Borah Tells the World

By RAY T. TUCKER

THE GREAT AMERICAN SPOKESMAN

The shock which Pierre Laval suffered when he clashed with Borah of Idaho is no new experience for American presidents and Old Guard politicians. Nor was it, perhaps, a complete surprise to the French Premier, who must have recalled the rôle Borah played in breaking the pledge which another President had given to Europe without taking sufficient thought of the shaggy-maned statesman with the boyish grin and mischievous manner on Capitol Hill.

Ten years ago it was Borah, more than any other individual, who prevented Woodrow Wilson from writing a new and strange chapter of American history. Today it is the same Borah, his hair a little thinner, who threatens to effect a remaking of the map of Europe so cruelly distorted by the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain. With his demand that France recognize the political, economic and geographical injustice of these documents before seeking further generosity from the United States, the Senator has stirred vivid and volcanic figures and forces abroad.

This spokesman from a remote Western state has reawakened the aspirations of millions of peoples. He has given heart to the Hitlerites of Germany; he has led Mussolini to gaze once more upon Italy's lost provinces; he has aroused a fear in Poland that she may lose her corridor to the sea; he has shown how shaky French domination of Europe may prove to be; he has uttered another warning against what he regards as "entangling alliances." If, as he once told the writer, "the key to my public conduct is a strong and instinctive sympathy for the underdog," he has, more than in his earlier crusades, achieved his ambition. From Germany and Hungary, as well as from his own country, have come messages assuring him that "God will bless" him for what he did and said when he spoke his mind to M. Laval—and to the world. It is, whether one agrees or not, quite an accomplishment for a single senator.

As always, he has received his meed—and more—of denunciation. Although the Senator discussed foreign problems with a realism which might well have come from official American spokesmen, it is doubtful if the latter enjoyed Mr. Borah's plain speaking. Likewise, Republicans who feel called upon to back up the party leader, right or wrong, are miffed. Raising the chant which their political ancestors were singing when some present-day senators were still in swaddling clothes, they assail the Idahoan as an obstructionist, as a troublemaker, as a prima donna. Leading journals, especially in the large financial centers of the East, carry frenzied editorials suggesting that the Logan law—or some law, it matters not which—be invoked against him for having placed high affairs of state in jeopardy. They recall his career, and pungently add that he promises but never performs, that his bark is worse than his bite. From Poland comes the story that he is of German descent, therefore clearly prejudiced, and that his best known ancestor was Catherine von Borah, second wife of Martin Luther. Everywhere he is reviled or worshiped, condemned as the bad boy of international politics or eulogized as the prophet of a new and better era. It has always been, and, until that day when he declines to pass through the pearly gates without a chance for a careful and conscientious scrutiny of what lands lie beyond the wall, so it ever will be.

In all this turmoil it seems strange that so few sense the human drama in Borah himself; or ask how it is that a senator from a small and unpretentious state, a senator who must prowl the political plains as a "lone wolf" because the Bigwigs of his party so seldom go along with him, can stir such a storm with so slight a thing as a newspaper interview! Rail at him as they may, their very railings seem to testify to a greatness, to an influence, to an independence which cannot be denied, and which must be admired if only because these qualities are so rare in American politics.

Why is it, one asks, that there is no other figure in the United States, with the possible exception of a President in office, whose words carry such weight at home and abroad! After Mr. Hoover, Mr. Borah was the man whom M. Laval wanted to see, and the French journalists radioed their request for an interview as soon as they left France. Was it because the practical peasant from Auvergne knew that the Senator from a far Western state was also a realist, and, too, that when the Hoover-Laval accord reaches the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and the Senate floor—if it ever does—it will be the voice of Borah which will prevail! M. Laval was wise beyond his nationality. Had a long line of statesmen, beginning with Woodrow Wilson and continuing to Herbert Hoover, possessed the astuteness of M. Laval with respect to Mr. Borah's importance and insight, they might have saved themselves a great deal of grief and the legacy of post-war problems confronting the world might have been less perplexing.

The Laval-Borah incident emphasizes a phase of the Senator's career that is little known. It is that the Idahoan has eventually emerged as a sort of super-state, a governmental entity in himself. Else why should M. Laval deem it wise to obtain his views, not on the United States, but on Europe, and on France's destiny in particular? It was an amazing thing that, under the presidential nose at the White House, the French Premier should arrange with a mere legislator for an international conference to be held under the secretarial nose at the home of Henry L. Stimson. There are other evidences of Borah's prestige abroad. He is, no less, Russia's unofficial ambassador in the United States, but on Europe, and on France's destiny in particular? It was an amazing thing that, under the presidential nose at the White House, the French Premier should arrange with a mere legislator for an international conference to be held under the secretarial nose at the home of Henry L. Stimson. There are other evidences of Borah's prestige abroad. He is, no less, Russia's unofficial ambassador in the United States, so much so that State Department officials must obtain a letter of introduction from him if they wish to visit the Soviet. It was his speeches in the Senate, which, through the Mexican crisis during the Coolidge administration, helped to prevent hostilities.

When he demands disarmament, as he did in 1920, a President Harding and a Henry Cabot Lodge may pooh-pooh
the proposal as "another Borah dream," but eventually they accede to it, and foreign nations come to the Senator's private party. When, as he did a few months ago, he suggested a five-year naval holiday, American statesmen sought the cyclone cellar, but Dino Grandi, Mussolini's foreign minister, caught up the tune, and Mr. Hoover and Mr. Stimson began to see the light. Nor can it be forgotten that it was his resolution which led to the original reexamination of the problem of German reparations by Charles G. Dawes and Owen D. Young in 1922.

His enemies call Mr. Borah a "dreamer." He may be. But he has seen so many of his dreams come true that he may be pardoned if he believes in his vision of a Europe politically disarmed. If this be dreaming, the Senator is content that he be set down as a dreamer, as an obstructionist. He is also ready and willing to let the people be the judge of the validity of his vision.

"But," say skeptical politicians, "Borah will simply talk about it. He will not go through. He will do nothing constructive."

Waiving, for the moment, the Senator's challenge that he has never ceased his advocacy of any cause which captivated him since he entered the Senate in 1906, it may be suggested that his best rôle is, and must be, that of an advocate. It is a common criticism of the Senator that he never "goes through," that his great crusades end only in Senate orations, that he gives a Republican administration connivance fits and lets it go at that, that he is irregular only on presidential off-days. The answer is that for Borah to advocate a cause is more than half the battle. There are a score of lesser men in the Senate who possess the plodding qualities needed to steer a bill or resolution through to enactment, but there is only one Borah to arouse public opinion so thoroughly that those other legislative grinds will be forced to do their stuff, willy-nilly. The Smoots, the Bingham, the Swansons, the Joneses have excellent records for amiable consistency, for accomplishment even, but they might beat their breasts and bargain for votes till doomsday without stirring or changing public opinion by one-half of 1 per cent.

Never was this more clearly shown than in the fight to prevent confirmation of Charles Evans Hughes as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. When his name was proposed, it was greeted by hallelujahs from the bar, the press, the politicians. On the day the vote was to be taken, it seemed that only three men—George W. Norris of Nebraska, Robert M. La Follette of Wisconsin and Borah himself—would not be numbered among the senatorial chorus of "Me, too!" But when the Senator from Idaho had concluded his address, it was obvious that the Administration's choice faced serious opposition. Senators who had pledged themselves to vote for Mr. Hughes hastened to join the small but growing group of critics. Day by day the recruits increased, until at one time thirty-five senators were aligned against the Administration. But from overseas came the voice of Minority Leader "Joe" Robinson, who had heard the transatlantic appeal of the White House and notified his southern Democrats that they must support so distinguished a jurist as Mr. Hughes. Despite this unexpected intervention, the "lone-wolf" headed a pack of almost thirty senators at roll call against the most eminent member of the American bar.

In any consideration of Mr. Borah's career, the circumstances surrounding his entry into politics cannot be neglected. When he first sought the nomination from the Idaho legislature in 1904 he lost out because the bosses knifed him at a caucus; between the hours of four in the afternoon and eight at night three legislators pledged to him slipped over on the other side. This episode undoubtedly sharpened his instinctive dislike for organized politics, for a system in which the word of the boss passes for law, and this prejudice has grown with the years he has spent at the Capital. He eventually won the nomination in a campaign in which he took for text, "King Caucus must go," and he has never deviated from this principle. He never attends G. O. P. caucuses and he takes no orders from senatorial slave-drivers.

Then again, he came from a state which had few interests at Washington, since it had only recently entered the national sisterhood. His constituents let him alone, allowed him to become his own master, permitted him to shape his own policies. Having leaped straight from the Idaho legislature in 1904 he lost out because the bosses knifed him at a caucus; between the hours of four in the afternoon and eight at night three legislators pledged to him slipped over on the other side. There are a score of lesser men in the Senate who possess the plodding qualities needed to steer a bill or resolution through to enactment, but there is only one Borah to arouse public opinion so thoroughly that those other legislative grinds will be forced to do their stuff, willy-nilly. The Smoots, the Bingham, the Swansons, the Joneses have excellent records for amiable consistency, for accomplishment even, but they might beat their breasts and bargain for votes till doomsday without stirring or changing public opinion by one-half of 1 per cent.

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politicians reporters shifted from the Thaw trial to this current cause célèbre. Thus his legal reputation had preceded him to the Senate corridor, where he brushed back his shaggy brown mane and hung his black wideawake hat on a peg on March 4, 1907.

Old Guard senators, naturally, looked upon him as a stalwart reinforcement in those turbulent, trust-busting, muckraking days. They envisaged him as a valiant champion in resisting reformers and in crushing the developing class consciousness of the American working man. He was immediately made chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor, which was an unusual honor for a first-termer, especially as any attempt to translate the demands of the downtrodden into legislative reality must have its beginnings in this body. To certain cynical senators who expressed alarm at bestowal of this key post on an untired recruit, Aldrich, the Republican boss, replied with a cloakroom wink:

"Don't worry, He's all right. I've looked him up. He's an anti-labor man and a corporation attorney."

This incident was to be characteristic of the Senator's career. More often than not, when the regulars accuse him of partisanship, it is because they have permitted themselves to be deluded. They cannot understand his persistent independence of presidential persuasion or the party good. Sometimes he votes with them, and they rub their palms at the thought that they have ensnared him at last, but on the next ballot he is gone again. They fail to recognize that sometimes, though not often, the G. O. P. exhibits liberal tendencies. As for Borah, his record, in its larger aspects, reveals greater consistency than they could give him credit for. The Old Guard cannot capture him any more than they could Aldrich, who soon discovered that, first of a long line of diagnosticians, he had been entirely wrong in his estimate of the breezy boy from Boise.

Almost immediately the new chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor showed himself to be animated by a political philosophy which eastern Republicans have never been able to understand. Far from safeguarding Aldrich's conception of capitalism, Borah proceeded to tear it down. Soon he was reporting out, and with the roaring; rollicking assistance of Theodore Roosevelt, passing through the Senate the most radical proposals ever advanced in that holy chamber. There were bills establishing the eight-hour day on government contracts, bills for the creation of a new and revolutionary Department of Labor, sub-

versive resolutions for investigation of the twelve-hour day and seven-day week in the sacrosanct iron and steel industry.

And there was none to stop the youngster from going this gait forever, it seemed.

These were, I imagine, the happiest days of Mr. Borah's career. He was discharging his duties to the "underdog," and in the White House sat a kin spirit. He enjoyed hugely the consternation of the bosses and split his sides at the spectacle of a cowboy-lawyer come to judge. Little wonder that Mr. Borah, in discussing the charge that he cannot and will not cooperate with his political peers, replies angrily: "Since Roosevelt left the White House there has been no leader of the Republican party I could cooperate with!"

It is, I find, Mr. Borah's failure to support Roosevelt's third party in 1912 that has given rise to the suspicion that he does not "go through," that he is, to speak plainly, a trimmer. The record shows, however, that the Senator agreed to support "Teddy," and even handled his delegate contests at Chicago, with the definite understanding that he would not join an independent movement. Roosevelt himself had given public and private pledges that no third party was contemplated, no matter how the convention fight terminated.

Mr. Borah is not so regular that he is averse to an independent movement. But he believes that a third party cannot be successfully launched by a few men at the top, that it must grow upward from the people. Never, in his public career, has he seen the time when a third party was either wise or feasible. When

and if he does, it is probable that he will become its Nestor, possibly its presidential candidate should there be a popular demand for him. Intensely practical, he thinks that he can accomplish more good within than without the ranks. Both Roosevelt and "Old Bob La Follette," who tilted against presidential windmills in 1924, recognized and appreciated the Senator's attitude in this respect.

Even so, Mr. Borah took an unequivocal stand on his return to Idaho in 1912. Although he had been renominated by the legislature, he offered to submit his anti-Taft brand of Republicanism to popular vote if the legislators who had voted for him wished it. There was none to accept his challenge, but his address in the Methodist church at Meridian, Idaho, on September 14 is worth quotation for the light it casts upon his conception of Republicanism—and upon William Edgar Borah:

"If they say to you that Borah is trimming, that he does not take a stand, ask them upon what question, upon what issue, upon what measure in this Congress or this campaign he has failed to take an open and decided and positive stand. Ask them if they have any doubt as to what his position will be on all these questions in the coming Congress.

"It is because I am positive on these questions that the opposition is coming from certain sources to my reflection. It is because I refuse to yield my views or modify my opinion that they are dissatisfied with me. If I were more uncertain, they would be far more certain in their support of me. If I were a little more unsteady, they would be more steadfast.

"Do you people want a man in the

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What Happened to Wheat?

By ROBERT H. Moulton

Specifically, the present unparalleled situation began to take shape in the summer of 1929. Oddly enough, it had its first inception in circumstances which promised very high prices. A small crop of wheat in the United States, and one of the smallest ever raised in Canada, resulted in a swift advance in prices in June and July of 1929. December wheat at Chicago going to $1.56 a bushel. Two-dollar wheat was freely predicted and when, a short time later, it developed that the outlook for the new Argentine crop, which would be harvested in December, was anything but favorable, this prophecy assumed something of the nature of a certainty.

The predicted price, however, was based in part upon the assumption that European requirements for the season would not vary greatly from those of the preceding year, when they exceeded 900,000,000 bushels. But with a deflated pocketbook and visions of very high prices in the offing, Europe entered upon a period of retrenchment and began her so-called boycott of North American wheat. Larger native supplies than usual, coupled with free offerings from the old Argentine crop, enabled her to pursue this policy for some weeks.

Then the miracle which she perhaps hoped would happen and bring about lower wheat prices actually came to pass, the drastic break in the stock market carrying them down to levels which a few weeks earlier would have seemed impossible. Grain markets the world over became more or less disorganized. Complete demoralization was narrowly averted. In this country the entrance of the Federal Farm Board proved to be a decidedly unsettling influence.

The agricultural marketing act of June 15, 1929, was the result of insistent demands for some form of farm relief, to which the present national administration stood practically pledged. So, notwithstanding that the governments of other countries had already provided silk, rubber, coffee and sugar four shining examples of the wrong kind of farm relief and the practical certainty of its failure in the end, Congress passed the farm marketing act through the provisions of which an attempt was to be made to stabilize prices of both wheat and cotton in this country.

The results of government aid in connection with the four commodities first mentioned may be summarized as follows: In Japan the price of raw silk fell from a high point of $16 a pound in 1920 to a low of $2 a pound in 1930, and production increased in spite of efforts to reduce it. The British attempt to elevate and stabilize rubber prices started when rubber was 20 cents a pound. It was temporarily successful, the price being lifted to $1.20 a pound. Last year it went to 8 cents, the low price for all time. Brazil's coffee valorization schemes were tried over a series of years, and under them the price fell from 20 cents to 8 cents a pound, with a huge increase in production. Raw sugar has had the aid of more than a hundred individual governments and has fallen most in prices. In 1920 it was selling in