

OUR "FIRST CANADIANS" DO THEIR BIT

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FIGURATIVELY and literally, Canada's Red Men are on the warpath, and are going all out in their patriotic zeal to further the Dominion's war-effort.

From the "longhouses" of the once mighty Six Nations, ancient allies of the "King George Men"; from the prairie lodges of tall and stately Blackfeet, west to the Rocky Mountain haunts of nomad Stoneys, and north to the smoke-stained teepees of caribou-hunting Chipewyans and Dog-Ribs in the Land of Little Sticks, the moccasin telegraph has carried the word that the children of the Great White Father are threatened by the "mad dog" Hitler and his iron-hatted braves. That the time has come for the red man to dig up the hatchet and join his paleface brother in his fight to make the world safe for the sacred cause of freedom and democracy! And Canadian Indians, whose forbears fought encroaching palefaces in their conquest of the New World, are rallying round the Great White Father to protect embattled Britain and stop the spread of Nazi ideology to the shores of North America.

The memory of the visit of their Majesties still fresh in their minds, Indians from the storm-battered shores of the Atlantic to the sunny slopes of the Pacific are figuratively beating their war-drums and displaying the same shining patriotism as did their forefathers when the Kaiser shook his mailed fist and let loose the first Great War upon the world.

At Ohsweken, present day capital of the Six Nations Indians on the Grand River reservation near Brantford, sachems of the tribes that rallied to the support of King George III under Chief Brant during the Revolutionary war, and were driven from their ancestral homes in the Mohawk valley by victorious Americans, assembled in solemn council. Around the sacred fire that still burns as it did in the palisaded capital of Onondaga when Iroquois war-parties carried terror over a third of the continent, they deliberated how best to aid the cause of democracy, and subscribed a thousand dollars from tribal funds to the Red Cross.

At Moose Lake in the pine forests of Northern Manitoba, Swampy Crees also went into council and commenced a Red Cross drive. And was the Rev. Arthur Serace, Anglican

missionary at this backwoods settlement, surprised when broad-backed squaws and sinewy hunters invaded his log home without warning with ermine-skins, beaded moccasins and cash donations to aid in Canada's war effort? Two dripping boxes of ice-packed whitefish, a haunch of frozen venison, and birch-bark and beaded novelties made by patriotic squaws around their lodge-fires, were added to the mounting pile of contributions on the floor of the mission house.

Not to be outdone in displaying their loyalty to King and country, six hundred tawny Crees at Nelson House promptly notified the Indian Department at Ottawa that they would get along without the usual relief supplies, so that the saving could be added to Canada's war-chest.

From the smoky wigwams of moose-hunting Cree and Saulteaux at Island Lake, God's Lake, Oxford House and Norway House, hub of the forested district of Keewatin, have come more donations—not in familiar greenbacks, but in glossy pelts of beaver, mink and silver foxes, the currency of the Silent Places, which already have totalled well over \$3,000. And in Northern Saskatchewan red men refused to take King George's treaty money. "Let the Gitche Okemow keep the money to help fight Hitler," they told the astonished Indian Agent. "We will live on the game in the woods and the fish in the lakes given us by the Gitche Manitou, and which our treaty with the chiefs of the Shagonashuak still allows us freedom to hunt and catch."

Imbued with the same patriotic spirit, Chiefs Tom Bull, Pannie Ermoneskin and Samson gathered at the Hobbema reserve, sixty miles south of Edmonton, and voted an ambulance to the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps. The money will come from interest on funds owned by the bands, which would otherwise be distributed amongst the tribesmen. Other Indians of the great plains, bound by the pact of 1876, that "made the red men and the white men brothers," converged on a reserve at Onion Lake to hear a plea from the chief of the Mistawasis Crees for the formation of an all-Indian battalion to help Canada fight the foe.

From the length and breadth of Canada, gifts are pouring in to show that the red man's heart is in the right place. From Chief Jimmy Big Stone, of the Carlyle Crees of Saskatchewan, came the gift of a cow, which realized \$54 for the Red Cross. From the tepees of Touchwood Hills tribesmen has come a donation of a thousand dollars. Cree Indians of the Mistawasis band of Carlton Agency, whose fathers fought the whites when Big Bear and Poundmaker hit the war-trail, have already sent

many of their sons overseas again and presented an ambulance to the Red Cross.

Descendants of Chief Piapot, whose fiery warriors camped athwart the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks during construction and dared the palefaces to push the hated fire-wagon trail further into Cree buffalo pastures fifty years ago, invested a thousand dollars in war savings certificates, and requested the Government to convert all interest accruing from tribal funds into war saving certificates for the duration. And their neighbours, the Kahkewistahaw band of Crooked Lake have contributed \$2,500 to Canada's war-chest.

Thus have the red people given the lie to Hitler's propaganda organ, the *Voelkisher Beobachter*, which, a couple of years ago, carried frightful stories of atrocities allegedly committed by Canadian authorities against the Indian population, held "prisoners" on Indian reserves. Thus, too, have the red men replied to Nazi fifth columnists attempting to sow discord amongst the tribesmen.

In their bark lodges and log-walled homes in the forests of New Brunswick, Abenikis, Micmaes and Malecites, numbering over six hundred, have been busy on war-auxiliary projects since the outbreak of the war. Inspired by the actions of their paleface sisters, dusky mothers and daughters have formed patriotic societies and sewing circles of their own. Waxing enthusiastic over Red Cross work, they have established groups and branches at Kingslear and Oromocto reserves, and by the red glow of their wigwam fires they are turning out socks, mitts and mufflers for our boys in khaki with yarn bought from their own slender earnings. Now, great-grandsons of Abenaki and Micmac warriors who fought against Roger's Rangers are serving in England in the front line of the battle for democracy.

Red riders of the plains, the restless blood of buffalo-hunting fathers still stirring in their veins, were quick to take up Hitler's challenge. Hardly had war-drums sounded ere a big green truck, bristling with flags and draped with patriotic bunting, was driven at reckless speed by a dusky driver into Saskatoon. From nearby reserves tumbled a score of brawny braves, whooping defiance at Hitler and seeking the nearest recruiting office. Many desired to join the air-force, to get behind the controls of a mechanical thunderbird and help blast Hun cohorts from the skies; but, succumbing to the persuasion of others less air-minded, signed up with the infantry instead.

"My father was chief of the Mistawasis Crees," Chief Joe Drever, the leader of the delegation, told the recruiting

officer. "I was with the Third Canadian Engineers in the last war. Three of my brothers fought at Vimy. One was buried there, the other died when he returned to Canada. It was my great-grandfather," he added proudly, "who led the peace movement when Chief Big Bear took the war-path, and persuaded the tribes to bury the hatchet at Fort Carlton." The last word of Joe came from overseas, where the chief and his khaki-clad followers were seen playing baseball on a village green in England.

Jumping international boundaries, enthusiasm to join in the fight against Hitler has spread to tribal tepees in the States. Along the Newburyport Turnpike, near Topsfield, Mass., State troopers saw a tired figure trudging eastward. The weary traveller was a full-blooded redskin, descendant of the Powhatan tribesmen who welcomed the Pilgrim Fathers to the New World from the *Mayflower*. He was on the last lap of a hike to visit friends in New Brunswick and join up. "Me," he explained to a sympathetic trooper, "I'm hearing that Hitler he's killing women and children, and that the Indians of Canada are going over to fight. So I think I'll go over and help fix that mad dog too." As he trudged on down the dusty road, they did a little figuring and decided that when he reached his destination, he would have hiked a couple of thousand miles to fulfil his self-appointed duty.

It recalls the epic journey of 5,000 miles made by John Campbell, a full-blooded Louckoux Indian from the vicinity of the polar outpost of Herschel Island to Vancouver, to join up in the last war. Donning his snowshoes, he trudged across the saw-toothed Rockies in the depth of Arctic winter, his footsteps lighted only by the stars and the ghostly scintillations of the Aurora. At Rampart House, on the rock-walled Porcupine, he crossed the Alaskan border. Frost-scarred and hungry, he trudged a week later into Fort Yukon without a dollar in his pocket. Cutting wood, driving dogs and working as deckhand on a stern-wheeled steamer, he earned enough to carry him the remaining 4,000 miles, and six months after leaving the shores of the Polar Sea he donned the khaki of the King.

From distant Osnaburgh Post on the shores of Lake St. Joseph came another youthful hunter who had never heard the whistle of a locomotive. Five hundred long white miles on snowshoes he trudged across blizzard-lashed lakes, through primeval forest, deep in winter snows, impelled by a single thought. He was going to cross the mighty Gitehee Gummee to the land of the Shagonash to fight for the Great White Father. At Fort

William a puzzled recruiting officer shook his head when the dishevelled red man voiced his wishes in guttural Ojibway. For William Semnia, reared in the birchbark wigwams of his hunter folk deep in the dark pine forests, could not speak a word of English. An Ojibway soldier of the Bull Moose battalion came to the rescue, and next day William blossomed forth, proud as a peacock, in glittering buttons and khaki, to become a model soldier.

Again sinewy young hunters from the rocky shores of Huron and Superior are flocking to the colours. There are Ojibway descendants of the painted and bedizened tribesmen who followed Pontiac upon the war-trail and raised their tomahawks to stem the advance of English soldiers into the hunting grounds vacated by French garrisons. There are braves of the Ottawa tribe who once laid siege to Detroit, and penned Major Gladwyn and his garrison within its stockaded walls for a year and a half. There are Pottawatamies whose great-grandfathers helped to capture and lay in ashes Michillimackinac and the frontier posts that linked the Great Lakes with the East. All former foes, they now stand shoulder to shoulder with those against whom painted forbears wielded tomahawk, torch and war-club.

Even the Shawanoes, whose fierce warriors gave to Kentucky the name of the Dark and Bloody Ground and fought Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton, are over there in the front line—targets for German bombs. And with them is Joseph Stonefish, a full-blooded Shawanee from Moraviantown, Ontario, direct descendant of Tecumseh, who for the second time has gone overseas to do his bit for the country his forefather served so well.

With war drums throbbing, the fighting blood of the Iroquois, Britain's allies for two centuries, has been aroused. Warriors of the Mohawk, Seneca, Cayuga, Tuscorora and other tribes familiar to readers of Fennimore Cooper, are all over there with the C.E.F., awaiting a chance at the scalps of Hitler's invading Huns. Others—according to my old friend Chief Little Valley, hereditary sachem of the Cayugas—whose war disability and greying locks prevent them from fighting in the front rank are engaged in border patrol and other war work.

Little Valley would like to be over there again, he assured me when I dropped into his little log cabin on the Six Nations reserve. "Wah! wah!" he exclaimed, "those were great days we had in France. Those Germans, they were sick men when we sneaked into their lines at night and knocked them on the head." Something of the spirit of warrior ancestors who skulked

through the forests with shaven heads and wampum-bedecked scalp-locks shone in his black eyes, and he told how he and his tribesmen stalked the Huns within their own lines as they stalk the deer in the woodlands of Ontario. Of how the clubs of the Ho-de-nau-saunee—The People of the Longhouse—would descend with a thud on the shaven pates of unsuspecting Huns; how they'd ease them over their own parapets, wrap their legs around the necks of their gagged and helpless victims, and drag them through the muck and mire of no-man's-land with their elbows to the British lines.

When I brought in Indians of the various tribes to meet Their Majesties at Winnipeg during the Royal Visit, there came with the Ojibways of Lake of the Woods the genial giant, Chief David Keesick. Six-foot-six in his moccasins and strong as a bull, he refused to talk or explain how there came to be hidden beneath his aboriginal finery of ermine tails and buckskin fringes a Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Tom Ellicott, who was with the Chief when he won his medal at Cambrai, told the story. "B Company of the 52nd battalion had suffered a terrible strafing," he explained. "The company was reduced to a mere handful. At dawn came the order to attack. Less than fifty men were left to go over the top. The chief, an ox of a man for strength, picked up a Lewis gun, I grabbed the ammunition, and he bounded forward. The machine-gun emplacement was just ahead. The Chief dropped in the mud. From a shell-hole I watched him crawl stealthily forward. With a war-whoop on his lips, he rushed to the emplacement, stuck the Lewis gun over the top and let out another whoop. Without a shot that German gun-crew surrendered. Out of a dug-out came more Germans, till eighty-seven stood there shivering with up-raised hands. A wounded Canuk escorted the prisoners back to the line. Why the Chief didn't get the Victoria Cross, I can't figure out. He was the bravest man I ever knew."

Now the red men are on the war-path once again. But Fennimore Cooper would rub his eyes if he could see the khaki-clad warriors of the Mingo, Mohawk, Seneca and Shawnee tribes advancing in single file through the hedge-covered byways of the English countryside. Still more would he wonder to see sons of buffalo-hunting Crees and Blackfeet mounting on snorting motor-cycles instead of prancing pintos, armed with Bren guns in place of tomahawks and bows and arrows, and wearing the tin hat and tunic of the modern soldier in place of the war-paint and dancing eagle feathers of frontier days.