

BATOCHÉ PROJECT

Pre-ample:

Information on the arrangement of each chapter and how the reader is invited to use it.

Each chapter contains in the introduction a summary of events outlining the major characters and the sequence of action covered in the course of the chapter. Following the introduction a selection of primary documents and secondary sources allow the reader to examine the sequence of events from diverse viewpoints and provide additional information relating to the characters and the action to which (s)he is introduced.

CHAPTER ONE

THE INITIATION OF VIOLENCE

Introduction to Chapter One:

Historians generally agree that the North-West "insurrection," spurred on by all facets of the population - Indians, Half-breeds and Whites - had been developing over a considerable period of time. The first warning of serious trouble was given by Superintendent Crozier in July of 1884, when a tense confrontation with armed Indians led to a situation where Crozier's cool head narrowly averted open warfare. Three months later a police force was stationed at Fort Carlton, a Hudson's Bay Post near a number of Half-breed settlements, on the South Saskatchewan River. Following the difficulties of 1884 the police force in the Northern divisions was increased to two-hundred men.

The actual Half-breed call to arms was the result of an indiscreet remark by the Hudson's Bay factor Lawrence Clarke, stationed at Prince Albert. Clarke, on his way home from a trip to Ottawa, where he was discussing the Metis grievances with Sir John A. Macdonald, had stopped at Regina to see Indian Commissioner Dewdney and then travelled on to Prince Albert. A few miles from home he was met by a number of Metis who were anxiously awaiting the government's reply to a petition on behalf of the Whites, Half-breeds and Indians in the Prince Albert district. To the Metis question concerning government reaction Clarke reportedly answered that Ottawa's reply was on the way in the form of armed men and bullets. This news spread panic among the Half-breed settlements. The Metis took immediate action to arm themselves, seizing several stores in the Duck Lake area to equip their men with supplies and ammunition. They also arrested several government officials, among them Indian Agent Lash, and confined them on the upper floor of one of the raided establishments.

Only a week earlier Superintendent Gagnon had telegraphed Mounted Police Commissioner Irvine in Regina, to mobilize a police attachment in support of Superintendent Crozier's force, at Carlton. A few days later the Commissioner was on his way from Regina to the fort on the South Saskatchewan with ninety policemen. Crozier, on hearing of the arrests by Riel's men, dispatched a scout by the name of Joseph McKay Jr. to Captain Moffat at Prince Albert with the request for a volunteer force of eighty men. In the meantime the Metis leaders called together

a council in the church at Batoche. Father Moulin, the parish priest, unwilling to allow the building to be used for this purpose and denouncing the Metis resort to armed resistance, was thrust aside at Riel's command. Dumont then sent out parties to cut the telegraph lines. Father Fourmond, at St. Laurent, also proved to be hostile to the Metis cause, threatening to withdraw religious services to those who actively joined with Riel. The latter realized the importance of religion to the Metis people and feared that his alienation from the priests would undermine the support he so urgently required; therefore he tried to fill the void by declaring himself a prophet of the new world for the great Metis nation.

The official decision to take up arms was signed by fifteen councillors. Pierre Parenteau was chosen president and Phillipe Garnot secretary. Some companies of soldiers were formed with Gabriel Dumont in charge of all. Riel did not become a member of the council but contributed by giving the new organization a name. He called it the "Exovedate," and referred to each member as an exovede, meaning, "those picked from the flock."

The foregoing account summarizes the initiation of violence which led to (what is somewhat erroneously termed) the Northwest "rebellion." The following quotations and excerpts from primary documents and secondary sources will attempt to examine the divergent viewpoints on issues associated with the initiation and the various accounts of ensuing hostilities as seen and experienced, curtailed or promoted by men and women of the opposing forces.

Metis Petition prior to Insurrection, fall of 1884 - Ignored.

"...Following Riel's return and at his urging, petition after petition was dispatched to Ottawa pressing the government for some action on Metis demands. Many meetings were held during the summer at which the people resolved to persevere in their efforts to win their rights. Nothing happened. The government did not respond.

In the early fall of 1884, they drew up a list of rights as had been done at the Red River. This was sent to Ottawa with a petition asking for guarantees. The charter contained seven clauses.

1. Subdivision of North-West Territories into Provinces,
2. Concession of land and other advantages to the Metis....
3. Immediate distribution of land titles to settlers in possession,
4. Sale of a half-million acres of Crown lands for the foundation of schools, hospitals and other institutions...
5. The reservation of 100 districts of marshy land to be distributed among the Metis children over the course of the next 100 years.
6. Allocation of 1,000 Dollars to maintain a religious institution in each Metis settlement.
7. Arrangement for Indian well-being.

2.
AMNSIS
Louis Riel,
Justice
Must Be
Done.
Manitoba
Metis
Federation
Press, 1979

Ottawa ignored this petition as well...²

By the end of February, 1885, Riel had to think of more drastic measures.

- " ... (The petition) was sent to Chapleau, the Secretary of State, and receipt duly acknowledged...January, 1885 came and went. Early in February the Cabinet agreed to investigate the claims of the half-breeds. But the government had promised investigation since 1879. There was no answer to the Metis leaders. By the end of February Riel had been forced to think of more drastic measures... (But) "I assure you," Riel told Rev. Williams the day of his execution, that three weeks before the Duck Lake fight I had no idea of rebellion."³

3.
Waite,
Peter
Canada,
1874-1896
McLelland
& Stewart,
1971

Sir John Macdonald denied ever having received a petition from the Metis, Indians or settlers.

" ...it is interesting to note that Sir John A Macdonald boldly declared in the Dominion Parliament in March 1885 that no North West "Bill of Rights" had ever been "officially, or indeed in any way, promulgated so far as we know, and transmitted to Government." The Government not only received the petition and forwarded it to the Colonial Office, but apparently acknowledged the receipt of the petition."⁴

4.
Stanley,
Birth
of
Western
Canada.
p.307

"Edmonton Bulletin" theorized that without rebellion the people in the North West need expect nothing from government.

"If it was not by...rebellion and appeals to the British government...that the people of Ontario gained the rights they enjoy today and freed themselves from a condition precisely similar to that in which the North West is being rapidly forced...If history is to be taken as a guide, what could be plainer than that without rebellion the people of the North West need expect nothing."⁵

5. "Edmonton Bulletin", as quoted in "Prince Albert Times", Feb. 22, 1884.

In early March of 1885, Crozier organized military forces, in case of trouble with half-breeds.

"...On the 13th (of March, 1885) Crozier reported that a half-breed rebellion was "liable to break out at any moment" and called for reinforcements. Hence on the 15th, Commissioner Irvine, of Regina, was instructed to proceed north as quietly as possible with all available men up to one hundred.

6. Stanley, George F. Birth of Western Canada Univ. of Toronto Press, 1961 p.322

...made every preparation for the trouble which he had accurately foretold. At Battleford he organized a body of volunteers, or special constables, to defend the town and took with him to Calton fifty men of the regular force, one gun and the arms of the dispended Prince Albert militia. On March 15th, he proceeded to Prince Albert where he arranged with Captain Moore, a former militia officer, to sound quietly the feeling of that settlement and report of it, if in the event of an emergency volunteer force could be readily enrolled."⁶

Military leaders were long convinced that a large police force would intimidate Indians and Metis.

(In a letter to Irvine, Crozier suggested that -)...Nothing but seeing a large force in the country will prevent serious trouble before long. If matters are allowed to drift or if it is felt that no greater, or only a slight increase of force at present here is made, I am strongly of the opinion we shall have the Manitoba difficulties of 1869 reenacted with the addition of the Indian population as allies to the half-breeds."⁷

7. Letter, Crozier to Irvine Jul 13, 1884 RCMP File No. 1137d.

Dewdney advised Macdonald one week before outbreak of violence that he intended to meet with Lawrence Clarke, and that troops should be ready to start north.

(Dewdney wrote to Macdonald on March 12, 1885:)

"My dear Sir John:

...Lawrence Clarke from Prince Albert, whom I first consulted about these men will be here today, as finding he was on his way to the North from Winnipeg I wired him to come and see me as I wished to talk over the half-breed reports that have reached me since he left Prince Albert.... A telegram from Crozier...Crozier is nervous, but I have no doubt has good foundation for his information as far as talk is concerned. A determined stand should be taken at once or the agitation will increase, and we will have no peace all summer.

8.
Macdonald
Papers
P.A.C.
Regina
Mar. 12,
1885

Herschmer with 50 (or 100 men would be better) should be ready to start north.

The part of Crozier's telegram about getting arms from the States is the weak part of it. I think the sale of fixed ammunition, and the importation of it, should be prohibited in the North.

With kind regards

Believe me

Yours sincerely

E. Dewdney" 8

Mitchell, a trader at Duck Lake, wrote to Crozier on March 20, (1885) that L. Clarke warned the half-breeds of troops on the way to fight them.

" Hillyard Mitchell, who acted as intermediary between Crozier and Riel wrote to Crozier on March 20, (1885) that he had learned "that he, (Clarke)...stopped at the settlement on the South Branch, and told the people that the Government was sending 500 police from Troy to fight the half-breeds. The people of course, got excited and said they were going to fight the said 500 men. And they are now waiting at Batoche expecting them to arrive."

Another version is put forward in an unfinished letter dated April 3rd, 1885....

" (Confidential Papers) "During the day in question and before the meeting (to form a council) took place, several English half-breeds, who were in town on business, went home

having heard the various rumors relative to the intention of the Police. Knowing that Riel had done nothing worthy of arrest and feeling that as they were responsible for his safety, they sent the news on to the lower end of the French Settlement, and as these things always grow by rehandling it reached the French in the form of a statement to the effect that the citizens of Prince Albert were arming to assist the Police to arrest Riel." Whichever version may be true, the important fact is that Riel took advantage of the panic to form the Provisional Government."

Clarke, however, denied having met or talked to anyone...

"In a letter to the Hudsons Bay Company Commissioner on July 6th, 1885 (H.B.C. folio on the Riel Rebellions) Clarke gave a detailed account of his movements on the day in question and said: "Between meeting Lepine twelve miles on the other side of the South Branch and Fort Carlton, I did not meet a single half-breed, nor with those that I did meet on the way had I one word of conversation about anything connected with Riel or his movements." Nevertheless the other view was prevalent at the time.⁹

9. Stanley,
Birth
of
Western
Canada
Ibid.,
p.443

Brave men were now aroused to defend their homes:

" ,,, Whether Clarke exaggerated, thinking that the size of the force might induce the Metis to return home quietly, or whether the Metis misunderstood his words, is not known. It is pretty certain that Clarke was referring to Irvine's force. However, even if Clarke had said 5000 men, the result would have been the same. Brave men were aroused to defend their homes.

10. Charlebois
Peter
The
Life of
Louis
Riel.
New
Canadian
Public.,
Toronto,
1978
p. 141

Now Riel and the Metis horsemen were excited. At a small shop operated by George Kerr and his brother, the Metis came upon a group of government officials. They took the officials as their prisoners, and hurried on toward Batoche...

...At Walters and Bakers, the Metis helped themselves to all the guns and ammunition in stock. Henry Walters protested, and for his pains was taken prisoner. Upstairs, in his own shop, he was locked up with the other prisoners.

Riel then had Dumont send out parties to cut the telegraph lines.¹⁰

Dewdney wrote to Macdonald in March of 1885 that half-breeds must be taken unawares and their leader arrested:

"...If the half-breeds mean business the sooner they are put down, the better. They are like Indians. When they gather and get excited it is difficult to handle them, but if they are taken unawares there is little difficulty in arresting the leader."¹¹

Dewdney to
Macdonald,
Mar. 11,
1885.
(Private)
Macdonald
Papers
Vol. IV

But Riel and the Metis were not going to be caught unaware:

"(Riel) Hoped that by holding prisoners and seizing property he could bring John A Macdonald to bargain, thus to gain concession for the Metis. The threat of war might be as effective as war itself. Riel and the Metis discussed their problem at length..."¹²

Charlebois.,
Ibid.,
p.141

The parish priests in the half-breed settlements, denouncing the unconstitutional means of resistance, withdrew their services.

"...The clergy...(were) refusing to perform religious functions for those Metis who joined actively with Riel. Riel realized that he must fill this void. He did not want to lose the support of the people to whom religion was very important, to the Priests who were working hand in hand with the government.

Charlebois.,
Ibid.,
p.139.

The missionaries came to fear immediately the Metis adulation of Riel, taking it as a serious threat to their power in the parishes. Riel spoke of himself as a "prophet of the new world." The Metis were to become "a great new nation."
"...Canada must become the cente of Christendom..."¹³

Charlebois' approval of Riel's action - under the circumstances - stands in contrast to Father Andre's condemnation of the Metis leader's style of movement. He wrote to his superior, Monsigneur Grandin, O.M.I., on March 22, 1885 :

"The People considered Riel as a hero with the qualities of a saint."

"...But beneath this mask (is) hidden fiendish conceit and excessive ambition...Riel detests priests and bishops and uses all his influence to turn the half-breeds against the clergy... He tells them that we are bought off by government, paid to

14.
Corres-
pondence
Andre to
Grandin
P.A.C.

uphold its authority and that as a result it was necessary to guard against the clergy's influence..."¹⁴

Riel's first move was to seize the church in St. Antoine so that he could make it his headquarters:

...Father Moulin's protest irritated Riel (who) threatened to arrest and tie him up like a prisoner if he continued to oppose his plan. The church was therefore taken by force and became the headquarters for Riel and his people...Riel said to his recruits: "Providence has foreseen this miraculous movement...St. Antoine is going to be celebrated as the birthplace of the emancipation of the Northwest..."¹⁵

15.
Andre to
Grandin
Ibid.

The term "Provisional Government", widely used to describe the Metis resistance movement was not used exclusively by the people who were actively engaged in the movement. Riel and Louis Schmidt, both, refer initially to a "council". Louis Schmidt writes:

The greatest number possible of the Metis were invited to come with their arms to St. Laurent...(then) the Metis went in a body to Batoche and it was there that the taking up of arms was decided.

...They immediately organized a Council of Leading citizens, which many named "the little Provisional" in memory of its elder brother of Red River. Some companies of soldiers were formed...with Gabriel Dumont in command of all...Pierre Parenteau was chosen president, Phillippe Garnot became secretary...Each man was called an "exovede," and the council itself the "Exovedate." Both words were synthetic Latin by construction and meant "those picked from the flock."¹⁶

16.
Memoirs
of
Louis
Schmidt
P.A.C.

During his trial Riel said: "The 19th Century is to be treated in certain ways, and it is probably for this reason that I have found the word 'exovede', I prefer to be called one of the flock. I am no more than you are, I am simply one of the flock, equal to the rest."¹⁷

17.
Queen vs
Riel,
197.
As cited
in
Stanley,
p.413

To: Batoche Working Committee
From: Christel
Re: Examination of Chapter One, format, content, etc.

Attached a tentative version of Chapter One, - no title yet- any suggestions?
I arranged each page in such a way that the source for quotations is readily visible. Possibly quotations should be numbered as well.

The first two pages contain introductory statements. The last paragraph on page 3 sets out the general aim of the chapter. Should there be an explanation by what process the aim is intended to be achieved? Or should an introductory chapter set out the format and process ?

Many of the quotations are probably too long. I will need help in determining how they can be shortened. Perhaps there is also repetition or at times not enough background info for understanding.

I had originally intended to start the first chapter with the initiation of the insurrection but changed my mind and began with an explanation of many of the issues that caused widespread discontent. The diversion of railroad, harsh economic conditions in N.W.T., Indian resentment, colonization land-agents's interests were part and parcel of the violence which ensued and, I felt, had to be mentioned - better yet should be explained in detail later on.

Can we have a meeting as soon as possible to assess what has been done?
Martin may have to look at sources and decide if they are properly footnoted.

CHAPTER ONE

Archer, John H
Saskatchewan A
History
Western Pro-
ducer Prairie
Books, 1980
p.84

"Louis Riel had been the champion of the Metis in the Red River in 1869 and 1870. He had headed a provisional government which, in the Metis eyes at least, had negotiated with the Canadian government in distant Ottawa... Now, in 1884 there were many of the same problems and perplexities..."

Riel, exiled from Canada, had spent the last five years in the United States, where he had met and married a Metis woman. The couple had two children, a son born in 1882 and a daughter in 1883. During the summer of 1884 he was quietly teaching at St. Peter's Mission School, at Sun River, near Fort Benton, Montana, when on Sunday, June 4th, Gabriel Dumont, two other Metis and an English Half-breed rode into the school to see him. They had come almost seven hundred miles from the Prince Albert district of the Saskatchewan country to urge him to return with them*, in order to redress their grievances to the Canadian government, because previous attempts of negotiation with Ottawa had been without success. *(and who had provided funds to bring him)

Riel agreed to the proposal and he arrived with his family in the Batoche settlement on the South Saskatchewan River early in July 1884, moving in with his brother-in-law, Charles Nolin. He was received with great enthusiasm by Metis, Half-breeds and the white settlers of Prince Albert. He spoke in the town on July 19 and brought together the complaints of whites and Half-breeds for presentation of a united front to the Canadian government. Nearly the whole town turned out to hear him and the meeting was termed a resounding success.

Waite, Peter B
Canada, 1874 -
1896.
McLelland and
Stewart Ltd.,
1971

"By mid-December, 1884, a great petition had been prepared, in French and in English, signed extensively, with something in it for the whites, half-breeds and Indians. It was sent to Chapleau, the Secretary of State, and receipt duly acknowledged. Nothing happened.

January came and went. Early in February the Cabinet agreed to investigate the claims of the half-breeds. But the government had promised investigation since 1879. That was no answer to the Metis leaders. By the end of February Riel had been forced to think of more drastic measures...(But) "I assure you," Riel told Rev. Williams the day of his execution, "that three weeks before the Duck Lake fight I had no idea of rebellion."

Writers generally agree that neither Riel or Dumont had planned a full-scale war against the government but attempted to exercise a little obtrusive coercion similar to the kind of tactics employed in the Red River resistance, but Macdonald was not willing to be blackmailed for a second time.

Waite, Ibid,
P.155

"And the C.P.R. and the Mounted Police were two good reasons why, in 1884, Macdonald did not have to... North West Mounted Police enforcements were ordered northward to Fort Carlton (A Hudsons Bay post with a N.W.M.P. garrison) on March 15. When the news of this move reached Riel, as it soon did, he was furious. With his supporters he seized as prisoners, on March 18, the Indian Agent and some other government officials. It was the first overt move, as Riel himself recognized."

The foregoing summary of events leading to the first violent action on the part of the Metis, leads to a number of questions, however, this chapter will examine only two basic concerns; first, the widespread discontent of the people in the North West generally, the specific grievances of the Metis, Indian and whites, and government reaction to the general unrest. Second, this chapter will provide documents to support the divergent viewpoints regarding the initiation of hostilities, that led to the battles which followed.

General Discontent in the N.W.T.

The Fort McLeod
Gazette,
19 September,
1883

There is a cry going up for justice from the eastern boundary of Manitoba to the base of the Rocky Mountains and from the boundary line to Canada's Northern limit...

The Prince
Albert Times,
May 16, 1884

Where they (the Canadian government) get their information which induces them to believe the people likely to submit tamely much longer, we do not know, but we can answer them that they need not look for their friends among the Canadian Half-breeds or Indians, as they are likely soon to be made aware of the manner at once startling and unpleasant...

"Edmonton
Bulletin", as
quoted in
"Prince Albert
Times",
February 22,
1884.

If it was not by ...rebellion and appeals to the British government...that the people of Ontario gained the rights they enjoy today and freed themselves from a condition precisely similar to that in which the North West is being rapidly forced...If history is to be taken as a guide, what could be plainer than that without rebellion the people of the North West need expect nothing.

Waite, Ibid.,
p.150

It was a long way from Ottawa to Prince Albert. There was no representation of the Northwest Territories in Parliament; that did not come until after 1886 as a direct result of the events of 1885. Few Northwest grievances, especially those from the territories, got onto the floor of Parliament. The North-West Council of Regina...proved powerless in fighting for Northwest demands...The North West Council passed a long memorial in 1883, and a sharper one in 1884; they disappeared into Ottawa pigeon holes until, two months after trouble had broken out, a report was prepared by them...

Indian Resentment

Waite, Ibid.,
p.148

There was Indian resentment over the Treaties and what they really meant. The idea of selling the land to the Canadian government seems never to have been in their head. 'Owning' land was a concept foreign to their thinking...What they had imagined, as one Indian pointed out, was usage similar to that of the Hudsons Bay Company.

Statement made at an Indian Council at Fort Carlton, August, 1884
Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, as cited on p.205

The Indian was blind in regard to making the treaty. He understood not the treaty when he heard of it...A government came to him without invitation...The Governor Morris comes and tells the Indian we are not coming to buy your land...we come here to borrow the country, to keep it for you...The Indian understands therefore that the country is borrowed, not bought.

What was worse Indian rations were cut down.

Waite, Ibid., p.148
John Rae, the Indian agent wrote in despair to Macdonald,...he had nearly precipitated an Indian outbreak by his handling of Big Bear whom he had ordered to take his reservation within a month or get no ration.

The newcomers looked upon the aborigines with contempt...Illustrative of the difficulties and tensions...was an incident described by the Commissioner of the Mounted Police in 1880. In September of that year a settler living near Fort Walsh struck an Indian in the face because he found him leaning against his fence...

Stanley, Ibid., p.275

Further disillusion followed the efforts to civilize the Indians by weaning them from the chase to the cultivation of the soil..., but their inherent restless disposition unfitted them as tillers of the soil.

Metis and Half-Breed Grievances

Archer, Ibid.,
p.85

Those Metis who had relied on a hunting economy with only marginal cultivation of land had been hard-hit by the disappearance of the buffalo. Many had turned to freighting as an alternative to the hunt, but steamboats on the Saskatchewan, and the Canadian Pacific Railway in the south, had reduced opportunity and brought on dire poverty. In addition the influx of settlers and the prospect of thousands more brought fear about land titles.

Waite, Ibid.,
p.151

The Saskatchewan Metis had some real grievances and some not so real. They claimed the same amount of land as the Manitoba Metis had got - 240 acres - based, in both cases, on the Metis share in Indian rights. The Manitoba Metis had found it had taken a long time to secure and patent their land and many, despairing of patents, and finding their way of life altered beyond recognition by white settlement, had sold out for what they could get and gone west, many to the Saskatchewan country. Thus, of the Metis in Saskatchewan, some were genuinely entitled to land and some were not...What the Metis resented was having to pay for land on the odd-numbered sections. Homestead lands were the even-numbered sections; the odd-numbered sections, if the township were not in a railway belt, were government sections for sale, at two dollars an acre. The Government could not see why the Metis should try to get around these regulations; the Metis could not understand why the regulations should apply to them at all.

Stanley, Ibid.,
p.246

Much of the problem went back to earlier roots. The Metis believed that part of the land was theirs, by right of their Indian parentage. It had appeared that this principle had been accepted in Manitoba in 1870. Now it was being refused. The Metis resented having to file on the lands they had lived on for years and which they considered to be theirs. They resented having to wait three years for title, which

seemed to regulate them to the level of new immigrant. They requested "a like amount of scrip and like land grants as Manitoba."

Phillippe Garnot, Secretary of the Metis Council, writes of the Metis, Half-breed and white settlers in 1885.

These are the problems which made not only the French-Canadian Metis meet, but also the English Metis and the farmers of Prince Albert, St. Laurent, St. Antoine, St. Louis, Carlton, Carrott River, (etc) to form a statement of grievances and send them to the government with petitions from all the above mentioned parishes,..as the government seemed to take possession of the North West as of Manitoba, and made laws there, many Metis came to Winnipeg and demanded to have their rights recognized as had the Metis of Manitoba, but the majority of them returned to their domiciles without having received any satisfaction, after having made a voyage of 1,200 miles. Then they began to agitate on the cause of their griefs. I have often heard said: "How was it that the treaty was made with the Indians and not with us?"

Another cause of dissatisfaction was the Hudsons Bay Company to whom the government paid the enormous sum of Three Million and 1:26 of the land. Why? Who can reply to this question? I don't think the Honorable Company itself can reply. For after their defeat...Now, who has repulsed hostile nations and who has won access to the country foot by foot, so to speak, at the price of the lives of a great number of their relatives and friends? Was it the Company? No; it was again the French Canadian Metis who repulsed the nations to the foot of the Rocky Mountains, and who, year by year, at the price of great sacrifices, brought these nations to sign a treaty with them and have, by this means established peace in all the territories.

The government then comes and seizes the country and not only doesn't consider them but adds insult to injury by paying the price of this country (so bravely conquered and certainly belonging to the Indian and

Metis, for the country not having been conquered by England, and even if it had been, the victory of 1809, brought about the Metis conquest...).to the Hudsons Bay Company which is the bane of the country.

...Another bane is the Mounted Police of the North West who, under the guidance of maintaining order, are themselves a source of disorder and who, instead of being the protectors of disorder are the destroyers. There are some exceptions but the majority of this force...are people without principles and without scruples, and even many among them used the shelter of the law and their uniform to commit acts of minorality and disorder which would certainly not go unpunished in another country.

Now, there are the employees of the government who, instead of being people who can get along with the Metis and who know their habits, are favorites of the government chosen in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Phillippe
Garnot, P.A.C.

There are also the legislators named to the Council of the North West who are almost all elected in the settlements along the railway line and who make laws which, all being good for the settlement that they represent, can not be put into practice by the Metis population. For example the law of the hunt and for cutting wood and many others...

White Settler's Agitation

Stanley,
George.
Louis Riel
McGraw-Hill
Ryerson, Ltd.
1963

The Indians and the Metis were not alone when they complained of Ottawa's sins of omission. The English-speaking settlers, white as well as half-breed, were likewise unhappy over the development in the North-West...The farmers did not know how to combat the problems of early frost and prolonged drought. These were not everyday problems, but at times they were of a most severe nature. Between 1871 and 1881 conditions were relatively favorable for farming, but between 1881 and 1891, both the frost and the droughts were

devastating...(Also) Prices for wheat (in Sept. 1883) went as low as forty cents a bushel and for oats fifteen cents...This was the traditional burden, and the western farmer had to shoulder it throughout the years following the opening of the prairies - this burden of high costs and low returns.

It did not help matters that the settlers were caught in the fever of land speculation, resulting from the construction of the trans-continental railway, and the influx of immigrants from other parts of Canada...

There were other factors that caused discontent and disillusionment: the loneliness and the isolation and the hardships that inevitably accompanied unplanned immigration; debts, poor crops and a perpetual shortage of money. These combined with adverse economic conditions to produce the first of several agrarian protest movements...It mattered little that part of the problem was to be found in the settler's ignorance of dry farming...Nor did the farmers always realize that...adequate sources of credit had not been devised for them...All they could see was the gap between the prices they received and the prices that were obtained...in the east for the produce they had grown. Therefore they laid the blame for this misfortunes on the federal government which tolerated and protected the railway monopoly of the Canadian Pacific, and the milling companies that amassed the profits.

Waite. Ibid.,
p.149

Among the white population there were grievances in plenty, many of the kind that occur in any pioneer community, but all aggravated by bad frost in 1883 and a wet harvest in 1884. Prince Albert suffered more than any other district of the Northwest...The whites in the northern Saskatchewan valleys were particularly unhappy over the change in railway route and the failure of the land boom. Thus farmers looking for a good crop and speculators looking for a

fat increment - often one and the same person - were both dissatisfied. The Assistant Indian Commissioner reported the feeling in Prince Albert in November 1883:

A strong feeling is being fostered against the Government and all officials relative to the nonissuing of patents...the people are egged to the belief that nothing short of a rebellion is necessary in order to obtain their rights...

Stanley.
Louis Riel
p.267

Although active protests against the indifference and neglect displayed by the federal government were voiced in Qu'Appelle, Edmonton and Moose Jaw, the principal and potentially most dangerous opposition came from the people living in the District of Lorne. This region included both Prince Albert and the French-speaking parishes of St. Laurent, and for some time it contained the largest concentration of settlers both half-breed and white. Lorne had been the first to secure presentation in the Territorial Council. It was also the region most seriously affected by the economic depression and the crop failures of the 1880's. In particular, the district had suffered from the federal government's decision that the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway should be relocated in the southern part of the prairies...

Government Reaction to the General Unrest

John A
Macdonald,
House of
Commons
Debate
March 26,
1885

The half-breeds have had a great many claims, some of them, as I have stated, reasonable enough, but some of them are not reasonable. The House knows that at the time the arrangement was made for the settlement of land titles in Manitoba, on the creation of that Province, a large number of Indians settled on the Assiniboine and Red River who had got places, localities, little properties, in possession under the direct sanction, though perhaps not by any other title, of the Hudson Bay Company. Those claims were recog-

nized and a certain quantity of land was appropriated for their satisfaction. Land scrip was issued to those Indians to the value of their holdings. The half-breeds scattered over the plains had no such rights from the Hudson Bay Company or any one, but as they heard that the half-breeds had received certain moneys, or money's worth, within the Red River settlement, they claimed that they all had the same rights. Among those half-breeds that are at Prince Albert and along both banks of the Saskatchewan, there are a number who received their land scrip for their land on the Red River, who have left Manitoba and are on the plains beyond the bounds of Manitoba. They made their claims and they pressed them, thinking they would not be recognized again. They pressed their claims again; they said they were half-breeds, and they tried to enforce a double claim on their behalf. A great many of these have been identified and have been refused. As a whole the half-breeds have been told that if they desire to be considered as Indians there are most liberal reserves that they could go to with the others; but that if they desired to be considered white men they would get 160 acres of land as homesteads. But they are not satisfied with that; they want to get land scrip of equal quantity -- I think upwards of 200 acres -- and then get as a matter of course their homesteads as well. Then there was some difficulty about the plots on which these half-breeds had settled along the Saskatchewan. No man has been disturbed in his settlement, and he has been told that he would not be disturbed. Sometimes the half-breeds quarrel amongst themselves, because in the bends of the rivers one man's claim overlaps another. These claims have been very difficult to settle. There have been several reports from different officials for several years, and a great many of these have been settled, but some remain unsettled. Finally there is a commission which we hope will proceed in the spring, or as soon as possible, to settle the few claims that remain unadjusted.

John A
Macdonald,
House of
Commons
Debates
July 6,
1885

...The half-breed had his own lot, he was not cultivating the land that he had. Giving him his land and giving him more land was giving him nothing. The nomadic half-breed, who had been brought up to hunt, having had merely his shanty to repair to in the dead season, when there was no game -- what advantage was it to him to give him 160 or 240 acres more? It was of no use to him whatever, but it would have been of great use to the speculators who were working on him and telling him that he was suffering. Oh! How awful he was suffering, ruined, destroyed, starving, because he did not get 240 acres somewhere else, or the scrip for it, that he might sell it for \$50! No, Sir; the whole thing is a farce. Now, Mr. Speaker, we, at the last moment, made concessions, and we did it for the sake of peace. The Government knew, my hon. friend, Sir David Macpherson, the Minister of Interior, knew that we were not acting in the interests of the half-breeds in granting them scrip, in granting him the land. We had tried, after consulting man after man, expert after expert, to find what was best for the country, and we found, without one single exception, they were all opposed to granting unlimited scrip and immediate patents to the half-breeds. But, Sir, an agitation arose, and the hon. gentleman has rung the changes on Riel being brought into that country.

Letter, to
Crozier to
Irvine
July 13,
1884
R.C.M.P.
File
No. 1137d.

...Nothing but seeing a large force in the country will prevent serious trouble before long. If matters are allowed to drift or if it is felt that no greater, or only a slight increase of force at present here is made, I am strongly of the opinion we shall have the Manitoba difficulties of 1869 reenacted with the addition of the Indian population as allies to the half-breeds.

Letter, to
Gagnon to
Irvine
March 9,
1885
R.C.M.P.
File
No. 2527

...I have the honour to report that a great deal of excitement has prevailed among the Half-breeds for some days past.

Leaders are continuously travelling about the country visiting their men who are getting arms ready for use.

Parties who had hired to freight have been ordered to stay at home as they would be required.

The Half-breeds are prevented from taking any work or contract in any way connected with the Government, and several have stated they will not accept of Government seed grain in the Spring.

J. Isbester had been offered a situation as Indian Farm Instructor and had promised to take the situation but is now prevented from doing so through his being connected with this movement. G Nolin has stated lately that he will accept nothing from, or do nothing for the Government, that he does not recognise the Canadian Government.

Rumours are circulated that Riel and his Secretary Jackson have resigned their functions and that that Gabriel Dumont is now the Chief of the movement. It is also stated that an attack is to be made shortly on Fort Carlton. I cannot find out what has prompted the Half-breeds to this display of excited preparation nor can I make out what their object is. I am not aware of anything done them lately, that could vouch for this ebullition...

Stanley,
Birth of
Western
Canada.
Ibid.,
p.307

...it is interesting to note that Sir John A Macdonald boldly declared in the Dominion Parliament in March 1885 that no North West "Bill of Rights" had ever been "officially, or indeed in any way, promulgated so far as we know, and transmitted to Government." The Government not only received the petition and forwarded it to the Colonial Office, but apparently acknowledged the receipt of the petition.

Letter, to
Crozier, to
Dewdney.
Feb. 27,
1885
Dewdney
Papers,
Vol. I

I have the honour to request that matters concerning the half-breeds be settled without delay - could not a surveyor be sent NOW, if it is intended to allow the half-breeds their lands as they wish... I must strongly urge that these and other matters already reported upon be attended to at once. Delay causes uneasiness and discontent which spreads not only among the half-breeds but the Indians...What is required is a settlement so that there may be no misunderstanding as to the intention of the government.

The Initiation of Violence

Mulvaney,
Charles D.
The History
Of The North
West Rebel-
lion
A.H. Hovey
& Co.
Toronto,
1885

Riel began the insurrection on March 17. He seized arms and ammunition at the store of John Keer, a merchant settled at "Batoche's Crossing," a small village on the South Saskatchewan, a short distance from Fort Carlton. He also imprisoned Trees, a magistrate, and several loyal Canadians; Keeley, a miller, Nash, Tomkins, Ross, a freighter, and others, in the house of one Cavan, at Batoche. He used the village church of Batoche as a store-house, and afterwards as a prison. The Half-Breeds with Riel formed a Council of Twelve, of which Jackson, formerly a druggist from near Wingham, was the only member of pure white race. This man became a convert to Catholicism just before the rising. The Council appointed captains of the Half-breed force, and placed guards on the trail from Clark's Crossing to Batoche, so as to intercept supplies.

Macdonald
Papers
PAC
Regina,
March 12,
1885.

.....Lawrence Clark from Prince Albert, whom I first consulted about these men will be here today, as finding he was on his way to the North from Winnipeg I wired him to come and see me as I wished to talk over the half-breed reports that have reached me since he left Prince Albert....A telegram from Crozier.... Crozier is nervous, but I have no doubt has good foundation for his information as far as talk is concerned. A determined stand should be taken at once or the agitation will increase, and we will have no peace all summer.

Herschmer with 50 (or 100 men would be better) should be ready to start north.

The part of Crozier's telegram about getting arms from the States is the weak part of it. I think the sale of fixed ammunition, and the importation of it, should be prohibited in the North.

With kind regards

Believe me

Yours sincerely

E. Dewdney

Stanley
Birth of
West.
Canada
Ibid., p.443

Riel in his letter to Fiset (June 16th, 1885) stated that Lawrence Clarke, a Hudson's Bay Company Factor, when passing St. Antoine, declared that 500 Mounted Police were coming to disperse them and to imprison Riel. Clarke denied this. In a letter to the Hudson's Bay Company Commissioner on July 6th, 1885 (H.B.C. folio on the Riel Rebellions) Clarke gave a detailed account of his movements on the day in question and said "Between meeting Lepine twelve miles on the other side of the South Branch and Fort Carlton, I did not meet a single half-breed, nor with those that I did meet on the way had I one word of conversation about anything connected with Riel or his movements." Nevertheless the other view was prevalent at the time. Hillyard Mitchell, who acted as intermediary between Crozier and Riel wrote to Crozier on March 20th, that he had learned "that he, on driving from Grey, stopped at the Settlement on the South Branch, and told the people that the Government were sending up 500 Police from Troy to fight the half-breeds. The people, of course, got excited and said they were going to fight the said 500 men. And they are now waiting at Batoche expecting them to arrive." Another version is put forward in an unfinished letter dated April 3rd, 1885 from Prince Albert (Confidential Papers, etc.). "During the day in question and before the meeting took place, several English half-breeds, who were in town on business, went home having heard the various rumours relative to the intentions of the Police. Knowing that Riel had done nothing worthy of arrest, and feeling that as they were responsible for his safety, they sent the news on to the lower end of the French Settlement, and as these things always grow by rehandling it reached the French in the form of a statement to the effect that the citizens of Prince Albert were arming to assist the Police to arrest Riel." Whichever version may be true the important fact is that Riel took advantage of the panic to form the Provisional Government.

....As a matter of fact the actual resort to arms was caused by an indiscrete remark of the Honourable Lawrence Clark. He had long and justly sympathized with the half-breeds and laboured earnestly to secure redress for their grievances. Since the arrival of Riel, however, his arden spirit of loyalty had caused

Secondary
Norman F.
Black
History
of Sask.
and the
N.W.T.
Historical
Company,
1913
P. 267

him to withdraw his support. Nevertheless he still enjoyed high prestige among the Half-breeds, and even those of their number who distrusted him had a very exalted notion of his influence and familiarity with the counsel of those in his authority. Early in the spring Mr. Clark visited Ottawa. On his return, while driving north from Qu'Appelle to Fort Carlton, he met a group of Half-breeds who inquired of him what answer the Government was going to make to their petitions. He reply was that the only answer they would get would be bullets and that indeed on his way northward he had passed a camp of 500 policemen who were coming up to capture the Half-breed agitators. While this incident has not figured prominently in former English accounts of the rebellion the facts are common property to this day all through the Batoche, Prince Albert and Duck Lake country.

p. 268

.....Riel now undertook the organization of a Provisional Government, making Batoche his headquarters. His council, called the "Exovidate" (a word he himself had coined) and in his subsequent correspondence he assumed the style of Louis David Riel, Exovede.

Well informed loyalists, such as J. E. Sinclair, the well-known legislator, scout and interpreter Thomas McKay; the Honorable Hilliard Mitchell, and Mr. Louis Marion a loyal French Half-breed, who was for some time detained by Riel as prisoner at Batoche, affirm that neither at this time nor later did Riel have more than sixty or seventy Half-breed supporters really intent upon rebellion. Many others, however, were gradually drawn into the movement against their wishes, by the exercise of intimidation and by shrewd appeals to their racial feelings and religious fanaticism. Others were in arms simply in an instinctive though hopeless effort to defend their homes.

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Canaurian Pacific Railway Company's Telegraph.

Terms and Conditions.—All messages are received by this Company for transmission, subject to the terms and conditions printed on their Blank T. Form L which terms and conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

Sent by Alto C. B.
Check To Call 1037 164

noia

No. 64 Time 3/18 1885

By Telegraph from Alton 18

To Gov Dewdney
Reporting discrepancy ed
overbearing armistice
worded individuals
called medlogy
aggressive as best as we state
hearing totter bechoned
named annuals evaporation
relaxation meant
chronicle commenced
nonense bid bids

To secure prompt despatch send reply to

Coded telegram from L. Clarke to Dewdney
March 18, 1885

(1. FORM A.)

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Canadian Pacific Railway Company's Telegraph.

Terms and Conditions.—All messages are received by this Company for transmission, subject to the terms and conditions printed on their Blank T. Form L which terms and conditions have been agreed to by the sender of the following message.

Sent by _____ Rec'd by _____

Check Coll 25825

No. _____ Time 2:25 p Mar 19 1885

By Telegraph from Fort Quappelle

To Gov Dewdney

Regina
Have you heard
anything from Lawrence
Clarke

A. G. Irvine
Collect

To secure prompt despatch send reply to
Irvine to Dewdney;

* Have you heard anything from Lawrence Clarke?

March 19, 1885

To Commissioner. Carlton 18 Dec. 85.

Rumour to-night Indians being tampered with. Large force should be sent without delay that arrests may be made if necessary to prevent further and continuous trouble from Rice and followers. Militia ammunition from Battledford will be here in day or two.

(Sd) A. M. F. Crozier.

CHAPTER TWO

The Recruitment of Support by Opposing Forces and The Encounter at Duck Lake.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO:

It may be useful, at this point, to describe the locations in which the events discussed in this chapter took place.

The North and the South branches of the Saskatchewan River meet at a place called "the forks" about three miles east of Prince Albert. Before they unite the rivers run parallel to each other with twenty to thirty miles distance between them. Along this stretch, close to a bend in the South Saskatchewan called "the elbow", lies the village of Batoche. Almost directly opposite, on the bank of the North Saskatchewan, is the former Hudsons Bay Post and Mounted Police garrison, Fort Carlton. Between Batoche and Carlton is another village, close to Beardy's Reserve, named Duck Lake. Other, mainly Metis, settlements in this vicinity are St. Louis and St. Laurent. Along the road from Duck Lake to Prince Albert lies the farming community of Red Deer Hill, composed of mostly English-speaking half breeds who were, in the days of the North-West troubles, sympathetic to the Metis movement.

Riel, after the initial call to arms, was uncertain of the extent of support among the Metis, particularly in view of his alienation from the clergy. He therefore appealed to the English half-breeds and white settlers for their cooperation. The latter were undoubtedly sharing Riel's antagonism toward the indifference of the government, but did not approve of the resort to arms or Riel's attempt to involve the Indians; in short, they wished to remain neutral. Several meetings were held in the parish of St. Catharines, at Red Deer Hill - one of them instigated by Crozier, who wished to counteract Riel's influence over the parishioners. Riel also tried to bring Crozier to the surrender of Carlton and its supplies, promising the Major and his men freedom in exchange, if they consented, and "a war of extermination" in case of refusal. Crozier, in turn, issued a proclamation "to all persons who have been forced into the rebellion" and "protection on presenting themselves to the Officers at Carlton or Prince Albert."

News of the outbreak of violence did not reach Prince Albert right away. The telegraph lines had been cut and all travel

stopped after the arrest of Lash and other government agents. Major Moffat, in charge of the few police in Prince Albert, responded to an urgent call from Crozier, on March 20, and dispatched Captain Moore with forty-seven volunteers to Fort Carlton. Crozier also reported to Moffat that Colonel Irvine was on his way north with one hundred men and sixty horses. By March 23, General Middleton had been called to Winnipeg, where Lt. Governor Dewdney had activated the 90th Battallion and the Winnipeg Field Battery. Three days later two hundred men had left the city by railroad. Crozier also made efforts to raise a volunteer corps at Battleford. On the same day, March 26, shots were exchanged between the Metis and the Mounted Police, at Duck Lake.

The skirmish at Duck Lake was planned by neither Crozier or Dumont. Crozier had sent a small party, under Sgt. Stewart, to purchase supplies, when on their way to the village, they met a group of Metis with Dumont, and some jostling and word-calling took place. Somewhat distressed, Sgt. Stewart decided not to press on to Duck Lake but returned to the fort instead, where a scout had already informed Crozier of the encounter with the Metis. According to several historians the Major was, at this point, persuaded to "get even" with the half-breeds and set out with one hundred men and a cannon to meet the Metis head-on. About seven miles from Carlton a skirmish took place in which nine Prince Albert volunteers and three police men were killed, and about twenty-five wounded. The Metis lost five men; one of them Dumont's brother Isidore and a Cree Indian by the name of Assywin.

Crozier and his men had underestimated the Metis ability to retaliate. Historians differ in their description of the number of Half-breeds engaged in the skirmish but agree that they had definitely the advantage of cover from an abandoned building

belonging to Beady's reserve and clumps of brush and willow in its vicinity, while the N.W.M.P. were on relatively open ground. When Crozier realized that neither his men nor his cannon were capable of overcoming the Metis force he retreated to Fort Carlton, defeated.

The foregoin is a summary of events describing the build-up of government troops, the Metis' appeal for support from English Half-breeds, Indians and white settlers, and the battle of Duck Lake which took place less than a week after the initial call to arms by the Metis' leaders. As in the previous chapter, the pages following the foregoing introduction are intended to provide the reader with a variety of primary documents and secondary sources. The material has been selected to facilitate an understanding of the climate of uncertainty and tension that existed among Metis' and government members alike. The accounts of the battle at Duck Lake illustrate the differing perceptions of the sequence of events and demonstrate that, perhaps, perceptions were often colored by the political commitment of those who recorded the action.

Riel felt that his success would depend on maintaining complete unanimity among his own people and upon his receiving the backing of the English half-breeds.

"Riel had acted with initiative....He believed in his star and believed, too, that with his Provisional government and his prisoners could force the hands of Sir John A. Macdonald as he had done in 1870. But he felt that his future success, like that of the past, would depend on his maintaining complete unanimity among his own people, and upon his receiving the backing of the English half-breeds. Above all he could tolerate no traitors among the Metis...on March 19 he did not have the unanimity that he felt to be essential." ¹

F. Stanley
Louis Riel, among his
Graw-Hill
erson

1963
373

"Riel knew that what he was now doing did not enjoy full support of the Metis. The missionaries were advising the people against violence. Charles Nolin, who had formerly invited Riel back to Canada, now made an effort to develop an opposition group among the Metis. Riel acted swiftly. Nolin, William Boyer, and Louis Marion were arrested. Boyer and Marion refused to join Riel's armed group.

At the trial, Nolin was sentenced to death. Riel did not demand an execution...Nolin and Marion agreed to submit and support the Provisional Government. Boyer was allowed to go free." ²

On March 21, (1884) Riel wrote to the English half-breeds of Deer Hill, St. Catharines and St. Paul: JUSTICE DEMANDS TO TAKE UP ARMS.

(In closing he refers to his organization as "the council of the French-Canadian half-breeds.)

"Dear Brothers In Jesus Christ, - The Ottawa Government has been maliciously ignoring the rights of the original half-breeds during fifteen years...Moreover the Dominion has taken the High-handed way of answering peaceable complaints by reinforcing and dispatching the Mounted Police...Ottawa does not intend to govern the North-West so much as to plunder it....Let us be firm in the support of right.

Dear Brothers, in the Council of the French-Canadian half-breeds now under arms at St. Anthony and in the Saskatchewan... The fact (that) your delegation and ours have crossed each other affords convincing proof that our feelings are mutual. Justice Commands to Take Up Arms."³

3. Sessional papers
9 Victoria
10. 43
A.C.

Letters were also sent to notify the Indians and the English and French half-breeds of Fort Qu'Appelle.

"Monsieur F. X. Batoche.

The French half-breeds have taken up arms "en mass". Not one of our people is against us. Tell our relatives, the Indians to come and help us, if needed. Take all the ammunition of the company..."⁴

4. Sessional papers
bid.

"To our brothers the English and French half-breeds at Lake Qu'Appelle and vicinity:

Dear Relations and Friends, - If you have not already heard, you shall hear the reasons which led us to take up arms...The Ottawa Government took possession of our country fifteen years ago, they make a mockery of our rights and offend against the law of God by inflicting upon us endless injustice. The officials commit every species of crime, and the mounted police are a scandal of the world by their foul language and evil conduct.

The English half-breeds of the Saskatchewan are undoubtedly with us. The Indians are crossing to us and joining us on all sides.

Purchase all the munitions you can...Do not listen to the offers the Ottawa Government will make you; their offers are the offers of robbers. Sign neither paper nor petition..."⁵

5. Sessional papers
bid.

Do not molest, ill-treat or kill anyone - were Riel's orders.

In a letter from Louis Riel to "Dear Relatives," he promotes disarmament but issues strict orders not to molest, ill-treat or kill any body:

Dear Relatives, - ...if you see the police passing by...take away their arms...Afterwards notify the Wood Indians...keep ready to all events, in being calm and courageous...Do not kill anybody. Do not molest nor ill-treat anybody but take away their arms.

6. Sessional papers
[Ibid.

Fear not. Louis "David" Riel, Exovede."⁶

The English half-breeds and whites of Prince Albert were in support of Riel but deplored the use of arms.

On March 23, at a last-minute meeting at St. Andrew's school-house, in Prince Albert, whites and English half-breeds proposed to send a petition to the government in which they blamed the latter for the agitation of the Metis and begged them to do justice and avoid blood-shed. At the same time a number of resolutions were sent to Crozier and Riel.

Petition:

"That the French in this district have taken up arms. That the Indians to a great extent are in sympathy with them. That the English half-breeds and Canadian settlers are in sympathy with them to get redress of their grievances in a lawful manner -- but not to take up arms.

That there is great danger of Indian war. And all that that means. That the French have rights and are determined men. That there is no way of settling this disturbance but by treaty or war.

That the Neutral party the English half-breeds and Canadian settlers who wish to remain at peace -- and their wives and families do beg of the Government to treat with the French -- give them their just rights and save the destruction of our families....

The Government has refused to treat with the settlers, till one party could bear it no longer, and will have their rights or die.

We therefore beg the Government to do justice to the settlers treat with them and save the effusion of blood.

Signed, on behalf of St. Andrew's, Red Deer Hill, and the surrounding country:

Charles Adams, Chairman
J. F. Pritchard, Secretary
Alex Stansfield, Sec.
Geo Glaister
Roderick Cook
Thomas McCorister
Andrew Spence ..."

Resolutions:

"That while heartily sympathizing with the French half-breeds in their endeavours constitutionally to get redress of their many grievances we cannot endorse their present attitude in taking up arms for that purpose, and we hereby beg of them not to shed blood.

That the opinion of this meeting is that, had the Government been just with the settlers this disturbance would never have been.

And further, had the influential citizens of Prince Albert joined the movement instead of ignoring it, had they advised the Government instead of exciting it against the people, it is the opinion of this meeting that the Government would have settled all grievances long ere this.

...That a copy of these resolutions be sent to Major Crozier, and one to Riel...."

On March 21, (1885) Riel demanded the surrender of Fort Carlton and its supplies.

"St. Anthony, 21st March 1885 - To Major Crozier, Commandant of the Police Force at Carlton and Battleford.

Major: The councillors of the provisional government of the Saskatchewan have the honor to communicate to you the following conditions of surrender: You will be required to give up completely the situation which the Canadian Government have placed you in, at Carlton and Battleford, together with all government properties.

In case of acceptance, you and your men will be set free, on your parole of honor to keep the peace. And those who will choose to leave the country will be furnished with teams and provisions to reach Qu'Appelle.

In case of non-acceptance, we intend to attack you, when tomorrow, the Lord's Day is over, and to commence without delay a war of extermination upon all those who have shown themselves hostile to our rights.

Messrs. Charles and Maxime Lepine are the gentlemen with whom you will have to treat.

Major, we respect you. Let the cause of humanity be a consolation to you for the reverses which the governmental misconduct has brought upon you.

Louis 'David' Riel, Exovede	
Rene Parenteau, Chairman	Jean Baptiste Parenteau
Chas. Nolin	Pierre Henry
Gab. Dumont	Albert Delorme
Moise Ouellette	Dum. Carriere
Albert Monkman	Maxime Lepine
Bte. Boyer	Bte. Boucher
Donald Ross	David Tourond
Amb. Jobin	Ph. Garnot, secretary

St. Anthony, 21st March 1885

To Messrs. Charles Nolin and Maxime Lepine

Gentlemen: If Major Crozier accedes to the conditions of surrender, let him use the following formula, and no other: 'Because I love my neighbor as myself, for the sake of God, and to prevent bloodshed, and principally the war of extermination which threatens the country, I agree to the above conditions of surrender.'

Exhibit
of
Riel
Queen
s
Riel
AC

If the Major uses this formula and signs it, inform him that we will receive him and his men, Monday. Yours, Louis 'David' Riel, Exovede." 8

Crozier, on March 21 also, demanded the surrender of the leaders of the rebellion and the dispersal of the armed men. He had a proclamation posted which offered protection to those who were forced into the "rebellion" against their will.

Crozier's Proclamation:

"All persons who have been forced into the rebellion against our Sovereign Lady, the Queen, or who are held by the rebels, against their will, will receive protection on presenting themselves to the Officers Commanding at Carlton or Prince Albert." 9

Picked men were employed by government as spies. Some were attached to the police as scouts, others as interpreters.

Irvine (?) wrote to Macdonald about the employment of spies: "Your Excellency speaks of employing some picked men among the

1. half-breeds. We do so already. There are a certain number of men attached to the police force as scouts, and others as interpreters." 10
AC

2. Auguste-Henri Traumadan believed that a Prince Albert trader, by the name of Hillyard Mitchell, was an informer. He explains, "...a man named Hillyard Mitchell, often came from Prince Albert to spy on what was happening among the Metis..." 11 Stanley quoted Mitchell as telling the Metis: "I have come over here as a friend...not as a spy, but to give you all some good advice." 12
F. Stanley

Another informer, employed as interpreter with the police, was a half-breed by the name of Joe McKay, nicknamed, "Gentleman Joe." McKay's role was prominent in the battle of Duck Lake, on the 26 of March.

The skirmish at Duck Lake was unpremeditated.

13. "The coming skirmish...was planned neither by Crozier, nor Dr. P. Charlebois, by Dumont. Crozier had sent a small party, under the command of Sgt. Stewart, to purchase supplies from the Duck Lake shop operated by Stobart and Eden." 13
p.146

On their way to the village they were stopped by a group of Metis with Dumont and some jostling and name-calling ensued. Sgt. Stewart, believing that his company would be more vulnerable on the return trip,

The two forces met at a point about a mile and a half from Duck Lake.

Dumont and his men returned to Duck Lake after their meeting with the Mounted Police, but scarcely had they arrived when scouts brought the message that Crozier was leading a force of policemen toward the village. The Metis, led by Dumont, dashed forward to meet the police about a mile and a half from Duck Lake. The half-breed position was decidedly favorable, providing ample shelter from thick clumps of brush and willow. Crozier's men were unaware of the Metis' presence until they descended the first hill. When the advance scouts gave the first warning, Crozier ordered his force to a halt.

Police reporter tells story of the battle at Duck Lake.

The Mounted Police placed a barricade across the road and prepared for hostilities. An account of the parlay between the Metis' and the police was given by a reporter for the "Battleford Herald," stationed at Fort Carlton:

"....Two men were seen to separate themselves from the body of half-breeds and advance towards the police, one of them carrying a flag of truce which consisted simply of a white rag tied to a small stick. Seeing them approach Crozier took with him Sgt. Brooks and Joseph McKay, the police interpreter, meeting the other deputation about mid-way between the two lines, whereupon a short parlay took place. Through the interpreter Major Crozier asked these men who they were, to which the spokesman replied that they were Crees and half-breeds and in turn demanded of Crozier to know what he sought. "Nothing" the Major answered. "We only came to see what was wrong," to which the Indian spokesman replied, "You had better go back." At this juncture of the Indians.. (who was with the half-breeds*) snatched at the revolver at McKay's hip and apparently this had been a signal agreed upon between them, for instantly a number of shots rang out from different points along the half-breed line. How earnest their intentions were can be divined from the fact that when Crozier turned on his heel waving his sword above his head and giving the command, "Commence firing," blood was trickling down from his cheek where it had been grazed by a bullet. In a oment firing became general and the rat-tat-tat of the Winchesters and Sniders and muzzle-loading shotguns and the variety of sporting rifles of different descriptions with which some of the rebels were armed become very general." 14

14. P.
Dr. P.
Charlebois,
Ibid.,
p.146

The parlay between opposing forces as portrayed by Dr. Peter Charlebois:

In Charlebois' account the parlay is portrayed somewhat differently. Dr. Charlebois explains that McKay must have had his rifle pointed at the Cree Assywin, "who reached out and turned the rifle to point in another direction. On seeing the armed man grab the barrel of the rifle, Crozier said to 'Gentlman Joe', "shoot him," McKay quickly drew his revolver from his belt and shot Assywin. Then, turning slightly, 'Gentleman Joe' shot Isidore Dumont through the head. Both Crozier and McKay were hurrying back to their own lines as the bodies of the two emissaries of peace slid off their horses onto the ground. These were the first shorts of the Metis uprising of 1885.

Fred Anderson, a long-time resident of Duck Lake who knew McKay, had this to say: "There has always been a dispute as to who fired first. I knew Joe McKay, who was there. He told me the two sides were talking when an Indian grabbed for Joe's gun. He said the only thing he could think of as they struggled was to

Keep the barrel pointed away from him. When the gun went off, the Indian was killed and the fight was on..."¹⁵

Supt. Crozier to Lieut.Col. Irvine:" I was in formed that there were about one-hundred marauding Half-breeds at Duck Lake."

On his return to Fort Carlton Crozier wrote a report of the Duck Lake encounter for Lieut. Col. Irvine who was on his way to the fort while the police were engaged in battle with the Metis'. The report was forwarded to Sir John A. Macdonald who considered it incomplete and asked for further details; particularly the reason for Crozier's impulsive move to meet the Metis unaided.

"Sir,- In reply to your Memorandum of this date I have the honor to inform you that on the morning of the 26th of March I sent a party to Duck Lake to procure a quantity of provisions and ammunition that were in the store of a trader, named Mitchell. They left Carlton shortly after; about ten o'clock it was reported to me the Serjeant Stewart had been prevented by Half-breeds from taking the stores after which he had bone and that he was "in trouble."

I immediately got ready a party one hundred strong to proceed to the relief of Stewart as I was moving off Stewart's party came down the hill at the Fort. I was informed that there were about one hundred marauding Half Breeds at Duck Lake. The rebel Head Quarters and force according to my latest information received through scouts being at Batoche's Crossing, South side of River. I therefore concluded to go to Duck Lake and get the provision and ammunition.

When within a mile and a half of Mitchell's store I was attacked by a force of Half Breeds estimated at the time at over two hundred in number but I have since been informed through rebel sources that there were at least three hundred and fifty of them."¹⁶

Crozier to Irvine: "The movement that threatened to be the most serious to us was that of a large body moving towards our right flank."

Crozier described the parlay between himself and the opponents as follows:

"I threw a line of skirmishes to the right of the road under cover of a wood to prevent the rebels surrounding us, which they were attempting to do - the remainder of my force, excepting the men in charge of the horses formed under cover of the sleigh extended to the left at right angles to the road.

As my escort halted, a man advanced from the enemy bearing a flag of truce. I ran forward to meet him and called back for the Interpreter Joseph McKay.

The enemy notwithstanding the flag of truce continued to get rapidly into position. The movement that threatened to be most serious to us was that of a large body moving towards our right flank.

I said several times to the man with the flag "Call back those people," referring to those moving to the right, to what I said he paid not the slightest attention. It was evidence that the sending out of the flag of truce was but a piece of treachery and to gain time in order to outflank us on the right and get into position." 17

Crozier to
Irvine.
MP
pers.

Crozier to Irvine: "The enemy were in a bush behind splendid cover, we were exposed."

Crozier wrote of the difficulties his men faced in combat: "The deep crusted snow caused any movement to be most difficult, if off the beaten track my men in extending found it slow and hard work.

The engagement lasted about thirty minutes and though the rebels were upon their own ground entrenched, in ambush, with the advantage of a commanding position, ready and waiting for us, we drove back their right and had we been opposed by them on our right on anything like an equality we could have done the same to their left - but there we had to contend against

the enemy in houses and in ambush. The right of my line did prevent the rebels gaining our rear - they did it at the cost of their lives - men could do no more.

Both the Police and Volunteers who composed my little escort behaved superbly, their bravery and coolness under a murderous fire was simply astonishing.

The enemy were in ambush behind splendid cover, we were exposed, yet not a man shirked or even faltered until the order was given to retire and then they moved off quickly.

18.
Crozier
do
Irvine,
bid.

I have the honor to be

Sir

your obedient servant
L.N.F. Crozier, Supt." 18

Lieut. Col Irvine to Sir John A. Macdonald: "Crozier's better judgement was overruled by the impetuosity of Police and Volunteers." 19

In a letter to Sir John Irvine criticized Crozier's decision to march out of Fort Carlton without awaiting orders. He wrote:

"Sir, - Referring to my telegram of the 26 ultimo...It appears to me a matter of regret that...Superintendent Crozier should have marched out as he did, in the face of what transpired earlier in the day, but I am led to the belief that this officer's better judgement was overruled by the impetuosity displayed both by the Police and Volunteers to go and take the stores and if necessary fight for them." 19

19.
Irvine
do
Macdonald
L.W.M.P.
papers

Police cannon was useless in Duck Lake engagement.

G.F. Stanley gave this account of the battle in action: "On the right the rebels had taken possession of a log house, which, partly obscured from view by the banks of snow and brushwood, was an excellent point of vantage. From it they poured a hot fire upon the Prince Albert Volunteers who had extended their formation to the right and were without cover of any description. To relieve the pressure upon that flank, Crozier ordered the cannon be directed upon the brush, but, owing to the position of the volunteers, this was impossible. The gun was accordingly trained upon another section of the field, but with little results, the shots flying "far over the enemies heads." *

* Narrative of John Brass. MSS folio on the Riel Rebellion.

To make matters worse, after several discharges a shell was rammed home before the powder charge was inserted, which rendered the cannon useless for the remainder of the engagement.

20.
Stanley,
Birth of
Western
Canada
Ibid.
p.328

Finally, after thirty or forty minutes, Crozier, recognizing the inevitable, gave the order to retire. His position was untenable. The half-breeds had all the advantage of position and, Crozier believed, of numbers." ** 20

** Crozier believed that the force opposed to him number^{ed} between 300 to 400 men. Crozier, however, greatly overestimated the number of his opponents.

The Metis fought behind cover and Crozier was not in a position to make an accurate estimate.

(The foregoing explanation cited in Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p.p. 444, 445.)

Duck Lake engagement described by Louis Schmidt, Riel's former secretary: The Metis were only a handful at the beginning.

"The English Commander...arrived without mishap about 2 miles from Duck Lake. But there a body of Metis barred them from the road. There followed a short battle, rude and murderous. A while later, 9 volunteers and 3 Police were dead, while the Metis themselves had lost 4 of their own and one Indian.

The cannon had had no effect. Drawn with too much haste, its projection passed above the heads of the men and went who knows where.

Not to be completely destroyed, Crozier ordered a prompt retreat not even taking the time to pick up the dead except those of the Police. And then there was time. The Metis who were only a handful at the beginning of the action, arrived all the time, and spread on each side of the enemy in an attempt to encircle them.

They wanted to pursue those who took flight, but Riel opposed it, saying that there was already enough spilled blood and believing, I imagine, that hostilities would stop there.

Gabriel received a slight bullet wound in the forehead, and he momentarily withdrew. When he wanted to return to the

21. H. Schmidt,
Memoirs
PAC

charge, there was already no more enemy. In collecting the enemy dead, the Metis found a wounded man who had not been able to follow the others. They brought him with them and took care of him." 21

Dumont, grazed by a bullet, cried: Courage! As long as I haven't lost my head I'm not dead.

Joseph Howard recounted Gabriel Dumont's recklessness and consequent wounding during the battle at Duck Lake.

"Gabriel Dumont...rode recklessly to within sixty yards of the troops. A bullet plowed a deep gash through his scalp and he fell, almost senseless; his horse, also wounded jumped over him and fled. He struggled to his feet but dropped again, and a nearby Metis, Joseph Delorme, cried out that their general had been killed. "Courage!" Gabriel yelled. "As long as I haven't lost my head I'm not dead." Another brother (of Gabriel,) Edward Dumont, ran forward to drag him out of the line of fire but Gabriel sent him back to take command." 22

22.
Joseph
Howard,
Strange
Empire,
p.391

A boy of fourteen among the Metis recalled the battle fifty years later; "You be scared like I was scared that day," he said. "You never forget either."

"Among the rebels on the battlefield was a boy of fourteen, a distant relative of Gabriel Dumont whom the latter, without children of his own, often treated as a son. More than fifty years after the Duck Lake battle his memory of it was still vivid. "You be scared like I was scared that day," he said, "you never forget either."

The boy, whose name was Alex, lay shivering for hours in the snow on top of the hill while the Metis awaited the police. He heard Uncle Gabriel cursing because his force was inadequate; Riel was not yet there with reinforcements and scouts had warned that Crozier was bringing about a hundred men...

...He had asked Gabriel, who had slain Blackfeet, what it was like to kill a man, and Gabriel had said it was not much different from killing game. Alex had done that, but he could see a great deal of difference now: the game was stalking the hunter over this snow-covered field. He remembered, too, that when overconfident Metis had remarked that the police were only

fair shots and the volunteers no good at all. Gabriel had answered grimly that men could very quickly learn to shoot well...

Alex did not see Gabriel shot from his horse, but he saw him stanching the flow of blood from his forehead with handfuls of snow, saw him crawl to his cousin, Auguste Laframboise, who was dying, and weakly attempt to make the sign of the cross over him.

When the boy looked back at the enemy, they were milling around the sleighs, trying to hitch up under fire. One wounded volunteer, unable to rise, was pushing himself with one bent leg toward the sleighs. His booted foot would scabble in the snow, trying to dig a hold, then there would be a little push and he would move a few inches. Alex thought the snow curled aside from his head like a sod from a plow. He watched the man's jerky, painful progress for a long time, while the teams were hitched and the other wounded loaded into the sleighs. The boy felt as if he wanted to call out to the police to wait. They didn't, and the wounded man was left still plowing blindly toward the road." 23

23.
Howard
Ibid.
pp.
394,
395

(It would be reasonable to conclude that the wounded man mentioned in Howard's account was the same of which Louis Schmidt - in the foregoing memoir - wrote: "...the Metis found a wounded man who had not been able to follow the others. They brought him with them and took care of him.")

Gabriel Dumont: "The sound of gunfire was heard at Batoche and Riel with 70 men hurried to help their brothers at Duck Lake.

Gabriel Dumont's description of the battle at Duck Lake had many interesting details. Lawrence Clarke in his flight left behind his raccoon coat and Crozier left behind several wagons and horses, he recounted several years later. The following are excerpts from his description of the action:

"Once the fusillade began, we fired as often as we could. As for myself, I fired the twelve shots of my Winchester rifle, and had reloaded to get it into play again, when the English, stunned by the number of their dead, began to withdraw. For them it was time, because until then their cannon, which had prevented my men, who were now on foot, from moving down the hillside now, was silent. Their cannoneer, in loading it, had put the lead before the powder. Our men then began to move round them.

Since in their flight they would cross a clearing, I attempted to ambush, saying to my men: 'Courage.' I'll make a few red-coats jump in their wagons. And I laughed -- not because I took pleasure in killing, but to encourage my boys.

As I talked about knocking over the red-coats, I neglected to take cover, and a bullet ploughed my skull, where it left a deep scar. I fell. Then my horse, also wounded, bounded over me. We were then about sixty yards from the enemy. I wanted to get up, but the shock was so severe that I couldn't.

When Joseph Delorme saw me fall back, he cried out that I was killed. I said to him, 'Courage, when the head isn't lost we don't die.' I then told Baptiste Vandal to take my cartridge and my rifle, which was famous, and which had a range of 800 yards. ...The sound of gunfire was heard at Batoche and Riel with 70 men hurried to help their brothers at Duck Lake.

24. While we fought, Riel sat on his horse, exposed to the bullets, armed only with a crucifix which he held in his hand...

Gabriel
Dumont's
Account of
the Battle
on March
26th, 1885
Sessional
Papers
49
Victoria
PAC

When Auguste Laframboise, a cousin, fell, Dumont tried to get to his knees to offer a prayer, but fell over on his side, murmuring, "Cousin, I'll owe it to you." 24

Laurier's Anecdotes:

Saskatchewan Herald" correspondent Laurie, while stationed at Fort Carlton recounted several anecdotes after the battle. The first gave a description of Gabriel Dumont's dash ahead of the Metis' and consequent wounding which, on the preceding pages was portrayed from a pro-Metis' point of view. Laurer makes a closing comment which reveals his strong anti-Metis bias...

25.
Laurie
Papers
PAC

"What a pity that Sandy's bullet had not been another inch lower." 25

By Laurie:

"...as one of the rear guard, a Scotchman named MacDonald was about to mount his horse he saw a solitary half-breed astride of a pony dash out as though intent on pursuing us alone but Sandy rested his rifle on the saddle, took careful aim and fired and had grim satisfaction of seeing his victim throw up his hands and fall from his horse. We subsequently learned that the man of bravado was no other than Gabriel Dumont himself and that

6. the Winchester Bullet had struck him high in the forehead and had glanced upwards, thus sparing his life. What a pity that Sandy's bullet had not been another inch lower!" 26
AC

"Am I wounded Laurie?" (Laurie's narration.)

"The return march was uneventful and devoid of any startling incident. I remember though that a Policeman known as "Dutchy" Miller who was riding in the same sleigh with me happened to take off his cap for some reason, when he noticed a round hole in the front and turning it around discovered a corresponding one in the back. In amazement he leaned forward and pointing to the top of his head asked, "Am I wounded, Laurie?" and sure enough there was a furrow just scalp deep ploughed the full length of the top of his head." 27

7. Laurie
Papers
'AC

For the first time in my life I heard the answers to the roll call: "Killed, wounded or missing."

"We reached Carlton shortly after 4 o'clock in the afternoon and then came what was to be the most painful and most solemn event of the day, the roll call, and for the first time in my life I heard the answers, "killed in action" or "wounded" or "missing." 28

28. Laurie
Papers
PAC

Young Napier died, calling, "Tell them I died like a man."

John Hooper, a Staff N.C. Officer with Middleton's Column, heard the following story from one of Crozier's men. It concerned several Prince Albert Volunteers who died during the battle of Duck Lake.

"Captain Morton, leading the volunteers as he fell mortally wounded, said to one who offered assistance: "Nothing will help me. See that my wife and family are cared for!" expiring with a groan.

A moment after, young Napier (son of Sir Charles Napier, of Magdala) was hit in the breast by a slug. To the next man he called, "I am shot - tell them I died like a man!" Whilst still on his knees, he was again struck twice (in the neck and in the thigh). Young Arnold was shot through the lungs and continued to fight, but was struck by two more bullets in quick succession. Several of the civilians were completely exposed and in a kneeling posture - a splendid mark for their hidden foes but a few yards away." 29

29. John Hooper
A Staff
N.C.
Officer
Infantry
Brigade
Middleton's
Column

Major Crozier took an unexpected plunge, - as told by Laurier.

Of Napier the Saskatchewan Herald correspondent Laurier told an amusing tale. This incident must have taken place only a few days or even hours before the young man was killed in battle.

"Major Crozier, the officer commanding, was making a tour of the sentries sometimes between midnight and daybreak for the purpose of learning if all was alert and giving attention to the duties devolving upon them. One of the new volunteers from Prince Albert, William Napier, who by the way was a cousin of Lord Napier of Magdala, was one of these sentries and when he heard the Major and the orderly sergeant approaching he promptly challenged them, when according to the usual routine Crozier asked him to give over his orders, meaning for him to repeat the instructions which had been given to him when placed on sentry. It seems that the sergeant of the guard had neglected this little formality, taking it for granted that that the sentries placed by him would be aware without any special instructions from him what they were expected to do. "Orders," said Napier "I have no orders." When the Major asked him "What did the sergeant of the guard tell you when he placed you here?" The answer came "Oh yes, he told me to look out and not step in that hole," pointing his finger to a place a couple of feet in the rear of Major Crozier. The Major turned around suddenly and stepped back with the result that he plumped into the hole clear to his armpits and had to make a hurried departure for his quarters to get into dry clothing." 30

30.
Laurier
Papers,
P.A.C.

Riel had hoped that the engagement at Duck Lake was the first and the last action.

Philippe Garnot, secretary of the Metis' council, wrote in his memoirs of the limited number of men, scouts and horses available when the alarm that the Police were coming was raised at Duck Lake. He said that the Metis were not expecting an immediate attack and had only twenty-six men and sixteen horses ready to meet Crozier and his force of one-hundred men. He continues:

"All the same they left to meet the Police quite far away so they could not reach the houses with their rifles...The 26 horsemen met the Police a mile and a half from Duck Lake, on the Reserve of the Indian Chief Beardy and they dismounted immediately and sent their horses to the rear...two among them, an Indian who had no rifle, and who was almost blind, and Isidore

Dumont, brother of Gabriel, continued to advance on the road, while forty placed themselves along the side of the road and ten others hastened to get a good place on the other side... before the Police took possession of it... (During the battle) the Metis conserved their ammunition, having only a little and having only six carbines, the rest were rifles for the hunts; but they knew how to be supported by about one-hundred infantry-men who were to make a detour to cut off the retreat of the Police.

The battle lasted only twenty minutes... When Major Crozier gave the order to retreat, the volunteers who were along the fence (by the side of the road) were all shot, save the one who was wounded and fell prisoner to the Metis; for the Police left its dead, its wounded, five or six horses, about twelve carbines, some ammunition... (and) a bob-sleigh completely harnessed... The Metis wanted to pursue the Police, but Riel prevented them, telling them that they had already made enough damage and he hoped it was the first and last action." 31

31.
Philippe
Garnot
Memoirs
P.A.C.

"Toronto Daily Mail" told story of government scouts, captured by the Metis.

On the day of the Duck Lake battle two scouts by the name of Harold E. Ross and W. Astley were captured by the Metis. They had left Fort Carlton between 11 and 12 o'clock on the night of the 25 March with the intention of gaining the high ground in the vicinity of St. Laurent to find if the Half-breeds had taken any steps to intercept Commander Irvine, who was on his way to the fort. When they came over the hill at Duck Lake they were spotted by Indian pickets near the trail. As they proceeded down the hill the Half-breeds rode after them, the soft snow, which had fallen the day before completely muffling their foot-steps.

"Toronto Mail, May 25, 1885."

"Hearing a noise behind him Ross looked back and saw Dumont at the head of about 20 men with a rifle in his hand. Gabriel at once cried out, "Surrender, You're scouts." Astley did not hear the call, whereupon Ross tapped him on the shoulder and said "They're on top of us," and wheeled his horse around. Dumont immediately seized him by the foot and ordered him to dismount, which Ross refused to do. The rebel adjutant-general,

as he styled himself in official documents, then attempted to pull Ross off, upon which the latter endeavored to draw his revolver. Two Indians got on each side of him, and those on the right pulled his foot from the stirrup and Dumont succeeded in unhorsing him, and in doing so discovered the revolver which he demanded. Ross drew it at once not to give it up, however, but for the purpose of administering a leaden pill to an Indian who had him covered with a gun, at the same time seizing Dumont by the throat with his disengaged hand to prevent his interference. Feeling something touch his head behind, Ross looked around, and found himself covered by two more guns, seeing which he surrendered. Astley in the meantime had endeavored to escape, but perceiving his comrade was not following, turned back to his assistance when was also surrounded and taken." 32

32.
Toronto
Daily
Mail,
May 25,
1885
(Caron
Papers.)

Capture of police scouts from Metis' point of view (Traumadan)

The capture of police scouts Ross and Astley, as reported on the "Toronto Mail," has also been described by Auguste-Henri Traumadan who based his account on Gabriel Dumont's personal Memoirs. Traumadan's description leads from the capture of the government scouts to the harrassment of Crozier's Police, prior to the Duck Lake engagement.

"The (Metis) scouts observed two horsemen - Harold Ross and John W. Astley - go by, and turned back to notify Dumont who, with his brother Edward, Philippe Gardipy, Baptiste Deschamps, and an Indian, Joseph Trottoir, set off in pursuit. On the way, he advised his armed companions not to harm them if they did not resist. They overtook the two at Duck Lake. Dumont took aim and yelled: "Don't run away or I shall kill you."

"I am a surveyor", said Ross as Dumont approached.

"You're a liar and no surveyor", retorted Dumont as he forced the man to dismount and noted the revolver he carried.

As Astley was trying to escape, Dumont's men prepared to shoot him, but Dumont stopped them. However, Astley fell and the Metis secured him. Both prisoners were taken to Duck Lake.

On the way, Dumont assured them that "if they were good lads, they would be well-treated." Dumont's men had scarcely had time to stable their horses when they heard a shout: "The Police are here!" Actually, only three scouts, Dumont and his

brother Edward, James Short, their brother-in-law, and Patrick Fleury, went after them. They couldn't catch them but amongst them, they recognized Thomas McKay, and stubbornly continued to pursue them.

Dumont, who was ahead of his companions, suddenly saw twenty-two Mounties ambushed along the road they had just ridden over. Dumont galloped towards his men and yelled at them to dismount. Blasphemously, a Mounted Police Sergeant announced that he was going to kill him. Dumont promptly rushed him and disarmed him. A shot resounded, and Dumont heard Thomas McKay shout: "Pay attention, Gabriel."

"Pay attention yourself, or I'll blow your brains out", replied Dumont as he hurled himself at this new adversary. McKay wheeled his horse which floundered in the snow and reared. With the end of his rifle, Dumont prodded McKay in the back, but as McKay spurred his horse, he managed to free himself. During this fracas, McKay never ceased from repeating: "Pay attention, Gabriel", to which Dumont reiterated: "Pay attention yourself". With the end of his rifle barrel over McKay's kidney, he forced his victim to move on. Meanwhile, McKay ordered a retreat. As they were leaving, Dumont shouted: "Why did you come here?"

"Just to speak to you", McKay replied.

"Then why run away?" asked Dumont. "You told us you would come with some men. Where are they? Bah! You're nothing but a fool!" However, McKay and his companions heard little of this; they were galloping away at full speed.

Dumont's men wanted to chase them but he held them back. There were only three! Therefore, abandoning the idea of pursuing the runaways, the little troop returned to Duck Lake. And this time again, they had scarcely time to stable their horses and swallow a few mouthfuls of lunch when the cry that the Police were coming roused them to action. This time, the Police were in force." 33

33.
Auguste-
Henri
Tranmadau
unofficial
trans-
lation
p.264-266

Astley and Ross provided Crozier with sworn statements, naming location, and number of half-breeds engaged in battle.

"I, Harold E. Ross of the town of Prince Albert in the Saskatchewan district in the North West Territories of Canada, Deputy Sheriff do solemnly declare:

1. I was a prisoner in the custody of Riel and the Rebels on the 26th day of March last and personally visited the scene of the battle on Saturday the 28th day of March last past, the said Riel the leader of the rebels was then with me on the said battlefield.
2. I have examined the plan and perused the statement hereunto _____ and marked "A" made by John Astley, who was a fellow prisoner with me on both of the above mentioned dates, and I solemnly declare the same are exact and in strict accordance with what I saw and observed myself.
3. And I further declare that I counted the number of men going out to take part in the said battle and that there were over 300 halfbreeds and Indians engaged in the said battle.

I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of an act passed in the 37th year of her Majesties Reign entitled An Act For the Suppression of Voluntary and _____.

Declared before me at Prince Albert in the Northwest Territories, Canada, this 28th day of May 1885. Signed

Steven Burstis

Notary Public

Signed Harold E. Ross.

"I, John W. Astley of the town of Prince Albert in the district of Saskatchewan in the North West Territories of Canada a civil engineer do solemnly declare that I was a prisoner in the hands of the rebels under Louis Riel at Duck Lake on the 26 day of March last past. 2. That the sketch map or plan hereto _____ is accurately drawn from my own personal observation of the locality where the fight took place and truly exhibits the features of the locality. 3. Of my own knowledge I declare that there were between three and four hundred Halfbreed and Indians engaged in the fight at Duck Lake on the said 26th day of March last past.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of an act passed in the 37th year of Her Majesties Reign and entitled An Act for the Suppression of Volunteer and extrajudicial oathes.

Declared before me at Prince Albert in the District
of Saskatchewan this 28th day of May A.D. 1885.

born
statements
Ness,
ley
W.M.P.
prisoners

Signed

Notary Public

Signed J. Astley" 34

Among the other prisoners was George Ness who was released for
some unknown reason to his fellow prisoners.

(unknown to all but Riel...)

The Toronto Mail, May 25, 1885 carried the following story
entitled: Other Prisoners:

"A number of others were also in confinement, but the
majority were only imprisoned for a short time. Those who were
placed in Walter and Bakers store for safekeeping were kept there
only during the night of the 18th, and were removed to Batoche
church the next morning, and the next day were removed to the
residence of Philippe Garnot, secretary of the provisional
Government. Among the other prisoners were George Ness, Louis
Marion, and Charles Nolin, half-breeds who had refused to take
up arms. Walters, of Walters and Bakers, and J.D. Hanafin, a
clerk in their employment, Ed Woodcock, already referred to as
captured at Hoodoo, and Thos. Sanderson, of Carrott River who
happened to have camped at that place the night it was plundered.
...Both...Nolin and Marion gave their adherence (to the Metis
government) but the latter (Marion) deserted the next day and
Nolin the day of the Duck Lake engagement. Ness stood out to
the last but was released for some reason unknown to his fellow-
prisoners....." 35

provisional
prisoners
W.C.

Mrs. Ness to Riel: Dear Sir, Excuse me troubling you, I am the
cause of my husband being taken prisoner.

It appears certain that Riel released George Ness on
account of two letters written to him by Mrs. Ness. The first
one reads as follows:

"Monsieur Louis Riel

Dear Sir,

Excuse my troubling you but I have confidence in you
alone that you will have pity on me who are all alone with my
three little children who are very young. No near neighbor to
help me take care of my little cattle and also you arrested my

husband while he was trying to get something for his little family. Oh believe me it is I who am the cause of his being taken. The night before I begged of him to go sell his horse to get provision and other things which are greatly needed... Dear Sir I would be so glad to see him, only to speak to him, and you only can grant me this favor.And yet, George is a Metis; No never shall I believe that my nation is cruel enough to kill my husband or keep him prisoner for long...Adeu dear Sir, I pray for you with all my heart.

16.
essional
apers
'A.C.

Signed The wife of George Ness" 36

Strained emotions compelled Indians and Metis' to seek revenge, but intervention of cooler heads averted tragedy.

After the fight at Duck Lake Gabriel Dumont entered the prison and ordered the prisoners to be shot but the men in charge refused to obey the order. The Sioux were particularly anxious to have revenge but were restraint mainly through the intervention of Monkman. Father Andre of Prince Albert wrote to Bishop Grandin of a wounded man who was attacked on the battlefield but was saved by William Boyer when a Sioux was about to kill the man using the butt of his gun. He had already been hit several times and two of his fingers were broken as he covered his face to shield himself from the blows. Boyer took the wounded man to Duck Lake. This, Father Andre wrote, "is another matter which is a credit to the half-breeds." 37

37.
Andre
to
Gandin,
Sessional
Papers,
R.A.
Alberta.

The latter incident must be understood in the context of experience which the Sioux had in the United States. There they had been cruelly persecuted and hunted like game. Many of their relatives had been killed and it is likely that they wished to revenge the brutality their next-of-kin had suffered.

The prisoners were moved to Carlton which by then had been vacated by the Mounted Police. A detachment of half-breeds remained to guard the premises and a man and a woman were assigned to the care of guards and prisoners.

After the battle of Duck Lake Riel urged Crozier to come and take away his dead.

The Metis council met promptly after the Duck Lake engagement to discuss the situation at hand and decided that the first and most pressing need was the removal of the dead on the battlefield. A prisoner was released and given a letter to the command

ing officer at Fort Carlton urging him to come take away the bodies of the unfortunate and that those in charge of this task would not be molested. Thomas Sanderson offered to carry the message to Supt. Crozier and then return again to give himself up as a prisoner.

"To Riel this seemed to offer an opportunity to communicate with those who had backed the agitation...and to place his case before them once more...he therefore wrote a letter addressed to Crozier, which he handed to Sanderson, at the same time asking Sanderson to tell the people (the volunteers) that he did not wish to fight them...The letter to Crozier read, in part as follows:

"A calamity has fallen upon the country yesterday. You are responsible for it before God and man. Your men cannot claim that their intentions were peaceable and since they were bringing along cannons. And they fired many shots first. God has been pleased to grant us the victory; and as our movement is to save our lives, our victory is good; and we offer it to the Almighty. Major, we are Christians in war and in peace. We write you in the name of God and of humanity to come and take away your dead, whom we respect...." 38

CHAPTER THREE

The Police transfer to Prince Albert and the massive troop movement from East to West.

Introduction to Chapter 3.

The decision to move Police and Volunteers to Prince Albert had been greeted with enthusiasm by the men stationed at Fort Carlton. The fort was of little importance, either from the point of view of situation or supplies. The evacuation was carried out under cover of the night and every available vehicle loaded with goods. What could not be taken was destroyed, - either sunk beneath the ice in the river or emptied in the snow.

The arrival of the Police brought confidence to the citizens of Prince Albert who had been thrown into a panic when they heard of the Metis' victory over the Mounted Police. Many thought that either Half-breeds or Indians would soon "swoop down and bring fire and blood-shed to the town," wrote Father Andre, a Prince Albert Parish priest, to his superior, Monsigneur Grandin. Many of the residents recounted their experiences to newspaper reporters a few decades later. These anecdotes have been preserved by the Prince Albert Historical Society and are stored in the local Museum at the present time.

While during the first two weeks of April life in Prince Albert resumed a fairly normal course, the Police were awaiting the arrival of government troops dispatched from Eastern Canada. Van Horne of the Canadian Pacific Railway moved close to five thousand men to their destination in less than ten days. This gigantic task was well worth the effort from the C.P.R.'s point of view: It brought the company, which had been on the point of bankruptcy, the desired Dominion loan.

After the arrival of the military in Fort Qu'Appelle many of the new Volunteers had to practice the skills required in combat. The army had been called together in great haste and many men had never fired a rifle before. While from Qu'Appelle the majority of troops moved north, a few had to return east on account of illness. Those who returned had many negative comments about the mode of transport, the behaviour of officers and men, and the morale among soldiers. The 65th Battalion from Montreal was singled out as the least disciplined. The men from this corps mutinied during transport and showed a general unwillingness to fight the Metis in Western Canada.

While preparations for a large military battle were in progress the grievances of the Half-breeds, which had led to their discontent and organized effort^{to} effect action from government, were remedied. The Half-breed claims were granted by Ottawa on March 30, 1885; but at this point it was too late to halt the hostilities set in motion. By early April thousands of troops were on their way to Batoche and a small but determined Metis force prepared to defend itself against an overwhelming majority of trained soldiers who were ready to strike "the rebels" a deathly blow.

The foregoing introduction is intended to help the reader become acquainted with the sequence of events leading from the evacuation of Fort Carlton to the arrival of the military in the Batoche area. The excerpts from primary documents and secondary sources have been selected to show, not only the actions and events set in motion by the leadership of the opposing forces, but also, the general mood of the people caught up in the chain of happenings around them.

The evacuation of Fort Carlton was carried out under cover of the night.

The decision to move police and volunteers to Prince Albert had been greeted with enthusiasm by the men stationed at Fort Carlton. Irvine too had been in favor of the move. Carlton was of little importance, either from the point of view of situation or supplies. On the other hand Prince Albert was looked upon as the strategic centre of the Territory of Saskatchewan. This may have been the reason why the people residing there felt that it was in particular danger of attack ^{from} either by the English Half-breeds in the surrounding settlements of St. Catharines, Red Deer Hill and Halcro, from the Metis in the Batoche area, ^{of} and the Indians in the territory.

The evacuation of the fort was carried out under cover of the night from March 27th to 28th and every available vehicle loaded with goods. What could not be taken was destroyed, - either sunk beneath the ice in the river or emptied in the snow.

Prince Albert inhabitants were bewildered and frightened, wrote Father Andre of Prince Albert to Monsigneur Grandin.

Through carelessness a fire broke out in the fort which destroyed the secrecy of the evacuation and the men hurried away with all possible speed. The arrival of the police force brought confidence to the citizens of Prince Albert who had been thrown in a panic when they heard of the Metis victory over the Mounted Police. Father Andre's description of the fears which pervaded the town were expressed in a letter to Monsigneur Grandin.

"The government troops suffered a serious defeat and were forced to beat a retreat. Eleven of their men were killed and there were a number of wounded...the number of dead among the half-breeds is not known. This news has spread terror in Prince Albert, whose inhabitants are bewildered and frightened. At any time, it is expected that Riel and his band of half-breeds, followed by the Indians, will swoop down upon us and bring fire and bloodshed to the town. People are abandoning their homes to take refuge in a kind of fort that has been built in Prince Albert."¹

Prince Albert inhabitants of 1885 told their stories.

The Prince Albert Historical Society is in possession of the recollections of former citizens who resided in the town

1. Father Andre to Monsigneur Grandin, OMI. P.A.C.

during the Northwest disturbances. Following are a number of excerpts from this collection.

Story of June Garson, nee Flett.

2. Mrs. P.F. Garson, Hoey, Sask. and a little crowd go past our house to the west, shouting and singing. I said that the little crowd would be no match for the Indians." 2
Historical Society

Georgina Freeborn, nee Miller, had this to say:

3. Mrs. W. Miller's Hill. File 97
"On 27th March, a stockade was built at the church where all the settlement were called in one night and let go home the next day as they thought Riel's men were coming to Prince Albert, but which turned out to be a herd of cattle that had been seen." 3

Excerpts from T. E. Jackson's account.

"After the Duck Lake fight a French half-breed, named Tousant St. Lucienne, whose home was near Carlton, came to Prince Albert, and said that my brother William Henry Jackson, was in danger. He had been secretary of the Farmers Union, and was intimately associated with Riel. As I have already stated, Riel had taken prisoner, Tom Sanderson, of Carrot River, and now Tom was sent with a message after the Duck Lake fight to Major Crozier, head of the Mounted Police in Prince Albert: "Come and remove the dead bodies of the men who have been killed at Duck Lake, and you will not be molested." When Sanderson reached Crozier, there were present Tom MacKay, Lawrence Clarke, and others who took exception to the message; they feared a trap, as they had lost the Duck Lake fight. The consequences was that they refused to allow Sanderson to return for the bodies.

Major Crozier was camped with his officers on the level ground near where Miss Lucy Baker used to live. I went and saw Major Crozier personally and asked if he could provide Sanderson and myself with two teams to go for the bodies. He agreed to do so, and gave us two police teams. Wm. Drain volunteered to go along with us. In reality Drain was asked to go with us to keep track of us and watch our movements! He was the only one who had any firearms with him. So we journeyed off...

We got all the bodies, loaded them on sleighs, and came right through to Prince Albert, Sanderson driving one team, and

myself another with Drain sitting along side of me. We were met in Prince Albert by an interested crowd. The relatives of the deceased arrived and took the bodies away.

Riel refused to let my brother go, and I lost all the robes that I had taken along in the sleighs. When Riel would not let my brother go, he intimated that if I returned a week or two later, he would let me take him. I had to get a permit from the authorities in Prince Albert for the town was under military rule. Sentries were on the outside of the town, and we needed an order from the military authorities before we could get through the guard." 4

4.
T.E.
Jackson.
Doc. 55
to
Macdonnell
by
dictation.

Story of Mrs. W.W. Clarke, nee McLeod.

"With the rebellion of 1885, my parents, now with two children, myself and a baby sister, took refuge in Prince Albert at my Aunt Ross's in the old house standing next "Addie" McBeth's house and opposite the old log Massey Harris warehouse. Later when my Aunt Ross moved away from Prince Albert, George Dill brought his bride, Rovena McGregor, a beautiful, glowing girl, to his house. (Here there is one page missing from the document.)

The Fort was a cordwood barricade around the old brick Presbyterian Church about opposite where City Hall now stands and the brick manse still stands. Most of the men were away at the Duck Lake affair and only a few left with my father, amongst them, half a dozen rifles to guard the fort, when a scout came galloping in with the alarm that the rebels were marching on the town. Although several of years later are blank, this night is vivid in my memory.

My baby sister and I were in bed in one of the rooms of my Aunt's house and my mother in her night clothes, when my father sprang into the room and, saying something to my mother, grabbed and putting my coat and stockings on me with my boots in his pocket, wrapped a shawl around my sister and taking one of us in each arm ran for the barricade. My mother had slipped a coat over her night clothes and put shoes on her bare feet. We could have gone around the square up to the old Mission (opposite where J. B. Kernaghan's store is built) and down what is now Central Avenue to the barricade. Instead of which we cut diagonally across back of where the old McGregor home stood for so many years, about where the site of Robert Cassie's store is now. The water from the melting snow stood a foot deep and painted on my memory is the picture of my mother running a few feet ahead in

the dim light. I can still feel my father's arms around me and hear him splashing across and well remember at the deepest part, leaning down from his shoulder to feel in his pocket for my precious red boots. Then, in the old manse, with my mother in bed and screaming women and children around, a rifle went off by accident and women fainted and men ran with blanched faces to the stockade.

I found two dolls under my mother's bed and started down the stair to show my father, but a big girl met me and slapped me and took them from me. My mother lost her first baby son that time, laying in bed at death's door for many weary months, and ever after was a frailer woman, not the only one who paid her price for pioneering the frontier with her husband.

It was possibly the next morning that the sleighs carrying our dead drew mournfully into the barricade, Captain Morton, our good neighbor on the farm, Dan McPhail, brother of J. R. McPhail who had a hardware store in Goschen, Dan McKenzie, and many other gallant spirits.

5. Recollections of Mrs. W.W. Clarke, Prince Albert Historical Museum, Prince Albert

'The tumult and the shouting died', and life shifted down again for the pioneers to long hours of work in the ineffable sunshine and clear air." 5

Entitled, "In Memoriam," a poem by William McDougall of Prince Albert.

IN MEMORIAM

The following lines were composed by Mr. Wm. McDougall in memory of the anniversary of the brave heroes who fell at Duck Lake.

"Come all true, loyal Canadians,
Where're you may reside
And shed a tear in memory
Of Eighteen Eighty-five.

'Twas then Prince Albert's heroes,
who in action at Duck Lake
On that ill-fated twenty-sixth of March,
Fought for their country's sake.

Those drifts of snow so pure and white
Were stained a crimson red
From the veins of our brave citizens
Who lie numbered with the dead.

No friend to clasp their cold white hand
Or their life-blood help to stay,
Within their cold, white snowy bed
Their young life fled away.

In fairer lands beyond the vale,
Where nations cease to fight,
They march around the great white throne,
In spotless robes of white.

Go deck with flowers their lovely grave,
As the years go fleeting by,
For mouldering their beneath the clay,
Lies a mother's soldier boy.

--Wm. McDougall." 6

6. Prince Albert
Heritage
Museum

Col. Irvine asserted that he had unquestionable proof of the nearly equal balances between loyal and "traiterous" elements in Prince Albert.

According to Gary W. D. Abrams the Police were received with a mixture of relief and bitterness. He explains:

"The worst fears were relieved in the late afternoon of March 28 when the volunteers and police arrived from Carlton. Yet their coming served also to create a new problem. Hungry and tired, the police occupied the stockade "rather unceremoniously," and thus revived a bitterness which was to fester malignantly during long weeks of inaction. Cooped up in the town, subjected to all the petty restrictions demanded by a state of war, and seeing the police stand idle while the critical battles were fought by others, the farmers in particular nursed animosity against their recent enemies. The police for their part, remembering that the settlers had helped to foment the agitation which had ended in rebellion, conscious of the hatred and contempt directed at them, and annoyed by incessant grumbling believed themselves surrounded by potential traitors. Irvine asserted later that he had "clear and unquestionable proof, at times, how nearly equal were the balances" between the loyal and traitorous elements. Only the presence and vigilance of the police, he believed prevented Riel's sympathizers from lending active support to the Metis." 7

7. Gary W.D.
Abrams,
Prince
Albert,
The First
Century,
P.78
(Modern
Press)
1966

The Police in Prince Albert were awaiting the arrival of government troops.

While during the first two weeks of April, 1885 life in Prince Albert resumed a fairly normal course the Police were anxiously awaiting the arrival of government troops dispatched from Eastern Canada. Middleton arrived with a large force on April 12 in Fort Qu'Appelle. The majority of his men had been called from their homes on short notice and had never fired a rifle, for this reason they remained in Qu'Appelle for a few days practicing, firing blank and ball ammunition. The movement of troops was described by John Archer as follows:

"Ottawa had taken some precautions. On March 24 a force of 400 men had been ordered to Winnipeg. On March 27, one day after the Duck Lake battle, 780 more men were on their way west. Care was taken to send both English-speaking and French-speaking units. By April 22 some 3,300 militiamen had made the long trek to the scene of action. Although the Americans offered full co-operation--a reversal of the stance taken in 1870--the government decided to send troops by CPR. It is probable that no one in Ottawa appreciated the real hardships faced by the soldiers, for there were gaps in the railroad and late March is no time to be traveling in open cars through northern Ontario. Van Horne was urged to transport the soldiers with all haste. He met the challenge and in doing so, the CPR came into its own. Horse-drawn sleighs met the trains and transported the troops to the point where the tracks began again. Shorter gaps were traversed on foot. It was a cold bleak trip, but on April 4 the first detachments from the east arrived in Winnipeg, joining troops raised in western Canada." 8

Van Horne had promised to get the troops to their destination in eleven days.

Van Horne of the Canadian Pacific moved nearly five-thousand men to their destination. He had promised the government that he would get the troops over the gaps in his unfinished railroad in eleven days. (The distance was between twenty-five hundred to eighteen hundred miles.) Van Horne kept his promise; in fact none of the troops needed eleven days, some made it in four, others took nine days to complete the journey. To accomplish this gigantic task the CPR put rails down on ice and snow, ran trains over frozen rivers, used construction trains and work engines, and imported Chinese coolies from the United States to perform most of the laborious tasks. Their efforts were amply rewarded. The company, reportedly bankrupt a few weeks earlier, got a Dominion loan before the first shots at Batoche were fired.

8. Archer,
John.
Ibid.
P.
89-90.

Between March 9 to 20, the "Saskatchewan Herald" had reported the following:

"THE C.P.R., Toronto March 9.

The Mail says that the Canadian Pacific Railway Company has not sufficient funds to complete the undertaking and that further assistance is necessary or the road must be abandoned...

RELIEF FOR THE SYNDICATE. By telegraph. Ottawa, March 13.

A ministerial caucus was held today to consider the question of the Pacific Railway. It is understood that the president for the company is to convert thirty million of unused stock held by government into bonds..."⁹

9.
Sask.
Herald
March 13,
1885.

SASKATCHEWAN HERALD, March 20

"The demands of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for additional help from the public treasury, as foreshadowed in the article in the Mail telegraphed here last week, has not taken the country much by surprise...It is felt that the present demand must be the last..."¹⁰

10.
Sask.
Herald
March 20,
1885.

On April 30, 1885, the C.P.R. got its loan.

"In British Columbia three hundred armed strikers were being held at bay in a C.P.R. camp by eight Mounties, and there was trouble elsewhere because the company was broke and the men were unpaid...the railroad was doomed unless a Dominion loan could be obtained. There had been bickering over this for four months; Sir John was holding out, as usual, for a political deal. But if Van Horne could get the troops west in time to save the Territories, the Cabinet would have to come around." 11

11.
Howard,
J.
Ibid.,
p. 379

On April 30, the C.P.R. got its loan, because, in John Archer's words, "When Van Horne performed miracles in moving troops from Toronto to Winnipeg, in spite of uncompleted sections of the railway north of the Great Lakes, Macdonald gauged the public mind and pushed bills through Parliament guaranteeing company bonds. With the money found, Van Horne had the line completed by autumn of 1885." 12

12.
Archer,
John.
Ibid.,
p. 68

A returning soldier said that the troops should have been sent by the American route.

Not everyone in Canada felt that the Canadian government had made a wise decision in sending troops via the C.P.R. Ten volunteers who had fallen ill on their arrival in the Saskatchewan returned to Winnipeg and aired their feelings regarding troop transportation, conduct of soldiers and morale among English and French speaking forces to reporters of the "Toronto News."

"John Hewitt, a member of the 12th Battalion, was among the number who returned...To a News reporter he said that he was suffering from congestion of the lungs...He expressed the opinion that the hardship which the soldiers had to endure would put a damper on the volunteer system in future. He thinks the government should have sent the troops by the American route. Had that been done the terrible march across Lake Superior would have been avoided. He believes the government's sole reason for sending the men by the Canadian route was simply to put money in the pockets of the C.P.R." 13

3.
Toronto
News
0
April
1885

Dr. J. E. White told of theft and drunkenness among officers and men of the 65th Battalion from Montreal.

"Dr. J. E. White, who went up with the Body Guard, and who returned to the city this morning with the sick, has learned a considerable amount about the actions and conduct of the officers and men of the 65th. The substance of his story as told to a News reporter today is as follows: On arriving at Monroe harbor the men of the 65th were lodged in a large schooner and some in sheds. The officials of the C.P.R. there very kindly opened some bales of blankets that they had in store, and lent one hundred pairs to the men, who, when they went away, took with them - that is, stole - sixty pairs of these blankets. Everything that they could lay their hands on they took, knives, forks, spoons, etc. Nice clean bunks had been provided for them, and these they left in such filthy condition that one could scarce believe that human beings, let alone civilized soldiers, had occupied them. From the stores of the regiment they stole two barrels of whiskey and other liquor, all of which they drank, making them uproariously drunk. At Monroe Harbor a lady named Mrs. Macdonald kindly threw open her house to the officers, and provided them with hot meals and every comfort. These gentlemanly officers, after enjoying the meals, pocketed the knives, forks, and spoons. They also stole the towels that Mrs. Macdonald had provided for their accommodation. But, worst of all they left her house in the condition that the men of the regiment left the bunks." 14

Lieut. Col. O'Brian did not allow the men to partake of the hot meal provided for them.

"Dr. White also corroborates the statement about Lieut.-Col. O'Brian not allowing the men of the 12th and 35th to partake of the hot meal provided for them. When the regiment arrived in Winnipeg O'Brian was informed that the meal was all ready in the restaurant waiting for the men to attack it. O'Brian said that the men didn't need it, as they had enough rations with them, and refused to allow them to partake of it."¹⁴ (They ate hardtack instead.)

¹⁴.
Toronto
News
[ibid.]

Returning Soldier said that all went well until the "infernal Frenchmen," from Montreal spoiled the whole arrangement.

Sergeant Geo. H. Nelson, No. 4 Co. Royal Grenadiers, reported to the Toronto News that not a solitary man of the Queen's Own or of the Grenadiers would complain of food or hardship. Although it had been tough, it was the best the section could afford and much better than the people ordinarily had. He said:

"Everything went all right until the infernal Frenchmen, the 65th from Montreal, baulked right in the middle of the gaps and spoiled the whole arrangement."

Reporter: "How do you mean that they baulked?"

Nelson: "Why, I mean that they mutinied. You don't know these men. They are the worst, most mutinous, reckless, disorderly gang I ever met in my life. They mutinied right there in the gaps, kept those behind them for a day and a half in the snow without shelter and nearly starved those before because no provision could go through. Oh, they are a fine crowd of soldiers... 'We don't want to fight,' was the incessant cry. When they were not saying that they said, 'We want to go home.' The train was backing down towards us and just as it arrived one of them said, 'Me won't fight,' and threw himself under the train. The breakbeam stove in his scalp, and a wheel cut off one of his feet. We left him in the bed I had just left, and I don't know if he died or got better."¹⁵

¹⁵.
Toronto
News
Ibid.

By April 13, Middleton and his troops had reached Humboldt after a treacherous 180 mile trek across the open prairie. The weather was cold, and there was a strong wind blowing. For days the men moved ahead against flurries of snow, sleet and hail.

"I am afraid the dress of my Aide-de-camp and myself would have astonished if not horrified an Aldershot General and his Aide-de-camp," the general wrote in his account of the campaign. "We were both clad in short buffalo skin coats, staff pantaloons, fur service caps, and long English shooting boots, with jack spurs. Swords were worn under, and revolvers over, our coats. The men and officers were in the regular British uniform, supplemented with snow boots, fur caps and gloves, and most of them with hideous red comforters round their necks." 16

16.
Stanley,
Ibid.
p. 325

On April 20 the General and his troops were 35 miles from Batoche, at Clarke's Crossing. They were now in Metis country. Their movements had been closely watched by Half-breed scouts who patrolled the terrain on both sides of the South Saskatchewan. Ironically the grievances which had led to the discontent of the Metis and Half-breeds had by this time been remedied.

"In ten days, from the 26th March to the 6th April, the Government had altered their policy and had given what they had refused for years. What was the cause? The bullets of Duck Lake..."

Belated decision to grant Half-breed claims by government.

"Under authority of subclause E of Clause 81 'the government stated,' it is expedient to deal with half-breed claims in N.W.T. by granting:

1. To each halfbreed head of family resident in NWT, outside limits of Manitoba, previous to 15 July 1870, the lot or portion of land of which he is at present time in bona fide and undisputed occupation by virtue of residence upon and cultivation thereof, to the extent of 160 acres, if said land he is in bona fide occupation of is less than 160 acres, the difference to be made up by an issue of scrip redeemable in land at the rate of \$1 per acre; those halfbreeds not in bona fide occupation of any land shall be issued scrip for \$160 redeemable in land.
2. To each child of a halfbreed head of a family, residing in NWT, previous to 15 July 1870 and born before that date, the lands he is at present in bona fide and undisputed occupation by virtue of residence upon and cultivation thereof to the extent of 240 acres; any

different to be made up by an issue of scrip redeemable in land at rate of \$1 per acre; if not in bona fide occupation of any land, such child to be issued scrip redeemable in land for \$240." 17

17.
Waite,
Peter B.
Canada
1847-1896
McLelland and
Stewart Limited
1971, p. 157

By now it was too late to halt the hostilities set in motion. Eight hundred government troops hovered in the vicinity of Batoche and another ~~four~~^{two} thousand were on their way to the Saskatchewan. A small but determined Metis force prepared to defend themselves against ^{an} the overwhelming majority of government soldiers ready to strike a blow to the "rebels."