

# GINGERING UP GINGER-LAND

*Cameras, Reporters and Politicians accompany Premier Sir Robert Borden and Mr. R. B. Bennett on Record-Breaking, Speech-Making Journey from Quebec City to Victoria and back again*

By J. F. B. LIVESAY

Photographs en route by the Author

**S**AID once a witty Frenchman—they say these things so much better over there: "I cannot get inside a man until I have him seated opposite me in a hackney coach."

A number of the privileged members of the party accompanying Sir Robert Borden and the Director-General, R. B. Bennett, M.P., west from Winnipeg to Victoria and back in their whirlwind campaign in aid of National Service had much the same experience of the people of Western Canada. Outside the merits and the heights of that campaign, it was these people—the wonderful audiences all through the prairie and at the Coast—that were of the most pregnant significance. Western Canada has given freely of her sons—too freely, even, of the farming community, it was said, if production is to be maintained—but those who are left are animated with the same stern spirit, inherited from Covenanter and Roundhead ancestors, or the natural growth of the wide land wherein they live, as the men they have sent overseas.

Take, for instance, the meeting at Brandon at the inconvenient hour of nine o'clock of a December morning, with the thermometer thirty-eight below zero. To one early on the ground it seemed impossible to fill the vast emptiness of the Winter Fair building, seating five thousand persons in and around what is reputed to be the largest show-ring in Canada. But nothing could chill the enthusiasm of the people of Western Manitoba, who came by special trains to what was to be the last of the prairie meetings. Quite four thousand persons were present.

The time was limited, because the special train had to reach Toronto at a certain hour next day but one; and perhaps this had something to do with the concentrated energy of the speeches, and the general crisp swing of the business. Certainly the Prime Minister was not heard to better advantage on the western tour, and the serious, earnest note he struck, an impressive and unforgettable figure to so many in that great arena, awoke at once its immediate response.

To those who do not know a prairie audience, the absence of applause, of vigorous hand-clapping, and ready demonstration, is actually disconcerting. At one considerable prairie point, indeed, the chairman of the meeting so far mistook the temper of the crowd as to ask for such a demonstration—he got it on demand, but in a few minutes the cheers subsided, to be replaced by the tense silence of close attention.

That, of course, is the greatest of all inspirations for the orator immersed in his theme, as so obviously was Sir Robert Borden. It was such audiences he faced in the West, grim in their determination to see it through, and abandoning their reserve only on such occasions as the eloquent declaration that Canada fought for nothing short of a victory so complete as to guarantee a peace that shall endure.

A feature of this significant meeting was the able and eloquent speech of Premier Norris, who, putting aside party politics in Brandon, as he had ten days before in Winnipeg, stood squarely on that platform alongside his Conservative opponents for the idea of National Service. That, indeed, was a happy characteristic of all the western meetings. No more impassioned appeal was made from any western platform than that of Premier Brewster, in British Columbia, while at the Regina meeting Hon. J. A. Calder was just as emphatic on behalf of the Saskatchewan Government, and, in Calgary, Michael Clark, M.P. for Red Deer, a recognized leader of Alberta Liberals, rose to a fine height in his exposition of the doctrine of unity of effort in prosecution of the war. It was difficult to dissuade oneself, indeed, of the notion that these were the right-hand men in the West of Premier Borden, instead of being the chief of his political opponents. That is a sign of the times.

This is neither the place nor the occasion to discuss or to weigh the aspects of National Service, as placed before the people of the West. None could leave these meetings without the impression of the single-hearted earnestness of its sponsors. It fell to the lot of the Prime Minister to strike the opening note of impressive warning; to recount what had been done, but much more to describe the perils and the difficulties that lay ahead; and to declare that nothing less than a united effort could achieve the common goal. He was able to speak from a wide experience that embraced not only the executive government, but included a personal survey of the conditions of our armies overseas. His message thence to the people of Canada was sharp and precise. Nothing less than ample victory and its concomitant of a lasting and honourable peace could pay for the blood of Canada's best, poured out on the plains of Flanders and of France.

Thus nobly introduced, Mr. Bennett stepped on the scene with his definite programme for the co-ordination of national effort, the foundation of which must



**L**EGEND: Sir Robert Borden has the National Service train stop in the foot-hills while he rehearses his Pacific war speech. Fast: The Premier has a little passing amusement. The train has stopped at a tank. Sir Robert invigorates himself throwing snowballs. The upper picture shows the Premier aiming definitely and morally at a cranberry bush. The second shows him contemplating the said bush after he has not struck it.

From the narrative of the journey it is quite obvious that the Premier sent better balls home from the platform on National Service than he did in the foot-hills. There has never been any doubt as to where Sir Robert Borden stands on the war question. And there are times when a man may stand a little too well. In the National Service campaign the Premier demonstrates that he does not believe merely in standing. The war and the world do move. The Government of Canada must move with them.

~ ~ ~

**R.** B. BENNETT, Director-General of National Service, swaps smiles with a member of the Toronto Globe staff aboard ship from Vancouver to Victoria. The gulls on the life-boat rig near by understand that Mr. Bennett is having the last word with the Globe and decide to overcome their native fear of man by coming as close as possible.

