

the facts of economic geography need collecting too.

At any rate, Mr. Botkin has equipped his volume with exhaustive citations and a masterful index, to aid those who may be stimulated or irritated into following up his leads.

After graduation from Harvard Richard E. Dorson made a specialty of American folklore. He now teaches history at Michigan State College.

Our Own Tongue

OUR AMERICAN LANGUAGE. By Richard D. Mallery. New York: Halcyon House. 1947. 276 pp. \$2.

Reviewed by HORACE REYNOLDS

IN SO FAR as American English differs from British English in spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, it is a separate language, distinct from all other forms of English and justified in its assumption of the title of the American language. It is natural then that Mr. Mallery, a New York University English professor, should begin his book on the American language with a discussion of such differences. He reminds us that it was Noah Webster who as early as 1789 was advocating the spelling reforms which turned English *savour* into American *savor*, English *centre* into American *center*.

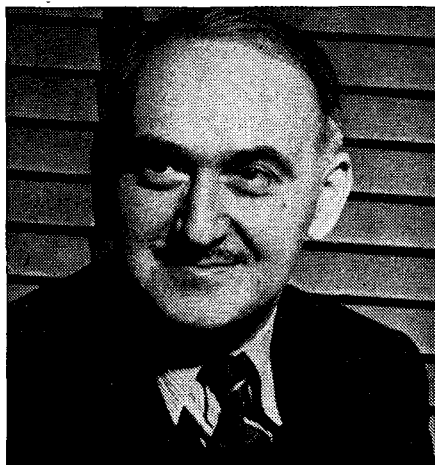
The American contribution to the vocabulary of English Mr. Mallery arranges under two heads; compounds and adaptations of English words; words from languages other than English. Under the first he lists such American linkings as *logrolling* and *catfish*; under the second, such American borrowings as *caboose* from the Dutch, *lagniappe* from the French, *pawpaw* from the Spanish, *pumpernickel* from the German, *possum* from the American Indian. This is a pretty sketchy treatment of the American contribution to the fund of English words brought to these shores by our seedfolks. Among other things, it leaves out of account the extended meanings Americans have given to such English words as *creek*, *gut*, and *corn*.

Every American of New England descent has among his grandparents an Ezekial or a Hezekiah; even today Mr. Mallery finds Hosea, Obadiah, and other Biblical given names in a recent "Who's Who in America." The Puritans on American soil appear to have gone farther than the stay-at-homes in this mortification of the self by the deliberate selection of a harsh-sounding name from the Old Testament. Another interesting thought engendered by Mr. Mallery's discus-

sion of personal names in America is the common distortion of foreign surnames. I know of one Eau Claire, for instance, who as a result of Irish neighbors became O'Clare; and Vevay, Indiana, while retaining its French-Swiss spelling is locally pronounced Veevee. It was also interesting to learn from Mr. Mallery that the itinerant Methodist preacher Lorenzo Dow had, in a nice way, given his Italianate first name to many male babies born during his lifetime.

Lists of terms taken from such various human activities and interests as transportation, religion, sport, radio, and the like make up the last half of Mr. Mallery's book. It is a little difficult to see the value of these lists. They contain no information not to be found more fully in such dictionaries as the Merriam Webster and "The Dictionary of American English." In compiling them, Mr. Mallery has not restricted himself to words of native origin or even terms in which the sense of the word is of American making. He includes terms like *boycott* and *cartel*, which American shares with other forms of English. The lists are sketchy and incomplete. The list of transportation terms, for instance, omits such common railroad terms as *baggage-smasher*, *deadhead*, *jerk-water*, to mention only a trio of expressive railroad words. The classifications are loose. In his section on slang Mr. Mallery includes such dialectical forms as *critter*, *cuss*, *rile*, *sassy*, *snuck*, which, if there is anything in the distinction between colloquial expressions and slang, are certainly the former, not the latter.

As an introduction to the subject, as a first book for those who may go on to Krapp and Mencken and "The Dictionary of American English," Mr. Mallery's book may well serve a useful purpose. One wishes it were less of a jerry job of merely catalogue-size book-building.



—Irving Haberman.

In no big magazine fiction may "a worker [be] right and an employer wrong," says George Seldes.

Free Press Wanted

1000 AMERICANS: The Real Rulers of the U.S.A. By George Seldes. New York: Boni & Gaer, Inc. 1948. 312 pp. \$3.

Reviewed by ROBERT S. ALLEN

GEORGE SELDES restates his favorite theme in his latest book, "1000 Americans": that most of the ills of the world would be solved, or at least abated, if the United States had "free and honest" newspapers and magazines. It's a good theme, but others have stated it more ably, accurately, and effectively.

Seldes brushes aside as naïve the various suggestions for a better press made by the Hutchins Commission on the Freedom of the Press. But Seldes's own suggestions for solving this problem are no less naïve. He proposes "more newspapers endowed by someone like Marshall Field, or establishment of a chain of standard daily newspapers by a powerful organization possessing the required number of millions of dollars."

Apparently, Seldes is unaware of Mr. Field's unhappy experience as a newspaper publisher in New York and Chicago. Also, of the fact that it not only costs millions of dollars to start just one metropolitan newspaper, but other millions to keep such a paper going. Seldes does suggest that organizations like the farm cops, the Farmers Union, the AFL, the CIO, or the Railroad Brotherhoods might have the money to finance such papers. Perhaps they have. But such projects would also be one very good way for them to go broke. His suggestion, coming from someone else, could very well lead to the conclusion that it was an idea planted by Seldes's favorite devil, the NAM, for the purpose of bankrupting these organizations.

Seldes hurls many searing accusations at the press of the land. Most of his charges are unqualified. An example is his statement that the press "suppressed, distorted, or buried" news about the debate in Congress on military aid to Greece and Turkey. "If we had had an honest press," Seldes asserts, "the people of America would have been informed . . . of the opposition view which feared the new policy would involve the country in war." Yet, in the very next sentence, Seldes concedes that a Gallup Poll of April 28, 1947, disclosed that seventy-five per cent of those polled held exactly this opposition view. Apparently the people of America did get information from some source. Of course, the real facts of the matter are that the debates on

the issue in Congress were widely reported. And many commentators, both press and radio, expressed vigorous criticism of the ill-advised and dangerous so-called Truman Doctrine. To cite one instance: Walter Lippmann wrote a number of articles questioning the soundness and wisdom of this policy.

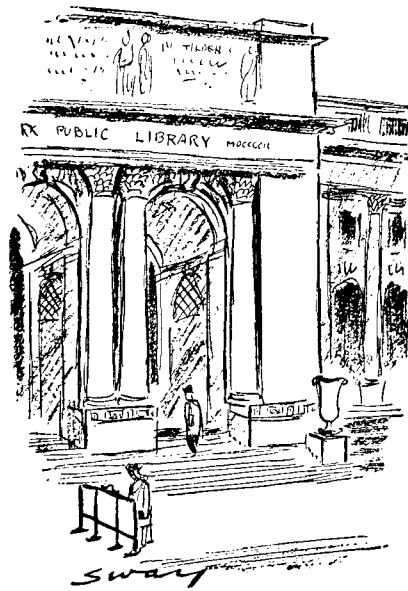
Nearly every page of Seldes's book laments that papers and magazines did not report this or that information which the American people needed to know for their own and the country's good. Yet, on page after page, Seldes proves the importance of these facts by quoting from articles printed in the newspapers at the time. For example: He quotes the *New York Herald Tribune*—not *PM*—that the fight against the confirmation of David E. Lilienthal, as head of the Atomic Energy Commission, was a "sordid scene." Seldes again quotes the *Herald Tribune* that the "first voice raised against Lilienthal after that of McKellar was the voice of Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire. Bridges's burning conviction that the views of the power lobby were the charter of American liberties has long been known to most people in Washington."

Isn't that informing the people? The *Herald Tribune* is a newspaper!

Some of Seldes's examples of suppression of news by the press seem far-fetched, to put it mildly. He makes a great point of the fact that "the scandal of 1913 when the NAM was shown by a Congressional investigation to have bribed members of the House of Representatives" was not as fully reported in the press as he considers it should have been. It would take many readers more interested in history than in comic strips, to keep this generation fully informed on the intricacies of the Mulhall investigation way back in 1913.

Seldes hits much closer to the truth when he says, 100 or so pages later, "actually, revelations in the few honest newspapers, and official investigations years after the fact, could not inform or arouse a large number of citizens." Without denying for one moment that the daily press commits numerous and egregious sins of commission and omission, every Washington newspaperman knows, from years of bitter experience, the difficulty of arousing the public with even the most sensational disclosures; the difficulty of getting the average reader to become "het up" over anything more profound than "Lil Abner."

Seldes devotes much space in his book to magazines, and his theme is the "powerful participation" of the House of Morgan in their ownership and control. According to Seldes, every big magazine in the United



States, with the exception of *The Reader's Digest* and *Look*, is owned or controlled or affiliated with the biggest business interests of the nation, including the House of Morgan and NAM.

Seldes asserts that "money is woven into the pages of *Life*, *Time*, *Fortune*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Newsweek*, and all the rest of the big magazines." To prove this, he cites examples ranging all the way from material utilized by Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry to an anti-labor quote by Clarence Buddington Kelland. Concludes Seldes, "To my knowledge, there are no instances of big magazines in the United States permitting a fiction writer to tell a story in which a worker is right and an employer is wrong."

Seldes even takes a poke at *The Saturday Review of Literature*, on which, he says, Thomas Lamont, of the House of Morgan, lost money:

It was the opinion of the editor of *Editor and Publisher*, Arthur Robb, that the financing of *The Saturday Review of Literature* "has for nearly two decades given Morgan a strategic foothold in the book publishing." But publishers insist that, although it might have been a foothold, it was certainly not strategic.

Within 249 pages and another fifty pages of appendices, Seldes tries to

document charges that the "big powers" of America buy elections, make wars, endanger the United States through cartel agreements, and control most channels of communication. This is a very big order, and the result is necessarily sketchy. Seldes's publishers proclaim that his book contains "explosive revelations." But the charges really are not new; at least they are not new to those who really read newspapers and other publications instead of merely skipping from the headlines to the sport and comic pages. However, for those who need a quick fill-in on NAM, the DuPonts, the Pews, Rockefellers, House of Morgan, et al., Seldes's book will give it to them.

But for convincing proof that the American public, knowing by heart every word of the machinations of the "big powers," would behave any differently than it has, it will be necessary to seek elsewhere. Seldes does not furnish that evidence.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In connection with the reference to *The Saturday Review* quoted in Mr. Allen's review, the editors have written to Mr. Seldes, pointing out that the statement in question did not in fact represent Mr. Robb's "opinion," but was attributed by Mr. Robb to Ferdinand Lundberg's "America's Sixty Families." Far from accepting the statement, Mr. Robb said that Mr. Lundberg's information "rested on assertion."

The *Saturday Review* has received a reply from Mr. Seldes apologizing for the error. "It would be notably hypocritical of me," Mr. Seldes wrote, "to fail to correct errors. In fact, I welcome corrections, and I favor the establishment of some bureau or system by which corrections would obtain the same circulation as the original error. . . . The sixth line from the bottom of page 83 of my new book should have read: 'Robb also quoted Lundberg as saying that . . .' The quotation is from Lundberg and not from Robb's review, and I regret the error in editing the ms."

The editors are grateful to Mr. Seldes for his explanation.

In Expectancy

By Kitty Owen Lehman

N'E'ER stilled these ceaseless yearnings in my soul
Like restless waves that beat against the shore!
Like crimson flames that lick against my mind
Leaving me hopelessness, and nothing more.
Let me know that I am part of this, the
Sun has shone upon, the waves have kissed.
Then let me joy that there is that in me
Which yearns forever in expectancy.