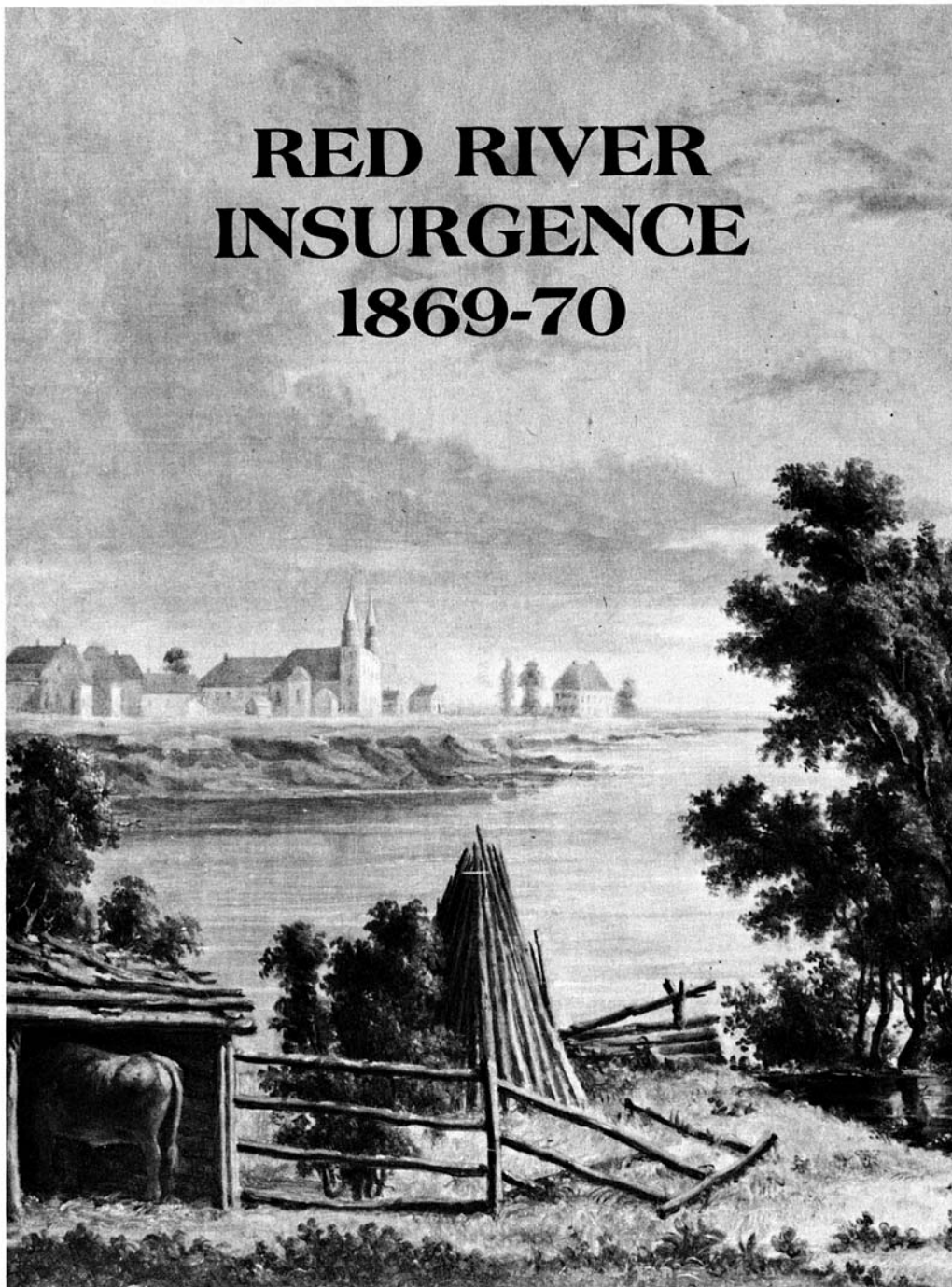


**RED RIVER
INSURGENCE
1869-70**



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RED RIVER INSURGENCE

When Louis Riel returned to the Red River settlement in 1868 after a ten year absence, he found that it had changed in many ways. A census taken shortly after, in 1870, showed that the population had grown to 11,963 inhabitants of whom 5,757, or approximately one-half, were French-speaking Metis. The next largest group were the English-speaking Half-breeds, who numbered 4,083. The white residents numbered 1,565 and the Indians 558.¹ Although the two groups, the Metis and the English-speaking Half-breeds, shared the commonality of an Indian heritage, they were, nonetheless, different socially and culturally. Religious differences split the Red River settlement into French (Roman Catholic) and English (Protestant) parishes. As well, the English-speaking Half-breeds tended to live a more settled lifestyle while the French-speaking Metis preferred a less settled one. While the Metis of the Red River settlement did some subsistence level farming, they were mostly hunters and freighters. However, they were not a nomadic people. They had formed organized communities with churches, courts, schools and local governments. The

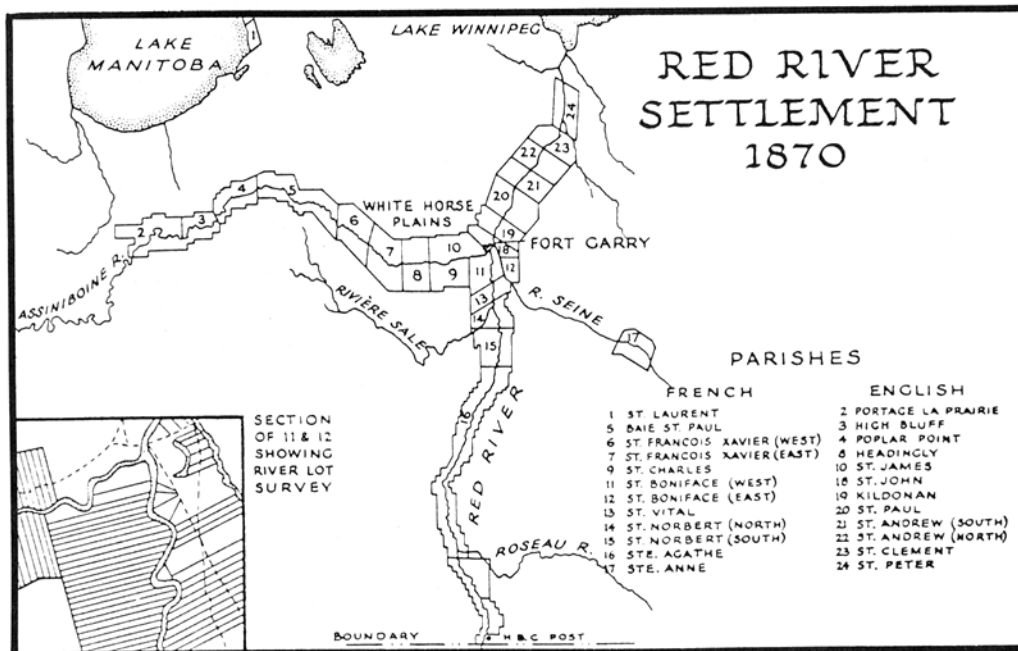


Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Metis had developed a sense of nationhood and, when they fought for preservation of their rights, it was as a unified nation of people.

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

The year 1868 was a period of political and social upheaval for the people of the Red River. First, although the Hudson's Bay Company still retained legal ownership of the land, they did not possess any real authority. Second, rumours of a proposed sale of Rupert's Land by the Hudson's Bay Company to the Canadian government left many people in doubt about the ownership of the lands they held. Third, a new group of people had arrived on the scene. The westward advance of Canadian expansion had introduced a group of Canadians to the settlement. Fourth, annexation of the North-West Territory by the United States was a very real possibility and had even been discussed in the United States congress. The only direct overland route linking the settlement with the rest of Canada was through the United States. Trade routes had been established to the south, with Minnesota, rather than with eastern Canada, which was farther away and more difficult to reach. Fifth, in addition to the American annexationists, there was also an Irish extremist group, the Fenians, who were interested in the Red River settlement. The Fenians were dedicated to liberating Ireland from British rule. One means of accomplishing this was by exerting military pressure on Britain through her colonies in British North America. The Fenians had mounted invasions of Canada in the 1860's from points in the eastern United States and now looked upon the Red River settlement as a prime target for invasion. Finally, 1868 was a year of severe hardship for the people of the Red River area. The buffalo had all but disappeared from the area and fish and game were scarce, as well. There was widespread crop failure as a result of a severe drought and grasshopper infestation. Change was imminent, but what form that change would take was not yet obvious.

RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

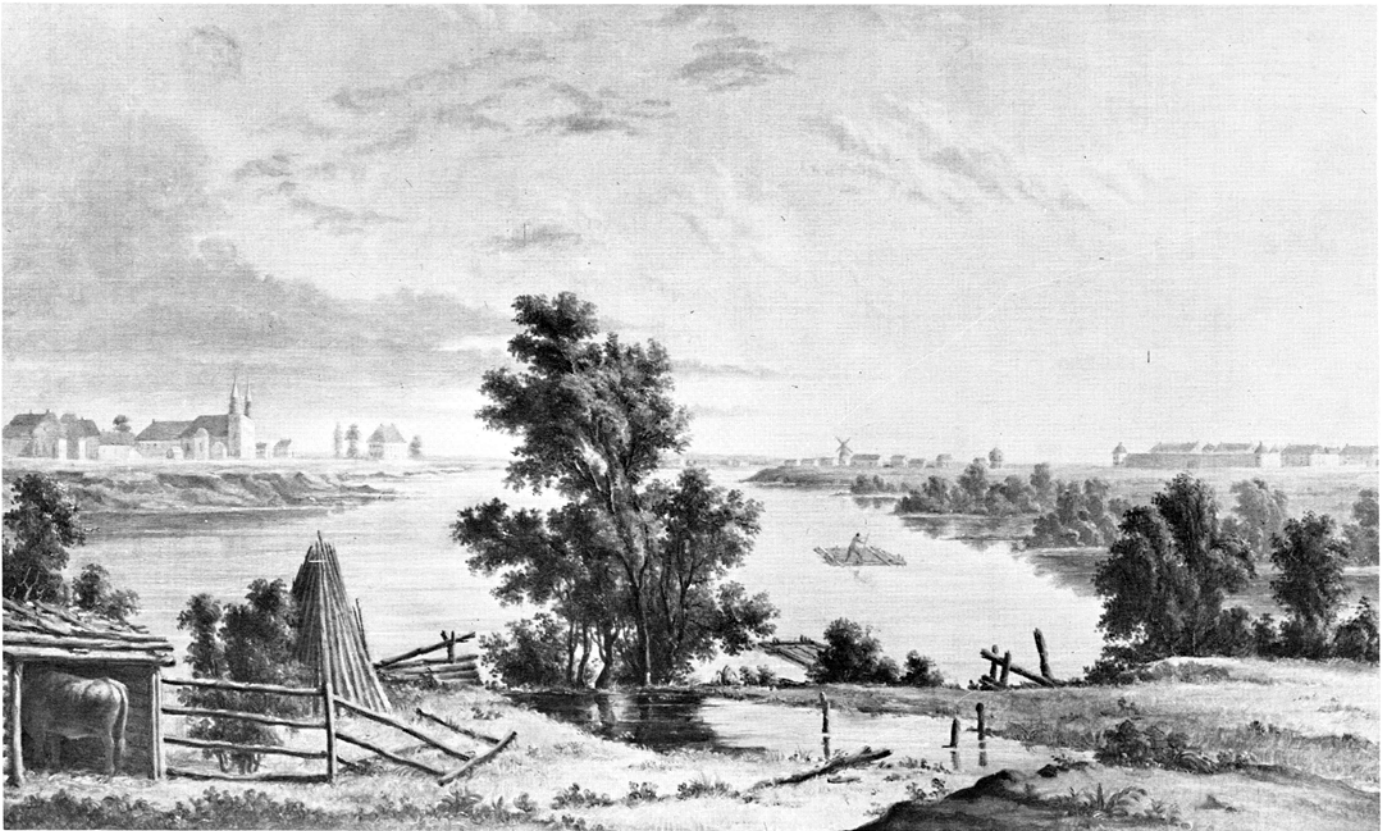


Photo courtesy of Royal Ontario Museum.

CONFEDERATION

Confederation had taken place in 1867. The provinces of Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Quebec), New Brunswick and Nova Scotia had joined together to form the Dominion of Canada under the British North America Act. The B.N.A. Act had also provided for the purchase of Rupert's Land and the North-West by the Canadian Government through Article XI, sec. 146, which read as follows:

It shall be lawful for the Queen, by and with the advice of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, on Addresses from the Houses of parliament of Canada,... to admit Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory, or either of them, into the Union, on such Terms and Conditions in each Case as are in the Addresses expressed and as the Queen thinks fit to approve, subject to the provisions of this Act...²

By the spring of 1868, the sale of the territories for the price of 300,000 pounds had been negotiated with the Company. The terms provided for the Company to surrender the land initially to England and then to the Canadian Government. October 1, 1869 was the date set for the transfer of Rupert's Land and the North-West to Canada.

REACTIONS TO THE TRANSFER

The rumour of the impending sale was received with mixed feelings by the people of the Red River settlement. One group, comprised of the Canadians within the Red River communities, aggressively supported the transfer of land. They were eager for union with Canada and highly critical of the ineffectual rule of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The chief agitator amongst the Canadian party was Dr. John Schultz, a land speculator, Orangeman and member of the Canada First movement. Like many prominent politicians of the day, Dr. Schultz was a member of the Orange Lodge, an organization whose members were dedicated to the advancement of Protestantism and who shared a common hatred of Roman Catholics. Most of the Metis were Roman Catholics.

Schultz was active in the Canada First movement, which began in 1868 in Ontario. Its members strongly supported the

FORT GARRY



JOHN SCHULTZ



Photos courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

acquisition of the North-West by Canada. Because the Canadians were the minority in the Red River settlement, Schultz supported a union which contained no plans for immediate self-government for the local residents. He wrote to J. McDougall, the brother of the future Lieutenant Governor:

The greatest danger from the Hudson Bay influence will be giving the franchise to our people at once. Theoretically fair and even necessary it is fraught with very great dangers till our people feel the change and we get an immigration of Canadians on Canadian principles. Our people will be satisfied with simply the local town and country self-government and to have No Elective Choice Whatever Over the Necessary Officers for These Positions.³

Such a policy would guarantee neither the rights of the local people nor responsible government for the residents of the North-West.

Schultz was, for a time, publisher of the first newspaper in the North-West, the *Nor'Wester*. He used the newspaper to promote annexation by Canada and to attack the inadequacies of the Hudson's Bay Company as a governing body. As well, articles appeared in the newspaper which openly berated the native residents of the settlement. Editorials published in the *Nor'Wester* contained comments such as:

"The wise and prudent will be prepared to receive and to benefit by them (an influx of settlers); whilst the indolent and the careless, like the native tribes of the country, will fall back before the march of superior intelligence".⁴

Dr. Schultz and his Canadian party made their contempt for the Metis well-known, and Riel later remarked in his memoirs:

And they [Schultz and his followers] had often spoke of undertaking to chase the metis as far as the Rocky Mountains, in order to rid the environs of Fort Garry of their presence.⁵

This contemptuous and ill-mannered treatment was at the root of much of the distrust the local residents felt toward Canadians in general. They were concerned about the effects on their community if great numbers of these "Canadians" overran their settlement in a flood of immigration after a union with Canada took place.

FIRST NEWSPAPER IN THE NORTH WEST



Most of the local residents were apprehensive about the proposed sale. They had never been consulted about the transfer of their lands, nor had they, at any time, received official notice of the sale. Furthermore, they believed that a union with Canada would open their area to an influx of large numbers of Canadian settlers before their ownership to the lands they lived on had been guaranteed. Also, the local residents were concerned about the quality of life if hundreds more settlers arrived, all sharing the viewpoints of Schultz and his party.

The Metis of the settlement were the group most strongly opposed to a sale which totally ignored their needs and concerns. The French-speaking Metis feared their language, religion and culture would be threatened by union with a largely English-speaking Protestant Canada. They felt there must be some mechanism in place to guarantee their rights. Other interest groups opposed the proposed takeover by the Canadian government, as well.

The Roman Catholic clergy feared an influx of Protestant Canadians would disrupt their missionary work. They hoped for more time to make changes. As well, a disruption of the status quo would weaken their control over the residents.

The local Hudson's Bay Company officials were not pleased. They had not been consulted about the sale which had been negotiated by their higher officials in London and, more importantly, they were not likely to benefit from it.

The Americans were not supportive of a union with Canada because they were hoping for annexation by the United States.

The English-speaking residents of the community, which included whites and English-speaking Halfbreeds, were divided on the issue. Many of the English-speaking residents were not entirely opposed to the idea of becoming part of Canada, but they believed that better conditions of entry should be obtained. They also resented the manner in which the transfer was being conducted. As well, there was a group of English colonists who preferred to remain a colony of the Crown rather than become a mere colony of a colony.

SURVEYORS ARRIVE IN RED RIVER

Although October 1 was the date initially set for the sale of Rupert's Land to the Canadian government, the transaction was postponed to December 1. Even before the sale had actually been finalized, the government of Canada took steps to take control of the area.

In the fall of 1868, John Snow and Charles Mair arrived in the settlement. Snow headed a survey crew sent out by William McDougall, the Minister of Public Works and soon to be Lieutenant Governor of the new territory. Their assignment was to survey a road linking Fort Garry to Lake of the Woods and Canada. Interestingly enough, McDougall had not taken the precaution of requesting permission from the Hudson's Bay Company, who still owned the land in question. The survey party immediately gained the mistrust of most of the residents by associating with Schultz and his Canadian party.

Mair was a poet of sorts, whose work had been published. In a letter to his brother, Holmes Mair, which was later published in the Toronto Globe, he wrote:

There are jealousies and heartburnings, however. Many wealthy people are married to half-breed women, who, having no coat of arms but a 'totem' to look back to, make up for the deficiency by biting at the backs of their 'white' sisters. The white sisters fall back upon their whiteness, whilst the husbands meet

CHARLES MAIR



each other with desperate courtesies and hospitalities, with a view to filthy lucre in the background.⁶

Comments such as these increased the hostility between the Canadian element in the settlement and the original inhabitants. Mrs. Bannatyne, wife of a prominent local settler, was able to extract some satisfaction when she caught Mair in the post office and publicly horsewhipped him.

In June 1869, Mair and Snow paced out lots in St. Norbert, with the intention of claiming the land themselves for resale and profit. The alarmed Metis met and organized groups to patrol communities on the Red and Assiniboine Rivers to protect their holdings from these land-hungry speculators.

Sir John A. Macdonald appointed William McDougall as the first Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories on September 28, 1869. McDougall immediately sent out more surveyors to survey townships, while he set out shortly after to take possession of the territory for Canada. Along with a supply of arms, McDougall also "brought with him a magnificent throne manufactured by Jacques & Hay — it is said a finer article of furniture than the Throne in Ottawa...."⁷

This survey crew, headed by Colonel Dennis, also gained the mistrust of the residents by associating with Schultz and his Canadian party. They further alienated the townsfolk with their method of surveying lots. The land in the area had been laid out in river lots. These were narrow strips of land which fronted on the river and had a hay privilege (a two mile strip) at the rear. The surveyors trespassed on farms and resurveyed the river lots into square counties.

A meeting of the Red River residents was held on July 24, 1869 to discuss their concerns. The alarmed farmers, many of whom had never been given title to the lands they held, agreed to set up patrols to prevent the theft of their land. Riel, who was educated and understood the Canadian legal system, was also fluent in both French and English. These qualities soon allowed him to emerge as the political leader of the Red River Metis. On October 11, 1869, he led a group of 18 unarmed Metis against a party of surveyors. They confronted the surveyors and stopped further surveying of their lands by standing on the survey chains.

LOUIS RIEL



Photo courtesy of RCMP Museum, Regina, Sask.

NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE METIS

On October 16, 1869, the National Committee of the Metis was formed. John Bruce was elected as their first President and Louis Riel was elected Secretary. At a meeting of the Committee on October 21, 1869, the following notice was drafted:

Dated at St. Norbert, Red River, this 21st day of October, 1869.

Sir,

The National Committee of the Metis of Red River orders William McDougall not to enter the Territory of the North-West without special permission of the above-mentioned committee.

By order of the President, John Bruce.
Louis Riel, Secretary.⁸

On October 30, 1869, a Metis courier delivered the notice to McDougall as he arrived at the border village of Pembina. McDougall went as far as an abandoned Hudson's Bay post just inside the Canadian border, but dared to go no further. On November 2, 1869, he was ordered to leave the North-West by an armed guard of 14 Metis led by Ambroise Lepine. McDougall retreated to Pembina in North Dakota. Later the same day, Riel and 120 armed Metis occupied Fort Garry without opposition.

On November 6, 1869, the National Committee of the Metis issued an invitation to the English-speaking residents in the settlement to send delegates to participate in a council to be held November 16 at the Court House in Fort Garry. The purpose of the council was to discuss "the present political state of this country and to adopt such measures as may be deemed best for the future welfare of the same."⁹

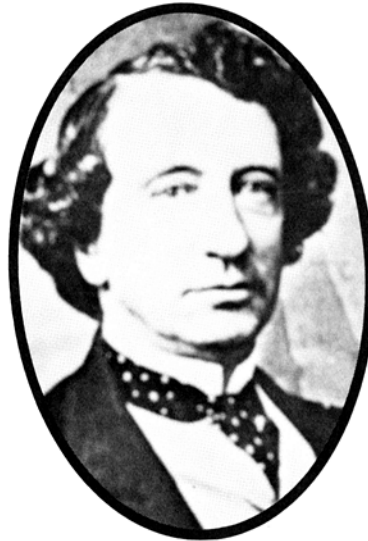
Delegates from the French and English-speaking communities met on November 16, 1869. It was Riel's belief that a unified body of all of the communities in the Red River settlement would provide a strong voice in negotiations with the Canadian government. At this meeting Riel put forth the proposal that a provisional government be established as the means of negotiating with the Canadian government. The two groups could not come to an agreement so they adjourned to allow time to consider the proposal.



AMBROISE LEPINE
GENERAL OF THE PROVISIONAL ARMY
Photo courtesy of Manitoba Archives



WILLIAM
MCDUGALL
Photo courtesy of
Saskatchewan Public Archives



SIR JOHN A.
MACDONALD
Photo courtesy of
Public Archives of Canada

TRANSFER DELAYED

During this time, Lieutenant Governor McDougall was still waiting at Pembina to take possession of his new territory. The possession date, December 1, 1869, was fast approaching. Although the Hudson's Bay Company had signed the transfer on November 19, Prime Minister Macdonald had refused to accept the transfer of the land. Unknown to McDougall, Macdonald had decided to delay the transfer of payment "until peaceable possession can be given."¹⁰

Macdonald also cabled McDougall, advising him that, because there was no military force to back him up, he should not attempt to take possession of the territory while the insurgents presented a threat to him. If he did attempt to take possession and was prevented from so doing, it would not only expose the weakness of the Canadian authority but it would also be lawful for the inhabitants to form a government. According to international law, if there was no legal government in existence, the inhabitants were within their rights to form a government of necessity for the protection of life and property. Macdonald further advised McDougall to delay until Britain could guarantee peaceful possession of the land, thereby throwing the problem and expense of governing the colony back into the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company and the British Crown.¹¹

However, the letter did not reach McDougall in time. On December 1, he sneaked across the border to the abandoned Hudson's Bay fort, declared the North-West a Canadian territory and proclaimed himself Lieutenant Governor. Copies of his proclamation were sent to Winnipeg and distributed throughout the Red River area.

Meanwhile, the convention of English and French-speaking delegates reconvened on December 1. At the meetings, Riel announced that he would be willing to negotiate with McDougall if McDougall would guarantee their rights. The delegates then adjourned to prepare a list of rights. Although the English-speaking settlers agreed with the Metis on the terms of the List of Rights, they could not agree on the methods of securing them. Riel wanted to delay McDougall's entry into the territory until he could guarantee these rights, but the English-speaking settlers were reluctant to go this far.

As the residents of the Red River settlement were attempting to reach an agreement on methods of negotiating with the Canadian government, the Canadian party within the Red River settlement did not remain idle. They were in constant communication with McDougall at Pembina, and it was partially due to their urgings that he sneaked across the border and proclaimed the territory for Canada on December 1, 1869.

They also misled McDougall into thinking he had more support within the Red River community than was actually the case. McDougall appointed Colonel Dennis, the surveyor, Lieutenant and Conservator of the Peace in Rupert's Land and gave him authority to raise an army to disperse the insurgents. However, Dennis's attempt to raise an armed force did not meet with much success.

Riel reacted quickly to the news: he seized all guns and ammunition in Winnipeg, closed down the Nor' Wester and posted armed guards around Schultz's home. On December 7, Riel arrested the 47 Canada Firsters who had barricaded themselves in "Fort Schultz" and the prisoners were marched off to prison in Fort Garry.

FIRST PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

With the support of the Metis only, Riel formed a Provisional Government on December 8, 1869. In a letter to the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba dated January 3, 1873, he gave his reasons for so doing:

The moment, however, that the existing Government was abolished by Mr. McDougall's proclamation, the urgent law of necessity compelling us to look to our own security, we proclaimed on the 8th December, the formation of a Provisional Government, with the object simply of protecting our lives and property....Most certainly, for we had the law of nations on our side.¹²

On December 10, 1869, the Metis lowered the Hudson's Bay Company flag and hoisted their own flag, which was a fleur de lis and shamrock on a white background.

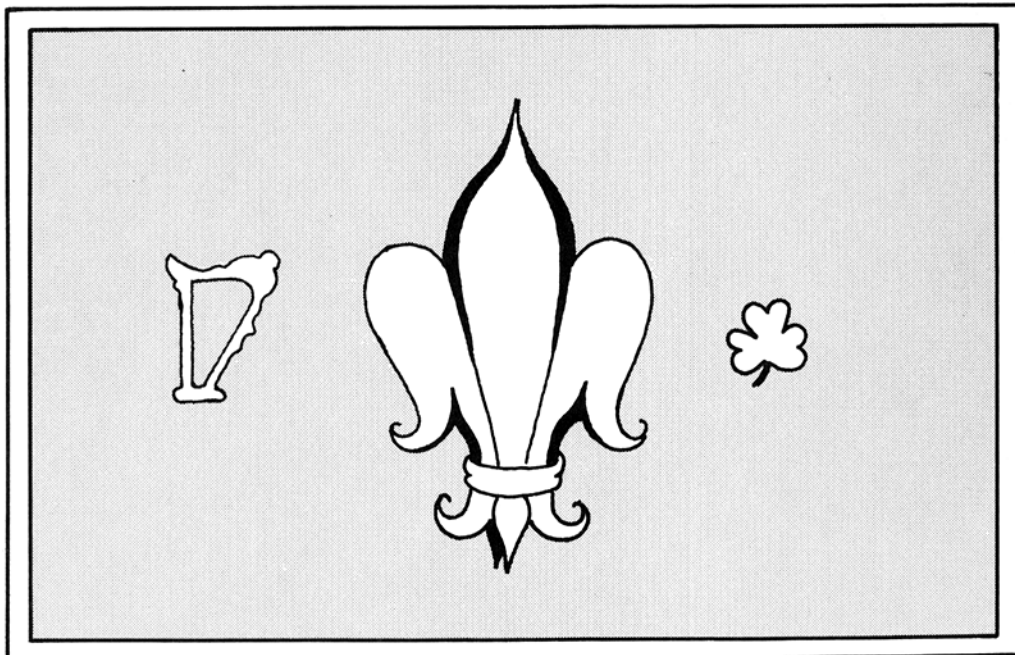
During the winter of 1869, Riel had much to be concerned about. The Americans saw the takeover of the Red River colony as the first step in securing for America all of the

British colonies in North America. Riel was worried, as well, about the actions of the Canadians and their attempts to rescue the prisoners at Fort Garry. Also, Riel had the task of maintaining a united front of English and French-speaking Metis. These concerns, together with the growing shortage of funds, placed heavy demands on Riel's skills as a leader.

December also saw the first of the emissaries sent by Sir John A. Macdonald to the Red River. Donald Smith, former Chief Commissioner of the Hudson's Bay Company, now a government emissary, was sent to explain the position of the Canadian government and to report on the causes and extent of armed resistance in the Red River. However, Smith was also personally authorized by Macdonald to offer bribes to "loyal French half-breeds"¹³ in an attempt to weaken the resistance. He spent 500 pounds bribing various Metis.

Riel invited Smith to address the National Committee of the Metis. On January 19, 1870, a meeting of the residents of the Red River colony was held to hear what Sir John's emissaries had to say. The meeting was attended by 1,000 people and

FLAG OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT



lasted five hours. However, Smith was only able to relay the good will intentions of the Canadian government; he could not offer concrete plans for implementing the intentions once the colony entered into the Dominion. Riel proposed that a committee composed of 20 French-speaking Metis and 20 English-speaking residents be struck to consider Smith's proposals and to decide what would be best for the Red River colony.

On January 26, the new convention with the 40 duly elected delegates met. Out of these delegates, a committee of six (3 Metis and 3 English) was formed to draw up a new Bill of Rights which incorporated most of the concerns listed in the previous bill.

On February 7, the 40 delegates met once again to discuss how many of the rights the Canadian government was prepared to guarantee. However, Smith was unable to specifically guarantee the rights; he was only able to guarantee that the list would be presented to the Canadian parliament. The decision about which rights would be guaranteed ultimately rested with the Canadian government. He invited a delegation to Canada to present their case. By forcing the Canadian government to negotiate the terms of entry, Riel had achieved one of his main objectives.

SECOND PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

Riel once again proposed that a Provisional Government composed of both English and French-speaking delegates be established. Because the Council of Assiniboia was non-operative and Macdonald refused to accept transfer of the land, no government existed and Riel said:

"The Provisional Government is an actual fact, why not recognize it? You have, in reality, practically recognized it by your acts in this Convention. It has accomplished some good. Help it do more."¹⁴

After receiving the approval of Governor MacTavish and the Council of Assiniboia, the representatives agreed to Riel's proposal. The six delegates selected to draft a Bill of Rights were chosen to draft a constitution for the Provisional Government. The committee recommended that there be an elected council of 24 members, 12 French-speaking and 12 English-speaking, together with an executive. On February 10, 1870, the Metis National Committee officially became the

Provisional Government and the officers were as follows:

President	Louis Riel	French-Metis
Secretary	Thomas Bunn	English-fur trader
Assistant Secretary	Louis Schmidt	English Half-breed
Treasurer	W.B. O'Donoghue	U.S. citizen
Adjutant- General	Ambroise Lepine	French-Metis
Chief Justice	James Ross	English Half-breed
Postmaster	A.G. Bannatyne	Hudson's Bay employee ¹⁵

From the list it can be seen that most interest groups were represented: the French Metis, British fur traders, English half-breeds and Hudson's Bay Company employees.

THE CANADIANS AND THOMAS SCOTT

The Canadians, who were captured on December 7, were still being held in the prison at Fort Garry. The first of a series of jailbreaks occurred on January 7 when Charles Mair, an Ontario Orangemen named Thomas Scott and several other prisoners escaped. Scott and Mair made their way to Portage la Prairie where they immediately began formulating plans to engineer the escape of the remaining prisoners and to overthrow the Provisional Government.

Meanwhile Dr. Schultz, who had also escaped, was soliciting support in the Red River Scottish communities. In February, under the command of Major Boulton, a military force of settlers set out from Portage la Prairie bound for Fort Garry. Even though the prisoners remaining in Fort Garry were released on February 15 after pledging allegiance to the Provisional Government, the armed military force did not disband but continued its march to Fort Garry.

On February 17, the members of the Canadian Party were recaptured and taken to Fort Garry. Before they were captured, two unfortunate events took place. Norbert Parisien, a sixteen year old Metis boy said to be mentally-handicapped,

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT, 1870



Above: The elected councillors of the Provisional Government of the Metis Nation, 1870.
Top row: L to R; Bonnet Tromage, Pierre de Lorme, Thomas Bunn, Xavier Page, Baptiste Beauchemin, Baptiste Tournond, Joseph (Thomas?) Spence
Middle row: L to R; Pierre Poitras, John Bruce, Louis Riel, John O'Donoghue, Francois Dauphenais
Front row: L to R; Robert O'Lone, Paul Proux.

THOMAS SCOTT



Photo courtesy of Provincial Archives of Manitoba.

Photo courtesy of Saskatchewan Public Archives.

was captured by Major Boulton's forces. While attempting to escape, he shot and killed another young man, John Hugh Sutherland, who was not a member of Colonel Boulton's forces. Parisien believed Sutherland intended to prevent his escape. Shortly after, Parisien was recaptured by the Canadian forces, severely beaten and died soon after from the wounds. Riel held the officer in command, Captain Boulton, responsible for these needless deaths and condemned him to be shot. After hearing a plea of mercy from Sutherland's mother, Riel later rescinded the death sentence. He is reported to have said: "Mrs. Sutherland, that alone has saved him. I give you Boulton's life!"¹⁶

Thomas Scott, who was among those captured, proved to be a difficult and rebellious prisoner. He constantly threatened the Metis guards and at one point they were so enraged with Scott that they dragged him outside to beat him. It was only the timely arrival of one of Riel's councilmen that saved him from a severe beating or perhaps even death. Scott had nothing but contempt for the Metis. Shortly afterward, Riel visited Scott to advise him that his repeated outbursts might bring him harm and to be more civil. Scott would not listen, and he physically attacked Riel.

After refusing to swear allegiance to the Provisional Government, Scott was brought before a court presided over by Ambroise Lepine. He was charged with defying the authority of the Provisional Government, attacking his guards and attacking the President. Scott was sentenced to death and executed on March 4 by a firing squad. This single act, more than any other, ultimately led to Riel's own execution in 1885. Edwin Brooks, one of Riel's jurors, remarked: "We (the jury) tried Louis Riel for treason but he was hanged for the murder of Thomas Scott."¹⁷

A more immediate result was the backlash from an outraged Protestant Ontario. Schultz and Mair travelled throughout Ontario, stirring up Protestant hatred against Riel and the French Catholic Metis for the murder of Thomas Scott. There was a loud cry from Ontario for Riel and his followers to be punished.

DELEGATES TRAVEL TO OTTAWA

When the delegates of the Provisional Government (Father Ritchot, Alfred Scott and John Black) reached Ottawa, they were greeted with a warrant for their arrest for their involvement in the murder of Thomas Scott. This warrant had been initiated by Scott's brother, Hugh. Although the charges were dropped a few days later, it was nonetheless humiliating for the delegates who had been invited by the Canadian government to travel to Ottawa to negotiate the terms of entry into the Dominion of Canada. It was viewed as a violation of their diplomatic immunity as representatives of the Provisional Government of Assiniboia.

The Canadian Government received the delegates officially and its representatives, Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George Cartier, negotiated terms of the Bill of Rights with the delegates. The Bill contained twenty different clauses, the essence of which is as follows:

LIST OF RIGHTS

1. territory to enter Canada as province with cultural life guaranteed;
2. two representatives in Senate, four in House of Commons, until pay increases to justify more;
3. exemption from public debt contracted before union;
4. local legislature to receive an annual pay of \$80,000 from Dominion;
5. properties, rights and privileges guaranteed. Civil matters to be exclusive domain of local legislature;
6. no direct federal taxes levied in area for five years;
7. a payment of \$.80 per head until population reaches 600,000;
8. qualifications for M.P.'s to be set by province;
9. voting qualifications — males who have reached 21 years, lived in area three years, a householder, and have taken allegiance oath;
10. terms of transfer arranged with Hudson's Bay Company to be annulled;

11. control over the public domain;
12. a commission to be appointed by Dominion to explore mineral wealth and to report to people within five years;
13. treaties with Indians in consultation with local legislature;
14. transportation link to Lake Superior within five years – rail;
15. public works to be financed by Dominion Treasury;
16. bilingual public business;
17. bilingual Lieutenant Governor;
18. bilingual judges;
19. debts of Provisional Government be paid by Dominion Treasury and the granting of amnesty for participants;
20. no change in duties until rails link with outside.¹⁸

The Manitoba Bill was passed by parliament on May 12 and it incorporated most of the provisions of the Bill of Rights. One exception, however, was the provision of amnesty for the participants of the insurgence (contained in clause 19). Assurances were repeatedly given by the Prime Minister that a proclamation issued December 6 by the Governor General of Canada, which granted amnesty to the participants in the insurgence, was operative and that the people of the Red River had nothing to fear.

RED RIVER EXPEDITION

Before the delegates returned to the Red River, rumours that a large military force was on its way to the area had already reached the settlement. Assurances were once again given that this was strictly a "peace-keeping" force. Alexander Begg wrote in his journal:

A bad feeling is beginning to exist in the minds of the French with regard to the Canadian Volunteers coming to this country. It is to be hoped however there is to be no more trouble in the settlement.¹⁹

On July 20, Captain Butler arrived in the settlement with a proclamation from Colonel Wolseley, who was leading the expedition to the Red River. The proclamation stated in part:

...Our mission is one of peace and the sole object of the expedition is to secure Her Majesty's sovereign authority.... The strictest order and discipline will be maintained and private property will be carefully respected....

G.J. Wolseley
Colonel
Commanding Red River Force.²⁰

However, it became apparent once Colonel Wolseley and his army neared the settlement, that theirs was not a peace-keeping force. The morning after Riel had been advised that Wolseley's forces were camped a scant six miles from Fort Garry, James G. Stewart rode into the fort and told Riel:

"For the love of God, save yourself. The troops are only two miles from here and the soldiers speak of nothing but massacring you and your companions."²¹

Having disbanded his Provisional Government troops and sent them back to their farms and jobs, Riel was without a military force. He was forced to flee to Pembina, across the United States border. When Colonel Wolseley arrived at the fort and discovered that Riel had fled, he wrote:

It was a sad disappointment to all ranks. Personally, I was glad that Riel did not come out and surrender, as he at one time said he would, for I could not then have hanged him as I might have done had I taken him prisoner when in arms against his sovereign.²²

Colonel Wolseley also neglected another of his promises, that "The strictest order and discipline will be maintained and private property will be carefully respected".²³

The weeks immediately following the militia's occupation of the fort were ones of drunken lawlessness, with the militia rapidly depleting all stores of alcohol. Some of the Ontario militiamen had joined for the sole purpose of avenging Thomas Scott's death. Lieutenant Governor Archibald reported:

With some (I cannot say how many) of the volunteers who went up, a desire to avenge the murder of Scott was one of the inducements to enlist. Some of them openly stated that they had taken a vow before leaving home to pay off all scores by shooting down any Frenchman that was in any way connected with that event. The great bulk of the French population having been, one way or other, concerned in the troubles, the feeling gradually grew to be one of intense dislike towards the whole race...²⁴

A Metis, Elzear Goulet, who had taken part in the Scott court martial, was stoned to death. Several other Metis and some of those who were thought to be Metis or who had supported the Metis cause, were murdered, severely beaten or had their property damaged. None of the assailants were punished for their crimes.

AFTERMATH

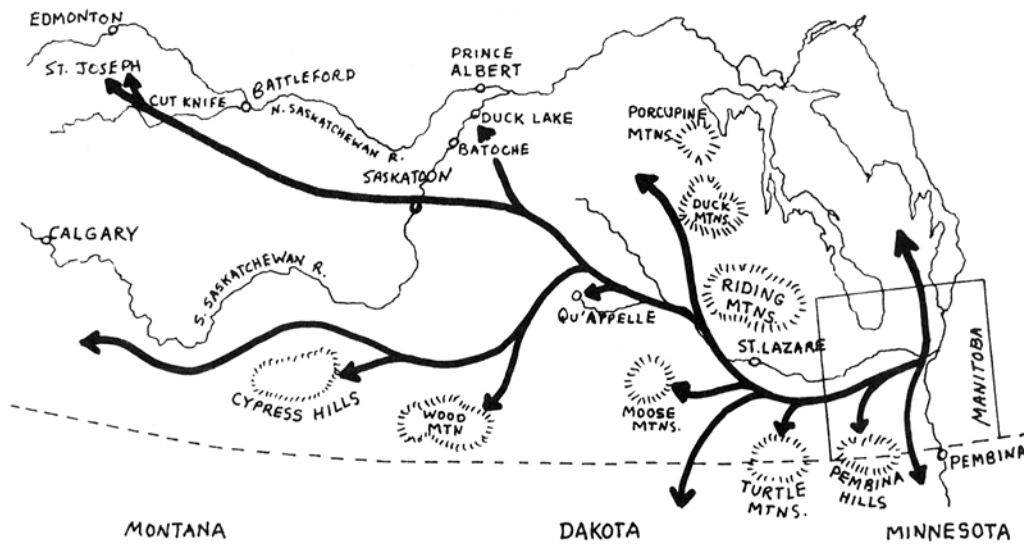
When Riel was forced to flee from the Red River, he did so in the belief that a number of rights had been secured for his people. He said:

It does not matter what happens now. The rights of the Metis for their religion, their language have been assured by the Manitoba Act. This is what I wished. My Mission is finished.²⁵

This was true. The Manitoba Act of 1870 incorporated the Province of Manitoba into Confederation with full provincial status and also guaranteed preservation of the Metis' religion and language rights. However, rather than being treated as equal partners in Confederation, the Metis of the Red River were treated as a conquered people. The French-speaking

Metis, the group most visible during the struggle for democratic government in the West, suffered social humiliation and physical abuse at the hands of the militia and Canadians. Although the Manitoba Act provided for 1.4 million acres to be set aside for Half-breed land claims, the whole issue was so badly managed by the government that few families realized their benefits. Most of the lands and scrip ended up in the hands of the land speculators. In the decade immediately following the Red River Insurgence, there was a large dispersion of the Metis from the Red River. Of these, the largest numbers moved to the North-West where they settled in communities along the river banks. There, for a brief time, they were able to recreate their lifestyle of old.

DISPERSAL OF THE METIS



HALFBREEDS RUNNING THE BUFFALO

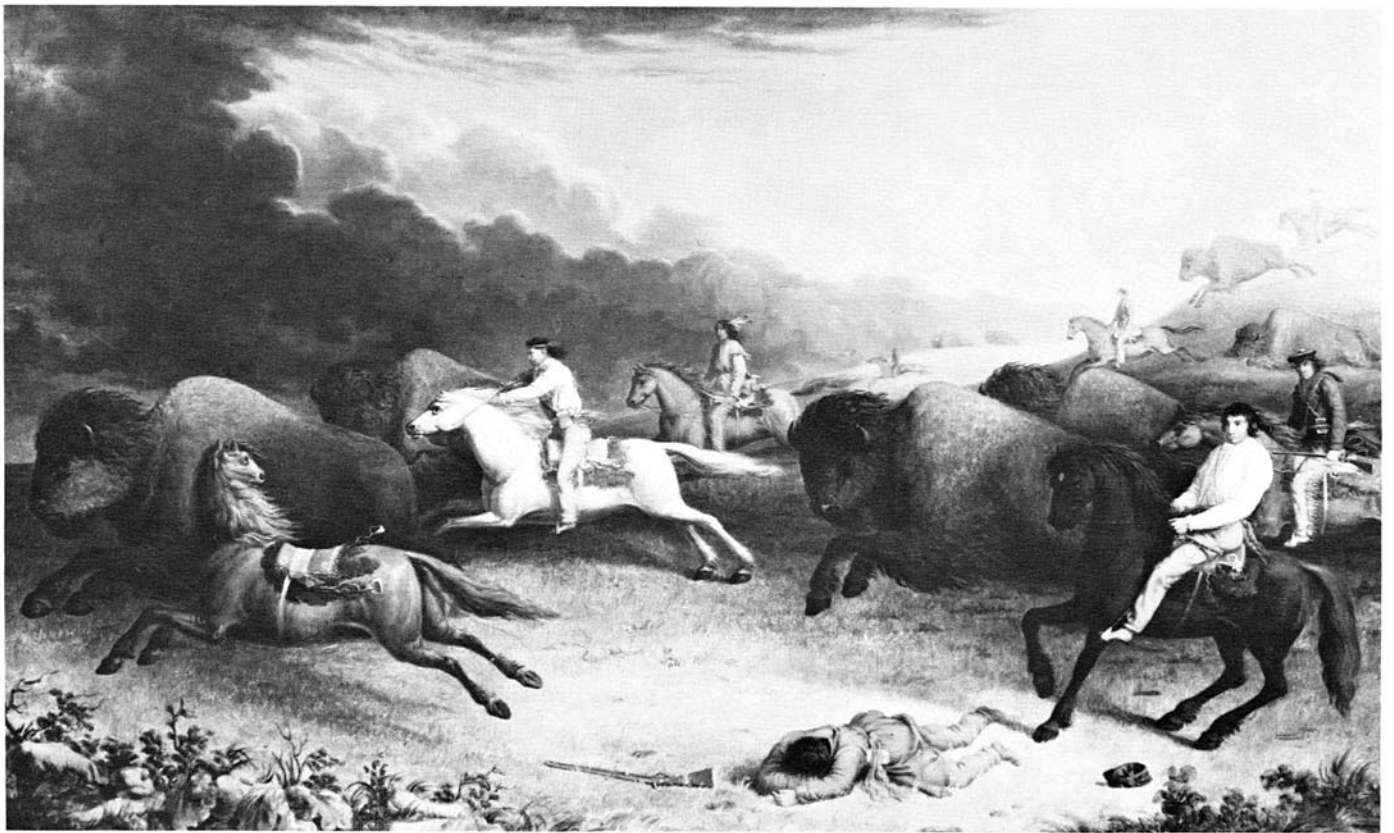


Photo courtesy of Royal Ontario Museum.

FOOTNOTES

1. A.H. de Tremaudan, *Hold High Your Heads*, (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1982), p. 100.
2. *British North America Act, 1867*, Art. IX, sec. 146.
3. George F.G. Stanley, *Louis Riel*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1963), p. 55.
4. Peter Charlebois, *The Life of Louis Riel*, (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1978), pp. 28-29.
5. W.L. Morton, *Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-70*, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1956), p. 532.
6. *Ibid*, p. 396.
7. *Ibid*, pp. 344-345.
8. See Stanley, p. 62.
9. See Charlebois, p. 41
10. *Ibid*, p. 43.
11. *Ibid*, p. 43.
12. *Report of the Select Committee on the Causes of the Difficulties in the North-West Territory, 1869-70*, (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1874), pp. 201-202.
13. *Ibid*, p. 94.
14. See Stanley, p. 97.
15. See Morton, pp. 302-303.
16. W.J. Healy, *Women of Red River*, (Winnipeg: Russell, Lang & Co. Ltd., 1923), p. 223.
17. See Charlebois, p. 227.
18. Rev. Professor Bryce, LL.D, *Two Provisional Governments in Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press Print, 1890), pp. 8-10.
19. See Morton, p. 375.
20. *Ibid*, p. 392.
21. See Charlebois, p. 86.
22. *Ibid*, p. 155.
23. See Morton, p. 392.
24. See Stanley, p. 160.
25. See Charlebois, p. 86.

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