep his head above the suffocating flow of shining luxuries and gadgets that pour from the *laissez-faire* industrial system.

What worries Europeans is: How long will America remain the strongest and wealthiest country? Will she use her power to force others to assume this rôle? Will it one day fall to the lot of Britain to replace America?

One can reassure such pessimists. Americans will go on having the wealthiest economy for some time; they have made a virtue out of their adversity. Generations of corruption by wealth have led them to believe it is a good thing to produce and consume as much as possible. Moreover, the average American, burning himself out consuming as much as possible, is periodically cheered by kindly European forecasts that American prosperity cannot last, and that bigger and worse depressions will come along and give him the relief of austerity.

To understand how Americans let themselves be bamboozled into becoming the wealthiest nation, one can only turn to European intellectuals, particularly Marxists. The truth one learns from them is that America was lost from the start, since it was *colonized without planning*. Without nationalized industries, a T.U.C., "work-

ing parties," and daily admonitions from some Central Office of Information, the early Americans could not fight against the laws of capitalist development. They became individualists. They began making up their own minds.

As European planners know, when people are given freedom of decision their depraved and baser instincts dominate. It was therefore natural that, when Americans began making up their minds, they should decide to want to be rich and to seek goods that satisfied their "animal instincts" and their "desire for common pleasure."<sup>1</sup> Without a plan and without paternalistic Fabian planners it was inevitable that Americans should compound this error by becoming in the course of time a nation of businessmen, where profits are made on coal mines; a nation where working men would rather face the bother of spending their own money than pay cigarette taxes and let government bulk-purchasers decide what is best for them to eat.<sup>2</sup>

Had there only existed in eighteenth-century Europe a sufficient surplus of retired trade-union leaders so that

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<sup>1</sup> This is not the case in England where the people buy coal to get slate, sausage to get bread, and beer to get water.

<sup>2</sup> Americans are so busy deciding what to spend their money on that they employ specialists to help make up their minds for them on problems not related to consuming. There are psychoanalysts for difficult cases; advice-to-the-lovelorn columns for romance problems; and newspaper gossip-columnists for problems of State. (*See Politics.*)

a planner might have been spared for America, that country would be an elysium today. The people would be too busy chasing raccoons for food to drive lewdly over-size automobiles. Indians would be breeding ponies for district officers and carrying on uninhibitedly for the benefit of anthropologists from the London School of Economics. Instead of listening to singing advertisements, Americans would spend their leisure creatively, reading (and filling in) forms in triplicate, as persons do in a society which is planned to make men realize their potentialities.

We must now turn to history to see how and why American industry got itself into the state which Europe's intellectuals say it is in.

#### EARLY AMERICAN CAPITALISM

Only a tiny minority of early settlers in America were English gentlemen (*see* Chapter III). None was a reader of *The New Statesman*. It was only to be expected that such degenerate types, confronted by a wild new world without rationing, should each turn to trade and manual labour and try to make a living for himself. Given this initial error, the rest of American history followed with the inevitability of Marxist certitude.

Once Americans turned to work and industry, the necessary result was the exploitation of red-Indians. What Americans call their "Old Deal"—their first commercial bargain—occurred on the site of Wall Street. There, the colonial capitalist swindled the Iroquois out

of Manhattan Island for twenty-four dollars worth of hand-coloured coupons.

Fresh from the England of Sir Robert Walpole, the later eighteenth-century settlers knew too well the prevailing standards of commercial and political honesty in the Old Country not to feel guilty about their own petty frauds. This guilt created tensions which could only be relieved by even greater wickedness. So neurosis combined with greed to drive Americans on to more advanced stages of capitalist development.

Up to this point Britain had tried to save Americans from corruption by wealth. She had taxed them with a planner's severity. She had prohibited the shipment of machinery (especially textile machinery) to America, where, the Cabinet felt, it would be dangerously close to raw cotton and other raw materials, so that sooner or later the combination might explode into a busy, profit-producing civilization. These laudable British efforts, however, halted in 1783 when Lord Cornwallis, his shirtless forces bled white by American souvenir salesmen, had to withdraw. Americans were left to learn for themselves the evils of wealth.

The Revolutionary War (as Americans call it) thus gave the colonial capitalists their initial advantage in wealth and power.<sup>3</sup> The money fleeced from immigrants

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<sup>3</sup> But, as has happened in every revolution *prior to 1917*, the leaders wanted power to pass not to the majority, who were fighting, *but to the minority—themselves.*" D. N. Pritt, *Star Spangled Shadow*, page 9.

and British soldiers gave the colonial industrialists their *economic* advantage. They seized *political* power by staying behind while patriotic Americans were out shooting Guards officers. Since 1776 the American capitalist class has never lost its grip. <sup>4</sup>

As the practice of robbing immigrants expanded, the businessmen of the eastern American seaboard required a more efficient customs organization to fleece the "green-horns" before they left their ships. "What our class needs," they hissed in their capitalist newspaper, *The Federalist*, "is a strong central government to organize the immigration industry in a business-like manner."

This clamour led to a second meeting of capitalists in Philadelphia, where the Founding Fathers devised the present American constitutional machinery for keeping the capitalist class in power. The misguided citizens ratified the new Constitution, and in the year 1787 the United States of America opened for business.

The immediate result was an improvement in the efficiency of fleecing immigrants. <sup>5</sup> The early 1800's are

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<sup>4</sup> Since that time there have always been some Americans with more money than others.

<sup>5</sup> The standing quarrel between New York and New Jersey, for example, as to which should pocket the swag from immigrants entering *via* the Hudson River, was quickly resolved when the federal government designated Ellis Island, in the bay between the two States, as a concentration camp for immigrants. Now that American capitalism has advanced far beyond the immigrant-swindling stage, the island is used for confining visiting British Cabinet Ministers.



therefore properly termed "The Era of Good Feeling" by historians. But the inherent contradictions of capitalism, discovered later by Marx, were not to be denied. Wealth increased fantastically. This—though unobjectionable <sup>6</sup> in a planned economy—is a sure sign in an unplanned one that depressions are inevitable.

The crisis came in 1837. The capitalists had been too efficient sucking money from the lower classes for two generations. For the first time Americans had no money, nothing to buy, and (worst of all) nothing to chew. Terrified mobs stormed the banks. Facing a snarling population, the capitalists took emergency action. They made Congress quickly pass a law offering *free land* in the West. All one had to do to get land under this law was to settle on it, run it, and ruin it (*see America, Shocking Erosion of*). It was about this time, too, that fast clipper ships were sent to China to get more immigrants.

#### THE GOLD RUSH OF '49 AND THE RISE OF THE MILLIONAIRE

Slowly the tottering economy righted itself. New money was pumped into the economic system as fast as it was taken from the incoming Chinese.

But it was the policy of free land that was most successful. Discontented citizens, wavering between a march on Washington and the prospect of free land, threw Nescafé and loaded dice into covered wagons and pointed their mules toward the setting sun. The early westward

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<sup>6</sup> If unlikely.

movement, though insignificant compared with the strap-hanging "Gold Rush" that followed, was swollen by hundreds of thousands of unfortunate Chinese for whom, once they had been fleeced, there was no further use in the East. At Ellis Island their money was stolen. In New Jersey, vacuum-cleaner salesmen took their shoes. In Pennsylvania, insurance salesmen got their spats. So these pathetic creatures were alternately swindled and thrust toward the frontier by the ruthless, peristaltic action of the capitalist system.

The need for more land to give away led the capitalists to force a war with Mexico in order to seize California. At first California was as unpopular with the migrating Easterners as Texas today. But late in 1848, while advanced Europeans were throwing manifestos at one another, an early Californian, one Captain Sutter, was peacefully destroying natural resources on a little plot near Sacramento when he accidentally discovered gold.

"*Gold! Gold in California!*" The glittering words carried East by pony-express thrilled farmers in Ohio and rack-renters in Boston. The Gold Rush of 1849 was on. *Gold!* Judges adjourned courts. Surgeons stitched up incomplete appendectomies. Congressmen even stopped talking and rushed to join the "Forty-Niners." *Gold!* Every man who could leave his wife left home.<sup>7</sup> *Gold in*

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<sup>7</sup> Those who couldn't tried to marry their wives to immigrant males. This may in part account for the notorious American rejection of *the immigrant father*, but not the mother, noted by Gorer in *The American People*.

*California!* Names had to be drawn from a hat to see who should stay behind and be President. The Gold Rush of '49 is the connecting-link between early colonial capitalism and the multimillionaires of today. It was a stampede in which wealth and power came to the least capable and to the most depraved.

The capitalists got a head start. They were standing round their stock exchange tickers when the famous "Gold Message" ("*What Hath God Wrought*") came in. Since only the wealthy could afford the train fare to St. Louis—then the end of the line—Eastern financiers reached that half-way mark weeks before the common people, who had to travel by wagon train.

West of St. Louis there were no roads or railways. To get to California along the notorious Santa Fé Trail involved crossing torrid deserts, torrential rivers, and icy mountain passes. It was a journey requiring courage, virility, and endurance, none of which the soft and wealthy Easterners possessed. (Even today—unlike European planners and bureaucrats—the American entrepreneur is neither imaginative nor bold.<sup>8</sup>)

Loaded down by heavy chrome watch-chains, the effete financiers fell perspiring by the wayside in places like Nevada and Oklahoma. Furious at the thought of missing the gold, they devised wicked schemes to rob the humble pioneers who, uncorrupted by wealth, came riding along later, courageously and innocently. The

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<sup>8</sup> On the other hand Europeans well know that he is pushing and aggressive. This is only a seeming contradiction. Actually it is very dialectical.

financiers formed bands to ambush the trustful travellers. Some raided wagon-trains from the hills. Others, capable of more subtle (and profitable) evils, set up snack bars, miniature golf courses, newsreel theatres, and so on, to fleece the "Forty-Niners."<sup>9</sup>

From St. Louis to California, the honest pioneers were skinned. By the time a few of them filtered across the skull-strewn desert into California, they were so disillusioned with the diabolical effects of gold-prospecting and wealth-seeking that they resolved not to touch a nugget with a ten-foot pole. Turning their backs on worldly activity, they became astrological mystics, poring over strange scripts and worshipping semi-naked blonde goddesses known as "starlets." That is why so many expatriate European intellectuals go into (more or less) retirement there.

#### THE FIRST SOULLESS CORPORATION

As millions of "Forty-Niners" ran that fabulous gauntlet of exploitation westward, the Santa Fé Trail saw fortunes (and precedents) made overnight. In the story of one of the great robber-barons, Cornelius Superchief, one can see the origin of that peculiarly American institution, the soulless monopoly corporation, and its concomitant evil, absentee ownership.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> And their daughters who were named Clementine.

<sup>10</sup> We quote from the capitalist historian, Fuzzey, whose text-book, "Brief Profitable Lives," is compulsory reading for American school-children, and staff members of the humour-magazine, *Time*.

“Cornelius Superchief, railway magnate and founder of the modern corporation, was born of poor but greedy parents in New York. In the race to California, Superchief could get no farther than Laramie, Wyoming, where he formed a band of businessmen-on-horseback. They dealt with the Forty-Niners’ money, horses, wagons, and women. To prevent any less ruthless member of his gang from leaving and ‘squealing’ (*i.e.* singing to policemen), Superchief put his organization on a proper legal basis, with the help of lawyers, and made it impossible for *any* member to quit.<sup>11</sup> All were made legally responsible for the action of any one gang-member. This was America’s first corporation.<sup>12</sup>

“After a year of prudent saving, Superchief controlled all wagons in the west. He then opened a wagon-train service, charging outrageous prices, the standard fee being a thousand dollars plus 80 per cent of all the money the passenger would make in California.

“This percentage-of-future-income kind of charge was soon copied by less inspired capitalists. It led to the present absentee-ownership situation, in which Eastern bankers control all the assets of the Far West,

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<sup>11</sup> “. . . the earliest pioneers were not independent . . . individuals, but an integral part of a social system from which there was no escape.”—D. N. Pritt, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Always called soulless, because it was composed of Americans.

including the Great Salt Lake, the prayer-mat used by Aldous Huxley, the Grand Canyon and Lana Turner.”<sup>13</sup>

#### THE CIVIL WAR AND THE ADVENT OF MODERN CAPITALISM

The “prosperity decade” of the ’fifties came to a close in June, 1858, when the number of pioneers passing over the Santa Fé Trail dropped sharply. Business slumped.

Alarmed, the capitalists ordered the government to take a census. It showed the entire population of Eastern America to be: three million slaves in the south; a few hundred unfortunates chained to government posts in Washington; and one man (Horace Greeley) stationed in New York by the capitalists to catch landing-lines from ocean vessels and tell immigrants “Go West, Young Man.” Everyone else had already moved West to California.

By a wily publicity campaign, the Santa Fé capitalists rescued their businesses by starting a Civil War.<sup>14</sup> Their

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<sup>13</sup> The fact that a successful financier has a chance of controlling Lana Turner is one of the reasons capitalism still appeals to young Americans, and even enlightened liberal Americans.

<sup>14</sup> Americans unfortunate enough not to have read European intellectual journals think the Civil War was fought to preserve the Union or to free the slaves. This is merely an example of the success of American advertising, on behalf of “the myth of capitalism.”

object was to set the slaves free so they, too, could go West and boost business along the Santa Fé Trail. This meant war, which was even more satisfactory, since the entire white population had to return East, along the same Trail, in order to fight.<sup>15</sup>

The Civil War prevented another depression, but it also created one more capitalistic contradiction, the solution of which led to the present assembly-line, mass-production economy. Putting everyone into one American army or the other introduced the hitherto exploited masses to standards of living higher than they had ever known. Some got meat to eat twice a week. Some were even given boots. It became obvious that, after the war, the working class would no longer work for sweated wages.

Anticipating the need for a substitute for cheap labour, the capitalists, while the masses were fighting, combed the world for labour-saving machinery. But to get their factories completely mechanized they needed time. So they prolonged the war by ordering the Northern generals to spin-out and botch things, and at war's end they insisted that the northern army police the South.

The capitalists could not invent the new machinery themselves. They were successful in mechanization and mass production because they got all the new inventions

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<sup>15</sup> It was especially satisfactory for the American Conservatives, who, like their opposite numbers in Britain, can only abide new ideas when there is a war to fight.

from the one country that has invented everything humane and up-to-date, from zippers and "peoples democracies" to double-decker buses and ice-cubes with holes in the centre: the home of planning—the Soviet Union.

Americans still disbelieve this. They do not see how it fits in with the fact that America was the first country to install modern assembly-line machinery. But the capitalist trick which enabled America to mechanize itself centres on a brilliant and hardy band of Stalinist geniuses who in 1865 escaped from the Czar's secret police on the pretence that they were going to an international intellectual congress. Instead they slipped away to an island off Siberia.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Here in the Aleutians they lived simply. Starting the day by inventing drugs like penicillin, they would relax at "elevenses" with confessions of Right-wing deviationism. Before lunch they would concentrate on physics, discovering relativity or nuclear reactors. Lunch itself was taken up with trifles like hot barber towels or traffic lights for six-way intersections. The afternoon was much the same: a book or two of Aristotle, or a Shakespeare comedy; then tea and confessions of Left-wing deviationism. In the evenings, sitting before their electronic camp fires, they amused themselves with teasers: *e.g.*, how to expand social services without raising taxes. Then, slipping their tousled heads on hair-restoring pillows, they would confess to ultra-Stalinist deviations from Stalinism, and sink into a sleep enlivened by Freudian images speaking Shavian dialogue.



American capitalists first heard of the existence of these early Stalinists from a Congressman who had been sailing near Alaska giving loyalty-tests to seals in Federal fisheries. That was in 1868. By that time the Stalinists had completed working drawings for every machine we know today, and many that we don't—yet. With indecent haste the Americans offered the Czar seven and a half million dollars for the Alaska territory. Not being in the vanguard of the proletariat, that monarch was easily led—and misled. He accepted.

By 1877, when the American masses returned from the South, the Northern capitalist factories were bulging with modern machinery. Only low-wage, machine-tending jobs were available to “veterans” accustomed to a higher standard of living than that with which they merely put up in the 'fifties. But what might have been an explosive class-struggle did not come off. Something terrible had meanwhile happened to the Common Man.

It was this:

Because the Generals had purposely “featherbedded” and bungled, the Civil War had been horribly bloody. The common people who fought in it were therefore suffused with guilt and shocked at how brutal and rapacious human beings can be under capitalism. In addition to the general guilt, Southerners felt specially guilty because they had lost the war and because they had called Lincoln “Honest Abe.” (Honest anything is a vulgar term in capitalist American society.) The Northerners felt specially guilty because they had won the war and

had mistreated Southern women.<sup>17</sup> Finally, both sides felt guilty about the assassination of Lincoln, because the assassin, Booth, came from a border State whose people had taken both sides at once.

As a result of this enormous sense of guilt at the sight of human behaviour under capitalism the masses were moved by only one desire: to stop being human beings.<sup>18</sup> When they saw that by tending machines they could become more like machines, and less like human beings, they thronged to the factories and offered to work on assembly lines for next to nothing. In this way began the feverish, over-producing, factory system which has swamped America with more standardized goods than its people have either the time or the energy to consume.

Not realizing the perils of over-production that lay ahead, the capitalists pressed on. Seeing the profitable psychological effect on the masses of Lincoln's death, they arranged to have Presidential assassinations almost as regularly as Presidential elections, "in the high Roman fashion." President Garfield was put away in 1881, and President McKinley (frequently praised as "the man who did more for American business than anyone else") was publicly assassinated in 1901. President Harding,

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<sup>17</sup> Southern women are so constructed that it is impossible to have any contact with them at all without mistreating them.

<sup>18</sup> Living in a capitalist-controlled culture, the other alternative (trying to be human beings in a planned society) did not occur to them.

also a Republican, died of food poisoning in 1923 under circumstances ambiguous enough to give quite a fillip to American industry.<sup>19</sup> Americans still believe that for high production at low costs, a good assassination is worth more than all the appeals of Sir Stafford Cripps frozen end-to-end.

#### AMERICAN CAPITALISM TODAY

From 1880 onward, by Presidential and other political assassinations,<sup>20</sup> the capitalists so stimulated the desire of Americans to operate machines in order to escape from being human, that they could not get them to stop. The capitalists had created a Frankenstein monster, and today America is merely reaping the grim harvest of overabundance shown by its early planlessness.

The tremendous wealth turned out by compulsory machine-operating simply pours forth from factories without cease. Americans, seeing a mighty wave of surplus chrome or cellophaned consumption goods looming over them, dare not waste a moment of consumption-time. If they did, surplus goods would pile up, the price-and-profit structure would collapse, and unemployment would soar.

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<sup>19</sup> The statement that there is no difference between the two major American political parties needs qualification. Both are pro-capitalist, but the Republicans produce more Presidents willing to die for industry than the Democrats. (*See* Politics.)

<sup>20</sup> Such as the hanging of Sacco and Vanzetti and the cremation of Sam McGee.

The average American today looks exhausted, not so much because he spends an average thirty to forty hours a week earning his high standard of living, but because he has to spend the other one hundred and sixty-eight hours frantically and desperately consuming: endlessly eating and drinking, or pacing up and down to wear out floor-coverings, or driving fast and ceaselessly through thick city traffic to wear out motor-cars or to dirty their white-walled tires.

Because it is essential to the system that Americans should over-consume, and because America has no cultural or traditional or class standards that count for anything, a citizen's prestige and social position is gauged by the numerical amount he consumes or wastes. And as this consumption, or waste, keeps America going, his patriotism is gauged the same way.<sup>21</sup>

Like everything else in America, consuming for reasons of prestige is a competitive matter. There are very rigid ethical standards of what is proper and what is improper over-consumption. Outright destruction is a form of waste that is considered unethical.<sup>22</sup> Deliberately

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<sup>21</sup> One of the reasons American civil servants are so frequently attacked and hounded by Congressmen is because they are paid much less than other Americans. Professors, school-teachers and other poorly-paid elements in America are in many States required to take oaths of allegiance, or loyalty, because of their suspiciously low consumption-level.

<sup>22</sup> This is not true in wartime, when moral standards fall in America, as in most countries.

to hack one's television set with an axe is definitely *not* playing the game. When America was young, it was permissible for a *nouveau riche* to gain prestige by lighting cigars with thousand-dollar bills or mortgages on the State of Connecticut. Today, this is deemed old-fashioned; almost ill-mannered.

Accordingly, the actual *amount* of wasting and consuming done by an American in the year is no longer the sole criterion of social position. The method, or kind, of consumption now sets the standard. In the 1920's, for example, someone discovered that the stock exchange was an easy outlet for one's income. This method was too good to be kept secret. The Wall Street crash of 1929 was the result of too many people wanting to lose too much money at the same time. The American Government consequently set up the Securities and Exchange Commission to supervise the stock-exchange and outlaw the easier forms of using up one's income.

For the achievement of social prestige, however, using up *money* is deemed inferior to the consumption and wastage of actual *goods*. Relative high or low marks for goods-wasting depend on the relative difficulty of actually consuming the goods: wearing out a bronze bird-bath, for example, brings much more social prestige than using up a pencil. Since *new* products are always being introduced in America, there can be no lasting American social distinctions.

The social anarchy this leads to in America can best be illustrated by the most recent shift in consumption-prestige ratings:

It appeared in 1949 as if the post-war rankings were fairly settled, and as if an orderly and stable class system might develop in America. Suddenly, in December, 1949, up from the depths of social obscurity popped a man from Minnesota with webby feet and a fin-like fungus all down his back. He had found a new and most difficult product to consume. He was the first person to use up one of those fountain-pens Americans make for writing under water. Since it required a lead desk and water-proof blotting-paper to do this, the man shot to the summit of the social scale. Everyone else dropped a notch.

#### THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

When Americans fall behind in their consuming, and surpluses *do* begin to accumulate, they must drop everything and build skyscrapers. These are the only buildings in which surpluses can be stored without taking up all the room there is in America.

This leads to cycles of "Boom and Bust," because dropping everything to build skyscrapers means that Americans have *less* free time to consume, and therefore even greater surpluses accumulate. Something of this sort occurred in the panic of 1929-32, when many large New York skyscrapers were being constructed.

The critical importance of consuming as fast as goods are produced has led to a unique form of class warfare in America.<sup>23</sup> At the top of the pile there are the leading

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<sup>23</sup> It has also led to the unique American fear and dislike of anything old. When Americans see an antique, they feel

capitalists—sixty families of them, as most Europeans already know. Thirty of these families are named Jukes, and the other thirty Kallikak. They control, between them, all the advertising agencies, news commentators and columnists (*see* Politics, American, Direction of), railroad shares, and modern art museums. They are thus far more powerful than the Government—as *all* Europeans also know. However, the sixty families are respected because they get more money than anyone else and must therefore consume more goods.

The middle class in America exists to provide lackeys for the capitalists. It is composed of persons who do not earn and consume as much as capitalists, but who pretend that they do, showing thereby that they are loyal.

All Europeans also know that both the upper and middle classes trample on the prostrate body of the American proletariat or working class. But one of the many reasons why Marxists—especially European ones—have not made any headway in America is because they have not understood the *real nature* of the American proletariat's misfortune. It is not that workers do not have enough to eat or drink or wear or consume in general, as used to be their lot long ago. It is that they are forced by the wicked upper classes to work themselves to a frazzle consuming *more than their fair share* of the burden of surplus goods. Also, the *real* class interest of the capitalists is now to *slow down* production. The bosses are

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guilty, believing it should have been consumed years ago. So they forthwith buy it in order to start using it up.

therefore constantly *whittling down the number of emotionally satisfying hours that workers can spend at machines or on assembly lines* and at the same time forcing the unwilling workers into smart shops and automobile salesrooms.

In the late 1920's, the capitalists tried to check the tide of over-production by hiring thugs to prevent workers from remaining at machines more than ten hours a day. The workers were able to resist these tactics by organizing trade unions, so the frantic capitalists had to go further. In 1937, one of the more energetic of them hired almost the entire Chicago police force to keep workers from operating machines in his plant on Memorial Day, a legal holiday. Several workers were killed in that struggle.

This began a full-scale industrial war. The workers employed the "sit-down strike" tactic, refusing to leave their machines, and refusing to spend and consume more than they had been accustomed to. The industrialists then gave in. But only for a while. Once the plants were operating again, the bosses began a reign of terror. Company detectives, working in the dead of night, sent employees anonymous notes containing dollar bills (known as "passing the buck").

Surpluses, however, continued to mount above consumption. Finally the capitalist "individualists" had to ask the Government to intercede in order to preserve the private enterprise economy. President Roosevelt, in a brilliant compromise, re-established peace. He made the workers accept a Minimum Wage-Maximum Hour



Law. It limited the time they could operate machines, and required them to spend and consume a minimum amount of goods each week. He was successful in getting the workers to do this because, at the same time, he passed the Wagner Labour Relations Act, which ordered employers to desist from certain "unfair labour practices"—such as employing "labour spies" who in America creep up behind assembly-line workers and slip wads of notes, precious stones, etc., into the oppressed proletarians' overalls.

Despite the efforts of liberal magazines and European Marxists to arouse them (*see* Politics, American), the American workers continue to accept their unequal burden of the over-consumption effort. They do so with cheery fatalism. They know the truth of Disraeli's aphorism that every society has jobs which no one wants to undertake, but which must, after all, be done. They have been misled by capitalist propaganda into believing that to consume a lot is really a good thing, and that they are better off than their European comrades who do not have to consume and spend one-half or one-quarter as much.

#### LAISSEZ-FAIRE INDIVIDUALISM

Not a little of the American workers' acquiescence in their capitalist system is due to their uniting with all other Americans in a fanatical devotion to individualism, and an equally fanatical hatred of planning.

They prefer the anarchy that results from each man pursuing what he conceives to be his objects in life, to

the idea of working for the good of the whole which prevails, for example, in Britain. In their naïve way, Americans explain this by saying that everyone can work in his own way in America, and things get done; whereas in a country like Britain everyone waits for someone else to say what the common good is, and nothing gets done.<sup>24</sup>

But there are many subsidiary reasons why Americans dislike planning. First of all, it is not competitive enough for the American personality.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, many Americans subconsciously *want* another depression, so that they can have a rest from consuming.<sup>26</sup>

Another reason has to do with the ethics of waste. As already mentioned, while Americans admire waste, they do not admire it when it is over-easy. For that very reason, Americans refuse even to consider nationalization. They do not like State corporations to monopolize inefficiency. On the other hand, the privately owned American corporations—which must compete with one another to irreparably ruin natural resources, waste money and men's lives, and pass the cost on to the public by charging high prices—are considered perfectly ethical, even admirable.

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<sup>24</sup> One can see from this that Americans have been so corrupted by planlessness and wealth that they actually argue from the conviction that getting something done is a *good* thing.

<sup>25</sup> Americans would approve of planning if there could be lots of competing plans, preferably one for each American.

<sup>26</sup> That is why so many go on voting for the Republicans.

Americans often accuse Europe's Socialist planners of forcing human beings to behave as human beings were never intended to, in order to make them fit Socialist theories. Americans cannot believe that men were intended to spend most of their waking hours writing minutes criticizing other people's minutes from behind desks in some sub-section of a sub-division of some sub-department of some Government monopoly. They believe the way to live is to write memoranda in some sub-section of a sub-division of some sub-department of a *privately*-owned concern, so that someone doing the same thing in a similar concern which is less efficient at this game, will be forced out of work.

What Americans do not realize is that they are committing the very crime of which they accuse European planners. They have moulded their humaneness and reined-in their instincts to conform with the dictates of economic liberalism. Europeans have merely moulded themselves to conform with the dictates of five-year plans and Socialism.<sup>27</sup> The Atlantic Basin today is a dismal swamp studded with battered capitalist pots calling dented Socialist kettles black.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> And instincts have been extinct in England since the time of Charles II.

<sup>28</sup> Americans get far more personal freedom, since no one knows what economic liberalism really could be today. That is because it is based on sound, logical principles which unfortunately cannot be applied to contemporary humanity.

A good example of Americans trying to behave in conformity with *laissez-faire* capitalism is their travel and their railroads.

Americans always travel. They do so because the theory of economic liberalism requires the "labour force" to be mobile. Taking trips is felt to be a semi-religious obligation. Another incentive to travel is that it uses up resources. Still another is that Americans dislike one another so much<sup>29</sup> that they are never happy in one place for any great length of time.<sup>30</sup>

There are hundreds of privately-owned railroads in America—each with its own name, many of them colourful (*Delaware, Lackawanna & Western; Katy Line; Sioux Line; Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fé; Père Marquette; Rockfish and Aberdeen*, etc.). This private, un-

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Socialism, on the other hand, has no logical principles, a fact which permits every Socialist planner and politician to say that whatever he thinks ought to be done *at the moment* is Socialism.

<sup>29</sup> Partly because they take competition so seriously; for a further explanation of this dislike, see Chapter III below.

<sup>30</sup> The factors listed above account for 90 per cent of the annual passenger mileage in America. The other 10 per cent of the travelling is done by barefoot boys proceeding from their log-cabins to the White House, and by unsuccessful political candidates (and a few chronically misanthropic slum dwellers) who race one another to the log-cabins that have just been vacated. On all railroads in egalitarian America, log-cabin passengers pay only half-fare.

planned system satisfies Americans ideologically, but it is a bother for the traveller.

In travelling from Boston to Chicago, for example, the voyager need not leave his coach (or "car," as it is called in America); yet he travels over four or five different railways and must carry a long, perforated ticket composed of coupons for each separate bit of line. The stamina required to buy, carry, and correctly produce such a ticket on a journey across the continent is only a little less than that needed a century ago to make the trip on foot. Indeed, in the old days the traveller slept uninterruptedly each night at inns, or under the stars. But proliferation of private railway lines means that a new conductor has to board the train each time it enters the tracks of another Company, in order to punch his Company's coupon, or bit of ticket. As a result it is not uncommon for the traveller to be awakened three or four times a night and asked to lift all of his ticket down from the luggage rack and hand it to the conductor, who then has to find *his* part of it.

There is also the inconvenience of making connections. The passenger seldom needs to change from the main-line train to another serving the particular city to which he wants to travel. The American method is to unhook whole wagons or cars and leave each of them, with its passengers, for hours at the various junction stations, until they are coupled to the train of the minor railroad, which puffs off with them to the destination.

That this is not without its troublesome aspects is the moral of the famous "Judge Crater episode" of the 'twen-

ties. In this, a sleeping-car was unhooked from the Eastern Pacific & Alfalfa (one of the major transcontinental railroads) and left at Ames, Iowa, where it was to be picked up by a Drop-Forge & Tabernacle-Truss Line bound for Des Moines. For one reason or another, the sleeping-car was overlooked for exactly three years and two months. After a world-wide search (in which the Army and the Air Force covered thousands of square miles), the car was discovered. It was then hooked on to a DF & TT train and taken to Des Moines, as scheduled. However, when the DF & TT conductor went through the train collecting tickets, he found two boys who were a year too old to travel on the half-fare tickets they had bought at the beginning of their journey, and quite a few toddlers who had no tickets at all.

The parents refused to pay. The Company accordingly brought suit against them to recover the difference.<sup>31</sup> The parents brought a counter-suit, charging the Company with violating the Constitution by practising "involuntary servitude." The case went up to the Supreme Court to the accompaniment of great newspaper publicity. But when the Court convened, it was discovered that a *quorum* was not present. Six of the nine Justices had been misplaced by other railroads at junction points throughout the country *en route* to Washington. One of them (Mr. Justice Crater) has yet to be found. The others did not show up until two years later, by which

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<sup>31</sup> Drop-Forge & Tabernacle-Truss R.R. Co. *vs.* Mortimer *et al.*, 35 Kansas, 156.

time the Statute of Limitations made further proceedings impossible.<sup>32</sup>

Despite such occurrences, Americans continue to insist that railroads be privately owned, and—even worse—that they compete. This insistence on competition was even stronger in the middle 1800's, when the transcontinental railroads were being built.<sup>33</sup> It led to the building of railroads in such a way that today two, or even three, sets of lines belonging to different Companies run parallel.

In the North West, for example, two lines, the Grand Northern and the Petit Northern, run side-by-side for over eight hundred miles. Prodded on by the American demand for competition, the Companies require their engine-drivers to throw chunks of coal at the engine-drivers of the competing line. This does not benefit the Companies, but it is gratifying and reassuring to the passengers, most of whom are *laissez-faire* businessmen.

Only a year ago, in the celebrated Northern Railways scandal, two engine-drivers from those competing lines were discharged and given twenty lashes each by the capitalist Company Presidents for fraternizing: *viz.* setting up a board between their cabs and playing checkers as their engines sped along. The drivers were defended

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<sup>32</sup> See Zachary, H.H.: "The Supreme Court and the Truss Cases."

<sup>33</sup> This is where the pitiable Chinese immigrants come into the economic picture. (See "The Gold Rush," above.) They built the Western railroads.

by their union officials, who claimed that the transition from coal-heaving competitiveness to checker-playing competitiveness was an inevitable result of the inherent contradictions and rapid decay of the capitalist system. But public opinion was outraged. The drivers had to be punished.

The story of American business and industry is thus a Greek tragedy in which the early colonization of America, without planning, led *inevitably* to a purgatory of competitiveness, and finally to an inferno of feverish, compulsive over-consumption.

Today Americans are as far from any hope of improvement as they were after that famous scene in the White House, one murky afternoon in 1926, when Calvin Coolidge looked up over the large, gilt cash-register which is kept on every American President's desk, rang up a sale, and remarked with a leer to the man he had just made an Ambassador:

"The business of America is business."

Since these were the only words President Coolidge uttered that year, they were widely reported to, and repeated by, over-consuming Americans. In fact, they came to have almost a magical sound. Americans still love to hear those words repeated. They love to read them, too. Considerate European intellectuals, diplomats and delegates who visit America to help Americans solve their problem of under-overconsuming, consequently repeat these words to Americans with becoming frequency.

On a quiet evening in any city "in the vast counting-house which lies across the Atlantic" (as Dickens de-



scribed it), the low tinkle of householders greedily counting up their money is punctuated by crowds returning from cinemas, chanting ecstatically, with sepulchral commercialism:

*“The-bizz-nizz-of-America-izzbizz-nizz-the-bizz-nizz-of-America-izzbizz-nizz.”*



III

THE WAY THEY LIVE  
TOGETHER



WHY do Americans behave like Americans?

To Americans, this natural query seems unnatural. It can only be properly answered by examining their peculiar origins in infancy and childhood; hence, in the family; and hence (to be precise) in a peculiarly *maternal* physical environment. As every American originates in this peculiar maternal environment, it is far easier to explain why Americans behave like Americans than why, for instance, Germans behave like Germans.

As is well-known outside America, Americans lack souls. This makes them even simpler to understand. It makes them both simple and simple-minded. (Souls are notoriously correlated with complexity, and therefore with higher mental development.) It is therefore unnecessary to go below the surface to learn about Ameri-

cans, because most of them only live on the surface.<sup>1</sup> Being so simple and superficial, Americans thus create a uniform, superficial culture and civilization, based on standardization and mass production. They fear being different from their fellows. Consequently, few deviations from a standard pattern of family life ever occur.

The standard pattern of family life, as was said above, reposes upon the mother. The main features of the American scene are therefore those of a matriarchy.<sup>2</sup> From the high-chair to the bath-chair, from the bottle<sup>3</sup> to the bier, the country is dominated by women. In America, the female is the species.

It is true that in business, industry, finance, law, the armed forces, medicine, university teaching, the police force, architecture and politics, the American woman does not at present occupy the leading positions. But all this becomes unimportant when one considers what she *does* do: She gives birth to the men who largely control these things. Her dominant role in America is based on the fact that she gives birth to the child. This happens in other countries; for example, in Britain. But that is not the point. It is the *interpretation* of this fact of na-

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<sup>1</sup> A European can be compared with an iceberg, only one-seventh of which is visible, the rest being submerged. No part of any American has ever been known to be submerged.

<sup>2</sup> Hence such peculiar Americanisms as "the bosom of the family," "breastworks of civilization," and the even more illuminating economic process of "boom and bust."

<sup>3</sup> Milk.

ture which gives it importance in "*The American Way of Life.*"

In the beginning, America was a wilderness.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, no sensible, well-adjusted Europeans wanted to leave civilized, peaceful Europe for a wilderness. So the people who did go were an odd-job lot: defaulting debtors, people who liked Indians, men deserting their wives, wives deserting their husbands, couples deserting everyone else, and people who had heard that tobacco was cheap. But they all had two things in common. They all wanted to get away from some place. And they all wanted to get to the same place.

American standardization is therefore very old, as time is reckoned in America. It stems from two causes. First, all Americans obviously were alike because they all wanted to go to America. Second, when they got there, they had to remain alike in order to confuse the Indians. An Indian seeking revenge on the white man who had scalped his father-in-law (instead of his mother-in-law)<sup>5</sup> seldom could distinguish the guilty white man from any other white man. Safety obviously lay in being as much like one's fellows as possible. Even after the need had passed (*see* Indians, Disposal of), the pat-

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<sup>4</sup> Actually, America has been remarkably consistent in its development. Today, it is still a wilderness. *See* Barrenness, cultural—Chapter IV.

<sup>5</sup> The Americans share with the Indians a peculiar and unprecedented dislike for their mothers-in-law—due, no doubt, to the prevalent matriarchal order of American society.

tern of standardization remained. This accounts for the fact that all American men eat the same food, drink the same liquor, wear the same clothes, and make passes at women forty-one minutes after they are first introduced to them.<sup>6</sup>

Once in America, the immigrants naturally disliked it. They disliked each other even more. Being a stubborn lot, they refused to admit that they had made a mistake. So they stayed, a prey to mixed emotions—all aggressive. They hated the countries from which they had come, because these countries had permitted them to leave. They hated them, again, for not letting them go back. They not only hated the other immigrants, they had profound contempt for others clearly as silly as themselves. And they hated themselves for their own lack of intelligence.

In line with these aggressive feelings, the few Americans who could write<sup>7</sup> began to send long, glowing letters to people in Europe, describing their new land in exaggerated and inaccurate terms. (*See Exaggeration,*

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<sup>6</sup> Women make passes at men in approximately thirty-two minutes. This also has something to do with "Female, American, predominance of"—but as no European observer has yet published his findings on it, it is not possible to be more precise here.

<sup>7</sup> Vulgarly known as "the Scribes" as opposed to "the Pharisees"—two unique groupings of Americans which, under other names, have persisted to this day, *e.g.* high-brows and low-brows, introverts and extroverts, Republicans and Democrats, the elect and the electorate, lawyers and clients. *See also Lawyers, American, Strange Ubiquity of.*



American.) When these innocents arrived abroad, the Americans used to greet them at the docks, yelling: "One born every minute." The new immigrants thus entered the American spider-web of hatred and aggression. Almost everyone not born in America was enticed there by someone else, eager to make others share his misery. The very first settlers were enticed by explorers like John Smith, who in turn was lured by an American woman, Pocahontas—who had been there all the time anyway, and was tired of it.

So year after year America was filled with disillusioned immigrants who came expecting a land in which the streets were paved with gold. Instead they found only a land flowing with milk and honey. Many European observers must have had the experience of seeing an American in a bar turn to another American, say "I don't like your ugly mug" and—as the Americans say—"smash his face in." Some Americans resent this, especially if the attacker is a stranger. But if he explains as he hauls his victim to his feet, "You look like a Pole, and my great-grandfather came to Toledo because of a letter from his brother, who was a Pole," the other American is usually apt to be forgiving. After all, he himself is probably looking for the descendant of the French Huguenot whose prose seduced his own ancestors.

The early settlers soon discovered that this aggression was a dangerous thing. If carried to extremes, it might depopulate the country, and there would be no one left to lure new immigrants. So Americans began very early to hide their aggressions under cloaks of love, affection

and indulgence. Moreover, some of the settlers had retained bits and pieces of purely European culture, among them scattered fragments of the Bible. They were thus able to make Americans feel guilty about their own hatreds.

For both these reasons the Americans tried to act as they thought people *would* act if they *really* liked each other. Naturally, not liking each other at all, they tended to overdo it—hence the great surface friendliness, hospitality, generosity, heartiness, sociability and so on, which are popularly supposed to characterize Americans. These are simply the means of hiding from other Americans, and from strangers, the aggressions and hatreds which Americans *really* feel.

Full of aggression, milk, honey, Indian corn, tobacco, turkey, and guilt, the new arrivals looked around for something to do. They needed something which would take up their time and provide an outlet for their aggression. Luring immigrants was all right in its way, but it did not take up enough time. And after all, there was a limit to the number of immigrants who could be transported in any one year.

So the Americans transferred their hatred to the land itself. They tore down trees which had been peacefully growing for centuries. They stopped rivers from flowing home to the sea. They tore up prairie grasses. They let the winds and rains wash away the best soils. Wherever there had been something before, they either removed it or remodelled it. Where there had been nothing,

they put something—even if it was only an abandoned copper mine or a city of five million people.

Here is the core of the spirit of American capitalism;<sup>8</sup> here, the reasons for American activity—and, incidentally, superabundant energy. But the Americans soon became attached to their building, chopping and changing, forgetting the reasons why they had embarked on these tasks in the first place. Zealously they erected log cabins, made beaver hats, hunted buffalo,<sup>9</sup> brewed corn liquor and bred jumping frogs.

They produced so much in a short time that the goods began to crowd the settlers out of the country. This led to the forced consumption which is an integral part of the American culture and which impinges on the child from the hour of his birth. (*See Industry.*) And it also led to the other fundamental fact of American society: its domination by women.

From the beginning, American men found themselves very busy. (they still are, and will probably always be

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<sup>8</sup> What grew from this core has been described in Chapter II above.

<sup>9</sup> A native American animal, once nearly extinct. The Americans, feeling guilty about its near-extinction and the near-extinction of the Indian (*see* Indians, Disposal of), have commemorated both in a single coin, the "buffalo nickel." This coin, worth about three-pence, has a buffalo stamped on one side and an Indian head on the other. This is an example of an early American labour-saving device.

busy.) They were therefore too busy to write letters to entice immigrants; and they were unable, anyway, to bear children. Immigrants and children were needed to share the unfortunate fate of people already in America and to consume what American men were producing (*see* preceding Chapter). If the women had refused to write the letters and/or to bear the children, American civilization would have come to a dead stop. It would never have started. The women knew this. The men soon learned. They surrendered unconditionally to the women. And the latter have run the country ever since.

One would not expect, under these circumstances, to find egalitarian marriages which are genuine partnerships between husband and wife. Nor can there be any doubt who runs the American home. It is not, however, correct to say that the American male performs a rôle analogous to that of the male spider. The American man does *not* die after sacrificing his time and pleasure in performing his relatively unimportant function in the begetting of the child. But since his other functions, in addition to the breakneck consuming of goods, consist largely of making a living, mowing the lawn, drying the dishes, taking the dog for a walk, beating carpets and getting drunk, it is no exaggeration to say he might just as well be dead.

The American woman *is* America. She performs all the important functions in American life. She not only gives birth to the children; she supervises their up-

bringing,<sup>10</sup> does the cooking,<sup>11</sup> cleans the house, drives the family car<sup>12</sup> and so on. In short, she does everything of major importance in American life except the things already noted. In other words, women do *not* occupy the leading positions in business, industry, finance, law, the armed forces, medicine, university teaching, the police force, architecture, politics, religion, etc.

Naturally, the American man is strongly and constantly repressing his inner rebellion against this domination by women. He particularly resents his wife, who both dominates him and does not understand him. The clearest proof of this is the American man's violent pursuit of *all* women whenever he is away from home.

In reality, the war permitted American men to be

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<sup>10</sup> Everyone in Europe knows that American children are badly brought up. This is because their parents bring them up themselves instead of using nannies and boarding schools.

<sup>11</sup> Men are occasionally permitted to help with this on special occasions like Sundays and holidays; also to do the simpler things, like making breakfast for their wives in the mornings. All breakfasts have to be simple in America—so that men can make them, of course.

<sup>12</sup> Very often, in the movies, the man will be shown driving the family car. American men do sometimes get to handle the family car (as distinguished from police cars, trucks and other cars used in the line of business). But all the interesting driving is done by the women: taking the children to school, driving from shop to shop, and so on.

free and happy in other lands and with other women for the first time in their lives.<sup>18</sup> They were therefore—as is well known—extremely reluctant to get back home. Seen in this light, their constant expressions of homesickness, their constant display of pictures of mothers, sweethearts, wives and children, and the riots among troops *ostensibly* clamouring to be returned to America, take on a new meaning. These were actually symbolic of deep—almost pathological—feelings of guilt, caused by the knowledge of their own lapses, *vis-à-vis* their homes, their families, and above all their women.

Americans have children by the same process that Europeans use. But, as has been explained, they have them for entirely different *reasons*. They consequently feel quite differently about them and toward them.

Americans have children in order to make more people undergo life in America, to provide consumers for the products of capitalist enterprise, and to outdo their neighbours (*see* Chapters I and II). Their feelings toward their children are therefore a curious compound. They love them because the children will share the burden of consumption with them. So they naturally love most the child who consumes the most. They also love the child successful in other competitive fields—*i.e.*, the one who does the most of *anything*. They hate them for being unintelligent enough to get themselves born in the American wilderness. And they feel guilty

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<sup>18</sup> Besides, they could make higher “date-rating scores” abroad. (*See* Chapter I.)

toward them for having made them Americans and for not loving them enough.

Accordingly, American parents habitually over-indulge their children, in order to compensate for their ambivalence toward them (*i.e.*, mixture of love and hate). Parents in America are never able to give their children what the children most crave: real love and a surcease from constant consumption.<sup>14</sup> Instead, they give them things the child does not prize at all: toys, books, dolls, dump trucks, Meccano sets, rocking horses, bicycles, roller skates, footballs, baseballs and musical mugs.<sup>15</sup>

The American child is thus insecure from birth. He realizes from the beginning that his parents cannot really love him, and that they can only half-heartedly

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<sup>14</sup> American parents further feel guilt at the thought of *what* they feed their children in the early months. That is, milk—and often, milk and honey. But there is so much milk in America that it must be disposed of, and obviously no one would drink it if he hadn't become used to the taste very early in life. So American parents really have no choice. Hence the gross overfeeding of milk to children *and* adults in America.

<sup>15</sup> The passion of Americans (of all sexes) for musical things—musical mugs, cigarette boxes, powder boxes and less mentionable objects—is interesting but difficult to understand. It is not to be confused with an interest in music. Americans never listen to the tunes played by these musical gadgets, especially since they all play the same ones. The gadget is the important thing.

love him if he is a successful consumer from the beginning and successful *numerically* in other things later on. So he suffers from marked feelings of inadequacy throughout life. Americans seldom have a real sense of personal worth, as Europeans understand the term.<sup>16</sup>

American children already suffer from grave feelings of guilt caused by repressed aggression. The aggressive feelings begin when, on opening his mouth to utter his first cry, the child finds himself being fed. They deepen when he hears his mother's voice, trained for presiding at meetings of women's clubs. By the time he sees his father chewing gum, the baby's life-long pattern has been set: insecurity, feelings of inadequacy, rejection of the past,<sup>17</sup> hostility and guilt.

In these early weeks, too, the child unconsciously learns the differences in status and function between the sexes in American society (*see American Children, Precociousness of*). In the hospital, he sees mainly the mother and the nurse. The father is kept out of the nursery by a plate of glass which anyone but an American father could, and would, break. (But women put it there!) If, as occasionally happens, the child is born at

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<sup>16</sup> Americans of all types, in their insecurity, demand constant reassurance of their own identity. Hence the abnormal demand for initialled articles of all kinds. Many wealthy Americans have small personal photographs on all their belongings.

<sup>17</sup> That is, of his parents. (For additional information on rejection of the immigrant father, *see Chapter II.*)



home, it usually takes him no time at all to understand the position of the male in the American society.

A grave problem is created in the American home by the fact that there are two sexes. So great is her guilt that the mother tends to over-indulge children of both sexes. But that is only part of the picture. As Freud<sup>18</sup> has so correctly said, there is an Oedipus situation which makes her strongly attached to her son. She is also jealous of her daughter, a potential rival for the love of the husband.<sup>19</sup>

However, the mother's tendency to indulge her son at the expense of her daughter is opposed by her knowledge of the rôle the boy must play later, and by her awareness of the important position of women in America. The mother, like most Americans in conflict about most things, is also constantly uneasy about her treatment of her children.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Freud, Sigmund: An Austrian psycho-analyst whose works are available in the collected edition in all American drug-stores, and some bookstores.

<sup>19</sup> This is the traditional Freudian explanation. In America, it is somewhat modified by the cultural pattern. Thus, the mother's real jealousy is less because of the daughter's rivalry for the father's love, and more because of the daughter's rivalry for the post of Madame Chairman at women's club meetings.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, American family life is at its worst when the family contains children of both sexes; better when the children are of the same sex; better still when there is an only child; and best of all when there is no family.

Naturally, the American boy has great difficulty in adjusting himself to the part he is expected to play. He often grows up without a clear understanding of his rôle. Marriage—in Europe often a shock to the young and inexperienced girl—in America proves a shock to the young man. He must adjust himself to an entirely new relationship. He often finds the honeymoon as well as the first year or eighteen months of married life very, very difficult. However, he receives constant advice and encouragement from his wife, his mother, his young grandmothers, his wife's mother, his schoolteacher (*see* Education, Prevalence of Female Teachers in), his sisters, his wife's sisters and—in some cases—from his mother's sisters and his wife's mother's sisters.

So most American young men *do* succeed in working out a fairly satisfactory adjustment to their marriage within the first year. Those who do not—and they are few—find a solution in completely abjuring relations with the other sex. Or else they openly admit their neurotic inability to adjust by marrying European women.<sup>21</sup>

The young American man is seldom left unprotected in his marriage. The mother still regards him as her son, and is often willing to take his part against his wife. However, the wise mother is aware that the sooner her son conforms to the accepted standards the better—the better both for him, and for her reputation as a suc-

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<sup>21</sup> With these, of course, entirely different kinds of relations are possible.

cessful mother. (The American man or woman is able to accept anything rather than failure.<sup>22</sup>) Should her son find marriage, without any outside relaxations, simply too great a burden to be borne, she encourages him to find outlets in such all-male activities as Elks, Lions, Buffaloes, Kiwanis, the International Order of Odd-fellows, and similar organizations.<sup>23</sup> The fierce animal names indicate compensation for the meek members.

Home life in America is not as great a strain as might be expected from the kind of relationships described above. That is chiefly because there is so little of it. Children are encouraged to go their own ways from very early ages. So manifold are the activities of all members of the family that it is very seldom they all share a meal. (*See* Competitiveness.) The few family activities in which all participate are: quarrelling for right of first entry into the bathroom;<sup>24</sup> arguing about

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<sup>22</sup> Because of their insecurity, Americans are entirely unable to accept failure in any form, even such a comparatively slight failure (to a more civilized European) as missing the eight-four train and being forced to wait for the eight-nineteen. The shrieks, stamps and groans—occasionally even tears—which even the most controlled Americans give way to on such occasions are highly revealing.

<sup>23</sup> Roaring the Lions' song, "I'm a Lion," at a cheery eight o'clock breakfast, surrounded by men and by gallons of milk, the American man often finds release from the tensions of married life.

<sup>24</sup> In those rare instances in which the home contains only one. (*See* below, this Chapter.)

the right to use the car;<sup>25</sup> debating with the mother about spending money,<sup>26</sup> and over-eating together and giving presents on holidays.

American holidays are eccentric. The most important ones are: the mother's birthday; Mother's Day; the birthdays of the female children; Washington's birthday;<sup>27</sup> Lincoln's birthday,<sup>28</sup> Labour Day (the symbolism here is obvious); Thanksgiving; Christmas; New Year's Day; and Groundhog Day.

Christmas, now an almost forgotten religious festival (*see* Religion in America, Lack of Importance of) becomes a vast day of atonement. Americans use the device of Christmas not only to expiate to their children for not indulging them enough, but also to expiate to one another for hating one another so bit-

<sup>25</sup> This takes place every evening in families with adolescent children. The father argues for decency's sake and the look of the thing, since his defeat is a foregone conclusion.

<sup>26</sup> The father's one responsibility is to make money. The mother and the children accept all the responsibilities of disposing of it.

<sup>27</sup> The real tribute here is to Martha Washington, George's wife, not to the so-called "Father of his Country."

<sup>28</sup> Two women are involved here, Lincoln's mother and his wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. Lincoln's first love, Ann Rutledge, receives little attention. She is, in fact, held in some disrespect, since she so far deviated from the general pattern of American womanhood as to die before Lincoln did. American women do not consent to die before their men-folk.

terly.<sup>29</sup> Hence the orgy of gift-giving, parties, drinking and so on—none of which Americans can be said to enjoy.

Gift-giving is very popular in America, because it allows the people to engage in their three most necessary activities: consumption, competition and expiation. As a result, Americans make one another presents on all possible occasions and on some impossible ones. Americans have been known to give escalators to Channel swimmers and cigars to men who have not become fathers.

It will be seen that there is little to knit the modern American family together. The bonds of affection are weak. Families share few interests—though each member of the family is usually interested in club activities, the movies, radio programmes, baseball, football, food, drink, and the lives of the people next door.

In a typical American family, the father rises first. He makes breakfast, brings his wife her breakfast in bed, and calls the children to theirs, before leaving for work. The children go their separate ways without seeing each other.<sup>30</sup>

The mother finally gets up about ten o'clock. She

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<sup>29</sup> They also compete vigorously to see who can give—and get—the most presents, attend the most parties and, of course, eat and drink the most. And, of course (again), high consumption and “conspicuous waste” are greatly advanced.

<sup>30</sup> It is not considered wrong for them to greet one another, should they meet outside the bathroom or on the front steps.

cleans the house<sup>31</sup> and goes into town to meet a friend for lunch. This friend is generally another female of her own age, so they can compare notes on their competitive accomplishments. (For deviations, *see* Adultery, Female.) She then attends club-meetings (*see* below), plays bridge, or buys useless objects to help the family's consumption effort.

In the evenings, she and her husband may entertain friends;<sup>32</sup> or they may go to visit their own friends. On these occasions, husbands and wives seldom address a word to one another during the entire evening, unless they should have the misfortune to be partners at bridge, in which case the words are seldom terms of endearment.

Most of the time and energy of American women is taken up by women's clubs. These offer excellent opportunities for the women to indulge in competition: in the number of clubs to which they belong, the number of activities (within each club) in which they participate, and the number of offices they hold.<sup>33</sup>

The power of these clubs in America is based on the fear American men have of their women. American men

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<sup>31</sup> This seldom takes more than twenty minutes, since all houses are equipped with the latest labour-saving devices, including robots, *i.e.* mechanical domestic servants.

<sup>32</sup> If the children do not need the house.

<sup>33</sup> That is why even the smallest clubs often have six or eight Vice-Presidents, in addition to the usual officers.

frequently suffer from nightmares,<sup>34</sup> in which they dream they have been forced to make speeches before a women's club. To avoid having to do this, American men will do *anything*.<sup>35</sup> Since the men in political power are also no exception to this rule, they are willing to start policies, stop policies, change policies, start strikes, break them, etc.—rather than make such a speech. So women's clubs are a powerful political weapon in the hands of American women.

While the men and the women are busy in the ways described above, the children are leading exciting and competitive lives of their own (*see* Chapter I). They look to their parents for food, clothing, shelter, pocket money, and the family car, but for little else.

Naturally, there are exceptions to this pattern. There are families who breakfast and dine together, some who go to the movies together, and some who even take their holidays together. But these *are* exceptions. Of the eleven average American families which have been carefully studied by qualified European observers, six followed the pattern described above in more or less detail, and only a minority of five deviated significantly. Four of the families came from Washington, D.C.; two from Silver Springs, Maryland; four

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<sup>34</sup> The gender of this word is significant.

<sup>35</sup> In sharp contrast to British men, who can hardly be restrained from cadging invitations to lecture to Women's Institutes.

from Baltimore, Maryland; and one from Elkton, Maryland; so they may be regarded as a fine representative all-American sample.

A few words must be said about the physical setting in which American family life takes place: the American home. American homes are designed to conceal from the members of the family the hollow emptiness of their personal relationships. The over-heated houses compensate for the warmth which is lacking in American life. American central heating is an attempt to make this artificial external warmth a substitute for the natural internal emotion which died out in pioneer days—when there was, apparently, ample emotional warmth of all kinds, but no central heating.<sup>36</sup>

The ideal American home would really be one large room in which everyone lived and all activities took place. This is because of the American fear of being alone. It started when the early Americans were afraid they would have no one with whom to share their misery, and because Americans need other people around to assure themselves that they really exist. (See Chapter I.) The easiest way of achieving this is to make it necessary for the members of the family to be in full view whenever they happen to be home. This desirable objective has not yet been reached. Americans make up

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<sup>36</sup> This explains why American homes are kept at temperatures in the high eighties or low nineties, even during the summer months.



for it, at present, by occupying quarters as cramped as possible.

If they have the misfortune to live in a big house, they frequently shut off all but two or three rooms; the entire family then lives in these. In big cities especially, Americans prefer to live in small flats. The standard American flat contains a living-room, a dining-room, two bedrooms, a kitchen and as many bathrooms as possible. The same is true of the average separate dwelling, generally called a bungalow. The most important room in the house is the bathroom, and it receives the most attention. Americans are seldom satisfied if this room contains only a bath, and tend to insist on a shower as well. Some Americans of the wealthier classes, indeed, insist on *two* tubs in the same bathroom (*see* Loneliness, American Fear of).

Every American above the age of four is remarkably well-informed about plumbing. The need for constant bathing (to wash away guilt, symbolically) is perhaps too obvious to require discussion. Important also is the need to aid the economy by using up as many showers, tubs, and bathroom gadgets as possible. A sample gadget is the popular "soap-on-a-string-to-swing-in-the-shower." This has the merits of melting rapidly, being utterly useless before it melts, and of using up soap, string, space, and time.

Americans above the age of five are almost as well-informed about methods of refrigeration as about plumbing. Good refrigeration is necessary in order to

provide the vast quantities of iced drinks which Americans imbibe. Vast quantities of iced drinks are needed because Americans are constantly over-heated, from the outside inwards. In this way a vicious circle is created. The chill in human relationships (*see Sex, Unsatisfactory Nature of*) makes over-heated homes necessary; over-heated homes make cold drinks necessary; cold drinks make refrigerators necessary; refrigerators add to the chills prevailing in human relationships—which necessitate over-heated homes—and so it goes on.

An American psychiatrist once wrote a book called *The Happy Family*. It was not the statement of a fact, but of an ideal.

IV

THE WAY THEY RELAX



AMERICANS are the unhappiest people in the world.

This is evident to any observant European. Even before he understands the nature of their family life, their personality, and their economic system<sup>1</sup> he knows—whether he spends a few days in the noisy stridency of America or not—just how unhappy the people must be.

The very atmosphere is a mixture of the noise given off by radio commentators, jazz-bands, electric clocks, automatic feeding machines, swaying skyscrapers (*see* below) and drunks reeling out of bars. The continuous noise hides from people their hatred of this mechanical, contrived and non-spontaneous culture in which they must produce, consume and compete till they die.

As is also well known to Europeans, Americans do not

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<sup>1</sup> “No one should have to see America for the first time.”—Pandit Nehru, quoted in the *Archaeological Journal*, *Time*.

converse. They talk, especially in suburbia (*see* below). If they conversed, someone might explain to someone else how unhappy he was, and why. The word might get around, and Americans might decide to withdraw from their suffocating economic wealth into an ordered and planned austerity. They might become human beings. They might develop a non-material side to their nature, their culture, and their consumption alike. They might grow souls.

It is with this in mind that one must consider the American cultural wilderness.

#### AMERICAN CULTURE: THE PRINTED WORD NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

American capitalists long faced one grave problem: practically everyone could read. This meant there was a danger that people would begin to read books which would tell them how miserable they were.<sup>2</sup> But the capitalists managed to turn the threat into an advantage. They persuaded Americans that literary merit must be judged by size—*i.e.*, number of pages—alone. (*See* Numbers, American Obsession with.) They were so successful that people began to demand bigger and bigger newspapers, magazines and books. So the

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<sup>2</sup>This danger became acute when an ex-Scottish capitalist traitor called Andrew Carnegie contributed some ill-gotten gains to found a chain of public libraries. He was afterwards compelled to offset the effects in America by contributing funds to open libraries in Britain and other countries.

capitalists were able to waste natural resources—particularly the forests—very quickly.

Since the boss-class naturally controls what is printed (*see* Industry), they have been able to debase what would have been the natural good taste of the American people—that is, had the people ever been free to develop their natural good taste. The corruption of American standards is evident in their daily “tabloid” picture papers, which print sensational crime and sex stories, often illustrated with semi-obscene pictures.<sup>3</sup>

American newspapers are so huge and unwieldy that Englishmen often wonder how Americans manage to read them. It is simple. They don't. Moreover, American newspapers are not supposed to be read. The editors merely fill the requisite *quantity* of large pages with foreign news, analyses of currency and production problems or the full texts of treaties, agreements, debates and political speeches. The British, who *do* expect their papers to be read, seldom waste space this way.<sup>4</sup>

Americans generally glance at the numerous adver-

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<sup>3</sup> In Britain, where people *are* free to develop their natural tastes, the circulation of the *Sunday News of the World* is barely eight million, and of the *Daily Mirror* a mere four and a half million.

<sup>4</sup> When the supply of newsprint to British papers was increased, for example, they wasted little space printing longer Parliamentary reports or foreign news. Instead, they increased the amount of sports news, racing results, advertisements, and features.

tisements in their papers. Having been corrupted to the point where they know they *must* consume, they like to feel they have some kind of choice as to what they will consume (*see* Industry). They also read the "want-ads" (since, as Europeans know, millions and millions of Americans are always unemployed<sup>5</sup>) and the syndicated columnists, and ignore the rest of the paper.

Columnists serve two functions in America. Because the people are at once too tired and too poorly-educated to form their own opinions, columnists provide opinions on all subjects, "off the peg."<sup>6</sup> In this way they are quite similar to political parties in Britain. So important are columnists that few major decisions are taken by American business or political leaders without consulting them. As the columnists seldom agree among themselves, this accounts in part for the contradictory and confusing nature of American policy.<sup>7</sup>

As has already been explained, Americans like to feel that they know a lot of people—preferably more than

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<sup>5</sup> Or expect to be, from reading British periodicals which tell them they are going to be. (*See* American Industry.)

<sup>6</sup> Tailored by the boss-class.

<sup>7</sup> Lack of agreement among columnists is also valuable in giving the aggressive Americans (*see* Chapters I and II) another way of quarrelling. For example, an irate stock-broker can say to a trade unionist, "Walter Lippman, June 23rd to you!" to which the answer might be, "And Drew Pearson, July 1st to you, too!"



anyone else. Columnists cater to this American peculiarity by regularly revealing the most private and intimate details about the famous. This leads Americans to believe not only that they themselves know a lot of people, but that they know a more important lot of people than anyone else. Most Americans feel it quite legitimate to number anyone whose name they have read four times in the same column among their friends. So when—as frequently happens—they make lists of their friends to reassure themselves that they have enough—they always include the people they have met in gossip columns.<sup>8</sup>

In this way, all Americans are deluded into believing that they are on close terms with the ruling class. As this helps keep down working-class discontent,<sup>9</sup> the ruling classes co-operate willingly in the deception, and with indecent haste—and even with importunity—reveal the most intimate details of their personal lives to journalists.<sup>10</sup> It is customary for the most co-operative among the boss-class to learn that they are to have children, be

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<sup>8</sup> Feeling they are friends with the famous, Americans go so far as to speak of many statesmen, movie stars, generals, athletes, gangsters, and crooners by their Christian names, or even by nicknames—a custom unknown elsewhere.

<sup>9</sup> Constantly being fanned by news reports of far better working-class conditions abroad.

<sup>10</sup> To be mentioned frequently by three or more columnists is the American equivalent for being in the Honours List.

divorced, get a new job, or go bankrupt when they open their newspapers.

American magazines, like newspapers, are large, numerous and blatant. The most important, naturally, are women's magazines (*see Women, Rôle of, Chapter III*). Besides stories which are later dramatized into soap-operas (*see below*), women's magazines have suggestions for feminine beauty culture,<sup>11</sup> and advice on planning, building, furnishing and running a house.<sup>12</sup>

Picture magazines are also popular, because they are practically comic books—particularly when they are ostensibly serious.

Finally, there are the news magazines of which one of the most important is *Time*. *Time's* gentle humility has long endeared it to millions of many-sided Americans with wide interests and a taste for standardized iconoclasm. They are, however, mystified and hurt by their inability to learn who edits and publishes it.<sup>13</sup> Occasionally suspected of being pro-Communist because of the great amount of space and emotion it devotes to the Party, *Time* is in fact the only effective bulwark today

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<sup>11</sup> Englishwomen rightly believe that American women spend too much time trying to beautify themselves. This process is not popular in England.

<sup>12</sup> The result is that practically all American homes look alike—so much alike that people often go to bed in other people's houses not realizing what they are doing.

<sup>13</sup> There is an unconfirmed rumour that it is published by a white-bearded Chinese mandarin.

protecting the American Way of Life from foreign ideologies.<sup>14</sup>

There are also many other periodicals, most of which do not circulate outside America. Movie and story magazines (mysteries, true confessions, horror tales) have the greatest influence. All others are unimportant.<sup>15</sup>

#### LITERATURE

Comic books form the staple reading-matter for Americans. They are well-suited to the intelligence of the people, since they require only a basic vocabulary of five hundred words. The most popular type of comic book tells a little story to advertise cereals or disinfectants.

Comic books—and their diluted form, the daily newspaper comic strips—are enormously popular. The problems, dilemmas and quandaries of their characters have stopped Congressional speeches, caused mutinies, provoked strikes, and raised riots. The artists of the strips and books enjoy special police protection, and get special treatment by the police. Some of the more educated Americans (but *see* Education, American, Low Standards of) prefer books known as “best sellers.” A

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<sup>14</sup> Considering the ability of the editors of *Time* to detect pro-Communist trends in astronomy, pediatrics, flower-arrangement and swan-counting, the Federal Bureau of Investigation would seem to have little to do.

<sup>15</sup> The others include literary and critical periodicals, art and music magazines, professional journals, etc.

“best seller” is at least two thousand pages long, no other book being eligible. Best sellers may be on any subject, provided they are not subversive. If the book can be carried only by Americans who weigh between twelve and fourteen stone, it is considered a huge success. If it can be carried only by Americans who weigh over fourteen stone, it is a colossal success.<sup>16</sup>

There is a realistic branch of American literature called “muck-raking.” The “raking” is the writing. The “muck” is the dirty American linen. Although often written by American deviants (*see* Chapter VI), these books are generally only published in Europe, and only read there. In this way, any European who has read Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, Erskine Caldwell’s *Tobacco Road*, John O’Hara’s *Butterfield 8* and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* knows much more about America than any American.

#### AMERICAN CULTURE

##### SPORT, MUSIC, ART, RADIO, CINEMA

National cultures generally reflect the dominant sex. British—and European—culture is recognizably masculine. But American culture is an exception. It is not virile and aggressive, like its women. It is like its weaker sex: American men. It is passive. Americans of both sexes are so tired by constant competition, consumption, and production that they lack the energy to participate

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<sup>16</sup> If it cannot even be lifted by a circus strong man, the writer is instantly given a seat on the Stock Exchange.

in culture. Sometimes, in rare bursts of activity, they may indulge in a semi-savage form of dancing called "jitter-bugging." But the active participation of *all* Russians<sup>17</sup> or *all* British<sup>18</sup> in *their* national cultures has no American counterpart. Americans, unlike the British, amuse themselves by watching others perform (for exceptions, *see* Americans, Sexual Habits of).

SPORT: In America, sport is not really sport (as Europeans understand it) but a means of compensating for the frustrations which are so common in other aspects of American life. For this reason, unlike the British, the cruder and aggressive Americans play to win. The British and other Europeans, remembering Marshall Aid, are often sensible enough to *let* them win—as, for example, in the Olympic games.

Americans display various types of poor sportsmanship, in addition to trying to win. One is their tendency to excuse defeats by saying that they played badly, as opposed to the more courteous British practice of explaining cricket losses by "a sticky wicket" and all British defeats at the hands of Americans by the greater American diet.<sup>19</sup> The notorious American habit of jeer-

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<sup>17</sup> As exemplified in May Day parades and films of Armenian folk-dancing.

<sup>18</sup> In the great national sport—queue-standing—which has many more participants than the Cup-Tie final or the Derby has watchers.

<sup>19</sup> No British player would ever insinuate he was in any way responsible for his side's defeat.

ing at the referee or umpire<sup>20</sup> is also unknown in Britain.

The American national sport is baseball. It is a dull game, resembling rounders. The game is played by children in England. It takes professional players years of training to be able to play it at all in America. The baseball season begins in April and closes in September, with a play-off between the best teams in each of the two major leagues. Although the Russians who invented baseball (*see* Chapter II), and the Japanese who perfected it, are never invited, this is persistently called the "World Series" by Americans.<sup>21</sup>

Because Americans cannot play anything more skilful than baseball, they try madly to get other countries to play the same game. Only the strongest resistance on the part of the Royal Family and the Prime Minister kept a clause out of the American Loan and Marshall Plan agreements by which Kensington would have replaced the Cincinnati Red Sox as one of the American major league baseball teams.<sup>22</sup>

Football and basketball are America's next most popular sports. They are played in the winter, largely by American universities which hope to compensate by

<sup>20</sup> Americans equate boorish behaviour at games with political and economic freedom.

<sup>21</sup> Symbolic of the American's conception of the world (*see* the American sporting magazine, *Time*).

<sup>22</sup> It is a bit difficult to understand why a Labour Prime Minister should want to keep Kensington.

athletic achievement for their lack of academic distinction. Though American capitalists *do* contribute to Universities at times, they are apt to be erratic in their benevolence;<sup>23</sup> so the average American university depends on a winning football or basketball team to attract paying spectators and bring in the money to pay its teachers. For this reason, athletic coaches are usually paid a sum equal to the salaries of the entire academic faculty multiplied by ten. Most American colleges also hire brawny young coal miners<sup>24</sup> to enroll and play in their football teams. This is what Americans mean by "working your way through college."

**MUSIC:** Although Americans have symphony orchestras, choirs, instrumental soloists, singers, jazz-bands and pianolas, the highest expression of American musical talent is the "singing telegram." This was invented by an American called Daniel Boone Crockett.

Crockett was, in his early days, the possessor of a large block of telephone-company shares. The shares

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<sup>23</sup> American capitalists are erratic in their benevolence, because they like to worry the Bureau of Internal Revenue by suddenly giving large sums to Universities, so preventing the Bureau from collecting at least part of the sum in taxes. This unco-operative attitude toward paying taxes has no equivalent in Britain.

<sup>24</sup> For this reason, few American University presidents ever openly condemn the activities of John L. Lewis (the American Coalminers' leader), and he is frequently offered honorary degrees (*see* Politics.)

were doing badly on the Stock Exchange. As the transatlantic system had not yet been established, the only people to whom Americans could talk on the telephone were other Americans. As Americans do not converse, the early American telephone call was apt to be brief and brisk, and the future of telephony in America somewhat cloudy.

Crockett had the original idea of *singing* a telegram over the 'phone to the addressee. He started modestly enough by offering a solo-voice greeting only. So popular was his invention, however, that he was soon able to provide a quartet, an *a cappella* choir, or a mixed chorus with orchestra. This kept Americans on the telephone longer, and the telephone companies made money. It did nothing to increase the danger that Americans might become a nation of conversationalists. It taught them to work out cross-word puzzles, doodle, or buy shares while ostensibly listening to the telephone.<sup>25</sup> And it led to "music while you work."

Encouraged by his success, Crockett expanded the tunes and the types of messages carried by the "singing telegram." It is now possible to send a message of condolence, intoned to a Bach chorale, or to have a "request number" of eight hundred Jersey cows moo-ed from Wyoming to Kentucky. So the highest ambition of an American composer is to compose singing tele-

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<sup>25</sup> It was also a valuable training for American men, as their wives generally use the telephone to call and give advice.



grams.<sup>26</sup> A close second is to be chosen to write "singing commercials" (*see* below, this Chapter). Unsuccessful American musicians are forced to write popular musical comedies.<sup>27</sup> The least successful of all compose music for the Boston Symphony Orchestra—but first have to emigrate to Europe.

ART: American poverty in the field of creative art is evident. Their architecture consists mainly of large, box-like structures called—with typical American exaggeration—"sky-scrapers."<sup>28</sup> They have no castles of their own, save what they have imported (*see*

<sup>26</sup> The man or woman who composes "The Telegram of the Year" is given a life-pension, an American flag, and ten yards of telephone wire made up to resemble D. B. Crockett.

<sup>27</sup> That is, popular in America. American musical comedies are not popular elsewhere. The apparent success of some American musical comedies (*Oklahoma, Annie Get Your Gun, Brigadoon, Dark of the Moon, etc.*) in London is because the British, wishing to have Marshall Aid continued, want to flatter the Americans and make them happy. As, even for Marshall Aid, the British cannot compromise with their consciences to the extent of pretending to like American films, they have selected American musical comedies as the best things to say they like.

<sup>28</sup> These skyscrapers, as the Russian journalists who visited New York in 1948 noted, swing and creak noisily in the wind, adding to the prevailing American din, and increasing American insecurity. (*See also, Skyscrapers, Americans, Storage Functions of.*)

Chapter I). They have nothing which resembles either the Albert Hall or the Albert Memorial.<sup>29</sup>

American art reaches its zenith in the animated or moving neon-sign. Because of the nature of American life, Americans would like nothing better than not to exist.<sup>30</sup> That is why they are so partial to the comic-strips and the animated neon sign. The people in them do not really exist at all. Since Americans cannot “non-exist” themselves—though many more succeed in doing it *per annum* than in Europe—they like to watch people who do not exist. They envy them.

RADIOS: American radio is run by competing private-enterprise concerns, rather than intelligently, artistically and efficiently by a public monopoly, as in Britain. Most of the time on American radio is occupied with “commercials.”<sup>31</sup> These are interruptions in a programme to advertise the wares of the concern which has bought that portion of time on the air.

“Singing commercials” are advertising announcements set to music. Sometimes singing commercials are in the form of little rhymed jingles. These jingles are the Americans’ poetry, and they are fond of them. They

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<sup>29</sup> As the result of considerable effort, they have succeeded in creating several structures almost up to the standard of St. Pancras Station, London.

<sup>30</sup> Failing this, they favour returning to the womb.

<sup>31</sup> Announcements which describe in enthusiastically inaccurate, and inaccurately enthusiastic, terms the products being advertised.

are often heard to remark that they would rather hear a good singing commercial than "one of those operas by Benjamin Britten."

It is thought un-American not to listen to commercials in reverent silence, though it is quite permissible to talk through a symphony concert. One of the men at present under investigation by the House Un-American Activities Committee was first suspected of un-American sentiments when it was noted that he habitually shut off his radio whenever a "commercial" or "jingle" began.

American boorishness is evident in all discussion programmes on the radio. There are, of course, none of the vigorous, hard-hitting, no-holds-barred, spontaneous, unscripted, and unrehearsed political and economic discussions so frequently broadcast, and so popular, in Britain. Occasionally, when the Americans *do* try their hands at such a programme, their discussions end in sulky disagreement. In Britain, on the other hand, there is always general agreement at the end of any wireless discussion.<sup>32</sup>

The real triumph of American radio ( and of Ameri-

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<sup>32</sup> This confuses some listeners, of course. Mistakenly, they have occasionally gained the idea that the speakers did not entirely agree—as, for example, the Dean of Canterbury and the Archbishop. But all such apparent difficulties are swept away when the B.B.C. moderator says, "Actually, I believe all our speakers tonight agree *in principle*." Americans, having no principles, cannot agree.

can drama<sup>33</sup>) is the "soap-opera," a simple-minded serial story which runs on for years, generally ten or fifteen minutes a day or week, and paid for by the big soap companies as advertising. Usually, dozens of soap-operas are broadcast at the same moment. (No one has yet thought of putting them all out on the same wavelength and the same time.)

It is easy to explain the popularity of soap-operas by saying that they cater to the low intelligence of the American people; or that they give the bored American house wife<sup>34</sup> something to do; or that they provide a standardized day-dream for a standardized country. Even if true, these take a very superficial view of the reason for the success of the American soap-opera.

It is successful because Americans fear loneliness and must have people around constantly (*see* Chapter I). Listening to a soap-opera gives the American housewife the illusion that her house is filled with people, and makes her think that she is popular and well-loved.<sup>35</sup> As housewives generally listen to the same programme for years, they come to feel that the characters in them are old friends, and often have trouble in distinguishing

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<sup>33</sup> The most talented American playwrights write for radio or for Hollywood. The others are unimportant.

<sup>34</sup> Bored because labour-saving devices leave her with so much time on her hands in the mornings.

<sup>35</sup> If an American housewife is feeling particularly gloomy, she can turn her various radio sets to several programmes within the same half-hour, and get the illusion of being at a cocktail party.

between the events in their lives and the events in those of their live friends.

CINEMA: Superficial observers claim that Americans like American films. True, Americans pay, often and well, to get into American films. But it is wrong to assume that they do so because they enjoy them.

If the American *people* had their way,<sup>36</sup> they would make, see and enjoy films truly representative of American life. They would see films about corrupt political machines; about share-croppers; about lynching, and the other evils which make up nine-tenths of American life. But they do not have their way.

Americans continue to attend their inferior and degrading films for four reasons<sup>37</sup>: to escape from reality; to consume in comparative comfort; to watch the people on the screen wasting things at a rapid rate; and to get a discreet place for confidential conversation.

But these reasons only explain why the mass of Americans attend the movies. What about the intellectuals and the readers of progressive journals? (*See Chapter V.*)

These people do not attend American films. They only go to foreign ones.<sup>38</sup> For a time, Americans of

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<sup>36</sup> That is, if the capitalists did not run the film industry.

<sup>37</sup> It is possible to dismiss at once the idea that they do so because they like the films. British critics have rendered great service in making the impossibility of this abundantly clear.

<sup>38</sup> British and other.

this type *did* attend American films, considering them a form of folk art. But they have now been convinced by foreign intellectuals that this is no way to lead the masses. To lead the masses, one must be above what the masses consider their own pleasures.<sup>39</sup>

So the higher type of Americans, like all non-Americans, boycott American films. The queues lining up to see *Ecstasy on the Escalator*, in London, for example, are illusory. They are entirely composed of visiting Americans.

To ensure that the films do not encourage Americans to think, the Wall Street bosses have laid down certain rules which must be followed in all American movies. European-produced films which deviate from these rules are severely censored—if, in fact, they are permitted to be shown at all.

The following are some of the rules:

1. Eighty-three per cent of all films must have a bedroom scene. This is to encourage the national birth-rate, keep consumption high, and provide a pool of unemployed.<sup>40</sup>
2. Americans must never be shown reading books.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The masses respect you more that way, as any Socialist intellectual knows.

<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, love-making and female undress in films must be much more circumspect than in Britain. American men are very excitable.

<sup>41</sup> This rule gives no trouble. No real American is willing to be photographed reading a book.

3. If a bearded man is shown asleep, the beard must always be *outside* the covers.
4. Any film character supposed to be worth three million dollars or more must be addressed by his initials and never called "Mister."
5. Whenever a sunset is shown, characters must ride over a hill into it.

This is only the beginning of a list running to thousands of items.

Discerning foreigners may have noticed that some American films do not follow these rules. That is true. The main point here is the one so cogently stated by the late Professor Laski: "Hollywood wants to preserve the *status quo*." <sup>42</sup>

The trouble is that Hollywood does not know what the *status quo* is.

#### SUBURBAN CULTURE: OR LIFE IN THE BUSH

American society has one element in the *status quo* which is uncommon in Europe, and unheard of in Britain. That is, the presence of a number of persons who enjoy the thought that they are better than other men.

Such people, who appear to set cultural standards in America,<sup>43</sup> usually live in peculiar packs, hordes, or

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<sup>42</sup> Harold J. Laski, *The American Democracy* (New York, 1948), page 694.

<sup>43</sup> At least, they take great pains to *appear* to set the cultural standards.

swarms known as suburban communities.<sup>44</sup> Here, in towns ranging from 2,500 to 25,000, they nurse their feelings of superiority in modern one-family houses, some of which have as many as twenty rooms. These houses crouch, in constrained and prissy alignment, behind maple-shaded macadam avenues, separated from

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<sup>44</sup> Much of our knowledge of American suburban life stems from recent researches published by participants in a learned controversy in the *American Sociological and Economic Gazette*: Cf. Himmelblau, H., *Tentative Introductory Remarks on Defining a Suburban Town* (April, 1935); Zangara, Z., *A Few Prefatory Approximations to a Description of a Suburban Town* (April, 1935); Abbeville, A., *Some Insignificant Five-Syllable Words On What Constitutes a Suburban Town* (April, 1935); Himmelblau, H., *Some Final Notes on the Errors of Zangara and Abbeville in their Definitions of a Suburban Town* (May, 1935); Zangara, Z., *Ultimate Positive Errors in the Definitions of Himmelblau and Abbeville* (May, 1935); Abbeville, A., *A Rejoinder to Himmelblau and Zangara—or Every Comma Defended* (June, 1935); Himmelblau, H., *On the Prevalence of Quacks and Witch-Doctors in the Field of Suburban Social Science* (July, 1935); Zangara, Z., *The Fatuousness of Recent Critics—Or How Right I Was All Along* (August, 1935); Abbeville, A., *I Can Lick Any Man In the House* (September, 1935).

The reader will have noticed, incidentally, that even American scholarship is competitive. (See *Personality, The American*, Chapter I.)



the street by privet hedges, barberry hedges, and shrubs clipped to resemble bears.

The American suburban town, unlike its British counterpart, is usually located near a city.<sup>45</sup> It can be physically distinguished from a city because one can see the sky without lying on one's back, the air contains traces of oxygen, and there are some shrubs. It would be difficult to decide, however, which is more unnatural: the American city which is utterly devoid of foliage, or the suburban town where plant life is trimmed, manicured, and cut short, like a tart's poodle.<sup>46</sup> The American suburb is a demonstration of the fact that, since the time of Pocahontas, Nature has taken a terrible beating from Americans. The coercion of coniferous growths into cute ordered echelons of evergreen mediocrity reflects the spiritual corseting of human nature and its natural impulses, for which the American suburb is notorious. It is, of course, difficult for the British reader—conditioned to the roistering, libertine, Devil-may-care spontaneity of British suburbs—to con-

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<sup>45</sup> In England, where there is more respect for classical learning, suburbanites are properly located *below* (sub) the *city* (urbs). The word was coined by an early Roman who noted the weed-digging, mole-chasing propensities of British suburban gardeners.

<sup>46</sup> This simile is in fact inappropriate, since prostitution is illegal in America. So the position of a tart's poodle is rather difficult to live up to.

ceive of such stultifying ordinariness and primness. It is, alas, not merely the distinction but the boast of the American suburb.<sup>47</sup>

The suburban community merits close attention because it is the only stable element in American society—except, of course, the sixty families who rule America (*see* Chapter II).<sup>48</sup> It is stable largely because it is inert, and it is inert largely because it is the home of the more successful. America's Suburbia is a social stud-pasture to which those victorious in the urban steeplechase of consumption retire, burned-out but triumphantly self-satisfied, to breed others in their own image.

The energy which suburbanites do not use in self-adulation is securely diverted from change or innovation by the activity on which all suburbanites are engaged twenty-four hours a day: the process of pretending they have souls. Suburbanites do not really have souls. To have a soul, as Europeans know, requires much suffering. Moreover, it requires one to be conscious how much he is suffering. Although Americans

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<sup>47</sup> America's Suburbia could never boast such outspoken radicals as Karl Marx (Hampstead) or Sir Alfred Munnings (Essex).

<sup>48</sup> There is only one other element, and that is the city community which is hopelessly unstable, since it is organized according to the consuming competition described in Chapters I and II. The old farm element has moved in to the city to write books glorifying the pleasures and humours of farm life.

constantly suffer, they do not know it. So they cannot have souls.

Suburbanites, however, have heard that it is a good thing to have a soul, as Europeans do. So they pretend to have one, but with this difference: instead of believing that consciousness of suffering is the raw material of souls, American suburbanites believe that a feeling of superiority to others is a sign of having a soul.<sup>49</sup>

American suburbanites therefore devote all their time to appearing to be superior to others. This is quite in keeping with the basic motivations of the American personality (*see* Chapter I) and with the prestige-struggle through over-consumption that most Americans follow. American suburbanites who have succeeded in the consumption race compete to be socially and culturally superior to other suburbanites.

This necessity to feel superior leads suburbanites into paradoxical behaviour. They make great show of feeling superior to both urban and rural Americans. They tell city dwellers how much more ennobling it is to live in the country, close to nature. And they tell rural residents how much more gay and daring it is to live *almost* in the city. The fact is that contact with anything wilder or more natural than a caged and grammatical parrot scares them; and contact with anything more urbane than the second cousin of a ballerina bewilders them.

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<sup>49</sup> Competing in this way for a soul in America is called "Keeping Up With the Joneses." "The Joneses" is American slang for the Trinity.

Suburbanites sometimes flaunt their superiority to non-suburbanites, but spend most of their time trying to feel superior to one another, for having a soul in America is also a competitive undertaking. This explains why the most standardized and uniform people on earth try many bizarre ways of being distinctive and unlike their neighbours.

One simple form of distinction-seeking is the furnishing of the home. The wall-paper, for example, is constantly replaced after calls on one's neighbours show that it is not as productive of uneasiness as theirs. Suburbanites try to buy chairs that are less comfortable than those of their neighbours. Until recently, chairs with seats only a foot off the floor were most popular. This type has now given way to chairs of normal height, but with no backs. Another form of household distinction is to have everything possible made of glass except utensils that would normally be made of glass. Thus, modern American houses have glass walls, roofs, and floors, but no windows. At parties, drinks are served in plastic vessels, but are placed on glass tables. These peculiar uses—or misuses—of glass suit Americans, who do not desire privacy, and from whom nothing can be kept in private.

Suburbanites also seek distinction in gardening. Everyone tries to clip his hedge half a foot lower than his neighbour's, in order that more of his own affairs should be seen and known, and less kept private. The neighbours, not to be outdone, decide to trim their hedge even lower. This goes on until both hedges are torn up,

new and high ones ordered and put in (thus helping waste), and the game begins again.

Another method of attaining distinction is installing gadgets in automobiles.<sup>50</sup> Having a motor-pump in order to squirt water on the windscreen of one's car was once considered distinctive in American suburbs. Now that these pumps have become standard equipment, suburbanites have substituted pumps which squirt water at other people's cars.

Cleanliness is another field in which suburbanites seek distinction. Since it is more distinctive for women to hint, rather than to say, that they have just had their hair washed—and since suburban women have reached the point where this must be at least a daily process—the current distinction is to appear at cocktail parties with wet hair that still contains shampoo suds.

There is also distinction-seeking in health and illness. Neighbours frequently visit one another's houses and slip up to the bathroom so they can make notes on the potency of the vitamin pills they find there. Every suburbanite buys vitamin pills by the sack. The search for stronger vitamin pills has led to the manufacture of some so potent that it requires special antidote pills to neutralize the effects. This is a notable American

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<sup>50</sup> Suburbanites have already achieved superiority over non-suburbanites in the size of automobiles, so they do not compete this way among themselves. That is why they have enormous "town cars" for driving in narrow crowded city streets, but small cars for the suburban country areas.

achievement, which yields high marks for wasteful consumption.<sup>51</sup>

American suburbanites will not have operations unless they have developed bigger and better appendices, or gall-stones, than the ones their neighbours had to have removed. Information on these matters, imparted (as usual) without secrecy or privacy, is communicated mostly at dinners, so that everyone knows what the existing record is for any type of diseased organ. The optimum distinction for illness in suburban communities is to be just far enough away from excruciating death to be able to tell others about it.

The behaviour and conversation of American suburban residents follows, with unswerving fidelity, the rules laid down by Suburbia's two Bibles, the *Reader's Digest* and *The New Yorker*. The former publication is popular with suburbanites firstly because it condenses to a fraction of the originals, and, second, because it puts into one volume stories about a wide variety of subjects. Suburbanites are unable to think or imagine for themselves; but the most important form of distinction in suburbia is cultural superiority (shown in talk). The *Reader's Digest* is thus the perfect cultural and intellectual main-stay.

The difficulty is that everyone in the suburban town

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<sup>51</sup> Because it is a sign of having taken distinctively potent vitamin pills, Americans like to be tall and strong, a condition most European intellectuals view with suspicion or condescension.

reads the *Reader's Digest*. Consequently, talk at parties or at the country club is dull indeed for a visitor who happens to have read the current issue. Superiority was formerly shown by the ability to memorize longer passages from *Reader's Digest* articles than anyone else. But the number of persons who could quote the entire month's issue soon grew fairly large. From then on, suburbanites competed for cultural superiority with their neighbours by repeating the contents of the magazine backwards, until even this became too common a skill.

Superiority is now a rivalry in time. The first person to get and memorize a new copy of the *Reader's Digest* is for a few precious seconds the intellectual and cultural leader of his community. His object is then to give a party as soon as possible, so that he can establish his tenuous superiority and, thereby, the vastness of his soul. Failing this,<sup>52</sup> he will go to a barber-shop, a drug-store, country club, etc., and open up as many conversations as possible before his time runs out. It not infrequently happens that everyone else is frantically memorizing the *Reader's Digest* at this time and will not stop to talk with him. So it is sometimes necessary for the first man to gain his end by driving through the town reciting the contents of the current issue through a loud-speaker system.

Even the comparative stability of suburban life did not, however, go unchallenged by Americans. Most of

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<sup>52</sup> That is, if he knows that he has only an hour's start on anyone else.

them are mistrustful of anything stable, feeling that it is (or could become) old, and therefore suspect. It was this fear that prompted a group of writers to start *The New Yorker*, a magazine which mocks at some of the habits of suburban dwellers.<sup>53</sup>

In the beginning, the satirical attitude of *The New Yorker* made suburbanites uneasy and self-conscious. The women were made especially uncomfortable by its gibes at their dress, speech, clubs, gardens, servants, and cultural pretensions. But gradually they not only got used to it, but also came to see that *The New Yorker* had uses. It printed reviews of plays, books, concerts and films; described the smart shops and restaurants; and carried remarkably erudite and informative advertisements. After reading it, suburban women could converse on an even higher intellectual level. They became enthusiastic converts. They began to talk as *The New Yorker* critics wrote,<sup>54</sup> and to say that they themselves

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<sup>53</sup> European intellectuals—many of whom admire *The New Yorker*—rationalize this by saying that it is not at all like an American magazine.

<sup>54</sup> A sample chat between two suburban matrons may illustrate this point:

*First suburban matron:* "I see Gielgud's *Hamlet* is being put on. It is a play in which the plot flashes like a candle before the stentorian blasts of Mr. Gielgud."

*Second suburban matron:* "Yes, it is running in New York now. My own view is that it is a play in which the plot flashes like a candle before the stentorian blasts' of Mr. Gielgud."



felt the way the magazine's critics *said* they felt. All this lifted suburban life to new heights.

Suburban women were also able to use *The New Yorker* to pretend they had gone to concerts they hadn't heard, and to films and plays they hadn't seen;<sup>55</sup> to suggest they had dined in restaurants which they couldn't find even with the aid of a guide-book, and would be afraid to enter if they could.<sup>56</sup>

By now, so many suburbanites have subscribed to the magazine that it cannot afford to stop printing the same things about suburbia.<sup>57</sup>

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*F.S.M.*: "But what about the sets? I felt they were more like a Swedish bowling alley than a Danish castle."

*S.S.M.*: "I never thought about the sets before. My off-hand reaction is that they looked more like a Swedish bowling-alley than a Danish castle."

<sup>55</sup> No one in Britain would ever be guilty of such a breach of taste. That accounts for the striking absence of critics and critiques in the British Press (especially the weeklies) and the B.B.C.

<sup>56</sup> Naturally, they have to go to the city at least one day a week, to lend credence to the idea that they are leading a wildly cultural life. In fact, they spend most of their time in women's restaurants (called "Schrafft's") or in news-reel theatres.

<sup>57</sup> All people who do not read *The New Yorker* are forced to live in the suburban equivalent of city slums, referred to as "the wrong side of the tracks." Those who do not read the *Reader's Digest* either, are forced to live *on* the tracks. Neither group is permitted to own a station-wagon or join a country club.

The great Monk scandal epitomises all this. It took place some years ago, when one of the theatre critics (Monk) got very drunk before an opening night. He then, as usual, wrote a review of the play before he had seen it, and went to sleep it off in a Turkish bath. His review was printed but—as it happened—the bailiffs took over the theatre and the play was not produced until the following season. Meanwhile suburbanites, not knowing this, carried on many intellectual discussions about the play, based on this critic's review.

For punishment, Monk was forced to settle in Suburbia and vacate his cosy *pied-à-terre* in a Third Avenue bar.

So even in Suburbia, Americans can never be safe.

THE WAY THEY GOVERN  
THEMSELVES



BECAUSE they all hate one another and have been corrupted by the jungle-ethics of capitalism, Americans are notoriously a difficult people to govern.

Europeans, who have long understood the American political system, have set forth with some vigour its two main postulates. First, Americans are too undisciplined, immature and competitively individualistic to have any real government at all. Second, the American Government is the means by which the ruling capitalist class preserves its control, lynches Negroes, and secures sufficient unemployment to keep those fully employed hard at work.

These two postulates may seem contradictory; yet both are true. The point is that the capitalists actually do control America, by the methods described below. It is only the uninformed and gullible American people who believe they have control over their government.

The ability of American capitalists to confuse the

populace and retain their power relies on many devices, among which the following are important:

- (a) Keeping the population ignorant and diverted.
- (b) Dividing the population against itself by encouraging hostility between the various racial groups,<sup>1</sup> the speaking of foreign languages, and the persecution of minorities.
- (c) Creating and controlling political bosses and political machines.
- (d) Keeping the so-called better element from entering politics.

Each of these points must be taken separately. When the background is sketched, the actual machinery which the capitalists use—that is, the government itself—will be comparatively easy to understand.

(a) KEEPING THE PEOPLE IGNORANT AND DIVERTED

Americans—as is well known—are very inaccurately informed about the world and about their own country. Since Americans are a mongrel people (*see* below), they are not—also a well-known fact—as intelligent as people of pure lineage.<sup>2</sup> So by using a simple technique called poll-taking, the boss-class manages to divert

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<sup>1</sup> For example, only national groups known to quarrel violently with each other in Europe, Asia, or Africa were permitted to enter America.

<sup>2</sup> Like the British, whose stock includes only Celts, Romans, Danes, Saxons, Normans, Angles, Jutes, Picts, Scots, Irish, Welsh, Flemish, French Huguenots, and Bus Conductors.

and distract the people from a proper concern with economic and social problems.

A poll is, of course, a survey of public opinion on any subject—preferably an obscure one in which no one is interested. The indefatigable poll-taking by capitalist-lackeys<sup>3</sup> confuses the people by forcing them to answer thousands of irrelevant—and often intimate—questions.<sup>4</sup>

More important, poll-taking *exhausts* the mental energy of the people. They have to have opinions on every possible subject, so that they do not disappoint the interviewers.<sup>5</sup> And this effort added to constant competition and consumption so tires the people that they lack the vitality to consider the iniquities of their society.

#### (b) CREATING DIVISION AND HATRED

RACIAL HATREDS: Since all Americans<sup>6</sup> are aggressive, and spend the time in which they are not consuming

<sup>3</sup> Called interviewers.

<sup>4</sup> Recent sample questions include: Would you have married your husband (wife) if you had known him (her) before you married him (her)? Has a horse ever placed a bet on you?

<sup>5</sup> As a sanction, the boss-class (normally opposed, as is well known, to social services for the people) is considering sending to asylums all people who answer "don't know" to more than nine consecutive polls.

<sup>6</sup> Properly speaking, of course, there *are* no Americans; merely the warring stocks described above. But the terms

and looking around for someone to hate (*see* Chapter II), it has been an easy matter for the capitalists to direct and to encourage hatreds between national groups. There is, of course, a strong element of self-preservation in this. If Americans did not hate each other, they might begin hating the capitalists who boss them.

THE NEGROES: Negroes have been in America almost as long as non-Negro settlers. The first blacks were brought to Virginia in 1619 by British sea captains whose hearts were touched by the deplorable conditions under which these people were living in their native Africa.

But the early Americans—like the later and present-day Americans—had no such feelings of compassion, and promptly enslaved these unfortunates. The British sea captains, dogged representatives of a dogged race, did not give up. They continued to deliver shipload after shipload of Negroes to the American continent, hoping that the hearts of the Americans might be touched and that they might grant the Negro the special position which the British wanted for them.<sup>7</sup> But it did no good. So, in the early nineteenth century, the British gave up and transferred their humanitarian energies elsewhere.<sup>8</sup>

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“Americans” and “American people” will be used here, since most people *think* there are Americans and American people.

<sup>7</sup> And which they occupied in the other British colonies.

<sup>8</sup> *E.g.*, monopolising the supply of opium to the Chinese.



The lot of the Negro in America has continued much the same from 1619 to the present day. Americans have long tried to convince the world that the Civil War was fought to free the slaves. As any informed Englishman knows, the Civil War not only did not free the slaves but was never intended to; it was intended to impose wage-slavery on *all* Americans (*see* Industry, American, Chapter II).

What the Civil War did do was to establish more firmly the dominance of the American capitalist. The American capitalists, however, were too wise to let the population realize how badly they had been fooled. So they *declared* the slaves free, and then introduced a system of lynching to handle any Negro who acted as if he were free.

The working of the planned-lynching system<sup>9</sup> is quite simple. The number of Negroes which may be lynched each year is set by the Federal Government. The State Legislatures then convene in the Ozark Mountains, and with considerable ill-will allocate the permitted numbers among the individual States. Mississippi frequently causes trouble by claiming more lynching candidates than her fair share and then causes more trouble by lynching in excess of her quota.<sup>10</sup> Some

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<sup>9</sup>Americans claim to be bitterly opposed to rationing and to planning. Yet where in Europe could one find better examples of both?

<sup>10</sup>This is generally frowned upon. If an Americanism may be permitted, it is deemed "not base-ball."

States make trouble by refusing to lynch any at all; but this is so rare that it causes a very small problem.<sup>11</sup>

Most Negroes are employed (as Americans cynically term it) planting cotton, toting bales, making "short'n-ing bread," and singing spirituals. All Negroes are very religious. They all croon spirituals as a leisure-time activity.

Some brazen Americans have been known to claim that some Negroes own their own land, some have cars, some go to the University, some enter the professions, some serve in Congress (scarcely a thing to boast about—*see* below), some are friendly with white people, some do not like spirituals, and some have neither been lynched nor expect to be.

It is hardly likely that this form of propaganda will deceive an educated European.

**THE JEWS:** In America, Jews are not lynched as often as Negroes. That is because they are less easy to distinguish from the general population, and because there are fewer of them.

The capitalists believe it is wise to placate the Jews somewhat, because Jews make notoriously good comedians, actors, musicians, etc., and so help to distract the population (*see* above). They are always busily getting

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<sup>11</sup> Mississippi or Georgia or Alabama is generally willing to make up the difference.

plays written about themselves, too. All these things help the capitalist bosses.<sup>12</sup>

So the capitalists tend to persecute Jews with their right hands, and to pet them with their left. In addition to having to over-consume (a persecution they over-share with the rest of the population), many Jews are forced to become intellectuals—a condition held in deep contempt in America. A large number must become lawyers and/or go into politics. On the other hand, Jews need not go to some of the duller and highly exclusive resorts where rich, white, non-Jewish capitalist bosses congregate. In this, too, they are more fortunate than the Negroes, who not only have to go to such places, but also to act as servants there.

**THE CATHOLICS:** The twenty-six million Catholics in America are too many to be persecuted systematically. Besides, the sturdy Catholic fight against birth-control is supported by capitalists who require more, not fewer, consumers. In addition, there are many Catholics in the ranks of the professional voters, the Irish Catholics being particularly useful here (*see* below).

Some of the persecution the Catholics suffer is directed against their hierarchy. (For example, nearly all their priests have to be good base-ball players.) And some Catholic officials must see *every* film made in

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<sup>12</sup> *Abie's Irish Rose*, for example. If Abie, instead of being a Jew had been an Englishman named Bertrand, it is hardly likely that the play would have had the same appeal.

America, so that all films get Legion of Decency<sup>13</sup> certificates.

The Catholic Church is forced to accept vociferous refugees from other creeds: for example, ex-Communists or ex-predatory-capitalists. It must also submit to having articles written against it from time to time, when the capitalists feel the other hatreds in America are wearing a bit thin.<sup>14</sup> Outside of this, there is very little actual discrimination against the Catholics. It is customary to have one as Mayor of New York, one on the Supreme Court bench, and one on the Notre Dame football team.

(c) CREATION AND CONTROL OF POLITICAL BOSSES AND  
OTHER TALENT

Keeping the population ignorant, scrapping, divided, and supplied with scapegoats or diversions, is only half the task of the capitalist lords of America. In order to deceive the people into believing that they are governing themselves, the capitalists had to give them a vote. The rulers were then forced to create political machines, run by bosses (*see* Choice, the People's), financed by graft (*see* Industry, Chapter II) and advised by lawyers

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<sup>13</sup> Legion of Decency: An organization designed to lure Americans into seeing films they might otherwise avoid, by making the Legion label the pictures "indecent" or "semi-indecent."

<sup>14</sup> These articles appear mainly in liberal and left-wing periodicals which—it is commonly thought—disapprove of persecution of minorities.

(*see* Parasitism, American)—in order to make the vote meaningless.

The nature and character of American voting are best illustrated by one of the "social surveys" of which Americans are so fond, which is briefly reported below.<sup>15</sup> American social scientists suffer from a weakness which is little known in Europe: the urge to test their generalizations by observing how people really do behave. The inability of American social scientists to sit still for fifteen years and re-read European philosophy unless the volumes are illustrated and serialized in comic-strip form<sup>16</sup> has led some of them to pass their time collecting information on how Americans vote, and (in particular) why they bother.

The results of that landmark of American social research, the Smokehouse Report, are representative of American voting behaviour in general. The Smokehouse Report studied the electors of the floating island of Ojibway, which was proceeding in a westerly direction through the waters of Lake Michigan when the study was made.

The scientists studied with great precision the be-

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<sup>15</sup> It is impossible to go into great detail here, since European professors would never speak to American professors again if it were known that the Americans were doing something so unprofessional as counting or measuring things.

<sup>16</sup> "Will the mean be golden? Will there be a war of the all against the all? Will the philosopher-kings remain celibate?" Such are the characteristic endings of these philosophical penny-dreadfuls.

haviour of the voters in the presidential election of 1948. Every possible influence on the voter was analysed by eager assistant professors. Voters were given saliva tests and X-rayed before entering the sterilized voting booths. After voting, they were psycho-analysed by Jungians and Freudians, and then run through mangles at high pressure.

Summarizing those parts of the eighteen-volume report that are relevant to our inquiry, one may say that the potential Ojibway voting population (those entitled to vote) consisted of 3,300 French Canadians, twenty Negroes named Eliza, ten native-whites, five hundred first-generation Irish, 1,200 Esquimaux, and four hundred emigrée from Notting Hill Gate who had fled in 1947 before the tentacles of the Ministry of Town and Country Planning. Religious affiliations ranged from Church of England and totem-worship to a man who claimed to be Mohammed. The class and occupational breakdown was as follows:

CAPITALISTS, BOSSES, etc.	..	..	..	I
LACKEYS OF THE ABOVE (in order of appearance):				
Professional Types	..	..	..	100
Chiefs of Police	..	..	..	I
Mortgage Foreclosers..	..	..	..	200
(— of churches	100)			
(— of widows	100)			
Higher Executives	..	..	..	1,200 <sup>17</sup>
TOTAL LACKEYS	..	..	..	.. 1,501

<sup>17</sup> Note the perfect correlation with the Esquimaux population.

SHOP-KEEPERS AND OTHER PARASITES .. ..	300
STAMP COLLECTORS .. .. .	1,000
OPPRESSED WORKERS AND UNEMPLOYED .. ..	2,628
	<hr/>
TOTAL	<u>5,430</u>

The Smokehouse researchers aimed at discovering (a) what proportion of the eligible voting population actually did soil hands in politics and vote, and (b) the extent to which class, racial, religious and other factors influenced their choice of a political party. Table A shows the results of the first part of the research:

TABLE A  
DEGREE OF PARTICIPATION IN ELECTION

<i>Type of Voter</i>	<i>Number Eligible</i>	<i>Votes Cast</i>
French-Canadians .. ..	3,300	200
Negroes .. .. .	20	0 <i>See Note (a)</i>
Irish .. .. .	500	1,000
Esquimaux .. .. .	1,200	7
Kensington Emigrés .. ..	400	200 <i>See Note (b)</i>
Native Whites .. .. .	10	2 <i>See Note (c)</i>
Names from Tombstones .. ..	0	2,000
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	5,430	3,409
	<hr/>	<hr/>

*Note (a):* Later found chained in a cellar.

*Note (b):* Others attended a "kaffe klatch" of the Dames of the British Empire Chowder and Marching Society.

*Note (c):* 1 capitalist and 1 police chief.

The figures poignantly demonstrate the apathy which the capitalists have encouraged in the general population. The chart also shows to what extent Americans have become corrupt. They prefer to let a small, highly-trained, mobile force of professionals do their voting for them.<sup>18</sup>

In American elections, these professional voters are usually the Irish. They are paid by local political "bosses,"<sup>19</sup> who get some of their money from capitalists, and some from selling road-paving contracts, and tickets to the Firemen's Ball.

Although the Irish have tended to monopolize the voting-industry, other immigrant races are used in cases of political emergency, even though they charge a little more. All immigrant races, however, charge less per vote than native Protestant whites.<sup>20</sup> The use by the Ameri-

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<sup>18</sup> In this, they are like the pure Anglo-Saxons, who traditionally think that a small, highly-trained, mobile force can do any dirty work they themselves would rather not do.

<sup>19</sup> Bosses in America run the political machines. They are often poetically-minded as well. It was, for example, a Tammany ward-boss who wrote the inscription, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses" which appears on the base of the Statute of Liberty. The Statute of Liberty was really a monument to the "Mom" of Boss Tweed, one of the most inspiredly corrupt bosses New York City (or any other place) has ever had.

<sup>20</sup> An interesting sidelight here: The Chinese and Japanese of America are so conspicuous that they can usually vote only two or three times a day without being spotted by the



cans of first-generation Irish to do their voting for them was first noted academically by the eccentric Irish-American philosopher, Dooley:

“. . . there's a few hundred iv thousands iv people . . . that have only two pleasures in life, to wur-ruk an' to vote, both iv which they do at the uniform rate iv wan dollar an' a half a day.”<sup>21</sup>

#### THE WAY THEY GOVERN THEMSELVES

The results of the Ojibway election, by party, were:

Republican	..	..	..	..	2,910
Whig	..	..	..	..	198
Democrat	..	..	..	..	24
Greenback Party	..	..	..	..	2
Czarist Party	..	..	..	..	2 <i>See Note (a)</i>

*Note (a):* 1 capitalist and 1 police chief, again.

The second part of the Smokehouse Report investigated influences which led the voters to vote the way they did. The results are given in Table B:

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opposition poll-watchers. This handicap, together with the Oriental custom of inscribing one's tombstone with native ideographs instead of English, makes Orientals of little use to political bosses. Hence the passage in 1922 of the Exclusion Acts, which made it illegal for Orientals to enter America or to become citizens.

<sup>21</sup> F. P. Dunne, *Mr. Dooley in Peace and War* (New York, 1899), page 112.

TABLE B

## INFLUENCES AFFECTING VOTING BEHAVIOUR

Percentage of Influence Exerted by: —

<i>Type of Voter</i>	<i>Class or Level of Status in</i>			<i>Mother's Orders</i>	<i>Other</i>
	<i>Job</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Race</i>		
French-					
Canadian	10%	40%	0	50%	0
Irish	2%	1%	0	-50%	+147% (a)
British	30%	0	15%	50%	5% (b)
Esquimaux	3%	0	7%	60%	30% (c)
Native					
Whites (2)	100%	S	0	0	0
Names from					
Tombstones	*	33% (e)	0	20%	47% (d)

(a) 50 cents a vote.

(b) Strongly against Corn-Law Repeal.

(c) Paid 60 cents a vote, and given chunks of blubber in addition.

(d) Influenced by tradition and the "Free Soil" movement.

(e) Amenable to pressure from Masons.

\* Not available.

S Runs on Sundays only.

## KEEPING THE DECENT ELEMENT FROM ENTERING POLITICS

There is one final method by which the capitalists control American politics. They prevent the better elements of the population from taking part, and they re-

cruit and control the kind of person who does operate the vast American Government structure. Several methods are used. The most effective is to make public life in America so intimidating that no decent person could possibly wish to enter it.

Any man or woman wanting to enter public life in America must begin by kissing babies. All kissing is unhygienic, as is well known.<sup>22</sup> Most well-brought-up Americans shrink at the thought of kissing strange, non-hygienic babies<sup>23</sup> and therefore cannot get over the first hurdle to public life.

If that obstacle is successfully vaulted, Americans running for office have to be photographed with such objects as bathing beauties, strings of dead fish; or the British Ambassador. This eliminates large numbers, too.

Finally, the national capital has been placed in Washington, D.C. If anyone *does* get into politics—against all good advice, and in defiance of the wishes of the rulers—he finds himself swiftly promoted until he gets into Congress, and so has to live in the swamplike Washington climate. The most stubborn seldom persist in the face of this last obstacle.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> All Americans have a great fear of disease and are always being inoculated, or boiling milk or water, or undergoing allergy tests.

<sup>23</sup> Frequently of foreign or unknown parentage.

<sup>24</sup> During the so-called New Deal, many of the better elements persisted so doggedly in their political ambitions that they were sent to Washington, D.C. The capitalists,

Accordingly, most mothers in America would rather see their sons running disorderly houses than running for political offices. It follows that those men who do enter politics do so because they are unable to enter anything else.

As the best elements are successfully kept out of the way, most of the work<sup>25</sup> of American politics is forced on the immigrant population, particularly the Irish. These unfortunates must therefore become voters and political bosses or starve.<sup>26</sup>

Some native-white Protestants, however, are to be found in the dregs of the occupational brew. These are usually the sons of share-croppers,<sup>27</sup> the products of an un-American marriage or children who have displayed neurotic traits from childhood.

Generally, every possible effort is made by the parents and by the community to deflect the interests of these children into constructive channels. If this is not possible, the boys<sup>28</sup> are eventually sent to a special Amer-

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however, caused the creation of numerous alphabetical agencies (FRA, RIP, SOB, IRT, PDQ, PBI, FHB, COD, OAP, etc.) and so confused the well-meaning amateurs that they retired in disgust to billion-dollar corporations, Wall St. law-firms, liberal magazines, or the radio.

<sup>25</sup> Dirty.

<sup>26</sup> A select few are allowed to become policemen.

<sup>27</sup> Share-cropper: American peasant.

<sup>28</sup> Very few women enter the legal profession in America. But the more maladjusted American women marry lawyers.

ican institution for which there is no European equivalent. At this institution, the young American is taught how to be a delinquent without breaking the law. That is the best compromise American society can reach. The special institutions which teach this subject are called "law-schools."<sup>29</sup>

When young men in America are released from "law-school," they are called "lawyers." As they have learned the basic political techniques from the Irish, and the legal loop-holes from their official tutors, they are politically invulnerable.<sup>30</sup>

The final result is that all the upper levels of American Government are dominated by lawyers, and the lower levels (which supply votes) by the Irish. Both must continue to remain the political lackeys of the capitalist bosses, because neither the Irish nor the lawyers can read, talk or understand Standard American, which is spoken by the rest of the population. Only the ruling class knows how to translate from the vulgar tongue into Celtic or *legal* terms.

#### THE WASHINGTON SCENE

The National American Government (known as Federal) is located in Washington, D.C. Its tentacles reach

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<sup>29</sup> It is probably no coincidence that one of the most well-known American law schools is the one at Harvard, which is located hard by the Irish residential city of Boston. Many a Harvard student's rough edges are rubbed down by his encounters with the Boston Irish.

<sup>30</sup> Particularly as no one else enters politics.

into all the nooks, crannies, ravines and crevasses of American life. To a visiting European, Washington seems a scrambling anarchy. The chaos appears so real that it is convincing.

In reality, government of the American Government is not situated in Washington, but in Wall Street and its related suburbs. The Washington chaos is therefore a delusion. It confuses not only the American people but unsophisticated outsiders. Actually, it is a façade erected by a group of hard-faced and harder-hearted men who are manipulating America and the world to their own advantage.<sup>31</sup>

True, officials in Washington and elsewhere are given a limited amount of power.<sup>32</sup> American businessmen are not as inexperienced or ill-informed as to believe they can fool all of the people all of the time. They only know that they fool most of the people most of the time.

So the President, Congress, Supreme Court, and Civil

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<sup>31</sup> The misguided Americans therefore do not really run their government. This is in marked contrast to Britain, where the people really do run the government—the Cabinet, House of Commons, and Civil Servants being merely the puppets of the masses. One of the best examples of this in 1949 was the budget, which everyone wanted and welcomed.

<sup>32</sup> They can, for example, refuse visas to Britons who have already been refused visas in London.

Service are all given small and sharply-defined fields of operation. Within these limits, they are free to act. But so dire are the penalties for trespassing that few venture to do so.

#### THE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

The two main American political parties are unlike political parties anywhere else. They have no principles. They have only practices, most of them sharp. They have no ideals. But they do have one (and the same) idea: to get, and stay, elected. In all this they are, as political parties, unique.

These two parties are differently named and have different symbols. The Republicans use an elephant (generally grey) and the Democrats a donkey. Beyond this, the parties are indistinguishable. The best example was the last Presidential election. On November 2, 1948, 95 per cent of Americans were confident that they were going to elect a Republican. To their surprise, they elected a Democrat. The effect on America, and the world, however, has been no different.

A grave problem faced the nation just before Election Day when the Republican nominee, Governor Dewey, threatened to shave his moustache. He would then have been completely indistinguishable from the Democrat nominee. The public might well have been so confused that it would have been impossible to have held an election at all. This, in turn, would have necessitated going through the entire process again, beginning with the

nominating conventions.<sup>23</sup> It is generally felt that Governor Dewey performed a public service in allowing himself to be persuaded to retain his moustache; and that he thereby made a great contribution to the preservation of the "American Way of Life."<sup>24</sup>

The chief difficulty for foreigners in judging American politics, naturally, is the absence of a proper third (Socialist or Labour) party. This defect would seem to be obvious. Yet it is noteworthy that in political discussions abroad—especially in Britain—at least one out of every non-American in forty-seven fails to make this point clear to any American present.

The lack of public information and education already referred to is one of the factors which help to account for the absence of a Socialist party in America. Another is the general immaturity of the American people (*see* Chapter I). Still another is the apathy of the deceived American voter (*see* above, this Chapter). Most important of all is the political immaturity of American organized labour.

Seen from any foreign point of view, the behaviour of American labour is ignorant, eccentric, and impractical. Organized American labour has 17,000,000 trade union members and vast funds at its disposal. To what

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<sup>23</sup> These include floating gas-filled elephants, drum-major-ettes, radio commentators, bubble-dancers, *et al.*

<sup>24</sup> His moustache may well be enshrined among the national relics, with Washington's axe, Alistair Cooke's typewriter, Paul Revere's horse, and Herbert Hoover's 1929 optimism.



ends have they devoted these resources? They have concentrated on high wages, short hours, good working conditions, pensions and similar bagatelles. Their members are chiefly interested (besides the things already enumerated) in owning their own homes, cars, refrigerators, etc.; in buying sports equipment, eating five or six meals a day, sending their children to the universities, and booing umpires.<sup>35</sup> (*see Sport in America, Boorishness of.*)

There are, it is true, some encouraging exceptions to the prevailing political ignorance and apathy of the American proletariat. There is a diminutive so-called Socialist Party.<sup>36</sup> American Socialists are characterized by doggedness<sup>37</sup> and candour.<sup>38</sup>

There is also an American Communist Party, which resembles the one in Britain in that it has a transient membership made up largely of such proletarian types as disgruntled history professors, unemployed economists and government secret agents. The American

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<sup>35</sup> The success of the American capitalist in forcing workers to consume much more than they want is evident. Advertising is an important factor here. American capitalists well know that if the workers were to refuse to eat only for one year, the capitalist system would break down.

<sup>36</sup> Not to be confused with a *real* Socialist Party.

<sup>37</sup> They have put up the same candidate for President for thirty years. He has never been elected.

<sup>38</sup> They constantly explain to the American people that the American standard of living is falling, not rising; and that if it is rising, this is not a good thing.

Communist Party is as inflexibly obedient to the Soviet Union as its British counterpart and would, therefore, be equally innocuous were it not for the publicity given to it by American capitalists and politicians through such devices as trials, "red-scares," etc.

Bolstering the forces of progress and enlightenment in the United States are the "liberal" magazines. These are very successful in putting their points across to the people who read them. As these people are mostly the editors and writers of other liberal magazines looking for new ideas, effective circulation is small.

Further enlightenment is offered the American masses by individuals or small splinter groups too sensitive and aesthetic to deal with everyday problems like low-cost housing, zoning laws, or taxation. They are more at home with great philosophical realities like "the brotherhood of man," "world government," and "set the people free."

These parties, magazines and individuals serve a clear-cut function in American life. True, they do not influence Americans very much. But they do influence Europeans.

Any thinking European who has contact with them can see what America is *really* like, in spite of all the propaganda which America's bosses<sup>39</sup> put out to persuade the more gullible to think otherwise. Perhaps the most satisfactory part of this, for an intelligent European, is that when he puts together this selected infor-

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<sup>39</sup> And such organizations as the AFL, CIO, ADA, etc.

mation, he realizes that his own picture was always correct: *he knew it all the time anyway.*

#### THE STRUCTURE OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

It is now time to discuss the *façade* which the American people *call* their Government.

The American Federal system operates on the basis of the separation of powers. There are three main divisions to the government: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial. None of these has any power. But all officials in them enter into the game and act as if they had.<sup>40</sup> The main object of a division of powers of this sort was (and is) to ensure that no one in the government knows what anyone else is doing.

The President is the head of the Executive Department of the Government. He is therefore called the Chief Executive.<sup>41</sup> His main duties are precisely laid down:

- (a) Opening the first base-ball game of the season.
- (b) Quarrelling with newspapers, columnists, radio commentators *et al* in public, weekly.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Many enter into the game so actively that they come to believe that they *do* have power (like the late President Roosevelt).

<sup>41</sup> For a period in the nineteen-thirties, in many circles, this title was dropped in favour of the longer "that . . . in the White House." The words left out varied enormously.

<sup>42</sup> The President who quarrels with the most columnists, radio commentators, etc., during his term in office is hon-

- (c) Making speeches, to which no one listens.
- (d) Pardoning people who have assassinated Cabinet officers.<sup>43</sup>
- (e) Vetoing the bills which Congress has spent the longest time preparing, and unanimously passing.
- (f) Accepting honorary degrees.<sup>44</sup>
- (g) Learning to weave rugs (with designs like American neckties) to show the people that a President can keep up with European royalty.

Congress is composed of two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. The denizens of the former are Senators; of the latter, Representatives. As Europeans know, the two are much alike, but as there are more Representatives, their House is noisier. The

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oured by having his face carved on one of the Rocky Mountains.

<sup>43</sup> A Federal offence, but one that the President pardons gladly, as he is generally only stopped from committing it himself by the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("G-men"). He would, of course, prefer to pardon offenders who murder Senators, Representatives, or Supreme Court Justices.

<sup>44</sup> The shortage of distinguished men in America is so marked that, even in a good year, only about twenty men can be found who are worthy of degrees. The President has to take up the slack by accepting dozens; sometimes scores. He is aided by the Vice-President (with little else to do), who accepts many of the honours conferred by finishing schools, military academies and junior colleges.

Congress spends most of its time filibustering,<sup>45</sup> refusing money to needy Europeans, and creating and handing round "jobs for the boys."

Naturally, Congress does not run itself. As so many foreign inquiries have demonstrated, it is run from the outside, by so-called "pressure groups." As the idea of outside forces influencing governments elected by the people is so strange to any European,<sup>46</sup> the operation of such groups in America is best made clear by an example.

The American producers of coffee-making equipment (in alliance with the Coffee Fraternity of Brazil) decided to put pressure on Congress to require all tea sold in America to be encased in little sacks called "tea-bags." The coffee-making equipment "lobby" began to give numerous bottle-parties in Washington. They poured arguments and liquor into Congressmen, open to both, from all forty-eight States.<sup>47</sup> They insinuated that tea-drinking was "an un-American activity." They suggested that American boys who attended tea-parties

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<sup>45</sup> Filibuster—A contest for American Congressional freebooters, the prize being awarded to the member who can speak (or read aloud) for the longest period. This provides a good use for American "best sellers." (See Chapter IV.)

<sup>46</sup> American observers of Britain's F.B.I., or the T.U.C. the various industrial trade associations, etc., have been misled by appearances.

<sup>47</sup> Forty-eight *at present*.

might become "sissies." Congressmen, long familiar with the members of the American State Department (also known as "striped-pants boys" or "the cookie-pushing-brigade") found these arguments impressive.

But the tea-importers soon sent their "lobby" to the counter-attack. Besides giving away sets of golf-clubs, cases of Scotch, and life-sized rubber models of Mr. Morgan Phillips, they played on the nerves of Congressmen. They pointed out that less tea could be wasted in tea-bags—and that to consume *less*, rather than more, was obviously un-American. They spoke of the dangers of a recession in the tea-trade moving swiftly on to the iron and steel industry,<sup>48</sup> and thus to an inevitable and widespread depression.

Things reached stalemate. Congress, assailed from all sides, did not know which way to turn. It might have coped with the situation by following European precedents and not turning at all. But a junior member of the coffee-making equipment lobby achieved a master-stroke. He suggested that the proposed law be amended. The new law should require pictures of Senators and Representatives to appear on the small paper flaps tied to each tea-bag. In the three months preceding elections, campaign slogans could also be printed on the other side of the flap.

Senators and Representatives found this idea irresistible. The Bill, in its amended form, passed both Houses with overwhelming majorities. Today, what the rest of

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<sup>48</sup> Because with tea-bags, one does not need tea-strainers.

the world understands as "tea" may be served in America only in the British Embassy and more important Consulates.<sup>49</sup>

It only remains to consider Congressional investigating committees. These committees are entirely unlike British Royal Commissions or Tribunals, to which they have sometimes been compared. Whereas a Royal Commission or a Tribunal seldom uncovers anything which reflects seriously on the character of the British people or their institutions, American Congressional investigations never discover anything *but* things discreditable to America (*see* Linen, American, Washing in Public of). Nor do these committees arrogantly assume any right to have a mind of their own, or to make it up. On the contrary, the cases are generally tried in the public Press first, a most democratic procedure.

Sitting on committees is the favourite activity of members of both Houses of Congress. Each committee consists of a handful of assorted members, chosen by lot from a grab-bag. They survey all phases—and phrases—of American life. There are at present committees studying: Communism; Fishing and Communists; the Chicago Drainage Canal and Communism; Boogie-woogie and Communism; and who really started the riddle, "What's black, white, and read (red?) all over?"

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<sup>49</sup> A small amount of "bootleg tea" ("right off the boat"), not in bags, is bought at fantastically high prices by many recent British immigrants and some first-generation British whose ties with the Old Country are strong.

The judicial branch of the Government is headed by the Supreme Court. The purpose of this Court is frequently, and with great regularity, to reverse the judgments of all courts within its own jurisdiction, together with all its own earlier judgments. This ensures full employment for American lawyers (*see* Lawyers, American, Strange Ubiquity of). It is therefore natural that such a Court should be termed Supreme.

The President finds the Supreme Court useful as a place to lodge promising men who might want to be presidents themselves. It also serves as a pasture for men who have to some extent outlived their party usefulness. In this respect, it discharges the functions of Britain's House of Lords, and of the National Coal Board.

Consider, in conclusion, the American political scene: the uninformed populace, the seething hatreds, the lack of parties properly organized on class lines, the political immaturity of American labour, bosses, political machines, lynching, pressure groups, and the curious structure of the Federal Government. It is a true devil's stew. It is perfectly clear that no well-informed, logical, and intelligent European could wish to live under such conditions.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Immigration statistics suggest that the number of well-informed, logical, and intelligent Europeans may be declining.



THE AMERICAN WAY AND  
THE WORLD'S



AMERICANS feel they are the most insecure people on earth. That is natural, because they have:

- 1 A highly competitive culture in which no one can feel himself to be permanently successful.
- 2 A compulsive need to consume.
- 3 An unhealthy and woman-dominated family-structure.
- 4 No culture.
- 5 A political system which no mature people would tolerate.
- 6 No souls.
- 7 Much more than their just share of the world's goods.

Because of their well-founded feelings of inferiority, Americans suffer from a deep need to think themselves better than others.

They have always wanted to participate in world

affairs, to try to prove to themselves that they are as good as other people, especially Europeans. In the past, the more sophisticated Europeans could not bring themselves to lower their diplomatic standards and allow the Americans this privilege. So, as was to be expected of their national character, the Americans developed a defensive doctrine called "isolationism." It consisted in denying that the world outside America existed. They broke with this idea, briefly, in 1898 in a desperate attempt to acquire an Empire from Spain and to refashion it on the British model. But when this adventure ended by saddling Americans with quantities of ocean and some sandy islands which no one wanted, they retired within their own borders, sulked in their tents, and the world heard no more of them.

When Europeans started the First World War, in 1914, Americans were beside themselves with envy. As they continued to watch the glorious scale on which natural resources were being destroyed, they became desperate. They sent emissary after emissary, begging for permission to come in—on either side. <sup>1</sup>

Finally, worn down by American importunities, the Allies, led by the weak and kindly British, surrendered. They agreed that in return for a small monetary loan, Americans might enter the war—but only for a short time. They made it quite clear that, when the war was

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<sup>1</sup>The most famous were Walter Hines Page, stationed in London, and Theodore Roosevelt (an exuberant, chest-thumping man who combined vigorous threats with driving inaction—a pre-planning version of Aneurin Bevan).

over, the Americans would be expected to retire again to their own Continent and mind their own business. President Wilson tried to evade this by launching the project of a League of Nations, with America in it.

The world soon learned that it did not pay to be kind to Americans. When the war was over, Europeans sought to pay back the borrowed money in the form of goods. The Americans, terrified at the idea of having to consume European products as well as their own, declined. They insisted on payment in cash, in the famous words "They hired the *money*, didn't they?" The Europeans, with much dignity, feeling that they had done enough for America by allowing them to come into the war, refused. So the Americans sulkily refused to sign the Versailles Treaty or to join the League of Nations, and again returned to their trick of pretending that the rest of the world did not exist (*see Isolationism, above*).

When the Second World War started in 1939, the Americans—uncertain whether they could destroy their surpluses better by neutrality or participation—vacillated for over two years. Finally, early in December, 1941 the Japanese destroyed almost the entire American Navy in an afternoon. In a paroxysm of certainty, the Americans abandoned their pose of neutrality and entered the war against the Japanese.

After 1945, the old argument came up again. Were the Americans to stay in Europe, Asia, etc., or go? The British, weary and tired after six years of war, decided it would be simpler all round to allow the Americans to remain, and thus be ready on the spot for the next

round in Europe and the Middle or Far East. They generously offered to guide the inexperienced Americans in the subtleties of European diplomacy.

For their part, the Americans had no intention of leaving Europe and Asia. Goaded almost beyond endurance by the success with which Europe had destroyed most of its goods, they determined to force into unwilling European and Asiatic hands—and lands—their own American surpluses.

The Eastern Europeans, almost as boorish as the Americans, rejected such American high-handedness. They consented to attend the Paris Conference where the matter was discussed, but soon saw that it was despair that had motivated Secretary Marshall's Speech at Harvard in June, 1947. The intelligent, far-sighted, enlightened East Europeans coldly refused to consume products, *i.e.* shoulder burdens, not their own. The West Europeans (more tolerant than their eastern neighbours), led by the British finally<sup>2</sup> gave in. They agreed to help out for a short time; but, touched by American distress, they finally agreed to accept American goods until 1952.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It may be wondered why the British are so consistently indulgent to Americans. It is caused by a sense of guilt. The British well realize that, had they been able to spare a few planners back in the eighteenth century (*see Business*), America, as we now know it, need never have happened.

<sup>3</sup> And to act as if they both *wanted and needed* the goods. (*See Sports, British Unwillingness to Defeat Americans in. Also see Musical Comedies, American, British Pretence of Enjoying.*)

After their centuries of isolationism, Americans have emerged from darkness and stand blinking in the pure and clear sunshine of European politics. Their long incubation has given them curious notions about the world, about their own place in it, and their own place in history.

Not understanding the world,<sup>4</sup> Americans do not realize that empires are acquired so that the "white man's burden" may be gallantly borne; and so that the standards of living of backward people may be raised, at the cost of considerable sacrifice to oneself and with no hope of reward. Furthermore, they nurse long-standing suspicions about other people's motives, believing their own to be free from reproach.

They are steeped in the inaccurate belief that America has been a successful experiment—a good ideal, and even a "good idea." So far do they carry this insularity that they frequently state publicly that the rest of the world is "looking to us for a lead."<sup>5</sup> They believe that the rest of the world admires them and wishes them well, and that since they are giving away so many things<sup>6</sup> they will be liked more than ever. At least if they do not be-

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<sup>4</sup> Because of the absence of a magazine like *The Economist* in America.

<sup>5</sup> It is true that some British have been heard to say that Europe, or the world, is looking to *them* for a lead. The difference is that the British may be right in so believing. The Americans are not.

<sup>6</sup> Which, anyway, they do not want, and others cannot use either.

lieve that, they think it ought to be true. They do not realize that the world knows all American actions are taken with regard solely to American interests.<sup>7</sup>

Once they had elbowed their way into world affairs, the Americans were faced with the need for a policy, and a personnel to administer it. The only consistent thing about their policy was their recognition of the need to make the rest of the world take their goods. But their ideas *how* this could best be accomplished changed from hour to hour (*see* Columnists, Guidance of American Affairs by). Frequently these policy changes confused Americans and non-Americans alike.<sup>8</sup> Then the guiding geniuses of American life, the American club-women, decided to take a hand behind the scenes. From then on, things became more stable and the Americans began to follow (for them) a fairly steady line.

It will perhaps be wondered why American club-women, so busy with other aspects of American affairs (*see* Women, American, Wide Range of Activities of) decided to burden themselves still further with world affairs. The explanation is simple. The Second World War frightened the already insecure American women. Their men had eagerly and delightedly gone forth from home and hearth. Once abroad, they had preferred

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<sup>7</sup> It was left to Americans to corrupt international relations by introducing the idea of self-interest.

<sup>8</sup> Americans, as has been shown, are conditioned to being confused; but it was a serious problem for Europeans, used to the consistent policies followed by their own governments.



foreign countries and foreign women to America and their own women, as described earlier.

By putting sufficient pressure on Congress, the club women succeeded in getting most of their men home. But they were determined never to run so appalling a risk again. So the American women swung in behind the plan for sending American goods all over the world on *any* terms, hoping gradually to re-make the world in the American image. When the rest of the world is like America—or as much like it as makes no difference—American women will again feel safe.<sup>9</sup>

American women are naturally determined to see that their plans for Americanizing the world are working properly.<sup>10</sup> They have well-laid plans to descend on Europe in droves for the next few years, to make certain that things are going to schedule.<sup>11</sup> A by-product for

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<sup>9</sup> Because their men will be willing to stay home.

<sup>10</sup> More passports were issued by the U.S. State Department during the year ended March 31, 1949, than in any other year. Majority of travellers were for Western Europe. . . . Applications continue to be received in record numbers. . . . State Department figures also show that *people listed as housewives were the largest group of applicants.*" *London Star*, June 20, 1949.

<sup>11</sup> It is amusing for anyone who understands the situation to watch Europeans trying to entice American tourists to Europe by offering good weather, good food, and good beds. None of these efforts is necessary. American women will come regardless of weather and food. (*See the American women's magazine, Time.*)

them is to see what it is that British and other European women have that so attracted American men.

The problem of personnel to administer the new American foreign policy was also difficult. Unlike the British—who had younger sons, black sheep, and convicts to populate their colonies—Americans had no such suitable groups. For years they had been jogging along with a small State Department, timidly modelled on the lines of the notoriously efficient British Foreign Office. America's new position and policy not only called for a bigger State Department but also a lot of other agencies.

Since all Americans dislike America and would like nothing better than to get away from it, as soon as the Government made known that many Americans were going to be allowed to go abroad to live for a time,<sup>12</sup> it was inundated with applications. The capitalist bosses solved this problem by selecting for the jobs mainly American "deviants": that is, Americans who do not have the standard American personality (*see* Chapter I), and who have sometimes read other things than comic books, American newspapers and best-sellers. That is why many Americans working abroad for their Government show such queer, un-American traits. Many are quiet; some do not wear vast painted neck-ties; some

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<sup>12</sup> Of course, even those Americans permitted to go abroad for the Government are forced to accept American wages, eat in American canteens and use American commissaries. Sometimes they force their foreign friends to eat in the canteens and help use up the commissary goods. Europeans do this because they are sorry for the driven Americans.

make timid and tentative efforts at conversation. One or two have come without cameras.<sup>13</sup>

Even "deviant" Americans, however, are sufficiently tainted with Americanism to make very poor administrators. If, like the British, they knew themselves to be superior to the people among whom they were stationed, there would be no problem. Since, however, they are *not* superior, they make grave errors. They mix with non-Americans; try to talk their language; chase their women; and fail to exact the homage the British always exact.

The Americans are concerned about the atom-bomb not because they plan to drop it on anyone else. Far from it. They do not plan anything; not even wars. But from the American point of view, the atom-bomb has a double appeal. It is more destructive than any other bomb. It can also make huge areas uninhabitable for long periods. Thus an A-bomb can make it unnecessary for Americans either to consume what used to be produced in the area, or to tear down buildings to build them up again.

There is little danger, however, that the Americans will *deliberately* start a war. (They are, as Europeans know, much too unpatriotic for that, and say they would rather live in their country than die for it.<sup>14</sup>) Even dur-

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<sup>13</sup> Having escaped the vigilant U.S. inspectors, since no American is allowed to quit the country without a passport, the current copy of the *Reader's Digest* and a camera.

<sup>14</sup> This may seem a singular choice on their part; but the Americans, as should by now be clear, are a singular, and not a collectivist, people.

ing a war they are forced to do much of their fighting practically smothered in *matériel*, and it is only in the front-line trenches that they are spared the burden of consumption—though even there the U.S. troops have to consume more than other troops.

It is painfully clear that Americans are going to keep on producing more and more—and so will have to consume more and more. They are going to remain brashly materialistic. The rest of the world, on the other hand, is determined to de-emphasize production and consumption as much as possible. Having gone collectivist, it is advancing—and may soon have advanced completely—beyond material needs.<sup>15</sup>

The rest of the world has made concessions. It has agreed to help the Americans out of their self-created dilemma—for a little while. But even this indulgence must come to an end. Someday, soon, the rest of the world will refuse to be burdened any longer with American goods. So the world's gravest problem remains: America is going one way; the rest of the world is going another.

There can be only one solution.

It will be necessary to start America all over again.

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<sup>15</sup> It is not true to claim that the Russians (as some of their admirers have insisted) have succeeded in cutting out consumption entirely. But the success they *have* achieved in cutting consumption of consumer goods has been enough to frighten America's capitalist bosses.







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