

# West Gets Much Joy Out of Life

## Terrible Seriousness in Regard to Sound Economic Problems Does not Impair the Westerners Faculty for Relaxation

By J. C. ROSS.

Giving publicity to "impressions" gathered in a month's trip through the West one of necessity must include many features. Probably the outstanding impressions gathered were of the country's immense resources; the confidence of the people in themselves and in the land of their adoption, together with their cheerful outlook on life, in general. In a very particular sense the people enjoy life as they go along, but in another sense they are earnestly trying to solve the big problems which confront humanity. However, they manage to get an unusual amount of pleasure out of life; week-end parties, excursions, picnics, motoring, riding and driving all playing a part in the out-of-doors life of the great west.

Closely associated with this impression of optimism and confidence in self and country was the impression of a terrible seriousness in regard to such matters as tariffs, special privileges, Government ownership and kindred topics. Old timers in the west have had their full share of experience with grasping corporations. In the first place the Hudson's Bay Company held sway over the land, and so ubiquitous and grasping was this great concern that the initials H.B.C. are said by the westerners to mean "Here Before Christ." The Hudson's Bay Company were there first, and it was a long fight before they gave up the special privileges and perquisites they had enjoyed for centuries. Then came the era of railroad building with a generous country giving millions of acres of arable land to railroad builders. Following this came the regime of the real estate speculators with big land syndicates buying up huge areas of desirable land and holding it until the enterprise of settlers made the land soar to almost prohibitive figures.

In connection with the real estate boom of a half a dozen years ago a good story is told which it must be said in truth can apply equally well to Eastern Canada. The story tells of an Old Country business man who went out to a Western city to purchase land. He was taken in charge by an energetic real estate salesman, put in an auto and whirled away out into the country where a new sub-division was being put on the market. The real estate agent tried his best to sell the property but the Old Countryman was unconvinced and declared that he would first look up what a rival city some three hundred miles away had to offer. In due time he reached the second city and was again taken in charge by a real estate agent who whirled him out in the opposite direction to that in which he had been taken in the first city. He, too, showed him a subdivision and tried his best to sell the property. The Englishman was somewhat disconcerted at what had been shown him, and in spite of the persuasions of the real estate man refused to buy, remarking, "A chap from — showed me this land two days ago, and if I buy at all, I will buy through him. It seemed a little nearer to his city." All that sky-rocketing is a thing of the past: real estate is down to its normal level and exploiting has gone into the discard.

### A STARTLING RESOLUTION.

Sometimes Eastern manufacturers and Eastern business men wonder at the hostility or indifference of the Western farmers. At a farmer's convention in Calgary this summer a resolution was introduced recommending that Eastern manufactured articles be boycotted. Fortunately saner counsel prevailed and the resolution was not carried, but it shows something of the spirit which

animates at least a section of the west. Sometimes one does not wonder at the westerner ridiculing the apostles sent out from the East. A case in point came under the writer's attention this summer. An Eastern manufacturer visiting the dry belt of Southern Alberta expressed his disappointment at the burned-up appearance of the crops and pasture and after some reflection announced that he had a scheme whereby the dry belt could be reclaimed. When questioned by Westerners to the nature of his scheme he made the astounding statement that there were now thousands of aeroplanes discarded from the army and he proposed that "these should be used to sprinkle the prairies and make them blossom like a rose." The ridiculous nature of the proposal so struck the westerners that the man and his remarks became a standing joke all through the country.

The west may have its problems, social, economic, racial and so on, but it is a great country and has immense possibilities. As one rolls over the prairies and views the expanse from the observation car of a luxurious train the mind instinctively goes back to the days of the ox-cart and the Red River Trail. One thinks appreciatively of those hardy pioneers who first blazed the trail into that great unknown prairie land. The men who opened up that great country must have been gifted with a vision. That first lone Argonaut might have said:—

"I hear the tread of pioneers, of nations yet to be; The first low wash of waves where yet shall roll a human sea."

## LITTLE IMMIGRATION LIKELY.

G. R. Marnoch, the well-known financial and economic authority of Southern Alberta, writes from Aberdeen some interesting reflections on the immigration prospects for Canada. Migratory movements, he points out, "arise from poor opportunities in one country, and richer fields in others. The results are the general benefits to individuals, and the betterment of the world's welfare. From our Canadian viewpoint it may be noted that the rough industrial and field work on the North American continent has always been done by labor that had recently migrated to our shores. Such laborers improve their own economic conditions; and they generally become citizens of the United States or Canada; always, in fact when they become farmers.

There is now going on, Mr. Marnoch says, "a permanent moving back of these people, whom we invited to come to us, and whom we were glad to see when they arrived. And we may as well recognize, too, that our economic fabric in Canada and the States is being seriously injured by this movement; for our settled people do not do, and never have done since the days of the Pilgrim Fathers, the rough work that these folk have done for us; and the rough work in our industries and in the building of our railroads must be done, always, before the finer handicrafts can begin.

"There is much work of rehabilitation to be done in Europe, and there are huge lists of very necessary repair works before Great Britain. Shortage of help is evident here on all sides just now in Great Britain; and in any case practically the only producers whom we profitably drew from this country in the past were farm laborers. While farm servants are drawing £40 to £50 a half-year (\$400 to \$500 a year) with board and lodging and on a short day, it may readily be surmised that there will be but little emigration of this desirable class to Canada."

## Proving the State a Bad Boss

Chairman Edward N. Hurley has quit the United States Shipping Board. Few men accumulated so much experience during the war as he did; yet, for all its variety, Mr. Hurley's experience was in largest extent with employers and employees; it was a job in production on a scale far greater than any private enterprise had even conceived before the war.

Mr. Hurley was asked in Washington the other day if he would tell, as a sort of valedictory to the American people on leaving the chairmanship of the Shipping Board, what, in his job, had impressed him most.

"The efficiency of private ownership and operation as compared with public ownership and operation," was the answer, "and I believe this lesson, as it is brought home more emphatically to the American people, is to prove one of the greatest benefits we derived from the war. As new facts about the conduct of the war come out, as our experience in many fields of production is appraised, they will point, I predict, more unerringly to this same conclusion—the superior efficiency of private ownership. All production centres on the cost—you can't get away from that. Shift the responsibility for the cost, for the best possible result under a given set of circumstances, and you shift the responsibility for efficiency. That is what we did on the Shipping Board, under the pressure of the war's necessity, when the question of cost was forced into second place. We shifted the responsibility of the cost from private shipbuilding concerns to the Government.

That keen interest in results which follows private initiative was gone. There you have the

whole problem as between Government ownership and private ownership. No way has been found to instill in Government ownership the incentive that possesses private ownership to improve conditions of production. Under Government control I found the spur of highest endeavor was taken off the private concerns and that the slowing up spread inevitably to the employees.

The whole proposition of Government ownership is fine in theory; in practice the push of individual energy is missing. I don't know of a Government-owned plant that produces more than two-thirds efficiency, and there are numerous examples much below this line.

"For a short time such a plant, under special appeals, might be speeded up, but it could not be maintained for a protracted period, and sooner or later would drop below the standard of private management. When the manager has no dividend to strive for, when the toll is paid, the slowing-up is sure to follow.

"For new shipyards we furnished the capital, we guaranteed the wages, we provided the profits. What natural incentive was there to keep costs down? As we view the opposite conditions under which our industries have grown to their present vast extent, how could we look for efficiency under such a system? And if we had Government ownership over the country, nationally, taking in all the public utilities, the same results would follow. More, you wouldn't have outside of the Government-owned plants that efficient competition which remains the life of trade."