

# Do they mean us? An American view of UK media

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/11/15/do-they-mean-us-an-american-view-of-uk-media/](https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/11/15/do-they-mean-us-an-american-view-of-uk-media/)

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Veteran US journalist Howard [Weaver](#) writing on the editor's [blog](#) for the American [McClatchy](#) newspaper group has posted about the Polis [debate](#) on impartiality. It is clear that Howard doesn't think that we Brits do impartiality very well outside of the BBC Radio 4. What makes this really interesting is that Howard was in the UK back in 1993 and he gives a link to his [journal](#) written at the time:

*The cynicism is widely manifest. One kind is apparent here in the way newspapers are so overtly political-both in terms of being partisan, and in the sense of buying into the political agenda of what matters. Admittedly, British politics matter more to Brits than to me, but I just can't imagine readers really wanting the steady diet of political skirmish and positioning that winds up in the headlines here day after day after tiresome day.*

**So not much changed there then. Howard was at Cambridge University at the time so he didn't have much access to telly, but he works his way through 1993 BBC radio. He likes Radio 2's eclectic musical taste (no really) but just watch a Yank fall in love with the heartland of bourgeois middle England:**

*And then there is Radio 4. This is the BBC public affairs and entertainment channel, a wondrous mix of skillful interview shows, radio drama, a soap opera (*The Archers*) that seems to have captivated everybody in Britain except me, and lots of news. From the schedule for today (printed every day in the papers, which also \*cover\* radio): Shipping Weather Forecast, Woman's Hour (pelvic inflammatory diseases), Thirty-Minute Theater (Theatre, here, of course), an interview show with the heads of music and musical instrument departments at Sotheby's, a science show, a feature on Queen Victoria's Scottish bodyguard, *A Book At Bedtime*, and much, much more, 5:55 a.m. till midnight, every day. There are a couple of panel/game shows that Barb and I try especially to catch. One is called "Just A Minute," and it requires panelists to discourse on the subject provided for a full minute, subject to challenges from competitors for pauses, repetition or general silliness. It's surprisingly adept.*

**Howard even tries to master cricket rules but reckons our sports reporting is not on a par with that in the States. He was right then but I think that is one area where we have caught up a bit since 1993. All I can say to Howard is "come back over". For a high-minded chap like you we now have BBC 4! (Just don't turn on BBC3 by mistake...) The papers are slightly less rabid but then so is our politics. 1993 was a particularly vicious period. I'd love to know what you make of our online media, too. How about the Guardian's [Comment Is Free](#), for example? But then as most of our best online sites are now swamped by Americans anyway I would suggest that perhaps we have more to offer than you thought?**

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