Plains."[20] By 1828 the Company had solidified its holdings at Red River, and Lower Fort Garry, which had been used primarily as a farming warehouse was turned into a military establishment "of some strength and of greater extent than Upper Fort Garry."[21]

In response to the Metis free trade impetus, the HBC perfected its machiavellian approach to the problem of controlling the Natives of the colony. The Company created a governing body that appeared to have some of the attributes of a pluralistic, democratic institution. However, it was merely a colonial administration run by Governor Simpson. It had some token Metis members, but they, like the rest of the council, were HBC appointees. This governing body was called the Council of Assiniboia. The District of Assiniboia, which included the Red River settlement, had been purchased by Lord Selkirk in 1811 for the purpose of creating a small agricultural colony for the HBC's use. The company had bought it back in 1835 for £82,000. This purchase was designed to confirm the Company's claim as the legal government of the country. The purchase legally enabled the HBC to establish the Council of Assiniboia, which could then act to curtail free trade. This action tended to bolster the company's legal claims based on the original HBC charter of 1670, which by the mid-1800s had come under attack from Canadian business interests in the East.

Until 1835, Rupert's Land had been administered by the London Committee through its colonial agent, the governor, who lived in the colony. There is no question that the appointed members of the council were just as powerless to make independent changes in the colony after 1835 as they had been before the Council was brought into existence. The council was designed simply as a means of co-opting the leaders of both the Metis and the settlers. In 1935, A.H. de Tremaudan wrote that:

> In 1835, the government of Assiniboia framed a constitution that provided for a Council of permanent Members recruited from among the notables of the colony. Supposedly, the people elected them; actually, the Company appointed them, and the Governor General of the Company was President of the Council. Other members included the Catholic and Anglican Bishops, upper-middle-class people of Fort Garry — a fort being built on the ruins of Fort Gibraltar — the Company doctor, several English "personalities" as well as five or six notables — friends of the Metis and some Metis themselves. This is how Cuthbert Grant became part of the Council when

> it was inaugurated on February 12, 1835 . . . At the first meeting, it was decided to organize a volunteer corps for the building of a prison and a Court House in the Fort Garry enclosure.[22]

Although the new Council of Assiniboia represented all the ethnic components of Red River, its priorities were clearly revealed during its first meeting. At the top of the list were a *Court House* and a *prison.*

Cuthbert Grant was appointed as a member of the Council in 1835. This was the final step in his co-optation by the HBC. The first Council consisted of:

President

Sir George Simpson, Governor of Rupert's Land

Councillors

Alexander Christie, Governor of Assiniboine.
The Right Reverend the Bishop of Julipolis — Bishop of the North West
The Reverend D.T. Jones, Chaplain of the Hon. Hudson's Bay Company
The Reverend William Cochran, Assistant Chaplain
James Bird, Esq., formerly Chief Factor Hudson's Bay Company
James Sutherland, Esq.
W.H. Cook, Esq.
John Pritchard, Esq.
Robert Logan, Esq.
Alexander Ross, Sheriff of Assiniboine
John McCullum, Coroner
John Burns, Esq., Medical Adviser
Andrew McDermot, Esq., Merchant
Cuthbert Grant, Warden of the Plains[23]

The Council, dominated by the governor, consisted of the spiritual and secular elite of Red River whose interests were directly connected to the Company. True, Cuthbert Grant was a prominent Metis, but by 1835 he had been reduced to being a tool of the HBC, which used him to police the Metis and to prevent free trade among them. The council was, as Tremaudan suggested, simply a colonial administration in the guise of a responsible government. It was used to maintain law and order in the colony under the terms of the HBC charter of 1670. Consequently, the Metis who were involved in free trade were arrested and jailed by Cuthbert Grant.

Despite the best efforts of the Council, however, free trade with St. Paul continued to grow. It had to. There was no way that large portions of the Metis population could survive in Rupert's Land without it. Because of the mercantile policies of controlled underdevelopment, Rupert's Land had no industrial or agricultural alternative to the fur trade. So, for those Metis who did not make their living directly from the buffalo hunt or as employees of the HBC, free trade – that is, trade deemed to be illegal, and punishable by imprisonment under HBC law – was their only hope for economic survival. HBC law was becoming unpopular in the colony however, since its aim was to support the Company's interests and those of the small White local elite.

By 1835 the Red River settlement had a population of about five thousand, of whom less than a thousand were of "pure" European ancestry. Four thousand people were either English or French Metis.[24] In the colony, one's ethnicity tended to enhance or to limit one's occupational potential. The English-speaking Metis were usually employees (on a part-time basis) of the HBC. But the French Metis, often making their living as hunters, were increasingly becoming free traders. Europeans were usually employed on a full-time basis, often in management positions for the Company. There were exceptions to this pattern. Many of the "mixed-bloods" with Highland Scottish names such as McKay, Sinclair, and Ross had moved out on to the plains for the buffalo hunt with their French-speaking cousins. Eventually, most of these people became French-speaking Catholics whose life style was indistinguishable from the other French Metis hunters.

By 1843 free trade had grown until it was beginning to seriously impinge upon the HBC's trade and profit. Once again, the HBC had to establish some fur trading posts that were not profitable simply to keep the new competition at bay. In June, 1843, Simpson complained to the Governor and Committee in London that:

> The district of the Lake of Two Mountains . . . under the charge of C.F. McTavish, is, I am sorry to say, very unproductive, barely paying expences . . . The only object in maintaining the district, since it is so unprofitable, is that it may serve to check the encroachment of small rival traders on the more valuable interior country.[25]

In this same communication Simpson complained that the lack of provisioning of some ports on the MacKenzie River had caused starvation

among the Indians who had come to depend upon the trade. In it, Simpson clearly revealed that he was aware that the Company's new policies were largely responsible for their deaths. But this was of minor importance. The struggle to stop free trade was paramount in his mind.[26] Simpson declared that:

> There is some illicit trade [at Red River] between the neighboring Indians and the Settlers; but this we cannot prevent, and now that the intercourse between the settlement and the United States has become frequent, it is probable that furs are occasionally conveyed thither. In order to check this traffic, we give high prices for furs.[27]

Clearly, by 1843, the growing free trade movement was seriously cutting into HBC profits. It had to be stopped. But how? The local state apparatus, the Council of Assiniboia, even with its courthouse and jail, had failed to check free trade. Likewise, the priests were unable to exert sufficient pressure on the Metis to make them stop their free trading activities.

Although the HBC was selective about the priests and ministers it let in to the colony, some priests and ministers did eventually side with the Metis in their free trade struggle with the Company. A rebel priest named Msgr. Belcourt had been loudly advocating free trade in the Metis communities. In fact, he was responsible for sending a petition to Queen Victoria in 1849 demanding the right to trade freely in Rupert's Land. Simpson simply had him expelled from Rupert's Land, as his following communication indicates:

> The Bishop of Montreal [has asked] for permission to form a permanent church establishment at Moose, but I have declined complying without your sanction, which I told the bishop I could not recommend being granted until they had recalled Mr. Belcourt, one of the priests of Red River, who has of late been exceedingly active in sowing the seeds of disaffection among the [Metis], and who was the framer of the calumnious petition to Her Majesty.[28]

Simpson concluded, "I think the spirit of Roman Catholicism is likely to have a very injurious tendency as regards the peace of the country and the interests of the fur trade."[29]

To add to Simpson's troubles, agricultural settlement was encroaching on the eastern frontier of Rupert's Land by 1847. Simpson complained to the London Committee:

> An agricultural settlement . . . at Sault de St. Marie, I regret to say is now beginning to grow up . . . in the immediate neighborhood of Fort William [now Thunder Bay, Ontario], which I am apprehensive may become troublesome to the business . . . but we shall of course do everything in our power to conciliate these people. These is no question, however, that the pursuits of civilized life do not harmonise with the fur trade, and that the business of the district must gradually decline as mining and agriculture progress.[30]

Time was beginning to run out for the HBC's mercantile empire in Rupert's Land. If the country was to continue to remain underdeveloped so that the fur staple could be profitably extracted, British troops would have to be brought in to oppress the Metis free traders.

As early as June, 1845, Simpson was convinced that a military force was needed to stop free trade in Red River. He wrote the governor and Committee,

> the Settlement, mainly through the instrumentality of the private dealers, is by no means in a satisfactory state . . . yet nothing but a military force can, in my opinion, permanently reconcile the enforcing of our rights, with the preserving of the public tranquility.[31]

Simpson wrote another letter to the governor and Committee later in 1845. This time his tone was much more strident. He informed them:

> on this subject of free trade, I consider the peace of the Settlement and the exclusive rights of the Company in very great danger, and have most earnestly to recommend that you urge the Government to afford military protection at Red River, as the only means of securing tranquility and enabling the authorities to administer the laws, which, in the absence of such forces, must become a dead letter.[32]

Simpson recognized that the state apparatus in Rupert's Land was essentially powerless without a military force to back it up.

Simpson was finally admitting that "tranquility" could only be obtained in the settlement through the use of force. Starving Indians and the destitute Metis would not likely remain tranquil for long when it became evident that it was Company policy that was causing their problems.

By 1846, the loyal Scottish farmers of Red River were becoming dissatisfied with HBC rule. The lack of markets for their agricultural

produce was making expansion impossible.[33] By and large, these farmers were not content to exist simply as subsistence-level farmers. All of these factors, coupled with a general fear of an invasion from the USA,[34] may have given credence to Simpson's continued requests for a substantial contingent of British troops from Red River. In 1846 eighteen officers and three hundred and twenty-nine men of the 6th Royal Regiment, with supporting artillery and engineers, arrived at Fort Garry, having completed the long journey from England via Hudson Bay, Lake Winnipeg and Red River.[35]

This contingent of troops did act successfully to restrict free trade and to stabilize the colony for the Company. But the cost of the upkeep of this force had to be shouldered by the HBC. The HBC had produced an agricultural food surplus capable of sustaining the troops, but, overall, their upkeep was deemed to be too much of a financial drain on the Company. So the troops were recalled to England after two years — and the free trade flourished again.

The governor and Council of Assiniboia developed an alternative plan for a military force: they would enlist a local militia. To this end, seventy men who were about to be pensioned from the British regular army were sent to Red River under the command of Major Coldwell in the autumn of 1848, "the object of this corps being that they should form the nucleus of the local force to be recruited in the Red River settlement, to support the enforcement of the laws of the Hudson's Bay Company."[36]

Once again the Company's plan for a military force failed. There was simply too much discontent in the colony with the Company's policies. The local population would not be recruited into a unit that was being designed for their own oppression. This failure to recruit a local militia spelled the beginning of the end of the HBC's reign over Rupert's Land. Without a strong military force the governor could no longer enforce the Company's laws.

In 1849 the Company's fading power was challenged when the Metis defied Adam Thom, the HBC magistrate in Red River. Several young men had been jailed for trading in furs, then released on bail. The Metis, under the leadership of Jean-Louis Riel (father of the famous Louis Riel), decided to use this particular case to test the ability of the HBC to enforce its laws in Red River. And Jean-Louis Riel was no ordinary man.

In 1839 Jean-Louis Riel had been sent to Quebec to study the conservative doctrines of the Church under the direction of the Oblate Fathers. After only two years in Quebec he returned to the West, filled

site of Minot, was to be the biggest battle ever engaged in by the Metis until their defeat in 1885 by Canadian forces.

On the evening of July 12, 1851, the smaller of the two columns, containing some seventy hunters, reached the Grand Coteau of the Missouri River basin. Here five Metis scouts sighted a very large camp of Sioux. They rode back and warned the hunting party, who quickly turned the convoy into a military barricade. They placed their carts in a circle, wheel to wheel, with the shafts tilted in the air towards the enemy. Packs, hides, saddles and dried meat were piled between and under the carts. They staked the horses and oxen in the centre of the circle. Trenches were dug under the carts for the women and children, and rifle pits and trenches were quickly dug outside the perimeter of the circular barricade. Here the Metis marksmen awaited the Sioux.

In the meantime, the five scouts who had first spied the Sioux rode into their encampment to parley, but they were quickly taken prisoner by the Indians. But two Metis escaped on their swift buffalo runners, dodging through heavy enemy fire. The remaining three Metis, named Whiteford, McGillis and Malaterre, were held by the Sioux. Then three Sioux approached the Metis barricade, insisting that they had no intention to attack, and that their three captives would be freed in the morning. But it was a trick. The Sioux only wanted to determine the strength of the Metis hunting party.

The Metis council made a decision to fight as soon as the next Sioux band approached, even though such action would cost the lives of the three prisoners. Failure to fight, however, would result in the annihilation of all. Counting the boys old enough to handle a gun (this included the young Gabriel Dumont), there were seventy-six Metis riflemen at the battle. These Metis were sure that they could not survive the attack and resolved to sell their lives dearly. Two runners were sent under cover of darkness to inform the main party of their situation.

At first light some 2000 mounted Sioux appeared along the entire crest of the Coteau, their spears and guns glinting in the early morning sunlight. In their midst could be seen the three prisoners. Thirty Metis rode out to negotiate for their return. One of the prisoners, young McGillis, kicked his horse into a gallop and escaped. As he joined the mounted Metis, they wheeled and rode hard for the barricade.

Inside the Metis circle, Father LaFleche held high his crucifix and walked from marksman to marksman, urging them on. Volley after volley, fired with military precision and discipline, stopped the first Sioux

charge, delivering heavy casualties. Then the Sioux regrouped and came on again, flinging themselves against the Metis rifle fire. This charge too was stopped, and the Sioux withdrew, appalled at their heavy losses.

On the next day, July 14, the Metis attempted to retreat towards the main party of hunters. In the early hours of the morning the circular barricade was abandoned and the carts advanced in four columns. But the Sioux gave chase, and another circle was quickly formed with the carts. Rifle emplacements were again made outside the perimeter of the barricade. For five hours the Sioux pressed their attack. As the smoke and dust began again to obscure the landscape, Father LaFleche once more exhorted his charges to die bravely. But, remarkably, they did not die. They were rescued by the main body of hunters, who were by now supported by many Saulteaux, traditional enemies of the Sioux.

The whole adventure had cost only one Metis life — the unfortunate Malaterre, who was found with thirty arrows in him. Incredibly, Whiteford, too, had escaped. The battle of the Grand Coteau with its decisive victory established new territory for the Metis buffalo hunters, and helped in great measure to secure the precarious trade route through Sioux territory to St. Paul.

Following the battle of the Grand Coteau, screeching Red River carts travelled incessantly between Red River and St. Paul during the summer and the early months of fall. Millions of buffalo hides were traded to the St. Paul merchants through "illicit" free trade. The following statistics show the magnitude of this trade. The figures are rounded off; they represent an approximation of the buffalo taken by all Metis hunters and sold in the American market. HBC purchases were also included in these figures.

From 1855 to 1859	2,377,050 buffaloes
From 1860 to 1864	2,905,700 buffaloes
From 1865 to 1869	2,716,896 buffaloes
The overall total of buffalo kills from 1855 to 1869 was, then,	7,999,645.[40]

Although some of these buffaloes were used to fill HBC needs in Rupert's Land, most went to the US market. In the USA, coats were made from buffalo hides, and the tongues were sold as delicacies in the better restaurants of the American East. The major market, however, resulted from a breakthrough in tanning technology that enabled the hides to be processed into leather. This was the leather used in the thousands

of miles of belting that drove the machinery of America.[41]

The period from 1850-1870 was the high point of the Metis free trade movement. It established the Metis as a new and dynamic group in the West, and it laid the economic foundations of the Metis nation. Like the USA, the embryonic Metis nation came into being through the free trade struggle against a foreign monopoly. The Metis, too, emerged victorious in this struggle, and were therefore recognized as a courageous and dynamic force in the Canadian West — a force to be reckoned with.

During the heyday of Metis free trade, the culture flourished in the Canadian West. During this brief golden era a unique Quebecois flavour was to be found among the Metis of Red River. These *bois brules* dressed in the long black French capote, adorned with the colorful Quebec sash. They danced Highland Scottish jigs and reels with brightly adorned, moccasined feet.

At home in Red River, the French Metis seemed as domesticated as their English Metis cousins. But on the plains they became a paramilitary force that combined the fierceness of the Plains Indians with the rigid discipline of a Napoleonic cavalry unit.

The Metis buffalo hunt was no haphazard affair. It was a complex, democratically run business. The first act of business for the hundreds of people involved in a buffalo hunt was the election of officers for the hunt. Ten captains were elected by the men of the camp. One of these was named as the leader of the hunt. Each captain commanded at least 10 "soldiers" who assisted with the maintenance of discipline and order.

Although the Metis were a friendly and tolerant people, discipline on the hunt could be severe. The rules were few in number, but they had to be obeyed. These rules became known as "the law of the prairie," and they were the basis of 19th century Metis law. These regulations, established in 1840, were recorded:

1. No buffalo to be run on the Sabbath Day.
2. No party to fork off or lag, or go before, without permission.
3. No person or party to run buffalo before the general order.
4. Every captain, with his men, in turn to patrol camp and keep guard.
5. For the first trespass against these laws, offender is to have his saddle and bridle cut up.
6. For the second offence, his coat is to be taken off his back and be cut up.
7. For the third offence, the offender is to be flogged.

8. Any person convicted of theft, even to the value of a sinew, to be brought to the middle of the camp, and the crier is to call out his or her name three times, adding the word "Thief" each time.[42]

The Metis did not often break these laws. They were too widely accepted as legitimate laws that were necessary for group survival. But, unfortunately, Metis survival depended upon many other forces in the New World, some of which were beyond their control. One such force was developing in the USA.

South of the 49th parallel, the United States of America began to look hungrily at the Canadian North West. The doctrine of manifest destiny held that American territorial expansion was not only inevitable, but was divinely ordained. The term "manifest destiny" was first used in 1845 by a fiery American journalist named John O'Sullivan, when he wrote an editorial supporting the annexation of Texas. The phrase was soon picked up by American politicians and used to justify American territorial expansion. By the end of the 19th century, the doctrine was used as justification for the acquisition of colonies in the Caribbean, and for the conquest of British North America north of the 49th parallel.

Governor Simpson was aware of American ambitions for territorial expansion into HBC country. In 1846, he used the fear of American invasion to lend strength to his demands for British troops, needed to protect the Company's monopoly from the internal inroads of the free trade movement.[43] Nevertheless, his efforts to obtain troops from England failed in the end, and Simpson was forced to rely upon the local population for defense. But the French Metis buffalo hunters were the only commissariat in Rupert's Land, and they were no friends of the HBC. But neither were they loyal to the aggressive young republic south of the 49th parallel.

The Metis had a political interest in keeping Canada separate from the USA. The republic to the south had never been kind to the native population. Following the American Civil War (April 12, 1861 to April 9, 1865), the government had turned its modern war machine against the Indians of the West. Those who did not capitulate and settle on reserves were annihilated. The California Indians were inundated by a flood of Europeans during the California gold rush of 1848.

The same process was occurring across the American prairie West through agricultural settlement. During the decade of the 1850's, 150,000

settlers poured into the Dakota and Minnesota territories adjacent to the Red River settlement. This rapid settlement led to a war with the powerful Sioux nation. In 1863 the American General Sibley's troops defeated Little Crow of the Santee Sioux, but not before hundreds of Indians and settlers had died violently. In 1864 the Cheyenne and Arapaho were defeated at Sand Creek, and the Indian populations were massacred. This defeat resulted in a change in battle tactics for the Plains Indians. They no longer sought to confront the US forces in head-on open warfare. Instead, the Indians employed hit-and-run guerilla tactics. Although this was a far more effective style of warfare for them, it was not sufficient to enable them to defend themselves against the formidable forces of the American state.

The gatling gun (a large, hand-cranked machine gun capable of intense rapid fire) was invented for, and brought to bear on, the Indians of the American West. Despite the brilliant guerilla tactics employed by such leaders as Geronimo of the Apache, and Red Cloud and Sitting Bull of the Plains Sioux, the firepower of the Americans made Indian defeat inevitable.

The Americans had a conscious policy involving the destruction of the buffalo herds so as to bring about the destruction of the entire political economy of the Plains Indians whose lives and culture had long depended upon them.[44] Clearly, there was no place in such a society for Metis fur traders and buffalo hunters. For better or for worse their destiny was to remain tied to that of the HBC and the Canadian nation.

Throughout the 1830s HBC profits had remained high. Control over the vast supply of furs in America enabled the Company to control the world market to a large extent and thus ensure high profits for its shareholders. Of course, a total world-wide monopoly of the fur trade could not be obtained, since the British Empire of the day did not control the entire world. Some peripheral fur production still remained in Finland and other out-of-the-way regions. American competition, however, was reduced by an "arrangement" involving the bribery of an official of the American Fur Company: the HBC paid the president of the Company — a man referred to as Mr. Crooks — £300 annually for his part in curtailing his company's operations north and west of Lake Superior.[45]

Just as the HBC was not able to establish a perfect monopoly in the marketplace, so too it was never able to achieve perfect control over the supply of furs in North America. The Metis free trade movement prevented such control and it remained, therefore, a significant historical

force in the Canadian West throughout the middle of the 19th century.

So long as the HBC controlled the lion's share of the supply, it could and did manipulate the market to its own advantage. Control over the supply enabled the HBC to be always in the winning position in the supply-demand cycle. But the free trade movement, via St. Paul, threatened HBC control of the marketplace. After the Sayer trial of 1849, sufficient quantities of fur were reaching the free market to interfere with HBC control over prices.

By 1849, a combination of events was jeopardizing HBC profits in Rupert's Land. Styles were changing in Europe. Furs were no longer as important as symbols of wealth among the chic members of the middle classes. Furthermore, fur resources, particularly beaver, were nearing depletion. Beaver had been over-trapped for a century or more.

Since the fur trade was becoming unprofitable, the HBC could not hope to retain social control over the inhabitants of Rupert's Land for much longer without a large, expensive military force stationed in the colony. To add to the Company's political problems, other business interests in the Canadian East were agitating for the annexation of Rupert's Land so that they could begin investing in a new agricultural colony in the western regions of the territory.

Simpson could see as early as 1848 that time was running out for the HBC in Rupert's Land. The following communication from Donald Ross, chief factor of Norway House, summed up the HBC's dilemma:

> I have for some time past been under the impression that it would be more beneficial to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company and those connected with their service, to give up at once all their Territories, privileges and exclusive rights of trade into the hands of Government on receiving some reasonable equivalent for the same, than to continue holding them on their present rather precarious and not very profitable footing, struggling against hope and as it were stemming a current which it will be impossible to surmount or withstand.[46]

By 1856 profits had dropped further, and the agitation in the Canadian East had grown. The West was now needed for investment and settlement purposes by the Canadian merchants and industrialists of Montreal and Toronto. These groups were now clamouring for the annexation of Rupert's Land. Simpson outlined his response to all this agitation in a letter to his friend, John Shepherd:

> The present agitation appears to me very opportune to enable the Company to make a good bargain with the Government for the surrender of the Charter, and One Million compensation I should consider so much clear gain, as in my opinion we could conduct our business nearly as well without as with the Charter, while the surrender of it would relieve us both of much outlay and public odium, and the annexation of the country to Canada would put us in a better position as regards the protection of life and property than at present, in as much as we should thereby have the benefit of the laws properly and efficiently supported and enforced.[47]

Clearly, Simpson recognized that the Company could no longer control the Metis. A state apparatus fully equipped with a military force would be needed for that. If the Company was going to continue the fur trade, *Canada* would have to oppress the Metis for the HBC.

In the meantime, the Metis continued to develop as an independent nation in the West. Indeed, the free trade struggle had inculcated a sense of nationalism among the French Metis. They saw themselves as a "nation" even though they had not established national institutions. Indeed, the Metis concept of nationhood was not fully formed, but the free trade movement had created the economic basis for Metis nationhood, complete with the emergence of a small Metis middle class.

Ox cart train at 3rd and Washington, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1858.
photo credit: Minnesota Historical Society.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONFEDERATION PLAN AND THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR MANITOBA

Just as the manufacturers and merchants of the Canadian East had plans for the development of Rupert's Land, so too did the Metis of the West have plans for their own homeland. In the main, the Metis wished to continue in the old way, hunting buffaloes, trapping and trading with both the HBC and the merchants of St. Paul. The Metis did not have long range plans for commercial agriculture, although subsistence farming continued to play a significant role in their economy.

But time was running out for the old ways. The aggressive policies of the American federal government towards western expansion and settlement were paying off handsomely in profits. This model was being watched closely by Canadian developers, who were preparing to emulate their American counterparts through the acquisition of Metis lands north of the 49th parallel.

The process of immigration and land settlement in the American West was inextricably linked to the construction of railways. This was, overall, a process that generated enormous profits as villages, towns and cities mushroomed along the new stretches of rail line to the West. This period of rapid population growth following American rail line construction across the Midwest to the Pacific rim stands as one of the most dynamic periods of colonization in Western history.

In 1815, John Stevens of Hoboken, New Jersey, was granted the first railroad charter in the USA. By 1837 there were still only 37 kilometers of operating line in the USA, with 16 kilometers operating out of Charleston, West Virginia, and 21 kilometers out of Baltimore. By 1839 there were operating lines in all the middle Atlantic states and all the New England states except Vermont, and by 1840 the eastern seaports of Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston were joined by rail on a north-south axis. By 1857, before westward expansion

began, US rail line construction matched that of all other countries of the world combined. In that year the USA had about one half of the world's railroad mileage. Then came the Civil War.

After the American Civil War (1861-1865), the north-south axis of US trade, which had depended heavily upon river boats, shifted to an east-west axis of rail traffic. Rail lines in the USA spread from a total of 56,000 kilometers in 1865 to 406,000 kilometers by 1916. There were no less than 112,000 kilometers of track laid across the western states during the 1880s. Rail line investment rose from $2.5 billion in 1870 to $18 billion by 1917. Revenues climbed from $300 million in 1865 to $4 billion in 1917.[1]

On May 10, 1869, the first rail line to the Pacific coast of the United States was completed with a golden spike ceremony at Promontory, Utah. During the next quarter-century, four railways were completed to the US West Coast. They were the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern Pacific, the Southern Pacific, and the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe. Clearly, western settlement and railway construction created a booming economy that seemed to assure permanent prosperity in America throughout the last half of the nineteenth century.

But these were also years of rampant corruption and labour strife in America.[2] In all, a total of 131 million acres of public land were given, in the form of grants by the American federal government, to owners of private railway companies.[3] This land was located mainly from Illinois west to the Pacific Ocean. As was later the case with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the recipient railway company received its lands in alternate sections along its route.

The farmers of the American West were exploited unmercifully by the American railways and grain marketing companies.[4] American farmers of the West organized against such exploitation by forming into semi-political alliances. In 1867, they organized the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry. This was a union of farmers committed to the struggle for a fair deal with a government that sided openly with the railway owners, bankers and merchants whose monopolies exploited the farmers.[5] This union grew to a membership of 800,000 by 1875. As well, by 1875 there were massive and brutal confrontations between the American military and railway workers attempting to organize unions in Pittsburgh, Buffalo, St. Louis and Chicago.

By contrast, Rupert's Land, north of the 49th parallel, remained virtually untouched by the "white man" until 1869. The HBC's mercantile

policies of controlled underdevelopment had kept agricultural and industrial expansion out of its western regions. On the endless Canadian prairie, the sea of grass waved undisturbed in the wind. The Indians still hunted immense herds of buffalo; and Red River, on the eastern limits of the prairie, remained little more than a speck on the face of the limitless western landscape.

But these peaceful scenes were not destined to remain for long. While Canadian industrialists and manufacturers in the East made plans to colonize the West, American politicians looked hungrily at the vast untapped wealth of Rupert's Land. "Manifest destiny" had provided the impetus for the American annexation of Texas and war with Mexico. It was possible that Rupert's Land might be next on the list of American acquisitions.[6]

There was another group of people who might form the nucleus of an American invasion attempt on Canada. They were the Irish Fenians, some of whom were just across the border from Red River, under the leadership of Bill O'Donoghue. O'Donoghue, a tall, slim man with a magnetic personality, watched and waited, organizing politically for the American takeover of Rupert's Land. As a child in Ireland, O'Donoghue had barely survived the horrors of the Irish potato famine. By the time O'Donoghue set sail for America, the famine had taken the lives of over a million of his compatriots.

The Fenians thrived on hatred for all things British. For years they had carried out raids across the Canadian border in the East from bases in the USA, in an attempt to exact revenge against the English. They wanted nothing less than the acquisition of Britain's possessions in North America.

Now, the Fenians were, as American citizens, acquiring substantial political power in the republic and consequently represented a real threat to the British colony in the Canadian West. Thomas F. Meagher, a brilliant orator, became the governor of Montana in the early 1860s, lending Irish passion and drive to the term "manifest destiny" as it applied to Rupert's Land. Even without the formal co-operation of the US government, the Fenians in America could put five thousand well-trained fighting men into the field.[7]

The Fenian threat became tangible in the Canadian West when Bill O'Donoghue arrived in 1868. O'Donoghue worked as a teacher of mathematics at the Catholic college in St. Boniface. When he met Louis Riel, however, he joined forces with him and pressed hard to have Riel

work for the annexation of the Canadian West to the American Republic. But the people of Red River, both French and English, preferred British citizenship, so O'Donoghue's efforts failed.

The real threat to the Metis of Rupert's Land materialized throughout the 1860s not in America, but in eastern Canada. Canada was still a backward colony during the 1860s. The great majority of its people lived on the land. Of the 3,700,000 Canadians in the 1871 census, 80% were rural; that is, they were living outside of any incorporated city, town or village. Canada had not yet entered into the industrial revolution as the USA and Great Britain had done. Throughout the 1860s, plans to change this were being developed in the East, as merchants and industrialists sought ways and means to copy the American success story through settlement of the West. Indeed, Canadian capitalists who had earned fortunes through the now defunct NWCo. had no other way of investing the capital that had been earned through the fur trade.

As fur trade profits declined sharply in the mid-1850s, Great Britain dropped its long-standing preferential trade agreement with the Canadian colony. This left Canadian merchants and industrialists with no market, save for that very limited agricultural market in the Canadian East.

For decades, eastern Canadian business interests had attempted without success to penetrate the lucrative American frontier market. By 1860 it was clear that the backward Canadian commercial system could not compete with that of industrialized America.[8] Even during good times, Canadian raw materials such as lumber, fish and furs were shipped out to England or to the United States to be processed in exchange for manufactured goods. By the 1860s, however, some eastern Canadians were attempting to change this.

With no hope of entering the American frontier market, and with trade to Great Britain reduced by the end of the preferential trade agreement, the emerging Canadian industrialists had only one option left: the creation of an internal agricultural colony in the Canadian West.

Canadian commercial interests had learned an important lesson from the American frontier experience: they recognized that prosperity was tied to immigration. Canadian attempts to attract immigrants during the 1850s had failed. By 1860, New York was receiving seven immigrants to every immigrant arriving in Quebec.[9] In fact, thousands of Canadians were emigrating each year to the booming USA. It was in this context of severe economic stagnation that the Canadian confederation plan was developed. Although this plan did not solidify and take shape as the

"national policy" until 1878, it had slowly been formed during the decade prior to Confederation by politicians, merchants, industrialists and certain railroad barons.

By the late 1850s, Montreal merchants were abandoning the fur trade and were directing their efforts towards the formation of an agricultural investment frontier in the West.[10] Canadian Confederation was, in a very direct way, part of the plan to create a captive market in the West for the eastern merchants and manufacturers. Economic historian Vernon C. Fowke wrote:

> The British North America Act of 1867 established the political constitution, the first step needed for the elaboration and implementation of the national policy, and created the federal government, the major instrument by means of which the plan was to be carried out.[11]

Central to the goals of the confederation plan was the creation of an internal agricultural colony in the Canadian West. The plan was designed to enable Canadian industry, protected by high tariffs, to expand in this captive market. Capital would thus be generated in the West to finance eastern Canada's industrial growth.

In order to guarantee the creation of a submissive internal agricultural colony in the West the Canadian government, taking its cues from both the British and American governments, tightly controlled the whole settlement program. This would ensure the controlled underdevelopment of the West in much the same way that the policies of the HBC had, using wheat instead of fur as the staple commodity. The West would be populated using much the same strategy as the Americans had used: the settlement plan would involve the construction of a railroad, privately owned, but largely publicly financed. Immigrants would be brought in by the hundreds of thousands to produce the new staple, wheat. Industry would not be allowed to flourish in the West, so that the colony would remain dependent upon the Canadian East for all its industrial needs.

Thus, a strange historical phenomenon was taking shape in Canada. Canada, itself a colony of Great Britain, was creating its own internal colony. Confederation in 1867 did not really deliver responsible government to Canada, although it did affect such an intent. The British North America Act (BNA Act) of 1867 was not designed to set up a free and democratic society in Canada. The Act did not guarantee the rights of women, Indians, or working people who did not own property. Only

men who were substantial property owners could vote in an election.[12] All women, all Indians, and all working men who did not own property were not allowed into the decision-making political process — not even by means of a ballot.

The BNA Act did, however, guarantee Britain's continued political domination of the Canadian colony. The Act decreed that:

1. Executive authority over Canada resided in the British Crown.
2. The Queen was the Commander-in-Chief of the army in Canada.[13]

Under the terms of the Act, the Governor General had enough power to ensure his control of the colony; his powers were real, not merely symbolic, as is the case today. The Governor General was appointed by the Queen; he, in turn, appointed the members of the Privy Council, who held their appointments for life. The Governor General also appointed the members of the Upper House (the Senate, where real power resided during the period of Confederation). The provinces were under the control of the Lieutenant Governors, who were also appointed by the Governor General. To be eligible for appointment to the Upper House, potential Senators had to be British subjects who owned lands valued at $4,000 clear of debt, which represented substantial wealth in 1867, more than a working man was likely to accrue in his lifetime. Only the members of the Lower House (the House of Commons) were elected.

These arrangements were welcomed by the emerging Canadian business elite because they acquired their own state apparatus — a government and an administrative bureaucracy — that would enable them to finance a transcontinental railway with public money. And it would enable them to control the West, where any form of representative government was to be denied.

The plans to turn the West into an agricultural colony of the East materialized after 1857 when the British and pre-confederation Canadian governments co-sponsored an expedition to the West. The expedition was designed to determine the agricultural potential of large regions in Rupert's Land. Captain John Palliser, a British geographer and explorer, was the expedition's leader. He was accompanied by J. Dawson and Henry Youle Hind, naturalists who were assigned the tasks of collecting information on soil fertility and climatic conditions.[14]

Henry Youle Hind produced a report based on this study that was widely used by the Canadian government in putting together its plans to settle the West. The report, printed in 1858 and reprinted in 1860, was also circulated widely as a means of advertising the West to potential

immigrants. Hind described the glories of the Red River Settlement and the prairies beyond as

> a vast ocean which must be seen in its extraordinary aspects before it can be rightly valued . . . It must be seen at sunrise, when the boundless plain suddenly flashes with rose-coloured light, at high noon, when refraction swells into the forms of distant ranges, and finally at sunset when, just as the huge ball of fire is dipping below the horizon, all sorts of wonders are visible.[15]

Hind's report served several functions: it evaluated the agricultural potential of the West, advertised the West to would-be immigrants and, finally, it provided the ideological rationale for the supression of the Natives. In his report, Hind repeatedly referred to both the Indians and the Metis as "slothful" and "lazy." He concluded that the West was being underutilized because of the inferiority of the Natives. What was required, he felt, was immigration, because only an "energetic" and "civilized" race could appreciate the qualities and capabilities of the vast land.[16] The practical advice given in the Dawson-Hind report seems to have been followed almost to the letter by the Macdonald government, which was responsible for settling the West.

Dawson and Hind reported that the land between the great Laurentian Shield and the Rocky Mountains consisted of two distinct regions, the semi-arid southern plains which were considered too dry to sustain a healthy agricultural economy, and the northern fringe of the prairies referred to as "the fertile belt." The fertile belt ran in a northwesterly direction from Red River through what is now Prince Albert to Edmonton, then west to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The belt was fairly wide and included such present-day communities as Yorkton and the Battlefords.

The settlement of the West was clearly no haphazard affair, as the whole process was carried off with scientific and political precision. The Palliser expedition provided both the practical and ideological bases for western settlement. The federal government, created and jointly controlled by the British and Canadian elite, was able to rationalize, organize and finance the settlement of the West for their benefit, not for that of the settlers and certainly not for the benefit of the people already living in the West. The Red River resistance, led by Louis Riel, was the first, but by no means the last, confrontation between westerners and a federal

government determined to go ahead with its policies irrespective of western discontent.

Native Resistance to the Confederation Plan

Unlike the authoritarian social structure emerging in Canada, the Metis of Rupert's Land throughout their brief history had an informal but democratic form of government. Political leaders were often selected on the basis of ability and personal charisma, although they were usually men who had some formal (European) education. There were few families in Red River with such education. Jean-Louis Riel, "the miller of the Seine," was one of the few men in Red River recognized as an intellectual by the Metis. His abilities and intelligence had placed him into a position of prominence among the Metis during the free trade struggles of the 1840s. Deeply religious (as were most of the Metis), schooled in the philosophy of the Catholic classical tradition, he nevertheless maintained a liberal approach to economics and politics.

Jean-Louis Riel married Julie Lagimodiere, daughter of the first European woman to make her home in the West. Julie's father, Jean-Baptiste Lagimodiere, was well off by Metis standards, and was well-connected to the French-Catholic elite in Red River. The Riel family lived much the same religious lifestyle as other petit bourgeois elements that were developing among the Metis of Red River during the 1850s and 1860s. The Riels combined commercial milling with subsistence farming, a fact that became significant when financial difficulties arose and the mill became insolvent at various times throughout Jean-Louis Riel's short life.[17] Although Jean-Louis was well educated, his wife, Julie, was illiterate. She was a devout Catholic, however, and saw to it that all her children, including the girls, received some education from the Catholic clergy.

Louis Riel was born to Jean-Louis and Julie at St. Boniface, on October 22, 1844. He was the eldest in the family that eventually numbered eleven children. Louis Riel was a serious child and shortly after entering school he acquired recognition as a sensitive and brilliant scholar who was "constantly at the head of his class."[18] He was described as "kindly and most charitable, often sharing his meal with a poorer fellow student."[19] Young Louis was such a remarkable child that he was soon

taken in hand by a Catholic priest for special tutoring. In 1854, he, along with Louis Schmidt, Daniel McDougall and Joseph Nolin (all Metis boys) were, because of their abilities, put into special classes held at Bishop Tache's residence. With Bishop Tache's support, Riel and his fellow students were expected to become the Metis intelligentsia in the West. This was not left to chance; these boys continued to receive special tutoring at Red River while the Catholic clergy made plans to provide them with advanced education later in the Province of Quebec.

In 1854, at the age of 10, Louis Riel, along with Schmidt and McDougall, set off to take classes in Montreal. They made the 28-day journey by Red River cart to St. Paul, Minnesota, and then boarded a train for the one week's journey to Montreal, the bustling French Canadian seaport on the St. Lawrence River. Once again, Louis Riel distinguished himself as a rather unorthodox but nevertheless good scholar. He quite naturally suffered from loneliness, having been taken from a large, loving family and transported hundreds of miles from home at the tender age of ten. Nevertheless, Louis and his fellow Red River classmates adjusted well to the strange urban surroundings, and they settled in to the years of study that went with the Catholic classical education of the period.

Jean-Louis Riel died suddenly on January 21, 1864, on his wedding anniversary. The shock of the untimely death of his father left young Louis despondent. But he bravely completed his classes that year, and began studies in law after the director of the college decided that he would not be suited to a career in the priesthood. Shortly afterward, however, Louis abandoned his career in law as the longing to return to the West became stronger in him. In 1868, Louis Riel set out on the long journey back to Red River, the place that he had left as a child such a long time ago. He was eager to see his mother and his sisters and brothers once more. When he arrived in Red River, however, it had changed almost beyond recognition.

What he found was a land stripped bare and overrun by locusts "grasshoppers," as they are called in the West. Locusts lay a foot thick on the surface of the Red River that year, filling the air with a foul stench. The crops were in ruins and the buffalo hunt had been poor. The entire population was on short rations, and genuine famine threatened. Despite the desolation, however, Riel knew that this land with its untapped wealth was coveted by both Canada and the USA. Local people were not only worried about where their next meal was coming from, they were filled

with uncertainty about their political future as well.

Shortly after his return to Red River, Louis Riel found himself in his father's old leadership position in the community. As the son of the charismatic Jean-Louis Riel, the leadership of the Metis was virtually thrust upon him. Louis voiced his desire to follow his father as a leader of the Metis: "I shall continue the work so nobly started by my father. He was a benefactor of our people: I shall try to walk in his footsteps." [20]

Upon settling in Red River, Riel found himself alone in his leadership role, for his old schoolmate, Louis Schmidt, had purchased some Red River carts and started a business trucking goods to and from St. Cloud, Minnesota. Riel spent much of his time refuting the stories in the Nor'Wester, a newspaper that advocated the Canadian takeover of Red River. Dr. John Christian Schultz and Charles Mair of the Canadian Party were the primary exponents of the paper's vehemently anti-French and anti-Catholic policies.

The Nor'Wester was an important mouthpiece for the Canadian Party. It had been taken over by Dr. Schultz two years before Riel returned to Red River and although the paper changed hands, it remained under the control of Schultz and his Canadian Party. The paper's owners were not satisfied with simply pushing for a Canadian takeover; they were also involved in undermining the whole Metis way of life: the language, the religion, the culture, and the economic base. Advertisements in the Nor'Wester, circulated in eastern Canada, were bringing immigrants (mainly speculators) to the West.

By 1869 other outsiders were making their presence felt in Red River. Spurred on by Dr. Schultz, government surveyors trespassed across Metis property in Red River in an arrogant manner, surveying the lands for purposes the Metis could only speculate about. These surveyors, led by Colonel John Stoughton Dennis, had arrived in Red River in July of 1869. There was no question as to who sent them; they were under the orders of the federal government. Yet the federal government had failed to inform the Metis of its intention to survey their lands. When the Metis tried to stop the surveyors, or ask them what business they were about, the surveyors replied that they were under orders, and were simply obeying those orders to survey the land.

It was not long before the Metis became aware that the surveyors' intentions were not honourable. While the surveyors trespassed on Metis land without concern for the occupants, the managers of the survey parties

were often engaged in securing choice lands for their own personal acquisition.[21]

On October 11, 1869, surveyor Webb and his party, on a survey mission, trespassed across the land of Andre Nault, Riel's cousin. Nault challenged the party, and denied them the right to be on his property. When the party refused to listen to him, Nault decided to resist them physically, and sent his son for help. A hasty meeting of Metis neighbours was called. The participants called upon Riel for advice. Late in the afternoon Riel led this small group of Metis to face the survey party still camped on Nault's property. A request was made to stop the survey. Webb refused. Riel placed his foot on the survey chain that lay stretched across the ground. The others lined up behind him, each with a foot on the chain. The survey party, faced with such stout resistance, retreated.[22] This single action, carried out with gentlemanly firmness, established Riel as not just an intellectual leader, but a man of action — a political leader in a time of uncertainty and imminent crisis.

During the crisis caused by the illegal surveying of Metis lands, the official governing agent in Red River, the Council of Assiniboia, remained silent on the issue, although some HBC officials expressed alarm at the premature procedures being carried out by the agents of the federal government. Government functionaries were apparently taking possession of the land and exercising the rights of ownership *before* the land had been officially purchased from the HBC and transferred to Canada.

At the same time, the federal government was connecting the colony to the East by means of a road — the Dawson Road. This project was under the direction of Mr. J. Snow, who was recruiting in Red River for the construction of the western portion of the road. The road construction was touted as a relief project to assist those people who were in need of help to pull them through the famine of 1869.

The English-speaking Metis of Red River were no less alarmed than the French at the government's actions in the settlement. At this point, despite their religious and cultural differences, there was a good chance that the French and English Metis could unite against the federal government's takeover. It appeared that the English-speaking Metis, too, were to be dispossessed of their lands. They wrote the federal government,

> "We have great confidence in the coming administration of the Canadian Government, yet we find it strange that no one thinks of consulting us to learn of our feelings toward the entry

> of our country into the Dominion; it seems extraordinary that the character of the new government was decided in Ottawa, without any concern as to what we might think." [23]

The majority of the Red River English did, however, acquiesce to the wishes of the federal government's agents in Red River. A.H. de Tremaudan explains why:

> One might be surprised that, despite its uneasiness, the English element at Red River Settlement ended up by accepting the state of affairs, while the Metis refused to submit to the Canadian invasion . . . It is important to remember that the conditions were not the same [for both groups]. In short, for the [HBC's] employees who had emigrated mainly from the British Isles, for Lord Selkirk's settlers of the same origin, and naturally for the Canadian employees, the change from the patriarchal government of the Assiniboia Council to that of Ottawa was of no great importance. For these men it meant only a modification of the existing administration or a slightly different legislation from that which had governed them in the past.[24]

There were other reasons for British acquiescence and French resistance to the Canadian government's premature takeover. It soon appeared that the English-speaking employees of the HBC, along with the new Canadian immigrants, *would* have a place in the new order of things. In fact, the speculators among the new immigrants stood to make a fortune in land deals once the territory was annexed by Canada. Generally, there was less mistrust of Canada among the English Metis than among the French, who, once again, bore the brunt of persecution that had distinct religious and cultural components. Indeed, the French-speaking Metis were the ones whose land and livelihood seemed most in jeopardy.[25]

In the early fall of 1869, there were rumours that Canada was sending a new Governor to take over Rupert's Land, even though no deal had been finalized between the HBC and Canada. During this period of doubt and uncertainty, Riel emerged as a strong public figure, a man capable of passionate and brilliant oratory. By now he was the unquestioned leader of the Metis, and, as well, he had the support of many of the more independent-minded English in the community. One such man, a magistrate named John Bruce, joined an association sponsored by Riel to deal with the political problems created by the takeover of the federal government.

This association, known as the National Committee of the Metis, drafted a notice to the new Governor, Mr. William McDougall, informing him that he must not enter the territory without the permission of the National Committee, by order of John Bruce, President, and Louis Riel, Secretary. On October 25, Riel (the real power behind the National Committee) was called upon by the Council of Assiniboia to explain why the letter had been written to McDougall. Bruce graciously accompanied Riel to the meeting with the Council, where Riel laid out the following grievances:

1. That his compatriots were satisfied with the existing government and wanted no other;
2. That they did not accept the fact that Canada could come and impose a new government on them without consulting them;
3. That they were determined not to give entry to the governor sent to them by no matter what power, outside the Hudson's Bay Company or the Crown which had appointed him, unless delegates were first sent to discuss the terms and conditions of his admission;
4. That even if the Metis had but a rudimentary education and were "half-civilized" they understood very well that soon they would be banished from the country which they declared indeed belonged to them;
5. That they were well aware of their poverty, but this condition only made the treatment being imposed on them all the more odious;
6. That no one had considered their existence or their wishes;
7. That when the discretionary power arrived, the English-speaking inhabitants would hasten to accord him full power to speak and act as master;
8. That the Metis did not want him and were determined to do everything possible to prevent his entry into the country;
9. That in acting thus, they were mindful not only to their own interests but those of the whole settlement;
10. That they were certain they were not infringing on any divine or human law and that they were only defending their own freedom;
11. That they did not expect opposition from their English-speaking neighbours; but, on the contrary, they begged them to join with them to preserve the plentitude of their common rights;
12. That they, perhaps, would find some adversaries among the Canadian element of the country but this they naturally expected and were prepared for.[26]

The Council of Assiniboia made its own stand clear at this meeting: it was siding with the Canadian government. Riel was told not to resist the Governor, and to use his influence to keep the Metis from interfering with McDougall's takeover of the territory. "The Council went as far as to say that sooner or later they would all be severely punished if they dared to carry out their plans."[27]

Riel did not let the Council's advice influence his course of action, however. He immediately set about organizing the Metis to stop McDougall from entering the territory. A delegation was sent to Pembina to advise McDougall not to enter the country. Another group set up a barrier on the road in a clearing near St. Norbert, and posted guards at the barrier.

The Honourable Joseph Howe, Secretary of State for the Provinces, had met with McDougall at Pembina just prior to McDougall's illegal attempt to take over the North West Territories. Howe failed, however, to impress upon the obstinate McDougall the need to tread lightly in Red River because technically the new Lieutenant Governor had no right to be there. As well, Howe failed to meet with the Metis to reassure them of the government's intentions towards them. This seems more than a mere oversight, since such a meeting, along with a clear statement of good intentions, could well have prevented the entire Red River conflict.

As McDougall travelled from Pembina, just on the American side of the border, his every move was watched by Metis scouts until he neared Red River. They reported back to Riel every detail of the Lieutenant Governor's enterprise, including the names of his travelling companions. They reported that McDougall had twelve crates of rifles with him.[28]

As McDougall neared Red River on October 30, J. B. Ritchot handed him an order from the Metis National Committee, dated October 21. The order forbade him to set foot on the soil of the North West without the permission of the inhabitants. McDougall, after thinking over the precariousness of his situation, returned to his camp three miles inside the American boundary. On October 31, throwing caution to the winds, he again made for Red River. He was met this time by Ambroise Lepine and a detachment of Metis cavalry, who quickly forced McDougall and his entire entourage back across the US border.

At the next meeting of the National Committee, fears were expressed that Dr. Schultz and his new ally, the federal government's chief surveyor, Colonel John Stoughton Dennis, might try some military venture in support of Governor McDougall. It was decided that the time had come

to sieze Fort Garry, before it fell into the hands of the militants in the Canadian party. On the afternoon of November 2, twenty men simply walked in and took over Fort Garry. There was no resistance from HBC Governor McTavish, who was ill and close to death. So the fort was taken without firing a shot, and was immediately manned by a garrison of nearly a hundred Metis.

As a means of reassuring the English settlers of Red River that he intended justice to be done for them as well as for the French Metis, Riel invited them to send twelve representatives to sit on the National Committee, beside the twelve French-speaking delegates. On November 16, the twelve "English" delegates met with their French-speaking counterparts. Included in this number were H. F. (Red) O'Lone and William O'Donoghue, of the Irish Fenians. It was soon apparent, however, that the French and English representatives did not really trust each other, and little was accomplished. This committee met again on November 18, but once again could not forge an agreement concerning a response to the attempted takeover by McDougall. In the end, the English representatives refused to take a stand against the Canadian government even when its actions were illegal. The two Irish Fenians, however, were even more militant than the Metis. They were to remain staunch allies of Riel throughout the coming struggle, and they sat on his first provisional government. Thus, with the exception of the Irish Fenians, the resistance movement that was developing against the federal government was overwhelmingly French Metis.

The National Committee, despite the initial reluctance of the English delegates, moved on November 24, 1869 to set up a provisional government. The HBC and the legitimate government of the colony — the Council of Assiniboia — had for all practical purposes abdicated responsibility. Governor McTavish had signed the deed of surrender of Rupert's Land to the Imperial government of Great Britain on November 19, 1869. But Canada was not prepared to take over the territory until December, 1869. What this meant was that a provisional government, duly put in place by the people of the North West, would have to be recognized as a legitimate government, since there was no recognized governing body in Rupert's Land during the last half of November, 1869.

Although the dying Governor McTavish appeared to equivocate on the matter of the takeover, he was sympathetic to Riel and the Metis people. He feared the violence of men like Schultz and Mair more than

he feared a government of the people under the leadership of Louis Riel. At one point McTavish revealed his sympathy for the Metis when he told Riel: "For God's sake, form a government."[29]

But a Metis government could not be formed without serious local resistance. Schultz and his followers were meeting frequently, acting as a third force, more radical than the government functionaries trying to take over the colony, and more violent. Schultz's party was busy carrying out military drill, in preparation for an armed attack on Fort Garry, the headquarters of the proposed provisional government. Later, at a meeting in Red River where Schultz and Riel faced each other as verbal antagonists, members of both camps were in attendance under arms.

Civil war did not break out during this confrontation because the Schultz faction was greatly outnumbered by the Metis. But Riel knew that he had to move fast even in the absence of substantial English support, so he went ahead with his plans for the formation of a provisional government. Schultz and Mair's resistance was partially successful, however. They had sown enough discord among the English to neutralize many who otherwise might have supported the idea of a provisional government.[30]

When the spurious Governor McDougall issued his edict of December 1, 1869, claiming the territory for Canada, he set off a chain of events that polarized the community into four recognizable factions. There were the Metis, under Louis Riel. The radical Canadian Party under Dr. Schultz and Charles Mair, was made up, it was now becoming clear, of Orangemen and other Protestant extremists. There were the official representatives of the federal government such as McDougall, Colonel Dennis and, later, Donald Smith, who was sent out as an official emissary of the government. Finally, there were those representing American interests in the region under the direction of a diplomatic and gentlemanly American spy named James Wickes Taylor. The Irish Fenians already allied with Riel sided with these Americans, who sought the peaceful annexation of Rupert's Land during this period of confusion.

On a day-to-day basis the balance of power shifted back and forth among these groups. Soon, however, Riel and the Metis began to represent order in an otherwise chaotic situation. The provisional government stood out as a model of diplomacy amid these conflicting forces. Having been elected rather than appointed, the provisional government resembled the loose American democracy to the south more than it did the authoritarian Canadian state in the East.[31] The democratically elected government of

Red River as its first priority drew up a Bill of Rights in response to McDougall's edict. It consisted of nineteen articles, essentially asking for provincial status and for a government that would be primarily responsible to the inhabitants of the province. The following is a modified version of the original Bill of Rights. It is the one that was eventually carried to Ottawa, and provided the basis for negotiations between Riel's provisional government and the Canadian government:

List of Rights

As prepared by the provisional government and given to the delegates as the basis for negotiations in Ottawa.

1. That the North-West Territory enter Canadian Confederation as a Province with all the privileges common to the different Provinces of the Dominion.

   That this Province be governed:

   a) by a Lieutenant-Governor appointed by the Governor-General of Canada.

   b) by a Senate

   c) by a Legislature elected by the people with a responsible Administration.
2. That until an increase in population gives right to more, we have two Representatives in the Senate and four in the House of Commons of Canada.
3. That upon entering Confederation the North-West Province is kept completely free of the Canadian public debt, and that, if it is called upon to assume some part of that debt, it shall not be until after it has received from Canada the sum itself for which it wishes the Province to be responsible.
4. That an annual sum of eighty-thousand dollars be allotted by the Dominion of Canada to the Legislature of the North-West Province.
5. That all property, rights and privileges that we possess at present be respected, and that the recognition and arrangement of customs, observances and privileges be left solely to the decision of the local Legislature.
6. That the country be not submitted to any direct tax with the exception of those that might be imposed by the local Legislature for Municipal and other local interests.
7. That the schools be separate and that the money for the schools be divided between the different religious denominations in proportion to their respective religious population as in the Province of Quebec.

8. That the definition of the qualifications of members for the Provincial Legislature and the Canadian Parliament be left to the local Legislature.
9. That in this country with the exception of Indians who are neither civilized nor settled, every man having reached the age of twenty-one, and all English subjects alien to this Province but having lived three years in this country and possessing of a house may have the right to vote at the election of Members of the local Legislature and of the Canadian Parliament, and that all alien subjects other than English, having resided the same length of time and in possession of a house, may have the same right on condition that they swear the Oath of Allegiance.

   It is understood that this article is subject to amendment exclusively by the local Legislature.
10. That the sale of the Hudson's Bay Company and its transfer of Government to Canada may never in any way have a prejudicial effect on the rights of the people of the North-West.
11. That the local Legislature of this Province have full control over all the lands of the North-West.
12. That a commission of engineers be appointed by Canada to explore the various regions of the North-West and to place before the Legislature within five years a report on the mineral wealth of the country.
13. That a treaty be concluded between Canada and the different Indian tribes of the country when demanded by the local Legislature and with its agreement.
14. That there be a guarantee of continuous steamship communication between Lake Superior and Fort Garry, to be finished within five years; also the construction of a railway ending at the American railway as soon as this reaches the International Boundary.
15. That all public buildings and edifices be charged to the Canadian treasury.
16. That both French and English languages be used in the Legislature and in the Courts and that all public documents be published in the two languages.
17. That the Lieutenant-Governor nominated for the North-West Province have a command of the two languages, French and English.
18. That the Judge of the Supreme Court speak both French and English.
19. That the debts contracted by the North-West Provisional Government

be paid by the Dominion of Canada Treasury since these debts were contracted only by illegal and inconsiderate measures adapted by Canadian agents to bring civil war amongst us. Moreover, that no member of the Provisional Government, nor those who acted under its direction, may be harassed with respect to the movements which have determined these actual negotiations.[32]

While the provisional government was drawing up the Bill of Rights, Schultz and his faction were mobilizing to attack Fort Garry. Before they could proceed with the planned attack, however, they were cornered in a warehouse and imprisoned by Ambroise Lepine and his Metis volunteers. Schultz and 45 of his armed followers were taken as prisoners. John Snow, the government road builder who had joined the Schultz faction, was escorted to the border near Pembina and told to be gone.

On December 8, Riel formally declared the establishment of the provisional government. This was now a legal government according to international law. Joseph Kinsey Howard wrote of this provisional government: "What happened was just what [Canadian Prime Minister] Macdonald had feared. McDougall did assume authority, the HBC did relinquish it — and Riel's provisional government, in [Macdonald's] own words, was legal."[33]

Colonel Dennis, who had been recruiting with Shultz, recognized that the provisional government was legitimate. He immediately ceased his attempts to form a militia to resist Riel. Perhaps he was motivated by the defeat and imprisonment of Dr. Schultz and his band of militants whose efforts at armed insurrection had failed so swiftly. Indeed, for a brief interlude it looked as though the Metis had achieved a peaceful victory over the other factions in Red River.

On December 10, the Metis flag, a golden fleur-de-lis on a white background, floated serenely above Fort Garry. As it waved in the breeze, cannons fired a salute, a band played, and speeches were made urging loyalty to the British Monarch, Queen Victoria.[34]

Peace prevailed throughout the rest of December in Red River. The inept McDougall gave up and left Pembina for eastern Canada. Riel was busy devising ways to assist the people of the territory, who were still suffering from the devastating effects of the locusts and the failure of the hunt. He expropriated some HBC food supplies and distributed them to the most needy families. There was one notable exception to his generosity, however. Although he and his family were in dire economic difficulties, he refused to take any of the supplies for his own use.[35]

On December 27, Riel had a serious disagreement with President Bruce, who felt he was being used by Riel as a pawn of the French. As a result, Bruce resigned from the government. On that day, Riel took over as the president, and Louis Schmidt filled the portfolio Riel had just vacated, that of secretary of the provisional government. Ambroise Lepine was formally made adjutant general, in charge of the armed force. On that same day, three strangers arrived in the district from Canada. Two of them, Jean Baptiste Thibault and Colonel Charles de Salaberry, identified themselves as commissioners of the federal government, acting as diplomats to discuss matters with Riel and the provisional government. The third member of this party, Donald A. Smith, did not reveal his identity as a commissioner of the federal government until January 5, 1870. Even then, he refused to show his credentials to members of the government when asked for them.

The interlude of tranquility ended at Red River early in January, when Charles Mair and Thomas Scott, along with seven others, escaped from prison. Mair and Scott made good their escape, but the seven others were quickly recaptured. On January 7, the enigmatic Donald Smith began to reveal himself when he was caught trying to bribe some of Riel's followers to abandon their leader.[36]

Neither Thibault nor de Salaberry had been an effective diplomat. They had accomplished nothing for their government. Now Smith stepped in, and his air of firmness and authority contrasted sharply with that of the other two diplomats. Smith was a shrewd and capable man. He told Riel that he was empowered, within certain limitations, to bargain with him regarding conditions under which Canada would take over Rupert's Land.

Seeking popularity, Smith quickly distanced himself from the stand taken by Governor McDougall. Quiet and confident, the stoic Smith soon won the respect of many of the frontiersmen. Smith challenged Riel to let him speak to the people at an open meeting so that he could explain the government's plans for the takeover of Rupert's Land. Riel acceded to his request, and agreed to act as his interpreter for the French-speaking people in the audience.

The meeting, held outdoors in -20 degree temperature on January 19, was the turning point for the Canadian government in its efforts to upset Riel's popularity. Many residents of Red River had heard of Donald Smith. He had worked for many years as the HBC's Chief Factor in Labrador, and he was married to a Metis woman from the North. People were so anxious to hear Smith that even the vicious cold would not deter

them. People came by the hundreds from Red River (now being called Winnipeg by the frontiersmen) and the outlying settlements from up and down the Red River. Some came from as far as Headingly, 22 kilometers to the west, travelling in open sleighs across the windswept plains. For five incredible hours Smith stood in the cold and read imperturbably from his documents while Riel, who was not heavily clad for such weather, dutifully translated Smith's words into French.

Riel and Smith stood side-by-side through the long and intense presentations. They were both impressive men. Riel, tall, slim with intense dark eyes and wavy brown hair, was a dashingly handsome man of 25. Smith, 50, with white hair and beard, was also a tall, striking figure, with an air of confidence and authority. The gist of Smith's speech was that Canada was acting in good faith, and was willing to grant all rights "that the people prove themselves qualified to exercise."[37]

The meeting was adjourned, but met at 10 o'clock the next morning. The weather was even colder, but the crowd in attendance was larger than the day before. It was another five-hour meeting, with both speakers and audience at the mercy of the brutal elements. Fires were lit to keep the audience warm as they listened. Riel and Smith, unable to enjoy such amenities, spoke alternately for the full five hours, appealing to the tense and expectant crowd. Howard explains how, in his words, Donald Smith "won an empire" that day:

> Smith came forward on the platform and obtained the chairman's permission to make a personal statement — his first in the two days of talks. His voice was friendly, his words carefully selected, simple.
>
> Much of what had been read concerned Mr. McDougall, he said. He would like to make it clear that he had never known that individual, had never seen him except for a few minutes when they met on the trail as McDougall was on his way out of the country. The people cheered.
>
> He deprecated the fact that he was not well known here; but his wife was a native of Rupert's Land and the country was very close to his heart. (Cheers.) He represented Canada, but he would press her interests only in so far as they were in accord with the interests of the Northwest. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Under no other circumstances would he have consented to act.
>
> True, he was connected with the Hudson's Bay Company.

(He was to hold its highest office for twenty-five years!) But he would resign from the Company at this moment if that would help Rupert's Land. (Cheers.)

The speech was short. "I sincerely hope," he concluded, "that my humble efforts may in some measure contribute to bring about, peaceably, union and entire accord among all classes of the people of this land."

Grimly but meticulously, hating every word, Riel translated. There were more cheers, this time from the French. Louis watched bitterly as Smith nodded and smiled to the crowd. For the first time the young Metis, master of political rhetoric in the Northwest, had met his match.[38]

Next, Riel stepped to the podium and moved that forty delegates, twenty English, and twenty French, decide on a finalized draft of their demands that would be sent to Ottawa as the basis of negotiations for their entrance into Confederation as a province.

Donald Smith was not altogether candid with his audience that day. Despite his promises, there was no doubt about the federal government's true intentions: it would give as little authority to the new province as was possible. The federal government still planned to exploit the West as an agricultural colony of the eastern industrialists and merchants. Still, there was considerable genuine give-and-take at this meeting. Smith was not acting by fiat as McDougall had attempted to do; he was engaged in a genuine debate with Riel, and he was *appealing* to westerners. This, in itself, marked a victory for Louis Riel. The two sides were, or appeared to be, reaching a negotiated settlement on conditions for Manitoba's entrance into Confederation. But Dr. Schultz and Thomas Scott of the Canadian Party had other plans.

These plans now centered around Scott, an obscure Irish immigrant. Scott, an Orangeman with a hatred for Catholics, was to be instrumental in the overthrowing of the provisional government. With the help of Major Boulton, Scott recruited a sizeable military force in the community of Portage La Prairie, some 90 kilometers west of Winnipeg. This community largely consisted of Orangemen who were relative newcomers to the West. Until they were provoked by Boulton and Scott, the people of Portage La Prairie had been ambivalent about Riel and the provisional government. But their dormant religious hatred was easily inflamed by *agents provocateurs*. Consequently, a detachment of some sixty men was recruited, ostensibly to secure the release of those prisoners still being

held by the provisional government.

During the night of January 23, a fierce blizzard swept in from the plains. This was what Dr. Schultz, still a prisoner in Winnipeg, was waiting for. His wife had managed to smuggle in a knife and a large hook that could be screwed into the wall to assist him in escaping from the second floor of his place of detention. Schultz used the knife to cut his buffalo robe into strips, which he tied together and strung from the hook fastened to the wall. The hook came loose as he was escaping, however, and he fell, injuring his leg. Despite this, Schultz made his way through the blizzard and made good his escape.

While Riel was engrossed in debating the finer points of the Bill of Rights with Donald Smith, Scott, now assisted by Schultz, was furiously organizing for the military overthrow of the provisional government. On January 25, Smith told Riel that he was not permitted to give formal approval to the Bill of Rights, but he expected such approval would be forthcoming from the government in Ottawa.

On February 10, as the duly elected president of the provisional government, Riel appointed emissaries to take the Bill of Rights to Ottawa to be negotiated with Prime Minister Macdonald's Tory government. Father Noel Richot and Alex Scott were chosen, and they immediately set out on the long journey to Ottawa.

Riel then set up an advisory committee of twelve "French" and twelve "English" delegates, who were elected from the various constituencies that made up the settlement. It was agreed that the political prisoners would be released provided that they sign an oath of allegiance to the provisional government. Sixteen prisoners signed the oath and were immediately released. But despite the efforts of the provisional government, peace was not to come to the territory before blood had been spilled.

By February 20, the Portage party of revolutionaries was on the march, under the command of Major Boulton. Their stated purpose was the freeing of the prisoners. However, when they learned that the prisoners had already been freed they did not disband. Instead they marched on toward Fort Garry. On the way, the violence that they were courting finally occurred.

Norbert Parisien, a Metis youth who had been taken prisoner by the Portage party, escaped, grabbing a double-barrelled shotgun from their cache of weapons before he fled across the frozen Red River. As he crossed the ice, the boy, half-crazed with fear, saw Hugh John Sutherland, the son of a government man, riding toward him on horseback. Panic-

stricken, Parisien aimed and fired twice; Hugh John pitched from the horse into the snow, spraying it with blood. Parisien was quickly overtaken by his pursuers who, seeing the mortally wounded Sutherland, took a terrible revenge by kicking Parisien to death.

The Portage party was captured near Fort Garry by a superior Metis force under the direction of Ambroise Lepine and Bill O'Donoghue, who was now a member of the provisional government. The Portage party gave up without a fight. Perhaps the deaths of Sutherland and Parisien had demonstrated to them the extent of the folly into which Schultz, Scott and Mair had led them.

In prison, the members of the Portage party were given the option of signing the oath of allegiance and being set free, or facing consequences which could include death by a firing squad. They wisely signed the oath of allegiance — all except Thomas Scott, who stubbornly refused to co-operate with any of the edicts of his captors. In fact, Scott and a companion named Murdoch McLeod attacked their guards, calling them cowards and traitors. When, on March 1, these two again broke out of their cell and attacked the guards, the Metis who were guarding Thomas Scott had had enough.

In a fit of anger, a delegation of Metis guards told Riel that if Scott were not executed they would shoot Riel himself. Reluctantly, Riel agreed to Scott's execution, along with the execution of Major Boulton, the official leader of the insurrection. Knowing Riel's gentle nature, members of the Scottish community who were in good standing with him went to him to ask for mercy for the condemned men. Mrs. Sutherland, the soft-spoken mother of the slain Hugh John, begged on her knees for Major Boulton's life. This was too much for Riel, and he relented. He told her that he would give Boulton's life to her, and her alone. But on the commutation of Scott's sentence he would not budge. Scott must sign the oath of allegiance or die.

On the morning of March 4, Mrs. Sutherland and a young woman, Victoria McVicar, made a final appeal to Riel to spare the life of Thomas Scott, whose death sentence was to be carried out immediately. "No, Mrs. Sutherland," Riel told the grieving mother, "I hold him responsible for the death of your son."[39] Later that day Scott, the young Irishman whose stubborn resistance had left Riel with no other option, was executed by a firing squad.

Scott's body was taken away by Riel's men and secretly buried. Riel must have realized at once that Scott's execution had made him a martyr.

Indeed, from that moment on, both Scott and Riel became symbols around which passions would burn for more than a century. Schultz and Mair, two ordinary men, began agitating among other ordinary men in Ontario. They went on a speaking tour of that province, stirring up Protestant hatred for Riel and the Catholic Metis over the execution of Scott. They demanded blood for blood.

In Red River, the execution of Scott brought an immediate cessation to the open hostilities against the provisional government. But the calm that spread throughout the community was deceptive. The execution created passions in the Protestant community that burned beneath the surface. In Ontario, a furor was created that would not abate until Riel himself was dead, some fifteen years later.

In Ottawa, Scott's execution created a crisis that pitted English Protestant Ontario against French Catholic Quebec. On the one hand, the government had to appease the Ontario Orangemen by appearing to seek punishment for Riel; on the other, it had to appear to forgive Riel in order to appease the Quebec Catholics. In order to achieve the latter goal, the government involved the Catholic clergy of Quebec in its bargaining with Riel. Bishop Tache was recalled from a visit to Rome and sent to Red River as an emissary of the federal government. In fact, the conservative elements within the Catholic Church were already philosophically, if not in actual practice, allied to the Conservative government in Ottawa. The top ranking members of the Church hierarchy were adherents to the arch-conservative ultramontane doctrine, which abhorred free thought and secular political institutions. This doctrine united them to Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative Party, which placed Bishop Tache in opposition to his young protege, Louis Riel, even though Tache felt a strong affiliation with him in his struggle against "Les Anglais."

Early in March Tache arrived in Red River as a goodwill ambassador of the federal government. Riel was suspicious of Tache in the beginning, so he placed a solitary guard at Tache's residence to act as a symbol of his displeasure with the Bishop for being allied with the enemy. Tache, however, reassured Riel that his, and the government's, intentions toward Riel and the Metis were honourable. Tache assured Riel that Sir John A. Macdonald had given his word (though not in writing) that there would be a general amnesty for all who were involved in the Red River resistance – including those involved in the death of Thomas Scott.

On March 15, Tache adressed Riel's advisory council. He asked that

one-half of the prisoners (the Portage war party) be released from prison as a gesture of good will. Riel went one better: he released all the prisoners, many of whom returned to Canada.

As another gesture of good will, Riel had the Metis flag taken down from its tall pole in the centre of Fort Garry. The Union Jack was hoisted, and it fluttered in grand solitude over Fort Garry for several hours, until Bill O'Donoghue spied the hated ensign. In a rage, he demanded that Riel take it down. Riel refused. O'Donoghue, undaunted, moved to take it down himself, but Riel's guards stopped him. Riel turned to Andre Nault and handed him a rifle, telling him to shoot O'Donoghue (who was now the treasurer of the provisional government) if he attempted to take the Union Jack down again. Two days later, still sulking, O'Donoghue put up another flag pole beside the one with the Union Jack, and ran up the flag of the provisional government. For a brief period in the history of Red River, and of Canada, both flags waved side by side over a tranquil Fort Garry.

There were at least three other residents of the North West who were extremely displeased to see the Union Jack flying over Fort Garry. They were Oscar Malmros, US Consul in Winnipeg; James Wickes Taylor, St. Paul lawyer, special agent of the US treasury and American spy in Canada; and Enos Stutsman, US customs agent at Pembina. Malmros, Taylor and Stutsman had all actively been involved in Red River politics, working both overtly and covertly to bring about the annexation of Rupert's Land by the USA. Oscar Malmros, as a diplomat, worked fairly openly toward union with Rupert's Land. James Wickes Taylor was an extremely competent individual who sought the peaceful annexation of the Canadian territories; he was unequivocally against military domination. Taylor was a gentleman with a courteous and easy grace, who was well liked by Canadians of both French and English extraction. "It was no secret that he dreamed of American annexation of the British North West and worked hard for it."[41] But for Taylor it was to be annexation only through the consent of the people of Rupert's Land.

Enos Stutsman was, like Taylor, a remarkable man, but for vastly different reasons. Stutsman had been born without legs. Yet he was able to live a full and adventurous life on the frontier. He rode horseback, much to the amazement of the tough frontiersmen. He was an outdoorsman, and was greatly admired by the inhabitants of Rupert's Land.

It is more than likely that the Bill of Rights, drawn up by the provisional

government and presented to Ottawa, was influenced by these three men. The Bill of Rights that formed the basis of the future Manitoba Act was a document styled after the American form of democratic government rather than the model of British colonialism that formed the basis of the Canadian government in Ottawa.

It was only because of Riel's loyalty to Great Britain that the work of the three American agents in Red River was not more productive than it had been. Riel's loyalty led to a serious split and then to a total falling out with his Irish supporter Bill O'Donaghue, who was pushing for union with the USA.

In fact, Riel resisted all American aid, both peaceful and military. Early in 1870, Nathaniel Langford and ex-governor Marshall of Minnesota secretly visited Riel in Red River. "They offered guns, ammunition and mercenaries. [Riel] was promised $4 million in money and supplies to maintain himself until his government was recognized by the United States."[42] Riel refused this offer. Likewise, he had been polite but non-committal with Taylor and his agents in Red River. In the end, Riel feared the Americans more than the British and opted for provincial status within Canada rather than union with the United States, because of the American policy of military suppression of the Native population.

Meanwhile, Father Richot and Alex Scott, who had been travelling across Ontario, were arrested in April and charged with complicity in the death of Thomas Scott. They were roughly treated by a crowd during their arrest. The federal government had to step in quickly to rescue these two, in order to prevent further embarrassing and perhaps even tragic treatment of them at the hands of the irate Ontarians. On May 4, news arrived in Red River of the arrest and the harrassment of the emissaries of the provisional government. But by this time it was too late for Riel to accept American support, even if the arrest of the two couriers did cause him fear and concern about the Metis future in Canada. The hate compaign being spread by Dr. Schultz and Charles Mair was bearing fruit.

When the federal government intervened for the protection of Richot and Alex Scott, it did so for political rather than humanitarian purposes. The intervention did, however, temporarily end the violence between the Metis of the West and the Protestant factions in Canada. The meeting in Ottawa between the Metis emissaries and federal government officials was cordial. In fact, the federal government incorporated all of the demands contained in the Bill of Rights, save for one: there was no mention of amnesty for Riel or any of the members of the provisional

government. The remainder of the demands, however, formed the basis of the Manitoba Act, which was first presented to the House of Commons on May 3, 1870. It was passed on May 12, 1870, and Manitoba officially became a province of Canada.

Richot and Scott returned triumphant to Red River on June 17, bringing with them news of the passing of the Manitoba Act. There was celebration, but there was also concern when Richot and Scott reported that the Canadian government had failed to grant amnesty, apparently on the basis of a legal technicality. It was claimed that the federal government had no jurisdiction over the territory when Thomas Scott was executed.

Riel was pleased with the Manitoba Act. In the struggle to obtain responsible government for his people he had proven himself a brilliant diplomat, a shrewd statesman and a man who could demonstrate both compassion and toughness in his dealings with a wily and belligerent enemy.

But the official silence on the question of amnesty now placed all other aspects of the Manitoba Act in jeopardy. Was the federal government's official silence on the question a signal of evil intentions towards Riel and the Metis? On May 16, 1870, an expeditionary force of British regulars and Canadian volunteers left the East for Red River under the command of a young British officer, Colonel Garnet Wolseley. The force was denied entrance into the USA, so it had to make its way to the West over the rough and as yet unfinished Dawson Road. On July 15, the Manitoba Act became official, but the fate of Riel and the Metis was unclear and would remain so until Wolseley's "peace-keeping" force arrived in Red River.

Meanwhile, a Lieutenant Governor was appointed for the new province of Manitoba. His name was Adams Archibald, and he was scheduled to arrive in Red River before Wolseley's troops. Had he done so he may have been able to stop the tragedy that followed. He did not arrive until after the military force, however, and there has never been a good reason given for his delay, which resulted in the troops' violent persecution of the Metis.

As Colonel Wolseley's force entered the West, rumours began to circulate that its purpose was not that of keeping the peace. The absence of Lieutenant-Governor Archibald became a concern for the people of Red River. Who would control the troops upon their arrival? As Wolseley's column neared the settlement it was placed under the surveillance of Metis

scouts who reported back to Riel that the troops were intent upon revenge for the killing of Thomas Scott.

In mid-August, Bishop Tache returned to St. Boniface from Ottawa. He seemed sincere when he reassured Riel that he had more promises – verbal promises – of amnesty. Tache insisted that Wolseley's troops were well-intentioned. Consequently, Riel made ready to welcome the troops to Fort Garry, despite the warnings of his scouts, who brought word that the force, now nearing Red River, was hostile toward the Metis. On August 23, the troops reached the old stone fort on the outskirts of the settlement.

That night, as a heavy rain pelted down, the troops made ready to capture Fort Garry and kill Louis Riel. Unaware of the danger, Riel and Louis Schmidt worked late into the night preparing for the transfer of power to the federal government. The next morning, as troops advanced on Fort Garry through a downpour, a local school teacher, James Stewart, came riding at a gallop through the fort gates. He found Riel at his breakfast, and gasped out "For the love of God, save yourself. The troops are only two miles away and the soldiers' only topic of conversation is slaughtering you and your family."[43]

Riel met one last time with Bishop Tache before escaping. He told the Bishop, "what happens now matters little. The Manitoba Act has passed and Metis rights are assured, their religion and their language. That is what I wanted. My mission is complete."[44] Later that day three horsemen made their way out of Red River through the pouring rain. They were headed for the USA and freedom. They were Louis Riel, Ambroise Lepine and Bill O'Donoghue.

O'Donoghue, like Riel, took up employment as a schoolteacher in the American West. But O'Donaghue died of tuberculosis shortly after his escape to the USA. For Riel, the flight to Montana marked the beginning of his period of exile and persecution at the hands of the Canadian government.

Riel spent several years in the American East, and revisited Quebec without being discovered by the Canadian authorities. In 1875, while visiting in Quebec, he was classified as insane and spent time in mental hospitals in Longue-Pointe and Beauporte. Upon his release, he lived in the State of New York for a period.

The federal government's handling of Riel created a furor in Catholic Quebec, while Protestant Ontario was happier with the outcome. As this uproar refused to die down, Canada's Prime Minister, Sir John A.

Macdonald, tried to solve the problem in an unstatesmanlike way. While surreptitiously funding Riel (he gave Riel $5000 to stay out of the country), Macdonald cried to the press, "Where is the scoundrel? I wish I could lay my hands on him."[45]

Meanwhile, Louis Riel's family suffered persecution in Red River. In 1871, a mob broke into his mother's home, thinking that Louis was there. Upon finding that he was not home, the family was questioned harshly and intimidated. A similar incident occurred in 1873, when a warrant was issued for the arrest of Lepine and Riel.[46] In that year, Louis Riel's sister Sara summed up the family's concern and sorrow over Louis' persecution: "Vous souffrez, vous êtes persecutes! vous êtes pouvres."[47] (You suffer, you are persecuted! you are impoverished.)

In 1872 Riel was elected in absentia to the House of Commons in Ottawa as the Member for Provencher (St. Boniface). But he gave up his seat in favour of the defeated George Etienne Cartier. He was nevertheless elected again in 1873, and in 1874. This time, despite the fact that he had been banished from Canada, he made his way into Parliament and signed the record. He escaped without being caught, once again embarrassing the government of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Although it had not been Macdonald's intention to grant Manitobans any form of responsible government, that is precisely what the Manitoba Act purported to do. This act, which allotted 1.4 million acres in Manitoba to be set aside for the "extinguishment" of Metis aboriginal land claims, was described by a federal Conservative Member of Parliament as the necessary sacrifice of a few acres of land to the Natives of Manitoba in order to secure the remaining ninety-nine per cent. This, he said, was a great deal cheaper than the alternative, sending in an army to conquer and pacify the Natives.[48] Nevertheless, despite the shoddy tactics and the cynicism of the Conservative M.P.s, the Manitoba Act did have positive and lasting results. A. H. de Tremaudan, biased by his strong Quebec nationalism and his anti-British racism, was still probably largely correct when he wrote: "The work of this band of cheats, criminals and thieves [referring to both the Canadian Party and the federal government] marks the darkest and most depressing period in the history of the Canadian West . . . Riel was a man without whom this vast territory, which today takes pride in being the granary of the world, would only be a colony of Canadian Confederation instead of becoming, from the start, an integral part of it, on the same footing as the provinces."[49] Indeed, the Red River resistance was not the end of the struggle with

the federal government for either Riel or for the people of the West — it was only the beginning.

CHAPTER 5

BANISHED TO THE WILDERNESS

The Manitoba Act proclaimed the establishment of the first responsible provincial government in the North West Territories. But the actions of Wolseley's troops during and after the invasion of Red River did not support the high-sounding intent of the Act. This Act did legislate specific Metis rights, such as the establishment of both French and English as official languages. More importantly, 1,400,000 acres of land were set aside to be distributed to both the French and English Metis who were residing in the country at the time of the transfer. This transfer of land to the Metis was deemed to be the means by which their aboriginal land claims would be "extinguished." As well, all residents were assured of the peaceful possession of the lands they occupied at the time of union with Canada. The Act also provided regulations for the distribution of homesteads and stipulated that the remainder of the North West Territories would be admitted into confederation at a later date.

Despite the fair and just legislation contained in the Act, however, the actual treatment of the Metis by the soldiers of the peace-keeping force belied its words. The ostensible victory of Riel and the Manitoba Metis as embodied in the words of the Act became, in practice, a bitter defeat. Although Metis rights were legislated through this act, the actions of the federal government's peace-keeping force seemed geared to revenge, not justice.

Following Riel's struggle in Red River, Prime Minister Macdonald took no further chances with the powerful Manitoba Metis. The Prime Minister made his real intentions towards the Metis clear in 1870 when he wrote: "These impulsive [Metis] have got spoilt by the emeute [uprising] and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers." [1]

The "strong hand" referred to by the Prime Minister was first used against the Metis by the Ontario volunteers who came west with Wolseley's peace-keeping force. Intent on avenging the death of Thomas Scott, they immediately founded an Orange Lodge in Winnipeg, and sought out any Metis they thought were involved in his execution. Elzear Goulet, one

of Riel's councillors and a member of the court martial that had sentenced Scott to death, was attacked on a Winnipeg street by a mob of soldiers, chased into the Red River, and stoned. Knocked unconscious by a stone, he drowned in the river.

Other Catholic Metis were brutalized and beaten up. The Ontario volunteers, themselves Protestants, beat to death James Tanner, a Protestant Metis who had not supported Riel. Baptiste Lepine, a brother of Ambroise Lepine, was killed in a brawl by soldiers belonging to the Orange Order. The troops also killed in his saloon an Irish Fenian, H.F. O'Lone, a former member of Riel's provisional government. Andre Nault was beaten up and left for dead by Canadian soldiers on American soil. These were not all spontaneous actions by drunken amateur soldiers; the province of Ontario had offered a reward of $5,000 to anyone who arrested Scott's murderers.

These acts of violence were not officially condoned by the federal government, although the soldiers who committed them were never tried or punished. There were, however, to be other reprehensible acts committed against the Metis by the federal government in 1885.

In the years immediately following the invasion of Red River, land speculators violated those Metis rights guaranteed by the Manitoba Act. Indeed, the Conservative government spokesman was proven correct who described the Manitoba Act as a simple expedient to acquire Metis lands without incurring the cost of a war. According to Adams Archibald, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, the Act provided for the extinguishment of aboriginal land title in such a way that the lands granted to the Metis could be quickly retrieved by land speculators involved in the land settlement process.[2] These speculators were often government functionaries playing a dual role, using their power and influence as government agents to acquire land as private citizens. Others who benefited from speculation in Metis lands were the former *provocateurs* of the Red River conflict, Dr. Schultz and Charles Mair.

The land granted to the Metis through the Manitoba Act was made available to speculators through the use of scrip. By using scrip to extinguish Metis aboriginal land claims the Canadian government was once again emulating methods used earlier by the Americans. The Americans had found scrip to be a good method of settling land claims, while at the same time making the lands granted to the aboriginals available for quick purchase by land speculators.

In Canada, the use of scrip served a two-fold purpose. It extinguished

Metis land claims, while making those lands available for White settlement. As we shall see, it also generated substantial bank capital. In the end, it did virtually nothing for the Metis.

There were two kinds of scrip used by the federal government to extinguish Metis land claims in the West: land scrip and money scrip. Land scrip was directly exchangeable for a parcel of open dominion land. Money scrip was made out to the bearer, who could either sell it, or use it to acquire open dominion land to the value of the scrip note. The land was valued at one dollar per acre until about 1890, when land prices began to increase. The Metis received scrip for either $160 or 160 acres of land. A similar issue of scrip was made to the Selkirk settlers and others who, like the Metis, had acquired lands without title under the old HBC regime.

The scrip issued to the Metis as extinguishment of their land claims was referred to as "Half-breed scrip." Half-breed money scrip was considered as personal property and was therefore readily negotiable. Land scrip, however, came under real estate laws that had to be circumvented by speculators since these laws tended to give some protection to the holders of land scrip. But both money and land scrip were eagerly sought after by speculators who most often bought it for a fraction of its face value.[3]

The federal government's Department of the Interior, which had been set up to implement the government's future national policy in the West, took charge of the scrip transactions. The Department appointed scrip commissioners who generally oversaw the scrip-purchasing procedures. Although the procedures themselves were designed to assist scrip buyers, there were many cases where speculators broke laws that were already designed to assist them, and engaged in actually defrauding the Metis out of their land and money scrip. These illegal scrip transactions went on for years and were the source of numerous scandals involving both speculators and government officials (see Appendix B).

The Department of the Interior officials often ignored the circumvention or violation of their rules. The government officials involved did not act simply as a paternalistic third party in the scrip affair; they actively supported land speculators — sometimes legally, and sometimes illegally. Their actions stand as evidence that the whole process had been initiated to quickly take land ownership away from the Metis and place it into the hands of the speculators whose job it was to settle the West with European immigrants.

From the beginning speculators and bankers — not the Metis — were

the real beneficiaries of the land grant carried out through the use of scrip. Often wrapped in the rhetoric of patriotism, the scrip transactions of land speculators and bankers earned them a fortune at the expense of the Metis in whose name the scrip was issued.

By briefly tracing the career of two such scrip speculators, we can see the pattern of massive exchanges of land titles and capital. W.F. Alloway and H.T. Champion came west as volunteers with Colonel Wolseley's peace-keeping force. Alloway was an Irish aristocrat, a Protestant and a member of the Orange Order. In fact, his family traced its roots directly to William of Orange, the conqueror of the Irish Catholics for whom the Orange Order was named. Champion, though not an aristocrat, was a wealthy, well educated man. These two stayed on after the pacification of Red River as land speculators, not soldiers. They speculated heavily in Metis scrip, earning such phenomenal profits that they soon started their own bank. In 1879, they opened in Winnipeg the banking firm of Alloway and Champion. This bank merged with the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1919.[4]

Alloway and Champion were by no means the only successful entrepreneurs dealing in scrip. Millions of dollars of capital were generated through the scrip process, as land was, as if by magic, converted into hard cash. Overall, it was not the fly-by-night business entrepreneurs who made off with most of the profits. The chartered banks were the largest dealers in scrip throughout the North West Territories, purchasing about 60% of all scrip sold.[5] Scrip notes, purchased for far less than face value, were used at face value by banks as assets, providing the capital necessary for them to make loans.

The ownership of scrip provided a bank with what was, in effect, a licence to create money. Until the bank failure of the 1930s, rules governing bank loans were lax and not rigidly enforced by governments. As a result, banks could loan amounts that were vastly in excess of their total deposits. Since banks considered scrip as assets, as the capital base upon which loans were made, they could, for example, use a $160 scrip note purchased for $80 to provide the basis for loans that might exceed ten times the face value, or $1600. Loaned at 5% interest per annum, this returned the original $80 investment in one year. Thus, the purchase of scrip created an exponential growth in Canadian bank capital over the years, providing much of the capital necessary for Canadian industrial growth.

The Metis who received the scrip initially had little capital.

Furthermore, they had insufficient farming experience to enable them to keep the land and farm it as a viable commercial operation. In any event, there was no rail line to the West at the time of the Manitoba issue of scrip, and, consequently, there would have been no means of moving agricultural produce to the international market.

The loss of their land through the sale of scrip, coupled with their harsh treatment by soldiers and incoming business interests at Red River, created the first exodus of the Metis to the remote regions of the North West Territories (now the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta). Predominantly Metis communities were founded in other parts of Manitoba, such as Turtle Mountain, Fort Ellice, and Ste. Rose Du Lac. Further west, Metis communities developed at Fort Qu'Appelle, Willow Bunch, Battleford, and along the South Saskatchewan River, near the forks of the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. The Metis also settled at St. Albert (near the present site of Edmonton) and further north at Lac La Biche, in what is now Alberta. The most important Metis settlements, however, were those located along the South Saskatchewan River, at St. Laurent, St. Antoine-de-Padoue (now Batoche), St. Louis and Duck Lake. The Metis of Red River settled here in large numbers, with St. Laurent being initially the largest and most important of the communities on the South Saskatchewan.

These Metis villages were all similar. Inevitably, the church dominated the village. There was the church, a parish residence, and usually a small number of other homes. The Metis of the new northern communities remained deeply religious. For them, the church was not only the centre of their social and spiritual life, it was their only form of institutionalized learning.[6]

Farm homes were scattered along the banks of the river for several miles on both sides of the settlements. The farms stretched back from the river-front in the same long, narrow pattern used by their predecessors in Red River. This method of landholding was particularly well suited to the communities along the South Saskatchewan River because it allowed each settler some river frontage, providing access to river transportation, as well as the necessary water for domestic purposes. As well, this tended to make available to all a share of the wild hay meadows that often ran parallel to the river a short distance back from its banks. Most settlers cultivated some land, usually no more than an acre or two for a garden and for growing feed for livestock. As long as buffalo were plentiful, a small plot of cleared land was all that each family required.

The Metis lived in log houses built painstakingly from poplar logs squared off with an axe and peeled of bark to prevent rotting. The spaces between the logs were filled with mud mixed with horsehair to act as a binding agent. A Metis house usually consisted of one large room with a plain plank floor. Inevitably, a crucifix hung over the mantelpiece, but there were few other decorations on the walls. The exterior of the home was often painted white, with bright trimmings around the windows and doors.

The Metis lived well enough by Western standards in their new settlements in the North West Territories. As was the case in Red River, these Metis of the northwestern plains enjoyed a social life that mixed the co-operative tribalism of their Cree mothers with the *joie de vivre* of their *Canadien* fathers. Their parties and social events, accompanied by the sound of the homemade fiddle, helped to pass the cold winter months. Most homes had at least one fiddle player, and practically everyone, from the youngsters to the grandparents, joined in the jigging and the dancing.

It was no accident that the settlements were located along the South Saskatchewan River near the present site of Prince Albert. These fertile lands had been familiar to Metis hunters for generations prior to the establishment of their permanent settlements. This was the winter home of large herds of buffalo that grazed the arid southern plains throughout the summer months and migrated to the northern river valleys for the winter.

The area was rich in fur and game animals. Lush and green in the summer months, the land usually received a bountiful rainfall. Thick hay meadows grew in rich black soil that was much better for growing crops than the light, arid land to the south. Gently rolling hills, covered with pine, aspen and birch trees, provided shelter from the prairie winds as well as an abundance of logs for building purposes, and plentiful firewood for the long winter months.

However, there were political and economic reasons for the location of the Metis settlements on the Saskatchewan that went beyond considerations of the natural beauty and abundance of the surrounding countryside. Three men, representing the three major forces that shaped the Metis nation in the West, attracted the Metis to these communities. They were Lawrence Clarke, Chief Factor of the HBC's Fort Carlton; Gabriel Dumont, a man already famous for his skill in the hunt and for his leadership ability and generosity among his fellow Metis; and Father

Alexis André, a priest of the Oblate Order of the Roman Catholic Church, and an adherent of the conservative ultramontane doctrine. These three men embodied the conflicting political and economic factions and institutions that together made up the loose fabric of the Metis nation that was still alive in the North West, despite the loss of Red River to the flood of incoming settlers.

Lawrence Clarke was a remarkably complicated man with a flamboyant personality that combined aggressive ambition with ostentatious generosity. He was born June 26, 1832 at Fermoy, Ireland. While still a youth, he went to the West Indies, where he worked for several years. He joined the HBC in Montreal in 1851, at age 19. He was sent to Fort McPherson, in the North West Territories, where he was soon promoted to clerk. Clarke was then transferred to Fort Rae, where, in 1855, he married Jane Bell, daughter of the post's Chief Factor. In the years that followed she bore five children.

In 1863 the Clarke family was transferred to Fort-a-la-Corne, near the present site of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. In 1867, Clarke was promoted to Chief Trader and sent to Fort Carlton (adjacent to the future site of St. Laurent). Here Clarke became a collector of Indian artifacts, many of which were sent to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The Institution, in return, made Clarke an honourary member. In 1870, his wife, Jane, died suddenly. Four years later he married Catherine McKay, a Scots Metis from the powerful McKay clan, a clan with a long history of loyalty to both the HBC and the Conservative Party in Ottawa. Over the years they had nine children. While serving at Fort Carlton, Clarke was promoted to Chief Factor for the HBC in 1876.

Largely self-educated, Clarke loved public speaking and political and intellectual exchanges with the elite of Prince Albert. He frequently made the 80 kilometer overland trip from Carlton to Prince Albert, travelling by sleigh in the winter, to participate in debates and lectures with the Prince Albert Learned Society. As well as being recognized as a renowned public speaker, Clarke was noted as a philanthropist who supported any worthy cause. Respected locally by both White and Metis settlers, Clarke nevertheless represented the rear guard of the two-hundred-year-old mercantile empire of the HBC. As such, he was a master of its policies in dealing with the Indians and Metis. Clarke considered himself to be one of the most important men in the North West.[7]

Gabriel Dumont, the third child of Isidore and Louise Dumont (nee Laframboise) was born on the prairie southwest of Red River in 1837.

In all, there were nine children in this Metis family. Gabriel's father was French-Canadian and his mother was a Sarcee Indian of the Blackfoot Confederacy. His father's family were great hunters and fighters who had achieved leadership positions among the Metis of White Horse Plains. For years the Dumonts were elected as leaders of the large buffalo hunts that took place across the West. Young Gabriel Dumont fought in the battle of the Grand Coteau, where, at the age of fourteen, he proved his courage in action against the Sioux. In the years immediately following the battle, Gabriel became an expert marksman and a skillful horseman. Already something of a legend at age 18, he could, it was reported, "shoot a duck through the head at a hundred paces."[8]

Gabriel's legend as a Metis leader continued to grow as he distinguished himself as a buffalo hunter and as a fearless warrior involved with the Cree Indians in their wars against the Blackfoot Confederacy. Before he reached the age of 25, he was known for his courage from Red River to the foothills of the Rockies. He was described as a "tough, resourceful and rather ruthless young man . . . [who] combined loyalty and good sense, generosity, and a surprising gentleness towards the young and the unfortunate."[9]

Although Gabriel was widely known for his physical courage and reckless bravado, he also earned a reputation as a diplomat, responsible for making peace treaties with the Sioux and Blackfoot Indians. Gabriel Dumont spoke six Indian languages fluently, as well as French.[10] He had no interest in learning English, however, and could never speak more than a few words of that hated language. He never learned to read or write, for these were skills that were not always held in high esteem by the Metis of the plains during the days of the great buffalo hunts.

In 1858, Gabriel Dumont married Madeleine Wilkie, the daughter of Jean-Baptiste Wilkie, a Metis trader at Fort Ellice. The couple remained childless because a bout with smallpox had left Madeleine incapable of having children. Gabriel's mother died during a smallpox epidemic in 1858, although she was thought to have died of tuberculosis, another disease that ravaged the Native people of the West. Later, his father married Angele Landre, and settled down in Red River where they had three more children. Isidore continued to be active politically in Red River.

In 1861, Isidore Dumont and his brother Jean, with Gabriel playing a minor role, managed to make a lasting peace treaty with the Sioux who, preparing for an all-out war with the Americans, wished to end their conflict with the Metis. This treaty, made at a meeting inside American

territory at a place called Devil's Lake, was important to the Metis because the Sioux eventually became their allies.

Throughout the next two years, Gabriel Dumont's power and prestige continued to grow and he became the undisputed leader of the Metis hunters who wintered in the North Saskatchewan territory. Following the tradition of great Native hunters, he became a member of the Society of the Generous Ones.[11] This society, consisting of the best hunters, took it upon themselves to see that the aged, the sick and the crippled received a share of the buffalo hunt. "At each hunt Gabriel would make at least one free run through the herd, dedicating the beasts he then slaughtered to the old and the sick who could not hunt for themselves; it was an example he expected other good hunters to follow."[12] In 1863, Dumont was elected as the leader of the Saskatchewan hunt, a position he was to hold for many years. By 1868, he was frequenting the regions of the South Saskatchewan River. After 1868, winter camps were established on a regular basis near Fort Carlton.

It was at this point in Metis history when two of the greatest Metis leaders crossed paths for the first time. Gabriel Dumont first met Louis Riel during the Red River crisis of 1870. At that time Dumont was in charge of a band of about five hundred hunters who roamed the country now known as Saskatchewan. When news of Riel's Red River resistance reached Dumont's camp, he made his way to Red River to discuss matters with Riel. According to Dumont's own account, he met Louis Riel for the first time on June 17, 1870. During that meeting he informed Riel, "Si tu fais quelquechose, envois-moi chercher, et je viendrai avec les sauvages." (If you need something, send to find me, and I will come with the Indians).[13] However, Dumont and his *sauvages* were not called upon, and he did not play a significant role in the Red River resistance.

After 1870, Gabriel and Madeleine made their permanent home in the northern district, near Fort Carlton. It was largely through Dumont's influence that many of the Metis of Red River moved to St. Laurent after 1870.

But important as Gabriel Dumont was to the founding of St. Laurent, the importance of the Catholic priests in establishing the colony cannot be underestimated. Three priests in particular were involved with the history of the Metis communities in the North West. They were Father Fourmand, Father Moulin, and Father André. Of these, Father André exercised significant control over the lives and the history of the Metis.

André was a short, robust Breton-French priest whose physical strength

and obstinate nature suited him to life on the frontier. André was "blunt and impetuous in speech and capable of striking one of his parishioners if he could do it in safety."[14] André's courage and his massive physical strength appealed to Gabriel Dumont, who formed a close bond with the priest, a bond that lasted longer than Gabriel's dreams of an independant Metis nation in the West.

St. Laurent, the most significant Metis settlement in the North West Territories, was first a Catholic mission, established some 40 kilometers from the HBC's Fort Carlton in the spring of 1871. The Metis built log houses for the priests that spring, and soon the mission was surrounded by fifty families who planned to settle there on a permanent basis.

On December 31, 1871, in the winter camp of the Metis a short distance south of the settlement of St. Laurent, an important council of Metis elders met. A permanent council was elected to govern the village of St. Laurent. This was the last important public meeting presided over by Isidore Dumont, who spoke eloquently. Isidore Dumont told the delegates that the buffalo were becoming scarce across the prairies. He said that he had been a hunter all his life. He could remember when herds of buffalo covered the prairies from the foot of the Rocky Mountains to Fort Garry. Now they were only to be found in the region of the Saskatchewan, and as the country became settled they would disappear even from there. Isidore Dumont agreed that the Metis should settle on the river-front lots near Fort Carlton and take up farming as a means of survival. In the meantime, he said, the Metis could continue to hunt buffalo until they disappeared from the prairie.[15]

For some reason, Gabriel Dumont was not elected as an officer of this council. But Lawrence Clarke was elected chairman, Father André was elected secretary and a Metis named Joseph Emilin was elected vice-chairman.[16] Other members of the committee included Jean and Isidore Dumont, Gabriel's uncle and his father.

Lawrence Clarke addressed the Metis at this meeting. He described how the Metis might create a thriving settlement near Fort Carlton. He decried the nomadic way of life now that the buffalo were disappearing, arguing that the Metis should now settle at St. Laurent and become educated instead of continuing to hunt the ever-decreasing herds of buffalo. He described a means by which the Metis could begin the transition from the old life of the hunter to the new life of the permanent settler. The HBC could play a major role in this transition for the Metis. "The Metis," he said, "would have three resources for making a

remunerative livelihood, one or both failing, they would have the other to fall back on – the prairie, the farm, the freighting."[17] Clarke described how the prairie could supply buffalo for the Metis to live on while they improved their subsistence-level farms with the money that they could earn as freighters and cartmen for his Company, the HBC, at Fort Carlton. The cash that the Metis acquired as cartmen and labourers could ease their entry into more intensive methods of farming that would eventually make them independent, ideally before the buffalo were all gone.

Clarke was supported at the meeting by Father André, who wished to see the Metis settle down so that the Church could exercise more authority over them than was possible when they lived a semi-nomadic existence. Andre reminded those present at the meeting that Clarke had contributed a fine church bell, costing one hundred dollars, to the mission at St. Laurent. Indeed, Clarke's words were welcomed by the Metis elders and councillors at the meeting, including the prestigious elder, Isidore Dumont.

The permanent settlement of St. Laurent came into existence in accordance with the plans made by the Metis elders, together with Clarke and André, at that historic meeting of December 31, 1871. The Metis took up subsistence farming with an energy that both surprised and pleased Father André. The community soon became a thriving success, in frontier terms. Some two hundred fifty Metis families moved into the district that counted St. Laurent as its centre.[18]

The settlement appeared to be doing well based upon the three resources described by Lawrence Clarke during his speech of December 31, 1871. The buffalo hunt was still bountiful in the district, although even here the buffalo were getting harder to find. The farms were providing abundant logs and wood, and some land had been cleared for planting crops and gardens. Also, as promised, the HBC was providing jobs for cartmen and labourers, so that some limited cash was available to buy manufactured goods from the HBC store.

Under the surface, however, all was not well with the settlement. Lawrence Clarke, whose speech of December 31 seemed to have been made in good faith, now indicated in a letter to his superiors his real reason for assisting with the establishment of a large Metis community near Fort Carlton. On January 15, 1872, Clarke wrote to the HBC's new commissioner, Donald A. Smith – the same Donald Smith who had served the Canadian government in its struggle against Riel in Red River.

In this letter, Clarke revealed the true nature of his involvement in the founding of St. Laurent. Describing the large population of Metis who were settling in St. Laurent, he wrote:

> As carriers for the northern districts, it will ensure us a reliable source from which we can draw all freighters we may require, and as the settlement increases in population, so will competition arise amongst them for fuller employment in this their favourite occupation, and enable us to reduce the rates of freight to the minimum standard.[19]

Clarke went on to describe to his superior how this cheaply contracted labour force could soon replace two-thirds of the Company's permanent staff:

> We will save hundreds of Pounds in oxen, carts, harness and thus be enabled to reduce our staff of employees to a third of our present force and thus diminish our expenditure by the lowest calculation two thousand Pounds sterling per annum.[20]

Clearly, Clarke was applying to the Metis labour force at Fort Carlton the process that had proven so successful for the HBC at Red River. Clarke was using the Metis surplus population to drive down wages as more and more people had to compete for scarce jobs. His plan was eventually to replace two-thirds of the HBC's northern permanent work force with temporary, or contractual, Metis labour.

During the early development of the settlement of St. Laurent, Clarke made efforts to have the Canadian legal system, along with an appropriate police force, established at Fort Carlton. Clarke was instrumental in the Company's plans to utilize the Metis as a captive and highly exploited work force. Given the large number of Metis required to make his plans work, he recognized that a police force and a court system would have to be brought into the North West from Manitoba to exercise control over the Company's Metis work force.

On January 17, 1872, Clarke wrote to Lieutenant-Governor Adams Archibald of Manitoba, requesting a French-speaking magistrate to bring Canadian law to the colony. He indicated that there would be about fifteen hundred Metis in the colony by the next autumn, and cited cases where bootleggers were breaking Canadian laws.[21] This must have seemed a rather trivial excuse for incurring the expense of maintaining a large police detachment in the territory, however, for Lieutenant-

Governor Archibald did not act on Clarke's advice. There can be little doubt that Clarke intended to manipulate the requested magisterial position to enforce those regulations which would benefit the HBC.

Although Clarke was not immediately successful in obtaining a magistrate who could be used to control the Metis of St. Laurent, his other plans to exploit the Metis as a captive work force and as a captive market for his company were working well. The Metis were becoming successful subsistence farmers. From the Company's perspective, it was therefore possible to take advantage of the fact that they were growing their own food. With growing competition for the scarce HBC jobs, the Company could now pay their Metis employees in trade goods rather than cash.

In all of this, Clarke was simply following the standard business methods of the HBC. Governor Simpson had set up the community of Red River for roughly the same reasons and in very much the same way some fifty years earlier. The Company had learned that, because of the abundance and the ability of the Metis work force in the North West, a free labour force — men who would work on a temporary or contract basis — was cheaper to maintain than the traditional indentured labour force. With people working on a seasonal or contract basis, the Company could lay off workers during the quiet season and hire them as required during the busy season. An added benefit was the fact that the Metis population of St. Laurent was dependent on the Company's Fort Carlton trading centre for its supplies of necessities such as ammunition, blankets, shovels, axes and other everyday requirements.

Yet, for the Metis escaping the persecution and oppression that were rampant in Red River following the invasion of Wolseley's force, the settlement at St. Laurent made good sense. Here, the buffalo were relatively plentiful. The Metis could continue to hunt them until they were gone. At the same time, these Metis hoped to receive title to the lands they occupied on their river-front lots. With the money that they hoped to earn as workers for the HBC, they might eventually be able to buy the expensive farm machinery required to move from subsistence farming into viable commercial agriculture. But by 1875, the Company was paying the Metis workforce in trade goods rather than cash. This meant that the Metis would remain a captive labour force for the Company, since lack of capital prevented them from expanding their agricultural pursuits.

The large pool of Metis workers in the district provided other

advantages for the Company as well. The Metis, acting as middlemen, bought furs from Indians who might otherwise have sold them in Manitoba, where competition had driven up prices paid to Indian trappers.[22] With the influx of Metis into the region, the HBC established an effective regional monopoly, much the same as that established at Red River in 1821. But the same problem of social control that had bedeviled the Company throughout its history in Red River arose again in St. Laurent. HBC factor Lawrence Clarke realized that a police force would eventually be required by the Company if it was to maintain control over the growing population of Metis.

By 1872 Clarke's plans for the acquisition of a cheap labour force were still working well, however. Because of the influx of people, business was booming for the HBC at Fort Carlton. The increase in population had, as expected, reduced the rates of pay to Metis wage-earners. The Company's monopoly control over supplies was earning huge profits. Clarke wrote to his superiors:

> I have assumed the responsibility of increasing the price of goods fifty percent and some articles one hundred percent and could sell all I have to these people at these rates, but I am holding on to them as much as possible. To sell our goods at one hundred percent on cost is sacrificing them.[23]

By 1874, the HBC had tightened its control even further over its trade goods and the cost of Metis labour. The Company was paying the cartmen and teamsters in goods, not cash. As Clarke had planned in 1872, the cost of these goods had been inflated by 100% and more above former prices. The Metis workmen were forbidden by law to strike, and were therefore unable to demand wages in cash, which might have been spent elsewhere, giving them some degree of independence from the company.

By 1874, Clarke had scored another victory over his Metis work force. He had become the Canadian magistrate for the North West Territories. Since Saskatchewan and Alberta had not yet entered confederation as provinces, the North West still technically came under federal jurisdiction. Lieutenant-Governor Archibald had been made responsible for governing both Manitoba and the North West Territories on July 30, 1870. On March 8, 1873, the federal government established an administrative body called the North West Council. This body functioned for the Canadian federal government in precisely the same way that the now defunct Council of Assiniboia had worked for the HBC. The North West Council,

consisting entirely of federal government appointees, was, like the Council of Assiniboia, nothing more nor less than a colonial administration. Indeed, it made no pretense at being a responsible government.

The North West Council met infrequently and at irregular intervals, and did very little to deal with the concerns of western residents. The Metis of the North West, like other residents of the territories, did attempt to use the North West Council as a means of redressing their grievances, but to no avail. Although the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba had governing powers in the North West Territories, his duties were narrowly defined. His main task in the territories was to establish treaties with the Indians in order to prepare the way for settlement.

The North West Council was not initially instructed to bring British law to the territories even though Canada had jurisdiction over the prairie regions. Canada continued to administer the law in the North West Territories using the HBC's legal system that had existed prior to 1870. Under this system, all HBC factors had automatically served as magistrates throughout their respective territories. When the North West Council reinstituted this scheme, Lawrence Clarke, as the magistrate for the North West Territories, was handed almost dictatorial legal powers over the Metis in the colony of St. Laurent. The very people who had been set up as a captive work force and a captive market by the HBC now came under its legal powers as well. As a magistrate, Clarke had the power to imprison anyone who went on strike against his company. Clarke used these powers to stop a strike by Metis employees at the Company's Green Lake operation, threatening imprisonment for the strike leaders.[24]

By 1873 the community of St. Laurent was beginning to suffer as a result of HBC policies. To complicate matters further, buffalo were becoming hard to find, even in this northern region of the prairie where they had remained relatively plentiful after they had virtually disappeared from the southern plains. Since they were receiving little, if any, cash as payment for their work for the HBC, the Metis had no hope of improving their subsistence-level farms. There was insufficient work available from the Company to provide for all the people in the community. For those who did obtain work, there was little or no bargaining power. With Clarke acting as their magistrate as well as their employer, the Metis had no legal recourse in their disputes with the HBC.

But Gabriel Dumont and other Metis leaders had not fully accepted Clarke's brand of law. The Metis had laws of their own, the laws of the

prairie. As a means of preserving the remaining buffalo and ensuring a stable supply of pemmican for the people of the community, it was decided to update and formalize the old laws of the prairie. This was accomplished at a meeting held at the winter camp south of St. Laurent on December 10, 1873. The written document that came into being at this meeting set out civil rules of conduct designed to enhance the lives of the people living in the Metis communities in the North. As well, it set out a code of laws suited to the political economy of the region. In particular it laid down rules for the hunting of buffalo and for their preservation. It attempted to structure and ensure an egalitarian distribution of this remaining vital food supply so as to avoid famine. This document became known as the "Laws of St. Laurent," and it established fines and other punishments for breaches of the regulations (see Appendix C). The Laws of St. Laurent contained twenty-five articles regulating all aspects of the hunt.

The Laws of St. Laurent were recorded by the priests, who also had significant input into the making of the laws. In the main, however, the laws reflected the democratic traditions of the Metis. Unlike the governing body imposed upon the North West Territories by Canada (the North West Council), all the Metis leaders and delegates who made up the Laws of St. Laurent were elected, as were the captains of the buffalo hunt.

Given the importance of the buffalo hunt, upon which the lives of everyone in the community still depended, rules and regulations governing the hunt dominated the document. The law stipulated that the hunt could not commence until the time decided upon at a general public assembly slated for the end of April every year. The law stated that "No one, unless authorized by the Council can leave before the time fixed for departure" (see Appendix C). Provisions were made for the punishment of anyone who broke this all-important rule: a fine, confiscation of property, or both.

The Laws of St. Laurent were administered by a president and council that were elected to pass judgement and impose penalties when required. At the meeting of December 10, 1873, Gabriel Dumont was unanimously elected president for the first one-year term. The council was comprised of eight members, all Metis, whose only qualification for running for this office was that they were recognized as men of good standing in the community. The Metis felt confident that these laws would be accepted by the federal government as an interim measure to ensure the peace and stability of the territory until Canadian law, properly enforced, should

enter the territory on a formal basis. Indeed, the preamble to the Laws of St. Laurent appears to have been written specifically to assure the Canadian government that the Metis were not attempting to usurp federal government authority. The preamble stated:

> The inhabitants of St. Laurent held a public assembly to draw up laws and regulations for the peace and tranquility of their community. In the absence of any form of government among them to administer justice and to judge the differences that may arise among them, they have thought it necessary to choose from their number a Chief and Councillors invested with powers to judge differences . . . It is well understood that in making these laws and regulations the inhabitants of St. Laurent in no wise pretend to constitute for themselves an independent state but the actual situation of the country in which they live obliges them to take measures to maintain peace and union amongst them . . . But in forming these laws, they acknowledge themselves as loyal and faithful subjects of Canada, and are ready to abandon their own organization and to submit to the laws of the Dominion, as soon as Canada shall have established amongst them regular magistrates with a force sufficient to uphold in the country the authority of the laws.[25]

The Laws of St. Laurent provided the basis for the survival of the Metis communities in the North West, and received almost universal acceptance by the people of the North West. They were widely recognized as practical and workable laws that ensured peace and stability. More importantly, they provided a means of protection for the rapidly dwindling herds of buffalo.

In fact, the Laws of St. Laurent were vital to the lives of the Metis. They were the only means of protection for their basic food supply. The buffalo had become so scarce by 1874 that starvation was occurring among some Indian bands. The few buffalo left on the plains were being sought by the Metis, the Indians and the HBC who still depended upon pemmican to carry out winter operations. If the buffalo were to escape extinction, the Laws of St. Laurent had to be rigidly enforced to the letter. Since the federal government had failed to provide such laws, the Laws of St. Laurent presented nothing less than a blueprint for survival. It was therefore inconceivable to the Metis that the Canadian government would object to them.

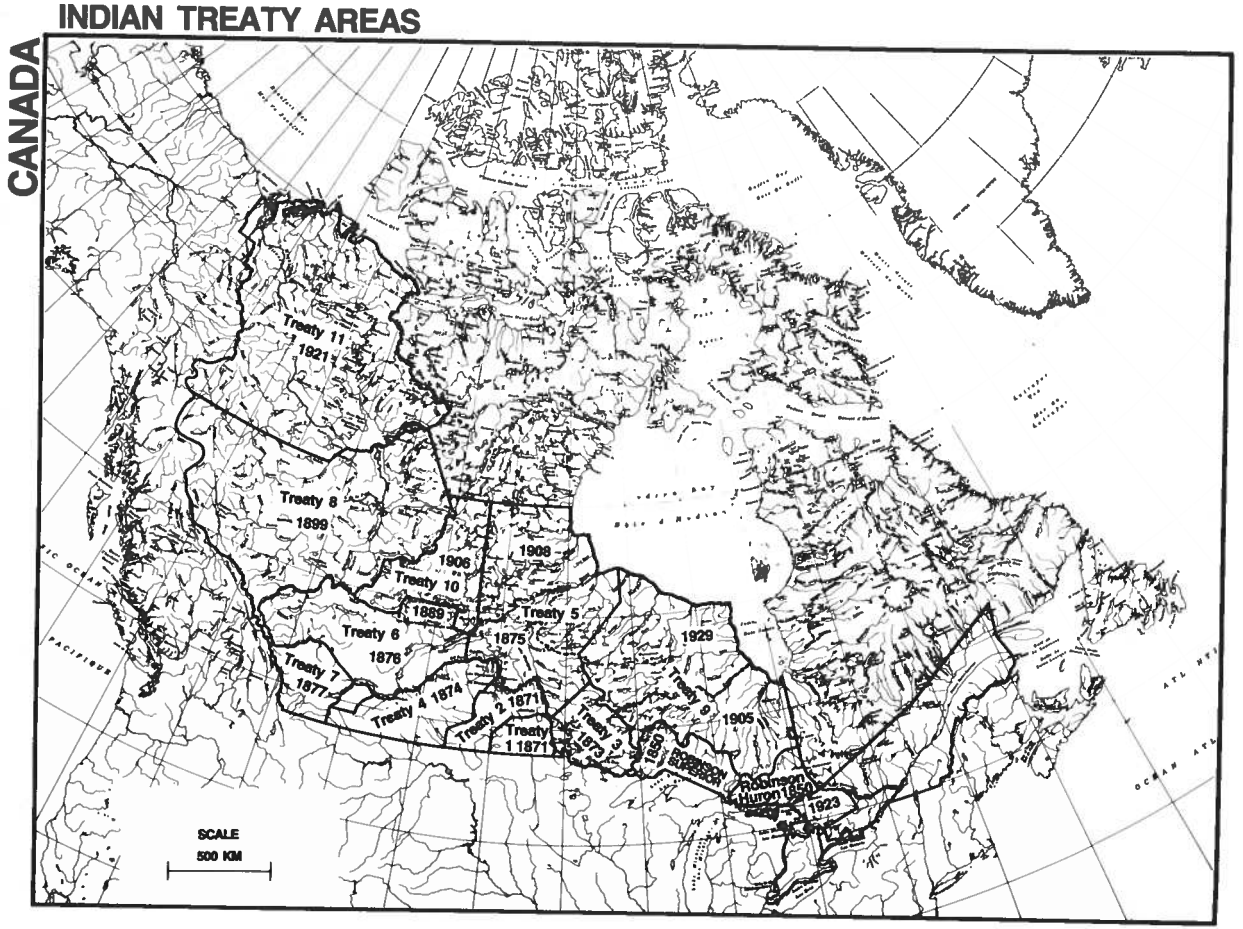
In Ottawa, a Liberal government had replaced Macdonald's Conservatives in 1873. This government remained in power from 1873 to 1878. Under the honest but cautious leadership of Alexander Mackenzie, this administration was far less active in colonizing the West than the previous government had been. As a result of an economic depression that gripped the land during the Liberal government's reign in Ottawa, there was little impetus for western expansion. Mackenzie had shown no interest in providing an expensive police force to protect the HBC operations in the Fort Carlton region. The Liberal government seemed content to leave the district alone and to let the Metis use their own laws, provided they did not incur any expense.

However, the Liberal government was concentrating some effort into making things ready in the West for settlement once the depression had passed. The efforts of Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris, who had replaced Adams Archibald in 1874, were directed toward the making of treaties with the Plains Indians. These treaties were removing the Indians from vast areas of the plains and placing them on reserves. Thus, the valuable lands of the North West Territories were, through the peaceful extinguishment of aboriginal land claims, being made available to the colonization companies for future settlement.

The Fort Carlton district was at the geographical centre of the proposed western colony. It was a vital location in both the Liberal and Conservative governments' plans for the settlement of the West because it stood near the centre of the proposed transcontinental railway and telegraph line that were to link British Columbia and the prairie West to eastern Canada. However, powerful Cree chiefs in this region, such as Big Bear and Starblanket, were refusing to make a treaty or settle on reserves as the Indians of the South had done in 1874. (see map)

Although the Cree of the North were on the verge of starvation, they were still able to hunt some buffalo as well as smaller game animals that inhabited the bush lands. Therefore they still enjoyed a degree of independence not available to the Indians on the plains further south. There was pressure on the northern Cree to sign treaties and settle on reserves, but not to the same degree as the pressure on the southern Indians, whose food supply had completely vanished.

Ironically, the very lands that the Canadian government needed the most for its future development plans were those lands still occupied by the most independent and militant Indians. Thus, by 1874, Lieutenant Governor Morris was pleading with the Liberal government for a


INDIAN TREATY AREAS
CANADA
Treaty 11
1921
Treaty 8
1899
1906
Treaty 10
1908
1889
Treaty 5
1875
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Treaty
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1873
1850
Robinson
Huron 1850
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substantial police force for the North West Territories. Morris argued that such a show of force would be necessary to make a favourable treaty with Big Bear and other militant Chiefs who lived near Fort Carlton. On April 25, 1874, Morris wrote to the Minister of the Interior:

> I direct your attention to [an] estimate of the force necessary to maintain order in consequence of the Indians' belief in the weakness of Canada from a military point of view. I will add that I have discussed the matter with persons well acquainted with the interior of the country, and the difficulties to be encountered, and the lowest estimate of the number of men who could be safely sent on the expeditionary force, has uniformly been five hundred men. The Indians are so numerous and so well armed that a small force would not be respected. I bring this matter under your attention, and presume that the measures that may be taken for the enforcement of order and the maintenance of law and peaceful relations with the Indian tribes, you will act with the benefit of advice from competent military sources.[26]

Clearly, Morris recognized that a powerful police force was needed as a means of coercion to ensure the continued social control of the Cree Indians. This police force was needed by the Lieutenant Governor in particular as a means of backing up his negotiations for Treaty Number Six, known as the Treaty of Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt.

Treaty Number Six would secure the territory that was to eventually contain a major rail centre on the transcontinental line. First, however, Big Bear and the other powerful chiefs had to be settled on reserves, following the conditions contained in the proposed Treaty Number Six. This could only be accomplished if the federal government would agree to establish a large police contingent at Fort Carlton. Furthermore, this police force should not be seen, by either the numerous Metis in the region or the Indian bands, as an invading army.

Lawrence Clarke, as the magistrate for the North West Territories, also required a police force. For one thing, he desired the protection of his Company's monopoly control over the region. By 1875, Clarke was involved in a struggle to obtain control over the dwindling supply of pemmican in the North. For this, Clarke required that Canadian law would supersede the Laws of St. Laurent. These laws, administered by the Metis, placed control of the hunt and the distribution of its bounty into the hands of Metis leaders such as Gabriel Dumont and his uncle,

Jean Dumont. Needless to say, the Metis were using what few buffalo were left to feed their own families, not to sell to the HBC. The HBC's winter operations, however, simply could not be carried out without a supply of pemmican. Pemmican was the staple that was used to feed the Company's employees on their long cross-country treks from Carlton to the rich fur-bearing regions of the North, and on the trail between Carlton and Fort Edmonton, some 560 kilometers to the west.

There is evidence to indicate that the shortage of pemmican was creating a crisis for the HBC's Fort Carlton operations. In July, 1873, Clarke wrote to Richard Hardisty at Fort Edmonton:

> There is no buffalo anywhere down this way. The last accounts of our freemen were far from cheering. They were camped at the Red Deer River, and only killing enough game to keep the camp in daily food.[27]

By January, 1874, starvation was not uncommon among some segments of the population, and the Metis were refusing to sell pemmican to the company. They were using available supplies to feed their own families. In March, Clarke complained to Hardisty:

> I am leading a dog's life of it just now. Freemen, settlers and Indians are all starving and after putting past the quota of pemmican for Dave, I have just 23 bags of pemmican left, all hands are coming to us and as I can't supply them I get many a threat and curse.[28]

As the terrible winter of 1874 passed into the spring of 1875, hopes were renewed for Lawrence Clarke. In the late spring of that year a minor incident occurred on the prairie south of St. Laurent that seemed to offer at least a temporary solution to Clarke's problem of obtaining a sufficient supply of pemmican for the HBC.

The 1875 Incident

There had been no serious breach of the hunting regulations laid out in the Laws of St. Laurent until the late spring of 1875, when a small band of Indian and Metis hunters endangered the existence of the community by illegally leaving to hunt buffalo well in advance of the

annual hunting party. These men, under the direction of a Metis named Peter Ballendine, a HBC employee at Fort Carlton, had left without consulting the Metis council. This presented the community with the threat of general starvation, since this hunting party might either take all the buffalo for themselves, or scare them away.

The Metis council was informed of this transgression by people who witnessed Ballendine's group hunting on the prairie. The council held an emergency session and directed Gabriel Dumont to go out, find the hunting party, and arrest everyone in it. Dumont and several others, equipped with repeating rifles, located Ballendine's hunting party and arrested them. Ballendine and his companions were found guilty of leaving for the hunt prior to the time decided upon by the council. They were given the option of joining forces with the St. Laurent hunters when they were ready to leave for the hunt, or facing punishment.

Ballendine and several of his Indian companions became belligerent. They argued that the council had no jurisdiction over them. Consequently, their carts and equipment were seized, and Ballendine was fined $25. Ballendine returned empty-handed to Fort Carlton after his arrest and fine, and told his story to his supervisor, Chief Factor Lawrence Clarke. Soon afterwards, the Metis, under the leadership of Gabriel Dumont, left for the annual hunt. Unknown to them, Lawrence Clarke set about using this obscure incident as a means of undermining Metis law and bringing a police force to the Fort Carlton region.

On July 10, 1875, Lawrence Clarke wrote a lengthy dispatch to Lieutenant-Governor Morris, in which the incident of Ballendine's arrest and fine was strongly exaggerated. Clarke wrote:

> Two-thirds of this population [150 families constituting the settlement of St. Laurent] are connected by intermarriage and other degrees of kinship, and have assumed to themselves the right to enact laws, rules and regulations for the Government of the Colony and adjoining countries of a most tyrannical nature, which the minority of the settlers are perforce bound to obey or be treated with criminal severity.
>
> From this body a court has been constituted numbering 14 persons presided over by a man named Gabriel Dumond (sic) who is designated as "President" before whom all delinquents are made to appear, or suffer violence in person or property . . . The past spring a party of "freemen" numbering 4 families made their way to Carlton from the upper Saskatchewan

> country where they had passed the winter of 1874/75, and having disposed of the products of their hunts, purchased fresh supplies of necessaries and started prairiewards to hunt and cure provisions for the supply of themselves and families, joining a party of other hunters and Indians who were leaving for the same purpose. Dumond (sic) . . . dispatched a courier with a letter ordering the party who had preceded them to retrace their steps and join the St. Laurent camp. To this the Indians and Metis demurred; when Dumond (sic) with 40 of his bodyguards fully armed with repeating rifles followed in pursuit, and having come up with the party seized all the horses and carts together with provisions and effects they had secured leaving the plundered people on the plains naked of transport, conveyance for themselves and families . . .
>
> Dumond (sic) . . . then returned the stolen property and, after using violent personal threats to individuals levied by force a heavy fine upon the party and returned to their camp.

Clarke concluded:

> Unless we have a certain protective force stationed at, or near Carlton, the ensuing winter, I cannot answer for the result. Serious difficulties will assuredly arise and life and property be endangered . . . I have thus presumed to address you not as an officer of the HBC but in my magisterial capacity. Awaiting anxiously for a reply, I have the honor to be sir, your obedient servant, Lawrence Clarke, J.P. for the North West Territories.[29]

This letter indicated that Clarke was engaged in contradictory activities, undermining the very Metis institution that he had been involved in creating. This institution was now being described as tyrannical and criminal.

This letter was in fact designed to provide Lieutenant-Governor Morris with the rationale for demanding a "protective force" for Fort Carlton, a demand that fitted well with his own plans for the negotiation of Treaty Number Six. Clarke now saw the Laws of St. Laurent as a basis for revolution against the Canadian government, and a danger to both property and life. It is significant that Clarke closed his letter by requesting — as a magistrate, not as a Chief Factor for the HBC — that troops be sent to Fort Carlton.

Another account describing this 1875 incident has been recorded. The

following account, written by a priest of St. Laurent, indicated how this minor incident resulted in the destruction of Metis law:

> All the Metis residing at Carlton or its environs, and forming the Colony of St. Laurent, had under the happy inspiration of Reverend P. Andre, voted a certain number of articles of law or regulations to maintain among them peace and good order both in the Colony and in the caravans on the hunt on the prairie. This produced the most happy effects and seemed to be the dawn of a true civilization that we hoped to soon see shine among our dear Christians, when an unforeseen incident came like a dark cloud to hide the dawn of our hopes . . . The hunters left as usual under the leadership of the brave Gabriel Dumont and under the direction of the Reverend P. Fourmond. After about 12 days march . . . they began to sight buffalo which gave them courage and hope. When one learns that many Metis of (another parish) without respect for the laws and rules and without concern for their brothers went on ahead. Immediately it was decided in a general meeting that it was necessary at any cost, and in the interest of everyone to observe the laws. The leader [Gabriel Dumont] with his captains and soldiers, faithfully carried out the decision of the meeting, brought to the camp willy-nilly all the delinquents with the exceptions of the two who preferred to pay an indemnity which was granted to them on condition that they would go immediately to Carlton. [This was undoubtedly Ballendine, the HBC employee, and his accomplice.] Hardly had they arrived at Fort Carlton when they complained of having been maltreated, robbed, almost assassinated. They knew whom to make these complaints to; it was to people who had looked askance at the creation of the laws of the Colonies. [Here the chroniclar undoubtedly referred to Lawrence Clarke.] If one were to believe the celebrated knave and his agents, the Metis of Carlton, joined with the Indians, were in full revolution against the Dominion of Canada.[30]

Clarke's actions in this affair were puzzling for several reasons. He had worked closely with the very Metis whom he was now condemning as insurgents and criminals. He had even served on their council, and was in many ways responsible for their settling at St. Laurent. Yet his letter to Morris reflected fear and mistrust of the Metis. It did not reflect the seriousness of the threat posed to the community by Ballendine's

hunting party. Considering that Ballendine's actions could have resulted in starvation for many people in the community had he managed to scare the buffalo away before he was captured, his punishment appeared quite light.

The Lieutenant Governor took immediate action on the basis of the information received in Clarke's letter and on the basis of alarming rumours that were spreading rapidly across the nation. Someone from the region had begun to rumour that a Metis insurrection was occurring in the West. These rumours were eventually published by the Toronto Tribune as a factual story.[31] They were probably transmitted to the East by telegraph, since the line had advanced to a point south of Fort Carlton by July, 1875. The rumours could not be confirmed, but Clarke's alarming report moved the lieutenant governor to direct Major General Smyth, commanding officer of the Swan River detachment of the North West Mounted Police [NWMP] some 430 kilometers east of Fort Carlton, to investigate the matter.

A force of fifty men, including both Major General Smyth and Colonel French, was dispatched on July 28, 1875. The force covered about 55 kilometers a day, arriving at Fort Carlton on August 5. Colonel French immediately launched an investigation into the arrest of Ballendine and his hunting party. Colonel French wrote in his first report on the incident to the Lieutenant Governor:

> As I expected, there is no reason for alarm with reference to the affair of Gabriel Dumont. It is customary for the [Metis] when organizing buffalo hunting parties to place themselves voluntarily under rules and regulations framed by certain officers whom they elect. These regulations usually impose fines for various offences and disobediences of orders, particularly when in the immediate vicinity of, or in chase of the buffalo. In the case reported by Mr. Clarke it appears that Gabriel Dumont as president or captain of a band mostly from St. Laurent undertook to punish and fine certain individuals who did not belong to his camp. Dumont is at present hunting on the plains, and may hereafter be arrested and tried for this offence, and as Mr. Clarke is the only J.P. in this vicinity, I propose leaving Inspector Crozier to assist him in his magisterial capacity, should Dumont be arrested within the next fortnight as is believed to be likely.[32]

After further investigation into the affair Colonel French wrote a final report on the case, implicating both Lawrence Clarke and the HBC's new Chief Commissioner, Mr. James Graham, as co-conspirators in the creation of the affair. A Metis informant named Pierre LaValee had discovered how the incident between Dumont and Ballendine had occurred. LaValee reported:

> They [Dumont's party] caught up to Ballendine, took his carts and fined him twenty-five dollars and sent him back home. He reported to the HBC all kinds of things, thus the excitement. It seems the HBC are the cause of it. They supplied this man with goods and sent him out secretly ahead of the rest.[33]

In his final report, French informed the Lieutenant Governor that both Clarke and Commissioner Graham had indeed been spreading false rumours about a Metis insurrection. The report concluded:

> I cannot myself help thinking that his honor, and I fear the Dominion Government, have been unnecessarily agitated by the alarming reports received . . . I was informed that four of the persons accompanying Mr. Graham, the Chief Commissioner of the HBC, had stated when passing Fort Pelly that serious disturbances had occurred at Carlton. I however, considered that such could not be the case as Mr. Graham had sent me no previous message on the subject. I sent to the HBC's post at Pelly and inquired from the Officer there if any message or letter had been left for me by Mr. Graham and finding that none such had been left I concluded that the matter was a mere canard.[34]

There was, of course, much more to this affair than a "mere canard," or hoax. This incident, insignificant as it appeared, resulted in the establishment of the NWMP in this northern region. It also resulted in the end of the effective use of Metis law.

French's report was passed on by Lieutenant-Governor Morris to the Secretary of State in Ottawa. Although officials there condemned Clarke's actions in the affair, no formal charges were ever brought against him. Instead, Gabriel Dumont and the men under his orders were captured and brought to trial. They were tried by the very man who, according to police records, had orchestrated the whole affair — Lawrence Clarke. It was also Lawrence Clarke who, in his capacity as magistrate, levied the fine against Dumont. Ironically, Clarke's punishment seemed lenient

and since the Metis were not aware of his role as the *agent provocateur* who initiated the entire affair, he did not lose stature in the eyes of the Metis, and he continued to be a political ally of Father André. In fact, since they were not aware that Clarke had conspired to have the Metis arrested for enforcing the Laws of St. Laurent, Clarke's leniency served to enhance his image and position in the Metis community.

But the damage had been done. Although Colonel French recognized Clarke's role as a *provocateur* in this affair, and was aware that the Metis were in no way threatening an insurrection, a permanent police force was established at Fort Carlton. The fines levied against Dumont and his party were inconsequential. What was important, however, was the fact that this incident was used to render Metis law illegitimate. British law was now in place at the HBC's Fort Carlton, along with a substantial police force for its enforcement. British law institutionalized the concept of private property, a concept that was absent in the old Metis law. This was a necessary measure if the Canadian government was to carry out its plans to exploit the North West Territories.

There were other effects, equally devastating. The Laws of St. Laurent could no longer ensure that the few remaining buffalo would be harvested for use as a food staple for the Metis. With the end of Metis law, control of the buffalo hunt passed from Metis hands. Thus, Clarke was free to hire hunters who were willing to kill the remaining buffalo and sell them to the HBC for Company use. By ensuring himself access to the dwindling buffalo herds, Clarke safely maintained HBC operations in the region. With the Laws of St. Laurent no longer in effect, the Company hired other professional hunters to secure a sufficient supply of the vital pemmican. The Company further increased its profits by acting as supplier for the police detachment housed at Fort Carlton.

For the Metis and the Indians, however, the incident had severe and long-lasting results. With the last of the buffalo now unprotected from random slaughter, famine once again threatened them. A priest of the community of St. Laurent wrote:

> This affair . . . had other results that it was easy to foresee . . . It was that the humble legislation of the Colony of St. Laurent, having no longer the right to punish the delinquents naturally lost all sanction . . . Everyone took their freedom and ran on the buffalo without any other guide than their insatiable keenness, passion for killing, greed and avarice.
>
> Anarchy and self-interest reigned on the prairie. They

> exterminated the poor buffalo with more frenzy than ever, so well that the police recognized a little later the wisdom of the laws . . . About two hundred and sixty families were obliged to make their winter quarters at Lac de Boeuf. In this number . . . one must count at least a good tenth as merchants [selling buffalo meat to the HBC].
>
> The passion of business, that is to say the thirst for gold, attracted from every direction a herd of such traders as these bands of wolves who followed the caravans of hunters. The competition was terrible and the price rose to the maximum. They announced, besides with the scarcity of buffalo, misery and near famine.[35]

The rapid slaughter of the remaining buffalo had severe, long-lasting results for the Indians and Metis in the Treaty Number Six region. The entire political economy of the Indians was built upon the buffalo hunt. Buffalo had provided food and clothing for centuries to the Plains Cree. Indeed, these animals had been so important to the lives of the Plains Indians that there was a significant place for the buffalo in their culture and their religion. Since these hunters had for so long depended upon the buffalo to supply all their needs, they had no agricultural history to fall back on when the species vanished from the plains. To the Indians, then, the loss of the buffalo spelled disaster. They could no longer survive without government assistance, let alone fight any kind of war against the institution that controlled their only food supply. It was the loss of the buffalo herds that defeated Big Bear, not a military conflict.

The Metis, too, suffered severe deprivation as a result of the end of Metis law and the resulting destruction of the buffalo herds. They now came to depend on their small, unproductive subsistence-level farms to supply most of their food. This unstable food supply was supported by fishing and by hunting smaller game animals such as deer. But this was a much more time-consuming activity, and was far less productive than the massive buffalo hunts of the past had been.

The HBC still provided limited work on a seasonal basis, but by now the wages, paid in trade goods, were abysmally low. Such wages were insufficient to see the Metis through the crisis brought on by the destruction of the buffalo herds. So the Metis who had migrated from Red River in 1870 were once again trapped in a stagnant economy that depended upon the fortunes of the HBC.

The population of St. Laurent decreased as the HBC waned in

importance after 1875, and jobs became even more scarce. St. Antoine-de-Padoue, St. Louis and other small communities grew as they absorbed some of the emigration from St. Laurent. Thus, the subversion of Metis law in 1875 had long lasting negative results for the Metis. The 1875 incident began a process of dispersion among the tightly-knit Metis families who had counted among their number Gabriel Dumont and other great leaders of the old buffalo hunts. The migrations out of St. Laurent fractured this leadership as the Metis left for other communities that tended to become isolated from one another.

Meanwhile, south of the border in Montana, another great Metis leader was living out his life in isolation from his people in Canada. Louis Riel, having lived as a fugitive since 1870, had settled down as a teacher in the USA. He had been officially banished from Canada in 1875 for a five year period. However, having been stripped of his powers and refused his seat in Parliament by a vindictive Canadian government, he began the only peaceful period of his short life. In 1879, he married the frail and petite Marguerite Monet de Bellehumeur, a shy Metis woman with a religious nature that matched his own. They had two children: Jean, born May 4, 1882; and the delicate Marie Angelique, born September 17, 1883.

Nearly two more years were to elapse, however, before destiny placed Riel and Dumont together as the leaders of the final Metis struggle against the federal government of Sir John A. Macdonald. Meanwhile, in the Canadian North West, the social conditions of the Metis deteriorated rapidly. The end of the Laws of St. Laurent eventually resulted in Lieutenant-Governor Morris's gaining a foothold in the Treaty Number Six regions. He had made previous attempts to convince the federal goverment that a police force was needed in the North West, but his efforts had not been productive, even though Indian wars and the American liquor trade were fast becoming a threat to the stable development of legitimate trade and commerce in the West.

The Cypress Hills massacre of 1873 had moved the Canadian government to establish a police force in the southern portion of the North West Territories.[36] This massacre had occurred when American whiskey traders, during a drunken melee with their Indian hosts, engaged in a battle over a stolen horse. In the ensuing chaos, the Americans killed thirty of the Indians, including women and children, before fleeing back to the United States. As a result of the lawlessness and violence associated with the American whiskey trade, some Indian chiefs welcomed the police to the southern prairies.

In the North, however, the absence of a police force had had serious consequences for Lieutenant Governor Morris's efforts in the negotiation of treaties. As his letter of April 1874, indicated, Morris fully recognized that treaties would not be signed with Chiefs Starblanket, Mistawasis and Big Bear until a substantial police force was established at Fort Carlton. Yet, the treaties were vital: the Indians of the region had to be safely placed on reserves before land settlement could occur. The American experience had indicated that settlers would be reluctant to enter the district as long as the Indians remained free. But now the police force was in place; and it had come, not as an invading army, but at the request of a highly respected magistrate in the North. It had moved in to restore peace and order. With the police force secured in Fort Carlton, Treaty Number Six could now be safely negotiated.

Lawrence Clarke played a major role in the negotiations which resulted in the signing of Treaty Number Six in 1876 (see map on page 123 showing treaty areas).

His signature, along with that of Lieutenant-Governor Morris, is affixed to the document. During the negotiations, Clarke proposed to the Chiefs that his faithful servant, Peter Ballendine, be accepted as the official interpreter. The chiefs, however, fearing that Ballendine would misrepresent them, angrily insisted on the use of their own interpreter, a Metis named Peter Erasmus. Despite the bad feelings created by this dispute, Morris successfully negotiated Treaty Number Six with the northern Indians,[37] although Chief Big Bear did not sign.

Treaty Number Six made possible the opening up of the most valuable region in the Canadian West — the heart of the fertile belt of land stretching from Red River northwest to the Rocky Mountains. Control of this region was central to the federal government's plans to exploit the West, plans that had been developing for at least a decade before the Conservatives were defeated in 1873. After 1876, and Treaty Number Six, the doors were open wide for the federal government to initiate its settlement plans in the North West. Once again, speculators descended upon Metis holdings in the West.

People who were familiar to the Metis of Red River began to reappear in Prince Albert after 1875. Charles Mair, now married to the niece of Dr. Schultz, moved to Prince Albert in 1876, where he started up a business as a trader. Mair was, however, once again involved in speculation in lands occupied by the Metis. Indeed, the doors had been opened wide, and speculators by the score were pouring into the boom town of Prince Albert. Once again, civilization had caught up to the Metis of the North West.

Children of Louis Riel (Jean and Marie Angelique), ca. late 1880's.
photo credit: Public Archives of Canada #PA 139072

Northwest Council, 1877.

photo credit: Saskatchewan Archives Board.

CHAPTER 6

THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE FOR THE NORTH WEST TERRITORIES

Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative government was returned to power in 1878, largely on the strength of its aggressive policies towards the colonization of the West. The national policy resolution passed that year spelled out in clear terms the establishment of land and transportation monopolies for the colonization of the West and the denial of responsible government for the North West Territories. Some credit, however, had to be given to the previous administration for the availability of western lands as a future source of wealth for the banks, railways, and land speculators.

The previous Liberal government had, overall, a lackluster term in office, but it did lay much of the groundwork for the western expansion that occurred under Macdonald's Conservative government. For example, in 1872 the Liberal government had passed the Dominion Lands Act, establishing the American system of survey that divided the West into sections of one square mile each. This made land ownership possible on a scale sufficiently large to ensure the commercial viability of agriculture, primarily wheat production. The Dominion Lands Act also set aside township eight and three quarters of township twenty-six on each range for the HBC, in fulfillment of its 1869 agreement with the Company when Rupert's Land was transferred to Canada.

In 1874 the Liberals had made an important amendment to the land act of 1872 that later gave the new Conservative government an advantage in its program to set up a land monopoly in the West. The amendment reserved certain townships in the West for colonization companies willing to settle these tracts of land as a profitable business venture. But the greatest accomplishment of the previous Liberal government in implementing its goals of western expansion was its massive placement of Indians on reserves through the treaty process. Treaty Number Four, signed in 1874, had placed the southern portion of what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta under federal government control. The same

was accomplished with the northern region of Manitoba in 1875 through Treaty Number Five. Treaty Number Six was signed in 1875 as well (see previous chapter), and Treaty Number Seven brought Southern Alberta and the foothill region under federal control in 1877.

The Liberal government's amendment to the Dominion Land Act in 1874 made it possible to populate the lands vacated by the Indians with European and Eastern Canadian settlers. Although the Liberals had planned to set the colonization companies up on a more liberal, free enterprise basis than that imposed by the Conservatives in 1878, the groundwork had been inadvertently laid for the establishment of the Conservative land monopoly that followed. The colonization companies that emerged after 1878 were often run by Conservative government incumbents and their political allies, who were involved as land speculators.[1] Upon his return to power in 1878, Prime Minister Macdonald personally took charge of the Department of the Interior — the department that controlled the West. His aim was to ensure that responsible government would be denied in the West.

By 1881, government crews had surveyed more than sixteen million acres of land in the West, making about one hundred thousand farms available to the colonization companies. The Conservative government planned to finance much of the construction of the privately owned Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) from the profits it hoped to earn from the colonization companies.

On April 21, 1882, Prime Minister Macdonald reported to the House of Commons that ten million acres would be granted to colonization companies that year. Macdonald claimed that one-half of the money granted to the CPR would be returned to the government through the colonization scheme. The prime minister hoped that by 1890 the government would get back $71,305,000 from the sale of lands and from profits earned through the colonization companies.[2]

Although the government was hoping to use the colonization companies to generate capital to provide the owners of the CPR with funds for construction of the proposed transcontinental rail line, the scheme also promised easy fortunes to the recipients of government land grants, who were to receive money from the government for each settler placed on the land. Land received by the colonization companies for a dollar an acre was to be sold to the immigrants for as much as they could get for it. Speculators estimated that each family of settlers would generate $2000 in profit for the colonization company on whose tract of land the family

located. One enthusiastic speculator involved in the settlement at Saskatoon exclaimed jubilantly, "There's millions in it."[3]

With the colonization scheme holding promise for the creation of overnight fortunes, it was not long before government functionaries and powerful allies of the Tory government became involved as speculators, hoping to exploit the settlers who, they hoped, would flock by the thousands into their western landholdings. J. S. Dennis, who helped to formulate the original plan set out by the former Liberal government, resigned his position as the chief surveyor, and applied for a grant of twenty-five townships. The grants were given out frequently on the basis of political patronage. William Bain Scarth, one of the speculators involved, came right to the point in his application to the Prime Minister for a land grant. He argued in his application that, since he had spent a lot of money supporting Conservative candidates in the election, the government should compensate him by casting a favourable eye on his request for land.[4]

In a letter to the Prime Minister, Alex Manning, another land speculator, was equally explicit. He wrote to the Prime Minister: "You were good enought to say . . . that you approved of our application as a legitimate one and that in all such applications your government would give the preference to its own friends."[5]

Among the speculators who were flocking to the Prince Albert district was Charles Mair who, as a business partner of Dr. Schultz, had earned a fortune dealing in Metis scrip in Manitoba.[6] These speculators clearly knew how profitable such activity could be. Indeed, most of the people moving to Prince Albert between 1875 and 1880 were speculators, not settlers. Many, as Conservative government supporters or civil servants, were privy to the plans for the construction of the CPR, plans that indicated that Prince Albert would soon become a major rail centre on the future transcontinental line to the West Coast.

These plans were in the making before the Liberal government had come to power in 1872. In fact, the Canadian Pacific Railway Bill had been passed that year, just before the Tory government's defeat resulting from a scandal involving CPR funds paid to Conservative cabinet ministers. The bill provided for a maximum gift of fifty million acres of western land to the CPR syndicate, much of which would be granted along the northern fringe of the prairies, with Prince Albert at the very centre of the future agricultural colony. "The lands granted were to be located twenty miles in depth and six miles in width on each side of the

railway, each block alternating with corresponding blocks of the same size to be reserved for the government and sold at $2.50 per acre."[7]

These land grants straddled the original route chosen for the CPR across the northern prairies. The CPR line was to terminate at a point on the Pacific Coast far to the north of the present city of Vancouver. The railway was to follow through the centre of the fertile belt and across the northern fringe of the prairies. According to the original plan, the railway was to swing north from Fort Qu'Appelle to a point a few miles south of Prince Albert, then west to Edmonton and through a series of valleys that acted as natural passes through the mountains to the West Coast. This was known as the Pine River Pass Route.

The proposed main line of the CPR had been surveyed and mountain passes along this route had been explored. The telegraph line, which was to follow the same route as the railway, was already being constructed, and by 1883 the telegraph line had reached Prince Albert.[8]

The town of Prince Albert and the Metis settlements nearby stood at the very centre of this route. The federal government had spent much time and money exploring, surveying and testing the fertility of the land along the route. It made sense for the CPR to take the northern route through Prince Albert because the suitability of the land for agriculture ensured that settlers would be eager to populate the area once the railway existed to transport their produce. The speculators who controlled the land development companies obviously knew of the government's original plans for the location of the transcontinental railway: their grants of land were scattered along the proposed route. For the colonization companies involved in the settlement process, the value of a piece of land would largely be determined by its distance from the completed main line of the CPR; the closer the land was to the railway, the more valuable it would become.[9]

One company in particular seemed to be privy to vital government information regarding the future location of the CPR. This was the Prince Albert Colonization Company. Its original tract of land was selected for the company by a government surveyor who received company stocks in return for information on the future location of the railway. In this way, the Prince Albert Colonization Company acquired land in the townships southeast of Prince Albert. These were the very lands occupied by the French-speaking Metis of St. Laurent, Batoche, St. Louis and Duck Lake.

Prince Albert was originally slated to be a large rail centre on the

transcontinental line. As such, the land in and around Prince Albert would appreciate substantially after the rail line was completed, earning fortunes for the shareholders of the colonization companies located adjacent to the large rail centre. Thus, the land in the townships containing the Metis communities, bordering as they did on CPR land, would appreciate in value from the original purchase price of one dollar per acre to perhaps ten dollars per acre, or much more if the area eventually contained either an urban centre or a major rail centre.

There was obviously more than simple luck involved in the proximity of the Prince Albert Colonization Company's tract of land to the proposed CPR line. In fact, the company was owned by people with close connections to the Macdonald government. The list of directors of the Prince Albert Colonization Company, with some of their connections to the Conservative government in office in Ottawa, included:

John White, Conservative Member of Parliament for East Hastings.
Thomas McGreevy, Conservative Member of Parliament for Quebec West, and close friend to the Honourable H.L. Langevin, Minister of Public Works.
Hugh Sutherland, later elected as the Conservative Member of Parliament representing Selkirk.
William Sharples, brother-in-law of the Honourable A.P. Caron, Minister of Militia in the Macdonald government.
Duncan C. Plumb, son of J.P. Plumb, Conservative Member of Parliament for Niagara.
J.A.M. Aikens, son of the Minister of Inland Revenue and son-in-law of the Honourable A.W. McLean, Minister of Marine and Fisheries.
A.T. Galt, brother of M.H. Galt, Conservative Member of Parliament for Montreal West.
J.C. Jamieson, son-in-law of the Honourable Mackenzie Bowell, Minister of Customs.[11]

Meanwhile, by 1881 an elite group consisting of local speculators had formed in Prince Albert. They too were buying up land on the basis of inside information obtained from the federal Conservative government. This local elite had coalesced into a strong political organization, bolstering the federal Conservative Party at the local level. In return for information on future government and CPR developments, these Tory speculators created a local political machine that was devoted to the Macdonald government in Ottawa.

By 1881, Lawrence Clarke, though still the Chief Factor of the HBC's fading operations at Fort Carlton, was heavily involved in urban development ventures in Prince Albert, where he now lived.

In that same year the federal government chose to allow one elected representative to sit on the North West Council, along with its appointed delegates. Clarke had achieved a good deal of political as well as economic power in Prince Albert. He was seen as a spokesman for the Metis, who formed the largest and most powerful block of voters in the new electoral district of Lorne. Clarke was also supported by Father André whose ultramontanist views led to his alignment with the conservative elements in the community.

The District of Lorne contained Prince Albert and all of the Metis communities that lay to the south, including St. Laurent, Batoche, Duck Lake and St. Louis. Clarke, as a member of the elite Conservative clique in Prince Albert, was able to curry the favour of the voters in that centre, most of whom were land speculators and members of the same Conservative camp. Since Clarke was supported by Father André, who exercised almost complete control over the Metis vote, he became the first elected official in the North West Territories: on March 25, 1881, Clarke was elected to the North West Council as the representative for the District of Lorne.

The fact that the people of the North West Territories were finally granted the right to elect one of the members of the North West Council in 1881 gave them little cause for celebration, however. The first North West Council had been appointed by the federal government on December 28, 1872. It had not convened a meeting until March 8, 1873. Its members (including Dr. Schultz) were all men well known for their active support of the government during the Red River resistance of 1869-70. This body, consisting entirely of government appointees, was not empowered to pass any legislation of its own. It was, to be frank, a purely colonial administration, and did not pretend to be anything else. The addition of an elected representative to this institution in 1881 was not a sign of change, nor of the beginning of responsible government.

Nevertheless, in order to maintain some credibility with the people of the West, the North West Council did address certain reform issues from time to time. Those issues that the council did raise were, however, simply ignored by the Conservative government in Ottawa. Even though the Council was made up of loyal Conservatives, the federal government's continued refusal to deal with their proposals left them frustrated.