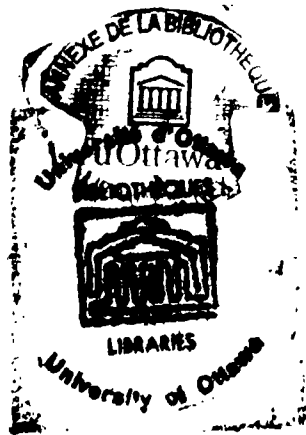


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FRICTION BETWEEN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC CAUSED
BY THE RISINGS OF LOUIS RIEL

by Robert Emmett Lamb

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Arts of the University of Ottawa
through the Department of History
as partial fulfillment of the re-
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ABBREVIATIONS

B.D. signifies British Documents, i.e., Correspondence Relative to the Recent Disturbances in Red River Settlement.

C.D. signifies Canadian Documents, i.e., Correspondence and Papers Connected with Recent Occurrences in the Northwest Territories.

C.S.P. signifies Canada, Sessional Papers.

P.C.D. signifies Privy Council Dispatches.

INTRODUCTION

Between 1864 and 1867 there was much compromising and self-sacrifice on all sides in Britain's North American possessions in order to achieve the great project of Confederation. Such a project gave reasonable hope that divergent races and religions could live side by side in peace, and that a happy Dominion within the Empire could be established and maintained in North America.

After hammering out the details of what was to become the British North America Act, the Fathers of Confederation were confident, and not without reason, that the ship of state could enjoy smooth sailing. Yet within three years time such a storm arose as threatened to destroy the work of the Fathers. Quebec and Ontario rushed to arms, one defending, the other assailing, Louis "David" Riel for his part in the Red River Rising of 1869-1870.

In the second Rising in the Valley of the Saskatchewan in 1885 there was provided the basis for a renewal of the clash which, indeed, reached such a fever pitch that the very structure of Confederation was again shaken, and the work of the Fathers seemed all but nullified. The subsequent hanging of Riel was up to that time the severest test of the durability of the young Confederation.

This thesis gives an account of the friction between Ontario and Quebec caused by the two Risings in the West led

by Louis Riel. The investigation has primarily to deal with what happened back East. The events themselves of both Risings are set down, but not for their own sake; on the contrary they are of value mainly as necessary background for the blows and counter blows exchanged between Ontario and Quebec because of them. To record the clash between the two eastern provinces, then, constitutes the basic aim of the thesis.

The province of Quebec had been overwhelmingly Conservative prior to the hanging of Louis "David" Riel, November 16, 1885. As a result of that event she switched her political allegiance to the Liberal camp, not immediately, but by early 1887. It was a noteworthy change. In national politics Quebec has remained with the Liberals ever since. The leader of the Métis nation occasioned that change.

The person and work of Louis Riel have come up for re-evaluation in our day. The passions aroused in connection with his career have now subsided, and it is possible to make that detached and objective analysis of the events with which he was connected which is so necessary for sound history. Two recent works have dealt briefly with the reactions back East to the Risings of Riel.¹ Neither, however, presents

¹ Stanley, George F., The Birth of Western Canada, London, Longmans, 1936, and Howard, Joseph Kinsey, Strange Empire, New York, Morrow, 1952.

an exhaustive account.

In order to understand the nature and extent of the strife in the East between Ontario and Quebec caused by the Riel Risings it is necessary to know something of the Risings themselves. Thus the Rising at Red River (1869-1870) has been dealt with first followed by the friction it produced in the East. A fifteen year interval occurred previous to the Saskatchewan Rising (1885). This was followed by the trial and hanging of the Métis Chief. This is treated next accompanied by the rising storm that was to lead to Quebec's defection from the Conservative Party. Owing to the absence of any complete history of either of the Risings, it has been deemed necessary to investigate their primary sources in order to insure a proper grasp of the friction which resulted from them. Consequently, despite their purpose as background only, the length of chapters One and Three has seemed justified.

The clash between French and English language provinces has been studied on three levels: the popular level, and for this contemporary newspapers have been examined: the Gazette, Herald, and La Minerve of Montreal as well as the Mail and Globe of Toronto; the top level of Cabinet government, and for this correspondence to and from the Governors General, the Prime Minister, and the Secretaries of State has been analyzed; and the middle arena of legislative

government where the ministries meet with the people's representatives, and for this the debates of the Dominion House of Commons plus the Journals of the Legislative Assemblies of Ontario and Quebec have been studied. Other sources, both primary and secondary, have been employed wherever necessary to complete the account.

Those who undertook the great task of nation building which has become known as Canadian Confederation were not unaware of the enormity of the work which confronted them. They were setting about to weld together into one political entity what had been distinct colonies of Britain's North American Empire. In particular they faced the imposing problem of causing Ontario and Quebec to live side by side in peace for the indefinite future. The legacy of past strife and conflict between the two provinces, with their divergent races and religions, was theirs. Nevertheless, hopefully they looked forward to a better day; and when their work was finished and the new government was launched, they were convinced that they had laid a firm foundation for amicable relations between the two provinces.

The Ontario and Quebec Fathers of Confederation had realized the futility of continuing their former mode of government and had reached general accord regarding their differences. Thus the great event of July 1, 1867, was made possible. They had feared for the preservation of the

British connection under the proposed federal system. The appointment and powers of the various Lieutenant-Governors as well as judges had given rise to misgivings. Federal courts of appeal had been another stumbling block, for possibly a minority province could be overruled by them. Lower Canada was extremely anxious about the preservation of its native language. The whole question of whether the British North American provinces should be united into a legislative or federal union caused much discussion. The question of representation by population, for which newly populous Upper Canada was so anxious, had also to be thrashed out. Further, each province, but Quebec especially, had a minority of the other language within its borders. How would they be treated henceforth? Was each to be allowed Separate Schools of its choosing? Even the location of the future capital was also a point of contention.

Nevertheless, all these obstacles were successfully overcome at the conferences and debates preceding Confederation. A new found spirit of amity prevailed between the two provinces who had quarrelled so much in the past. On the basis of this amity the Confederation was built. What follows tells of the tests it received as a consequence of the two Risings in the West of Louis Riel.

CHAPTER ONE

THE RED RIVER RISING (1869-1870)

As late as the seventh decade of the last century there existed a vast area of the North American Continent as yet relatively unaffected by civilization. It has been the closed preserve of the Hudson's Bay Company which had had a royal charter from the English king not only to do business therein but also to provide whatever government was needed. This area extended from the western boundary of the new Dominion of Canada, near the western end of Lake Superior, to the Rocky Mountains. It was bounded on the South by the American border and on the North by the Arctic wastes.

Besides the aboriginal tribes, the inhabitants included a distinct group called Métis, or half-breeds. These were the progeny of Indian mothers and French, Scotch, and English fathers. The French had long been in the Northwest as hunters and trappers for the most part, while the Scotch and English were connected with the Hudson's Bay Company and, in later days, were Selkirk settlers as well. Out of touch with what was to them the outside world and unconcerned with its interests and ambitions, they formed a race apart and a civilization of their own. Theirs was a simple life, close to nature. They had been missionized by both Catholic and Protestant missionaries and were intensely religious, as well as trusting and naive. French and Catholic Metis devoted

themselves to hunting and the chase by and large; they were excellent marksmen, extremely courteous, and familiar with the procedure of communal living which was demanded by the very nature of the hunting expedition. Scotch and English Protestant Métis were more given to the settled life of tilling the soil. Such legal trappings as titles to land (important items in a more complex society) gave them little or no concern. In settlements under the paternal eye of the Hudson's Bay Company where almost everyone was known to everyone else and where dishonesty and crime were rare occurrences, legal technicalities were all but unnecessary. Socially, all Métis occupied a position midway between Indians and whites, were looked up to by the former, and respected by the latter.

At the juncture of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, about seventy-five miles north of the American border, was the Red River Settlement surrounded by the limitless prairies. This had for its nucleus the original Selkirk Settlement sponsored by the Scottish Lord in the early years of the nineteenth century. Around it were clustered various communities of different sizes, all within an approximate radius of fifteen or twenty miles. The French Métis, not all of whom were nomadic, tended to remain together, and likewise the Scotch and English Métis. Both recognized, however, what they had in common, and relationships between them were more than peaceful. They regarded themselves as

the Métis nation. The Settlement all told, including recent aliens from Canada and the United States, has been variously estimated as between 6,000 and 16,000 persons.

The Situation Prior to Resistance

Covetous eyes, however, had for some years been cast westwards on the fertile lands in the valley of the Red. It had been the settled and long standing policy of the Ontario Clear Grits and their organ, the Toronto Globe, to secure this area for Canada. In fact, it was one of the points insisted upon by George Brown, the Globe editor, in lending his support to Confederation that the new Dominion should without delay construct a railway to link this choice territory with the East. This land and its riches were a coveted prize for exploitation by enterprising Canadians. It was but natural, Brown argued, that it should belong to the young Dominion; indeed many emigrants being lost to the States could now be diverted westward to Assiniboia.

The first disturbing element to interfere with the nearly idyllic existence of the Métis at Red River was the commencement of publication of an English language paper, the Nor-Wester, in 1859. The editor and publisher, an emigrant from Ontario named William Buckingham, could have no reasonable hope for pecuniary profit from his venture. It meant nothing for the French Métis who not only knew no English but were, for the most part, illiterate to begin

with. Moreover, the English-speaking Métis were also largely unable to read. Its motive and purpose for existence, then, could only be ulterior, and that was to disparage at every turn the Hudson's Bay Company and the position it enjoyed in the Territory. At the Settlement itself the paper was largely ignored, but the copies that were mailed to Ontario were given great notice in the press of that province in order to draw attention to the opportunities at Red River and to urge the transfer of this land to the Dominion of Canada. Indeed it would be an act of virtue to deliver the natives from the yoke (!) of the Company. Hostile toward the Hudson's Bay Company and scornful of the native Métis, the Nor-Wester became more and more disliked at Red River.

As the eighteen sixties wore on an increasing number of trouble makers drifted into the Red River Settlement from Canada. Their leaders were Dr. John Christian Schultz, Acting Master of the Northern Light Masonic Lodge of Pembina and Red River (1864-1869), William Caldwell, Walter Bown, Charles Mair, and Colonel John Stoughton Dennis. Their organ continued to be the Nor-Wester. Some of them proclaimed a republic independent of the Council of Assiniboia¹ at Portage la Prairie, sixty miles to the West. It lasted one year, 1867. It became more and more evident that these aliens were acting

¹ The Company-appointed ruling authority.

of set purpose as an advance guard of more, "superior" Anglo-Canadians yet to come from Ontario. Both the local officials of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Métis nation became apprehensive.

The door for Canadian influence was opened further in the Fall of 1868 as a result of the famine which followed the grasshopper plague of that and the previous year. Acting as if it already had authority in the Northwest, Canada began work in that year on a wagon road from Lake-of-the-Woods to Oak Point thirty miles east of the Red River Settlement. Under the leadership of John A. Snow and Charles Mair the project seemed an opportune bit of assistance to the unemployed and poor natives of Red River. They could work on the Dawson Road, as it was called², and earn money enough to buy food. However, this pair drove a hard bargain. Instead of wages in cash the road workers were given the right to purchase supplies from them only, and at a rate more expensive than was the case with other merchants. Furthermore, they attempted, contrary to law, to buy from the Indians lands around Oak Point on which Métis had already settled. Governor William H. MacTavish of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Garry was notified by William McDougall, Minister of Public Works, of the Canadian Cabinet, that Canada's contribution

² After S. J. Dawson who had explored the Northwest for Canada in 1858.

to the relief of Red River distress would be used to pay the cost of initial work on the Dawson Road. This was not, strictly speaking, an injustice, but it was clear to the Métis how much more generous were the United States and the Hudson's Bay Company in coming to their assistance. However much the activities of Mair and Snow may have departed from official Canadian Government policy, the fact remains that they were Government officials employed by Canada, and they succeeded only in creating a bad impression of the Dominion in the minds of the Métis and Red River inhabitants generally.

Despite the work on the Dawson Road already begun by Canada in its domain, the Hudson's Bay Company did not contract with the Imperial Government for the surrender of its Charter to the Crown for the Northwest, or Rupert's Land, until March of 1869. The negotiations, which were conducted in London between the high officers of the Company and the British Government, were lengthy. The original sale price demanded by the Company was £500,000, and it was only with difficulty that it was prevailed upon to accept a smaller sum of £300,000.³ Canadian representatives at the parleys were Sir Georges Cartier and William McDougall, Minister of Public Works and even then the expected first Lieutenant-Governor of the new Territory. Besides the cash settlement

³ The generous price (\$7,200,000) paid to Russia by the United States for Alaska in 1867 had undoubtedly influenced the Company's demand.

(which Canada herself would pay) the Company was to retain large blocks of acreage surrounding its posts, plus a twentieth part of each township within the fertile belt. Actually, the Company did not officially surrender its Charter until November 19, 1869, the Queen did not give her consent until May 12, 1870, and the final and official date for transfer of the land to the Dominion of Canada was not till July 15, 1870.

From the beginning of the negotiations until their end the population of Red River was totally ignored. They concluded, then, that they were being bought and sold like so many cattle. Furthermore, the Council of Assiniboia, the official Government in the Territory, was likewise ignored. To complete the mishandling of the transfer Canada's Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory When United with Canada⁴ made it plain that the Red River Settlement was to be in effect a "colony of a colony", i.e., it was neither given provincial status nor any guarantee of local representative institutions. Thus the pattern became all too obvious to the people of Red River that Canada as such and McDougall in particular were proceeding with a high hand.

⁴ "Temporary" in the title did not carry the implication that the inhabitants would soon have self-government, but rather that the Dominion Parliament was adopting the measure on a temporary basis, since it possessed at the time no authority in the Northwest, and would make the measure permanent as soon as it did secure authority there.

The Canadian Government (as opposed to private Canadian citizens at Red River) was further compromised in the minds of the Métis by the premature work of land surveying which it undertook in July, 1869. A party of surveyors under Colonel J. S. Dennis began dividing the property of the area into rectangular divisions in disregard of the existing land divisions as well as the reactions of the inhabitants.⁵ A new order of things was becoming ominously evident. A veritable invasion was about to take place. The situation was somewhat electric. Even as they would unite to repel an attack from Indians, the Métis nation would now unite to resist this invasion of Canadians from the East, that is, if, as it seemed, their rights as property owners and free citizens should be ignored. As in other crises in the past they sought a leader. He was already at hand.

Louis Riel, whose destiny it was to be the rock which crushed the hoped for harmony of Quebec and Ontario, was born October 22, 1844, at Pointe Douglas⁶, Manitoba. He was the

⁵ Although commissioned on July 10, Dennis was not instructed to proceed until October 4, 1869. He had sought support from the Red River clergy in August. Cf. McDougall to Dennis, July 10, 1869, Canada, Sessional Papers, 1870, Vol. 5, paper 12, p. 1-2 "Instructions to Surveyors"; Memorandum of William McDougall, Minister of Public Works, September 22, 1869, same, p. 152.

⁶ Thus Auguste-Henri de Tremaudan in his Histoire de la Nation Metisse, n.p., Levesque, 1935, p. 162. Father Adrian Gabriel Morice says he was born at Saint Boniface, Manitoba; cf. his Critical History of the Red River Insurrection, Winnipeg, Canadian Publishers, 1935, p. 77. At all events these two places are within two miles of each other.

son of Jean-Louis Riel and Julie Lagimodière. Of French-Canadian stock almost entirely, he could claim blood relationship to the Métis nation through his father's maternal grandmother who was an Indian woman of the Montagnais tribe in the North. His early education was obtained at Saint Boniface. In 1858 he was sent by Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché of Saint Boniface to college in Montreal. He was thought at the time to have the seeds of a priestly vocation. After the death of his father he worked in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and in Saint Joseph, Dakota Territory, since the small family homestead at Saint Vital had to house eight children younger than he.

By the following year, however, he was working the family farm and sharing with the other Métis their indignation over the Anglo-Canadian invasion and their fearful anxiety regarding the future. He was now twenty-five years of age, in excellent health, intelligent, well-educated, a gifted speaker, and looked up to by the French Métis as their leader even as his father had been before him.⁷ The turbulent agitators from Ontario led by Schultz saw in him, albeit a lowly Métis, a man to be reckoned with. Louis Riel was of medium height and stocky build; he had a large head and prominent features. His youth at the time almost assured a

⁷ Louis Riel the elder had led a movement in 1849 which forced the Hudson's Bay Company to permit trade with the United States..

certain lack of emotional stability and unwillingness to compromise. Neither hunting nor teaching held much attraction for him. He seemed to need a cause for which to fight.

It is incorrect to consider him the instigator of the Red River disturbance; he merely assumed the leadership of an already discontented group and guided it according to his impulses and more matured judgments.⁸

Remote Causes

The Red River Rising of 1869-1870 was essentially a movement of protest and resistance against factors that could have been overcome had the correct measures been adopted. It was not a separatist movement, but rather a resistance movement. It was resistance to an uncertain future and a struggle to secure definite guarantees that would remove this uncertainty. The remote causes explaining why such a resistance movement began must be sought to a large extent in the superior attitude, bordering on contempt, of the young Dominion toward the inhabitants of the Northwest. Such an attitude caused strategic and tactical blunders which immediately brought on the Red River Rising and pushed to the forefront of Canadian history the person of Louis Riel.

The lines of opposition were not drawn on a national or religious basis at the outset, at least. All Métis: Scotch, English, and French resented the attitude of Canada

⁸ Jonasson, J. A., "The Background of the Riel Rebellions", Pacific Historical Review, Sept., 1934, p. 276.

and of what Canadians they had experience with, although it was the French Métis who would presumably lose most in the impending political arrangement. On the other hand even French-Canadians had been guilty of underestimating the inhabitants of Red River, as is evidenced by Cartier's disregard of Bishop Taché's warning advice about the situation there.⁹

It was inexcusable that the Canadian authorities should have been so oblivious to the feelings and reactions of the native inhabitants of Red River to the transfer of sovereignty of their own dwelling places to a new, hitherto foreign, power. Moreover, it should not have been difficult to understand that the local representatives of the Hudson's Bay Company in the West were not happy about the transfer. They too had not been consulted and were subject to loss of security and revenue. Moreover, the past history of Quebec should have taught the Canadian Government that the French Métis at Red River would surely shrink from a political arrangement wherein they would remain a political minority dominated by unfriendly elements from Ontario.

⁹ Deposition of Bishop Taché, Canada, Journals of the House of Commons, 1874, Vol. 8, Appendix 6, "Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of Difficulties in the Northwest Territory in 1869-1870", p. 9; also Pope, Joseph (ed.), Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1921, p. 106.

In the eighteen sixties three forces were at work at Red River: A. the French element involving language, culture, and religion; B. commercially minded settlers from Ontario looking for new fields to be exploited; and C. an American influence stemming from Minnesota, especially. B was the result of deliberate Canadian policy, non-governmental at least. The constant drift of emigrants to the Great Republic from Ontario could be stopped, it was hoped, if the West could be annexed and opened up for economic enterprise. C was the result of economic ties newly formed between Assiniboia and the northern Mississippi Valley. The rigid monopoly of trade exercised by the Hudson's Bay Company in the Red River Valley weakened considerably in the eighteen fifties yielding to a new pattern of economic life in the area. While annexation to the United States was not probable, it was always possible, and so, a source of uneasiness both to Canada (both before and after Confederation) and to the Imperial Government. "Manifest destiny" had led Americans westward to the Pacific coast. It might also lead them northward as well, particularly since the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. Economic penetration had preceded political absorption by the United States of both Texas and Oregon. This lesson was not lost on upholders of the British connection.

To some extent also, the cupidity of Ontario must be assigned as a remote cause of the Red River Rising. The

possibility of exploiting the economic resources of Red River by Ontario capital loomed large in the thinking of that province. Enterprising young men could also find there excellent opportunities for making their fortunes. Ontario lust for the wealth of Red River was revealed candidly, but perhaps unintentionally, in a Toronto Globe editorial, written after passage of the Manitoba Act. "...until the conviction goes abroad that life, liberty, and the pursuit of dollars are amply secured in the Territory, the flood of immigration will not set in".¹⁰

Dr. Schultz expressed the attitude of the Ontario carpet-bagger¹¹ toward Red River at Toronto following his flight from the Riel Government.

It was from Ontario this movement to add Red River to the Dominion commenced; [...] and it was to Ontario the Territory properly belonged. He [Schultz] only hoped the day was not far distant when Ontario would have peaceful possession of it, and that he would meet many of his hearers in Red River.¹²

10 July 9, 1870, p. 2, col. 2 (italics ours).

11 In the wake of the conquering Northern armies during the American Civil War there followed a swarm of unscrupulous business adventurers into the Southern states who enriched themselves at the expense of the vanquished population. Without means to begin with they were able to carry all their earthly possessions in a make-shift carpet bag. They became the symbol of all that was hateful to the conquered South.

12 News item, Herald, Montreal, April 9, 1870, p. 1, col. 6.

Proximate Causes

The proximate causes of the Rising at Red River (1869-1870) seem to be nine all told. They are not, assuredly, mutually exclusive and depend, of course, on the remote causes.

First, there is the blunder of the Canadian Government in failing to take into consideration the feelings and the possible reactions of the inhabitants themselves of the Red River Settlement to their changed political status. All the negotiations in London revolved around the extinguishing of the Hudson's Bay Company charter. That accomplished, the Canadian negotiators, Cartier and McDougall, regarded the deal as closed. That there were human beings involved, the subjects of certain rights and who might be reasonably anxious about the continuation of those rights, seems not to have come to the serious notice of the Canadian representatives. In fact what seems to have dominated their thoughts was not the people of the new Territory to be acquired so much as the limitless tracts of vacant lands which would be at the disposal of the Dominion Government. At the headquarters of Empire in London it was easy to think of themselves as empire-builders in their own right. It was a mistake, however, to create the impression, even inadvertently, that the people of the Territory concerned were but the

subjects of a huge barter.¹³

Second, the failure to consider the sentiments and reactions of the local officials of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Northwest Territory. Since the purchase of its controlling stock by the International Finance Company in 1863, the relationships of the head officers in London with their subordinates had become more impersonal and formal. Traders and Factors and other local officials of the Company were in no way consulted about the surrender of the Company's charter. Consequently, they faced loss of security personally and an uncertain future without compensation. Moreover, the Dominion Government also ignored the local Hudson's Bay Company officials. The latter had, not unreasonably, expected that their services would be sought by the Canadian Government because of their extensive personal knowledge of the land the young Dominion was acquiring. Their services, however, were not sought; the Dominion Government thought they needed no instruction for the proper absorption of new Territory. Furthermore, the courtesy of personal and official notification about the transfer was not extended to Governor MacTavish, the Hudson's Bay Company authority at Fort Garry. It was not to be wondered at, then, if local Hudson's Bay Company men at Red River were indifferent to the Métis resistance, at best, or helping to promote it, at worst.

¹³ Causes of Difficulties, p. 23.

Third, the influence of American agitators and agitation at the Red River Settlement. In general this factor has been much exaggerated by those who have preferred to believe that the Métis were not loyal to the British Crown. However, such an influence was present. Economically Red River had been, for more than a decade, forging links with Saint Paul and the Mississippi Valley and had no direct connection with other British possessions. Such links brought American settlers to the Red River area where they continued to maintain their American sympathies. Besides, deserters from the American Army were known to have aligned themselves with the Ontario malcontents at the Settlement. To whatever small extent they may have caused the conflict, they refrained from participating in it themselves.

Fourth, the arrogance and aggressiveness of the Ontario clique of malcontents. The avowed and unabashed intention of this group was subjugation of the Red River Settlement to Canada and exploitation of its economic potentialities. To the Métis they made themselves obnoxious by their overbearing manner and their openly expressed predictions that Red River natives would be forced to give way before the oncoming 'superior' intelligence from Ontario. Their leaders were John C. Schultz, James Lynch, Charles Mair, William Caldwell, and later J. A. Snow, and John S. Dennis, all anxious to impose on Assiniboia their own type of civilization. From an attitude of friendliness, or at least open-mindedness, toward

Canada the Métis were changed by the activities of this clique to an attitude of dislike and fear. If people like these were to be their masters after absorption by Canada, then such absorption ought not to take place.

Moreover, the bellicose and contemptuous attitude of these Ontario carpet-baggers towards the Hudson's Bay Company was not calculated to smooth the way for a peaceable transfer of jurisdiction. In fact, through their organ, the Nor-Wester, they carried on a ceaseless campaign of abuse and opposition to that institution branding it as unfit to rule, and urging prospective immigrants from Ontario to come and push it aside.¹⁴

Fifth, the fatal alliance, all too obvious to the Métis, of the Dominion Government with the Ontario malcontents. As long as the latter were nothing more than private citizens expressing private views they could be held in check by the police and courts of a stronger government than the Hudson's Bay Company had been able to provide; but when it

¹⁴ A certain John S. Wallace of Coburg, Ontario, had sought information about Red River. The Nor-Wester supplied the following: "When it comes to the question as to what we shall or shall not do, the venerable H. B. Co. is of very little account. She only sits here as an obstruction and a hindrance to true progress. She is old, old and in her dotage, and if Canada does not hurry up with her negotiations, we confidently expect that the old lady will go off in a fit some of these fine days. We would say to all Canadians:- Don't let the name of the Hon. Company trouble you. She can do you no harm. The land is waiting for you. Come and take possession". Re-printed in the Toronto Globe, Mar. 5, 1869, p. 3, col. 3.

became clear that the prospective rulers were working hand-in-glove with these turbulent elements, the effect on the Red River natives was most unfavorable. Snow and Dennis, and even Mair, were employed by the Dominion Government, and when they allied themselves with the disliked Schultz faction, they compromised the Canadian Government itself.¹⁵

Sixth, dislike for Governor-to-be William McDougall personally. His reputation went before him, and he was persona non grata at Red River. It was McDougall who opposed the claims of the Hudson's Bay Company in the transfer negotiations at London. It was McDougall as Minister of Public Works who authorized the ungenerous Dawson Road plan and who had ordered the premature surveyings which ignored the traditional French narrow and deep farms with river frontage for all. Added to all this was his reputation as a land speculator. As will be shown shortly (cause #8) it was the future of their property holdings that caused the Métis so much anxiety. The Montreal Herald at the outset of the resistance wasted no sympathy on McDougall. It understood very well the Métis objection to him as a speculator in lands.

¹⁵ Begg, Alexander, The Creation of Manitoba, Toronto, 1871, p. 20-21.

They [the Métis] see a stranger who was never generally popular among his own people, and who has lately done anything but increase his political reputation, sent among them as Governor, not without the worst of all taint for a man in such a position, the character of a disposition to job in land, affixed to him by the very men who have now given him his appointment.¹⁶

Finally, there was the matter of the 300 Enfield rifles which McDougall was known to have brought with him. These, the Métis concluded, were to be the means used to enforce his (and the Ontario clique's) rule at Red River.¹⁷

Seventh, the lack of any guarantee of equal status with the other provinces after Assiniboia should be admitted to the Dominion. Instead of bargaining as free men on the question of entrance into a hitherto alien Dominion, the Métis found themselves faced with the prospect of an inferior status, of becoming a colony of a colony. It was deplorable absence of political insight to fail to realize that free men do not yield their freedom easily. The Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land passed by the Dominion Parliament in June, 1869, made it evident that the inhabitants of Assiniboia had no assurance of representative

¹⁶ Editorial, Nov. 24, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

¹⁷ "It will be well to remember that a number of stands of arms with ammunition are at Georgetown, en route here [Pembina] waiting for orders to forward them when required."--Cameron to Macdonald, Nov. 3, 1869, Macdonald Papers, 'North-west Rebellion, 1869-1870', Vol. 2, p. 123; McDougall to General Hunt, Nov. 22, 1869, C.S.P. 1870, Vol 5, paper 12, p. 63; McDougall to Howe, Nov. 25, 1869, C.S.P., 1870, Vol 5, paper 12, p. 59; Howe to McDougall, Dec. 10, 1869, C.S.P., 1870, Vol. 5, paper 12, p. 58.

institutions, indeed of less self-government than they had enjoyed under the Hudson's Bay Company. A Governor was supplied by Ottawa who was to have a Council nominated by the Governor-General-in-Council. There was no assurance that Red River people would be represented in the Council. Apparently, McDougall was to be a paternal despot, merely advised by his Council, both he and they taking their instructions from Ottawa.¹⁸

Eighth, fear by the Métis of loss of their lands. Under the mild rule of the Hudson's Bay Company clear legal titles to property were neither common nor necessary, for in the simple society at Red River mutual trust prevailed. The advent of land-hungry newcomers from Ontario, now seemingly allied with the Canadian Government, produced great anxiety and what seemed to be the probable imminent loss of ancestral holdings. Through their Indian mothers the Métis possessed the Indian title to their lands. Their attachment

¹⁸ Morton, Arthur Silver, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-1871, Toronto, Nelson, 1939, p. 874. Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, who had visited Red River before McDougall's scheduled entry, gave it as his conviction that the English language portion of the Settlement originated the Rising. "I believe the difficulties originated in the first instance, from the discussions by the English part of the population. And the ground they took was that they had never been consulted in the arrangements. They entertained fears and apprehensions with regard to the instructions given for the management of the country, that their rights would be to a great extent ignored." -- Speech in Commons, Feb. 21, 1870, in answer to McDougall, Chisholm, Joseph Andrew (ed.), The Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe, Halifax, 1909, Vol. 2, p. 596.

to them and their willingness to defend them were of a piece with that patriotism which has always inspired peoples everywhere to defend their homes and possessions. Once Dennis commenced his surveys the Ontario carpet-baggers staked out for themselves, and for more carpet-baggers yet to come, choice lands in staggering amounts so that it began to appear that no man's property was safe. This land-grabbing, moreover, was done with the tacit acquiescence of a Government that at the time had no jurisdiction at Red River.¹⁹

Ninth, for the French Métis fear of loss of language and religion. Should they be overrun by herds of Anglo-Canadians opposed to them in both these, their own language and religion could hardly survive. The Scotch and English Métis were not so restive because, of course, they had not so much to lose. On both these heads they were similar to the Canadian invaders. It was altogether otherwise with the French Métis, who with Gallic insight perceived at once that the necessary logic of events, if not controlled with a firm

¹⁹ Begg, Creation, p. 24-27. Some Métis lands in and around Oak Point were "signed away" by drunken Indians who did not themselves have ownership of them; cf. Morice, R. R. Insurrection, p. 68. Also the testimony of Andrew Graham Bellenden Bannatyne in Causes of Difficulties, p. 123; also that of Joseph James Hargrave, same, p. 185; Dennis had warned McDougall in August, 1869, about existing discontent over the surveys and failure to extinguish the Indian title. -- Cf. Dennis to McDougall, Aug. 21, 1869, C.S.P., 1810, Vol. 5, paper 12, "Instructions to Surveyors", p. 5-6; same to same, Aug. 28, 1870, C.S.P., 1870, Vol. 5, paper 12, "Instructions to Surveyors", p. 6-8.

hand, would in the long run militate against their most cherished interests.

Despite the presence of William B. O'Donoghue at Red River from the Summer of 1868 it cannot be held that Fenianism²⁰ was a cause of the Red River Rising. It is quite certain that Fenianism had hoped to profit by the Rising after it had begun. But it did not in any way cause it. O'Donoghue did not put aside the cassock of the seminarian for some month's after the Rising's inception, so that if he is considered an agent of the Fenians at this time, it was already too late to cause the Rising.

Measures of the French Métis Alone

The decision to offer resistance to the course that events were taking was first made and carried out by the French Métis. Acting by means of their own National Committee they took the first overt steps. They then solicited the cooperation of their fellow Métis of Scotch and English origin in a common government. The peace and order of the Settlement were endangered several times during the ten months of their Provisional Government, but at length the Manitoba Act, which satisfied their claims, was passed, and Lieutenant-Governor Adams Archibald, appointed by Ottawa, was established

20 A secret terroristic organization whose aim was to drive the English from Ireland by attacking any part of the British Empire in any way vulnerable.

at Red River in September, 1870.

The occasion for first forcible resistance was provided by the surveyors of Dennis operating on the farm of André Nault, a French-Canadian, on October 11, 1869. Ignoring the already existing land divisions they proceeded to run their lines across the latter's property as they saw fit. He appealed to them to discontinue but without satisfaction, for they were ignorant of French. He then sought the help of Louis Riel, who could speak to them in their native English. Together with Jean-Baptiste (Janvier) Ritchot and several other French Métis Riel caused the cessation of the surveying by standing on the chains. Canada, they argued, had no authority for such operations in territory that did not belong to it.

The surveyors, headed by a certain Major A. C. Webb, reported to Colonel Dennis the obstruction to their work. The latter protested to the Council of Assiniboia. This body summoned Riel to appear before it on October 25, 1869.

Before this last date the French Métis Council met on October 20 and elected John Bruce, President, and Louis Riel, Secretary, of their National Committee. They decided, also, that it was imperative to keep the Governor-to-be, McDougall, out of the Northwest Territory entirely until guarantees should be forthcoming that they would not be deprived of their rights under the new political arrangement.

On the following day, October 21, 1869, McDougall was ordered by the National Committee not to enter the Territory.²¹ He was known to be on his way through Minnesota at the time. The order was committed to Janvier Ritchot to be delivered personally to McDougall at Pembina on the Red River, Dakota Territory, just below the international boundary. He and a small group left the following day on their journey of some seventy miles.

On Monday, October 25, Riel and Bruce both appeared before the Council of Assiniboia to explain their stoppage of the surveying work by the strangers from Ontario. Carefully the French Métis position was stated. Canada had no right to impose a new government without consulting them. McDougall would be prevented from entering until guarantees should be given. Their lands must be protected. They were only defending their liberty. They were acting for the benefit of the English and Scotch Métis as well, and they expected these latter would unite with them in the common defense. Trouble could be expected from the Ontario malcontents, but they would be prepared for it.²²

²¹ Correspondence Relative to the Recent Disturbances in the Red River Settlement, London, 1870, p. 8, hereinafter referred to as "B.D.", i.e. "British Documents".

²² The Council was composed of John Black, President; Robert Machray, Anglican Bishop of Rupert's Land; Dr. Cowan; Dr. Bird; Messrs. Dease, Sutherland, McBeath, Fraser, and Bannatyne. Oliver, E. H., (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records, Ottawa, 1914, Vol. 1, p. 615. B.D. say Thomas Bunn was also present; q.v. p. 183.

The Council, whose membership could not be expected to appreciate the full extent of the fears of the French, endeavored to dissuade²³ Riel from his course. They pointed out the present and future dangers to follow from their course and used what pleading and threats they could to reverse the Métis course. Riel, however, was resolute.²⁴

The only method whereby force could be used to hinder the French was by arming the English and Scotch Metis against them. This, in effect, would amount to nothing less than civil war, even if these latter could be ranged against the French. Moreover, the Indians would soon be drawn in, also, the consequences of which were rueful to contemplate. For their part the French Métis were proceeding with their plans spurred on by the news that McDougall had brought arms with which his supporters in the Settlement, the Schultz party, would surely be provided.

South of Fort Garry on the road to Pembina near the parish church of Saint Norbert a barricade was erected and guarded to keep unauthorized persons from proceeding farther. Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot, the local pastor, lent his sympathy as well as his rectory for the Métis Council meetings.

23 Without a police force persuasion was their only tool.

24 Minutes of the Council of Assiniboia, October 25, 1869, in Oliver (ed.), Canadian North-West, Vol. 1, p. 615-618; and B.D., p. 183-184.

Upon his arrival at Pembina, October 30, 1869, McDougall was served the Métis prohibition of entry by the committee headed by Janvier Ritchot. His reaction was in keeping with his personality: he tore it up and threw it in their faces. Thus began the new Governor's relationship with his prospective subjects at Red River.²⁵ On the following day he and his party left American soil and established themselves in the Hudson's Bay Company post across the line. Two members of the official party, J. A. Provencher, formerly with the Montreal La Minerve, and Captain Cameron, son-in-law of Charles Tupper, who had been sent on to Fort Garry,²⁶ were turned back at the Saint Norbert barricade on November 1.

Realizing the capital importance of Fort Garry with its arms and supplies and fearing a move by the Schultz faction to seize control of it, Riel had it occupied by the French Métis on November 2 apparently with the tacit understanding and agreement of the Hudson's Bay Company

²⁵ Press despatch, Globe, Toronto, Feb. 4, 1870, p. 4, col. 6. After returning to Canada McDougall himself formally denied this, but by that time his reputation for veracity was on the decline.

²⁶ Cameron proceeded on his own initiative.

authorities.²⁷

On the evening of the same day, November 2, a Métis party headed by Ambroise Lepine served notice to McDougall to leave the Hudson's Bay Company post inside the boundary of the Northwest Territory and return to American soil. This was to be done by nine a.m. the following morning with the alternative of suffering the consequences. At length, no longer being able to doubt that Lepine's armed party would be as good as their word, the Governor-designate prudently withdrew across the international boundary, where he was allowed the use of a house belonging to a Pembina Métis. Two days later, however, McDougall commissioned a certain Major James Wallace to act as spy in the Red River Settlement and to keep him informed of opinion and events there.

Although the French Métis had most cause for alarm because of the dangers threatening their language and religion in the proposed change of political status, the time had now arrived for establishing a durable form of government

27 Trémaudan is convinced that Governor MacTavish, knowing that his own power was rapidly dwindling and fearful of disorders in the Settlement, preferred to have Métis rather than the Schultz "invaders" in charge of the Fort. "Il est notoire en tout cas que quelques jours auparavant, le gouverneur MacTavish avait demandé à Romain Nault qui observait ce qui se passait à l'intérieur et aux environs de l'enceinte: 'Que fait donc Riel qu'il n'agit pas?'

"Et François Larocque, décédé à Richer le 19 mai 1923, a déclaré sous le sceau du serment qu'il avait été le porteur d'une lettre dans laquelle MacTavish suggérait à Riel d'occuper le fort". -- Histoire de la Nation Métisse, p. 181.

to fill the vacuum caused by the virtual abdication of Hudson's Bay Company authority. Accordingly, on November 6 Riel, although still Secretary only, issued a proclamation²⁸ inviting twelve English-language delegates to meet with a like number of French-language delegates with a view to adopting necessary measures for the future welfare of the Red River Settlement. The time was to be November 16 and the place, Fort Garry Court House.

In the ten days intervening between Riel's proclamation and the opening of the Convention McDougall at Pembina was active in promoting his cause. On November 7 he wrote to MacTavish requesting that the Hudson's Bay Company man explain the "authority" of the Governor-designate.²⁹ When it is remembered that up to this time MacTavish had been given no official notification of the transfer of the Territory to Canada, it is not difficult to understand that he did not reckon it his duty to cooperate fully with McDougall. Accordingly, he answered him on November 9 explaining the difficulties then existing at the Settlement and advising a return by McDougall to Ottawa.³⁰ This the latter was not disposed to do.

28 B.D., p. 32 and Begg, Creation, p. 49-50.

29 B.D., p. 23.

30 B.D., p. 39.

Forestalled from seizing political power the Canadian "invaders" worked privately to secure McDougall's admittance. On November 12 they petitioned Governor MacTavish to proclaim McDougall's authority and undertook to assure the latter himself of sufficient support in the Settlement if he would merely issue a proclamation affirming his own authority and demanding the submission of the Red River inhabitants.³¹ On November 14, however, McDougall pledged to Joseph Howe, Dominion Secretary of State for the Provinces, that he would not usurp any authority before receiving official notification from Ottawa.³²

Joint Efforts

It was not unreasonable to expect that the inhabitants of Red River could agree on a list of rights to be presented to Ottawa or London or both stating their position so that matters could be settled peaceably and the transfer of Red River to Canada be made in a manner satisfactory to all. Mutual understanding and agreement, however, were delayed seriously by a proclamation of Governor MacTavish, either extorted from him by the pressure of the Schultz

31 B.D., p. 32.

32 "Correspondence and Papers Connected with Recent Occurrences in the Northwest Territories", C.S.P., 1870, Vol. 5, No. 12, p. 38, hereinafter referred to as "C.D.", i.e. "Canadian Documents".

faction or voluntarily put forth to remove suspicion of complicity with Riel, to the effect that the French Métis were wrong in the measures they had adopted up to that point.³³ This proclamation was largely the cause of two days of profitless discussion at the outset of the Convention. A four day interruption then followed to allow the existing court system to continue to hold sessions in the meeting place. During these court sessions it is interesting to note that no charges were brought against Riel and the other French Métis leaders. When the Convention gathered again on November 22 a naive suggestion by one of the English-speaking Métis, Thomas Bunn, that McDougall be allowed admittance and that negotiations should proceed from there was vigorously rejected by the Riel group. The foremost fear of the French Métis at this time was that McDougall's supply of guns would be put at the disposal of the Ontario malcontents with the result that all basis for bargaining would be gone. On the following day, November 23, the French announced their desire to form a Provisional Government so that McDougall could be by-passed and negotiations be carried on directly with Canada. The English-language delegates protested that they were not empowered by their constituents to take such a step. Consequently the next meeting was delayed until December 1, 1869. In the meantime on the evening of November 26 Schultz attempted

33 B.D., p. 41.

to "capture" an English Métis meeting by filling the hall with his own armed faction thus excluding most of the English-speaking Métis. At the critical moment, however, Riel's men entered and expelled them.³⁴

When the delegates gathered again on December 1 they discussed the adoption of a list of rights as a basis of negotiation with the Canadian Government with a view to admittance to the Dominion.³⁵ Despite agreement in principle the English and French natives of Assiniboia were not able to reach any common ground of joint political action. Naturally, with more at stake (language and religion), the French insisted on precise and definite written guarantees from Canada. For their part the English-speaking natives seemed strangely indifferent to the future fate of the Settlement. Hence Riel and his followers were required to undertake by themselves the task of governing. The intrigues and dissension caused by Schultz had done their work. Any attempt to deal with McDougall was not considered desirable by the French both because of his secret manoeuvring with the Schultz faction in the Settlement and because he was in no position to give assurances and guarantees desired by the people of Red River anyway.

³⁴ Trémaudan, Histoire de la Nation Métisse, p. 193-194.

³⁵ B.D., p. 76-77.

The agreed upon List of Rights was printed and circulated throughout the Settlement on December 5. Its moderation and reasonableness won a good deal of support for Riel from Scotch and English elements. His next move was to remove all guns and ammunition from Winnipeg stores.

Ascendency of Riel

The machinations of McDougall in Pembina to effect his assumption of the reigns of government at all costs resulted in the most far-reaching measure yet taken by Riel: proclamation on December 8 of the existence de facto of a Provisional Government at Red River. It was dated from November 24. It had become apparent to Riel and his followers that the Hudson's Bay Company authority had ceased to exist and that an assertion by McDougall of his own authority conferred by Her Majesty was nothing less than a forgery.

A sense of urgency had been pressing Riel to seek the support of the English-speaking inhabitants so that all Red River citizens might be safeguarded from the depredations of the Ontario invaders and guaranteed a position of political equality in the Dominion.^{35a} The ultimate decision to take

^{35a} According to the sworn testimony of Benjamin Sulte, Cartier's private secretary in the Spring of 1870, Riel had written several letters to Sir Georges through Eustache Prudhomme of Montreal wherein he repeatedly protested that his resistance was only intended to secure better terms for union. -- Cf. Causes of Difficulties, p. 181.

forthright measures without the active cooperation of the English and Scotch Métis was necessitated by the constant endeavors of McDougall in Pembina to secure support within the Settlement by means both illegal and warlike and his collusion with the detested Schultz. Let us now examine the various pressures from without to which Riel was subject during this period.

On November 19 formal surrender to the Crown of the Charter of the Hudson's Bay Company took place in London. From that date, then, the authority of Governor MacTavish at Red River ceased de iure as well as de facto, even though the event did not become known till later. Authority thus passed to the de facto government, i.e. Riel's, which now regarded itself as a de iure government also. Canada, of course, did not possess sovereignty because the date of transfer was not until December 1.

On the same date, November 19, Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces in the Ottawa Government, reminded McDougall at Pembina that he had no authority in the Northwest until it should be officially given him by Howe.³⁶ However, McDougall did not receive this communication before December 6.

The would-be Governor's position at Pembina was difficult for a proud man to accept. Toward the end of November

³⁶ B.D., p. 10.

he seems to have become convinced that some positive and decisive steps had to be taken. His sources of information about sentiment at Red River were very poor. He was urged to issue a proclamation asserting his authority which was expected to have the effect of causing all opposition to disappear. He then proceeded with several measures the results of which were to prevent his ever becoming Governor of the Northwest, which were to ruin him politically back home, and which would consolidate the power of Riel more firmly than ever.

Unknown to McDougall the Ottawa Government had informed the Imperial Government on November 27 that it would not pay the transfer money nor accept responsibility for Red River and the Northwest as long as it continued in its then present disturbed condition. When peaceful transfer could be assured, then Canada would accept possession. The December 1 transfer date thus ceased to have meaning.³⁷

Two days later, November 29, McDougall wrote Howe that he had organized an armed force to secure his assumption of power. Then in the early hours of December 1 in the presence of his own small party he proceeded onto Northwest Territory soil and read a proclamation which he apparently thought made

³⁷ Young to Granville, November 27, 1869, B.D., p. 12; and Macdonald to McDougall, November 27, 1869, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 614-616.

him legal Governor of the Northwest. He had merely presumed that he was empowered so to act on the day when the transfer of jurisdiction was scheduled to occur. In actual fact he had received no authority from Ottawa, and Ottawa had not received any from London because of Canada's refusal to accept possession of troubled territory. In attributing to the Queen an act which she had not performed McDougall took upon himself responsibility for all acts performed by his subordinates in attempting to enforce his spurious authority. It was a capital blunder.^{37a}

On the following day McDougall sent word to Ottawa of what he had done.³⁸ On the same day, December 2, he took steps to implement his "authority". He commissioned Colonel J. S. Dennis to raise armed forces and to put down the Riel Government which, in effect, was the initiating of civil war at Red River.³⁹ Acting with the title "Lieutenant and Conservator of the Peace" Dennis commenced to raise and drill armed forces, about 450 altogether, within the Settlement preparatory to attacking whatever strongholds the French Métis possessed and confiscating whatever supplies his forces would need. Like his superior Dennis, too, committed an

37a B.D., p. 108-109.

38 B.D., p. 59-60.

39 B.D., p. 109-110.

illegal act. He seized Lower Fort Garry about twenty miles north of Riel's headquarters even though the French had not possession of it at any time. He also dared to enlist Indians among his forces, either forgetting or never realizing that this could very easily precipitate general Indian uprisings in all directions.⁴⁰ The inhabitants of nearby Minnesota still had vivid memories of the Sioux massacre of 650 of their fellow citizens seven years previous.

It was evident, also, that Dennis was in contact with the Schultz faction of Ontario invaders. These latter were to operate in Winnipeg proper, while Dennis himself would make his headquarters to the North at Lower Fort Garry. He appointed other officers to assist him such as A. C. Webb, the surveyor, Majors Charles Boulton and James Wallace, and Dr. James Lynch. Boulton raised and drilled troops at Kildonan about four miles north of Fort Garry.⁴¹

All moves were, of course, known to Riel. He was aware, too, of the work of McDougall's pies in the

⁴⁰ Howe to McDougall, Dec. 24, 1869, B.D., p. 84.

⁴¹ Dennis has been anonymously described by one who served under him in Saskatchewan in 1885 as "being descended of martial ancestors, confident in his skill as a commander..." -- Cf. Reminiscences of a Bungle, Toronto, 1887, p. 9. Actually Dennis had already bungled one campaign in Ontario against the Fenians in 1866 before going west. The Irish Republican Army captured Fort Erie in that year largely because Dennis had led his detachment into a trap. -- Cf. Howard, J. K., Strange Empire, New York, Morrow, 1952, p. 75.

Territory. Such pressures caused him to seek the cooperation of the non-French natives and finally, when this could not be had, to carry on alone the task of defending Assiniboia against Canadian exploitation. Respect for the Queen's authority caused the French Métis to be cautious and to wait several days until it became evident that MacDougall's proclamation was unauthorized. It was not until December 8 that Bruce and Riel officially proclaimed the existence of the Provisional Government as the only existing legal authority at Red River.⁴²

Other pressures forcing Riel to act were provided by the activities of the Ontario malcontents the number of which had been continually increasing. On December 4 about fifty of these, some with wives and children, gathered at the residence and warehouse of Dr. Schultz to protect Canadian government supplies that had been purchased at the time of the building of the Dawson Road, or, possibly, to prepare for an assault on Fort Garry.

Riel delayed for time, and time favored him. The December 5 List of Rights plus the increasing assurance that McDougall had no legal authority had the effect of lessening non-French antipathy toward Riel. Moreover, joint warlike preparations by both Dennis and Schultz rallied whatever

⁴² Oliver (ed.), Canadian North-West, Vol. 2, p. 904-906.

French had been still hesitating to the support of Riel, so that his forces now became stronger than ever.

Actually, Schultz and his followers had been instructed by Dennis not to attempt to barricade themselves in the Schultz building, but to retire to Kildonan. Their numbers were too few and their position indefensible. They would be trapped in their own "fort".⁴³ This is exactly what happened, as the disillusioned followers of the masonic warrior discovered too late. However, the bearer of Dennis' orders was captured by the French, and the precarious situation of the defenders of "Fort Schultz" was made clear to Riel. After three days of watching Riel suspected that some of the provisions were being forwarded to Dennis at Lower Fort Garry or westwards to Portage la Prairie in order to feed Dennis' levies.

Riel decided to act without further delay. He marched 100 of his men with three of the cannon of Fort Garry to the Schultz headquarters and presented an ultimatum through the agency of the Postmaster, A. G. Bannatyne. Everyone was to surrender his arms within fifteen minutes and be taken to the Fort's prison, or suffer the consequences. Realizing the hopelessness of their position at last, they prudently complied, forty-five in number. However, before departing from the building they cached a good deal of their gun powder

⁴³ B.D., p. 88.

in stove pipes and chimneys so that anyone who would build a fire in the building after their departure would be destroyed in the ensuing explosion. Fortunately, the wary Métis discovered the treachery before any harm was done.⁴⁴

Capture of the Schultz party was exactly the blow that convinced Dennis that further efforts to dislodge the Provisional Government by force and civil war were useless. Anglican Bishop Robert Machray strongly recommended that he discontinue the use of forcible measures against the French.⁴⁵ Moreover, Dennis' levies were melting away. Seeing the futility of further military efforts he disbanded his forces on December 9 (the day following Riel's proclamation of a Provisional Government), disguised himself as a squaw, and made his way to Pembina to report to McDougall.⁴⁶ Others who had reason to fear for their activities against Riel made their departure from the Settlement, also.

Riel's position was now unchallenged. The Hudson's Bay Company flag was removed, and an improvised flag combining fleur-de-lis and Shamrock was run up to replace it on

⁴⁴ Dwight to Macdonald, Dec. 24, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870," Vol. 2, p. 292; Same to same, Dec. 26, 1869, same, p. 308, 309; Dugas, G., Histoire Veridique des faits Qui Ont Prepare le Mouvement des Metis a la Riviere Rouge en 1869, Montreal, 1905, p. 118.

⁴⁵ Machray, Robert, Life of Robert Machray, London, 1909, p. 181-182.

⁴⁶ B.D., p. 89.

December 10. At the same time Riel made a speech urging all to remain loyal to the Queen.

Final McDougall Frustration

News of the collapse of his armed efforts to be brought in was a severe blow for the Governor-designate in Pembina. He was, of course, misinformed from start to finish by his agents in the Settlement, most of whom had hoped for comfortable positions in the new government and who had overstated the case constantly. McDougall had been led to believe that the opposition to his entry was not formidable and that it could be overcome by suave statements and threats and, if necessary, by a small amount of force.⁴⁷ Before beginning his humiliating return to Canada after six weeks of frustration in Dakota he made some parting gestures.

On December 13 he dispatched a message to Riel personally, requesting a conference with him. But even here he could not refrain from alluding to the dire consequences that would surely befall the Provisional Government for continuing to refuse him entry.⁴⁸ For his part Riel, confident of support at Red River and well aware of McDougall's lack of

⁴⁷ Unsigned communications to McDougall from the pro-Canada party at Red River, Nov. 5 and Nov. 9, 1869, B.D., p. 22, 32.

⁴⁸ McDougall to Riel, December 13, 1869, B.D., p. 72-73.

authority and his inevitable repudiation by the Ottawa Cabinet, ignored the half-pleading, half-threatening communique. He would have nothing further to do with this alien whose weapons were deceit and threats and who had attempted to divide the Métis nation by openly promoting civil warfare at Red River.

Having failed here also, McDougall attempted a final blow on December 16. Through Dennis he commissioned a Red River Indian, Joseph Monkman, to organize whatever Indians he could for an assault on the French Métis of Red River.⁴⁹ Fortunately, such an assault never materialized.

At length, all avenues of approach having been exhausted, McDougall with his small party, left Pembina on December 18 for Saint Paul and Ottawa. His final official act was a letter to the sick MacTavish at Fort Garry blaming him for all that went wrong. The awful truth was becoming known to McDougall, unofficially through the newspapers, that Canada had not paid the purchase money for the Northwest Territory and that, therefore, he had had no authority whatever for all his acts of "sovereignty" executed on American

⁴⁹ Memo of Cartier to Young, June 8, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 175; and Dugas, Le Mouvement des Métis, p. 163.

soil.⁵⁰ Unfortunately for the would-be Governor, he was pursuing in December the same crude and high-handed policy toward Red River with which the Ottawa Cabinet had initiated negotiations weeks before. What McDougall did not know was that a chastened Dominion Ministry had shifted ground and was following in December a policy of conciliation toward the inhabitants of Red River.

On his way to Saint Paul McDougall was met by Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault and Charles de Salaberry, who had been commissioned by Ottawa to do what they could to bring McDougall in as Governor.⁵¹ After being informed of this McDougall decided to continue on his way to Ottawa. He wanted nothing more to do with Red River and would not risk further humiliation. He was formally recalled by the Cabinet on December 29, 1869.⁵²

⁵⁰ It was even thought by some that he could be criminally prosecuted if any loss of life should result from his orders. A Quebec lawyer, J. H. Willan, wrote a letter to the Queen's Counsel suggesting that possibly McDougall would be guilty of murder if by his "pretended authority" he should have caused any loss of life at Red River. He further suggested that if such were the case, "honour" and "humanity" would oblige the U. S. Government to send him in chains to Fort Garry to be tried for his life. As an alternative perhaps the American courts would wish to try him for criminal breach of American neutrality laws and for assuming the exercise of sovereignty on American soil. -- Press dispatch, Globe, Toronto, Dec. 29, 1869, p. 1, col. 6.

⁵¹ Howe to Thibault, Dec. 4., 1869, C.D., p. 45-46.

⁵² Thibault to Howe, Mar. 17, 1870, C.S.P., Vol. 5, No. 12, "Northwest Territories: Report of the Very Reverend J. B. Thibault, G.V."; B.D., p. 124-125; and Begg, Creation, p. 199.

No inconsiderable trouble was caused McDougall at Pembina by his American neighbors who became increasingly hostile to him as the weeks passed. The propagandists of annexation, best represented by Enos Stutsman, wanted the Northwest for the United States and would be quite ready to assist any movement that would prevent its absorption by Canada. They made use of the press, then, to embarrass McDougall at every turn. Even the whisper of the employment by the Governor-designate of savage Indians created serious tension. Complaints went from Minnesota to Washington and from there to Ottawa, so that he was forced to deny that such was his intention.⁵³ McDougall became irked by the failure of Americans at Pembina to lend him their sympathy.⁵⁴ The plain fact was that numerous relatives and friends of Red River Métis lived in Minnesota and in Dakota Territory. These were

⁵³ The Montreal Herald absolved McDougall from the charge of enlisting the Sioux against the Métis. Apparently, said the Herald, he allowed for a certain period the Americans to believe that in order to minimize Yankee sympathy for Riel. -- Cf. editorial, Mar. 12, 1870, p. 1, col. 5-6. However, see H. P. Dwight's report of an editorial in the Saint Paul Press giving weighty evidence that McDougall did make a deal with the Sioux to attack Americans at Saint Joseph and Pembina. -- Cf. Dwight to Macdonald, Jan. 4, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North-West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 392, 393-394.

⁵⁴ "The Governor is annoyed at the sympathy of Pembina for the rebels, and says the Yankton and Saint Paul papers and the people of Pembina have abused him instead of helping him with their counsels and advice to check the hostile movements of the Indians." -- Correspondence appearing in the Saint Paul Press for Dec. 21, reprinted in Globe, Toronto, Dec. 22, 1869, p. 1, col. 6.

certainly not pro-McDougall and kept Red River well-informed about his movements.

Common Ground

With the irritating influence of McDougall removed Riel, and the French Métis generally, again took up the task of seeking unity within the Settlement. It was imperative to confront Ottawa with a united front. The period from McDougall's departure (December 18) to the despatch of the Provisional Government's delegates to Ottawa (March 23) was devoted to this work. By not sending negotiators with full powers the Canadian Ministry delayed considerably the desired goal of union with Canada on agreeable terms.

To maintain the expenses of government Riel requisitioned £2000 from the Hudson's Bay Company on December 22. Since the ending of its governmental authority it had become a private business enterprise in Assiniboia. The requisition, then, was a form of taxation. Nevertheless the Company was assured that it would be reimbursed by the Canadian Government after the union. Riel had O'Donoghue keep an exact

record of everything appropriated.⁵⁵

On Christmas day Father Thibault arrived as an emissary from Ottawa. His companion, Colonel de Salaberry, deemed it prudent to wait several days before making his own entry, which occurred on January 5, 1870. With the departure of McDougall the nature of their mission was changed. The result was that they were empowered to do almost nothing.⁵⁶

Two days later President Riel (Bruce had resigned) requested the saloon-keepers not to sell till January 10, 1870. Law and order, he thought, could be better maintained that way.

On this same day, December 27, there arrived in the Settlement another negotiator from Ottawa, Donald Smith, of

⁵⁵ Final settlement did not come till 1884 when the Ottawa Government turned over to the Company £10,704.101 as complete payment for all claims. -- Cf. Morice, R. R. Insurrection, p. 131-132, fn. 25. Here we see the purpose for O'Donoghue's presence in the Provisional Government despite his Fenian sympathies: to keep the record books and accounts, a type of work in which he was skilled. Joseph Royal was reported by Edward Blake to have told him (Blake) that Louis Riel was in no way mercenary. Royal spoke as follows: "I know all the events which occurred when he [Riel] was in the provisional government. I know that at the time that he was in power there in 1869-1870, when he had the resources of the Hudson Bay Company at his command, his own family was in a state of destitution, living down at their place, and he would not allow any portion of what he called public property to be sent to them at all, even to keep them in life, and that same provisional council was obliged secretly to send down a bag of flour or something of that kind to his mother, who had the charge of the family, in order to keep them alive." -- Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 261a.

⁵⁶ Howe to Thibault, Dec. 4, 1869, C.D., p. 45-46.

the Montreal office of the Hudson's Bay Company. His conduct upon arrival was not of a nature to inspire the confidence and cooperation of the Riel Government. In effect, he was unwilling to recognize the legal existence of that Government and the position of its head. He showed his distrust of Riel from the outset by leaving in Pembina his credentials whereby Ottawa had commissioned him to negotiate in its name. He was to have them brought in later at a time which he himself considered more opportune for his purposes. Since the English-speaking portion of the Settlement had still not stirred themselves to help shoulder the task of governing, the Provisional Government was of necessity French. Commissioner Smith wished to deal with the entire Settlement, English-speaking as well as French-speaking. Consequently he followed a course whereby he could approach the people directly, over the head of Riel. This he was ultimately successful in doing by the third week in January, 1870.

In the meantime discipline and patience with the slow processes of orderly government had been weakening somewhat. The French Métis could be relied on for vigorous action whenever it was necessary, but keeping guard at Fort Garry and policing the streets of the Settlement were monotonous routine and were relished less and less as time went on. Some of the prisoners escaped in early January as a result.

The question of prisoners became an uncomfortable issue. They were the forty-five captured in the Schultz

store on December 7 plus another dozen or so detained for their cooperation with Dennis in his attempted civil strife of the week following. Most of them were bellicose Ontario carpet-baggers⁵⁷, but a large number were well-intentioned English and Scotch who had been hoodwinked by Schultz into gathering at his store-warehouse. Apparently, Riel was keeping these as hostages, or as a sort of lever, whereby pressure could be exerted on the English-speaking part of the Settlement to join in the Provisional Government and thereby exhibit to Ottawa a unified sentiment and opinion. This Riel wanted badly, for it would put Red River in a better bargaining position. A pro-Riel newspaper, the New Nation, was published for this purpose, also. Its first issue was that of January 7.

Smith's activities for over two weeks after his arrival remained dubious.⁵⁸ Riel himself brought matters to a head by proposing an assembly of citizens in the open air at Fort Garry on January 19. The Settlement did not possess a building large enough to accommodate the thousand men and women who gathered in the sub-zero weather. The reading of

⁵⁷ It was a fact noticed by the Métis that many of these adventurers had had military experience and titles. Some openly boasted having their uniforms in their homes. It might well be that a conquering army was being gathered in the Settlement waiting until it was strong enough for a coup d'Etat.

⁵⁸ He conducted himself as if he were merely assisting Governor MacTavish in Hudson's Bay Company affairs.

his official commission from the Ottawa Cabinet and the Governor-General made it clear that Smith had hardly more power than Thibault and de Salaberry to conclude a satisfactory agreement.⁵⁹ Toward the end of the second day Riel moved that a convention of French and English delegates be called. The motion was carried. It was scheduled for January 25 and would decide what would be best for the welfare of the country.

Before it met the irrepressible Dr. J. C. Schultz escaped from his Fort Garry prison in a blizzard on January 23. He avoided re-capture and ultimately made his way back to Canada, but not until he had promoted one more attempt at violence.

The Convention of Forty -- twenty French-language and twenty English-language delegates -- met from January 25 until February 10. A committee of six worked on a list of rights to be submitted to Commissioner Smith.⁶⁰ Discussion of this list, clause by clause, continued until its adoption on February 5. It reflected the desire of the natives of Red River for continued possession of what was theirs, for protection against greedy strangers, for exemption from heavy taxation, and for political status approaching equality with the older provinces. Although he did not get everything his

⁵⁹ Howe to Smith, Dec. 10, 1869, B.D., p. 51-52.

⁶⁰ B.D., p. 157-158.

own way,⁶¹ Riel achieved in the main what he had hoped, i.e. greater assurances of forcing Ottawa to terms. Donald Smith, unfortunately, was not empowered to grant approval to all clauses, and so he suggested the election of two or three delegates to negotiate with the Dominion Ministry.

At this juncture the English and Scotch finally perceived the necessity of doing what Riel had for so long wished them to do: accept their share in the Provisional Government. If delegates were to be sent to deal with the Canadian Government they must be authenticated by a government truly representative of the entire population. Consequently, the English-speaking portion of the Settlement must participate. Thus, after the personal urging of former Governor MacTavish,⁶² they did so, and the Provisional Government now included several English and Scotch in high places.⁶³ This was achieved on February 9, along with a resolution for a twenty-four member Advisory Board, to be formed later, to assist the Government.

61 For example, he was outvoted in his desire to have the purchase of Rupert's Land disallowed unless and until the natives should be consulted and should agree.

62 Deposition of John Sutherland, Preliminary Investigation and Trial of Ambroise D. Lepine for the Murder of Thomas Scott, 1874, p. 40; Tache, A. A., North West Difficulty, 1874, p. 24b.

63 Officers were: Louis Riel, President; James Ross, Chief Justice; A. G. Bannatyne, Postmaster-General; Thomas Bunn, Secretary of State; W. B. O'Donoghue, Treasurer; Louis Schmidt, Assistant Secretary of State; A. D. Lepine, Adjutant-General.

On the following day three delegates were selected by the Convention to negotiate with Ottawa: Father N. J. Ritchot, Pastor of Saint Norbert; Judge John Black of the defunct Council of Assiniboia; and Alfred H. Scott, a Winnipeg store clerk born in England and a former resident of the United States. With this the Convention closed.

Two days later, February 12, Riel released the first sixteen of the prisoners still remaining in Fort Garry. He was now reasonably confident that these would see the folly of continued trouble-making.⁶⁴

Having recuperated somewhat from the injuries and exposure accompanying his escape, John C. Schultz began once again from his place of hiding in the vicinity of Lower Fort Garry to assemble what men he could for still another effort to seize control of Red River by force. This work he began while the Convention of Forty was still sitting, i.e. about February 8. After lengthy efforts and much patience the native inhabitants had achieved common ground. Now they must face military action from the Ontario desperadoes, and the work of months was in danger of being nullified.

Linked with the attempt of Schultz and, as events were to prove, actually more dangerous, was a similar piece of military action originating sixty miles westward, a filibustering expedition from Portage la Prairie. Here the

⁶⁴ Apart from those who had escaped, six or seven had been given their freedom on January 3.

nucleus (about sixty) of nondescript warriors formerly gathered by Major Boulton in early December decided to capture Fort Garry and release whatever prisoners were there and to seize Riel if they could. Boulton became their reluctant leader, hoping to exercise some control over them. It was a move at once foolish and tragic; foolish because the filibusterers were poorly armed and outnumbered and also because Red River people were now achieving common ground peacefully by means of the Convention of Forty; tragic because it was the direct cause of the first blood shed since the beginning of the resistance four months earlier. Indirectly it was the cause of the execution of one of their number, Thomas Scott.

A blizzard forced a halt to the approach of this warlike rabble at Headingly, fourteen miles west of Fort Garry. Meanwhile the Métis had been gathering for the impending battle, mounted and well armed to the number of 600.

The home of Henri Coutu, a relative of Riel with whom he sometimes lodged, was invaded and searched by Thomas Scott and Major Boulton. Scott's declared intention was to kill Riel on sight.⁶⁵

At Kildonan the two rebel groups of Schultz and Boulton joined forces. Still Riel restrained his men from attacking hoping the filibusterers would perceive the rashness of

⁶⁵ Accounts differ here. Some say he merely sought to apprehend the Provisional Government President and keep him as a hostage until the Fort Garry prisoners were released.

their intentions. It was here at Kildonan, about four miles north of Fort Garry, that they killed a mentally defective Métis youth, Norbert Parisien, whom they had seized as a "spy".⁶⁶

Meanwhile on February 15 President Riel had ordered the release of the twenty-four prisoners who had remained in Fort Garry. Postmaster-General Bannatyne had succeeded in persuading them not to rebel again.

On the day following the Provisional Government sent a message which pointed out the folly of warfare under the greatly improved conditions. It closed with the sobering reminder that the more numerous Government troops, better provisioned and armed, were in a far better position than the ill-fed, ill-equipped mob at Kildonan. At long last the majority of the filibusterers saw the light and began to return to their homes without seeking contact with Riel's troops.

On February 17 a large body of forty-eight rebels still armed and led by Boulton himself were captured while passing within sight of Fort Garry. They neglected to inform the Government that they had abandoned their rebellious intentions. The Major was sentenced by a court-martial to be

⁶⁶ In an escape attempt the terrorized lad shot one, Hugh Sutherland, whom he had reckoned to be a pursuer. When caught by a group led by Thomas Scott he was felled with an ax blow to his head. From this wound he died a few days later.

shot for leading an armed rebellion⁶⁷ which caused the deaths of Hugh Sutherland and Norbert Parisien. Later, however, he was reprieved by President Riel upon the urgent entreaty of Mrs. John Sutherland.⁶⁸ The President next appealed to Canadian Commissioner Smith to use his personal influence to secure the loyalty of the English-speaking portion of the Settlement, who had in many cases openly sympathized with the filibusterers, despite their pledged adherence to the Provisional Government at the Convention less than a week before.⁶⁹

His last effort at civil war and violent seizure of Red River having also failed, John C. Schultz fled the Settlement on February 21. The masonic warrior made the province of Ontario the scene of his future operations against the President of Red River's Provisional Government.

Suppression of the Portage filibuster had caused the delegates to the Canadian Government to delay their departure until the end of that episode. By that time it was known that Bishop Taché was on his way back to Red River. He had arrived in Ottawa from Rome on February 9. It would be highly worthwhile for the delegates to wait now to hear what news and

⁶⁷ Report of Smith to Howe, Apr. 12, 1870, B.D., p. 154.

⁶⁸ Healy, W. J., Women of Red River, Winnipeg, 1923, p. 226-227.

⁶⁹ Report of Smith to Howe, Apr. 12, 1870, B.D., p. 154-155.

proposals the Bishop might have brought from the Ottawa Government. He arrived at Saint Boniface on March 9.

In the meantime a prisoner had been executed at Fort Garry. Not impressed by the condemnation and reprieve of his leader in the Portage filibuster, Major Boulton, Thomas Scott, one of the rebels, manifested so much defiance that he was court-martialed and sentenced to be shot for armed rebellion and repeated insubordination. Exile was useless because he had threatened to return. The court was presided over by the Adjutant-General, A. D. Lepine. Joseph Nolin acted as interpreter, since Scott knew no French.⁷⁰ Riel himself participated in the trial to the extent of presenting the charges verbally in English and of requesting leniency for the accused.⁷¹ Sentence was set for noon of the following day, March 4. It was only with difficulty that the contemptuous Scott could be brought to realize that, unlike Boulton's case, the sentence would be carried out. His minister, Rev. George Young, secured an hour's delay of execution, therefore, in order to prepare the condemned man for eternity. Following the coup de grace the body was removed secretly from the Fort the same night in order to prevent possible hostile demonstrations and buried in an unmarked

⁷⁰ Trémaudan, Histoire de la Nation Métisse, p. 225.

⁷¹ Deposition of Joseph Nolin, Trial of Lepine, p. 59.

grave in Saint John's Protestant cemetery.⁷²

Riel and the leaders of the Provisional Government were still vividly mindful of the two successive days and nights of fearful anxiety, scarcely more than two weeks previously, when open civil war and bloodshed were expected from the rabble gathered at Kildonan. Peace and good order were still dubious in the Settlement. The obstreperous and defiant conduct of Scott and other prisoners whom he encouraged to imitate him was not calculated to pacify matters. It was doubtful if Canada or Red River itself would have much confidence in and respect for a government which allowed such conduct to pass unpunished. At all events, peace and quiet did ensue at the Settlement following Scott's execution. The scandal of unpunished insubordination was now removed.⁷³

Upon his arrival at the episcopal palace Bishop Tache' found that he was to have a guard of Métis maintained at his door for several days in what amounted to house custody. It was known that the Bishop was an official emissary of the

⁷² Morice, R. R. Insurrection, p. 295. On the previous November 18, 1869, Scott had been convicted and fined by the Assiniboia Court for assault on J. A. Snow, the surveyor, the previous Summer during operations in the building of the Dawson Road. -- Cf. Begg, Creation, p. 80; Snow to Langevin, Oct. 6, 1869, C.S.P., 1870, Vol. 5, paper 12, "Reports of Superintendents of Roads", p. 17-18; same to same, Feb. 21, 1870, p. 22; correspondence, Herald, Mont., Dec. 17, 1869, p. 2, col. 2. It was the same Scott who, club in hand, had led the group which murdered Norbert Parisien at Kildonan.

⁷³ Begg, Creation, p. 322.

Ottawa Government. To prevent misleading propaganda from being circulated the guard was stationed. Riel knew that because of his long absence Bishop Tache' was unaware of the actual state of Red River sentiment and opinion. Moreover, by this time the head of the Provisional Government had begun seriously to wonder if any good could come from Ottawa.

Not until March 15 was the Council of the Provisional Government convoked to hear the Bishop. He protested Ottawa's good intentions and urged good will in the matter of union with Canada. Cordiality prevailed. Riel pledged release of a portion of the prisoners. This he did two days later when fifteen of them, including Major Boulton, were set free.⁷⁴

Before the delegates were dispatched, however, the Council of the Provisional Government drew up a constitution and also revised the List of Rights of the Convention of Forty. On the advice of the Bishop they decided to request provincial instead of territorial status in the Dominion.⁷⁵ On March 23 two delegates, Father Ritchot and Alfred Scott, departed for Ottawa. The third delegate, Judge Black, left the following day. He was accompanied by Major Boulton and Charles de Salaberry.

⁷⁴ Begg, Creation, p. 317-319.

⁷⁵ Tache', North West Difficulty, p. 25a-b; Morice, R. R. Insurrection, p. 307-312.

The New Province

Such a feeling of optimism prevailed now that the normal life of Red River began to revive. The Hudson's Bay Company resumed business operations. Hunters made preparations. Money circulation increased noticeably,⁷⁶ and the highways were open for traders again. The Provisional Government was strong and secure, and it appeared but a question of time before the terms of entry would be ironed out and Red River have a new political fealty. Riel's peace proclamation of April 9 justified the optimism of the people.⁷⁷ The Queen's birthday was the occasion of public celebration by all parties in the Settlement.

In deference to the wishes of Bishop Taché the Union Jack was raised over Fort Garry on April 21; to this O'Donoghue objected vigorously, but the President left no doubt about his loyalty to the Crown.⁷⁸

Former Governor MacTavish took his leave from Red River on May 17. He headed for England in search of health.

Meanwhile the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, as it was now called, undertook a veritable Code of Laws for the

⁷⁶ Begg, Creation, p. 377.

⁷⁷ B.D., p. 160 and Begg, Alexander, History of the North-West, Toronto, 1894, Vol. 1, p. 483-485.

⁷⁸ Begg, History of the North-West, Vol. 1, p. 485.

government of the region. This was promulgated by President Riel on May 20. The legal and judicial vacuum caused by the cessation of Hudson's Bay Company rule made such a code imperative.⁷⁹

Elsewhere, the welfare of Assinibolia was being promoted with difficulty. Judge Black would not travel in company with Father Ritchot and A. H. Scott, and while in Ottawa did next to nothing to present and defend the point of view of the French Métis. The other two delegates, despite their diplomatic status as accredited representatives of another state, were arrested upon their arrival at Ottawa, April 11, upon the strength of a warrant issued in Toronto. They were released shortly, but the event caused considerable concern both at Red River and at the Colonial Office in London.⁸⁰

Cartier and Macdonald had interviews with the delegates on April 22, 23, and 25 without officially recognizing their status. This was not done before Father Ritchot had refused to continue until such recognition was given. It was granted on April 26.⁸¹ The Canadian Government concluded that the new area should be admitted as a province. They drew up

79 Begg, Creation, p. 347-372.

80 Granville to Young, Apr. 18, 1870, B.D., p. 177; and same to same, May 18, 1870, B.D., p. 178.

81 Causes of Difficulties, p. 70.

the Manitoba Act providing substantially for everything for which Riel and the Métis had undertaken their resistance movement. It passed in the Canadian Parliament by an overwhelming majority on May 3 and received the Queen's sanction on May 12. The date set for the entry of the new province was July 15. The original size of the future province was quite small. It was subsequently enlarged. Riel was asked by the Ottawa Ministry to continue as President until the new Governor should arrive.⁸²

Two delegates, Father Ritchot and A. H. Scott, (Judge Black had gone on to England) returned to Red River on June 17. On June 24 the members of the Provisional Government gathered to hear their report. It was found in the main to be satisfactory. On the motion of Louis Schmidt it was agreed to accept the terms offered by Ottawa and to enter the Canadian Confederation as the province of Manitoba.⁸³

There remained, however, more than one cloud on the horizon to mar the relationships between Ottawa and the Manitoba Métis. Not unreasonably the French Métis suspected that they would be the victims of personal and group vendetta by defeated Ontario Orangemen once the Provisional Government

⁸² He was Adams Archibald of Nova Scotia and was appointed on May 20. For confirmation of Riel by Cartier cf. deposition of Fr. Ritchot, Causes of Difficulties, p. 35, 77; Taché, North West Difficulty, p. 27b.

⁸³ Deposition of Father Ritchot, Causes of Difficulties, p. 81; and Begg, Creation, p. 379-380.

turned over its authority to the new, Ottawa-appointed, Lieutenant-Governor.

Rapacious Ontario interests had been out-manoevred and out-generaled by the natives of Rupert's Land. These latter had successfully defended their homes and lands from alien cupidity. That, in sum, was the story of the entire resistance movement up to that point. But once sovereignty was yielded to the Dominion protection would be needed from the vengeance of the vanquished. Ontario's Clear Grits had lusted too long for the wealth of Assiniboia to accept the Manitoba Act as a fixed condition for the indefinite future. Laws of Parliament could be changed and circumvented if sufficient pressure were brought to bear upon the lawmakers.

Thus Riel and the Métis leaders wanted assurance that they would not be molested in future for acts performed while in charge of the Provisional Government. Specifically they wanted an amnesty which would exempt them from culpability for acts which might be construed by some as blameworthy and punishable. The guarantee of Governor-General Young dated December 6, 1869, held good for all acts and decisions made prior to that date.⁸⁴ Bishop Tache' left Ottawa on February 17 for Red River taking with him, as he thought, a general and complete amnesty. This would apply, he was convinced, not only to all acts and decisions up to that date, but to

⁸⁴ B.D., p. 45-46.

subsequent deeds as well.⁸⁵

Unfortunately for Riel and his Government the execution of Thomas Scott for armed rebellion and repeated insubordination occurred on March 4, 1870, two weeks after the pledge given to Bishop Taché by Cartier and Macdonald. This circumstance was seized upon by the Canadian political leaders to evade the obligation of their pledge. They were under fierce and constant fire from Ontario for exhibiting even the least tolerance of those who had been responsible for the death of Orangeman Scott. Consequently, Red River had to be placated on the one hand, and Ontario votes must not be lost on the other. The whole matter of an amnesty had to be arranged, if it could be arranged, as quietly and as privately as possible.

Bishop Taché received nothing but verbal promises of a general amnesty in February.⁸⁶ The delegates from the

⁸⁵ Deposition of Archbishop Taché, Causes of Difficulties, p. 18; also his account of an interview at Niagara with Governor-General Young, July 23, 1870, Taché, North West Difficulty, p. 10a.

⁸⁶ Deposition of Archbishop Taché, Causes of Difficulties, p. 18-19. In a rather vague way Macdonald had written: "...the Canadian Government will stand between the insurgents and all harm." --Macdonald to Taché, Causes of Difficulties, p. 19. Actually the Prime Minister did give the Bishop a written pledge in this same letter of February 16, but it contained a new condition about which he had previously been silent: "...if the Company's Government is restored..." -- Cf. Macdonald to Taché, Feb. 16, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 19; and deposition of Archbishop Taché, Causes of Difficulties, p. 20.

Northwest were carefully instructed to insist upon the amnesty as a sine qua non of entry into the Dominion.⁸⁷ But they, too, had left with nothing more than verbal assurances.^{87a} Thoroughly aroused and worried Bishop Tache' made a special journey to Ottawa leaving the Settlement on June 27, three days after the return of the delegates, in an effort to constrain the Cabinet Ministers to honor their pledge.⁸⁸ He was not successful. He met with coldness and evasions from both Governor-General Young and Cartier, who now took the position that it was the business of the Imperial Government in London to grant such an amnesty since Canada had no jurisdiction in the area concerned prior to June 15, 1870.⁸⁹

The fact seems to have been that Cartier spoke too soon in making the amnesty promise to begin with. He seems to have been acting on the assumption that he was just as influential as a post-Confederation, Dominion Cabinet member as he had been previously as the second ranking Cabinet member

87 Clause 19 of the List of Rights, B.D., p. 130.

87a Actually Father Ritchot did receive a written guarantee from Cartier wherein the latter used the expression "liberal policy" instead of "amnesty." -- Cf. Cartier to Ritchot and Scott, May 23, 1870, Tache', North West Difficulty, p. 26a.

88 On June 9 His Excellency had warned the Ottawa Cabinet by writing of the grave consequences of not granting the amnesty. -- Causes of Difficulties, p. 32-33.

89 Actually, this is the position that the Ottawa Cabinet should have adopted in the first place, had it been constitutionally alert.

for United Canada. He discovered too late that he had promised too much.

Since Bishop Taché had made public at Red River the expectation of the amnesty, it occupied a foremost place in the thoughts of everyone there. Finally, it was hoped that either Colonel Garnet Wolesley or the new Lieutenant-Governor, Adams Archibald, would bring the amnesty with him to the new province. The Bishop himself returned from Ottawa on August 23 still hoping that the Dominion Ministry, of whose intentions he had spoken so well at Red River, would thus arrange matters. By this time Riel was ready to believe nothing emanating from the Canadian capital. Furthermore, he was right; for the Bishop had been too trustful of the politicians, as events were to prove.⁹⁰

The other cloud on the Métis horizon was the dispatch to Manitoba of Imperial and Canadian troops under the command of Britain's Colonel Garnet J. Wolesley. The nature of these forces and the purpose of their journey to Red River were never clearly revealed to the public at large, so that the inhabitants of that place could not tell if they were

⁹⁰ The dictionary meaning of "amnesty" is a pardon for offenses committed. But the leaders of the Provisional Government necessarily maintained that they had not been guilty of any offenses. Therefore they ought not to have sought amnesty, for this implies an admission of guilt. What Riel and the other Métis leaders really wanted was some sort of declaration of immunity and blanket guarantee of protection from future vengeance.

coming as a harmless symbol of transfer of sovereignty or as a conquering army intent upon subjugation and punishment. To be sure, an expedition was decided upon by the Imperial Government in February, i.e. before the execution of Scott; for the Ottawa Government would not pay for the territory until peaceful transfer and possession could be assured. Still, it was all but obvious to everyone in the East that the Canadian Volunteers, who constituted the bulk of the force, were almost entirely made up of Ontario Orangemen bent on avenging the death of brother Scott. Their intentions were no secret, yet they were allowed to enlist. Moreover, they proceeded to Fort Garry without having such intentions effectively frowned upon by the authorities, and as events were to show, they did carry out these intentions by every means at their disposal.

Officially, however, the purpose of the expedition was quite different. In response to Canada's request for peaceful transfer and possession Granville, British Secretary of State for the Colonies, offered military help to insure order and quiet at Red River.⁹¹ This offer was first made in February, and, accordingly, preparations were made. Boats were constructed at Collingwood, Ontario, to transport the expedition through Georgian Bay and across Lake Superior to

⁹¹ Granville to Young, Mar. 5, 1870, B.D., p. 175; also Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1869-1870," Vol. 1, p. 403.

Fort William. From this point it was to make its way to Fort Garry by the Dawson Road and portages across and along rivers and lakes until its objective was reached. Besides the nucleus of Imperial soldiers, Canadian soldiers would be employed as well. Granville's instructions to Sir Clinton Murdoch, special envoy to Governor-General Young, were to the effect that the purpose of the expedition was not to force Canada's sovereignty on Red River.⁹² On April 2 Granville informed Young that the troops were to support order in the Settlement⁹³ once Canadian authority should be accepted. Still another motive for the expedition seems to have been to protect the natives of Red River and the Indians from the depredations of immigrants from Ontario, and if necessary to shield the Settlement itself from possible hostile Indian activity. This second purpose was not announced till August 4, and by the Canadian, not Imperial, Government. Officially, also, Wolesley himself proclaimed in July that his expedition was one of peace.⁹⁴ Riel himself had this

⁹² Gunn, Donald, and Tuttle, C. R., History of Manitoba, Ottawa, 1880, p. 435. Awareness by Macdonald of the fact of this instruction of the Colonial Secretary is revealed in a letter to Governor-General Young. -- Cf. Macdonald to Young, Apr. 10, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 517-518.

⁹³ B.D., p. 177; Cartier to Macdonald, Feb. 23, 1873, Causes of Difficulties, p. 105.

⁹⁴ "Instructions to Archibald", C.S.P., 1871, Vol. 5, No. 20, p. 6; Begg, Creation, p. 383; Tache, North West Difficulty, p. 12b.

proclamation printed and distributed throughout the Settlement.

Official statements notwithstanding, Riel was realistic enough to recognize a gap between theory and practice. Unlike Bishop Taché, who seemed to have accepted the official statements without question, the President of the Provisional Government had decided reservations. Métis scouts, as well as Indians, who were in contact with the slow-moving expedition,⁹⁵ brought to Fort Garry ominous reports of the vengeance sought by Ontario Orangemen. Legally or illegally they were intent on punishing Riel and the French Métis for the execution of Thomas Scott. All the hardships and the labor of the ninety-six day journey would have to be rewarded with some indulgence in revenge.

Despite its number it was altogether possible for the Provisional Government to have destroyed Wolessley's force. This Riel was urged to do by O'Donoghue, who probably realized by this time that Riel never did have any serious intention of abandoning the British connection. Guerilla warfare could have been carried on all the way from Fort William to Fort Garry, if necessary, to annihilate the expedition. None of the force had had any experience with such fighting.⁹⁶ Also,

⁹⁵ It began about May 20.

⁹⁶ Morice, R. R. Insurrection, p. 338.

logs could have been floated down the rapids of the Winnipeg River to demolish the small boats the soldiers were in. Indians had volunteered to do this should Riel approve. Even as the force approached Fort Garry through the rain-created, treeless morass on the morning of August 24, it could easily have been slaughtered by a well-defended fort with its numerous cannon.

Counselled by Bishop Taché and Father Ritchot, however, Riel was determined to hand over the reins of government peacefully to legitimate Canadian authority, for he now considered his work to be finished. He had dismissed his potential army of a thousand Métis and had even prepared an address of welcome for Governor Archibald.⁹⁷

It was much to be desired that the new Lieutenant-Governor, Archibald, should arrive at Red River ahead of, or at least simultaneously with, Wolessley's troops, for then the transfer of sovereignty could be made honorably and with dignity, and all appearance of a military conquest would be forestalled. Whether by accident or design, however, Archibald did not arrive until September 2. Had he arrived previously and had he brought, as was widely expected, the amnesty with him, the anxiety of the Provisional Government leaders would have been at an end.

⁹⁷ Riel to Taché, July 24, 1870, Morice, R. R. Insurrection, p. 341.

Despite the optimism of Bishop Taché, until the very eve of Wolesley's arrival, it was all too plain that Riel would be forced to seek safety in flight. He stated to the Bishop on that day his conviction that the Ottawa politicians had deceived him (the Bishop) from first to last.⁹⁸ As the British regulars were entering Fort Garry, Riel, having already dismissed the guard, departed with O'Donoghue, crossed the Red River, and made his way to exile in Pembina and later Saint Joseph, Dakota Territory. Thus the Settlement had no civil authority from August 24 to September 2, since Riel had been empowered by the Dominion Government to continue his office until the arrival of Governor Archibald.⁹⁹

On the day following his arrival with the Imperial soldiers Wolesley, despite his declared peaceful purposes of the previous month, made it clear that he had regarded the leaders of the Provisional Government as outlaws from whose tyranny he would deliver the Settlement.¹⁰⁰ He prevailed upon Donald Smith to exercise the functions of civil authority.

⁹⁸ Dugas, La Mouvement, p. 192.

⁹⁹ Deposition of Fr. Ritchot, Causes of Difficulties, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰ Dawson, S. J., Report on the Red River Expedition, C.S.P., 1871, Vol. 6, No. 47, p. 25; Schofield, F. H., The Story of Manitoba, Winnipeg, 1913, Vol. 1, p. 297; Young, George, Manitoba Memories, Toronto, 1897, p. 188. He gave expression to the same notion four days later in an address to his troops.

After several days of riotous celebrating the British regulars returned to Canada on September 3. On August 27 the Canadian soldiers had come in and unleashed their pent up passions in drinking and brawling. The feeble police force which Smith had attempted to organize found it safer not to interfere.

Finally, on September 2 Adams G. Archibald, the new Lieutenant-Governor, arrived to try to bring order to a chaotic situation. He was not trusted by the English-speaking inhabitants, who suspected him of being pro-French. He was not liked by the French-speaking inhabitants because he had not brought the amnesty. His task, then, was difficult, and many lawless acts were to go unpunished before orderly government could secure control of the new Province.

Throughout its eleven month history the resistance movement at Red River was subject to varying interpretations back East. Poor communications, racial and religious bias, political bungling and chicanery, all played their parts in an embroglio that threatened the existence of the fledgling Confederation. The next step is to study the effect back in Ontario and Quebec of Louis Riel's first Rising in the West.

CHAPTER TWO

ONTARIO-QUEBEC REACTION TO THE RED RIVER RISING

The almost inevitable effect back East of the Red River Rising was friction between the two older provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Apart from the general attitude of each province springing from its religious, racial, and cultural background the main points of friction were fairly limited, hardly more than five. Nevertheless there were many other issues that Ontario became aroused about but in regard to which Quebec maintained a relative calm. This was owing almost to the very nature of the case. Those at Red River to whom Ontario lent its sympathies were being checked and repulsed, and the end result of their efforts to exploit the Métis homeland was considerably less than their cupidity had hoped for. This was something for Ontario to become excited about, not Quebec. The irritation of the latter arose whenever Ontario's frenzy overreached itself thus constraining the French province almost in spite of itself to retaliate in self-defense.

Apart from the Eastern Townships Quebec was, of course, solidly French and Catholic. Except in language Ontario was not quite so homogeneous. The upper social and cultural strata were almost wholly Anglican in religion and conservative in politics. The substructure of Ontario society

was Presbyterian and Methodist in religion and liberal in politics. It was not very cultured nor too well educated. In such strata narrow-mindedness flourished, manifesting itself socially in the Orange Society. (This Society numbered Conservatives among its members, also.) This latter was imported from northern Ireland where it had been keeping up a running battle with the Catholic Irish. Transferred to Ontario it turned its bellicose energies on the Catholic French. The relatively small number of non-French Catholics in Ontario could not exhaust all its attention, and its bigoted dynamism broke out in full fury as a result of the Red River Rising.

Before dealing separately with the main issues of friction between Ontario and Quebec we will consider the general attitude of mind with which the Rising at Red River was viewed: first, the general attitude of the Government; second, the general attitude of the newspapers supporting the Government, and then those opposed to it; finally, the general attitudes of members of Commons as revealed by their discussions in that body.

The issues are by no means sharply defined in all instances. Both party and racial lines are blurred in the course of the conflict. The same positions are not maintained at the beginning and throughout. Even the same interest is not manifested at all times. The succession of

events results in a fluctuation of attitudes.

A word must be said about the peculiar position occupied by William McDougall. He had begun his political career in alliance with the Ontario Clear Grits and George Brown, Editor of the Toronto Globe. At the time of Confederation he let John A. Macdonald know that he would be willing to cooperate with the Conservatives. Following that achievement, when party government came back in vogue and the coalition was no longer needed, Macdonald offered him the Governorship of the Northwest Territory as a means of removing him from the Cabinet without appearing to cast him off entirely. His failure to enter his "dreary sovereignty", as Macdonald referred to it, he attributed not to his own mistakes but to the perfidy of his Conservative colleagues. Consequently, upon his return to Canada he expressed his bitterness publicly and in the House of Commons. To increase his misery he found that he was not being welcomed back by his Clear Grit friends of earlier years. On the contrary they still resented his desertion of them in the first place. Wanted by neither party, McDougall's position was thus most uncomfortable.

It is with McDougall, however, that we can begin to discern the general attitude of the Ministry toward the Red River Rising, for he was their appointee as Lieutenant-Governor.

General Reaction of the Government

In his first report to Macdonald, October 31, 1869, McDougall made it evident that he didn't think the Rising would last long, no longer than a week. He was preoccupied with plans for the opening of the Territory to settlers in the "millions", with telegraph communications, with a railway, and with Lake Superior navigation thereto. He did not think about the native population of Red River, about their hopes, fears, and rights, nor about the Hudson's Bay Company. He, the lofty London negotiator, was moving to the leadership of a backward area.¹

Whatever his distrust and implicit disregard for the Métis the Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, was too adroit a politician himself to domineer when delicate tactics were called for. He disapproved from the beginning of Colonel Dennis' aggressiveness in pursuing the surveying at the Red River Settlement despite opposition on the part of the natives.

The course taken by Stoughton Dennis in pressing for strong measures to be taken against parties interfering with his surveys, was exceedingly injudicious ...He was in the country simply on sufferance, in anticipation of its future transfer to Canada: on finding any serious dissatisfaction amongst the natives or residents, he should have at once struck and awaited your arrival. It is, of course, important

¹ McDougall to Macdonald, Oct. 31, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 96-103.

to have land surveyed for settlement as early as possible, but that is a secondary consideration to your entrance on your duties with the general assent and support of the people.²

Ontario fanatics would always insist that the Métis of Red River were guilty of rebellion against the British Crown and not just resistance to Canada. The Prime Minister however, was informed from the very first that such was not the case. A telegram of November 24, 1869, read: "...object of the insurgents is not to throw off allegiance to the Queen. But to oppose annexation to Canada."³ Moreover, Macdonald also knew of the desire of the French Métis to negotiate for equitable terms of entry into the Dominion as early as November 26, 1869, or shortly thereafter. McDougall's assistant, J. A. N. Provencher, had written a report on his interview with the Métis at the barricade wherein he stated this Métis desire.

...if the Canadian Government was willing to do it, they [French Métis] were ready to open negotiations with them, or with any person vested with full powers, in view of settling the terms of their coming into the Dominion of Canada.⁴

² Macdonald to McDougall, Nov. 20, 1869, Pope, Joseph, (ed.), Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, Toronto, 1930, p. 408-409.

³ H. P. Dwight to Macdonald, November 24, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 173.

⁴ Provencher to McDougall, Nov. 3, 1869, Canada, Sessional Papers, 1870, Vol. 5, No. 12, p. 28.

This report was forwarded by McDougall to Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, and was received by the latter on November 26, 1869. It is true that about this time the Canadian Cabinet was committed to a policy of conciliation in regard to the insurgents of Red River, yet Macdonald was unwilling to invest "full powers" in any negotiator as was desired by the Métis and reported by Provencher. The Prime Minister would not grant the inhabitants of Red River this much unless and until he should be forced thereto. This attitude undoubtedly contributed to much of the delay in putting an end to the Rising.

Macdonald seemed predisposed to accept the opinion of and to deal with Donald A. Smith in regard to Red River affairs. The Prime Minister's personal friend in Montreal, George Stephen, had vouched for Smith, and the latter seems to have taken the initiative in securing his own appointment as Canadian Commissioner to Red River.⁵ What Smith's primary motives were are not clear, but it is quite possible that they were not unconnected with the preservation of Hudson's Bay Company interests, since he was himself the chief Hudson's Bay officer in Montreal at the time and in frequent contact with Governor MacTavish.

⁵ Stephen to Macdonald, Nov. 27, 1869, Pope, Joseph, (ed.), Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1921, p. 110; Macdonald to Stephen, Dec. 1, 1869, same, p. 110-111.

The information provided by H. P. Dwight on November 24 about the nature of the Rising became the official Government view as is shown by the Minutes of Council for December 16, 1869.

The resistance of these misguided people is evidently not against the Sovereignty of Her Majesty or the Government of the Hudson's Bay Company,⁶ but to the assumption of the Government by Canada.

In January, 1870, Prime Minister Macdonald received information from Red River, from Washington, and from Montreal all of which indicated that the preservation of the integrity of Britain's North American possessions would be a difficult task. Moreover, it is quite possible that the Imperial Government of the time was less zealous for the retention of these possessions than was the Canadian Prime Minister himself. In the early part of the month he had good evidence from Donald Smith at Fort Garry of the American desire for the annexation of Red River.

The drift of the whole thing is evidently annexation, and such is the belief on the part of Americans at Pembina... That this view of the matter is wholly incorrect, I have lost no opportunity of declaring, and not unfrequently the assertion appears to be quite a surprise to my hearers.⁷

Edward Thornton, British Ambassador to the United States,

⁶ Committee of Council Minutes, Dec. 16, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. I, p. 278.

⁷ Smith to Macdonald, Dec. 28, 1869, Pope, Correspondence, p. 114.

expressed to Governor General Young his fears about American annexation of Red River (and British Columbia) in early January, 1870. He did not know what action, if any, President Ulysses S. Grant would take but requested from Young information on the state of affairs at Red River.⁸ The substance of this communication must soon have passed to Macdonald, since Governor General and Prime Minister were in frequent communication. At about the same time C. J. Brydges of Montreal wrote him about positive information he had directly from the President of the Northern Pacific Railway that the latter's line was being built as closely as possible to the Northwest Territory boundary from which feeder lines could easily be run into points in British territory. This would encourage the annexation of Red River and the rest of the Northwest to the United States. Macdonald answered him that he was much concerned about possible loss of this area.

It is quite evident to me...from advices from Washington, that the United States Government are resolved to do all they can, short of war, to get possession of the western territory and we must take immediate and vigorous steps to counteract them. One of the first things to be done is to show unmistakeably our resolve to build the Pacific Railway.⁹

⁸ Thornton to Young, January 3, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 383-388.

⁹ Macdonald to Brydges, Jan. 28, 1870, Pope, Correspondence, p. 124-125.

To add to the Prime Minister's worries was his own attitude of distrust toward the Red River Métis. On January 3, 1870, he wrote to John Rose in London wherein he referred to "these wild people".¹⁰ Again, to Adams Archibald on January 15, 1870, he tells of his hopes for "pacifying those wild people in the West".¹¹ On February 11, 1870, the Minutes of the Privy Council received the following, probably because of Donald Smith's reports:

But it is to be remembered that the Insurgent Leaders have already declared themselves in favor of annexation to the United States, and even if compelled by public opinion to acquiesce in the proposed mission of the Red River delegates to Ottawa, their good faith is more than doubtful.¹²

In the latter part of the same month Macdonald still harbored resentment against the Métis.

We must never subject the Government there to the humiliation offered to McTavish. These impulsive half-breeds have got spoilt by this émeute, and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers.¹³

Whatever his words of diplomacy, they are apparently superficial only. Macdonald had all along distrusted the Métis in

10 Pope, Correspondence, p. 119.

11 Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 906.

12 Minutes of Committee of Council, Feb. 11, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 357-358.

13 Macdonald to Rose, Feb. 23, 1870, Pope, Correspondence, p. 128.

general and Riel in particular. He cannot be excused from the charge of playing the crafty double game of exterior suavity and interior severity. He disliked the Métis success of forcing Canada to better terms and would obviate it as much as he could. Furthermore, Macdonald did not want the Northwest to be controlled by the native Métis.

It will never do to leave the future Government of the Country at the mercy of these impulsive half-breeds, and our object should be to get a force into the Country as peaceably as possible. Once there they can easily if composed of Regulars be replaced by a Canadian Force.¹⁴

Again in April, 1870, Macdonald was still perturbed about the task of retaining for the Crown its North American possessions. His difficulty in holding on to the Northwest in face of the lassitude of the incumbent British Ministry is reflected in a personal letter to Lord Carnarvon, former British Secretary of State for the Colonies.

...we greatly distrust the men at the helm in England who cannot, I fear, be considered as appreciating the importance of maintaining the Empire as it is, intact.¹⁵

In explaining why the United States should not object to the movement of Canadian troops through the Sault locks, the Prime Minister said that no warfare existed because there really was no rebellion against Her Majesty's authority. Red

¹⁴ Macdonald to Rose, Mar. 11, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 14, p. 48.

¹⁵ Apr. 14, 1870, Pope, Correspondence, p. 133.

River natives simply wanted better terms of entry.

In the Red River affair there is no pretence that a state of war exists. In an outlying and distant province of the Empire some 600 or 700 Half-breeds object to being united with Canada. They do not at all desire to sever themselves from Great Britain. They fully acknowledge the sovereignty of Her Majesty and profess every desire to maintain their allegiance to Her. Their action is simply one of suspicion that if incorporated as a portion of Canada they may not get as good terms as they desire.

The movement at Fort Garry is not even a rebellion against Her Majesty. It is simply a resistance to the entry of certain Canadian functionaries into the Country.¹⁶

Here we have the language of diplomacy. Two months earlier in the privacy of the Privy Council Macdonald had agreed that the Métis did wish to renounce the British connection.¹⁷ However, it is not impossible that in the interval the Prime Minister may have taken a more favorable view of the intentions of the Red River Métis.

No matter what his private sentiments and judgments may have been Macdonald's over all policy toward the Rising was one of conciliation and one calculated to minimize friction between Ontario and Quebec, at least for the then immediate future. Father J. Ryan, the Catholic pastor at Oakville, Ontario, wrote Macdonald on May 3, 1870, about a chance conversation he had recently had with George Brown, Editor of the

¹⁶ Macdonald to Young, Apr. 18, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 14, p. 145.

¹⁷ See above, p. 78.

Toronto Globe. They talked about the Fenians and the indignation meetings in Ontario in the course of which Brown virtually conceded that Macdonald's powers of conciliation were preventing worse conflicts within Canada.

Although Mr. Brown did not entirely admit yet he could not deny the fact that it is owing to your conciliating disposition and government that the whole Dominion is preserved from the most angry feelings both Religious and National.¹⁸

Such evidence was calculated to encourage the Prime Minister on his then present course. At the same time the conciliatory Manitoba Bill was meeting with comparatively little opposition in Commons thus confirming the practical wisdom of his policy. It made him confident that there would be a peaceful conclusion to the Red River Rising. "...everything promises a peaceful solution to the Red River trouble."¹⁹

Such was the general attitude of Macdonald and the Government toward the Red River Rising. From the vantage point of four years he was able to state his general attitude toward the Red River Rising before a Select Committee of the House of Commons.

The armed resistance was a very aggravated breach of the peace, but we were anxious to hold and did hold, that under the circumstances of the case it did not amount to treason. We were informed that the insurgents did not desire to throw off allegiance to the

¹⁸ Ryan to Macdonald, May 3, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "General Letters; 1869-1870", p. 436-437.

¹⁹ Macdonald to Young, May 4, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 14, p. 157.

Queen, or sever their country from the Empire, but that their action was in the nature of an armed resistance to the entry into the country of an officer, or officers, sent by the Dominion Government. We desired, therefore, that it should be considered in the light of an unlawful assembly, although it might technically be held to come under the statute of treasons, and it was intended that that continuous act, whatever it might be called, should come under the proclamation [of Governor-General Young, December 6, 1869] and be condoned by it.²⁰

General Reaction of the Press

The general attitude of the Montreal Gazette was a reflection, more or less faithful, of that of the Ministry. Its first reaction to news of McDougall's rejection at Pembina was one of Anglo-Canadian indignation. It did not think that the new territory could or should be dominated by French institutions, and the Dominion was urged to force the issue without delay. "If need be a sufficient number of military settlers can be found to go on there in the Spring and secure respect for the Government."²¹ The editorial of a week later is still anti-Riel in tone, and his movement is scorned.²² The editorial of December 9, 1869, reveals the Gazette roused

²⁰ Deposition to Select Committee of Commons, Apr. 30, 1874, Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the Northwest Territory in 1869-1870, Ottawa, 1874, p. 102.

²¹ Editorial, Gazette, Montreal, Nov. 25, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

²² Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Dec. 3, 1869, p. 2, col. 2.

to passion and protest. Having perused the French language clergy publication Nouveau Monde, it took that organ to task for apparently desiring to promote a war of race and religion. The Gazette cannot fathom why anyone could be sympathetic with the insurgents of Red River. To support them is to aid, abet, and encourage sedition and treasonable practices.²³

Gazette support of Government policy can be seen in its recommendation of non-payment to the Hudson's Bay Company of the sale price for Red River since the Company was unable to turn the territory over to Canada in a peaceable state. This was precisely what the Government did.²⁴ The Ministry was further defended, at least indirectly, on December 31 when the Gazette put blame elsewhere. It maintained that the Canadian position and intentions had been misconceived at Red River. The activities of Colonel J. S. Dennis and John Snow in surveying had caused understandable apprehensions regarding land tenures. "The whole thing is a muddle growing out of misunderstandings and lies".²⁵ The same editorial shows how thoroughly anti-McDougall the Gazette had become by this time and also how much closer it had moved to a better understanding of the Métis position.

23 Editorial, Dec. 9, 1869, p. 2, col. 1-2.

24 Editorial, Dec. 24, 1869, p. 2, col. 2.

25 Editorial, Dec. 31, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

We see that some of our western contemporaries are gravely commenting on Messrs. McDougall's and Provencher's proclamation [of December 1, 1869], as if it were something more than waste paper. They seem to ignore the fact that the territory had never been transferred, and Messrs. McDougall and Provencher had really no more right to use the Queen's name than Messrs. Bruce and Riel.²⁶

Continuing as the faithful Government organ the Gazette took Le Pays to task for suggesting that the Canadian manner of dealing with the inhabitants of Red River was comparable to the doings of Cortes and Pizzaro. Such partisan politics, said the Gazette, endangered the general welfare of the country.²⁷ This was followed a week later by a summary and self-exculpating treatment of Canada's position with regard to the Red River insurgents. Canada had done no wrong. In agreement with the Mother Country she had purchased the Hudson's Bay Company rights. She had planned representative institutions. She had sent a Lieutenant Governor to analyze and select Government officers from among local talent. He was refused admittance as well as parleys. The Gazette still hoped for success from patient negotiation.²⁸

More mature reflection produced on February 8, 1870, a thorough analysis of the troubles at Red River. The Ontario clique, including John C. Schultz, John S. Dennis, John Snow,

²⁶ Same

²⁷ Editorial, Jan. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

²⁸ Editorial, Jan. 12, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2.

and Charles Mair were blameworthy for their conduct. The Toronto Globe had been responsible for much ill will by publishing a series of articles calculated to rouse the opposition of the Métis; then when it had been aroused, it (the Globe) had advocated strong arm methods of repression. James Ross, formerly of the Globe, had caused much mischief, said the Gazette editorial, because he had apparently "turned coat". McDougall had accepted his estimates of those who would have been willing to bear arms against Riel. These estimates had been false and exaggerated; hence the failure of Dennis' forces. Ross thereupon took his stand openly with Riel. McDougall the Gazette now seemed ready to excuse. He had started too late on his mission, but the Ministry jointly had been responsible for that. Even the frustrated Governor's recent blustering, anti-French sentiments expressed to his constituents, the Gazette excused as a post factum outburst of feeling. The editorial went on to say that if the French should constitute a majority at Red River, then they must be given their rights.²⁹ Ten days later the Government was said to have been correct in seeking to pacify matters at Red

²⁹ Editorial, Feb. 8, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-3. "If the half-breeds had any reason to know that ostracism or proscription was intended by Mr. McDougall towards their race or creed, then we cease to be surprised at the attitude they assumed, and cannot very severely blame it. But we cannot conceive that he went there, as we are sure he was not sent, in any such spirit." -- Same, col. 3.

River. Crude threats were of no avail because Canada was not able to execute them anyway, and forceful measures would have served only to unite the Métis all the more. "If it is possible we must for once lay the foundation of a great dominion by slow but most excellent peaceful means."³⁰

Thus it can be seen that the general attitude of the Montreal Gazette is one of conciliation and pacification, and in this it but mirrors the policy of the Ministry itself. In mid-June, 1870, the paper's position was succinctly stated on the subject of peace between Ontario and Quebec.

We have a great work in this Dominion. The two races are linked together in building it up, and every true-hearted man will repudiate the attempt now so sedulously made, to light up the old torch of religious discord, and array Ontario and Quebec against each other.³¹

The French language pro-Government organ of Montreal was La Minerve. Almost always faithful to the Ministry, it was forced to fend off Ontario attacks on the one hand and to justify to its own readers whatever anti-Métis measures the Government should adopt on the other. In the main it was successful in doing both these. It should be noted also that its journalism was of a higher caliber than most other papers.

First mention of Red River difficulties appeared in the issue of Monday, November 15, 1869. The progress of

³⁰ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Feb. 18, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

³¹ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., June 21, 1870, p. 2, col. 2. Cf. also a letter by "S.D.M." to the Kingston British Whig reprinted in Gazette, Mont., July 13, 1870, p. 1, col. 8.

McDougall's party had been watched carefully, because M. J. A. Provencher, a member thereof, had been connected with La Minerve. The stopping of the party was laid to an intriguing group. "Intrigants" have supposed they will be taxed and suffer the loss of their lands.³² Four days later La Minerve heard but did not want to believe that McDougall was forced to depart hastily from the Hudson's Bay Company post inside the Northwest boundary.³³ Already there were present the elements of an embarrassing situation: French Métis were resisting the Conservative Ministry, and La Minerve was committed to the support of that Ministry.

On December 10, 1869, La Minerve could not understand why the clergy periodical Nouveau Monde was rallying so strongly for the insurgents. Did it want a war of races and religion? The insurgents did not have a chance anyway. Absorption by the United States would surely follow successful resistance to Canada. The Métis had taken up arms "pour quelque misérable pique..."³⁴ Twelve days later La Minerve heard of the capture of Schultz's gang and regretted that things had gone so far. The insurgents could not hope to better themselves by opposing the state. Schultz, Bown, Snow,

³² News item, La Minerve, Montreal, Nov. 15, 1869, p. 2, col. 2.

³³ News item, Nov. 19, 1869, p. 2, col. 4.

³⁴ Editorial, Dec. 10, 1869, p. 2, col. 2.

and Mair had been the causes of the trouble to begin with. The Ministry was not to be blamed.³⁵

La Minerve had long been bothered by the sympathy of Nouveau Monde for the Red River insurgents. On December 31, 1869, Nouveau Monde had discoursed at length about the justice of the Metis cause, pointing out their resistance to unauthorized Canadian encroachment, but denying that they had rebelled against the Queen's authority. The result was that it then appeared to La Minerve difficult to refute Ontario charges that the Catholic clergy were supporting the Rising.

In two weeks time La Minerve had prepared its counter position. It charged Nouveau Monde with being influenced by modern liberalism! Canada would not obtain "sovereignty" over Red River, but simply "power of administration". "C'est au souverain de choisir ses administrateurs et au peuple à les accepter."³⁶ Because they had forcibly kept out McDougall's party the Métis had broken British law.

C'est une loi de tout pays soumis à l'Angleterre que l'autorité seule a droit de faire la police dans ses domaines et de fermer l'entrée du territoire aux voyageurs.³⁷

Assuredly the Métis had rights to their property, but these would be protected by due process of law. They had

³⁵ Editorial, Dec. 22, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

³⁶ Editorial, Jan. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

³⁷ Same, col. 2.

understandably resented Schultz, Snow, and Mair, but rebellion was not justified. Nouveau Monde had even criticized the Ministry, mirabile dictu! Certainly Canada would appoint most of the Government for Red River; Canada had paid the bill. Nouveau Monde itself gave the Métis the idea they were being persecuted and, also, reason to hope for sympathizers in Quebec. To be sure the Métis had been fearing a great influx of immigrants, but arrangements could be made to secure plenty of land for themselves and posterity.³⁸ In all this analysis La Minerve did not seem aware of McDougall's illegal proclamation of December 1, 1869.

Basically, La Minerve maintained, Ontario was grieved because it had been taught for long to believe that Red River was its legitimate prey, but the course of events made clear that the game was escaping the trap. Prejudice against French Canadians and Catholics also explained Ontario's fury. Upper Canadians were trying to make out that the Rising had been inspired by French Canadian Catholics. The truth was that the Conservative papers of Quebec have, with some regrettable exceptions, denounced the Rising. "Quelque fut l'origine et quelles que fussent les nationalistes mises en causes ils ont étouffé toute sympathie parce que les rebelles étaient dans l'illégalité."³⁹ No, the insurgents are against Canada as

³⁸ Editorial, Jan. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-3.

³⁹ Editorial correspondence, Apr. 8, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

such, Quebec included. Thus Canadians must not be divided but must remain calm. The Schultz's, Mair's, Bown's, and Scott's had alienated the Métis. That was the source of the trouble. Ontario should have recognized that by spawning these people with their clamorous talk of predominance at Red River, it was itself responsible for the trouble.⁴⁰

On Wednesday, April 13, 1870, La Minerve became definitely pro-Métis as it sensed the gathering storm precipitated by the arrival in Ottawa of the Red River delegates. (Schultz and Dr. James Lynch were already in the capital). Several documents were published which, said La Minerve, revealed the wrongness of the anti-Riel position.

On y verra la part prise par les Américains, l'imprudence des journaux haut-canadiens, des fatales menées d'envoyés haut-canadiens, le défaut d'instinct de l'Hon. M. McDougall, les fausses et dangereuses prévisions du Col. Dennis, la manière inconcevable avec laquelle M. McDougall accuse le Gouverneur McTavish d'imbécillité.⁴¹

Three days later La Minerve remembered its conciliating and pacifying role. The day was Easter Saturday.

⁴⁰ Editorial correspondence, Apr. 8, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3. Ontario rapacity was the prime cause of Red River resistance. "L'action empressée de quelques-uns des ses habitants, leur zèle à considérer le territoire comme leur ont été la cause première de l'exaspération qui s'est emparée de la population." -- Same, col. 3.

⁴¹ Editorial note, Apr. 13, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

Si on désire l'apaisement du flot populaire si violemment soulevé par les derniers événements de la Rivière-Rouge, si on veut sincèrement la conciliation et l'établissement de l'ordre, qu'on adopte donc au moins en certains quartiers, une conduite plus raisonnée, plus conforme à des principes dont on se targue si fort, mais dont on fait⁴¹, alors même qu'on devrait y adhérer fermement.⁴²

But it was not easy to mollify antagonistic passions, and the strain resulting from the attempt was revealed in a lengthy editorial on April 18, 1870, which went thoroughly into the legal aspects of the arrest of the Red River delegates. La Minerve lamented and even became indignant over the rising tide of fanaticism, which would make all agreement impossible. Why, it asked, should Quebec be thus roused to reaction? Quebec had never justified this movement.

"Pourquoi nous mettre en cause et nous forcer, pour notre propre défense, à faire face à ce déchainement de passions qui s'adresse assez évidemment à une nationalité."⁴³ Nevertheless, for its part La Minerve would steer its way carefully between the irrational rage of the Toronto Globe and the wilful blindness to evil of the Nouveau Monde. A plague on both these! La Minerve would say what it believed to be right.⁴⁴

⁴² Editorial, Apr. 16, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

⁴³ Editorial, Apr. 18, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

⁴⁴ Editorial, Apr. 19, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

Whatever its principles, and perhaps because of them, La Minerve felt and resented the sting of the chronic Ontario charge of disloyalty. It marshalled much evidence in its editorial of April 20, 1870, to show the unquestionable loyalty of French Canadians. To have expressed some sympathy for the Métis was surely not disloyalty. Even the Government had acknowledged justified Métis grievances. Both in 1776 and in 1812 the Canadiens were loyal. Besides, the annexationists of 1849 were English.⁴⁵

After congratulating the Globe for returning to a state of relative calm, La Minerve noted on April 25, 1870, that the Northwest problem had been "une série d'errements", and thereupon it scattered some blame in all directions: the Hudson's Bay Company should have headed off dissatisfaction; the Canadian Government should have sent unprejudiced surveyors; the Métis should have registered their complaints long since; Bishop Taché's warning should have been listened to; disreputable characters were allowed to champion Canada; Ontario papers should not have created the impression that aliens would in future control Red River; Quebec papers ought not to have sought to justify the Rising; McDougall never should have issued "sa proclamation incendiaire"; Ontario papers ought not to have scorned the Provisional Government,

⁴⁵ Editorial, Apr. 20, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2.

for that provoked Scott's execution, nor should they have charged the Catholic clergy with responsibility and thereby "de nous forcer, pour notre propre défense, de prendre une position contraire"; Quebec papers should not have identified the Rising with the interests of Lower Canada; Scott's death should not have been made an engine of party warfare. La Minerve conceived its own function to be to defend the national honor, because the Rising "est un outrage direct fait au Canada". The Montreal organ would steer a middle-of-the-road course and, to be sure, defend the Ministry.⁴⁶ Some penalties would naturally have to be imposed, but "il nous paraît inutile et dangereux de vouloir punir en bloc." To deal with the Northwest in terms of section and race was all wrong. That was Ontario's manner of acting.⁴⁷

The beginnings of Quebec enthusiasm for emigration to Red River were appreciated by La Minerve on May 17, 1870. Manitoba would be swamped by non-French inhabitants otherwise, for Ontario had been making an energetic effort to recruit emigrants.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Editorial, Apr. 25, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2. "Nous ne pouvons supposer qu'une seule chose au ministère, l'intention d'être sincère dans ses négociations." -- Editorial, Apr. 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

⁴⁷ Editorial, Apr. 25, 1870, p. 2, col. 5.

⁴⁸ Editorial, May 17, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

Even after the passage of the Manitoba Act the Ontario press did not allow La Minerve to forget about the Rising. After a long silence it protested on June 24, 1870, against the rabid press of Ontario. The fact was that the Métis had been driven to resistance by the fanaticism of this press which had been giving them a wrong notion about Canada and which has made Bishop Taché's work all the more difficult.

La press fanatique du Haut-Canada a taillé une rude besogne à Msgr. Taché, car il était dur pour le sage prelat d'ôter de l'esprit des chefs, qui entendent encore les cris de la populace d'Ontario demander leur tête, que les promesses du Canada sont sincères.⁴⁹

Mature reflection in early July led La Minerve to some self-complacent observations about Canada's handling of the Red River Rising.

La révolte du Nord-Ouest est surtout le fruit d'un malentendu et se trouve en grand partie excusée par l'impossibilité où étaient les Métis de saisir du premier coup la portée de nos actes et d'apprécier nos motifs. Ce qu'ils ont demandé par la résistance ne sortait pas des conditions de notre programme primitif. Il a toujours été dans nos intentions de concéder au Nord-Ouest une constitution semblable à celle des autres provinces.⁵⁰

La Minerve is thus the French language counterpart of the Montreal Gazette with this variation: that to prove its loyalty to the Government it had to overcome greater obstacles than the English language publication.

⁴⁹ Editorial, June 24, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

⁵⁰ Editorial, July 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 5.

Of the newspapers in opposition to the Government the Toronto Globe seems to have been the most vehement. Its Editor, George Brown, had entered a coalition ministry with his arch-political foe, John A. Macdonald, in order to secure Confederation. He did so on condition that the Northwest Territory should be secured for Canada as soon as possible afterwards, for the Globe had long campaigned for the acquisition of that area to keep Canadians from emigrating to the United States and to direct them westwards. Still out of office Brown and the Ontario Clear Grits were forced to witness the Conservative Ministry sponsor the project they themselves had so long championed. As an opposition paper the Globe was required to criticize the Government at every turn, but in regard to the Red River Rising it could not support the native Métis, for these apparently wished to prevent Canada from acquiring their homeland and, besides, they were largely French and Catholic. Thus the Toronto Opposition organ veered from one to the other, but almost always with much journalistic violence and bombast.

At the very outset the reaction of the Globe was an attitude of lofty pity for the handful of half-breeds who were so naive as to think that by forbidding McDougall entry, the matter would be settled. How foolish of them to have thought they would be deprived of their lands! How foolish not to have recognized the French Canadian Provencher as a

personal guarantee that many more French Canadians would soon be in Red River. The editorial ended with threats that the new economic invaders would certainly take control anyway, no matter what the Métis did.

...it is altogether too much of a joke to think of a handful of people barring the way to the onward progress of British institutions and British people, on the pretense that the whole wide continent is theirs, and that they mean to treat it as such.⁵¹

This was accompanied by scorn in the same issue.

...the 'insurgents' have, it is said, in true French fashion organized a Provisional Government, and for the moment, probably, really believe they are not so ridiculous as the rest of the world will declare them to be.⁵²

An editorial of November 30, 1869, stated that the Catholic clergy were supporting the Métis. However, the same editorial presented the best view to that date in regard to the Métis. It was admitted that the French Half-breeds were seeking the support of others in governing the territory, and, moreover, wanted nothing to do with either Fenianism or annexation to the United States, and were altogether loyal to the Queen. Nay, more, the Métis were even praised in these words

We have not the least doubt that, when the causes of dissatisfaction which at present exist are, happily

⁵¹ Editorial, Globe, Toronto, Nov. 17, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

⁵² News item, p. 1, col. 3.

removed, they [Métis] will be loyal supporters of Canadian authority, and admirably qualified to act as frontier police.⁵³

A shift in editorial policy is noticeable in the issue of December 9, 1869, at which time anti-French bias crept in. Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot, Pastor of Saint-Norbert south of Fort Garry, was said to be the moving force behind the insurrection. Moreover, Bishop Taché of Saint-Boniface (then in Rome) was also thought to have encouraged it; at least some of his subordinates had apparently misconstrued his attitude following the snub by Sir Georges Cartier, Minister of Militia.⁵⁴

There seems to have been some idea on the part of the French, that they were about to be overrun by Protestants from Canada; but it is only charitable to believe that few of them could have conceived the idea that they could withhold from settlement the fourth part of a continent, in order to keep them from the contamination of Protestantism.

The French race on this continent is wonderfully exclusive in its ideas; but this is a touch beyond what even a Lower Canadian Frenchman ever conceived.⁵⁵

The pendulum of criticism swung back on December 31, 1869, to the Government. They should not have ignored the people of Red River in the choice of Governor and Council.

The surveying party, which preceded the Governor and began work, was exclusively composed of Canadians; and evidently it appeared to the people of the Territory that every good thing in the gift of the new Government was to be absorbed by strangers, and that those who had penetrated far from civilization, and

⁵³ Editorial, Nov. 30, 1869, p. 2, col. 2.

⁵⁴ See above, p. 11.

⁵⁵ Editorial, Dec. 9, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

lived for forty or fifty years in the hope of attaining the blessings of self-government, were about to be placed under the control of a set of foreign officials, as grasping as those of the Hudson's Bay Company. Let our readers in Ontario put themselves in the place of the people of Selkirk, and say whether they also would not have felt indignant when so treated.⁵⁶

The first indication of Globe awareness of possible Quebec-Ontario friction resulting from the trouble at Red River appeared in an editorial of January 12, 1870. "The question we are to bear in mind, is[.] about the future of Ontario and Quebec, and the whole of these Confederate Provinces."⁵⁷ A certain impetus was given to the trend toward friction on January 14, 1870. The Globe reacted sensitively to the criticism in Quebec of Canada's mistakes in dealing with the transfer of Red River. Certain letters appearing in Quebec papers favorable to the Insurgents' cause roused its ire.

We are besides gravely told [by said letters] that documentary evidence is forthcoming to show that the Canadian newcomers had formed a plot to sweep the French population of Red River from the face of the earth, and divide their lands among themselves; and professedly respectable Lower Canadian Journals give currency to such idiotic talk without even the gentlest protest against its folly, or the slightest doubt of its having even a shadow of foundation.⁵⁸

The blustering war spirit reappeared two weeks later after the arrival of a copy of the Red River paper, New

56 Editorial, Dec. 31, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

57 Editorial, Jan. 12, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

58 Editorial, Jan. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

Nation: "...she [Canada] will not permit a handful of armed traitors to tyrannize over their unarmed brethren. Neither Riel or Canada must go down."⁵⁹ Race conflict was promoted a few days later: "...Riel has been appointed President under a threat from the French of civil war if the office were refused him."⁶⁰ Such a statement did not come from the news dispatches of the day or previous days. It was pure surmise by the Globe editor. The anti-French tone increased in an editorial of March 11, 1870. Sarcastically it asserted:

These French insurgents, it would appear, were the most lamb-like personages one could think of; and, if forced to kill some people, would simply have to be pitied and sympathized with."⁶¹

On March 14, 1870, the Globe published a letter from Red River from one of the Ontario carpet-baggers who had gone there. That it is anti-French and greatly biased in favor of Canada goes without saying. But the Globe prefaced it with the remark that it gave the "loyal view" of the situation, i.e., it vilified the Hudson's Bay Company, the Catholic clergy, Riel, and the French Métis, and justified the activities of the pro-Canada party.⁶² The mounting antipathy of

59 Editorial, Jan. 27, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

60 Editorial, Mar. 1, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

61 Editorial, Mar. 11, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

62 Correspondence, Mar. 14, 1870, p. 3, col. 1-2. Possibly this was the confidential report to McDougall at Pembina sent by James Wallace, published unbeknown to the latter and about which Wallace protested bitterly to Macdonald. -- Cf. Macdonald Papers, "General Letters, 1869-1870", p.387, 392-394.



the Globe for the Provisional Government became evident in the issue of March 19, 1870. Instead of yielding a meed of praise to Riel for having the mercy to rescind a court-martial sentence of death on Charles Boulton for having led the Portage filibuster, it extolled Boulton for having the "moderation" not to go through with his intended bloodshed. The sentence of death pronounced on him the Globe spoke of as "murder" and "assassination".⁶³

A note of race hatred crept into the editorial of March 31, 1870, i.e., shortly after news of the execution of Thomas Scott had reached the East: "Our countrymen are imprisoned and placed in irons, their rights are denied, their nationality insulted..."⁶⁴ Punishment was demanded for the death of Scott, and the editorials beat the war drums constantly for this goal. The Globe of April 4, 1870, did not consider the reaction of Quebec in its cry for Riel's scalp, nor did it seem aware of possible Quebec-Ontario friction because of its desire for vengeance.⁶⁵ The Globe would not admit, of course, that it has been guilty of any fanaticism in its antipathy to Riel and the Provisional Government at Red River. It was just unfortunate for the French if they

⁶³ News item, Mar. 19, 1870, p. 1, col. 4.

⁶⁴ Editorial, Mar. 31, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

⁶⁵ Editorial, Apr. 4, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

should be outnumbered there. "The fanatics are the French Canadians, who are striving to obtain for themselves peculiar and exclusive advantages."⁶⁶ By April 16, 1870, however, the Toronto Opposition paper came to realize somewhat the reaction which its vengeance-on-Riel policy was causing in Quebec. Still it protested its innocence of any intent to arouse ill will between the provinces. "The idea of anything like unfair treatment to the French half-breeds is a phantom of Quebec's own imagination."⁶⁷

Most of the slurs of Globe editorial policy are included in the dispatches of the correspondent it sent to Red River near the end of May, 1870. This news-gatherer ("W.H.W.") secured a limitless amount of accurate (?) information even before leaving American territory in Minnesota. His dutiful contribution to friction with Quebec is his dispatch of May 10, 1870, from Georgetown, Minnesota.

The priesthood will make a vigorous effort to retain supremacy at all hazards, and it appears that nothing except an overpowering influx of truly British immigrants can save the settlement from becoming just another hot-bed of Jesuitism and treason as is to be found in the Province of Quebec.⁶⁸

The kettle of Ontario-Quebec friction was kept boiling by the Globe in the issue of July 1, 1870. One of the Canadian

66 Editorial, Apr. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

67 Editorial, Apr. 16, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

68 Press dispatch, May 20, 1870, p. 2, col. 6.

malcontents at Red River had written a letter which the Queen City paper quoted approvingly and gave editorial attention to.

Let the Globe, and every paper that desires the prosperity of the North West, urge emigration as our only hope. Let the Protestants of Ontario rush to our rescue. Now is the time to deal a death blow to the faction which has brought so much evil in the Province of Manitoba.⁶⁹

By mid-July Globe editorial frenzy had subsided a good deal, and the paper remembered that it also had the duty to criticize the Government in office. It then indulged in self-congratulation to the effect that it had been right all along and the Conservative Ministry had bungled everything. Moreover, it was hopeful that the new province would soon be flooded with Ontario immigrants.

...the time when the word of Ritchot, etc., shall be of any importance in the management even of that Province. It is nearly over, and if the people now or soon to be in the territory are true to themselves -- over never to return.⁷⁰

Five days later following a Toronto indignation meeting anti-Catholic and anti-French in tone, the Opposition paper soberly recalled its readers to what it regarded as the root cause of all the trouble: the Conservative Ministry. The issue was not Protestantism versus Catholicism, nor Ontario versus Quebec, nor did it help any to rail against Georges Cartier

⁶⁹ Quoted in editorial, July 1, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

⁷⁰ Editorial, July 20, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

and Hector Langevin. The real rascals were the Ontario members of the Ministry whom the people of Ontario themselves elected. These should be turned out of office by the power of the vote.⁷¹ It is refreshing, whatever the Globe's motives to read such statements as these: "The time has gone by for the man of Ontario to cry out about French domination and Popish intrigue..." and "It is not true[...]~~that~~ the Manitoba Bill was a French and a Roman Catholic job."⁷² Thus what the Globe was telling its readers at the end of the Rising was that since they had not put the Clear Grits in power, the Red River Rising had occurred, and that the method of avoiding such happenings in future was to turn the Conservatives out.

The Montreal Herald was an English language opposition paper. However its opposition was of a different nature than that of the Toronto Globe. It did not have nearly the interest in the Red River Rising that the Queen City organ had, and it devoted relatively little attention to it. The Hudson's Bay Company was never genuinely enthusiastic about relinquishing its control over the Northwest Territory, and the Montreal Herald had a definitely pro-Hudson's Bay Company inclination. Throughout the Rising the activities of the Company were ably defended in its columns. Joseph James Hargrave, Governor

71 Editorial, July 25, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3.

72 Same, col. 2.

MacTavish's Secretary at Fort Garry, kept it informed throughout the Rising with, of course, the Hudson's Bay Company viewpoint.

Until January 11, 1870, the Herald cannot be said to have had a definitive attitude in regard to the Rising. It delighted in the discomfiture of Governor-apparent McDougall, but contented itself with what amounted to indifference. On the above date, however, it heard of the requisitioning of funds by the Provisional Government from the Hudson's Bay Company. The Herald then took a serious, and even firm, view.

This then is more than a crime; it is a blunder, and one that must naturally alienate any sort of sympathy which might have been felt for people who had not been treated with much regard to etiquette, and whose mode of resenting the treatment they had met with was rather more amusing than dangerous...This passing the line which separates fun from felony, is, however, a very awkward element in the situation...this new step of the insurgents greatly complicates the situation, and does so in a manner which is extremely dangerous for themselves.⁷³

On March 9, 1870, the Herald gave serious editorial notice again to the Rising at Red River. It was summary in form, and assailed McDougall again for "the bellicose character of all his documents" which had inspired the latest debacle, the quashing of the Portage filibuster against the Provisional Government. Some credit was given the French Métis for the moderation shown so far.⁷⁴

⁷³ Editorial, Herald, Montreal, Jan. 11, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

⁷⁴ Editorial, Mar. 9, 1870, p. 1, col. 5-6.

The Herald did not seem to regret the discomfiture of the Toronto Globe over the latter's deferred hope of Ontario exploitation of the economic possibilities of Red River.

The Upper Canadians are apparently disappointed at finding that in the Red River settlement they are going to have a second Lower Canada, and that in their greed for territory they have contrived to perpetuate a state of things against which they have long been protesting. Hence they are urging upon the Government all sorts of violent measures under the idea that they may thus put down an influence which suddenly stared them in the face where they least expected to see it[...]. The Globe leads the cry...⁷⁵

The same editorial urged calmness. Violent, lawless measures in dealing with Riel were deprecated. The only manifest desideratum was that Riel be hanged, but in a legal and judicial manner. All other elements were merely parts of a huge muddle. The peaceable inhabitants of Red River must not be forgotten. Greedy Upper Canadians must not be listened to in their desire for violent deeds. Cartier was smarting under the assumption that he and French Canadians in general must necessarily be pro-Riel, and the Minister of Militia cannot forget that he himself was once a revolutionary. However ready to disapprove of Riel's doings, French Canadians were holding back from the vindictive violence advocated by Ontarians. On top of the seething cauldron was sitting Sir John Macdonald trying to refrain from measures antithetical

⁷⁵ Editorial, Apr. 11, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

to Conservative policy. The ministerial newspapers were also deserving of criticism for their lack of a consistent stand as regards Riel. Despite protestations of opposition to lawlessness they were recommending a reward for Riel, dead or alive, and they were urging "Toronto rowdies" to lynch the delegates of the Provisional Government.⁷⁶

Toward the middle of May, 1870, the Herald began some political reflections on the Rising most unfavorable to the Conservative Government.

...we cannot really defend the position which had been held by those who have in this business represented the interests of Canada. We have never, ourselves, been disposed to make a mere party matter of the affair; for, even if we had been inclined to do so, both the organized political parties were too much in accord on this subject to enable any one to produce party material out of it. The worst of the thing for the Canadian Government is, that it has never known its own mind, or, if it has, has so departed from its original ideas as to have utterly falsified itself.⁷⁷

The Herald had been opposed to the annexation to Canada of Red River Country to begin with.

We have simply been taking other people's chestnuts out of the fire at the cost of our own fingers; and if these members do not get even worse burned than they have been at present, we shall be exceedingly fortunate.⁷⁸

By July 20, 1870, of course, the Herald had become reconciled to the impossibility of avoiding the annexation of Red River.

76 Same.

77 Editorial, May 21, 1870, p. 1, col. 3.

78 Editorial, June 13, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

Bunglers, heedless of the national welfare, have already effected that. Satirically, in the fashion of the Globe, it spoke of Riel and Bishop Taché having coerced the Dominion to do their will. Nevertheless, the Herald took delight in the fact that Brown and his followers did not get Red River on their own terms.⁷⁹ Later it opined that it was ignorance and stupidity that had caused the Government to mismanage the transfer of Red River from start to finish rather than malice and treachery. Riel had achieved his aims by threatening and bluffing, just as Macdonald was doing in keeping Ontario Conservatives obedient to him.⁸⁰

Even though it felt obliged to engage in Government-baiting, the Montreal Herald would not stand side by side with the Toronto Globe as an opposition paper. Likewise it was alternately favorable and unfavorable to the French Métis according as Hudson's Bay Company interests were preserved or injured. Indeed the Company itself was its one abiding loyalty.

General Reaction of Commons

Ministerial policy and popular sentiment meet on the floor of Parliament. It is necessary, then, to learn the

79 Editorial, July 20, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2.

80 Editorial, Aug. 31, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3.

reaction of Ontario and Quebec to the Red River Rising as manifested by the people's representatives and lawmakers.

The second session of the First Parliament of the Dominion ended on June 22, 1869. Commons did not meet again until February 15, 1870, when it began its Third Session. The general attitude of Commons can be learned from the amount and kind of interest which it revealed in the Red River Rising. Alexander Mackenzie (Lambton, Ontario) referred to the contradictory reports he had heard about the conduct of the Government surveyors at Red River on February 23, 1870.⁸¹ Commons did not express more concern about the Northwest until March 14, 1870. On that day Joseph Dufresne (Montcalm, Quebec) inquired about the nature of the Red River trouble and whether any blood had been shed or life lost. Cartier replied for the Government that no blood had been shed nor life lost so far as the Ministry knew. Information regarding McDougall's expenses he was presenting that very day.⁸² Ten days later on March 24 J. Brousseau (Portneuf, Quebec) moved for 2000 copies, and 1000 in French of the Northwest correspondence. This would seem to indicate mounting interest in the subject. But B. Chamberlin (Missisquoi, Quebec) was sure the amount requested was twice too much. The matter was then

⁸¹ Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 189.

⁸² Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 391-392.

turned over to the Joint Committee on Printing upon the suggestion of Mackenzie.⁸³ Thus, prior to the execution of Scott, House interest in the Northwest was very small indeed.

After the death of Scott, Alexander Tilloch Galt (Sherbrooke, Quebec), left no doubt about his general attitude: "...as these individuals [leaders of the Provisional Government] have appealed to force, my conviction is that force must be resorted to." He further thought that Scott had been executed "without any provocation".⁸⁴

Before adjourning on April 19, 1870, Prime Minister Macdonald had to parry a good deal of impetuous bluster of a vague and nebulous nature from the irascible Opposition Leader, Alexander Mackenzie. The latter had no certain facts at his command, but his general attitude was formed nevertheless: he was against Riel and the Métis.⁸⁵

David Mills (Bothwell, Ontario) assaulted the Government on April 25, 1870, maintaining that they had not dealt with the Northwest in the same liberal manner as when it was question of admitting other provinces. The people of Red River had not been given any security, nor any assurance of equal footing in the future with the other provinces. "In

83 Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 700.

84 Same, p. 903.

85 Same, p. 1088-1089.

the case of these people the spirit of the Union Act had not been carried out."⁸⁶ He thought the inhabitants of Red River should have some self-governing powers. Here we have not great sympathy for the Métis of Red River but the Opposition seizing upon a present issue in order to embarrass the Government.

Lengthy debate on May 9, 1870, on the Manitoba Bill lasted until 3:00 a.m. the following morning. Much of it was but a re-statement of what had been covered before. In defending the Ministry's handling of the Red River Rising Francis Hincks ably stated their position. "The Government had to do two things, either they had to send an army to conquer those people and force them to submit, or to consider their claims as put forward by the delegates."⁸⁷ No matter which alternative the Government adopted it would be flailed by the Opposition. In the same debate Cartier objected to constant reference to the Métis as "rebels", since they had not rebelled against the authority of the Queen but had resisted Canada only, which had no authority at Red River.⁸⁸

On February 27, 1871, while the Government were being criticized for their Chaplaincy policy for the Red River Expedition Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces,

⁸⁶ Same, p. 1178.

⁸⁷ Same, p. 1190.

⁸⁸ Same, p. 1199.

rose to make the record clear regarding the general attitude of constant tolerance of all members of the Ministry for all religious bodies.

He [Howe] had sat for two years at the Government Council table, and had never seen a minister, mean, prejudicial and foolish enough to propose the decision of any question upon the ground of religious preferences. He proceeded to ridicule the idea of Roman Catholic domination, in face of the fact that only three of the thirteen ministers were of that faith. Ten Protestants ruled or led by so small a minority!⁸⁹

Such on the floor of Commons was the Ministry's defense of its general attitude throughout the period of the Rising.

The Person of Louis Riel

Over and above the general attitude adopted in the East toward the Red River Rising there were certain focal issues in particular around which interest centered, interest that was productive of friction because opinions differed sharply. The first of these to be examined is the person of Louis Riel himself. Without desiring it personally he became a symbol, for some of what was to be destroyed and for others of what was to be supported. He was a rock on which men of differing races, cultures, and religions split. Because of the heat of the controversy facts were often lost sight of giving way to rumors and vague impressions and surmises.

⁸⁹ Parl. Debates, 4th Sess., Vol. 2, 1871, p. 171-172.

Without being mentioned by name Riel is referred to without praise by the Toronto Globe on November 13, 1869, as "leader of the gang" and who was brought before the magistrate at Red River. He could not be reasoned with in regard to the stopping of the surveying party.⁹⁰ La Minerve's first reaction is on the favorable side. "Ils auraient de plus pour chef un jeune homme de grande habilité, M. Louis Riel..." "...il est même éloquent dans ses discours et joint à cela une caractère excentrique..."⁹¹ On the same day as this appeared Macdonald was writing to McDougall on the proper way to handle Riel.

This man Riel who appears to be the moving spirit, is a clever fellow and you should endeavour to retain him as an officer in your future police. If you do this promptly it will be a most convincing proof that you are not going to leave the half-breeds out of the Law.⁹²

A highly favorable biographical sketch was reprinted in the Globe from the Saint Paul Dispatch. The Toronto paper did not endorse the account, but at all events it did print it, and so did not show antipathy for Riel at the time.⁹³

In January, 1870, Charles Tupper, who had conferred with him at Red River, described the Métis leader as "very

90 P. 3, col. 2.

91 News item, Nov. 23, 1869, p. 2, col. 5.

92 Macdonald to McDougall, Nov. 23, 1869, Pope, Memoirs, p. 408. (Underlining in original).

93 Dec. 1, 1869, p. 3, col. 3-4.

shrewd, intelligent, and determined man."⁹⁴ At about the same time Stuart Mulkins, one of Riel's prisoners, described him as intelligent, but changeable.⁹⁵ By early February, 1870, the Globe was making dark insinuations of priestly influence goading Riel on. "He [Riel] and his associates have [..]been but the tools in the hands of some who keep themselves studiously in the background..."⁹⁶ Unmistakeable Globe antipathy to Riel is manifest in the issue of February 14, 1870; it is expressed again on February 22 of the same year. What right had Riel to hold any Canadian in custody? Why had Donald Smith dealt with such a person? The diatribe continued in the following day's editorial wherein Riel was characterized as the "great potentate of the North".⁹⁷ Still the wrath mounted. Hearing that Bannatyne, Cowan, and MacTavish had been imprisoned, the Globe railed against Riel thus: "...the whole thing looks like the mere waywardness of a passionate and weak-minded upstart 'clothed with a little brief authority'".⁹⁸ On March 1, 1870, Riel was styled "the

⁹⁴ Press dispatch, Globe, Toronto, Jan. 15, 1870, p. 1, col. 6.

⁹⁵ Gazette, Montreal, Jan. 31, 1870, p. 1, col. 6.

⁹⁶ Editorial, Globe, Toronto, Feb. 2, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

⁹⁷ News item, Feb. 14, 1870, p. 1, col. 4; news item, Feb. 22, 1870, p. 1, col. 5; editorial, Feb. 23, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

⁹⁸ Editorial, Feb. 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

self-chosen dictator of the rebels"; and rhetorically Sir John Macdonald was asked if he were anxious "to hail Riel as the Emperor of the Nor'West?"⁹⁹

The Toronto Globe to the contrary the Prime Minister was distrustful of Riel and exasperated with him even at this period. "If we once get him [Riel] here [Ottawa], as you must know pretty well by this time, he is a gone coon."¹⁰⁰ This remark also reveals something of the spirit with which the first Minister would deal with the people of Red River.

The Montreal Herald reproached Riel for what it called "brutal" treatment of prisoners.¹⁰¹ In this matter it found itself in company with the Toronto Globe, whose anti-Riel tirade continued.

...the vagaries of that person [Riel] in respect to those unfortunate men [Canadian prisoners at Fort Garry], as well as other incidents in connection with which his name appears, show his character in anything but a favourable light, and confirm the impression that an unscrupulous readiness to resort to force is the only ground of his supremacy in Winnipeg.¹⁰²

In the white heat of its editorial anger over the death of Thomas Scott the Toronto Globe thus characterized the President of the Provisional Government.

99 Editorial, Globe, Toronto, p. 2, col. 3.

100 Macdonald to Rose, Feb. 23, 1870, Pope, Correspondence, p. 128.

101 Editorial, March 7, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

102 News item, Mar. 12, 1870, p. 1, col. 5.

Riel's power and purpose have been underestimated. He and his immediate supporters have deeper designs than the uneducated French are aware of, and the Hudson's Bay Company and the clergy together, in playing the part of Frankenstein, have let loose a monster whose craft, condition and ferocity are greater than any one supposed. His audacity and unscrupulous character, which is exemplified in his utter disregard for the rights and even lives of those who oppose his wishes, has enabled him to reduce the people of the North-West to an abject and pitiable condition.¹⁰³

Riel, emboldened by his success in intimidating the Government at Ottawa, grows bolder and bolder till he caps his infamous career by the murder of a British subject in front of Fort Garry under circumstances the most revolting. What further outrages he may commit before he is brought to justice, it is impossible to say.¹⁰⁴

The Montreal Gazette also became furious with Riel for the Scott execution. Editorial policy hardened in the anti-Riel mold in the issue of April 8, 1870. Riel was pilloried as a coward who braced himself to have Scott shot for personal insult but who then recoiled from the consequences of his act. He had also cowed the Convention with threats.¹⁰⁵

The Montreal Herald remained relatively calm. It contented itself in Riel's regard with urging his hanging, but legally and judicially.¹⁰⁶

103 Editorial, Apr. 4, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

104 Same, p. 2, col. 2.

105 Editorial, Apr. 8, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

106 Editorial, Apr. 11, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

Somewhat conscious of the effect on Quebec of its vengeance-on-Riel policy the Globe thus delivered itself on April 16, 1870.

For Riel we have, of course, no sympathy, and we charge the Lower Canadian press with creating discord, retarding peace, and distorting the true view of the question by attempting to shield him and draw indignation upon his accusers.¹⁰⁷

In the House of Commons Joseph Rymal (Wentworth, R.R., Ontario) asked the Government if any steps had been taken to arrest Riel. Macdonald faced the issue squarely and answered that power to do so resided with the Imperial Government only. Canada could not have any ex post facto jurisdiction in Manitoba.¹⁰⁸

On July 16, 1870, the Toronto Globe returned to its charge that Riel was but a tool of Bishop Taché.¹⁰⁹ However, it balanced this three days later by reprinting a favorable sketch of the Métis chief from the New York Herald.¹¹⁰

The Montreal Gazette regained some of its balance with regard to the person of Riel when it published the following from its correspondent who arrived in Winnipeg within a week after Wolesley's troops:

¹⁰⁷ Editorial, April 16, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., May 2, 1870, Vol. 1, 1870, p. 1320.

¹⁰⁹ Correspondence, p. 3, col. 2.

¹¹⁰ Globe, Toronto, July 19, 1870, p. 2, col. 4-5.

...they [English speaking Red River inhabitants] maintain that but for Riel's command over his men, but for his strong personal influence and predilection for Canada and her institutions, the loss of life would, in all probability, have reached hundreds, massacre and assassination would have done their bloody work, the Canadian expedition would certainly never have reached Fort Garry this year -- and the second Lieutenant-Governor and his men would have fared very little better than the first in their attempt to enter the country.¹¹¹

The Role of the Clergy

Besides Louis Riel himself Ontario-Quebec friction centered around the Catholic clergy of Red River assailed by Ontario and defended by Quebec. The assault began with William McDougall himself in his first report to Prime Minister Macdonald. He was satisfied that the Catholic priesthood was in league with the insurgents.

The worst feature in the case is the apparent complicity of the Priests. It appears certain that at least one of them has openly preached sedition to his flock and has furnished aid and comfort to the parties in arms[.]the R.C. Priesthood here cannot be relied upon to support the authority of the new Government.¹¹²

At the time of composing this first report McDougall's source of information from Red River seems to have been Colonel John Stoughton Dennis. This notion is reiterated shortly afterwards.

¹¹¹ Press dispatch, Sept. 16, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

¹¹² McDougall to Macdonald, Oct. 31, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 98-99.

The situation is grave and demands prompt and vigorous action. There are two influences at the bottom of this movement which cannot be put down with soft words -- The Priests and the Yankees. The other inciting causes are easily removed.¹¹³

Macdonald apparently accepted McDougall's estimate of the Red River clergy for he replied to the frustrated Governor that his fellow ministers from Quebec: Langevin, Cartier, and Chapais, were chagrined by the alleged action of the Red River priests.

Our Lower Canadian colleagues are intensely disgusted at the action of the French priests as described by you. I hope you will allow no impatience at their factious and irrational conduct to induce you to hold out any but conciliatory language to them. After you are fairly in the saddle, if they attempt to obstruct your administration, you can act summarily with them.¹¹⁴

Here we see the Prime Minister's lack of sympathy for the pastors of the French Métis; also his practice of courteous words until he is able to employ the mailed fist.

The Governor-designate went so far as to contact John Rose in London to have the Times there publish a ghost-written letter signed by him assailing Jesuits and priests.¹¹⁵ On his humiliating return journey through Saint Paul, Minnesota, McDougall's ire was again directed against the

¹¹³ Same to same, Nov. 8, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 124.

¹¹⁴ Macdonald to McDougall, Nov. 20, 1869, Pope, Memoirs, p. 408.

¹¹⁵ Rose to Macdonald, Dec. 18, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 288.

Catholic clergy.

The Catholic priests used all their influence against him and more than all else gave a practical turn to the religion [...] the priesthood of the Territory were fearful that the change of Government would be disastrous to their spiritual power.¹¹⁶

The first Press mention of clerical influence behind the Métis insurgents appeared in the Toronto Globe of Thursday, November 25, 1869.¹¹⁷ Four days later in a brief editorial the Montreal Gazette chastised the Church for alleged clergy encouragement to "rebellion" against "lawfully constituted authority".¹¹⁸ This was based on correspondence from Pembina, dated November 14, 1869, and printed in the same issue. At the beginning of 1870 it seemed to have been established Globe editorial policy that priests at Red River had been largely responsible for the insurrection. McDougall was, of course, not silent on this subject upon his return to Canada. At first "designing men" are spoken of.¹¹⁹ Then "Catholic priests" are openly mentioned as the real fomenters of trouble, along with disappointed local Hudson's Bay Company officials.

¹¹⁶ Dwight to Macdonald, Dec. 31, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 358-359.

¹¹⁷ News item, p. 1, col. 4.

¹¹⁸ Editorial, Nov. 29, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

¹¹⁹ News item, Jan. 1, 1870, p. 1, col. 3; editorial, p. 2, col. 5 of same issue.

There is no doubt that two or three Catholic priests have showed themselves particularly active in this work [spreading anti-Canadian rumors], and have wrought upon the ignorance and fears of the French speaking portion of the people to such an extent as to lead them to active resistance.¹²⁰

From Saint Paul the Globe was supplied with an important detail of the Scott execution: "...Riel had him [Scott] shot because he was an Orangeman and obnoxious to the priesthood[.]the priests favoured his execution."¹²¹ This was the first mention in the Globe of Scott's having been an Orangeman. It was precisely the correct note to strike, however, for a crescendo of Ontario fury against Quebec and the Church. It was soon repeated in a Globe editorial.¹²² On April 6, 1870, the Queen City organ charged that the Catholic clergy had not wanted the opening of Rupert's Land "for settlement". (This latter is the Globe's felicitous phrase for economic exploitation by Ontario carpet-baggers.) Bishop Taché conveyed this notion to the first road-building engineer, S. J. Dawson. He reiterated it to Cartier, but the latter was firm in maintaining it as Government policy. Father Ritchot was prominent in the first manifestations of resistance to McDougall. Bishop Taché's administrator, Father Lestanc, declared that the country

120 Editorial, Globe, Toronto, Jan. 4, 1870, p. 2, col.1.

121 Press dispatch, Mar. 31, 1870, p.1, col. 7.

122 Issue of Apr. 1, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

belonged to French Canadians and should be retained by them.

In all this it is impossible to avoid seeing a determination on the part of the French Catholic clergy in the North West Territory to resist the entrance of British Canadians.¹²³

Three days later the Globe narrowed its assault to Father Ritchot by endeavoring to connect him with the Scott execution.

Pere Ritchot has been from the very outset a frantic instigator of the deeds of violence committed by the French party under Riel [...] he has resisted pacific counsels [...] having regard to his relations to Riel he was guilty as an accessory to Scott's murder, inasmuch as he did not use his influence to prevent it, when he might and ought to have done so.¹²⁴

To this charge the Montreal La Minerve replied nine days later that Ontario fanatics were endeavoring to make Father Ritchot responsible for a crime of which he had no knowledge, since he was at his rectory eight or ten miles away at the time. "Les journaux du Haut-Canada commencement par dire qu'il assistait au spectacle, et finissent par l'appeler une canaille."¹²⁵

The Globe continued to level other charges against Father Ritchot; that the barrier to McDougall was due to his influence; that he had denounced from the altar those who would not rebel. Besides, many Métis soldiers had gone to

123 Editorial, Apr. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

124 News item, Apr. 9, 1870, p. 1, col. 5.

125 Editorial, Apr. 18, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

Fort Garry because of fear of excommunication for refusing.¹²⁶

The Montreal Herald was repelled by the Taché-Riel negotiations on the former's return to Red River. It was a mistake, it held, to have the Bishop represent the Canadian Government. He was too condescending towards Scott's executioner. If he was not in a position to cow Riel, then he should not have been sent out. The people of Red River were still deserving of justice, but only if their hands should be free of blood. This disapproval of the conduct of Bishop Taché put the Herald in agreement with Upper Canadians.¹²⁷

La Minerve responded the very next day by defending the Church from the mounting charges of complicity even against Bishop Taché, who was in Rome during the start of the Rising. The French language Governmental organ was not sure of all Father Ritchot's activities, but whatever he may have done in the Rising was done as a private individual.

Monseigneur Taché en laissant le territoire pour Rome avait laissé l'ordre de bien recevoir l'honorable M. McDougall. Si M. Ritchot a cru nécessaire d'intervenir pour contrôler le mouvement et empêcher des massacres, et si le Haut-Canada persiste à interpréter sa conduite d'une manière aussi défavorable, il peut du moins tenir pour certain que ce monsieur n'a jamais agi pour d'autres que pour lui seul.¹²⁸

126 News interview, Apr. 12, 1870, p. 2, col. 5.

127 Editorial, Apr. 13, 1870, p. 1, col. 6

128 Correspondence, Apr. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

On the day following the Globe of Toronto became firmly convinced that Riel was but a "front" man for others who were remaining in the background. Who was the chief behind-the-scenes manager of the Rising at Red River? None other than Bishop Taché, the Globe was certain.¹²⁹ La Minerve then recalled some fact: the outbreak occurred while the Saint Boniface bishop was in Rome; if he had wanted it to continue, he would not have crossed an ocean and half a continent at such a season in order to stop it. Pere Lestanc, it is true, would do nothing to support those who would deprive the Métis of their rights; but this was not reprehensible. Even granted that Father Ritchot was active with the insurgents, assuredly the entire Catholic clergy would not stand condemned on that account. If Ontario newspapers knew some Catholic doctrine, they would realize that the Church does not sanction revolt. Moreover, if they knew some history they would recall that the Church has always upheld the unpopular position of calming turbulent passions in time of upheaval. Riel was responsible for Scott's death. It was an established fact that the clergy tried to prevent it.¹³⁰ Still the Globe hammered back that Bishop Taché was playing a masterly political game which had for ultimate

129 Editorial, Apr. 15, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

130 Editorial, Apr. 22, 1870, p. 2, col. 3-5.

purpose the gaining of a privileged position for the Catholic Church in the future province. "The insurrection was a move in the political game of chess which the clergy of Red River have played with the Government of Canada..."¹³¹

When the proposed Manitoba Bill was brought into Commons on May 2, 1870, William McDougall, still representing North Lanark and then in uneasy alliance with the Clear Grits, returned to his charge of the previous Fall in Minnesota that the Catholic priesthood had fomented the "rebellion" in the first place. To this charge the French members immediately chorused a denial. Still McDougall persisted that the Catholic clergy wanted certain advantages for themselves, their Church or their people.¹³² Stung by these charges L.F.R. Masson (Terrebonne, Quebec) replied that the frustrated Governor's attack was proof positive that no worse selection could have been made for Lieutenant Governor of the Northwest. It was obvious to all that the outstanding Catholic clergyman of the area, Bishop Taché, was the one individual most responsible for the pacification of Red River and for the honoring of the British flag there.¹³³ Not to be silenced, McDougall renewed his attack on Bishop Taché in an orgy of

¹³¹ Editorial, Apr. 23, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

¹³² Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 1302.

¹³³ Same, p. 1312-1313.

self-exculpation and simultaneous forgetfulness of the issue before the House. He stated that if the Bishop had exerted himself sufficiently upon returning to Red River Riel's forces would have melted away. P.J.O. Chauveau (Quebec County, Quebec) thereupon charged him to give proof of his assertions.¹³⁴

During the discussion of May 4, 1870, on the Manitoba Bill Prime Minister Macdonald defended Bishop Tache' from the insinuation that the Church sought special grants of land in the new province.

Bishop Tache' had never said anything about it, and no attempt had ever been made to force an advantage from the Government for the benefit of the Roman Catholic Church.¹³⁵

This testimony from the head of the Government did not put a stop to criticism of the role of the clergy in the Rising, however. On May 7, 1870, R. A. Harrison (Toronto W., Ontario) declared that the death of Scott "was a disgrace to humanity"; the "Roman Catholic priests and Fenians" were not without blame; and, moreover, Father J. B. Thibault was a spreader of dissension.¹³⁶

In mid-Summer, 1870, the Montreal Herald took delight in the fact that Brown and the Liberals did not get Red River

¹³⁴ Same, p. 1317.

¹³⁵ Same, p. 1356.

¹³⁶ Same, p. 1417-1418.

on their own terms. When its editorial said "it must be mortifying that another more astute has reaped all the benefit", the Herald seemed to have been referring to Bishop Tache'. In short its meaning seemed to be that the Bishop had out-generaled Brown and the Ontario Grits in the contest for control of Red River.¹³⁷

Quebec did not withdraw its support from the Ministry on the issue of the role of the Catholic clergy in the Rising, nor did it put forth unqualified approval of Riel and the Métis. However, it did defend the clergy consistently, calmly, and with a good deal of assurance. In the Spring of 1871 Cartier maintained in the House of Commons that Quebec had become excited during the Red River Rising not because it approved of the death of Scott, but only because of the frenzied charges of certain Ontario newspapers.

He (Sir George) denied that any sympathy existed in Quebec for the murderers. There was no doubt that there had been an irritated feeling among the people of Quebec at the time, but it arose from no sympathy with the murderers, but from unfounded charges of newspapers in Ontario, that the priesthood in Manitoba were implicated in the crime.¹³⁸

The Execution of Scott

The execution following a court-martial of Thomas Scott at Fort Garry March 4, 1870, was for Ontario's Orangemen

¹³⁷ Issue of July 20, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2.

¹³⁸ Parl. Debates, 4th Sess., Vol. 2, 1871, p. 1037.

a casus belli. They refused to accept it as a legal death sentence; nor would they acknowledge the legality of the court-martial that passed it, nor even the Government in whose name it functioned. By and large Quebec was not anxious to justify it either, but constant Ontario insistence that Quebec was somehow linked with Riel forced the latter province into opposition to Upper Canada.

The Toronto Globe printed the first report of the execution on March 26, 1870. It did not then scream with fury; and there was no mention of Scott's having been an Orangeman.¹³⁹ The Montreal Herald announced the news the same day. Its press dispatch said that Scott "was court-martialed and shot".¹⁴⁰ La Minerve's first account was printed two days later. The reason given for the execution is that Scott had broken an oath not to take up arms again.¹⁴¹

The Scott execution was soon discussed on the floor of Commons. On March 29, 1870, upon the request of Edward Blake (Durham W. R., Ontario) for official information Prime Minister Macdonald replied that it had not been officially

¹³⁹ Scott in fact was quite unknown in Ontario prior to his execution, having emigrated to Canada in 1864 only. Thus for Ontario he was more a symbol than a person, i.e., he was an Orange victim of French Catholic brutality. -- Cf. News item, Mar. 26, 1870, p. 1, col. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Mar. 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

¹⁴¹ Press dispatch, Mar. 28, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

confirmed. The Opposition leader, Alexander Mackenzie (Lambton, Ontario) then showed interest by urging the Government to secure accurate information, "because if any parties at Fort Garry had gone the length of taking a Canadian life, he (Mackenzie) trusted the Government would not be wanting in their duty in the matter".¹⁴²

The Globe was astounded that Donald Smith in Saint Paul should have remained silent on the subject of Scott's death. "If Mr. Smith could talk of peace after such an occurrence, he is certainly a very extraordinary man."¹⁴³ The Grit paper did not want to believe the report. Riel had no legal authority so to act. As a British subject Scott was within his rights in seeking his fortune in British territory. The Provisional Government was endeavoring to bring on a crisis with the ultimate aim of separation from the British Crown.¹⁴⁴

Mackenzie in Commons on April 4, 1870, referred to the execution as "murder" and desired information from the Government, for Canada ought not to be squeamish in its dealings with "these people". Charles Tupper (Cumberland, Nova Scotia) seconded in language equally as strong the sentiments

¹⁴² Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 766.

¹⁴³ Editorial, Mar. 31, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

¹⁴⁴ Editorial, April 1, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

of Mackenzie. As a supporter of the Ministry his views are significant, for they showed that party lines had then been officially crossed.¹⁴⁵ Two days later J. H. Cameron (Peel, Ontario) delivered himself of a good deal of pompous bombast on the subject of Scott's death. He desired further information of the "barbarous murder" and about what the Government intended to do about it.

...there has been no subject since Confederation, or for many years before, which has so agitated the whole of the Dominion, and more particularly that portion of it from which I come, than the whole question of the North West, particularly connected with the great tragedy so recently enacted.¹⁴⁶

The view of the Montreal Gazette was that "the majesty of the Empire has been insulted..."¹⁴⁷ The Herald lined itself strongly against Riel, for it professed not to be able to understand how there could be such a thing as treason against the Provisional Government.¹⁴⁸ Again on the day following the Gazette called the execution "...this act of needless, barbarous murder[.]...calls for rigorous measures in return."¹⁴⁹ Thus both Government and Opposition organs were united in their condemnation of the Scott execution.

¹⁴⁵ Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 834-837.

¹⁴⁶ Same, p. 895.

¹⁴⁷ Editorial, Apr. 5, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Editorial, Apr. 5, 1870, p. 1, col. 3-4.

¹⁴⁹ Editorial, Apr. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

On hearing from the Methodist Minister at Red River, Reverend George Young, that his brother had certainly been executed, Hugh Scott had the letter published in the Toronto papers. He thereupon wrote Macdonald to make sure the Cabinet understood the facts. He wanted those responsible punished and assured the Prime Minister his brother was thoroughly loyal and inoffensive. In fact, he insisted, his brother had died because of his loyalty. Then came the threat of private vendetta:

...I trust your government will leave nothing undone to meet out the punishment due these rebels, and murderers. If not his blood I shall require at their hands.¹⁵⁰

Editorial corespondence in La Minerve for April 8, 1870, took note of the mounting agitation in Ontario. The Opposition party was assuredly making capital of the event of Scott's execution because it had nothing to lose. If the Ministry did nothing it was assailed; if it attempted something it was also denounced. "Le Nord Ouest est pour l'Opposition un bel engin de guerre."¹⁵¹ Actually, it was American schemers who had pushed the Métis on and used them for their own purposes. It was they who insisted on Scott's execution so that a deed of blood might stand between Red River and Canada and make all reconciliation impossible. "Il

¹⁵⁰ Hugh Scott to Macdonald, Apr. 6, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 658.

¹⁵¹ Apr. 8, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

est connu, de source officielle, que ce sont les américains qui ont arraché à Riel cette exécution."¹⁵²

Governor General Young was immediately aware of the significance of Scott's execution, and he telegraphed word of it to the Colonial Office on April 4, 1870. He thought that Riel would then yield to nothing but force.¹⁵³

Not until April 12, 1870, did Red River again come up in the House. Again it was Mackenzie whose own excitability was probably a reflection of public sentiment at large in Ontario. "...there was extreme anxiety", he said, "and very great irritability in the public mind at the present..."¹⁵⁴

Toronto Orangemen projected themselves into the Scott frenzy by the following resolution which the Globe obligingly printed:

Whereas Brother Thomas Scott, a member of our Order was cruelly murdered by the enemies of our Queen, country and religion, therefore be it resolved that while we sympathise with the relatives of our deceased Brother, we, the member of the L.O.L. No. 404 call upon the Government to avenge his death, pledging ourselves to assist in rescuing the Red River Territory from those who have turned it over to Popery, and bring to justice the murderers of our countrymen.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Same.

¹⁵³ Young to Granville, Apr. 4, 1870, British Documents, p. 115; Young to Macdonald, Apr. 9, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 514.

¹⁵⁴ Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 987.

¹⁵⁵ News item, Apr. 13, 1870, p. 1, col. 8.

Prime Minister Macdonald did not accept the execution as a legal function of a legally constituted court-martial. His estimate of this event is revealed in a letter to Lord Carnarvon in England written less than two weeks after the certainty of that happening had been established in the East.

The affair [Red River Rising] has been a good deal complicated, however, by the barbarous murder of Scott. He was tried by a sham court-martial under the orders of Riel and condemned on the most frivolous pretexts.¹⁵⁶

While not defending Riel and the Métis, La Minerve insisted that Mair, Schultz, and Snow had wished to expropriate whatever they could at Red River, and then were using Scott's death to prevent justice being done to the Métis cause as well as to cloak their own past misdeeds.¹⁵⁷

On the day following Macdonald's sudden illness Cartier took charge of the Government bill for Manitoba, May 7, 1870. Mackenzie's speech for the day was a long diatribe on everything the Opposition leader and an Orangeman might have been expected to say. He declared Father Thibault's mission to have been a "complete farce". He admired "the bravery of the unfortunate man Scott ... who would not save his life by taking the oath of allegiance to Riel..."

¹⁵⁶ Macdonald to Carnarvon, Apr. 14, 1870, Pope, Correspondence, p. 134.

¹⁵⁷ Editorial, Apr. 18, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

He wanted the Ontario malcontents to be heard equally as much as the Red River delegates.¹⁵⁸

In reporting to the Governor General in early June Georges Cartier joined Macdonald in refusing to accept the legality of Scott's execution. Thus the leading Quebec Cabinet member agreed with Ontario on this important question. La Minerve, as has been seen, agreed, also.

...the shooting of Scott, without speaking of the illegality, was, to say the least, an act of excessive abuse of power, and of cruel brutality.¹⁵⁹

On June 13, 1870, the Montreal Herald was certain that the furor over Scott's execution would pass, since nothing could be done about it legally, anyway.¹⁶⁰ The Gazette was not so resigned.

Scott was not shot even in an ordinary riot. His killing was a cold-blooded atrocious murder; and the men who were guilty of it should be made to answer before the ordinary tribunals of the country.¹⁶¹

The Herald thereupon renewed its indignation over the execution even in late Summer, 1870. "...for such a causeless and brutal murder as that of Scott, the murderers should be held

158 Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 1409-1417.

159 Memorandum of Cartier to Young, June 8, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 172. "...so cruelly shot under a sentence of a pretended court-martial." -- Same, p. 175.

160 Editorial, June 13, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2.

161 Editorial, Aug. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

to a strict account."¹⁶²

The Delegates from Red River

The sequence of events was such that news of Scott's death did not reach the East until about two weeks previous to the arrival of the delegates from the Provisional Government: Father Noel-Joseph Ritchot, Alfred H. Scott, and Judge John Black. Ontario agitation was at a fever pitch at the time. Father Ritchot and A. H. Scott crossed the border at Prescott and proceeded directly to the Capital. Judge Black accompanied by Major Charles Boulton arrived shortly afterwards, having passed through Toronto, where excitement was high.

In January, 1870, Macdonald had instructed Commissioner Smith to invite delegates. "You are authorized to invite a delegation of...two residents to visit Ottawa for the purpose of representing the claims and interests of Rupert's Land."¹⁶³ In the following month he informed Bishop Tache that a kindly reception was guaranteed any delegates of the Provisional Government to come to Ottawa.

In case a delegation is appointed to proceed to Ottawa you can assure them that they will be kindly received and their suggestions fully considered.

¹⁶² Editorial, Aug. 31, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

¹⁶³ Macdonald to Smith, Jan. 2, 1870, Pope, Correspondence, p. 118.

Their expenses coming here and returning and whilst staying in Ottawa will be defrayed by us.¹⁶⁴

Macdonald had already informed Rose in London how the simple Métis would be handled by the skilled politicians of Ottawa. "If we once get them [Provisional Government delegates] here we will easily deal with them."¹⁶⁵

Even before they had arrived much had been said about the delegates on the floor of Commons. J. H. Cameron (Peel, Ontario) hoped they would not be dealt with as "ambassadors of a civilized country". They were coming "with their hands red with blood".¹⁶⁶ Macdonald replied that there was no evidence to link the delegates personally with Scott's death and referred to them as "this body of quasi ambassadors".¹⁶⁷ Mackenzie immediately countered that he was willing to accept Judge Black but not the other two.¹⁶⁸

As might be expected the Toronto Globe was altogether opposed to accepting the delegates whose hands were red with Scott's blood. Possibly Judge Black could be listened to, but only as a private citizen. If the delegates should be

¹⁶⁴ Macdonald to Taché, Feb. 16, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 1053.

¹⁶⁵ Macdonald to Rose, Feb. 5, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 1023.

¹⁶⁶ Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 896-898.

¹⁶⁷ Same, p. 898-900.

¹⁶⁸ Same, p. 901-902.

listened to, then the Provisional Government would be recognized. Moreover, the delegates, the Globe suspected, were seeking special privileges for the Church.¹⁶⁹

Apparently the arrest of Father Ritchot and A. H. Scott was a last minute manoeuver, perhaps because they had not appeared at Toronto where it was expected that they would be lynched.¹⁷⁰ The complaint of Hugh Scott was not made until April 12. The warrant was issued the same day at Toronto by Police Magistrate, A. MacNab. It was received in Ottawa by Edward John O'Neill, Police Detective, on the following day. Martin O'Gara, Ottawa Police Magistrate, immediately authorized the execution of the warrant, and the arrest was effected the same day, April 13. Hugh Scott next journeyed to Ottawa and swore a similar complaint before Police Magistrate O'Gara, for the Toronto warrant was declared invalid in the Capital. Hearings were held before Justice Thomas Galt. Depositions were sworn to by Judge John Black of Red River, and five emigres from that place; four of whom, including Major Boulton, had been prisoners of Riel. The evidence was inconclusive, and the prisoners were released

¹⁶⁹ News item, Apr. 7, 1870, p. 1, col. 5; editorial, Apr. 8, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3; news item, Apr. 9, 1870, p. 1, col. 5; and editorial, Apr. 13, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

¹⁷⁰ "Ils ont évité de passer par Toronto, sachant que la population de cette ville voulait les lyncher." -- News item, La Minerve, Mont., Apr. 12, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

on April 23, 1870.¹⁷¹

La Minerve did not hide its indignation over the arrest. It was a disgrace to Canada's own honor, for they had come under the supposed protection of "le drapeau blanc". Ontario had had no right to make such an arrest. In view of existing excitement the Government should have protected the delegates; the Métis of Red River would be unable to distinguish between the warrant of a private citizen and an official Canadian Government act.¹⁷²

On April 19, 1870, Joseph Dufresne (Montcalm, Quebec) expressed in Commons his pain that the delegates were deprived of protection and thrown in prison, since they had accepted Donald Smith's invitation in good faith.¹⁷³ Macdonald replied that criminal jurisdiction belonged to the individual provinces,

¹⁷¹ The warrants, depositions, and other judicial proceedings connected with the arrest and detention (April 13-23, 1870) are to be found in Ontario Sessional Papers, 1870-1871, Vol. 3, No. 18, p. 1-8. It is not improbable that the Prime Minister himself may have been somehow responsible for the arrest of the delegates either by acting or failure to act. The Toronto Magistrate, A. MacNab, had sought his advice on April 8, 1870. Either he advised him to proceed with the warrant or he neglected to tell him not to proceed with it. MacNab's telegram was as follows: "Scott's brother applied to me today on his information charging Scott and Ritchot with being accessories to the murder of his brother. Shall I grant the warrant to arrest Scott and Ritchot when they arrive here Toronto? Answer." -- A. MacNab to Macdonald, Apr. 8, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 660.

¹⁷² Correspondence, Apr. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 1; editorial, Apr. 18, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

¹⁷³ Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 1085-1086.

and therefore he could do nothing.¹⁷⁴ A certain Bown (whose name does not appear in the official list of Commons members for the Session) rose to insist that the Government ought not to receive the delegates officially. The Provisional Government was nought but a "self-constituted authority", which Canada would surely not give recognition to. Macdonald answered that delegates had been invited and elected; it was their task to lay their grievances before the Throne. The Prime Minister seemed to indicate that the delegates would be dealing primarily with the Governor-General, and that the Cabinet as such would have conversations with them, more or less incidentally. The unctuous Sir John did not want to admit that the delegates would be granted official recognition. Ontario would not have relished it.¹⁷⁵

Not until April 20, 1870, did Father Ritchot protest to the Governor-General his imprisonment. He asserted that he had had nothing to do with Scott's death, and even if he had "this in no way affects my character as an ambassador, which invests me with inviolability, and in virtue of which I am beyond all jurisdiction either civil or criminal."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Same, p. 1086-1087.

¹⁷⁵ Same, p. 1088.

¹⁷⁶ Ritchot to Young, April 20, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 688.

The Montreal Herald regretted the shabby treatment extended to the delegates. Even though the invitation had been given prior to the death of Scott, still they came expecting the usual diplomatic amenities. The Toronto Globe disagreed. Acceptance of the delegates would mean recognition of the Provisional Government. Such recognition would mean that Riel was an acknowledged head of a sovereign state and so beyond the reach of punitive measures.¹⁷⁷

La Minerve returned to the defense of the delegates on April 26, 1870, but with certain reservations. It did not agree with Father Ritchot that the delegates were from a sovereign, foreign power, but insisted that Canada and Red River were merely two members of the British Empire. The Provisional Government had to be dealt with as a de facto government but should not be granted recognition. Canada's honor required that no punitive measures be inflicted on the representatives. Then the French language Government organ employed some careful phraseology which Macdonald himself was to insist upon later. It spoke of the delegates being not from the Provisional Government but "de la population du Nord-Ouest". Father Ritchot and A. H. Scott were under the impression that they had been officially recognized as emissaries of the Provisional Government. Macdonald always

¹⁷⁷ Editorial, Herald, Mont., Apr. 22, 1870, p. 1, col. 2; editorial, Globe, Toronto, Apr. 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

denied it.¹⁷⁸ Two days later a vicious character assault on Father Ritchot brought La Minerve to his defense. "Nous protestons contre ces infames insinuations[.]. En negociant avec ce monsieur le gouvernement peut etre sur d'avoir negocié avec un homme respectable."¹⁷⁹ The Gazette was generous enough to reprint this in its columns.¹⁸⁰ In fact by May 3, 1870, the Gazette had accepted La Minerve's position that it is proper to deal with the delegates without recognizing the Provisional Government.¹⁸¹

Wrathful outbursts marked the discussion in Commons of the Manitoba Bill on May 3, 1870. Mackenzie claimed that the Provisional Government delegates were simply Riel's appointees and should not be recognized. He quoted a letter of Dr. James Lynch in support of his opinion. J. H. Bellerose (Laval, Quebec) countered that Lynch was not truthful, because he had claimed that Father Ritchot was present at the Scott execution. Lynch's veracity was then testified to by Joseph Whitehead (Huron, N.R., Ontario). McDougall at this point rose in rage and struck in all directions: at Father Ritchot first whose hands were red with "the blood of a loyal

178 Editorial, Apr. 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-4.

179 Editorial, Apr. 28, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

180 Issue of Apr. 30, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

181 Editorial, May 3, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

Canadian"; then at Cartier for communicating with the priest; and finally at Howe whom he accused, without naming him, of treason to the British Crown, and of encouraging the Red River Rising.¹⁸²

On May 7, 1870, A. G. Archibald (Colchester, Nova Scotia) defended the Government for dealing with the delegates as a necessary and realistic measure. They had been invited by Canada to come and make known the views of Red River inhabitants. As for the French "there were no more loyal subjects of the Crown[.] There are no men more truly British in their feelings, in their attachment to the Sovereign, in their love of the British connection..."¹⁸³ It pained Mackenzie Bowell (Hastings, N.R., Ontario) to hear Archibald's protest against the insulting of the Red River delegates.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, he was sure that the Government had been ignoring the Ontario malcontents and giving ear only to the Red River Provisional Government delegates.¹⁸⁵

The Opposition kept up the attack on the proposed Manitoba Bill on May 10, 1870. Mackenzie Bowell, who was at the time Grand Master of the Orange Lodge, made sarcastic references to Cartier's "defense", as he characterized it,

¹⁸² Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p.1331-1333.

¹⁸³ Same, p. 1421-1430.

¹⁸⁴ Same, p. 1433.

¹⁸⁵ Same, p. 1436.

of Father Ritchot. This brought J. H. Bellerose to his feet in defense of Father Ritchot's character, and he denounced Howell's "irreverent mode of speaking of the clergy". Howell retorted in hot anger that he was

...prepared to denounce a rebel no matter what his position, creed, or nationality might be. If the honorable member (Bellerose) wished to uphold his clergy in treason, he (Mr. Howell) would not spare them even though he might in doing so hurt the over sensitive feeling of the honorable member (Bellerose).¹⁸⁶

Under oath in 1874 John Macdonald claimed that he had not received the delegates as representing the Provisional Government, but only of the people of the Northwest.

The delegates presented themselves as delegates appointed at a meeting of the people at Winnipeg...

...the Governor General could not recognize the legal existence of the Provisional Government, and would not treat with them as such...

...it was understood that the discussion was between the delegates of the Convention and not from the Provisional Government, excluding any other capacity in which they appeared... Father Ritchot understood that we did not recognize them as representatives of the Provisional Government; but I understood from Sir George that Father Ritchot was continually anxious to obtain some such recognition, while Sir George was avoiding any such recognition.¹⁸⁷

Likewise under oath in 1873 Father Ritchot maintained that the leaders of the Canadian Government had received himself and the other two delegates in their capacity as representatives of the Provisional Government.

¹⁸⁶ Same, p. 1539-1540.

¹⁸⁷ Deposition of Macdonald to Select Committee of Commons, Apr. 30, 1874, Causes of Difficulties, p. 103.

...the President of the Provisional Government of Assiniboia[.] commissioned the Reverend N. J. Ritchot, John Black, Esquire, and Alfred Scott, Esquire, to [.] negotiate the conditions in accordance with which this same people consented to enter the Canadian Confederation;

...the said delegates[.] proceeded to Ottawa,[...] were received in their said quality of delegates by the Canadian Government, and negotiated with Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George E. Cartier, the two Ministers authorized for that purpose by the Government; 188

How can such openly contradictory testimony be harmonized? Macdonald's Cabinet colleague Cartier might have provided the clue, but by that time Sir George was already dead.

The Sending of Troops

The question of a military expedition to Red River was also a sore point that led to friction between Quebec and Ontario. The Expedition was conceived in McDougall wrath and frustration. It was fostered by Macdonald distrust of the French Métis and fear of American aggrandizement. It was moderated by Imperial Government caution. It was variously interpreted by newspapers and members of Parliament. At Red River it was anticipated with enthusiasm by some and apprehension by others. Finally, it arrived amidst a welter of emotional, military, and constitutional confusion. The primary concern here, of course, is the friction it caused in the East.

188 Affidavit sworn at Montreal, Nov. 19, 1873, before Nai. Valois, J. P., Causes of Difficulties, p. 83.

William McDougall spoke of forcible suppression in his very first report from Pembina, October 31, 1869. One week later he went into great detail with a plan for an assault on Red River Settlement. Unmindful of international law he proposed assembling part of his army in Minnesota.¹⁸⁹

MacDougall's first report arrived on November 19, 1869. Four days later the Prime Minister was speaking of the possibility of sending troops to Red River. He did not then discuss the motive for doing so, but only the difficulties arising from geography and the ius gentium. "If the complication is going to last, we must look forward to the necessity of sending a Force via Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods."¹⁹⁰ By November 25 John Rose in London had already urged the Imperial Government to authorize the use of Her Majesty's troops if necessary. Scanting military action Garnet Wolessley seems to have sought the appointment for the Expedition as early as December, 1869. This we know from a letter of George Stephen, the Montreal business man, to Macdonald. The latter at this time thought it would be less expensive to bribe the insurgents than to pay for the sending

¹⁸⁹ McDougall to Macdonald, Oct. 3, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 99; same to same, Nov. 8, 1869, same, p. 126.

¹⁹⁰ Macdonald to Captain D. R. Cameron, Nov. 23, 1869, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 529.

of an expedition.¹⁹¹

Perhaps reflecting the Ministry the Gazette declared as early as November 25, 1869.: "If need be a sufficient number of military settlers can be found to go on there in the Spring and secure respect for the government."¹⁹²

Before his official recall William McDougall reiterated his belief that an expeditionary force was necessary. The Prime Minister wrote Rose at the end of December, 1869, that he still feared the necessity of sending troops. At this time he had Father J. B. Thibault, Charles de Salabery, and Donald Smith negotiating at Red River. The latter sent word on January 4, 1870, that he too thought troops would be necessary to crush the insurrection.¹⁹³

Even in January, 1870, the Globe became petulant and desirous of using force. Assuredly the Conservative Cabinet was to blame, but nonetheless, the movement at Red River

¹⁹¹ Rose to Macdonald, Nov. 25, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. I, p. 172; Stephen to Macdonald, Dec. 10, 1869, Pope, Correspondence, p. 112; Macdonald to McDougall, Dec. 12, 1869, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 716.

¹⁹² Editorial, Nov. 25, 1869, p. 2, col. 1.

¹⁹³ McDougall to Macdonald, Dec. 28, 1869, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 317; Macdonald to Rose, Dec. 31, 1869, Pope, Memoirs, p. 416; Smith to Macdonald, Jan. 4, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 399-400.

should be brought under control, by force if necessary.¹⁹⁴

A note of caution was introduced by the Imperial Government on January 8, 1870. Canada was warned by the Colonial Secretary not to violate United States territory. Macdonald was anxious to have Imperial troops included to demonstrate to the United States that England was definitely interested in maintaining her sovereignty in North America. The rumor had been current, and had apparently gained the American President's ear, that England wanted to get rid of her Northwest possessions and would do nothing to prevent their loss. Sir John also wanted the Imperial troops because the Northwest was Imperial, but not Canadian, territory. Even the Canadian Volunteers would be called for in Her Majesty's name and would therefore be performing an Empire duty, and not just carrying out a Canadian invasion of a foreign country. Even before receiving assurances from Granville, the Colonial Secretary, that Imperial troops would form the nucleus of the Expedition Macdonald expressed himself as follows on their employment: "...we must not relax our preparations to vindicate by force if necessary, Her Majesty's

¹⁹⁴ "...we have no hesitation in saying, in the plainest and most unmistakable language, that this playing at Republics and Provisional Governments within the British Empire must come to an end, if necessary by the heavy hand of force." -- Editorial, Globe, Toronto, Jan. 7, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

Sovereignty in the North West,..."¹⁹⁵ Already by the end of January, 1870, arrangements had been completed for the building of sixty boats to transport the troops across the lakes.¹⁹⁶

By the end of January, 1870, also, the Toronto Globe was definitely committed to a policy of suppressing the Métis by force of arms. "...it would be folly in the extreme to be...making no preparations for resolute coercive measures so soon as the season will permit."¹⁹⁷ However, it was not until a month later that the newspapers had any exact information that there would be an expedition in fact. Their composition and purpose was then outlined.

The troops are not to be sent to the country for the purpose of taking forcible possession, but merely to uphold the authority of the Government in case of trouble. The rights and privileges of the people are to be respected in every particular, and they are to stand on precisely the same footing as the people in other parts of the Dominion.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Macdonald to Rose, Feb. 5, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 1023, 1022.

¹⁹⁶ Granville to Young, Jan. 8, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 341-342; Macdonald to Rose, Jan. 26, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 964-965; same to same, Feb. 5, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 13, p. 1022-1025; S. J. Dawson to Macdonald, Jan. 29, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 533.

¹⁹⁷ Editorial, Jan. 29, 1870, p. 2, col. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Reprinted from Toronto Telegraph in Gazette, Mont., Feb. 25, 1870, p. 4, col. 3.

Thus it can be seen that a good deal of thought was given by the Government to the Expedition and for some time before the public was aware of it. It was still not settled, however, under what conditions Imperial troops would participate, if at all.

A Canadian Privy Council Meeting of February 11 was agreed that troops should be on their way as soon as navigation would permit, because diplomatic negotiations might break down. A cable from Lord Granville, March 5, 1870, laid down Imperial policy in regard to the sending of troops.

The proposed military assistance will be given if reasonable terms are given to the Roman Catholic settlers and if Canadian Government enable H.M.'s Government to proclaim transfer simultaneous with movement of troops.¹⁹⁹

This seems to be the first evidence that Catholics at Red River should be placated, either in Canadian or Imperial correspondence. In his handwritten copy of this telegram, Young underlined "Roman Catholic", put an exclamation mark after them, and inserted (sic), thus. It appears, then, to have been a new development to him also. Macdonald, to be sure, did not want the Northwest to be controlled by the native Métis but rather by Canadian and Imperial forces. However, the prospect of such an expedition, Bishop Taché soon warned, was not relished at Red River. "The threat of

¹⁹⁹ Granville to Young, Mar. 5, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 403.

sending troops is, without doubt, the greatest obstacle to conciliation."²⁰⁰ In London the British Ministry was anxious to avoid all appearance of coercion with regard to the sending of troops and also that the transfer of the territory should be completed together with or previous to their departure. They also wanted the Imperial troops withdrawn as soon as possible.²⁰¹

With the oncoming of Spring troops for Red River became a more common subject of discussion. The Globe rejoiced greatly when it felt certain that Her Majesty's Government were sending military assistance. It did not matter that delegates were on their way from Red River to negotiate; that was then a matter of "secondary importance". Following certain news of Scott's death Globe war frenzy was fanned to a white heat. Baring its fangs it declared:

There is only one sort of argument likely to prevail with characters of this stamp. Donald Smith's chicken-broth has failed to cure the Winnipeg disorder, so suppose we try the effect of a steel tonic.²⁰²

It hoped that the troops destined for Red River would be

200 Taché to Howe, Mar. 11, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 21.

201 "Minutes of the Committee of Council", Feb. 11, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 358; Granville to Young, Mar. 5, 1870, same, p. 405; Macdonald to Rose, Mar. 11, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. 14, p. 48; Rose to Macdonald, Mar. 23, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 457.

202 News item, Apr. 4, 1870, p. 1, col. 3.

future settlers there. Thus after the army had conquered the land, it would remain there to divide it up and secure possession. The natives were thus to be beaten into submission and their conquerors were to expropriate and overrun them. That such a policy was the very cause that would make the native Métis fight for certain apparently did not occur to the Globe. The Gazette also wanted troops to get to the Northwest to put the Rising down. The death of Scott "calls for vigorous measures in return." The Herald and La Minerve were more calm. The former thought the force would be "rather a constabulary than an army..." The latter took careful note of the proper and desirable purpose of the Expedition.

On ne doit pas, néanmoins, considérer cette expédition comme une déclaration de guerre. Les Métis n'ont aucune objection à recevoir une garnison canadienne, si nous donnons satisfaction sous d'autres rapports, pourvu que cette satisfaction soit donnée avant l'arrivée de ces forces.²⁰³

Still the Globe would not relent. Vengeance first was its desire. Send the troops. Punish Riel. That was primary. A constitution could be given to Red River but only to encourage the "loyal party" there to assist the oncoming troops. But constitution or no constitution the troops should march. "The Government dare not, after the murder of Scott, temporize.

203 Editorial, Apr. 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 2; Cf. also editorial, Globe, Toronto, Apr. 2, 1870, p. 2, col. 2; editorial, same, Apr. 5, 1870, p. 2, col. 3; editorial, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 1; editorial, Herald, Mont., Apr. 6, 1870, p. 1, col. 2.

They must send troops, and that speedily."²⁰⁴

In the meantime the inner circles of government were having difficulty in being assured of Imperial assistance and, indeed, in managing the Expedition at all. Colonel John Stoughton Dennis undertook to advise the Prime Minister to seek the help of Indian tribes north and west of Lake Superior as guides and scouts. The indomitable Dr. John Christian Schultz, between appearances at indignation meetings, also proffered the same advice to Sir John. Accompanied by Dr. James Lynch and Joseph Monkman, an English language Métis, Schultz also had an interview with Governor-General Young wherein the latter became convinced of the necessity of winning the allegiance of the above mentioned Indians. It would have been disastrous for Canada should the savages attack the Expedition even before arriving at Red River. On the same day the Prime Minister signified to the Governor-General Canada's willingness to accept transfer of the Northwest "if England sends troops to act with ours and suppress the insurrection..." But the Imperial Government insisted that the troops be not "used to force the people to unite with Canada." The Governor-General invited Macdonald and Cartier for a verbal discussion with himself and Sir Clinton Murdoch, special envoy from England. It is not known

²⁰⁴ Editorial, April 14, 1870, p. 2, col. 5.

what conclusions were reached at this parley, but it appears that Macdonald and the Canadian Government had to back down from its insistence on a strict guarantee that Imperial troops should be used if necessary to suppress Riel. In the next telegram from Granville on April 23, 1870, no mention was made of the Home Government having provided any such guarantee.²⁰⁵

Not long after certain news of the Scott execution had reached the East Alexander Mackenzie, Leader of the Opposition, wanted the military force to get to Red River soon "to enforce order there." On April 25, 1870, L. H. Holton (Chateaugay, Quebec) expressed concern that the expense of the Expedition was so great and its possible consequence so dangerous that the whole House should deliberate on it. He suspected the Government were undertaking too much without the consent of the House. On the day following he wished to know the nature, object, and scope of the Expedition. Since Macdonald and Cartier were at that very time dealing delicately with the Provisional Government delegates and

²⁰⁵ Dennis to Macdonald, Apr. 3, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 2, p. 647-650; Schultz to Macdonald, n.d., same, p. 369-370; Young to Macdonald, Apr. 9, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "General Letters, 1869-1870", p. 412-415; Macdonald to Young, Apr. 9, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 516; same to same, Apr. 10, 1870, same, p. 517-518; Young to Macdonald, Apr. 11, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 1, p. 521-522; and Granville to Young, Apr. 23, 1870, same, p. 525-526.

endeavoring not to recognize them officially, the Prime Minister in answer said that Holton's queries were inopportune; he then lapsed into generalities. On April 29, 1870, in the absence of both Macdonald and Cartier (at work on the Manitoba Bill) Joseph Howe, Francis Hincks, Hector Langevin, and Christopher Dunkin parried for the Government. They did not think the military expedition should be discussed recklessly, but the Canadian Government were assuredly working in unison with the Imperial Government on the matter. On May 10, 1870, Moise Fortier (Yamaska, Quebec), besides defending the Catholic clergy, also spoke against the proposed military expedition. The next day L. H. Masson (Soulanges, Quebec) also objected to the expedition. If it had a mission of peace there were too many soldiers. If it had one of war there were too few. He had understood that the Government had agreed to have the army of the Territory composed of native inhabitants. Cartier answered that the expedition was indeed "one of peace" to "re-establish the authority of the Queen and restore order and security to life and property in the country".²⁰⁶ On May 11, 1870, the same Masson together with Joseph Dufresne (Montcalm, Quebec), and A. A. Dorion

206 "It was necessary that her Queen's authority should be established there, and it was for that purpose the expedition was to be sent, and not for the purpose of carrying on war." --Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p. 1551.

(Hochelaga, Quebec) opposed the sending of troops and paying so much of the expenses thereof. These three were, of course, well aware by this time of the ugly mood of the Volunteers from Ontario. Hence if it were still not too late to block the Expedition by parliamentary process they appeared ready to do it. Hincks and Cartier defended the Government's position. For their part the Opposition were entirely in favor of getting the troops to Red River; they made no examination into the expense of the operation. Thomas Scatcherd (Middlesex, N.R., Ontario) and especially Mackenzie spoke in favor of it. Quebec thus made no other effort in Commons to stop the Expedition and thereby increase the friction between itself and Ontario.²⁰⁷

The success of the Red River Expedition was reasonably hoped for as early as April, 1870. Inner circles of the Canadian Government -- Privy Council, Governor-General, Special Commissioner J.W.C. Murdoch -- were then convinced that the approach of the troops would mean the flight of Riel. They had become convinced that Riel's support had been melting away, and that he would certainly not be in a position to offer armed resistance. From Ottawa where he had been conferring with the Governor-General and Canadian leaders Murdoch wrote to the Colonial Office:

²⁰⁷ Same, p. 901-902, 1180, 1186-1188, 1266-1272, 1540, 1550-1551, 1560-1564.

It is considered certain that Riel, on the advance of the expedition, will leave the territory and seek refuge beyond the British Dominion.²⁰⁸

From this basic policy the Government does not seem to have deviated.

Outside of Parliament the sending of troops was a cause of popular friction, as La Minerve of April 26, 1870, made clear.

Maintenant, nous entendons parler guerre et expéditions militaires. Les ennemis du gouvernement en ont fait un formidable engin politique et l'on nous répète que le corps d'armée est prêt, qu'avant quinze jours il sera en route pour conquérir le Nord Ouest.²⁰⁹

Bound to support the Ministry the same paper opined that the populace of Red River would welcome the troops as protection against savages. Either it forgot or did not know that Red River Métis had maintained successful relations with the Indians for two generations. It hoped against hope that not a single shot would be fired and that the troops would act in the same friendly spirit as a garrison stationed in Canada! It urged French Canadians to swell the ranks of the Volunteers, for great numbers had been enrolled from Ontario who would likely remain as settlers. Naively La Minerve supposed that it was the Imperial Government that wished

²⁰⁸ Murdoch to Sir Frederick Rogers, Apr. 28, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 194.

²⁰⁹ Editorial, p. 2, col. 1.

harsh measures for the Métis and the Canadian Government that were benevolent.

Le gouvernement canadien tenait à sa noble décision de ne pas vouloir un seul instant, paraître poser pour la violence. L'envoi de troupes lui repugnait.²¹⁰

"Paraître" is important. Assuredly Macdonald did not want it to appear that the Northwest was being coerced as long as the fact was achieved. Thus the wolf would advance clothed like sheep. La Minerve again lamented on May 2, 1870, that so few French Canadians had enlisted and that so many French language papers were discouraging such enlistments. There would be no danger of fighting, for Indians would not attack British troops and Fenians were no more dangerous in the West than in the East. It renewed its lament two weeks later.²¹¹

In its editorial innocence the Toronto Globe could not understand why nearly all the papers of Quebec should have been united in protest against a punitive expedition to Red River. Such papers must surely have been disloyal. After protesting that it did not wish to intensify sectional feeling, the Globe felt bound to say:

210 Editorial, Apr. 29, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

211 Editorial, Apr. 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 4; editorial, Apr. 29, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3; editorial, May 2, 1870, p. 2, col. 7; editorial, May 16, 1870, p. 2, col. 5.

...almost the entire French press of Lower Canada is crying out in the most vigorous manner against the expedition to the Red River, and using language which one can scarcely reconcile with the writers' being good British subjects or loyal Canadians.²¹²

On June 13, 1870, the Herald was certain there would be no resistance at Red River to the troops, for that was why the Government had retained the services of Bishop Taché. La Minerve agreed, for it reckoned Riel to be well aware that the Canadian Government had pledged its word to the American Government that the work of the Expedition was to be peaceful. But on June 27, 1870, the Herald gave attention to the unfavorable reaction at Red River to the approach of troops the purpose of whose mission had not been made clear. Particular objection was taken to the Volunteers. These objections were contained in a letter by the Assistant Secretary of State of the Provisional Government, Louis Schmidt, to Fr. N.J. Ritchot dated June 1, 1870. The Globe seemed to be saddened by Red River acceptance of the Manitoba Act, for that meant that there would be no fire and sword employed there. Perhaps to sooth French Canadians who still feared that the Military Expedition was punitive in character the Gazette gave an unqualified pledge that its mission was one of peace.

That expedition was sent, in the first instance, not as a hostile force to conquer a country, but

212 Editorial, May 2, 1870, p. 2, col. 3.

on a mission of peace, to inspire confidence among the settlers, and thus ensure the more rapid development of the territory. This was the character given to it on the floor of Parliament by responsible Ministers of the Crown, and nothing has occurred since to change that view.²¹³

In early June, 1870, Bishop Taché expressed to Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, his anxiety over the advent of the Military Expedition. He declared that general uneasiness at Red River was giving way to grave apprehension so that new troubles and possible resistance to the incoming troops was spoken of by some. "...I solemnly gave my word of honour and promised even in the name of the Canadian Government that the troops are sent on a mission of peace..."²¹⁴

Toward the end of July, 1870, it was apparently feared by the Anglican Bishop of Rupert's Land and others of the English speaking portion of Red River that if Riel obtained certain knowledge that there was no amnesty, he would resist the troops. Therefore Bishop Robert Machray took the initiative in inviting Wolesley to hurry even with but a small portion of his force. He dispatched one of his own

²¹³ Editorial, July 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 1; Cf. also editorial, Herald, Mont., June 13, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2; editorial, La Minerve, Mont., June 24, 1870, p. 2, col. 4; correspondence, Herald, Mont., June 27, 1870, p. 2, col. 4-5; editorial, Globe, Tor., July 9, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

²¹⁴ Taché to Howe, June 9, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 3, p. 39.

clergymen with six river boats, for which a voluntary subscription had been raised, to meet the Force and speed its final approach. The result was that the new Lieutenant Governor, Adams Archibald, was left eight days behind the Expedition thereby creating a vacuum in civil authority. Since he shared the same basic distrust of Riel and the Métis that Macdonald had, Wolesley seized all messengers and scouts dispatched by the Métis Chief. Their failure to return plus the non-appearance of the hoped for amnesty convinced Riel that Wolesley's intentions, despite his declaration from Thunder Bay of June 30 that his Expedition's mission was one of peace, were nothing less than hostile. Hence Riel's departure into exile.²¹⁵

First report of the arrival of the troops and the flight of Riel, La Minerve refused to believe. There was no reason for the leader of the Provisional Government to fear. Wolesley's motives were peaceable. The report was nothing but a fabrication of Globe correspondents, "un canard". Not until September 9, 1870, did La Minerve withdraw its head

²¹⁵ Sulte, Benjamin, L'Expedition Militaire de Manitoba, 1870, Montreal, 1871, p. 35; Machray, Robert, Life of Robert Machray, London, 1909, p. 210-212; S.J. Dawson, "Report on the Red River Expedition", C.S.P., 1871, Vol. 6, No. 47, p. 22; An Officer of the Expeditionary Forces, "Narrative of the Red River Expedition", Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, Vol. 109, p. 168a-169a, 172b, 175a-b; Archibald to Howe, Sept. 3, 1870, C.S.P., 1871, Vol. 5, No. 20, p. 9; Tache', North West Difficulty, p. 12b; "Instructions to Archibald", C.S.P., 1871, Vol. 5, No. 20, p. 6.

from the sand and acknowledge the arrival of the troops and the flight of Riel. It did so without comment. It seemed speechless with chagrin at the failure of its prediction of an amnesty as well as the hostile activity of Wolesley. The day following it summoned a little sympathy for the Métis. They were being abused, not by the Canadian Government, but by Wolesley. Faithful to the end La Minerve judged the Ministry to be blameless. "...nous savons que le gouvernement ne manquera pas à son engagement." No, it was Wolesley who had been responsible for three unpeaceable incidents: arrest and detention of Riel's messengers, forcing Riel to flee because of the threats on his life by Wolesley's men, and arrest of inoffensive Métis. His troops had acted despite him. They had themselves thus become revolutionaries. On September 12, 1870, La Minerve was stung thoroughly by the Ontario press and reacted with a sharpness not previously indulged in. Why, it asked, did the Toronto press regret that Riel had not been arrested dead or alive? Who had authorized it so to act? The Ontario fanatics under Wolesley's command were revolutionaries themselves. Wolesley had military power only. Riel still had civil power. It was the turn of the Métis to have indignation meetings. The Gazette also reported that members of the Volunteers had sworn to

take Riel's life.²¹⁶

We have seen that the Expedition was desired by Prime Minister Macdonald from the beginning of the Red River resistance, and to coerce if coercion should be necessary. Despite public declarations of its peaceful motives, its membership and perhaps even its leader were disposed to employ harsh measures toward the French Métis. From this root divergence between unexpressed motives and public declarations popular friction was to result almost inevitably.²¹⁷

The Amnesty Question

The last of the more notable focal points of friction between Ontario and Quebec resulting from the Red River Rising was the issue of the amnesty. The proportions of this issue were considerably less than some of the previous ones perhaps because it did not come to public attention

²¹⁶ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Sept. 3, 1870, p. 2, col. 3; news item, same, Sept. 9, 1870, p. 2, col. 4-5; editorial, same, Sept. 10, 1870, p. 2, col. 5; editorial, same, Sept. 12, 1870, p. 2, col. 4-5; press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., p. 2, col. 4.

²¹⁷ Even as late as 1873, shortly before his death Sir George Cartier recalled to Macdonald the purpose of the military expedition as explained to Fr. N.J. Ritchot by Governor-General Young: "In the interview of the 19th [May, 1870] Lord Lisgar [Young] gave assurance to Father Ritchot that the military expedition was going to Red River not to arrest any one, but to maintain order, as done by any garrison of regulars in any Canadian city where there was one." -- Cartier to Macdonald, Feb. 8, 1873, Causes of Difficulties, p. 105.

until much later than they. The moves within governmental circles will be treated first, and the popular reaction later.

On December 6, 1869, Governor General John Young had issued a proclamation that an amnesty would be granted. It was entrusted (500 copies in French, English, and Cree) to Father J. B. Thibault, who was to distribute it after having consulted with McDougall at Pembina. It was issued, of course, before Ottawa had received word of the abolition of Hudson's Bay Company rule by McDougall's spurious edict of December 1, 1869. Also, the frustrated Governor-designate had departed from Pembina before the arrival of the priest-envoy. Hence Father Thibault did not promulgate the Proclamation. According to Macdonald "...the Government had been informed that Mr. Thibault's baggage had been taken possession of and the proclamations taken from him by the insurgents."²¹⁸

The next move was to entrust the same Proclamation to Bishop Taché upon his departure from Ottawa for Red River on February 16, 1870. From his discussions in the Capital with Cabinet and Governor-General the Bishop had understood that the grand object of his mission to Red River was to conciliate the people there and to secure their peaceable

²¹⁸ Deposition of Macdonald to Select Committee of Commons, Apr. 30, 1874, Causes of Difficulties, p. 100. Cf. also Taché, North West Difficulty, p. 22a-b.

acceptance of union with Canada. For the attainment of this object an amnesty was needed, and so the Prime Minister had written: "...the Canadian Government will stand between the insurgents and all harm."²¹⁹ The fact that Thomas Scott had not then been executed did not, in the Bishop's view, render null the amnesty proclaimed by Governor-General Young on December 6, 1869. If any such occurrence were to alter radically the nature of the assurances the Bishop was bringing from Ottawa to Red River, then he should have been so informed.

When I left Ottawa it was my impression and conviction that, no matter what took place in the North-West before my arrival, I was authorized to make that proclamation known as soon as I got there...

...I understood that my instructions as to the amnesty authorized me to cover every event which should have occurred before my arrival in the Territory, including such an event as the death of Scott, and this was my belief and understanding also after I arrived and when I heard of that event.²²⁰

Had the events previous to my arrival at Fort Garry, altered the dispositions expressed[...], the authorities [...] were bound in justice to warn me of the change of their intentions, in order to redeem their word and mine before the people to whom I had to convey this message of 'peace and conciliation'.²²¹

²¹⁹ Macdonald to Taché, February 16, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 19. He had also added a new condition previously unmentioned in their verbal discussions: "...if the Company's Government is restored..." -- same, p. 19, 20.

²²⁰ Deposition of Bishop Taché to Select Committee of Commons, Apr. 17, 1874, Causes of Difficulties, p. 20.

²²¹ Taché, North West Difficulty, p. 4b.

Whatever the Bishop's view of the matter the fact of Scott's death after the issuing of the Bishop's commission was the hedge behind which Canadian ministers hid when the awful truth came home to them that they had promised too much too soon.

The amnesty came into parliamentary discussions briefly on May 10, 1870. L. H. Masson (Soulanges, Quebec) wanted to know if the Government would grant an amnesty in Manitoba. Cartier responded that "irregularity had taken place on both sides" and that "it was probable that the Imperial Government as was its custom, would grant an amnesty to offenders."²²² Surprisingly, such a forthright statement by the acting Prime Minister at such a critical time did not cause much attention.

Securing an amnesty or assurances of one was a matter of grave concern to the delegates of the Provisional Government.

Les questions soulevées par la 19^{ieme} clause de nos instructions surtout l'amnestie, sont de la plus haute importance. J'ore espéres, Sir, et le passé m'est ma garantie pour l'avenir que nous pourrez nous procurer avant notre départ, toutes les garanties promises par Sir John et vous, au sujet de ces questions de haute importance.²²³

²²² Parl. Debates, 3rd Sess., Vol. 1, 1870, p.1550-1551.

²²³ Ritchot to Cartier, May 18, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 3, p. 145.

Indeed, Fr. Ritchot later testified under oath that "...the delegates required as condition sine qua non of any agreement, a general amnesty for all that had been done or authorized by the Provisional Government."²²⁴ Moreover, he came away from Ottawa convinced that he had received trustworthy assurances, for he further testified:

That the honorable Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George E. Cartier...declared that they were in a position to assure us that it was the intention of Her Majesty to grant the amnesty...

That, on the 3rd May, 1870, before the closing of the negotiations, the Governor-General and Sir Clinton Murdoch assured the said delegates in the name of Her Majesty that the amnesty would be granted [...]. Sir Clinton Murdoch added[...]: that Her Majesty would willingly pass the sponge over the acts in question, in order to re-establish tranquillity in the country.

.....
That on the 19th May following, the Governor-General of Canada, at his own house, in the presence of Sir George E. Cartier, renewed to the delegates in person the assurance that the amnesty would certainly be granted...²²⁵

With such sworn testimony John Macdonald would not agree.

Likewise under oath he testified April 3, 1874:

He [Fr. Ritchot] deceives himself so far as a promise by me is concerned. I made no such promise. In the conversations between Sir George and Father Ritchot, they were moving on different planes; Sir George referring to the amnesty, exclusive of the persons charged with the death of Scott, and Father Ritchot always including them.²²⁶

224 Affidavit sworn Nov. 19, 1873, before Nai. Valois, J.P., Causes of Difficulties, p. 83.

225 Same, p. 83.

226 Causes of Difficulties, p. 106.

Lord Lisgar, the former Sir John Young, Governor-General, answered in a similar strain.

I am quite clear that neither on the occasion in question, nor on any other, did I give an assurance or promise of an amnesty to cover all offences committed during the insurrection.²²⁷

Sir Clinton Murdoch added his denial to the assertion of Fr. Ritchot, also.

I have no recollection of any promise or expectation of an amnesty to Riel and his associates having been held out by Lord Lisgar, when Mr. Ritchot had an interview with him, in my presence or at any other time.²²⁸

From such profound disagreements popular friction was certain to arise. In the illness of Prime Minister Macdonald Cartier continued the negotiations with the delegates of the Provisional Government. The latter pressed him for assurances of an amnesty; whereupon the Minister of Militia wrote them as follows:

I desire to call your attention to the interview you had with His Excellency the Governor-General on the 19th instant, at which I was present, and in which His excellency was pleased to state that the liberal policy which the Government proposed to follow in relation to the persons for whom you are interesting yourself is correct, and is that which ought to be adopted.

P.S. You can at any time make use of this letter, in such manner as you shall think proper, in any explanation you may have to give connected with the

²²⁷ Lisgar to Cartier, Feb. 21, 1873, Causes of Difficulties, p. 104.

²²⁸ Murdoch to Herbert, Mar. 5, 1873, Causes of Difficulties, p. 104.

object for which you were sent as delegates to the Canadian Government.²²⁹

Confronted with this document of his ministerial colleague Macdonald admitted that Cartier "does not dispute the accuracy of Father Ritchot's statement". However, he claimed he had had no official explanation from Sir George explaining this letter to the delegates, and since he (Macdonald) was sick at the time, he was not familiar with the details of the discussions regarding the amnesty.²³⁰

At Red River Bishop Taché was, of course, trustful that the amnesty would be forthcoming. By the end of May, however, he became anxious and made inquiry of Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces. His dispatch was not answered. He wrote again on June 9, 1870.

...I solemnly gave my word of honour and promised even in the name of the Canadian Government[...] that a complete and entire amnesty if not already bestowed, will surely be granted before the arrival of the troops...

...I humbly beg that my promise will be considered as sacred[...]. Should I have promised in vain[...]. Besides the heartrending feeling I would personally experience, I would be publicly reputed a deceiver, or as having been wilfully deceived by the Canadian Government.²³¹

²²⁹ Cartier to Ritchot and A. H. Scott, May 23, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 74.

²³⁰ Deposition of Macdonald, Apr. 30, 1874, Causes of Difficulties, p. 106.

²³¹ Taché to Howe, June 9, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 3, p. 39-40. On the day following the worried Bishop also dispatched a similar plea to Cartier.--Cf. Taché to Cartier, June 10, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 3, p. 42-44.

Cartier and Howe each sent the Bishop a reply on July 4 pointing out that the prerogative of granting an amnesty belonged entirely to the Crown.

...the responsibility of the assurance given by your Lordship of a complete amnesty, cannot in any way attach itself to the Canadian Government.²³²

The Dominion Government were straining every nerve to divest themselves of all responsibility for the granting of an amnesty. It seemed the best way out of their serious dilemma. They hoped to placate Quebec on the one hand by satisfying the Métis and to demonstrate to Ontario on the other that they themselves were not pardoning the Métis leaders, but rather that the amnesty was out of their hands completely. They marshalled every argument they could think of to show that they had no power to grant an amnesty and that it was a function belonging to Her Majesty's Government. In short they were endeavoring to force the hand of the British Ministry. Ontario would complain without result if the Imperial Government granted the amnesty.²³³ Strictly speaking, the Bishop was wrong to promise the amnesty in the name of the

²³² Howe to Taché, July 4, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 34. Cf. also Cartier to Taché, July 4, 1870, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870, Vol. 3, p. 84-89.

²³³ Cartier (?) to Young, n.d., Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 3, p. 50-60. Internal evidence suggests that this official communication was the work of Cartier, although no signature is appended.

Canadian Government since the prerogative rests with the Crown. However, in early February the entire problem was not clearly delineated. Also, he was himself an agent of the Canadian Government and therefore in a position to speak in its name, his meaning probably being that the Canadian Government would make the necessary representation to the Imperial Government and thus secure the desired amnesty.

There is some reason to believe that Governor-General Young personally was opposed to the granting of an amnesty. He saw fit to forward to Earl Granville, Colonial Secretary, a copy of Dr. James Lynch's letter to him (Young) giving reasons why an amnesty should not be granted. Why a letter from a private citizen and a known enemy of Riel and the Métis should be forwarded to the Imperial Government can be explained, it would seem, in no other way than as a desire on the part of the Governor-General to influence the decision of Her Majesty's Government against the granting of an amnesty. This seems particularly true since there is no request in Lynch's letter itself that it be forwarded to London. The initiative for and accomplishment of this action rested with Young alone.²³⁴

²³⁴ Young to Granville, July 6, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 195; Lynch to Young, July 1, 1870, same, p. 195-196; and the acknowledgement from the Colonial Office, Kimberley to Young, Aug. 3, 1870, same, p. 197.

On the other hand almost a month earlier the same Governor General had forwarded to Earl Granville the Memorandum of Sir George E. Cartier which the latter had prepared to accompany the Petition of Father Ritchot. The Memorandum is a lengthy interpretative account of the Red River Rising which ends with a recommendation for a full and complete amnesty excepting no one. Cartier was Acting Prime Minister at the time in the illness of John Macdonald. In his brief letter to Granville which accompanied this Memorandum Governor-General Young took pains to point out that Cartier's document was not the work of the entire Cabinet even though this is not disclaimed by Cartier in the Memorandum itself. Young wrote:

This document is entitled to all the consideration due to the writer's long experience and high political standing in British North America, but it is not to be regarded as a Minute of Council nor as the expression of the opinion of the united Cabinet.²³⁵

In the one case a letter speaking against the amnesty and written by a private citizen who does not himself request its forwarding to the Imperial Government is sent there by the Governor-General, while in the other case an official Memorandum drawn up by the Acting Prime Minister and speaking in favor of the amnesty is disparaged by the same Governor-General to the Imperial Government. There seems little doubt

²³⁵ Young to Granville, June 9, 1870, Causes of Difficulties, p. 170.

where the sympathies of Sir John Young lay.²³⁶

Bishop Taché was satisfied that the amnesty proclaimed by the Governor-General on December 6, 1870, was enough to secure the protection of everyone connected with the Rising, but because vengeance-seekers preferred to deny its validity following Scott's execution, the Bishop sought something more assuring from Governor-General Young at Niagara, July 23, 1870.

"The Governor-General pointing to his proclamation, exclaimed: -- 'Here is my Proclamation, it covers the whole case.'"²³⁷

Later the same day the Bishop expressed to Young in writing (as the latter had requested) his anxious desire for greater assurance of amnesty. He pointed out the harmful effects that would surely result in the Northwest if the people there were to conclude that the Canadian Government had deceived their Bishop.

If amnesty is not granted, I will be considered by some as having imposed upon the people, and will perhaps only have prepared a fearful reaction, others who will never suspect my sincerity, will easily believe that I have been deceived by the Canadian Government. I will go so far as to say that really I would have been deceived, for it is impossible to understand otherwise what was told to me at Ottawa.²³⁸

If the Bishop had acted contrary to the mind of the Governor-

²³⁶ Memorandum of Cartier, Causes of Difficulties, p. 171-178.

²³⁷ Taché, North West Difficulty, p. 10a.

²³⁸ Taché to Young, July 23, 1870, Taché, North West Difficulty, p. 11b.

General in promising an amnesty, then the latter would surely have drawn his attention to it. This Young did not do. Therefore he implicitly assured the Bishop that his promise was in accordance with the wishes of Her Majesty's Government.²³⁹

Whatever Young may have said to Bishop Tache' at Niagara about his Proclamation covering the whole case, it appears from the testimony of John A. Macdonald on April 30, 1874, that the Governor-General excluded from his Proclamation of amnesty those who were charged with complicity in the death of Thomas Scott.

The Governor-General and his advisers held that the amnesty as proclaimed did not cover the charge [homicide of Scott].

The proclamation I speak of is that of 6th December, 1869.²⁴⁰

In early August, 1870, it was clear to the leaders of Government that there would be no amnesty. Governor-General Young on August 6, 1870, stated emphatically to the convalescing Prime Minister: "The British Government will not touch the question of amnesty."²⁴¹ Since the Military Expedition was less than three weeks from Fort Garry such news could not have been made public.

²³⁹ Tache', North West Difficulty, p. 12a.

²⁴⁰ Deposition of Macdonald, Causes of Difficulties, p. 100.

²⁴¹ Young to Macdonald, Macdonald Papers, "Governor-General's Correspondence", Vol. 3 (Lisgar, 1868-1870), p. 339.

Adams Archibald was sent on his way as Lieutenant Governor on August 8, 1870, apparently without any instructions, or indeed without seeking any, about the amnesty.

I do not think that I could say that I had received any instructions about the amnesty[...]. I think the subject of the amnesty was mentioned, but as far as my recollection goes it was always assumed to be a matter for the Imperial Government.²⁴²

I myself had no discussion with the Government about it [amnesty], nor do I know what their line of action was from anything I heard from them...²⁴³

On the following day [September 3, 1870] I saw a number of leading people[...], who told me of the amnesty, and that it was expected to precede or accompany me. I told them I knew nothing about it, and had no instructions on the subject. There is no question but that, whether rightfully or wrongfully, the people believed that there was to be an amnesty...²⁴⁴

Confronted with the failure of his Memorandum to win the amnesty Cartier had but little choice except to let the new Lieutenant Governor depart without amnesty instructions. The views of the Governor-General and Dr. Lynch seem to have prevailed.

On August 27, 1870, Bishop Tache' reported to Sir George the griefs that had come to Red River because of the

²⁴² Deposition of Archibald before Select Committee of Commons, May 15, 1874, Causes of Difficulties, p. 134.

²⁴³ Same, p. 135.

²⁴⁴ Same, p. 135.

non-appearance of both the amnesty and the civil Governor.²⁴⁵

Friction in the popular arena over the amnesty broke out in the Toronto Globe on June 7, 1870. Granting of an amnesty was a dastardly act which the Globe would not put past the Conservative Ministry. It demanded a statement from the Government of its intention in the matter. The same paper contained two days later a news dispatch from Washington to the effect that the Imperial Government would assuredly grant it. Subsequent press dispatches from Ottawa and Saint Paul were similar. By August 1, 1870, the Queen City paper was in despair that the amnesty was a fact and termed it the crowning act of "folly and imbecillity" on the part of the Macdonald Government.

To make assurance of an amnesty doubly sure, Riel & Co. think it desirable to give the screw a turn, and by affecting that they have still power to cause trouble, get all they want. Nothing like a rebellion, especially if one happens to be a French Canadian and a Roman Catholic! ²⁴⁶

On August 4, 1870, the Globe denied that an amnesty was legally possible and lectured the Imperial Government and Crown against any such procedure. Amnesties, it declared, were issued by royal prerogative for those already judged by court trial; they were not protective coverings to keep

²⁴⁵ Taché to Cartier, Macdonald Papers, "North West Rebellion, 1869-1870", Vol. 3, p. 104.

²⁴⁶ Editorial, Globe, Tor., June 23, 1870, p. 2, col. 2.

suspected offenders from being brought to trial. This latter would be a dispensing power and would lead to numberless future political crimes all of which could not be brought to justice simply because an "amnesty" would have been obtained. No, said the Globe, not even the Crown could do this.²⁴⁷

Opposed to Globe fury was the quiet confidence of La Minerve that there would be an amnesty granted.

Le seul moyen désormais de réparer les appels à la passion du Globe et du Télégraph, c'est amnestie; nous espérons qu'elle ne tardera pas à arriver, afin de rendre impossible les occurrences d'autres malentendus et d'autres fautes.²⁴⁸

On August 2, 1870, the same paper seemed quite certain that the amnesty had been accorded secretly. Furthermore, it was only right that it should have been granted. Otherwise, harmony in the Northwest would be set back ten years. The passions of the moment were not to be acceded to. Both Fr. Ritchot and Bishop Taché had petitioned the Imperial Government which, because it had heartily approved of the conciliatory measures of the Canadian Government, must, in order to be logical, grant it. Such a trustful assumption was annoying to anti-Riel journals, because it was taken mistakenly as

²⁴⁷ Editorial, June 7, 1870, p. 2, col. 3; news dispatch, June 9, 1870, p. 1, col. 4; press dispatch, June 16, 1870, p. 1, col. 6; press dispatch, June 20, 1870, p. 1, col. 6; editorial, Aug. 4, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3.

²⁴⁸ Editorial, June 24, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

an accomplished fact.²⁴⁹

The Gazette placed itself squarely against the granting of an amnesty, certainly against one which would cover those responsible for the death of Scott. Accepting the statement of the Edinburgh Scotsman, however, it was convinced on June 10, 1870, that the amnesty was a fact. It was regrettable that "the authors and participators in an useless and wanton murder should escape unwhipt of justice."²⁵⁰

Near the end of July, 1870, the Gazette renewed its opposition to an amnesty. Riel should be tried like any other criminal. In fact offences against statute law could not be amnestied, said the Gazette. Crimes could not be condoned. The execution of Scott was not a political offense, but a crime only. As such it was outside the prerogative of the Crown.²⁵¹

The Herald accepted it as fact that the amnesty had been granted. On June 13, 1870, it opined: "...as to an amnesty, of course that will be granted."²⁵² By August 6, there was no longer any doubt. It came not through the

²⁴⁹ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Aug. 2, 1870, p. 2, col. 4-5.

²⁵⁰ Editorial, p. 2, col. 1.

²⁵¹ Editorial, July 26, 1870, p. 2, col. 2; editorial, Aug. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 1; and editorial, Sept. 1, 1870, p. 2, col. 4.

²⁵² Editorial, p. 2, col. 2.

regular channels, but through Sir Stafford Northcote of the Hudson's Bay Company and Sir Clinton Murdoch, a Commissioner of the Imperial Government. Colonel Wolesley was carrying the amnesty with him. The editorial lapsed into sarcasm about future honors to be conferred on Riel, Lépine, O'Donoghue, and Fr. Ritchot, all of which will be secured by Cartier, who, of course, made all the arrangements.²⁵³

The reaction of Ontario and Quebec to the Rising at Red River was thus intense and bitter. Party lines were crossed, and racial and religious lines were substituted. Ontario, Protestant and Orange, lashed itself into a frenzy which Quebec largely ignored until the clergy and the Church were attached and until Riel and Quebec were identified in Ontario criticism. Then Quebec retaliated almost in kind.

Hundreds of miles away in the new province of Manitoba Riel and the Métis had no immediate conception of the furor in the East. The operations of organized Orange vengeance were for them a new experience. In fact it seems nothing short of amazing that the hostile bluster and furor of Ontario did not drive Riel and the Red River Settlement into political union with the expanding United States. Friendly economic links with the upper Mississippi Valley had been forging for many years. That this opportunity was

²⁵³ Editorials, Aug. 6, 1870, p. 2, col. 1-2; Aug. 16, 1870, p. 2, col. 2; and Aug. 31, 1870, p. 2, col. 2-3.

passed up for the extremely dubious future of political co-existence with rapacious and vindictive Ontario is a lasting tribute to Métis loyalty to the British connection.

From this first Rising Louis Riel was to emerge as a rock of division. However acknowledged by others his victory was, to the French Métis he was the Founder of Manitoba, their champion. Sinking into obscurity in his American exile he grew in legend among his Métis of the Northwest. To them he was still leader and Chief. When Métis grievances reached the saturation point in the Valley of the Saskatchewan in 1884 their Chief was available again.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SASKATCHEWAN RISING (1885)

When Louis Riel re-appeared on the stage of Canadian History the scene was shifted to the Northwest Territories and in the valley of the Saskatchewan River both of whose branches flow roughly east and west across the central area of the present day province of the same name. Below the two river branches is the prairie, interrupted by the Eagle and Bear Hills, bounded on the South by the Cypress and relieved on the East by the Touchwood and Beaver Hills. Northwards are lakes and muskeg. Not long before the Rising the Canadian Pacific railway was pushed through Qu'Appelle (the former Troy), Regina, and Swift Current, and veered northwest to Calgary. The track passed from 150 to 250 miles south of the scene of the second Rising of the Métis. This fact itself was not without meaning among the causes of the civil strife.

Wagon trails and hunters' routes went south from Prince Albert, Batoche, and Clarke's Crossing in the Northeast to Qu'Appelle and Regina; from Battleford and Fort Pitt in the north central region to Swift Current; and from Edmonton in the Northwest down to Calgary and beyond. In fact all the main trails continued into the United States, for the buffalo herds had to be followed wherever they roamed. Like the Indians themselves the Métis felt themselves entitled to "dual nationality" and were for the most part little concerned which side of the international boundary

they happened to be on. Hunting the buffalo was their way of life. Many of the Métis were engaged in freighting as well, transporting supplies in their wagons from railroad stops to settlements on the North and South Saskatchewan.

People of the area included Indians to begin with: Wood Crees, Plains Crees to the North and Blackfeet in the future province of Alberta. With the Crees were associated less numerous Assiniboines, Sarcees, Stonies, and even Sioux. The greater number of the Indians had agreed by this time to live on reservations. Crowfoot was the Chief of the Blackfeet, while Big Bear and Poundmaker each led large bands of Crees. White settlers lived by trading and farming in and around Prince Albert near the juncture of the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan. They were also thinly scattered elsewhere and were employed, of course, wherever there was a Hudson's Bay Company trading post. Between whites and Indians were the Half-breeds, or Métis: Scotch, English, and French. The first two were more given to the settled life; but the French Métis farmed hardly more than a garden in most instances and devoted themselves in large part to the hunt.

Peace and law were guaranteed by the recently established Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a semi-military organization spread thin throughout the vast territories. Theirs was a herculean task in the main well done.

The Northwest Territories were, of course, an integral part of the Dominion of Canada from the time of the admission of Manitoba in 1870. They were subject to a paternalistic government regulated from Ottawa. The Council of the Northwest was the only institution in any way representative of the inhabitants. The day had not come when the people of this vast area would enjoy the same amount of self-government as Manitoba and the provinces of the East.

The Métis Situation

Pioneer Métis had come to the valley of the Saskatchewan in the latter half of the eighteenth century, but population growth had been slow. French Métis hunted, trapped, and traded with the Hudson's Bay Company. They grew enough food to supplement their diet of buffalo meat, also. Scotch and English Métis, of less numbers, engaged in business and farming, and many became farm instructors on Indian reservations.

After the collapse of their time-honored and near-idyllic mode of existence at Red River in the eightenseventies scores of French Métis took the trail westwards to the Saskatchewan settlements where buffalo hunting was still possible and where life could go on as before. Some of these sold their land in Manitoba for a good deal less than its true value. Others abandoned theirs as not worth the trouble.

As Pioneer homesteaders the French Métis squatted on land along the Saskatchewan south branch especially. As they had been accustomed at Red River they made their holdings ten or twenty chains wide by two or one miles deep all fronting on the River. The longer they stayed the more improvements they made: buildings, paths, roadways. Their lumber they obtained from the deep rear areas of their own holdings. As half-white the Métis were not unmindful that the white man divided property among various individual owners and secured official papers from the Government which were the proof that no one else was allowed use of his land. He remembered, too, that titles to land had figured prominently in the Manitoba difficulties. The Métis again became anxious about proper, legal ownership of their lands.

Almost all Métis were uneducated and even illiterate. By themselves and unaided they could not effectually secure and maintain their rights. The white man's civilization was moving inexorably westward. His railway was already present albeit incomplete. Throngs of immigrants were due to follow, and these would kill the buffalo not for need but for sport. For the Métis the future was at best questionable and at worst dangerous.

The missionary clergy had always been their protectors, the go-betweens of simple and pious Métis and the shrewd white man. The trust of the Half-breeds both Catholic

and Protestant in their clergy was complete. The latter felt obliged not merely to save their souls but also to shield them against the cunning of the whites. Because of the work of the missionaries, Indians and Métis did not have to be subdued by conquering armies, and indeed, if Ottawa had listened to them there would likely not have been a Saskatchewan Rising.

Nature of the Rising

In essence what was the armed rising of Indians and Métis in the valley of the Saskatchewan in 1885? It was not warfare in the usual sense. Nor does it seem to have been a rebellion in the usual sense, at least not at the outset. How to term it depends largely on what standpoint is adopted: victor or vanquished. It also depends on what stage in the unfolding of events is considered: the outbreak or the climax.

In actual fact the Saskatchewan Rising of 1885 amounted to nothing more than "riot and murder". Indeed, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald was originally in favor of terming it just that but was dissuaded by Governor-General Lansdowne.¹ Between Métis and Canadian forces there were but two battles (Batoche and Fish Creek) preceded by one skirmish (Duck Lake). Between Indians and Canadian forces there were

¹ Pope, Joseph (ed.), Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1921, p. 354-355.

but two encounters worthy of the name (Cut Knife Hill and Frenchman's Butte). The total number of killed and wounded on both sides was hardly more than could be expected in widespread rioting. Pillaging was indulged in by Indians as well as by the conquering Canadian troops.²

From the standpoint of the vanquished the Saskatchewan Rising was a madman's attempt to make a reality out of his dream. From the standpoint of the victor it was an over zealous, doubly sure, almost frantic effort to preserve the integrity of a vast domain.

At Red River in 1869-1870 Louis Riel had been successful in bringing Ottawa to terms by exhibiting insight, initiative, and forcefulness in dealing with his opposition. He had convinced Ottawa that he spoke for the people of the Northwest and that he could not be brushed aside. He was not obliged to use his troops, but they were poised and ready, and Macdonald could not ignore the danger. Why not adopt the

² In a letter to one of Riel's lawyers, F. X. Lemieux, in August, 1885, Father Alexis Andre, missionary at Prince Albert, asserted that the homes and property of the Métis had been pillaged by the Volunteers despite Middleton's orders, but probably because of his example. "Les volontaires ont pillé les habitants et tout ce qu'ils possédaient, leurs chevaux, leurs effets et habillements, et ils n'ont laissé aux malheureux que ce qu'ils avaient sur le dos[...]. Et lui-même Middleton comme pour les encourager à piller, s'est approprié un beau cheval et une voiture d'un nommé Manuel Champagne, dont il a fait présent à Thomas Ibeuri. Voilà des faits dont je suis certain..." -- La Minerve, Montreal, August 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 2.

same methods again in the Northwest? Why not make another demonstration?³ Why not set up another Provisional Government with armed forces to back up its demands? Why not seize important hostages to gain the Government's attention?⁴ Ottawa would again see the light, would again come to terms and grant the just demands of the Métis. The forces would be

³ Thomas McKay, an English language Métis, testified at Riel's trial as follows: "I said, there appears to be great excitement here Mr. Riel. He said, no; there is no excitement at all, it was simply that the people were trying to redress their grievances, as they had asked repeatedly for their rights, that they had decided to make a demonstration." -- "Queen vs. Riel", Canada, Sessional Papers, 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 61. McKay's testimony concerned the start of the Rising. The same notion of a forcible demonstration to force the attention of the Government on the plight of the Northwest persisted in Riel's mind throughout the conflict. Captain George Holmes Young, who had custody of Riel after his surrender, testified to this effect also. Cf. same, p. 171.

⁴ See the testimony of Young in the same place. A Presbyterian Minister, Reverend Charles Bruce Pitblado, who conversed much with Riel while the latter was enroute to his Regina cell, testified as follows at the Trial: "He [Riel] hoped to induce the Government to make a treaty with him or with the half-breeds of the Northwest similar to the treaty they had made with the half-breeds of Manitoba.

.....
 "His object was to get hold of the police so that whilst they were in his power he might negotiate with the Government". -- Same, p. 175.

disbanded. No blood would need to be shed.⁵ If a forceful demonstration were not made, the Government would delay indefinitely the redress of Métis grievances. It was a mad-man's scheme, but it was the tragedy of the Métis nation to have followed such a leader at such a time.

The scheme misfired, of course. Unlike Red River in 1869-1870 the authority of Canada had been already constituted and acknowledged in the Northwest in 1885. But to the now clouded mind of Riel the taking up of arms and the confiscation of supplies somehow did not amount to "rebellion". The Saskatchewan Valley Métis were not consulted about their transfer from Hudson's Bay Company jurisdiction to that of Canada and had made no treaty with Ottawa as had the Métis of Manitoba in 1870.⁶ Consequently, Riel asserted, the Métis were merely defending themselves against the unjust encroachments of the Canadian Government. Following his surrender to

⁵ In his testimony during the trial of Joseph Arcand et al. Charles Nolin asserted that Riel had convinced the Métis before the opening encounter at Duck Lake that there would be no bloodshed. "...his [Riel's] intention was to so conduct matters that without any bloodshed he would secure them the full recognition of their rights[.] without shedding any blood, and without any danger..." -- Queen vs. Arcand et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 12. Cf. P. de M., L'Oeuvre Véridique de Louis Riel, Montreal, Levesque, 1934, p. 126-127.

⁶ The trial testimony of Rev. C. B. Pitblado has shown Riel's desire to secure a treaty. -- Cf. C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 176.

Major-General Frederick Middleton the Métis leader insisted on this point.⁷ At the very first encounter with Dominion authority, the Mounted Police, at Duck Lake, the bloodless demonstration failed. Shots were fired, and there were killed and wounded on both sides in the brief skirmish.⁸ Métis fighting was under the direction of the warlike Gabriel Dumont, who had witnessed the mortal wounding of his brother as the opening act of hostilities. It was too late now to withdraw, and the French Métis in general found themselves in open violence against the Government.

7 "We did not rebel. This matter is not rebellion. We have never yet been treated with about our rights. The half-breeds of Manitoba have entered into a treaty. That treaty stipulates that the arrangements to be made with the half-breeds of the territories would be similar to those made in Manitoba. No treaty has been made with us. We never transferred our rights, and before they are taken from us we wish to have a treaty made, and we think we have a right to expect that the conditions of that treaty will be similar to those made in the treaty which settled the half-breeds in Manitoba. No, my friend, this is no rebellion. We simply defend ourselves. We do not belong to the Hudson's Bay Company. They sold their interests in the country. The Indians who took the treaty sold what interest they have in the country. The half-breeds of the territories are the owners of the soil they occupy. They have an interest in the country with which they have never parted. They desire to have an equitable arrangement made for their interest. They defend themselves." -- Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 27, 1885, p. 1, col. 4.

8 English speaking settlers had also wanted a treaty for the redress of grievances. Cf. the testimony of William Miller, "Queen vs. Thomas Scott", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52, p. 155.

On the other side the Macdonald Ministry could no longer ignore the fact of an armed uprising in the Northwest. It had never conducted a war before. It proceeded vigorously but not wisely. It was a prey to fears somewhat real, somewhat imaginary. It decided to take no risks and to put forth the maximum effort. Before the Rising ended it had 7,982 men engaged and had transported 2,000 of them to the Northwest. In relation to the few hundred rebelling Métis and Indians this was a staggering contrast. It can rightly be compared to the summoning of all fire stations in a large metropolis to extinguish a small bonfire.⁹

The fears of the Ministry, however, were not without some foundation. If the Blackfeet in Alberta had risen, and if the followers of Big Bear and Poundmaker, to say nothing of smaller tribes, had engaged in the maximum of

⁹ One of the correspondents with Middleton's forces expressed his conviction that the scope of the Rising had been exaggerated. "There is no doubt these rebels have given us a great amount of trouble, but still I cannot help thinking that the rebellion is not by any means so extensive as many might easily be inclined to imagine. Beyond, perhaps some fitful skirmishes with the Indians and possibly a dying rally of the breeds, this rebellion might be said to be at an end." -- Gazette, Mont., May 26, 1885, p. 5, col. 3.

However, a press dispatch from Ottawa at the beginning of the Rising was not without some truth. "The fact is the uprising is in itself of no serious proportion, but the authorities deem it advisable to throw a formidable force into the country to show the resources of the government, and make such a demonstration of strength as will prevent for all time to come another attempt to defy constituted authority." -- Gazette, Mont., Mar. 30, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

plundering and destroying of which they were capable, the result would have been woeful to contemplate. Luckily for Canada Indians and Métis never succeeded in joining forces in any considerable numbers. South of the border there was more danger. It had been rumored that the Fenians had been gathering in Dakota and Montana territories and would march northwards to the support of Riel. American Indians as well as Dakota and Montana Métis themselves might also have come to the assistance of their brothers in arms.¹⁰ Thus Canadian troops had not only to engage the Métis and Indians already under arms, but also to guard against invasion from the South, to awe the still peaceful Indian tribes, and to protect the tracks of the Canadian Pacific railway whence would come supplies and reinforcements.

Having stumbled and perhaps been pushed into open conflict with the authority of the Dominion, the French Métis persevered in the belief that they were defending their homes and property from imminent seizure. Let their opponents call it rebellion if they wished, the Half-breeds were protecting their lives, their lands, and their rights.

¹⁰ Typical of the reports current at the time of American Indian assistance was the following. "One hundred and fifty Montana Indians have gone North, probably to join Riel. If the trouble continues, many warriors of Wyoming, Montana, and the Black Hills will go to join the rebel leader." -- Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 25, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

The Indians had broken their treaties to be sure, but the plain fact was that they had never comprehended the full consequences of those treaties in the first place. For these free rovers of the plains and mountains to be told by the white man that they must henceforth remain in the semi-captivity of a reservation however large was totally unreasonable.

What then was the nature of the Saskatchewan Rising? It was the quixotic bid of a Schizophrenic to repeat his previous triumph at Red River and, when that failed, his still more outlandish attempt to achieve by force of arms his vague and indefinite goals.

Remote Causes

Basically the remote causes of the Saskatchewan Rising can be reduced to three. They are: first, the economic revolution which took place in the Northwest territories during the decade preceding the Rising; second, Governmental ineptitude, both at Ottawa and in the Northwest; and third, the ignorance and the susceptibility of the Métis which made them unable to perceive and to halt the folly of their course.

From time immemorial the native Indians of the West had satisfied their wants from the numerous buffalo herds that moved about the prairie lands. Just as fresh vegetation re-appeared each year by the gift of Manitou to feed his

children, so too did the great herds come back each year so that Manitou's children might eat meat also. Enough buffalo were killed each year to satisfy their requirements. Such was the economy of the West, an economy to which the French Métis adapted themselves, also.

But when the white man came he brought different ideas and different laws. The land which everyone had roamed over freely he divided into sections, put fences around them, and said that they belonged to this, that, and the other individual person. Also, he could produce a piece of paper authorized by the Great White Mother which commanded that no one else could ever again make use of any such piece of "private" property without the "owner's" consent. Furthermore, in search of sport this same white man chased and killed the buffalo by the innumerable thousands. He could not eat all that he killed, and so he left the carcasses to rot on the plains after he had enjoyed to the full the thrill of the chase. The inevitable result was that the extensive herds of buffalo were decimated not gradually, but almost suddenly.¹¹ Indians knew no other means of livelihood, and of necessity were required to begin to learn the cultivation of the soil, the agricultural art of the white man. The French were not

¹¹Gabriel Dumont had pointed to this as early as 1878 in a petition to the Governor-General. Cf. C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45b, p. 29.

quite so badly off since they had already had experience with farming on a small scale, and they could engage in freighting as well. It is true that the missionaries had warned about the coming extinction of the buffalo herds and had advised a transfer to a different mode of economic existence, but the improvidence of their charges was such that they allowed the crisis to overtake them before they undertook to remedy it. To the Indians and Métis it was all too obvious that year after year in their own country the whites were becoming richer and richer whereas they themselves, the native inhabitants of the area, were becoming poorer and poorer.

It would seem that the Conservative Ministry at Ottawa had remembered nothing of the causes of the Red River Rising of 1869-1870. It was as a closed book, almost entirely forgotten, for much of the grievances of the Saskatchewan Métis was but a duplication of that of the Red River Métis. Under the pressure of other concerns the Ministry neglected the

needs of the Northwest.¹² If ever John A. Macdonald earned the name "Old Tomorrow" it was for his failure to handle properly the question of the Métis and Indians of the Northwest. Again it was the question of a surveying system; again it was the question of legal titles to land, of excessive taxation, of the absence of self-government, and even of racial discrimination. The fact is that Ottawa had no over-all economic program for the benefit of the Northwest. In the Territory itself the Government officials, like all such, took their cue from Ottawa. The natives felt that their lives were being determined by non-sympathetic strangers many of whom could not even speak their language.

The Métis themselves were not only uneducated but even

¹² A certain W. O. Jackson writing from Fort Qu'Appelle, September 3, 1884, to Sir Hector Langevin in regard to Half-breed matters, pointed out Government delay as a cause of mischief. "...it is only in the absence of definite action by the Government that extreme views, such as those at present advanced by Louis Riel in the Prince Albert district, prevail." -- Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 350. Under date of June 13, 1884, Bishop Vital J. Grandin of Saint Albert pleaded with Macdonald to do something about Métis grievances. "I blame the Half-breeds and did not spare them reproaches, but I will take the liberty to tell Your Honour, with all possible respect that the Canadian Government is also deserving of blame and if I had the same authority with its members I have with the Half-breeds I would tell them so, in more courteous words without doubt, but with the same frankness.

"How many petitions and complaints were not sent to the Government by the Half-breeds without any notice being taken of them? How many times did I not address myself to Your Honour both in writing and Viva voce, without ever obtaining anything but courteous words?" -- Grandin to Macdonald, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 405.

illiterate.¹³ They had developed almost no resources of their own and were completely dependent on the clergy for all major decisions affecting their interests. The result was that when they were weaned away from clerical influence, they were led down the path to hopeless revolution and inevitable economic ruin.¹⁴ The vast amount of human virtue of the innocent and naive Métis was expended in pursuit of

¹³ This fact was lamented by Charles Nolin in his deposition at the trial of Joseph Arcand *et al.* -- Cf. "Queen vs. Arcand *et al.*", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 14.

¹⁴ Father André gave it as his settled conviction that the Métis had been thoroughly hoodwinked by Louis Riel. "...with the exception of Gabriel Dumont, Napoleon Neault [sic] Damase Carriere, now deceased, not one of the other half-breeds had the least idea or suspicion that there was any probability or danger of rebellion, until they were so completely involved in the toils of Riel, and he had led them on until they were so compromised, that there was no escape for them." Deposition in "Queen vs. Arcand *et al.*", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 1. Bishop Grandin insisted that it was Riel who by deception and threats pushed the misled Métis into rebellion. "These poor half-breeds would never have taken up arms against the Government had not a miscreant of their own nation, profiting by their discontent, excited them thereto. He gained their confidence by a false and hypocritical piety, and having drawn them from the beneficial influence of their clergy, brought them to look upon himself as a prophet, a man inspired by God and specially charged with a mission in their favour, he forced them to take up arms. So much was he master of them, that no one dared to resist him. If they did not take up arms from enthusiasm, they did so from fear, terrified by his menaces." -- Grandin to Macdonald, July 11, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 347-348.

a political folly.¹⁵ Having a good deal less to lose, the Indians did not suffer nearly as badly.

The Middle Aged Riel

Prior to a consideration of the proximate causes of the Saskatchewan Rising it is necessary to confront the person of Louis Riel as he appeared at the time of his second effort to champion the cause of his nation, his beloved Métis. Again it would be his role to divide Quebec and Ontario and to set them at war with each other, and this time the consequences would be far reaching. In fact Louis Riel seems a tragic figure moving inevitably to a pre-ordained destruction, and indeed, his own inner sentiments and desires do not seem to be out of harmony with the unfolding of the tragedy.¹⁶ Louis Riel was satisfied that he had played a great role in

¹⁵ The misfortune of the Métis was explained by Father Vital Fourmond, Catholic missionary of Saint Laurent in his deposition at the trial of Albert Monkman and others. "...the poor half-breeds were coaxed and forced into that disastrous rising through orders and insane instigation of Louis Riel." "Queen vs. Monkman et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 20.

¹⁶ Something of the desire for martyrdom, political at least, can be detected in Riel. To the priest who blessed him and his family on their departure from Montana for the Northwest he is reported to have said: "Father, I see a gallows on the top of that hill, and I am swinging from it." -- Howard, Joseph Kinsey, Strange Empire, New York, Morrow, 1952, p. 362.

history and seemed conscious of it at every step.¹⁷

Fundamentally Riel's temperament was melancholic. Even as a boy he was reserved and aloof; he seemed preoccupied with serious things. Following his Manitoba triumph he was hunted and persecuted and pursued by implacable Orange vendetta. Threats on his life were frequent, and several attempts actually were made. The soil of the United States was no guarantee of safety. Living in an atmosphere of constant fear for six or seven years following his first departure from Manitoba, he became unable to distinguish real fears from imaginary fears, real threats from fancied threats. The even balance of his faculties was upset, and the fantasies of his persecuted brain assumed the aspect of reality. He spent time both in Beauport Asylum and in that of Longue Pointe, about eighteen months altogether.

Riel was said to have been afflicted with megalomania, and this was probably true in his middle life. Anyone, however, who has achieved great things has had to desire and plan them first. That in itself does not prove mental derangement.

¹⁷ In his own address at the end of his trial Riel declared: "I am glad that the Crown have proved that I am the leader of the half-breeds in the North-West. I will perhaps be one day acknowledged as more than a leader of the half-breeds, and if I am I will have an opportunity of being acknowledged as a leader of good in this great country."
-- "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 197.

The central fact in Riel's mental life was his inflexible conviction that he had a "mission" to fulfill. His, he believed, was no ordinary existence. He had been called to do a great work. On all other matters he was quite rational and even a good deal above average in mental capacity, but his "mission" was his unshakeable and fixed idea. The fact is that Archbishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal had told him that he had a mission in life. This thought he dwelt on so repeatedly that it became the main thought in his mental fabric. It grew to such proportions and sank such deep roots that everything else became subordinate to it. The words of his spiritual director while in Worcester, Massachusetts, Father Jean Baptiste Bruno, served to confirm his notion of a "mission".¹⁸

Louis Riel was not without several good qualities. These made him more difficult to analyze and estimate, so

¹⁸ "I believe that I have a mission. I have yet and still that mission. I have not assumed to myself that I had a mission. Seeing my intentions, the late Archbishop Bourget said: 'Riel has no narrow views, he is a man to accomplish great things,'...

"...I was not wrong when by circumstances I was taken away from my adopted land to my native land." -- Riel's address at the end of his trial, "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 193. At the trial of Joseph Arcand et al. Charles Nolin testified that Riel had told the Metis: "...I have a mission to fulfill. To liberate the whole world. To liberate the half-breed people whom I love so much, who are my own flesh and blood, who live in my heart." -- "Queen vs. Arcand et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 13.

much so that his faithful Métis never suspected his mental derangement. He was an eloquent speaker, even in English. His first address after returning to the Northwest Territory both disarmed and charmed all his listeners. Even Father André, who had anticipated inflammatory talk, was won over by the Métis chief. Thus he was an attractive personality with whom courtesy had become second nature.

On the side of weaknesses Riel was neither resourceful nor provident. He subsisted a good deal on the kindness of others, despite his good education. Moreover, he was irritable when contradicted, especially with regard to his "fixed idea", his mission. The result was a certain changeableness which never left him.

In fulfillment of his "mission" Riel had no doubt that he was the destined leader of the Métis. He was not always sure whether he would lead by pen and word or by political action. Thus he would wait for "signs" from Heaven. His desire to lead the Métis to nationhood was not confined to Canada alone. In point of fact he had been taking an active part in organizing a Métis voting bloc in Montana immediately before his return to the Northwest.¹⁹

¹⁹ In accepting the invitation of the Métis delegation Riel told them: "...my intention is to come back early this fall [...] I am one of those who would like to unite and direct its Montana Métis element's vote." -- Reply to Métis delegation, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 432.

Having granted that his "mission" was to Riel the all-important goal in his existence for the accomplishment of which everything else was altogether secondary, it will be seen that the morality of all other decisions will be determined by their necessity or facility for achieving this goal. Whoever wills a good end, it seemed to him, must always will the means thereto. Hence the leader of the Métis would adopt measures from which in his younger years he would have shrunk in horror and disdain. Several months before the outbreak of hostilities he was privately advocating revolt against the Canadian Government.²⁰ Moreover, he constantly inveighed against the clergy and hierarchy, because he understood that the Métis would not follow him as long as their esteem for the missionaries continued undiminished.²¹ He even went so far as to urge the Indians to rise, however much he was aware of the probably disastrous consequences.

20 Even his public oath not to revolt taken on December 10, 1884, he set aside in March, 1885. Cf. Le Chevallier, Jules, Aux Prises avec la Tourmente, Extrait de la Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa, p. 21-22.

21 Father Henri Leduc, Vicar General of the Saint Albert Diocese, maintained that Riel had sought clergy support in the Fall of 1884 and was displeased at not getting it. He then endeavored to separate the Métis and Indians from the clergy, and told them that the clergy had gone in league with the Hudson's Bay Company to oppress them by selling them and their lands to the Government. They could make their own decisions, said Riel, without advice from the clergy. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Montreal, June 4, 1885, p. 1, col. 3

It seems probable that this was done at Dumont's urging, but the written requests to the Indian chiefs were signed by Riel and served as damaging evidence at his trial.²²

Nonetheless, Louis Riel possessed great personal piety. God and the saints were constantly in his thoughts and on his lips. He was known to pray with great fervor for long periods of time. After the suppression of the Saskatchewan Rising, Riel's mother, who was still living at Saint Vital, maintained that a large nail in her house had been sent to Riel by Pius IX in recognition of his "conduct and services" during the Red River Rising. It was said to be from the true Cross. From the Holy Father Riel was also said to have received a medal which he always wore.²³ Yet on March 25, 1885, the day before the opening encounter at Duck Lake this same Riel publicly renounced Catholicism. Moreover, he was quite convinced that this was in keeping with his own piety. Father André, perhaps too impulsive and headstrong in his judgment of the Métis leader, gave it as

22 Le Chevallier, Jules, Batoche, Montreal, Dominicaine, 1941, p. 50 and Aux Prises avec la Tourments, p. 21-22; also exhibits 8, 9, 11, and 18, "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 227-228, 229, 232. Auguste-Henri Trémaudan maintains that Dumont was the great unifler and leader of the Indians. -- Cf. his Histoire de la Nation Métisse dans l'Ouest Canadien, Montreal, Levesque, 1935, p. 280-282.

23 Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., June 12, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

his ultimate decision that Riel was sincere in his piety.

Le contact continuel que j'avais avec lui m'avait habitué à ses habitudes extraordinaires, qui avaient leur origine dans le manque de balance de ses facultés intellectuelles plutôt que dans la simulation affectée d'une fausse piété pour tromper les simples et les ignorants, comme je l'avais cru d'abord avant de le connaître. Le pauvre homme était la victime d'hallucinations qui obscurcissaient son esprit et lui ôtaient le jugement dans les choses religieuses; car il n'y a pas le moindre doute dans mon esprit qu'il se croyait vraiment prophète et qu'il pensait recevoir des communications d'un esprit familier. Il m'a solennellement déclaré au moment de mourir qu'il avait agi en toute bonne foi et sans aucun dessein de tromper en faisant passer les rêves de son cerveau malade pour des révélations.²⁴

The missionaries of the Northwest had to deal with the practical problem of permitting or refusing the Sacraments to Riel. Their decision was that they could be given him; whatever signs of unworthiness he showed could be attributed to a mind upset by the remembrance of past personal misfortunes; for such he was not held to be responsible.²⁵

Relations between Riel and Dumont pose an interesting problem. It is not improbable that Riel never wanted recourse

²⁴ André to Taché, Nov. 16, 1885, Archives de la Maison générale des Oblats de Marie-Immaculée, B. 2, Saint-Albert, quoted in Le Chevallier, Aux Prises avec la Tourmente, p. 53, fn. 118.

²⁵ Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 56. At Riel's trial Father Andre testified as follows: "Upon politics and religion he [Riel] was no longer the same man. It would seem as if there were two men in him, he lost all control of himself upon these questions." -- "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 146. Cf. also Blake, Edward, Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 247a.

to arms but that he was pushed on by Dumont.²⁶ Possibly the dream of an independent Métis empire in the Northwest was conceived by Dumont long before the recall of Riel from Montana, and possibly Riel could be used to further this cause, for he was educated whereas Dumont was not. At all events a much more effective campaign could have been waged against the Canadian forces had Riel not constantly restrained the vigorous Métis warrior.²⁷

Finally, we must consider the supposed venality of Louis Riel. At the beginning of December, 1884, he began to speak of his need for money, especially as due from the Canadian government for services rendered in Manitoba and for property rightfully his under the "Métis title".²⁸

26 In Fort Benton, Montana Territory, during mid-June of 1885, Dumont maintained that the Metis Rising was principally of his own doing. Riel, he asserted, was for peace. -- Cf. letter dated June 18 at Fort Benton from W. A. Cameron to his father-in-law, Charles Roy, in Hull, Quebec, given in a press dispatch from Ottawa, Gazette, Mont., July 3, 1885, p. 1, col. 4. Despite this assertion of Dumont's from his position of safety in exile it is possible that he was then striving to save his friend from the gallows.

27 A certain W. A. Cameron of Fort Benton, Montana Territory, asserted in a private letter of June 18, 1885, that he had spoken to Riel in Montana the previous year, and that Riel had told him "his business was strictly private, and that he was not an advocate of resorting to arms". -- Cameron to Roy, Gazette, Mont., July 3, 1885, p. 1, col. 4.

28 This concern was not altogether new nor hitherto concealed. He had mentioned it when he agreed to leave Montana, June 5, 1884. -- Cf. C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 34.

His claims for indemnity were: he had never been paid a salary for ruling the Red River Settlement for several months as President of the Provisional Government; he had received nothing for organizing and leading the Métis against the Fenians in 1871; he had never received his 240 acres of land in Manitoba to which every Métis was entitled by the Manitoba Act; since Winnipeg grew so rapidly such property in 1885 would be worth many times the original value. Furthermore, Riel had been deprived of income from such property throughout many prosperous years.²⁹ Thus he concluded that Canada owed him at least \$35,000, perhaps more.³⁰ Two days after taking, in Father André's presence, the oath not to revolt, Riel asked that missionary on December 12, 1884, to

29 Testimony of Thomas Eastwood Jackson, "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 113; Polémiques et Documents touchant le Nord-Ouest et l'Exécution de Louis Riel, Montreal, 1886, p. 145a-b.

30 A letter to the L'Etendard, Montreal, December 5, 1885, signed "Un Qui Sait" stated that Riel used to recall that Cartier had offered him exactly \$35,000 for his personal Métis claims. "...il se rappela que Cartier lui avait offert \$35,000 pour ses droits comme Métis. Si on me les accorde, se dit-il, alors ma patrie est sauvée, je vais faire instruire des métis qui m'aideront dans mon oeuvre." -- Cf. Polémiques, p. 146b. Saint Paul's Canadien wrote as follows about Riel's desire for money: "Riel a, tres justement exigé du gouvernement canadien la somme de \$35,000, a titre d'indemnité qu'il s'engageait à verser entre les mains des métis, ses pauvres compatriotes pillés, volés, dépouillés, de leurs terres, de leurs foyers, de leurs écoles, de leurs chapelles et lentement exterminés par Sir John A. Macdonald & Cie." -- quoted in Polémiques, p. 147a (italics in original).

obtain this money for him from the federal government. Apparently he had received what he considered a "sign" from Heaven. Henceforth he would not labor for the Métis by political action but rather with the pen. He would return to the States and found a newspaper to champion the cause of the Métis nation. It would be another tool in the constitutional and legal effort to secure redress of Métis grievances.³¹ His indemnity from the Dominion Government he would use as capital to get the paper started. The exotic character of this plan is but a reflection of the confused mental state of the Métis leader at the time.

It was even charged by some³² that Riel was ready to abandon the Métis and their grievances should the Dominion Government grant him the requested indemnity on condition of his withdrawal from the Northwest. Father André testified at Riel's trial that the latter had declared on December 23, 1884, during his meeting with D. H. McDowall, representative

³¹ At Riel's trial Charles Nolin testified: "He [Riel] said also, that if he got the money he would go to the United States and start a paper..." -- C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 125. This plan to found a paper was also asserted by "Un Qui Sait" in his letter to L'Etendard, Dec. 5, 1885, and the paper's editor left no doubt of his acceptance of its truth. "Ceux qui sont au fait des 'plans' de Riel, savent, que la fondation d'un journal était son rêve..." -- Quoted in Polémiques, p. 146b. Cf. also Laurier, Wilfred, Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 181a.

³² For example the Montreal Gazette in an editorial of November 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

for the district of Lorne: "... if I am satisfied the half-breeds will be."³³ However, it is very probable that when Riel uttered these words he was simply using the language of the lawyer, i.e., "when counsel is satisfied, client is satisfied".³⁴ At the time he spoke them (thirteen days after his oath not to revolt) his intention appears to have been not to abandon the Métis and their cause for money but rather to champion them in another way, i.e., by founding a newspaper, perhaps in the United States or even in Quebec. Finally the statement of Riel's mother at Saint Vital can also be brought to bear. With regard to the Saskatchewan Rising she was quoted as saying: "I know he was not working for money in this case."³⁵

This then is the man who will create so much friction between Ontario and Quebec again. During the course of hostilities further aspects of his personality and career will become evident, but now the proximate causes of the Saskatchewan Rising call for attention.

³³ "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 147.

³⁴ Polémiques, p. 146a.

³⁵ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., June 12, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

Proximate Causes

In the Northwest of 1884-1885 there were four influential forces all striving to control the course of events. Some endeavored to use one or more of the others for their own ends. The lines of demarcation between them are not clear and distinct, but they seem to be these:

1. Prince Albert business men; 2. Riel; 3. Dumont; and 4. the missionaries (Father Alexis André in particular). Something will be said about each, and then, the proximate causes proper will be listed.

The business element of Prince Albert was made up of land speculators, small merchants, Hudson's Bay Company interests, as well as a fringe of less designing Scotch and English Métis and white settlers. Politically, the majority were Liberals, i.e., members of the Opposition Party, while the Conservatives were but a small group. The fundamental thinking of this business element about the course of events seems to have been this: The Liberals are anxious to embarrass the Government. The agitation will accomplish this. Local Conservatives do not mind, because additional police in the Northwest means more business. If shooting begins, the Métis

will be the victims,³⁶ and Riel is a made-to-order scape goat. The undeniable fact is that the political agitation of 1884 was initiated not by the French Métis, but rather by white settlers and English language Métis in the Prince Albert area. Overtures were made to the French farther west at Saint Laurent and Batoche. Moreover, the very motion to recall Riel from Montana was made by Andrew Spence of Prince Albert, and it was from whites at this settlement that most of the funds were raised to pay for the expenses of Riel's return.³⁷ From a report received by Riel from his future Secretary, William Henry Jackson, it would appear that the behind-the-scenes "wire-pullers" were Prince Albert Liberals.³⁸

36 One of the Métis leaders, Michael Dumas, escaped after the Rising with Gabriel Dumont to Fort Assiniboine, Montana Territory. Stopping briefly in Saint Paul, Minnesota, after the Riel trial, he made clear that the Métis were pushed into the Rising by English agents. "He claimed the half-breeds had no intention of going to war, but were provoked and forced into it by English agents." -- News account derived from Saint Paul Pioneer Press, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 25, 1885, p. 5, col. 4.

37 Prime Minister Macdonald maintained in Parliament that it was the white land speculators at Prince Albert who furnished Dumont with money to bring Riel from Montana to begin the Rising. -- Cf. news account, Gazette, Mont., July 8, 1885, p. 2, col. 4; also Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 41.

38 Jackson to Riel, July 23, 1884, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 31-33. Jackson was also Secretary of the English language Settler's Union. He himself, his brother, and his father were all Liberals and opponents of Macdonald. -- Cf. Stanley, George F. G., The Birth of Western Canada, London, Longmans, 1936, p. 300.

This conclusion was made by Amédée Forget of the Northwest Council in reporting to Lieutenant-Governor Edgar Dewdney a Métis meeting of September 5, 1884.

"L'agitation n'est pas aussi bruyante qu'au début, mais elle n'en est pas moins sérieuse. Elle embrasse tous les Métis français et anglais et un grand nombre de colons blancs sans scrupules de Prince Albert. Ceux-ci sont politiquement les adversaires du parti au pouvoir et seraient enchantés de créer une situation qui pourrait mettre le gouvernement dans l'embarras."³⁹

What gave rise to much of the desire to embarrass the Conservative Ministry was the deep disappointment of many white business men who had bought up a good deal of land in the region of Prince Albert with the expectation that its value would increase shortly. The original route planned for the Canadian Pacific railway would take it through Prince Albert. The speculators in land bought for a low price property whose value would be raised by the railroad. Then the railway route was changed to a more southerly area. Thus the speculators had their hopes for profits dashed. The perfidy of the Conservatives was blamed.⁴⁰

Other business men, even if not Liberal, stood to gain if more potential customers appeared in Prince Albert and elsewhere. Father André warned about such persons as early as July 7, 1884, in a letter to Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney.

³⁹ Quoted in Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 52.

⁴⁰ Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 12, 39.

A good many persons will urge you to send here 200 or 300 policemen. They will be glad to see Government go to expenses, because that will be so much money put in their pockets. Nothing so far requires to send one man more to keep the peace of the country.⁴¹

This greedy element was disappointed in July of 1884 when rioting for which they had hoped did not occur. By a pretense of not wanting Riel to speak they predicted rioting as a result; but this would bring many police, and so, increase business. But Riel spoke so disarmingly that he won the support of the English language Métis and the majority of white settlers. Father André has recounted the disappointment of these schemers in a second letter to Dewdney, July 21, 1884. He says that one of the reasons the people of Prince Albert became so enthusiastic for Riel was that they wished

to defeat the intrigues of a certain clique of men here at Prince Albert [...] Today those men have failed, and have seen their expectation to see a riot fall down, and they are greatly disappointed and will [...] represent Riel as bound to disturb the peace of the country;⁴²

Despite these warnings and a previous one from Dewdney himself⁴³ Prime Minister Macdonald himself fell into the trap.

⁴¹ André to Dewdney, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 31.

⁴² Same to same, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 35.

⁴³ On June 14, 1884, Dewdney had written the Prime Minister: "...at Prince Albert there is a certain clique which would like nothing better than to see a row so that money might be brought among them." -- Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 4, p. 11.

Instead of acting for the immediate redress of Métis grievances he took the first overt step in a policy of repression in September, 1884. He privately requested Donald A. Smith of the Hudson's Bay Company to lease Company buildings at Fort Carlton to accommodate additional Mounted Police. Such a move was calculated to have the twofold harmful effect of showing the Métis that Ottawa intended repressive measures instead of the just settlement of their difficulties on the one hand, and of providing more profits for Northwest business interests on the other.

For its part the Hudson's Bay Company would assuredly profit if large bodies of police or soldiers should be moved into the Northwest. It is a fact that most of the Government purchases of supplies were made from the Company once the Rising began. In reporting to the Under-Secretary of State, May 3, 1886, the Deputy Minister of Militia and Defense, Eugene C. Panet, declared that no purchasing agents were employed by his Department throughout the Northwest Campaign of 1885 because "...the purchasing was done by the Hudson Bay Company."⁴⁴

Caught up in the agitation and perhaps not realizing what it would lead to were the English language Métis and small white tradesmen and settlers in the Prince Albert area.

⁴⁴ C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 80k, p. 25.

These were not without sympathy for the plight of the French Métis, but they balked from anything that meant danger for themselves. Behind them, of course, and possibly to a certain extent conniving with them were the larger business interests of Prince Albert. Major L. N. F. Crozier of the Mounted Police sensed the situation as early as January 7, 1885, when he wrote to Lieutenant-Governor Edgar Dewdney:

...his [Riel's] very presence here causes a feeling of uneasiness among the half-breeds and Indians, which, as you know, is taken advantage of by others who are neither half-breeds nor Indians, to further their own schemes and ends.⁴⁵

At the Métis trials after the Rising Charles Nolin and Father Vital Fourmond both testified in the same strain.

Many English half-breeds and whites also encouraged the poor French half-breeds up to the culminating point and then cautiously left them to their fate...⁴⁶

...the poor ignorant half-breeds were encouraged on from step to step in the late uprising till their false white pretended friends and their English fellow half-breeds left them on the verge of rebellion and bloodshed...⁴⁷

The second main influential force at work in the Northwest was the person of Louis Riel. His mad and unrealistic

⁴⁵ Crozier to Dewdney, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 29

⁴⁶ Deposition of Nolin, "Queen vs. Arcand et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Deposition of Father Fourmond, "Queen vs. Monkman et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 22-23.

realpolitik had for goal the humbling of the Macdonald Government and the welfare of the Métis. He would be forceful and truculent and drive a hard bargain. Unless the Métis had such a leader to take such a stand, they would continue to be neglected and forgotten by Ottawa. He would make a show of force, but without bloodshed. The clergy were too much in sympathy with the Conservative Ministry, and so they must be circumvented. Growing Riel anti-clericalism agreed with and perhaps was inspired by English language influences at Prince Albert, who had their own reasons for provoking an outbreak.

The third main influential force was the person of Gabriel Dumont. He had taken no active part in the Red River Rising, although he had offered Riel at the time the assistance of 500 men. Even at the age of twenty-five, as a vigorous man of action, he was the acknowledged leader of the French Métis, especially on the buffalo hunts. In fact as early as July of 1875 Lawrence Clarke, the Hudson's Bay Company Factor at Fort Carlton, had complained to the Governor of Manitoba that Dumont had been conducting a little government of his own in the Northwest Territory. This was because he forced conformity to the customary rules of the hunt on

some who had undertaken to violate them.^{47a}

Dumont had understood clearly that what was happening in Manitoba could very easily happen farther West. Thus he concluded that the Métis must unite with the Indians and all Indians with each other if they wanted to withstand the oncoming white man. Even Crees and Blackfeet, long standing enemies, he succeeded somewhat in uniting. He developed a vision of a Métis-Indian empire in the Northwest. From time to time he would visit the various Indian tribes in order to spread the gospel of unity. Moreover, he had taken the lead in forwarding to the Canadian Government numerous petitions for the redress of Métis grievances. However, in 1884 when the English language Métis and white colonists from the Prince Albert area with their Settler's Union sought the support of the French Métis of the Saint Laurent area, Dumont realized that perhaps his lack of education and his illiteracy were a handicap to his leadership. He remembered Riel and his successful work in Manitoba. Riel was educated, was familiar with the East, was sympathetic with the Métis, and so, a good deal more qualified than he for the work of

^{47a} According to John A. Kerr, a Fort Garry prisoner during the Red River Rising, Dumont inflicted punishment on one of his band in March, 1875, in upholding the "Law of the Plains". A warrant for assault was issued but never executed. Cf. letter of Kerr to Mail and Empire, Toronto, Apr. 1, 1935, p. 6, col. 7. For another view cf. Williams, Fred, "March Was Fateful for the Northwest", same, March 7, 1935.

negotiation. He himself was a warrior and a man of action.⁴⁸

The fourth influential force was that of the missionaries, whose Superior in the Carlton District was Father Alexis André, a native Breton who had come to the Northwest as a missionary in 1865 following four years of similar work in Dakota Territory. First and foremost the missionaries were obliged to prevent bloodshed. For this they worked constantly. It was all too clear to them that their beloved Métis would be all but destroyed in any conflict with the forces of a modern state. Armed struggle must be avoided at all costs. Métis and Indians could not hope to prevent white civilization from advancing to the Pacific. The best they could do would be to adjust themselves to the inevitable as well as possible.

Unfortunately for the French Métis and Riel there seems to have existed, albeit unconsciously, a certain "Missionaries-Conservative axis" in political thinking. The majority of the missionaries were natives of Quebec, a Conservative stronghold. During the life time of Georges-Etienne Cartier and afterwards the Conservative Party and John Macdonald had secured by and large the well-being of that province. Liberals and Rouges did not have the support of the Quebec hierarchy. Good missionaries in the West could not

⁴⁸ Trémaudan, Histoire de la Nation Métisse, p. 279-287.

support them either.

What do the missionaries find happening in the Valley of the Saskatchewan? Liberals at Prince Albert are endeavoring to embarrass the Conservative Ministry of Macdonald and to topple it if possible. They encourage an agitation which is reaching out to include their own French Métis.⁴⁹ They are endeavoring to turn the Métis against their priests. They have sponsored the return of Louis Riel to be a thorn in the side of the Ottawa Cabinet. Indeed, they are pushing the ignorant and childlike Métis along a path that can lead only to disaster while they (the Prince Albert schemers) remain safely in the background.

The upshot of this situation is that the missionaries are led to a too hasty condemnation of Louis Riel. In this way they played into the hands of the Orangemen still seeking revenge for the death of "Brother" Scott in 1870. Instead of appreciating his growing insanity and shielding him, or at least remaining silent, they made public their condemnation of his anti-clericalism and eventual apostacy. Bishop Vital J. Grandin of Saint Albert necessarily depended upon them as his chief sources of information, and he too spoke out in denunciation of the mentally deranged Métis chief. The bishops of the East took up the hue and cry, and the end

⁴⁹ P. de M., L'Oeuvre Véridique de Louis Riel, p. 127-128.

result was that the Orangemen were enabled to press for the hanging of Riel using as their most effective weapons the condemnations of the missionaries themselves and hierarchy of Riel's own Church. There are times when silence is much wiser than talk.

Whatever his zeal and success as a missionary Father André appears to have been a headstrong and impulsive man unwilling to brook any opposition. With the naive and child-like Métis such qualities were probably an advantage, but Louis Riel was an educated man and much more the equal of Father André than any other Métis. Perhaps this fact could have been recognized by the autocratic missionary.

In regard to the proximate causes of the Rising in particular, mention must be made of the hardships and creeping starvation caused by the disappearance of the great buffalo herds that had figured so prominently in the Métis and Indian economy for so long. The suffering which this caused was pointed out by Lawrence Clarke, the Hudson's Bay Company Factor at Prince Albert, May 20, 1884, in a report to his superior at Winnipeg which was forwarded to the Government at Ottawa.

These men are not farmers, merely cultivating small patches of land little larger than kitchen gardens. They live by hunting and freighting. Their occupation as hunters was ended by the disappearance of the buffalo and there is not sufficient overland freighting going on in the country to afford labor to a third

of their number, hence they are getting poorer year by year.⁵⁰

Immediately prior to the Rising two or three bad harvests had increased the misery in the Valley of the Saskatchewan. New grown shoots of wheat and vegetables were gnawed by worms. Then followed a premature frost. The prices the Hudson's Bay Company was willing to pay for furs and pelts were, in the estimate of the Métis, too low. Commercial stagnation set in largely because there was not sufficient freighting to occupy all the Métis (whose numbers had been swelling from numerous migrations) willing and able to engage in it. The severity of the Winter (1884-1885) and shortage of food caused many horses engaged in this work to perish.⁵¹ The Plains Crees Indians were close to starvation.

In the political sphere there was on the part of the Ottawa Government an undeniable distrust of the Métis race, customs, and language. At all events the representatives of that Government in the Northwest had little or no tolerance or sympathy for the natives of the region. For the most part they could understand neither French nor Cree and in some instances did not bother to provide themselves with an interpreter.

⁵⁰ Clarke to Grahame, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 27-28. This report appears without signature or date in the Sessional Papers, but these are supplied in the original. -- Cf. Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 389-397.

⁵¹ Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 53.

The reports they filed with Ottawa were prejudiced and one-sided, so that the Ministry did not have a correct view of the real situation and the extent of the unrest in the Northwest.⁵²

Furthermore, the French Métis would have appreciated a land agent of their own race at Batoche, but Ottawa was content that they should make the fifty mile journey to the English settlement at Prince Albert and do their business with the land office there. The Métis had complained of discrimination against them in the matter of awarding contracts for the erection of telegraphic wires in the Northwest. Others apparently had more influence on the Government.⁵³ This situation seems to have been rectified in the early part of 1885, however, for Charles Nolin, Riel's cousin, was offered such a contract.

The failure of the Government to grant scrip for those who had not obtained it in Manitoba was another proximate cause of the Saskatchewan Rising. Since they were of Indian blood the Métis expected this to be guaranteed by Section 31 of the Manitoba Act. By one delay after another Ottawa

⁵² Begg, Alexander, History of the North-West, Toronto, 1895, Vol. 3, p. 182, 183-184, 188. In his April Manifesto Riel claimed that some of these local officials appointed by Ottawa had been dishonest. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 20, 1885, p. 1, col. 4.

⁵³ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 31, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

caused the Métis to despair of any eventual action in the matter of scrip. The need for a census, a change of Ministry, then upon the return of the Conservatives Macdonald's mistake of taking personally the portfolio of the Interior Department, which he neglected, more silence and indifference to an almost limitless number of petitions, memorials, and letters from every quarter of the Northwest that scrip be granted, all contributed to a mounting anger with a Government that could be so callous toward the just demands of its subjects.

No report was apparently made by any Minister, or any action taken until, under the pressure of imminent rebellion, the Government hastily appointed a commission and rushed scrip to the rebellious métis in March 1885.⁵⁴

The insecurity of the natives of the Northwest was increased by the failure of the Government to grant patents for land. Here again inexcusable governmental ineptitude loomed large. The Métis found themselves bound by the requirements of a homestead law, in reality designed for new immigrants, when they themselves were the original inhabitants

⁵⁴ Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p. 250. By this latter date the issuing of scrip wherewith the Métis could buy land for a dollar per acre was a definite mistake. "It is generally conceded here that the system of issuing scrip to half-breeds is a mistake, for two reasons. First, it is parted with for a merely nominal sum to crafty speculators, who are following right along in the wake of the commissioners, and, secondly, it places means in the hands of doubtful people to assist the rebels, which they could not under other circumstances obtain." -- Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 11, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

of the area having title to their holdings by native right, by improvements made upon them by their own labor, and by shedding their blood in defense of them against Indian attack. Constitutional means were used: meetings of protest, petitions, letters of entreaty. Response was hardly more than verbal. Until August of 1881 the Métis of the South Saskatchewan could not even register their claims, let alone be issued patents, for the Prince Albert land office was not established until this latter date. On January 25, 1882, Lawrence Clarke of the Northwest Council, pointed out to Lindsay Russell, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Ottawa:

A strong feeling of regret[...]⁵⁵ was expressed that the law debarred the pioneer settlers who had performed all settlement duties[...] from obtaining immediate patents for their lots.⁵⁵

Many Métis newly come from Manitoba squatted in good faith on lands allotted to the Hudson's Bay Company or set aside by law for schools. Owing to the incomplete state of the surveying they could not know that such land was not vacant, and in many instances they had erected buildings thereon. Anxiety for their holdings increased among the Métis while effective Government action was all but non-existent. Yet the entire amount of acreage to satisfy Métis grievances was trifling in proportion to the amount still unoccupied. The

⁵⁵ Clarke to Russell, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45b, p. 47.

The Government, as a matter of pure expediency to maintain the peace, could well have parted with it, and avoided a rebellion. A certain W. O. Jackson writing from Fort Qu'Appelle, September 3, 1884, to Sir Hector Langevin in regard to half-breed matters pointed out that the total number of acreage which would settle all claims was 150,000, a relatively small sum.⁵⁶

Again, along the South Saskatchewan the Government made the same surveying mistake as it had done previously on the banks of the Red and the Assiniboine. The French Métis, and indeed many of the English language Métis, wanted narrow and deep plots fronting on the river. They wished them to be either ten chains wide by two miles deep or twenty chains wide by one mile deep. This was traditional. It made easier the watering of the livestock, and met the communal and social requirements of a genuine settlement. Narrow plots with river frontage were officially established by government surveys of 1877 and 1878, but only in the districts about Prince Albert and Saint Laurent, which were already settled by that time. The square system of surveying into townships, which the Dominion Government had adopted from the United States, was then established all around these settled areas. However,

⁵⁶ Jackson to Langevin, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 350; also Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p. 250-255.

many of the Métis did not give up the hunting and nomadic life until after that date. These plus an ever swelling number of Métis from Manitoba merely squatted on land already surveyed into townships but staked it out according to the traditional Métis method, that is, narrow lots with river frontage. From these holdings they would not move. It would have been well-advised expediency for the Government to have accepted the fact, to have granted the Métis legal title to these lands, and to have said no more about it. From their own standpoint the Métis felt that the land of the Northwest was their patrimony. This was the system they, the native inhabitants, wanted. Why should Ottawa complain?⁵⁷

The native Métis of the Northwest resented the fact that they themselves played so small a part in the governing of their own country. They found themselves forced to do the bidding of agents and emissaries from the East who were nothing but strangers to them. This was hardly a wise Government policy. As early as 1878 the Métis had complained of this

⁵⁷ Begg, *History of the Northwest*, Vol. 3, p. 183; Stanley, *Birth of Western Canada*, p. 255-259; C.S.P., 186, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45b, p. 40. Major L. N. F. Crozier of the Mounted Police drew attention to the need for immediate Government action. "The matter of the claims of the half-breeds for scrip, and as to the manner of dividing and sub-dividing the land upon which they have already settled, imperatively requires the immediate attention of the Government, and that decisions at once be given for or against the wishes of those interested." -- Crozier to Dewdney, January 7, 1885, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 29.

situation in a petition to the Lieutenant-Governor.

Resolved, therefore, that an humble petition be forwarded to His Excellency the Governor-General, praying that the two members of the Council remaining to be appointed under the authority of the Act of 1875 and its amendments, may be selected from amongst the old residents of the country, and that at least one of them be a French half-breed, and that in order to do full and perfect justice to your petitioners' race, provision may be made for the immediate appointment of a person of French origin as stipendiary magistrate.⁵⁸

Riel himself was offered a position on the Northwest Council before the outbreak, but he regarded this as an eleventh hour gesture unworthy of his consideration.⁵⁹ Without education and illiterate it would have been difficult to locate French Métis in responsible posts of local government, however.

Another less important proximate cause of the Rising was what was said to be excessive taxation on the poor Métis. It was particularly irksome for a Northwest native of long standing to discover that he could not continue to cut down trees on the rear of his narrow strip plot of land without first paying a timber tax. This complaint was included in Riel's April, 1885, Manifesto.⁶⁰ In its Detailed

⁵⁸ Dumont et al. to Laird, Feb. 1, 1878, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45b, p. 29.

⁵⁹ Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 51.

⁶⁰ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 20, 1885, p. 1, col. 4.

Report of December 14, 1885, the Interior Department issued its rejection of this complaint.⁶¹

After his surrender Riel suggested another proximate cause of the Rising. He argued that the Métis were driven to resistance by the arrogant practices of the Mounted Police and the Hudson's Bay Company officials.

He [Riel] was forced to fight, he said, by the mounted police and Hudson's Bay Company officers. They tyrannized over the half-breeds and abused their power.⁶²

Still another proximate cause of the 1885 Saskatchewan Rising was the rapidly deteriorating Indian situation. Because of a business recession during the years 1883, 1884, 1885, the Government pursued a policy of retrenchment in the expenditures, among others, of the Indian Department. Such parsimony came at a time when the Red man had not yet achieved success in the settled life, but was still in great need of Government assistance. The new white immigrants scorned the Indians, and this, of course, was resented. Only gradually did the aborigines realize fully that their lands would not come back to them, that they had been sold and not just borrowed. The Indians' first attempts at agriculture were a good deal less than successful. Consequently, they too easily

⁶¹ Epitome of Parliamentary Documents in Connection with the North-West Rebellion of 1885, Ottawa, 1886, p. 344.

⁶² Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 27, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

concluded that the white man had deceived them by predictions that they would profit more from farming than from hunting. Beginning in January of 1882 with their unsuccessful attempt to arrest and punish a minor Blackfeet chief, Bull Elk, the Mounted Police suffered a growing loss of prestige among the native tribes. Instances of resistance and defiance increased. Furthermore, around the Cree, Big Bear, there gathered all the irreconcilables of other bands who had accepted treaties. "Divide et impera" was Government policy with the Indians, and Big Bear saw the need for unity. He knew the white man could not be overcome by force, but he did want to drive as hard a bargain as possible. He found it difficult to control his young men, and several incidents could easily have erupted into open Indian-white warfare. Poundmaker was the other outstanding chief of the Saskatchewan area. He was more peaceably inclined than Big Bear, but he too realized that the Blackfeet of southern Alberta under Crowfoot had obtained a favorable treaty from the Government because they had given the Government trouble. Poundmaker also found it difficult to control his warlike young braves.⁶³

When Riel arrived in the Valley of the Saskatchewan in July of 1884 Indian agitation had progressed far in the direction of unity and common cause among them. Big Bear and

⁶³ Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p. 269-294; Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 26, 35.

other chiefs interviewed Riel at Duck Lake at the end of that month. The Indians thus became aware of Métis discontent, and Riel saw that he was able to lead the Indian agitation as well.

The Métis explanation for rebelling has been well summed up by Stanley.

The justice of the métis case cannot but be admitted. They were the first settlers in the North-West Territories. Some had abandoned their nomadic life before 1872 and squatted upon small plots of land. Others settled at a later date. In these instances the métis considered it a grievance to be obliged to enter their holdings as homesteads and wait until the expiration of three years for their patents. Moreover, those who remained on the prairie until forced to settle down by the economic transformation of the country, regarded the North-West as their patrimony.⁶⁴

The Agitation

The constitutional struggle by legal and peaceful means to secure basic citizen rights in the Northwest Territory began sporadically, then spread in every direction, and finally increased in intensity to a point where the Métis and Indians concluded that patience had ceased to be a virtue. Although armed resistance and conflict were confined to the area of the North and South branches of the Saskatchewan River, disaffection had spread much further. It went as far west as Edmonton and Saint Albert and as far south as the

⁶⁴ Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p. 251.

Cypress hills near the American border. Petitions and protests went from English language and French language Métis, from Indians, the clergy, and even from white immigrant settlers, as well as the Lieutenant Governor, from 1873 till the outbreak. The reaction of the Government was a mixture of delay, misunderstanding, neglect, half-hearted attempts, disbelief, and unconcern.⁶⁵

On January 15, 1883, the expenses of two delegates, Daniel Maloney and the Vicar General of Saint Albert, Father Henri Leduc, were defrayed by the natives so that they might go personally to Ottawa to press the case. They conferred with Interior Under-Secretary D. L. McPherson on March 7, and left the Capital on April 23 with assurances only. No concrete results followed.

On January 29, 1884, Prince Albert whites and Scotch Métis began to seek common unity with the French Métis of Saint Laurent. On March 24, Dumont, speaking for the French, pledged their support. On April 28 an all-Métis meeting between the Saint Laurent and Prince Albert settlements adopted Seven Resolutions to be presented as a Petition to the Government. Andrew Spence, an English language Métis, suggested Louis Riel as leader of their agitation. The assembly agreed with enthusiasm. On May 6 another all-Métis

⁶⁵ C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, papers 45a-45b, p. 3-48.

meeting agreed, despite some English opposition, to seek Riel's help in the proper drafting of resolutions. Two French and one English delegate were appointed to consult with Riel and, if they thought proper, to invite him to Saint Laurent. Whites and Métis would pay the cost of the journey.

Thus the web was spun. Anti-Ministry elements at Prince Albert would use Riel to embarrass it. Macdonald had been given plenty of difficulty by Riel in the previous decade. He would certainly succeed in doing so again. The Catholic clergy on the other hand were dismayed. The appearance of Riel boded no good.

At one of the trials following the Rising the Conservative lawyer W. V. MacLise made the unsubstantiated assertion that Riel's recall to the Northwest had been plotted two years previously. He claimed that Riel's cousin, Napoléon Nault, had met him in Manitoba in 1883, and that the two of them had planned that Dumont and the Métis should arouse an artificial demand for Riel's return.⁶⁶ Such an assertion presumes that it was the French Métis who were responsible for Riel's recall, whereas the fact is that whites and English language Métis

⁶⁶ "Queen vs. Parenteau and 25 others", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52, p. 371.

took the lead in effecting his return.⁶⁷

Even before the arrival of the delegation at Saint Peter's Mission in Montana Territory, where he had been teaching in a Jesuit Industrial School, the Métis chief was aware of a desire in the Northwest for his return. A certain "N.C.W." had written him on May 18, 1884, telling him of strong English language and Indian support, of the plight of the Métis, of the advanced state of the agitation, and reminding him of past wrongs inflicted on him by the Canadian Government.

...your banishment involved that of your whole people, and where is the half-breed who does not feel the blow of your banishment and is not ready to defend you to the last drop of his blood? The whole race is calling for you!⁶⁸

Two days later Maxime Lepine, a Saint Laurent Métis, using the initials "T.L." wrote Riel to the same effect.

We elect you as our chief. We all cry out to you to come to our assistance, knowing that you alone are able to defend us. Not only do the half-breeds in general beseech you to listen to their prayer, but the people of the other races, who do not know you,

⁶⁷ This charge seems to have been made originally by Brother Pierre Marie Piquet, a Northwest missionary, in an undated letter for publication. "L'Histoire de ce mouvement nous montre Napoléon Neault [sic], commerçant métis, se concertant avec Riel, dans une entrevue qu'il eut avec lui à la Rivière-Rouge, dans l'été de 1883. Ce Neault, une fois arrivé dans la Saskatchewan, n'a eu rien de plus pressé, de concert avec Nolin, Maxime Lepine et Gabriel Dumont, que de réunir la première assemblée qui donna naissance au mouvement politique dont Riel devait être l'âme." -- Le Véritable Riel, Montreal, 1887, p. 28.

⁶⁸ C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43h, p. 1-2.

beg us to express the same wishes on their behalf. Be good enough, therefore, to give a cordial reception to the delegation sent to you.⁶⁹

On May 19, 1884, the official delegates of the Saskatchewan Valley Métis departed on horseback for Montana to seek out Louis Riel. They were two French Métis, Gabriel Dumont and Michael Dumas, and one English Métis, James Isbister. Another French Métis, Moïse Ouellette accompanied them at his own expense.

On the day following a full report of what had been happening was sent to his superior in Winnipeg, James A. Grahame, by Lawrence Clarke, Prince Albert Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company and a member of the Northwest Council. His report was forwarded to the Ministry in Ottawa by Grahame on May 29, 1884. Clarke left no doubt that he thought repressive measures should be used against the Métis, and he was fearfully aware of the danger of an Indian uprising. He urged the confiscation of the arms and ammunition of the defunct "Saskatchewan Military organization" which were scattered about the country. All Métis, Clarke reported, did not favor breaking the law, but many who participated in the Red River Rising apparently did. He was of the opinion, and claimed that Father André was also, that Riel should have been arrested at the border in order to allow better influences

⁶⁹ May 20, 1884, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43h, p. 2-3.

to operate on the Métis.⁷⁰

On June 4, 1884, the delegates arrived at Saint Peter's Mission and invited Riel to the Northwest to lead their agitation. His answer in the affirmative was given the day following in writing.⁷¹ He would take his young family with him but hoped to return to his teaching at Saint Peter's in September following.

On June 10, the day of the departure of the Riel family with the delegates, Bishop Vital J. Grandin of Saint Albert let it be known that he deplored the decision of the Métis to make Riel their leader. This was an indication of the clerical opposition he might expect later during the remainder of the agitation and during the Rising.⁷² Father André also rebuked the Métis for their action, as Prime Minister Macdonald was to learn: "...Pere André ... pitched into

70 Clarke to Graham, May 20, 1884, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 389-397. "The French half-breeds on the Saskatchewan River, and a section of the English half-breeds living between the two rivers have been holding meetings at Saint Laurent at which meetings all the members were sworn to secrecy, notwithstanding this, enough has transpired to show that grave trouble will arise in the country unless repressive measures are adopted by the Government." -- same, p. 391.

71 Riel to delegates, June 5, 1885, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 34-35.

72 Grandin to St. Albert Oblates, as quoted in Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 42.

them [Métis] right royally about sending messengers to Riel."⁷³

Three days later the same bishop wrote directly to Prime Minister Macdonald telling him of the role of white land speculators at Prince Albert in separating the French Métis from their priests. At the same time he chastised the Government for their indifference to Métis grievances.

I blame the Half-breeds and did not spare them reproaches, but I will take the liberty to tell Your Honour, with all possible respect that the Canadian Government is also deserving of blame...

How many petitions and complaints were not sent to the Government by the Half-breeds without any notice being taken of them...⁷⁴

Riel arrived at Saint Laurent at the very end of June. For the simple Métis and Indians even, he was already a legendary figure renowned for his exploits in bringing Ottawa "to its knees" in 1870 and securing for Manitoba constitutional safeguards for its native population. His coming was as that of a Messiah to deliver his people. In the enthusiasm of the moment his former Secretary at Red River, Louis Schmidt, now living in the Northwest, wrote to Le Manitoba at Saint Boniface.

On dit que Riel arrive avec sa famille. Que n'a-t-il la bonne idée de se fixer irrévocablement au milieu de nous! Cet homme ne peut faire que du bien à ses compatriotes et il est le seul qui réunirait les

⁷³ Dewdney to Macdonald, June 14, 1884, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 4, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Grandin to Macdonald, June 13, 1884, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 405.

suffrages dans n'importe quelle contestation. Son nom est grand parmi les Métis français et anglais et il est incontestable que son influence bien dirigée leur sera d'un secours immense.⁷⁵

The delegates submitted their report wherein they told of Riel's conviction that he would have to be on the scene personally in order to do effective work for the Métis cause. He also stressed the need for unity in the Northwest in order to exert influence at Ottawa.⁷⁶ Riel acknowledged his satisfaction in being thought worthy to lead his beloved Métis.⁷⁷

Despite his regret that Riel had been brought in Father André quickly changed his opinion and was won over by the moderate words and personal charm of the Métis chief. The missionary's great fear was that the Government would yield to hysteria and adopt some overt measure of repression which would have no other result but to bind all Métis in support of Riel and precipitate open rebellion. Twice in July he wrote Lieutenant-Governor Dewdney to this effect.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Issue of July 17, 1884, as quoted in Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 45-46.

⁷⁶ "Report of the Delegates", C.S.P., Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 33-34.

⁷⁷ "Riel's Answer to Invitation to Come to Saskatchewan", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43h, p. 14-15.

⁷⁸ André to Dewdney, July 7, 1884, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52c, p. 30-31 and Andre to Dewdney, July 21, 1884, C.S.P., 1886, same, p. 35-36.

In the second letter he expressed confidence that the then present excitement would subside and that Riel would be forgotten. Even the English language Métis and white settlers at Prince Albert had been swayed by Riel's speech and manner, and so there was no danger of conflict with them.

Throughout the remainder of the Summer and the Fall a series of public meetings and committee meetings were held preparatory to framing a petition to Ottawa that might have better hope of success than earlier ones.

On September 5, 1884, Bishop Grandin assured a Métis gathering of the support of the Church, but he also let it be known that he would not countenance revolt against constituted authority. At the launching of the Métis Union of Saint Joseph on the twenty-fourth of the same month Riel continued to show amity toward the clergy. However, by November 26 he was railing against the clergy, hierarchy, and Government at the home of Moïse Ouellette. He was known to have done so privately again on December 9. His volte face on December 10 in taking an oath not to revolt and showing deep grief for having lashed out against the clergy is good evidence of his increasing emotional instability and oncoming insanity.⁷⁹ On December 16 the Petition on behalf of Indians,

⁷⁹ Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 56; testimony of Nolin, "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 125.

Métis, and whites was ready. It was forwarded to Secretary of State J. A. Chapleau at Ottawa by W. H. Jackson, Secretary of the Settlers' Union.

The reply of the Ministry was first made to Jackson by Chapleau on January 20, 1885. It made Jackson optimistic.⁸⁰ In a telegram sent not to Riel but to Nolin on January 28 Prime Minister Macdonald promised a Commission to examine Métis grievances. When on February 8 Riel learned of this telegram, he reacted angrily. It was clear to him now that as far as the Dominion Government was concerned he was not the leader and acknowledged chief of the Métis. Riel's pique because of this snub had much to do with his descent into the maelstrom of unreason.⁸¹ Instead of his bringing Ottawa to terms, he found himself being ignored and bypassed. He was not to be in control of events as he had wished. Reality was not conforming with his theories, and so he cried "havoc" mentally and let slip the dogs of war.

In his better moments during February Riel knew that a military campaign against the forces which Canada was able to put in the field was out of the question. But he did want Ottawa to pay attention to him. In his mental confusion he

80 Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 58.

81 For example his reported reaction to the Government's snub: "Dans quarante jours Ottawa aura ma response."
-- Le Chevallier, Batoche, p. 59.

decided upon the strategy of a forcible demonstration to force Ottawa to do again what he had forced it to do before at Red River: guarantee basic citizen rights to his Métis. No shots would be fired. No blood would be shed. The Prime Minister would see the light and redress Métis grievances. Riel would then be the Founder not just of Manitoba but of the Northwest. The plan would involve severe risks, but he had taken risks before.⁸²

In the back of Riel's mind were vague hopes of support should his forcible demonstration go awry. They were nothing more than the stuff of a mentally sick man's dreams, but for the mentally deranged, their dream world becomes the real world. What were these vague hopes of support? First, active armed assistance from the English language Métis and whites of the Prince Albert area particularly; second, from the other Métis, French and English, spread over the Northwest all of whom at one time or another had petitioned for redress of grievances; third, from the Métis of Dakota and Montana Territories among whom he had lived from 1879-1884; fourth, from the Fenians who might invade from the Northwestern

⁸² The testimony of the unwilling Secretary of Riel's Council, Philip Garnot, brought out the fact that even after the opening encounter Riel still hoped to receive Government Commissioners to settle all grievances. -- Cf. C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 13, paper 52, p. 44.

States;⁸³ fifth, from the Indians who were, after all, blood relatives of the Métis; and sixth, perhaps the active intervention of the United States Government, which might conclude, somehow or other, that its own interests would be jeopardized by a Métis defeat.

Of these six hopes the first one had the most secure basis in fact. From the first suggestion of inviting him to return until the very eve of the outbreak Riel had been led to believe that the English language inhabitants were the ones most in favor of desperate measures.⁸⁴ In fact, one plausible way to account for the Saskatchewan Rising would be that Riel and the French Métis were pushed into it by scheming Prince Albert whites and then abandoned to their fate. At all events it seems reasonable to conclude that if this element had backed Riel once the shooting began, he might not have

⁸³ A certain John Devoy published in the New York Sun the assertion that Riel had dealt with the Fenians as early as 1878 by presenting to them in New York a plan for the conquering and independent governing of the Northwest. -- Cf. Dominion Annual Register, 1885, p. 157 fn.

⁸⁴ A Methodist minister, Rev. Caleb Parker of Prince Albert, declared that white agitators both Liberal and Conservative, the latter especially, had been sympathizing with Riel and that he would not have had recourse to arms had it not been for their sympathy. However, they dropped him when the situation became serious. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., June 13, 1885, p. 1, col. 6.

continued to urge that the Indians participate.⁸⁵

The Demonstration

During the course of the month of February, 1885, Louis Riel seems to have come to the realization that his best efforts at constitutional agitation had failed. The Canadian Government had clearly indicated that it would not deal with him. His cousin, Charles Nolin, who was not as popular as he and whom he was never able to control, had been the recipient of a telegram direct from the Prime Minister himself, and, moreover, his own request for indemnity had been ignored. It was time now for stronger measures, for a show of strength.

The clergy could not be won over to revolt, nor even to his projected demonstration, because this latter involved the calculated risk of armed conflict with the constituted authorities. Moreover, the simple Métis were devoted to their clergy. Besides, in their childlike simplicity it would be too difficult to make them understand the strategy of the forcible demonstration. It must be a fait accompli before

⁸⁵ The refusal of the English language settlers to join in the armed rising was embodied in two series of resolutions which were intended for both Major L. N. Crozier of the Mounted Police and Riel. -- Cf. C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43h, p. 7, 8. Riel had dispatched a written appeal for their armed assistance on March 21, 1885. -- Cf. C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43h, p. 6-7.

they could have a chance to withdraw. The clergy, then, must be depicted to them as sold-out to the Government and as fundamentally opposed to the temporal well-being of the Métis. Exaggeration and deception would have to be employed, of course, but the end result would be good. He who wills the end must will the means. There must now be no turning back. Jeanne d'Arc had listened to her voices, and Louis Riel had a divine mission to fulfill. Archbishop Bourget had said so, and if clergy and hierarchy opposed him, then the Montreal Archbishop should be made Pope of the new world in order to set them straight.

Accordingly, and in pursuance of his latest decisions, Riel addressed a mass-meeting of Métis at Batoche on February 24. He said nothing of the Ministry's response in the Macdonald-to-Nolin telegram but rather suggested that he himself should return to Montana, since apparently nothing satisfactory had resulted from the Petition he had come northward to formulate. But the Métis did not want to be abandoned at this critical hour, promised him their unfailing support, and begged him to lead them still. This was precisely what

he had wanted to hear.⁸⁶

Shortly afterwards Riel received what he thought would be unswerving English language support at a Prince Albert meeting, March 2. On this occasion he advocated passive resistance thus casting the Métis in the role of martyrs in order to bring the Government to acquiescence. Late the same evening, however, together with Napoleon Nault and Damase Carrière he went to Father André's rectory and sought approval for the immediate formation of a Provisional Government. This was to be a necessary part of the forcible demonstration designed to force Ottawa's attention on the needs of the Northwest. This missionary refused vigorously

⁸⁶ Riel was later to maintain that he was a reluctant leader of the Rising. He had wanted to return to the States, but the Métis would not hear of it. On the other hand his bête noire, whom the Métis Council once condemned to death, Charles Nolin, as well as the latter's brother Joseph Nolin, both were to insist that the supposedly spontaneous demonstration of personal loyalty to him was planned by Riel himself and staged by his own intimate followers. For Riel's view see his letter to Dr. Fiset in Quebec from his Regina Prison cell, June 16, 1885, published in Gazette, Mont., July 3, 1885, p. 1, col. 3 and also in La Minerve, Mont., July 1, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2. For Charles Nolin's view see his testimony in "Queen vs. Riel", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 126. For Joseph Nolin's view see Street to Carling, July 11, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "North-west Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 3, p. 160-161. W.P.R. Street had been commissioned by the Government to settle land claims at Prince Albert following the Rising. It was then that he learned the view of Joseph Nolin. Even if the personal antipathy of Charles Nolin for Riel is discounted, it is quite possible that the victim of the fixed idea of a mission might well have resorted to such a ruse in order to secure solid Metis support preparatory to the planned demonstration.

and even ejected the Métis chief from his house.

On March 5 Charles Nolin was told about the plans for a forcible demonstration. He refused assent. Instead he proposed a Novena of prayer to the Métis patron, Saint Joseph, before deciding what should be done. With the agreement of the pastor of Saint Laurent, Father Vital Fourmond, a public Novena was held between March 10 and 19. Nolin wanted to delay Riel and his intimates from immediate action.

On March 15 Riel publicly denounced Father Fourmond at Batoche for threatening to deny the Sacraments to anyone who would take up arms. His hold over the Métis was evidenced by this action.

Three days later a crucial event occurred. The Hudson's Bay Company Factor, Lawrence Clarke, informed the Métis that 500 Mounted Police were proceeding northwards to arrest Riel and others. This report was accepted uncritically by the naive Métis, who became greatly excited and determined that no such fate should befall their chief. The report

quickly spread, and there was a general rush for arms.⁸⁷

Ignoring the completing of the Novena Riel on the same day, March 18, decided upon the formation of a Provisional Government. On the day following the Métis of Batoche gathered at their church in honor of their Patron, Saint Joseph. They had brought their arms in order to fire a volley as part of the festive ceremonies. Riel used the occasion to tell them about the approach of the large body of Police and to stir them up in support of himself.

He proceeded with the organizing of the Provisional Government with his own hand-picked Council. He made his

87 Clarke's role in precipitating the Rising was insisted upon by the Métis. James Isbister, an English language Métis, one of the delegates who were sent to Montana to interview Riel, attributed the precipitation of the Rising to the threats of Clarke. He maintained that Clarke even urged rebellion. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., June 20, 1885, p. 1, col. 5. An article in L'Electeur asserted that Clarke told the Métis that, far from getting redress from the Government for their grievances, they would soon experience police measures from a force of 500. -- Cf. article from L'Electeur reproduced in a letter to the Gazette, Mont., June 26, 1885, p. 5, col. 3. Even prisoners held by Riel agreed that Clarke "when passing through Batoche, on the 17th [sic] March ...had said to them [the Métis] in a domineering and authoritative manner that the Government were sending up five hundred men to take Riel.

"...It was stated to the settlers, that the force which Mr. Clarke said was on the way for Riel, was also coming to effectually suppress the half-breeds." -- Correspondence signed "Garry", Gazette, Mont., May 26, 1885, p. 5, col. 2. Immediately after his surrender Riel himself also maintained that it was Clarke who had precipitated the Rising. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 19, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

Lawrence Clarke himself denied that he had circulated this report in a letter to the Hudson's Bay Company Commissioner, July 6, 1885. Cf. H. B. C. folio on the Riel Rebellions quoted in Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p. 443, n. 69.

headquarters at the local church, and before the day was over he had Nolin arrested, tried, and condemned for treason for not willingly supporting the resort to arms. The sentence was not carried out, however, and it was agreed that if he would accept the tasks assigned him, Nolin's life would be spared.⁸⁸

To shield himself in the event that the demonstration should fail and to create the appearance that he was merely the agent of the Métis nation Riel had recourse to two devices. He signed all documents with "Exovede" appended to his name, that is, he himself was to be considered as just another member of the flock; his Council was the "Exovediat". "David" in quotation marks also appears, because the Hebrew king was also a warrior leading his people. Riel was also careful to implicate all the members of his hand-picked Council by having their names signed to all documents that might be in any way compromising. In fact it is quite possible that this was the main reason for having a Council, at least a Council so numerous. He must prepare for the day when his defense would be that he had done nothing which all the

⁸⁸ At his first opportunity Charles Nolin went to Prince Albert and surrendered to the Police to show thereby that he was dissociated from Riel. He was thereupon confined in jail until the close of the Rising. His imprisonment gave great force to Riel's predictions of harsh treatment by the Police to whatever other French Métis should thus surrender. -- Cf. testimony of Father André, "Queen vs. Arcand et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 1-2.

other members of the Council had not assented to, and so, all would be equally guilty. The Government surely would not hang so many. It is significant that Riel was particularly careful that all documents of the Provisional Government should fall into the hands of Major-General Middleton. Therein the Government would find that all were equally implicated.⁸⁹

Part of the Riel plan was to capture, in story book fashion, important hostages, for example, Superintendent Gagnon of the Mounted Police, or even Middleton himself.⁹⁰ It would also seem to have been necessary to seize some important post like Fort Carlton or Goshen. Then surely he would command Ottawa's attention. It is noteworthy that all telegraph lines were not severed by the Métis. Macdonald would have to be left some means of negotiating. The Provisional Government was established and ready. After the hoped

⁸⁹ In his effort to secure the release of Joseph Arcand who, he maintained, was an unwilling follower of Riel, Charles Nolin declared that Riel wished to implicate as many as possible along with himself. -- Cf. "Queen vs. Arcand et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 13. Thomas Eastwood Jackson testified in the same strain at another trial. -- Cf. "Queen vs. Champagne, Fisher, Garnot, Gariepie, Lepine, Monkman, Ouellette, et. al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 15. John W. Astley, one of Riel's prisoners, testified that Riel had explained to him on May 12, i.e., before his surrender, how he had arranged to implicate others. -- Cf. "Queen vs. Arcand et al.", C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 45c, p. 26.

⁹⁰ Middleton himself was sure the Metis had intended to capture him during the Fish Creek engagement. -- Cf. Report upon the Suppression of the Rebellion in the North-west Territories, and Matters in Connection therewith, in 1885, Ottawa, 1886, p. 20.

for initial success the Métis chief would sit back and await the arrival of Government Commissioners in order to draw up some kind of agreement for Métis submission to Canadian rule similar to that obtained for Manitoba in 1870.

For their part the Mounted Police were well aware of what was happening and would happen in the Northwest. Riel and his movements had been watched carefully since his arrival the Summer previous. Major L. N. Crozier was altogether accurate in his analysis of the Métis moves. He wired on March 10 that arms were being gathered. The day following he declared the Métis greatly excited and planning an attack on Carlton. Two days later he reported that rebellion could be expected at any moment. Dewdney forwarded the disquieting news to Macdonald. In the North Saskatchewan district Police numbers were raised from seventy-eight to 200 during the course of the year. The force at Battleford had been doubled. On March 15 Commissioner Irvine left Regina with a force of 108 Police for Prince Albert.

Because of his uncertainty about the English language inhabitants of Prince Albert Crozier had hesitated to be bold toward the armed Métis. By March 18, however, volunteers in that place had rallied to the support of the Canadian authority. A portion of them maintained guard at home, while others gave their services to Crozier at Fort Carlton.

By March 21 Riel was ready for his first overt bold stroke. He sent by Charles Nolin and Maxime Lepine an ultimatum to Crozier to surrender Fort Carlton with its stores and supplies as well as Battleford. Failure to do so would be followed by a Métis attack. Crozier refused, and so the first attempt for a bloodless triumph failed. Riel did not carry out the threat to attack.

Irvine's force was known to be on its way. Crozier's better judgment told him to wait for its arrival. The Métis knew that some move must be made before it arrived. The green but hot-headed Volunteers as well as many members of Crozier's Police were anxious for an engagement. The Major thus sallied forth with 53 Police, 41 Volunteers, and one small cannon from the Fort on March 26 to secure provisions and ammunition stored at Duck Lake. Riel's projected demonstration was to receive its crucial test.

Earlier the same day a small body of Police with Thomas McKay, an English language Métis, had been turned back by Dumont and a larger group of armed Métis. Now, however, the prestige of the Police was at stake. The first rebuff had to be avenged.

As Métis, thirty in number, and Police came together about two miles from Duck Lake Isidore Dumont and one Indian on foot came forward to parley. Crozier and his interpreter, John McKay, met them. The Police commander extended his hand

by way of greeting. The Indian apparently mistook the gesture, and in his fancied need for self-defense reached for the interpreter's gun. The interpreter thereupon fired, missed the Indian, but struck and killed Gabriel Dumont's brother instantly. This happening the Métis war chief could not forget.⁹¹

Convinced that his men had been and were being surrounded by Métis taking up advantageous positions, Crozier thereupon gave order to fire the first volley, which was accordingly done. Riel had now arrived upon the scene; he ordered the fire to be returned. The calculated risk of the forcible demonstration had misfired. Riel had now led his Métis into open warfare with the Canadian Government.⁹²

⁹¹ Elzear Montgrand, a non-rebelling Métis who received an account of the Duck Lake skirmish from an eyewitness, asserted that Police and Métis opened fire simultaneously. Crozier ordered his men to point their rifles at the Métis while he called for their surrender. About 300 yards distant the Métis dropped into a gully. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 1, 1885, p. 1, col. 7; also press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 10, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

Emissaries of Riel in the Qu'Appelle Valley insisted that in the engagement at Duck Lake Major Crozier's Police fired the first shot and that the fight was forced upon the Métis. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 3, p. 1, col. 5.

For other accounts of this critical event see Tremaudan, Histoire de la Nation Métisse, p. 301-302; P. de M., L'Oeuvre Véridique de Louis Riel, p. 190; the testimony of four witnesses at the trial of Riel: Thomas McKay, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43c, p. 65-66; John W. Astley, same, p. 69; Peter Tompkins, same, p. 82; John B. Lash, same, p. 93.

⁹² The simple Métis had thought all along that there would be no bloodshed. -- Cf. supra, p. 186, fn. 5.

The Police and Volunteers did find themselves in a disadvantageous position, the enemy well concealed in front and on both flanks in order to avoid the cannon. The seven-pounder Police cannon at first fired over the heads of the Métis and then was jammed and put out of service. After more than a half hour of firing the police Commander saw that it would be better to withdraw. Ten Police and Volunteers had been killed; thirteen others had been wounded, two seriously. Dumont was in favor of pursuing them all the way back to Fort Carlton in order to turn the defeat into a catastrophe. Riel, however, was opposed to further bloodshed. The defeated force was allowed to make its way back without opposition. Riel had carried a crucifix about during the conflict.⁹³

Later the same day Colonel Irvine arrived at Fort Carlton with his force of 108 Police which had left Regina on March 15. On the following night Fort Carlton was abandoned. Police, chastened Volunteers, stores, supplies insofar as possible, as well as wounded, all moved fifty-five miles into Prince Albert, a more defensible and more strategic position. Fort Carlton burned in the evacuation process.

93 A former prisoner of the Métis named Anderson asserted, after Riel's arrest, that the Métis leader twice requested Crozier to remove his own dead after the Duck Lake engagement but that the Major refused. Thereupon Riel ordered Anderson to return the bodies to Prince Albert. For this service Riel gave him his liberty. -- Cf. press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 29, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

The word quickly spread far and wide among Métis and Indians of how the Police had been given a severe defeat. Other Métis became enthusiastic, while, unfortunately, many Indians became interested. On the following day, however, March 27, Defense Minister Adolphe Caron ordered the mobilization of the Canadian militia. His dream to the contrary, Canada was sending Riel soldiers, not Commissioners.

Despite their refusal of armed assistance Riel again assured the English language Métis on March 25, the day before the Duck Lake engagement, that all-Métis common action would alone prevent bloodshed. This would very probably have been the case, for Crozier had hesitated to attack the Métis until he was sure of support at Prince Albert. The Volunteers he raised there gave him the confidence he needed, and so brought on the battle of Duck Lake.

Indian Outbreak

Riel achieved a military victory over Crozier, but his attempt to capture hostages and without bloodshed had failed. Killing of the Police was the signal for the Indians to rise. White authority was now being seriously challenged. This might be the last opportunity to preserve the Northwest for the aborigines. By welcoming and even urging the participation of the savages Riel gave the best evidence so far of his loss of reason. He had always known the disastrous con-

sequences of inviting Indians to war. This action was altogether contrary to his better judgment.

To the West at Battleford it soon became plain that Poundmaker's tribe was ready for war. The settlers of that town abandoned their homes and withdrew into the Fort for safety. The Indians did not wish to attack the latter place but contented themselves with sacking the deserted homes of the settlers as well as the stores of the Hudson's Bay Company. This they began on March 30, four days after the Duck Lake encounter.

Farther west on the North Saskatchewan was the little town of Frog Lake. A handful of Mounted Police, too few for effective protection but whose very presence was reckoned to be an annoyance to the Indians, were withdrawn to Fort Pitt on March 31. Already word of the Police defeat at Duck Lake had been received. Big Bear's tribe, which had suffered greatly during the Winter, was in the vicinity. The Chief himself had become less and less able to control the warlike propensities of his younger men. Wandering Spirit, a hater of whites, took the lead in massacring nine of them on the morning of April 2. Included were the two priest-missionaries of the place, Father Felix Marchand and Father Francois Xavier Fafard. Others were taken prisoners by the Indians, and fear spread to every white settlement in the Northwest.

The next point of Indian attack was Fort Pitt on the North Saskatchewan about half-way between Frog Lake and Battleford. It contained a goodly amount of Hudson's Bay Company supplies. On April 7 a band of Indians (nine teepees) under Little Poplar camped across the river from it but made no hostile moves. On April 13 Big Bear's tribe arrived from Frog Lake. W. H. McLean, the Hudson's Bay Company trader, undertook to parley with the Indians on that and the following day. The warriors argued that their objection was not to the Hudson's Bay Company but to the "Government People". Young and wilder spirits took charge and announced their determination to drive these out of the country. The civilians at Fort Pitt elected to go into the Indian camp on terms that seemed to have been a little better than outright imprisonment. McLean became their leader endeavoring to make the best of a bad situation. The Police thereupon abandoned the Fort, destroying what they could not transport, and boarded their own scow for Battleford which they reached on April 22. One Police scout was killed, one captured, and one wounded in a pre-evacuation skirmish.

Sporadic Indian raiding and plundering occurred at isolated points during the next few weeks. Many hoped that the white man could now be driven from the country, and despite their treaty, they were ready to attack. Lack of unified leadership and sustained effort, however, spelled ultimate

Indian defeat.

Military Events

The Commander of Canadian forces at the time of the Saskatchewan Rising was an Englishman, Major-General Frederick Middleton. On March 23, 1885, he was ordered by Prime Minister Macdonald to Winnipeg, that is, before the Duck Lake engagement. He asked for 2,000 men. Before the Rising was over the total number of Canadians engaged (apart from 500 Mounted Police) was 7,982 men including transport, medical, and other corps.

By diplomatic activity the American Government was prevailed upon to do all it could to prevent Indian help from south of the border from being given the insurgents in the Northwest. Indians and Métis in southern and eastern portions of the Northwest Territory were neutralized by the rapid dispatch of troops to Qu'Appelle as well as by belated, generous Government bounty.

The basic campaign strategy of Middleton was a three-pronged advance against the insurgents. He himself was to lead his force from Qu'Appelle northwards to Saint Laurent and Batoche. Lieutenant-Colonel William Dillon Otter was to proceed with another force northward from Swift Current to the relief of Battleford. Major-General Thomas Bland Strange was to proceed northwards from Calgary to Edmonton. Middleton

in the East and Strange in the West were to converge then on Battleford and meet Otter there.

It was no secret that Middleton had but little confidence in the fighting qualities of his Canadian soldiers. Before the campaign was over it was also no secret that Middleton's officers had little less than contempt for him. Middleton was overly cautious preferring no risks whatever. Consequently his movements were slow, and his estimate of enemy strength constantly exaggerated. The result was that it took him five to six weeks to accomplish what could have been done in three.

The transportation of the troops from the East was a triumph of military logistics. The Canadian Pacific railway was not yet complete. There were several gaps in the area north of Lake Superior. Men and supplies had to be transported by sleighs when available and by difficult marching in severe weather. The rapidity with which they were brought west had much to do with localizing the Rising.

The Mounted Police came under the command of Middleton once the Rising began. Those at Prince Albert were kept there by the Commander's orders. Their function was to prevent the disaffected Indians and Métis in the area from attacking the town and to safeguard the population. Their very presence there was a constant source of worry to Riel at Batoche. It had much to do with Riel's long standing refusal

to allow Dumont to attack Middleton sooner, especially his supply stations. The Metis leader feared that if great numbers of his own men should leave Batoche, then Irvine's Police would come from Prince Albert and attack.⁹⁴

There was another reason, however, why Riel restrained Dumont from forcing a fight on Middleton at points unfavorable to the latter. That was the continuation, despite the Duck Lake engagement, of his unrealistic illusion that he could somehow treat with the Dominion for redress of Metis grievances. For this reason he had not cut the telegraphic wires to Regina and Winnipeg. He still hoped to negotiate.⁹⁵

At length, however, Dumont could be restrained no longer. He announced that he would take southwards a body of men with him to engage Middleton at Tourond's Coulee (Fish Creek). Riel consented and accompanied the troops himself. They stopped at intervals for prayers led by Riel. A report that the Police were marching on Batoche from Prince Albert caused Dumont to detach fifty men to return for the defense of that place.

⁹⁴ Chambers, Ernest J., The Royal North-West Mounted Police, Montreal-Ottawa, 1906, p. 90-91, fn. 1.

⁹⁵ Justice J. Taylor of the Court of Queen's Bench of Manitoba in rendering his decision to reject Riel's appeal referred to both the Duck Lake and Tourond's Coulee (Fish Creek) engagements as being nothing but tactical moves in the Metis Chief's efforts to force the Dominion Government to negotiate. -- Cf. "Appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, Manitoba", The Queen vs. Louis Riel, Ottawa, 1886, p. 190.

Middleton's force numbering 800 had been advancing slowly from Fort Qu'Appelle since April 6. Scouts were proceeding well in advance of the main body. It was they who reported Dumont's preparations to attack at Tourond's Coulee. Rifle pits had been dug on the far side of the coulee's slope so that the Canadian troops would be silhouetted against the sky as they appeared on the crest opposite, and so, easy targets. If they penetrated into the ravine, they could be disposed of there by an enemy difficult to locate. These were the tactics of the buffalo hunt and very effective.

The Métis, however, were far outnumbered. They were limited in ammunition, and very few had anything more than ancient weapons to use. Their Indian allies were unreliable, and most fled before the day's (April 24) fighting was over. Eighty men came to their relief from Batoche near the end of the encounter, however, and the Canadian forces were not able to achieve a victory.

Having lost the advantage of surprise by the scouts' discovery of their position the Métis nevertheless had the benefit of better position. The prairie was set fire, but it amounted to nothing more than a check to the Canadians. Fortunately for the Métis, part of Middleton's forces was on the other side of the river and could not be brought across to assist in the fighting.

The main result of the engagement was to delay for two weeks the assault on Batoche. Buckshot made ugly wounds,

and the citizen soldiery began to re-assess the enemy. Middleton became more cautious still, and the Métis were given a better chance to prepare for the final struggle.

By May 9 Middleton was again moving northwards with 850 men. The steamer Northcote had been fortified and manned with a small detachment of soldiers. It was to proceed up the South Saskatchewan while the main body of the troops marched on land. A lowered ferry cable, however, knocked off its mast and funnels, and it drifted beyond the scene of battle. Although shots were exchanged between ship and shore, its role was largely ineffective.

Again the Métis under Dumont prepared their rifle pits and on ground favorable to themselves. The battle of Batoche lasted four days (May 9-12). For the first three days the Canadian forces advanced, exchanged shots, and withdrew. Despite the assistance of a machine gun under the direction of an American, Lieutenant Arthur L. Howard of the Connecticut National Guard, they could not drive the Métis from their pits. On the final day of the battle, a diversion was created on the northeast of the Métis position. With their attention divided and with ammunition all but exhausted, they were faced by a direct but unauthorized charge down the slope and over their rifle pits. Thus driven from their position and decimated by the machine gun fire the remaining defenders fled, and the battle of Batoche was over.

Colonel W. D. Otter left Swift Current on April 13 with 534 men including a detachment of Mounted Police under Superintendent Lawrence W. Herchmer. On April 24 they arrived in Battleford where 500 inhabitants had been besieged for nearly a month by Indians.

Presuming that Poundmaker was already a hostile because his men had sacked the town of Battleford and with the approval of Governor Dewdney, Otter set out to engage the Cree Chief at Cut Knife Hill, where the Indians were encamped. He took with him 325 men, two seven-pounder cannon, and a machine gun. After an all night march he failed to surprise the Indians on the morning of May 2. Fighting lasted all day, the troops for the most part being almost surrounded by the Indians. As darkness approached they fought out of the trap and retired to Battleford. Otter had hoped to prevent Poundmaker from joining forces with Big Bear and Riel, but the entire action proved to be of doubtful value.

An Alberta rancher and retired army officer, Major-General Thomas Bland Strange was appointed April 8 to lead a third column northwards. He departed for Edmonton on April 20 arriving there May 1. From here he proceeded eastward along the North Saskatchewan to meet Middleton at Fort Pitt.

However, by May 28 he made contact with Big Bear's camp at Frenchman's Butte about twelve east of Fort Pitt. With his 195 men he attempted a frontal assault on the natural

stronghold occupied by the Indians. This did not succeed, and the terrain made flanking all but impossible. However, Strange's cannon was causing havoc. Had he not given the order to withdraw too soon, they would have defeated the Indians entirely. Thus Big Bear's band escaped intact, save for its battle casualties. On June 3 Strange was joined at Fort Pitt by Middleton, who had come from Prince Albert following his Batoche victory and had accepted Poundmaker's surrender at Battleford on May 26.

Pursuit of Big Bear was all that remained of the Rising. Major Samuel B. Steele of the Mounted Police engaged him in an indecisive skirmish at Loon Lake to the North of Fort Pitt. Middleton himself took his own troops northwards into the muskeg country, but Big Bear's band eluded them. On June 9 the troops of Middleton were officially withdrawn. Strange's column, which had also been hunting for the Indians, was recalled on June 24. The hunted life was not beneficial to his people, Big Bear realized, and so he surrendered himself on July 2 at Fort Carlton.

The failure of the Indians was caused by their inability to achieve unity of action. Poundmaker hesitated to join Riel until it was too late. Big Bear's camp was divided. The Plains Crees were the war party, while the Wood Crees were peaceable. Indecision and superstitious searching for omens and portents precluded sustained and successful

warlike action. Ultimately the Wood Crees departed Big Bear's camp after making possible the escape of his twenty-seven white prisoners.

Following the Batoche defeat Gabriel Dumont could not persuade Riel to flee with him, and so he and Michael Dumas made their way successfully to Montana Territory, leaving Saint Laurent on May 16.

On May 15, three days after the final battle, Riel surrendered himself to Middleton. He had the latter's written promise of protection on his person, for he rightly feared private vengeance from some of the Canadian troops. He was interrogated by the Commander, who also came into possession of all the official papers of Riel's Council.

The Métis chief did not give much evidence of mental aberration even during his journey to his Regina cell. The latter place he entered on May 23. On July 6 he was indicted for high treason, and on July 20 his trial began. On the day following an adjournment was allowed to allow witnesses necessary for the defense to be assembled. The trial reopened on July 28 and continued until August 1. On that date Riel was sentenced to be hanged on September 18 following.

The stage was now set for a political clash between Quebec and Ontario. Riel was the rock on which they split. The strength of the Confederation was now to receive its severest test.

CHAPTER FOUR

ONTARIO-QUEBEC REACTION TO THE SASKATCHEWAN RISING - I

Once again Ontario and Quebec experienced conflicting reactions to a Riel Rising. At the outset the conflict was thoroughly concealed in the first rush to defend the colors. Canada as such, the entire Dominion, was being attacked. That was how Quebec and Ontario responded to the news of the rebellion in the Northwest. Though as second thoughts began to take shape in Quebec, evidence of a withdrawal by French Canadians from their original enthusiasm appeared. Vocal opposition became open. However, it did not during the course of the Rising and Trial themselves have a serious nor a decisive influence on the course of events. Friction was present and active but largely without practical result. The present chapter will trace the development of the friction throughout the period of the Rising proper as well as the Trial.

Father Alexis André, missionary at Duck Lake, appears unconsciously to have prophesied the work of Louis Riel on the Saskatchewan in the Spring of 1885. He had presented (apparently in 1881, although the document is undated) a petition to the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council showing how Ottawa's failure to give title to lands long peacefully occupied was giving rise to serious disputes. The unconscious reference to Louis Riel is as follows: "It appears to be in

the power of any evil-designing man to disturb the peace of a Settlement and to create bad feelings between neighbors."¹

Good evidence that Riel did not intend armed conflict when he began agitation in Saskatchewan is seen in the fact that he brought wife and family with him.

A man will not bring his wife and children along with him if he intended to raise a rebellion and Mr. Riel has brought his wife and two little children with him, and that is the best proof that he has no bad intentions.²

In January, 1885, Superintendent L. N. F. Crozier of the North West Mounted Police at Battleford had been fearing an Indian uprising. On the 14th of that month he wrote to Regina that messengers were being exchanged between the various tribes calling for a gathering of Indians at Duck Lake in the Spring. Little Pine, who was half-Blackfeet, tried to get that tribe to participate. Poundmaker, Crozier reported, asserted that Little Pine had enjoined his young men not to dispose of their guns.³

¹ Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 254.

² André to Dewdney, July 7, 1884, same, Vol. 2, p. 424.

³ Extract of a letter from Crozier to Commander of the Northwest Mounted Police at Regina, Jan. 14, 1885, same, Vol. 1, p. 120.

Eastern Reaction to the Rising Proper

Public reaction back East to the Saskatchewan Rising can be seen in the refusal of La Minerve to accept Globe charges that Riel had been plotting rebellion. His movement was constitutional, no matter what the Globe said.⁴ The first reaction of the Toronto Mail was one of disbelief. However, it did discuss the Métis claims and Riel. It concluded that Bishop Vital J. Grandin would send the Métis to their homes, whereupon Riel's demonstration would collapse.

The sensational story published yesterday concerning an insurrection among the half-breeds and Indians in the Saskatchewan region is a tissue of exaggeration...

Their [sic] is no 'rebellion' in the Saskatchewan region or anywhere else...⁵

On March 28, 1885, the Mail could no longer deny the state of warfare which existed in the Northwest. The Prime Minister had announced it the day previous in Commons. The Government was, of course, defended.⁶

It does not appear to be true that Riel had been fomenting rebellion ever since his return from Montana. According to Désire Girouard, a Conservative M.P. for Jacques Cartier, in a speech at Lachine in August 15, 1885, the

⁴ Editorial, La Minerve, Montreal, Mar. 21, 1885, p. 2, col. 2.

⁵ Editorial, Mail, Tor., Mar. 24, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁶ News dispatches, Mail, Tor., Mar. 28, 1885, p. 1, col. 3-7.

Rising broke out suddenly and to everyone's surprise.

The outbreak took everyone by surprise. Sir Hector Langevin, Sir Richard Cartwright, Mr. Mackenzie and Mr. Macdougall, who were in the Northwest last August and September, saw not the least indication of such an insurrection. Lieutenant Governor Dewdney, moreover, visited St. Albert on the 16th of October last, and Msgr. Grandin presented him with an address of welcome on the part of his clergy, the citizens doing the same. The demonstrations of devotion to Canadian institutions and to the government were numerous and hearty.⁷

Mounted Police reports, however, contradict the "surprise" theory. They state awareness of secret meetings for several months.⁸

The causes of the Saskatchewan Rising were treated differently by different sources. The Montreal Gazette was a Government organ. It seemed unwilling to attribute the Rising to anything else fundamentally but the malice of Riel. Already many causes have been brought to light and even published in its columns by July, 1885, but Riel remained its bête noir.⁹ Instead of admitting culpable Government delay in granting redress for Métis grievances, the Gazette congratulated the Government on having held off the Rising as long as it did. The Métis wanted Riel indemnified. The Government

⁷ News item, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 18, 1885, p. 2, col.3; reprinted, Nov. 26, 1885, p. 2, col. 3-4.

⁸ Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol.2, p. 360-369.

⁹ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Jul. 17, 1885, p.4, col.1.

could not in honor accede. Therefore, the Rising was, in this way, inevitable. As regards the Indians, Government policy of settling them on reserves and encouraging a civilized mode of life has succeeded in keeping them pacified for a long time. Again the Gazette was certain that Riel personally was the culprit. Remove Riel, and there would be no rising.

The real cause of the rebellion is the skill in persuasion and agitation of Riel, who has turned the natural restlessness and discontent of the half-breeds to his advantage, and who, for ought that is yet known, may have been well paid for his work by hostile organizations in the United States.¹⁰

By the end of April the Gazette had discovered another motive for the Rising. It was a final effort to detach the Northwest from Canadian jurisdiction and authority. The land claims were simply used as a pretext.

One thing, however, is clear, that the land claims are a mere pretext for the uprising and that at the bottom of the insurrection is a resolve to make a last attempt to have possession of the Northwest territory. In fact the issue, deemed trivial at the outset, has already broadened into the question whether Canadian authority shall be exercised over the Northwest or be limited to Manitoba in its western reach.¹¹

The Toronto Mail also agreed with this analysis that Riel was making a last stand against approaching civilization.¹²

10 Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Apr.1, 1885, p.4, col.1.

11 Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Apr.30, 1885, p.4, col.1; Cf. also same, May 13, 1885, p.4, col.1.

12 Press dispatch, Mail, Tor., Mar.30, 1885, p.2, col.2.

Whatever its editorials said the Gazette gave evidence in its press dispatches that there did exist genuine Métis land grievances. Métis squatters, even after an occupation of several years, have been unable to procure patents. Land speculators with "influence" have secured deeds to property, even to some lands already worked and improved by Métis squatters for fifteen to eighteen years.¹³

Implication of Prince Albert whites in stirring up revolt was strongly asserted by the Mail correspondent in June, 1885.

Every half-breed and Indian of the whole sixty thousand of them in those territories knows that but for the material and moral aid and encouragement extended to him by the white agitators, Riel would not have raised the flag of revolt....¹⁴

When still safely a Conservative Désiré Girouard in his speech at Lachine in mid-August, 1885 listed five causes of the Saskatchewan Rising. They are, of course, critical of the Métis position.

1st. The spirit of revenge on the part of Riel; second, his blind and inordinate ambition. He believed himself to be the king of Heaven and earth, with the power to dispose of the entire world, and speaking as a prophet sent of God himself; third, the agitation of speculators and agents of American companies, whose interest it was to foment trouble; fourth, the cries roused by certain hungry and disappointed politicians, and, lastly, the inflammatory tone of certain articles in the journals

¹³ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 26, 1885. p. 1, col. 3.

¹⁴ Correspondence, Mail, Tor., Jun. 20, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

that guide a portion of public opinion, such as the Globe.¹⁵

Even in November the Gazette repeated its charge that it was a personal cupidity of Riel that was the cause of the Rising. It quoted Father André to the effect that the Government had granted the narrow strips with river frontage in the land divisions and on March 4, had granted patents and wood rights, the only remaining grievances. Bishop Grandin also insisted that it was Riel who by deception and threats had pushed the mislead Métis into rebellion.¹⁶

There was, to be sure, a non-Conservative account of the causes of the Saskatchewan Rising. Father C. A. McWilliams, who assisted Riel at the last, asserted that the Rising was caused by fortune-seeking capitalists.

... the poor people were goaded on by the capitalists who had gone into the North-west and secured vast territory of land around Batoche and Prince Albert, which I am told is the garden of Canada [...] those capitalists seeing that their fortunes were not accumulating as they desired, incited the poor people, who looked up to them, to rebellion in the hope that they could drive the Indians and Halfbreeds out of

¹⁵ News item, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 18, 1885, p. 2, col. 3.

¹⁶ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; Grandin to Macdonald, July 11, 1885, Pope, Joseph (ed.), Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1921, p. 347-348.

their homes and thus secure for themselves the land.¹⁷
At the very beginning of the Rising an expatriate of the Prince Albert area informed the Globe that there was definite dissatisfaction among the whites even in regard to land claims and duties on American-made farm implements. The unnamed informant declared:

There is coming to be a pretty strong feeling [...] in favour of separation from the Confederacy, and establishment as a separate colony [...] the feeling is all but universal that the policy of protection which prevents us from getting our agricultural implements from the States without paying a very heavy duty, however it may work in Ontario, is death to the prairie Provinces.¹⁸

The Montreal Herald was certain that Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney was not without blame in causing the rising. He misrepresented the Government to the people of the Northwest and misrepresented the people to the Government. Moreover, he was a speculator in the territory he was governing.¹⁹

17 Quoted in press dispatch Globe, Tor., Nov. 27, 1885, p. 1, col. 4. The same priest was of the opinion that "... the Government should place detectives in the Northwest to remove what he (Fr. McWilliams) considered its greatest curse - the English and Scotch capitalists. He heard men himself talking treasonably and wishing for another rebellion as it left much money in the country". -- Same, p. 1, col. 4.

18 News item, Globe, Tor., Mar. 21, 1885, p.13, col.3.

19 Bulletin, Edmonton, quoted in editorial, Herald, Mont., Jun. 16, 1886, p. 4, col. 4; editorial, Herald, Mont., Dec. 2, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; same, Dec. 11, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

One outstanding cause of protest was the activities of the Prince Albert Colonization Company. Mackenzie Bowell and his son-in-law J. C. Jamieson both held shares of stock in this company, the latter being a paid officer as well. In 1883 while both were thus related to the company and Bowell a Cabinet member, the Government granted the company for \$20,000 a township wherein many Métis were living. These Métis were among those who, fearing loss of their lands, rose in 1885 in arms.²⁰ Riel himself, of course, maintained that the Métis feared loss of their lands to colonization companies.

The parish of St. Louise [sic] de Langevin had been completely sold with the property of twenty four families, and they could not get even the appearance of the title and the chapel, priest's house, and all the ground and everything was taken away.²¹

Métis tradition concerning the part played by Chief Factor Lawrence Clarke of the Hudson's Bay Company found its way to the East. Riel and the Métis always maintained that Clarke had told them that five hundred mounted police were coming to arrest the Métis chief and to confiscate Métis homes.

²⁰ Editorial, Globe, Tor., July 21, 1885, p. 4, col. 3. It may be noteworthy that Major L. N. F. Crozier and two or three of the men under his command were from Belleville, Ontario, the same town where J. C. Jamieson dwelt.

²¹ Quoted in press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; also, editorial, same, Nov. 19, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

On June 10, 1885, James Isbister, non-rebelling English language Métis and one of the delegates that had brought Riel from Montana the previous year, wrote a letter to the Winnipeg Sun wherein he stated that Lawrence Clarke not only speculated in half-breed scrip but even urged rebellion. With regard to Métis grievances Clarke stated "That all that could be done in the matter had been done by himself, and the only thing left was rebellion".²² This charge concerning Clarke seems borne out by correspondence to the Montreal Gazette based on information obtained from the released prisoners of the Métis.

These prisoners unite in saying that Mr. Clarke, when passing through Batoche, on the 17th March, [...] had said to them in a domineering and authoritative manner that the government were sending up five hundred men to take Riel.

To this the half-breeds immediately gave credence. Riel gathered his friends or councillors together and held a hurried meeting. That night, the 17th of March, the country from Fish Creek to Batoche and to Duck Lake was scoured, and the half-breeds in the country were either persuaded or forced to join with the leaders. It was stated to these settlers, that the force which Mr. Clarke said was on the way for Riel, was also coming to effectually suppress the half-breeds. Every house and store was pillaged for arms and ammunition; and the next day, the 18th March, the rebellion broke out in earnest...²³

Potential Métis sympathisers in the East were thus able to

²² Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion 1885", Vol. 6, p. 18.

²³ Correspondence signed "Garry", Gazette, Mont., May 26, 1885, p. 5, col. 2.

see that there was strong argument for their cause.

The Government had long been aware of the necessity of careful land settlement in the Northwest. The old Macdonald failing of procrastination gave rise to repeated Métis complaints about the insecurity of their holdings.²⁴

These causes served as speech and propaganda material for the controversy that was to follow the Rising in Quebec and Ontario.

The Government were not unaware that a rising was imminent in the Northwest. According to a Memorandum drawn up by "F.M." in connection with some mounted police correspondence on the origins of the Rising, Superintendent Gagnon had noted as early as March 10, 1885, that the Métis were preparing arms, on March 14th Superintendent Crozier telegraphed "That a Half-Breed rebellion might break out at any moment, and be joined by the Indians."²⁵ First news of the Saskatchewan Rising was published by the Gazette on March 24, 1885.

²⁴ As far back as 1870 Macdonald was aware of the necessity of settling with the Indians and Métis about lands in Saskatchewan. Otherwise squatters would come and disturb the pre-established surveying system. "We should take immediate steps to extinguish the Indian title everywhere in the Fertile Belt in the Valley of the Saskatchewan and open it for settlement. There will otherwise be an influx of squatters who will seize upon the most eligible positions and greatly disturb the symmetry of future surveys." -- Macdonald to Archibald, Nov. 18, 1870, Letterbooks, Vol. , p. 540, 542.

²⁵ Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 2, p. 358.

Dispatches had been received from Toronto, Winnipeg and Ottawa. The locale of the Rising was said to be Prince Albert. Some communication wires had been cut. Confidence was expressed that the Mounted Police could handle the Rising successfully and quickly. Blake, leader of the Opposition, sought answers from the Government, and Macdonald replied that Riel had been in the territory since the previous summer professing loyalty but simultaneously stirring up the Métis. The Ottawa correspondent expressed his own opinion: "... when Riel is captured he ought to be strung up on the first convenient tree without ceremony."²⁶ The first Gazette editorial on the outbreak in the Spring of 1885 revealed nothing but contempt for it and the firm assurance that it will be speedily quelled. Riel was a fanatic, who had been confined for two years in an insane asylum, and was devoid of judgment. Those whom he had convinced to follow him were altogether ignorant and unaware of the resources of the Canadian Government. News reports of the serious nature of the Rising, the Gazette branded as needlessly sensational.²⁷ On the same day as this editorial an exaggerated report was received from Winnipeg to the effect that Riel had 500 men who had taken

²⁶ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 24, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

²⁷ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

possession of several trading posts. On the day following no more than forty or fifty Indians were said to be joined to Riel.²⁸

As a Government organ the Toronto Mail felt obliged to defend the Ministry for its handling of Northwest affairs, and insisted that a less expeditious but more just system was being followed in settling Métis claims.²⁹

Early reports, as may be expected, contained many inaccuracies. "Good authority" reported on March 28, 1885, that Riel had allowed a puppet to become leader. Another report had Major Crozier employing two hundred Indians. Such reports along with first news of the Duck Lake encounter caused the Montreal Gazette to take a more serious view of the trouble. Thus the disturbance was changed from a riot to rebellion.

Yesterday these men were engaged in a riot; today they are participants in a war against the constituted authorities, treasonable to the country, rebels against the Crown, and, as such, they must be met and either defeated in the field or tried and punished by the law.³⁰

The Gazette took the opportunity at the same time to commend

28 Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 25, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; same, Mar. 26, 1885, p. 1, col. 3-4.

29 Editorial, Mail, Tor., Mar. 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 3-4.

30 Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 28, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; Cf. also press dispatch, same, Mar. 28, 1885, p. 1, col. 2 and also col. 4.

the Opposition Leader, Blake, for approving the Government's efforts to suppress the outbreak. The Montreal organ was confident of defeating Riel but feared an Indian uprising. The Canadian Pacific Railway would be helpful in the work of suppression. Not for a moment did Gazette editorial policy question the need for thorough repression of the rebellion, and with such force as to ensure peace for the indefinite future. Its only concern was with means, methods, and techniques for achieving this. The only fear expressed was the possibility of the Indians joining Riel, in which case it would take longer to suppress.³¹

The Montreal La Minerve seemed to be in full possession of the facts regarding Riel as early as March 30. It was well aware that he regarded himself as having a mission. He had triumphed at Red River in 1870. He had become a legend among the Métis. He had awaited in Montana to be called again to lead his people. La Minerve discounted the strength of the Métis, nor could they have secured any cannon from the States as had first been reported. It even concluded correctly that

³¹ Editorials, Mar. 28, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; and Mar. 30, 1885, p. 4, col. 1. "The events of the next few days will be awaited with intense interest and anxiety, as they are pretty certain to solve the question whether Riel is backed in his mad venture by any large force, or whether his followers are confined to a comparatively few of the half-breeds, whose grievances, real or imaginary, have been worked upon by him for his own base purposes, and do not include in their number the Indian tribes or any of them". -- same.

the Duck Lake engagement was an accident; that Riel's strategy was to take prisoners in order to have a basis of negotiation. Furthermore, said La Minerve again, Government agents must bear a good deal of responsibility for alienating the Métis by their haughty conduct. However, Riel was at fault for having departed from constitutional means.³²

As a dutiful Opposition paper the Toronto Globe flailed the Ministry on March 24, 1885, upon receipt of definite word of an armed uprising. The Government was altogether to blame. Separationist desires have cropped up everywhere.³³

In general, sympathy for the Métis in the East was fairly common. The Toronto Globe said that they had a "strong claim to our kindest consideration".³⁴ Such sympathy was continued the next day along with criticism of the Government.

No one can contemplate without sorrow the possibility of a collision between them [Métis] and the force which we are told is gathering to reduce them to obedience. Even now gentle and peaceable methods would be best.³⁵

32 Editorial, Mar. 30, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2. "Le gouvernement lui-même est bien disposé, - il la prove en traitant les Métis d'une façon paternelle dans l'Acte du Manitoba - et une série de meetings accompagnés de représentation émergiques n'aurait pas manqué de faire accepter tout ce que leurs demandes avaient de raisonnable." -- same, col. 2.

33 Editorial, Mar. 24, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

34 Editorial, Mar. 24, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

35 Editorial, same, Mar. 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

There would be neither glory nor honour nor advantage of any kind in slaughtering a few score or hundreds of these misguided people and establishing a reign of terror in the district they inhabit.³⁶

On March 27, 1885, La Minerve was surprisingly sympathetic to the Métis and critical of the Government, i.e., the Department of the Interior. Even Mennonites had been given prior consideration to the Métis. To be sure Riel was rebuked for having gone beyond the bounds of legality. But the Métis were the original inhabitants of the area and should have been given more consideration. On the following day La Minerve was no longer able to doubt the extent and the seriousness of the Rising. There was no longer any sympathy expressed for the Métis.³⁷

In contrast the Montreal Gazette, English language Government organ, showed a different attitude towards the Métis. It began with scorn: "These men who are in rebellion are not white men; they are more than half Indian, having all the restless discontent and acquisitiveness of the race...."³⁸ However, scorn for the Métis turned to pity on April 9, 1885.

36 Same, col. 1.

37 Editorials, Mar. 27, 1885, p. 2, col. 2-3; Mar. 28, 1885, p. 2, col. 1. "Cette révolte doit être réprimée vigoureusement, avant qu'elle ne s'étende à d'autres groupes."
-- Editorial, Mar. 28, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

38 Editorial, Apr. 1, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

It is all the more pity that a class of people who might have proved so useful to the country should have been misled by evil counsel into courses that can benefit neither themselves nor others while in many ways they will prove disastrous to all alike.³⁹

Agreement was common at the outbreak that the Rising should be crushed. Once news of the first bloodshed had been confirmed the Globe, while still holding the Prime Minister responsible, was entirely in favor of suppression of the Rising, nor would it be content with half measures.⁴⁰ Another Opposition paper, the Montreal Herald, was altogether in favor of an overwhelming military effort so that Indians and Metis would be impressed for all time to come. Let no expenses be spared. Let the soldiers have the best. Canada must be master. "The unanimous opinion of thoughtful men at this crisis in North-West affairs favours an overwhelming demonstration of physical force."⁴¹ Crushing of the rebellion was for the Gazette also an unquestionable and worthwhile good.

The rebellion can and must be crushed out, no matter what the expense. It must be taught the half-breeds and Indians of the Northwest that the whole power and resources of Canada will be utilized for the protection of settlers in the Northwest, and it is imperative that the lesson should be so taught that it will be remembered for all time to come.⁴²

³⁹ Editorial, Apr. 9, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁴⁰ Editorial, Mar. 30, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁴¹ Editorial, Apr. 1, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

⁴² Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 2, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; cf. also same Apr. 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 3; and editorial, same, Apr. 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

Reactions back East to the Saskatchewan Rising varied according to varying analyses of that event. The Montreal Herald, of course, pointed the finger of criticism at the Ministry. If their Commission to enumerate Métis resident outside Manitoba prior to 1870 had been set to work in 1884, the insurrection would have been avoided. This paper also thought that Edgar Dewdney was not a sufficiently good Governor for the Northwest. The Indians distrusted him.

... Mr. Dewdney has lost the confidence of the Indians [...] the sooner he is removed from the very important position he has proved himself unable to fill satisfactorily, the better for the interests of the whites and the Indians of the territories.⁴³

The Toronto Globe found it necessary also to criticize the Government. Its Ottawa correspondent had sent word about Government contracts for suppressing the Rising and the beneficiaries thereof, i.e., jobbers and Government hangers-on who had received contracts for supplies of clothing, boats, and other necessities. According to this correspondent Defense Minister Adolphe Caron had ignored competition in the letting out of contracts. The Globe was even willing to admit the possible truth of speculation that Lieutenant-Colonel Adolphe Ouimet had left his command at Calgary and returned to the East to urge the Cabinet personally to negotiate with, instead

⁴³ Editorial, Apr. 6, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; Cf. also press dispatch, same, Apr. 1, 1885, p. 1, col. 2.

of suppress, the Métis.⁴⁴

In its analysis of the Saskatchewan Rising the pro-Ministry Toronto Mail was anxious to emphasize the part played by English language white agitators at Prince Albert.

Dumont knew well that his Métis could not win. No one knew better than he the disadvantages with which, even with the best of luck he would be handicapped [...]. Dumont repeatedly declared that he took up arms with a handful of followers trusting entirely to the solemn pledges of the Prince Albert agitators that they would rush to his aid and believing that when the people of Eastern Canada saw that the whites were in it, the Government would at once come to terms and grant the half-breed demands. He never for a moment calculated on his ability to stand up successfully with two hundred and fifty poorly equipped Métis against the might and resources of the Dominion of Canada.⁴⁵

What became of the English-speaking rebels? Why the white-livered hounds became effusively loyal at the first rumble of the drum! Some of them actually joined the Prince Albert volunteers in order to rehabilitate themselves, while the rest took to inveighing against the enormity of Riel's crime at the street corners. In private they hoped for success to the rebel arms, but in the presence of the police they were boisterous patriots who would not for worlds that such a blow had fallen upon this fair Dominion!⁴⁶

The Mail was anxious to point out that the majority of white agitators at Price Albert were of Liberal sympathies.

⁴⁴ Correspondence, Apr. 20, 1885, p. 1, col. 6; and Star, Mont., as quoted in Globe, Tor., Apr. 21, 1885, p. 2, col. 3; editorial, same, p. 4, col. 3.

⁴⁵ Correspondence, Mail, Tor., Jun. 20, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

⁴⁶ Correspondence, same, Jun. 18, 1885, p. 4, col. 6.

The general tenor of the Montreal pro-Ministry paper, the Gazette, was such as to stress the unity of all elements in putting down the Rising. Troops at Toronto were anxious to start. Likewise, troops being mustered at Quebec City were also eager to go. Thomas White, M. P., speaking at Montreal on March 28, 1885, expressed the opinion that the uprising in the Northwest would weld together the various provinces in common devotion to duty.

They [opening of hostilities] are lifting us out of the narrow rut of our petty political and national and provincial littleness, and inspiring a wider and nobler sentiment of devotion to our common country, Canada, in the presence of a common danger⁴⁷

The Gazette was careful from the outset of the Rising not to become anti-Catholic, anti-Clerical, nor even anti-French. Following Riel's arrest, it referred approvingly to a La Minerve analysis for the reasons for the Rising. The Métis, La Minerve said, had been wounded by clergy aloofness and apparent antipathy to their agitation for redress of grievances. The clergy responded that the agitation of the Métis had been too secretive and appeared in the nature of a conspiracy. The clergy could not be expected to champion such a movement, and La Minerve and Gazette agreed. The Liberals were excoriated by the Gazette for attempting to make

⁴⁷ News item, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 30, 1885, p. 8, col. 2-3; Cf. also press dispatches, same, Mar. 26, 1885, p. 1, col. 4; Mar. 30, 1885, p. 8, col. 1.

political capital out of the Rising. They were ignorant and unpatriotic, and would use every means to unseat the Conservatives.

In public meetings, in the Quebec Legislature, in party club gatherings, and in their press the Liberals have justified the rebellion, have passed severest strictures upon the government, have sought to create a sense of discontent that would hamper the speedy restoration of peace, and to prevent the unanimous support of the administration of the day which such a crisis as the present demands and ought to receive from every loyal citizen.⁴⁸

The righteousness of the Gazette was not such as to forbid its advocacy of the use of Indians against the insurgents. General Indian warfare was upon the Dominion anyway, said the Montreal paper.

... looking at the situation in the light of recent events, the time seems to have arrived when the employment of the Blackfeet is justifiable and will be approved by public opinion.⁴⁹

After the fall of Batoche the Montreal La Minerve fended off criticism of the Ministry: "Mais jusqu'à preuve au contraire, nous nous refusons de croire que le gouvernement ait manqué de bon vouloir et du désir de satisfaire les légitimes réclamations des Métis."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Editorial, Apr. 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2; Cf. also editorial, same, May 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁴⁹ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., May 13, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁵⁰ Editorial, May 19, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

Despite its own position in regard to the Métis Rising the Montreal Gazette recorded also evidences of pro-Métis sympathies in Quebec. On Tuesday, March 31, 1885, i.e., near the very beginning of the outbreak, Riel sympathizers in Montreal held a small meeting of about fifty persons. Constitutionally, they admitted, the Government was on solid ground in endeavoring to suppress the outbreak; but, nevertheless, all possible means should have been taken to settle the difficulty, it was urged. It was surely just that French Half-breeds should be given what had been accorded Scotch Half-breeds. A resolution was passed to petition the Government to establish a commission "composed of men who knew the half-breeds" for the purpose of mediating. Before the end of March, Quebec dissatisfaction with military measures against the Métis was expressed in Le Nouvelliste. It did not urge disobedience upon Quebec soldiers but would not condemn it either.

Canadians are sent to shoot other Canadians whose demands, after all, are just, and in whose veins the same blood runs[...] Many volunteers may refuse to go to the front or may hand in their resignation. We do not advise such a course, but no one will have the right to be surprised if things turn that way.⁵¹

⁵¹ Reprinted in Gazette, Mont., Apr. 1, 1885, p. 8, col. 1. Le Nouvelliste later repudiated this attack on French-Canadians fighting the Métis. It was said to be the work of a non-regular contributor passed inadvertently. -- Cf. same, Apr. 4, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

The above sentiments were denounced in Commons by two French-Canadians: Phillippe Landry and Charles Joseph Coursol, who pledged French-Canadian assistance to constituted authority. Less than two weeks later Club National held a meeting regarding the Northwest troubles. Resolutions were passed supporting the Métis claims for equal citizenship; but a motion to censure the Government for sending French-Canadians to fight "their compatriots" was defeated. The same Club National sponsored another protest meeting on Saturday, April 18, 1885, much to the annoyance of the Gazette. Canadians should not be sent to fight Canadians; besides a foreign invader might be closer at hand than many had suspected. As in 1837-1838 the Government was to blame. Dewdney was scored as the cause of the trouble. French-Canadians should have been sent instead of Crozier. Alfred Perry, an Englishman, declared that the Métis were doing what men should do: stand up for their rights. This speaker also appealed to the Irish for their support. Let the Rising be settled by granting what the people want, not by bayonets and muskets. A certain F. Z. Dupré declared himself an open supporter of the Rising. Again on April 23, 1885, Club National held another public meeting of about two thousand. The Government was again blamed for the Rising by Raoul Dandurand, President. Since the Métis had no representatives at Ottawa they were forced to take up arms to command attention from a Government wholly given over

to other concerns. The Métis were fighting for their homes and their rights, for they had been exploited by unscrupulous Government agents who enriched themselves at their expense. Another speaker, J. X. Perrault asserted that it had almost always been necessary for French-Canadians to fight for constitutional and responsible Government. He instanced 1837, 1870, and the then present Rising.

The rebels in Manitoba had fought under Riel in 1870 for constitutional government, and today that province enjoys it and they might thank Riel for that. Riel was now fighting in the Northwest for responsible government, for the people there had no political rights and were risking their lives to get them[...] Quebec was essentially French and they ought to stand by their compatriots in the Northwest, who were the victims of crying injustice and tyranny[...]. The French Canadians had forced the British Government to do what they wanted and they should make the Dominion Government do the same.⁵²

Other speakers at this meeting pointed out that it was the upper Canadian fanatics, especially those of Scotch descent who were anti-French in sentiments.⁵³ Even before Riel's capture was made known in the East, La Patrie assailed the Conservative Ministry furiously on Friday, May 15, 1885. It bitterly maintained that Macdonald was the implacable enemy of the French race and that the Liberals must be put in.

⁵² News item, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 24, 1885, p. 8, col. 1-2.

⁵³ Same; also, news item, same, Apr. 2, 1885, p. 8, col. 3-4; press dispatch, same, p. 1, col. 3-4; news item, same, Apr. 16, 1885, p. 1, col. 4; same, Apr. 20, 1885, p. 1, col. 6-7.

A little patriotism, French Canadians! Open your eyes once for all. Our brethren in the Northwest know what it has cost them to have lent an ear to the beautiful words of this man [Macdonald] With Sir John it is war to the bitter end; it is blood and pillage and national desolation and persecution and reprisals, and finally the complete annihilation of our brothers in the Northwest... Let us make our choice.⁵⁴

The House of Commons of the Dominion Parliament did not reflect in the course of the Rising the same amount of excitement as was noticeable in the press. Upon hearing the telegram of Colonel A. G. Irvine about the engagement at Duck Lake, Commons on March 27, 1885, remained calm. The discussion centered around the practical exigencies of transport and supply of troops, for there seemed to have been no question about the necessity of suppression.⁵⁵ Liberal support almost without serious question of the Government's effort to suppress the Rising continued until after the fall of Batoche. On May 21, 1885, however, Liberal leader Blake assailed the Government for withholding vital information and threatened to reveal private knowledge which he himself had been put in possession of.⁵⁶ Macdonald thought Blake's blast was inopportune and partisan. "... the speech of this day and the

⁵⁴ Quoted in editorial, Gazette, Mont., May 19, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁵⁵ Commons Debates, 3rd Sess., 5th Parl., 1885, Vol. 2, p. 790a-791a.

⁵⁶ Same, Vol. 3, p. 2030-2040a.

course of honourable gentlemen this day, will disgust the country, will disgust the people."⁵⁷

In the middle of the Rising Liberals (Rouges) in the Quebec Legislative Assembly supported a resolution calculated to embarrass the Conservative Ministry at Ottawa and also to produce a friction between Quebec and Ontario. Arthur Turcotte, M.P.P. for Three Rivers, moved on April 13, 1885:

That[...]this house[...]cannot but believe that it [the Saskatchewan Rising] has been brought about by carelessness and neglect in settling certain claims which are perfectly equitable, and which have been pending for a certain number of years, and it is inclined to think that [...]this uprising is more the result of a momentary dispute than of conscious and premeditated disloyalty; that this House is convinced that had it not been for the evident neglect and incapacity of the Federal authorities, this insurrection would not have occurred, and that this Province would not have been called upon to send its children to fight with its fellow-citizens driven to bay by a too long continued neglect and of vexations and denials of justice; that this House[...]has an incontestable right to express its opinion when its sons are called upon to shed their blood in a cause, the justice whereof is, to say the least, a matter of discussion; [...]that this house[...]solemnly protest against the Federal Government, which they hold responsible for the blood that has been shed, and in particular for the culpable neglect of the Minister of the Interior, who has, so to say, driven the half-breeds to take up arms...⁵⁸

Actually, this motion was interspersed with expressions of loyalty and confidence. Moreover, it was received with mixed reactions, and Turcotte himself was quite willing that action

⁵⁷ Same, p. 2042a.

⁵⁸ Quebec, Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1885, Vol. 19, p. 123.

on it should be postponed. This was decided upon, for, among other things, it was already midnight. Nothing was done by way of discussion when the above motion was thus moved, but it was taken up two days later, when it met with strong opposition. Renewed discussion on April 16 was also fruitless.⁵⁹ The Legislative Assembly of Quebec voted on the Turcotte resolution after more discussion on April 20, 1885. It was defeated forty-one to fifteen.⁶⁰ Thus, during the actual fighting Quebec stood behind the action of the Dominion Government. The Toronto Mail was happy to learn of the defeat of the Turcotte resolution. It was, said the Mail, really Grit machinations among loyal French Canadians.

He [Turcotte] suspected the existence of a certain sympathy for Riel among the French Canadians, and he determined to turn that sympathy against the Local Government by forcing it to reject his motion of sympathy with the half-breeds.⁶¹

"...whenever a question of loyalty to the confederation, of strengthening the Union, comes up, the French Conservatives show an example of loyalty and faithfulness that the Ontario Grits have never shown."⁶² Even the Montreal Herald, which

⁵⁹ News item, Herald, Mont., Apr. 16, 1885, p. 8, col. 1-2; news item, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 16, 1885, p. 8, col. 3-4; and same, Apr. 17, 1885, p. 8, col. 5.

⁶⁰ Quebec, Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1885, Vol. 19, p. 162-163.

⁶¹ Editorial, Mail, Tor., Apr. 22, 1885, p.4, col.2.

⁶² Same.

could hardly be considered a pro-Ministry paper, protested what it called Turcotte's "mischievous resolution" in the Quebec Legislative Assembly. No matter what words it used, it was essentially disloyal. In supporting it Honore Mercier was simply playing politics.⁶³

The person of Louis Riel, as was to be expected, was a source of contention between Ontario and Quebec. However, throughout the course of the Rising itself, popular sentiment as expressed in the press was uniformly against him. This is quite understandable. The Dominion was at war with him. Newspapers in the East would be risking a good deal had they championed his cause at such a time. Near the end of the Saskatchewan Rising the Montreal Herald described Riel unflatteringly. There was nothing chivalrous nor high-minded about him. He was cool and calculating and not hurried onward by weak-minded enthusiasm. He took no step except he considered his own personal advantage. Then followed the charge of venality. He worked upon unreal Métis fears, and he knew better.

It is on account of his intense and cynical selfishness and his cold-blooded cruelty that so little sympathy is felt for Riel in any Province of the Dominion, and that so many regret that he was not captured at the battle of Batoche Crossing.⁶⁴

⁶³ Editorial, Herald, Mont., Apr. 22, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2.

⁶⁴ Editorial, Herald, Mont., May 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 3; Cf. also same, col. 2.

Two days later the Herald wanted Riel punished for his crimes. He was an "unscrupulous adventurer" who had no lands to defend personally in the Northwest. Moreover, the Indians must learn that they were not to get in the way of white settlement and civilization.⁶⁵

The Montreal La Minerve as early as March 30th was well aware of the mission which Riel believed himself to have. It did not censure him severely at the time. He had been highly regarded by the native Métis of the Northwest. However, he was now having recourse to unconstitutional means.⁶⁶

The Toronto Mail upon first receipt of news about disturbances in the Northwest declared that Riel was never happy except when posing as the hero of some desperate cause. He had talked war for months; but no one acquainted with him would credit him with either the capacity or the courage to make serious trouble. The same paper on March 30, 1885, printed information from a certain "J.B.A." writing from Winnipeg about the Métis chief. "A wild restless movement of the eyes added to a wilder egotism marked the monomaniac."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Editorial, Herald, Mont., May 18, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

⁶⁶ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Mar. 30, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2.

⁶⁷ Press dispatch, Mail, Tor., Mar. 30, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; Cf. also editorial, same, Mar. 24, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

The Montreal Gazette printed evidence of the anti-Riel sentiment in Toronto where a proposal was made for the establishment of the "Toronto Rangers". This was to be a group of Queen City men pledged to bring in Riel dead or alive. Personal animus against Riel continued strong in Gazette editorial policy on April 27, 1885.

Riel was an outlaw who had forfeited all claim to consideration at the hands of the government and who came to the country apparently simply to revenge old and fancied wrongs.⁶⁸

After the capture of Batoche the Gazette longed for the head of Riel. On no account was he to escape punishment.

... the one regret is the failure to capture or kill Riel [...] Riel must not be permitted to escape. The blood of a hundred loyal Canadians calls for vengeance [...] The victory is indeed a splendid one [...] But it is a victory won at a cost which can never be repaid, and for which the lives of Riel and his lieutenants will be but a poor compensation. But that compensation we must have.⁶⁹

Once the victim was captured the Gazette anxiously anticipated the execution.

Having got Riel, the question naturally arises how to deal with him. He will in all probability be given a civil trial, not, perhaps, by a jury, but by a commission of judges, and of the verdict no doubt can for a moment exist. The blood of a hundred loyal Canadians, of many of the flower of the youth of the country, is upon his head, and simple justice demands that the arch mover in the rebellion shall suffer the

68 Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Apr. 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; cf. also press dispatch, same, Mar. 31, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

69 Editorial, Gazette, Mont., May 14, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

penalty of his crime, and that right speedily. No maudlin sentimentality can be permitted to shield him from the punishment of his criminal folly. Swift and unhesitating retribution must overtake him, and while a fair trial is conceded, the execution of the inevitable must not be delayed by any expedient.⁷⁰

Thus it can be seen that Quebec and Ontario were not divided against each other over Riel by the end of the Rising.

The issue of Riel's mental condition was not an afterthought but was known in the East from the outset of the Rising. However, comparatively little attention was drawn to it till later. The first editorial of the Montreal Gazette on the outbreak in the Northwest stated that Riel was a fanatic who had been confined for two years in an insane asylum and was devoid of judgment. La Minerve at the same time was aware that Riel thought himself to have a mission in life, and it put its finger without delay on the important question of his mental condition.

Louis Riel est-il suffisamment équilibré pour comprendre toute la responsabilité de ses actes? Voilà au question d'autant plus pertinente après ce qui lui est déjà arrivé, que son plan de campagne seul nous en fait douter.⁷¹

Talk of Riel's insanity was public by the time of the engagement at Tourond's Coulee (Fish Creek), near the end of April,

⁷⁰ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., May 18, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

⁷¹ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Mar. 30, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; Cf. also editorial, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

1885. A press dispatch from Winnipeg dated April 26th, thus describes him:

The white prisoners now with Riel believe him to be insane as a result of recent events, and fears are now entertained that [...] he will now go crazy and probably kill the prisoners in revenge.⁷²

This all important item in deciding the judicial fate of the Métis chief came to the fore later, i.e., during the trial and immediately prior to his execution.

The antipathy of the Montreal Gazette for Louis Riel is harder to understand when that paper itself printed evidence of his humane treatment of prisoners. A press dispatch about the Tourond's Coulée (Fish Creek) engagement reported that Riel had prevented the execution of Canadian prisoners, which Dumont was alleged to have ordered. Again a certain prisoner named Anderson asserted after the Rising that Riel had given him his liberty in return for bringing to Prince Albert the bodies of Canadian dead which Crozier had left at Duck Lake. Perhaps it was official Ministry policy even at this early date to suppress all evidence of good qualities in Riel and to heap all blame on him individually.⁷³ Another factor in Riel's favor which was known in the East at the close of the Rising was that by surrendering himself he hastened the

⁷² Gazette, Mont., Apr. 27, 1885, p. 1, col. 6.

⁷³ Gazette, Mont., May 26, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; same, May-29, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

ending of Indian resistance and so, saved Canadian lives. However, this fact was lost sight of by those who wished to exact the extreme penalty. "The news of the surrender of Riel demoralized the Indians and made them come in."⁷⁴

During the Saskatchewan Rising proper the reaction of the Church can be gathered from Archbishop Alexandre Antonin Taché of Saint Boniface and Bishop Jean Langevin of Rimouski. From the very outset the former found it necessary to deny sympathy for the rebels. "He [Taché] says he got Riel out of one scrape, but now that he has got into another, he must take the odium of it and suffer as he deserves for his indiscretion."⁷⁵ The real fact was that the Archbishop was anxious to prevent possible collaboration of his St. Boniface flock with the rebellious Métis. He urged prayer for peace everywhere but especially in the Northwest. He had received a letter from Riel at St. Laurent in October, 1884 wherein the latter had declared his peaceful intentions. The prelate replied urging constitutional means only. Hardly more than two weeks after the Duck Lake engagement, Bishop Jean Langevin, brother of Public Works Minister, Hector Langevin, spoke against the Rising and of the necessity of putting

⁷⁴ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 23, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

⁷⁵ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 30, 1885, p. 1, col. 6.

it down. He said in part:

A regrettable insurrection which can only bring disastrous consequences for Canada, has broken out in our Northwest territory, and poor, misguided men, forgetting the teachings of our holy religion[.] have risen up in arms against the established authority and taken the law into their own hands[.] It is absolutely necessary that the majesty of the law be affirmed and protected[.] let us ask that victory may crown the efforts of the brave defenders of law and order...⁷⁶

About April 1, 1885, Joseph Royal, M.P. for Provencher, Manitoba, left suddenly for the Northwest. Macdonald denied having given him any official commission. It was surmised by some that he had sought to enlist Archbishop Taché in the cause of controlling Riel, and, further, that that prelate had refused to risk betrayal a second time. In an interview of April 30, 1885, Archbishop Taché expressed himself as deeply dejected over the persistent charges of Anglo-Canadians that French Canadians were disloyal. Moreover, the Catholic religion forbade rebellion against constituted authority. Riel was to be looked upon as an erring son.

With regard to the accusation that we sympathize with Riel in his movement, I can only say that my sympathy is of the nature of a father towards his child doing wrong. The boy Riel was brought up by me and is it any wonder that I deeply grieve over his erring ways?⁷⁷

Further statements of Churchmen in condemnation of Riel later

col. 6. ⁷⁶ Quoted in Gazette, Mont., Apr. 11, 1885, p. 1,

col. 6; ⁷⁷ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., May 1, 1885, p. 1, col. 6; Cf. also editorial, Globe, Tor., Apr. 17, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

helped to prepare the ground for his execution.

Eastern Reaction during the Trial Period

Fear of race war and conflict between Ontario and Quebec was present in the thoughts of Bishop Vital J. Grandin when he wrote to Prime Minister Macdonald even before the trial. "What I most dread is the antipathy, the hatred and the desire of revenge which will infallibly arise among the different nationalities and religious denominations of the country."⁷⁸ In its effort to prevent conflict, the Montreal Gazette was led into some wishful thinking. In its exuberance over the return of the troops from the Northwest, it said "... the warmth and genuineness of the welcome home of the brave lads whose heroism in the Northwest campaign is above praise has obliterated all sectional jealousies and all provincial bigotries."⁷⁹ The Toronto Government organ, the Mail, seemed to think in the same manner, at least it expressed a good deal of broadmindedness about Quebec in an editorial of late July, 1885.

... it is high time for the two races to know each other better. In Quebec there is a caricature Ontario, and in Ontario a caricature Quebec, both invented by politicians;

⁷⁸ Grandin to Macdonald, July 11, 1885, Pope, Joseph (ed.), Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Tor., 1921, p. 347.

⁷⁹ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., July 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

and until those wretched figments are replaced by more truthful and intelligent conceptions, we cannot hope to become an united Canada.⁸⁰

The Montreal Herald also contributed its piece at this time to inter-provincial harmony. It protested the effigy burning of Riel in Ottawa. So far from the Court scene it could have for effect only the arousing of those who have latent sympathies for Riel. Let the proper judicial authorities handle the matter, said the Herald.⁸¹

The person of Louis David Riel came to the fore by the necessary logic of events and in accordance with his own desires. In early June, 1885, a secret organization was rumored to exist with branches across the Dominion whose members had sworn to take Riel's life should he escape at the trial. On the other hand, Wilfrid Laurier spoke on his behalf when he protested the chaining and manacling of the Métis leader in his Regina cell.⁸²

Among the newspapers the Riel controversy flourished. The anti-Riel tone of the Toronto Mail was evident in the issue of June 17, 1885. Riel deserved no sympathy; he had been cowardly and cruel, and had brought ruin upon his own people. Since the Mail was a Government organ this estimate

80 Editorial, Mail, Tor., July 25, 1885, p. 6, col. 3.

81 Editorial, July 29, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

82 Press dispatches, Gazette, Mont., June 5, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; same, June 9, 1885, p. 1, col. 5.

may have reflected the definite policy of the ministry at that time. The pro-ministry La Minerve remained detached and objective, if not cool, toward the Métis leader. It pointed out at the beginning of July, 1885, that Riel had not attempted to excuse himself from the charge of promoting an Indian uprising, nor for his apostasy from the Faith. About two weeks later La Minerve made manifest again its lack of sympathy for Riel. If people wished to contribute to his defense fund as an act of humanity well and good, but such kindness did not excuse nor condone his crimes. As late as July 23, 1885, after the trial had begun the anti-Ministry Globe of Toronto was broadminded enough to deplore the abusing of effigies of Riel at Winnipeg and Toronto. The pro-Ministry Montreal Gazette continued throughout the Summer of 1885 its antipathy for Louis Riel. He did not personally share whatever grievances the Métis had and therefore was not to be excused. He had had no property, had not been living in the country, and even claimed to be no longer a British subject. He was nothing more than an adventurer. The Gazette chafed at the adjournment of the trial. It would brook no delay. Its attitude seemed to be: proceed with the trial; get on with the hanging! When the trial resumed the pro-Ministry Montreal English-language organ withdrew from its extreme position and became definitely objective toward Riel. The occasion was the Riel effigy at Winnipeg which had been blown up while the returning

troops were passing by. It called for a fair trial and enjoined on its readers an absence of criticism to which every man under trial for his life should be entitled. The anti-Ministry Montreal Herald at trial time would show the Métis leader no sympathy. He was sane enough to lead a rebellion. Therefore he was responsible. Let the law take its course. He knew better than the Métis he deceived the power and resources of the Dominion and the hopelessness of a successful Rising. The more was he to blame for that.⁸³

In mid-August as the pro-Riel agitation increased the Gazette found it necessary to deflate the new-found hero of the opposition politicians.

The spectacle of men, professing loyalty, haranguing audiences of their countrymen in justification of the rebellion that has brought such havoc to the homes of the poor half-breeds; holding up as a saint a man who usurped the place of the priests, and whose machinations have caused the murder of two noble missionary fathers of the Roman Catholic Church; picturing as a patriot a man who offered to sell his patriotism for money; weeping over the wrongs of a wretch who gave his allegiance to a foreign flag and had not a shilling of interest in this country, is one that all right-minded people must deplore.⁸⁴

⁸³ Editorial, Mail, Tor., June 17, 1885, p. 4, col. ; editorials, La Minerve, Mont., July 1, 1885, p. 2, col. 3, and , same, July 13, 1885, p. 2, col. 1; editorial Globe, Tor., July 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; editorials, Gazette, Mont., July 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; same, July 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 2 and July 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; editorial, Herald, Mont., Aug. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁸⁴ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 13, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

On the same day, La Minerve published a letter from the Northwest missionary Father Alexis André wherein no word of defense of Riel was to be found. This was considered significant and as indicating that the Métis chief personally ought not to be defended. Desiré Girouard, M. P. for Jacques Cartier, asserted at this time that Riel's motives were revenge and ambition.⁸⁵

Even French Canadian members of the 65th Regiment refused to allow the name of the regiment to be used in collecting money for Riel's defense fund. Thus it can be seen that the person of Riel was anathema to large sections of the East both supporters and opponents of the Conservative Ministry.⁸⁶

Between the time of Louis Riel's imprisonment (May 23, 1885) and the beginning of his trial for high treason (July 20, 1885) the Government prosecutors prepared their case. Although it was denied that any instructions had been issued for the prosecution of Riel which would make him solely guilty, the overall political strategy seems to have been to pile all available evidence on the head of Riel personally so that he above all could be proved guilty beyond cavil.

⁸⁵ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Aug. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 1; news item Gazette, Mont., Aug. 18, 1885, p. 2, col. 3.

⁸⁶ Correspondence, Gazette, Mont., July 25, 1885, p. 3, col. 5.

Then the sentence could be commuted or carried out according to prevailing political winds. At the same time evidence would also be gathered against Northwest white Liberals for being the real behind-the-scenes instigators of the Rising. Perhaps some evidence could be found which might somehow implicate Liberals back East, perhaps even Blake himself. Such evidence would be held back until the approaching elections, at which time it could be released, as political exigencies arose, for the defeat of the Liberals at the polls. Henry J. Clarke in his appeal to Macdonald for a bench appointment, August 30, 1886, indicated that such was his strategy in handling the trials of the other Métis, and that he [Clarke] personally had engineered the concentration of guilt on the head of Riel.

I was about two months engaged in those trials, and the result is that I know almost every man, French, English, Scotch or Half Breed, who was mixed up with the Rebellion. I gained my knowledge when preparing my defense. I think you can without much difficulty guess who is the author of the depositions of Pere André, Foulmond [Fourmond?], Couchem [Cochin?], Chas. Nolin and others - all of which have been or ought to have been of great use to the Government, placing as they do all the responsibility of the Rebellion on Riel and others, and all condemning him without stint.⁸⁷

The Government prosecutors at the trial were Christopher Robinson, Britton Bath Osler, C. W. Burbidge, Deputy Minister of Justice; T. Chase Casgrain, and D. L. Scott.

⁸⁷ Clarke to Macdonald, Aug. 30, 1886, Macdonald Papers; "Northwest Rebellion 1885", Vol. 7, p. 29.

Riel was defended by Francois Xavier Lemieux, Charles Fitzpatrick, J. N. Greenshields and T. C. Johnstone.

Immediately prior to Riel's trial, the first trial for murder in the Northwest territories had taken place. An appeal had been made on behalf of the accused, one named Connor (occasionally referred to as Khonnors the Hebrew), to the court of Manitoba, challenging the jurisdiction of the local court of a Stipendiary Magistrate and six jurors in cases of capital offenses. The precedent established in the case would have an important bearing on Riel's trial. The verdict of the Chief Justice of the Manitoba Appellate Court was that the Canadian Parliament had rightly conferred on the Stipendiary Magistrate, with Justice of the Peace, the power to try persons accused of capital offenses, and had rightly established six men juries for such areas as the locale of the Regina Court.⁸⁸ As will be seen the case of Connor preceded Riel's to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

From a list of thirty-six eligible men six jurors were selected, none of whom could be classified as French. They were Henry J. Painter, Edward Eratt [Everett?], Edwin J. Brooks, Walter Merryfield, Peel [Paul?] Deane, and Francis Cosgrave. The Stipendiary Magistrate was Colonel Hugh

⁸⁸ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., June 30, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

Richardson. With him, as required by law, sat Henry LeJune, Justice of the Peace.

Riel's lawyers announced at the outset that they were questioning the jurisdiction of Richardson's court, and that they wished the trial to take place in some Province having fully constituted courts. The plea was "not guilty". Magna Carta provided for a trial by a jury of twelve, and Magna Carta formed part of the public law of British domains. Defense also offered to bring in Gabriel Dumont and Michel Dumas, fugitives in the United States if the court would assure them safe conduct in order to testify.

Prosecution argued that in territories like the Northwest ordinary and regular courts were too difficult to establish hence the reason for the structure of the Regina tribunal. Moreover, the law against treason could be administered simply by a Stipendiary Magistrate alone who may also charge and try the offense. To this defense would in no way agree. Thereupon the Judge stated that his court was competent and ordered the trial to proceed.

Defense next presented a long list of Métis petitions of grievances to the Dominion Government extending from 1878 to 1884. Also, they mentioned insanity as an excusing factor for Riel; also the fact that Riel himself had done no fighting personally and that if his advice had been taken, no blood would have been shed. An adjournment was sought so that

witnesses for Riel could be secured from the East. Prosecution reluctantly agreed.

When the trial reopened July 28, 1885, the Superintendent of the Hamilton Asylum, James M. Wallace, appeared for the Crown to give evidence regarding Riel's mental condition. Doctor Francois Roy of Quebec, Doctor Daniel Clark of the Toronto Asylum, and Doctor A. Vallee appeared on behalf of Riel.

Doctor John H. Willoughby of Saskatoon acted as witness for the prosecution. He asserted that Riel had told him at one time that he intended to rule over the Northwest or "perish in the attempt". The Indians would rise, and the United States would support him. God-fearing men would govern the Northwest, not those at Ottawa. There would be seven portions to the new land, and a new Iceland would be set up. Thomas McKay, a Métis, testified that he heard in March that Riel had been urging recourse to arms. After March 20, 1885, he had been detained by Riel for questioning at Batoche. On March 24, 1885, he had returned to Carlton. McKay maintained that he had had no personal quarrel with Riel. John Astley, a Prince Albert surveyor and prisoner of the Métis, testified that Riel had told him that he (Riel) had ordered his men at Duck Lake to fire, but he (Riel) had thought that the police had fired first. He also asserted that Riel had declared that another fight with the soldiers

was needed in order to secure better surrender terms from Major General Frederick Middleton. Moreover, Riel had claimed that not he himself but his associates wanted to bring the Indians in.

During the session of July 29, 1885, Captain George Holmes Young testified to obtaining Riel's papers in his council chamber. Riel admitted having incited the Indians and being promised Irish assistance from the United States. Charles Nolin, cousin of Riel, testified that he had been imprisoned by Riel for having counselled moderation. Major L. N. F. Crozier testified that he was fired upon at Duck Lake. Riel and counsel at this point quarrelled because Riel thought they were not asking the prosecution witnesses questions which could remove prejudices from the jury. Robert Jefferson testified that he was in Poundmaker's Camp when Riel's invitation to the Chief to join him arrived. General Middleton testified that Riel was a "religious enthusiast", strong on some points.

On July 30th, defense lawyer Greenshields maintained that Magna Carta was being violated by the failure to provide a proper jury. Moreover, the Métis had been understandably aroused by the appearance and activities in their country of speculators, land-grabbers, and colonization companies. Their efforts to obtain redress had been futile. Father Alexis André, Philip Garnot, and Father Vital Fourmond all

testified that Riel was demented. The last named asserted that Riel's plan was "to capture Winnipeg and Quebec, France and Germany, overthrow the Pope and place himself at the head of the Church". Doctors Roy of Beauport Asylum and Clark of Toronto judged Riel insane. Doctors Wallace of Hamilton and Jukes (the latter of the Mounted Police staff) judged him sane.

On the following day Captain Young, General Middleton, Reverend Charles B. Pitblado, a Protestant Minister of Winnipeg, Captain Richard Deane and Corporal Joseph Piggott of the Mounted Police all testified that Riel was sane. Defense lawyer Fitzpatrick argued that the accused was insane, that "old British justice" would win out, that Riel had delivered himself to save others, that Poundmaker and Big Bear should have been allowed to testify. After a brief adjournment, Riel spoke to the jury, disclaiming insanity, thanking his opponents and the court for fairness, and criticizing Archbishop Tache and his own counsel. Crown Counsel Robinson argued that the defense had based its case one moment on justification of the Rising and the next moment on the insanity plea.

Doctor Roy stated that Riel suffered from ambition-mania and was not responsible for his acts. Doctor Clark said that despite his ability to distinguish right from wrong, Riel was still insane. His case was difficult because he was so well educated. Doctor Wallace said Riel could distinguish

right from wrong and so, had no symptoms of insanity. However, more lengthy examination might cause him to alter his conclusion.

On the morning of the trial's last day Judge Richardson read the evidence. After noon recess he reviewed the law and referred to the chief points of evidence. The jury deliberated an hour, during which time Riel prayed on his knees in his box, and returned at three fifteen p.m. with a verdict of guilty, and recommending Riel to the mercy of the court. The judge then rose, pronounced sentence of death by hanging for September 18, next. He told Riel there could be no prospect of reprieve or of interference by the Queen. Riel remained calm.⁸⁹

The question of the competence or lack of it of the Court that tried Louis Riel was to figure prominently in the friction between Ontario and Quebec. We have seen that the Appellate Court of Manitoba upheld the competence of a Northwest territories court to try capital cases in that of Connor.

⁸⁹ The indictment, evidence, judgment, and exhibits of the trial of Louis Riel are to be found in Canada, Sessional Papers, 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, papers 43-43c, p. 1-233. In Commons on March 5, 1886, Guillaume Amyot (Bellechasse, Quebec) asked why Judge Richardson had assumed to say that Riel could hardly hope to expect the exercise of mercy in regard to his sentence. The new Minister of Justice, John S. D. Thompson, answered that the Government had given the Judge no such instruction and presumably he had done so as an expression of his own view only. -- Cf. Commons Debates, 4th Sess., Fifth Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 59a.

Connor had been tried for murder, and Riel was tried for treason. Thus there was a difference in charges, and pro-Riel sympathisers insisted that Richardson's court was not competent. Dominion Senator Trudel on July 13, 1885, raised the question "in the interests of justice" of modifying existing law to allow the Northwest insurgents to be tried before a jury of twelve. Three days later Joseph Gedeon, Horace Bergeron (Beauharnois, Quebec) protested the trial of Riel by six jurors only and all English speaking. He wished a new law to provide for 12 jurors.

It will be a great act of justice, so far as the Province of Quebec is concerned, and it will be a great satisfaction to everyone, whether Riel is guilty or not, to know that he was tried before a mixed jury of twelve men, as was the practice in Quebec, men who knew him and were qualified to give judgment on the case brought before the court[...]. As regards the sentiment of the people, they are very indifferent as to what the verdict may be. It is a question of law, and as a matter of justice it would be a great satisfaction if these men were tried according to the laws of Ontario and Quebec, and it would be a great consolation to people interested in those men.⁹⁰

Answering for the Government, Hector Langevin could not see the value of changing the law. The jurors, he was sure, would be picked as they were elsewhere in the Dominion, and so a fair trial would be assured.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Commons Debates, 3rd. Sess., Fifth Parl., 1885, Vol. 4, p. 3440b-3441a. Cf. correspondence, Gazette, Mont., July 14, 1885, p. 5, col. 1.

⁹¹ Same, p. 3441b.

Even the pro-Ministry Montreal Gazette made an acknowledgment concerning the questionable competence of the court that tried Riel. "Without competent jurisdiction may be the tribunal before which he was tried and condemned but guilty of dastardly crimes, a mere mercenary adventurer it is certain he is."⁹² Five days later the same paper again admitted that the competence of the Regina court might be an open question, in which case, it pointed out, appeals could be made. It also printed the doubts of Desiré Girouard in his Lachine speech about the competency of Richardson's court.⁹³

When news of the verdict on Riel reached the East Toronto agreed that the Métis Chief should suffer the supreme penalty and couldn't understand why the jury should have recommended mercy. English speaking citizens of Ottawa also agreed with the "righteousness" of the verdict. French at Ottawa were excited, claiming pro-Riel documentary evidence had been suppressed. Preparations were being made for a petition to the Governor-General for a commutation. The Montreal Herald had no sympathy for Riel and wanted the law to take its course. La Minerve devoted an entire column to

⁹² Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 13, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

⁹³ "In any case Riel has a right to a legal trial[...]
it is only right that the point [the competence of the Regina
court] should be settled whether by the court of Appeal or
the Privy Council." -- News item, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 18,
1885, p. 2, col. 3. Cf. also editorial, same, p. 4, col. 1-2.

editorial upon Riel's condemnation but did not regret his sentence. It understood well his mania but did not protest the verdict.⁹⁴

A well-balanced view of the verdict on Riel was supplied by the Gazette in the issue of August 8, 1885.

There is a strong effervescence on both sides. One side cries: 'Riel must be hanged, or _____! The other side cries: 'Riel shall not be hanged, or _____! This effervescence must needs be, but it will subside, and then there will float on the surface the view of common sense. That view is as follows:- The verdict was two-fold _____ 'guilty, with recommendation to mercy.' In pursuance of the first part, the man was sentenced to death. There justice was carried out. In furtherance of the second part, he will be interned for life either in an asylum or a prison. There mercy will intervene. One thing is imperative - Riel must never be let loose again.⁹⁵

The above view may have represented Cabinet policy at the time, or Cabinet indecision; or it might even have been an effort to discover public sentiment on Riel's condemnation.

Another important factor in the pro-Riel agitation was to be the mercy recommendation of the jury. As we have seen public sentiment in Toronto could not understand why there should have been such a recommendation. The Toronto Mail without at first endorsing the view, admitted the fact that the jury probably believed Riel to have been somewhat

⁹⁴ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 3, 1885, p. 1, col. 4; editorial, Herald, Mont., Aug. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Aug. 3, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

⁹⁵ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 8, 1885, p. 4, col. 4. (*Italics in original*).

insane and so recommended mercy. Soon, however, the Mail did commit itself to the view that the reason the jury recommended mercy was their belief that he was not wholly sane, i.e., that although he could distinguish right from wrong, yet he was subject to delusions which warped his moral sense. It was the Opposition, said the Mail, that interpreted the recommendation to mercy as a belief on the part of the jury that Riel was partially justified in rebelling. The Orange Sentinel argued that it was the duty of the Government not to take into consideration this recommendation for mercy, but rather it was in the interest of the Dominion to allow the law to take its course.⁹⁶

The question of Riel's sanity was paramount throughout the agitation. It was, of course, on this that his defense lawyers hoped to win his acquittal. Without doubt the comparatively small acquaintance with the nature of insanity at the time was responsible for the confusion and altercation on this point. Today, it can hardly be doubted such a man as Riel would not be hanged but would be reckoned as criminally insane and confined in an institution. After Riel's surrender Doctor Orton, a Brigade surgeon with Middleton, had an interview with the Métis leader. He gave it as his opinion that

⁹⁶ Editorial, Mail, Tor., Aug. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; same, Aug. 4, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; and Polemiques et Documents touchant le Nord-Ouest et L'Exécution de Louis Riel, Mont., 1886, p. 151b.

Riel was altogether sane: "His conduct betrayed no sign of insanity ..."⁹⁷ Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney himself declared to Macdonald his belief that Riel was insane. He enclosed one of Riel's letters to both Mounted Police Officer Richard Deane and himself and made this comment to the Prime Minister: "I think he is crazy."⁹⁸ A Riel letter dated July 16, 1885, at Regina Prison to John A. Macdonald makes his insanity fairly patent. He discussed the political ramifications of his trial as regards Liberals and Conservatives almost as if he were a policy-maker within the cabinet. He gave advice on political appointments to be made by the Prime Minister and wanted to be tried in the East.⁹⁹ During the adjournment of his trial the Métis leader was reported to have refused to make a written renunciation of apostacy from the Church. He was found to have been amenable on all points save this. He claimed he had a mission to fulfill and that his conscience would not allow him to recant.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., June 9, 1885, p. 1, col. 6.

⁹⁸ Dewdney to Macdonald, June 27, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 4, p. 448 (underlining in the original).

⁹⁹ Riel to Macdonald, July 16, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 348-350.

¹⁰⁰ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., July 25, 1885, p. 1, col. 4.

As we have seen Father André, Father Fourmond, and Philip Garnot, his secretary, all testified at the trial their belief that Riel was insane. During the course of the trial also the Montreal La Minerve was sure of Riel's insanity. "La scène qu'il à faite à ses avocats à propos de la transquestion de Nolin, et sa conduite générale depuis le commencement des procès prouvent clairement qu'il est un maniaque."¹⁰¹ Declaring him sane at the trial were Captain Young, General Middleton, Reverend Pitblado, Captain Deane, and Corporal Piggott. Of the four doctors at the trial two of them, Roy and Clark declared Riel insane; a third doctor, Wallace, thought him sane with the reservation that a more lengthy examination could well reveal the contrary; the fourth doctor, A. Jukes, who had not examined Riel prior to the trial, reckoned him sane. The election-conscious Desiré Girouard also dealt with the insanity issue. "Again as to the condition of Riel's mind, the evidence is contradictory. Some medical men say yes, others say no. What is required is a commission of professional men to settle the question."¹⁰²

The adverse reaction of churchmen to the Rising of Riel and their failure to recognize his increasing mental

¹⁰¹ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., July 31, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

¹⁰² News item, Gazette, Montreal, Aug. 18, 1885, p. 2, col. 3.

aberration were responsible, it seems hardly deniable, for the unwillingness of the Ministry to commute his sentence. Assuredly the Métis chief had opposed the missionaries and had usurped their position of influence over their Métis flocks; but the latter did not appreciate that this was the madman's recourse to evil means to secure a good end, i.e., the welfare of his beloved Métis nation. Judging by external acts only they roundly condemned his opposition to them, his apostacy from the Church, and his success in inducing many of the Métis to do the same. The missionaries rushed to print in the Summer of 1885 and so the record was established that Riel was already condemned by Catholic churchmen. Macdonald relied on the docility of French Quebec to its clergy and hierarchy for an ultimate reconciliation between his Ministry and the French province.

In an interview at Ottawa on his way to Montreal, Archbishop Tache of St. Boniface characterized Riel's conduct as folly which did not merit his sympathy. Moreover, Riel was an enemy of the Church. Father André wrote to La Minerve his condemnation of Riel under the pseudonym of Testis Fidelis.

Je puis affirmer en toute certitude que nos Métis, laisses a euxmemes, n'auraient jamais pensé a se soulever; mais Riel, comme un genie malfaisant, s'est servi de son influence sur ces pauvres gens pour les precipiter dans une rebellion...¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Le Véritable Riel, Mont., 1887, p. 6; Cf. also Press dispatch Gazette, Mont., June 9, 1885, p. 1, col. 6.

The same missionary also denounced Riel in a letter to the Toronto Mail: "Le nom de Riel est en grand discredit parmi eux maintenant qu'ils voient clairement les mauvais desseins de celui qui fut leur chef."¹⁰⁴

Bishop Grandin's condemnation of Riel is recorded in his letter to the Prime Minister of July 11, 1885. Father Fourmond, one of the missionaries, wrote in condemnation of Riel to Bishop Grandin's brother. This letter was published in Semaine Religieuse. Among other things he declared:

Deja nous avons notre anteChrist dans la personne de ce fameux Riel, contre lequel il nous a fallu lutter, au peril de notre vie, pour detruire sa funeste influence sur nos pauvres gens.¹⁰⁵

A missionary brother, Pierre Marie Piquet, sent to La Minerve four letters throughout June and July, 1885, wherein he vented his antagonism for Riel. "Riel etait l'ennemi implacable du Gouvernement Canadien, du clerge Catholique de ses concitoyens les Métis."¹⁰⁶ And again, "Quel homme que ce Louis David Riel! Non content d'avoir entraine ses compatriots dans l'insurrection, il en a fait encore apostasier un grand nombre."¹⁰⁷ Still later:

¹⁰⁴ Le Véritable Riel, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Le Véritable Riel, p. 15; Cf. also Grandin to MacDonald, July 11, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 347.

¹⁰⁶ Same, p. 23.

¹⁰⁷ Same, p. 25.

Quel est l'auteur des troubles du Nord-Ouest? C'est Louis Riel. Si c'est Riel qui est l'auteur des troubles du Nord-Ouest, c'est lui seul qui doit être puni. Mais, me direz-vous, les autres aussi ont participé à la révolte. Si comme moi vous aviez suivi pas à pas étudié à fond l'hypocrisie, la finesse la ruse et les autres moyens secrets ce peuple et pour l'entraîner à la rébellion de gré ou de force, comme moi vous rejetteriez sans peine sur cet homme cruel et tyran toute la culpabilité de cette rébellion.¹⁰⁸

Finally,

Dans toutes ses prêches, l'église catholique, les prêtres et les évêques sont l'objet de ses diatribes, il se dit prophète et envoyé de dieu pour réformer l'église Catholique...¹⁰⁹

On July 16, 1885, Bishop Grandin wrote to Defense Minister Adolphe Caron his sentiments about the Metis leader.

Un miserable [Riel] avait capté leur confiance, en se donnant comme un homme divin[.] il a travaillé longtemps, pour faire croire à ses compatriotes qu'il était un grand saint. Il passait les jours et les nuits en prières, il jeunait souvent et disait à tous qu'il avait une mission vraiment divine. Il a fini par se donner comme l'homme de Dieu, et dès lors rien ne le gênait plus. Jouissant d'une autorité divine, il était supérieur au clergé et à toute religion.¹¹⁰

Of all the French Cabinet Ministers, Caron seemed to be one least sympathetic to Riel or disturbed by his fate. Such a letter as the above could well have established his opinion.

The Montreal Gazette found its anti-Riel campaign greatly assisted on August 13, 1885, by a letter of appeal

108 Same, p. 27.

109 Same, p. 31.

110 Same, p. 42

from the priests of the Saskatchewan district where the Rising occurred. It published this letter, dated June 12, 1885, in its editorial columns. Among other things the missionaries said:

That Louis 'David' Riel does not deserve the sympathy of the Roman Catholic church or its people, as he usurped our places as priests with our flocks, and otherwise deprived our people of the advantages and consolation of having us among them. All this he did to gain his own selfish ends, and we therefore feel that the church and people in Canada should sympathize with us and our people, and pity rather than blame them for being led astray.¹¹¹

Since churchmen made the case against Riel so strong and in the process overlooked the insanity which was responsible for the ill-conceived Rising, the way was cleared for the Ministry to proceed with his hanging. On sober second thought, Macdonald calculated, the population of Quebec would surely follow the lead of its clergy.

It was inevitable almost that the entire Riel issue should become a plaything of politicians. The lines were not clearly drawn from the outset. Each Party manoeuvred hesitatingly and with a sensitive reaction to political winds. The anti-Ministry Montreal Herald did not support Opposition Leader Blake, in the latter's blast of the Government in

¹¹¹ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Aug. 13, 1885, p. 4, col. 2. This letter was published by the Montreal organ particularly for the benefit of "The Demagogues who are engaged in the wicked work of stirring up race animosities, of creating political difficulties." -- Cf. same.

Commons, April 21, 1885.

The Opposition continue to be badly led. The speech which Mr. Blake sprung [sic] on Parliament on Thursday afternoon on North-West matters was a blunder. The country is not in a sufficiently settled mental condition to discuss these matters calmly[...]. Mr. Blake's party speeches in connection with North-West affairs seem out of place. The country is not in the mood to listen to them.¹¹²

The Toronto Mail charged the Grits with being anti-French Canadian on May 22, 1885. It did not go to the defense of the French but was content with merely assailing the Opposition. Throughout the Rising the Toronto Globe did not give expression to an anti-Quebec policy. It did publish occasional evidences of Quebec dissatisfaction with the anti-Métis war, but it did so without comment. The Globe consistently followed its anti-Government stand flailing the Ministry at every turn. Without excitement it had assumed that Riel must be punished, but it also wanted a fair trial, followed by sure punishment. It feared the Ministry might let him off. The Globe would remain watchful to prevent such a thing. In early July the Herald still would not back Blake in his criticism of the Government's North-West dealings. It was too sympathetic to the rebels and, of course, partisan. Worse still, it would provide material for Riel's lawyers in the trial soon to begin.

¹¹² Editorial, Herald, Mont., May 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

We believe Mr. Blake's impeachment of the Government in connection with North-West matters was hasty and ill-timed; that it betrayed a partisan motive and could not be credited to an overwhelming desire to promote the public good; that the hope within him was strong that he would catch political support from those who sympathize with the disloyal element in the North-West.¹¹³

The Montreal Gazette did not wish the trial to become an instrument of party warfare. Its position, to be sure, was that Riel should certainly be condemned, after a fair trial, of course. It was resigned to the six day adjournment but hoped that that would be all. In its editorial of July 25, 1885, the Gazette resented and rebuked the attitude of the "Liberal Press" toward the Riel trial. It could not understand how anyone could think of excusing the action of the "arch-culprit". It accused the Liberals of making a partisan political issue out of something that should have been the non-partisan and objective goal of all parties, i.e., condemnation of Riel.¹¹⁴

The Montreal La Minerve suspected that some Liberals would like to see Riel hang just in order to have something to blame on the Conservatives. "L'organe rouge ne unie qu'a

¹¹³ Editorial, Herald, Mont., July 9, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; Cf. also editorial, same, July 7, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2; editorial, Mail, Tor., May 22, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; editorial, Globe, Tor., May 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2.

¹¹⁴ Editorials, July 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; July 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

une chose; surexciter les passions et embarrasser le ministère autant que possible."¹¹⁵ The Champ de Mars meeting of Sunday, August 9, 1885, was nothing but a clever political manoeuvre, La Minerve was convinced. It pretended to be non-partisan but this was only in order to deceive the public. On August 18, 1885, La Minerve charged that the Rouge lawyers of Riel showed no interest in the other prisoners. Once their defense of Riel failed they hurried back to Quebec to attack the Government, thus showing no interest in the sufferings of the Métis at all.

Quant aux autres prisonniers Métis, nous savons également que les avocats rouges, une fois la sentence de Riel dans leur poche, se sont empressés d'abandonner ces pauvres prisonniers à la clémence de leur allié politique, le juge Richardson, une creature de M. Mackenzie, pour revenir cabaler dans la province de Quebec contre le gouvernement.¹¹⁶

The same refrain of partisanship in regard to the Riel issue came to the Prime Minister from a private source in the latter half of August, 1885. Thomas Cowan wrote to the effect that the Opposition were making political capital by predicting as a certainty that Riel would not be allowed by the Conservatives to hang. "Our opponents make every possible use, or misuse, of the Riel question..."¹¹⁷ Whatever the

¹¹⁵ Editorial, Aug. 8, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

¹¹⁶ Editorial, p. 2, col. 1.

¹¹⁷ Cowan to Macdonald, Aug. 22, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 59.

hopes, naive or otherwise, of keeping the issue of Louis Riel out of the political arena, they were doomed to failure. Partisanship was bound to play a part, almost in the nature of things.

Support for the cause of Louis Riel was not slow in developing. During the Summer of 1885 it took its rise, and reached its culminating point on Execution Day. As early as May 23, 1885, a prominent French Canadian, a friend of Riel was reported by the Montreal Gazette to have offered to pay the expenses of defense counsel for Riel. It is probable that this benefactor was Doctor Romuald Fiset, Riel's former schoolmate. Francois Xavier Lemieux and Charles Fitzpatrick were retained. John O'Farrell, a Winnipeg lawyer, lent some support to Riel's cause less than a month later. He stated his opinion that sane or insane Riel could not lawfully be tried for any act prior to his surrender, because the proclamation and letter of Middleton (whose authority in the area of the Civil War was complete) were of such a nature as to condone Riel's acts up to the date of surrender. This attempt to establish theoretically belligerent's status for Riel was to be continued later in the agitation. Near the end of June, 1885, a committee of French Canadians at Quebec City headed by Judge L. J. Loranger, petitioned the Government to pay for the production at the trial of all the witnesses

that Riel's counsel may summon. 118

Further support for Riel in the East before his trial was given by the publicity allowed his letter of self-defense both by La Minerve and the Gazette of Montreal. The letter was written to Romuald Fiset and dated June 16, 1885, at Regina jail. The Métis chief gave his view of the Saskatchewan Rising. He pointed out the fact of his ready surrender, his declining of an opportunity to escape had he wished, and the pacifying effect this had on the Métis. He had not wanted to be tried at Prince Albert but rather in lower Canada where alone he could assemble all his witnesses. The Métis had come to his home in the States to seek his help in petitioning the Dominion Government. In this work he had peacefully engaged until the actual outbreak which was itself precipitated by the report that five hundred policemen were coming to imprison the Métis leaders. One petition addressed to the Government had been viewed by Bishop Grandin of St. Albert, Father André of Saskatchewan, Amédée Forget of the North-West Council, and Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney himself. He did not wish recourse to arms, but the Métis were influenced by "interested dealers", employing intrigue and forged letters. He called two meetings, the second of these on March 2, 1885,

118 News item, Gazette, Mont., May 23, 1885, p. 1, col. 4; Press dispatch, same, June 18, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; Press dispatch, same, June 30, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

wherein he expressed his desire to return to the United States. The Métis would not on either occasion listen to this proposal. Father Vital Fourmond was present at the first of these meetings, which was held at St. Antoine. Riel himself was drawn into the whirlpool of events when he learned that some Métis, hearing of the approach of the above mentioned police, had arrested an Indian Agent and detained a few others. Arriving on the scene he found the people had already taken up arms in self-defense. Twenty-four hours later the whole Métis population was in arms. The fight with Major Crozier followed. After this first conflict he personally assisted a wounded member of Crozier's force. General Middleton had promised to commend this act to the Government. Other prisoners were sheltered and succored until claimed by friends. Riel resented being tried as a murderer, but was confident he would not be found guilty.¹¹⁹

A Riel Defense Committee decided on a public meeting after vespers in St. Roche, July 5, 1885, in order to organize a public subscription to defray expenses. It was also decided to publish in the French language papers all correspondence with the Government. Financial assistance was also sought from French Canadians in the United States. On the night of

¹¹⁹ Correspondence, La Minerve, Mont., July 1, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2; press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., July 3, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

July 7, 1885, a meeting of Riel sympathizers numbering five thousand took place in Quebec City. Here it was also decided to begin a public subscription of funds to secure an impartial trial for Riel. We have seen already that an effort was made in Parliament to help Riel by modifying existing law to assure him a twelve-man jury.¹²⁰

An attempt was early made to secure the sympathy of the Canadian Irish for Louis Riel. At the July 7th public meeting in Quebec City an Irishman and former mayor of the City, Owen Murphy, likened Riel's cause to that of the Irish. He was sure that if properly appealed to the support of the Irish could be obtained for the Métis leader. Further attempts to win Irish support came later.¹²¹

It was not hard to create sympathy in Quebec for the French Métis of the North-West owing to the factor of blood. It was more difficult for Quebec to support suppression of the Rebellion than Ontario. An interesting view of the military operations was provided by Captain Guillaume Bossé of the 65th Battalion. In a letter from Edmonton dated May 22, 1885, he expressed his suspicion that military activities and preparations had been too extensive and for the benefit of

¹²⁰ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., July 6, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; same, July 7, 1885, p. 1, col. 7; and, same, July 9, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

¹²¹ Press dispatch Gazette, Mont., July 9, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

interests with ulterior motives.

Rumors here of coming trouble are as plentiful as with you, but we have been taught to believe that all of the reported attacks are mere fabrications of interested parties, who, through greed, will keep us here longer than there will be any real necessity for. You will be astonished when you know who these people are, and you will soon be provided with facts.¹²²

On July 17, 1885, Joseph Tasse' (Ottawa City, Ontario) drew attention to the difficulty which French Canadians experienced in fighting blood brothers.

... for us French Canadians the circumstances were exceedingly painful. We had to fight against brothers, men who have French blood in their veins...¹²³

... the voice of blood, strong and mighty as it is, has not prevented us from doing our duty[...]. Hence, the indignation with which we have seen certain newspapers questioning our loyalty, our devotion to our country.¹²⁴

With what indignation have we not seen these newspapers proclaiming that the time had come when the French Canadians must go; that they must be swept away from the country. With what increasing indignation have we not seen those same papers, have we not heard certain hustings resounding with the charge that our bishops and priests were at the bottom of the North-West rebellion, when everybody knows, or ought to know, that without the intervention of Monseigneur Grandin, the venerated pastor of the Saskatchewan [...]. Father Lacombe, the apostle of the Blackfeet [...]. Father Cochin, the apostle of the Crees [...].

¹²² Bosse' to an unnamed relative, Gazette, Mont., June 6, 1885, p. 1, col. 3. Unfortunately, a subsequent letter providing "the facts" never appeared.

¹²³ Commons Debates, 3rd Sess., 5th Parl., 1885, Vol. 4, p. 3465a-3466b.

¹²⁴ Same.

Father Andre[.] the prairies[.] would only be today
a vast ocean of flames[.] a vast ocean of blood.¹²⁵

... on one side it was stated that the bishops and
clergy were sold to the Government, on the other hand
[.] they were accused of taking part in the rebellion.¹²⁶

This evidence of Bossé and Tassé of the French Canadian attitude was not specifically on Riel's behalf, but it did indicate that French Canadians faced a problem not experienced by Ontarians in putting down the Rising of the French Métis. However, definite pro-Riel sympathy was not long in manifesting itself. On Friday evening, July 24, 1885, during the reception of the sharpshooters at Ottawa Riel was hanged in effigy. This gave rise two days later to a public indignation meeting of some 600 French Canadians. Resolutions were passed against the guilty parties, exonerating the general public, and approving the action of the Saint Jean Baptist society for leaving the ranks during the procession upon approaching the effigy.¹²⁷ Thus French Canadian sensitiveness could be worked upon to arouse a pro-Riel agitation which, by its very nature almost, was bound to produce friction between the two provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

125 Same.

126 Same.

127 Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., July 28, 1885, p. 1, col. 7.

The anti-Riel movement in the Summer of 1885 was on a smaller scale than its counterpart, so that Upper Canadians were to insist that the only reason they had for anti-Riel agitation was to counteract the sympathy gotten up for him in Quebec. As a faithful member of the Ministry, Joseph A. Chapleau, Secretary of State, early made clear his anti-Riel position. He replied in June, 1885, to a series of resolutions in favor of Riel passed in Fall River, Massachusetts, by French Canadians. He disagreed with them entirely. The resolutions were an unjust condemnation of the Canadian Ministry. Armed rebels guilty of murder, etc., must be condemned. The resolutions were based on misinformation. The Métis, Chapleau continued, did not make use of ordinary channels of protest. They did not enlist the assistance of friends in Parliament, Privy Council, and press. Riel started the Rising to satisfy his vanity. He enrolled the Indians in the work of bloodshed. His only excuse was mental aberration. Nevertheless, he should be punished as though guilty of "malicious premeditation". The Métis never sought the help of the Secretary of State, and so he insisted he was not obliged to come to their aid. He had battled for Riel in 1874, but now he was deserving of punishment.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Chapleau to A. Plante and L. Charland, Gazette, Mont., June 26, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3.

We have already seen that the Orange Sentinel expressed its hope on August 6, 1885, that the death sentence against Riel would be carried out.

About this time the Prime Minister received some correspondence of an anti-Riel character. Anti-French and anti-Catholic indignation was expressed in the following communication:

The French Catholic party will use their utmost power for a reprieve. If they are successful you and your party should be consigned to oblivion. Bishop Tache and Co. meddle too much in N. W. matters. The more the half-breeds get, the more the Mother Church will benefit. Irish Leaguers and Fenians do all that they can to keep up the agitation[.] The idea of your party being intimidated by howling French Catholics and Fenians is ridiculous.¹²⁹

Still another thus expressed himself at this time:

... if the French of Montreal and Quebec think he [Riel] is a martyr [sic] and that he is sure of going strait [sic] to Heaven the sooner he goes there from here the better...¹³⁰

That Ontario was for the most part opposed to Riel and reckoned him deserving of death, there can be no doubt. But a popular mass movement to secure this end did not exist during the Summer of 1885.

The next chapter will trace the increasing friction between the two provinces as Execution Day approached.

¹²⁹ Anonymous to Macdonald, n.d. Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 12, 14, 15.

¹³⁰ Anonymous to Macdonald, n.d. Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 20.

CHAPTER FIVE

ONTARIO-QUEBEC REACTION TO THE SASKATCHEWAN RISING - II

Despite the Government's triumph of arms, the effects of the Saskatchewan Rising remained. Eastern reactions were experienced throughout Riel's appeals to higher courts, his hanging, and even afterwards. This chapter will be concerned with the reaction and friction during the period from the end of the Trial till Execution Day, November 16, 1885. It is divided into the formation of definitive Cabinet policy (roughly August 25 - September 10), and the crescendo of friction as Execution Day approached (September - November, 1885).

Formation of Cabinet Policy

It is in the highest inner circles of responsible government that a nation's directional decisions are made. From whatever documentary evidence is available it is necessary to piece together the fundamental policy of the Conservative Government of John A. Macdonald in regard to Louis "David" Riel. It seems that basic decisions were made in late August and the early part of September, 1885, on the fate of the Métis Chief.

Macdonald's distrust of the Métis in general and Riel in particular, which had been manifest at the time of the Red

River Rising, never seemed to have left him. However, he was too shrewd a politician not to set aside this distrust if it should have been politically advantageous to do so.

Fundamentally, then, the decision taken at the above mentioned time appears to have been that Riel should hang. However, it was not fitting that it should be made public, for an ear could be kept to the political ground to learn the tremors of political reaction. Should it become necessary, retreat could be made from the decision for hanging and the Ministry could retire to safer quarters.

Word had been coming from the hustings of Ontario that that province would be lost if Riel were spared. Quebec, to be sure, was being roused in his favor, but the clergy and hierarchy, in part at least, had ranged themselves against Riel. Moreover, Quebec had been roused against the Conservatives in 1872 over the New Brunswick school question but had calmed down on second thought and returned to the Conservative fold. Therefore it appears that from the standpoint of political expediency Macdonald decided to allow Riel to hang, struggling to retain Ontario support and hoping reasonably for ultimate conciliation with Quebec.

From a purely judicial standpoint the decision could have gone either way. A case could have been made for the hanging or against it. Therefore it appeared to the Ministry that political expediency had to be the deciding factor, for

without doubt the Opposition could make out a case also, either to support the hanging or to oppose it, whichever was more politically profitable.

The case of Connor has already been referred to. His was the first trial for a capital offense in the North-West Territories. He had appealed to the Privy Council, and it appeared that Frederick Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, had wished to delay his execution. He wired the Canadian Governor-General, the Marquis of Lansdowne, as follows: "Urgent Connor under sentence death Winnipeg has appealed Privy Council Petition will be heard tomorrow presume Connor has been respited."¹ Lansdowne's answer about Connor was: "Connor was to be executed this morning. No doubt that sentence was carried out. Dispatch by next mail."² The fact is that Connor was executed before the Privy Council had a chance to reply to his appeal. The question arises: why the haste in executing Connor? Perhaps Lansdowne, or Macdonald, did not want the Colonial Office to prevent this execution. Why so? Because if it would and could interfere with Connor, a precedent would be established for interfering with and delaying the execution of Riel a few weeks later. Perhaps it was Riel

¹ Stanley to Lansdowne, July 17, 1885, Colonial Secretary to Lansdowne, June - Aug., 1885, G 1, Vol. 249, p. 124-125.

² Lansdowne to Stanley, July 18, 1885, Governor-General Drafts to Sec. of State for Colonies, G 9, Vol. 81.

above all that Lansdowne, or Macdonald, or both, wanted to hang.

Writing to Dewdney in the North-West on August 17, 1885, Prime Minister Macdonald expressed no fear of the pro-Riel agitation. "The conviction of Riel is satisfactory. There is an attempt in Quebec to trump up a patriotic feeling about him, but I don't think it will amount to much."³ An expression of Ontario opinion came to Macdonald from Henry O'Brien, a law partner of one of Riel's prosecutors, i.e., Christopher Robinson. It reveals the prevalent anti-Quebec view. "The public are now again reminded of the cold blooded murder of Scott. I mention this as I see the French are getting up sympathy for him [Riel]."⁴ On the following day word was sent to the Prime Minister of a genuine political threat, i.e., loss of Ontario votes if Riel should escape hanging. "... from what I have seen and heard in Durham and elsewhere, I fear any reversal or commutation of his Riel's sentence would blast our chances of carrying any election."⁵ A leading Ontario Orangeman, Dalton McCarthy, expressed to Macdonald on August 24, 1885, the view that Ontario vengeance

³ Macdonald to Dewdney, August 17, 1885, Letterbooks, Vol. 23, p. 241.

⁴ O'Brien to Macdonald, Aug. 21, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 53.

⁵ Cowan to Macdonald, Aug. 22, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 59.

was a result and not a cause of Quebec sympathy for Riel.

So far as I can ascertain the feeling is to hang Riel, and of course this is the natural outcome of the feelings the French Canadians display to save his neck. Otherwise, I doubt if they would be so blood thirsty.⁶

The situation which faced Macdonald politically in making his decision to let Riel hang was well described by a letter he received from a certain C. H. Macintosh in late August.

If Riel is spared through any action of the Government it means the utter disruption of the Conservative Party in the Province Ontario as well as the outlying ones. If he is punished it means a mere surface excitement in Quebec - for the Grits of the other provinces dare not form an alliance with them on the question, and if they did, so much the worse for the Grits.⁷

The formation of cabinet policy was further assisted by what the Prime Minister heard from H. A. Ward, newly-elected member for East Durham.

During my canvass I have found that the Riel matter has, before any other question engaged the attention of the farmers and many of the very strongest of our friends have not hesitated to declare that, if the Rebel is not hung, they will never again vote on the Conservative side. They are very much in earnest over this question and evidently quite determined to carry out their threat to desert the party in the event of a reprieve being granted by the Government.⁸

⁶ McCarthy to Macdonald, Aug. 24, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 67-68.

⁷ Macintosh to Macdonald, Aug. 25, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 75.

⁸ Ward to Macdonald, Aug. 26, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 94-95.

Macdonald was of the opinion that the Saskatchewan Rising did not have the rank of rebellion. It was really just riot and murder, but extensive enough to make it "technically amount to treason". Macdonald was not anxious for the Queen to exercise her prerogative of letting Riel off, and was confident she would not. If Riel's case had had international complications, i.e., with United States, then Imperial policy would probably cause the exercise of her prerogative. But as long as it was "riot and murder" rather than "rebellion", it did not seem likely that the United States would protest.⁹ The Prime Minister was convinced still that the sympathy being stirred up in Quebec for Riel was the demagogic work of the Rouge party and would not have lasting bad effects for the Conservatives.

The murder of the priests - the incitement of the Indians to murder and pillage, and Riel's abandonment of the faith of his fathers, added to his cowardice, will prevent any anticipated sentiment in his favour.¹⁰

Macdonald had received a letter from Bishop Grandin, dated July 11, 1885, giving the latter's condemnation of Riel's course. Macdonald was also aware at this time of the denuncia-

⁹ Macdonald to Lansdowne, Aug. 28, 1885, Pope, Joseph (ed.), Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1921, p. 354-355. It would appear from this that if President Grover Cleveland had wished to intervene strongly on the ground of Riel's American citizenship, this would have led to commutation of his sentence.

¹⁰ Same to same, Aug. 28, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, same.

tion of Riel by the North-West missionaries for his renunciation of the Church and deception of the Métis. Macdonald seemed certain that Quebec would accept this as proof that it should not support Riel.¹¹

Answering Macdonald on August 31, Lansdowne did not agree that the Saskatchewan Rising could be reduced to "riot and murder". Since it was not stopped by the North-West police, and since troops were raised from all over the Dominion to fight, and since these troops were marked for an Imperial medal, the Rising they fought against could scarcely be reckoned as nothing more than "riot and murder".¹²

On the same day word came to the Prime Minister from Pembroke, Ontario, regarding political feeling there. "The feeling in central Ontario that Riel should hang is intense and more unanimous than I have ever known popular opinion to be."¹³ That such information was influencing the Prime Minister in his policy toward Riel seems to be indicated by what he wrote on September 3, 1885, to Governor-General Lansdowne: "What I ventured to suggest in my letter was that the persons convicted at Regina, should be dealt with as guilty of

11 Same to same, Aug. 28, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, same.

12 Lansdowne to Macdonald, Aug. 31, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 356.

13 G. A. Kirkpatrick to Macdonald, Aug. 31, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 116.

municipal and not political offenses."¹⁴ This shows that Macdonald wanted Riel's case removed from the category of political offenses. If he had been successful in keeping it from being so regarded, then the growing practice in civilized countries of not executing political offenders would not have applied to Riel, i.e., he could be executed for having been guilty of "municipal" offenses. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister decided to proceed with the hanging even though he could not make use of this convenient basis. Indirectly from Governor-General Lansdowne we learn of the finality of Macdonald's determination to hang Riel by early September: "... from our conversations at Ottawa I have no doubt that your mind is fully made up and that you will advise that the law should take its course."¹⁵ The "conversations at Ottawa" must have occurred in early September, because the above letter was written from Victoria, British Columbia, following a trip by Lansdowne through the North-West. Moreover, according to Macdonald himself Lansdowne had intended to leave on this trip, September 12, 1885.¹⁶ Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that basic Cabinet policy in regard to

¹⁴ Macdonald to Lansdowne, Sept. 3, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 357.

¹⁵ Lansdowne to Macdonald, Oct. 7, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 361.

¹⁶ Macdonald to Lord Carnarvon, Sept. 8, 1885, Letter-books, Vol. 23, p. 281.

Riel was definitively formed by September 12, 1885.

From the second week of September, till the second week of November, 1885, Cabinet policy, still unknown to the public at large, maintained sufficient elasticity to enable it to bend if necessary with the political wind. The various moves of the Ministry and its fears will now be traced during that period.

Joseph Phillippe René Adolphe Caron, who was to be the object of much obliquy later, on August 31, 1885, was high enough in the esteem of the people to be given a brilliant reception at Levis by the inhabitants. He was congratulated for the honor recently conferred on him by the Queen. He had just concluded his holidays at Riviere Du Loup (where Macdonald had been at the same time). Nearly a month later, September 29, Caron received a similar address at the City Hall of Quebec City by Sir Narcisse F. Belleau. Besides these, the Dominion Rifle Association at its annual meeting in Ottawa also presented him with a similar address in the presence of the Governor-General.¹⁷ Within two months this same Minister was held in execration by his compatriots.

When it became known that Riel was appealing to the Appellate Court of Manitoba a reprieve was granted from the first execution date, September 18, 1885. The Macdonald

¹⁷ Dominion Annual Register, 1885, p. 385b-386a.

Papers contain a copy of the following telegram from George W. Burbidge, Deputy Minister of Justice, to Colonel Hugh Richardson, Stipendiary Magistrate at Regina, dated September 16, 1885. "It would be merciful to grant reprieve at earliest possible time. Telegraph me when this is done."¹⁸ On September 18, 1885, Stanley in London, England, wired Lansdowne: "Is Riel respited and how long, will he appeal to Privy Council."¹⁹ Apparently, the Colonial Office in London was quite interested in Riel's case even at this date. Unlike the case of Connor Canada did not proceed with the hanging on the day that the Colonial Office expressed hope of a reprieve.

Governor-General Lansdowne's substitute, W. J. Ritchie, forwarded to Colonial Secretary Stanley the following cable on September 26, 1885, no doubt the decision of the Canadian Privy Council.

Execution of Riel postponed by convicting judge till 16th October. Important that decision as to grant of right to appeal should be given some days before. Expedient that there should be no second postponement. If Judicial Com. of the P. C. met 12th October Dominion Govt. would be able to communicate with Attorney General. Dispatch follows by Mail.²⁰

18 "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 3, p. 191.

19 Stanley to Lansdowne, Sept. 18, 1885, Governor-General's Correspondence, G 21, file 175; also Colonial Secretary to Lansdowne, Sept.-Oct., 1885, G 1, Vol. 250, p. 146.

20 Ritchie to Stanley, September 26, 1885, Governor-General Drafts to Colonial Secretary, G 9, Vol. 81.

Apparently, Macdonald recognized that a second respite would be politically unwise; it would give good ground for Quebec hope that Riel would be spared. Stanley had informed Lansdowne earlier that the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had been scheduled for an adjournment until November, unless necessity dictated otherwise. Apparently, Riel's case was a necessity for the Macdonald Government because the agitation would certainly increase the longer his fate remained uncertain. Two days later, September 28, 1885, the Canadian Government was anxious for a one-day delay until October 13, 1885, for the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council meeting to make sure that its Deputy Minister of Justice, G. W. Burbidge, who would sail, October 1, would be on hand.²¹ Apparently, the Liberals heard of this and decided to send one of Riel's trial lawyers, Charles Fitzpatrick, who arrived later. Actually the Judicial Committee were prepared to hear Riel's petition on October 7, 1885, but it had not been lodged.²² For his part Governor-General Lansdowne was anxious to know about the progress of Riel's appeal.²³

Minister of Justice Alexander Campbell, appears to have put pressure on Judge Richardson for a second respite

21 Ritchie to Stanley, Sept. 28, 1885, same.

22 Stanley to Lansdowne, Sept. 28, 1885, same.

23 Ritchie to Stanley, Sept. 28, 1885, same.

because of the delay at London, England, by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council which agreed to wait until October 21, 1885, for the arrival of Riel's lawyer.²⁴ On October 22, 1885, came the final message: "Judicial Committee of Privy Council have heard Counsel on behalf of Riel. Advise Queen dismiss Petition."²⁵

On October 27, 1885, Alexander Campbell, Minister of Justice, sent Macdonald a confidential message highly informative in regard to the inner workings of the Cabinet at a critical time. It was Hector Langevin who feared adverse Quebec reaction. Adolphe Caron did not, nor Joseph A. Chapeau, Secretary of State. Caron did not believe a mental examination for Riel was needed. Probably, as a result of his conversation with Caron, Campbell then withdrew his previously made suggestion for a medical examination holding it in reserve as a last recourse. Instead, he was then prepared to deal boldly with Riel.²⁶

Caron says that in his judgment Langevin is altogether wrong in thinking it will in any way affect public opinion in Quebec, that all sensible men are satisfied that Riel should pay the penalty of his crime, and that in a month no one will think anything more about it; he

²⁴ Ritchie to Stanley, Oct. 9, 1885, same; same to same, Oct. 12, 1885, same.

²⁵ Stanley to Ritchie, Oct. 22, 1885, same.

²⁶ Campbell to Macdonald, Oct. 27, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 3, p. 228-231.

believes Chapleau is also of this opinion...²⁷

With regard to bringing pressure on Langevin to secure Cabinet unanimity Campbell wrote: "... if they [Caron and Chapleau] agree and the view of Lord Lansdowne be pressed on Langevin with their views he will give way..."²⁸

The Cabinet could not have been unaware of the efforts of the International Arbitration Society on Riel's behalf. It had sent a memorial to the Queen, but Her Majesty regretted not being able to act on such a matter without her responsible Ministers. For its part, the Colonial Office did not want to interfere with the Dominion in the latter's handling of the case. Canada, it maintained, was competent to pardon, if she would.²⁹

Placed in an extremely difficult position, the Secretary of State, Chapleau ultimately determined to act on stern principle. He had originally intended to dissent from the Cabinet, perhaps to resign over the decision to let Riel be hanged. On second thought he concluded that this would promote national animosities. Thus he decided to go along with Macdonald's decision. He thought Riel guilty despite his doubt about his sanity, preferring to give the law the benefit

27 Same to same, Oct. 27, 1885, same, p. 228-229.

28 Same to same, Oct. 27, 1885, same, p. 229.

29 News item, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 2, 1885, p. 5, col. 4.

of the doubt. "... I prefer giving the benefit of the doubt to the law rather than to the deluded criminal."³⁰ Chapleau was well aware of the gathering storm of Opposition in his native province to Riel's execution but this would not cause him to abandon his Quebec colleagues in the Cabinet. "We may be called upon to suffer, my Quebec colleagues and myself, I more than others, at the hands of our people owing to the intense feeling which exists in our province."³¹ It can hardly be doubted that Chapleau was prepared to follow principle, come what may.

... I prefer the risk of personal loss to the national danger imminent, with the perspective of a struggle in the field of race and religious prejudices. We will have to fight, perhaps to fall. Well, I prefer, after all, to fight and to fall in the old ship for the old flag.³²

Upset by Conservative defections over the execution Public Works Minister Langevin, wired Macdonald excitedly that Charles J. Coursol, Alfonse Desjardins, Desire Girouard, and Fabien Vanasse had told him personally of their theoretical and practical opposition to the hanging. The Prime Minister wired back loftily: "Keep calm resolute attitude - all

³⁰ Chapleau to Macdonald, Nov. 12, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 364.

³¹ Same to same, Nov. 12, 1885, same.

³² Same to same, Nov. 12, 1885, same.

will come right."³³

On the evening of November 12, 1885, the Canadian Privy Council held an important meeting, probably at the Governor-General's Residence, whereat they agreed to go through with the decision adopted in early September for the hanging of Riel. A statement of official policy was committed to writing on this occasion and left with the Governor-General. On the following day the latter made a few minor emendations of his own and intrusted the document to his secretary for forwarding to the Colonial Office.³⁴ It seems that in general the policy was to hang Riel as an example. It was feared that Indians in future would be too hard to control and the white settlers present and future of the North-West would be unsafe if the Métis leader were allowed to live; for Indian leaders could not be hanged if Riel were not. In short, the Ministry took into consideration not only the moral guilt of Riel's acts but also the impression his punishment would make upon North-West society. The Ministry were sure that Riel's trial was altogether legal and complete. They were convinced that Riel was fully aware of what he was about

³³ Macdonald to Langevin, Nov. 13, 1885, Pope, Correspondence, p. 365; Cf. also Langevin to Macdonald, Nov. 12, 1885, same.

³⁴ See Appendix II for this policy document, Case of Louis Riel: Reasons for Non-commutation of His Sentence.

They drew attention again to the execution of Scott in 1870. They pointed out, also his supposed mercenary character as well as the comparatively groundless nature of the charge that the Métis had genuine grievances. Recourse to arms to settle such complaints could not be countenanced. Moreover, Riel was no longer a Canadian citizen. Riel was, to be sure, a religious enthusiast, but the jury was not moved by this fact. He was still accountable for his acts, and no similar political fanatic was to be encouraged to believe that he could follow Riel's course and confidently expect to escape punishment. In view of these reasons the popular clamor to save Riel had to be disregarded; it would probably not last long anyway. Moreover, the Catholic hierarchy were largely opposed to Riel because of his apostacy, and the three French Canadian Cabinet Ministers themselves agreed to his execution. Such was the official policy of the Canadian Government as expressed by the Governor-General in his official confidential report to the Colonial Secretary, Frederick A. Stanley in London. The public at large was left uninformed.

On the day following the Cabinet meeting to determine finally Riel's fate, i.e., November 13, 1885, several bolting French Conservatives met Chapleau in the Windsor Hotel, Montreal, at 4:10 p.m. The Secretary of State said that the Indians would not be respited, and so, how could Riel expect it? Chapleau admitted having "sounded the public pulse" by

visiting Montreal quietly the previous week-end, prior to the previous respite. He had wired Macdonald, as had Langevin from Quebec City. In short, it appears that the Prime Minister's decision was much influenced by this eleventh hour report. The Windsor Hotel meeting of November 13 did not adjourn until 5:20 p.m. At 4:40 p.m. Chapleau stepped out and wired the Prime Minister of the determination of the bolting Bleus and also his own decision to stand by the Ministry. He feared demonstrations in "other provinces". Shortly after 6:00 p.m. Chapleau was reported to have received a telegram from Viscount Melgund saying "His Excellency adheres to his warrant".³⁵ This was taken to mean that the execution would be proceeded with.³⁶

The die had now been cast. The Cabinet had taken an united stand, French members included. It remained to face the popular reaction.

Pre-Execution Crescendo of Friction

Outside the Cabinet the crescendo of sympathy for Riel on the one hand and antipathy for him on the other rose in

³⁵ News item, Herald, Mont., Nov. 14, 1885, p. 5, col. 2-3. This telegram was denied by both Chapleau and Melgund. Possibly the signature was "Macdonald" instead of "Melgund". -- Cf. editorial, Herald, Mont., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 5.

³⁶ Chapleau to Macdonald, Nov. 13, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 301-302.

the two provinces of Quebec and Ontario. The absence of any official statement by the Government contributed to popular excitement and so, indirectly at least, to friction between the two provinces. It seems that French Canadians too easily presumed that the Métis leader would not be hanged, and when the fact had to be faced it was already too late to save him. Ontario on the other hand worked constantly for the carrying out of the sentence and achieved a fait accompli before Quebec had effectively and sufficiently summoned all its political strength. Such, in broad outline, seems to have been the course of events prior to Execution Day, November 16, 1885. However, it must be understood that the French province was not completely quiescent before the hanging. Gathering pro-Riel agitation in the Summer of 1885 has been noted above.

The Montreal Herald was still anxious in mid-September, 1885, to prevent race warfare. It feared that some French language papers were promoting racial and religious strife. Moreover, these papers were supporters of Langevin and Chapleau.

We hope that Sir Hector and Mr. Chapleau will not delay a disavowal of a policy which must tend to the disintegration of political parties and the establishing of a race and religious war that would be a calamity to the Dominion.³⁷

Shortly before the execution Colonel Joseph Aldéric Ouimet expressed a desire that conflict might be avoided within the

37 Editorial, Sept. 17, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

country.

I really believe with nearly all the most respectable and unprejudiced part of the Canadian nation, that the hanging of Riel in the present circumstances would be a great national calamity and possibly a fatal blow to our national existence.³⁸

Riel's appeal to the Manitoba bench was dismissed on September 9, 1885. Chief Justice Wallbridge presided together with Justices Taylor and Killam. A guest judge from Rouen, France, Judge Barratin, also sat. Imperial confirmation had been given, the Justices said, to the Dominion Act whereby the Regina Court was established. Following dismissal of Riel's appeal, the Montreal Gazette remained calm and collected. It noted that an appeal might next be made to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. This was agreeable to the Gazette because it was very important that justice should be obtained in order to avoid racial animosities.

... knowing that sympathy for Riel has been based not a little upon the impression that his trial was not had before a properly constituted tribunal, the decision of the Privy Council will permit of his punishment without exciting race prejudice or passion.³⁹

Thus the Gazette saw the open conflict of races which lay ahead.

³⁸ Ouimet to Macdonald, Nov. 13, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 311.

³⁹ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Sept. 10, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; Cf. also press dispatch, same, Sept. 10, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

Riel's next move was to appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. We have seen that Connor's appeal had preceded his. Despite Connor's hanging before the Judicial Committee replied, the decision of that body was a refusal to hear his case. The Gazette acquiesced calmly in the delay in Riel's execution necessitated by his appeal to the Privy Council.⁴⁰ On October 13, 1885, it was learned that the Privy Council would agree to a postponement until October 21, 1885, so that Charles Fitzpatrick, Riel's lawyer, might have time to arrive from overseas. Actually, the Judicial Committee had met on October 13, 1885 at which time it reluctantly granted this delay. The attitude of this body was in no way sympathetic.⁴¹

A letter writer to the Gazette, who signed himself Quis, and who was very probably learned in the law, declared that as regards the Statute of Treasons at least, the North-West territory was to be reckoned as part of the Queen's realm. The conclusion to be drawn would appear to be that Magna Charta did apply to the North-West in accordance with which Riel would be entitled to a twelve-man jury and therefore his trial before a six-man jury was illegal.⁴²

⁴⁰ Editorial, Sept. 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁴¹ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Oct. 14, 1885, p. 1, col. 5; also law report, Times, London, Oct. 14, 1885.

⁴² Quis to editor, Gazette, Mont., Oct. 16, 1885, p. 5, col. 4-5; same to same, Gazette, Mont., Oct. 17, 1885, p. 5, col. 3-4; also editorial note, same, Oct. 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

The Lords of the Judicial Committee turned down Riel's appeal for a hearing for two reasons: first, it was not necessary that the North-West have courts identical in structure and composition to those in England itself; and, therefore, it was quite constitutional for the Canadian Parliament to establish for criminal offenses, even treason, a court presided over by a Stipendiary Magistrate and having a 6-member jury, as was the case with the similar courts in India; second, shorthand notes of trial evidence were in "literal compliance" with the law requiring the presiding magistrate to cause full notes of evidence to be kept.⁴³

From the Canadian High Commissioner's Office in London, England, on October 22, 1885, came the cable: "Judgement delivered this morning Riel's case. Privy Council refused petition for leave to appeal."⁴⁴

For the final hearing on October 21, 1885, before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, Jeune, Fitzpatrick, and Bigham appeared for Riel; the Attorney-General, Richard Webster, R. S. Wright, and Danckwerts appeared for the Crown. G. W. Burbidge, Canadian Deputy Minister of Justice, appeared

⁴³ Judgement of the Lords of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on the Petition of Louis Riel, from the Court of Queen's Bench for the Province of Manitoba, p. 1-4, Privy Council Dispatches, 1885, 1049F. See Appendix I; also The Queen vs. Louis Riel, Ottawa, 1886, p. 200-202.

⁴⁴ P.C.D. 1885, 1050F.

for the Canadian Government. Bigham argued that Riel's trial with its attendant circumstances were: "Deemed by the people of Canada to be matters of no ordinary importance; have divided the population into two opposing parties." The Lord Chancellor replied that that fact constituted no ground for appeal "within the Statute".⁴⁵

When it heard the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to Riel's Petition the Toronto Mail was calmly content that he should die.⁴⁶

Although the recommendation of the Judicial Lords to the Queen that Riel's Petition be not heard was for all practical purposes final, nevertheless, the Queen did have to make a decision. Such a decision was not, as a matter of fact, rendered until two days after the hanging, i.e., November 18, 1885.⁴⁷

The acquittal of two English language participants in the Saskatchewan Rising was not calculated to pacify the adherents of Riel. The Montreal Gazette protested against the objection of some French Canadians that an English speaking

⁴⁵ Law report, Times, London, Oct. 22, 1885.

⁴⁶ Editorial, Oct. 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

⁴⁷ Queen's Order in Council approving the Report of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council on the Petition of Louis Riel for Special Leave to Appeal, P.C.D. 1885, 1098F; or, Colonial Secretary to Lansdowne, Nov.-Dec., 1885, G 1, Vol. 251, p. 98-100.

rebel, Thomas Scott, had been acquitted whereas Riel had been condemned. The Gazette was confident that acquittal in one case and condemnation in the other were both in accordance with the evidence. Riel's secretary, William Henry Jackson, was acquitted without even a trial. He was then committed to Selkirk Asylum at Lower Fort Garry, Manitoba. From this place he escaped on November 8 or 9, 1885. He made his way to Crookston, Minnesota, where he was taken in by the local pastor, Father de Carnefel, and from which place he hoped to work for the release of Riel.⁴⁸

The trial verdict also continued to be a subject of agitation. Charles Fitzpatrick expressed himself in October, 1885, to the effect that if the verdict were carried out Riel would become a martyr whereas if he were imprisoned or confined

⁴⁸ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Sept. 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; also news account, same, Nov. 25, 1885, p. 2, col. 3-4. The subsequent history of Jackson (who also styled himself at times, Honore Joseph Jaxon) is both long and somewhat interesting. Under the sponsorship of the Knights of Labor he lectured in the midwestern states on his experiences. As President of the Aborigines Advancement Association he protested in 1933 before the New York Board of Estimate the City's absorption of land which he contended was held by descendants of the original Indians. At the time of his death, January 10, 1952, Jackson was the reputed owner of properties in New York City, in the state of New Jersey, and in Saskatchewan as well as assets in safe-deposit boxes. However, he died as an apparent penniless derelict in New York City, having lived for years in a shack near the Bronx River and later in a basement cranny. His father had been a Virginian and his mother a Métisse, but Jackson was never sure whether he had been born in Montana Territory or in Northwest Territory, Canada. -- Cf. press dispatches, Globe and Mail, Tor., Jan. 14, 1952, p. 11, col. 4-7; same, Jan. 21, 1952, p. 7, col. 3-4.

to an asylum he would be forgotten.⁴⁹ On this same day the Montreal Herald questioned the correctness of charging Riel with treason, for a penalty of death for that offense had not been imposed during the then present generation either in England or the United States. Had he been convicted of "murder", of which the Herald was convinced he was guilty, he could have been hanged without protest. But now the Herald doubted if the Prime Minister would go through with the hanging. "Riel will not hang", was the caption of a Herald editorial for October 26, 1885. It noted that French language Ministerial organs were confident that there would be no hanging while English language Ministerial papers were equally confident that there would be. The Herald did not know how to resolve this contradiction exactly, but it did opine that Macdonald had an understanding with Langevin. The means to be used would be a medical commission, whose findings would create a doubt about Riel's sanity. He would then be given the benefit of the doubt, and, therefore "Riel will not hang". The charge that the Ministry was being influenced by the question of votes to be gained or lost in hanging Riel was openly made by the Herald on October 29, 1885. It had no sympathy for Riel personally. It simply stated that he would not hang, apparently because more was to be feared from wounding Quebec

⁴⁹ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Oct. 23, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

than from wounding Ontario and the Maritimes. The Herald reiterated on October 31, 1885, its analysis and charge that the Government really wanted to save Riel and that that was why he had been tried for "treason" and not "murder". "...it does seem as if the blunder made in trying him for treason was made in the hope of saving his life."⁵⁰

A learned legal opinion on the illegality of the verdict pronounced on Riel was published in the Ottawa Daily Citizen, November 6, 1885. It was written by J. W. Ward, an Ottawa lawyer, in reply to Octave Latremouille (November 2, 1885). In a private letter to the Prime Minister lawyer Ward told Macdonald he had actually understated the case and urged that the sentence be not carried out.⁵¹

Besides the trial verdict another controversial point during the period of rising friction as Execution Day approached was the matter of the mercy recommendation of Riel's jury. The Toronto Globe returned to this subject on November 6, 1885. It declared that the jurors attached to Riel's conviction a recommendation for mercy precisely because they knew that the Métis had legitimate grievances. This was to counter the

⁵⁰ Editorial, Oct. 31, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; Cf. also same, Oct. 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2; Oct. 26, 1885, p. 4, col. 3; Oct. 29, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3.

⁵¹ Ward to Macdonald, Nov. 2, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 257. On p. 259 is the clipping from the Daily Citizen. A French Canadian petition forwarded by Ward to Macdonald is also to be found, p.260-262.

theory sometimes expressed by the Ministerial organs that the purpose of the mercy recommendation was because of a doubt about Riel's sanity.⁵²

The person of Louis Riel continued to be an object of execration for many. The letter of the North-West Missionary, Father Vital Fourmond, designated him as anti-Christ. It disturbed the Montreal Gazette that a certain section of French Canadians had been endeavouring to make Riel into a patriot and saint. Insanity could be the only possible explanation and defense. Toward the end of October the same paper was quite prepared to see Execution Day approach. Riel was the arch-culprit personally, and so, it would seem, responsible for all the individual acts of everyone else implicated. If others already imprisoned should be released after Riel's hanging, that would be appropriate, thought the Gazette. It would not matter, for Riel would by then be punished, and that is the all-important item. Stung by the criticism of the New York Herald, the Montreal Herald became altogether anti-Riel on October 31, 1885. It regarded him as guilty and deserving of death. Here a pro-Ministry and an anti-Ministry paper agree in dislike of Riel.⁵³

⁵² Editorial, Globe, Tor., Nov., 6, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3.

⁵³ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Oct. 2, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; editorial, same, Oct. 22, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; also editorial, Herald, Mont., Oct. 31, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2.

Riel was not altogether without friends at the time. A French Canadian, Major Edmond Mallet, pleaded personally with President Grover Cleveland on November 9, 1885, on behalf of the Métis chief. The President decided that the United States could not interfere. We have seen already the estimate of Riel personally held by the Dominion Cabinet. He was still held responsible for the "cold blooded" murder of Thomas Scott at Fort Garry, in 1870; also, he was clearly mercenary. A good word for Riel was spoken by Captain Howard of the Connecticut National Guard. The latter stated in an interview at Ottawa in November, 1885, that Riel had given orders that General Middleton was not to be shot in any of the fighting.

Many of the volunteers wondered how it was that none of the Halfbreeds' shots picked off General Middleton, but Cpt. Howard says it was found out after Riel's surrender that he had instructed his men not to fire on the General. The rebel probably believed he would not get as good treatment from any other commander in the event of his having to surrender.⁵⁴

On Saturday, November 14, the Montreal La Minerve despaired of Riel's being saved. It still regarded him as guilty and deserving of punishment and did not seek to justify the Rising. But it had become a question of mercy versus

⁵⁴ Press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 14, 1885, p. 3, col. 2. Howard's statement seems to have been confirmed by Colonel Ouimet.-- Cf. press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 2, col. 4. Cf. also press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 10, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; Case of Louis Riel, Appendix II.

vengeance. Therefore, the pro-Ministry French language organ worked on Riel's behalf. The Montreal Gazette was fairly objective in its account of the delivery of official notice to Riel at Regina. The Métis chief was in a cell of a Mounted Police Barracks three miles west of Regina. High Sheriff Chapleau conveyed the news. The cell and Barracks building were completely guarded. Riel was reported to be calm and gracious. He wished to be buried in St. Boniface and enquired if he could speak on the scaffold. He was grateful to friends who had been trying to save him. Father Alexis Andre' attended him. The Toronto Globe recorded an ultimate unkindness to the Métis chief. The latter asserted in his Regina cell that in response to his request for newspapers that Lord Melgund had cruelly and insultingly forwarded him copies of Salvation Army Papers and some tracts.⁵⁵

Although used by his counsel as Riel's main plea of defense where it proved insufficient to cause the jury to acquit him, the question of Riel's sanity or insanity continued as a prominent bone of contention between the two provinces of Quebec and Ontario. We have seen that the theory of the Montreal Herald was that a medical commission would find Riel to be unbalanced and that the Ministry would use such a

⁵⁵ Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Nov. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; and press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

finding to commute, as the Herald believed, his sentence. A certain J. V. Chauveau pleaded for Riel with Macdonald on November 7, 1885. A postscript said that the writer and a certain Chevrier had been accosted on the street several years previous by a man giving the appearance of madness. Senator M. A. Girard later informed him that that man was Louis Riel. By November 9, 1885, Edgar Dewdney had apparently changed his mind and then believed that Riel was sane. He forwarded to Macdonald a Riel letter to Judge Richardson with the comment: "It does not look like a madman." Father C. A. McWilliams in appealing to Macdonald to prevent the hanging, stated: "From the corrupt habits of the man in his youth it is a surprise to me that he is not a complete raving maniac, instead of the kind he is."⁵⁶ P. S. Murphy of Montreal wanted Riel's sentence commuted because "Je le crois fou". In an interview shortly before his execution Riel stated that Father J. B. Primeau of Worcester, Massachusetts had told him in 1875 that God had entrusted into his hands the cause of religion in the world. Thus this still remained Riel's conviction. According to Doctor C. K. Clarke no post mortem was allowed on the body of Riel so that an examination

⁵⁶ McWilliams to Macdonald, Nov. 9, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 267-268. Cf. also Chauveau to Macdonald, Nov. 7, 1885, same, p. 253-255; and Dewdney to Macdonald, Nov. 9, 1885, same, Vol. 4, p. 517.

might be made of the brain structure.

While alienists are of the opinion that such a fire-brand as Riel undoubtedly was, should have been kept shut up from society as long as he lived, they are quite willing to admit the difficulties in the way of the practical politicians who showed lamentable unfairness when asked to allow a post mortem to be held and a proper examination of the brain made.⁵⁷

As Minister of Justice Alexander Campbell was willing to have a quiet examination made of Riel's sanity and told Macdonald so. He suggested Doctor M. Lavell of Kingston Penitentiary. "If it would get us over a fence I wouldn't at all object to a private enquiry of mere motion on the part of the Crown to ascertain the mental state of the prisoner."⁵⁸ The Ministry had been seeking legal advice on the procedure in regard to sanity inquiries, and learned that there was nothing in Canadian law to cover it. A. Power had been doing the legal examining of authorities on law and custom. "We have no statute in force in Canada applicable to the case and there is nothing but the old traditions of Coke and other old writers to go upon."⁵⁹ We have seen that after talking

⁵⁷ Clarke, O. K., "A Critical Study of the Case of Louis Riel", Queen's Quarterly, Vol. 13, (1905-1906), p. 22. Cf. also Murphy to Macdonald, Nov. 14, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 399; press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

⁵⁸ Campbell to Macdonald, Oct. 23, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 3, p. 218.

⁵⁹ Campbell to Macdonald, Oct. 25, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 3, p. 226.

to Militia Minister Caron that Campbell had withdrawn his suggestion of a medical commission. Hoping that Macdonald too would then abandon the thought of a medical examination of Riel's sanity, Campbell wrote: "... if no medico is sent up then we are all agreed that the law should take its course."⁶⁰

A certain P. Mungovan of Belleville, Ont., recommended a medical examination of Riel, presumably with a view to establishing his insanity and so relieving Macdonald of the difficulty of hanging him. He had no sympathy for Riel personally but regarded the hanging as a mistake both politically and juridically, as an outmoded form of punishment for such a crime as Riel's. Despite Campbell's final recommendation to the contrary Macdonald did authorize an eleventh hour medical examination of Riel's sanity. He commissioned two doctors: M. Lavell of Kingston and F. X. Valade of Ottawa, the former having originally been recommended by Justice Minister Campbell, to proceed to Regina for the task. Macdonald pointed out that the doctors were to discover Riel's "present mental condition", as opposed to that of the Rising and the trial. Moreover, the Prime Minister distinguished between illusions and delusions on the one hand and accountability for acts on the other. He made it clear he was interested only in the latter. He further instructed the

⁶⁰ Same to same, Oct. 27, 1885, same, p. 231

doctors to question not just Riel himself but his keeper, visiting physicians, prison officials, and others in daily contact with Riel. The surgeon attached to the Northwest Police was apparently engaged also, for two of his reports, both lengthy, are to be found in the Macdonald Papers.

Doctor A. Jukes was evidently conscientious and fully aware that a man's life was hanging probably on his decision. He readily recognized that Riel had hallucinations on religion and politics, but maintained that this was to be distinguished from correct moral judgment of right and wrong. Therefore, Jukes concluded that Riel was responsible for his acts at the time of the Rising as well as at the trial. Doctor Lavell also gave it as his opinion that Riel was "an accountable being and capable of distinguishing right from wrong".

Doctor Valade differed from the others and stated that "I have come to the conclusion that he is not an accountable being, that he is unable to distinguish between right and wrong on political and religious subjects..."⁶¹

The Ministry on November 9, 1885 gave Riel a stay of execution until November 16 to permit the medical commission

⁶¹ Mongovan to Macdonald, Oct. 30, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 228-232; Macdonald to Lavall and Valade, Oct. 31, 1885, same, Vol. 3, p. 233-235; Jukes to Macdonald, Nov. 6, 1885, same, p. 237-246 and p. 257-275. Canada, Sessional Papers, 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43, p. 1-2; Stanley, George, The Birth of Western Canada, London, 1936, p. 450-451, note 11.

to examine him. Doctor Edward McCully of Toronto wrote Langevin that it would be both proper and politically expedient to have Riel examined. If the Mail would publish Riel's so-called prophecies with the comments of medical examiners it would make clear that the hanging should not occur. The "Ultra Protestants and Orange wing of your own party" are the only ones that would need to be kept in harness thought the doctor. Langevin apparently passed this letter along to the Prime Minister. Doctor McCully later maintained publicly that it was he who had first suggested to the Cabinet, i.e., Langevin, that a medical commission should examine Riel's mental condition. He himself was convinced that as regards "his mission" Riel was insane. The Montreal La Minerve on November 13, became anxious about the medical report regarding Riel's mental condition. It wanted the Government to make known the results, so that people's minds may be put at ease, that it was not an insane man that was being hanged. The editorial of that day ended with a threat.

Nous avons demandé grace ou pitié pour un condamné,
 nous crierions honte aux bourreaux d'un aliéné.
 Nous pouvons souffrir qu'on se montre sourd à nos
 supplications; nous ne permettrions pas qu'on in-
 sultât impunément aux principes élémentaires de
 l'humanité.⁶²

⁶² Editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Nov. 13, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 10, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; McCully to Langevin, n.d. Macdonald Papers, "North-west Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 186-187; press dispatch, Gazette, Montreal, Nov. 24, 1885, p. 8, col. 2.

In the official policy statement of Governor-General Lansdowne of November 13, we have seen that the Canadian Government was satisfied that no difference was to be found in Riel's mental condition by the medical commission from trial time to hanging time. Valade's minority report had no effect here.⁶³ The Montreal Gazette, a Ministerial organ, declared without equivocation that "it was upon their [Lavell's and Valade's] testimony that the order-in-council was passed instructing that the law should take its course."⁶⁴

During the period of rising friction between September and November, 1885, the attitude of Catholic churchmen toward the hanging of Riel became somewhat less decisive. The Summer letter of Father Fourmond to Semaine Religieuse received editorial attention from the Montreal Gazette in early October. The Gazette used it to strengthen its own anti-Riel stand. The missionary had asserted that Riel was responsible for war, apostasy, heresy, treason, persecution, fire, and pillage. Furthermore, he had complete control of the Métis. He was made accountable for all the acts of the

⁶³ Case of Louis Riel, Appendix II.

⁶⁴ Editorial Gazette, Mont., Mar. 10, 1886, p. 4, col. 1. It was Langevin who had the task of presenting to Parliament on March 9, 1886 the falsified account of F. X. Valade affirming Riel's accountability. However, it is possible that Langevin may not have known personally that Macdonald had altered the original text, either per se or per alium.-- Cf. Correspondence, same, Mar. 10, 1886, p. 5, col. 3.

Indians, even though not personally present, e.g., the Frog Lake murders. La Minerve asserted on November 9 that Bishop Grandin from the Northwest was in Ottawa and must surely be appealing for forgiveness for Riel. The same paper had already published the opinion of that Bishop on Riel. He had said that the Métis idolized him and regarded him as one sent by God. He was anxious for glory. He would rather die and be remembered than live without distinction. He was given to prayer and spoke convincingly. Of the imminent hanging the Bishop said "Cet homme en liberte sera dangereuse et son nom sera dangereuse aussi, s'il pendu."⁶⁵ The Bishop's unspoken recommendation would seem to have been that Riel should be imprisoned for life. On Sunday, November 15, the day before the execution, the same Bishop spoke in the Montreal Cathedral about the work of the Northwest missionaries. In the course of his talk he condemned Riel's action in the Saskatchewan Rising. The city of Montreal at this time was greatly agitated. The anti-Riel remarks of the visiting Bishop thus seemed calculated to quiet unjustifiable excitement.⁶⁶

As during the preceding Summer so on the approach of Execution Day charges of partisanship were frequently made by

⁶⁵ Quoted in editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Nov. 5, 1885, p. 2, col. 2. Cf. also editorial Gazette, Mont., Oct. 2, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Nov. 8, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

⁶⁶ News item, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 5, col. 3.

supporters of each political party. While the Manitoba justices were considering the appeal of Riel to their court the two defense lawyers had spoken at a Métis pro-Riel public gathering at Saint Vital, nearby. On September 10, the Montreal Gazette became incensed at two of Riel's counsel: Messrs. Lemieux and Fitzpatrick. It charged them with making partisan capital out of their case. Their relations with the Liberal press throughout had been too close to please the Gazette.

Messrs. Lemieux and Fitzpatrick have been less lawyers than party politicians in their conduct of the case, maintaining during the whole of the trial intimate relations with the Liberal press, and taking an active part in the partisan public gatherings wholly at variance with the free play of the law.⁶⁷

The anti-Ministry Herald suspected Macdonald of trying to dodge the responsibility for hanging Riel by shifting it to London. The Herald did not want the Imperial Government to interfere else it would do so in every such case.

If the Government believe that Riel should not be hanged they have but to say so and he is saved. People will not respect a Government that endeavours to shirk its responsibility..."⁶⁸

And again two days later:

⁶⁷ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Sept. 11, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; cf. also press dispatch, same, Sept. 10, 1885, p. 1, col. 3-4.

⁶⁸ Editorial, Sept. 12, 1885, p. 4, col. 4.

It will be strange indeed if, while Riel's tools are getting sentenced to the penitentiary, Riel himself should go scot free. The eyes of the people of the Dominion are fixed upon the Premier and watching every movement of the Government in this connection.⁶⁹

As has been seen the Ministry had already made its decision by this date.

In early September the Regina Leader stated that defense lawyer Lemieux had "wrapped Père André around his little finger" and was subsequently using him for Liberal purposes. He had prevailed upon the missionary to write him a letter to be published in the newspapers which would stir up criticism of the Government. The letter was written and soon released to the papers. It was all but dictated by Lemieux and contradicted some of his statements in June about Middleton's efforts to relieve the Métis. The net effort was calculated to be the rousing of an anti-Ministry feeling. The Leader said:

Nous savons pourquoi il écrivait à 'mon cher Lemieux'. Toute la ville savait que le naïf missionnaire avait été la jouet du dit Lemieux, [...] que Lemieux lui conseilla d'écrire une lettre qui serait publiée dans tous les journeaux; que le Père André s'engagea à écrire cette lettre, qu'il montra au rusé avocat Canadien pendant la nuit; que se denier souria en disant tres bien -- [...] Peu de temps avant d'écrire à mon 'cher Lemieux', il écrivait une autre lettre dans laquelle il condamnait la rebellion, traitant ses auteurs comme ils le méritaient et rendant justice au gouvernement. Mais

⁶⁹ Editorial, Sept. 14, 1885, p. 4, col. 6.

la lettre écrite sous l'inspiration de Lemieux contre-
dit tout ce qu'il avait écrit auparavant.⁷⁰

This letter, which had previously been published in La Minerve on August 14, 1885, did indeed criticize the Conservative Government for its undue delay in redressing Métis grievances and blamed it for not granting representative institutions to the Métis and responsible Government.⁷¹ It is doubtful, however, that Lemieux "managed" Father André because Bishop Grandin had already chastized the Government for delay in his letter to Macdonald of June 11, 1885.

We have seen already that the Montreal Herald had charged the Ministry with being influenced by the question of votes in regard to the hanging or sparing of Riel. The Toronto Mail returned to editorial comment on Riel's case on November 3, 1885. The Opposition press, it charged, was making use of forged documents seeking to arouse sympathy for Riel. The Mail would not accept any of them. Still closer to Execution Day the Herald charged the Government with acting according to political expediency.

If Riel is hung he will hang because the safety of the Government calls for his life. He will hang because it is believed that Langevin, Caron, and Chapleau will still be able 'to keep the Quebec delegation solid'. It is on party gambling of this

⁷⁰ Quoted in La Minerve, Mont., Sept. 15, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

⁷¹ Correspondence, La Minerve, Mont., Aug. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-3.

description that this unfortunate man's life now depends.⁷²

By November 13 the Herald was convinced that if Macdonald were yielding to Ontario pressure, he would be making a political mistake. Quebec support was tried and true, of long standing. Prospective Ontario support was doubtful. "We believe the Ontario politicians are grossly deceiving the Premier in regard to the feeling in Ontario..."⁷³ La Minerve still excoriated the Liberals on November 12 despite its newfound sympathy for the Métis chief, for the Opposition desires nothing but to get into office as a result of Riel's death. "Tout le monde comprend que les habiles de l'opposition escomptant froidement l'exécution de Riel pour leur avenir politique."⁷⁴ Three days prior to the hanging the Toronto Mail assailed the Opposition for making the person of a condemned man the object of their political manoeuvrings.

In Quebec we find the Rouge press forging Riel's name to documents fabricated for the purpose of getting sympathy for him [...] invoking the French people to rise and avenge his execution by overthrowing the Government[...]. The facts adduced at the trial are garbled, and bold inventions introduced to lead Lower Canada to believe that Sir John Macdonald is about to hang this man solely in order to slake the blood-thirstiness of the English-speaking community. In

⁷² Editorial, Herald, Mont., Nov. 12, 1885, p. 4, col. 2. Cf. also same, Oct. 29, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3; also editorial Mail, Tor., Nov. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

⁷³ Editorial, Nov. 13, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

⁷⁴ Editorial, Nov. 12, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

Ontario, on the other hand, [...] the people are being called upon to destroy the administration if Riel be not hanged, and at the same time [...] inciting the French if hanged he be."⁷⁵

Two days before the hanging the Herald made yet another charge of political partisanship.

... we fear it's true, that while this man Riel stands in the shadow of the gallows, the controversy that goes on at Ottawa has reference to the winning or losing of constituencies according as he hangs or does not hang!⁷⁶

As an accomplished practitioner of the craft of politics John A. Macdonald would not overlook the effect his decisions were to have on popular support. As the hanging of the Métis chief approached, the Conservative party became more and more embattled. As early as June 11, 1885, its faithful correspondent at Prince Albert was defending the party against charges of complicity in causing the Rising.

It must not be supposed, however, that Prince Albert harbored the only disloyal whites. There were some in the Qu'Appelle Valley, some in Battleford, and some in Edmonton. And, so in Prince Albert, all of them, or nearly all, were violent Reformers, whose principal grievance was that the Tories were in office. They wanted to give Mr. Blake a text against the Government.⁷⁷

In late August, 1885, the Conservative leader received word from Galt, Ontario to the effect that the Opposition were

⁷⁵ Editorial, Nov. 13, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁷⁶ Editorial, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

⁷⁷ Correspondence, Mail, Toronto, June 20, 1885, p. 4, col. 1

making political capital by predicting that the Conservatives would not allow Riel to hang.⁷⁸

On September 10, 1885, loyal Orange Lodge No. 884 at Hamilton adopted the following resolution unanimously: "Il est resolu...nous nous opposerons constitutionnellement a tout gouvernement qui commuera la dite sentence ou interviendra pour l'empêcher d'être mise à exécution."⁷⁹ La Minerve, however, reaffirmed its support of the Conservative party on September 16, 1885.

Elle reste, comme toujours, l'organe du grand parti conservateur, c'est à dire du parti de l'ordre, de la légalité, de la constitutionnalité, de ce parti, en un mot, qui n'a jamais cesse de défendre nos véritables intérêts religieux et nationaux.⁸⁰

On September 22, 1885, loyal Orange Lodge No. 1505 passed this resolution: "Que cette L. O. Lodge insiste fortement auprès du gouvernement sur l'importance de mettre ces décisions à exécution sans délai."⁸¹ On the same day the Dunmore Lodge No. 1499 passed this resolution:

Nous refusons, en conséquence, de supporter tout gouvernement qui interviendrait ainsi, et permettrait à ceux qui sont impliqués dans la rébellion du Nord-Ouest d'échapper à la pénalité d'une juste sentence.⁸²

⁷⁸ Cowan to Macdonald, Aug. 22, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 59.

⁷⁹ Polemiques, p. 152b (italics in original).

⁸⁰ Editorial, Sept. 16, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

⁸¹ Quoted in Polemiques, p. 152b.

⁸² Quoted in Polemiques, p. 153a.

Another September letter to the Orange Sentinel reminded Macdonald of probable loss of Ontario votes. "Que si Riel n'est pas exécuté les candidats conservateurs perdront presque tous leurs supports dans la péninsule."⁸³

From Hamilton on November 4 came more concern about the political consequences to the Prime Minister of not hanging Riel.

The universal feeling here among Conservatives is, that if anything should happen to prevent the law taking its course, the consequences will be laid at your door and our friends are very anxious about it and fear that in that case you would lose more support from Ontario that you would gain in Quebec and that whatever you should lose in Quebec, should the sentence not be interfered with, you will more than make up from this province.⁸⁴

On November 6, 1885, "Brother" Morton declared at Orange Lodge No. 821:

...if the Government allows Rome to step in on this occasion and secure a reprieve for this arch-traitor, the Conservative Party can no longer count upon their [Orangemen's] services, although they have worked and voted for them for many years.⁸⁵

The Toronto Globe was aware of the split within the Conservative Cabinet over the hanging of Riel. It supposed the French members plus Inland Revenue Minister John

83 Quoted in Polémiques, p. 152b.

84 Thomas Robertson to Macdonald, Nov. 4, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p.245.

85 Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 117a.

Costigan to have been against it and the remainder for it.⁸⁶

Montreal Junior Conservative Club members reminded Macdonald of the bad political effects of allowing Riel to be hanged in a telegram of November 10: "... Riel must not be hung on Monday. Bad blood exists today and must not be increased. Consider matters carefully. Riel's execution means our downfall. Coursol endorses this telegram."⁸⁷ Desiré Girouard of Montreal found on the same day that he could no longer remain silent. The Quebec feeling, he declared, was that Riel had been unjustly and cruelly treated for having been granted another stay of execution if it did not mean commutation of sentence. He hoped that the Conservative party would not be responsible for such tortures. Guillaume Amyot reported to his party chief on November 12 the seriousness of the political situation in Bellechasse County.

I have done my best in my county to form the opinion against Riel, but the courant d'opinion everywhere is getting irresistible, and take my word as a sincere friend that your best supporters will not be able to stand the position if Riel is hanged.⁸⁸

The arguments given in Bellechasse County were that a sane

86 Editorial, Nov. 7, 1885, p. 6, col. 2.

87 P. A. Crosby to Macdonald, Nov. 10, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 270-271

88 Amyot to Macdonald, Nov. 12, 1885, same, p. 294. Cf. also Girouard to Macdonald, Nov. 10, 1885, same, p. 282-283.

man would not engage an insane secretary. But Riel's secretary, W. H. Jackson, had satisfied Northwest Judicial Authorities that he was insane. Therefore, the man who engaged him, Riel, was also insane. Moreover, civilized nations no longer applied hanging for such cases as Riel's.

The Montreal Gazette took editorial note of the action of a group of French Canadians, members of Commons, who had forwarded a telegram to the Prime Minister on Friday, November 13, repudiating responsibility for the execution. The telegram read: "Dans les circonstances L'exécution de Louis Riel serait un acte de cruauté dont nous repoussons la responsabilité."⁸⁹

A calm and well-reasoned but anonymous letter from "plusieurs conservateurs" told of the inhumanity and political inexpediency of allowing Riel to hang.

Le mort de Riel servit certainement un bouleversement dans notre Province et feroit [sic] perdu la confiance et l'appui au Gouvernement conservateur dans les trois quarts des comtés en _____ Province.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p.314-315; editorial, Gazette, Mont., Nov.14, 1885, p.4, col.3; Herald, Mont., Nov.14, 1885, p.5, col.2; Dominion Annual Register, 1885, p.187-188. This telegram was signed by the following: C.J. Coursol, Montreal East; Alfonse Desjardins, Hochelaga; Desire Girouard, Jacques Cartier; Fabien Vanasse, Yamaska; L.H. Massue, Richelieu; Flavien Dupont, Bagot; A.L. Desaulniers, Maskinonge; J.B. Daoust, Two Mountains; J.G.H. Bergeron, Beauharnois; J.W. Bain, Soulanges; P.B. Benoit, Chambly; Edouard Guilbeault, Joliette; G.A. Gigault, Rouville; Simon Labrosse, Prescott; L.L.L. Desaulniers, Saint Maurice; Firmin Dugas, Montcalm.

⁹⁰ "Plusieurs conservateurs" to Macdonald, Nov.13, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 299.

Two other parliament members, C. A. Lesage and Guillaume Amyot, expressed themselves with determination in a telegram of the same day: "We cannot share the responsibility of Riel's hanging under circumstances."⁹¹

From Montreal came to the Globe the report of Peter White, M.P. for North Renfrew, that if Riel's sentence should be commuted Macdonald could not count on ten votes from the province of Ontario in the following session of parliament. Thus we see that pressure was being put on Macdonald from both provinces and with increasing intensity as Execution Day approached.⁹²

In an effort to extricate himself from his seriously difficult position Hector Langevin may have employed, it seems not unreasonable to assume, extra-Cabinet pressure on Prime Minister Macdonald to force the latter to prevent the hanging. He could stir up such a pro-Riel furor in the French language press that Macdonald would be forced to capitulate. This was a last recourse since he personally could not sway the Cabinet, and Chapleau even, would not work with him.

... it is believed that Sir Hector's mission is to stir up such an agitation in favour of the rebel leader as will intimidate Sir John Macdonald into pardoning him.⁹³

⁹¹ Lesage and Amyot to Macdonald, Nov. 13, 1885, same, p. 313.

⁹² Press dispatch, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 3, col. 2.

⁹³ Press dispatch, same, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 3, col. 2.

The other Toronto paper, the Mail, in its last issue before Execution Day, did nothing more editorial-wise than condemn L'Ere Nouvelle of Three Rivers for cursing the French Cabinet Ministers. La Minerve, said the Montreal Herald, was endeavouring to make the exercise of the Royal prerogative of mercy peculiar to the Governor-General, and thus shift the burden of a decision on Riel from the shoulders of the Cabinet. Not so, but to the Governor-General on the advice of his advisers belonged the exercise of this prerogative. The Cabinet alone was responsible insisted the Herald. The Herald would not allow the Ministry to wash its hands of the responsibility for Riel's hanging. Apparently it was Secretary of State Chapleau who had been endeavouring to create the above impression.⁹⁴

Two days before Execution Day A. Hilaire Hurteau, M.P. for L'Assomption, joined himself to the declaration in the telegram of Coursol et al. On the next day also the Mayor of Lachine on behalf of an assembly of citizens lent support to the Coursol declaration. On November 15, also, it was reported from Ottawa that the Government would be safe even if Riel hanged. This was for the purpose of calming Langevin, who had contemplated resigning.

⁹⁴ Editorial, Mail, Tor., Nov. 14, 1885, p. 4, col. 3; and editorial Herald, Mont., Nov. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 4. ..

The list of the Ministerial supporters in the House of Commons was carefully canvassed with a view of persuading Sir Hector that he could safely rely on the Government being sustained no matter what became of Riel. Sir Hector is reported as being still undecided as to whether he shall resign or stick to the ship.⁹⁵

The anti-Riel movement was intensified between September and November, 1885. Private individuals, political observers and party men, and the Orange Lodges caused a tremendous swell of remorseless determination that Riel should die. The Macdonald Papers contain the evidence of this anti-Riel pressure on the Dominion Government. The Sessional Papers contain on the other hand but a trivial amount of anti-Riel evidence. On September 10, 1885, the Orange Sentinel stated: "Riel has been fairly tried and convicted, and the sentence of the court must be carried out."⁹⁶ From Cobourg on September 12 came information about the anti-Riel sentiment in that area.

... there is a very strong feeling indeed both in East and West Northumberland and East Durham lest the arch conspirator should escape hanging. [...] Yesterday a friend of mine received a letter from Brighton, M.P.P. for North Grey in which he also says the feeling there is very strong and if Riel should escape hanging he cannot say what the

⁹⁵ Press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 2, col. 2. Cf. also Hurteau to Macdonald, Nov. 14, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 316; Alexandre Robert to Macdonald, Nov. 15, 1885, same, p. 411-415.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Commons Debates, 4th Sess., Fifth Parl. 1886, Vol. 1, p. 117a.

consequences might be to our party!⁹⁷

From Appleton, Ontario came the report that a certain unnamed, life-long Conservative had declared:

... he would not give the party another vote if the sentence of the court was not carried out. He says he dose [sic] not care what party is in opposition to ours he will support it. I find there is very strong opposition to the Government on this matter particularly with the Protestants and even some of the Catholics.⁹⁸

L. McCallum, Conservative member for Stromness, Ontario, forwarded to Macdonald a letter he had received from one of his constituents containing a strong statement of the anti-Riel position.

Has the Conservative party come to such a state, that the leaders, in order to keep themselves in power, has [sic] to grovel to the dictates of the Roman Catholics of Quebec, in their wishes in regard to Riel.⁹⁹

In my opinion, and I am sure it is the opinion of the majority of the people of Ontario, the Conservative party would better be in opposition for all time to come, than to be ruled by the Church of Rome.

Have not the Protestant people of this Dominion any influence in the land, that the Roman Catholics can get, and do, everything they want.

I rather think should the Government sell themselves to the Romans, by making a loophole for the rebel Riel to crawl through they will find at the next General Election that things will be different.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Charles Gifford to Macdonald, Sept.12,1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p.139-140.

⁹⁸ J.A. Teskey to Macdonald, Sept.16, 1885, same, p. 149-150.

⁹⁹ Richard Leeson to McCallum, Sept.18, 1885, same, p. 172.

¹⁰⁰ Same to same, Sept.18, 1885, same, p.173-174.

On October 21, 1885, Thomas Arkell of Saint Thomas, Ontario, wrote the Prime Minister.

... with respect to the fate of Riel a very strong feeling exists among our friends in this section and I believe it is general all over the Province of Ontario. I have heard a large number state most positively that if Riel is not hanged they will never poll another Conservative vote[...]¹⁰¹ the murder of poor Scott is not forgotten.

Local Conservative politicians of Hamilton, Ontario, fearing to oppose the current of public opinion informed the Prime Minister calmly:

Right thinking men of both political parties feel that Riel has had a fair trial, has been found guilty on plain and convincing testimony and that the sentence of death pronounced upon him was fully warranted by his crimes. They also feel that the safety of the community demands the enforcement of the penalty.¹⁰²

The direction of the political winds in Ontario was clearly revealed to Macdonald at the end of October by a certain J. C. Gilroy of Clinton, Ontario.

I travel over a very large portion of this province beginning at Niagara Falls and Windsor and extending north to the county of Bruce and have found this question [hanging of Riel] the important topic wherever I go. I have questioned people of every shade of politics in order to find out their opinions of this matter and one and all agree with myself that Riel must be hanged in order to show the people of Quebec and the world that you do not make one set of laws for we [sic] in Ontario and another for the people of the Province of Quebec. Then on the other hand I almost every day ask

¹⁰¹ Arkell to Macdonald, Oct. 21, 1885, same, p. 201 (underlining in original).

¹⁰² George Roach et al to Macdonald, Oct. 28, 1885, same, p. 213.

Conservatives where ever I go and have very many confidential conversations with them on this matter in all sorts of places at the dinner table on the trains on the street and in fact where ever I chance to meet them and I assure you that without a dissentient voice they openly declare many of them like myself who have been life long supporters of yourself and your Government and the Conservative cause that if Riel is not hanged they have given their last Conservative vote and that as long as they live they will never support you again.¹⁰³

Expressing his personal sentiments the same writer continued:

Speaking for myself I have only to say that I have all my life been a supporter to yours and of your Government and never gave other than a straight party vote in my life, but I take my oath that if Riel is not executed I never will vote for you again and if necessary I can furnish you the names of five thousand straightforward honest fearless Conservatives who will do the same and what is more if he is not hanged that in a few months there will be the greatest rebellion, one of the mightiest struggles for freedom and liberty from french [sic] domination by the loyal intelligent [sic] Protestant people of Ontario that this our beloved Dominion has ever witnessed.¹⁰⁴

Loss of the Quebec vote Gilroy thought improbable.

I know[.] that the French Canadian vote would go the same as it has always gone and that the Grit party have no inducements to hold out to or offer them[.] When you again go before the people for re election I feel satisfied that your French Canadian followers will be as numerous as ever they were.¹⁰⁵

The Orange Sentinel editorialized again on October 29

In pressing on the Government the necessity of hanging Riel during the first outbreak under his personal direction, a man whose only offence was loyalty to the

220. 103 Gilroy to Macdonald, Oct. 29, 1885, same, p.218-

104 Same to same, Oct. 29, 1885, same, p.220-221.

105 Same to same, Oct. 29, 1885, same, p.222-223.

British Crown was ruthlessly butchered. The blood of Thomas Scott yet cries for vengeance.¹⁰⁶

Further Orange pressure on the Prime Minister came from Lodge No. 80 of Peterborough, Ontario. Its resolution read as follows:

That this L.O.L. no. 80 sees with regret the obstacles that are being put forward to prevent the rebel Reil [sic] from paying the just penalty of his many crimes on the scaffold and that this Lodge is of opinion that no further respite should be granted him but that he should suffer the extreme penalty of the law and be hanged in fulfillment of the sentence passed upon him.

And that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to Sir John A. Macdonald.¹⁰⁷

At Peterborough also the "Royal Black Vets of Ireland", No. 261, seconded the resolution of L.O.L. No. 80 of that city that no executive interference should prevent Riel from being hanged.¹⁰⁸

Even a medical inquiry was not acceptable to Ontario. Riel must be hanged. Political expediency thus also demanded it as a result. Peter White of Pembroke M.P. for North Renfrew, Ontario, argued in this manner.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 117a.

¹⁰⁷ This resolution was forwarded to the Prime Minister by the Secretary, W. A. Jamieson, under date of Nov. 4, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 242.

¹⁰⁸ M. D. Grady to Macdonald, Nov. 13, 1885, same, p. 305.

I have taken some pains to ascertain the opinions of my supporters and I am convinced that even the issuing of a commission to inquire into his [Riel's] mental condition will alienate many of our very warmest and most loyal friends. As some of them have expressed themselves: "We will never give another Conservative vote unless the sentence of the Court is carried out."

Of course I don't wish to be understood as having any bloodthirsty feeling in the matter but am simply pointing out what seems to me to be the prevailing feeling amongst our friends.¹⁰⁹

On November 5, 1885, Lodge No. 425 expressed its position in this resolution:

That we, as loyal subjects of Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, deem it our duty to urge upon our representatives in Parliament the necessity of an honest, manly and fearless administration of justice in the execution of the fairly tried, twice condemned and sentenced arch rebel and murderer Louis Riel.¹¹⁰

That Riel had been granted a stay of execution was painful to the Orangemen. Lodge No. 300 passed the following resolution probably on November 11:

That we, as Orangemen, view with feelings of fear and regret the present situation of the Louis Riel matter -- although condemned to be hanged on the 10th of last month, but still lives. We strongly recommend that no subterfuges be allowed, nor any delay given through which this justly condemned rebel leader may escape. We also strongly wish our brethren throughout Canada to join hands in preventing any outrage in this matter to our Queen and country, whom we as Orangemen have united to cherish and protect.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ White to Macdonald, Nov. 5, 1885, same, p. 247-248.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 118a.

¹¹¹ Quoted in same, p. 117b.

The tide of anti-Riel pressure swept the Prime Minister and Cabinet along with it. It was a momentous decision that faced Macdonald and one that he could put off no longer. In deciding against Riel he showed that he did not wish to risk the loss of Ontario strength and support.

Definite efforts were made to enlist the aid of the Irish in support of the pro-Riel movement. Martin Wood, Secretary of the International Arbitration Society, was interviewed by a correspondent of the New York Herald to whom he declared that the Canadian Irish were implicated in the pro-Riel agitation. "I may add that the Irish have had a large hand in it [the agitation] with the French Canadians."¹¹² The same correspondent reported that a London merchant named Kenny was taking a prominent part in the pro-Riel agitation. Among other things Kenny stated the following about the London Irish:

Among the workingmen and poor of London there is a vague feeling of sympathy for the half-breeds, because they fancy they stand toward the English colonists much in the same position as the Irish do here to the [sic] England.¹¹³

An anonymous Irish Canadian on November 6, 1885, asked Macdonald to "lean toward mercy" and prevent Riel's hanging.

¹¹² News item, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 2, 1885, p. 5, col. 4.

¹¹³ Same.

As for Riel himself I care not a snap. In the name of God, I lean' on the side of mercy. If you hang Riel I'm affraid [sic] the deed will never be forgotten nor forgiven, and the harm done never repaired. Imprison Riel and I'm sure that after a whirlwind of Orange blow and bluster, the matter will soon be forgotten.¹¹⁴

From Montreal on November 14 came an unsigned telegram to either Macdonald or Honorable John Costigan containing an article from the Montreal Post. Irish sympathy was strongly expressed for the "humiliation" being forced on the French race, and Riel was fighting to secure in the Northwest only what the Irish fought to secure for their homeland.¹¹⁵ A meeting of prominent Irish Catholics of Montreal on Saturday, November 14, sent a deputation requesting John Joseph Curran M.P. to use eleventh hour influence with the Government in behalf of Riel. The Post of the same day called upon Honorable John Costigan to resign his Cabinet seat along with the French members.¹¹⁶ Such efforts did not achieve great results. After Execution Day, however, they were continued and increased.

Despite the efforts of La Minerve the identification which French Canadians felt with Louis Riel was the outstanding phenomenon of the period of agitation both before and after Execution Day. In fact there would hardly have been an

¹¹⁴ An Irish Canadian to Macdonald, Nov. 6, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p.249-251.

¹¹⁵ Macdonald Papers, same, p. 401-409.

¹¹⁶ News item, Herald, Mont., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 8, col. 4.

agitation without it. It was thought that the vindictiveness shown against Riel was owing primarily and above all to the fact that he was French. Therefore, if Francophobes were using Riel as a means to strike at the French people as such, the latter would react accordingly, and a bond of common sympathy was woven between the Métis Chief and the inhabitants of Quebec.

The way was prepared for the pro-Riel agitation in the city of Montreal by events of another kind in September and October of 1885. An epidemic of small pox raged there during those months. Vaccination was promoted by the English language press, but the French were largely opposed. English speaking citizens wanted the contagion to be confined, and the refusal of the majority of the French to accept vaccination brought passions to the boiling point. The ensuing controversy stirred up much excitement among the French especially. Thus emotion and sentiment were already aroused along racial lines which were easily continued in Montreal prior to the Riel execution and afterwards. In fact it can truly be said that the small pox agitation blended into the Riel agitation, for the disease was still claiming a few victims in early November when the Riel movement was on the upgrade. Oddly enough the Montreal Herald was assaulted by the French language press during the small pox epidemic, but its pro-Riel stand later was welcomed by the French journals.

In his Regina cell as Execution Day drew near Louis Riel was told of the sympathy felt in Quebec for him. One of his trial lawyers, Francois Xavier Lemieux, wired him of the excitement in the French province. "If no respite is granted on Saturday night then send me and friends parting word in a long telegram. Great excitement. Courage."¹¹⁷ On Saturday, November 14, La Minerve had come to understand clearly its position with the mass of the French Canadian race, and at the same time it despaired of Riel's being saved. It still regarded him as guilty and deserving of punishment and did not seek to justify the Rising. But by the above date it had become a question of mercy versus vengeance. Quebec had asked for mercy and had been beaten down. It was nobler to seek to save a life than to take one away. The non-French majority had not been generous. Appeals for clemency had been answered with demands for blood, and at a time when other countries had ceased to exact the supreme penalty for political offenses.

La position prise par la province de Quebec etait plus honorable que celle choisie par la province d'Ontario et quelque autres provinces où l'élément francais est en minorité, et ce qui nous fait peine pour le bon nom de la Puissance, pour l'harmonie future qui doit régner entre différentes races, c'est que le mauvais sentiment l'a emporté sur le bon.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Lemieux to Riel, Nov. 13, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 4, p. 540. This telegram was forwarded by Dewdney to Macdonald.

¹¹⁸ Editorial, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

French identification with Riel caused great excitement in Quebec City on the day before (Sunday) Execution Day. The Herald dispatch called it "unparalleled".

From an early hour this morning French-Canadians were promenading the streets and eagerly questioned every passer-by as to the possibility of a commutation of the half-breed chief's sentence. At noon the enthusiasm on this subject reached a fever heat. ~~Castors~~ Conservative and Liberal could be seen in groups earnestly discussing the question the execution, and their 'common cause' taken to defend the national pride of their race which had so far been trespassed upon by the Orangemen of Ontario in claiming Riel as their victim.¹¹⁹

This identification of Riel with Quebec French was to be fully exploited by the Rouges in the days of agitation following the execution.

The public pro-Riel movement could not, of course, be supported by the Ministerial organs. The Montreal Gazette, however, did take editorial note of the fact that the Mayor of Ste. Therese village had used \$200 from the public funds in order to contribute to the Riel defense fund. This was in September. It also reported that in Quebec City shortly before the hanging Riel was being eulogized thoroughly. He had been classed with the "victims of '37". Defense lawyer Lemieux was confident that he would not hang. On the day previous to the execution the same city was filled with rumors. Sir Hector Louis Langevin had come from Ottawa on

¹¹⁹ Press dispatch, Herald, Mont., Nov. 16, 1885, p. 1, col. 2.

Friday, and local political leaders had sought him out. However, no telegram from members of Parliament had been sent to Macdonald as had been the case at Montreal with the other French Cabinet member, Secretary of State Chapleau.¹²⁰

The Opposition Montreal Herald had been opposed to Riel from the outset of the Rising. It would have allowed him to hang without regret, but by November 11 it had changed its stand. It then wanted the Métis chief to live, not out of sympathy for him personally, but out of respect for Canadian honor. Canada would be dishonored if a man convicted of a political offense were to be hanged. The day for that had passed.¹²¹ From the same Herald we also learn that it was more than probable that Quebec did not expect the hanging to be carried out. "The statement is officially made in official circles here that the sentence will not be carried out..."¹²² Quite rightly the same paper deprecated the secrecy with which the Ministry shrouded its decision on Riel.

Gentlemen who were brought in contact with members of the Government assure us that the question of hanging Riel was unsettled up to the afternoon of yesterday[...]
it is the duty of the Government to declare in an authoritative manner for the public information[...]¹²³ what its

¹²⁰ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Sept. 8, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; press dispatch, same, Nov. 10, 1885, p. 1, col. 3; press dispatch, same, Nov. 16, 1885, p. 1, col. 4.

¹²¹ Editorial, Nov. 11, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-3.

¹²² Press dispatch, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

intentions are, and abandon altogether the policy of concealment which has been so confusing and worrying to the public mind.¹²³

The Herald wanted Riel spared. It was convinced that political and electioneering expediency were the deciding factors, Canada herself was on trial before the world.

... we would once more urge upon the Government the wisdom and the justice of refraining from taking Riel's life [...]. If his life be taken it will be impossible to reconcile the world to the justice of the act [...]. The public conscience of other countries will condemn and six months hence we shall condemn ourselves. There will lie at the door of the Government a political murder...¹²⁴

The country is now on trial. The moment has nearly arrived when judgment will be passed, not on Riel only, but on Canada itself...¹²⁵

The policy of La Minerve is most interesting. Both in 1870 and again in 1885 it had followed the Ministry faithfully. As Execution Day approached, however, it found the call of race irresistible and took its stand clearly in the pro-Riel movement. Toward the end of October it busied itself in self-defense against the charge of personal animosity toward Riel and of promoting clerical dislike for him. It was continually reproducing the testimony of the missionaries which showed that the clergy themselves had already condemned Riel. No, La Minerve did not seek Riel's head.

¹²³ Editorial, same, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

¹²⁴ Same.

¹²⁵ Same, col. 2.

By November 9 La Minerve appeared to be hoping that the sentence would not be carried out. It spoke of Britain's reputation for clemency. It regretted that it had been hearing no talk of mercy now coming from Ontario. What had happened to British mercy that had won more honor for her than conquering armies? A Northwest Bishop -- Grandin, no doubt -- was in Ottawa. He had already forgiven himself; surely he was then seeking forgiveness for Riel. "Nous ne lui trouvons pas de justification pas meme d'excuse, mais nous trouvons un champ large pour l'exercice de la miséricorde."¹²⁶ Upon hearing of a six day respite La Minerve on November 11 pleaded pardon for Riel. An act of pity would redound to the benefit of the Empire, and speaking to the Governor-General while forgetting its party stand, La Minerve reached its climax of pleading with: "C'est un peuple qui supplie." Thus it was then wholly in the pro-Riel camp and identified entirely with the cause of race.¹²⁷

The pro-Riel swing became even more pronounced on November 13. La Minerve was trusting of the medical report with regard to Riel's mental condition. Its editorial of that day ended with a threat.

Nous avons demandé grace ou pitié pour un condamné [..]
 Nous pouvons souffrir qu'on se montre sourd à nos

¹²⁶ Editorial, Nov. 9, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

¹²⁷ Editorial, Nov. 11, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

supplications; nous ne permettrions pas qu'on insultet impunément aux principes élémentaires de l'humanité.¹²⁸

Finally La Minerve lapsed into righteous despair on the Saturday before Execution Day. The French of Quebec, whose loyalty and zeal in putting down the Rising, were beyond reproach, had as a unified race, supplicated the majority to show mercy. That supplication had been rejected to the humiliation of the race. The joy of vengeful passion would pass, but then remorse would set in. We have upheld the better cause, said La Minerve.¹²⁹

The private pro-Riel movement suffered from the same defect as the public movement. It started too late, and this was probably due to Quebec's tacit assumption that the Métis leader would not hang anyway. After all, Ambroise Lépine had been pardoned; Riel probably would be also.

In pleasing contrast to the flood of vengeance-on-Riel letters received by the Prime Minister was one from a Presbyterian Minister in Grafton, Ontario, John W. Smith, pleading for clemency. "...spare his [Riel's] life as he was not the mover but only came forward in sympathy with his fellows who considered themselves injured."¹³⁰ J. V. Chauveau

¹²⁸ Editorial, Nov. 13, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

¹²⁹ Editorial, Nov. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

¹³⁰ Smith to Macdonald, Sept. 14, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 146-147.

pleaded for Riel on November 7. He expressed the view that he had been confident that Riel would not hang but had then become worried.

I have been all the long firmly convinced that Riel would not be made to suffer the extreme penalty of the law, but now that the time is so short and that so much doubt is still entertained, I cannot conceal from you an opinion, which were I not an old friend, I would on account of the position I have held in this Province [not?] render public. This is simply that the execution of Riel under present circumstances - apart from all other considerations - would be fraught with most fatal consequences. I am in a position to hear the opinion of a great many. Therefore I hasten to appeal to you and to say "My dear old friend for God's sake, for every one's sake have mercy on that man!"¹³¹

Father Charles A. McWilliams, Riel's former class mate who attended him at the Regina prison, urged Macdonald from Regina on November 9, 1885, not to allow him to be hanged. "...if the death sentence be carried out, the blood of an insane man will be upon the head of His Excellency the Governor-General and upon that of his advisers."¹³² A Valleyfield correspondent who signed himself "Nation Nelliste" threatened Macdonald's life if Riel should hang. Lieutenant Governor Louis Francois Rodrique Masson of Quebec was convinced of the editorial reasoning of the Montreal Herald, i.e., that a loop hole was deliberately allowed in order to

¹³¹ Chauveau to Macdonald, Nov. 7, 1885, same, p. 253-255.

¹³² McWilliams to Macdonald, Nov. 9, 1885, same, p.267. This last charge Father McWilliams publicly retracted later.

pardon Riel. On November 13, however, he was worried enough to write the Prime Minister. Like so many other Canadiens "Up to this last moment I felt certain of a commutation of sentence." He urged that an exception be not made to the prevalent custom of not executing those guilty of Riel's crime. A caucus member of the bolting French Conservatives explained to a Globe reporter that the prospective hanging was regarded as a national issue pure and simple.

The object of our meeting[.] is to take action and show Sir John Macdonald that if he hangs Riel he cannot longer expect the support of the French Canadians now setting [sic] on the Government benches.¹³³

We feel that the only thing that can save Riel is to show Sir John that the French members to a man will leave him. We feel that if Riel be executed it will be nothing short of political murder for the avowed purpose of keeping the Ontario vote.¹³⁴

From Montreal a certain W. S. Porteoris pleaded the usual arguments on November 14. At the conclusion he subjoined: "You will notice I am not a frenchman."¹³⁵ On the same day Pierre Fortin M.P. wanted the Prime Minister to secure royal clemency. Countless Montreal voters sent a series of identical telegrams on November 14 also. They approved of

¹³³ Press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 14, 1885, p.3, col. 1; cf. also "Nation Welliste" to Macdonald, Nov. 11, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p.284-285; Masson to Macdonald, Nov.13, 1885, same, p.309-310.

¹³⁴ Same.

¹³⁵ Porteoris to Macdonald, Nov. 14, 1885, same, p. 324-325.

the position of Charles Joseph Coursol et al. and wished to act "dans les meilleurs interets de la paix et de la Confederation."¹³⁶

All the above pressure on Macdonald was not enough. The final Privy Council meeting had been held on the evening of November 12, and official instructions were borne to the Sheriff at Regina immediately thereafter. All pressure after that date was almost certainly foredoomed to be fruitless. To have succeeded in saving the Métis Chief the movement on his behalf should have started sooner and should have been much more intensified.

Further pressure was brought upon the Government to effect or to block the hanging of Riel, and these have been printed in the Sessional Papers.¹³⁷ In this official Government publication the Ministry acknowledged that two communications only came from Ontario and Quebec demanding Riel's hanging. All the evidence given above of anti-Riel pressure was excluded. Assuredly the Ministry was accused by the French of having capitulated to Ontario's desire for vengeance, to Orangemen particularly. By having printed two communications only showing anti-Riel pressure the Ministry was

¹³⁶ Same, p. 327-397; also, Fortin to Macdonald, Nov. 14, 1885, same, p. 326.

¹³⁷ Canada, Sessional Papers, Vol. 19, No. 12, 1886, papers 43e and 43f, p. 235-287.

probably endeavoring to answer this charge. One communication was from the Orange Association of West Toronto which was forwarded by James Beaty M.P. for West Toronto to the Governor-General through Secretary of State J. A. Chapleau. The other was from a certain Charles O'Hara of Cranbourne, Quebec, and addressed to the Privy Council.¹³⁸

On the other hand the same Sessional Papers contain numerous letters, petitions, and resolutions showing pro-Riel pressure from Quebec and Ontario. Most of these seem to have been made before the first scheduled execution day, i.e., before September 18. They are dated for August and early September. Perhaps this was to prove that the Ministry did relent and allow a stay of execution of one month out of a spirit of fairness. As regards place of origin they seem to have stemmed from the district of Three Rivers, Rimouski, Maskinonge, and Quebec City. Other isolated places are included, of course. Conspicuous by its absence is Montreal, the very place where the post-Execution agitation received its most effective impetus. Perhaps this was to show the supposed artificiality of the pro-Riel sympathy manifested there after the hanging, i.e., that it was surely nothing but the machinations of Liberals and Rouges there.

The evidences of pro-Riel pressure as found in the

¹³⁸ Same, p. 235-236.

Sessional Papers were almost all in the form of petitions to the Governor-General asking for a direct exercise of the royal prerogative of pardoning. Imperial policy toward Canada at the time, however, was one of non-interference in such matters. Therefore such petitions were ineffectual. On the other hand the anti-Riel pressure as found in the Macdonald Papers was brought to bear on the man who really made the ultimate decision, the Prime Minister himself. Therefore they were productive of results.¹³⁹

A particularly interesting letter to the Governor-General came from a citizens committee of Sherbrooke, Quebec, lending support on November 12 to a petition to the same of the day previous. It states without equivocation that Antoine Racine, Bishop of Sherbrooke, was in favor of a commutation of Riel's sentence. Although this is the only evidence of a Quebec bishop having attempted to prevent the hanging, the committee say that other bishops think similarly.

His Lordship authorized the deputation to state to the Dominion Government that he is in favor of a commutation of the sentence of death passed against the said Louis Riel, and understood his Lordship to say that he is convinced that his view is shared by all his episcopal colleagues. He does not, however, think he can intervene directly in the matter owing to the political discussions to which it has given

¹³⁹ For Lansdowne's interpretation of Imperial policy, see Appendix II below. For Colonial Secretary Stanley's concurrence in this interpretation see Stanley to Lansdowne, Dec. 4, 1885, Colonial Secretary (Secret and Confidential), 1885, G 3, Vol. 19.

rise. His Lordship, nevertheless, authorizes us to use his name in order to give greater weight to the petition we transmitted to you last evening. He considers that the exercise of mercy in favor of poor Riel would be the best means of re-establishing calm and peace in the over-excited minds of the people.¹⁴⁰

The passions of both Ontario and Quebec reached a fever pitch on November 16, 1885. But the friction between the two provinces did not end then. What happened after the execution of Louis Riel will be the subject of the final chapter.

¹⁴⁰ L. C. Belanger et al. to Lansdowne, Nov. 12, 1885, C.S.P., 1886, Vol. 19, No. 12, paper 43f, p. 285.

CHAPTER SIX

ONTARIO-QUEBEC REACTION TO THE SASKATCHEWAN RISING - III

The friction between the provinces of Quebec and Ontario that followed the execution of Louis Riel, November 16, 1885, was of the stuff and substance of a political struggle between parties. One party was striving to preserve its integrity and power. The other was putting forth its maximum effort to climb to control of the reins of government.

A distinction must be drawn between the pro-Riel agitation on the one hand and friction between Ontario and Quebec on the other. The former was a movement within the province of Quebec to drive the Conservatives from office there as well as from the Federal Parliament. The latter was an arousal of passions and sentiments, nationalistic assuredly and somewhat religious also, which set English language people against their French language counterparts. The former outlived the latter although the latter was indeed part of the former. Whenever French agitators railed against the English they were contributing to friction with Ontario, but when they assailed other French politicians, they were merely using the Riel issue to put the reigning Government out. In short, the Liberals (Rouges), of Quebec especially, used the Riel issue and its resulting friction between the provinces as a means to get into office.

To charge the Liberals with such strategy is not to imply any moral turpitude necessarily. It was an adroit move in the craft of politics. The Opposition party had been out of office since the Mackenzie regime of the previous decade. The hanging of Riel was an opportunity not to be lost. At the beginning of the post-execution agitation there were steps taken to form a National Party for the French to insure the non-violation of their rights in future. However, sober second thought about the hard realities of political life for a minority group made clear before long that Quebec would be more harmed than helped by such a party. Therefore the ultimate beneficiary of the pro-Riel agitation was the Opposition Liberal Party which gladly received the support which French Canadians had formerly given to the Conservatives. Their triumph, however, was not immediate, and friction between the two provinces over Louis Riel was a good deal diminished before the Liberals secured office.

In this last chapter the editorials of the various papers on Execution Day itself will be dealt with first and then the numerous issues of the conflict which tapered off in the succeeding months, all with a view to the friction they engendered between Ontario and Quebec.

Execution Day Editorials

On the day appointed for the execution at Regina the Montreal Gazette devoted a lengthy editorial reviewing the whole case and restating its own position. Actually, the Gazette had been quite calm all along and, apparently, above controversy on the subject. It expressed regret for the identification of Riel with the French race, whereas he should be considered, it thought, purely as a treasonable malefactor.

It is to be regretted from every point of view that Riel has been, in a manner, identified with the race from which he springs, and that representatives of the French Canadian people have deemed it well to make his cause in a sense their own.¹

There is no consideration of race or creed in such a case as Riel's. When he massacred priests and laymen, made prisoners of all who would not be in subjection to him, he knew not nationality or religion.²

As the faithful Government organ the Toronto Mail on Execution Day felt obliged to editorialize on the righteousness of the decision to allow Riel to hang. It was aware of and reproved the agitation in Quebec.

Unfortunately an uproar has been stirred up in Lower Canada by certain politicians who are prepared to sacrifice the interests of law, order and stable government in the Dominion provided they can embarrass the Federal Administration.³

1 Editorial, Gazette, Montreal, Nov. 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 1.

2 Same, col. 2.

3 Editorial, Nov. 16, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

The Mail was satisfied that Riel could distinguish right from wrong, and that was all that was legally necessary to sentence him. If he were truly insane then his followers and sympathizers could not have been ignorant of it. The argument that Riel's was a "political offense" and therefore not to be punished with death carried no weight with the Mail. Those who led revolutions, it said, were not to be raised above ordinary highwaymen and bandits. Moreover, it was Riel's second conviction.

... as it valued law and order in the Northwest and the maintenance throughout the Dominion of an equal scale of justice for French and English alike, the Administration was bound to make an example of him, [Riel]. It was no case for the exercise of mercy.⁴

Thus the Toronto Mail defended the Government, of course, but did not become anti-French nor anti-Quebec.

On Execution Day itself nothing was said on the editorial page of the Toronto Globe of the event at Regina.

On the same day the Montreal Herald editorialized that the Government had originally intended to spare Riel. It cited the deference shown by Major General Middleton, the protection shown him between capture and incarceration at Regina, the sharp distinction between his indictment for high treason and that of the Indians for murder simply, the delay in reaching a conclusion, and in forwarding the warrant.

⁴ Same, col. 3.

All the facts are in keeping with the suggestion that the Government desired to save his life, but that party pressure has proved too strong and that the man's life is to be taken at last on the demand of partisan supporters of the Ministry.⁵

The Herald cried "shame" on the Ministry.

The moment had come to surrender to partisan clamor or give the world an example of true nobility that looked solely to the best interests of the Dominion in the present and the future. Let it be recorded to the disgrace of our country that in this supreme moment when every consideration of national honor and national safety called for an example of genuine statesmanship, the Government responded with an ignominious decision which considered only partisan surroundings and partisan results, which proceeded from no broad view of the entire situation, but had regard only to the effect of their action upon elections to come off two years hence in the province of Ontario! Partisan demands were permitted to stifle the national conscience; merciful intentions were smothered under the threats of partisan vengeance; and the country is called upon to bear a load of dishonor and disgrace that slippery politicians in Ontario may be enabled to hold certain doubtful constituencies. A great opportunity to perform an act of clemency has been turned into an event of uncommon cruelty which after generations will stigmatize as it deserves.⁶

The Herald did not wish to champion Riel personally. It had been outspoken in condemnation of his rebellion. But the Country would be harmed almost as much by hanging him as by letting him go free altogether. Its position was not based upon race nor nationality but upon desire for the good reputation of the Country in the eyes of the world. Six months after the execution, the Herald predicted, patriotic Canadians

5 Nov. 16, 1835, p. 4, col. 1.

6 Same, col. 2.

...will look back with astonishment on the fact that the bloodthirstiness of partisan rage was permitted to perpetrate the worst example of political murder that the press of this country has ever been called upon to record.⁷

In protesting the prostituting of the exercise of pardon to partisan politics the Herald thought that Quebec should have begun its pro-Riel clamor sooner:

Had the demand for Riel's execution been less earnest in Ontario, or had the agitation for a Commutation of the sentence been undertaken by Sir John's supporters in Quebec at an earlier day, who can doubt but that a medical commission would have reported the prisoner insane, and that the gallows at Regina would have disappeared.⁸

On Execution Day the wail of the Montreal La Minerve coalesced into a hard determination to discover calmly and objectively who were responsible for the policy of vengeance over mercy. The time had now come to distinguish friend from enemy and to call things by their correct names. The day of Riel's hanging was an evil day, and those who have made it a cruel triumph of revenge have simply stored up for themselves lasting and bitter sorrow. "De ce jour, les conditions de la politique sont changées." Quebec support for the Conservative party was now subject to change. Among the upper Canada Conservatives there had lingered a despicable clique which had been tolerated and overlooked too long and

7 Same.

8 Same, col. 3.

had profited at our expense, said La Minerve. "Voila le court et le long de cette histoire cruelle qui se termine par une pendaison." Most British Conservatives and John Macdonald for certain have been fair and even generous to Quebec. La Minerve was convinced that the Prime Minister had no desire at that late stage of his life for the satisfaction of seeing blood flow. He must, therefore, have yielded to a nucleus of fanatics. "Si c'est, comme nous le croyons, le parti orangiste qui a présidé à l'acte impolitique de ce jour, il y aura un reglement definitif entre ce parti et le notre ...". But if the Government had yielded to a coterie of Orange fanatics, it must be prepared for the consequences. The French speaking Cabinet members La Minerve would not yet condemn. It urged patience till their explanations should be known. However, they must accept responsibility for what they had done or not done. Despite the intense feeling of the moment La Minerve was confident it must be correct because it was unanimous. It urged calmness and moderation because Quebec was too much in the right to allow itself to be carried away by an excess of passion.⁹ "Plus le mécontentement de notre province se manifestera d'une maniere grande et digne, plus il sera menacant et imposant."¹⁰

9 Editorial, Nov. 16, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2.

10 Same.

Fear of Conflict

It was recognized in not a few quarters that a conflict of races was not desirable, and many labored to prevent such a thing. On the afternoon of November 19, 1885 a meeting was held to form a resolutions committee preparatory to a planned outdoor meeting in Montreal for the Sunday following. Orators had to be selected and arrangements made. The movement towards new political affiliations became prominent. The Honorable Beaubien declared: "It should be understood that this movement was not to be considered as a war of races. Liberty, should be given, even to Orangemen, in effort to do good."¹¹ The Honorable Honoré Mercier asked

...people of all races and religions to join them, for they were speaking as free citizens and not as revolutionists. They had met to condemn the execution of Riel, who had been sacrificed on the altar of his fatherland. The resolutions drafted must be open enough to gain the support of all...¹²

Street demonstrations following the execution were deplored by the Montreal Herald. It did not object to the possible new political alignments but trusted that nothing would be done "to enlarge the division between the English and the French of the province".¹³

¹¹ News account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 20, 1885, p. 5, col. 1.

¹² Same, col. 2.

¹³ Editorial, Nov. 20, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

The Toronto Globe undertook the role of pacifier and sought to prevent, or at least moderate, friction between Ontario and Quebec. Not until November 21, 1885, did the Globe give editorial notice to the anti-French agitation in Ontario. Then it adopted a remarkably tolerant attitude toward Quebec and its agitation. The Ministry, of course, were the real traitors and criminals. Citizens were asked to consider the whole matter impartially and not to rush into an anti-French frenzy, nor to accuse the French of defending a rebel. Riel had come unwillingly from a peaceful existence in Montana to lead a justifiable, constitutional agitation, because the long-suffering Métis knew no other recourse. "... the people of Ontario should recognize this truth - that nothing more than bare justice is demanded by the voice of their French Canadian countrymen."¹⁴ Quebec's demonstration was an anti-Ministry demonstration only. It would be tragic to divide the two races of Canada when they should be united in driving the real culprits (the Ministry) out.

The responsibility is with the English provinces. It rests on Ontario in particular. The desire of Quebec is, not for revenge, but simply that full justice may be consummated.¹⁵

A few days later the Globe protested against the efforts of the Conservative Toronto Mail to stir up race war. It (the Mail)

¹⁴ Editorial, Nov. 21, 1885, p. 8, col. 3.

¹⁵ Same, col. 2.

must regard Quebec as lost and so it would gather all the new strength it could in Ontario. Quebec, said the Globe, had no quarrel with Ontario as such, nor with Protestants, nor English speaking people, but was attacking the Conservative Ministry only. "It is altogether an outrage to speak of any 'dominant' race, religion, or class, in a country that claims to be free or under a constitution which rests upon justice."¹⁶ In comparing the agitation then prevalent in both provinces the Globe concluded that that of Quebec was the more law abiding and constitutional of the two. After effigy burning Quebec demonstrators went peacefully to their homes. French Canada, said the Globe, was denouncing the Ministry, the French members especially, but it was not seeking "to smash confederation" as the Toronto Mail had threatened.

We venture to say that if all the anti-French writing and anti-French talk done in Toronto this week were printed on one sheet, and all the anti-English utterances of Quebec for the week were printed on another the former would bear to the latter the proportion of a ten acre lot to a postage stamp.

Such being the truth, no words can be too strong to describe the infamous and traitorous attempts of the Tory organs to incite race prejudice in Ontario.¹⁷

The Globe endeavored to moderate the frenzy of the Mail against Quebec again on December 1, 1885.

¹⁶ Editorial, Nov. 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; Cf. also same, Nov. 24, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2 and Nov. 26, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

¹⁷ Editorial, Nov. 28, 1885, p. 8, col. 2.

Unless it wishes to see the horrors which desolated the Northwest repeated on a larger scale in the older provinces, [...] it [Mail] should moderate its language and refrain from threats which can do no good.¹⁸

Following the Liberal election victory in Ontario at the end of 1886 the Globe rejoiced that the two races had now recovered amity.

Yesterday united Ontario and Quebec as they never were united before, and Canadians may now look forward with confidence to a long period of happy cooperation between the two races.¹⁹

La Minerve also feared friction between the provinces and set about to allay French disquietude.

Nous avons signalé le danger, qu'on y songe avant d'aller plus loin; le plus grand malheur qui puisse fondre sur un pays comme le notre, c'est une lutte entre les races et les plus grands ennemis de la patrie sont ceux qui la favorisent.²⁰

In a lengthy recapitulation of its views regarding the Riel agitation the day before Christmas, La Minerve stated again its fear that all English speaking people would coalesce in an anti-French union if the movement in Quebec for the Parti National were successful. It was regretted that executive clemency was not shown Riel, but it was also undeniable that he was guilty. A culprit ought not to escape merely because of French, or English, blood in his veins. Moreover, a war

18 Editorial, p. 4, col. 1.

19 Editorial, Dec. 29, 1886, p. 4, col. 1.

20 Editorial, Nov. 24, 1885, p. 2, col. 1.

of races was a great calamity.

... nous étions convaincus que ce mouvement aurait pour effet s'il réussissant, de soulever des animosités qui pourraient se transformer en une guerre de races et de mettre jusqu'à un certain point la minorité française à la merci de la majorité.²¹

It appeared to the Montreal Herald in March, 1886, that the Liberals were sufficiently divided to make race warfare improbable. The disappointed ones were those using the "Race and Revenge" cry to form political parties along English and French lines. Their "mischievous zeal" would still probably not come to an end, unfortunately, said the Herald. Thus the Herald followed a policy of neutrality and endeavored to still the conflict of races.

In the House of Commons on March 18, 1886, Alfonse Desjardins (Hochelaga, Quebec) charged that the Conservative organ, the Toronto Mail had endeavored to raise Ontario prejudices against Quebec, i.e., the French population. The Honorable member was altogether correct.²³

Position of Churchmen

After the execution of Riel the position adopted by Churchmen was somewhat indecisive. Individual priests in many

²¹ Editorial, Dec. 26, 1885, p. 2, col. 3; Cf. also, same, col. 1-2.

²² Editorial, Mar. 26, 1886, p. 4, col. 1-2.

²³ Commons Debates, 4th Sess., Fifth Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 207a.

instances did not hide their sympathies for the Métis leader as well as the political agitation. The hierarchy, however, to the extent that they expressed themselves at all, were largely opposed to the agitation. It was to be expected, of course, that they would endeavor to calm passions and preserve tranquillity. But perhaps, also, their opposition to the agitation might have been an expression, conscious or otherwise, of their disinclination to see the Conservative Party driven from power.

A certain Father Piché preaching at the Lachine parish church said that Riel's execution was a triumph for the political factions of Ontario. However, in Montreal itself on the morning of the mass meeting on the Champs de Mars an outstanding Irish pastor of that city, Father Dowd, spoke against the pro-Riel agitation and the proposed National party. As reported by the Gazette Father Dowd claimed he had never spoken explicitly on things political before, but after conversing with Bishop Grandin he had become convinced of Riel's inexcusable guilt. Montreal was being stirred up by "inflammatory speeches", and "foolish journalists" as well as "deceitful politicians" were advising the formation of a National party. Prayers, however, were offered for Riel in the Basilica of Quebec City and in the presence of Archbishop Elzéar Alexandre Taschereau on November 22, 1885. But Bishop Louis Zéphirin Moreau of St. Hyacinthe refused to allow masses

to be celebrated publicly for Riel in his diocese, even though Bishop Jean Langevin of Rimouski did so. A report from Montreal was to the effect that Bishop Grandin and Archbishop Taché both of whom were said to be in that city, had opposed religious demonstrations on behalf of Riel. This was stated to be the reason why Bishop Moreau of St. Hyacinthe had forbidden public services in his diocese for that purpose.²⁴

On Sunday, November 29, Father Canoir preached at a High Mass for Riel at Notre Dame church, Hull, Quebec, that the Métis chief had died as a martyr and a Christian. This was as extreme as any clergyman would go in praise of Riel. Father Charles McWilliams of Railton, Ontario, former classmate of Riel and companion at Regina prison, wrote Prime Minister Macdonald in early December that he thoroughly distrusted those who were now ranging themselves as Riel sympathizers.

It is something ridiculous to read of the pow-wow that is being made in Quebec over the affair. I cannot give those people the slightest credit for sincerity regarding Riel. During last Summer I made several excursions to Montreal and must confess I do not believe he had one tenth the sympathizers they are now putting [sic] on. He was looked upon as a man who had brought disgrace

²⁴ News item, Herald, Mont., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 8, col. 6; news report, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 23, 1885, p. 3, col. 5; press dispatch, Herald, Mont., Nov. 24, 1885, p. 3, col. 2; news item, same, Nov. 26, 1885, p. 8, col. 4-5; press dispatch, Mail, Tor., Nov. 27, 1885, p. 5, col. 2.

upon the French people and should suffer the penalty.²⁵

In his lengthy letter reviewing the Northwest troubles Archbishop Taché also spoke of the political agitation in the East. Without explicitly saying so he cautioned against the abandonment of the Conservative party. He was aware that the Liberals were making political capital out of Riel's death.

Je n'ai besoin de repeter que j'aime mon pays, et c'est pour cela qu'en parlant d'une agitation qui ne peut pas être sans danger, je prends la respectueuse liberté de mettre mes amis eux-memes en garde contre ce qui peut leur nuire et nuire à la cause qu'ils ont épousée.²⁶

The Mandement of Archbishop Edouard Charles Fabre, the new Archbishop of Montreal, accompanying the Holy Father's Encyclical Immortale Dei, was interpreted by La Minerve as a check on the pro-Riel or pro-Liberal agitation of the moment. Religion was being made use of for political gains. La Minerve quoted several extracts. Father McWilliams expressed himself publicly as disbelieving the sincerity of the pro-Riel agitation in Quebec. "This big noise in the Province of Quebec is not sincere, it is only a sham, to make political

²⁵ McWilliams to Macdonald, Dec. 4, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 3, p. 358-359; Cf. also press dispatch, Herald, Mont., Dec. 1, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

²⁶ Correspondence, La Minerve, Mont., Dec. 12, 1885, p. 2, col. 7.

capital of."²⁷ The Mandement of the Montreal Archbishop was praised by the Herald for its condemnation of street demonstrations and effigy burning, i.e., for the extreme activities of the "Rielites". Bishop Moreau also wrote his clergy of St. Hyacinthe in a vein similar to that of Archbishop Fabre. He explained his position in regard to Masses for Riel. He regretted the agitation resulting from the execution and feared it might lead to something worse. Moreover, political opportunists were acting on principles condemned in Immortale Dei. Archbishop Taschereau of Quebec City also issued a Mandement in connection with the distribution of Immortale Dei. However, he made no such specific application as the Montreal Archbishop. He did not condemn the Riel agitation and confined himself to general terms. Still another Mandement in connection with Immortale Dei was issued by the Bishop of Nicolet, Elphege Gravel. He regretted in general terms the excitement and effigy burning and the bitterness of public discussion. However, he issued no prohibitions. But in a supplementary circular letter to his clergy the same Bishop stated that Riel had had recourse to means condemned by the Church. Moreover, it was "contrary to good order" to engage in tumultuous demonstrations and provocative mock-executions of public officials. Bishop Gravel thus in effect aligned himself with the Archbishop of Montreal. It is not impossible

27. McWilliams to one unnamed, Dec. 3, 1885, La Minerve, Mont., Dec. 30, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; cf. also, editorial, same, Dec. 28, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2.

that the silence of other Quebec Bishops and innumerable priests may be more eloquent than the pronouncements of a few, i.e., Riel may well have had sympathizers among the clergy and hierarchy who may have deemed it prudent not to speak under the circumstances.²⁸

The Person of Riel - His Mental Condition

The person of Louis Riel continued to be a rock of division after his death. Papers and politicians had to be mindful of their position and their future whenever they risked statements about him. The Quebec Chronicle refused sympathy for Riel on the day following Execution Day. He was not a martyr; he deserved his fate; the sympathy raised for him was of the "maudlin" sort. No special favors of commutation should have been shown him. In Toronto on November 18, 1885, Louis Riel was hanged in effigy on a flag-pole atop the Globe building. The news report charged it was the work of a "practical joker". Pure love and admiration for Riel were not evidenced by all French supporters of the Métis leader. They were convinced the execution had been a mistake and even a crime, but Riel himself was not a martyr nor a hero. George Duhamel, for example, at the final meeting

²⁸ Editorial, Herald, Mont., Dec. 29, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Dec. 30, 1885, p. 2, col. 3; same, Dec. 31, 1885, p. 3, col. 1-3; same, Jan. 11, 1886, p. 2, col. 1-2.

of the Riel Defense Committee on November 19, 1885, maintained "Riel was a sublime fool, and would have been soon forgotten if incarcerated in a penitentiary or lunatic asylum..."²⁹ The political winds were of course seen to be blowing in a different direction and speedy adjustments were being made to keep on the winning side. Many a politician did not want to honor Riel as a martyr or hero, but they would use the issue to sail to political victory. Desiré Girouard, Conservative M.P. for Jacques Cartier, declared on November 19, that "... there was no doubt that Riel was a lunatic..."³⁰ Hardly two weeks later this same politician declared that insufficient inquiry had been made in regard to Riel's mental condition. Furthermore, he continued, that it was unjust to execute one who had surrendered to Middleton's promise of humane treatment. The jury had recommended mercy. Riel wanted money in order to begin a newspaper. The United States had not executed Sitting Bull for the Custer massacre; and Chapleau had already contended in the Quebec Assembly in 1875 that the execution of Thomas Scott was a legal act. Finally, Girouard insisted that by having recourse to arms, Riel and the Métis had not been guilty of treason against the

²⁹ Quoted in news account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 20, 1885, p. 5, col. 3; cf. also press dispatch, same, Nov. 18, 1885, p. 5, col. 2; press dispatch, same, Nov. 19, 1885, p. 5, col. 4.

³⁰ Quoted in news account, same, Nov. 20, 1885, p. 5, col. 2.

Crown but only of an attempt to compel the Canadian Government to grant better terms.³¹

The Toronto Mail, of course, could hardly have been expected to defend the Métis chief. He was far more than just a political offender. He had imprisoned, killed and destroyed when he was unsuccessful in extorting ransom for the lives of settlers. The jury did not regard him as insane. If Riel had been spared no other disturber of the peace could be put to death in Canada. The Mail repeatedly insisted that by the pro-Riel agitation, i.e., punishing the Ministers by voting them out of office, the French were seeking to overthrow the constitution! The person and accomplishments of Riel were condemned by the Montreal La Minerve, also. He would ordinarily have been forgotten; but because he had been made an object of vengeance, he would be remembered. "L'exécution de Louis Riel restera dans notre histoire comme une page noircie par une tache sinistre."³² How far La Minerve receded from its position of mid-November, 1885, in regard to Riel can be seen by mid-January of 1886. By this latter date it had become altogether anti-Riel in its post execution efforts to preserve the integrity of the Conservative Party in Quebec. Riel had been guilty, it charged,

31 Herald, Mont., Dec. 9, 1885, p. 3, col. 1-2.

32 Editorial, Nov. 18, 1885, p. 2, col. 1; Cf. also, editorial, Mail, Tor., Nov. 30, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3.

of placing obstacles in the way of such French leaders in the Northwest as Roayl, Lariviere, Girard, and Dubuc so that he himself might be the leader of the French there.³³

The mental state of the executed Métis leader continued to be disputed by sympathizers and opponents. It was a constantly recurring topic throughout the agitation. On Execution Day itself Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney was still confident of Riel's sanity. Writing to Macdonald about Riel's will he says: "It is not the will of an insane man by any means."³⁴ Doctor Daniel Clark, Superintendent of the Toronto Asylum, who had testified to Riel's insanity at the trial, declared again at great length his conviction that Louis Riel was insane, *megomania*. Moreover, he thought he had always been unbalanced, more or less. He was not malingering. Had Riel been an obscure person he would not have been executed. He was sacrificed, the doctor thought, to allay vindictive feeling.³⁵ J. Israel Tarte of Quebec City had no doubt of Riel's insanity. Writing to the editor of the Toronto Mail, November 26, 1885, he stated this emphatically and based it on personal acquaintanceship with the Métis

³³ Editorial, Jan. 19, 1886, p. 2, col. 2-3.

³⁴ Dewdney to Macdonald, Nov. 16, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 4, p. 546 (underlining in the original).

³⁵ News interview, Globe, Tor., Nov. 18, 1885, p. 8, col. 1-2.

leader.

I have known Riel well when he was locked up in our lunatic asylum and I give you my word of honor that he was then completely demented. He was not an idiot, quite the contrary. He spoke with an eloquence that many could envy. He wrote both prose and verses. He wrote Latin and Greek, but he was mad, mad of the folly of honors and of religious reforms. I have seen him in telegraphic communication with Napoleon the Third, with Bismarck and Pius the Ninth. I have seen him answering to imaginary despatches and ringing, with the greatest conviction, for messengers who naturally existed only in his imagination, etc.³⁶

Riel seems to have asserted that his defection from the Church was but a tactical manoeuvre. This he told Doctor M. Lavell who he thought was a newspaperman. Riel was quoted as follows according to the recollections of the Doctor:

'I am a Roman Catholic and always was one'. 'No', said Dr. Lavell, 'you are not, you abandoned them.' 'Oh,' Riel replied, 'I had an object in view.'³⁷

Doctor Lavell's judgment was that Riel was sane. However, the opinion of Doctor Clark was well substantiated by an excellent legal analysis about insane criminals by a letter writer who signed himself "Lex". He maintained that the criterion for judging Riel's sanity ought not to have been his ability or inability to distinguish right from wrong but rather his possession or non-possession of self-control. Joseph A. Chapleau was convinced at the time of the hanging

³⁶ Tarte to editor of Toronto Mail, reprinted in Gazette, Montreal, Nov. 28, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2.

³⁷ Correspondence, Globe, Tor., Mar. 12, 1886, p. 1, col. 6.

that the Métis chief was altogether of sane mind. He produced a letter of F. X. Perrault M.D., who was attending physician of Longe Pointe Asylum when Riel was confined there.

I, the undersigned physician of the Asylum of St. Jean de Dieu, certify that a few days after the entrance of Louis Riel into this asylum I perceived that with him insanity was simulated. The exaggeration of his acts was such and so much beyond what we generally remark in subjects affected with real insanity that with a physician accustomed to treat such cases there would be no room for doubt. Upon making the observation to him that I was not to be taken for his dupe, he confessed to me in effect that he was shamming the insanity. And the evidence that I was right in my surmise and that his confession was really sincere is that on all occasions, and there were many, I have been alone conversing with him, he has always talked in a manner absolutely lucid and sane upon all and every subject with which he has entertained me.³⁸

Thus no common agreement was reached throughout the controversy about Riel's mental condition.³⁹

Chapleau's Ordeal

Opposing the popular current as he did Secretary of State Chapleau received both abuse and credit. He had gone to Europe for his health and had returned to work at Ottawa on October 15, 1885, only a month before the hanging. Thus he could be expected to be somewhat out of touch with popular sentiment and reaction with regard to Riel. The citizens

³⁸ Translated in Commons by Chapleau, Mar. 24, 1885, Commons Debates, 4th Sess., Fifth Parl., 1886, Vol. 1., p.353b.

³⁹ Correspondence, Globe, Tor., Mar. 16, 1886, p.4, col. 4-5.

of St. Jerome wrote a moderate letter to him wishing to hear his side of the charge against him of condoning the execution. They had hoped he would not leave the Ministry on account of the question because that had been surrounded by too much passion and prejudice. If he were to leave let it be over some other greater issue. They did not want a war of races and urged him not to found his popularity on national and religious hatreds. They would not condemn him without hearing his explanation. Chapleau replied gratefully and cautiously. He hoped that a temporary storm would not cause his constituents to have done with him after eighteen years of service.⁴⁰ The Secretary of State next sent a letter to his constituents telling why he stayed with Macdonald. He did not want to see his race isolated and reprisals provoked. "I felt that there was more courage in stemming the current than in allowing myself to be carried away by it..."⁴¹ He bolstered his argument by making use of clergy condemnations of Riel and pointed out the necessity of taking into consideration the protection of white settlers in the Northwest. His own resignation and even that of all the French ministers

⁴⁰ Dominion Annual Register, 1885, p. 391b; news account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 28, 1885, p. 5, col. 4; also Chapleau to St. Jerome citizens, Nov. 27, 1885, reprinted in same, Nov. 30, 1885, p. 5, col. 1.

⁴¹ This letter was published later under the title: The Riel Question; p. 4-5.

would not have prevented the death of Riel anyway, and Quebec would have been deprived of representation in the Cabinet.⁴²

During the latter part of November and early part of December, 1885, La Minerve defended Chapleau almost daily.

Chapleau's and Langevin's resignations, it argued, would only have added fuel to the fire. No other Canadiens would have replaced them, and then Quebec would have been left a prey to an all-English Cabinet.

Despite the favorable account accorded Chapleau by the Gazette in connection with his constituents' worries the Herald gave a different view. It reported a meeting of 1500 electors at Saint Jerome's Terrebonne, whereat the Secretary of State was publicly repudiated and condemned. This meeting Chapleau declined to attend. Furthermore the Herald asserted that French Conservative had been assured that Riel would not hang. Yet Chapleau and the other Ministers voted in Cabinet unanimity that he should hang. This, said the Herald, Chapleau had not explained. The Secretary of State was still acting on "stern principle" in January, 1886, at another meeting at Saint Jerome particularly. He still stigmatized Riel as a traitor to his race and still defended the Government. By this time the Herald was admiring him without agreeing with him, however. Siring its thought by its wish the Gazette on the same occasion was sure that Chapleau had triumphantly recovered his favor with his

⁴² Same p. 12-14.

constituents.

The occasion was[...a]memorable one, marking as it does the death-knell of the party which has sought to erect a political platform upon the Regina scaffold...⁴³

Chapleau himself had said on this occasion that the pro-Riel agitation in Quebec would lead to the abuse of French minorities in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, even though these minorities were saying nothing in favor of Riel. Thus Chapleau would seem to want to prevent friction between the provinces for the benefit of Quebec. He concluded an excellent Commons speech by the following statement of his position in regard to Riel on March 24, 1886:

I have not changed my mind to suit men and circumstances; I have relied upon the reward given to men who do not flinch before the cries of the multitude, and who do not seek their political fortune in the success of the moment. I have walked straight before me in what I have thought was the right path as a citizen of Canada. I have followed that conduct. I have not been biassed, and in the whole of what I have done, in the whole of what I have said through that painful crisis, I trust I have not lost the sympathies of my friends, the respect of my enemies, nor the confidence of the country.⁴⁴

Reaction of the Irish

Again as before the execution an effort was made to enlist the support of the Irish for the pro-Riel agitation.

⁴³ Editorial, Gazette, Mont., Jan.21,1886, p.4,col.1.

⁴⁴ Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol.1, p.358a; cf. also news item, Herald, Mont., Dec.2, 1885, p.8, col.4-6; editorial, same, Dec.3, 1885, p.4, col.2; same, Jan.22, 1886, p.4, col.2; editorial, Gazette, Mont., Jan.21, 1886, p.4, col.1; and news report, same, p.5, col.2-4.

The chief agent of this effort seems to have been H. J. Cloran, editor of the Montreal Post. However there were two influential counter-agents at work also: Father Dowd, prominent Irish pastor of Montreal, and John Joseph Curran, Conservative M.P. for Montreal Centre. Two days after the hanging a certain Francis A. Quinn was publicly expressing the sympathy of Montreal's Irish Catholics. "The Irish had met in battle the very same enemy that confronted the French..."⁴⁵ In its joy following the Champs de Mars meeting of Sunday, November 22 Le Monde overstated the case for an Irish-French rapprochement.

De toute part, dans la province de Quebec, dans Ontario, et des provinces maritimes, des Etats-Unis même, les Irlandais ont déclaré adhérer à notre cause. Au fond, ce sont nos seuls véritables amis.⁴⁶

A telegram from New York City Irish was read at the above mentioned meeting, and it was deprecated by the Herald as unsuitable for a Canadian audience. Father Dowd's sermon on the morning of this meeting warned the Irish against participation in the agitation. His sermon pleased Curran so much that he forwarded a newspaper reprint of it to the Prime Minister and succeeded in urging the latter to send a personal

⁴⁵ Quoted in news account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 20, 1885, p. 5, col. 1.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Polémiques et Documents Touchant le Nord-Ouest et l'Exécution de Louis Riel, Montreal, 1886, p. 127a.

note of thanks to the pastor. Among other things Father Dowd said:

The Irish Catholics must keep aloof from such folly. They were living at peace with their neighbors of all creeds, they had no interest in this movement...The foolish, rash men who advised them to join this National party would have them sacrifice everything in a moment of impulsiveness.⁴⁷

Curran himself felt obliged to state his position in a letter to the Catholic Record of London. He would not be drawn into the pro-Riel frenzy and censured the Record for sympathy shown to Riel. Editor Cloran, on the other hand, warmly sympathized with Quebec in his address to Chapleau's constituents at Saint Jerome on January 20, 1886. However, he was immediately answered at the same meeting by John Joseph Curran who insisted that the Editor was not in a position to speak for all Irish. Again it was Curran in Commons who blasted James David Edgar (Ontario West, Ontario) and Wilfred Laurier (Quebec East, Quebec) for their part in the pro-Riel agitation. The attempt to get the Irish to participate, he said, would have produced religious as well as race war. According to the Gazette in its analysis of the voting on the Landry Resolution censuring the Government for the hanging of Riel there were no Irish Catholics on the Liberal side. Supporting the Government by voting against the Landry

⁴⁷ News report, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 23, 1885, p. 3, col. 5. Cf. also Macdonald to Dowd, Dec. 8, 1885, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 472-476.

Resolution were eight Irish.⁴⁸ In his letter to Prime Minister Macdonald of August, 1886, Henry J. Clarke, the Northwest lawyer, claimed he was in possession of enough information about W. B. O'Donoghue, Riel's Treasurer in his Provisional Government at Red River (1869-1870), to be able to cut the ground from under any Irish-French rapprochement for the benefit of Liberals. He claimed he had a document dictated by O'Donoghue at Saint Paul, Minnesota, wherein the latter complained of the treatment accorded him by the French Métis, particularly after his refusal to testify against Thomas Scott at the latter's court martial. The desired alliance of Irish and French during the political upheaval following Riel's execution could hardly be called a success.⁴⁹

Orange Influence

The first reaction of Quebec to the hanging was that Orange influence was responsible. Since the Orange lodges were greatly spread throughout Ontario, this charge tended to provoke friction between the two provinces. The rejoinder

⁴⁸ Editorial, Herald, Mont., Nov. 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 3; cf. also correspondence, Gazette, Mont., Dec. 4, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2; editorial, La Minerve, Mont., Dec. 26, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2; news report, Gazette, Mont., Jan. 21, 1886, p. 5, col. 5-6; Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 125b-134a; editorial, Gazette, Mont., Mar. 27, 1886, p. 4, col. 2.

⁴⁹ Clarke to Macdonald, Aug. 30, 1886, Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 7, p. 33-34.

of the Conservatives was that the Orange lodges held in fact very little influence and that only a few of the very many took a stand on the Riel matter. "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; we will all vote for thee for evermore!" was the message from several Orange lodges.⁵⁰ That Orangemen were glad of the execution can be seen from the following resolution of Lodge No. 1222.

That we the members of Boyne L.O.L. No. 1222, here assembled, desire to express our satisfaction that the law has been permitted to take its course in the case of Louis Riel, the leader of the North-West rebellion, who, on Monday, the 16th November, paid the penalty of his many crimes, and who was responsible for the loss of many valuable lives, among whom were two members of our noble order.⁵¹

Orange Lodge No. 710 of Clinton, Ontario officially expressed its satisfaction over the hanging at the end of December, 1885. Moreover it sympathized with the Prime Minister for the trouble in Quebec and pledged its support. Speeches at Quebec City on the day following the execution condemned both that event and Orangism. At Montreal Girouard declared

⁵⁰ Such was the common belief among the French. It is possibly the message that was sent by a certain D. McLean of Belleville, Ont., who was probably believed to be a spokesman of the Orange lodges. His message was, as contained in the Macdonald Papers, as follows: Well done good and faithful servant. With you for evermore. -- McLean to Macdonald, Nov. 16, 1885, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 427. For the charge of Orange origin for this message see Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 118a.

⁵¹ Same.

"Riel was not executed to please the Protestants, for they were indifferent about the matter, but only a small section of them - the Orangemen... He [Girouard] denounced the Orange Order as an illegal organization."⁵² At the Montreal Champs de Mars meeting of November 22, 1885, a certain Doctor Marcil of St. Eustache also pointed to Orange influence as the root cause as Macdonald's lack of mercy. "Riel was not sacrificed for the cause of justice but to satisfy the vengeance of a fanatical sect of Orangemen."⁵³ During the course of the debate on the Landry resolution the Montreal Gazette maintained on the strength of Chapleau's remarks in Commons that Orangemen really had no effective influence as regards Macdonald's decision to allow Riel to hang. "One Orange Lodge out of two thousand in the Dominion moved in the matter ..."⁵⁴

La Minerve swung from its charge of Orange influence on the Ministry on Execution Day to an absolution from the same charge in early January. Actually said La Minerve,

⁵² News account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 20, 1885, p. 5, col. 2; press dispatch, same, Nov. 18, 1885, p. 5, col. 1-2; Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 494-495.

⁵³ Quoted in news account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 23, 1885, p. 5, col. 3.

⁵⁴ Editorial, Mar. 19, 1886, p. 4, col. 1.

Orangemen were no worse religiously than Protestants in general.⁵⁵

The part played by Orangemen in securing Riel's execution was de-emphasized by the Toronto Mail. They had conducted themselves in a wholly creditable manner. However, the Mail admitted that a certain group of Orangemen were bloodthirsty.

The only notable exceptions were the Reform Orangemen grandmastered by Mr. Richard Reynolds of Yonge Street, who constitute the so called Loyal Orange Brotherhood, a new and distinct organization whose mission appears to be the maintenance of Protestant Institutions in so far as they may be compatible with the welfare of the reform party. They clamoured that Riel should be executed, for they believed with the Globe that his sentence was about to be commuted...⁵⁶

The Toronto Globe reported a crowd of 15,000 Bleus and Rouges condemning the Government and Orangeism on the night following the hanging. This Quebec City meeting resolved "... that Orangeism is the most dangerous enemy of British institutions[...], that the conduct of Sir John Macdonald in yielding to Orangeism[...], has rendered himself unworthy to preside over the Government of this country..."⁵⁷ On the Monday following the Champs de Mars meeting the Globe made

⁵⁵ Editorial, Nov. 16, 1885, p. 2, col: 1-2; same, Jan. 9, 1886, p. 2, col: 1.

⁵⁶ Editorial, Nov. 30, 1885, p. 4, col. 4.

⁵⁷ Press dispatch, Globe, Tor., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 2, col. 4.

light of the attempt of Orangemen to withdraw from their responsibility in effecting Riel's hanging. The activities of Ontario Orangemen had convinced Quebec that the Métis chief was hanged for the death of Scott in 1870, "to glut their vengeance". After the execution Orangemen blandly asked French Canadians to calm down and forget about it. They wished, of course, for a continuation of Conservative rule which was seriously threatened by defections in Quebec.⁵⁸

In the House of Commons Guillaume Amyot (Bellechasse, Quebec) declared on March 11, 1886, that Riel was hanged by the Ministry because some Orangemen made it the condition of their political support. This was the common Quebec belief. Nathaniel C. Wallace, (West York, Ontario) argued that only a fraction of Orangemen took anti-Riel steps with the Government. John Charles Rykert (Lincoln and Liagara, Ontario) maintained that ten Orange lodges only expressed an opinion on Riel's hanging, and that eight of the ten were Grit lodges. Despite these denials, Philippe Baby Casgrain (L'Islet, Quebec) reasserted the widespread Quebec belief that Riel was a victim of Orange vengeance for the death of Thomas Scott.

In Quebec there is a fixed idea that if it had not been for the former murder of Scott, Riel would never have lost his life on the scaffold, and it will take a long time to cause that opinion to disappear.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Editorial, Nov. 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3.

⁵⁹ Commons Debates, 4th Sess., Fifth Parl., 1886, Vol.1, p. 308a; Cf. also, same, p.86b; p.100b; and p.166a.

The more the charges against the Orange society continued the more the likelihood of friction between Quebec and Ontario.

Execution Reactions

Friction between the two provinces was also revealed in the immediate reactions to the hanging at Regina. Prime Minister Macdonald himself was confident that the storm in Quebec would be nothing but a squall. "The French Canadians are greatly excited and their Parliamentary representatives threaten all kinds of vengeance, but I dare say that will pass off on sober second thought."⁶⁰ Whether to escape the effects of the pro-Riel agitation or not, the fact is that Macdonald did sail for Europe (England) on the Polynesian from Rimouski less than a week after the estimate given to Dewdney, i.e., November 22, 1885. Colonial Secretary Frederick Stanley reacted to the hanging with no excitement nor unusual interest. This was in contrast to the pre-hanging interest manifested by his office. In March of the year following the Opposition press reported another Macdonald reaction to the hanging. According to the London Advertiser, referring to the Manitoba Free Press as its authority, the Prime Minister's son Hugh J. Macdonald asserted that his father had declared "that if the French of Quebec make any

⁶⁰ Macdonald to Dewdney, Nov. 16, 1885, Letterbooks, Vol. 23, p. 361.

disturbance about the execution of Riel, the Volunteers who quelled the insurrection in the Northwest could also maintain the law in Quebec." The Prime Minister was said to have rebuked his son by telegram for having been so indiscret.⁶¹

An anonymous correspondent congratulated Macdonald for allowing Riel to be hanged. "The Grits around here have been saying that the French had you fast[...], long live Sir John. God Save the Queen."⁶² From Toronto on Execution Day John N. Beatty wired Macdonald. "My hand is sore shaking with your friends. Even Grits say the old man is a brick." F. W. Husband wrote from Montreal on the same day. "Your Government has nothing to fear or feel anxious about, all old friends will rally round you and many others will join your standard who never did before." From Scotstown, Quebec came a telegram signed "No Rebels". "Good for you. May you live for ever." H. N. Whitcomb, a Liberal of Shefford Mountain, Quebec, declared on November 18 that the Eastern townships were behind Macdonald as a result of the execution, even Liberals. Reverend Archibald McMurchy of Toronto was

⁶¹ Dominion Annual Register, 1885, p. 397b; Stanley to Lansdowne, Dec. 14, 1885, Colonial Secretary (Secret and Confidential) 1885, G 3, Vol. 19; Globe, Tor., Mar. 16, 1886, p. 4, col. 5.

⁶² Anonymous to Macdonald, n.d., Macdonald Papers, "Northwest Rebellion, 1885", Vol. 5, p. 10.

happy about the execution. "I know there would have been the deepest dissatisfaction amongst Highland Presbyterians, if there had happened to be any thwarting of justice." David Wilson of Chatham, Ontario wired his satisfaction on November 19. "The eyes of the Dominion was [sic] upon you. You proved our best friend in our greatest emergency." The council of Simcoe County, Ontario, undertook to congratulate Macdonald for upholding Riel's sentence, and also to sympathize with him for criticism he was then receiving from certain quarters.⁶³

Opposite sentiment was also expressed toward the Prime Minister. From Sorel, Quebec, came a threat on Execution Day from C. Mongeon: "Riel has been hanged. Note the injustice done to the french Canadians of Quebec. Look out!" Le Club de Raquettes Le Trappeur scratched Macdonald's name from its honorary list.⁶⁴

First reactions to the execution in various cities were reported by the newspapers. Execution Day in Toronto

⁶³ Beatty to Macdonald, Nov. 16, 1885, same, p. 420; Husband to Macdonald, Nov. 16, 1885, same, p. 423 (underlining in original); "No Rebels" to Macdonald, Nov. 17, 1885, same, p. 433; Cf. Whitcomb to Macdonald, Nov. 18, 1885, same, p. 455; McMurchy to Macdonald, Nov. 19, 1885, same, p. 457-458; Wilson to Macdonald, Nov. 19, 1885, same, p. 460; Cf. resolution of Simcoe County Council, Nov. 21, 1885, same, p. 488

⁶⁴ Mongeon to Macdonald, Nov. 16, 1885, same, p. 417; Cf. also A. Noel to Macdonald, Nov. 17, 1885, same, p. 444.

was enjoyed with interest and satisfaction. The great worry was that there might be another stay of execution. Once that was certain the streets were filled with newspaper reading public. "... no feeling of pity or regret could be heard expressed at his [Riel's] fate." Long standing Conservatives had threatened never to vote Conservative again should the sentence be commuted. The patriotism and devotion to duty of many of the volunteers who had served in the Saskatchewan Rising was shown by their threats to quit the service should Riel be reprieved.

Amongst the volunteers who took part in the suppression of the rebellion, feeling ran very high, and it was well known that many of them had made up their minds to quit the service if Riel were not hanged.⁶⁵

The Toronto Mail reported that first reactions in that city to news of the execution were restrained. Many were surprised that Riel had died bravely for they had been told his conduct on the battlefield was otherwise. The reaction at Yamachiche, County St. Maurice, Quebec, was the hanging of Macdonald in effigy on the evening of Execution Day, the charge being political deceit. The Montreal Herald reacted to the execution by continuing to maintain that the Government did not indict Riel for the proper charge in the first place. It wanted to fix against the Ministry the odium of having provided a loophole for itself. If Riel had been indicted for

⁶⁵ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 1, col. 6.

murder, it would have been an open and shut case: if convicted he would have to be hanged no matter who objected, if acquitted he would have to be released in the same way. In short, it could not then have become a political issue. But said the Herald, the Ministry wanted it to be a political issue so that the members thereof would be able, they hoped, to sail with the winning political current. If convicted of treason and popular feeling were opposed to the execution, the Ministry could say that death was no longer imposed for such offenses. If popular feeling demanded the death of Riel, then the Ministry could go ahead with it by saying that he had instigated to murder and had Scott killed in 1870.

The Government dallied with the case; it allowed full time for the passions and intrigues of contending factions to get full play; it balanced the party advantages and disadvantages pro and con; it decided that it was a more serious matter to quarrel with Ontario than Quebec; and, for the sake of some seats in Ontario it hung Riel. This is the long and short of the disgraceful story, and all attempts to put any other face on the business must be failures.⁶⁶

Reactions in the city of Montreal were not slow in coming. Alderman Robert declared at a meeting of the city council on Execution Day that the protest movement on the part of Quebec had started too late. The same speaker called for an

⁶⁶ Editorial, Herald, Mont., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; Cf. also, same, col. 1; news item, Mail, Tor., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 1, col. 6; news item, Herald, Mont., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 1, col. 7.

end to different political parties in Quebec. The council voted nineteen to four to adjourn in protest against the Ministry's action. An open air meeting, apparently impromptu, immediately followed. Many council members spoke as well as M.P.'s and Liberal leader Honore' Mercier. The National Party was spoken of, all other parties in Quebec to be dissolved. Never again should Macdonald receive the support of Quebec. The same evening a crowd of 10,000, mostly students, made speeches, marched, and burned effigies of Macdonald, Langevin, Caron, and Chapleau. Alphonse Desjardins, M.P. declared: "...I fear that the day's tragedy will do more to foster race and national prejudices than any other event which has occurred in my memory."⁶⁷ J. G. H. Bergeron, M.P. gave it as his opinion that "It was not Riel that was struck at, but the whole French Canadian nationality. Henceforward all distinctions between Rouge and Bleu and Castor would disappear..."⁶⁸ Le Monde, La Presse, and La Patrie, ran the tricolor at half-mast. L'Etendard did the same with the fleur de lis. The City Hall flag was also placed at half-mast. Riel was extolled, and the "hangers" denounced.⁶⁹ In Ottawa 500 French Canadians

⁶⁷ Quoted in news item, Herald, Mont., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 8, col. 6; cf. also same, col. 2-5.

⁶⁸ Quoted in news account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 17, 1885, p. 5, col. 2.

⁶⁹ Same, col. 1-4.

burnt effigies of Macdonald, Mackintosh, and Tassé; the last two were local members of Parliament. Many homes had flags at half-mast. In Quebec City flags were trimmed in mourning; men wore crepe on hats and arms. Hundreds of marchers chanted: "Glory to Riel" and damned the Orangemen. The flag of the Saint John Baptiste Society was ordered draped in mourning and flown at half-mast for eight days. French in Saint John's suburbs closed homes and businesses to attend solemn requiem Mass for Riel. The Liberal L'Electeur appeared draped in black. Overwhelming attention was given to the Riel case, and French Canadians were warned not to forget the martyr "who was murdered for the French cause".⁷⁰ By November 24 the reaction of Toronto to the execution was one of calm, for the Queen City was satisfied that punishment had at last been exacted for the death of Scott. The Montreal Gazette by November 26 saw fit to print something in praise of Riel. It quoted the tribute by the Regina Leader to Riel's manner of dying.

Riel met his fate on Monday in a manner not unworthy of a man who had aspired to play a great part in the world. He was calm, resigned, grave, passionless, forgiving, and as the great dramatist said of a greater man, the way he left the world became him better than anything he did in it.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Press dispatches, same, Nov. 17, 1885, p. 1, col. 5-6.

⁷¹ Quoted in Gazette, Mont., Nov. 26, 1885, p. 8, col. 2; cf. also correspondence, Herald, Mont., Nov. 26, 1885, p. 3, col. 2.

The delayed reaction of the Toronto Globe of November 28 was that the Government had hoped to cover all its faults, misgovernment, and blunders by throwing Riel's corpse before Ontario voters, thereby implying that Ontario taxpayers could be satisfied only with a rebel's blood.⁷²

Very early in the agitation we can perceive the work of those who were seeking to promote a political upheaval in Quebec itself. Their efforts are not to foster friction with Ontario necessarily but rather to oust the Conservative French Cabinet members especially. L. O. David of Montreal, President of the Riel Defense Committee, was a leader in this work. Within three days of the execution he declared at an open-air Champs de Mars meeting that not Ontario fanatics but traitorous Quebec Cabinet members caused the hanging of Riel. This influence worked within the agitation, turned it away from the vehement opposition to Ontario thereby reducing friction, but all the while helping on its own purpose, a turnover within the internal politics of Quebec itself.⁷³

Pro-Riel Meetings

Throughout the French province the excitement spread. Public meetings, town councils, subscriptions for Masses for

⁷² Editorial, same, p. 8, col. 3.

⁷³ News item, Herald, Mont., Nov. 20, 1885, p. 8, col. 5.

Riel's soul, all formed part of the reaction of the first few days following execution. The public meeting at Saint Hugues, Bagot County, was sure that Riel died "because he belonged to the Catholic religion, and because he was a French Canadian". It protested against our "fanatical enemies of Ontario". The Hull meeting condemned the French Cabinet members. The town councils of Saint Henri and Saint Sauveur adjourned in protest. Quebec City Liberals brought religion to their assistance in their protest. They thought Riel's execution was "an insult and humiliation to the Roman Catholics of Canada". Parading and inflammatory speeches took place on two successive nights at Saint John's, Quebec. Again on November 19 at Montreal H. C. Saint Pierre accused the Conservative member for Jacques Cartier, Desiré Girouard, with but very recent and suspicious devotion to the Riel cause. Such men as he were "now sneaking around to get into the National Party". Another speaker, Poirier by name, said that Riel was hanged for the murder of Scott, the Orangeman. The Pointe Claire City Hall flag flew at half-mast. Subscriptions for Masses for Riel were taken up in Riviere du Loup, Saint Guillaume, Saint Martin, and Saint Bridget. At Sherbrooke Orangemen.

prevented a burning of Macdonald in effigy.⁷⁴

The Toronto Mail endeavored to de-emphasize the first pro-Riel public meetings. They were said to be the work of boys. Essex County, Ontario, French were urged to remain quiet because English in Ontario were not roused. An attempted pro-Riel protest meeting on November 21 in Alexandria, Ontario, according to the Gazette, boomeranged into approval of the Ministry.⁷⁵

Strategy of the Liberals

In order to make clear the difference between the political agitation as such and the friction between the provinces, it is necessary to understand the basic strategy of the Liberal (Rouge) Party in Quebec especially. The Liberals would not allow a golden opportunity to pass. Support must be withdrawn from the Conservative Party. An open and blatant appeal to come over to the Rouges would surely not succeed. Therefore an intermediary step was called for.

⁷⁴ News account, Mail, Tor., Nov. 27, 1885, p. 5, col. 3; press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 19, 1885, p. 5, col. 3; news account, same, p. 5, col. 3; press dispatch, same; news account, same, Nov. 20, 1885, p. 5, col. 2-3; news item, same, col. 3; press dispatch, same, p. 5, col. 3.

⁷⁵ Press dispatch, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 24, 1885, p. 8, col. 2; correspondence, Mail, Tor., Nov. 18, 1885, p. 1, col. 4; same Nov. 19, 1885, p. 1, col. 6; editorial, same, Dec. 1, 1885, p. 4, col. 3.

Such a step was the attempted formation of the Parti National. It was but a byproduct of the excitement. Sober second thought made it evident that Quebec would be isolated by such a party, because all English would be united against it. Therefore the end result was the reception in the Liberal ranks of the majority of those who had attempted to form the Parti National. It brought the Liberal Party to national victory in 1887.

Friction with the province of Ontario was fostered in Quebec by the Rouges only to the extent that it would help them to defeat the Bleus. Thus the agitation changed from an anti-English and anti-Ontario movement to an anti-Bleu movement.

Joseph Aldéric Ouimet sensed the Liberal strategy also.

I prefer to wait in order to judge of the intentions and motives of those who appear up to this moment to have had control of this movement. The members of this National party were all wishing to be chiefs, and none privates, and they run about the country creating an agitation for the profit of their party, which will not last long. It threatens for the future dangers more considerable than those we wish to avoid.⁷⁶

La Minerve was more outspoken. Riel, it said, had had hypocritical defenders: liberals who wanted nothing more than his death to vault them into office. The pro-Ministry

⁷⁶ Quoted in news account, Mail, Tor., Nov. 27, 1885, p. 5, col. 4.

Gazette had discerned Liberal strategy too.

The origin of the Riel agitation is not far to seek. It was a foregone conclusion since the closing days of March that, whatever way the revolt ended or whatever fate was in store for its promoter, both one and the other should be made a weapon of offense against the Government.⁷⁷

For an ultimate country-wide Liberal victory Ontario must not be antagonized. Therefore the Liberal organs in the latter province had to control and suppress if possible any anti-French reaction to the intermediate Parti National. This the Toronto Globe endeavored to do in early December.

To refuse sympathy to our fellow countrymen in Quebec; to hold that because they wish to punish the Government we will maintain it, would be an almost incredible instance of narrow minded race prejudice and bigotry.⁷⁸

At the same time it urged the French not to overlook the advantages of joining with the Ontario Grits.

Chapleau spoke of basic Liberal strategy in Commons during debate on the Landry Resolution. He maintained that the Liberals were not interested in saving Riel's life but rather in using his hanging as a means to overthrow the Conservatives. Fantastic reporting of the trial filled the French language press. As soon as the Liberals heard that

⁷⁷ Editorial, Dec. 1, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; cf. also editorials, La Minerve, Mont., Nov. 28, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2; same, Dec. 19, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; Mar. 25, 1886, p. 4, col. 2-3.

⁷⁸ Editorial, Dec. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; cf. also same, Dec. 5, 1885, p. 6, col. 1.

the Ministry was not arranging for the Imperial authorities to grant a commutation and that they intended to allow the hanging, they (Liberals) were glad. L. O. David was the originator and instigator of the agitation.⁷⁹

Embattled Conservatives

Embattled Conservatives had to contend with the Liberal assault. Gazette, Mail, and La Minerve worked mightily to this end. The Gazette found it could not ignore the agitation and called the proposed National Party a Liberal trick. It re-published Girouard's mid-August Lachine speech which was very anti-Riel and which would be embarrassing in November to the M.P. for Jacques Cartier; it also quoted the Bishop of Arichet to the effect that the agitation was "uncalled for and mischievous". To the Opposition the Gazette threw the charge of stirring up race hatred. "...they appeal merely to passion and prejudice and the pride of race. Everyone who does not see eye to eye with them is termed an Orangeman..."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Commons Debates, 4th Sess., 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 344b-345a.

⁸⁰ Editorial, Dec. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; cf. also same, col. 3; same, Dec. 4, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; same, Nov. 17, 1885, p. 4, col. 1; same, Nov. 24, 1885, p. 4, col. 1-2; news account, same, Nov. 26, 1885, p. 2, col. 3-4; same, p. 5, col. 3.

La Minerve also did its part to save the Conservatives from defeat. It defended Langevin and Chapleau. It tried to pacify those who had been aroused. It printed and re-printed letters from priests, brothers, and sisters condemning Riel. Moreover, it hammered on the theme that English language Liberals were glad of Riel's death, and so there could be no agreement with them which would give Quebec political power. It interpreted Archbishop Taché's letter in a light favorable to the Conservatives. The anti-Dewdney remarks of the Herald it balanced by asserting that the Lieutenant Governor's critics on the Northwest Council were themselves disappointed speculators. "Blake, it charged, could not now champion Riel. He was the one who had offered \$5000 for his capture in 1872. Blake had tried at one time to climb to power over the body of Thomas Scott; now he was trying to do so over the body of Louis Riel." The anti-French tactics of the Conservative Toronto Mail were embarrassing for La Minerve, but the latter was certain that it did not speak for the English language leaders of the Conservative Party.⁸¹

⁸¹ Editorials, Dec. 9, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-6; same, Dec. 14, 1885, p. 2, col. 1-2; same Dec. 15, 1885, p. 2, col. 2,3; Nov. 24, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; same, Nov. 26, 1885, p. 2, col. 1; same, Dec. 15, 1885, p. 2, col. 1; same, Dec. 18, 1885, p. 2, col. 2; same, Dec. 26, 1885, p. 2, col. 3.

The Toronto Mail was obliged to take up the cudgels in defense of the Conservative Party also. In doing so it became the instrument of friction with Quebec. As has been said the Globe took on the role of pacifier. Not so the Mail. It lashed out against the French as such. Thus for a study of friction between Ontario and Quebec at this period it is to the Mail we must look rather than to the Globe. In short the Mail played in 1885 the role played by the Globe in 1870.

If the French agitation were successful, said the Mail, the new regime would be pledged to exempt French language citizens from the adverse operation of the law, i.e., to set one province above the constitution. The people of Ontario had not sought blood, but they had sought to prevent "the organized attempt to brow-beat justice". Ontario would not permit an imperium in imperio, said the Mail.

Yet after all our efforts to establish amicable relations with them [Canadiens], even at the sacrifice of prosperity, the French-Canadians are now seeking to compel us to recognize their right to suspend the operation of the law whenever a representative of their race is in the toils. But let us solemnly assure them that, rather than submit to such a yoke, Ontario would smash Confederation into the original fragments, preferring that the dream of a united Canada should be shattered forever, than that unity should be purchased at the expense of equality.⁸²

⁸² Editorial, Nov. 23, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

Quebec, cannot succeed in this audacious attempt to plant a dictatorship[.] provided we stand together[.] determined[.] to submit to no trick for imposing the tyranny of a French minority upon a country consecrated by British blood to British freedom.⁸³

In a second editorial of the same issue the Mail endeavored to show the unreasonableness of the French position.

...the French-Canadians have for the time being become possessed of the idea that the punishment of this arch rebel [Riel] was an outrage upon them because inflicted in spite of their desire that he should be spared, not as one specially deserving of mercy, but simply because he was a representative of their race.⁸⁴

The Main continued its anti-Quebec assault on November 25.

The French want, not equality, but special privileges for themselves. One passage of that day's editorial was very noteworthy, for it revealed that the Mail was willing to resort to force should the Conservatives be turned out by the action of the French especially.

But if the overthrow of the present Cabinet is to be followed by the planting of French ascendancy -- and such in effect is Mr. Mercier's programme -- then as Britons we believe that the conquest will have to be fought over again, and, Lower Canada may depend upon it, there will be no treaty of 1763. The victors will not capitulate next time.⁸⁵

The reply of J. Israel Tarte, a Quebec City journalist, to the Mail was so competent that it deserves consideration here. It was by far the most calm, sensible, and level

83 Same.

84 Same, col. 3.

85 Editorial, p. 4, col. 2.

headed exposition of the pro-Riel view made during the agitation. It was addressed to the Mail's editor. Tarte did not make a hero nor a martyr of Riel but went to the central point of the issue: why did the Conservative Ministry not show mercy when the jury clearly recommended it and made it clear that this was the proper course? Thus Tarte was not saying that Riel was right in having recourse to arms, but only that the death sentence ought not to have been carried out, and this for three reasons: 1) the above mentioned clemency recommended by the jury, 2) political offenders are no longer punished with death, 3) Riel's insanity, which Tarte vouched for from personal knowledge. As long as Quebec was using constitutional means, it had a perfect right to withdraw its political support from Macdonald. It was a matter of opinion, which every British subject had a right to entertain and to express. Apparently, said Tarte, the Toronto Mail would like it to be illegal for French Conservatives to switch their allegiance to another political leader. When the Mail editor said that he would prefer to fight the conquest over again Tarte argued that here was the spectacle of an English language paper advocating the use of brute force to smash a minority and thereby prevent it from withdrawing its political support from one particular leader. It was plain from Tarte's argument that it was the French who were using legal and constitutional procedures, whereas

the Anglo-Saxons were being appealed to by the Mail editor to adopt the most unconstitutional method of forcible repression of the political opinion of a minority.⁸⁶

By the end of November the Mail was much worried about the growth of the agitation in Quebec. It was particularly apprehensive about the new amity between French and Grits of Ontario and sought to split this feared union.

...those Ontario Reformers who have determined to stand with the French in order to secure office under the French thereby accept the whole French platform, and become responsible before God and man for the calamities which the French are apparently bent upon invoking.⁸⁷

The French were solemnly warned by the Mail of the consequences to themselves of their national movement. "...it could not fail to create a slumbering war between the races, which would redound to their lasting and particular injury."⁸⁸ The Toronto Conservative organ protested its innocence of desiring friction between the provinces. The cry of "Down with the French" had to be raised in self-defense

⁸⁶ Tarte to the Editor of the Toronto Mail, Nov. 26, 1885, Mail, Tor., Nov. 30, 1885, p. 1, col. 7-p. 2, col. 1-2; cf. also same, Dec. 8, 1885, p. 5, col. 1-3. The Montreal Herald commented favorably on the Tarte letter: "It would be well for all the parties to this controversy if they would bring as much moderation to the discussion as Mr. Tarte has done in this instance." -- Editorial, Herald, Mont., Nov. 28, 1885, p. 4, col. 4.

⁸⁷ Editorial, Nov. 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁸⁸ Editorial, same, Nov. 28, 1885, p. 6, col. 3.

only. Chastened by Tarte's reply the Mail admitted it would be permissible to vote the Conservatives out, but it was nothing short of revolution to hold that a French criminal could be exempt from the law simply because Quebec demanded it.⁸⁹

On December 11 the Mail argued that the pro-Riel agitators were more harmful than Riel himself. They were endeavoring to wound the Dominion on a larger scale than Riel. They wanted to degrade the law for the aggrandizement of the French race. The French must not be superior to the law.⁹⁰

The Mail exulted in victory at the end of the debate in Commons on the Landry Resolution. It was a defeat for the French Nationalists in whose eyes the English were aliens and interlopers. The anti-Ministry Montreal Herald had been certain that the Toronto Mail all along had wanted to unite all French against the Government on the Landry Resolution. Why? So that, as a result, all English would unite against the French, and then there would be race war with the ultimate goal of driving Quebec out of Confederation. This was

⁸⁹ Editorial, Nov. 19, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; same, Nov. 20, 1885, p. 4, col. 2-3; same, Nov. 25, 1885, p. 4, col. 4-5; same, Nov. 26, 1885, p. 4, col. 3; same, Nov. 27, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; same, Dec. 2, 1885, p. 4, col. 4; same, Dec. 3, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁹⁰ Editorials, Dec. 11, 1885, p. 4, col. 2; Dec. 21, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

probably a far-fetched argument, but it was recalled that John Macdonald had not originally been in favor of a federation of provinces but rather of a legislative union. Possibly he had never been reconciled to the favorable position occupied by Quebec since Confederation.⁹¹

Battling the Mail in the Queen City the Globe accused the Conservatives of striving to excite an anti-French feeling. "His [Macdonald's] chief organ is doing all it can to excite race hatred and sectarian animosities and to array the English speaking people against the French."⁹² The Globe was still defending French Quebec during the Landry debate. At the end of 1886, when other political issues had long since come to the center of the stage, the Liberals won a provincial election in Ontario. In the campaign which preceded the Mail had been blatantly anti-Catholic, for the Conservatives had backed the "No Popery" cry, which followed in the wake of the Riel agitation. The Globe, the great pacifier, rejoiced: This provincial victory was a prelude to national victory for the Liberals in early 1887.

...the free and generous heart of Ontario does not condemn the Canadian French for their sympathy with the unfortunate Halfbreeds whom John A. Macdonald harried into a piteous insurrection, and does not

⁹¹ Editorial, same, Mar. 26, 1886, p. 4, col. 2; and editorial, Herald, Mont., Mar. 29, 1886, p. 4, col. 4.

⁹² Editorial, Globe, Tor., Dec. 1, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

condemn, but heartily approves, their declaration against the cruel, corrupt, and blood-stained Cabinet at Ottawa.⁹³

Pro-Riel Movement

To the chagrin of Macdonald and the Conservatives the pro-Riel movement continued even after the spontaneous resentment of the first few days following the execution. The Champs de Mars open-air mass-meeting of Sunday afternoon, November 22 was memorable. The young Wilfred Laurier went so far as to say that "if he [Laurier] had lived on the shores of the Saskatchewan he would have taken up a rifle himself to defend his property."⁹⁴ Arthur Turcotte M.P.P. was sure that Riel would not have hanged if Cartier had been living. "He would have upset the scaffold." Charles Joseph Coursol M.P. despite long standing friendship for the Prime Minister was now certain that he had "declared a war of injustice on the French people". However, he was certain the French Canadians did not "want a war of races". In most of the speeches of the day Riel was altogether identified with French Canada. Mercier and the Liberals were hard at work at this meeting and numerous other smaller pro-Riel gatherings. Their object, of course, was to capture control of

⁹³ Editorial, Globe, Tor., Dec. 29, 1886, p. 4, col. 1.

⁹⁴ News account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 23, 1885, p. 5, col. 1.

Quebec for the Rouges.⁹⁵

The pro-Riel agitation spread rapidly throughout the province. Most of the public meetings adopted the Champs de Mars resolutions as their own. The names of Coteau Saint Louis, Riviere du Loup, Levis, Charlesbourg, Beauport, Saint Jean Baptiste Village, Sillery, Montebello, Becancourt, Laprairie, Saint Remi, Saint Michel, Saint Scholastique, Saint Cesaire, Saint Celestine, Lachine, Joliette, Vaudreuil, Trois Pistoles, Walton, Saint Stanislas de Champlain, Iberville, Marieville, Saint Augustin, Plantagenet, and Saint Lin, all appear as having been the scenes of indignation meetings, effigy burnings, parading, and demonstrations on behalf of Riel. It is noticeable that the farther away such events receded from Execution Day the more they lost the character of antipathy to Ontario and the English and likewise the more they became pure denunciations of the Conservative Cabinet members. Chapleau, Caron, and Langevin were frequently referred to as traitors to their race. Thus the political motive became more and more dominant, and friction with Ontario became a sometimes useful but not strictly necessary byproduct of the agitation.

On the same day as the Montreal Champs de Mars meeting, November 22, the market place in Quebec City was filled for a

⁹⁵ Same, col. 2-3.

similar meeting. At this gathering Joseph Guillaume Bosse⁹⁶ M.P. for Quebec Centre attempted to defend the Cabinet and had to be accorded police protection. J. A. Caron, who represented Quebec County, refused to appear at the meeting.

Two weeks after the execution Quebec was still indignant. "Meetings are being held and masses said in every parish in the district."⁹⁶ Whatever the Government papers might have said in de-emphasis, the Herald was convinced that the anti-Conservative revolt in Quebec province was strong and probably lasting.

...the province of Quebec, through the Liberal Opposition and the Conservative revolt, is now arrayed as strongly against the Government as it is at present constituted, as it was ranged strongly in its favor six months ago, a change altogether unprecedented in the history of the politics of the country.⁹⁷

Even as late as December 29, 1885, an open-air meeting was reported to have been held at Berthierville. By this time to be sure, the political tone was uppermost. It was no longer just feeling for Riel but opposition to the Ministry for their entire Northwest policy and management.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Press dispatch, Herald, Mont., Dec. 1, 1885, p. 1, col. 3.

⁹⁷ Editorial, Dec. 1, 1885, p. 4, col. 2.

⁹⁸ News item, Herald, Mont., Dec. 31, 1885, p. 8, col. 5.

The Landry Resolution

Thorough Parliamentary discussion of the hanging of Riel took place in March, 1886, in debate on the Landry Resolution. Phillippe Landry (Montmagny, Quebec) moved as follows:

That this house feels it its duty to express its deep regret that the sentence of death passed upon Louis Riel, convicted of high treason, was allowed to be carried into execution.⁹⁹

Discussion on the Landry resolution did not produce friction between Quebec and Ontario to any noteworthy extent. The friction of the previous weeks among the population at large of the two provinces had stilled. The debate in the legislative body of the country was often sharp and acrimonious on a personal level, but it in no way produced unmistakable friction between the two provinces. Thus it was altogether unlike the discussion in the same House in the Spring of 1870 when Louis Riel ruled at Red River and his delegates negotiated at Ottawa.

The fact that the pro-Riel agitation had simmered down and the Riel question was no longer prominent in the public mind perhaps explains why the question was raised in

⁹⁹ Commons Debates, 4th Sess. 5th Parl., 1886, Vol. 1, p. 59b. Landry's motion was first made on March 5, 1886, but discussion was postponed till March 11 because of the absence of members on the former date. Discussion continued till March 24. -- Cf. same, 68b-367b.

Commons at the moment it was. It had been assumed by the Opposition that Landry's motion was so worded and so timed as to make a Government victory (by voting it down) inevitable. Landry himself denied such implications and, on the contrary, claimed that his resolution had been framed objectively and to pose a question of justice pure and simple and that he himself had petitioned for commutation of Riel's sentence.¹⁰⁰

The Toronto Globe accused the Government in sponsoring the Landry Resolution of stirring up racial animosity. The Resolution was so worded that it could hardly fail to result in a Ministry triumph, because it prevented the Opposition from voting on the larger issues, e.g. Government culpability for misgovernment of the Northwest. It narrowed the discussion down to a mere question of aligning oneself with Quebec or Ontario, and so opened the door to more emotion than reason.¹⁰¹

After the defeat of the Resolution of Phillippe Landry (146-52) on March 25, 1886, the Montreal Herald commented that the debate had not produced the racial divisions and antagonism for which the Toronto Mail had hoped. Twenty-eight French Conservatives and Liberals voted for it, but twenty-five

¹⁰⁰ Same, p. 69a-70a.

¹⁰¹ Editorial, Globe, Toronto, Mar. 25, 1886, p. 4, col. 1.

French Conservatives voted against it. Only seventeen Conservatives deserted. As many English Liberals voted against it as for it. Neither race nor party was prevailed upon to punish the Government. Thus it appeared to the Herald that the Liberals were sufficiently divided to make race warfare improbable.¹⁰²

Reaction of the Provincial Legislatures

The Third Session of the Fifth Legislature of Ontario sat from January 28, 1886 - March 25, 1886. Its only concern with the Saskatchewan Rising was an address of praise to the Volunteers of Ontario, and of the other provinces as well as the regular troops for their part in suppressing it. They expressed the hope that the Crown would amnesty those still imprisoned for offenses committed in connection with the Rising.¹⁰³

The Fifth Session of the Fifth Parliament of the Legislature of Quebec sat from April 8 - June 21, 1886. From April 28 till May 7 a resolution of regret and sorrow for the execution of Riel was debated.

¹⁰² Editorial, Mar. 26, 1886, p. 4, col. 1.

¹⁰³ Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, 1886, Vol. 19, p. 16.

Resolved that the members of this House, without wishing to interfere in questions which are not within the scope of the Provincial Legislature, deem it their duty, nevertheless, to take advantage of their being assembled together to give a more public and solemn expression to the regret and sorrow which the people of this Province, whom they are elected to represent universally manifested on the occasion of the deplorable execution of Louis Riel, which execution was carried into effect even after the recommendation of the jury to mercy and in despite of all the reasons, in favor, from a humane point of view, of a commutation of the sentence.¹⁰⁴

This Resolution met with determined opposition and was ultimately defeated. It was argued that it was not permissible for a provincial legislature to censure the Federal Government. The Federal Government had not been guilty of any assault on the rights of the Quebec Legislative Assembly. Moreover, the entire province was by no means universally agreed that Riel's execution was a subject of regret.¹⁰⁵

A counter resolution reading as follows was passed:

Resolved, That this House, without wishing to deny that it can, in certain cases where it has no jurisdiction, appeal to the clemency of the proper authorities, should not, [..] express any opinion upon the execution of Louis Riel.¹⁰⁶

This effort in the provincial Legislature to censure the

¹⁰⁴ Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Quebec, 1886, Vol. 20, p. 77.

¹⁰⁵ Desjardins, L. G., Discours Fait a l'Assemblée Legislative de Quebec, a la seance du Vendredi, le 30 avril, 1886, n.p., n.d., p. 5-24.

¹⁰⁶ Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Quebec, 1886, Vol. 20, p. 77.

Federal Government was the work of Rouges, it seems certain. Among those voting against the counter resolution were such prominent Rouges as Lemieux, Mercier, and Turcotte. The first of these was Riel's counsel at Regina. The second was the recognized leader of the Rouge party. The third was the sponsor of the defeated resolution of the year previous which aimed to censure the Conservative Federal Ministry for the Saskatchewan Rising.¹⁰⁷

Thus it can be seen that the local provincial legislatures, also, did not reveal nor produce any friction to speak of between Ontario and Quebec. This fact lends weight to the view that the pro-Riel agitation was above all a political manoeuvre managed by the Opposition.

¹⁰⁷ Same, p. 77, 81-82, 83-85, 89-91, 95-97, 102-103, 104-106, 108-110, 111-113, 117-120, 122-127.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

When the Fathers of Confederation undertook their great task, they were reasonably optimistic about the outcome of their work. None was so unrealistic as to suppose that all conflict between Ontario and Quebec would be entirely ruled out in future, yet they were confident that disputes could be settled within the framework of their new political organization and according to its laws. Yet the Risings of Louis "David" Riel in the West created reactions between the two eastern provinces that were to test severely the strength of the young Dominion. That it survived the test is a credit to the framers of Confederation as well as the good sense of their successors and the people at large of Ontario and Quebec.

The friction between the two provinces on the occasion of the two Risings is undeniable historical phenomena that form part of the historical record. From the vantage point of later time it is possible to record it with a certain degree of objectivity. It has been the purpose of this thesis, of course, to make this record.

Certain generalizations from the record can be made. In general, it can be said that Ontario was on weak ground in its reaction to the Red River Rising of 1869-1870, and that Quebec was on weak ground in its reaction to the Saskatchewan Rising of 1885. The latter, however, needs

qualification. Quebec was by no means unified in its reaction to the second Rising and the hanging of Riel. What support it did give to Riel's cause was more emotional than rational. Again, the point is fairly clear that the subjective dynamism that caused Ontario to insist upon Riel's hanging in 1885 was the remembrance of the execution of Thomas Scott at Red River in 1870, which had been authorized by Riel's government there. The legal point was treason for rebellion against constituted authority, but it is more than probable that the sentence imposed for this would have been commuted had it not been for Ontario's memory of the 1870 execution. Also, it seems evident that the pro-Riel agitation in Quebec in the Fall of 1885 was more political than anything else. Religion, language, and nationality were brought in, but the political motive was predominant. The Liberals realized that there was a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to political fortune. Further, newspapers with rare exceptions performed faithfully their functions as party organs. As a rule, those that opposed Riel in 1869-1870 had to favor him in 1885 and vice versa. The case of La Minerve was especially interesting in that this paper departed momentarily from support of party interests to champion the cause of race, only to return to its party allegiance faithfully.

Other derived truths, perhaps of less significance, have also emerged. First, it seems that the French people

and their leaders were too trustful of John A. Macdonald, for it is hardly deniable that their desire to save Riel was defeated because the Prime Minister feared the loss of Ontario votes. Second, Macdonald himself never did trust the Métis nation. His was a concealed distrust, but real, nonetheless, and productive of practical consequences. Third, the Governors General, John Young (Lord Lisgar) in 1869-1870 and Lord Lansdowne in 1885, were considerably less than pro-Quebec and pro-French in two instances when something important was at stake, i.e., the amnesty in 1870 and a possible pardon in 1885. Here, also, the French were too trusting. Fourth, French Catholic Churchmen gave too much support to the Conservative Party, and so they could not find it in them to sympathize with a Métis leader who was causing trouble for that Party. Fifth, Missionaries in the Northwest and, as a consequence, Churchmen in the East, in a too hasty effort to dissociate themselves from rebellion, condemned Riel without taking account sufficiently of his oncoming madness; later efforts to excuse him for this reason were ineffectual. Sixth, Quebec, resting complacently in her voting strength, began her pro-Riel drive too late. She seemed to assume that the Métis Chief would be shielded in 1885 as he had been after the Red River Rising. Seventh, a potential Irish-French rapprochement did not achieve success. Whatever the contemporary struggle of the Irish for Home Rule for Ireland,

the Canadian Irish did not join the French in any considerable numbers against the "common foe". Finally, it would seem that Prime Minister Macdonald did not wish Ontario Orange desire for vengeance on Riel as expressed in numerous letters to him to come to light. He allowed one Ontario anti-Riel letter only to be published in the Sessional Papers. The remainder are still unpublished in the Macdonald Papers.

The fact is that the young Dominion did survive the shock of friction between Ontario and Quebec caused by the Risings of Louis Riel and their consequences. It thus passed a severe testing of its durability and has emerged with the strength needed for a lasting political entity of the federative kind.

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HEALY, W. J., Women of Red River, Winnipeg, 1923, vii-261 p.

Biographical sketches of pioneer women by the provincial librarian. Helpful for details not otherwise available.

HOWARD, Joseph Kinsey, Strange Empire, New York, Morrow, 1952, 601 p.

Very complete biography of Riel using a vast amount of original sources. Objective but lacking in documentation.

KNAPLUND, Paul (ed.), "Gladstone on the Red River Rebellion", Mississippi Historical Review, Vol. 21, June, 1934, p. 76-77.

A policy statement regarding the Red River Rising taken from the Gladstone papers with brief introduction

and notes; of assistance for knowing the origin of Granville's policies.

LAURIE, Major-General, Report upon Matters in Connection with the Suppression of the Rebellion in the Northwest Territories in 1885, Ottawa, 1887, 80 p.

Pamphlet reprint of the publication of the Department of Militia and Defence listed above.

LeCHEVALLIER, Jules, Aux Prises avec la Tourmente les Missionnaires de la Colonie de Saint-Laurent de Grandin durant l'insurrection Métisse de 1885, (no place), 1940, 76 p.

A recent and scholarly account of events in the Saskatchewan Valley from within, i.e., as regards the Catholic missionaries especially; makes use of episcopal and missions archives material. Necessary for an account of the Saskatchewan Rising. Offprint from Revue de l'université d'Ottawa, issues of Oct.-Dec., 1939 and April-June, July-Sept., 1940.

----- Batoche, les missionnaires du nord-ouest pendant les troubles de 1885, Montreal, Presse Dominicaine, 1941, 310 p.

Thorough account of the Rising and aftermath from the Métis side, making use of original documents and unpublished material. Altogether indispensable for understanding the Saskatchewan Rising.

MACDONALD, John A., Letterbooks, 1869-1870, 1885.

xx-468 p. MACHRAY, Robert, Life of Robert Machray, London, 1909,

A well done biography containing a few original letters. Necessary for knowledge of Red River Rising, particularly the military expedition of Wolesley.

MACKENZIE, Alexander, The Life and Speeches of Hon. George Brown, Toronto, 1882, viii-383 p.

Sympathetic biography plus some correspondence and speeches. An informative life by a contemporary having good but incomplete primary sources.

McDOUGALL, William, The Red River Rebellion, Eight Letters to Joseph Howe, Toronto, 1870, 68 p.

Very important for McDougall's viewpoint; a justification of himself and castigation of the Conservative Ministry and of Joseph Howe particularly.

MIDDLETON, Frederick Dobson, Suppression of the Rebellion in the North West Territories of Canada, 1885, edited

by G. H. Needler, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1948, 80 p.

The seven years post factum account by the British officer originally appearing in United Service Magazine serially (Nov., 1893-Feb., 1894), edited by one who marched in the ranks as a youth. Illuminating for all Middleton could be expected to know personally; helpful notes and bibliography by the editor.

1885, MORGAN, H. J., (ed.), Dominion Annual Register for Toronto, 1886.

P.128-159 has a summary of the military action of the Saskatchewan Rising supplying vital statistics, names of killed and wounded, dates, etc. Not completely accurate in every detail.

MORICE, Adrian Gabriel, A Critical History of the Red River Insurrection, after Official Documents and Non-Catholic Sources, Winnipeg, Canadian Publishers 1935, 375 p.

A complete account and interpretation, scholarly, and based on primary sources, and altogether pro-Riel. Necessary for knowing the Métis tradition regarding the Rising at Red River.

----- Dictionnaire historiques des Canadiens et des Métis Français de l'ouest, Quebec, 1908, xlii-329 p.

Biographical sketches of a vast number; in most cases the only reliable source.

O'DONOGHUE, William B., A partial account of the Red River Rising appearing in the Mail, Toronto, May 20, 1885, p. 1, col. 6-7.

Document was in 1885 in possession of F. O'Donoghue, a brother, in San Francisco, California. The Fenian viewpoint on events at Red River in 1869-1870; of assistance for understanding its author's position especially.

OLIVER, E. H. (ed.), The Canadian North-West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records, 2 vols., Ottawa, 1914.

Critical edition of most North West governmental documents including some of the Provisional Government. Needful for critical texts.

ONTARIO, Journals of the Legislative Assembly for 1870, 1871, 1885, 1886.

Contains reactions of provincial lawmakers to events in the West. Necessary source of knowledge of Ontario attitudes.

----- Sessional Papers, 1870-1871, Vol. 3, No. 18.
Contains records of arrest Red River delegates.

OUIMET, Adolphe, La Vérité sur la Question Métisse au nord-ouest; biographie et récit de Gabriel Dumont sur les événements de 1885, (B.A.T. Montigny), Montreal, 1889, 400 p.
A largely pro-Riel and pro-Métis work. Dumont's account of the military events counterbalances the official Government account of same as well as Middleton's.

POPE, Joseph (ed.), Confederation, Being a Series of Hitherto Unpublished Documents bearing on the British North America Act, Toronto, 1895.

Rounds out the account of the making of Confederation.

----- Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Toronto, 1921, xxviii-502 p.

A selection by Macdonald's secretary of a variety of letters on all topics both to and from the Prime Minister. Contains valuable first hand information.

----- Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, 2 vols., London, 1894, Vol. 1, xvi-392 p., Vol. 2, x-369 p.

Selections from the correspondence connected by the helpful accounts of the former secretary. Supplements the earlier volume of correspondence.

----- Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, revised edition, Toronto, 1930, xxxix-816 p.

A one volume revision of the above.

QUEBEC, Journals of the Legislative Assembly, 1885, Quebec, 1885, Vol. 19, ix-323-lvi p.

Official journal of the 1885 session. Contains the Turcotte resolution, with discussion and voting thereon.

RAMBAUT, Thomas D., "The Hudson's Bay Half-breeds and Louis Riel's Rebellions", Political Science Quarterly, 1887, Vol. 2, p. 135-166.

A contemporary legal and constitutional analysis, containing letters by William McDougall and Edmond Mallet. Good Hudson's Bay Company background material.

RIEL, Louis David, Poésies religieuses et politiques, Montreal, 1886, 51 p.

Poems to Our Lord, Our Lady, Archbishop Taché, John Macdonald, Montana missionaries, etc., plus "official" portrait. Provides insight into Riel's mentality.

ROBERTSON, J. P., A Political Manual of the Province of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, Winnipeg, 1887, 209 p.

A handbook of factual information. Contains a fund of official data.

SCHOFIELD, F. H., The Story of Manitoba, 3 vols., Winnipeg, 1913, Vol. 1, 443 p., Vol. 2, 759 p., Vol. 3, 734 p. One volume of history, very complete; two volumes of biography; competent and well done.

STANLEY, George F., The Birth of Western Canada, a History of the Riel Rebellions, London, Longmans, [1936], xiv-475 p.

Perhaps the best and most complete secondary account, drawn from extensive original sources including Hudson's Bay Company archive material; objective and altogether indispensable.

----- "Gabriel Dumont's Account of the North West Rebellion", Canadian Historical Review, Sept., 1949, Vol. 30, No. 3, p. 249-259.

A translation of the Métis warrior's account originally appearing in Ouimet, Adolphe, La Vérité sur la question Métisse, q.v. Edited with good introduction and notes. Gives the Metis side from the Duck Lake engagement to the author's escape to the United States.

SULTE, Benjamin, L'expédition militaire de Manitoba, 1870, Montreal, 1871.

Originally a magazine account for Revue Canadienne by one who marched with the troops. A valuable primary source by the French literateur and former secretary of Georges Etienne Cartier.

TACHÉ, Alexandre Antonin, The Northwest Difficulty, Bishop Taché on the Amnesty Question, as appeared in the Times, (London), April 6, 7, and 8, 1874, (no place), (no date), 36 p.

A persuasive plea with plentiful objective evidence for the long delayed amnesty. A valuable account by one of the main participants in the Red River troubles of 1869-1870 arguing that the amnesty had been granted, at least implicitly.

----- Témoignages de Mgr. Taché devant le conseil du nord-ouest (histoire et origine des troubles du nord-ouest racontés par S. G. Mgr. Taché devant le conseil du nord-ouest,

Chambre du comite, 18 mai, 1874), 8 p.

This is but a portion, i.e., Archbishop Taché's testimony, of the Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territory in 1869-1870, q.v. in Canada, Journals of the House of Commons, 1874, Vol. 8, Appendix No. 6.

TASSE, Joseph (ed.), Discours de Sir Georges Cartier, Montreal, 1893, xii-817 p.

A valuable collection many of which are unavailable elsewhere; contains Cartier's optimistic views on future amicable relations between Ontario and Quebec.

TASSE, Joseph (?), La question Riel, (no place), (no date), 13 p.

An anti-Riel, anti-Rouge discourse to the Ottawa "Cercle Lafontaine", February 19, 1886; an example of the French Conservative effort to stem the rising Rouge tide.

THOMPSON, S.D., Discours sur la question Riel prononcé le 22 Mars, 1886, a les chambres des communes, Ottawa, 1886.

A reprint from the Commons Debates of the new Minister of Justice's defence of the Government for allowing Riel to hang; Lengthy and bolstered by many quotations, it says all the Ministry can say.

TREMAUDAN, Auguste-Henri de, Histoire de la nation Métisse dan l'ouest Canadien, Montreal, Levesque, 1935, 450 p.

An account of most of what is known about the Canadian Métis; pro-Métis and uncritical, yet it provides information otherwise unobtainable.

TREMBLAY, Ernest, Riel, Response à Monsieur J. A. Chapleau, St. Hyacinth, 1885, 80 p.

A post-Execution reply to the Conservative Secretary of State; gives the view of the anti-Ministry side.

VARIGNY, C.V.C. de, Louis Riel et l'insurrection Canadienne, (no place), (1886), 28 p.

A detached, objective account originally appearing in Revue des Deux Mondes, 1886, Vol. 74, p. 418-447.

WHELAN, E., The Union of the British Provinces, a Brief Account of the Several Conferences Held, Charlottetown, 1865, new edition with introduction by D. C. Harvey, Garden-vale, 1927.

A collection of accounts from newspapers and periodicals, indispensable where other primary sources are silent.

YOUNG, George, Letter to the Editor of Courrier appearing in La Minerve, Montreal, December 19, 1885, p. 9, col. 1-2.

A bitter account of the details of Scott's execution at Fort Garry in 1870 and denunciation of Riel by the Methodist minister there at the time. Important for details but written fifteen years after the event.

----- Manitoba Memories, Toronto, 1897, 364 p. Personal recollections as well as general history of 1868-1884 by the Methodist minister at Red River. Of assistance in understanding position of non-Métis.

The Gazette, Montreal, issues of 1869-1871 and 1884-1886 especially.

A daily pro-Government English language newspaper of Montreal.

The Gibbet of Regina, the Truth about Riel, Sir John A. Macdonald and His Cabinet before Public Opinion, New York, 1886, 200 p.

A pro-Riel post mortem and condemnation of Macdonald and Cabinet. More subjective rhetoric than objective history, but illustrative of the prevailing controversy.

The Globe, Toronto, issues of 1869-1871 and 1884-1886 especially.

A daily Clear Grit organ usually viciously anti-Ministry.

Governor-General's Correspondence, G 1: Colonial Office to the Governor-General, G 3: secret and confidential, G 9: Governor-General to Colonial Office, and G 21: File 175.

Altogether necessary for study of intra-Government policies and decisions.

The Herald, Montreal, issues of 1869-1871 and 1884-1886 especially.

Although consistently anti-Ministry, not always faithful to Opposition; in 1869-1870 definitely an organ of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Louis Riel, martyr du nord-ouest, Montreal, 1885, 96 p.

A contemporary pro-Riel propaganda piece helpful for understanding of French feeling. Contains some valuable appendices: Riel's will, p. 79-80; two

letters, Riel to Lemieux, November 3, 1885, p. 81-82 and André to Lemieux, November 20, 1885, p. 83-86; and Les Métis, Riel's own unfinished account of the Métis nation, p. 87-96.

Macdonald Papers, especially "Northwest Rebellion, 1869-1870" and "Northwest Rebellion, 1885". Importance of these cannot be overemphasized.

The Mail, Toronto, issues of 1884-1886 especially.

A pro-Government organ established in 1872 for the apparent purpose of counteracting the influence in the Queen City of the Opposition Globe.

La Minerve, Montreal, issues of 1869-1871 and 1884-1886 especially.

A French language organ loyally pro-Ministry most of the time; high caliber journalism.

Le mot de la fin. Voici le vote! Conspiration armée contre les Métis français. Le chef Métis sacrifié aux Orangistes. La folie de Riel, (no place), (1886), 40 p.

A pre-election propaganda piece against Macdonald, Chapleau, Langevin, and their candidates; a review of all Government-Métis troubles (1869-1885); assembles much valuable evidence on the critical points, with most sources cited.

Polémiques et documents touchant le nord-ouest et l'exécution de Louis Riel, Montreal, 1886, 312 p.

Concerns mostly events prior to 1885; a collection of documents of varying degrees of historical value arranged to serve as a pro-Riel propaganda piece.

Preliminary Investigation and Trial of Ambroise D. Lepine for the Murder of Thomas Scott, being a full Report of the Proceedings in the Case before the Magistrate's Court and the Several Courts of Queen's Bench in the Province of Manitoba, (no place), 1874, 127 p.

Important for sworn depositions of witnesses.

Privy Council Dispatches, 1885.

High level Government decisions regarding fate of Riel particularly.

La question Riel, (no place), (no date), 67 p.
An anti-Liberal contemporary piece justifying the execution. Valuable for knowledge of the Government side.

1869, (no place), Reminiscences of the Red River Rebellion of (no date), 45 p.

An anti-Hudson's Bay Company and anti-Riel diatribe produced under the passions of the moment, but with almost no historical value. Includes pieces by Charles Mair, G. D. MacVicar, Thomas Lusted, Charles Garrett, and J. C. Schultz. Illustrates an extreme position.

Report of the Delegates Appointed to Negotiate for the Acquisition of Rupert's Land and the North West Territory, (no place), 1869.

An offprint of the second paper of Canada, Sessional Papers, 1870, Vol. 5, No. 12, "Correspondence and Papers Connected with Recent Occurrences in the Northwest Territories".

Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North West Territories in 1869-1870, Ottawa, 1874.

An offprint of Canada, Journals of the House of Commons, 1874, Vol. 8, Appendix No. 6, listed above.

The Riel Rebellion, 1885, Montreal, 1885, 46 p. Popular history with much Indian data; shows the view of English Protestants.

Story of Louis Riel the Rebel Chief, Toronto, 1885, 192 p.

A fanciful contemporary biographical account altogether unreliable as history despite a few meeds of praise for Riel. Important for an understanding of the mentality of Ontario at the time.

Le Véritable Riel, Montreal, 1887, 63 p. Letters and court testimony by Father Alexis André; also letters of Father Fourmond, Brother Piquet, Father Leduc, a Batoche missionary sister, Father McWilliams, Father Touze; Riel's condemnation of Archbishop Tache; brief condemnation of Riel by Bishops Fabre, Moreau, Gravel, Langevin, Cameron, Grandin, Racine, and Duhamel. Invaluable for an understanding of the attitude of the Hierarchy toward Riel.

APPENDIX I

JUDGMENT OF THE LORDS OF THE JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL ON THE PETITION OF LOUIS RIEL, FROM THE COURT OF QUEEN'S BENCH FOR THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

Present: The Lord Chancellor (Lord Halsbury), Lord Fitzgerald,
Lord Monkswell, Lord Hobhouse, Lord Esher, Sir Barnes Peacock.

This is a petition of Louis Riel, tried in July last at Regina, in the North-West Territories of Canada, and convicted of high treason, and sentenced to death, for leave to appeal against an order of the Queen's Bench of Manitoba confirming that conviction.

It is the usual rule of this committee not to grant leave to appeal in criminal cases, except where some clear departure from the requirements of justice is alleged to have taken place. Whether in this case the prerogative to grant an appeal still exists, as their Lordships have not heard that question argued, they desire neither to affirm nor to deny, but they are clearly of opinion that in this case leave should not be given. The petitioner was tried under the provisions of an Act passed by the Canadian Legislature, providing for the administration of criminal justice for those portions of the North-West territory of Canada in which the offense charged against the petitioner is alleged to have been committed. No question has been raised that the facts

alleged were not proved to have taken place, nor was it denied before the original tribunal, or before the Court of Appeal in Manitoba, that the acts attributed to the petitioner amounted to the crime of high treason.

The defence upon the facts sought to be established before the jury was, that the petitioner was not responsible for his acts by reason of mental infirmity. The jury before whom the petitioner was tried negatived that defence, and no argument has been presented to their Lordships directed to show that the finding was otherwise than correct. Of the objections raised on the face of the petition two points only seem to be capable of plausible or, indeed, intelligible expression, and they have been urged before their Lordships with as much force as was possible, and as fully and completely in their Lordships' opinion as it would have been if leave to appeal had been granted, and they have been dealt with by the judgments of the Court of Appeal in Manitoba with a patience, learning, and ability that leaves very little to be said upon them.

The first point is that the Act itself under which the petitioner was tried was ultra vires the Dominion Parliament to enact. That Parliament derived its authority for the passing of the Statute from the Imperial Statute, 34 & 35 Vict., chap. 28, which enacted that the Parliament of Canada may from time to time make provision for the administration,

peace, order, and good government of any territory not for the time being included in any province. It is not denied that the place in question was one in respect of which the Parliament of Canada was authorized to make such provision, but it appears to be suggested that any provision differing from the provision which in this country have been made for administration, peace, order, and good government cannot, as matters of law, be provisions for peace, order and good government in the territories to which the Statute relates, and further that, if a Court of Law should come to the conclusion that a particular enactment, was not calculated as matter of fact and policy to secure peace, order, and good government, that they would be entitled to regard any Statute directed to those objects, but which a Court should think likely to fail of that effect, as ultra vires and beyond the competency of the Dominion Parliament to enact.

Their Lordships are of the opinion that there is not the least colour for such a contention. The words of the Statute are apt to authorize the utmost discretion of enactment for the attainment of the objects pointed to. They are words under which the widest departure from criminal procedure as it is known and practised in this country have been authorized in Her Majesty's Indian Empire. Forms of procedure unknown to the English common law have there been established and acted upon, and to throw the least doubt upon

the validity of powers conveyed by those words would be of widely mischievous consequence. There was indeed a contention upon the construction of the Canadian Statute, 43 Vict., chap. 25, that high treason was not included in the words "any other crimes", but it is too clear for argument, even without the assistance afforded by the 10th Sub-section, that the Dominion Legislature contemplated high treason as comprehended within the language employed.

The second point suggested assumes the validity of the Act, but it is founded upon the assumption that the Act has not been complied with. By the 7th sub-section of the 76th section it is provided that the magistrate shall take or cause to be taken in writing full notes of the evidence and other proceedings thereat, and it is suggested that this provision has not been complied with, because, though no complaint is made of inaccuracy or mistake, it is said that the notes were taken by a shorthand writer under the authority of the magistrate, and by a subsequent process extended into ordinary writing intelligible to all. Their Lordships desire to express no opinion what would have been the effect if the provision is directory only, or whether the failure to comply with it would be ground for error, inasmuch as they are of the opinion that the taking full notes of the evidence in shorthand was a causing to be taken in writing full notes of the evidence, and a literal compliance therefore with the

Statute.

Their Lordships will, therefore, humbly advise Her Majesty that leave should not be granted to prosecute this appeal.

APPENDIX II

CASE OF LOUIS RIEL: REASONS FOR NON-COMMUTATION OF HIS
SENTENCE. Colonial Office, 1885
20534

Governor General the Most Honourable the MARQUIS OF
LANSDOWNE, G.C.M.C., to Colonel the Right Hon. F. A. Stanley,
M.P. (Received November 24, 1885)

(Confidential)

Government House, Ottawa

November 13, 1885

Sir,

You have no doubt already been made aware that the law has been allowed to take its course in the case of Louis Riel, now lying under sentence of death at Regina for crimes committed during the recent outbreak in the North-west Territory.

2. It is, I think, desirable that I should place you in possession of the reasons which rendered it, in the opinion of my Government, undesirable that Riel's sentence should be commuted.

3. Before proceeding to do this, I would observe that, although under his instructions the Governor General is directed not to pardon or remit the sentence of offenders without having recourse in capital cases to the advice of the Privy Council, I am far from regarding this instruction

as relieving him from all responsibility for the decision arrived at. It is, I conceive, his duty, whenever the advice of his Ministers is tendered to him under such circumstances, to examine them fully for himself, to satisfy himself that the advice tendered to him has been given upon sufficient grounds, and with a complete absence of unworthy or interested motives, and if he is not so satisfied, then with all the force at his command to urge his own views in opposition to those of his Ministers. This duty is more especially incumbent upon him in a case in which the pardon or reprieve of the convict might "affect the interests of the Empire." In such cases the Governor General is especially directed "to take those interests specially into his own personal consideration, and it would, I conceive, be his duty, should he believe that the recommendation of his advisers was fraught with danger to the public safety, to withhold his approval.

4 I will now recapitulate the reasons for which, in my opinion, there was not only no occasion for such resistance on my part in Riel's case, but for which, on a careful review of the facts, I have come to the conclusion that the advice tendered to me by the Privy Council was that which it was its duty to give under the difficult circumstances with which it has to deal. In considering these reasons it should, I think, be specially borne in mind that Riel's case was

eminently one of those in which the punishment to be inflicted upon the criminal has to be determined with reference not only to the degree of moral guilt attaching to his acts but also to the effects produced by such punishment upon the society of which he is a member.

5. Of the legal and technical completeness of the case against Riel there is no question. After exhausting his rights of appeal in this country, he was, by the forbearance of the Executive, allowed an opportunity of access to the highest appellate tribunal of the Empire, and that tribunal summarily dismissed his application.

6. The crime of which he was convicted was of a most serious nature and was committed with the utmost deliberation. He had been living for some years in a portion of the United States not far removed from the scene of one of the worst of those massacres by which so much horror is invariably lent to the history of an Indian war. He must have known when he set himself to organize his Indian allies against the Government of his country what kind of events were certain to result from such co-operation; but for the success of the Canadian forces at Batoche I have little doubt that there would have been a general rising of the Indians throughout the Northwest Territories, accompanied by all the atrocities invariably accompanying Indian warfare. Riel certainly knew, and as to this the evidence is conclusive, that he was rendering himself

liable to the punishment of death when he entered the Dominion.

7. His offence was not the first which he had committed; he had already brought a like calamity upon his country, and had escaped the supreme penalty of the law for the cold-blooded murder which he had committed in 1870 by fleeing to the United States. It was only owing to the clemency of the Crown that he was relieved from the sentence of outlawry then pronounced upon him.

8. Upon the occasion of this, as well as upon that of his former rebellion, he gave evidence that there was a sordid side to his fanaticism, and that the divine mission which he proclaimed was not inconsistent with the abandonment of its object, and his dupes, for a sufficient price.

9. Of the so-called half-breed grievances which are alleged in extenuation of the guilt of the leaders of the rebellion it is enough to say that subsequent investigation has shown how slender was the foundation upon which this charge was based, and that the grievances in question were such as are inevitable in a newly settled country in which the machinery of administration is as yet, in some respects, imperfect. Even, however, if it were to be conceded that the Métis of the Saskatchewan had cause for complaint of their treatment by the Dominion Government, it could not be admitted, except with the most unfortunate results that in a country where so

large a measure of political freedom is enjoyed by all classes, redress for purely political wrongs is to be sought by an appeal to arms. It is to be remembered, too, that during his sojourn in the United States, Riel formally abjured his allegiance to Her Majesty, became an American citizen, and abandoned any real or supposed right as a Canadian to interfere on behalf of his oppressed fellow subjects.

10. It is, however, more especially with reference to its bearing upon the present and future of the North-west Territories that Riel's case should be considered and dealt with, and it has been urged upon me that from this point of view nothing was more to be deprecated than a course which would be regarded in that portion of the Dominion as indicating any infirmity of purpose on the part of the Government in dealing with the ringleaders of the insurrection. It is moreover to be remembered that if Riel's sentence had been commuted a like commutation would have been unavoidable in the case of the Indians now under sentence of death, who were, many of them, taken red-handed, but whose culpability is beyond question less than that of the men who instigated their crimes. The isolation and defencelessness of the settlers in these remote districts exposes them to certain destruction in the event of an outbreak such as that of the spring of 1885, and I have no doubt whatever that if exemplary punishment be not required of the principal actors, a blow

will be struck at the confidence of the whole body of white settlers, and serious discouragement given to all who may contemplate coming into the country. Upon the Indians generally an exhibition of leniency would have a very mischievous effect. Riel had proclaimed that the Government did not dare to hang him, and his escape would certainly be ascribed by the Indians, and probably by the Métis, to fear or favour, and not to a sense of justice.

11. The question of his sanity was fully dealt with by the courts, which found, in effect, that at the time when his crimes were committed he was responsible for his acts. The evidence, no doubt, went to prove that he was an enthusiast and at times subject to religious delusions; but this plea was not accepted by the jury.

12. Within the last few days an attempt has been made to show that his mind has given way and that he has become insane since his trial. If it could have been found that this was the case, that his state had become essentially different from that of which the courts had cognizance, and that the sentence of death was about to be carried out upon a person incapable of realizing his own position or the circumstances which had led to his imprisonment and punishment, it would, I believe, have been wrong to allow him to be executed. Upon this point my Government was ready to be guided by the spirit of the Act 27 & 28 Vict., c.xxix., which makes provision for

the detention of prisoners under sentence of death, but subsequently ascertained to be insane. An examination, however, made by experts specially appointed for this purpose disclosed no sufficient grounds for believing that Riel's mental condition had become different from what it was known to be at the time of his trial. Mention was made especially in one of the two reports received of the extent of the religious and political delusions under which he appeared to be suffering, but the fact that he was at times under the influence of such delusions had been fully brought out in evidence and weighed by the courts, and the medical reports, although conceived in a humane and indulgent spirit, failed to establish that since his trial he had passed from a mental condition in which he was accountable for his actions to one in which he was no longer so accountable. It was, in the opinion of my Government, only upon conclusive evidence of such a change that any interference with the course of law would have been justified. I may point out, in passing, that the admission, either by the courts or by the Executive, that in a country circumstanced in regard to its settlement as are the Northwest Territories any person with a morbid or excitable temperament, and with a mind subject to occasional illusions or accesses of religious or political fanaticism, might break the law with a confident expectation of escaping the punishment which the law awards, could not fail to have far reaching

and disastrous consequences.

12. In the above recapitulation I have omitted all mention of the political feeling likely to be provoked in other parts of the Dominion by Riel's execution or by the commutation of his sentence. It was, I conceive, the duty of the Government to decide without respect to the popularity of its decision. I feel at the same time bound to admit that in a country in which national sympathies are as strongly developed as they are here, some sacrifice of strict principle may at times be worth making in order to render impossible a successful appeal to prejudices of race, or to avoid the revival of old antagonisms, and the creation of embittered memories. Any considerations of this sort were, however, in my opinion, outweighed by those to which I have already had the honour of referring. That there is a large amount of sympathy for Riel among the French Canadians cannot be denied; that it is very deep-seated or that it will endure long I am not convinced. It is to be observed that the Roman Catholic hierarchy are to a great extent alienated from him by his abandonment of the doctrine of the Church, for whose teaching he sought to substitute a religion of his own. May I add, in reference to this point, that the advice of the Privy Council, which includes three French Canadian Ministers, was unanimous in favour of allowing the law to take its course.

I have, &c. (Signed) LANSDOWNE

Colonel the Right Hon. Frederick A. Stanley,
&c. &c. &c.

APPENDIX III

CHAMPS DE MARS RESOLUTIONS

Whereas, the half-breeds both French and English, had for a long time past had grievances which were the occasion of the political offence, for which their chief, Louis Riel, has been executed;

Whereas, civilized nations have practically abandoned capital punishment for political offences;

Considering, especially the fact that Riel had been recommended to the clemency of the court by the six jury-men, belonging to a race and creed, different from his own, and to whom the state had entrusted his trial, it became the duty of the Government to use clemency towards him.

Considering, that three respites having been granted and the execution postponed three times, this duty became all the more imperative;

Considering, also the fact that Riel had surrendered at the request of General Middleton;

Considering, that it is evident that the Government has made of this execution a simple subject of election calculations, that it has coolly computed how many seats would be won by hanging Riel, and how many would be lost by a policy of clemency and justice, that, finally in view of giving effect to the calculations, it has sacrificed him to the

hatred of fanatics, thus allowing them to stir up against one another the different races, who, in this country, live together under the protection of the British flag;

Resolved - 1st. That in thus executing Louis Riel on the 16th November, 1885, the Government of Sir John Macdonald has committed an act of inhumanity and of cruelty, unworthy of a civilized nation, and deserves the consideration of all the friends of right and justice, without distinction of race and religion.

2. That the consent given by Sir Hector Langevin, Sir Adolphe P. Caron and the Honorable Joseph A. Chapleau to the odious execution constituted a betrayal of their trust and specially deserves the reprobation of all the citizens of this Province.

3. That under the circumstances, it becomes the duty of the electors of each constituency to exact from its representatives in the House of Commons a formal pledge to defeat the Government of Sir John Macdonald by every constitutional means at their command.

4. That in the opinion of this meeting the circumstances demand that all divisions of political parties, of races and of creeds be put aside and that all men who are so disposed, whatever may have been their former differences of opinion, unite to accomplish the object indicated in the

preceding resolution.

Resolved further, that all county and local municipal councils of the Province be invited by the press to seize the first opportunity to qualify the execution of Louis Riel as having been on the part of the Government of Sir John A. Macdonald an odious act of cruelty, and as being moreover on the part of Sir Hector Langevin, Sir Adolphe P. Caron and the Honorable Joseph A. Chapleau a betrayal of trust, and transmit the resolutions, which shall be adopted to that effect, to their senators and members;

Resolved that the resolutions adopted by this meeting be communicated to each of the senators and members for the Province of Quebec with an urgent report to give them their adhesion. -- News account, Gazette, Mont., Nov. 23, 1885, p. 5, col. 1; Cf. also Dominion Annual Register, 1885, p. 188.

APPENDIX 4

ABSTRACT OF

Friction between Ontario and Quebec Caused by the Risings of Louis Riel¹

How was it that the newly formed Dominion of Canada, which began with such optimistic hopes for amity between Upper and Lower portions, should within the space of three years following Confederation be forced to witness the clash of these two provinces as a result of a resistance movement far to the West of them? How did it survive the continuation of that clash fifteen years later in 1885, wherein the same battle lines were simply renewed and intensified? Such is the problem considered by this thesis. Its purpose is to record the friction that resulted between Quebec and Ontario resulting from these two Risings in the West led by Louis "David" Riel, a hero for one province and a villain for the other.

After much discussion and compromise the Quebec and Ontario Fathers of Confederation hit upon what they had reasonably hoped would be a workable formula for future peaceable relations between their respective provinces. They expressed frequently the good will each province had for the

¹ Ph.D. Thesis presented by Robert Emmett Lamb, in 1953, to the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ottawa, 492 pages.

other as the new nation was launched.

Not long after the achievement of Confederation the Government attempted to acquire for Canada the vast territory of the Hudson's Bay Company stretching from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains. In doing so it ignored the native population of the area, the Métis nation, completely. The latter resented this, feared for their future political, economic, and religious status, and resisted the illegal and premature assumption of authority by the young Dominion. They succeeded in causing Canada to re-consider and to offer better terms of entry into the new Confederation, i.e., provincial status.

Since Ontario had long lusted for the economic riches of the new area to the West, it waxed angry over the efforts of the Métis to assert their rights by establishing their own government in the area. Their wrath reached its boiling point when a former Ontario resident, an Orangeman and Protestant, was executed for rebelling against that government. As a result Quebec felt obliged to come to the defense of the Métis and Riel their leader because it had become convinced that the attack by Ontario was directed precisely against the Catholic Church and its clergy as well as against itself. Riel, Quebec reckoned, was merely the occasion. Ontario was denied an opportunity of wreaking vengeance on Riel personally, but it did cause his exile and the denial of amnesty.

Oncoming white domination and economic exploitation caused another Métis rising in the Valley of the Saskatchewan in 1885. The Métis there knew only one leader with sufficient qualifications to secure for them from the Ottawa Government redress for their long neglected grievances. They brought Riel from Montana Territory to lead their constitutional agitation in the Summer of 1885. Delay by Ottawa, futility, and frustration, were followed by the strategy of the forcible demonstration of the now mentally unbalanced Riel. A panicky Mounted Police decision, the uprising of the Indians, and open warfare between the Canadian Government and the Métis and Indians came next. The military result could never have been in serious doubt.

Once again Ontario and Quebec opposed each other over the issue of Louis Riel. During the actual suppressing of the Saskatchewan Rising there was relatively little Quebec protest against the anti-Métis war. But at the end of that event and throughout the Summer of 1885 when the Métis leader was being tried and condemned, a pro-Riel movement was gathering momentum in Quebec. It was to the benefit of the Opposition Party, the Liberals, to promote such a movement, for the Government appeared determined to allow the sentence of the Regina court to be carried out. Not until the eleventh hour, i.e., after Britain's Judicial Committee of the Privy Council had turned down Riel's final appeal for commutation of

sentence, did Quebec rise in wrath over the fate of the Métis Chief. It was too late to do anything effectually to save him. Accordingly, the Ministry, threatened with political death by Ontario and anxiously hopeful that Quebec fury would subside without lasting injury to Conservative strength there, issued instructions to the Regina sheriff to proceed with the hanging on November 16, 1885. This was a golden opportunity for the Liberals to oust the Conservatives from office by capturing the voting strength of Quebec. The popular anti-Ontario outcry of the French province was assisted, promoted, and even led by Quebec Liberals (Rouges). As passions cooled Quebec realized it could not succeed with an all French party. However, it rejected the "rope" party of John A. Macdonald. Throughout 1886 Conservative support weakened more and more. The elections of early 1887 brought victory for the Liberals. Thus the vengeance-on-Riel policy insisted upon by Ontario and to which Macdonald yielded resulted in the ultimate defeat of the Conservatives and the defection of the French province from their ranks.

Certain conclusions emerge from this record of Ontario-Quebec friction. Ontario desire for vengeance on Riel in 1870 was doomed to frustration on constitutional grounds because Canada had no authority in the Northwest prior to July of that year. On the other hand in 1885 Quebec's attempt, largely emotional, to deny Ontario its victim was on

weak ground, because the Métis Chief had led open rebellion and had promoted Indian participation therein in territory where Canada already possessed political authority. Further, the conclusion seems unavoidable that Riel was hanged in 1885 above all for what he had done in 1870, i.e., authorizing the execution of Orangeman Thomas Scott at Red River. His judicial conviction, of course, was for his part in the Saskatchewan Rising, but Ontario's group urge for vengeance and for the forestalling of commutation of sentence was inspired by its remembrance of vengeance denied in 1870. By this urge Macdonald was swayed. Again, the pro-Riel agitation was used by the Liberals to vault themselves into office. It was an adroit political manoeuvre. Such seem to be the main conclusions that emerge from this study.

