

Pride and Poverty: The Rise and Fall  
of the Metis in Western Canada  
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YOU CAN NOT KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING  
UNLESS YOU KNOW WHERE YOU ARE COMING FROM

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## ABSTRACT

This volume contains three theses. First, it documents the way in which a form of genocide was built in to the economic system of mercantilism followed by both France and Britain during the epoch of Colonial conquest. These powers destroyed the ancient social order of the Native people, created a dependency on the fur trade, then created extreme poverty and starvation for the Indian tribes when the fur resource was overdeveloped to the point of the virtual extinction of the fur bearing species. Natives and settlers were prevented from engaging in agricultural pursuits or industrial diversification since these occupations would have reduced profits for the company engaged in the fur trade.

Secondly, the Metis, a race created in response to the needs of the fur companies, began to create a nation-state of their own in precisely the same way as the United States of America had done. Their nationalism developed within the context of the free trade movement against an Imperial monopoly. From this struggle, a nascent Metis bourgeoisie emerged and would have developed in to a nation, but ~~a~~ <sup>the</sup> Canadian State destroyed this process by military conquest and political chicanery.

Thirdly, the Metis people represent an historical microcosm of the working class as a whole under monopoly capitalism. Their fate may be equated with the fate of the international working class in light of the historical events recorded here.

The Metis were created as a work force to produce profits from one staple commodity. When, through their courage and ingenuity, they became so efficient that the resource was depleted (overdeveloped) - they were abandoned as a work force, oppressed by the state, had their lands expropriated and were cast out of the new "wheat economy". Since then they have existed as "surplus-population" on the periphery of the new socio-economic system. Today they fill the poor houses and the jails of our country. Until justice is done and their rights are restored, Canada can not become a model democracy, or even a decent place for children to grow up in.

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## DEFINITIONS

### 1. Capitalism

An economic system based upon the accumulation and investment of capital by private individuals who then become owners of the means of production and the distribution system for goods and services. Capitalism depends upon an extensive system of credit and a "free" labour market. Entrepreneurial capitalism (competing individuals) has historically given way to monopoly capitalism (the concentration of power and money into fewer and fewer hands until the monopoly is so large that it controls international prices and obtains political power over nation-states.

Capitalism, as it developed historically, came to depend upon a working class, a class of its own making, for its profits. Workers are only hired to earn a profit for the capitalists. But workers organize into unions, have strikes, etc., so under capitalism, there has been a historical economic drive to replace workers with machines and automation. This can be paid for by charging more for the commodity produced by the monopoly since competition has ended when a monopoly situation is achieved. Thus, unemployment and poverty for many must always exist under a capitalist economic system.

### 2. Capital intensive

This is the term used to describe the final phase of capitalism, when a monopoly situation has been achieved and the resulting concentration of capital enables the owners to replace much of their labour force with capital equipment, machinery, automation, etc.

3. Colonization

This was the process by which newly emerging capitalist Nation-States obtained economic and political power over large areas of the world. Colonies were used to supply cheap raw materials such as sugar, cotton, fur, etc., for industrial growth in the capitalist Nation-State. Slave labour was often used, and the colonies were usually super-exploited, while the wealth was brought home to the imperial country.

4. Communalism

Communal ownership of the means of the life-support system. Usually this is the social form of the hunting and gathering cultures. Food, clothing, etc., is shared along kinship lines. Usually everyone in the tribal grouping is considered to be related. In this way everyone shared the bounty of the hunt. There was no real separation of economic and political power in such a society, and there were no class divisions or vast gaps between rich and poor. Everyone worked in such a society, and everyone shared equally in the goods obtained.

5. Commodity

Something produced for sale and profit.

6. Commodity production

This is the form of production that accompanies capitalism as an economic system. In communist societies where things were shared on tribal lines, there was no commodity production. Things were made on the basis of their use value, not their sales value.

7. Culture

The total life-way of a social group of people, the group's total man-made environment including all the material objects and spiritual beliefs that are passed on from one generation to the next. All culture develops from the

economic base that provides for the material and spiritual needs of the group. Thus, in a hunting and gathering economy, there is usually a communal culture, in a slave economy a class-based culture, and in a capitalist economy a class-based culture that is based on individualism.

8. Independent commodity producers

People who, as individuals, produce or procure things to be sold in the marketplace. This class of people is usually rural, and usually produce items that do not require much capital for their production.

9. Ethnic:

Belonging to a distinctive or a particular racial, cultural or language division of mankind.

10. Exploitation

The use of other people, or classes of people, or things, for one's own gain or advantage.

11. Imperialism .

The highest form of capitalism, where an entire capitalist Nation-State exploits other regions of resources, rapes it of its wealth, leaving as little as possible for the local people.

12. Labour-intensive phase

In capitalist production, this is the initial type of production using massive man power and little machinery. After much money has been earned in profits by the workers, the capitalist uses these profits to replace the labour force with machinery, automation, etc.

13. Mercantilism

A historically specific economic system that united church and state under the class of merchants who had risen to power by overthrowing the ancient feudal aristocracies of

Europe. This is the system that initially exploited colonies, created trade and merchant capital.

14. Mercantile Company

A company of merchants that was given all the power of the state to hold court, to execute people, to control the military and police so that they could efficiently exploit the peoples and resources of a colony.

15. Metis

French for half-breed. Also has Spanish connotations, "Metisto", referring to the mixture of Spanish and South American Indians. However, the term Metis specifically refers to the French speaking people of mixed European and Indian blood.

The English referred to these people as "half-breeds".

16. Metissage

Act of marriage between Indian and white people.

17. Mode of production

The process by which a society produces, controls and distributes the material to sustain and enrich the lives of its members.

18. Non-status Indians

People who are of Indian or Metis origin who through reasons of marriage, or bureaucratic red-tape are not considered to be Indian under the Indian Act.

19. Oppression

The act of keeping people down by the harsh or unjust use of force or authority.

20. Status Indian

A person of Indian or Metis origin who is classified as an Indian under the Indian Act.

### Surplus-population:

This refers, not to "overpopulation", but specifically to that class of people that have been displaced by the dominant economic system as it moves from its labour intensive, to its capital intensive phase. Today this includes the "unemployed", people on social welfare, people only working part-time but who would like to work fulltime. It also includes bankrupt "independent" business people who could no longer compete against the big monopolies and chain stores etc. and found themselves on the labour market. This later group would include small farmers, store owners etc. who went broke. Many Native people are in this class. This class of people can no longer be fitted in and exploited by the big corporations and therefore they tend to be oppressed by the state ending up in jail or on welfare. Characteristics of this class are poor education, lack of marketable skills etc., alcoholism and a "feeling" that life is without purpose.



21. Papal Bull

A decree made by the Pope to justify and legitimize policy.

22. Political economy

The production, distribution and ownership system of a society; it includes the technology used and includes the class relationships such as owner-worker, and use of the state as a means of oppression.

23. Society

A group of people with a common or distinctive culture, who occupy a particular territory and have achieved some degree of political unity.

24. Staple commodity

An item that provides the main basis of an economy. Other commodities may be produced, but only as a means of extracting the main item, usually from a colony.

25. The State

A historically specific institution that came into being when classes developed in human society. The State is the organized authority, domination, and power of the possessing classes over the rest of the people. It includes the Royal families, Kings, Bishops, Popes, parliaments, Dictators, armies and police forces as well as the judiciary, the Court system, the educational institutions and the bureaucracy of civil servants.

26. Treaty

A formal agreement, duly concluded and ratified, between two or more states. Also, a formal agreement duly concluded and ratified between a state and any group, class or race under its jurisdiction.

## Chapter II

### THE OLD WORLD MEETS THE NEW

Ever since America was "discovered" by Columbus, our history has been largely determined by outside forces. Various Treaties between conflicting powers in Europe have "granted" vast portions of the Western Hemisphere to this or that European Sovereign or State. Territory may have been granted to a head of state by God through his servant the Pope, or by a sovereign King to his aristocratic friends or allies.

George Grant, in Technology and Empire, wrote:

"A central aspect of the fate of being a Canadian is that our very existence has at all times been bound up with the interplay of various world empires. One can better understand what it is to be Canadian if one understands that interplay. As no serious person is interested in history simply as antiquarianism but only as it illumines one's search for the good in the here and now, let me set the problem in its most contemporary form-- Vietnam. What our fate is today becomes most evident in the light of Vietnam. It is clear that in that country the American empire has been demolishing a people, rather than allowing them to live outside the American orbit."<sup>1</sup>

In order to acquire a better understanding of the history and transformation of cultures in North America from antiquity to the present day, the reader is asked to pause for a moment and try to imagine this continent as it was before European politics created national boundaries, states, provinces, and nations. Indeed, these may have existed in vastly different forms, and in an informal way prior to the white man, but try to think of the hemisphere unmarked by boundaries, unpolluted by industry, vast, natural and bountiful.

Because most of the pre-white history of America was passed on in a verbal form, and because the history that is handed down to posterity is often the property of the victorious group or class,

much of the real history of the ancient Indian cultures has been lost or distorted. Thus, many people still look upon the North American Native cultures as "unchristian" or "savage" or "primitive". In the depths of the misconceptions about the Native cultures, Native people are seen as having been "vicious" or even "bloodthirsty". As has already been indicated, nothing could be further from the truth.

"THEIR MANNERS ARE DECOROUS AND PRAISEWORTHY",<sup>2</sup>--so said Christopher Columbus to Queen Isabella of Spain, in his report of the Europeans' first contact with a Native American tribe.

Let us now attempt to look at the European intervention into the life of North America from the Native perspective. Just a little imagination, and we can see the huge, white-sailed ships resting in the bay, and we can wonder as the Natives must have done, at the strangeness of these pale visitors appearing as if by magic from some far-off place.

"Those Europeans, the white men, spoke in different dialects, and some pronounced the word indien, or indianer, or indian. Peaux-rouges, or redskins came later;<sup>3</sup> (as did "savages", "primitives" and all the other labels that have been used by colonizing powers throughout history against the indigenous peoples whose land and labour they coveted.)

"As was the custom of the people when receiving strangers, the Tainos on the island of San Salvador generously presented Columbus and his men with gifts and treated them with honor."<sup>4</sup>

'So tractable, so peaceable, are these people,' Columbus wrote to the King and Queen of Spain, 'that I swear to your Majesties there is not in the world a better nation. They love their neighbors as themselves, and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle, and accompanied with a smile.'<sup>5</sup>

It is doubtful that either Columbus or his gentle hosts could have imagined, upon that fateful meeting on that idyllic isle, the utter catastrophe that would befall the Natives of the Americas as a result of the historical intercourse initiated that day in 1492.

For Spain and Portugal, the conquest of America began with pirate-like militarism in search of plunder. Much of Imperial Spain's Colonial wealth was built upon the gold taken by the inquisitors as they plundered the ancient Inca civilization and exterminated the 'indians' of the islands.

Further to the north, four centuries of European mercantile\* competition for colonies was equally destructive of the ancient cultures and indigenous populations of North America. Some three hundred years after Columbus' meeting on the island, the great chief Tecumseh of the Shawnees addressed his people:

"Where today are the Pequot? Where are the Narragansett, the Mohican, the Pokanoket, and many other once powerful tribes of our people? They have vanished before the avarice and the oppression of the White Man, as snow before a summer sun.

Will we let ourselves be destroyed in our turn without a struggle, give up our homes, our country bequeathed to us by the Great Spirit, the graves of our dead and everything that is dear and sacred to us? I know you will cry with me, "Never! Never!"

- Tecumseh of the Shawnees<sup>6</sup>

Tecumseh might well have wondered why these strange white people did the awful things that he spoke of. Why did they insist that land and water, forest and river, animals and, indeed, people must belong to - BE OWNED BY SOMEONE. Why did they bring with them a silent death, a pestilence for which there was no cure, and why did they exterminate entire tribes of people with their guns? Could they not understand the obvious, that the rivers and forests, the prairies and mountains belonged to no man? They belonged to the Great Spirit and therefore to every man. Is it that each and every white man was born with a destructive mind, that he must transform nature and kill man and beast?

Well might the Native have pondered the Europeans' actions in this new world. But to understand the people involved in these

crimes, it is first necessary to understand their history and culture. Canadians of this epoch do not commit such crimes, do we?

In order for us to understand the Europeans' exploitation of North America, we must fully understand the whole historical process of mercantilism and colonialism. Only then can we come to understand the psychology, and the personalities involved in the military adventurism of the U.S.A., and the chicanery and double-dealing of the speculators and empire builders of Canada. In our analysis of the conquest of North America in general and Canada in particular, let us not abstract from our historical sketch the cultures, the economies or the sociology of the peoples involved in the passing events, and then pass off the empty remainder as "history". This is, in many ways, what has been done in our history texts. Small wonder then, that there has been so much misunderstanding between races and cultures, and so little understanding, comprehension and tolerance of the differences.

To understand the history of the Americas after Columbus is, then, to understand the need and the competition of the European states in their race for colonies. The whole process of the acquisition of colonies was rationalized and legitimized by the religious leaders of Europe:

"When in 1492 Columbus, representing the Spanish monarchy, discovered the New World, he set in train the long and bitter international rivalry over colonial possessions for which, after four and a half centuries, no solution has yet been found. Portugal, which had initiated the movement of international expansion, claimed the new territories on the ground that they fell within the scope of a papal bull of 1455 authorizing her to reduce to servitude all infidel peoples. The two powers, to avoid controversy, sought arbitration and, as Catholics, turned to the Pope --a natural and logical step in an age when the universal claims of the Papacy were still unchallenged by individuals and governments. After carefully sifting the rival claims, the Pope issued in 1493 a series of papal bulls which established a line of demarcation between the colonial possessions of the two states: the

East went to Portugal and the West to Spain. The partition, however, failed to satisfy Portuguese aspirations and in the subsequent year the contending parties reached a more satisfactory compromise in the Treaty of Tordesillas, which rectified the papal judgment to permit Portuguese ownership of Brazil."<sup>7</sup>

The economic push for the conquest of new lands has been variously described in economic terms as "mercantilism", (see our working definition)--and, from a sociological perspective, as the metropolis-hinterland relationship. According to this latter term, the rising class of entrepreneurs and traders in Europe were politically powerful enough to influence, if not outrightly control the sovereign and the military. This control was won for this class by Oliver Cromwell in England, and the defeat of the Stewart Kings opened the door for an unprecedented expansion in trade and commerce, as well as industrial growth. The colonies that were acquired were to provide the metropolis with an abundant source of raw materials such as cod fish, lumber and furs. As well the colonies supplied an abundant source of cheap labour. Finally, the colonies provided a market for the processed and finished materials that were manufactured in the Mother Country. In other words, the colonies were to provide the capital that was needed in the European transformation from feudalism to industrial capitalism as the dominant mode of production.

'According to Adam Smith, the discovery of America and the Cape route to India were 'the two greatest and most important events recorded in the history of mankind.' The importance of the discovery of America lay not in the precious metals it provided, but in the new and inexhaustible market it afforded for European commodities. One of its principal effects was to 'raise the mercantile system to a degree of splendour and glory which it could never otherwise have attained to.' It gave rise to an enormous increase in world trade. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were the centuries of trade, as the nineteenth century was the century of production. For Britain that trade was primarily the triangular trade. In 1718 William Wood said that the slave

trade was "the spring and parent whence the others flow." A few years later Postlethwayt described the slave trade as "the first principle and foundation of all the rest, the mainspring of the machine which sets every wheel in motion.'

In this triangular trade, England, France and Colonial America equally--supplied the exports and the ships; Africa the human merchandise; the plantations the colonial raw materials. The slave ship sailed from the home country with a cargo of manufactured goods. These were exchanged at a profit on the coast of Africa for Negroes, who were traded on the plantations, at another profit, in exchange for a cargo of colonial produce to be taken back to the home country. As the volume of trade increased, the triangular trade was supplemented, but never supplanted, by a direct trade between home country and the West Indies, exchanging home manufactures directly for colonial produce.

The triangular trade thereby gave a triple stimulus to British industry. The Negroes were purchased with British manufactures; transported to the plantations, they produced sugar, cotton, indigo, molasses and other tropical products, the processing of which created new industries in England; while the maintenance of the Negroes and their owners on the plantations provided another market for British industry, New England agriculture and the Newfoundland fisheries. By 1750 there was hardly a trading or a manufacturing town in England which was not in some way connected with the triangular or direct colonial trade. The profits obtained provided one of the main streams of that accumulation of capital in England which financed the Industrial Revolution." 8

Unfortunately, neither the peasants or city dwellers of the old world, nor the Natives of the new world were to fare much better under the rule of the newly liberated class of merchants than they would have under the harsh feudal tyrants of old.

Erick Williams wrote as follows, in commentary on the slave trade:

"Seen in historical perspective, it forms a part of that general picture of the harsh treatment of the underprivileged

classes, the unsympathetic poor laws and severe feudal laws, and the indifference with which the rising capitalist class was beginning to reckon prosperity in terms of pounds sterling, and ... becoming used to the idea of sacrificing human life to the deity of increased production." <sup>9</sup>

The slave trade and the claiming of far-flung lands that already were populated by people of many cultures was legitimized and sanctified by the dominant deity of the day. The Pope, through the proclamation of papal bulls, made the seizure of foreign lands that were 'discovered' by Europeans both legal and honourable. Trouble arose, however, trouble due to competition between states for colonies. As the following account indicates, the Pope was not always successful in arbitration and wars frequently broke out.

"Neither the papal arbitration nor the formal treaty was intended to be binding on other powers, and both were in fact repudiated. Cabot's voyage to North America in 1497 was England's immediate reply to the partition. (The dividing of colonies between Spain and Portugal). Francis I of France voiced his celebrated protest: The sun shines for me as for others. I should very much like to see the clause in Adam's will that excludes me from a share of the world. The king of Denmark refused to accept the Pope's ruling as far as the East Indies were concerned. Sir William Cecil, the famous Elizabethan statesman, denied the Pope's right to give and take kingdoms to whomsoever he pleased. In 1580 the English government countered with the principle of effective occupation as the determinant of sovereignty. Thereafter, in the parlance of the day, there was no peace below the line. It was a dispute, in the words of a later governor of Barbados, as to whether the King of England or of France shall be monarch of the West Indies, for the King of Spain cannot hold it long ... England, France, and even Holland, began to challenge the Iberian Axis and claim their place in the sun. The Negro, too, was to have his place, though he did not ask for it: it was the broiling sun of the sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations of the New Worlds." <sup>10</sup>



As slave labour developed in what is now known as "third world" countries such as Africa and South America, so indentured labour (semi-slavery) developed in Europe. These latter unfortunates were procured primarily from the gaelic-speaking peoples of Scotland and Ireland. As well, unemployed English people were "pressed" into service in America, as well as being herded into "workhouses" in the slums of the newly developing industrial cities.

However, indentured labour, valuable source of manpower that it was, became dangerous to the large monopolies (trading in slaves and cotton) because the indentured labourer eventually became a free man, provided that he survived the intense labour, the heat and the tropical diseases that destroyed so many of his fellows. These freed men eventually set up their own plantations in the south, again with the use of black slave labour, and began to compete with the large monopolies. Nevertheless, despite this budding competition between the free enterprisers and monopolies, the triangular trade route was a remarkably profitable venture. So much so that the timber and fur trade to the north was much retarded, while this super-profitable trade became fully developed.

The pattern for the economic exploitation of the Caribbean islands was very similar to the pattern of the development of the fur resource to the north. First came the labour intensive phase of the staple resource extractive economy, tightly controlled by a select few who had been granted a monopoly over a large trading area, then came settlement and colonization. In both cases, cheap labour sources included the victims of previous colonial conquests, the Irish and Highland Scots used as indentured labour and the newly colonized people, the Negro in the South as slave labour. For the exploitation of the fur staple, however, slaves were not required. What was required was a nomadic work force of independent commodity producers who could supply cheap furs to the Company traders. Thus, the Hudsons Bay Company despite its despotic powers was not compelled to reduce the natives to slavery in order to ensure its profits as was the case in the Carribean.

The practice of slavery and indentured labour during this epoch has left an indelible mark on the European countenance. Needless to say, all Europeans did not profit from it just as they were not equally responsible for it. These practices were used by the aristocracy of the time to procure capital for industrial growth. The uprooted peasantry of Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland fared, in many ways, no better than the Africans who were procured as slaves. The victims had one thing in common despite the differences in colour: they were people whose land was being taken by military conquest as a subjugated colony of an imperial power.

It has been argued that England had been so successful in obtaining colonies abroad, only because of her experience at home. The conquest of Ireland and Scotland, lasting over centuries, was an invaluable trial-and-error method of learning for the English ruling elite. The victims of imperial expansion in Great Britain suffered a fate as terrible as later "third world" victims of the modern epoch. Following is a brief sketch outlining the methods used to break up the ancient clan system of the Keltic societies of Ireland and Scotland.

As was the case with most medieval, or pre-capitalist society in Europe, the Kelts were Catholic. The Catholic religion was a dominant force, a virtual cement, binding the seventeenth and eighteenth century Keltic societies together in a mutated but still stable form of tribalism. The following quotation shows how the English outlawed this faith, and used other measures to separate the Irish clan chiefs from their people and to turn the ancient commonly-owned lands over to a landlord-tenant relationship:

"Penal Laws against Catholics (Elizabeth, in 2nd year of reign, 1560, c. 1) are applied more and more since the beginning of the reign of James I, it becoming dangerous to practise Catholicism. Under Elizabeth 2 cl. the fine of 12d was imposed for very non-attendance of a Protestant Church service and, in 1605, under James, imprisonment was added by Royal Proclamation and, hence, unlawfully. This did not help. Besides, in 1605 all priests were ordered out of Ireland in 40 days ~~of pain~~<sup>4</sup> of death.

These followed the pronouncement of tanistry and gavelkind as unlawful by the Court of King's Bench in the Hilary Term in the third year of the reign of James I. A Royal Proclamation stipulated surrender of estates and regrant under new valid titles. Most Irish chiefs came forward to receive incontestable title at last, but this was made conditional on their giving up the clan relationship in favour of the English landlord-tenant relationship

This in 1605." <sup>11</sup>

Prior to the rising English classes' successful military conquest, the old Keltic societies' social fabric had been torn asunder in Ireland, and to a lesser extent in the Highlands of Scotland. The traditional and ideological foundations of the Keltic political economy were systematically undermined. The resulting chaos exacerbated old inter-clan rivalries and created new conflicts as the various clan chiefs picked sides by deciding either to "sell out" and "feather their own nest," or to remain loyal to the people and die a hero's death.

Following is a statement of the English government regarding their 'divide and conquer' tactics:

"English policy under Elizabeth: to keep Ireland in a state of division and strife. Should we exert ourselves, the English government averred, in reducing Ireland to order and civility, it must soon acquire power, consequence and riches. The inhabitants will be thus alienated from England; they will cast themselves into the arms of some foreign power, or erect themselves into an independent and separate state. Let us rather connive at their disorders, for a weak and disordered people can never attempt to detach themselves from the Crown of England. " <sup>12</sup>

The massacres and famines, the burnings and executions that followed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Ireland and Scotland set the stage for our contemporary history, as "redundant" populations of Irish and Scottish peasantry, along with many pauperized English people were either transported as

slaves or annihilated in battle or through starvation to make way for the new industries. In Scotland people were exiled, and replaced with sheep for the new woolen mills of England.

These incidents along the bloody path to colonization in Great Britain were not to be surpassed even by the Americans in their wars against the Indians of the U.S.A.

Following are several vignettes describing some of the more infamous actions taken by the English against the Irish and Highland people. The reader is asked to take careful note of these incidents so that a comparison can later be made with the treatment of Indian and Metis populations in the U.S.A. and Canada. It should be noted that the American extermination of certain tribes was being carried out during the same historical period:

#### 17TH CENTURY. CROMWELL

"Drogheda Massacre. After a successful assault quarter had been promised to all who should lay down their arms--a promise observed until all resistance was at an end. But at the moment that the city was completely reduced, Cromwell ... issued his fatal orders that the garrison should be put to the sword. His soldiers, many of them with reluctance, butchered the prisoners. The governor and all his gallant officers, betrayed to slaughter by the cowardice of some of their troops, were massacred without mercy. For five days this hideous execution was continued with every circumstance of horror A number of Catholic ecclesiastics found within the walls were bayoneted. Thirty persons only remained unslaughtered ... and these were instantly transported as slaves to Barbadoes " (emphasis mine)

Petty (Political Anatomy of Ireland, Dublin edition of Petty's tracts, 1669, pp. 312-15) estimates that 112,000 British and 504,000 Irish inhabitants of Ireland died in the war of 1641-52. In 1653, soldiers' debentures were sold at 4/- to 5/- in the pound, so that with 20/- being the price (nominal) of two acres of land, and there being 8 million acres of good land in Ireland, all Ireland

was purchasable for £1 million, though in 1641 it was worth £8 million, and in 1652 at less than £500,000, so that Dublin had to get meat from Wales. Corn was 12/- per barrel in 1641 and 50/- in 1652. Houses in Ireland worth £2 million in 1641, were worth less than £500,000 in 1653.

Leland, too, admits in Vol. III, p. 171, that 'the favorite idea of both the Irish Government and the English Parliament (from 1642 onwards) was the utter extermination of all the Catholics of Ireland'. (Emphasis mine)

See Lingard (History of England, Vol. VII, 4th ed., p. 102, Note) on the transportation of Irish as slaves to the West Indies (figures vary from 6,000 to 100,000). Of the 1,000 boys and 1,000 girls to be sent to Jamaica, the commissioners wrote in 1655: 'Although we must use force in taking them up, yet it is so much for their own good and likely to be of such great advantage to the public, that you may have such number of them as you shall think fit.'

'By the first Act of Settlement, the forfeiture of two-thirds of their estates had been pronounced against those who had borne arms against the Parliament and one-third of their estates against those who had resided in Ireland any time from October 1, 1649, to March 1, 1650.'<sup>13</sup>

England's seizure of Irish land and labour was a long and arduous task. The destruction of the Highland clan system, on the other hand, was brief, barbarous and thorough. The Highland "rebellion" of 1745, ostensibly a struggle of Catholicism versus Protestantism, was in reality a battle for survival by the Highlanders. Following the 'battle' of Culloden Moore, in which five thousand half-starved Highlanders equipped only with broad swords took on a modern army in excess of thirty thousand troops equipped with cannons, cavalry and rifles, the first genocidal actions of the modern epoch were commenced.

Following are accounts of these activities which led to the mass exodus of Kelts to the new world where many were to become, in part, the progenitors of another proud race - the Metis nation.

the Highland economy was pillaged as cattle and crops were expropriated by the victors. The people were driven from their ancient holdings while their crofts and homes were burned around them.

"The destruction was begun in the west at Grummore as the party approached it from Altnaharra on the Lairg road, and messengers were sent ahead to all the other townships warning the people that they had an hour in which to evacuate their homes and take away what furniture they could. 'I saw the townships set on fire,' recalled Roderick Macleod, who was a boy at the time....

... it was sad, the driving away of these people. The terrible remembrance of the burnings of Strathnaver will live as long as a root of the people remains in the country ....'

The timber of three hundred buildings burned in the thin May sunshine. The valley was filled again with terrible noise, the crying of women and children, the hysterical barking of the dogs which the Northumbrian shepherds had brought with them. 'Nothing but the sword was wanting,' said Macleod, 'to make the scene one of as great barbarity as the earth every witnessed.'" <sup>14</sup>

— "Little that the people had endured in 1836 prepared them for the great famine that came ten years later. In 1845 the potato blight, which also destroyed crops in Belgium, Denmark, Sweden and Canada, visited Ireland with such appalling effect that its history and its economy were scarred for a century." <sup>15</sup>

In the Scottish Highlands, as throughout Ireland, the inhabitants had become 'tenants'. There people existed primarily on the potatoe, since the <sup>fit to plow</sup> arable land was not used to produce grain for export to England. Consequently, the great potatoe famine killed some two and a half-million persons who were reduced from the Keltic population in the ten year period 1845 - 55.

"... Throughout the months of hunger ahead, merchants would continue to export grain and other foodstuffs from the Highlands to markets in the south where prices were much more agreeable." <sup>16</sup>

"... In 1745 transportation was the penalty for the theft of a silver spoon and a gold watch. One year after the emancipation of the Negro slaves, transportation was the penalty for trade union

activity. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there was some connection between the law and the labor needs of the plantations, and the marvel is that so few people ended up in the colonies overseas." <sup>17</sup>

Of the millions of people transported in the mid-nineteenth century little has been recorded. Following is an account of but one such heart-breaking experience.

"The sailing of an emigrant vessel was a deeply emotional experience, for those leaving and for those who remained. The Highlanders were like children, uninhibited in their feelings and wildly demonstrative in their grief. Men and women wept without restraint. They flung themselves on the earth they were leaving, clinging to it so fiercely that sailors had to pry them free and carry them bodily to the boats. A correspondent of the Inverness Courier watched the departure of some Kildonan people from Helmsdale: Hands were wrung and wrung again, bumpers of whisky tossed wildly off amidst cheers and shouts; the women were forced almost fainting into the boats; and the crowd upon the shore burst into a long, loud cheer. Again and again that cheer was raised and responded to from a boat, while bonnets were thrown into the air, handkerchiefs were waved, and last words of adieu shouted to the receding shore, while, high above all, the wild notes of the pipes were heard pouring forth that by far the finest of <sup>mountain</sup> pibroch tunes, Cha till mi tuille, We shall Return No More!

Conditions aboard the emigrant ships were seldom better than <sup>unpleasant</sup> abominable, and for fifty years selfless humanitarian societies fought for Acts of Parliament that would bring a slight improvement in them. The ships that sailed from Dublin or Belfast were the worst of all, but because steerage passage on them cost thirty shillings only, a quarter of what it cost from Greenock, many Highlanders crossed the Irish Sea to sail from there. In the beginning, before Parliament attempted to control the contractors, emigrants were loaded into the ships like bales of merchandise. In 1773, for example, a ship of three hundred tons left for the Carolinas with four hundred and fifty passengers. All were crammed

into a hold measuring sixty feet by eighteen by six, each emigrant having a little over two square feet of deck on which to spend ten or eleven weeks at sea. The pure water with which the shipmaster was supposed to supply his passengers was in fact sour, and was stored in casks that had previously contained indigo. Dysentery killed twenty-three of the emigrants before they reached America." 18

Although some regulations were eventually passed governing emigrant ships;

"Neither ministers nor ship-masters worried for long. The new regulations made little impression on the self-interest of contractors or the indifference of authority. Overcrowding continued and disease increased. When the little brig James reached Halifax in 1826 every person on board, crew or passenger, was ill with typhus. Reporting this to William Huskisson, the Colonial Secretary, a Governor-General of British North America added:

I really do believe that there are not many instances of slave-traders from Africa to America exhibiting so disgusting a picture. ... The most favourable account that reached me of one vessel admitted no sort of comparison between her and a French slaver brig captured by me four years ago when in command of a frigate on the Leeward Isles. Thus in many ways indentured labour was treated more cruelly than slaves, since the loss of a slave meant the loss of profit." 19

"Within the span of one man's youth and middle age from one half to two-thirds of the Highland people in Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Inverness had been uprooted and dispersed. The proportion may have been more; no one can now calculate it." 20

Prebble summed up the destruction of the Highland clans as follows:

"At Culloden, and during the military occupation of the glens, the British government first defeated a tribal uprising and then destroyed the society that had made it possible. The exploitation of the country during the next hundred years was within the same pattern of colonial development--new economies introduced for the greater wealth of the few, and the unproductive obstacle of a



native population removed or reduced. In the beginning the men who imposed the change were of the same blood, tongue and family as the people. They used the advantages given them by the old society to profit from the new, but in the end they were gone with their clans.

The Lowlander has inherited the hills, and the tartan is a shroud." 21

The <sup>violent</sup> cataclysmic events of the late seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries--the end of feudalism as the dominant mode of production, the destruction of the Keltic clan system, the revolution of the English middle class and its subsequent control of the state, in short the triumph of capitalism as the major socio-economic system--drove the survivors of the newly created surplus population across the seas to America and other colonies.

Although the same dynamic was in motion all across Europe, the middle class revolution in England was at least a hundred years in advance of its competing European nation-states. Thus, the early inhabitants of New France (Quebec) arriving in the new world as a consequence of the same social upheavals that had impoverished the new landless classes of Great Britain, never did so prior to the middle class revolutions in the old homeland. However, they were not to escape the competitive wars of the mother countries in their race to establish colonies. Indeed, much of the history of North America would ~~result~~ as a consequence of that imperial struggle.

Chapter II Summary

America was "discovered" because the ancient feudal systems of Europe were giving way to a new revolutionary era, an era that demanded constant expansion in order to survive. With the beginning of capitalism, through revolutions in England and France, Nation-States come in to being. These Nation-States first conquered the tribal systems that were left in Europe, then used the people of these countries, primarily Scotland and Ireland, as a slave or semi-slave force to be used as cheap labour. As well, Negro slaves were used for labour in South America. This is the labour that produced the money for industrialization in Europe.

The new Nation-States required cheap raw materials such as cotton, sugar, fish, timber and fur from the colonies. Lacking capital or machinery, slave or indentured labour was used extensively to produce sufficient profit to build industries in the Imperial Country. The colonies were then used as a marketplace for the manufactured goods. This was an era when a new class of people achieved power over the old feudal aristocracy. Because of the shift in the European economy through technological change, vast populations of people were no longer required as peasants. These people were exterminated, or shipped to the new world.

America became a colony to supply wealth for the new European capitalist class, and a place to dump the impoverished clansmen of Ireland and Scotland, as a new labour force in the New World.

The seizure of lands for these purposes was made "legal" or "legitimate" by the religious leaders of the day.

Chapter II Footnotes

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- (2) Brown, Del Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee  
Bantam Books, Holt Reinhart & Winston 1973 p. 1
- (3) Ibid p. 1
- (4) Ibid p. 1
- (5) Ibid P. 1
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- (7) Erick Williams, Capitalism and Slavery p 51  
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- (9) Ibid p 52
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- (11) Murphy, John from Ireland and the Irish Question  
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- (12) Ibid F. Engels, p.p. 259 - 260
- (13) Ibid, Murphy, John p. 265 - 266
- (14) Prebble, John, The Highland Clearances Penguin Book New York.  
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- (15) Ibid, Prebble, John p. 171

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(17) Erick Williams, OP Cit. p. 12

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(19) Prebble, John ibid p. 265

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(21) Ibid p. 304

## Chapter III

Mercantilism and the first "World War"

The countries of Europe that were in the process of transition from feudalism to merchant capitalism became locked-in to a deadly competition for colonies. Mercantilism depended on colonies for successful accumulation of capital, sufficient to launch the imperial Nation-State in to a phase of industrial growth. For the victor in this battle for colonies, revolutionary growth in first trade and commerce, and then industrial expansion, unprecedented in the history of man was the prize. For the losers, stagnation and a retreat - back in to the feudal post was the best that could be anticipated.

Spain, Portugal, Holland, England and France were the European states that, though historical accident and geographical location took the lead in this battle for colonies. They were all states that were strategically located as maritime nations at the cross-roads of new mercantile world trade. England with its successful bourgeois revolution under Oliver Cromwell had unleashed the revolutionary force of its middle classes well ahead of France, its closest competitor. Thus, despite its relatively small population it had produced a mighty merchant navy, and a formidable battle fleet that was to ensure its victory in the "world war" for colonies. The war between France and England for possession of America and other colonies:

"...was a war, affecting the four continents then know. As it developed it revealed the extreme complexity of international relations. Isolation, as an intelligent observer remarked, became an illusion. The bonds of interest between states ... form a sort of chain whose links are so firmly joined that no one state can be shaken without all the others immediately feeling the shock to a greater or lesser degree. Atrocities perpetrated in the course of hostilities seemed to suggest that the world was once more plunged into the dark ages. Never, in truth, since the age of the Goths, the Huns, and the Vandals, were so many armies assembled at one time in one theatre of war, never did armies fight so bitterly, ravage countries with such fury or display such lack of

humanity as they pillaged their unfortunate inhabitants. In America the war was no less cruel than in Europe. It was perhaps even more cruel."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Europe's centuries-long battles for colonies around the world both France and England remained imposing imperial powers who early-on defeated all other opponents. The history of North America, although touched by the sword and fire of Spain, eventually was determined by the French-English wars. North America became the spoils of the victor in this struggle, before becoming independent when the United States produced its own militant, nationalistic middle class through its own revolution.

Greg Fregault compared the two European nation-states as they appears during the war for colonial supremacy: "...Frenchmen and Englishmen have in common a great many more ideas, traditions, and habits than they are willing to recognize. Although these two great peoples flatter themselves that they are quite different from each other, and emphasize-with a vanity more fitting in members of a primitive clan than in a modern nation-the elements that distinguish them and in which they recognize signs of indisputable superiority, the truth is that their resemblances are deeper, and incomparably more important, than the differences in behaviour and ideas in which they take so much pride. At the time of the War of the Conquest, France and England presented two more or less original expressions of one western civilization.

Both were nation-states. Local patriotisms had not been stifled in Britain any more than in France, but they had been checked. In this respect the role of Scottish leads and Scottish troops in America provides a significant example. James Murray, who commanded the army of occupation in Quebec in 1759 and 1760 before his appointment as governor of the conquered province, was an assimilated Scot. Both Britain and France were nation-states and both were monarchies; different, certainly, since one presented itself as an absolute and the other as a constitutional monarchy. But without seeking to minimize it, we may ask wherein exactly this difference lay. After having lived for two centuries under an absolute monarchy and survived a certain number of

political crises, England, in the course of her evolution, had reached a new formula for royal power, a formula better adapted to the development of her social structure and for this reason subtler, more effective, and more harmoniously tuned to her collective life than was the case with the French monarch. In France the mechanism of the monarchy needed to be readjusted, simplified, and cleaned, so that its gears might mesh with those of the new force, the <sup>middle class</sup> bourgeoisie, building up pressure in the very centre of French society. The British state had found its direction and was moving with its age; the French state, still imposing in its massive power, was behind the times. The deepest difference between the two monarchies, the difference that explains the growing dissimilarity between their institutions, is perhaps that one allowed itself to be outstripped by events. ... whereas the other kept up with them. It is worth noting that the space between the English revolution of 1688 and the outbreak of the War of the Conquest was hardly more than two generations.

In the religious sphere both nations were traditionally Christian, although France had maintained her link with the Catholic church while England had long since brought religion within the dimensions of her island. But differences in religion important in the case of persons, who are endowed with conscience, do not affect states, which, for all practical purposes, have no conscience. Careful reflection leads one to conclude that for both states, faith meant faith in their own power. In the world of ideas and culture, minds on both sides of the Channel bore the mark of the scientific revolution which, since the end of the preceding century, had completely changed the intellectual perspectives of western nations and given them a common denominator of 'modernity'.

The intellectuals, English and French alike, who gave the age its tone, those who made a lasting contribution to European thought, were united in worship of reason, allegiance to 'humanitarian' ideals, and faith in progress.

Finally, the economic structure of the two countries was similar in essentials: both were capitalist countries, both were imbued with respect for 'trade'--a wide term embracing notably

what we now call industry--and carried it on with a passion that sometimes came very close to ferocity. The elevation of trade was reflected in a corresponding rise in the status of the trading class, and representatives of the bourgeoisie were now to be found in every sphere of society: in government, on the bench, in the army, and of course among the aristocracy, where it was agreed that, as Madame de Sevigne had said, gold crowns were 'of good lineage', even when they constituted the dowry of a low-born daughter of trade. The middle class, already rich, was growing still richer as it met the need of the state for larger and larger supplies of money. England was ruled by aristocracy of trade and finance in conjunction with the aristocracy of birth to which it was linked by business interests and family ties.<sup>2</sup>

As can be seen, then, both England and France were motivated through the same desires for expanded trade and commerce, the only difference being that England's old feudal aristocracy had already been transformed into leaders of the new dynamic social order. In France, the old feudal order stifled the growth of capitalism just long enough for England to gain the competitive edge. But the similarities in method were remarkable. In both cases the imperial country exported their new landless and impoverished classes to the Americas as cheap labour, and as a means of populating and domesticating the new colonial territories.

In both cases the exploited people of the old world married the soon-to-be exploited natives of the new world. From Britain, the newly subdued and impoverished Kelts had much in common with the American Native, while the French zealously "Frenchified" the natives. Thus a brand new race of colonized people came in to being, fathered by European oppression, mothered in North American innocence.

It should not be suggested that all Europeans of the upper classes were culprits, as the following quotation, made in the British Parliament, regarding the Quebec Act of 1775, by the great poet and Parliamentarian Edmund Burke reveals: "I stand for the necessity of information; without which--without great, cogent, luminous information - I, for one, will never give my



vote for establishing the French law in that country. I should be sorry to see his Majesty a despotic governor. And am I sure that this despotism is not meant to lead to universal despotism? When that country cannot be governed as a free country, I question whether this can. No free country can keep another country in slavery. The price they pay for it will be their own servitude. The constitution proposed is one which men never will, and never ought to bear. When we are sowing the seeds of despotism in Canada, let us bear in mind, that it is growth which may afterwards extend to other countries. By being made perpetual, it is evident that this constitution is meant to be both an instrument of tyranny in the Canadas, and an example to others of what they have to expect. At some time or other it will come home to England..."<sup>3</sup>

Despite such fine and lofty sentiments, and indeed such incisive foresight, the mercantile development of Canada moved ahead with cruel rapidity. Canada's historic economic purpose was that of supplier of primary resources, "staples" for the European, later American, advanced capitalist economies. D.E. Aitkin explained: "...In broad outline the story of Canadian economic development until the early years of the twentieth century is a simple one. The rate and direction of developments have been determined by the economic characteristics of a number of staple products: fish, fur, timber, wheat, and minerals. Each of these staples has posed its own particular problems of organization and marketing, and each has cast Canada in the role of an economic satellite and marginal supplier of other more advanced areas, chiefly Great Britain and the United States. Fish, fur, wheat, and square timber kept Canada within the economic orbit of the former; lumber, metallic minerals, and more recently crude oil drew Canada closer to the latter. Great Britain and the United States have also been the principal sources of capital imports and of the immigrant labour supply..."<sup>4</sup>

The "development" of what is now Canada was determined by the profits obtainable by England and France from one "staple" commodity - fur. The requirements of the English and French bourgeoisie, through their new historical entity, the Nation-State,

were to determine the destiny of North America.

Indeed, the Metis population came in to being as a biological and social entity in direct response to the labour requirements of the fur companies. The new European Nation-States, having united the interests of their merchant class to the military power of the state, had created a new social phenomenon capable of both creating and destroying entire human populations.

Since the birth, life-span and death of the Metis Nation was contingent upon the fate of the fur trade - its rise and fall - an analysis of the fur trade is now necessary:..." In medieval England, as in the rest of western Europe in the middle ages, common furs of local origin were among the normal commodities of everyday life. Goat-skins, an occasional deer-skin, dogs, cats, hares, and above all conies, were in common use and denoted neither rank nor wealth in the wearer. Fine furs came from the Scandinavian or Russian outskirts of the medieval worlds, and they were prized and priced according to the beauty and quality which the arctic or semi-arctic conditions of growth gave to the pelts, and according to the cost and difficulty of the trade-route along which they had reached the market. Such furs as foxes, bears, beaver, sable and ermine were in constant demand and sure of a steady market as insignia of rank and wealth. They formed one of the main commodities of the trade of northern Europe, intermediaries, the 'factories' of Novgorod and Bruges..."<sup>5</sup>

...By the sixteenth century Russian and Baltic fur sources were becoming depleted. Under these conditions of both strong demand and world supply, the Canadian fur market held firm from the earliest contact with natives until past the middle of the nineteenth century, when the new fashion of silk hats ruined the beaver market. Sustained demand often led, through victimization and debauching of primitive tribes, to fantastic profits of 1000% and 2000% - though war, cut-throat competition, losses at sea, and a three-to-six-year lapse between investment and return, demanded high compensation..." 6

With such risks, expenses, distances and such a lengthy period between investment and return, private or "free enterprize" development of the fur staple was an impossibility. The task required an immense centrally controlled organization. Indeed, the Hudsons Bay Company met all of these requirements. This company was granted not only an economic monopoly but, as well, it held all state control over 'Rupertsland.'

Today, we see a nominal, or an ostensible separation between the major corporations and the state. We do not, for example, see Exxon in direct control of our government, our army, police force, legal system and civil service. The Hudsons Bay Company, however did have such direct control, to better facilitate its trade and commerce in the colony. The company had absolute powers on such matters, as Rich described below:

"...The emphasis, with the accent increasingly on trade and farming rather than on mines or commerce-raiding, left the normal machinery for the acquisition and the settlement of colonies unaltered. The period 17th Century saw some experiments both by the English and by the French in "Crown Colony" administration, but they were ill-starred and unpopular; the normal method of acquisition, administration and settlement, remained a chartered company. The pattern varied in detail but the principles remained constant; there was a hard core of common practice arising from common views and common needs, for the chartered company had behind it both a tradition of usefulness and a capacity for action in the difficult circumstances of seventeenth-century colonial expansion. Those circumstances demanded that the incentives for expansion and settlement should arise from private desires and be supported by private capital; but they also demanded that such desires should be regimented in the interests of the state. For this reconciliation of private incentive and state interest the chartered company seemed invaluable.

The companies were always private in that much (though not always all) of the capital required for planting and trading came from private purses. But they were public in that they required some sort of a charter to give them their claims to lands and trade, to promise them support against foreign rivals and to grant them monopoly against rivals of their own nation. Without such a charter and promise of support they could not get the financial backing necessary for such speculative ventures as overseas settlements. The companies were public, too, in that they were saddled with public or quasipublic duties--the defence of the lands to be occupied, care for law and good governance, for religion, for relations with native princes and peoples--and with

the regulation of the expected trade in such a way as to conform to the national interests. This later function was a quite normal feature of those attempts to regulate trade so as to secure that over-all balance of foreign payments which, in one form or another, dominated the economic policies of every European state of that day." <sup>7</sup>

The above quotation was a "nice" way of saying that private interests were given the full autonomous power of the state in order to more efficiently subjugate, <sup>free to submit</sup> and exploit the labour of the colonized people. Again, from another source, we see that the monopoly of the fur trade had been well organized over a long period of time and was firmly controlled by the English aristocracy and supported by the state.

..."In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when American furs began to affect the European market, therefore, the fur trade in London and throughout England had behind it a long history, an important and privileged controlling company, and a skilled and independent body of artisans. All of this served to supply a luxury demand for furs used in the skin." <sup>8</sup>

Following is an account of the formation of a conscious policy linking the interests of the merchants to the English state in the exploitation of new colonies: "... Fishing, trade, discovery and settlement, all had their place. Bristol was the centre of the movement, and the practical knowledge of the Bristol men was brought into closer contact with the small school of Elizabethan imperial planners when in 1584 the Younger Hakluyt was promised the next vacant prebend at Bristol. The promise was won when he presented his Discourse of Western Planning to Elizabeth, and won a most apt reward for that treatise. For the Discourse marked a new approach to the Atlantic, to America and to the fur trade, by the courtly theorists. Largely economic in its approach, it emphasised the decay of our European markets, the need to find fresh outlets for our produce and for our redundant population, and the need to find fresh sources of the commodities which we brought from Europe..." <sup>9</sup> Richard Hakluyt was bringing the furs of North America into his planning of a British Empire. In this he had the French for an example. The

French fishermen who frequented the Banks of Newfoundland and the mainland coasts had during the middle years of the sixteenth century developed a constant and lucrative fur trade with the Indians with whom they came in contact, and as a result of his experience and his conversations in Paris, Hakluyt was now, at a formative moment, including fur in the list of goods which England might derive from American settlements instead of from doubtful friends and possible enemies among her neighbours..."<sup>10</sup>

"Policy in imperial trade was a close-knit and purposeful policy, not to be cried down because it was often achieved by intrigues and often entrusted to fortune-seekers. Based upon the Cromwellian Navigation Acts, it accepted the integration of domestic and colonial trade into one over-all balance, and it aimed at supplementing the economy of Britain by that of her colonies, who would provide market for her manufactures, raw materials for her industries, and a transport system which would give a reserve of ships and seamen for wars. So integrated, the imperial economy would become increasingly independent of alien supplies or markets and stronger because, as an imperial unit, it would achieve a balance of exports over imports. Any colonial trade that would supply goods which must otherwise be bought outside the empire, or which could be sold on the European market, would meet with favour, and any project which showed promise of such a reaction would be sure of discussion and of favourable reception."<sup>11</sup>

The above statements provide a candid analysis of mercantilism from the perspective of the English ruling class. As can be seen, the colonies' purposes were to provide cheap raw materials to the imperial country, and were to become markets for the manufactured goods from England. For this latter purpose, the colonies were to be peopled with the "redundant" population of Irish and Scots whose lands had been seized by the English Crown.

Things did not run this smoothly for the French Imperialists, however. Corruption in high places and the resulting stagnation in the French fur trade prevented innovation or expansion. Thus, Grosseilliers and Radisson appeared at the English Court in London with a plan for the exploitation of a massive fur resource around Hudson's Bay.

The sluggish French aristocracy, was too slow for these local Quebecois entrepreneurs. Consequently two of their adventurers sold the English aristocracy with their stories of the abundance of fur in Canada. Thus the Hudson's Bay Company came into being primarily to create wealth for the English merchants, and secondarily to extend the British Empire across America. Rich wrote:

"...Such a challenge as Groseilliers and Radisson embodied was almost certain of support in London. Courtiers, financiers, administrators and scientists, equally anxious to make their own fortunes, to strike a blow at French trade and to probe the mysteries of the Arctic, were all bound to be interested. So it proved."<sup>12</sup>

"...Commonplace enough in many ways, the small speculative advances of money by wealthy and powerful men who could well

afford the losses involved nevertheless mark a vital mingling of personalities between the adventurous and purposeful French-Canadians, now for ten years set on their concept of the 'Bay of the North', and the hardening group of their patrons -wealthy, powerful men, comparatively enlightened, and convinced imperialists. They were ready to take a modest chance, as much in the wider interests involved as in the hope of making their own fortunes, but they were not prepared to undertake great risks." <sup>13</sup>

Imperial France was unsuccessful in its attempts to compete with the Hudsons Bay Company even though its method of colonial development was similar to that of England: "From the first, a monopoly of the fur trade had been an important feature of French attempts to settle and govern Canada" <sup>14</sup>

One of the reasons that the French monopoly failed was the degree to which corruption and graft alienated the Quebecois adventurers. Rich Explained: "Thus although it was universally accepted that the fur trade was the solution for the colony, the abuses and privileges with which it was enmeshed,...meant that by the time Charles II was restored to the throne of Great Britain even the habitans were unwilling to undertake its responsibilities much though they wished to enjoy its profits." <sup>15</sup>

Again, as with England, the method of development ensured the Colony's dependence on the Mother Country.

"...The institutional development of New France was an indication of the relation between the fur trade and the mercantile policy. The fur trade provided an ample supply of raw material for the manufacture of highly profitable luxury goods. A colony engaged in the fur trade was not in a position to develop industries to compete with manufacturers of the mother country. Its weakness necessitated reliance upon the military support of the mother country. Finally the insatiable demands of the Indians for goods stimulated European manufactures." <sup>16</sup> As can be seen, then, England and France were motivated by precisely the same social and economic needs, but they were not alone:

" Puritan rule and Dutch rivalry greatly hardened and strengthened England's concepts of Empire in the middle years of the seventeenth



century. Settlement and the clear subordination of the colonies to the mother country, combined with emphasis on navigation and the West India trade, were then worked into a policy and embodied in statute. In this England was not alone. The second half of the seventeenth century saw all the states of Western Europe looking across the Atlantic in a newly purposeful mood from which the semi-piratical exuberance of the sixteenth century was missing.

Spain, despite her defeats at sea, had vindicated her grasp of Central and South America; the coastal fringes of North America had been settled by English and Dutch colonists in their temperate regions, whilst further north New France boasted some three thousand habitans by 1663. The West Indies were still in dispute, but the rising emphasis on those islands reveals the importance being given to navigation as a source of income and a defence in war; it reveals, too, emphasis on trade as a source of balanced payments rather than on bullion as a product of mineral wealth and exploitation. 'Colonies would bring commodities which must otherwise be brought from foreign countries; or they might bring commodities which could be sold to foreign countries.' <sup>17</sup>

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the English and Dutch settlers of the Eastern Seaboard of America were firmly entrenched not only in agriculture but in industry, trade and commerce as well. So much so that the colony with its bourgeoning independence became a threat to the mother country as America began to produce its own dynamic, even revolutionary middle class.

Quebec, on the other hand, with its stifling feudalistic seignorial system, and its vastly different geographical features produced a transient, restless element within its indigenous population: By 1667 Canada was... "still supreme in the fur trade of the new world and there was good reason for this. The nearer the English settlers moved towards the fur-bearing lands of the far north the more deeply they committed themselves to fishing and to subsistence farming, whereas the nearer the French got to the beaver the more they succumbed to the lure of the woods and forsook the plough for the canoe, the trap and the gun..." <sup>18</sup>

"...The French settlements in the lower St. Lawrence, attractive in many ways, were inhospitable in comparison with New England. The rivers and lakes, too, were natural highways into the interior whereas the Alleghanies tended to restrict English settlement to the coastal area. The French were few in numbers--only about two hundred habitans by 1642 and only about three thousand after serious efforts at organised emigration, by 1663 - they were partly military and largely adventurous, and they were predominately male in a way in which the family groups of New Englanders were not. They were more of a garrison than a colony, and they required steady encouragement of female emigration to enable them to balance their lives and set up families in the New World. The English had emigrated with their wives and families, their household goods, farm stock and cattle; they were in every way a more settled and less adventurous, if equally determined, community.

Moreover, the French priests led one of the most magnificent examples of penetrative missionary endeavour which the modern world has seen. They journeyed thousands of miles into the hinterland of the St. Lawrence whereas the New Englanders, intolerant in their Puritanical self-righteousness, ignored and increasingly abhorred the heathen and certainly projected no serious plans for their conversion to Christianity. French policy, too, was strongly influenced by the legend of an 'Inland Sea' which could be reached by river and lake and which would then lead by easy water-routes to the Pacific and so to the trade of the Far East.

Not least among the causes of the different reactions to the fur trade was the fact that New France lay contiguous to magnificent fur-country, and the farming there could often only be engaged in for six months of the year, whereas New England furs were often inferior since they were grown in less rigorous conditions, they came through the medium of a long and vulnerable Indian trade route, and the pursuit of furs took time which could more profitably be spent on agriculture." <sup>19</sup> (emphasis mine)

Hidden in the above statement is the economic basis for most of the policy that was to develop in Canada and the United States regarding the native peoples.

As indicated, the Americans (New Englanders) "intolerant in their puritanical self-righteousness ignored and increasingly abhorred the heathen; this was because the American Indians unlike their Canadian counterparts "stood in the path of American economic development." America did not depend on the fur trade as a primary source of profit. Instead, the American middle class developed its own industry, trade and commerce on the basis of land settlement and rapid westward expansion. Thus the Indian populations just as surely as the buffalo of the west, were exterminated as a forerunner to successful settlement. Nomadic tribes of Indians and immense herds of buffalo were incompatible with fences, private property, and a sedentary population of independent commodity producers. In Canada, on the other hand, fur provided the economic basis for successful colonial development. The profits to be derived were immense. The Indians were absolutely necessary to the exploitation of this resource, upon which the entire colony depended. Small wonder then, that there was such a high level of 'missionary zeal' by the religious institution of New France. This zeal catholicised and domesticated an easily exploitable work force from the St. Lawrence through to the western mountains. Small wonder the "womanless" men of New France intermarried with the Indian maidens and created the Metis nation--they were of the same religion and engaged in the same workforce. Furthermore the Indian woman, strong, stoic and pliant <sup>not always plain or easily influenced</sup> could bring comfort to her man through the long hazardous months on the journey for furs, as no other woman could.

Because the fur trade required the Indian for its ultimate success, no terrible blood-bath occurred north of the border as it repeatedly did in the United States of America. Yes, there was 'Batoche', but we shall see in a later chapter why this war occurred and why relatively few people died in it. As in the United, a military "solution" to the native "problem" was attempted eventually, but the Metis and Indian people were far too valuable (for the time) as producers and transporters of furs.

Until the commodity was depleted and the Hudson's Bay Company turned Rupertsland over to Canada 'for a price'.

Following is a chart from: Leandre Bergerons', The History of Quebec produced, one suspects, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, yet in many ways the chart is accurate enough in depicting the line of exploitation in the extraction of the fur staple, a task that created the Metis as a nation, beginning with the Coureur de Bois' meeting with the Indian women of Canada.

The Chain of Exploitation

	1 Red Man	2 Coureur- de-Bois	3 Company
ACTIVITY	producer of raw material	carrier and middleman	middleman
PRODUCTIVE LABOUR percent of total	65%	5%	0%
PROFITS TAKEN percent of total	.01%	4.99%	60%
SOCIAL CLASS	sub- proletarian	quasi- proletarian	bourgeois

Note:

1. Here, 'company' means the organization that amasses capital. Strictly speaking, amassing capital cannot be considered productive labour.

of the Fur Trade

4 Artisan	5 Merchant	6 Buyer
producer of finished product	middleman	consume
30%	0%	
5%	30%	
autonomous worker	bourgeois	noble or bourgeois

2. Later, when the factory appears, the artisan is replaced salaried workers whose labour power is bought by the owner of factory. This owner is in the bourgeois class.

The Metis as a "nation" lasted barely two hundred years. They were created by the fur trade, excelled in all aspects of it, reached their zenith as the fur trade peaked and died as a nation after the resource was depleted and profits could no longer be wrung from it. None of this was accidental.

As can be seen, the Coureur de Bois were so vital to the whole fur trading industry that they were not unduly exploited by the company, at least in the initial stages of the development of the fur industry.

Let us now examine why it was that the Indian people - relatively powerful in terms of military strength, living in a relatively peaceful and co-operative culture, enjoying a physical well-being vastly superior to their European counterparts of the time - were lured in to a commodity producing economy that rendered them immediately dependent upon foreign forces that were in opposition to their own long-term interests. Among the Indians...

"The demand for European goods was persistent and cumulative since penetration of European goods was relatively slow, largely because of the rapid depreciation of the goods and of the vast areas involved. In 1615 Champlain gave a hatchet to the chief of the Cheveaux Releves 'who was as much pleased and delighted with it as if I had given him some rich present.' With regard to the expedition against the Iroquois in the same year, he wrote, 'there were only four or five who were acquainted with the handling of arms, while in such an expedition the best are not too good in this particular.' At the time of Sagard's visit, the Hurons were in possession of kettles and knives, although many were anxious to borrow his utensils. They had planted peas secured at Quebec. Skinning knives, awls, and axes were in use. But iron utensils were constantly wearing out because of the intense work which

they were put; they were traded to other peoples or they were destroyed at burial feasts. Once they had access or they secured access to a source of iron supplies, more primitive implements disappeared and the methods of making them were forgotten. Guns displaced bows and arrows. They required periodic mending and ammunition was in constant demand. As old cultural traits fell gradually into disuse and old ways of getting a livelihood were forgotten, the Indian became increasingly dependent on the products of the specialized equipment of Europe and increasingly dependent upon his supply of furs. In the Jesuit Relations of 1647-48, it was written: "The Hurons...did not come down last year to the French through fear of the enemies who, on the one hand threatened the country, and on the other beset all the roads. But the necessity of obtaining hatchets and other French goods compelled them to expose themselves to all those dangers." The importance of iron to a culture dependent on bone, wood, bark, and stone can only be suggested. The cumbersome method of cooking in wooden vessels with heated stones was displaced by portable kettles. Work could be carried out with greater effectiveness with iron axes and hatchets, and sewing became much less difficult with awls than it had been with bone needles. To the Indians iron and iron manufactureres were of prime importance"...<sup>20</sup>

..."Increasing stress was placed on the beaver, and energies were redirected to the capture of that animal. Commodities were in demand which made it possible to spend more time for that purpose, guns, kettles, knives, awls, and axes. Among the agricultural Indians to the south and among those Indians in closer proximity to the French, the supply of beaver decreased rapidly and greater dependence was placed on the existing trading organization with the northern hunting Indians. Longer distances were covered and knowledge of the country was increased among the Indians. These factors hastened the decay of old cultural traits, the acquisition of new cultural traits, and general instability of life. Since the trade was carried on in the summer, agriculture was neglected or shifted to a greater extent to the care of the women. Sagard refers frequently to the work of Huron women in grinding corn with which the men were able to go to more distant nations to trade. The nation was, consequently exposed to the inroads of the Iroquois. Increased hostilities,

between Indian middlemen such as the Iroquois and the Hurons to the westward, to the spread of new cultural traits, and to a further expansion of trade. This pressure of tribes on the territory of the Indians to the interior was an additional and important cause of renewed Indian wars and destruction. Wars between tribes, which with bows and arrows had not been strenuous, conducted with guns were disastrous."<sup>21</sup>

It can be clearly seen that the Mercantile Companies of New France, in their dealings with the Indians, did not intentionally engage in genocide. Rather, the penetration of European goods such as metal pots, knives, axes, guns, tobacco and alcohol had a deleterious effect on the Native culture, an effect that left the formerly proud and independent tribes more-or-less dependent on the production of fur as a commodity that was exchanged for the new necessities.

It is clear that the movement away from communal ownership of lands and resources into staple commodity production was, in and of itself, enough to de-stabilize the whole traditional way of life. All this without conscious political manipulation or control. Needless to say, the destruction of the ancient tribal or clan systems of the Indians did not occur in the absence of such conscious political and military ventures. Again, the element of rivalry for beaver pelts, and for guns, ammunition and all the accoutrements of war <sup>make more violent</sup> exacerbated old tribal rivalries and turned somewhat traditional, largely insignificant conflicts into inter-tribal wars of extermination as tribes aligned themselves with either one or the other of the imperial powers. The destruction of the Huron nation by the Iroquois, for example, was taught in our history texts for many years, although the underlying reasons for this destruction were largely "glossed over". But let us now look at Dee Brown's work where he describes how the American Indian tribes, serving no particular purpose for the new American middle class after its revolution of 1776, indeed "standing in the way of progress", - were the victims of genocidal military campaigns initiated and executed by the United States Federal government.



It should not pass unnoticed that the reasons for the "better treatment" of the Indian tribes under the jurisdiction of the French and British Imperial Crowns was not based on philanthropic motives. Since the Imperial Powers were absolutely dependent upon the tribes as commodity producers of the fur staple (the only economic reason for France and Britain's presence in America), extermination of the Native population would have resulted in the extermination of their profits from furs and consequently, their *raison d'etre* in North America.

Not so with the American nation after 1776. The push West of the new national middle class of America led to the creation of industry and agricultural settlement, both of which were <sup>hostile</sup> inimical to the old tribal societies of the great central plains. There was no quarter asked and none given. The tribes and the buffalo were systematically destroyed as though men were no more important than the beasts. The destruction of the tribes by the American government is now a part of the conventional knowledge of the American people, Indian and white. Consequently there is no need to recount here the countless thousands of horror stories of that black epoch, the opening chapter of the story of America itself. But the question comes around again, the same question posed by Blake when speaking about the Quebec Act, can any Nation founded upon atrocity and brutality ever transcend such beginnings, or will this type of mass violence remain forever as a component of the social culture of America, and as a "means to an end" for the American state apparatus?

Chapter III Footnotes

- (1) Guy Fregault, Canada: The War of The Conquest  
Oxford University Press, Toronto, 1969, p. 6
- (2) Ibid p.p. 7 - 8
- (3) Hilda Neatby, The Quebec Act: Protestant Policy  
Prentice Hall, Scarborough, Ontario p. 40
- (4) H. G. J. Aitkin, Approaches to Canadian Economic History  
edited by W. T. Easterbrook and M. H. Walkins  
McClelland and Stewart, 1967, p. 220
- (5) E.E. Rich, Hudson's Bay Company 1670 - 1870  
Volume 1, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto, 1960, p. 1
- (6) Ibid, p.p. 15-16
- (7) Ibid p. 10
- (8) Ibid p. 3
- (9) Ibid p. 4
- (10) Ibid p. 4
- (11) Ibid p.p. 21 - 22
- (12) Ibid p. 25
- (13) Ibid p. 34
- (14) Ibid p. 14
- (15) Ibid p. 16
- (16) W. A. Mackintosh, Approaches to Canadian Economic History  
(as in 4)

(17) E. E. Ritch OP CIT p. 10

(18) Ibid p. 18

(19) Ibid p. 19

(20) Harold Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada,  
University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1970, p. 18

(21) Ibid, p. 18, 20

Summary of Chapter III

With the advent of mercantile capitalism, and its corollary, the development of the Nation-State, the merchant classes of Europe gained ascendancy over the landed aristocracy and thus launched a new, aggressive, revolutionary force on to the stage of world history. This change in the class control of the state apparatus resulted in a world war for colonies.

In this race, France and England became the chief contenders. England, having achieved a successful bourgeois revolution ahead of France, became the leading world power and eventually won colonies around the world. To these colonies, England sent the surplus population of Scotland and Ireland as colonizers and workers.

The European Nation-States developed the fur resource with profit as the only criterion. Consequently, the tribes of America were made dependent on the fur trade for their very existence when their own culture gave way to dependency on the foreign technology. They could not avoid some dependency because, as the various tribes aligned themselves with one of the two imperial powers, guns were needed to prevent extermination. When the English armed the Iroquois with guns, the Hurons, for example, were vulnerable unless they too were so armed. Thus, in many ways the tribes had to engage in the commodity production of furs to obtain arms for survival.

The European method of exploiting the fur resource was uniformly the "chartered Company". This literally combined the state and the merchant Company, so that there was absolutely no division between state and Corporation; the corporation was the state, and it was equipped by the imperial Country with a military force to be used for social control of its producers and workers.

New France, dependent on the Indians for furs, developed a "neutral" ideology that enabled it to "christianise" the Natives and turn them into a domesticated work force. The New Englanders, engaged in Agriculture and industry developed an "intolerant" or genocidal ideology regarding the Indians who "stood in the way of progress". Thus, America used the state to kill off the Native peoples.

In New France, however, the fur trade, and "missionary zeal" locked the white and Native peoples in to a single "staple" economy. From this economic base came the Metis "nation ", a people that for some two hundred years served the fur companies faithfully as a highly respected work force. This was in contrast to the United States where Natives were exterminated.

## Chapter IV

### No Military Genocide in Canada The Role of the Metis-Nation

Why was this American "final solution" to the "Indian problem" not carried out in Canada? It would be nice to think that the "old British sense of fair play" had something to do with it, but that is, of course, nonsense. As was previously suggested the massacre of the indigenous people of the United States occurred as a forerunner to first agricultural, and then industrial development. In Canada (Rupert's Land) the Indians provided the basic production for the fur industry and the Metis manned the transportation infrastructure for the collection of furs. As well the Metis excelled in the buffalo hunt, brought western mass-production organization to it, and in so doing provided food for the Hudson's Bay Company and the new settlers. The Indians and Metis were, then, vital to the economy so long as extraction of the fur staple provided sufficient profits to the Hudson's Bay Company (and the North West Trading Company). In fact, many marriages between Hudson's Bay officials and Indian women occurred as a means of enhancing the trade between the Company and the Indian hunters: "... company men became well aware that many northern Indian groups customarily established friendship bonds with strangers not by means of impersonal diplomatic contracts and trappings such as the early London committee had proposed to use, but by lending or exchanging wives or daughters. During his sojourn in the Cree and Chipewyan Athabaska country in 1820 - 21, for example, George Simpson, later the governor of the new Hudson's Bay Company, informed the London committee that among the Indian groups he knew, the offer of their Wives and Daughters is the first token of their friendship and hospitality (Rich 1938:392). Such patterns were apparently so widespread that Marcel Giraud in his comprehensive study of 'metissage' in Canada discovered only one Indian society that consistently shunned sexual contacts between themselves and the whites - the Athapascan-speaking Beaver Indians were, or by the late 1700s had become, strongly averse to such relationships." Mackenzie 1911, II: 26)..."

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As can be seen, Indian women were used by both their men and Europeans as means of cementing trading relationships. The white men were quick to misinterpret the Indian sexual freedom as licence to have any woman they desired. This led to conflict. The Indian woman had to be loaned, or given by her man, and in exchange for this a reciprocal gift, or trade obligation was implicit:

..."The Cree or Homeguard Indians of the coastal areas of Hudson Bay were the first to introduce traders to a complex pattern that they later found in many Indian societies - visible, but in British terms immoral, freedom in sexual behaviour, combined with less visible and thus less readily understood social controls. Strangers to Indian ways recorded this freedom long before they came to comprehend the controls that went with it. It was easy, then, for early Britishers to misrepresent Indian views, as did former company employee Richard White when called as a witness during the 1749 parliamentary inquiry. When asked 'if the Europeans were allowed to converse with the Women it would not drive away the Indians?' White answered simply, 'He believed not; for the Indians were a sensible People, and agree their Women should be made use of!'

Other observers saw that such "use" was hedged about with social forms that Europeans disregarded at their peril. In 1743 James Isham reported the consequences of a case of neglect of Cree expectations and forms which probably took place during the French occupation of the York Fort area from 1697 to 1714:....'

"Jelioussey...is Likewise very much amongst the Natives... and often will be the death of such that has offended them, as I have Known both English and French by these offences, - a sample of which - the French had formerly a settlement up --- River where the Natives (women) was forc'd into the fort against their will which aggravated them to that Degree, that they fix'd upon Revenge, - they therefore unperceiv'd. inform'd. their husbands to be Ready upon a Signal they wou'd make, accordingly the women took an opportunity to wett all the french fuzes with their' urine, and then gave the Signal, when their husbands gott in under cover of the Night, and put their Enemies to the

rout, when the french run to their arm's and found how they was betrayd, and was kille'd for their perfidiousness, being 8 in Number, - some of which Indians are now alive and have told me the same."<sup>3</sup>

..."At the same time, these officers faced social pressures from Indian groups. When Indian traders discovered who was the most important man at a particular post, they sought his favour and friendship by offering him gifts, especially of women. In 1779, surveyor Philip Turnor told the London committee that their bachelor officers inland were continually pressed to accept such gifts; were they not to keep a Woman...above half the Indians that came to the House would offer the Master their Wife though he was to make the Indian a present for his offer the Woman would think herself slighted. If the master already had a woman, he was subjected to fewer offers; very few Indians make that offer when they know the Master keeps a woman

If officers refused to become involved in wife-borrowing, with its suggestions of whoremongering, they were all the likelier to receive offers of their Indian associates' daughters in marriage. Being more congruent with British values, these proposals might meet with greater success. A trader interested in taking a bride could readily go through the simple formalities of Cree marriage, easing his way with presents of trade goods..."<sup>4</sup>

"Later writers recognized, further, that Cree "Jealousy" was provoked particularly in situations where wives were "borrowed" without having been lent and would doubtless have seen the episode recorded by Isham as a case in point. Andrew Graham, the arctic explorer Sir John Richardson, and the Montreal-based explorers and traders, Alexander Mackenzie and Alexander Henry the Younger, all agreed that the lending or exchanging of wives was a generally accepted custom among the Cree, contingent, however, upon the approval of the husbands. Women, and European men, engaging in unapproved and clandestine affairs risked severe retaliation. In his Observations, Andrew Graham gave a concise summary of Cree wife-lending, recording



also the Cree means of handling the children born during lending periods:

If woman commits adultery without the knowledge and permission of her husband, he makes no scruple of turning her off; and very often knocks out her brains with a hatchet...But they frequently lend their wives to other men for a night, week, month, or year; and will sometimes make an exchange for several years. And afterwards the women return to their former husbands, taking with them all the children they have born by the other man. Such children, Graham went on to note, were readily adopted by these women's husbands and were in fact seen as gains, at least in cases involving children of British fathers: when any of the married women has a child by an Englishman the husband is not angry with her but proud of his present. Indeed the affair rivets her firmly in his favor.

In summary, in any post where the chief officer permitted contacts between his men and Indian women, the traders' desires for female companionship were readily fulfilled because the Indians were eager to cement social ties with their new European trading partners. But Indian and white perceptions of these relationships could vary widely, leaving much room for misunderstanding. If the London committee in its early decades had not required its traders to be circumspect in their dealings with Indians, Indian-white relations in the Bay might have been far less peaceful. The vertical social organization of the posts also facilitated the control of trader-Indian relations; although officers might abuse their power, their subordinates; behaviour was quite closely regulated. When a young man wished to marry, he applied for the consent of the girl's father, brother, or other family head, making him a "present" of furs or European articles.

When a Young man has a mind for a wife, they do not make Long tedious Ceremony's, nor yet use much formality's...the man goes out of his tent, to the woman's tent door, where he

looks in and Lays before her as much Cloth as will make her a smock, Sleeves, and Stockings, no words Spoke, he then Return's to his own tent, and waits for the womans Comming, - in the mean time, if the woman takes this Cloth up the match is made, that she will be his wife, when she gett's up and goes and sitts by him in his tent; as man and wife and all is over; But if the woman (refuses) to take the Cloth, some one in the tent Carry's itt and lays itt by the man, which Denotes she will not be his wife, when he Looks out for another.

Women acquired in this way regarded themselves as married, and husband and wife were expected to remain loyal to each other. As they came to understand Indian custom, traders who went through such ceremonies began to take their fur trade unions seriously, recognizing their native families in wills and in other contexts. By the 1770s, company men had learned that the Cree, except in cases of excessive addiction to brandy, were not promiscuous libertines and that wife-lending did not vitiate the seriousness of the marriage relationship. William Falconer, an officer at Severn on the Bay coast in the 1760s and 1770s, wrote that while the informality of Cree marriage rites might "seem frivolous.", both man and wife "performs their dutys, and are more chaste to each other than the more civilized Nations who are instructed with the Dutys of Christianity.

But even if chief officers acquired women by accepting wives or marrying Crees, they still remained somewhat subject to further offers of women. Although Cree marriage customs forbade promiscuity, they permitted the taking of more than one mate; and indeed the Cree, like the Chipewyans and other groups, expected leading men to show their importance by practising polygyny." <sup>5</sup>

" ...fairly early in the company's history, economic motives also began to lead Hudson's Bay traders into further involvement in these alliances, as they discovered that Indian women, because of their socio-economic roles in Indian society, could

make substantial contributions to the trade." 6

"...The officers at York summarized to the London committee a variety of important tasks that native women were now performing in the posts:

they clean and put into a state of preservation all Beaver and Otter skins brought by the Indians undried and in bad Condition. They prepare Line for Snow shoes and knit them also without which your Honors servants could not give efficient opposition to the Canadian traders they make Leather shoes for the men who are obliged to travel about in search of Indians and furs and are usefull in a variety of other instances.

Economic considerations, then, as well as social and sexual motives, encouraged the Hudson's Bay men to accept offers of Indian women and to permit them in the posts. The Indian families involved also expected economic rewards: gifts, favours in trade, and support for relatives in time of need, as well as, perhaps, the gaining of children as productive family members with useful company contacts, were among the benefits that might accrue.

Hudson's Bay Company men who acquired Indian wives and families might find their "connections" personally, socially, and economically beneficial during their Bay service, but they had relatively few options to choose from in pursuing these relationships as their careers drew to a close. Before the founding of the Red River Colony, the fur trade country offered no centre to which a trader and his family could retire. Settlement at the posts was not possible; the company could not afford to allow its retired servants and their families to accumulate at its establishments. And the London committee was firmly set against transporting native dependents to England, perhaps fortunately in some ways, since the adjustment and health problems of Indians taken to Europe were generally considerable. A few late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Hudson's Bay men retired with their families to Canada (Tyrrell 1934: 98n; Rich 1939: 219-20, 1954: 370): but most had no ties

there. Fewer still left the company to live with their families in Indian society; most were evidently not eager to exchange their relatively secure sedentary life for the precarious nomadism of Indian life in northern Canada. Nor did the company favour the idea of its retired servants settling among the Indians as potential free traders challenging their former employer's monopoly.

The major remaining option was therefore the dissolution of the alliance. These separations sometimes meant that native families were abandoned. But numerous officers' wills attest the continuing strength of their fur trade bonds. In his will of 1784, for example, John Favell left annuities for his Indian wife and their four children, appointing as executor Thomas Hutchins, a colleague with whom he had served at Albany. Hutchin's own will, proved in 1790, was also largely concerned with the money he had held in trust for Favell's family in the Bay. William Bolland of Eastmain Factory, in his will of 1804, left annuities for his seven children and their mother, "my Helpmate Penachequay", to be administered by the Hudson's Bay Company secretary in London, and to be used "yearly to find them clothes and necessaries". (HBCA, A. 36/3, ff. 155-56). And other examples of like solitude are plentiful.

On the Indians' side, established custom allowed traders' wives and children to return to the band; Cree divorce procedures provided a model for handling the placement of traders' native families. In the 1770s, Andrew Graham describe Cree Customs on these matters as follows:

'Should the husband conceive a dislike for his wife for misbehaviour, or any other cause, he will part with her at once, and she returns to her own relations with her children. The friends never offer to mediate between them, but marry her to another. The woman will also leave the man upon maltreatment, or inability to provide for her. The children being always esteemed the maternal property, is the principal reason why men seldom put away the women by whom they have issue, because it would be depriving themselves of their support in their old age (Williams 1969: 176).'<sup>7</sup>

" The North Westers of the period between the 1770s and 1821 frequently allied themselves with Indian women for the same trade-related reasons as did the Hudson's Bay Company men. Like them, the wintering North Westers soon learned that Indian women could be important both in building alliances and in helping traders survive. In late 1786, Alexander Mackenzie arrived in the northern Saskatchewan country to spend the winter and found himself opposed by trade rivals who had a great advantage over him because of their established Indian relationships:

'There are about ten men of the Cree nation at the other fort, all connexions, and I cannot see one of them. I have no one at the the fort that can make raquettes (snowshoes); I do not know what to do without those articles. See what it is to have no wives:...I find none of my men speak Cree.'<sup>8</sup>

"The informality, flexibility, and intimacy of the French and and British Canadians' trade dealings with the Indians carried over to their relationships with Indian women; and the contrasts between Montreal and Hudson's Bay Company traders in this respect are conspicuous. Although their influence was remote, the London committee interested themselves in the discipline and morality of their employees; and since their men were generally less mobile than the North Westers, standard rules of behaviour could be drawn up and applied to all. Hudson's Bay men, then, accustomed to the more regulated life of their Bayside posts and to rules that (although imperfectly enforced) urged that social relations with Indians be circumspect, recorded with displeasure some of their Canadian rivals' conduct.

In the late 1700s, for example the Hudson's Bay men competing with Montrealers for the trade with the Athapascan-speaking Chipewyan Indians, found the Canadians abusing the Indians and their women. Like the Cree, the Chipewyans were willing to offer their women to traders, and they also had the custom of wife exchange, their version of which was sympathetically recorded by Samuel Hearne in 1771. Such exchanges established "the strongest ties of friendship" between the families involved, and each husband thereby committed himself to the support of the other's family if the need arose; they were "far from viewing this engagement

as a mere ceremony" (Tyrrell 1911: 160). The Canadians' behaviour therefore stirred complaints as Hudson's Bay man Malchom Ross recorded on 28 April 1792:

'The Jepowyan Indians complains very much of the injustice done them by the Canadians in taking their woman from them by force, some of the Canadians keep no less than 3 women and several 2.--an instance happened this day of the injustice of the Canadians in the traffic of the Fair Sex.--A Canadian that had 2 women before, went to their tents and took a young woman away by force, which was the only support of her aged Parents: The old Indian her Father, interferred, he was knocked down and dragged some distance by the hair of his head, altho so infirm with age that he is obliged to walk with a stick to support himself--such is the goings on in this Quarter, all this is encouraged by their masters, who often stand as Pimps to procure women for their men, all to get the mens wages from them.'

And on 2 May of that year, after noting that his rivals had just come close to provoking violent retaliation by the Indians, Philip Turnor added some further <sup>division of men into races</sup> ethnographic details on their ways.

'Capt<sup>n</sup> Mis-ta-poose a leading Indian who went to the North Sea with Alex. Mackenzie and 18 men with him passed by our House with Guns and a Woman with a hatchet vowing vengeance against the Canadians on account of their fetching some Women from them which had run away with them from the Canadians but they left their Guns in the woods and went to the Canadian House without them they disputed a little but did not get the Women...the method by which they (Canadians) get most of the Che-pa-wy-an Women is by the Masters seizin them for their Husbands or Fathers debts and then selling them to their men from 500 to 2000 Livres and if the Father or Husband or any of them resist the only satisfaction they get is a beating and they are frequently not satisfied with taking the Woman but their Gun and Tent likewise.'

These accounts of the 1790s draw attention to a feature of the Montrealers' dealings with native women that is too common in their own records to be dismissed as the biased story-telling of their opponents. Although North Westers often formed stable domestic ties in the Indian country, many of them also became involved in what Malclom Ross aptly called a "traffic of the Fair Sex." Women might be economically productive interpreters, alliance builders, and companions; but they could also become items of trade and sometimes turbulent bargaining between North Westers and Indians and between the bourgeois or wintering partners and their own engages. These employees, generally of French-Canadian backgrounds, were accustomed to female companionship and often placed an explicit economic value on that privilege, particularly if they were in debt. On 26 November 1802, Alexander Henry the Younger recorded that one of his men offered to serve him as long as he was able in return only for his clothes and permission to keep his woman. Henry added that he had "seen several people as foolish as he is, who would not hesitate to sign an agreement of perpetual bondage on condition of being permitted to have a woman who struck their fancy."

Some North Westers became involved in more complex transactions, in which women were traded off as commodities for wages or debts. On 9 April 1800, while he was at Fort Chipewyan in the Athabaska district, James McKenzie recorded the arrival of an Indian with furs and added the following:

' The Indian brought his daughter, who deserted in the course of the winter from Morin, at Slave Lake, in order to be returned to her husband (Morin). Mr. Porter wrote me, by Morin's orders, to sell her to the highest bidder and debit (sic: credit) Morin for the amount.

Two advantages may be reaped from this affair; the first is that it will assist to discharge the debts of a man unable to do it by any other means, for he is neither good middleman, foreman, steersman (canoe positions), interpreter or carpenter; the second is that it may be the means to tricking some lecherous miser to part with some of his hoard...." 9

Again, from another source, we see that French fur traders, married native women in the same manner, and in many cases for the same reasons of commercial expediency.

..."The traders from New France, most of whom were French, penetrated the interior via the canoe routes and slowly interfered with the Hudson's Bay Company's trading policy which obliged the Indians to travel to Hudson Bay to trade. In order to regain some of the inland trade, Henry Kelsey, a clerk in the Hudson's Bay Company, was sent into the interior in 1690 for the dual purpose of exploration and trade. The resulting expansion of the trading posts into the interior in future generations brought about greater interaction between Indians and Europeans so that more mixed-blood children were born.

Desire for companionship was a reason for many of the alliances with Indian women. As the traders were constantly moving, the convenience of a wife in every village was also a factor. Many alliances were undertaken for commercial reasons since, by taking as wife the daughter of a headman in a village, certain trading loyalties would be obtained. It was expected that the new kin group - and a nomadic band was usually a large kin group - would trade with a relative rather than a strange trader. The primary reason, however, for having an Indian wife was simply one of survival. In a non-technological society most work was done by hand and to exist required teamwork with clearly differentiated roles for men and women.(emphasis mine) men were hunters, trappers and protectors. Women took the meat from the hunt and dried it or rendered the meat into pemmican. They gathered berries, dug nutritious roots, cared for gardens and small fields of grain in agricultural areas, dried and smoked fish, tanned hides, made clothes, collected firewood, cooked, bore children and were largely responsible for their upbringing. It was almost impossible for men to survive without women. Europeans soon learned this lesson and, for this reason as well as for others, eagerly took Indian women as mates.

In some cases the alliances were casual. In many others an abiding affection sprang up between the mates. Some traders took an Indian wife back to New France or Britain; however, as the woman was likely to be lonely, unable to speak the language and socially



ostracized because of their origin, the move rarely proved to be a happy one. More often, the coureur de bois or member of a trading company took the Indian wife to share his room and board as long as he remained in the Northwest. Upon retirement, or when the man was recalled to [civilization], the woman with her numerous children, existed as best she could with the help of charitable friends. One other choice was often made by the trader. He worked in the country as long as he was able and then retired to live out his life with a wife and family beside a trading post.

The children of such a union were in an enviable position. They were both bilingual and bicultural. They knew the lifestyle of the Indians and, if not the total way of life of the white man, at least his frontier style. The most intelligent boys learned to read and write and were sought after as clerks by the local trading company. The others, through the father's connections, would have the preferred jobs such as interpreters, canoeemen, fur packers and manual workmen around the fort. Those who could not secure such positions were able to enter trapping on a competitive basis with their Indian relatives. Such Metis became indispensable to the Indians, for through them the Indians could negotiate more effectively with local traders. Through them they had access to some of the technological knowledge of the White man. Indeed many of the early Metis were chosen as chiefs of tribes because their knowledge and understanding of White culture was so urgently needed by the Indians...<sup>10</sup>

The Hudson's Bay Company men usually abandoned their Indian wives when their term of service was completed, and returned to Scotland or England. Not so with the Coureur de bois. This was his homeland.

Less disciplined than the English and Scottish servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, the coureur de bois tended to seduce Indian women promiscuously. Thus these devil-may-care frenchmen became prolific among the Indians. To this mixed race the French added other qualities such as "independence" and "lawlessness." But, as the following quotation indicates, the coureur de bois were as necessary as they were "undesirable" to the economy of New France. So the French bourgeois put up with them, wining in disgust they "christianised the Indians," and "tolerated" the drunken coureur de bois:

The *coureur de bois* is commonly depicted as a type, and a type he was, as distinguished from the habitant. (It is doubtless true that the roles were often interchangeable.) The *coureur* was usually a young man; often he could range the woods in the winter and tend his farm in the summer. But the long voyages to the up country of course tended to make him a professional, and addiction to the life of the woods tended to make it impossible for him to settle down on the farm while the hardships of the woods could still be endured.

But among the *coureurs de bois* there were distinctions to be made. In the first place, it must be realized that they were the first manifestation of a recurrent necessity of Canadian agricultural life, the need of the young men to go out to work for wages if the family was to be supported and the young men themselves were to make a start in life. This was as necessary for young Canadians as it was for young Scots, Irish, or Swiss to hire themselves out as mercenaries. It was first the fur trade, then the timber trade, then the canal and railway construction that gave them seasonal employment and cash wages. Nor could the young men be kept content subsisting on the farm; labour was free in New France. For the majority of the young men, the life of the *coureurs de bois* meant no more than this, and they engaged themselves, as perhaps their fathers had done to come from France, to serve in the up country for a term. From these men the *voyageurs* of later fame derived.

Other *coureurs*, however, obviously did not work for wages but were themselves employers. These might perhaps be called master *coureurs de bois*. They were the equivalent of the *bourgeois*, the wintering partners of the later North West Company. Of this type the most outstanding in the seventeenth century were Louis Jolliet, Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle, Nicolas Perrot, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut, and Antoine de Lamothe-Cadillac. These men were really inland traders, who were financed by the merchants of Montreal to go up-country to

bring down furs under licence, or, if need be, without licence. In Acadia their equivalent was the *capitaine de sauvages*. They were the managers of that mixture of exploration, peddling, Indian intrigue and tribal warfare called the fur trade.

The above description of the *engagé* and the *bourgeois* as two types of *coureurs de bois* does not, however, by any means exhaust the significance of the term. The *coureur de bois* of the records was usually an unlicensed trader; that is, a free trader, one who defied authority in trading and who perhaps took, or threatened to take, his furs to Albany. When he did come down to Montreal, wild, exuberant, perhaps defiant, he drank and rioted, spending his profits on women and finery. Often for good reason he did not return to his parish to rejoin his family and make confession, but remained in the woods, living the life of the Indians and mingling his blood with theirs to begin the race of the *métis*. As such, he was a threat to the prosperity of New France and a danger to its morals. What wonder that devout governors fumed at him, and that the ecclesiastics censured him, as the police and clergy were later to fret when the lumberjacks came out of the woods or the harvester expeditions came to town? But to prosper, New France had to contain this brood of her wild and lawless children; chide as she might, she dare not disown them. And the expansion of the fur trade alone could hold them, for it gave them occupation and the life they loved.

As can be seen, the Metis nation came in to being because of the fur trade in the first place. Not only were the Indian men necessary as suppliers of furs, but the women were utilized as a vital work force, as trade items (commodities) and as wives and lovers of the officers and workers.

It comes as a shock that Indian women were used as slaves (commodities and items of exchange) by both the Indians and Fur Companies as late as the first quarter of the 19th century. Thus, the Metis "nation" grew and formed into a workforce for use by the Fur Companies. In this regard the North West Company men, native to Montreal, appear to have indulged in sexual excesses with Indian women that went against the customs of the Indian people to a far greater degree than the Hudson's Bay company's men. However, as was indicated, Hudson's Bay Company employees tended in the main to abandon their Native wives and children when their terms were over in Canada, and they returned to Britain alone. On the other hand, those voyageurs, both Quebecois and Scottish, engaged as workers in the North West Company tended to remain here, and these were the people who eventually formed the European, paternal side of the Metis nation. From these liaisons, some formed on the basis of love or loneliness, some on the basis of trade requirements, and some on the basis of slavery, a robust, and highly efficient work force developed, one that became so efficient that it very shortly depleted the west of furs and buffalo for the greater profits of the fur companies, and thus depleted its own economic "raison d'etre."

It was the Metis union of Indian hunting skills and European technology that led to such inventions as the red river cart, used to transport the tons of buffalo meat taken from the highly organized hunt, and the york boat, used to replace the canoe for the transportation of furs and trading goods.

With the massive growth in the fur trade, came a corresponding growth in the Metis population. Brown describes the process and the growth of Red River as a Company-governed town.

"Certain socio-economic and political changes beginning in the 1820's had important effect upon the implications for company families in the fur trade country from the time of the merger until

the end of company rule and the annexation of the Northwest by Canada. One was the reorganization of the new company both as a monopoly and as a de facto colonial government engaging in more administrative activities with more authority than either of the old companies had had. Further, Red River itself became at least an outpost of civilization with its schools, churches, and other appurtenances. Communications with Canada and Britain improved, and British and American culture also began to penetrate the fur trade country from the west as settlers and missionaries entered the Oregon Territory and British Columbia.<sup>11</sup>

"other developments, particularly the continuing steep growth of the mixed-descent population and company retrenchments, also had important effects. The pruning of surplus personnel in the 1820s was predictable; The number of servants employed by the contending parties was triple the number required in quiet...times, and, more especially, when the business came to be managed by one firm. But even after the pace of post-merger cuts and early retirements slowed, other problems confronted those dependent on the fur trade--shortages of furbearing animals in once rich areas, increased incursions of American and other independent trappers and traders as transport routes improved, and, finally, changes in fashion and market demand, notably the rising preference for silk hats after 1839...."<sup>12</sup>

Above, Brown had indicated that economic merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company followed by overdevelopment of the fur resource reduced the need for Metis people as labourers and traders for the Companies.

Finally, despite initial Hudson's Bay Company regulations (as follows) day-to-day needs exerted themselves over company policy, and eventually transformed it in to absolute acceptance of "metissage".

The "puritanical" directors of the Hudson's Bay Company, out of touch with the day-to-day needs of the far-flung empire in North America, put in place the following set of rules for their Rupertsland employees:

"The regulations included in the Governors orders for the men's behaviour, dated September 26, 1714, illustrated the problems:

1. All persons to atten prayers.

2. To live lovingly with one another not to swear or quarrell but to live peaceable without drunkenness or profaneness.
3. No man to meddle, trade or affront any Indians, nor to concern themselves with women which Frenchmen did thereby cutting themselves off through jealousy. Men going contrary to be punished before Indians.
4. No man to go abroad or hunt without obtaining leave. (etc.)"<sup>13</sup>

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13. Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 1956, p. 135

"Metissage in Western Canada was not just the consequence of the contact of the white man and the Indians. Propinquity undoubtedly played its part; but propinquity was not enough. Had there been no other reasons for (SIC) "miscegenation"\* (racial inter-marriage) it is not impossible that the puritanical restriction initially laid down by the Hudson's Bay Company might well have succeeded in limiting the mixing of the two races,... Indian marital alliances were not just the by-product but the SINE QUA NON of the successful prosecution of the fur trade. The nature of the Canadian fur trade forced (SIC) "miscegenation" upon the white traders--not that they needed much persuasion."

\*Note: The Writer of this work apologises to people of all races for the use of the racist term "miscegenation: It was included here only to quote the original source accurately. Indeed, it is recognized that the original writer may not have intended the term as a racist statement.

"An Indian Squaw (see previous notation) provided valuable contacts with the Indians who had the furs to dispose of. She proved to be a life-saver when Indians were on the war path... An Indian woman could gather berries, dry Indian corn, prepare sagamite, tan hides and repair canoes...Such services could not lightly be disregarded, as French traders from Radisson to La Verendrye were ready to concede. And Samuel Hearne,... recognized the validity of the Cree Matonabee's criticism of the

unsuccessful expeditions of 1769 and 1770, that to undertake a long journey without women was to invite failure. Were not women the best draft animals in the world? Said Matonabee, 'Women were made for labour: one of them can carry or haul as much as two men can do!'"<sup>14</sup>

Despite the racist terms used (or perhaps because of them) Stanley has outlined not only the usefulness of Indian women as a cheap labor force for the trader, but has shown that Indian women were vital to the fur trade's ultimate success. The love and sex so generously bestowed upon the fortunate trader by the Indian women, contrary to the above account, may well have been the most important reason for the relationship, however, one thing is clear; without such marriages, the fur trade would not have been a successful business venture for the Hudson's Bay Company or any of the other mercantile companies.

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14. George F. Stanley, The Other Natives Edited by Lussier Sealy, The Manitoba Metis Federation Press, Winnipeg 1968

Summary Chapter IV

There was no direct military genocide committed against the Indians in Rupertsland as was the case in the "Thirteen Colonies", later the United States. Both New France and England "tolerated" the Natives because they were a vital component of the fur trading economy as it was carried out by the chartered mercantile companies.

Populations of human beings do not just "happen"; they are created in line with the specific requirements of specific social classes at a given stage of historical development. Thus, the Metis "nation" emerged as a brand new biological, social and historical entity in direct response to a policy of the imperial powers of Europe in their exploitation of the fur staple in North America. The Metis were created as a work force for the fur trading Companies. As such, it became necessary for the European powers to "accept" the Indian women that were absolutely essential to the fur trade as labourers, and in the formation of trade alliances with Indian tribes. Thus, New France developed a policy that saw Indians as "persons" provided that they were converts to Catholicism.

Finally, once the fur resource was depleted, the Metis were seen as "useless surplus-population" by the fur corporations' executive.



Chapter IV Footnotes

1. Brown, Jennifer, Strangers in Blood
2. Ibid Brown, Jennifer p. 60
3. Ibid Brown, Jennifer p.p. 60 - 61
4. Ibid Brown Jennifer p. 62
5. Ibid p. 60 - 62
6. Ibid Brown J. p. 64
7. Ibid Brown J. p. 66 - 67
8. Ibid Brown J. p. 81
9. Ibid Brown J. p.p. 82 - 84
10. Lussier, Antoine S. & Sealey, d. Bruce, The other Natives: volume 1 Manitoba Metis Federation Press
10. a) W. L. Morton, The Kingdom of Canada, McClelland and Stewart, - 1969, p.p. 65-66
11. OPCIT Brown, Jennifer, p. 199
12. Ibid, Brown, Jennifer p. 199
13. Harold Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, University of Toronto Press 1956, p. 135
14. George F. Stanley, from the Other Natives, Edited by Lussier and Sealey, The Manitoba Metis Federation Press, Winnipeg, 1968

Chapter VThe Great Mercantile Company  
Brings "Civilization" to America

In ages past the Indian hunters of the plains had shared the bounty of the hunt along clan lines within their tribal groupings. Thus everyone in the group received sustenance from the hunt with little or no concern about private ownership of the individual buffalo carcasses taken. Indeed, in the ages prior to the introduction of the horse to the plains by the Spaniards, and the changes in hunting techniques that followed, the whole community was involved in the hunt. Herds were driven over a cliff or 'buffalo pound', so that no individual claim was possible, and the community's needs as a whole were not contradicted by the needs of any of its individuals.

~~With~~ <sup>With</sup> the Metis, however, the spoils of the hunter were not totally shared on a communal basis. Since the buffalo meat and the hides were to be processed and sold to the companies, the buffalo hunt became a form of commodity production. The produce obtained from the hunt, under this new circumstance, had to be marketed to forces outside the metis community. Thus, total community control of the resources of the plains was not possible with the Metis, as it had been with the Indians. For the Metis, the requirements of the buffalo hunt were not based on their own needs, but rather, on the needs of the rapidly expanding fur trading companies. Thus the hunt ceased to be a "harvest" and became a slaughter. So it was with the fur resource. The local economy, based on buffalo hunts and trapping for furs, became a dependant element of an integrated, foreign-controlled international economy dominated by the remote merchant class of England.

The Indian and Metis movement away from communal production to a form of commodity production controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company's head office in London was a profoundly important historical event, culminating, in the destruction of the old Native economies and cultures.

For the Indians and Metis of the plains, nature's balance gave way to England's "balance of international trade". The fur resource was hunted far beyond its natural homeostatic <sup>stable</sup> balance, as was the buffalo resource.

Just as traders were dependent upon Indian women initially, and upon Metis men eventually, so too did the entire Indian population of the trading area become dependent on the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly of economic and political power embodied in its mercantile operations which consciously proscribed any Indian activities that were aimed at self-sufficiency. Gustavus Myers wrote:

#### Settlers and Indians Intimidated

Absolutely controlling supplies of every description, the Hudson's Bay Company refused to give even the bare necessities of life to settlers and Indians if its interests demanded that they be denied them. Testifying that he had seen an Indian hung when he was on the Pembina, John McLaughlin was asked by the House of Commons Committee whether he did not know that the Company, by Act of Parliament, was prohibited from trying or executing cases of capital punishment. He knew it, he said, and so did all of the other settlers in the Red River Settlement.

Q. "How is it that the Colonists resident on the spot did not remonstrate against this execution?"

A. "It is impossible for them to remonstrate there; they are too much under control of the Company; the Company would stop supplies."<sup>10</sup>

As to the intimidations practiced upon the Indians by threatening them with starvation, the testimony was overwhelming. Chief Justice William Henry Draper, of the Court of Common Pleas of Upper Canada, agreed that the system established by the Hudson's Bay Company was such as to place the Indians in a state of utter dependence. "If what I read," he testified, "is true, that a silver fox skin, or some other valuable skins, are obtained for three or four tin kettles, of course, it must be so, but I have no knowledge of it as a fact myself."<sup>11</sup>

The principal articles traded were blankets and cottons, some ammunition and tobacco. If an Indian sold furs to settlers, the Company seized the furs and impounded them,

and imprisoned the Indian.<sup>12</sup> The Company also refused supplies and provisions to Indians who did not comply with the most minute of its numerous regulations; in such cases, the consequence was starvation.<sup>13</sup> The Indians had become dependent upon the Company for their powder and shot; they had lost their original mode of hunting; the gun had replaced the bow and arrow. "To make an Indian really a hunter with the bow and arrow — a deer stalker — takes a whole life; you cannot reteach the present generation; it takes a whole life to approach at that distance the animal for which the bow and arrow came into use. Of course, that is one of the main causes of their decline." And if they could not get ammunition the Indians could no longer obtain furs, and in turn provisions and supplies; well knowing this, the Hudson's Bay Company used the fact as a lever to hold the Indians completely under their control.<sup>14</sup>

The Hudson's Bay Company even prevented Indians from trading with Indians, or making presents of furs to one another, or wearing furs, "and tried to use missionaries to

tell Indians that the anger of God would follow wearing a foxskin." 15

Of the misery and degradation of the Indians of Lake Superior when dependent upon the Hudson's Bay Company's posts for all of the necessities of life, Allan MacDonell testified that he could give many instances. The Company's system, he declared, was one calculated to destroy the capabilities of the Indian trying to emancipate himself from the bondage "of an avaricious community of trading monopolists." He related a particular instance at Penetanguishine, of how the Hudson's Bay Company agent had forbidden the Indians from gathering cranberries, which were sold at a very remunerative price to a white who had engaged them. The Company threatened that, if they did not stop, their supplies would be cut off during the long winter months. The object of the Company "was to prevent the Indians learning that there was another pursuit whereby they would become independent of the Company, and cease to be its hunters." 16

#### **They "Rob and Keep Us Poor"**

"The Traders," petitioned Peguis, Chief of the Salteau Tribe, at Red River settlement, "have never done anything but rob and keep us poor, but the farmers have taught us how to farm and raise cattle. . . .

"We have many things to complain of against the Hudson's Bay Company. They pay us little for our furs, and when we are old we are left to shift for ourselves.

"We could name many old men who have starved to death in sight of many of the Company's principal forts.

"When the Home [British] Government has sent out questions to be answered in this Country about the treatment of

#### SOVEREIGNTY OF HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY

Indians by the Company, the Indians have been told that if they said anything against the Company they would be driven away from their homes.

From other sources, the Hudson's Bay Company's same oppressive methods emerge again. Following is an account from Prison of Grass;

'Bay governors imposed even more **severe** restrictions and oppressive conditions on the native population than formerly. The renewed monopoly (following the North West merger of (1821) - kept many natives in perpetual debt to the Bay, psychologically as well as economically. The Bay imposed the debt - dependency system deliberately on the native trappers:

An important witness, Allan MacDonnell, declared that the Company's system was designed to destroy any capability the Indian might possess of emancipating himself from the bondage of an avaricious group of trading monopolists. He described how Indians who attempted to work at another occupation than fur-hunting, were harassed by the company. The object, MacDonnell said was to prevent the Indians learning that there was another pursuit whereby they would become independent of the Company, and cease to be its hunters'

(Based on a Report from the select committee on the Hudson Bay Company, )  
( British parliament, London 1857, p. 389. )

(White) hunters could neither sell their pelts to foreigners nor take them out of the country to sell them. It was the Company that set the prices everywhere, and it goes without saying that the hunters' profits were slim. However, they were greater than those of the Indians, who were cheated unmercifully. For example, an Indian would receive only one shilling for a skin where a white would receive twenty shillings.

( Howard Adams Quoted Tremaudin, p.p. 125 - 6 )

A gun that sold in England for \$4.50 was sold to Indians and halfbreeds for five silver fox skins, a value of \$250; cotton checkered men's shirts were sold for seven beaver pelts, a profit of over 2,000 per cent. However, some historians argue that paying higher prices to natives for furs would not have encouraged them to trap more:

A rise in prices would lead to the Indians bringing down less furs, not more...(because) the Indian did not react to the ordinary European notions of property, nor to the normal Europe.

Trade Habits and Economic motivation  
Among Indians.

This is probably true: If the Indians had fully adopted the profit motive, they might have forced the company to pay higher prices; as it was they had no ideological incentive to do so and were doubly vulnerable to exploitation." 2

As has been pointed out, the transformation of a hunting and gathering society who shared the land and its sustenance on a communal basis, to a class of commodity producers, had the deadly effect of creating a dependency on the part of the Indian people, a dependency furthermore, that rooted the well-being, indeed the very life of the people, to the vagaries of the fur trade market. Now that the hunters were dependent on outside technology, such as guns and ammunition, metal pots, etc., it followed that they lost much of their political power at the same time. Unfamiliar with the concepts of private property and exploitation, the Indian tribes fell easy victims to the mercantile empire of the Hudson's Bay Company whose profits were based on private property and exploitation. But economic dependency was not sufficient, the companies created other dependencies as well:

"The drenching of the Indian tribes with liquor seems to have gone on as briskly and indomitably in the east of Canada as in the remote stretches of the west. In the vast western expanses, the Hudson's Bay Company was law-marker and law-enforcer, and its officials were supreme dictators..." 3

Liquor Indispensable to Trade

Many of the tribes on the Lower St. Lawrence were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company; and as to conditions among the Nipissing, Algonquin and Iroquois tribes, a special Quebec Commission reported in 1858 that, "The unlimited

use of ardent spirits, however, seems to be the great check to their advancement. On returning to their settlements with their peltries, everything is sacrificed to the gratification of this passion, and the whites even find it to their advantage to follow them into remote hunting grounds, in order, by pandering to their infatuation for liquor, to obtain, at an almost nominal rate, the fruits of months of toil."<sup>4</sup>

At the same time Fathers T. Hamipeaux and M. Ferard, Roman Catholic missionaries on Manitoulin Island, reported, in August, 1857, that, "Our Indians are not of themselves addicted to drink, but they are supplied with liquor . . . The greater part of these bands subsist by hunting and fishing, and by selling their furs to the Traders of the Hudson's Bay Company. . . . To all who have at all studied the history of the Tribes formerly inhabiting these tracts of land, now so depopulated, it is as evident as that two and two make four that whiskey has destroyed a greater number of Indians than either war or disease."

"But the Trader, who looks to his own interest, is pitiless, laughs at the misery and degradation of the Indian, and offers him the fatal draught whenever he can do so with impunity. In the central villages, particularly those more remote from the center,<sup>5</sup> the abuse of strong drinks is more common, but we also remark that the Spring and the Autumn, at the time when the Traders make their appearance for the purposes of trade, are the periods when the evil re-appears periodically, and it is easy to surmise the cause."

The traders, reported the missionaries further, gave the Indians worthless but garish objects in trade; they paid the Indians ruinously low prices for vegetables and fish which they resold at large prices; and by their credit system kept the Indians in a state of slavishness and dependence. The culmination was that the Indian led "a miserable existence, and has nothing but wretchedness in perspective before him."<sup>6</sup>

These reports are merely a few of those in the Canadian archives, and were not part of the voluminous mass of evidence submitted to the British Parliamentary Select Committee. The fact was brought out in evidence in 1857 that the Hudson's Bay Company imported in its ships about 4,000 gallons of spirituous liquors annually. It was notorious that the Hudson's Bay Company exchanged spirits in barter for fur; at the time, on the Pembina River, when Norman W. Kittson of Minnesota, and the American Fur Company, (John Jacob Astor's Company) and the Hudson's Bay Company were in opposition (competition), "the liquor was the principal item of goods which went out to supply the Indians



In any event, their propensity for alcohol created a further dependency on the Mercantile Company; at the same time it sped up the process of cultural and social breakdown. It was, then, from the profit-motive aspect, the ideal commodity for the ultimate commercial conquest of the Indian people by the Hudson's Bay Company in North America.

The methods used by the Hudson's Bay Company in the exploitation of the people and the fur resource were as profitable as they were despicable. Following are various accounts of the profits derived through these methods:

'By the sixteenth century Russian and Baltic <sup>U</sup>fur sources were becoming depleted. Under these conditions of both strong demand and world supply, the Canadian fur market held firm from the earliest contact with natives until past the middle of the nineteenth century, when the new fashion of silk hats ruined the beaver market. Sustained demand often led, through victimization and debauching of (SIC) primitive tribes to fantastic profits of 1000% and 2000% -- though war, cut-throat competition, losses at sea, and a three-to-six years lapse between investment and return, demanded high compensation.'<sup>6</sup>

The state-Company's colonial development of the fur resource of America was a most profitable affair. Again, the other side of the equation was the dependency of the Indian tribes:

Apart from the demand for furs, there was at the same time a strong demand among Indian tribes emerging from the Stone and Copper Ages, for the white man's manufactured goods. Once one tribe had acquired firearms, it became a matter of simple survival for its neighbours to seek the same. Bows and arrows were relegated to killing game when ammunition was short. In hunting, the Indian had managed to live in a state of equilibrium with his game supply; and his primitive hunting tools took care of this. Once the fur trader's commercial greed and goods entered the picture, things changed. Instead of taking a beaver or two from a lodge, the whole colony was taken; and for this, more efficient killing implements were needed: traps, ice chisels, axes, knives, hooks, guns and ammunition. In the matter of clothing and bedding, the traders made the Indians' life more comfortable and secure. The Indian soon became dependent on the traders' blanket coats and woollen trousers and socks, and also on blankets.

Indian women, in a life of threadbare slavery, benefitted perhaps most from the trade goods. Apart from mirrors, beads and trinkets, they prized instruments for cooking and sewing. Till the advent of metal cooking vessels, the process of boiling was performed by dropping red-hot stones into vessels of skin or birchbark. Before the needle, only a bone-splinter or a thorn was available for sewing; while sinew or rootlet had served for thread.

Such then was the reciprocal drive which powered the fur trade.

7

It should be recognized here, that the reason for the whole colony of beaver being taken by the Indian hunters, instead of one, or two, to fit local requirements as was the case in the past, was that the heavier were now being trapped as a vital commodity, to be used in exchange for firearms etc., that were now a necessary component of the new life-support system that, in turn, was under the direct control of the merchant company.

This direct control netted the following profits; as recorded by Harold Innis:

During the century of occupation of Hudson Bay the English had built and elaborated an organization remarkably adapted to control of the trade in that area. As contrasted with the trade in the St. Lawrence, in which control was impossible, effective control of trade by a centralized body in England was the dominant characteristic. This control had disadvantages which became evident in many directions. Complaints were made by the governors and other officers of Hudson Bay that the indents were disregarded in many particulars. In many cases the men were not altogether loyal to the Company and *esprit de corps* was weak. Matthew Sarjeant gave evidence:

That the Company understand a great deal of their affairs: but are frequently advised by their Governors and Factors, whose Interest is not always the same with that of the Company; for they have settled Salaries; and if the trade is ever so much increased, he never knew any further encouragement given to them.<sup>87</sup>

(87) Report from the Committee, 1749 P221  
Northwest I. 355

8

Despite the remote bureaucratic control from London:

The success with which the Company had solved the problem of overhead costs by various devices was shown in profits. In 1720 the stock was trebled<sup>84</sup> and a subscription of 10 per cent taken, making an increase from £31,500 to £103,950. Sales of fur increased according to Laut from £20,000 to £30,000 and £70,000 a year.<sup>85</sup> Dividends on the new capital of 5 per cent were paid in 1721; 8 per cent, 1722; 12 per cent in 1723-24; 10 per cent from 1725 to 1737; 8 per cent in 1738; and 10 per cent in 1739.<sup>86</sup>

9

These profits corresponded to the overdevelopment of the fur resource, resulting, eventually in the virtual destruction of the beaver.

In 1770 at the beginning of fresh competition with Canadian traders in the interior the Company had at Prince of Wales Fort<sup>82</sup> or Churchill a chief factor and officers and sixty servants, and tradesmen giving a return of 10,000 to 40,000 Made Beaver; at York Factory a comple-

ment of forty-two men and returns from 7,000 to 33,000 Made Beaver; at Severn Fort, eighteen men, 5,000 to 6,600 Made Beaver; at Albany Fort (including two subposts at East Main, twelve men and 1,000 to 2,000 Made Beaver; and Henley House), thirty men and 10,000 to 12,000 Made Beaver; and at Moose Factory, twenty-five men and 3,000 to 4,000 Made Beaver. Another estimate<sup>83</sup> gives beaver receipts of the posts in the period after 1770 as roughly in the following proportion: Albany Fort, 21,454; Moose Factory, 8,860; East Main, 7,626; York Factory and Severn River, 37,861; and Churchill River, 9,400. The trade centred about the mouths of the large rivers which drained the vast areas of the interior, especially the Albany, the Nelson, and the Churchill.

10

Of the commodities brought in by the Hudson Bay Company, and the profits generated from them through trade, Myers reported:

At this point the essential question incisively thrusts itself: What were the definite results, in concrete currency form, of these long-continued methods? In plain, understandable commercial language, what were the profits of the Hudson's Bay Company, which was directed from London by a sovereign quintet of merchants and aristocrats?

The answer to this question offers no difficulty. Doctor Sir John Rae, who, for 20 years, had been in the Company's service as medical officer at Moose Factory and in the Arctic region, asserted in his testimony that the Company's employes were forced to pay, on goods for their own use, 50 per cent. more than the London price. As for the Indians, they were charged (in furs) more than 200 per cent. in excess of the price that the Company paid in London for the goods which it sold them. The Indians, he said, possibly were forced to pay 300 per cent., but it was clearly established that they had to pay more than 200 per cent.

David Gunn, writing March 6, 1857, from the Red River Settlement to Philip Vanhoughnet, President of the Executive Council, at Toronto, stated that the price of goods sold at the

### Company's Large Profits

But what of the Company's annual profits? Ellice testified, in 1857, that the average annual profits for the previous 17 years had been £65,573, of which £39,343 had been appropriated to the profit of the Company in England, and £26,229 had been annually appropriated to the Factors and Traders in the interior of Canada; the general profits of the Company during that period had averaged 12 per cent. upon the capital.<sup>3</sup>

These profits, however, were simply those extracted from the fur traffic. They did not include the profits from the Hudson's Bay Company's asserted ownership of stupendous areas of land, and from its grain, cattle, horse, sheep, produce, fishery and timber lines of business. Immense quantities of timber in British Columbia and Oregon were cut and sawed and exported by the Company. It had at this time 156 establishments or posts, of which 12 were in Washington Territory and Oregon, in which territory it claimed proprietary or rather possessory rights; and, indeed, it subsequently was able

to get \$450,000 in gold from the United States, in 1870, as payment for the surrender of those asserted rights, under a treaty executed in 1864.<sup>4</sup>

13

But what of the Indian population, a population who's very existence now rested upon the sale of beaver pelts to the Hudson's Bay monopoly, what was to become of them when their new economic base had been depleted by the rapacious over-development of the company upon whom they had become dependent?

### Hosts Killed Off or Turned Into Vagrants

The fate of vast numbers of Indians was graphically described in a memorial dated May 18, 1857, from the Committee of the Aborigines Protection Society to Henry Labouchere, Chairman of the British Parliamentary Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company.

The Committee of that Society stated that the Indians were the real producers of the huge wealth from the fur trade,

## PASSING OF HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY'S SOVEREIGNTY

estimated on competent authority at £20,000,000, which had already gone to England. The aborigines were rapidly wasting away, said the memorial, and it cited the statement of Dr. McLaughlin, superintendent of the Hudson's Bay Company's affairs west of the Rocky Mountains, that he believed that nine-tenths of the entire Indian population there had been swept away by disease, principally fever and ague.

"The malignancy of these diseases," the memorial said, "may have increased by predisposing causes, such as intemperance and the general spread of venereal [diseases] since their intercourse with the Europeans, but a more direct cause of mortality was their mode of treatment."

Then describing how immense numbers of animals had been killed, and the increased difficulty of the Indians getting furs, the Committee of the Aborigines Protection Society stated that necessarily the Indians had a harder time getting the necessities of life; and when they did get supplies from the Hudson's Bay Company it was under a credit system so devised as to keep them in debt to the Company.

It was a fact, said the Committee further, that although under the system in force "we have given unlimited scope to the cupidity of a Company of traders, placing no stint upon their profits, or limits to their power, the unhappy race we have consigned to their keeping, and from whose toil their profits are wrung, are perishing miserably by famine, while not a vestige of an attempt has been made on the part of their rulers to imbue them with the commonest arts of civilized life, or to induce them to change the precarious livelihood obtained by the chase for a certain subsistence derived from cultivation of the soil."

The Hudson's Bay Company — so concluded the memorial of the Committee of the Aborigines Society — had been in rigid, exclusive, supreme control for two centuries with every opportunity to uplift the Indian. "And yet what has been

the result? The system which has made the Company prosperous and powerful, has made the Indian a slave and his country a desert. He is at this day wandering about his native land, without home or covering, as much a stranger to the blessings of civilization as when the white man first landed on his shores. . . ."

Of the great numbers of Indians that had once inhabited Canada, few remained in many Hudson's Bay Company sections in 1857, compared to the original population. The Esquimaux were reduced to 4,000; in the older parts of Canada there were but 3,000 Indians frequenting the establishments of the Hudson's Bay Company. The whole of the tribes on the plains numbered only 25,000. On the east side of the Rocky Mountains the Thickwood Indians, preserving themselves in their mountain recesses, were much more numerous, totaling 35,000; and in British Columbia and on the North West Coast, where exploitation was but comparatively recently begun, there were 80,000 Indians. This made a total of 147,000 Indians in the Hudson's Bay Company's territory. Adding 11,000 whites and half breeds, the full total of the Company's "subjects" was 158,000.\*

We see that a form of economic genocide was intrinsic to the mercantile colonial development of the North American fur trade. This was not mass murder in the sense that the British Imperial state apparatus was placed on active duty on the basis of some ideological notion of racial superiority; rather, it was built right in to the very basis of the fur trade and was virtually inevitable given the colonial method of over-exploitation that was akin to the methods of slavery and brutality used in the conquest of South America. The end result was the same; the end of the old Indian social system and the near destruction of the native population. From all this human suffering, who were the ones that gained?

### Enrichment of British Shareholders

The £20,000,000 sterling that the fur trade had yielded to British capitalists was distributed among a noted array of titled aristocrats, church prelates and clergymen, politicians, merchants and others. On the list of the Hudson's Bay Company's stockholders in or about 1856, appeared the names of the Earl of Selkirk, Countess Lydia Cavan, Baron Wynford,

Viscount Folkestone, Sir George Sinclair, Sir Edmund Anstabus, Bishop John Banks Jenkinson, Rev. Oswald Littleton Chambers, the Ellice family and scores of other notables.<sup>9</sup>

Considering that the £20,000,000 from the fur trade were profits flowing in during a long period, it is easy to see that by a multiplying series of investments and reinvestments compounding continually, that sum really represented a far larger sum; and it may be said, too, that with the extraordinarily large purchasing power of money then—far greater than now—£20,000,000 was a prodigious amount, much greater intrinsically than even such a large sum would be in these present days.

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Here was one of the prime origins of the capital flowing into England, part of which capital went later into factories, mines and other capitalist concerns at home, and part into investments in Canada and elsewhere. An additional source of the origin of English capital was the profits derived from the traffic in Negro slaves.

Of the later history of the powerful Hudson's Bay Company:—its exploitation of the Indian tribes; its wars with competitive trading companies; its supremacy over a stupendous territory, reaching even to what is now San Francisco; its methods and its profits; its demanding and receiving great sums from the United States and Canada for the surrendering of title to territory which it claimed under the grant of Charles II; and its retention of immense and valuable areas, much of which it still owns— all of these facts

From the Hudson's Bay Company came officials who developed into land, railroad, steamship, and bank magnates—men promoting or controlling transportation and banking systems and owning vast wealth and resources.

15



That the Indian population was vital to the success of the fur trade is simply <sup>accepted, self-evident</sup> axiomatic. The Indian people, initially, were the work force. Without them no profit was possible for the Hudson's Bay Company. Harold Innis wrote:

"The saying that the only good Indians were dead Indians never applied to the fur trade. It was the swiftness of the change in the culture situation which made competition in the fur trade intolerable to native populations in the south. A similar development has followed in the present century with the rapid introduction of European goods among the Eskimos and their threatened destruction." 16

The term, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian", developed during the American settlement of the west, where the Indian population was seen as a block to westward expansion of the American national economic system. It has been amply demonstrated here that the Indians were not consciously oppressed by the Hudson's Bay Company until the fur resource has been depleted in a particular area. Despite its ponderous methods the Hudson's Bay Company developed efficiently around Hudson's Bay.

With advantages of geographic location, a supply of cheaper goods, and monopoly control over trade with the Indians, the Hudson's Bay Company developed an organization in relation to the definite area of Hudson Bay. The fixed standards of trade and of wages, and definite rules for the trade determined in London would have been impossible in the St. Lawrence where all attempts to enforce control of the trade defeated their own ends. The success of various devices for control was a factor explaining the lack of advance<sup>91</sup> in the interior and the failure

to establish posts. The end of this state of affairs began with a termination of the wars, renewed activity in the development of the trade in distant territories, more effective organization of competitors, and the necessity for a more aggressive policy. The difficulties involved in a change of policy were responsible for the relatively slow progress of the Hudson's Bay Company in the interior.<sup>92</sup>

However, such a lucrative source of wealth as the fur resource, stretched over the length and breadth of the continent, could not be held as a monopoly without challenge forever. Indeed, the class of merchants who had long prospered from the fur trade along the St. Lawrence soon began an aggressive campaign of competition. These merchants, because of their knowledge of local conditions, moved much more rapidly than the moribund Hudson's Bay Company. Innis explains why the Company did not move rapidly inland until forced to do so by competition from the North West Company:

The success of control from London was the result of several factors. In the first place the geographic features were important. With the expansion of competitors to the interior as in the case of the French by river transportation and its limited facilities, distances increased, cost of transportation was greater, heavier goods were demanded by the Indians, available supplies of fur were exhausted, and the advantage of cheap transportation to the interior by ocean-going vessels, as in Hudson Bay, became more conspicuous. The evidences of this advantage were shown most plainly in Forts York and Churchill which tapped regions most distant from the St. Lawrence. Again this control was more effective through the competition of the Hudson's Bay Company with advantages incidental to the growing supremacy of Great Britain in manufactures. Moreover, the cultural traits of the Indians were important factors. On the St. Lawrence the agricultural developments of the Indians in the growth of Indian corn proved of fundamental importance to the prosecution of the trade over wide areas. In Hudson Bay agricultural development was limited, and exploration and penetration of the interior without a supply of Indian corn was practically impossible. The Company was dependent on the Indians, especially at Forts Nelson and Churchill, to make their canoes in the interior, and to obtain their food supply by hunting on their way to the Bay. Without a supply of food adaptable to transportation in canoes,<sup>88</sup> and without a supply of birch bark, penetration to the interior was undertaken with difficulty and chiefly through dependence on the Indians. The heavy overhead cost of trade in the Bay forbade additional expense in this direction. As a result of these difficulties, as well as of monopoly control, the penetration of European goods to the interior was less rapid and had less disastrous effects to the Indians than on the St. Lawrence. Changes in Indian economy were made more gradually.

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As will be seen, the North West trading Company operating out of Montreal was to have an ever more disastrous effect on the Indian population than that of the Hudson's Bay Company.

As the Indian population declined in numbers because of hunger and disease brought on by the Companies' exploitation, the Metis race increased both in number and in importance. As increased competition sent the various companies into a state of perpetual expansion, leaping past one another in an attempt to secure rich fur bearing regions, the logistics of transportation and supply demanded an ever larger work force. Here the Metis excelled.

Throughout its history the Hudson's Bay Company prevented any farming by Natives or settlers, other than what was required for its own use. This was disastrous for the Indians when the fur economy collapsed through depletion of the resource. Following is an account of the destruction of a tribe of Indians in Labrador, a tribe whose efforts at self-sufficiency through subsistence farming had earlier been smashed by the Hudson's Bay Company.

... Fort Nascopie lay some hundreds of miles northwest. "Early in the last century," says Grenfell of the North West River post, "this was an important place, the residence of the Chief Factor in charge of Labrador." Although the barren lands of Labrador were supposed to be unproductive, yet, Grenfell relates, "this post had a large farm where oats and vegetables were grown." The remnants of the Nascopie tribe still come to that post to trade their furs.<sup>22</sup>

George Gladman, whose father was a Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company and who himself had been associated 31 years as Clerk and as Chief Trader with that Company, testified before the Select Committee of the Canadian Legislative Assembly, in 1857: "No agricultural settlers (properly so-called) are permitted at or near the Company's trading stations, except Red River. Their stations are occupied solely by the officers and employes of the Company and their families, the Indians being the only other residents near the station."<sup>23</sup>

If Willson had read the testimony before the British Parliamentary Committee of 1857, he would doubtless have been more cautious in too conspicuously locating Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal among the Nascopie tribe, and in admitting the extraordinarily large mortality among those Indians; for, as we have already cited, it was those same Nascopie Indians who were terribly reduced by starvation, and who were forced to the awful extremity of eating the dead bodies of their companions, and even to kill and eat their own children!

It was in such a time and place that Donald A. Smith, later created Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal — Strathcona, the

most powerful Canadian capitalist of these times — began and flourished. According to Willson, quoting from another writer, Smith was rated a highly valuable employe of the Hudson's Bay Company during the 13 years he was in service in Labrador "learning the secrets of the Company, how to manage the Indians, and how to produce the best returns." He showed, Willson relates further, an "invaluable knack of turning everything to account. 'No matter,' it has been heard of him, 'however poor the post might be, Donald Smith always showed a balance on the right side of the ledger.' He was rewarded, first by a chief tradership, and after ten years more spent on the shores of Hudson's Bay . . . he was appointed a Chief Factor."<sup>24</sup>

This process of bringing in some cottage industry, just enough to supply trade goods, and in creating a small agricultural economy, just enough to provide for its employees, was, as we shall see, to have serious consequences for the Hudson's Bay.

So long as fur was the primary staple upon which the Hudson's Bay Company depended for its profits, manufacturing, settlement and farming had to be strictly regulated and controlled, since settlement and a vast agricultural economy would of necessity come in to conflict with the fur trade economy, and eventually threaten the Company's monopoly power.

But the Company's feudal monopoly was not being effectively maintained, in any event. The treaty of Paris, in 1763, handed Canada to England. This left the old trading empire of New France, the lucrative St. Lawrence route to the Great Lakes and south to the Missouri, open for seizure by local entrepreneurs. The Montreal merchants were quick to take advantage of the opportunity. Having pounced on their historical advantage, they obtained considerable economic power. Having gained this, the

merchants as a national class derived sufficient political power to materially challenge the Hudson's Bay Company through trade competition, and to legally challenge the validity of the Hudson's Bay Charter. This local capital, this rising class of local merchants, presented no small problem to the British monopoly. This was the very "stuff" that created the successful American revolution of 1776. When the thirteen colonies, numbering some 3 million people<sup>20</sup> threw off the stifling yoke of British imperialism in their struggle for "free trade".

The Hudson's Bay Company could and did flog the individual European or Indian for engaging in the "free trade" in furs, but how were they to handle this national class of entrepreneurs who were powerful economically and politically and who might, if forceably coerced, do a repeat of the American revolution, thus driving Britain right out of North America. Might it not be wiser and cheaper to form an economic alliance with such a class of "nationals" . .

Up until the time when the North West Company began to seriously compete with the Hudson's Bay Company, there was no great need for the latter's rapid penetration of the interior. With its lucrative profits, the Company was content to "sit tight" in its forts that ringed the Hudson's and James Bay area, letting the northern Indian tribes come to them for trading purposes. Thus, its monopoly enabled the company to save the immense expense that would be required for its own transportation infrastructure to the interior. In this way the Indians were forced to make the trading journey a regular part of their seasonal routine.

The Hudson's Bay Company, under these circumstances could systematically over-develop the fur resource before pushing its network of forts further in to the interior. Some Westward expansion was required but in the main, the Hudson's Bay Company's operations were static and bureaucratic. Scurvey broke out within the Hudson's Bay's forts. Innis Wrote:

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Consequences of a more serious character were attendant on the apparent decline in efficiency which developed during the period of monopoly control on the Bay. It was astonishing, in view of the long experience which the Company had, and in view of the precautions characteristic of the early history of the organization, that scurvy should develop on a large and serious scale in the Fort because of the bad quality of the meat sent from England. One finds in this Journal of 1786 a statement that:

This putrid state of the meat was too well evinced by the eye alone setting aside the sense of smelling—when the knife was put into it we had often—very often the disgusting sight of the remains of a heap of maggots which had gone through the double purgation of salt and boiling, for it must be plain to common reason that such appearances in meat could not be produced at any other time than prior to being put into pickle.

21

As a result of the poor quality of goods arriving from England, certain basic changes had to be made; first, food supplies had to be secured in America, and secondly, a good deal of local manufacturing was required.

By 1786, when competition by the Montreal Merchants was becoming a threat the Hudson's Bay Companys"....

policy of reducing the imports of provisions and supplies to cut down the overhead expense incidental to a heavy one-way traffic continued. The men were engaged in fishing, hunting, preparing and salting partridge, geese, rabbits, and deer, and trapping fur-bearing animals; in brewing, and in cutting and rafting down firewood and timber for repairs and building; and in gathering limestones and burning lime. They were engaged in growing vegetables, and making hay for the cattle, and tending the swine which the Company had imported for the consumption of the Fort. The provisions were packed in sawdust, or stored for preservation in ice in the "victual hole" and in the cellars during severe winters. The tasks of the craftsmen—cleaning and mending guns, making and repairing kegs and runlets, squaring and sawing timber, making sleds and snowshoes, making suits of clothing, turning out ironworks, including hatchets and other implements, became more onerous. The work involved in storing the goods, setting out and taking up buoys, drying, stretching, and pressing skins, grinding oatmeal, making bread, cleaning out the snow, picking oakum, and collecting stones for ballast, had increased. Penetration to the interior involved new tasks. Additional supplies were unloaded from the Company's boats, stored, and repacked for transport to the interior in the following year. Throughout the winter, various boxes were packed, gun flints were collected, stored, and sorted, shot was weighed and put into bags, gunpowder was packed in runlets, tobacco was prepared, bundles of cloth and goods made up, kegs were filled with brandy, and with the appearance of the inland brigade these goods were loaded and sent to the interior. The inland furs were brought down, stored, and sent to England on the arrival of the boats. As a result of the additional work complaints were numerous. The keeping of live-stock was not economical since men were employed making hay when other work of greater importance was neglected. Insufficient time was given to collect stones for ballast and the captain of the vessel collected those immediately available in front of the fort, with the result that the banks wore away very quickly and imperilled the buildings.

22

The Hudson's Bay Company's attempt at agricultural self-sufficiency was never successful. Despite the starvation of Indians caused by overdevelopment of the fur resource and subsequent failures of the hunt the company relied more on the Indians for a food source than the Indians did on the Company:

The company supplied a limited quantity of food in recognition of its obligations to the coastal Indians for having restricted their movement. Thomas Mitchell, master at Eastmain, explained this in his journal entry of 20 March 1745: "served out to 36 Indians Small & great 6 lbs. of damidgd. flower = These Indians if they were a 100 mile in Land they might find supply a Nough But yt we should want them to kill geese."<sup>19</sup> Most often, the coasters were in great need only during the late winter period when they could not venture too far afield lest they get caught in the spring thaw and miss the goose hunt. If one were to calculate the amount of food which flowed in each direction throughout the first two hundred years of the fur trade one would find that the flow of subsistence goods from the Indians to the Hudson's Bay Company men was overwhelmingly greater.

23

As early as 1745, the ethnic make-up of Hudson's Bay employees was becoming more-and-more Metis. As well, people were being ethnically defined on the basis of their occupation by the Hudson's Bay Company authorities. "Mixed-bloods" as they were called, were by this time performing nearly all the tasks formerly carried out by Europeans.

Many of the Highlanders who were impounded into the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, following the destruction of their own clan system, simply left the Bay forts and went to live with the Indians. And these people, defined by the Bay as Indians, were then paid less for their services, as were the mixed-bloods, than the European workers who remained as Hudson's Bay employees. The following quotation explains.

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In many ways the Europeans, particularly those who lived for many years at the posts, must have modified their life-style, values, and world-view, in ways learned from the Cree, to accommodate to the demands of this harsh environment and their relations with the local people. A number of traders of French, English, and Orkney extraction had Indian wives and offspring who must have greatly influenced their lives.

Clearly the second group, the mixed-blood offspring, were heavily influenced by the Europeans. Even before it became company policy early in the 1800s to cultivate a 'small Colony of very Useful Hands' who would ultimately replace European-born servants,<sup>20</sup> sons of some British traders entered the service of the company. Not all did though; many chose to live an Indian life and settled among the coaster families. There are cases such as the Beads family where one brother (Thomas) joined the company while the other (Chizzo) remained a hunter.<sup>21</sup> Others such as the Atkinsons and Hesters vacillated between the two.

Initially the native servants performed general labouring tasks but by the 1840s they were involved in all aspects of the company's operations and formed the majority of the servants in James Bay. It is unlikely the inland posts would have succeeded without the special skills gained from their Indian heritage. Furthermore their lower salaries and greater abilities, according to the records, produced higher profits for the company than at other posts in the southern department.<sup>22</sup>

It was this group, with its allegiances to both sides, which was *most*



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useful to the company in mediating and negotiating with the inland Indians. Little is said about the life-style of these mixed-blood servants except that they hunted to provide for the post and for their families who often did not live at the post but camped near it. Beginning in 1806 and lasting to 1826, there can be found in the records a list of those baptized at the post by the chief trader. The first Christian minister to preach amongst the eastern James Bay people did not arrive until 1840, but included in the school-books sent to the bay in 1810 were bibles, hymn books, scriptures, and moral sketches. That the Europeans accepted mixed bloods as their own is evident from their writings and the fact that not only their children but their grandchildren were buried in the 'European burial ground' rather than in the Indian one at Eastmain.<sup>23</sup>

Aside from the often short-lived influence of their fathers, their brief period of schooling, and their work experience, most other aspects of their lives would have been heavily influenced by their mother's family. The men married either coasters or mixed-blood women like themselves. Some practiced polygamy. A few of them were criticized by other Hudson's Bay Company employees for their strong Indian affiliations. George Atkinson II, who had visited England, told his mixed-blood friends they were being cheated and advised them not to hunt furs or geese until they were better paid for them. It was recommended that Thomas Cooper be withdrawn from service because he divulged too much of the company's business to the Indians at Mistassini in 1840. Most, however, seemed to identify their interests with those of their employer. Some of the native servants retired, under pressure from the company, to the Red River Colony or Lake Superior.<sup>24</sup> (This was a precautionary measure to remove them from the fur trade arena in order to prevent them from joining the opposition or trading independently.) Many, however, remained at the bay and rejoined their coaster relatives. Of the three groups of Indians in James Bay this was the group whose life-style had strayed the farthest from the traditional Indian one and yet they and their children could be re-incorporated into it.

Despite the Company's attempts to establish a self-sufficient agricultural component, it still relied heavily on Indians for its food supply. Indeed, the plains Indians and Metis buffalo hunters provided the essentials of the Company's food supply. This was also true for the Northwest Company.

Harold Innis quotes a source in the Canadian archives:

... and although as we have observed above, these Indians, as well as their neighbours within our territory, have no valuable furs, their friendship and co-operation, is necessary to the support of the trade carried on with the others. They alone supply all the food on which the company's servants subsist; without which they could be compelled to abandon three fourths of the country, and all the valuable part of the trade. The sole employment of these Indians, is to kill the large animals with which their country abounds; to select particular parts of their flesh and tallow; and prepare it in the usual manner and deposit it at the posts where the Company's servants will find it, as they progress from and return to the general rendezvous; as these Indians are not like those of the cold and mountainous regions in want of manufactured goods, their principal inducement to perform the services we have enumerated is the present of rum, which they receive at stated periods. These are the most independent, warlike and restless, of all the Indian tribes; and require to be managed with the greatest delicacy; more particularly as they form the link which binds in a common interest with the Northwest Company the whole Indian population of the ~~interior country~~ <sup>228</sup>

25

"Under what we believe to be a fictitious Charter, but which the Company's Agents maintained to be the fundamental law of Rupert's Land [the whole of the West and North West Territory], we have been prevented the receiving in exchange the peltries of our Country for any of the products of our labor, and have been forbidden giving peltries in exchange for any of the imported necessaries of life, under the penalty of being imprisoned, and of having our property confiscated; we have been forbidden to take peltries in exchange for food supplied to famishing Indians.

"The Hudson's Bay Company's clerks, with an armed police, have entered into settlers' houses in quest of furs, and confiscated all they found. One poor settler, after having his goods seized, had his house burnt to the ground, and afterwards was conveyed prisoner to York Factory.

"The Company's first legal adviser in this Colony has declared our navigating the lakes and rivers between this colony and Hudson's Bay with any articles of produce, to be illegal. The same authority has declared our selling of English goods in this colony to be illegal.

"On our annual commercial journeys into Minnesota we have been pursued like felons by armed constables, who searched our property, even by breaking open our trunks; all furs found were confiscated...."

The petition went on to say that, "Thus, we, the inhabitants of this land, have been and are constrained to behold the valuable commercial productions of our country exported for the exclusive profit of a company of traders who are strangers to ourselves and to our country.

26

But the merchants of Montreal did not waste time on petitions; theirs was the struggle for empire. Battling each other in cut-throat competitions, engineering ambushes and murder where necessary, they built their St. Lawrence empire West beyond the Great Lakes, to the prairies and beyond.

"Just when the North West Company was formed is difficult to determine. At an early date, signs of concentration (of capital) among fur traders... were apparent... There are references to the North West Company as early as 1776 but the first union of interests of which we have definite knowledge was a 16 share concern formed in 1779. The agreement on which this was based apparently broke down; but it was succeeded by a new agreement in 1783 and this is the date at which the North West Co. is commonly said to have begun."<sup>28</sup>

The competition engendered by the Montreal merchants sent the two major Companies into a panic of Westward expansion, "leap-frogging" over one another in an attempt to secure new alliances with Indian tribes and new rich fur producing regions. This reduced profits as overhead costs of transportation climbed. Following is an inventory of supplies, costs, etc. for one canoe. Its size and carrying ability is surprising. Note the types of commodities being taken to trade with the Indians. Tobacco and alcoholic drinks top the list. If anything, the Canadian-based merchants were to have an even more harmful relationship with the Indians than the Hudson's Bay Company:

THE FUR TRADE IN CANADA

The freight of a canoe, of the substance and dimensions which I have detailed, consist of sixty *pieces*, or packages, of merchandize, of the weight of from ninety to a hundred pounds each; and provisions to the amount of one thousand weight. To this is to be added, the weight of eight men, and of eight bags, weighing forty pounds each, one of which every man is privileged to put on board. The whole weight must therefore exceed eight thousand pounds; or may perhaps be averaged at four tons.<sup>155</sup>

Canoe transportation involved a heavy wages toll. According to Alexander Henry:

To each canoe there are eight men; and to every three or four canoes, which constitute a *brigade*, there is a *guide* or conductor. Skilful men, at double the wages of the rest, are placed in the head and stern. They engage to go from Montreal to Michilimackinac, and back to Montreal again, the middle-men at one hundred and fifty livres and the end-men at three hundred livres, each. The *guide* has the command of his brigade, and is answerable for all pillage and loss; and, in return, every man's wages is answerable to him. This regulation was established under the French government

	<i>Each</i>	<i>Total</i>
16 bales containing each 1 pc. stroud and other dry goods	100	1600 lbs.
12 kegs rum, ea. 8 gals. ....	80	960
2 kegs wine, ea. 8 gals. ....	80	160
4 kegs pork and beef ....	70	280
2 kegs grease, 1/2 tallow, 2/3 lard ....	70	140
1 keg butter ....		70
3 cases iron work ....	100	300
1 case guns ....		90
6 kegs powder ....	80	480
4 bags shot and ball ....	85	340
4 bags flour ....	100	400
4 rolls Brazil tobacco ....	90	360
4 bales tobacco ....	90	360
63 packages .....		5540
9 men .....	140	1260
9 bags .....	30	270
1 keg rum .....		80
6 bags bread or pease .....	100	600
4 kegs beef or pork .....	70	280
1 travelling case .....		80
Kettles, poles, paddles, oil-cloth, gum, bark, etc. ....		140
		8250 lbs.

<sup>155</sup>*Travels and Adventures . . . by Alexander Henry, pp. 14-15, for this and the following quotation.*

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Innis noted that;

With a canoe 35 feet long, 4½ feet broad, 30 inches deep, carrying 8 men and a clerk, it took 26 days from Montreal to Michilimackinac."<sup>29</sup>

Labor time requiring remuneration for one way would be 9 x 36 or 324 man days. Consider that Michilimackinac was on the Great Lakes, about 1/3 the distance to Athabasca where many furs were taken, and one begins to understand the immense cost of labour in comparison to other costs in the trade. This is the labour power then that represented the major capital expenditure since both companies cheated the Indian producers unmercifully.

It was difficult to keep men employed at this dangerous and difficult work that often involved an 18 hour day. Pay was so poor that the canoemen, or Voyageurs, were often in debt to the company following the delivery of the cargo to its destination.

Innis explains:

The licence returns leave a decided impression that the turnover in labour was high, not more than one in seven or eight returning to the same point under the same grantee in succeeding years. Occasionally canoemen became interested in the trade and took out expeditions themselves or under the direction of Montreal firms. A demand for skilled canoemen led to a rise in wages and to desertion and confusion, as suggested in the following memorandum for Sir Guy Carleton, dated January 20, 1778.

2do, that it be published before the Traders and their Servants that the latter must strictly conform to their agreements, which should absolutely be in writing or printed, and before witnesses if possible, as many disputes arise from want of order in this particular.

3<sup>do</sup> It has ever been customary that a canoe man who falls indebted to his Master at the end of his voyage does (if in health) work out the debt by further service with the same master; or if he agrees with another that other to pay the debt in furs or money as was his wages, immediately.

4th. An infamous custom has of late been practised by some, of engaging the men of other Traders whilst in actual service, and before their time was out such agreement should be declared with and any credit given on such faith be lost to the trader.

5th. It has been an unvariable custom and seems founded on equity that the last outfitter should be the first paid, after which the other creditors whether of two or twenty years ought to share alike. . . .

6th. In disputes between the Trader and Canoe man the officer ought to be the sole judge because the agreements are so explicit if properly made out, that by referring to them the decision is plain but between trader and Trader, two or four with the officer so as to give him the casting voice, will be perhaps more eligible.<sup>156</sup>

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The overall costs of the transportation infrastructures of the two companies was tremendous. The additional costs of duplication because of competition were practically unbearable. the only reason that a profit could be shown at all was because of the fact that both companies' work forces (voyageurs) and commodity producers, (Indians) were most shamefully exploited. In fact, at the height of the war of competition, no dividends were declared. 30A

Following are excerpts describing costs, routes etc. of the Hudson's Bay Company's transportation infrastructure:

The trade routes they travelled were the rivers and lakes — not only the pleasant lakes and placid rivers frequented by modern tourists — but also the turbulent rivers with rapids, waterfalls, back-breaking portages and through country notorious as the home of countless trillions of savage mosquitoes and flies. A seemingly glamorous job it was to travel the waterways of Canada, but these Métis voyageurs knew hardships that few men could tolerate. Sixteen to eighteen hours of daily labor, paddling canoes holding three tons of freight; the back-breaking labor of carrying one hundred and eighty pound loads through bogs, up rocky inclines and over long portages; lining (tracking) a canoe up rapids while immersed to the waist in ice-

The long and difficult haul upstream on the Nelson and the Saskatchewan of heavy and bulky goods and the return downstream of furs and the shortness of the season accentuated the problem of overhead cost incidental to an unbalanced cargo. The problem was more serious with the marked increase in capital necessary to carry on trade in the more remote interior. The average turnover was three and four years and the proportion of assets to capital very large, for example, in 1856, capital totalled £500,000 while assets in June of that year were £1,468,301 and liabilities £203,233.<sup>18.11.</sup>

York Factory was the terminus of vessels from England. Regarding the external transport Garry suggested in 1821:

Two small Vessels of 150 to 200 Tons each would be more desirable at York than the *Prince*. . . . It will be necessary to have a Vessel of 40 to 50 Tons to run between York, Severn, Albany and Moose. It appears expedient a Vessel should run to the United States or Canada to convey Buffalo Robes, Moose Skins, &c., and to take returns of such goods as may be cheaper than in England.<sup>24</sup>

Goods were unloaded, stored, and packed for the voyage to the interior. A trunk-line system was developed from York Factory to Norway House and feeders were attached to Red River and to the posts on the Saskatchewan. Direct transportation was provided for goods from York Factory to Red River.

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The brigade that carries the furs from Fort Douglas to York Factory . . . passes to the west of Elk Island. It performs its voyage in about fifteen or twenty days. On its return, the voyage requires from thirty to thirty-five days, on account of the length of time consumed in ascending the streams. It is usual for the Company's ships to leave England together, with supplies of goods; they generally sail about the last of June, arrive at York Factory about the middle of August, and return to England with the furs brought down in the spring. The brigade does not

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wait their arrival, but carries and distributes at all the posts, the goods imported the preceding year, so that there is always one year's supply in advance at York Factory.<sup>25</sup>

For the transport of goods to the remote districts of Athabasca and Mackenzie River, Norway House became a second depot. Goods were brought from York Factory to Norway House and dispatched to Mackenzie River about the middle of June in the following year by the Portage la Loche brigade.<sup>26</sup> The brigade arrived at Portage la Loche (thirteen miles—the height of land between the Hudson Bay drainage basin and Mackenzie River drainage basin), discharged its trading goods and provisions, and loaded the furs brought to this point by the Mackenzie River brigade. The latter usually began at Fort Simpson in the latter part of May, went downstream to Fort Good Hope and collected the furs of that post as well as of Fort Norman on the return. At Simpson the returns of Liard River were also collected, and leaving about the middle of June the whole was taken up the Mackenzie arriving at Portage la Loche about the end of July. The trading goods were loaded and leaving Portage la Loche early in August, were floated downstream, and distributed to the Mackenzie River posts.

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The North West Comapny had developed a complex waterways system that incurred the expenditure of very large sums of money. The canoes used were similar in size, structure, carrying capacity etc., to those in use by the Hudson's Bay Company. The North West Company's trade route included the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, the Missouri River (until the American revolution of 1776), and the waterways west to Athabasca, and eventually across the mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

Following is an account of the North West Company's Great Lakes Fleet of commercial ships, its system, Locks etc.

THE  
NORTH WEST COMPANY'S  
TRADE IN CANADA *Jms*

In 1790 the Northwest Company had two vesels of 12 and 15 tons on Lake Superior. In 1793 it had the sloops *Beaver* (45 tons) and *Athabaska* (40 tons) (built August 15, 1786) on Lakes Erie, Michigan, and Huron, to bring supplies chiefly from Detroit and Mackinac to the Sault. In that year the *Athabaska* had been floated down the Sault rapids from Lake Superior, and the *Otter* (75 tons) was built on that lake to take her place. In 1800, Harmon stated that this vessel carried 95 tons of freight and made four or five trips per season to Grand Portage. By 1803 the *Invincible* had been added on Lake Superior.<sup>169</sup>

Various improvements in transportation were made in other directions. Canoes were manufactured for the trade at Three Rivers<sup>170</sup> in Eastern Canada and at the Island of St. Joseph<sup>171</sup> near Michilimackinac as an integral part of the organization. At Sault Ste Marie<sup>172</sup> locks were built:

Here [Sault Ste Marie] the North West Company have built locks, in order to take up loaded canoes, that they may not be under necessity of carrying them by land, to the head of the Rapid; for the current is too

strong to be stemmed by any craft. The Company are likewise building a saw mill, at the foot of the Rapid, to furnish boards, &c for the Grand Portage, &c . . .<sup>173</sup>

Roads were planned from Toronto to Penetanguishene to shorten the routes.<sup>174</sup> Heavy goods<sup>175</sup> could be received at York until the end of October, sent to Lake Huron on sleighs during the winter, and forwarded from Georgian Bay to Sault Ste Marie much earlier. Difficulties with ice on the lakes as well as the strong easterly winds of the early spring were avoided. The Company was able to secure legislation prohibiting the sale of liquor to canoemen going down the Ottawa rapids.<sup>176</sup>

One thing is clear from all of this, the costs involved in the infrastructure and the gathering system for the fur trade were so great that the fur trade could only be carried out in an organized, corporate manner. Few individuals had sufficient capital to fund even one trading trip to the interior. As well the Montreal merchants, despite the competition that existed among their own, were able, even in the later part of the eighteenth century, to secure some legislation that was required to enhance their trading profits. The Montreal merchants did, then, represent a real and immediate threat to the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly in terms of capital, and in terms of political power. Here was a powerful and dynamic national middle class of merchants capable of overthrowing the British foreign monopoly just as the thirteen colonies had done in 1776. They must be handled shrewdly and with political sophistication by the imperial government. If another successful middle class revolution is to be avoided, diplomacy and economic union must replace the use of military force.



Following is an account of the numbers and type of personnel employed by the North West Company. Note that the "Free Trade" company also had rules and regulations against private (free) trade.

Standard printed forms became the rule and included articles against private trade, and provision for the deduction of 1 per cent of the wages for a fund for disabled *voyageurs*. Accounts as to advances to each man in goods and cash were forwarded from Montreal to the upper rendezvous. The length of time for the engagement in the interior varied and was as long as six years. The great majority of the men were middlemen and relatively unskilled. With few exceptions they were French.<sup>242</sup> In 1767 wages of "porkeaters" (men who were hired for the trip from Montreal to Grand Portage and return) were roughly 350 livres for a guide, 300 to 320 livres for foremen and steersmen, and 250 livres for middlemen. Winterers hired by the year received 300 to 400 livres. About 1800, "porkeaters" received: guides, 800 to 1,000 livres; foremen and steersmen, 400 to 600; middlemen, 250 to 350; and winterers received: foremen and steersmen, 1,200 livres; middlemen, 800. The increase in wages for skilled canoemen was most pronounced. In 1805 winterers in the Athabasca department were paid: guide, 800 livres; foremen and steersmen, 500 to 750; middlemen, 300 to 550; in Lower Red River: guide, 600 to 750; foremen and steersmen, 450 to 600; middlemen, 150 to 350. Departments tended to vary between these extremes. In 1817-18 wages in the Athabasca department had declined very slightly. Temporary changes apparently followed amalgamations and monopoly control, as in 1804 wages at Kaministiquia declined from the level of the previous year.<sup>243</sup> Each department varied as to the number of interpreters, fishermen, summermen, and hunters; some departments had a cooper and a blacksmith. Men who performed other work and were also interpreters received proportionally higher wages. On July 15, 1806, following monopoly control, regulations were passed stating definite wages and equipment for each department and each occupation. River

Equipment for the "porkeaters" included 1 blanket, 1 shirt, 1 pair of trousers; for winterers, 2 blankets, 2 shirts, 2 pair of trousers and tobacco; and differences in equipment for various occupations were shown usually in the tobacco item. In the regulations of July 15, 1806, men of the more remote departments as in the case of Athabasca were given additional items such as knives, beads, and vermilion. Wages were paid as a rule in goods<sup>245</sup> and many departments showed a pro-

#### THE NORTHWEST COMPANY

nounced excess of men's debits to the Company over credits. The wage bill for the departments varied appreciably. In 1805 wages for English River totalled 35,000 livres; for Lower Red River, 20,000 livres; and for Fond du Lac, 63,913 livres. In 1817-18 total wages for Athabasca department were 76,000 livres for 215 men.

What Innis has pointed out, is that the voyageurs, mostly French, were virtually all indentured for a five to seven year period.

Wages were paid in kind, and employees were frequently indebted to the Company after a trip to the North West. Again, this was necessary because of much duplication within the transportation infrastructure because of the competition. Bad as their lot was, the "pork eaters" or voyageurs were to do even worse after the amalgamation of the North West Company with its Montreal based competition, the XY Company. The Church was used, after amalgamation, to prevent strikes by the voyageurs:

The evidence points very directly to the conclusion that a monopoly control of the trade made possible substantial reductions in wages outlay through direct control in standards of wages and indirectly through the sale of goods. Wages fluctuated as a result of competition and monopoly.<sup>248</sup> After the amalgamation of the XY Company and the Northwest Company, clerks' salaries were reduced from £100 per year to £60 per year for first year, £80 for second year, and £100 for third. In 1819 following competition of the Hudson's Bay Company, wages in the Athabasca district increased,—“a middleman gets now a thousand livres Halifax currency, and a *boute* fourteen hundred, interpreters from sixteen to two thousand; clerks from one hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds same currency.”<sup>249</sup>

Disputes between the men and the Company were not unknown but appear to have been rare. In 1789 ten firms signed an agreement

to the effect that no *voyageur* should be hired “unless he produced a certificate from his curé.” The low prices of furs incidental to the French Revolution were apparently followed by a reduction in wages and D. A. Grant in a letter to S. McTavish dated St. Helen, July 10, 1794, complained of the recalcitrant character of the French<sup>250</sup> and of the weakness and pusillanimity of the magistrates who had allowed “a party of upper country engagés who rose and took off the pillory” to escape. On August 3, 1794, at Lac la Pluie several ringleaders demanded higher wages but without success. The more obstreperous were sent to Montreal. Sanctity of contract was an effective weapon for the company<sup>251</sup> and *esprit de corps* was developed to an appreciable extent. Men of the Athabasca department regarded themselves as the best travellers. Winterers looked with scorn on the *mangeurs du lard*. On arrival at the height of land above Lake Superior each recruit was initiated to the title of a northman by having water sprinkled in his face with a small cedar bow and by taking an oath that he would not allow any new man to pass that road without submitting to a similar ceremony, and that he would kiss no *voyageur's* wife against her will.<sup>252</sup>

The French Canadian and Metis voyageurs in the service of the Canadian-based North West Company were little, if any, better off than their Scots and English counterparts in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. Both were used as indentured labour, both received poor wages, and both companies worked their men long hours. Compensation was collected among the workers themselves, if a man was hurt or killed, and neither company accepted any responsibility. Despite all this, the North West Company was able to work on its employees' nationalist sentiment and as Innis indicated, there were few strikes and not much in the line of labour resistance to exploitation.

The amalgamation of the North West Company with its rival XY Company in November 1804, gave further control of the voyageurs to the merchant class. As well, the amalgamation made possible an improved transportation infrastructure by eliminating duplication, and thus reducing the necessary work force.

The advantages of a large-scale organization in the fur trade were shown in part in the wage policy. Wages could be paid to a limited extent on the basis of what the traffic would bear. Improvement in transportation routes made possible a reduction in personnel. The wage bill was kept to some extent under control but it remained a very important item of expense and was chiefly a cost of transportation. Alexander Mackenzie estimated that on the whole, expenses of transportation equalled one-half the total adventure of the Company and the prosecution of the trade in more remote areas following the date of his estimate (made about 1798) probably increased the proportion.<sup>253</sup>

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The organization of the departments west of the Rocky Mountains, especially to the south, was not complete without arrangements for cheaper transportation of furs and goods than the route across the continent to Montreal. The solution of this problem was found in the dispatch of vessels from England by the Horn to the mouth of the

Columbia. Furs from the Columbia district were sent direct to Canton. Tea and Chinese products were taken to England on the return voyage. Difficulties with the East India Company in carrying on direct trade with China led to the arrangement in 1815 by which the furs were dispatched through a Boston house. Trade was carried on through American hands from 1816 to 1820.

The amalgamation of Canadian capital was sufficient to successfully control the cost of labour and the cost of the furs bought from the Indians within the region dominated by the North West Company.

The elimination of competition meant that Indian hunters were left with a "take it or leave it" offer, identical to the situation faced by their northern counterparts in their dealings with the Hudson's Bay Company. As well, the North West Company began to merge with American capital, so that a vast marketing infrastructure was secured.

The creation of the local monopoly paid off in other ways as well:

The advantages in the conduct of the trade by a large organization were shown in other directions than in the elaboration of an extensive transport system. Methods of control of vital importance to the success of the Northwest Company were worked out. Systems of administration and accounting were improved and adjusted to the technical demands of the trade. The territory was divided into districts and partners placed in charge.

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We see then that the Montreal merchants or "free traders" were not free traders at all. The bloody competition between the North West Company and the XY Company ended in economic merger in 1804. This merger, in turn, gave a sufficiently wide monopoly to the North West Company that it was able to:

1. control the cost of its labour;
2. control the cost of furs within its own area of domination;
3. rationalize its transportation infrastructure by ending duplication and laying off the excess work force;
4. put into place a larger, more centrally controlled marketing network and;
5. streamline and apply tighter management and accounting procedures.

In all of these respects, then, the North West Company was simply a mirror image of the British Imperialist Hudson's Bay Company. In addition, it was less bureaucratic, more aggressive and commanded the Nationalist sentiments of many of the local people.

Just as competition between the North West Company and the XY Company was, in the beginning seen as a necessary evil by the merchant class, an evil that must eventually end in either economic amalgamation or open trade warfare, so was the newly merged North West Company cast again into open conflict with the Hudson's Bay Company. Only this time the competition was on a larger scale, and represented the interests of the whole unified class of Canadian merchants, against the stronger international owning class of imperial Great Britain. Instead of an occasional local murder as was the case in the North West Company's competition with the XY Co., the trade war that was developing between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company had the potential to develop into open warfare between Canada and Britain, or even worse from the point of view of the owning classes, another revolution by a nationalist middle class against an imperial conqueror, a "national liberation struggle."

Innis recorded below how this concentration of Canadian capital resulted in the outbreak of new violence, this time against the Hudson's Bay Company, for the control of an entire continent's fur trade potential.

As a result of the period of intense competition conditions became intolerable and amalgamation was the inevitable result. After amalgamation with the XY Company, fresh and violent efforts were made by the Northwest Company to check the Hudson's Bay Company. Haldane<sup>54</sup> of the Northwest Company in 1806 attempted to block the Albany route by attacks on the posts at Bad Lake, Red Lake in Minnesota, and Big Falls near Lake Winnipeg. J. D. Campbell was appointed to block the Saskatchewan route and in 1808 attacked the Company at Reindeer Lake. The approach of the Hudson's Bay Company to the Northwest territory and the threatened serious interference of Selkirk's colony with the increasingly important supply of the Northwest Company's provisions<sup>55</sup> precipitated difficulties which led to bloodshed at Seven Oaks.

From the perspective of the merchant class of Montrea, now loosely united under the directors of the Northwest Company, competition, even open warfare with the Hudson's Bay Company, could not easily be avoided if they were to obtain increased the Hudson's Bay Company. On the other hand, the Hudson's Bay Company would have to take whatever steps were necessary to protect its lucrative monopoly in the North West. However, it could no longer depend on the British state to send in troops and warships. This had proven too costly and, in any event, had failed to prevent the revolution of the Thirteen Colonies in 1776.

Furthermore, many British statesmen and businessmen bought heavily into both companies -- the Hudson's Bay and The North West Company. For these powerful imperialists, amalgamation would be far more rational than competition and warfare.

We can trace the associations of one of Canada's most colorful explorers and entrepreneurs, Alexander MacKenzie, (later Sir Alexander MacKenzie). In following his career, one sees the pattern of the concentration of capital, and the union of the bourgeois class and state power:

**Mackenzie, Sir Alexander**, fur-trader and explorer: b. 1764, at Stornoway, Scotland; d. at Mulinearn Inn, near the Pass of Killicrankie, Scotland, March 12, 1820. Son of Kenneth Mackenzie and Isabella Maciver. His mother died while he was a child and in 1774 the family emigrated to New York, where John Maciver, Isabella's brother, was a well-to-do merchant. Upon the outbreak of the American Revolution in 1775, Kenneth Mackenzie and John Maciver received commissions in the King's Royal Regiment of New York (the "Royal Greens"), raised and commanded by Sir John Johnson; Mackenzie died on service in 1780. Meanwhile young Alexander had been sent first to Johnstown, N.Y., and in 1778 to Montreal, where he attended school. In 1779 he entered the service of Finlay, Gregory and Co. (later Gregory, McLeod and Co.), which was prominent in the western fur trade. He was sent to Detroit on his first important trading mission in 1784; the next year he was made a partner. In 1787 the firm was absorbed by the North West Co.; Mackenzie was made a partner in the larger concern and was stationed in Athabasca. . . .

We see that Alexander MacKenzie was the son of a powerful aristocratic father. (At that time military Commissions were purchased by aristocrats and no "commoners" could hold the Kings Commission in the British Military). Again, it was the well-to-do classes in America that, by and large, remained faithful "empire loyalists" during the American revolution. As well, MacKenzie was connected, through his mother's kin, to the Boston merchant class.

In 1799, owing to differences with Simon McTavish, the most powerful figure in the North West Co., Mackenzie withdrew from the concern and went to England. There his journals were edited by William Combe and published as *Voyages from Montreal . . . to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans* (1801). He was knighted in 1802. The same year he returned to Canada and became active in the XY Company, a new rival to the North West Co. It was absorbed by the North West Co. in 1804, following the death of Simon McTavish. Mackenzie lived for some years in Montreal and sat in the Lower Canada Assembly as member for Huntingdon, 1804-08. In 1808 he left Canada for good. In 1812 he married Geddes Mackenzie; they had two sons and one daughter. He purchased Avoch, an estate in the Black Isle, Ross-shire, and this was his home until his death. His papers were destroyed in 1832, when Avoch House was burned.

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We see, by following the business career of Sir Alexander MacKenzie, the process of the accumulation of capital into fewer and fewer hands, under a more centralized control at a National level. The XY company, Gregory, McLeod and Co., and the North West company had all become one united company.

MacKenzie united the interests of the fledgling Canadian state with the Canadian Merchant class when he entered parliament as an M.P. in 1804. But MacKenzie, being a Scot and a businessman, had no "Canadian national" interests at heart. He left Canada and became, "chief London director of the North West Company, who had also bought into the rival firm (the Hudson's Bay Company)."

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As can be seen, the international capitalists clearly could not tolerate the type of competition and warfare that was occurring between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay. Having shares in each company the struggle, for them, was indeed irrational. Their interests would be better safeguarded, and their profits greatly increased by peaceful economic merger.

The people with the most to gain through competition were the owners of the North West Company. The voyageurs and workers had little to gain; they would be working for wages regardless of who the owners were. The Hudson's Bay Company had little to gain; theirs was a defensive action to maintain control of the vast properties that were theirs by law. Competition or open warfare could benefit only one class, the merchant class of Montreal who did not own shares in other international monopolies such as the Hudson's Bay Company. Indeed, the Montreal-based company was the most aggressive combatant in this struggle. But they needed an army to win against the powerful Hudson's Bay Company. For this, they systematically co-opted and recruited the Metis buffalo hunters of the Red River.

To ensure a sound ideological basis for their campaign, the merchants of Montreal challenged the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly at the legal level:

This claim to jurisdiction and proprietorship the Nor'Westers flatly denied. The Red River country, they claimed, was French-Canadian by right of French exploration and occupation. It had passed with Canada to the British crown by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. Almost at once it had been reoccupied by their predecessors from Montreal—twenty-five years before a servant of the Hudson's Bay Company had set foot in the Red River country. They could point to the Canada Jurisdiction Act of 1803, by which crimes committed in "the Indian country" were to be tried in the courts of Canada. If Macdonell could arrest and deport for that cause, so could they under commissions as Justices of the Peace obtained in Lower Canada.

While this legal claim was issued by the North West Company, its management recognized that the struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company would be won or lost not in court but in the arena of the business world of their day. Consequently, the Northwest Company



created its own militia under the leadership of Cuthbert Grant, a Scottish Metis whose father was an aristocrat from the Highlands, and a Wintering partner of the North West Company. As well, he was a member of the prestigious Montreal bourgeois' "Beaver Club." This was a most select club consisting of the well-to-do Canadian fur trading merchants, political figures and other powerful members of the Montreal elite.

Cuthbert Grant had been sent by his father to attend school in the Highlands. Upon his arrival again in the Canadian North West he married the daughter of a Hudson's Bay Man, and was the lifelong friend of John McKay, also a factor of the Hudson's Bay Company, and brother of Cuthbert's wife. Grant was the man with so many connections to the British ruling class and who was to be the principal warrior of the Metis militia, as well as the man who was to wed the Metis concept of nationalism to the commercial interests of the North West Company.

Grant and McKay remained life-long friends despite the War of the two corporations. Engaging in friendly sword-play, wrestling and arguing with each other, these men never let the rancour or the bloodshed of their subalterns in the battle interfere with their aristocratic play, or their haughty companionship.

While the directors of the North West Company consisted of Highland and English aristocracy, the work force was almost entirely made up of French-Canadians. They were to become the progenitors of the "Metis nation", as it was perceived during the heyday of its power. These people became the nomadic buffalo hunters, the voyageurs, the adventurers and traders who loomed so large in Metis history and culture. Following is a statement summarizing the relationship between the North West Company and the Metis work force of Red River:

At the posts on the edge of the plains, Espérance La Souris; Brandon, Pembina, the pemmican was collected. The buffalo were hunted in the summer by the *engagés* of the posts and by their friends and relatives, the "freemen" and their half-breed sons. The freemen were *engagés* who had taken their discharge and remained in the northwest, held there by an Indian wife and half-breed children and the wild life they had come to prefer. Their children were called Métis, and sometimes *bois-brûlés* from their swarthy complexion. Even in their freedom they retained much of their dependence on the North West Company and remained in many ways its servants and natural allies. Casual workers, trappers and hunters like their Indian kin, the Métis had their sense of identity preserved by the connection with the company. As buffalo-hunting became more important, they began to specialize in it and to conduct their expeditions out onto the plains in an organized way.

More and more they gave up the stalking of the buffalo by individual hunters and began, like the plains Indians, to "run" the buffalo on horseback, shooting down the great beasts one after the other from the saddle. After a run, their women had days of work before them, cutting and drying the meat, pounding it to flakes, and stirring it with melted fat, tallow, and sometimes berries, in bags of green buffalo-hide.

But the Metis did not give their blind allegiance to the North West Company on the basis of race alone. Indeed, the company, despite the fact that most of the French Metis were tied to it by the economic chains of the fur trade, had to resort to propaganda and chicanery to acquire the Metis' support for its war against The Hudson's Bay Company.

Tremaudin wrote:

Because of their heritage and tradition, the Metis were slow to decide on war. But, once their decision was made, nothing could dissuade them. Suspicious by nature, they did not give their support off-hand, and none could boast of them as allies. Imprudent words stung their sensibilities and led them to revise the bases of any alliance they had made. Only incontestable proofs of faithful friendship could win their loyalty and gratitude.

For these reasons, the North-West Company - to which by the nature of events they were allied - did not recruit them easily for its struggle against the Hudson's Bay Company. The "Bourgeois" neglected no precaution to secure the co-operation of the Metis who were indispensable to them. In this way, they came together again, planned together, and discussed these plans carefully.

In February, 1815, the North-West Company thought it could count on the moral support and active aid - if not of the Metis nation as such - but at least of many of its members. The previous August, it had made up its mind to go to work shortly after Alexander McDonnell had announced to John McDonald (William McGillivray's brother-in-law) that his people had decided to defend their rights at all costs.

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Undoubtedly, the Canadian authorities favoured the "Bourgeois" of the North-West Company. Therefore, without unduly compromising themselves, they let the petitioners understand that their rights would be safeguarded provided that, on their side, they embraced the cause of the North-West Company against its rival. In other words, they played on the honesty of the Metis; they used unworthy means which, as we shall see in the course of this story, were employed time and time again by men in power with regard to these sincere, humble petitioners.

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The "authorities" referred to by Tremaudin were the functionaries of the fledgling Canadian state. The petitions referred to were petitions to safeguard the Metis right to hunt buffalo.

Meanwhile Cuthbert Grant was placed in charge of the North West Company's Qu'Appelle operations.

While Grant was learning his new duties on the Qu'Appelle, and tasting in buffalo-hunt and prairie-ride the life of the plains and the fur trade, Miles Macdonell was busy making preparation for the first band of settlers to pass the winter at Pembina. He had chosen The Forks as the site of the colony. On Point Douglas, a broad point of land in a loop of the Red a mile north of The Forks, he had placed the colonial establishment which consisted of stores of goods and houses for the labourers and colonists. Some ground had been broken on the Point with the hoe and late sowings attempted. North from Point Douglas he planned to have the settlers' lots surveyed. Thus at the very key to the rivers, along the provision route from Qu'Appelle, Selkirk's colony was taking shape. In its labourers and settlers was a force which might, if Selkirk's purpose was antagonistic to the interests of the North West Company, stop the movement of pemmican from the Upper Assiniboine to Bas de la Rivière. And every new band of settlers would increase the threat.

Grant and his superior officer, John Pritchard, must have discussed from time to time the purpose of the colonizer and the prospects of the colony. Pritchard was a garrulous, optimistic man, whom his colleagues viewed with a slight distrust. He was skilful in all the ways of the fur trade and adept at wilderness life and travel. He had come to love the northwest, and to him the colony offered the possibility of retirement from the trade and a chance to live out his life in the Red River country. In fact Pritchard was a colonist at heart, eager to till the western soil, and he watched the colony with an anxious and growing affection.

To Grant it probably had no such appeal. Reared as a gentleman, he was content with the routine of the office, the management of free-men and their half-breed sons, and the sport of riding over the plains to shoot buffalo on the prairie or ducks along the lakes of the Qu'Appelle. To his youthful eyes the colony must have seemed not an interesting experiment in agriculture in a land where no one farmed but a mad venture which might become a nuisance, or even a danger, to the company. Such certainly was the Nor'Wester view, and Grant identified himself heart and soul with the company of which his father had been a *bourgeois*, which had seen to his own bringing up, and

which had now opened a career to him. The colony he would watch with a personal indifference, but also with the hostility of a Nor'Wester.

Grant had other things to do than worry about the future of Selkirk's colony. One by one he met his sisters as their husbands' affairs brought them to the Qu'Appelle. Awed as they might be by this brother who was a gentleman and a clerk of the company, they would question him about where he had been, the relatives who had befriended him, and all the treasured Scottish connection. Grant's brothers-in-law, François Morin and Pierre Falcon, proud men though they were in their own right and among their own people, looked up to the young man who had so high a place in the world of the company. The word went round that young Cuthbert had come back a *bourgeois* like his father, and once more the name of Grant was

uttered in respect around the summer camp fires and in the winter cabins of the Upper Red River country. Young Mr Cuthbert Grant had come back to his own country, and the people who had known his father were slyly measuring the son to determine whether he was the man his father had been. As they talked with him at his post, and traded their pemmican, and watched him in the saddle and at the hunt, they found him to be a man they could trust, a real *bourgeois* who, while he kept his distance, would never forget them and never turn them away. And this knitting of bonds of trust between Grant and the *bois-brûlés* was just what the partners of the North West Company had had in mind when they sent Grant back to Upper Red River

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Loyal as Cuthbert was to his company, his class background placed him in close contact with his upper class counterparts of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Grant's own loyalty to the company was kept bright by the presence of a similar post of the Hudson's Bay Company, a mere musket-shot from the Qu'Appelle. There the master of the post was now John Richards McKay, who struggled manfully to induce the Indians and Métis to bring their furs and pemmican to his trading room rather than to that of the Nor'Westers.<sup>3</sup> Even when he had scant success, his presence kept prices up, because both Indians and Métis had a keen sense of the value of competition to the seller's market. And sometimes an offended or cunning Indian would trade at the other post, leaving his debt to the rival unpaid. Then there might be trouble between the traders, and renewed efforts to win over the clients of the other with drink and cajolery.

The rivalry was keen, however, only when the winter's packs were brought in in the spring and the summer's pemmican in September. During the long winters the rivalry would become only a concealed watchfulness, and there would be much visiting back and forth, exchange of books, long hours of talk and, when a visit from another post gave occasion, night-long dancing and revelry. As McKay had as housekeeper his sister Elizabeth, the bachelors of the North West Company often drifted down to the Hudson's Bay trader's house and spent long hours by the fire, smoking their pipes and talking with the men – but really there to enjoy the company of the women. But Grant was secure in the possession of Bethsy's affection, and before long it was known through Upper Red River that they were lovers.

Little more is known of Grant and Bethsy's love, and there is no need to imagine that it in any way differed from the other quick, responsive romances of that wild country where civilized young people of the same station in life were so few. But if Grant and Bethsy were lovers in 1813, their romance was soon to be thwarted. Selkirk's colony came into conflict in 1814 with the North West Company, and a fur-traders' war was to be waged with mounting violence ~~until the~~

Even if Grant was only one of four captains of the Métis, however, he was now cast for the role he was to play in the fur-traders' war. A clerk of the company, he had been chosen both because of his standing as a clerk and a gentleman and because of his ties of blood with the Métis to lead them in their alliance with the Nor'Westers in the fur-traders' war. He was to help bind the *bois-brûlés* to the cause of the company, and with their help to remove from the life-line of Upper Red River the menace of the colony at The Forks. He was to lead the Métis in rejecting the claims of Selkirk to the Red River country by asserting those of the Métis. With the eagerness of youth and the unquestioning loyalty of the clansmen, he made his *bourgeois* cause his own and passionately identified himself with the campaign to drive the colonists from Red River. By so doing he was also to identify himself with the new Métis nation, and stands at the beginning of their history as Louis Riel stands at the end.

But at the same time, Grant was to make himself and the *bois-brûlés* the dupes and tools of the Nor'Westers. It was a fact he did not perceive in his youthful enthusiasm, because the North West Company and the *brûlés* seemed to have a common interest in resisting the establishment of the colony. So Grant thought, and so he acted. Later, when he found the Nor'Westers disposed to shift the blame for the violence that arose out of the resistance, his loyalty began to falter, and he was to become in the end the champion of the Métis, and of the Métis alone.

The bond that was knitting between Grant and the Métis was one of sympathy and mutual loyalty, founded on respect. As the Métis gave him their trust which once given to anyone was rarely withdrawn, so he responded with his own most outstanding trait, a simple, unswerving fidelity. Just as it was natural for sons of his father's companions and servants to give him the loyalty their fathers had given him, so it was natural for him to return an equal loyalty. And that loyalty to his Métis followers was of a piece with his allegiance to the North West Company. A youthful and impetuous loyalty to the company and the Métis is the key to the part he played in the stormy events of the next four years.

It is, in fact, not too much to say that the loyalty of Grant to the company, and of the Métis to Grant, was the decisive element in the course of the next two years. That the Métis would support the Nor'Westers in driving out the colonists was by no means certain in 1814. The Hudson's Bay Company men and Miles Macdonell might well have induced some of the Métis and freemen to defend the colony. Grant's

readiness to follow the plans of his superiors and to use his growing influence with the Métis to rally them to the cause of the North West Company and of their own rights in the soil was to be the principal factor in the Nor'Westers' harrying of Selkirk's colony.

The Nor'Westers under Duncan Cameron and Alexander Macdonell began their campaign in the fall of 1814. They did not use the methods of open warfare. What they employed were the old tactics of the competitive fur trade. Their rivals were to be cajoled, bribed, badgered, and intimidated into withdrawing. It was their hope that such methods would suffice, as indeed they might unless met by a determined resistance. If that occurred, then the harrying would result in actual war.

As can be seen the North West Company had, through Cuthbert Grant, instilled the Metis with a sense of nationhood. Tied as they were, as the workforce for the North West Company, they had literally no alternative but to struggle for its preservation against settlement, and against the Hudson's Bay Company.

A. S. Morton wrote:

The conception of the Métis as "The New Nation" instilled into them during the struggle with Selkirk's colony never died. Nationalism born of racial feelings and nurtured by a common language and by a community of interests is an undying flame. It may die down in a period of calm, but at the first clash of interest it is fanned up as by a tempest. This belief of the half-breeds that they were a nation, that as the Indian population, depleted by smallpox and drawn off to the more distant posts for their livelihood, left the land vacant, the Métis inherited their vast domain through the mother blood in their veins, held them together as one at every juncture at which they revolted against the domination of the "whites." Instilling such ideas and feelings into the half-breeds during what proved to be a passing phase in the history of the West the Northwesters were playing with fire — a fire which would not be quenched. In five short years they were drawn into the Hudson's Bay Company and they and their partners, and after them the Canadians, found that this national feeling accentuated their difficulties in dealing with their untutored servants and fellow subjects.

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Despite the nationalism created by the struggle of the Metis hunters against settlement, they were, on the other hand, kept in a state of dependency by the Canadian 'bourgeois' of the North West Company just as surely as the Indians of the North had been by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Both companies required some food production to continue their operations. This was supplied for the North West Company by the Metis buffalo hunters. No agricultural colony was therefore required. Not so with the Hudson's Bay Company. Having won the loyalty of the Metis hunters, the North West Company thereby

controlled the only available food supply. Game hunting in the North could not take place on the same massive scale as the organized buffalo hunt of the south, so that the Northern Indians could not supply a stable food source to the Hudson's Bay Company. Consequently, the Selkirk settlers were brought out to Red River. The settlers were to provide just enough food for the company's needs. There was to be no surplus.

The Metis as well, were controlled by the North West Company so as to prevent the growth of Native agriculture and industry.

The North-West Company which, in 1804, had built a stone fort of considerable size (they had named it somewhat immodestly Fort Gibraltar) on de la Verendrye's site at Fort Rouge, did not view with as kindly an eye as the Metis, the settlement of this new population in an area they had come to regard as their own.

Cultivating the soil and raising farm animals were undertakings that were not in accord with fur-trading. In these activities - and in the fact that a man whom they thought of, perhaps, not as an enemy, but as an embarrassing and dangerous opponent - was responsible for them, the "Bourgeois" saw a serious threat to the continuation of their chosen and generally sole vocation. Likewise, they did not view favourably the fact that the Metis who, hitherto by force of circumstances, had been loyal to them, now were discarding their trapping, hunting, and nomadic habits, and acquiring those more sedentary - cultivating the land and raising farm animals, occupations that "Messieurs the Bourgeois" affected to despise.



So the North West Company, like the Hudson's Bay Company, had a captive work force.

The Metis were tied to the fur trading interests of the North West Company just as surely as the Highlanders and Metis were tied to the interest of the Hudson's Bay Company. Neither company allowed the production of agricultural or industrial surplus beyond their own trading requirements. And so the two labour groups were thrown into bloody conflict with each other by the authorities who controlled the companies. Into this tinderbox a spark was introduced by the Hudson's Bay Company. Lord Selkirk, philanthropist and humanitarian, seems to have been used as a fool by his more "hard-nosed" business companions within the Hudson's Bay Company's London Board of Directors. Selkirk, wishing only to find a place to locate the destitute survivors of the Highland clans, was duped into founding the "Selkirk settlement", consisting of potential farmers and settlers who were to provide supplies for the Hudson's Bay Company. But this settlement was placed directly under the guns of Fort Gibraltar, in the heart of North West territory, where a trained para-military force of Metis Cavalry held sway.

A. S. Morton wrote of this:

*(Hudson's Bay)*

Henceforth as the occasion might arise, the Company stressed its possession of the soil of Rupert's Land. While from the point of view of the Company the immediate object in arranging for the establishment of Selkirk's colony was to secure the cheap provisions and cheap and efficient labour which would enable it to reduce the costs of its struggle with the North West Company,<sup>5</sup> the more distant gain would be the proclamation of the Company's right to the soil, accompanied as it would be by the right to warn the Northwesters off their property. Accordingly, Lord Selkirk, assured that his Grant made him proprietor of Assiniboia, on June 5, 1813, wrote to Governor Miles Macdonell that the Hudson's Bay Company's land rights were perfectly clear, but should be acted on with moderation; formal protests should be made where necessary to prevent the North West Company from obtaining prescriptive rights through uninterrupted possession.<sup>6</sup>

But "cheap provisions" were obviously not the first purpose of the settlers for the company. If they were, the settlement would not have been located at the juncture of the Red and Assinaboine rivers, where their very presence threatened to cut off the North West Company's entire transportation infrastructure. The settlers were, then, primarily placed at this bottleneck as a para-military force, but a force with no military skill, no weapons, no soldiers. They were lambs for the slaughter, a slaughter that would bring in the British state as mediator, and end the destructive competition through economic merger. Another middle class national revolution would be averted, and the Hudson's Bay Company's Monopoly would be complete.

Lets examine the facts.

There can be no doubt that the region chosen for "settlement" was chosen on the basis of strategic advantage in the trade war, not on the fertility of land, etc.

"Each spring the provisions posts would ready the rough boats made each winter by the post carpenter and send the pemmican down by them on the receding high waters of May and early June. Down the great valley of the Upper Red the brigades would file, through the narrow gorge of the Sand Hills and around the wandering loops of the flat Red River plains from Portage des Prairies. All, with those from Pembina, had to pass The Forks of the Red, dominated since 1810 by the high bastions of Fort Gibraltar. Here was the key to the rivers, to the pemmican trade and, in a measure, to the northwest fur trade. (emphasis mine)

From The Forks the North West boats went the Bas de la Riviere, where their cargoes were stored for the brigades east and west. There the boats were burned, the nails collected from their ashes, and taken back to the Upper Red for use again in a country where iron was scarce.

Thus at the very key to the rivers, along the provision route from Qu'Appelle, Selkirk's colony was taking shape. In its labourers and settlers was a force which might, if Selkirk's purpose was antagonistic to the interests of the North West Company, stop the movement of pemmican from the Upper Assiniboine to Bas de la Riviere. And every new band of settlers would increase the threat."

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"And as this was the region which supplied provisions for the fur trade of the Athabasca country, where the Nor' Westers got the richest part of their furs, and which the Hudson's Bay Company now proposed to invade with the help of supplies from Red River, the war in the Red River country merged with the rivalry of the two great companies for the trade of the whole northwest."

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"The North West Company viewed Selkirk's grant and his projected colony as a threat to their claims in the northwest and to their trade. In Scotland Alexander Mackenzie had tried strenuously to stop the recruiting of colonists for Red River. Despite his efforts, the first party had sailed in 1811, but had to winter on the Bay near York Factory. In the spring they came south to Red River, which they reached only in August, after Grant had ridden westward to Qu'Appelle.

The first party was made up of Scots and Irish labourers, who might or might not become colonists. Their leader was the colony's Governor, Miles Macdonell. Macdonell was a Canadian Scot from Glengarry. He was a Roman Catholic of Loyalist stock, and had served in the Canadian militia. Selkirk had come to know him while in Canada seeing to his colony at Baldoon. He chose him as a man used to exercising authority, and as one knowing the country, although Macdonell had never been in the northwest or served in the fur trade. It was to prove a not altogether happy choice."

It did not take long before Lord Selkirk's philanthropic naivete coupled with the first governor of Assiniboia, Miles MacDonnell's obstinacy, resulted in open warfare:

"In January, 1814, as Governor of Assiniboia, Miles MacDonnell issued a proclamation by which he prohibited the export of pemmican from Assiniboia except by licence from himself. The results of this act were two. One was to place the supply of pemmican for the North West Athabasca brigades at the discretion of the Governor of Assiniboia, which to the Nor'Westers meant at the discretion of the Hudson's Bay Company."

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During his brief span as governor of the newly created territory of Assiniboia, MacDonnell "pulled off" what appeared to be one blunder after another. However, his most stupid act was probably his proclamation designed to prevent Metis hunters from pursuing their highly organized method of hunting. He passed an ordinance forbidding the hunting of buffalo while mounted on horses. At the same time, continued crop failures due to drought, floods, locusts, and early frost made the entire colony dependent on pemmican, and, consequently, on the skill of the Metis hunters. From the beginning he was given a contradictory, if not impossible, task; he was to attempt to destroy the North West Company's source of provisions (the buffalo hunt), but at the same time the whole colony was dependent upon the Metis hunters and the buffalo they took for their staple food supply.

Technology, even the best European technology, could not yet deal successfully with the harsh climate and short growing season to produce a viable agricultural economy.

As the situation became increasingly violent, Selkirk's colony ceased to be a pseudo-agricultural colony and became a para-military one. Selkirk hired mercenaries from the De Meuron Regiment and hurried them from Europe to the Red River. Howard wrote;

Selkirk sent more colonists and the Nor'westers stepped up their campaign of terrorism. Métis horsemen raided the farms, threatened and occasionally pillaged. And in April, 1815, a number of the Selkirk people deserted to the enemy. Meanwhile the efforts of Macdonnell to establish an embargo on foodstuffs had added to the fury of the rival firm and had increased the alarm of the Métis. The colony in its first years was always on the verge of starvation and its people spent the winters in Pembina, where buffalo meat could be obtained from the Métis hunters. Macdonnell established a post there, Fort Daer.

The Nor'westers managed to arrange for Macdonnell's arrest and removal to Canada for trial on charges emanating from his embargo proclamation, and he was succeeded first by Colin Robertson and then by Semple. The latter, born in Boston, was a Loyalist who had settled in England after the Revolution; he was a writer and gentleman of culture, and the colonists he brought with him were superior to most of those who had come before.

Lord Selkirk, setting out on his first visit to the colony, brought with him about a hundred former soldiers whom he planned to settle there. Most of the men were from the DeMeuron Regiment — Swiss, German and Italian mercenaries who had fought for Britain in the Napoleonic Wars, had been sent to Canada in 1812, and discharged at the conclusion of the war with the United States. But the earl and his troops did not reach the colony in time to prevent the tragedy of Seven Oaks.

The Métis "army" which participated in the massacre was organized at a North West Company post at Qu'Appelle, 250 miles west of Fort Douglas, by Alexander Macdonnell, a Nor'wester and cousin of Selkirk's lieutenant, Miles Macdonnell. Field command was assigned to Cuthbert Grant, son of a Scotch "wintering partner" of the North West Company and a Cree woman. Cuthbert was twenty-three and had had some education in Scotland. His sister married the "Métis minstrel," Pierre Falcon.

Grant's prairie cavalry took the field early in June, seized a Hudson's Bay supply brigade and a post halfway to Red River, and established new headquarters at Portage la Prairie. On June 18, Grant and about sixty-five of his

riders left there for Fort Douglas and in the early evening of the following day they were sighted from the fort's watchtower.

Unarmed settlers who had been working in their fields fled to the fort, crying the alarm: "The half-breeds! The half-breeds!" Semple left the fort with twenty-six men to greet the Métis and learn the purpose of their visit. He could not bring himself to believe that the visitors were unfriendly, so his little party was inadequately armed.

The Metis were in an angry mood. Tremaudin wrote:

In their nature, the provocations, indeed the exorbitant demands of the Hudson's Bay Company which, by way of Lord Selkirk, had seized what the Metis considered their country, and which, by way of Governor McDonnell, had requisitioned the fruits of their labour, appeared unjust. But, aside from this, they watched the settlers cultivating the soil and, after chatting among themselves, concluded that this was in their best interests. But when they were forbidden to hunt, fish, and cut wood without permission - singularly annoying restrictions - they vented their anger - in words! But when their age old way of life, an integral part of their being - the bison hunt on horseback - was prohibited, their indignation pierced them to the very soul! This restriction infuriated them - something the "Bourgeois" of the North-West Company had been unable to accomplish with all their representations since the arrival of the first settlers.

Thus the scene was set for the only Metis atrocity in history. And it was an atrocity. The British had hung, drawn, and quartered and burned the Highland warriors after the clans had been defeated in battle. In Quebec, "witches" had been burned at the stake. Indeed the crimes of the twentieth century by the Nazis in Europe, and the Americans in Viet Nam, with massacres such as the infamous action at Mai Lai, make this deed seem pale in comparison.

In America at that same time, during its Indian Wars, the American troopers had engaged in the desecration of the Indian

dead. The Métis, it is true, in this action, were no better.

Semple, on leaving Fort Douglas, marched on foot northwestward to the bend of the river at the north side of the base of Point Douglas. There was the farm of John McLean, the leading farmer and steadiest settler of all Selkirk's colonists. McLean joined the party. As they went on, they met Alexander McBeath, a veteran of the 73rd Regiment, coming in to the fort with his family. Behind were William and James Sutherland with their families. These were the only settlers going to the fort for refuge, all the others, except the prisoners, being there already. McBeath told Semple of the arrival of the main party of the Métis, and advised him that he would need two field-pieces if he was to deal with the numbers of the Nor'Westers. Semple again refused to listen to the suggestion that he would need artillery to impress the mounted Métis. He went on for a time, then changed his mind and sent Bourke back for one field-piece.<sup>31</sup>

On the other side Grant led his men forward and pushed into the scrub which grew around the Seven Oaks. As the party broke into the open, they saw before them Semple and his men approaching along the trail through the river lots.

Both sides halted at once. Then the *brûlés* fanned out on either side of Grant, who sat silent, watching Semple alertly. The ponies sidled and fretted. Semple by a gesture had his men deploy in line across the plain at wide intervals, as they sought to match the front of the *brûlés*. Then the two parties confronted one another, silent and motionless except for the snorting of a pony or the flash of a bayonet in the sunlight. In the west the sun was dropping quickly down the sky, and the shadows of man and horse lengthened darkly on the plain.

The collision had occurred: the men who held The Forks had challenged the men from the provisions plains. Like a flash Boucher slid from his horse and ran for the Métis' line. A shot rang out. It was fired by Semple's men at an Indian who had kept edging forward when they warned him back.<sup>36</sup> A second shot came from the *brûlés*. It was fired by Grant and it hit Semple in the thigh.<sup>37</sup> A third brought down Holte.<sup>38</sup> The *brûlés* now slipped down behind their horses and levelled their guns over the ponies' backs. Semple's men began to crowd up to their leader to see how he was hurt. The Métis discharged a volley in their midst. Many of Semple's men fell. The rest turned to fight and returned the fire as best they could. Then the *brûlés*, as was the old French-Canadian custom in battle, threw themselves to the ground to

reload. Semple's men, thinking their fire had taken effect, flung up their hats and cheered.<sup>39</sup>

Back on the trail, Bourke and his men saw the flashes and heard the reports of the guns. The field-piece would now be of no use, so Bourke sent it back with one man and came on bravely with the other.

The cheering of Semple's men was brief. The *brûlés* sprang to their feet and fired their second volley. Then they charged on foot. Grant, who had stood watching from beside his horse, ran towards Semple. At this moment the advance guard from Frog Plain swept around the Seven Oaks and charged in behind the survivors of Semple's party. These were now doomed. Some, like Rogers and John McLean, went at the Métis with the bayonet and died fighting savagely.<sup>40</sup> The rest broke and fled for the trees by the river, but most were ridden down and shot or speared. As Bourke approached, he was caught in a swirl of horsemen and wounded by a spear, but he and his companion fled into cover by the river. Only four others escaped, three by flight and one, John Pritchard, by shamming death and then begging mercy.

Meanwhile Grant had reached Semple, to find the Governor lying with a broken leg. Semple asked to be taken to the fort, where he said he might recover. Grant promised he would be, and then went out to restrain his men from further slaughter.<sup>41</sup> But as soon as he left, someone – some said it was the Indian Machicabou, others the Canadian, old François Deschamps – shot the Governor in the breast and killed him.<sup>42</sup> This piece of savagery was matched elsewhere. The wounded were knifed and tomahawked, the dead stripped and ripped up after the Indian fashion. The wild blood of the *brûlés* was boiling, and it was some time before Grant could check their savagery.

The fight itself had lasted only fifteen minutes.<sup>43</sup> Semple and twenty of his officers and men were killed. One Indian of Grant's party had been killed, and one *brûlé*, young Trottier, wounded.<sup>44</sup> The victory was as complete as the fight was sudden.

The Métis now collected their ponies and, whooping and waving their plunder of blood-stained shirts and cloaks, galloped back through the bush to the camp-fires at Frog Plain. There Pierre Falcon,<sup>45</sup> the bard of the Métis and Grant's brother-in law, who had not fought but had seen the fight, was soon shaping the Nor'Wester view of the collision into the verses of his "La Grenouillère."

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From another source:

#### ASSINIBOIA

The song was born on June 19, 1816. On that day, too, the nation was born in the minds of the people, if not yet in political fact.

These things occurred on a bloody battleground called Seven Oaks, now a park on the outskirts of Winnipeg, while the Métis, momentarily reverting to savagery, hacked with skinning knives at the bodies of twenty-two white men they had slain at the bidding of other white men. "Falcon's Song" was introduced at the celebration of the "victory" that night. It did not tell how the Métis had mauled, like dogs, the bodies of their victims; it said the whites were to blame for the incident, and some whites certainly were, though not the ones named by the simple Pierre.

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And who were the whites that were to blame for the "incident"? Lord Selkirk seems to have been innocent. He died a broken man before his fiftieth birthday, in part because of the tragedy of Seven Oakes. He had been duped.

But the conspiracy against him, in which the Nor'westers had enlisted even the British Colonial Office and the courts, had its hoped-for result: Selkirk's health collapsed. Added to his discouragement and fatigue was his bitterness when it became apparent even to him that union of the warring fur companies, as desired by the Colonial Office, was the only solution. He had once been willing to consider this, but after Seven Oaks he refused to go into partnership with butchers. In 1820 he died in the south of France, at the age of forty-nine. His twenty-year struggle to establish the colony in the face of implacable opposition even from his government had cost his personal estate one hundred thousand pounds.

Less than a month before, Sir Alexander Mackenzie of the North West Company had died. The two greatest figures of the fur trade were gone and union of the companies followed quickly. Their war had cost the Hudson's Bay Company about forty thousand pounds in addition to Selkirk's own losses; the rival's costs were even greater. Both were hard-pressed, but Selkirk's militant policy left the Hudson's Bay in the stronger position; before he died the earl had the satisfaction of learning that the wintering Nor'westers were angling secretly for a deal by which they could sell out their London and Montreal partners.

62

The nameless, faceless directors of the Hudson's Bay Company had placed the Highland Scots and Irish laborers into the mouth of a loaded gun; the Metis hunters, dupes of the North West Company, joyfully pulled the trigger.

But the directors, unlike the Metis cavalry, must have known that there could be no other outcome once the "settlers" had been used as they were in the feud. Their mere presence at Fort Gibraltar made such an ending inevitable, but it led to "peaceful" economic merger instead of another national liberation struggle. Thus, while the Highland peasants suffered their fate, and the Metis hunters bought some time for their culture and way of life, the Lond directors, investors in both companies, were the real winners.

Cuthbert Grant was eventually "forgiven". Indeed a later governor of the Hudson's Bay Company duly appointed Cuthbert Grant as "Warden of the Plains", as per his old title while a mercenary of the North West Company. See the following summation of letters from the Hudson's Bay Company archives in Ottawa.

"20 Feb., 1838 George Simpson, London to Alex. Christie

Re: Cottage industry employment; curtailment of Indian labour; halfbreed labour for McKenzie River; half-breed apprentice post masters.

I was in hopes of being able to reply to your letters by the Fall or winter express before the departure of the Packet, but regret it has not yet made its appearance.....

The Governor and Committee's general dispatch of this season, which will be sent round by Red River for your information will explain their Honors views in regard to the mode in which they wish the appointments and general arrangements of the ensuing outfit to be made & I hope they will be found to answer every necessary & useful purpose.

Their Honors have likewise in the Dispatch given an outline of their views & wishes in regard to the Red River arrangements, and you will be pleased to lay as much of the Dispatch as refers to the Public business of the Colony before the Council of Assiniboia.

20 Feb., 1838 George Simpson, London to Alex Christie D4/23,F, 224

The Establishment of Officers & Servants under your superintendence & the settlement for the ensuing Outfit is intended to be as follows.....Warden of the Plains Cuthbert Grant.....John Muir is now employed at a Distillery in Orkney & will proceed to the Settlement in the Fall to be employed with any other hands you may require [ In addition to the Establishment already noticed ] in duties connected with the Distillery about to be established at Red River." <sup>63</sup>

Indeed, the North West Company also had, "enlisted even the British Colonial office and the Courts", just as the Hudson's Bay Company had done to settle the war of the corporations. The massacre of Seven Oakes had served its purpose. Economic merger was achieved through the death and desecration of some twenty Highland and Irish laborers and peasants. Surely a small price to pay, from the perspective of the Imperial and Canadian national bourgeois, considering the immense profits that the now absolute monopoly could provide. Of course merger did not occur on the eve of this slaughter. Nevertheless it had mobilized the British State.

" The renewal of the war in 1819 and 1820 could not, indeed, be further tolerated by the Imperial Government or in any case continued by the North West Company. The Imperial Government now insisted that the rivalry of the companies be ended by union; and in union the influential men of the two companies saw the only hope of preserving the fur trade. In 1821 the two united as the Hudson's Bay Company, in what was in effect the wedding of the name, the charter, and the stability of the British company with the experience and hard-driving skill of the North West wintering partners. In the negotiations in London the latter obtained the key positions and a preponderance of power in the new company. John George Mactavish, a leading *bourgeois*, was moved at once to take charge of the new company at York Factory on Hudson Bay. In the union those who had lately been engaged in bitter and violent competition had to learn to work together at counter and council. Old Nor'Westers, *bourgeois* and clerks, now found themselves factors and traders, clerks and interpreters of the new company. And with the new order peace came at last to the northwest. "

The merger of the companies created the first Metis "unemployment". Many of them, both English-speaking protestant and French speaking Catholic settled in to farm small plots of land. Tremaudin wrote:

They settled on land at the mouth of the Assiniboine. The Scots settled in the vicinity of Fort Douglas. The French-Canadians and Metis settled in groups here and there near the two principal centres. Behind St. Boniface was St. Norbert and the White Horse Prairie of Saint-Francois Xavier. All this division of land was accomplished without friction. Religious fanatacism was non-existent. Catholics and Protestants lived as brothers; each section had its own school and church; each tried to learn the other's language. The merging of the Hudson's Bay and the North-West Companies under the name of the former on March 26, 1821, did, in small measure, serve to bind closer the ties between the English and French population of the Red River.

b) The Thread of Events

The period between 1823 and 1835 is marked with several outstanding events. In 1823, some unknown persons brought domestic animals from the United States. Together with other workers, Monseigneur Provencher made enormous sacrifices to establish a model farm which would allow his mission to be self-supporting should hunting and fishing fail.

65

The metis too had learned a bitter historical lesson from this struggle:

"The metis had never before concerned themselves about<sup>ownership</sup> of the country, for this was a concept foreign to the Indian or Metis mind. With the urging of the whites however, the Metis were quick to catch on."

The Metis learned that "property", the very prairies and hills, could be privately owned. It was this "ownership" that was eventually to destroy them as a nation. Following is a list of Owners whose avarice led to the death of the Highland peasants at Seven Oakes.

THE NORTH WEST COMPANY

ALEXANDER HENRY, trader of Montreal  
PETER PANGMAN, partner, North West Company  
PETER POND, partner, North West Company  
ARCHIBALD NORMAN McLEOD, partner, North West Company  
WILLIAM McINTOSH, partner, North West Company  
ALEXANDER McKAY, partner, North West Company  
DR. JOHN McLoughlin, married to Alex. McKay's widow  
JAMES, JOHN AND ANDREW McGILL, merchants of Montreal  
ISAAC TODD, merchant of Montreal

THOMAS DOUGLAS, LORD SELKIRK, of the Hudson's Bay Company  
COLIN ROBERTSON, a former Nor'Wester  
MILES MACDONELL, Selkirk's lieutenant  
JOHN CLARKE, of the Hudson's Bay Company  
GEORGE SIMPSON, clerk in Hudson's Bay Company  
NICHOLAS GARRY, member of committee of Hudson's Bay Company.

We see that these, the owners of the North West Company, were not Metis. They were the ancient landed aristocracy of the Scottish Highlands, now transformed into the new owners of a mercantile empire in Canada. Once again, they had sold their "children" into infinity, just as their greed had depopulated their native land of its peasants and warriors. But the Metis were left with the blame, while the tragedy filled the coffers of the rich Scots, and history left them a place of honour. The principal recipients of the North West Company were:

SIMON McTAVISH and his three nephews:  
WILLIAM McGILLIVRAY  
DUNCAN McGILLIVRAY  
SIMON McGILLIVRAY  
JOHN GEORGE McTAVISH, cousin to Simon McTavish  
JOHN McDONALD of Garth, nephew-in-law to Simon McTavish  
DAVID THOMPSON, brother-in-law to McDonald  
RODERICK McKENZIE, brother-in-law to Mrs. Simon McTavish  
ANGUS SHAW, nephew-in-law to Simon McTavish  
SIMON FRASER, cousin to Simon McTavish  
JOHN FRASER of McTavish, Fraser & Co., London, cousin to  
Simon McTavish  
SIMON McGILLIVRAY, grand-nephew to Simon McTavish  
JOSEPH McGILLIVRAY, grand-nephew to Simon McTavish  
ALEXANDER FRASER, "distant cousin" to Simon McTavish  
ALEXANDER MACKENZIE (Knight), cousin to Roderick McKenzie  
CHARLES CHABOLLEZ, brother-in-law to Simon McTavish  
JUDGE REID, nephew-in-law to Simon McTavish  
JOHN DUNCAN CAMPBELL, son-in-law to John McDonald of  
Garth  
JOSEPH FROBISHER, Simon McTavish's Montreal partner  
JAMES McTAVISH, "relative" to Simon McTavish  
DONALD McTAVISH, cousin to Simon McTavish

One can see at a glance the "inborn" or class relationship of the people who prospered because of the slaughter of the laborers at Seven Oakes, and the resulting merger of the National and international mercantile companies. At last, the perfect monopoly had been created.

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8. Ibid, p. 142
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13. Ibid p.p. 136 - 7
14. Ibid. p. 47
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19. Opcit p. 129 - 130 Myers
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23. Carol M. Judd, Arthur J. Ray, Old Trails and New Directions, University of Toronto Press, 1980, p. 48
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- 32a Ibid Innis, p.p. 290 - 291
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34. Harold Innis Opcit p. 239, 240, 241
35. Ibid p. 241, 242
36. Ibid p. 242
37. Ibid p. 243
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39. Encyclopedia Canadiana, Canadian Company, Ottawa 1965, volume 6, p. 274
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41. Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire*, Swan Publishing, Toronto, 1952, p. 37
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43. Ibid p. 14
44. Tremaudin p. 66
45. Ibid, p. 68
46. McLeod and Morton, *Opcit* p.p. 17 - 18
47. Ibid p. 18,19
48. Ibid p. 24,25
49. Ibid p.p. 24,25
50. A. S. Morton, D. Bruce Sealy *Opcit* p. 30
51. Tremaudin (Unauthorized trans p.p. 149,150
52. Morton and Sealy *Opcit* p.p. 28, 29
53. McLeod and Morton, *Opcit* p.p. 14, 15
54. Ibid p. 17
55. Ibid p. 20
56. Ibid p. 15, 16
57. Ibid p. 20
58. Joseph Kinsey Howard *Opcit* p.p. 38, 39
59. Tremaudin Unauthorized translation p. 58
60. McLeod and Morton, *Opcit* p. 47,48,49
61. Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Opcit* p. 35
62. Joseph Kinsey Howard Ibid p. 40
63. Hudson's Bay documents, Hudson's Bay Archives, Ottawa, D4/23, F224
64. McLeod and Morton, *Opcit* p. 76
65. Tremaudin, (unauthorized translation) p. 81,82
66. Marjorie Wilkes Campbell, *The North West Company* Macmillan Co. 1957
68. Ibid introduction

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER V

The chronology of events and empirical facts laid out in Chapter V spell out some profoundly important historical patterns. Following is a summary of the most important themes of Chapter V.

The old Indian communal organization of social production was transformed by the Metis people of the fur trading epoch into a form of organization based on commodity production. The commodities produced, fur and buffalo meat and hides - depended on a market. This market was controlled by outside forces (the British and later American empires). The Indian "national" independence was then transformed through the Metis as middlemen into a form of economic dependency based on commodity production, instead of communally shared production. A mutual dependency, then, existed between the fur trading companies and the Natives, both Indian and Metis. But this was a power relationship, not an egalitarian one as had been the case with Indian communal production. The Companies, once competition could be done away with, would control prices paid for furs, buffalo, etc, as well as wages paid to workers. Thus, the changeover from communal production to commodity production was, of itself, enough to ensure internal social breakdown because of overwhelming foreign control of the Native economy.

Thus, this mutual dependency created vast wealth for the British and Canadian owning classes, and it resulted in the social break-down of the Indian and Metis societies. The poverty thus created decimated the Native population through starvation and disease.

The fur trading companies both went through a process of violent competition, replaced by economic mergers. The Selkirk settlers were used as "lambs for the slaughter" when the Hudson's Bay Company executive placed them into a situation that threatened the livelihood of the Company's Metis work force. The North West Company officials goaded the Metis, through Cuthbert Grant, into committing an atrocity by slaughtering the settlers. This slaughter "outraged" British parliamentarians, and "peaceful merger"

was thus manipulated. The interests of the Canadian owning class and the British owning class were thus united. Another national liberation struggle had been averted. Cuthbert Grant was then used by the Hudson's Bay Company, as he had previously been used by the North West Company to murder the Hudson's Bay Company settlers. Cuthbert Grant was made a council member of the Hudson's Bay Company government's Council of Assiniboia. Here, Cuthbert fought to prevent Metis free trade.

Throughout this epoch, the companies rigorously prevented free trade, or agricultural diversification. Consequently, starvation and social breakdown frequently occurred when the fur resource was depleted in a particular area. The total monopoly allowed for the merger of the Canadian merchant class with the British merchant class and it made possible the control of much of the world market for furs, so that not only the cost of production could be controlled, but the price of the commodity could be dictated as well. The starvation of the Indian people on the one hand, meant the accumulation of vast wealth through the fur trade for the newly united Canadian and British bourgeoisie.

## Chapter VI

The Perfect Monopoly  
Its effects on the Native People

The formal merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company took place in 1821. As Tremaudin indicated, this merger brought "peace" to Red River, but "peace" at what cost?

It is difficult to conceive of a more astute businessman than the Hudson's Bay Company's governor George Simpson was. His shrewdness and ruthlessness in the pursuit of profits must stand as a record, even in the fur trade with its built-in dynamic of super-exploitation. Simpson recognized the need to co-opt the loyalties of the Metis hunters, voyageurs and laborers, as well as the Metis Red River cavalry, all of whom were his Company's recent enemies prior to the merger. He knew that this was his first, his paramount task.

Although the Scottish settlers hated Cuthbert Grant because of his role in the slaughter of their fellow pioneers, they were leaderless and docile so that no serious attempt was ever made for revenge. Their fighting spirit had been broken, it seems, along with the destruction of their social system, and they seem never to have recovered from being sold into exile and slavery by their own clan chiefs. Consequently, Simpson had little difficulty in moving Grant into a new position of prominence under the new regime. Along with Grant went the loyalty of the Metis cavalry, the only force in Rupertsland capable of defending the colony from the Sioux to the south. Along with Grant went the Metis expertise as buffalo hunters, and consequently, the staple food supply for the floundering agricultural colony. Again, buffalo hunting as a means of obtaining a food supply did not threaten the fur trade as an agricultural economy would, should it "get out of hand." As well, the Metis, particularly the French speaking Metis, represented the major work force on the rivers and lakes. The voyageurs were to the canoe what the Orkeny men were later to become to the York boat. They were the master craftsmen of the wilds. There could be no successful exploitation of the fur resource without the successful

co-operation of the Metis people, and for this purpose Cuthbert Grant was the key. Half Scottish aristocrat, half Indian warrior, exmercenary for the North West Company, he was still in charge of the Metis settlement at White Horse Plains, and was still the commander of the Metis cavalry. A deadly enemy only yesterday, he must now be cultivated, and used, by the Hudson's Bay Company, so that the Metis people as a whole could be taken amicably into the service of their late enemies and future employers.

He had made up his mind. He would not again lead the Métis in lawless violence. The old North West cause held him no longer. The careless loyalty of his youth was ended. Grant had put himself squarely and firmly on the side of law and order. By doing so he made it possible to bring the Métis over to the side of law under the new regime. It was the most critical decision of Grant's life, and it was crucial for the history of the northwest. There was to be no renewal of the old North West opposition, no guerrilla trade of the plains waged by Grant's Métis.

How dangerous an opposite decision by Grant might have been is illustrated by what was happening at Pembina. That settlement, another "forks" of the Red, had rivalled Selkirk's colony at The Forks since 1812. It had the great advantage of proximity to the buffalo herds, which were kept away from The Forks by the marshes of the Rivière aux Ilets de Bois. There some of the freemen and Métis were settling (as they thought) on British soil, and the Reverend S. S. Dumoulin<sup>13</sup> had begun a mission of Saint-François-Xavier among them, shortly after he and the Reverend J. N. Provencher had begun the Red River mission in 1818. But Peter Fidler, the Hudson's Bay Company's surveyor, had declared that Pembina was south of the new boundary laid down at the 49th parallel in 1818, and Major Stephen Long of the United States Army proved him right in 1823.<sup>14</sup> Thus the Métis settlement at Pembina would be outside the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company. When the Canadian traders came there in 1821, it was clear that a new opposition might shelter there beyond the reach of the Hudson's Bay Company. Had Grant chosen to lead such an opposition, a new North West Company might well have sprung up. American traders would come north from St Peter's on the Mississippi, and Canadians from Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin.

Small wonder that John Halkett,<sup>15</sup> executor of the Selkirk estate, was to resolve in 1822 that the settlement must be moved north to The Forks. Or that George Simpson, Governor-in-Chief of the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, would decide that Grant was a man who could not be ignored and must be brought into the company's service.

Grant and Simpson had met at Fort Hibernia at the end of February 1822. Simpson may indeed have been in time to help Grant make his decision not to lead the Métis against the company's post. Certainly it is difficult to believe that their meeting was casual. Grant seems to have responded to the direct approach and brisk warmth of the calculating young Scots governor. What Simpson thought of "the

celebrated Cuthbert Grant," he recorded in his journal of this journey of February 28:

Cuthbert Grant is not on the books altho allowed to remain at the post: he appears a very steady good tempered well behaved man possessing strong natural parts and some Education about 25 years of age Stout & active; he seems to have been entirely made a party tool of & in the late unfortunate business more activated by the impulse to irritation of the moment than design and I am convinced regrets it as much as any one; he might be made a most useful man of by good management as he possesses much influence among the Servants halfbreeds & Indians but if treated w[ith] harshness a most dangerous enemy and on the Score of policy I think it might be judicious to allow him to remain in the Service; he is not satisfied wh. the Messrs McGillivrays as they have given him no statement of his Fathers affairs & seems to suspect that he is not justly treated. I have recommended his being allowed to remain about the place & hope to be enabled to get him into the Service again.<sup>16</sup>

This was Simpson's first impression of Grant. Their acquaintance was to ripen quickly. Simpson's next destination was Brandon House and, as there were on the track some thirty tents of Indians who were likely to give trouble, Grant volunteered to act as guide. He went ahead to the "Hunters Tent," where Simpson overtook him on March 4. Riding on in company, they stalked and wounded three buffalo, a failure which Grant later redeemed by killing a bull. They reached Brandon House on March 6, where they found Colin Robertson and John Richards McKay in charge.

The intimacy which had developed on the trip now led Grant to take Simpson into his confidence. Simpson records:

Grant showed me a letter from Mr. Wm. McGillivray recommending his going down to Canada to get clear of the Bills of Indictment which he is determined on doing in Spring; he also proposes going to England to make some Enquiry after his private affairs. Mr. McGillivray acknowledges that he has from (£)4 or (£)5000 in his hands but Grant has pretty good information that it should be (£)13 or (£)14000 & suspects that they are inclined to impose on him; his object seems to be [to] deposit his money in safe hands & re-enter the Service but if not admitted I suspect he will be inclined to form an opposition & if he does so he will be a

very dangerous man as he has many followers & great controul over half breeds & Indians, he gave me a full statement of the Red River unfortunate affair from which it would appear that he did little more than defend himself party & property and altho dissatisfied w[ith] the N.W. Coy. disclaims any instructions or previous arrangement for destroying the Colony; he is a manly spirited fellow & I should hope that the Committee will not object to his being again admitted into the Service.<sup>17</sup>

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1. Margaret Macleod and W. L. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown, McClelland and Stewart Ltd. 1974, p.p. 78, 78, 80

Thus, following his successful legal defence, exonerating him of guilt in the deaths of the settlers (a very expedient judgement for the Hudson Bay Company) - Grant became an invaluable tool of the Company, delivering up both the Scots and French Metis to its service.

Many of the Metis, particularly the French speaking people, had been employed by the North West Company. After amalgamation, the duplication of forts was no longer necessary since the competition had ceased, consequently nearly half of the forts immediately became redundant. It was the French speaking Metis, formerly of the North West Company, who had to bear the brunt of the unemployment that was thus caused by the amalgamation. But what could the company do with these people? Settlement and independent trading had to be avoided if the fur profit was to be protected and competition was to be kept down. Cuthbert was once again used as the "Judas" for his people:

~~After the amalgamation~~ After the amalgamation of the companies in 1821, the Métis at Pembina were considerably increased in number by people from discontinued posts. Mr Halkett considered settlement there undesirable. Its situation on the border increased the danger of a Métis alliance with the American traders. There was also danger from the Sioux. Governor Simpson admitted that Pembina was "much exposed to the hostile visits of the neighboring Indians (the Sioux)." <sup>34</sup> It had been attacked that season several times, and fourteen people had been either killed or wounded. The Company had withdrawn the post in an endeavour to concentrate settlement at The Forks. They relied on Bishop Provencher's influence with the Métis to effect their removal.

Provencher wrote on September 1, 1822, "I will try to enter into the views of Mr Halkett and induce the people [the Métis at Pembina] to settle at The Forks or its vicinity." <sup>35</sup> The following July he commented further, "Mr. Halkett who moved Heaven and earth to destroy Pembina neglected to tell the Governor what to do with these people. We moved nearly all of them this Spring [1823] and they are at the Forks. They are camping along the river." <sup>36</sup>

Upon Grant's retirement in the spring of 1824 they were still there and still presenting a serious problem to the Governor. These displaced people must be settled, and the idea of a new nation which they still held must if possible be quenched. Who could so well establish them as their former leader, Cuthbert Grant, now so loyal to the new Company? Who could better win the Indians than this man who had "more influence with them than anyone in the country"? After the attacks of the Sioux at Pembina, Grant had offered to lead reprisals against them but the Governor had a different idea. Grant could found a settlement with these Métis to guard the colony against further attacks. As early as January 27, 1824, Simpson reported, "Grant has some idea of turning Settler with his Father-in-law next season." <sup>37</sup> On May 31, Simpson wrote to A. Colville of the Company in London:

I have made it my business to secure Grant's attachment and good offices . . . and by management I have got him to retire from the Service, and turn settler. I have got an order on McGillivrays to transfer his money into the hands of the Company, in which he has made me his trustee and executor, and put his affairs principally under my management. He is regularly married to a half-breed daughter of McGillis (who is a settler

with from £2,000 to £3,000) and related to or connected with the principal freemen or half-breeds who look up to him as their chief and great man. As I formerly remarked he this spring became a settler and has got a grant of land on the White Horse Plain, about 12 miles above this place (Fort Garry) on the Assiniboine where he is joined by McGillis and about 80 or 100 families of half-breeds all steady married men. Grant is turned very serious (religious) and by management will become a useful man to the Colony and Company . . .<sup>38</sup>

The land grant was only part of Simpson's policy of using Grant to serve the purposes of the Hudson's Bay Company. On January 4, 1824, he wrote to J. G. McTavish at York Factory: "Mr. Cuthbert Grant I consider to be a fit person to conduct this transport business [between Norway House and Red River] and for that purpose he will be dispatched with the craft from hence at the opening of navigation."<sup>39</sup> Grant now became a private freighter, transporting goods in 1824 and in 1825 from York to Red River both for the company and on his own account. For the role Simpson had planned for Grant was not merely that of settler, but also of a free, or private trader who would purchase the furs the Métis might otherwise take over the border to sell to the American traders from St Peter's or from the Missouri. Grant was to be his agent in solving the whole problem of the place of the Métis in the new order. If they were not to be a menace, they must be brought to settle in the colony and they must be induced not to sell furs to the Americans. They must also be restrained from provoking the Sioux Indians to attack the colony. Grant, with his unequalled influence over the Métis and his deep concern for them, could more than anyone else bring them to settle and accept the Company's rule and monopoly. Of this undertaking, Grant's projected settlement would be the centre-piece. Simpson, surveying the whole enterprise, wrote in June:

The Half-breed population is by far the most extended about the Settlement and appear to require great good management otherwise they will become in my opinion dangerous to its peace; hitherto they have lived almost entirely by the chase, and in consequence of the great demand for provisions have been enabled to indulge in their rage for Dress, extravagance, and dissipation; but domestic Cattle are now getting so numerous that in the course of two years hence there will be no market for the produce of their hunts, and those people if not brought



gradually from their present vagrant mode of life will then become worse and more destitute than Indians being unaccustomed to the privations & hardships to which the latter are frequently exposed, & ignorant of the mode of hunting fur-bearing Animals; - their notions of pride and independence are such that they will not enter the service moreover they are not the Class of people that would be desirable on any terms as they are indolent and unsteady merely fit for voyaging. - Under those circumstances it is necessary to watch and manage them with great care, otherways they may become the most formidable enemy to which the Settlement is exposed. - Cuthbert Grant, whom your Honors were last years [sic] pleased to admit as a Clerk in the service, is warmly attached to this race of people & has much influence over them which he seems desirous to use in furtherance of your views: for these last two years the Sioux have committed several murders in the neighbourhood of Pembina; this in my opinion did not arise from any hostile feeling towards the Whites but in consequence of the intrusion of the Half-breeds on their lands, and with a view to get possession of their Horses & Women, and if the latter could be drawn from those hunting Grounds I think the Settlement would experience no further annoyance from that Tribe. - Grant, with a desire to avenge those murders and deter the Sioux from a repetition of such outrages, offered to lead the Half-breeds against them this spring, but as such a measure was likely to involve very serious consequences we could not sanction or encourage it. Under all those circumstances we consider it highly necessary and proper to withdraw the half-breeds from Pembina and encourage them to adopt a more settled mode of life, in furtherance of which I have released Mr. Grant at his own request from his Engagement to the Company, and he has this spring established himself as a regular Settler at the White Horse Plain on the East bank of the Assiniboine River about 14 miles from hence, and has got upwards of Fifty families of Half-breeds & Freeman to join him already: they have commenced their Agricultural operations on a small scale and received every facility we could render, & if the season is at all favorable it will induce others to join them: the few who are still at Pembina do not consider themselves safe there and will remove in the course of the summer. - The Catholic Mission enters warmly into this plan; they have much influence over those people & Monr. Picard the priest is to be established among them this summer so th:

I trust the plan will be attended with beneficial effects and meet your honors' approbation.<sup>40</sup>

As can be seen, Simpson attempted to settle the "indolent and unsteady" class of people "merely fit for voyaging", into a system of subsistence farming. This ploy would:

1. remove the surplus population created by amalgamation from the "responsibility" of the company;
2. provide a buffer between the Red River fur trading colony and the "fierce" Sibus tribes to the south;
3. perhaps eventually provide some food production for the company should buffalo supplies become scarce;
4. provide a "reserve army" of labour that could be used during peak periods in the fur trading cycle.

As can be seen, Grant's loyalty to the new order was an item of top priority for governor Simpson. As a final bonus, the Metis if not actually having conquered the Sioux, at least had sufficiently subdued them so that the Metis were strong enough to be able to travel through Sioux territory to St. Paul. Thus, they were capable of opening up a much cheaper trade route for the Hudson's Bay Company than the expensive northern water routes had been.

Rober Devrome, in his Masters Thesis, wrote:

"The problem of employing an adequate labour force to carry on the trade during peak periods, i.e., the summer months, and at the same time be able to keep down overhead costs, was resolved by the Company through a variety of measures; the most common of which was to utilize the labour pool of settlers in the Red River settlement. For example, in 1838:

...settlers were hired for the transport of goods  
from York to Norway House and Red River  
...this freight was contracted for the settlers  
by the piece,  
the burden of overhead was materially reduced  
through hiring temporary employees rather  
than a permanent force throughout the year  
(Innis, 1956: 308-309).

Thus the

Red River settlement (became) a reserve

from which men could be taken in the open season and brought back to be discharged in the winter (Ibid.:310).

3

### The Cart Trade

In addition to their economic involvement in the Hudson's Bay Company fur trade activities, the Metis initiated and dominated---as a labor force---the cart trade to St. Paul in the United States; the principle source of power being the ox. The trade between St. Paul and the Red River settlements began in 1844 with six carts and increased to 102 in 1851, 600 in 1858, and 2,500 in 1869 (Knox, 1942:40; Mackintosh, 1934:27).<sup>4</sup>

The cart trade between the Red River region and St. Paul was encouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company. As the requirements of the Company grew, their import expenses increased, and in order to lessen these expenses the trade south was encouraged. Innis (Ibid.) points out that, in 1856, the price of transporting goods from England via St. Paul to Red River was £ 18 per ton, as compared to £ 26 per ton using the Hudson's Bay route."<sup>5</sup>

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3. Robert J. Devrome, Masters Thesis, "The Metis Colonization Culture Change and the Rebellion of 1885, U of Alberta, 1976 p. 43-44
  4. Ibid. Mackintosh from Devrome p.45
  5. Ibid. Innis, from Devrome p. 46

The Metis were being used by the company as:

- (a) a surplus labour force to be used as part-time labour;
- (b) a para-military force to protect the colony;
- (c) as entrepreneurs engaged in the cheaper trade route to St. Paul and;
- (d) as workers and voyageurs.<sup>1</sup>

Small wonder, then, that governor Simpson was quick to "forgive and forget" Cuthbert Grant's supposed "youthful transgression." The power of the Metis nation was now effectively controlled by the company.

Devrome Continued:

#### Transportation

With competition no longer a threat to the Company's supply of furs, it was able to introduce new economic measures. For example, the transportation system was revamped with "York boats...substituted for North canoes as freighters at a saving of a third in wages" (Merck, 1968:XLVI), and fur prices were standardized and employees wages were cut in half (Ibid.: also Innis, 1956:312).

Birch bark canoes had become increasingly difficult to obtain, were easily damaged, and the expense of maintaining them far exceeded that of the York boat.<sup>1</sup> In 1821 it was estimated that the cost of constructing and outfitting a light canoe to make the journey from Ft. William to Lake Winnipeg was between \$300 and \$500 (Innis, 1956:289). Compared to the cost of a York boat and the

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<sup>1</sup>From smallest to largest the canoes of the fur trade were designated as: light canoe, half-canoe, batard (bastard canoe). Canot du nord (25' long, with 10 or 11 in a crew), and Canot du maitre (Montreal canoe - 35 to 40' long with crews of 16 or 18, and a carrying capacity of five tons (Howay. Scot. 1941)

much greater amount of hard and soft ware it could transport, the saving to the company was significant, e.g., the York boat cost between £20 and £25 to construct, would carry between two and three tons, including eight to twelve voyageurs, possibly some passengers, and food supplies for all (Innis, 1956:293).<sup>1</sup>

According to an account by W.C. King, Chief Trader at Lower Fort Garry during the 1860's,

the York Boats were built in the colony by Company ship-builders, of native spruce, they had a thirty-three foot keel and an eight foot beam. They were designed to travel over lakes, rivers, and rapids (Weekes, 1940:25).

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<sup>1</sup>"The York boats appeared in the fur trade about 1826... (and were)...of two sizes---28' and 40'---the larger of which could carry 110 pieces of 90 pounds each with a crew of a steerman, eight middlemen and a bowsman (Anon., The Beaver, Sept. 1935:10-11)." 7

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6. Ibid. Devrome, p. 44-45

7. ANON. The Beaver September 1935 p.p. 10-11

Up until amalgamation, money, as such, had not been used by the company. With all formal competition thwarted by merger, the company, as has been indicated, cut wages in half. As well, the hunters could no longer select their buyers so prices dropped for furs received. Tremaudin comments:

"The beaver

pelt served as a standard of value and was called a 'pelu'. If the fur presented was valued at half a beaver pelt, it was worth half a 'pelu'; if it were worth twice as much, the cost was two 'pelus', etc. The dealer receiving the furs said to the hunter who bought them: "You have 200, 300, 700 'pelus'", etc. A shirt might be worth 12 'pelus', material 3 'pelus' a yard, sugar  $\frac{1}{2}$  'pelu' a pound. The hunter received merchandise in proportion to the number of 'pelus' he had brought in trade, and the Company recognized that it was indebted to him for this amount. If, on the contrary, he was indebted to the Company, and his reputation was good, he could make up the difference on the next trip. Once the exchange was equal, the deal was closed.

Hunters had neither the right to sell their pelts to foreigners nor to take them out of the country to sell them. Agree, it was the Company that set the prices everywhere! It goes without saying that the hunters' profits were slim. However, they were greater than those of the Indians who were cheated unmercifully. For example: an Indian would receive only one shilling for a skin for which a white or a Metis would receive twenty shillings. Naturally, this led the Indians to make their exchanges by way of their

Metis cousins. Learning this, the all-powerful Company issued orders forbidding everyone to exchange furs with Indians. Disobedience meant imprisonment.

Armed constables received orders to search houses

suspected of concealing furs bought from Indians. In the execution of their duty, these men committed many revolting acts which, little by little, alienated the Metis and ended by their making energetic reprisals. In the face of this, the Company was forced to give in and alter its behaviour.

Here are three examples of unjustifiable police activities. One is the case of Regis Lawrence who, in 1828, was accused of having in his possession a number of pelts bought from Indians. Constables, finding his house locked up, forced the doors open and carried away all the furs they found without troubling about their origin. In another case, about the same year, constables went so far as to burn the house and destroy the traps of two French-Canadians at Lake Manitoba. One of the men was blind. For a like offence, a tinsmith of Italian origin was imprisoned and then deported.

The history of the period abounds in similar incidents that demonstrate how far the Company, in its thirst for gold, could demonstrate its contempt for the rights of human beings over who, by the terms of its charter, it exercised absolute control...

civilization and colonization were absolutely nil. The Company didn't begin to develop until after the events of 1869-70 and, if the population of Canada is still only 10,000,000 instead of 20,000,000, the fault is that of the Hudson's Bay Company which, from the time it assumed power over these vast territories, did everything it could to discourage the development of resources with the exception of furs.

8

As can be seen by the research of Tremaudin and Devrome, the monopoly created by the 1821 merger was, once again, on a grand scale, reducing wages, cutting back on labour as it was replaced by capital, and reducing the prices paid to independent commodity producers. For a detailed analysis of this process, we must turn once again to Harold Innis's work:

" The fur trade had shifted at each successive step to the west and the northwest.<sup>8</sup> The struggle of settlement against furs which began in the Conquest, continued in the American Revolution and its aftermath, and in the amalgamation of 1821 was now being pushed in the Northwest. The organization of the trade had resisted the encroachment of settlement and in the West made its final stand in the period from 1821 to 1869. Settlement had increased in the southern districts—Ontario and Quebec—and control by an organization of the trade in those areas was impossible. Of the three departments more directly under the control of Governor Simpson—the Northern, Southern, and Montreal—the Northern remained as the most important. In 1821 it provided 8,995 whole beaver against 5,312 from the Southern department, 36,937 marten against 31,528, 2,660 otter against 1,528, and 82,312 muskrats against 30,602 and its furs were valued at £48,050. In 1828<sup>9</sup> this department showed an apparent gain of £73,000 compared with £26,000 from the Southern department<sup>10</sup> and £6,000 from Montreal department.<sup>11</sup> The disparity was even more obvious in the following year with £96,515, £30,593, and £4,962 as respective gains.

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8. Tremaudin - Unauthorized Translation p. 88-89-90



In the Northern department the amalgamated Company began the task of reorganizing the trade. This department became an excellent example of the economies of monopoly in the fur trade. The personnel was efficiently organized. Expenses were eliminated in every possible direction and control of the supply of furs was adjusted to price levels. The supply of provisions<sup>12</sup> and supplies was developed with reference to the lowest possible cost in the self-sufficiency of each post, of the departments, and of the organization as a whole. Goods were imported, distributed, and handled with the greatest possible economy. Seldom has there existed an instance in which monopoly control was

exercised over a wide area through such a long period of history in a single industry as in the Northern department from 1821 to 1869. And seldom has it been the fortune of an institution to be linked throughout its history to the life of one man, as in the case of Governor Sir George Simpson. The activities of the Hudson's Bay Company in the period 1821 to 1869 deserve an important place in the history of monopolies.

A problem of immediate importance in the rearrangements of the interior was the elimination of bitterness which had been a part of the competition of the preceding period. The men of the Hudson's Bay Company complained that the "comfortable districts were set aside for friends of the N. W. C." Colin Robertson wrote:

It never occurred to the new concern that such men as John Clarke and Colin Robertson were in existence. . . . The N. W. C. have gained a complete victory for the best places. John George McTavish becomes superintendent of York. McLoughlin goes to the Columbia. I am to have Norway House. Mr. John Clarke, full of health and vigor, was represented as compelled to go to Montreal for his health for a time.<sup>13</sup>

The diary of Nicholas Garry is most illuminating on the necessity for tact. The diplomacy of Governor Simpson was vital to success during the early years of amalgamation.

A further problem of immediate importance was the introduction of the Indians to the new régime.<sup>14</sup> The Indians were assured of the supremacy of the Hudson's Bay Company and brought under the control of monopoly. An unsigned letter, the author of which would be suggested to anyone with a knowledge of the history of the period, dated Red River, Fort Garry, May 20, 1822, was eloquent on this point.

Their immediate wants have been fully supplied, but of course the scenes of extravagance are at an end, and it will be a work of time to reconcile them to the new order of things. . . . I have made it my study to examine the nature and character of Indians and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of Iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of subordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us. . . . In the woods and northern barren grounds this measure ought to be pursued rigidly next year if they do not improve, and no credit, not so much as a load of ammunition, given them until they exhibit an inclination to renew their habits of industry. In the plains however this system will not do, as they can live independent of us, and by withholding ammunition."

9

As can be seen, the company now intended to take its full "pound of flesh" from its commodity producers and its workers. But Simpson understood that on no account must the plains Indians and Metis be allowed their own technology if it was to exist independently from the Hudson's Bay Company.

Where the Natives were already dependant on the company for ammunition and supplies, starvation broke out among the Indians when trading forts were abandoned by the company following the rationalization of the fur gathering infrastructure as a result of the amalgamation of 1821.

" The difficulties involved in abandoning posts in the interests of economy and of handling the Indians were shown in the murder of the Company's men at St. John on Peace River in 1823 and in the abandonment of that post and Fort Dunvegan in 1824.<sup>10</sup> But eventually the natives were brought under control."

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9. Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade In Canada*, p. 286, 287, 288.  
 10. *Ibid* p. 288

" Again the large personnel of both companies incidental to competitive conditions was reduced and arrangements made for settling those who had been discharged, at Red River. A letter of February 27, 1822, stated:

It has become a matter of serious importance to determine on the most proper measures to be adopted with regard to the men who have large families and who must be discharged, and with the numerous halfbreed children whose parents have died or deserted them. These people form a burden which cannot be got rid of without expense, and, if allowed to remain in their present condition, they will become dangerous to the Peace of the Country and safety of the Trading Posts. It will therefore be both prudent and economical to incur some expense in placing these people where they may maintain themselves and be civilized and instructed in Religion.

We consider that all these people ought to be removed to Red River. . . .<sup>17</sup>

A later writer noted that

The number of servants employed by the contending parties was triple the number required in quiet . . . times, and, more especially, when the business came to be managed by one firm. . . . The influx of families, from the fur trade, in 1822, and the following summer, exceeded in number those who represented the original colonists brought in from all quarters by his Lordship.<sup>18</sup>

The problem of settling the surplus population was closely related

to the organization of transport. As already pointed out, the effectiveness of the competition of the Hudson's Bay Company was dependent in part on the shorter route from Hudson Bay to the interior and on the use of the York boat. The Northwest Company route from Fort William to Lake Winnipeg dependent on the expensive canoe<sup>19</sup> was abandoned and the York boat was supreme. Nicholas Garry wrote in his diary for 1821, "The whole country may now be supplied with boats. . . ."<sup>20</sup>

Concerning Bas de la Rivière, formerly the Northwest Company's provision depot, he wrote:

At the Moment we were there, there were 50 Women and Children living at the Expense of the Company. This is an immense Expense and some Steps should be taken to avoid it.<sup>22</sup>

( 1 3 7 )

The development of Red River settlement was an immediate solution of the reduction of personnel.

The problems of transportation which had dominated the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company on Hudson Bay continued with monopoly control in the interior. In the evidence given in 1857 it was reported that two ships were generally sent to York, one ship to Moose and another to East Main." 11

As can be seen, the new technology and the mechanics of amalgamation had placed large numbers of former employees in to a previously unheard of situation on the plains - they were now "unemployed". More and more, Red River became the dumping ground used by the Hudson's Bay Company to get rid of the people who could no longer be used as employees.

In addition to this the company was able to assert far more control over its existing employees.

" Simpson, presided at the Council meetings. With the construction of the railroad to Chicago he went to Red River by that point and St. Paul. By these visits of inspection<sup>102</sup> he was able to gain a remarkable knowledge of the demands of the trade and to bring the trade under the control of a central organization.

The accounting methods of the Company were extended to provide more adequate control over the territory" 12

" In addition to the organization of expresses for communication between departments and posts, the affairs of the Company were regulated by inspection journeys which became more effective and numerous with improved transport.<sup>101</sup> From year to year Governor Simpson made his round of visits to the Councils and to the more important posts in the Eastern districts. Less frequently he visited the more remote department on the Pacific coast. He travelled at remarkable speed, leaving Lachine each year and proceeding by canoe with a picked crew up the Ottawa to Fort William and Norway House where

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11. Ibid, p. 288-289

12. Ibid, p. 317,318

Accounts<sup>103</sup> of every district and of every officer and man were made out annually. Inventories were made out at every post on May 31—the closing date for each outfit. With these were included transfers from other posts and the invoices of goods received to show total receipts. Transfers to other posts and inventory of the following spring gave expenditures. Upon this was based, after allowing for competition in various areas, the indents or requisitions for the later years. Fur receipts were entered from day to day and the total was required to balance with the amount shipped. Provisions were handled in a similar way but with a wide margin. Each post was charged with its expenses of transportation, wages, interest, and other costs. The activities of each post from day to day were noted in journals<sup>104</sup> and an elaborate check was kept on each post manager and on each district manager.

Barter was carried on by a unit referred to as Made Beaver or M. B. The changing value of the beaver, especially the later decline in its importance and the fall in price (from 30s. to 32s. per pound in 1837 to 7s. or 8s. in 1854), necessitated the establishment of a unit other than the large beaver skin which was called Made Beaver. Other furs were sold by the Indian on the basis of a relatively fixed tariff."

13

The amalgamation concentrated power and authority as  
—a direct corollary of the concentration of capital into fewer  
and fewer hands. .

This concentration of power extended to the furthest reaches of the fur empire. Innis wrote: "Concentration of authority became evident even within the Northern Council."<sup>14</sup>

The Councils themselves, having centralized authority at the local level, were in turn subverted to the centralized authority in London and to the London Board's appointee, governor Simpson:

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13. Ibid, p. 318

14. Ibid p. 320

" Not only did the Council decline in importance but there were complaints that the Governor promoted those who were most likely

to submit to centralized control. Wintering partners trained in the organization of the Northwest Company were gradually replaced by younger partners trained in the methods of the new discipline. Sir George Simpson's control over Robert Campbell contrasted strikingly with his lack of control over the old partners. The biographies of John McLoughlin and Sir James Douglas are interesting parallels. The bitterness incidental to the old rivalry of the Northwest Company disappeared with the elimination of the more discontented partners. The complaints of patronage were evidence of the increasing power of the Governor."

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With monopoly and the centralization of authority went the new historical structuring of the business world, a system that later came to be known as "bureaucracy", and with this new "top down" structuring of remote and cold authority, came a drop in moral and, to some extent, a drop in efficiency.

Innis continued:

"The gains of the Company which were incidental to monopoly control were offset in part by losses which followed too rigid an application of methods of control especially in the more remote districts. A decline in morale was accompanied by unwise and expensive decisions of the central body."

16

However, the real advantage obtained by the absolute monopoly was the control of the markets in Europe. Despite the inefficiency created by the newly created bureaucracy, the "bottom line" was to be vastly increased profits. Of course, a world-wide monopoly could not be obtained, since the British Empire of the day did not control the entire world. Some competition still remained from countries such as the United States of America, who had just completed a successful national middle class revolution that shook it loose from British domination, and from remote countries such as

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15. Ibid p. 321-322

16. Ibid. p. 325

Russia and Finland, countries that had not been militarily or politically dominated by Britain. Innis wrote:

" The success of monopoly control over costs was measured from the pecuniary point of view in terms of net profits and of dividends to the shareholders and wintering partners. But net profits were also dependent on the number of furs sold and the price for which they were sold. If the Company was in a position to restrict the supply of furs on the European market and to raise the price, net profits were increased. If the Company could increase the supply of furs with a stable price, net profits would again be increased. " 17

However, the monopoly situation was sufficiently strong for the Hudson's Bay Company in the European market place, that the control of the supply of furs could be manipulated so that the company was always in the winning position in the supply-demand cycle. Thus, the company, while guilty of depleting the beaver resource in the first place, was now able to implement some "conservation" programs. For example, beaver could be "conserved" until the market supply was scarce. With the relative shortage in supply came an increase in price per pelt. When the price rose high enough, the Company could then trap the beaver at an increased rate so that "top dollar" could always be realized as profit.

Innis explains:

"It is possible that the Company through attempts to determine fashions and in other ways was able to increase the price of furs but the evidence of these activities is extremely slight and it is probable as a result of competition from fur produced in Russia and other areas that its control over the market was not material.

In the production of furs the Company was not in a position to expand its territory to any great extent. New posts were established on the fringes of the earlier territory in the Yukon and Labrador<sup>121</sup> but the contributions were not significant.<sup>122</sup> The Company was mainly concerned therefore with the territory previously covered by the two separate companies and especially by the Northwest Company. After the amalgamation steps were taken to nurse back the beaver supply

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17. Ibid., p 325

in territories which had been exhausted in the period of competition. In the Minutes of Council, 1825, it was directed: "Indians—Beaver hunting in summer discouraged; Nelson Lake Indians to be discouraged hunting beaver." Five years later it was ordered<sup>123</sup>

that the different District in the Northern Department be restricted to not exceeding the following number of Beaver for the Current Outfit, founded on an average list of returns for three years as expressed in number 131.

Minutes of Council 1826, viz:—

Athabasca	5000	Winnipeg	50
Saskatchewan	5500	Norway Ho.	120
English River	650	Island Lake	100
Cumberland	150	Nelson River	400
Swan River	400	York & Churchill	300
[total 12670]			

In the regulations of 1833 it was urged

that Gentlemen in charge of Districts and Posts, except such as are exposed to opposition, exert their utmost efforts in discouraging the hunting of Cub Beaver and beaver out of season, and that no Beaver traps be issued from the Depot, except for sale to the Piegan Indians, and that in any cases where an unusual proportion of Cub or unseasoned Beaver appears the same be particularly represented to the Governor & Committee.<sup>124</sup>

Similar regulations were passed in the next decade. The Company's measures were apparently not wholly successful, chiefly, it was stated,<sup>125</sup> because the Indians converted the beaver skins into clothing when they were not allowed to sell them. In 1841 the situation was serious:

The impoverishment of the Country in the article of Beaver is increasing to such an alarming extent that it becomes necessary to take effectual measures for providing an immediate remedy; to that end it is Resolved 90. That the Gentlemen in charge of Districts and Posts be strictly enjoined to discourage the Hunting of Beaver by every means in their power; and that not more than half the number collected Outfit 1839 be traded during the Current and two ensuing Outfits at the undermentioned Districts and Posts [25 posts Northern department, 7 posts Southern de-



partment] and as a further remedy for the evil; if it be found that Gentlemen disregard this instruction as they have done many others issued from time to time for the same object, it is Resolved

91. That the Governors and Committee be respectfully advised to give notice of retirement from the Service to such Gentlemen as may not give effect to the spirit and letter of the Resolutions . . .

92. That all Indians at Posts where this restriction exists and who do not kill Beaver be paid in Goods the value of 10 Skins of Made Beaver for every 9 Skins in small Furs they trade in course of the year.<sup>126</sup>

According to Governor Simpson, in the latter part of the period the exchange of goods for furs was arranged to encourage the production of cheaper furs. These furs—muskrat and others—were paid for at a higher rate in proportion to value than the finer furs. Consequently the finer fur-bearing animals were protected and the cheaper and more abundant fur-bearing animals were exploited.

The Company not only attempted to conserve its supply of furs by direct regulations but was also in a position to carry into effect regulations providing for the largest returns from sales. In 1836 it was resolved that no common cub skins be traded because of the high duties in England. In 1839 with the low price of muskrat in England, prices were reduced throughout the whole Northern department; no small rats were taken and 12 large rats were made equal to 1 Made Beaver. In Red River<sup>127</sup> competition necessitated a higher price and 10 large rats were equal to 1 Made Beaver. In 1840 only half the quantities of lynx and musquash sent to England in 1839 were forwarded. In 1841 regulations permitted the purchase of spring rats only at 12 per Made Beaver in both the Northern and Southern departments and only half of the rats retained at York Fort in 1840 together with the Mackenzie River outfit were sent. In 1842 only spring rats were to be purchased at 10 per Made Beaver in the Northern department. No small or damaged rats were purchased, and only 500,000 were sent to England (Southern department, 1839-40 outfits, 183,000, and 1841 outfit, 90,000; Mackenzie River, 1841 outfit, 30,000; Northern department, outfits 1839-40 at York Factory, 234,000). Monopoly control was effective in controlling the production and sale of the cheaper furs as in the case of muskrat.

Ibid

→ 18. p.p. 325, 326, 327

As can be clearly seen, monopoly control of the fur supply was immensely profitable. So much so that the fur resource was very rapidly depleted in a systematic manner after 1821.

Other competitors were "bought off".

" To obtain more complete control the Company acquired<sup>184</sup> the territory of Assiniboia from the Selkirk estate in 1834. Control of the supply of furs in the face of competition from the south was strengthened through an agreement dated March 21, 1833, in which the Hudson's Bay Company paid £300 annually to the American Fur Company for withdrawing from Rainy Lake, Winnipeg, and Red River districts.<sup>185</sup> In 1840 the two companies agreed to oppose a third party in the same districts.<sup>186</sup> Through these arrangements the Hudson's Bay Company reduced its complement of servants in the district and carried on the trade more economically.<sup>187</sup>

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The Red River settlement was a vulnerable point in the defences of the Company and these arrangements were eventually doomed to failure. Petty trade proved difficult to check and in spite of drastic measures continued to increase. Methods of checking private trade in Red River have been an important subject in most of the histories of western Canada.<sup>188</sup> Improvement of transportation facilities to the south made control impossible and it became necessary to meet competition—as in the territory subordinate to Missouri, in buffalo robes—with the informal weapon of a higher price.<sup>189</sup> In 1847 large numbers of buffalo robes<sup>140</sup> were sold in St. Paul at \$3.50 each by settlers from Red River. Exports of furs in 1856 from Pembina and Red River through St. Paul, according to one statement,<sup>141</sup> included "64,292 rats; 8,276 minks; 1,428 martens; 876 foxes; 3,600 coons; 1,045 fishers; . . . 2,542 rit foxes; . . . 7,500 buffalo robes" and other furs.

valued at \$97,000. Prices paid by competitors were responsible.<sup>142</sup> The American Fur Company, for example, paid for otter skins \$3.50 compared with 6/ from the Hudson's Bay Company; \$2.00 for fisher compared with 2/; \$3.25 for beaver compared with 6/; \$15.00 for silver fox compared with 10/, and in the case of summer and yearling buffalo robes the latter company refused to purchase them. "

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19. Ibid. P. 330

20. Ibid. p. 330, 331

Finally, the profits tell the story of the degree of success of the monopoly, followed by over-development, depletion of the fur staple and a rapid drop-off in profits as this occurred: We see that returns per share went to a high of £ 872.10 in 1855, followed by a plunge to £ 339.9.5½ in 1856.

south.<sup>160</sup>

"The final results of monopoly control during the period were shown in the returns of the Company. The shares of the wintering partners were crucial indices, since these officers were primarily responsible for the conduct of the trade. The average annual return for 1/85 share from 1821 to 1872 was estimated at £360.<sup>160</sup> Returns to 1833 averaged £393.8.4 per share and to 1840 averaged £400. Profits fluctuated greatly and declined after that date. In 1841 the returns were £120.<sup>161</sup> Total profits for the period 1840 to 1857 averaged £65,573.2.7 of which £39,343.17.6 were appropriated to the Company and £26,229.5.1 to the chief factors and traders. From these profits the returns of chief factors averaged £617.3.2 and of the chief trader £308.11.7.<sup>162</sup> In the decade from 1853 to 1862 average profits increased apparently as a result of competition and the abandonment of the policy of protection to the fur-bearing animals. Dividends<sup>163</sup> were being paid out of capital. The average return<sup>164</sup> on 1/85 share from 1853 to 1862 was £466.5.6½. The returns fluctuated violently throughout the period increasing from £334.12.3 in 1853 to £690.18.2 in 1854 and to the highest point of £872.10.1 in 1855. They declined sharply to £339.9.5½ in 1856 and recovered to £479.39 in 1857 and £475.15.½ in 1858. But further decline followed to £259.11.3½ in 1859, to £248.1.8 in 1860, and £207.8.6 in 1861. The rally in 1862 brought them to £353.5.1.

The final blow<sup>165</sup> to the monopoly followed increase in settlement on the Pacific coast and in the Red River district. In eastern Canada industrialism was following the path of the fur trade. "

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21. Ibid, p 337

There can be no doubt that the resource was ruthlessly over-developed following monopoly control. As well, the company destroyed those resources that were vulnerable to development by free traders. In the end it was settlement, not the free traders, that defeated the Hudson's Bay Company. Innis wrote:

" On the Pacific coast similar tendencies were in evidence. The licence agreement of 1821 and the renewal of 1838 were supported by various arrangements in the attempts to prevent competition. In this field the advantages of a large central organization, such as the Hudson's Bay Company, were evident in the diplomatic negotiations<sup>149</sup> with the home government. The close relationship between the large central organizations of the fur trade and the home government was still a characteristic feature. In securing the licence and its extension, in the arrangements for leasing Russian territory, in the grant of Vancouver Island, in the investigation of 1857, and in the numerous boundary disputes in the Oregon territory, the position of the Company was greatly strengthened by its diplomatic representatives.<sup>150</sup> .

<sup>149</sup>

A contributing factor to the development of competition was the constant decline in the supply of valuable furs in the more southern districts.<sup>146</sup> The decrease of the fur trade from 1803-1804 to 1857 in the southern district of the Hudson Bay territory and the northern states was estimated by Ellice at one-half or two-thirds. An increase in the number of trappers and more effective methods of trapping<sup>147</sup> were responsible for the persistent decline. According to John McLean<sup>148</sup> the Company met competition by general instructions to destroy fur-bearing animals along the frontier "so as to offer no inducement to petty traders to encroachment on the Company's limits." But these devices probably defeated their own ends. Increase in settlement was fatal to monopoly control of furs and indeed to the large supply of furs. "

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22. Ibid, p. 332

23. Ibid p. 332

We see, then, that the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly control of the fur trading industry enabled it to do the following:

1. Lay off about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the original work force that was in place prior to amalgamation.
2. Abandon many forts that has been in place, on the basis of competition into an unnecessary duality, or a duplication.
3. Control the prices that would be paid to the Indians who procured the furs.
4. Control the market supply and demand cycle in its own favour.
5. Exercise more control over personnel and accounting procedures.
6. Cut back on wages paid to existing employees.
7. Replace labour with capital, because of the concentration of capital following the merger.

The side effects of all this, however, were to become very important as time went on. The people who were displaced, "unemployed" by this whole process, the Metis trappers, voyageurs, middle-men and labourers as well as their families, had to be "disposed of", or in some way prevented from "free trading."

Let us now turn to a series of documents selected, in the main, from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Ottawa. The following letter is a directive from the Governor and Committee, London, England, to George Simpson, dated March 8, 1822:

The entire letter is not quoted here, only portions that are relevant have been selected. (Note that this is less than a year after the amalgamation in June, 1821). The following letters may have a word missing in some places. This is because the letters have been placed in the archives just as they were written in 1822. In some cases it was impossible to decipher certain of the handwritten words. Rather than guess, the space has been left blank so that the possibility of making an error on a key word, thus changing the original meaning - has been avoided. It is better to have a missing word here or there, than to err in what was said, thus perhaps changing the meaning or the original

intent of the message.

The reader is asked to have patience, at this point in our narrative, and to read carefully the content of the following documents. They are copies of original correspondence, and were written in a remarkably candid manner. Their importance as documents to prove the central thesis of this work should be emphasized:

" We now enclose a duplicate of our dispatch of the 27th ult. and we shall have occasion to address you again in a few days upon the subject of the accounts and Inventories of Goods taken over on the 1st of June last.

2. We have been reflecting upon the arrangement of the Salaries of the Clerks proposed in the ..... of our letter of the 27th ult. From the great number of young men now in the Country it will necessarily be a heavy burden upon the trade and it is a matter of the greatest importance to consider if the proper mode of reducing the Establishment of Clerks and Servants to what may be necessary to carry on the trade in an efficient and economical manner. This must be done, however, with discretion and discrimination and with due consideration towards the young men, for it would not be right to discharge those of meritorious habits and character who have acquired a knowledge of the trade and qualified themselves to act as good traders and Clerks merely because their Services might be dispensed with in consequence of the new arrangements.

There are many, who from a recent and temporary employment in either Service, have no great claim upon the Company, and unless in the case of very \_\_\_\_\_ talent these ought to be discharged in the first place.

5. We consider the Scale of salaries which has been proposed to be liberal, and perhaps even too high, but it is an object to hold out sufficient inducement for young men of talent and respectability to remain in the Service until there is a nearer prospect of promotion.

The reduced prices at which all articles of clothing etc. purchased from the Stores are to be charged, may be considered an additional advantage given to the clerks; but one of our objects in proposing these liberal terms is to get ride of that heavy and undefined expense of supporting their families, and it ought to be generally understood that in future some regular charge (&) head must be made to the parties who have families according to the expense of provisions at the post, as well as that they must pay for all articles from the Stores. This regulation ought to be general, and the charge made in proportion to the rank and emoluments of the parties.

6. We understand that there are an immense number of Women and Children supported at the different trading posts, some belonging to men still in the Service and others who have been left by the fathers unprotected and a burden on the trade. It comes to be a serious Consideration how these people are to be disposed of. It is both dangerous and expensive to support a numerous population of this description in an uneducated and savage condition, and it would be impolitic and

inexpedient to encourage and allow them to collect together in different parts of the Country, where they would not be under any proper superintendence. The Establishment of Clergymen and Schools at the Red River Settlement, where means of religious instruction and education will be afforded them and where they will be under a regular police and Government, by the Establishment of Magistrates under the act passed last session of Parliament points out the proper mode of disposing of this numerous class of persons. All old servants, with numerous families, ought to be discharged and transported at the expense of the Trade to Red River; the Canadians, who are Roman Catholics, their children will naturally fall under the care of the Catholic Mission and the Protestants and their families, and all those Orphan children, who will (fail) to be supported by the Company will of course be under the care of the Rev'd Wm. West. (above, Simpson recognized the need for Red River as a town where surplus-population could be kept and controlled.)

7." Small allotments of 20 or 25 acres of Land will be made for the men with families, and a general establishment under the Plan of a School of Industry will have to be formed for the Orphan Children. But it will be necessary that some assistance should be given to the men with families in clothing, tools, Seeds, and ammunition to enable them to build their houses and settle themselves on their land, and to maintain their families until they can reap a crop.

(Above, small plots of land for subsistence farming only was seen as a means of \* It is not to be expected that the Men will do this of themselves and the managers of the Settlement will not consent to a large population of this kind being thrown upon them, unless they are properly provided for and under some efficient management and Control. It will be necessary, therefore, that this measure should be carried into execution under a proper system; but as we are confident that it will be the most economical plan in the end, we think the money it may cost will be well expended. Perhaps the best mode of doing it will be to appoint an intelligent Chief factor or Chief trader, who has the talent of managing the people, together with the necessary assistance of Clerks under him, to take charge of the whole of these people, to make the requisite arrangement with the Gentlemen in charge of the Settlement, for the location of these families, and to superintend and direct the people in the building of their houses, see that they attend to the cultivation of their land, distribute the clothing, ammunition and tools and direct the arrangement for their maintenance. The heads of families ought to come under a written engagement, to obey the directions of the Gentlemen who may have the charge of this business in consideration of which they will be entitled to the above assistance and to their allotments of land. Under a well arranged plan of this kind, and at an expense for two years probably not what it at present costs annually to maintain these people at the trading posts, the Company will be permanently released from a very heavy burden.

8. With respect to the Orphan children, there will be some expense at first in erecting the buildings required for their accommodation and in maintaining them the first year, but if the elder boys are employed in Cultivation, and the Girls and younger Children in \* creating a part-time labour force. ) N.B

works of Industry, the expense will not be very considerable and for religious instruction and education may be carried on at the same time. As the children grow up they may be apprenticed to the respectable Settlers, who will afterwards support them in consideration of their labour for the term of their apprenticeship. Mr. West and his assistants will take charge of this part of the Plan.

12. We do not think it desirable that the Company should have a shop for the supply of the Settlers at Red River, and it will be much better if private persons would undertake this business on their own account. Should this be the case we think they may be allowed to purchase assortments of Goods in wholesale, for the purpose of being retailed to the Settlers, from the Stores at York Factory at the advance of  $33 \frac{1}{3}$  \_\_\_ on the London prices, and they will of course have to provide their own means of transport from York factory to Red River. Such Sales will of course only be made to men of responsibility and when satisfactory payments or good Bills upon London.

13. We approve of the Minute of Council to furnish the Buffalo Wool Company with the skins of Calves killed at the proper season at the price of 5s. each; and in all questions that may arise in the Construction of the Agreement of that Company we wish a liberal Construction to be given to it, as they are to pay a high price for the hides, and the Company will also derive considerable advantage by the charge on the Wool sent home for Sale. Every Attention should be paid to the requests of the Buffalo Wool Company in regard to the season of the year at which the Animals should be killed, and no attempt ought to be made to press upon them Hides that are not in season or fit for their purpose.

15. The Chief factors and others in charge of departments ought to be instructed to keep their accounts on a regular and uniform plan. They ought to be devilled with their outfits, wages, and all expenses and credited with the returns, and where subordinate trading stations are fitted out in (these) Departments, accounts on a similar principle ought to be kept by the Chief trader or Clerk in charge. In this way the council will be enabled to examine and check the expenditure, and to form a just opinion upon the conduct of every individual employed. Copies of these accounts must be sent to us with the observations of the Council upon them.

16. Regular journals must be kept by every person in charge of a department or trading station and not considered mere matter of form and left to the clerks or apprentices.

In these all material occurrences ought to be entered and the dates of departure from the Depart and arrival at wintering stations and also at the principal intermediate places noted." 24

24. Hudson Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, A6/20 fo. 36-43



Following is a summary, in point form, of the concerns revealed in this letter from the London Committee:

- 1) Excess staff (left over from the dual infrastructure needed prior to amalgamation) - are now a "heavy burden" on the Company, so a "proper mode" of reducing their number must be established. Do not fire the very best of them if it is expedient to keep them on.
- 2) Salaries have been too high (because of competition prior to the merger) - Cut them but try not to let that destroy morale. Give some new (token) benefits to employees as a trade-off, in return GET RID OF THE EXPENCE OF SUPPORTING THEIR (HALF BREED) FAMILIES.
- 3) Seriously consider how these families of (half breed) women and children can be DISPOSED OF.
- 4) Don't let this "surplus-population" of half-breeds "collect together" in their "savage" state since this would be "dangerous". In other words, divide and conquer them. Don't let them maintain their own culture and political organization because this would endanger the Company.
- 5) Send them (the half-breed population) to Red River, have them under the control of the Churches (either Catholic or Protestant, it really doesn't matter). Put them under "regular police and government". (Hudson's Bay police and government).
- 6) Put the orphans into schools where they can acquire agricultural and industrial skills. When they grow up they can be apprenticed out to "respectable settlers" for board and room only.
- 7) Give the adults 25 acres of land. This is enough for subsistence farming only, for a large family. There can be no surplus from a 25 acre farm that would be used for commodity production and, consequently no market would be required, no expansion possible, so that this type of controlled agriculture could be prevented from coming into conflict with the fur trading industry, as it had in the east.

8) Industry will be controlled for use by the company, thus preventing the emergence of "free" industry and trade.

9) Tighten up control of the Chief Factors, and the accounting practices as well.

This letter, this policy directive, from the London Office to governor Simpson is a clear and concise statement of the intent of the London executive as regards the Metis people, the employees of the company, and of the executive's intentions of keeping Rupertsland dependent economically and politically on the fur staple, and the Hudson's Bay Company. As well, it spelled out its own "final solution" for "that numerous class of people", the Metis who could no longer be fitted in and used as labour for the Company's purposes. Never has the problem of unemployment caused by the transformation from labour intensive to centrally controlled, capital intensive industry been more explicitly stated. The "surplus population" must be disposed of!

The fact that this was a mercantile Company engaged in one single industry, the extraction of the fur resource, demanded that all other diversification be prevented if profits were to continue to increase. Thus, an entire population of people on the plains found that because of this colonial economic and political control of local resources, their very lives depended on the far away fur market in Europe and upon the vagaries of style, or the whims of the European rich.

The following correspondence deals mainly with Simpson's efforts to deal with the directives given in the previously described correspondence.

Exerpt from a letter from George Simpson, Hudson's Bay House, Lachine, to A. Barclay, Secretary, Hudson's Bay Company, London dated Dec. 9, 1845.

It deals with the manipulation of European labour to replace expensive Canadian labour.

"The price of labor is exceedingly high in this country at present and likely to continue so, arising from the demand for canals, railroads and other public works. I am, therefore, apprehensive we shall not be able to get the number of men required for the interior, unless a very considerable advance of wages be given; and as such advance might tend to raise the wages in the interior, I think it will be more politic, however, inconvenient, to dispense with the servants from Canada for next year, and to increase the number from Europe, as far as such can be done without over burdening the York ship with passengers. The number required from Europe for the Northern Dep't, as per the 55 par. of my despatch of 20 June, is 27. In addition to these I have to beg that three more Sloopers be engaged & ten more laborers, on the terms quoted in that paragraph; and for the Southern Dep't., I have to request that, five labourers be forwarded over and above the number stated in the 50 Res. of the Southern Council and in the 11 par. of my dispatch of 10 September. The whole number required from Europe by the Bay ships will, therefore, be as follows:

		<u>Wages</u>	<u>YF</u>	<u>MF</u>	
Stone Masons	at	£25	2	-	
Biscuit Baker	"	"	1	-	
Scotch Shepherds	"	"	2	-	
Sloopers	"	£20	5	-	
Laborers	"	£16	30	17	" 25

Following is a letter from George Simpson, Hudson's Bay House, Lachine, to "governor and Committee, Hudson's Bay House, London, England", dated Feb., 1844

Here Simpson again describes how imported labour from the Orkenies is used against militant Metis labourers, who are to be laid off, once replaced.

It also deals with scarcity of furs (because of overdevelopment) the abandonment of a fort, and problems with American competitors or "free traders".

"Since I last had this honor, I have visited the Posts of Lac des Salles, Riviere Desort, Fort Coulonge, and Lac des Allumettes where I am sorry to say the prospects of Trade are by no means favorable, furs being unusually scarce, and much competition existing from people engaged in the lumber trade. Shopkeepers and pedlars from the United States who give extravagant money prices for the few skins taken as they are collected. At the two former Posts, I find we shall be able to reduce the establishment of people and by increasing the quantity of our supplies for sale to lumberers and settlers the profits derived from such sales may I think be made to go far towards covering the expenses of the establishments.

The business of the Posts of Fort Coulonge and Lac des Allumettes usually occupying the services of 3 gentlemen and 22 men, I think may be concentrated without injury to the trade by abandoning the Post of Fort Coulonge altogether, and maintaining that of Lac des Allumettes on a reduced establishment of one Officer, and 13 men. Plus change is induced by the absence of most of the Indians usually frequenting Fort Coulonge who now receive their supplies, and take in their few returns to Lac des Allumettes /only 30 miles distant/ and in consequence of the lumber business being conducted on a less extensive scale in the neighbourhood of Fort Coulonge than heretofore, the timber being now collected at a greater distance. But before carrying this measure into effect it will be necessary for me to confer with Mr. Liveright, now at Temiscamingue under whose management the business of those posts has been conducted for many years, and who may have objections to urge thereto with which I am at present unacquainted.

The Servants heretofore employed at those establishments are either Canadians of half breeds of French extraction who are more difficult of management in this part of the country, less under our control, and require much higher wages than Orkney laborers. I, therefore, have to beg that six steady well conducted young Orkneymen on 5 years engagements at the usual wages of £16 or £17 stg. be forwarded for Lac des Allumettes, and Lac des Sables by the Great Britain if this reaches in time, or any other Montreal trader so as to arrive here the latter end of June or early in July, and if they be found to answer our Canadian Servants in this Department, as their engagements expire may be replaced by Orkneymen."

The following selections from a letter from George Simpson, Red River Settlement, to Governor and Committee Hudson's Bay Company, London England, were dated 23 July, 1846.

In it, Simpson thanks the Imperial government for the troops it is sending in to protect Hudson's Bay Company profits and interests, such as its fight against "free trade" competition. As well, he substantiates our prior analysis that no surplus of farm produce was allowed in the colony, over and above the expected requirements of the Company.

" Re: State of affairs in Red River in preparation of Troops arrival.

"With reference to my last dispatch, under date 18 June, 1846 and the accompanying documents, forwarded by Messrs Warre & Vavasour to the Sault de Ste. Marie, to be mailed there for England, via the United States, I have now the honor to acknowledge receipt of the Governor's dispatch of 4 May, with the accompanying correspondence with H.M. Government, on the subject of the troops now, I presume, on their way to York factory, which dispatch I received here on the 12 July. Up to that period I had no definite information that the troops were to be forwarded, & never contemplating that so large a detachment as 400 would be sent, we were very inadequately prepared for their reception in regard to the means of transport and likewise for their accommodation and maintenance here; but by very great exertion and at serious inconvenience to the interests of many of the neighboring districts, I trust we may be enabled to overcome the difficulties which at first sight presented themselves. A fearful malady in the shape of measles and dysentery combined, which has, this summer carried off a great many of the inhabitants of this Settlement and of the surrounding Indian population, has much increased the embarrassments under which we labored....

2. With regard to the means of transport, we have, by making drafts on the districts of Saskatchewan, Swan River, Norway House, English River, Lac la Pluie and York, and by the employment of Settlers and Indians, collected crews for 41 boats, which is all the means of transport we can provide for the troops....

4. In the course of last winter, say under date 29 Dec., I addressed C.F. Christie from Lachine, instructing him to 'commence immediately collecting provisions at Red River.....', in which, however, we have not been quite so successful as could be wished. But I have the satisfaction to say, we have, nevertheless, a sufficient quantity of the old crop of wheat on hand [6500 bushels] to afford a two year's supply to the troops; besides which, we have in store about 2000 bushels barley. The agricultural settlers have, in their own hands, about a year's stock of grain, which they are determined to keep for home consumption & for seed next year. The agricultural population, however, does not exceed half of the whole settlement, the other portion being dependent on the chase, the fisheries and on their more industrious neighbors for the means of subsistence. Of cattle, we have already secured about 100 head, which will average about 600 lbs. weight, and about 200 hogs, averaging 200 lbs. each; & I have no doubt we shall be able to make up a year's supply of animal food for the garrison. Potatoes are abundant, but no other vegetables are in use here.

The want of a market, which has long been a source of discontent to the settlers, has prevented the agriculturalists from extending their farms & increasing their live stock beyond the requisite quantity to meet the demands of the Company & their own absolute wants,

By enlarging their farms, however, their supply of grain & live stock may be increased very rapidly. By the last census, taken in 1843, the cattle amounted to about 6000 head of all ages, sheep 3600 and swine 2000. The stock has not materially increased since that time, for the reason already given, but as an incitement to industry, public intimation has been given that, the Company will take, for the three ensuing years, commencing with 1843, all the wheat, cattle, sheep, pork & poultry, the settlers may have for market - so that, if no unforeseen calamity occur, we have no reason to apprehend a scarcity. The crops of the present years, however, I am concerned to say, are very unfavourable, the wheat (lying) (thus) & \_\_\_\_\_ from long drought in the early part of the season, & of that which is in ear, about a quarter has been destroyed by the Hepian fly, "

27

As has been indicated by Simpson, the establishment of a garrison of troops in Red River was an expensive project as well as being an endeavour that seriously strained the food resources of the colony. At times such as this, when troops were brought in to protect company profits, its own policy of allowing no

agricultural surplus to accrue backfired and left it with insufficient, or only a marginally sufficient food supply for the troops. Clearly the use of troops to protect Hudson Bay Company property and interests was an unprofitable affair. It was always more expedient to exert subtle political pressure of a type that seemed to give some power to local people and token power to some of the hand-picked Metis leaders, such as Cuthbert Grant as a member of the Council of Assiniboia.

Simpson was bedevilled by the need for an agricultural surplus for a safe food supply on the one hand, and the need to prevent settlement to ensure fur trade profits on the other. This was, of course, an impossible contradiction at best, and the problem was exacerbated when "unexpected" guests of the British Imperial Government arrived to protect the Colonial Company's interests.

On October 25, 1847, Governor Simpson lamented the fact that fur production and profits had dropped off because many Indians had been stricken and died from disease. Again, he lamented the fact that the survivors had taken up agriculture and could no longer be counted on to trap furs at the Company's whim.

Following are excerpts from this letter where he outlines his fear of American traders, and the mining industry which diverted furs and Indian laborers away from the Company's potential use:

" Lake Superior district has fallen off more than any other, the deficiency in the returns is compared with those of the preceding year amounting, at our valuation, to about £2,000, on every description of fur except lynx, in which there is an increase of nearly 600 skins, & that increase may, in some degree, account for the reduction in martens. The deficiency in the trade, however, arises from a variety of causes, but principally from the reduction in the number of Indians, a very great mortality having occurred among them last year from measles & dysentery, while many have withdrawn from the country altogether, & seated themselves down as agriculturalists, at the Manitoulin Indian Settlement recently formed by Government. Others, on the American line near Fort William, have given a considerable portion of their hunts to the American traders; & there is no question that the trade of the district has been seriously affected by the attention of the natives being diverted from the chase by the numerous exploring & mining parties now employed in all parts of the lake. The American Fur Company have been anxious to afford us every protection in their power, conformably to the terms of the long standing agreement; under

which a pecuniary consideration of £300 p annum was allowed that Association, but the altered circumstances of that concern, arising from recent misfortunes, have of late years prevented their affording us the protection contemplated; this agreement in question has, therefore, been terminated by mutual consent, and the allowance of £300 p ann discontinued; & this, I have the satisfaction to say, has been effected

... any degree disturbing the friendly understanding that has so long subsisted between the two concerns. An agricultural settlement of Indians and freemen, say retired voyageurs from the service at the Sault de St. Marie, I regret to say is now beginning to grow up on the banks of the Keministagoick, in the immediate neighborhood of Fort William, which I am apprehensive may become troublesome to the business of that part of the district; but we shall of course do everything in our power to conciliate these people. There is no question, however, that the pursuits of civilised life do not harmonise with the Fur Trade, & that the business of this district must gradually decline as mining & agriculture progress in this quarter. We have applications to the Government at present pending for grants of land in the neighborhood of all the establishments on the shores of the lake, as a means of protection from the encroachments of settlers, but as yet these applications have not been determined upon, I have every reason to believe, however, that they will be complied with. The usual posts are still maintained, say Fort William, with an outpost near Pigeon River, Nipigon, Pie, Long Lake, Michipicoton & Batchewana; with the usual compliment of people, but an increased outfit of goods has become necessary owing to an advance made in the prices of furs to Indians, arising from the competition of the numerous strangers by whom we are now surrounded."

28

Thus, Governor Simpson laid out, to the Governor and Committee in London, his fears about industrial diversification and advanced agricultural settlement. Clearly, the Company required that the west remain dependent and impoverished, and largely ignorant, if its monopoly of, and profits from the fur staple were to be maintained. As well, Simpson recognized that religion was an important element of the Metis people. In the following (from the same letter) Simpson was setting in motion a process to have a "troublesome" Catholic priest removed from Red River because he was advocating free trade. (He was later removed by the Catholic Hierarchy).



"Two Roman Catholic priests from Canada proceeded to Moose this season, who although very unwelcome visitors, were hospitably entertained, much to the annoyance of Mr. Barnley the Wesleyan Missionary, who protested formally in writing against their admission to the establishment, but although Mr. Barnley himself has lost his popularity among the natives, the priests were not successful in making converts; they seem nevertheless determined on persevering & have made application to me, in which they have been backed by a personal application from the Bishop of Montreal, for permission to form a permanent establishment at Moose, but this I have declined complying with without your sanction, which I told the Bishop I could not recommend being granted until they had recalled Mr. Belcourt, one of the priests at Red River, who has of late been exceedingly active in sowing the seeds of disaffection among the half-breeds, & who was the framer of the calumnious petition to Her Majesty which has recently been presented to the Colonial Office by Isbister & others. In the course of last winter I had occasion to notice to the Bishop the troublesome character & conduct of Mr. Belcourt, who visited Canada this season, in order to explain the conduct of which I complained & was allowed to return only in order to settle his private affairs, on the assurance that he would withdraw altogether from the country & be back in Canada in the course of this month. Should he not make his appearance accordingly, I purpose going down to Quebec to communicate personally with the Bishop of that diocese, under whose immediate direction he is; but as I shall have occasion to address you more fully on this subject in the course of a few weeks hence, it is unnecessary to enlarge thereon at present, beyond saying that, I think the spirit of Roman Catholicism is likely to have a very injurious tendency as regards the peace of the country & the interests of the Fur Trade."

29

The Hudson's Bay Company was not above attempting to control and manipulate even the churches, as a means of controlling the ideology of the Metis people and the white settlers of Red River.

But trouble was brewing for the Company from many quarters. Control was not as absolute as it appeared. Every oppressive act of the company, every piece of legislation designed to oppress, control, reduce wages, or prevent freedom of trade, or freedom of movement, created an opposing force, an emotional and intellectual reaction to oppression. For long periods of time the Metis people appeared docile, resigned to their lot, but then suddenly, from one source or another, like a volcano bursting from its mountainous environs, resistance became tangible. Struggle developed everywhere, created by the desire, indeed the need, for men to be free. As the years passed, the need for freedom surfaced in the form of material conflict, rather than ideological

debate. If one thing was obvious to the Indian and Metis people of the fur trading epoch, it was that the Company was not likely to be moved with words of reason. Thus, a chronological selection of letters to and from governor Simpson reveals the following conflicts, along with the proposed solutions from the Hudson's Bay Company's perspective.

By 1838 Red River had become a colony with a large number of unemployed Metis and Indian people. This was used by the Company as a reserve of cheap, seasonal labour, and a reserve of unemployed people whose presence tended to threaten and keep down the wages of the existing Company laborers. "If you don't want to work hard for us, there are a hundred people in Red River who will," is a threat that could have been used many times over to stimulate recalcitrant workers. By 1838, it should be noted, free traders such as "Sinclair, McDermot & others" were already creating trouble for the monopoly by paying higher wages:

24 A New title Deed has been prepared for lands to be sold or pawned at Red River Settlement; likewise a Register book agreeably to your request, and some books of Notes for circulation in the Colony, all of which will be forwarded by the Ship, as they are too ponderous to be sent by the overland Packet.

In your Councillings proceedings at Red River Settlement I have to beg you will oppose any attempt that may be made to reduce the duties on Imports or Exports lower than the 4 per cent derermined on last year as the fund arising from that branch of Revenue at the present rate I am quite sure will barely defray the charges & expences connected with Public affairs, which it is intended to cover.

The Trade of several of the Home Districts is beginning to suffer very much from the large emigrations of Indians to Red River of late years and that influx of population is becoming a source of great danger to the White inhabitants who are now out numbered by half-breeds & Indians in the population of about 4 or 5 to one. This evil arises from [in some degree] the encouragement given them [with the best intentions by the Protestant & Catholic Missionaries] to change their Residence & habits of life, but is principally owing to the facility

with which they can obtain Malt Liquor & the high terms offered them for labor, especially by Sinclair, McDermot & other carriers who in order to obtain labor at a cheaper rate than by hiring the regular N.B. settlers, entice the York, Norway House, Oxford, Cumberland & Beren's River Indians from their own homes. It is absolutely necessary for the preservation of the peace of the Settlement and the protection of the Trade of those Districts, that some means be taken to check this dangerous migration. I have, therefore, to request that in any future contract or agreement with Sinclair, McDermot and other carriers for transport an express condition be made that they shall employ no Indians or other persons than such as you approve, and that they will not hold any communication, or have any dealings with Indians en-route otherwise we must discontinue that mode of transport and thereby deprive them of a valuable branch of business.

For the McKenzie's river and other transport you will next year make the same arrangement as heretofore, and it is desirable to engage in the course of the winter or spring about 20 young able half breeds at £17 per annum for general services on three years contracts. You will be pleased to purchase at the Settlement, about the usual quantity of dried provisions, grain and other Country produce for the use of the Service & at the Established prices."

30

In a correspondence dated June 21, 1843, governor Simpson describes the problems encountered in his tour of the territories to the Governor and Committee Hudson's Bay Company, London England. Following are excerpts from this lengthy document:

1) Simpson describes how an American competitor was "bought off" for £ 300:

13. "Lake Superior being the centre of the <sup>Can.</sup> American Fur Company's operations, it may not be improper here to say, that my late advices from Mr. Crooks, the President of that concern, I am happy to learn that notwithstanding their recent difficulties, their fur trading operations in this part of the country are likely to go on without interruption and that that gentleman will continue in the management. They have uniformly kept good faith with us in the arrangement by which they were not to interfere with our trade upon the frontier line to the Northward & Westward of the shores of Lake Superior, I shall, therefore, as heretofore transmit to Mr. Crooks a draft on your Honors for £300, being the consideration due under the agreement in question for the past year; and as that agreement will expire next year, I shall endeavor to have it renewed for a further term of 3 years on my return to Canada in the Autumn."

31

30. Hudson's Bay Company Archives - Ottawa D4/23, f. 224

31. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, A 12/2 f. 182

Below, Simpson describes how he feels about the Missionaries who are teaching the Indians and Metis some skills. Since the buffalo have begun, by this time, to be very scarce, Simpson callously concludes that this is good because farming will now keep his work force alive at a subsistence level, so that it can be used by the Company as commodity producers of furs in the winter.

15. "Both Wesleyan and Roman Catholic Missionaries are making great efforts in this district to christianize the natives, in which, however, they are by no means successful, owing, I conceive, in a great measure, to the hostile feeling with which they are animated towards each other. There is one advantage likely to arise from the establishment of these missions in the district, in the encouragement they hold forth to the natives to form themselves into agricultural Settlements, to which they seem very much inclined, as from the precarious state of the natural resources, now that large animals are become extinct, they perceive it is the only mode in which they can be saved from the miseries of starvation; indeed, unless they give their attention to this object, the population must either migrate to some other part of the country, were the means of subsistence are more abundant, or become extinct from starvation, so that as a measure of protection to the trade, independent of any feelings of humanity, it becomes necessary to encourage and assist their endeavours, and to that end instructions have been given that hoes, seed, grain and cattle when they are in a condition to take care of them shall be provided for the use of the Indians, free of charge. There will be three principal agricultural settlements in the district, one on the banks of Lac la Pluie river near a place called the Manitou, another in Plantation Islands in the Lake of the Woods and the third on the upper part of the Winipeg river, all well adapted as regards soil for the object in view, in which there is every prospect of their being successful, and if so, the stock of provisions thus collected will enable the Indians to devote their time during the winter exclusively to fur hunting, instead of their attention being principally occupied, as it now is, in obtaining the means of living." N

16. The fur trade of Red River district [adjoining that of Lac la Pluie] is rather more productive than for the few past years, but at the best it is upon a very small scale and principally through the hands of half breed Settlers; who, though nominally agriculturists, devote the greater part of their time and attention to the chase. At this place I have no doubt there is some illicit trade between the neighbouring Indians and the Settlers; but this we cannot prevent, and now that the intercourse between the Settlement

and the U. States has become frequent, it is probable that furs are occasionally conveyed thither. In order to check this traffic we give high prices for furs, which to a certain degree has the desired effect, as the American traders across the lines cannot afford to compete with us. These high prices are productive of inconvenience, inasmuch as they encourage the natives to bring their furs hither from the neighbouring districts; but circumstanced as we are here, with a large half savage population, very difficult of management, it is impossible to prevent that entirely, and the mode of dealing now practised we consider the best calculated to protect the Hon. Company's interests in this quarter. "

32

Simpson was aware that free trade was also causing competition resulting in higher prices being paid to the Indians. "Free trade must be stopped", he said. Below Simpson laments the fact that the company misappropriation of provisions had led to starvation of Indians which had left profits in a "very unpromising state".

. "McKenzie's River - We have no later advices from this district than the early part of the Winter, nor can the result of the trade of the past outfit be known until the month of Sept. when further and

more detailed reports on its affairs will be transmitted, but up to the last advices I am much concerned to say that the business was in a very unpromising state, owing entirely to the great scarcity of provisions throughout the district during the Winter of 1841/2 and autumn of 1842, which has led, in the lower part of the McKenzie river to a very great loss of life among the natives. It may be recollected that in the winter of 1841/2 the post of Fort Good Hope was temporarily abandoned in consequence of the total failure in the means of subsistence which led to the most horrible scenes within a short distance round the establishment perhaps ever heard of in the country, the natives dying of starvation and absolutely devouring each other, 56 having perished in that way under the pickets of the fort; and in the spring of last year [1842] I lament to say that two of the Company's Servants, John Spence and Murdock Morrison, the bearers of a packet to Peel's river [respecting whom it will be recollected there was much anxiety last year, from nothing having been

heard of them / it is now ascertained were dogged to their encampment, the night of the day they left Fort Good Hope, by four women / who had previously devoured their husbands & children / and were murdered in their sleep to appease the cravings of hunger of these wretched people. C. F. Lewis in his communication desires particular instructions in reference to these women, but as there can be no doubt the horrible deed was committed under the pressure of the most intense sufferings, we can only deplore the event to which the miserable women were impelled of a measure of self preservation. The Indian population of that part of the country has been so much reduced by famine / but few families of the dog ribbed tribe having escaped / that it is supposed the trade will, in consequence, be barely sufficient to maintain the expence of a post and there was some idea of abandoning Fort Good Hope; on futher consideration, however, it was determined to maintain it for the present, with the double view of meeting the wants of the few remaining natives and of facilitating our communication with Peel's River."

33

The abandonment of posts, and the depletion of the fur resources had had their inevitable result; a people made dependent on the fur trade had starved to death because all the furs were now gone. This process had been built-in to the colonial economy, as Simpson's letters so clearly revealed. Meanwhile, as of June, 1843, Simpson reported to his superiors:

So. "Red River Settlement, I am happy to say, is in a healthy and tranquil state and its affairs going on in a regular and satisfactory manner. The crops look well, black cattle and sheep are as numerous as the condition of the people to provide winter provender will admit and although the inhabitants make lowd complaints of the want of a market, I do not know any peasantry so comfortable & independent in their circumstances; they are, nevertheless, very difficult of management, which is not to be wondered at, when the variety of races and ignorance / the greater part of them but nominally removed from a state of barbarism / are considered. We have, heretofore, been so much occupied with the affairs of the Fur Trade, that we have not been able to give much attention to those of the district of Assiniboia, but after the pressure of our own Coucilling business is over, a Council will be held for this district, when such messures will be determined upon for the benefit of the Settlement and its inhabitants as may be considered advisable, and the Minutes forwarded by the ship. (Out of doors) there seems to be a strong desire to establish

a public distillery and I think it is likely we shall have to fall in with the views of the public on this subject; unless we do so, it is to be feared that they will set all our prohibitory ordinances at nought and enter largely into illicit distillation, which we have not the force to prevent."

Note: see A6/26, f.184 4 March, 1844 Governor & Committee to George Simpson - reference is made to the above letter.

34

As of 1843 things were tranquil in Red River, at least on the surface. But Simpson may have had vague fears; he continually refers to the use of "force".

Lacking that force, the Council of Assinaboia was created by the company to create the illusion of local democracy. As well, the Company began to engage in political subterfuge at the national level, so as to have some control over the fledgling Canadian parliament in the east, should it become troublesome.

On November 29, 1856, Simpson wrote to John Shepherd, governor Hudson's Bay Company, London England. Evidently the Hudson's Bay Company had been the recipient of government grants. This was protested by the "whig firebrand", George Brown:

"In the meantime, the matter having got wind, has been taken up, by some politicians headed by George Brown who made the Hudson's Bay Company one of their party cries; they protest against the Grants being made but I do not apprehend they can prevent the fulfilment of what has been already passed by the Council.

There is reason to believe the present Government will shortly break up, although some of its members may retain office, Vankoughnet the president of the Council, whose attacks upon the Company you have seen, will be a leading man, whether in or out of power; but in the new combinations lately to occur, he and his friends are very desirous to strengthen their party by the accession of our Lawyer Mr. Rose Q.C. of Montreal who possesses much influence in the Country. He hesitates, however, to incur (that) heavy expense which a contested Election might

entail on him; but some of his friends who are anxious to secure his entrance into public life, and who would thereby secure a claim in his good offices here after, I understand, are disposed to assist him with the money for the purpose, the parties who support him I learn confidentially are of the first standing in the Country, headed by the Grand Trunk Railway Company, and Mess'rs Gilmour and Co. a \_\_\_\_\_ House with the Lumber Trade. I am of opinion that although such a course is not usual with the Company, they might in this instance do well to unite with Mr. Rose's Friends in this object, but privately and without the knowledge of any other person than Mr. Rose himself. If in the House, and that we had been instrumental in getting him there, he would be both willing and able to render us valuable service more especially as he would be associated and no doubt have much weight with the very party who are likely to be most troublesome to us. As regards the Company's interests I should be very glad to see Mr. Rose in Parliament being already the Company's confidential adviser. We should not only have an able supporter in the House, but also the means of establishing when necessary private communication with the Government which is often more effectual in disposing of questions than official correspondence. The Company could not appear in this matter, but unless you object to it, I will in the meantime contribute from my own friends towards Mr. Rose's election if contested a sum not exceeding £250 Stg."

35

Above, Simpson very candidly describes how a politician was to be backed, supported and bribed so as to obtain company "grants" and privileges from the state.

Closer to home, Simpson knew that the Company's time was running out, he wrote:

"I feel strongly tempted to write, but there is no use in doing so at this distance. Newspaper-writing to do any good must hit at the right moment. But after all when I reflect I can't help seeing that proof that must be required on charges such as Kennedy's must fail and therefore, must result in good. But that will not quiet Red River. We have a great deal of unemployed energy, young men who go to the States in summer and earn there what they spend here in winter. These are the life and soul of all troublesome movements, the old School are worn out and superseded." N.B.

In the meantime the Yankees are closing in upon us. The Territory of Minnesota is divided, the Eastern half being now the State of Min'a and the Western, the Territory of Dacotah. Troops are certainly coming, not to Pembina; but somewhere about Graham's Point on the Grand Forks. Steamboats are talked of and all the legislation in the world will never, I fear, turn the tide of commerce from the plains and waters of the South. There is one subject that has long appeared to me very important and that



Kennedy has made the most of not in a spirit of improvement, but for mere (bun Kum) purposes ie. the tenure of Lands here. He told the people that their titles were worthless and a great deal more stuff that is unfounded and that seemed to make a great impression. It was not difficult to show and show satisfactorily that practically the land holders had little to fear; but the real difficulty is in the system by which lands have been granted, sometimes without anything to show and sometimes by a mere pencil mark and worst of all, have changed hands without registration or documentary evidence of any kind. The whole thing requires immediate and efficient attention with a system of Registration not by one of the clerks in the Counting house, but by an able public officer, who with nothing else to do would find two or three years of hard work to set it all to rights and issue proper title deeds. The fur trade should have nothing to do with it. There is a cry too about the title of the Company to the lands on the ground that the Indians were never paid for them. It is difficult to get at the true state of the matter; but it is certain that old Peguis at Kennedy's instigation is talking very big and many people believe him to be in the right. You have now as much as I can give you on the res publice. Perhaps I may send a line to meet you at Fort Alexander. In the meantime we drag on in the old way. "

By 1859, the Company was experiencing difficulty obtaining<sup>36</sup> men from the Highlands of Scotland because of the poor wages offered and the bad working conditions. The company made an unsuccessful attempt at recruiting men from Norway (the Company did get some men over to Rupertsland but was forced to pay their way back home). Because of all this, the Company raised wages and renewed its recruiting drive in the Orkenies and the Scottish Highlands.<sup>37</sup>

The company executive feared the solidarity of the clan system of the Highlanders just as much as it feared the tribal loyalty of the Canadian Indians, as the following excerpt from a London Director's letter makes clear:

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36. Ibid, D4/83, f.o. 912-914

37. Summation of the Content of a letter from Thomas Fraser, Secretary, Hudson's Bay House, London England to James R. Clarke, York Factory dated 24 June, 1859, Hudsons Bay Company Archives, Ottawa B 239/C111 p.p. 95-99

"In concluding my observations on the subject of the new Recruits sent out allow me to suggest the prudence of not keeping either all the Orkney men or all the Stornoway men or all the men from Inverness together. Let Brigades be composed of a certain proportion from each place. Your own experience will suggest sundry advantages to be derived from that arrangement besides that of preventing combinations and Clanship."

38

Just as the Company separated old friends and neighbours of the Scottish Highlands to prevent labour solidarity, so they used these new recruits to replace militant Metis voyageurs, (as has already been established.)

Despite all, the low wages and absolute control of the fur business brought on strikes.

In the following letter to Hudson's Bay, spokesman discusses replacing troublesome Indian and Metis people with a new technology, (a boat on the Saskatchewan).

3 Dec., 1865 - William Mactavish, Fort Garry to James A. Graham, Norway House  
N.B.  
Re: Labour problems Portage La Loche tripmen

I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of 16 and 30 September and 6 October, which I found waiting me here on my return from Canada.

The Portage La Loche tripmen who misbehaved have been punished as far as we can. It is difficult, however, to get at them and our necessities sometimes compel us to engage people whom we would gladly avoid.

Whatever change may have to be made as regards the Portage boats, I observe we cannot calculate on the assistance of the Norway House Trippers, as it appears they will not make a trip from Norway House after the 12 August. I am aware that if we long continue to trust to the Indian Brigades making a trip from Norway House after the arrival of the Portage Boats, the Indian tripmen would break down as the Portage Tripmen have done, and, as I may add, all other Tripmen will do; but I thought, and still think that for a year or two they could be induced to make the trip, as they formerly did annually, and as they have been got to do occasionally more lately. I observed your objections to the scheme of substituting Indian Trip boats for Portage boats, and as far as it goes it is valid, but I do not think it insupportable. If the Mackenzie River returns get here, as they did this year, on the 21 September, it would be idle to speak of sending them via Saint Paul, except in an uncommonly fine season.

(Mactavish goes on to report of the trial runs of the steam boat International on the Saskatchewan.)

.....He says, however, that there are one or two places which will occasion the necessity for the boat having stronger machinery than that now on the "International". If this be correct and a boat got to run on the Saskatchewan, the Portage La Loche Brigade will be done away with. Both Governor and Committee approve of the scheme."

Mactavish, in the previous letter admitted that conditions were so bad that no one, Metis or Indian, or European boatmen, could be expected to continue. Strikes were inevitable, so as the following letter indicates, these men were to be replaced with capital in the form of a new technology.

" D9/1, fo. 55-59

7 Dec., 1865 - William Mactavish, Fort Garry to William J. Christie  
Edmonton.

H.B.

Re: Dissolving the Portage Boat Brigades, steamers on the Saskatchewan

"Captain Nunn and \_\_\_\_\_ Hutchinson, Captain and Pilot of the Steamer International, arrived here from Carlton late in November. They had started from here rather late, and detention in Lake Winnipeg, in part arising from their Guides ignorance of the West shore of the Lake..... They give a very decided and favorable opinion of the Saskatchewan river for steam navigation between the Grand Rapids and Carlton, as Nunn says most decidedly that if a Pier is made at the Rapid at Cross Lake to enable the steamer to be hauled up there is no obstruction that can prevent the running of a Steamboat. But he says that though the Steamer International would answer for the Saskatchewan, the machinery in the boat is not sufficiently powerful for the work that would be required of it at a few points.

In reply to a letter of mine to the Governor and Committee on this subject, I am informed that the putting of Steamers on Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan river must be left to the decision of the Officers in this Country. Though the fact of neither of the Steam engines on hand have being suitable, either for a propellar on Lake Winnipeg or a Steamboat on Saskatchewan, will render the carrying out of the plan for putting a steamer on that River more expensive. I am still of the opinion that it would be advantageous to carry out the scheme; as apart from other advantages, it would in the end enable us to do without the Portage Boats, the crews of which have now become a perfect nuisance from their mutinous conduct and unwillingness to carry out any engagement made with them. I feel confident that if a

boat can run on the Saskatchewan the Mackenzie River Outfit and Returns can be got in and out by Lac la Biche and Athabasca River. The Boat could land the Outfit at a point on the Saskatchewan between Fort Pitt and Edmonton from whence it could be carted to Lac la Biche, where I think the Mackenzie River Boats could take it very nearly as easily as from Portage La Loche. I send you a copy of Captain Nunn's report. With regard to the route from Carlton to Green Lake I think it will be well to have it thoroughly examined and the best road from Pelican Lake to Green Lake ascertained. Though I do not think it will be used next year yet eventually I am of opinion a considerable portion of the English River Outfit must go in by that route."

40

The following letter from one local Hudson's Bay Company official to another, again mentions labour difficulties and the need for a military force to put the workers in their place:

"7 Dec., 1866 James A. Grahame, Norway House to Joseph Wilson,  
York Factory

Re: Rebelliousness of Portage boat brigades

"The breaking down of your Boatmen is to be deplored. So little reliance can be placed on any except the Indian Brigades that I would \_\_\_\_\_ see them keep moving.

As regards the Portage Brigades; their going to York is a near mockery as far as upward cargoes are concerned and always will be. The men are anxious to get back to their families, and their repeated misdeeds being treated with impunity in Red River, from the actual inability of the law to reach them, they have become reckless and unfit to deal with. Our business depending on such people for its routine must suffer, and nothing but the arm of military power could do anything with them. That of course is out of the question."

41

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41. Excerpt, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, Ontario.  
D9/1, f.o. 55-59

40. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, Ontario D9/1, fo. 60-65

As of 1866, no troops were available from England to "punish" the striking Metis boatmen. However, by 1870, they were available. Donald A. Smith, in the following letter, hopes that profits will be restored with the return of "law and order" brought about by the troops.

August, 1870 - Donald A. Smith, Norway House  
Rec'd 15 Sept.

A11/128, fo. 143-4

Re: Troops coming to Red River; reorganization of Officers as commercial administrators; dissolving labour of tripmen.

"States that he is advised it is not desirable that he should proceed to Fort Garry till the arrival of the Troops which are expected at Fort Alexander shortly. The Board may rest assured that no effort will be spared to protect the interests of the Company, such arrangements as, under the disorganized condition of affairs at the Coy's establish't, may be practicable will be made in order that the trade may participate as largely as possible in the increase of business, which will not doubt take place on the advent of Troops & other strangers to the settl.

Has heard that the business of the Dist. is being conducted with as much regularity as could be looked for. Hopes that upon the restoration of law & order the trade of that place and of the Country generally will become more remunerative than it has been for some time back, but it is evident that to make it so there must be introduced into the service a certain number of men of Com'l knowledge & habits such as are not possessed by some of the existing officers.

Arrangements will be made for the accommodation of the Troops who may remain in the Country by giving up to them such buildings at Fort Garry & at the Stone Fort as can be dispensed with without inconvenience to the trade, on the understanding that the Co'y will be fairly remunerated for the accomodation.

Sends a copy of a proclamation by Col. Wolsley. Received for transmission to Red River Settlement.

States that the general business throughout the Dep't is in much better condition at the moment than the aspect of affairs only a short time back would have warranted the Officers in expecting, owing to insubordination of some breeds principally French Halfbreeds engaged for the transport to McKenzie River and their return to Red River without completing the voyage, there was some fear that it would not be possible to introduce the Outfit for that District, but arrangements were made with Chief Factors Christie & McMurray the difficulty has been overcome and no inconvenience to the trade is apprehended from want of supplies in McKenzie River.

The measures decided on for the transport business of next season to that remote District are such as it believed will render the Co'y in great measure independent of the Tripmen from Red River."

As can be seen, the extreme degree of exploitation of its workforce, made possible by its complete monopoly, brought down the wrath of the Metis trip men, so that the Company began, by 1860, to require Imperial troops to control its own employees. During the period 1821 - 1870, when its monopoly held sway over Rupertsland the company required British troops to ensure the protection of its profits on three occasions prior to the invasion of the Canadian militia under Colonel Wolseley.

"On several occasions detachments of Imperial troops were sent to the Red River Settlement by the British Government in response to urgent requests of the Hudson's Bay Company, and these were all in turn, during their stay, quartered within the stone walls of Fort Garry. In 1846, eighteen officers and three hundred and twenty-nine men, being a wing of the 6th Royal Regiment of Foot, with artillery and engineers, under the command of Colonel John F. Crofton, arrived, having made the long journey from England via Hudson Bay, Lake Winnipeg and the Red River. They remained quartered in the fort for two years and then returned to Great Britain by the same route.

In the autumn of 1848, seventy pensioners arrived under command of Major Caldwell, the object of this corps being that they should form the nucleus of the local force to be recruited in the Red River Settlement, to support the enforcement of the laws of the Hudson's Bay Company. Major Caldwell remained in the Settlement until 1855, but most of the men settled down in the country.

In 1856, the Company evidently brought strong pressure to bear on the Imperial Government to send another military force to Fort Garry. In this year also, two hundred United States troops arrived at Pembina, and the first act of this body was to issue a proclamation, notifying British subjects that they must not cross the International Boundary line to hunt or trade in furs. As a result of the situation, the Imperial Government in 1857 sent a company of the Royal Canadian Rifles via the Hudson's Bay route and these remained until 1861, when they returned to England".<sup>43</sup>

43. Charles Napier Bell, L. LB. FRGS., The Old Forts of Winnipeg, 1738 - 1927, The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Published by Dawson Richardson Ltd., Winnipeg, 1927, p. 33, in Volume 50 AMNSIS library, Regina.

From all of this it is clear that the American republic to the south, although correctly seen as a threat to Great Britain's interests in the Northwest, was not the only, indeed, the main reason for bringing troops into the Red River. They were brought in on at least two occasions to intimidate recalcitrant employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, and to pose a threat to free traders. As we shall see, it was this latter group that was able to organize at a "national" level, and finally break the strangle-hold of the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly of the Northwest.

Summary of Chapter VI

The monopoly of the fur trade, made possible when the Hudson's Bay Company merged with the North West Company, led to the following:

- 1) Wages paid to employees were reduced.
- 2) Independent commodity producers were paid less for their furs.
- 3) The duplication of the expensive transportation infrastructure was no longer needed. Forts were abandoned and many voyageurs were laid off.
- 4) Labour was replaced by capital, as york boats and eventually steam ships replaced the canoe, and rail lines eventually replaced the carts.
- 5) More control of accounting methods was made possible through centralisation.
- 6) More control was exercised over the activities of employees.
- 7) Control of the major fur sources in the world allowed for the virtual control of the European fur market's prices.
- 8) Complete and absolute control over the economic conditions of the people of Rupertsland resulted in more political power for the company both locally and in London.
- 9) The company earned super-profits which hastened the process of overdevelopment.

The other side of the ledger, the other results of this concentration of money and power were as follows:

A vast surplus-population was created. Red River became the "dumping ground" for the people displaced after 1921.

White Horse Plains was set up, under Cuthbert Grant, now in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, as an agricultural colony. Both Red River and White Horse Plains provided a "reserve army" of labour that could be used by the Company during peak periods of work. Thus, "free" labour replaced indentured labour.



The Company refused to allow markets for farm produce. Farms were to be for subsistence only, since settlement would impede the fur trade. Thus, without the ability to trade freely in furs, without any other alternative industry in the colony, the Metis were impoverished, and forced to trade illegally, simply to survive. Strikes occurred regularly and the Company brought troops in from Britain to quell the disturbances of the angry labour force, and to prevent free trade. However, Britain was unable to send in a sufficient force to maintain the Company's laws that were now flagrantly hostile to the local people.

The Scottish "half breeds" in the main, were kept in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, but the French-speaking Catholic Metis were laid off (because they were more militant and nationalistic). As a result, the Metis became the buffalo hunters, taking on more of the Indian characteristics of that life-style, while the English-speaking "half breeds" remained as Company employees, and consequently remained more "loyal" to the Company and its Colonial government. However, the merger created so much unemployment that many of these people were forced out onto the plains to hunt, as well. The Scottish "Half Breeds" that were forced out of Red River along with the French-speaking Metis eventually became French-speaking Catholics and assumed the life-style of their hunting companions. Thus, once again, "ethnicity" was determined, under the Hudson's Bay Company regime, on the basis of occupation. For the large majority of people, Metis, Half-breeds, and Scottish settlers, life was rapidly becoming impossible under the old order based upon the extraction of one staple commodity within the confines of a perfect monopoly.

Chapter VIILa Traite, C'est La Liberte'

The correspondence of the Hudson's Bay Company officials quoted in the preceding chapter appeared to be obsessed with profits, and labour difficulties, but the Company functionaries both in London and in Rupertsland understood that the real danger in the North West was Metis nationalism. This 'sleeping dragon' had been born from the bloodshed of an arrogant governor and his innocent settlers, and had been nursed by the oppression of the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly control of every political and economic aspect of the Metis peoples' lives.

The effect of this monopoly control was even more visible in the destitution of the Indian tribes of the North. The Metis voyageurs had witnessed for themselves the plight of the Indians who had become dependent on the fur trade as it was controlled from London. These voyageurs and labourers, "laid off" after amalgamation, simply added fuel to the fires of Metis discontent in Red River. The Metis could not long tolerate "unemployment", since this would amount to a sentence of death by starvation, or at best, a life of degradation and dependency on relatives or friends. But there was still an abundance of buffalo on the plains, and just beyond the jurisdiction of the Company, in the United States, there were numerous Yankee traders who paid a competitive price for the furs and buffalo hides.

Prior to amalgamation with its inevitably massive reduction in the work force, the French "Metis" and the English "Half Breeds" had lived a harmonious existence in Red River, but now divisions were being created by the new economic system.

The lay-off of the lower level workers hit hardest at the French-speaking Metis employees of the old North West Company, while many of the English-speaking half breed employees of the Hudson's Bay Company retained their jobs. Consequently, it was the French-Speaking Metis who, in the main, became the buffalo hunters and "free traders", and who consequently provided the push and

the impetus toward Metis nationalism. The Scottish half breeds who did become buffalo hunters and free traders eventually become French speaking Metis. Examples of such common Scottish names among the Metis are Cameron, McKay, Ross, Sutherland, Sinclair, etc.<sup>1</sup> Again, ethnicity was defined by occupation, in keeping with the caste-like system imposed upon Rupertsland by the Hudson's Bay Company.

There had been some divisions among the Red River Native population prior to amalgamation, imported divisions such as the Catholic/Protestant split, but the Native people nevertheless had existed as a peaceful, cohesive community who accepted each other and the white settlers as friends and equals for the most part. Now, however, with unemployment hitting the French-speaking Metis, real divisions began.

Now, for both the French-speaking Metis and the unemployed Hudson's Bay Company labourers, free trade became a necessity simply to maintain life, since no agricultural or industrial diversification was allowed by the Company. Furthermore, just as the commodity production of farm produce had failed through lack of technology, so did subsistence farming on the tiny plots of land (25 acres) fail, both through lack of capital and lack of technology.

So unyielding was Company policy toward preventing local industry that it frequently imported expensive necessities for the fur trade such as liquor, rather than take a chance on having locally created industry "get out of control" and thus ruin the fur trade. None of this policy was accidental. It had been practiced in the conquest of Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland by the English elite.

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1. Auguste Henri Tremaudan referred to this in his work. This was verified in an interview with historian and curator of St. Boniface museum, Mr. Henri Letourneau, in March, 1981.

Following is a quotation describing this process in another part of the world:

" WITH THE RETURN of peace to Europe in 1815 and the dramatic fall in grain prices, landlords, hoping to cut their losses by restocking with cattle and sheep, hastened to clear their lands of tenants who could no longer pay rents based on high wartime values.

But the number of people went on increasing, even while they were being squeezed off the best land. In England and America the towns were quickly expanding as populations grew, but in Ireland where industrial development was so ruthlessly suppressed there was nowhere for people to move, apart from what had formerly been considered waste regions. Further and further up the mountainsides they retreated, clearing rocks and heather to make small holdings, or they moved into soggy ground on the fringes of boglands.

These developments did not take place without protest. The ballad maker summed up the feelings of the people:

There may be seen fine meadows green  
And bullocks sleek and grand,  
Just get your pole and take a stroll  
And clear them off the land.

This land so kind was ne'er designed  
By Providence on high  
To keep John Bull with mutton full  
While the natives starve and die. "

2

Back in Red River, in 1844, Hudson's Bay Company Alexander Christie wrote to Simpson in London:

10 Aug., 1844 Alexander Christie, Fort Garry, Red River Settlement  
to George Simpson, Hudson's Bay House, London

"D5/12.F.154

Re: Why business can't develop within mercantile fur trade.

2. Elinor O'Brien, The Land and People of Ireland  
Lippincott, Philadelphia, 1953

We have no prospect, of any partnership being formed to undertake Distillation in the Settlement; the fact is, all are well aware of the trouble, and risk of Capital, which the business would entail upon them, Mr. McDermot, handed me the enclosed, which on a (currency) view, does not appear very objectionable, but upon my

mentioning /verbally / the improbability, the Company requiring more than about 1000 Gall: of spirits annually for their Trade; and that it would be doing great injustice to the Settlers, were the Company to enter upon an agreement for taking all the Pork and Beef they require, from the Distillery. After this explanation he /with- out hesitation / declined any further interference on the subject, merely stating that the profit from feeding Pigs and horned Cattle upon the Wash and Grains, about the Distillery, might be considered the Chief emolument, likely to accrue from the transaction; and with- out a ready market, could be obtained for such, it would be perfect folly to begin Distillation with the (prospect) of being obliged to throw all the Grains & Wash with the River.' I could not but acknow- ledge the Justness of the case, at the same time told Mr. McDermot, that he must be aware the proposition would entirely defeat the purchase of similar articles from the Settlers, and in fact subject them to more loss, than all the profit they might derive from the Sale of their Barley. Seeing then, that no persons of Capital in the Settlement are disposed to commence Distillation. I cannot con- sistently recommend the business to be undertaken on account of the Fur Trade, and am strengthened in this opinion, from not being author- ised to do so, either by the Northern Department, or Assiniboia Councils. We cannot deny that clandestine Distillation is not carried on in the Settlement, and which am of opinion, would be carried to a greater extent, were the Company to commence a Distillery. The only cause (there)(thus) (becomes) (assign) for making whiskey, is the deficiency of Spirits in the Company's shop, 60 Casks of 24 Gall: each was sold during the last Winter, this Season with the expectat- ion of the Distillery being established, the Outfit only consists of 40 Casks, leaving a deficiency of 480 Gallons, which under existing circumstances I have taken the liberty of applying to Mr. Hargrave for about half this quantity being spared from the present stock at York factory.

3. Exerpts from a letter by Alexander Christie, Fort Garry Red River, to George Simpson, Hudson's Bay House, London, September, 1848, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, D5/12, f. 154

The Hudson's Bay Company, ~~in line~~ with British Colonial policy had, with its apparently absolute victory against local capital in the trade wars, made life impossible for large numbers of Indian and Metis people in Rupertsland. In so doing it had sown the seeds of its own destruction, since it had created a conflict that was to become too expensive for the Imperial Government to contain or control militarily.

The Metis struggle took on a nationalist flavour as it burst the economic chains that had been imposed, through its spontaneous efforts toward free trade. "Law and order", under these conditions would have required a major military presence, a presence that the British Crown was not able to provide because of more pressing world-wide commitments, and which the Company could not really afford if other measures could be found. But, as time went on, one thing became clear to governor Simpson and the London Directors; the cry for free trade coupled with rising Metis nationalism was fast becoming a force that would eventually threaten the power of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly just as surely as these same historical forces had emerged in the Thirteen Colonies, resulting in the successful middle class revolution of Nationalist American merchants and artisans against the British imperial trade monopoly. The cry, "no taxation without representation" that was heard in that revolution, was to echo across the plains again.

Indeed, a small rebellion had occurred in Upper and Lower Canada in 1837, resulting in the military oppression of the Quebecois. Even Anglo "Lower Canada" attempted a feeble "Comic opera" revolt against the British Monopoly and the upshoot of the whole affair was the much touted creation of "responsible government".

So the Hudson's Bay Company, in the West, set up a puppet government at the local level, "the Council of Assinaboia", consisting entirely, at first, of Company hacks such as Cuthbert Grant and other Company functionaries placed there to affect an image of local democracy. The Council could not, however, hide the material reality of oppression that was preventing the majority of the Metis

from pursuing a productive life in a land of natural abundance. Nor were the settlers allowed any other market for their produce than the Company's local requirements, and these were tightly controlled to prevent agricultural expansion or industrial growth. In view of this, troops would be needed if the monopoly was to survive. Simpson was acutely aware of this. In a letter dated 15, November, 1856, he wrote: (selected excerpts)

" I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of 24th ultimo on the subject of the renewal of the Company's License of Trade, and the measures to be adopted for checking the progress of illicit traffic by the Americans on the frontier and ~~the~~ the Red River people. It is with much satisfaction I observe you approve generally of the views expressed in my letter of 27th September, and that you coincide in the importance of obtaining from Her Majesty's Government the assistance of a regular military force, even should a large proportion of the burden of its maintenance fall on the Company. With reference to the expression on the 1st. paragraph of my letter to which you allude "of approaching the Government with a view to negotiating the Surrender of the Charter;" it might have been better had I qualified it by noticing it as the last resource, but in a confidential communication to yourself, I was less guarded than I should otherwise have been, in indicating what appeared to me the probable result to which the negotiations with Government might eventually lead...."

4

Despite the recorded instances of the Hudson's Bay Company's use of liquor in trading with the Indians, Simpson, in the following quotation protests that the Yankee free traders were using liquor in their trade with the Indians. Indeed, as later events were to reveal, the free traders were even more corrupt than the Hudson's Bay Company had been in this practise.

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4. Excerpt from a letter from governor George Simpson, Hudson's Bay House, Lachine to John Shepherd, London, England, November 15/1856. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, A7/2 p.p. 89 - 101

However, Simpson pounced upon this as an excuse to bring in British troops to establish law and order. Later on, the royal North West Mounted Police force was created and sent west under the same ruse, following the massacre of an Indian group in the Cypress Hills by American free traders. In a letter to London he wrote:

"I should have very great pleasure in seeing the course you suggest in reference to spirits smuggled into the country for the purpose of the Indian trade carried into effect, were it practicable; but for a variety of reasons I fear it would not be possible to resort to the extreme measure of the seizure and destruction of spirits found in the possession of the free traders. There is a large portion of the territory, as yet undisturbed by opposition, into which the introduction of spirits for any purpose has been prohibited ever since the coalition (1821), but there are other parts of the country, such as the vicinity of Red River and the American frontier, where the enforcement of prohibitory regulations is impracticable. Liquor has never, during my administration, been used by the Company's people as barter for furs; it is nevertheless employed, to a moderate extent, for other purposes, principally for procuring provisions, which the Indians would not furnish without it, and were we to refuse to trade on their own terms we should get neither pemican, dried meat, grease nor rice etc. and without provisions our whole business would be brought to a stand; the transport could not be carried on, many posts would have to be abandoned, and large numbers of Indians, who are more or less dependent on us for their supplies at certain periods of the year and in seasons of scarcity, would be reduced to extreme want. Anxious as I have always been to abolish altogether the use of liquor at our posts, I could not, knowing what the consequences would be, recommend that measure; and unless we actually adopted that extreme course, our best efforts to prevent the abuse of the article by the free traders would fail, and our motives be liable to misrepresentation.

..... Had we the support of a military force at Red River, we could do much towards restricting the use of liquor in the country, by preventing its importation from the United States ..... and I regret to say I anticipate that if the existing state of things continues, spirituous liquor will be brought into general use in the Indian trade all over the Territory, which I should consider the most grievous calamity that could befall the native race. Unless the Company's authority be continued and the means afforded them of putting down illicit trade with the strong hand, I see no way of averting the threatened evil. If the Government have really at heart the protection of the aboriginal tribes, this consideration will no doubt have much weight in determining their course of policy in reference to the renewal of the Company's License of Trade...."5



However, in the same letter, Simpson revealed the real reason for the Company's need for troops; to smash metis free trade, and ensure Company profits. In the following quotation, Simpson reveals his fear of Metis Nationalism in their free trade struggle. As well, he admits that the Company did not have sufficient military force to contain them:

.. "The preparations made last year for effecting a seizure of some goods which we understood it was intended to convey to McKenzie River for the purpose of illicit trade, noticed in the 3rd paragraph of my last letter, were rendered unnecessary by the abandonment of the expedition by the projectors, probably on ascertaining the heavy outlay they must incur, and the small prospect of success, but certainly not from learning our intention to intercept them on the way inland, as profound secrecy was observed on the subject, and I believe it was never heard of beyond the walls of the Council room. The same parties renewed their schemes this year, but again abandoned them, on this occasion, in consequence of learning that we were determined to follow and oppose them in the regular way of trade, without having recourse to a seizure, and their experience of such a mode of dealing with interlopers taught them their enterprise would end in loss and disappointment. We might, as you say, carry out a firm and determined course in some portions of the Company's territory, McKenzie's River for instance, where there are no settlements of whites and halfbreeds to outnumber the Company's people, but a seizure in the most remote quarter, would be taken up as a national affair by the Halfbreeds all over the country, who would retaliate, not on the spot, but at points where they are in a condition to strike a serious blow at the Company, say at Red River, York Factory or Norway House. If we adopt strong measures at any point, we must be prepared for coming into collision with the half-caste race in all parts of the country, who would to some extent be supported by their Indian relatives, and I need hardly say that, under existing circumstances, we are quite unprepared for such a collision. With an efficient military force at Red River, however, the case would be entirely different, as I believe that <sup>that</sup> troublesome community were under control, free trade in other quarters might be effectually put put down, without having recourse to extreme measures."

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6. Ibid, p.p. 89 - 101

Governor George Simpson, letter to John Shepherd, dated 15 November 1856, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, Ontario

Clearly, Simpson recognized that free trade and Metis nationalism were wrapped up in the same revolutionary package, and Red River was the centre of the thrust. The desire, or the urgent need for a British Imperial military force in Red River crops up again and again in Simpson's correspondence. As well, he frequently despairs of obtaining sufficient troops from the Crown to enforce Hudson's Bay Company rule. Despite the need for force following the 1821 amalgamation, troops were sent infrequently, and in insufficient numbers to contain Metis free trade, as the following account reveals:

"Realizing the necessity for better and greater accommodation for the conduct of their business, which, since the coalition of the two companies, had greatly improved, in 1831 the Hudson's Bay Company built at the then head of deep water navigation, just below St. Andrew's Rapids, the large and costly establishment which became known as the Stone Fort, or lower Fort Garry. The general tradition amongst the English population was that Sir George Simpson, viewing with some alarm the increasing turbulence of a part of the metis of French extraction, deemed it advisable in case of a clash between the Company and that section of the Red River population, to have a stronghold nearer the centre of the English speaking white and half-breed inhabitants. Indeed, it was then generally understood in the Settlement that Government of the Company would be removed to the Lower Fort.

Whatever the policy may have been in 1831, it was changed, and Governor Alexander Christie, who had been a councillor of the governors of the Company's territories, and later Governor of Assiniboia in 1833 (an office he held for two terms, 1833-39 and 1844-48), began the erection in 1835 of the large and quite imposing Fort Garry which, until 1882, was the centre of the Company's business affairs in what is now Manitoba, and as well the centre of the social life of the Red River Settlement.

The Court House and jail was originally within the fort, but a minute of a meeting of the Council of Assiniboia held 3rd July, 1843, explains that "It being found exceedingly dangerous and inconvenient to have the public jail within the walls of Fort Garry, it was resolved: That the present jail be abandoned and that a new building be erected on some suitable spot by the Hudson's Bay Company, to be in future used for that purpose." The new Court House and Jail was built immediately adjoining the fort on the northwest side, and here several important cases were tried, particularly those connected with the claim of many of the inhabitants of the Settlement, both French and English, of their right to trade in furs, and which the Company, acting under the powers of its charter, granted in 1670, resolved not to concede. This claim of the people lay at the very root of the dissatisfaction which prevailed, causing serious outbreaks, and the presentation of their claims, by some of the people, to both the heads of the Hudson's Bay Company in London and the Canadian and British Governments. I happen to have the original letter book of Fort Garry, containing much of the correspondence that took place:

between the Company and the leaders of the Red River people on this subject, and it affords very entertaining and instructive reading.

On several occasions detachments of Imperial troops were sent to the Red River Settlement by the British Government in response to urgent requests of the Hudson's Bay Company, and these were all in turn, during their stay, quartered within the stone walls of Fort Garry. In 1846, eighteen officers and three hundred and twenty-nine men, being a wing of the 6th Royal Regiment of Foot, with artillery and engineers, under the command of Colonel John F. Crofton, arrived, having made the long journey from England via Hudson Bay, Lake Winnipeg and the Red River. They remained quartered in the fort for two years and then returned to Great Britain by the same route.

In the autumn of 1848, seventy pensioners arrived under the command of Major Caldwell, the object of this corps being that they should form the nucleus of a local force to be recruited in the Red River Settlement, to support the enforcement of the laws of the Hudson's Bay Company. Major Caldwell remained in the Settlement until 1855, but most of the men settled down in the country.

In 1856, the Company evidently brought strong pressure to bear on the Imperial Government to send another military force to Fort Garry. In this year also, two hundred United States troops arrived at Pembina, and the first act of this body was to issue a proclamation, notifying British subjects that they must not cross the International Boundary line to hunt or trade in furs. As a result of the situation, the Imperial Government in 1857 sent a company of the Royal Canadian Rifles via the Hudson's Bay and these remained until 1861, when they returned to England. "

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As can be seen, the Imperial government was not able, or willing, to expend its military resources to enforce its merchants' rule in Red River. During this highly expansionary era of British Imperialism, troops might have been more profitably deployed elsewhere. During this period British troops were engaged in the following conflicts; 1837, suppressing a rebellion in upper and Lower Canada; 1839 - 1860, the England - China war; 1854, suppressing the great strike in England (14,972 men were fired as a result of this).

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7. Charles Napier Bell L.L.D., F.R.G.S., The Old Forts of Winnipeg 1738 - 1927, Sponsor The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, Publisher, Davidson Richardson Ltd., 1927, p.p. 32-33

In 1867 the first attacks on Canada by the Irish Fenians began. In 1867 Canada was in a state of economic depression with many strikes and much labour unrest.

As can be seen, the outlying region of Red River was a low priority for the British Crown.

Consequent to all this, Simpson wrote despairingly:

...Mr. Lowe was lately in this country and brought an introduction from Mr. Ellice to Rose, who made a tour for about a fortnight with him in Upper Canada and the United States. Mr. Lowe was very communicative with Rose, and was full of a plan for annexing Ruperts Land, with which he has returned to Downing Street. Mr. Labouchere is likewise favorable to annexation. It appears by Mr. Ellice's communication that he was consulted by Mr. Labouchere on this subject and that he gave it as his opinion it would be unwise to disturb the present management of Ruperts Land, which ever since the Coalition had been characterized by good judgment and moderation; but if taken out of the hands of the Company, it would be necessary to pay "one million sterling for the fee simple" and to provide for the government and peace of the country, a matter of very serious importance and which would involve a considerable expense, to be provided for either by the home or provincial Government. I give you this confidentially, in order that you may communicate it to the Governor, who will no doubt make a proper use of the information. .... The present agitation appears to me very opportune to enable the Company to make a good bargain with Government for the surrender of the Charter, and One Million compensation I should consider so much clear gain, as in my opinion we could conduct our business nearly as well without as with the Charter, while the surrender of it would relieve us both of much outlay and public odium, and the annexation of the country to Canada would put us in a better position as regards the protection of life and property than at present, in as much as we should thereby have the benefit of the laws properly and efficiently supported and enforced."

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8, Governor George Simpson, letter to John Shepherd, dated 15 November 1856, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa, Ontario A7/2 p.p. 89 - 101

(196)

Clearly, what Simpson was saying here was, "since we cannot hope to control the Metis population within our own economic interests, and since we can no longer depend on Britain for a sufficient military Force, let Canada have Rupetsland for one million sterling. We can still make as much money, and the Canadian State Can suppress the Metis People for us. Of course, Simpson must have recognized that the Canadians would settle the region and thus end the fur trading empire eventually, but this was the Company's best remaining option. How did the "All powerful" Company get into this mess? Tremaudin explains:

" In 1835, the Government of Assiniboia framed a constitution that provided for a Council of permanent members recruited from among the notables of the colony. Supposedly, the people elected them; actually, the Company appointed them, and the Governor-General of the Company was President of the Council. Other members included the Catholic and Anglican Bishops, upper-middle-class people of Fort Garry - a fort being built on the ruins of Fort Gibraltar - the Company doctor, several English 'personalities' as well as five or six notables - friends of the Metis and, later, some Metis themselves. This is how Cuthbert Grant became part of the Council when it was <sup>inaugurated</sup> ~~augerated~~ on February 12, 1835. Sir George Simpson, Governor-General of the Company from 1821 to 1863, presided. At the first meeting, it was decided to organize a volunteer corps for the building of a prison and a Court House in the Fort Garry enclosure. The colony was to be divided into four districts with a magistrate to preside over each. Because of this, the 'jury system' became necessary, and it was inaugurated on April 28, 1836; for the trial of Louis Saint-Denis, accused of theft." 9

The company had created its own institutions, and staffed them with its hand-picked friends and allies. So the British jury system was adapted and utilized by the Company. The hand-picked "notables" were non other than Company officials as judicial "bag men", and upper class allies were added to give the jury system the appearance of justice and democracy. Tremaudin continued:

"Year in and year out, the Hudson's Bay Company had promulgated and vigorously enforced strict rules in connection with fur trading. Trappers were forbidden to traffic with outside interests and even with each other. Its decrees were absolute and no one dare violate them. Occasionally, maybe, and alone, Metis were allowed to sell furs in the United States or buy pelts from their cousins, the Indians, in order to get a better return for their trouble.

By degrees, the natives organized to protest against a monopoly that was becoming insupportable. Consequently, in 1837, a petition bearing 977 names and asking for greater freedom of trade, was addressed to the Queen. Most of the signers were Metis.

As very often happens though, it was a simple accident that lit the fuse and brought about the desired end abruptly.

At the beginning of Spring, 1849, Company officers arrested a young Metis, Guillaume Sayer, of Saint-Francois Xavier, the son of a retired Company agent. He was accused of having bought Company goods with the intention of exchanging them for furs at Lake Manitoba. As he resisted arrest, the officers maltreated him and tossed him into prison. He was freed on bail only.

In the meantime, three other Metis, Laronde, Goulet

and McGinnis, were arrested, too, on a similar charge, thrown into prison and, like Sayer, freed on bail.

The whole Metis population seethes with exasperation over this quadruple arrest. In Jean-Louis Riel,<sup>^</sup> it found a leader who protested effectively against the decidedly arrogant domination of the Company. ; .

Benjamin de Lagimodiere (Riel's brother-in-law), Urbain Delorme, Pascal Breland and Francois Bruneau, were chosen counsellors.

A proposed demonstration on the day of the trial appeared to alarm the Company seriously. To forestall vague possibilities, it lowered itself to using shabby methods. Judge Thom and his colleagues - including Governor Caldwell - were ordered to hold Court Assizes on May 17, Ascension Day. It was thought that on this day, a Catholic holiday, the troublemakers would be at worship and, in their absence, the judges could act as they chose.

The shrewd Metis saw through this subterfuge, for all their lives they had been accustomed to playing wiser games! Riel and his counsellors repaired to Monseigneur Provencher's. There, it was decided that the protesters could attend early Mass at 8 A.M. and be present at the opening of Court at 11 A.M.

Therefore, when the magistrates took their seats, they found the room filled with Metis! Judge Thom had agents circulating to urge the participants of this imposing

demonstration to do nothing to create a riot. The Metis, remaining calm as usual, indicated clearly nevertheless that, this time, they were determined to see that complete justice was accorded to the four accused.

"Sayer" was the first case called. As his friends had instructed him not to reply, no one appeared. For the moment, the magistrates did not want to seem upset and they did not insist. They continued with other cases on their list. At one o'clock, the bailiff repeated the call for "Sayer". This time again, no one replied.

In the interval, the Judge sent emissaries to make a deal with the dissatisfied Metis. These proposed that a number of friends chosen from among them accompany Sayer to defend him when he appeared in Court. This offer was accepted on the express condition that the Court took no longer.

When the name "Sayer" was called for the third time, the young Metis advanced surrounded by an escort of a dozen compatriots at whose head was Jean-Louis Riel. In clear, precise terms, Riel reiterated, this time to the Court that, since the case was so simple, the Judges had one hour and not a minute more, to hear the plea and pass judgment on it. The Prisoner's defence was entrusted to a man named Sinclair. The jury was chosen and the hearing began.

Although Sayer pleaded guilty, Sinclair tried to



demonstrate that the prisoner had obtained permission from the Company to do what he was accused of. Things went so slowly that the hour soon passed. Then Riel went forward and asked that Sayer be freed. The magistrates tried to stall for time. "But," said Riel, "to end this miserable business, we accorded you one hour - more than necessary. The hour has passed; the trial is over; the prisoner is free!"

Inside and outside the Courtroom, the Metis chorused: "Long live liberty! Sayer is free!" "That is not all," continued Riel. "We want something more than the acquittal of Sayer and his co-accused. They have already suffered too much - especially Sayer - for having trafficked in a few furs without the Company's permission whatever the lawyers may say. We demand that henceforth trading be free all over the country, that all hunters and merchants have the right to buy, sell, and exchange furs without first obtaining the Company's permission; that, in future, the Company must not, in any way, meddle with our business transactions. We intend to be free. I proclaim here and now that from this time forward trade is free! Long live free trade! - Long live free trade!"

"Trading is free!" chorused the Metis inside and outside the Courthouse.

Although noisy, the demonstrators left in good order taking with them the four prisoners. Thanks to the Metis,

dating from this moment, the means of a sort of peaceful revolution, the Red River inhabitants came to enjoy commercial freedom, one of the greatest and most reasonable privileges of a people conscious of its right and its strength.

When the Council of Assiniboia met a short time later on May 31, 1849, it decreed that all changes in fur regulations must obtain sanctions from the Queen, the two British Houses of Parliament, the Company, and the Council of the Colony. And, following, care must be taken to "plough the first furrow" of this declaration of commercial freedom that Riel and his compatriots had proclaimed on that memorable day - May 17, 1849.

But the result achieved by this opportune intervention, motivated by the Metis, was not limited to the degree of emancipation proclaimed in such a positive manner. The Metis attitude had also the effect of making the Hudson's Bay Company and its supporters in the Council of Assiniboia understand that now they must reckon with the French-speaking population of the colony.

At the same session of May 31, 1849, it was decided that future magistrates dealing with Metis or French-Canadian interests must speak in French...<sup>10</sup>"

The "Sayer Trial" of 1849 was a very significant event in Red River. From this date onward it was apparent to everyone that the Hudson's Bay Company was not capable of mustering sufficient fire power to enforce its system of exploitation upon the Metis population of the North West.

Louis Riel senior had eloquently and bravely taken his place in history with his defence of the Metis free traders. From that day onward, until all pretence of democracy had been abandoned by the Canadian government, trade for the Metis people was free despite half-hearted harassment by company officials.

All this occurred despite Simpson's sly and incisive actions and decisions. In 1846, Simpson attempted to retain the Commander as a permanent head of the Council of Assinaboia, where he could continue his oppressive work as a legal functionary after the three hundred imperial troops were withdrawn. He wrote:

"A12/3, f. 219

23 July, 1846 George Simpson, Red River Settlement to Governor & Committee, Hudson's Bay Company, London Confidential

"With reference to my public letter of this day's date, in which I have stated my intention to start for York on the 28 inst., returning hither early in October, it was my view when I left Canada, to have passed the winter here, but from a variety of considerations, I now think that, unless some unforeseen difficulty present itself, it will be more to the interests of the general concern that, if I get back from the coast in time to attempt the journey to St. Peters on horseback, I should proceed to Canada with a view of crossing the Atlantic, in order to communicate with you personally on several points which seem to require immediate consideration, and I am the more inclined to adopt this step, however harassing the journey might be at that unfavorable season, because when once the troops are brought up from the coast, I do not see that my presence can be attended with any benefit whatsoever, especially so, as there is now no probability of serious interference with our trade from the United States, while the half-breeds and surrounding Indians will be so much overawed by the presence of the military that, they are not likely to be troublesome.

One of the objects of my desire to confer with you personally is to point out the danger that may arise from famine by having so large a body of people not engaged in labor, dependant on the resources of this Settlement, which is so isolated that, in the event of a failure of the crops or any similar calamity, it would be utterly impossible to obtain assistance from any other quarter. A regular force of 200 men stationed at this place, I should consider quite sufficient to overawe not only the inhabitants of the Settlement, but all the surrounding Indian tribes; & this force might be made to form the nucleus of a very numerous & efficient native corps, which could be employed either defensively or offensively as occasion required; and if the Government determined on removing any portion of the troops, I could, by being in communication with you, make the necessary arrangements for their removal to Canada next summer.

The future Government of this Settlement is likewise an object requiring early & very serious consideration. The Governor ought to be constantly resident here, so that a distinct Governor for the district of Assiniboia will always be necessary, as the Governor in Chief of the Company's Territories, or their principal representative in North America, could not by possibility give the necessary attention to his extensive charge, if confined to Red River Settlement. There has long been a great objection of the part of the Settlers to the Governor of Assiniboia being a member of the Fur trade, as his interest if they do not really bias his conduct, are believed to do so, inducing a distrust in all his actions. Mr. C.F. Christie has given notice of his intention to retire from the Service next spring, the duties of his situation being so harassing as to affect his health, it is, there-

fore, necessary to provide a successor; and I really do not know any of the Chief Factors or Chief Traders, who would accept the office, qualified to fill it to advantage. I would, therefore, suggest that if the Commander of the Forces here be a man of judgement and moderation, he should, with the sanction of Government, be appointed Governor of Assiniboia, in which case he would naturally expect an allowance from the Company, over and above his pay and enrolements from Government. If any insuperable objection existed to this arrangement, the next best that occurs to me, would be to appoint Mr. Thom Governor of Assinibia, in which case, the office of Recorder would merge in that of Governor, while the commercial agency of the Company could be entrusted to a Chief Factor or Chief Trader, who would have no other duties than those connected with the Indian trade & sales to & purchases from Settlers. Mr. Thom has told me confidentially that, it is his intention to retire from the service in the summer of 1848; but I have no doubt that, with a moderate increase of salary, he would feel disposed to remain, in the event of both offices being combined."

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11. George Simpson, letter to Governor & Committee, Hudson's Bay Company, London, dated July 1846, Hudson's Bay Co. Archives, A 12/3, f. 219

Clearly, Simpson recognized the threat of the Metis free traders, the need for troops, and the need to control the local "puppet government", either by having it directly controlled by Hudson's Bay Company officials, or if this ruse was too transparent, by the equally devious ploy of replacing key Company officials with the Commander of the troops, no less. Despite Simpson's subterfuge, Metis free trade provided a sufficiently strong force to burst the seams of the Hudson's Bay Company's control, and, following the Sayer trial, the lack of physical force was evident, and trade could no longer be contained within the framework of the Company's monopoly.

The political power of the emerging national middle classes both in the east, and now in Red River was on the rise, while the feudal control of the Hudson's Bay Company was rapidly coming to an end, since Britain was now unable to supply the military forces necessary for continued exploitation.

It is clear that this was the emergence of the same historical national force as was the case in Upper and Lower Canada. Gustavus Myers wrote of the latter rebellion:

" The insurrection, in 1837-1838, led by William Lyon Mackenzie in Ontario and by Papineau in Quebec, was intrinsically one of upspringing capitalist forces, but superficially its character was composite, blending a variety of factors and elements. It is not the purpose here to give any perfunctory chronological or personal narrative of that movement, but to present an outline of the vital economic causes and results.

#### Grievances of the Rebels

The proclamation issued by Mackenzie, as Chairman pro tem of the insurrectionary Provincial Government of the State of Upper Canada, began by denouncing the "blighting influence of military despots, strangers from Europe ruling us, not according to laws of our own choice but by the capricious dictates of their arbitrary power.

" They," read on the proclamation, "have taxed us at their pleasure, robbed our exchequer and carried off the proceeds to other lands—they have bribed and corrupted ministers of the Gospel with the wealth raised by our industry—they have, in place of religious liberty, given rectories and reserves to a foreign priesthood, with spiritual power dangerous to our peace, as a people—they have bestowed millions of our lands on a company of Europeans for a nominal consideration, and left them to fleece and impoverish our country—they have spurned our petitions, involved us in their wars,

excited feelings of national and sectional animosity in counties, townships and neighborhoods, and ruled as Ireland has been ruled, to the advantage of persons in other lands and to the prostration of our energies as a people. . . ."

Then declaring the movement a separatist one, the proclamation enumerated the reforms sought. These included a legislature chosen by the people, free press, civil and religious liberty, free education and other changes not the least significant of which was that of "freedom of trade—every man to be allowed to buy at the cheapest market and sell at the dearest."<sup>1</sup>—the very quintessence of rising capitalism, the moving principle of which was abolition of monopoly and of all feudal restraints, and the assurance of unfettered access to all resources and markets and of unhindered competition.

#### Abolition of Feudalism Demanded

In Lower Canada the proclamation issued by Dr. Robert Nelson, president of the insurrectionary party, declared for repudiation of all allegiance to Great Britain and provided for 17 different reforms.

Among these were: A Republican form of government; all citizens to enjoy the same rights, and Indians were to be no longer disqualified civilly; dissolution between Church and State; abolition of feudal or seignorial tenure of land "as if such a tenure had never existed in Canada"; imprisonment for debt no longer to exist except in such cases as should be specified by Act thereafter; sentence of death no longer to be passed or executed except in cases of murder.

Other reforms called for were freedom of the press, trial by jury, general and public education, elective franchise and the like. Another provision of the proclamation declared that "all Crown lands, also such as are called Clergy Reserves, and such as are nominally in possession of a certain company of landholders in England, called the 'British American Land Company,' are of right the property of the State of Lower Canada," except such parts as were bought by persons and held in good faith.<sup>2</sup>

## Capital to Have a Free Hand

One of the main pleas of the insurrectionists was that capital should have a free hand, especially in the line of development of resources, the establishment of manufactories and of modern systems of navigation and transportation. They pointed to the astounding development of transportation, trade and manufacture in the United States, and asked pointedly why it was that Canada should be so backward? Answering themselves, they replied it was because of the surviving feudalistic conditions which, variously in both Quebec and Ontario placed monopolies of trade and of land in the hands of the Church, seigneurs, officials and companies (largely absentee), and because of the feudalistic laws incompatible with the requirements of an age, the spirit of which was individual enterprise and full personal freedom of trade.<sup>3</sup> "

12

Clearly, the rebellion in Upper and Lower Canada was another expression of the same force. In Red River it was now bursting the bonds of the Hudson's Bay Company rule. The only major difference was ethnicity, the French bourgeois in Quebec, English middle class in Ontario and the Metis free traders in Red River. But the Metis of Red River were not the only people taking a stand against the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly. The rising class of Canadian national capitalists also were challenging the legality of the Hudson's Bay Company's claims, and were themselves casting greedy eyes on the potential wealth of the North West. The Metis were supported in the struggle for free trade by the Red River settlers. Myers continues:

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12. Gustavus Myers, A History of Canadian Wealth  
James Lewis & Samuel, Toronto, 1972, p.p. 97,98,99

" If any settler was in arrears for land, the Company (to which, perforce, he was compelled to sell all of his produce), deducted one-fifth for payment for the land, at the same time selling the same produce to the Indians for ruinously exorbitant sums, and charging the settler (as we have seen) from 100 to 400 per cent. advance on the prime cost of all goods that he bought. Every employe of the Company, in fact, was forced to pay for 50 acres of land before he could come to the Red River Settlement; if he could not pay cash, he had to go to Europe or remain in the Company's service until he had saved money enough to pay for the land.<sup>11</sup>

#### Petition of 575 Settlers

In 1849 the settlers rose in armed revolt against the Company which, insistently proclaiming its rights under the Charter granted by Charles II, had "ruled with a hard and heavy hand." The Company mollified its extortions, yet nevertheless, despite the Company's persistent claims that it was treating the settlers fairly, the settlers still bitterly complained that extortion in various ways was continuing.

In 1857 a petition signed by 575 settlers at the Red River Settlement was sent to the British Parliamentary Select Committee. The petitioners told how the flattering promises of the Earl of Selkirk had induced emigrants to settle there.

"We have paid large sums of money to the Hudson's Bay Company for land," the petition read, "yet we cannot obtain deeds for the same. The Company's agents have made several attempts to force upon us deeds which would reduce ourselves and our posterity to the most abject slavery under that body. . . ."

"Under what we believe to be a fictitious Charter, but which the Company's Agents maintained to be the fundamental law of Rupert's Land [the whole of the West and North West Territory], we have been prevented the receiving in exchange the peltries of our Country for any of the products of our labor, and have been forbidden giving peltries in exchange for any of the imported necessaries of life, under the penalty of being imprisoned, and of having our property confiscated; we have been forbidden to take peltries in exchange for food supplied to famishing Indians.

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13. Ibid. p. 138



"The Hudson's Bay Company's clerks, with an armed police, have entered into settlers' houses in quest of furs, and confiscated all they found. One poor settler, after having his goods seized, had his house burnt to the ground, and afterwards was conveyed prisoner to York Factory.

"The Company's first legal adviser in this Colony has declared our navigating the lakes and rivers between this colony and Hudson's Bay with any articles of produce, to be illegal. The same authority has declared our selling of English goods in this colony to be illegal.

"On our annual commercial journeys into Minnesota we have been pursued like felons by armed constables, who searched our property, even by breaking open our trunks; all furs found were confiscated."

#### Payments of 100 to 400 Per Cent. Advance

The petition went on to say that, "Thus, we, the inhabitants of this land, have been and are constrained to behold the valuable commercial productions of our country exported for the exclusive profit of a company of traders who are strangers to ourselves and to our country. We are by necessity compelled to use many articles of their importation for which we pay from 100 to 400 per cent. on prime cost, while we are prohibited exporting those productions of our country and industry which we could exchange for the necessaries of life."

Then the petition proceeded to describe how the governors, legislators, judges and other authorities were all Hudson's Bay Company functionaries — governors, chief traders and chief factors —; how they were appointed by the Company, and arbitrarily imposed and enforced such taxes and prices and decreed such offenses and punishments as suited the Company's interests. They made the laws, judged the laws, and executed their own sentences.<sup>12</sup>

#### Individual Freedom of Trade Demanded

In an age when steam machinery and factories had already been established in Canada, when railroads were being built, when the owners of the thousands of lumber, grist and other mills in Eastern Canada were looking for the widest outlet for their products, and when ambitious traders were demanding the free right to trade, it was a logical development that nascent capitalism should indignantly complain of such feudal and arbitrary restrictions upon the freedom of trade, as their interests conceived and demanded it.

The Toronto Board of Trade vehemently protested against what it termed this assumed, usurped power of a single corporation — and "foreign" at that — to enact tariffs, collect customs' dues and levy taxes. It derided what it styled the pretended rights by which the Hudson's Bay Company, under a charter granted by Charles II, nearly 100 years before Canada had passed from French control, assumed sovereignty

over the North West Territory and arbitrarily exercised the power to grant away and sell lands belonging to the Government.<sup>13</sup> The Toronto Board of Trade's petition dwelt with emphasis on this point.

When testifying before the Canadian Legislative Select Committee, in 1857, Allan MacDonell gave a long list of facts tending to prove the illegality of the Company's charter. "The very foundation for the Charter is a grant of territory presumed to have been made in the year 1670. Now as Charles II could not grant away what the Crown of England did not possess, much less could grant away the possessions of another power, the very words of the charter itself excludes from the operation of the grant those identical territories which the Hudson's Bay Company now claim."

These further representations were brought out in the Parliamentary Investigation:—The Hudson's Bay Company did not enter the valley of the Saskatchewan until about the year 1793, and did not plant its establishments in the valley of the Assiniboine until about 1805, more than a hundred years after the date of its charter. It did not set up exclusive rights until 1814.<sup>14</sup> William Mac D. Dawson, head of the Woods and Forests Branch of the Crown Land Department at Toronto, testified that his investigations had disclosed that the Hudson's Bay Company had no real title in the Red River and the Saskatchewan country; that "it was a monstrous imposition and was first assumed under Lord Selkirk." ▽

14

So the Metis of Red River were not alone in their conflict with the foreign monopoly. The merchant classes of Canada were engaged in a similar conflict. However, in the Canadian west the Metis were the only people capable of mustering sufficient strength to force the issue.

The Metis, through the illicit free trade to the south, and to lesser degree to the west along the Edmonton Trail had produced its own class of merchants, some of whom were wealthy.

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14. Gustavus Myers, *Ibid*, p.p. 138, 139, 140, 141

The free trade route to St. Paul had grown out of the Hudson's Bay Company's own trade requirements. Thus, the Metis cartmen and merchants who were ultimately to challenge the Hudson Bay Company's monopoly were initially created by the Company's own needs. Innis described the growth of this trade, and he recorded the savings per ton for the company:

THE FUR TRADE IN CANADA

"The movement of settlement to the northwest in the United States following the development of transportation facilities in that area had an important effect on the later organization of transport of the Company. Red River carts began to freight supplies from St. Paul, the head of steamboat navigation on the Mississippi. On July 10, 1847, 120 carts arrived at St. Paul from Red River<sup>38</sup> and in 1856 it was claimed that 500 carts<sup>39</sup> (an estimate of 200 carts<sup>40</sup> appears safe) left Pembina or Red River settlement with wheat, tallow, beef, and other produce for St. Paul or St. Anthony. Freight from England to York was £5 plus £1 for lighterage and storage per ton and from York Fort to Red River, £20—a total of £26—whereas freight from St. Paul to Red River was £18 per ton.<sup>41</sup>"

15

This savings, however, was to eventually cost the company a fortune, because it was through this trade route that the Metis class of merchants came into being as a cohesive "national" force. Governor George Simpson wrote, in a letter dated June 18, 1846, to the Governor and Committee, Hudson's Bay Company, London:

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15. Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, University of Toronto Press, 1970, p. 294

37. "This Settlement was the scene of much excitement during the past winter, arising from a mischievous system of agitation which has been kept up by McDermot, Sinclair, Kittson /an American trader/ and other designing persons, who exert their ingenuity to mislead the ignorant and half savage population by whom we are here surrounded, with a view to promoting their own private interests. These disaffected people have been very successful in inducing a belief in the public mind, especially of the half-caste race, that the charter affords no exclusive right of trade to the Company as against themselves, the natives of the soil, and they now claim as a birthright, the liberty to hunt & trade throughout the Company's Territories, and either to convey their furs out of the country or to dispose of them to whom they please. With this view of their rights, the inhabitants of Red River have hunted and traded during the past season to a very considerable extent, some having sent their furs to the United States and others disposed of them to the American traders settled at Pembina near the lines. Every endeavour has been used by C. F. Christie to protect the trade, by giving high prices for all furs brought by actual hunters, and by employing parties of people to watch the Indians and collect their hunts at a distance from the Settlement; but he has abstained from purchasing furs from parties who have without license or authority traded them from the hunters, feeling that, if he once gave way to the assumed right of the half breeds to trade with Indians, he would be compromising the Company's vested rights under the charter. Had Mr. Christie attempted to seize the furs collected by the settlers, or the goods imported from the United States without payment of duty, it would unquestionably have led to a popular outbreak, the consequences of which might have involved the loss of both lives and property. He, therefore, abstained from forcible measures for protecting the trade, but used every effort which conciliation and sound judgment suggested to that end, and thus we were enabled to hold our ground during the past winter, without any serious disturbance, although under constant apprehension of open violence. At present there is a universal cry throughout the settlement for free trade, and a petition to Her Majesty is being sent round for signature, praying that, the trade may be thrown open to the natives to traffic with Indians or whites in furs and all other commodities, both within & without the Company's territories. We have not seen the petition, but understand that to be its import; and I am concerned to say that, Mr. Belcourt, one of the R.C. priests is implicated in these proceedings. I have not yet seen that gentleman; owing to his temporary absence from the Settlement, but I understand from the Bishop of Juliopolis, who seems very much to regret the part Mr. Belcourt has taken in these affairs, that that gentleman was, in the first instance, drawn into communication with the leaders of the people from a desire to tranquilize the public mind, but that he has imperceptibly and unintentionally allowed himself to be led away, until he has now become the champion of free trade. He has been urged very strongly by the people to proceed to England with the petition, there to advocate their cause, and on his evincing an indisposition to take so prominent a part, they resorted to threats of 'sending him by force', which the bishop has solemnly protested against.

On a former occasion, in the winter of 1834/5, when an alarming agitation existed in the settlement, I found Mr. Belcourt exceedingly useful in assisting me to restore quiet, and from the good disposition he then manifested, I can scarcely bring myself to believe that, his interference in this matter is influenced by any mischievous design; and when I have an opportunity of seeing him, I am in great hopes I shall be able to divest him from the dangerous course he has of late been following."

16

This letter clearly reveals Simpson's concern over Metis free trade. Just as clearly it implicates him in his successful efforts to have the Church manipulate the Metis people, in the interests of the Company. Certainly "Mr. Belcourt, one of the Roman Catholic priests", had been advocating free trade, and it was only by having the Bishop of Juliopolis intervene on behalf of the Company that he was removed.

Nevertheless, local Metis and white entrepreneurs continued to expand their illicit trading activities.

It seems Mr. Evans, an English Protestant minister was also "advocating free trade". As the following letter indicates, Simpson had him removed from the colony as well.

"I have to request the favor of your drawing the particular attention of the Board to the 37 par. of my dispatch from Red River last year, and to the several communications that have since taken place on the subject of the withdrawal of Mr. Evans, the superintendent of the Wesleyan Missions, a measure which is highly necessary to secure the peace of the country and the success of the missions. If orders to this effect have not been already issued, I trust the subject may be immediately pressed upon the consideration of the Committee of the Wesleyan Society, with a view to their directing his withdrawal; and if they forward their instruction by the steamer of 19 April, they will be in time to be acted upon this year.

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\* It should be noted that "Mr. Evans" was the man that created the Cree alphabet, thus making literacy possible for them.

16. Letter from George Simpson, Red River, to Governor & Committee Hudson's Bay Company, London, 18 June, 1846, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa A 12/3, f. 67

27 March - Since writing the foregoing, the Northern Express has been received,..... Mr. C.F. Christie's communications to me on the affairs of Red River Settlement, convey but little detailed information, as will be seen by the copy of his official letter to me, herewith transmitted. The Settlement appeared to be healthy & upon the whole tranquil, with abundant means of subsistence, the crops having been favorable & Buffalo very numerous in its immediate vicinity. Kittson, (Green) and other American traders made their appearance last autumn, as was expected, establishing themselves at Pembina, immediately within the U.S. Boundary line, and have attracted thither a number of half-breed families forming the nucleus of a Settlement who, with others in Red River Settlement, are employed in collecting furs throughout the adjacent country forming a troublesome opposition, which will become very formidable, unless we have the means of enforcing our Revenue and protection of the trade, which, fortunately, have not yet (seen) production of any violence on the part of the Half breeds who are led

to believe by those under whose influence they are acting that, the fact of their being natives of the soil gives them an unquestionable right of trading & hunting within the H.B. Territories, which cannot be effected by the Company's Charter. Mr. Christie suggests, as a means of protecting the trade that, a chain of posts should be formed round the Settlement. I do not, however, approve of this plan, as I feel assured it would not be attended with any beneficial effect, while the outlay would be exceedingly heavy. Some benefit was expected to be derived from our placing a post at Pembina along side Kittson within the American Boundary, under cloak of a license to trade in the United States Territory which I obtained last autumn through Mr. Crooks the President of the American Fur Company. The post has been placed under the charge of one of our own Clerks, an American Citizen by birth whose returns will be taken to the American Fur Co's depot on Lake Superior, to be either shipped to England or disposed of in the States for the benefit of the Company, as the Gov'r & Com. may hereafter determine. The license did not reach Red River until the latter end of December, when Mr. Fisher was summoned from Fort Ellice to take charge of the post. I shall immediately apply to Mr. Crooks for a renewal of the license in favor of Fisher for the ensuing season & for licenses for other American Citizens to manage posts to be established within the United States frontier, if found necessary. These posts will ostensibly appear to be maintained by the American Fur Co., but will virtually belong to the Hudson's Bay Co. Mr. Crooks has manifested the most friendly disposition in our present difficulties, and has assured me of his co-operation for the protection of the Company's interests; and with that gentleman's assistance, by giving liberal prices for skins in the Settlement & at the neighboring posts; and by closely watching the movements of McDermott, Sinclair & other traffickers in furs, I am in hopes the American opposition will make so little by their attempts on the trade, as to discourage others from immediately following their example on an extended scale." 17

17. letter from George Simpson to Governor and Committee, London dated March 1846, Hudson's Bay Archives, Ottawa, A12/3, f.19

It will be recalled (from the last chapter) that governor Simpson had been paying "Mr. Crooks of the American Fur Company" bribe money. This seems to have paid off, as the above letter reveals, in the struggle to co-opt free trade in the Pembina region. In the same letter, to the Governor and Committee, London, Simpson again repeats his fears and concerns.

"I have no doubt that, the difficulties with Sinclair & McDermott might be adjusted, but that, I fear, would be now of little benefit in restoring quiet, as although they have been instrumental in getting up the present agitation, they do not possess sufficient influence to restore peace, as Kittson and other strangers, whose interest it is to excite disaffection towards the Company, will have little difficulty in persuading the people that, the hostility of those parties has been bought off. Kittson, gaining confidence by the protection afforded him by the half-breeds, will, it is expected, move from Pembina next winter, and seat himself down as a trader within the Settlement, amongst the numerous French half-breed population situated above the Forks. Could we with safety attempt to arrest this man and remove him from the country, we should have no hesitation in doing so, but it would be madness to attempt it in the present state of public feeling; in the event, therefore, of his coming, we can only protest against any improper interference with the trade and patiently wait till the means may be afforded of informing the laws, which, at present, are little more than a dead letter." 18

In the same letter to the Governor and Committee, London, Simpson again repeats his fears and concerns:

"McDermott & Sinclair have for several years past spoken of chartering a vessel from England for the conveyance of their goods and returns to and from York factory, and I have no doubt that, McLaughlin is authorised to take legal advice and communicate with your honors on that subject; and I think it is not at all improbable that Clouteau & Co. of New York, or some other American Capitalists, may be disposed to back them in this attempt upon the trade...."

In other correspondence Simpson wrote

"As yet I have had no communication with the authorities here; but from the excitement that existed at Red River on this subject and on the subject of Free trade, I consider the peace of the Settlement and the exclusive rights of the Company in very great danger, and have most earnestly to recommend that, you urge the Government to afford military protection at Red River, as the only means of securing tranquility and enabling the authorities to administer the laws, which, in the absence of such forces, must become a dead letter."

- Hudson's Bay Archives

18. A 12/3, F. 19 Letter Simpson to Archibald Barclay, London

19. A 12/2, f. 642 dated March 1846, Letter Simpson to Archibald Barclay, London. Hudson's Bay Archives Ottawa.

The Metis united Indian Courage with European military organization to "mass produce" buffalo meat and hides for the commodity market. Following is a description of the precision and discipline exacted through the democratic but tight control exercised over all the members of the hunt by the leadership:

The first act of business during the rendezvous at ~~Pem-  
bina or St. Joseph~~ was the election of officers at a general council. Ten captains were chosen by vote of the men of the camp and one of these was named chief of the hunt, or governor. Each captain commanded ten "soldiers" who assisted him in maintaining order and enforcing regulations. The captains took their responsibility seriously and, though the Métis were normally a cheerful and friendly people, disciplinary action, when necessary, was sudden and severe. Ten guides took turns directing the expedition's course, and the camp flag was affixed each day to the cart of the captain whose guide led the march. Raising the flag in the morning was the signal to start, and while it was up the guide was chief; even the captains were subject to his orders. When the flag was lowered as the signal to camp, the captains and soldiers took over, under the chief; they pointed out the order of the camp and sent every cart to its appointed place. Much of this organization had been planned and effected during the day's march, so the camping maneuver, performed like clockwork after long practice, could be completed in half an hour.

After the election of officers, regulations were drawn; like all other public announcements they were communicated to the camp by the crier. Under orders of the chief he circulated among the lodges every day to announce the discovery of lost articles, changes in the route, penalties for transgressions, or anything else concerning the company. Much of the hunt's procedure was dictated by custom and few "laws" were necessary; the standard rules varied little from year to year. The regulations in 1840 as recorded by Ross were:

1. No buffalo run on Sabbath Day.
2. No party to fork off, lag, or go before without permission.
3. No person or party to run buffalo before the general order.
4. Every captain with his men in turn to patrol camp and keep guard.

#### THE PRINCE OF THE PRAIRIES

5. For first trespass against these laws, offender to have saddle and bridle cut up.
6. For second offense, coat to be taken off offender's back and be cut up.
7. For third offense, offender to be flogged.
8. Any person convicted of theft, even to the value of a sinew, to be brought to the middle of the camp, and the crier to call out his or her name three times, adding the word "Thief!" each time.



At the end of each day's march the chief and his captains assembled in council outside of the camp, squatting on the grass with their guns beside them and pipes in their mouths. The events of the day were discussed, offenses were judged, and the next day's route selected. Few "crimes" came before this group because the Métis, impatient of laws and other restraints of civilization, accepted the individual responsibility with such an attitude required if their society was to survive. "They cherish freedom," commented Ross, "as they cherish life." He was struck by their unselfishness and general regard for the welfare of the group.

When the herd was found at last the hunt was marshaled with great speed and efficiency. The captains assembled the hunters—in the first 1840 chase there were four hundred of them—the priest blessed the venture, and the women emptied the carts and prepared to follow for the meat. The chief surveyed the herd, a mile and a half away, through a telescope, carefully examined the intervening ground, and at last, with a cry of "Ho! Ho!" and a sweep of his arm, gave the signal. He was an old man on a gentle horse, and custom forbade any rider to pass him until the buffalo took flight and the actual killing run started. The horses were held at first to a slow trot; as they fought for their heads they were permitted to canter, and when the herd broke they started on a dead run; now it was every man for himself.

20

Thus the Metis "law of the prairies", though not written, or formally institutionalised, was nevertheless a code strictly adhered to. It worked, despite its informality or perhaps because of it, and it worked well.

"The size of the Hunt grew in direct correlation to the demands of the Hudson's Bay Company and the settlers. As the population of the Red River settlement increased, so did the importance of the Hunt and, even though the Hudson's Bay Company was experiencing ever increasing financial difficulties, "the demand for supplies of food of slight bulk and high food value such as pemmican remained" (Innis, 1956:301). Using the Red

Using the Red

Red River cart<sup>1</sup> as the principal mode of transportation, and either riding or leading their best hunt horses, the Metis made their large expeditions in June, August, November, December and January.<sup>2</sup>

Technology and Economics of 'The Hunt'

A description of the Hunt noted that 540 carts went out in 1820, 820 in 1830 (Ray, 1971:228) and 1,210 in 1840.<sup>3</sup> Howard states that

The June hunt of 1840 was typical of these Metis mass expeditions. It engaged 620 hunters, 650 women, 360 children for two months, requiring 1,210 carts, about the

<sup>1</sup>The Red River cart was first introduced in 1801 at Pembina by Alexander Henry, of the North West Company (Knox, 1942:40).

<sup>2</sup>The Plains buffalo rutting season occurred during June, and the same occurred for the Woods buffalo in August, at which time the buffalo gathered in large herds. During the latter three months mentioned the buffalo's hide was in prime condition for robes, coats, and the commercial market (Ray, 1971:26-27).

<sup>3</sup>"Alexander Ross furnishes the following census of carts assembled in camp for the "first" (i.e., Spring) hunt at five different periods:

1820.....	540 carts
1825.....	680 carts (an approximate increase of 24%)
1830.....	820 carts (an approximate increase of 22%)
1835.....	970 carts (an approximate increase of 18%)
1840.....	1210 carts (an approximate increase of 25%)"

(Ross, 1856:244 In Roe, 1935:208).

In addition to tipis and house-keeping equipment, the expedition carried 740 guns, 150 gallons of gun powder, 1,300 pounds of balls, 6,240 flints and hundred of knives, axes and harness sets

Each cart was designed to carry about 900 pounds, with the average, according to Roe (1935:209) being 1000 pounds. The 'monetary value' of the June 15th hunt of 1840 was estimated by Alexander Ross (1856:244, In Roe, 1935:208) to be \$24,000.<sup>1</sup> Roe (1935:216) supplements Ross' data by supplying buffalo hunt figures for the period between 1840 and 1874; 1874 being the last year of a Red River based expedition:

- From 1840 to 1845 five expeditions of 1343 carts each killed 261,885 buffaloes.
- From 1845 to 1850 five expeditions of 1648 carts each killed 321,360 buffaloes.
- From 1850 to 1855 five expeditions of 1999 carts each killed 389,805 buffaloes. \*

<sup>1</sup>"This is Ross' table of the hunt which left Fort Henry for Deming on June 15, 1840; in which not merely the numbers are stated but also the suggested monetary value of the expedition. This is as follows:

1210 carts at \$1 10c. ea. each.....	\$1915
620 hunters (2 months) at 1s. per day....	1860
650 women (2 months) at 3d. per day.....	1460
360 boys and girls (2 months) at 4d. per day.....	360
403 buffalo runners (i.e., horses) at \$15 each.....	6045
655 carthorses at \$8 each.....	5240
Guns, gunpowder, knives, axes, harness, camp equipment, and utensils (approximate estimate).....	3700
	\$23,995
	or \$24,000 "

A tabulation of the above figures show that From 1840 - 1850, 4,865,250 buffalo were taken by the Metis hunters alone. 21

21. Robert Devrome, The Metis, Colonization Culture Change and Sask. Rebellion of 1885, a Masters Thesis, U. of Alta 1976 P.P. 49 - 50 - 51 - 52

As can be seen by the scale of the hunt, far more buffalo were taken than could possibly have been used by the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupertsland. The bulk of the sales were in St. Paul, where the hides were shipped east to supply belts for burgeoning U.S. industry. Nevertheless, the Hudson's Bay Company, as W. L. Morton indicated, was dependent..."firmly on the provisions afforded by the Plains (buffalo)."22

As demand grew, the hunt increased in size and became more organized and efficient. As the following statistics show, the hunt was no longer a leisurely affair, it was "socialised production", and its volume provided the basis for the creation of a Metis middle class of entrepreneurs. Thus, Metis Nationhood was built upon an economic base that (1) resulted in the extermination of the buffalo and (2) tied this new Native middle class to the "illicit" free trade along the St. Paul route. Following are statistics showing the rapid increase in buffalo kills as buffalo ceased being taken for subsistence and became a commercial commodity:

From 1855 to 1860 five expeditions of 2436 carts	
each killed 475,410 buffaloes.	Total 2,377,050
From 1860 to 1865 five expeditions of 2980 carts	
each killed 581,140 buffaloes	Total 2,905,700
From 1865 to 1870 five expeditions of 3641 carts	
each killed 679,224 buffaloes	Total 2,716,896
From 1855 - 1870 a total of 11,549,621 buffalo were taken	

W. L. Morton points out that by 1859 the buffalo frontier had been pushed west as far as the Cypress Hills.<sup>23</sup>

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22. W. L. Morton, from Robert Devromes Thesis, p. 84

23. Statistics compiles on basis of data from W. L. Morton, as quoted by Robert Devrome, Op.Cit., p. 52

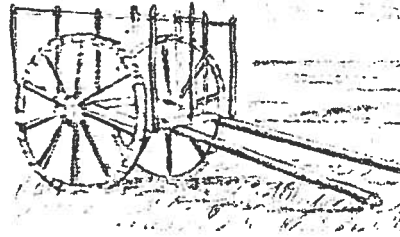
Following is an account of the destruction of the plains buffalo, indicating the market pressure on the resource, and the methods by which the demands were met.

" The Metis community spent the summer and fall travelling across the plains in Red River carts searching for buffalo herds. These carts were large, noisy wooden structures capable of carrying large quantities of meat. They were so involved in improving the noisy vehicle that the Cree dubbed the Metis, half-man half-cart.

On the first night out, soldiers were appointed and hunting rules proclaimed. The punishments for not keeping the Sabbath or for stealing were three fold. For the first violation the offender's saddle was cut to pieces, for the second fault his coat was torn off his back and on the third violation he was flogged. Using rifles rather than bows and arrows, the hunters employed the chase hunting method. They would charge into the herd firing and reloading at a full gallop.

After a hunt the hides were stripped, tongues were cut out and the choicest meat butchered. Carts hauled the produce back to camp where women slashed the meat into strips for pemmican. The hump, tenderloin and undershoulder pieces were bundled into 60 pound packages. The bones were split and boiled for the marrow. A trader would purchase the tongues immediately, have them salted and painted with molasses for lavish eastern tables. A hunt in 1840 comprised 4,000 people, 500 dogs and 1,210 carts; they gathered 1,189,000 pounds of meat and left an equal amount on the plains to rot.

The buffalo occupied a prominent part in white man's frontier living. Besides providing warm robes and food, buffalo by-products furnished their personal articles such as sifew for sewing and parchment for paper. . . .



Buffalo trade was profitable for hunter, dealer and manufacturer. However, the prices varied each year in accordance with availability, location and season. Buffalo meat sold between 1 and 6 cents per pound. While tongues were being sold for 18 cents each in 1825 at the Red River settlement, they were sold for 12 cents in the Rockies. In the west, salted tongues brought 25 cents and were resold for 50 cents in the east. Late in the 19th century when a market developed for bones, they were sold at 6 to 10 dollars per ton. In 1872 the Sante Fe railway shipped 10,793,350 pounds east. This equalled the skeletons of approximately 564,300 buffalo.

Robes were divided into two categories, prime and common. The prime hides were gathered during the cold winter months. Warm weather pelts were unfit for robes and brought the poorest prices. Prices fluctuated from 60 cents to 1 dollar and 75 cents for cowhides and from 1 to 3 dollars for buffalohides. In the east these same skins were sold at 5 to 10 dollars each.

Bartering was used extensively, especially by the traders dealing with Indians. In Saskatchewan, 3/4 pound of tobacco, 2 horn combs or 20 charges of powder and ball were the equivalent of one robe. In the United States during 1872 and 1873, one robe was worth 7 cups of sugar, or 5 measures of calico. The most costly item was a gallon of whisky or "firewater" which was purchased for 5 robes prepared by the Indian women.

Although the Hudson's Bay Company was establishing posts throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta, it was unable to penetrate the Blackfoot Nation. Since the buffalo supplied their needs, the Blackfoot had no need of white produce. But to keep traders out of their land they took their wares to Fort Edmonton. These boundaries broke down with the introduction of whisky into Blackfoot culture: For many years the Hudson's Bay Company had not used liquor in its dealings with the Indians; therefore, a southern route was developed to fulfil the demand for this illicit traffic. Thus, the current of trade on the plains was shifted southward. The main route between America and Canada was from Fort Benton, Montana and Fort Whoop-up, N.W.T.

When eastern concerns found hides made excellent belts for power machinery, a rush for hides developed which saw a massive waste of unused meat. Answering the call, free traders rushed west to make quick profits, using rifles and whisky as barter. The euphoria of liquor was relished to such an extent that men would trade their most prized horse, rifle or even wives. Wagon loads of putrid whisky were taken to isolated Indian camps where the liquor was sold by the cup. Early the next morning, the traders moved the wagons out before their victims awakened. One recipe called "Whoop-up Juice", contained 1 quart of whisky, 1 pound of chewing tobacco, a handful of red pepper, a bottle of Jamaican ginger, a quart of molasses, diluted in water and heated into true firewater.

The Indian hunted to live. The trader hunted for profit. A third group hunted to satisfy a lust for killing. From the four corners of the world "sportsmen" came to bag a buffalo. Infected with "buffalo running fever" they desired only the thrill of the chase and the joy of the kill. Railways advertised that for 10 dollars a man could ride in luxury on a hunting excursion or to a buffalo hunting contest. The train paused to "

24

Free trade did not affect only the buffalo hunt. It contributed to the destruction of the fur resource through overdeveloped, just as it depleted the immense buffalo herds of the plains. Harold Innis explains:

"Competition spread to the interior. In 1859 free traders Whitway and Harper outfitted at Red River and traded at Norway House. After 1861 the free trader<sup>143</sup> began to penetrate the Saskatchewan area<sup>144</sup> and in 1862 he was trading at Cumberland House. At Norway House the free trader competed effectively with such commodities as tea, sugar, and fancy light and pink cottons and the villagers began to take furs to Red River.<sup>145</sup> W. Sinclair wrote to Sir George Simpson on July 11, 1860: "They come and trade with the York and Oxford House Indians during the time of tripping in the summer—this arises from the high prices given for furs at Red River." In 1862 the free trader was threatening the Nelson River district. Complaints arose of independent trading between the trippers of the Mackenzie River brigade and the Portage brigade and the guide was accused of trading. To check this competition the Company found it necessary to raise the tariff at competitive points. Further, the number of traders at these points was increased and a personnel built up to hold subposts and to travel to various points for furs. A report on the causes of a decline in profits from 1858 to 1860 at Norway House was illuminating. These causes included an increase of the fur tariff in 1859 in which the price of marten was doubled, an increase in trippers' wages to equal the wages of Red River settlement, an increase in the consumption of colonial produce which in turn had increased in price, a decline in the most important post, Nelson River, through greater consumption of produce and the additional expense, including a boat in which to import this produce, and a loss on tea, sugar, tobacco—low-priced bulky commodities which could not be sold to pay the freight in the sales shop."

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24. Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources publication, Museum of Natural History, Bison and Man p. 21 - 22
25. Harold Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada U. of T. Press, 1956 p. 331

As can be seen, free trade, once unleashed against the monopoly quickly reduced monopoly profits for the Hudson's Bay Company and increased the average wage of the workers and the fur producers because of the re-introduction of competition.

Clearly, this was a situation that was:

- (1) rapidly depleting both the fur and buffalo resources and;
- (2) could not long be tolerated by the Hudson's Bay Company if its profits were to be maintained.

Small wonder that governor Simpson lamented the Company's lack of a military garrison, and suggested letting Canada take over to subdue the Natives.

Meanwhile, in the Northwest, the free trading Metis were coming in to contact with other political groups with a hatred for all things English, (such as the Hudson's Bay Company). The Fenians, a group of Irish patriots, determined to get revenge against the empire for the loss of their own lands and millions of their compatriots, were seeking an alliance with the Metis to overthrow the British Company and sieze power. As the following letter indicates, the very substantial illicit fur trade to St. Paul provided both the funds for the building of a Metis National middle class, and the "firebrands" to teach revolution.

My Dear Sir

It appears to me that the "Dominion" Government does not understand the true cause of the troubles in the North West. The true causes are these. First of these is that our political demagogues who pander to the "Penian" element in this State, are now and have for some time been counselling the invasion of "Winnipeg" but found it unpopular among the better class of citizens, hence they got the "Penian" priest and other firebrands in the Northwest to operate on the Roman Catholic half-breeds. The head-quarters of the deluded rebels are in St. Paul. From 350 - 400 thousand dollars of furs are sold annually in St. Paul, and through the influence of interested parties in this trade the poor deluded half-breeds are led into the trap, and are made the pliant tools of unprincipled men. And these men are doing everything they can to prejudice the inhabitants against Gov. McDougall, upon whom they look as a monster that will trample them under foot. Such influences practiced by artful and designing men, headed by a fanatical "Penian" priest, work very forcibly on the ignorant minds of the greedy and ruthless half-breeds. Colonel Armentinger's mission will fail, and he can do little if anything among them; as the prejudice against any one direct from the "Dominion is so great that they are deaf to reason. The best, cheapest and only way to settle the matter now, is to withdraw McDougall, Armentinger and every one else upon whom the half-breeds look with suspicion...."

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26. Copy of letter by Mr. F. F. McBain to Sir John A MacDonalld,  
December 25, 1869/ Amnsis Library, Gabriel Dumont Institute  
Regina



The overdevelopment of the buffalo resource, while it created Metis wealth on the one hand, transformed the Metis way of life on the other. Innis recorded how the loss of the buffalo resulted in a shift to agriculture in Red River, to meet Hudson's Bay Company needs.

(In 1843)

3. "In the Mackenzie River department, provisions, especially pemmican, were supplied from Saskatchewan and Dunvegan. The requisition of Fort Simpson headquarters from Chipewyan included 48 bags of pemmican, or 40 bags pemmican and dried meat equal to 8 bags, 2 bags of fine pemmican and "as much butter as can be spared." In 1857 it was estimated that 2,000 to 3,000 hundredweight of pemmican were manufactured annually.

In the latter part of the period, the production of pemmican on the Saskatchewan declined. After 1852, with increasing scarcity of pemmican and supplies from Saskatchewan and other districts, pemmican was no longer sent to Mackenzie River department. Its production tended to fall off at certain posts.

Following the decline of the supply of pemmican from the Saskatchewan district, Swan River and Red River districts exported larger

quantities. Swan River began to supply grease in 1841 and pemmican and dried meat in 1842 sending out 3 cwt. soft grease, 20 bales dried meat, and 70 bags of pemmican in 1845. Red River exported larger quantities of pemmican and dried meat after 1840. With the decline in the supply of pemmican and its shift to other areas flour became a more important export from Red River. Flour requisitions from Red River increased from 200 cwt. in 1825 to 1,200 cwt. in 1833 and declined from 1,000 cwt. in 1838 to 750 cwt. in 1845. The price was reduced from 20/ per cwt. in 1823 to 10/ in 1832 but increased again to 12/ in 1836 and remained at that price to 1838. Requisitions for pork, beef, and ham remained very stable throughout the period, declining slightly from 1832 to 1838 but rising throughout the period 1840 to 1845. Butter steadily increased. Indian corn, peas, and barley practically disappeared in the first two or three years. Prices were remarkably steady with a tendency to increase. Cheese, eggs, suet, French beans, assortments of garden seeds, and even potatoes were added to the requisition after 1837 and especially after 1840. Red River settlement with its favourable climate became the chief source of agricultural products which were shipped downstream and across the lake to Norway House."

With the destruction of the buffalo, and the depletion of the fur-bearing animals of the north, coupled with the recurring plagues of smallpox, life for the Indian and Metis population of Rupertsland became precarious, at best. Thousands died of famine and disease "overnight." Howard wrote:

"Six hundred Blackfeet, one-fourth of the tribe in the United States, were dead of starvation. Some had gone mad from hunger and grief while wolves prowled among the unburied dead in the silent tipis. Scores, though living, were crippled by diet-deficiency diseases. And the spirit of a warrior race was broken for all time. No matter how bitter the Blackfeet might become, they never again would be able to do anything about it.

28

Then, within two or three decades, the furs were gone or the market failed, as it did when felt replaced beaver in men's hats. Another decade or two finished off the buffalo; the Indian, who had made one adjustment with great difficulty, now confronted another and much more complex one. He could not go back: the game which Manito had put on the Plains to sustain him was gone. He could see no way to go ahead: the whites had taken the land, subtly robbed him of his age-old skills, weakened him with alcohol and disease and hew, less nourishing foods, and destroyed his self-respect. The face of Nature had been transformed, the balance of Nature had been upset; by these he had lived. The white man had knifed the mother in the breast and the spirit had fled from the child.

Desperately the Dreamers prayed and Smohalla exhorted them: "All the dead men will come to life again; their spirits will come to their bodies again. We must wait here in the homes of our fathers and be ready to meet them in the bosom of our mother."

But the spirits of the dead men were sluggish and cold and slow to respond, and meanwhile the knife of the white man rose and fell, again and again."

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28. Joseph Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire*, Swan Publishing Toronto, 1952 p. 304
29. *Ibid*, p. 250

Following are vignettes taken from Dee Brown's, Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee. These accounts are included, not so much as an attempt to document the American atrocities, this has been amply done by Dee Brown, rather the following are included in a rather futile attempt to pass on to the reader some notion of the magnitude of the human tragedy that gave birth to modern America.

"California Indians were gentle as the climate in which they lived. The Spaniards gave them names, established missions for them, converted and debauched them. Tribal organizations were undeveloped among the California Indians; each village had its leaders, but there were no great war chiefs among these unwarlike people. After the discovery of gold in 1848, white men from all over the world poured into California by the thousands, taking what they wanted from the submissive Indians, debasing those whom the Spaniards had not already debased, and then systematically exterminating whole populations now long forgotten. No one remembers the Chilulas, Chimarikos, Urebeures, Nipewais, Alonas, or a hundred other bands whose bones have been sealed under a million miles of freeways, parking lots, and slabs of tract housing..." 22

"Almost a thousand miles north of the Navaho country and at this same time of the white men's great Civil War, the Santee Sioux were losing their homeland forever. The Santees were of four division--the Mdewkantons, Wahpetons, Wahpekutes, and Sissetons. They were woodland Sioux but kept close ties and shared a strong tribal pride with their blood brothers of the prairies, and Yanktons and Tetons. The Santees were the "people of the farther end", the frontier guardians of the Sioux domain.

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30. Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, Bantom Books, Hold, Reinhart & Winston, 1973, p. 220

...During the ten years preceding the Civil War, more than 150,000 white settlers pushed into Santee country, thus collapsing the left flank of the once "permanent Indian frontier". As the result of two deceptive treaties, the woodland Sioux surrendered nine-tenths of their land and were crowded into a narrow strip of territory along the Minnesota River. From the beginning, agents and traders had hovered around them like buzzards around the carcasses of slaughtered buffalo, systematically cheating them out of the greater part of the promised annuities for which they had been persuaded to give up their lands..."<sup>31</sup>

In 1863, General Sibley defeated Little Crow of the Santee Sioux; at the head of 600 warriors. Following the battle, "303 Santees(were) sentenced to death, sixteen to long prison terms".<sup>32</sup>

However, Abraham Lincoln intervened and only 39 warriors were executed.

In 1864 the army defeated the Cheyennes and Araphos at Sand Creek:

As Dee Brown indicates in the following quotation, the massacre of Sand Creek by the American military was for land, the valleys and mountains, the rivers and prairies, mother earth, worshiped as a goddess by the tribes for untold centuries. With the land taken from them, a land now drenched with their own blood, white antelope the Elder, may have been singing the death song for an entire way of life that had existed some ten thousand years, but was to be extinguished in a matter of decades.

"Thus did the Cheyennes and Araphos abandon all claims to the Territory of Colorado. And that of course was the real meaning of the massacre at Sand Creek .

"Survivors among the Cheyennes said that White antelope, an old man of 75, sang the death song before he died: Nothing lives long only the earth and the mountains".<sup>33</sup>

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32. Ibid p. 38

32 Ibid p. 59

33. Ibid p. 89

After Sand Creek the plains Indians changed their battle tactics drastically. The plains Indians united in their efforts bringing in the Sioux, the Cheyennes and Araphos. Thus they were able to muster an army of well over two thousand braves at any time. But more importantly they abandoned their tradition methods of warfare, and under Chief Redcloud, they developed forms of guerilla warfare that had never been much improved upon over the years until Vietnam.

However, the vast numbers of American troops and automatic weapons made victory impossible in the end. The gattling gun was invented for, and brought to bear on, the Indians of the west. Despite the great leaders such as Geronimo in New Mexico, Red Cloud of the Oglalas and Sitting Bull of the Sioux, Crazy Horse, and the hundreds of other brave and intelligent chiefs and warriors the struggle to maintain the old order was hopeless. The destruction of the buffalo alone was enough to ensure the destruction of the peoples whose lives, culture and history had depended upon it. What with the "advance of civilization", and the destruction of the buffalo herds, the military destruction of the Indian population seemed at first to be a simple "mopping up" operation. The tenacity and bravery of the Plains Indians, however, turned this in to a full-scale military offensive.

The last "battle" against the American Indians by the United States government occurred at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, December 28, 1890. This was the Christmas season for whites; for the Indians it was "the Moon when the Deer Shed Their Horns".

Chief Big Foot and other "renegades" (Indian Patriots) had been captured and the massacre of Wounded Knee occurred almost by accident as the prisoners had virtually no weapons, and no intention to do battle.

"In the first seconds of violence, the firing of carbines was deafening, filling the air with powder smoke. Among the dying who lay sprawled on the frozen ground was Big Foot. Then there was a brief lull in the rattle of arms, with small groups of Indians and soldiers grappling at close quarters, using knives, clubs, and

pistols. As few of the Indians had arms, they soon had to flee, and then the big Hotchkins guns on the hill opened up on them, firing almost a shell a second, raking the Indian camp, shredding the teepees with flying shrapnel, killing men, women, and children.

"We tried to run", Louise Weasel Bear said," but they shot us like we were buffalo. I know there are some good white people. But the soldiers must be mean to shoot children and women. Indian soldiers would not do that to white children..."<sup>34</sup>

..."The wagonloads of wounded Sioux (four men and forty-seven women and children) reached Pine Ridge after dark. Because all available barracks were filled with soldiers, they were left lying in the open wagons in the bitter cold while an inept Army officer searched for shelter. Finally the Episcopal mission was opened, the benches taken out, and hay scattered over the rough flooring.

It was the fourth day after Christmas in the Year of Our Lord 1890. When the first torn and bleeding bodies were carried into the candlelit church, those who were conscious could see Christmas greenery hanging from the open rafters. Across the chapel front above the pulpit was strung a crudely lettered banner: PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TO MEN."<sup>35</sup>

Thus did the American government "solve its native problem".

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34. Ibid, p. 444

35. Ibid, p. 445

The destitution of the tribes North of the 49th parallel, brought on almost as a "side effect" of the economic imperialism of the Hudson's Bay Company, was in itself a crime against humanity, but it was pale by contrast when compared to the military genocide carried out directly by the United States military. In Rupertsland the buffalo were slaughtered to be sold as a commodity. In the United States the buffalo were exterminated by United States troops purposely, to starve the Indians into submission. Howard recorded,

"It seemed to be the intent of General Miles, Canada complained to Washington, to prevent the buffalo from completing their annual northern migration. Lord Lorne, the Governor General of the Dominion, suggested to the Secretary of State that nothing should be done to impede the free movement of the herds.

Miles, who had advanced in rank after defeating Chief Joseph two years before, was patrolling the Montana-Dakota frontier with the ostensible purpose of preventing an influx of Canadian Indians to hunt. This was bad enough, Ottawa felt; but by interposing his troops between the boundary and the southern winter range he was holding the buffalo in Montana for slaughter. The herds, scenting man ahead, retreated and reversed their course.

Nor was that all of the story. That same year a disastrous series of prairie fires swept the grasslands just north of the line, and the few buffalo which did get that far found no forage and turned back. The Governor of Manitoba could not regard this as coincidence; "the fires were started," he said, "at different points almost simultaneously, as if by some

preconstructed arrangement." They extended from Wood Mountain, midway in the present Province of Saskatchewan, to the Rockies and north as much as a hundred miles. Americans, their dismayed neighbors were convinced, had set the fires deliberately to keep the herds south of the line; and it is probably true that some were started by American Indians with the encouragement of Montana's white buffalo hunters.

On the other hand, buffalo are whimsical beasts, given to inexplicable shifts in their range. There had been other years when they had vanished temporarily from their usual feeding grounds and the Red River hunters had fasted in consequence. But this time they did not come back. After 1879 there were virtually no buffalo north of the boundary, whereas in Montana they held out for four more years. "

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36. John Kinsey Howard, *Strange Empire*, Swan Publishing, 1952  
p.p. 251, 252

The Americans were keeping the buffalo from migrating North for military purposes. Sitting Bull had defeated General Custer in 1866. Shortly after, Sitting Bull's band fled across the border to the Cypress Hills region. Dee Brown wrote:

" And then in the Moon of Falling Leaves came the heartbreaking news: the reservation of Sioux must leave Nebraska and go to a new reservation on the Missouri River.

Through the crisp dry autumn of 1877, long lines of exiled Indians driven by soldiers marched northeastward toward the barren land. Along the way, several bands slipped away from the column and turned northwestward determined to escape to Canada and join Sitting Bull. With them went the father and mother of Crazy Horse, carrying the heart and bones of their son. At a place known only to them they buried Crazy Horse somewhere near Chankpe Opi Wakpala, the creek called Wounded Knee. "

37

The American Troops, in attempting to starve Sitting Bull into submission and prevent further escapes, had, according to these indications, set fires along the border and stationed troops as well, to prevent the northward movement of the buffalo. In so doing, they also starved the Cree and the Blackfeet tribes North of the border, who were also dependent on the buffalo. This was standard practice in the United States, according to Howard.

" When these vast herds were seen the Indians and Métis had been hunting for generations. But systematic extermination by white men or at their instigation had been under way only ten or fifteen years, since the railroads had been pushed into the West and the policy of "starve the Indian out" adopted in the United States. By 1890 there were fewer than one thousand buffalo left on the continent, most of them in captivity; today there are about thirty thousand, all on government or private range. "

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37. Dee Brown, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, Bantam Books, 1970  
p. 296
38. Ibid, p. 253 (Howard)



The destruction of the buffalo and the oppression of the plains Indians and Metis was not just a "mere act of thoughtlessness carried out by white men". It was a systematic and conscious process of conquest engineered by a specific class of white men for specific purposes. Who was benefitting from all of this destruction? Howard continued:

"Meanwhile Donald Smith busied himself as a lobbyist in Ottawa, and the first track laid on the Canadian system was the Pembina branch, south from Winnipeg to connect with Hill's road. Since the latter ultimately became the Great Northern, two of the major transcontinentals may be said to have started in the Red River Valley.

In 1877 a Red River stern-wheeler owned by Hill, the Selkirk, brought the Canadian Pacific Railway's first locomotive, the Countess of Dufferin, to Winnipeg from St. Paul, which it had reached by Mississippi steamer. This locomotive still stands in the Manitoba capital as a historical relic.

In December, 1878, the Canadian Pacific and Hill's line were joined at the boundary. As the promoters of the scheme had anticipated, the money rolled in. There had been steamboats on the river since 1859 (the first had been put there, as might have been expected, by the unfailingly enterprising St. Paul Chamber of Commerce), but low water had sometimes laid them up for several seasons, they were slow, and their rates were very high.

Hill's financial associates in the St. Paul railroad company were George Stephen and R. B. Angus of the Bank of Montreal; Hill had met Stephen through the latter's cousin, Donald Smith. In 1880 Stephen, who was personally wealthy in addition to controlling the bank's resources, was persuaded by Sir John A. Macdonald to bring into his group Duncan McIntyre, who controlled some eastern Canadian lines, and to form a syndicate which would undertake to build the Canadian Pacific as a private enterprise.

Hill was born near Guelph, Ontario, in 1838, but he had become an American citizen. His new loyalties may have been partially responsible for the brevity of his association with the Canadians, but his withdrawal from the syndicate in 1883 was chiefly due to the fact that he did not stand to get the profits he had expected. He was determined that Winnipeg should be the eastern terminus of Canada's new transcontinental; traffic would there be diverted to his line and proceed east from St. Paul over existing American or Canadian roads. This was the proposal James Wickes Taylor had made to the St. Paul Chamber in 1859.

Economically, Hill's (or Taylor's) argument was sound: the bleak Laurentian Plateau north of Lake Superior never could produce enough to support a railroad, and construction there would be ruinously expensive. But the Canadian Pacific was to be the new Northwest Passage, the lifeline

of Britain; Macdonald and its other political sponsors insisted that it must be "an Imperial highway across the continent of America entirely on British soil." They had not forgotten that the real motivation of Taylor's proposal, which Hill now sought to sell to Ottawa, had been annexationist: by making western Canada dependent upon St. Paul for transportation, the Americans figured, that vast undeveloped section of the Dominion sooner or later would be forced to join the United States.

39

The rising class of industrial capitalists were the ones who were getting rich through the destruction of the old way of life.

The Indians and Metis populations, following the depletion of the fur trade, had found themselves alone and vulnerable in the crossroads of conflicting empires. These names, Donald Smith, Sir John A. Macdonald, George Steven, etc., were much much more than mere personalities in all of this. They were the main actors in the drama, people who, while ensuring Britains' trade route to the pacific, were at the same time building Canadian National capital at the expense of the Indian, Metis, and white settler populations of the North West. James Wickes Taylor was an american spy in Red River, and became the "agent provocateur" for his Country's railroad interests. More of these people later.

George F. Stanley's account of the free trade movement essentially verifies Howard's account. He wrote about the puppet government as follows:

The administration of the colony, too, was simple in the extreme. In the earliest days of its existence the Red River Settlement was ruled by a Governor appointed by Lord Selkirk. After the Earl's death, the colony remained the property of the Douglas family, although in actual fact the responsibilities of caring for it were taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1836, however, the sixth Earl of Selkirk surrendered the territory granted to his father, and the Red River Settlement reverted to the jurisdiction of the Hudson's Bay Company. This change of ownership made very little difference to the settlers. The Company carried on the traditional forms of government, appointing a local governor and

naming a council to assist him. Although primarily filled with men whose interests coincided with those of the Company, this body included other elements of the population. The two main religious denominations, Roman Catholic and Anglican, were given representation; so, too, were the English-speaking half-breeds.<sup>30</sup> Only in 1853 was the first French-speaking métis given a seat on the Council of Assiniboia; but in the years that followed both the half-breeds and the métis were given more substantial recognition in the matter of appointments.

The powers of the governor and council were strictly limited. None of their measures had any effect fifty miles beyond the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, that is, outside the limits of what became known as Assiniboia; nor could the council infringe upon the powers of the Governor of Rupert's Land, who held court at Norway House. Nevertheless, the Governor and Council of Assiniboia adopted many measures of a purely local nature, dealing with such matters of importance to the community as roads, surveys, animals, fires and sale of liquor. In 1837, a General Court was established and placed under a Scottish Canadian, Adam Thom, and several judicial districts were organized to function under three magistrates. There was no organized police force, although constables were engaged from time to time; but except on a few notable occasions the absence of an armed force was of little consequence. The people generally were law-abiding, and the faithful heeded the

admonitions of their priests, nuns, ministers and pastors. "Civilization" had not yet brought to Red River dishonesty and unscrupulousness and the crimes of premeditated violence of a later period. If a local settler should occasionally drink himself into a stupor, it was easier, certainly cheaper, and probably better, to allow him to sleep it off at home or in the field than to thrust him into the local gaol.

40

The Hudson's Bay Company officials looked with a wary eye upon such proceedings. For the moment, however, there was nothing that they could do in the face of instructions from London that they "would not suffer the fur trade to oppose or oppress the Settlement, and if it be attempted, the expense of redressing the evil must and will fall on the fur trade as in Justice it ought."<sup>32</sup> The anxiety of the London office that the local governors should avoid irritating the settlers was illustrated by the reduction to four per cent of the seven and a half per cent revenue tax upon imports imposed by the Council of Assiniboia in 1835.

There was irritation in any case. The settlers disliked even the four per cent tax. They liked even less the constant reiteration by Company officials of the statement that whatever concessions might be made about other articles of trade, fur was and would remain a Company monopoly. Inevitably the settlers turned to smuggling. The risks were not particularly great, if the common routes were avoided and travelling was done at night, and the inducements of higher prices offered by the Americans at Pembina were considerable. Inevitably the Company replied with a more active espionage system, with more frequent searches,

40. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel, McGraw Hill Ryerson  
1969, p.p. 10 - 11

Life at Red River was not entirely idyllic. The colony was not without political heart-burnings, nor were relations between the Hudson's Bay Company and the settlers without friction. The great source of trouble was the vexatious question of the Company's trading monopoly. From the outset this had been recognized as a potential cause of contention, if only because of the economic stagnation of the colony and the presence of American traders on the frontier. The Americans not only had goods for sale but provided a market for furs or foodstuffs, so the settlers were prepared to buy and sell quietly across the boundary. Trade with the Americans began as early as 1819, when the settlers were compelled to go to Wisconsin to obtain seed grain. In 1820 a contract for cattle was offered to a merchant in Prairie du Chien. He was unable to fulfil his part of the bargain when the animals starved to death during the winter; but another trader, Joseph Rolette, a former Nor'Wester, took advantage of the situation to drive a few cows to Kaskaskia in 1821, where they were purchased "with great avidity."<sup>31</sup> Other American merchants did likewise.

41

What concerned the Hudson's Bay Company was not so much the quantity of furs reaching American hands as the fact that the métis were managing to get hold of the finest and the lightest furs from the Indians and were sending them south in return for American products.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, in 1844, Governor Christie of Assiniboia decided to take more emphatic measures to end the illicit trade, which was increasing in significance daily or nightly. He would forbid the use of the Hudson's Bay Company's ships for importing goods by any settler who refused to sign a declaration that he had "neither directly nor indirectly trafficked in furs." He would even go further. He would order all letters leaving the colony to be sent to Fort Garry with the sender's name clearly written on the outside; should the sender be suspected of dealing in furs, his letters might be opened and their contents examined and, if necessary, the letters stopped.

This was more than most of the settlers were prepared to accept. Andrew McDermot, one of the leading businessmen of Red River, and James Sinclair, an active, intelligent half-breed who sought to take over the leadership of the half-breeds from Cuthbert Grant, now a docile tool of the Company, frankly refused to obey Christie's orders, and then compounded their defiance by ostentatiously purchasing goods from American traders in Pembina.

Although the cause of annexation was advocated in other regions of the northern United States, notably in Chicago and in Detroit, the real centre of the agitation was St. Paul. This community was, by now, the *entrepôt* of the North-West trade, British as well as American, and it saw in its own future the fulfilment of Seward's dream. In St. Paul everyone was an annexationist: the merchants, because they felt that annexation would provide them with still greater opportunities to expand a trade already estimated at between one and two million dollars, not the inflated paper dollars of the 1860's but the solid gold dollars of the 1860's; the railwaymen, because annexation seemed to offer opportunities for new railway lines into the British territories to the north, which would take the carriage of goods and passengers away from the slower and more

cumbersome steamers; the politicians, because they saw in annexation a sure and easy way to obtain votes. Annexation was a political matter; and so it was the politicians who took the lead in pressing it upon the United States government. Of these, the principal exponent was the former governor of Minnesota and a member of the Senate of the United States, Alexander Ramsey. Echoing Ramsey's demands in Washington were those other apostles of expansionism, Senators Zachariah Chandler and Joseph Howard of Michigan, and General N. P. Banks of Massachusetts.

Of all advocates of the annexation of the North-West, no man worked harder to bring it about than James Wickes Taylor. "

42

Howard described the same process and indicated why the puppet government could not work indefinitely without open resistance.

" The governmental authority was the Council of Assiniboia, serving with the Company's local governor and selected by him. In 1835 this group, using as an excuse the need for money to be spent on "public works" (none of which developed), levied a duty of seven and one-half per cent on all exports and imports. The Métis reaction was so alarming that the import was soon cut back to four per cent, where it had originally stood, and other measures were tried. Public flogging was ordered as punishment for theft, and theft could be defined as removal of furs from the Company's jurisdiction without an export license. But this could not be enforced, either, without risking an uprising, so the law was repealed. In 1840 the Company's men began searching homes and cart trains for contraband furs, and a new land deed was devised binding homeseekers not to trade in furs or import goods from the United States.

The smugglers just took a wider cut across the prairie to Pembina, and the settlers "squatted" without bothering about titles. Their numbers were soon so great—more than five thousand, most of them Métis, by this time—that the Company did not dare to try evictions.

The furs flowed south along the Red River trails, and goods came back. St. Paul could supply pots and stoves and tools and whiskey much more cheaply than cargoes could be brought from London to the Bay and then south by boat to Fort Garry. And the American traders gave two to four times as much for furs as the British paid. Mink sold for ten pence a skin at Fort Garry, forty cents at Pembina; buffalo robes, for which the Company gave only five shillings, brought \$2.50 when smuggled south; and the American price for beaver, \$3.25, was double the sum offered by the British. "

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42. Ibid, p. 12

43. Joseph Kinsey Howard, Strange Empire

p. 57

Howard described the "invention" of the Red River Cart and its brief sojourn through history:

" the cart was known in the region as early as 1784. Henry himself did not claim to have designed it, but his journal entry of November 15, 1801, may be the first mention of the new vehicle:

Men now go again for meat with small carts, the wheels of which are one solid piece, sawed off the ends of trees whose diameter is three feet. Those carriages we find more convenient and advantageous than it is to load horses, the country being so smooth and level that we can use them in every direction.

Henry became more and more enthusiastic about the cart. "This invention," he wrote in 1803, "is worth four horses to us, as it would require five horses to carry as much on their backs as one will drag in each of these large carts."

Henry was English but the cart was definitely French. Similar vehicles had long been in use in Quebec, whose inhabitants had modified the design they had known in France. But the Red River cart was a product of evolution and adaptation, built for the prairie, as was a similar one which evolved on the Argentine pampas somewhat later. No one could be said to have "invented" it, nor did the design remain unchanged. The cart became lighter and stronger, until it could carry a load of five hundred pounds and make fifty miles a day when drawn by a pony, or carry nine hundred pounds fifteen or twenty miles a day when drawn by an ox.

The solid flat wheels of which Henry wrote were replaced by "dished" wheels with four or more spokes. The wheels could be quickly removed and attached under the cart or at its sides so it could be floated over a river. After spokes became popular, the felloes which formed the rim were wrapped with wet rawhide, shrinking and hardening as they dried, the leather strips bound the segments of the rim firmly together.

The cart was built entirely of wood and the noise of its wheel hubs as they rubbed on the axle, which usually was an unpeeled poplar log, was a tooth-sabbing screech which was never forgotten by anyone who heard it; it was if a thousand fingernails were drawn across a thousand panes of glass.

The wheels were so high that even in a runaway the outfit seldom overturned. Wood was used exclusively even after metal became available, because trees were accessible in the watercourses along the trail and repairs could thus be made easily; also wood was light, so the cart could be lifted out of the mud, and would float.

The brigades wound across the prairie like a great snake, the extra horses or oxen fanning out beside the carts to get out of the dust; this herd usually numbered a tenth to a fifth as large as that actually pulling the carts. The start was made at daybreak, with a rest at noon, and a day's run lasted about ten hours.

The wheels could not be greased because dust would coagulate and cement them to the axle. Drivers and their animals just had to get used to the interminable shriek of the grinding wood, and soon did—though tenderfoot visitors found it incredible that anyone could. Most of the prairie "tourists" came away affirming that the noise was indescribable, then set out immediately to try to describe it—and had to fall back upon such adjectives as "hellish" or "horrifying" or "nerve-racking."

The Red River cart brigades never sneaked up on anybody. On a still day you could hear them coming for miles, and see the great cloud of yellow dust they raised; and if the buffalo of the plains did finally flee into holes in the ground as the Indians believed—well, it was no wonder.

#### LONG LIVE LIBERTY!

The Red River trails linked two frontiers and two political systems. A bewildering *mélange* of cultures flowed over them: British, French, American, Swiss; Indian and white and Métis; Catholic and Protestant and pagan.

They freed trade from the restraints which governments and private monopoly sought to impose upon it, and they changed, for a time, the direction of commerce. They could have changed the political destiny of half of the continent, and almost did.

Initially the flow of goods to the frontier was from east to west: Montreal to Red River by canoe; from New York to Mackinac. But about 1830 the movement began to shift, with the cargoes originating in the north and south. When the Hudson's Bay Company absorbed the Nor'westers, London got the business of supplying the empire's outposts

and the goods came in by way of the Bay; on the American side at about the same time the fur companies began shipping supplies from St. Louis up the Mississippi to St. Peter's.

The Red River trails had been in use for several years for occasional unscheduled transport before they became a vital link in the new north-south chain of communication. In 1843 the first regular cart service was inaugurated between Pembina and St. Paul by Joseph Rolette, Astor's agent at Pembina. Half a dozen carts then sufficed to take the furs south and bring back trade goods, implements, and whiskey; but by 1851 more than a hundred were making the trip and in 1858 the number had grown to six hundred. This meant that a sizeable share of the fur trade had been diverted, illegally, from the Hudson's Bay Company to the aggressive Yankee traders of St. Paul and New York, for there were not enough furs south of the boundary in the region served by the carts to make possible shipments on this scale.

Freight traffic over the prairie route reached its peak in 1869 when twenty-five hundred screeching carts raised a cloud of dust which hung over the trail for three months. Next year political troubles began and trade was interrupted; then, in 1873, the first steamboat came up the Red, and in 1878 the first railroad was completed. The old trails were finished.

But they had done their job. Among other things, they contributed more than any other factor to the break-up of the best-entrenched political and industrial combination that ever existed, the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company of Adventurers could absorb and disarm its most enterprising competitors; it could dictate to bishops and shift populations; it could stave off investigations and audits and other governmental interference—but it could not close the Red River trails.

The new nation being born on Red River owed much of its *raison d'être* to smuggling, as had other nations before it. Much of the commerce upon which St. Paul and other cities of the American frontier were built was illegal. But the laws that were broken were mostly Hudson's Bay Company laws, and few persons on either side of the forty-ninth parallel recognized the right of a chartered company to make and enforce legislation. "



Howard summed up the Metis free trade role in the history of the North West as follows:

" During the great struggle for the prizes of the fur trade in the first half of the nineteenth century and for two or three decades thereafter the Métis were dominant on the rivers and prairies. They were the wanderers of the wilderness—the best boatmen, best guides, hunters, trappers and traders. They devised a system of freight transport for the Plains which established a new industry and made St. Paul the capital of Minnesota and the commercial center of the Northwestern frontier. Their knowledge of the country — much of it instinctive and thus inexplicable to white men—made them indispensable in development of the West, as did the fact that most of the Indians welcomed them as relatives and friends.

The Métis, a new people, were the cultural and economic intermediaries in the "civilizing" of a continent. Without their help the process would have been much bloodier than it was. They also were the inheritors of the Indians' culture, and with it, the Indians' problems."

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Clearly, free trade to St. Paul was big business. So big that the ponderous Hudson's Bay Company could not begin to contain it. This business produced sufficient wealth to maintain its own class of Metis merchants and entrepreneurs. And it provided the economic basis for Nationhood just as it created the class whose ideology created Metis nationalism.

Louis Riel senior had been a leader of the Metis national intelligentsia, largely responsible for the popularisation of the free trade movement. It is no coincidence that his hue and cry, "La traite, C'est la liberte", was precisely the same one that smashed the old feudal order of Imperial France, and replaced it with dynamic capitalism. At the height of the free trade movement, in the 1860's, the Metis bourgeoisie of Red River were much better off, and more highly educated than were the European settlers.

However, the Metis middle class had not solidified, and had not the historical time-span available to it, to be able to create its own local institutions. Consequently, its ideology

was taken from other areas, predominantly from Quebec. Just as the aristocratic Scottish element had sent their children off to Europe for education (Cuthbert Grant et al) so now the French speaking Metis bourgeois sent their most intelligent progeny off to Quebec to be taught by the Roman Catholic school system. Thus Louis Riel junior, at a tender age, left his prairie home to be tutored in Quebec, despite the beauty of local culture that was developing in Red River, as Stanley describes it:

" the night-long dances and the political gatherings on the church steps after Mass. Perhaps he asked his father or his cousins about the organization of the buffalo hunters, about his own race, their sensitiveness, their myths, their depressions and their exaltations. Because Louis Riel was always a thoughtful boy, proud, introspective, just a little aloof, these things would have interested him.

In spite of the failure of his father to secure political recognition for himself, as the boy grew older he must have felt a sense of pride in the emergence of the métis as a strong group in the Red River community, a group which was developing its own bourgeoisie, its own leaders, a group whose voice was being heard and respected in the Settlement. Without a doubt Louis shared in the social life of the métis, in the family parties, the feasts of galettes, tikameg (whitefish), buffalo steaks and boiled tea, in the annual migration to the nearby lakes to hunt the Canada goose during the autumn. "

46

These were the things that were important in the lives of the Metis, yet, for the bright children of the Metis entrepreneurs, Montreal was the destination for "higher" education.

" Louis Riel had not reached his fourteenth birthday when he set out for Montreal on June 1, 1858. At that age he was able to enjoy to the full the experience of a journey that took him over fifteen hundred miles from the banks of the Seine to those of the great St. Lawrence. The first part of the journey was to be by ox-cart, along with métis tripmen on their way to St. Paul. There were two people to watch over the boys and assist them on their way, the Reverend Sister Valade, Superior of the Grey Nuns at St. Boniface, who was on her way to Montreal to find new recruits for the western missions, and an old Canadian, Granger by name, whom Taché had asked to go along with the party.<sup>13</sup> "

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46. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel p.p. 18. 19

47. George F. Stanley. Louis Riel p. 21

The course of studies was that of the ordinary French classical college. It occupied eight years, called Latin, Syntax, Method, Versification, Belles-Lettres, Rhetoric and Philosophy. The subjects studied included religious instruction, Latin, Greek, French, English, mathematics, philosophy, and the elements of physics, chemistry, astronomy and botany. The emphasis was thus upon the humanistic studies, with only a cursory nod in the direction of the sciences. Each pupil's day was full. With frequent examinations, both oral and written, there was little time for idle dreaming. It seemed a long struggle for the young boy, but the reward at the end was the classical baccalaureate."

48

The educational institutions of Quebec were teaching the conservative doctrines of the "ultra Montaign" order that still attempted to stifle free thought (and free trade) by acting as the ideological supporters of the old feudal order. Yet, despite these contradictions, the Metis of the plains inevitably saw their intelligentsia siphoned off and inculcated with an ideology that was foreign to the interests of the local people, and which tended to replace the old Indian co-operative systems with European conservatism, or free enterprize individualism. In this struggle, the leaders of the Metis of Red River lined up on one side or the other. The third option, the communal organization of life, and the old tribal co-operation of the Indians went down to defeat by default. The ideology of the conflict was "made in France" or was "made in England". Thus, Mcleod wrote of the struggle, following the Sayer trial...

" which in fact marked the end of any attempt to enforce the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company by resort to the courts.

Nor was this the whole programme of the Métis, for they followed up their victory on May 17 by demanding that Thom, whom they regarded as an enemy of their race, should retire from the Court, and that twelve representatives of the Métis be admitted to the Council of Assiniboia.<sup>33</sup> In short, their demands were revolutionary, and in them there was no place for Grant. Grant had served Simpson and the ~~Hudson's Bay Company~~ too long and too loyally. He could no longer

be regarded as the chief of all the Métis of Red River. New leaders had risen: James Sinclair for the English half-breeds, and Louis Riel for the French Métis. Only in Grantown was Grant still chief.

The diminution of Grant's influence which was marked by the Sayer trial was quickly acted upon by Simpson. The Council of the Northern Department did not renew, for the first time in twenty-one years, his annual appointment as Warden of the Plains. Grant's unique place in the Red River colony was ending. Councillor of Assiniboia and Magistrate he remained, but his usefulness as a check on the free trade was over. Even on the Council his position as representative of the people of mixed blood was henceforth to be shared, as the Reverend Louis Laféche was appointed in that capacity in 1850. This was the beginning of a process which was to bring a number of half-breeds to the Council table, among them some of Grant's Grantown neighbours.

The old order was changing in another respect. Grant had always believed himself the seignior of Grantown. He believed that his people held their lands of him. But the new interest in land titles caused by the free trade quarrels led Chief Factor Ballenden to challenge Grant's belief. In 1850 he convinced Grant that his proud claim was groundless "

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So the new economic thrust of the Metis middle class brought down Grant and the old monopolists and replaced them with their own capitalist revolutionaries and nation builders. Indeed, Cuthbert Grant's claim as a feudal Seignior was 'groundless' ~~for~~ the people of Red River, "Le commerce est libre," epitomized the new way of life.

But the Metis free trade was so dynamic that it consumed the buffalo herds and the remaining fur resources almost overnight. It should be noted that the buffalo hides literally created the new economic order that was to replace the old one. They were shipped east where they provided the millions of miles of belting that was required for industry at that time:

A fundamental technological change in the 1870's caused a great demand for hides, as well as robes, and so put further intense pressure on the buffalo. Previously, many skins were collected with the hair on to be used for carriage robes, overcoats, gloves, hats and the like. Other skins were collected without hair, having been prepared and tanned by native women. The leather was rather soft, however, and could not be readily used for heavy-duty purposes such as machine belts. But in 1871, a New York tannery experimented and produced a superior leather, useful for shoes, saddles and other purposes.<sup>38</sup> Bison leather thus became competitive with cow-hide in quality, and the demand for bison robes increased very rapidly thereafter. "

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49. Margaret Macleod Cuthbert Grant of Grantown, McLelland & Stewart, and W. L. Morton 1974, p.p. 136 - 137

Indeed, the demand for leather ushered in the era of the hide men, probably the most prolific killers of wildlife that the world has ever seen. These men took the buffalo solely for its hide, generally leaving the rest of the carcass to rot on the plains. They operated chiefly in the United States, but also moved north into the Cypress Hills and the southern Canadian plains where their activities were watched by the North West Mounted Police in the middle 1870's. A good hide man often claimed to have killed more than a hundred animals in a day and thousands in a season.

The overall toll exacted for hides and robes at this time is impossible to estimate with any accuracy. In 1874, George McDougall said that more than 50,000 "robes" had been traded to the Americans in Canada by the Indians each year for a number of years.<sup>39</sup> Other skins were shipped east to Fort Garry in this period. On June 14, 1876, the *Manitoba Free Press* reported that the total trade sent to Fort Benton as a result of native hunting during the winter of 1875-1876 was "fully 40,000 robes," exclusive of other pelts, "amounting to several hundred, such as elk, beaver, wolf, bear, etc."<sup>40</sup> The 40,000 bison robes did not include "the unprecedented good trade" on the Montana side of the border. The *Free Press* concluded that the buffalo would not persist for many years longer. "

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" The pronounced decline of the bison herds between about 1830-1860 was due to a number of factors. One undoubtedly was the persistent and increasing impact of the fur trade, particularly that centring on the Missouri. After 1830, the Americans traded throughout much of the Cypress Hills area. Furthermore, they were more interested in marketing bison robes than the British because it was easier and less expensive to ship bulky goods east via Missouri river steamers than it was for the Hudson's Bay Company to move such products via York boat and Red River cart to Hudson Bay or Fort Garry. Another reason for the growth of the bison trade was the decline in demand for other furs. Silk and other materials commonly were substituted for beaver in hat-making at this time. Bison prices also increased in the late 1830's. Robes which earlier sold for three dollars brought up to six dollars depending upon supplies.

As a result of the previous influences, Missouri bison robe shipments climbed sharply during the 1830's, 1840's and 1850's. The American Fur Company transported 45,000 robes

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50 . J. G. Nelson, *The Last Refuge*, Harvest House, Montreal, 1973, p. 166

to St. Louis in 1839 and another 67,000 in 1840. "The expanding St. Louis market averaged 90,000 per year during the 1840's and 100,000 during the 50's and 60's."<sup>35</sup> Large numbers of robes also were sent to other marketing centres in these years, for example, to Kansas City. "

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"The 1860's and 1870's brought several changes which led to the very rapid extinction of the bison as a wild animal in the Cypress Hills area. One important change was the entrance of the American whiskey traders. These men induced the Black-foot and other Indians to hunt the bison persistently and vigorously by offering them large amounts of cheap alcohol and other goods "

52

Like the Indians of the plains, the Metis economy depended on the buffalo resource. The only difference was that the Metis used the buffalo as a trade commodity to build capital, while the Indians continued to hunt buffalo communally, and share along kinship lines.

The destruction of the buffalo was as devastating to both the Indian and Metis economies as it was necessary for the C.P.R., and Canadian and American Westward expansion.

The following account verifies the previous one that inferred the setting of fires by the American military to starve Sitting Bull's Sioux into submission.

"About this time some American military and political officials began to indicate that they favoured a policy of exterminating the bison—the basis of Indian independence—thereby bringing the natives under white control. As the American author, Carl Andrist has put it, in the 1870's a number of American generals "took the position that the quickest way to tame the roving Indians and keep them on the reservations would be to hurry up the extermination of the buffalo."<sup>43</sup> These sentiments undoubtedly were shared by many of the ranchers who moved onto Indian lands in the late 1870's and early 1880's. They thought of the bison not only as the basic means of subsistence for their opponents, the Indians, but also

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51. Ibid p. 165

52. Ibid, p. 46

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as an animal that competed with cattle for range and carried them off as part of the "wild herds." The C.P.R. with its hungry force of thousands of workers also took its toll at this time.

In his report for 1878, the Commissioner for the North West Mounted Police wrote that, "the best authorities in the North-West are of the opinion that the buffalo as a means of support, even for the Indians in the southern district, will not last more than three years." Extensive fires had burned over "nearly all the country out from the mountains, the favoured haunt of the buffalo," during the winter of 1878. As a result of this, and "mild weather, the herd did not come into their usual winter feeding ground" but remained out in the plains.

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" However, the bison continued to live in relatively large numbers south of the forty-ninth parallel, in the general vicinity of the Cypress Hills, for a few years longer. According to some sources, the animals were deliberately prevented from migrating back into Canada by the burning of the plains along the border and by the setting up of a cordon of Métis, Indians and American soldiers who continually drove the animals toward the Missouri. It has been suggested that this was done in part to starve Sitting Bull and his Sioux into leaving Canada and going to reserves in the United States.

The hunting season from October 1882 to February 1883 seems to have culminated in the elimination of the big herds, leaving only small bands and individuals to wander about for a few years longer. One large slaughter occurred near the Missouri River. Another took place in South Dakota where a herd of approximately 10,000 was cut down to about 1,000 animals. Whereupon, ironically enough, Sitting Bull and his Sioux arrived from the reservation where they had recently

been taken after returning to the United States and in two days they slaughtered the remaining animals.

After this time no large bands of buffalo appear to have been observed near the Cypress Hills, or for that matter on the entire Great Plains, those in the south having been eliminated a few years earlier. Yet the few surviving northern plains bison remained the focus of much interest and excitement. In October, 1884, for example, a Canadian Pacific train running from Calgary to Winnipeg was boarded at several way stations by people loaded down with rifles, saddles and other equipment. They had heard that seven bison had been seen in the Cypress Hills and were on their way to participate in the slaughter of the last remnant of the vast herd which had once roamed the prairies of Canada...."

Where the last free plains bison died is, however, unknown. Individuals and small herds were reported here and there in the northwestern plains until about 1890. Thereafter, the story is one of attempts to get bison to reproduce in captivity and to develop herds in parks and reserves, as well as placing individuals and small groups in zoos. "

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53. Ibid., p. 167

54. Ibid p.p. 168 - 169

With the death of the last free bison on the plains, died the dream of Metis nationhood, a dream that was based on the commodity production of this resource. The middle class Metis intellectuals remained. The Metis spirit of nationalism still flourished. Could they not remain as a nation of farmers, tradesmen and merchants in the west? This would require a new technology and capital, more capital than the Metis middle class had been able to accumulate in its historically brief span. The C.P.R. was on its way. The cart trade was gone. The buffalo were gone, the fur resource depleted. The Indians were being forced onto reserves, their only alternative being starvation. Could the Metis - proud hunters of the plains, intrepid voyageurs of the North West, independent free traders to St. Paul and the south - could they now become sedentary farmers and ranchers? If so, the dream of nationhood might still become a reality. The Hudson's Bay Company's reign was effectively finished. But many new forces emerged to take over. And most of the forces represented empires, either on the rise, or on the wane. The Metis were indeed an insignificant force amid the clash of empires on the vast expanse of the prairie west.



Summary of Chapter VII

The concentration of capital and the resulting transformation of the economy from a labour intensive to a capital intensive mode of production left thousands of Metis in Red River and throughout the North West "unemployed". This was a brand new historical phenomenon for the Metis people, a phenomenon inextricably attached to a form of commercial production for profit, "commodity production".

The Metis, the French-speaking Catholics of the North West, were the hardest hit with unemployment because they had been the employees of the "junior" for the surplus-population of French Metis and Scottish "half-breeds". These half-breeds of Scottish descent who moved out and became buffalo hunters and "free traders" eventually became French speaking "Metis". Ethnicity was again defined on the basis of occupation.

The Hudson's Bay Company attempted to set up a colony of subsistence farmers who would be available to trap furs in the winter and who would also supply abundant, cheap labour during peak periods. Indentured labour (semi-slavery) was no longer required, since they and their families would now be a "drain on Company resources". "Free labour", that is "wage labour", would now be less expensive than indentured labour for the Company, since there was a vast reserve of manpower at the Red River Colony. No farming for profit was allowed. No local industry was allowed. Consequently, life became untenable for the Metis surplus-population under the old regime. Revolution became essential for simple survival for many Metis people.

The Council of Assiniboia was set up as a puppet government by the Company, and staffed with people like Cuthbert Grant, to stifle and co-opt the Metis free trade movement. Louis Riel senior led this movement. The Sayer trial became a test of strength and under Louis Riel senior, this "trial" laid bare the military and political weakness of the Company. Following this "trial", the Metis could not be prevented from free trading with the American merchants in the United States.

From this commercial revolution, the Metis developed their own wealthy merchant class, their own concept of nationhood, and

they began to develop their own institutions, laws etc. In other words, theirs was the same historical process of movement away from imperial semi-feudal monopoly control to revolutionary capitalism, that had occurred in England, France and the United States and had created the abortive rebellion in Canada under MacKenzie and Papineau.

The Metis turned the buffalo hunt into an organized form of mass production that was so efficient that it contributed in very large measure to the near extinction of the buffalo on the plains. These hides were used to create the belting that was required by American industry at that time. A lot of industry was water-powered, and depended upon a intricate system of belting in the machine shops.

From this new form of hunting, and to the social system dependent upon it, came a system of laws, rules etc. known as the "law of the prairies". Though not formally institutionalized, these laws bound the people together as a nation.

Just as the Metis of Red River were about to achieve nationhood on the basis of trade with the United States, that country began a war of extermination against its Natives, to make way for the "trade and commerce" of its own successful class of revolutionary capitalists.

The American-planned starvation of their Indian tribes through the systematic destruction of their food supply spilled over into Canada, and the Indians and Metis of this country were stricken with famine and disease. Thus, the emerging Metis nation of Rupertsland was placed into a dilemma; the nation upon which its own economic base rested was committing itself to the destruction of Indian and Metis people.

The Metis as Farmers

It has been established through Hudson's Bay Company correspondence that the Company was consciously blocking agriculture in the colony by restricting the market to that of its own use. No surplus beyond its own requirements was allowed. Therefore farming, as we now know it, that is, the commodity production of grains and livestock for sale on an "open" market, was impossible. The company's policy is best summarized by Mr. Edward Ellice in a letter to the Right Honourable H. Labouchere, 14 October 1856:

"There is no cultivable land in the country within the present reach of markets, and none beyond them, that I am aware of, except in the Settlement of the Red River, where climate and soil held out the least hope to the agriculturist. The Hudson's Bay Company will agree cordially with you in opinion that they would do much better to confine their operations to their trade. They are neither Colonists in an agricultural sense, beyond such cultivation as is necessary in the immediate vicinity of their posts for the maintenance of their people, or as speculators in the traffic of land, or as founders or Governors of agricultural Settlements, by their own will or desire, but because they are bound to undertake the administration of the affairs of the country by the Governments and for the protection of their trade."<sup>1</sup>

W. A. MacKintosh wrote, "The Hudson's Bay Company was directly opposed to agricultural settlement and to the education of the Indian population".<sup>2</sup> But even if farming as a commodity production had been allowed by the Company, it may have been impossible at the time, given the lack of markets within reach of the colony, and the lack of technology adapted to local conditions such as early frost, drought, etc.

The metis system of farming, with property running back from the river frontage, thus ensuring a hay lot for every farmer, was the only one that could work at the time. When governor Macdougall tried to impose the American system of survey on the Metis, he met resistance not on the basis of blind tradition, or superstition, as has been suggested in the history books, but for very practical reasons of survival in a subsistence agricultural economy that was of secondary importance to the hunt, and the fur trade.

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1. Hudson's Bay Company archives, Ottawa, A7/2,

2. p. 70 W.A. MacKintosh, *Prairie Settlement, The Geographical Setting* Vol 1, Macmillan Co. Toronto 1934

"The system which had been in use on the Red River was French, adapted from that of Quebec. It provided each settler with a small river frontage and appurtenant water rights, and with a "hay privilege" extending back from the river two miles on the open prairie. This "hay privilege," though uncultivated, was an integral part of each farm, used for the grazing of cattle or sheep or horses on the nutritious native grass. The river lot itself was only a small part of the settler's property. The "hay privileges" were unfenced and generally were used in common by neighboring landholders, but there was no question about each man's legal right to two miles of land behind his own farm.

This ribbon-like land pattern was designed for small, self-sufficient farmsteads with a livestock base, requiring

little cultivation. It was thus ideally suited to the needs of the Métis, who were long absent on the hunt; the domesticated herds could fend for themselves while the elders of the community tended the gardens and small fields of grain. And it had not been in the Company's best interest to establish farms so large that they would divert the natives' energies from the hunt for furs and robes.

But the American system which McDougall sought to impose was designed for large-scale grain production on plowed soil. Without access to the river one could not raise cattle or garden crops; this would be satisfactory to "the most desirable emigrants," who would be farmers; but it was anything but satisfactory to the Métis, the nomadic herdsmen, the hunters and adventurers. McDougall might not have been daunted even if he had known what he was doing, but undoubtedly he did not realize that he was attempting to alter, arbitrarily, the whole way of life of thousands of people."

3

As will be shown later, the system of surveying land into sections was part of the Conservative government's policy for Western Canadian development, and it was a policy that had no place for Metis farmers.

Then there were the recurring natural disasters such as floods, drought, locust plagues, and early frosts that wiped out the dreams of the Selkirk settlers, year after year. Clearly, technology was insufficient for large scale commodity production of grain. The 1860's may have been as dry as the "dirty 30's" in the west. George Stanley wrote:

"The 1860's were not only years of political agitation, they were also years of drought, distress and sometimes of famine. "Dry, Dry," wrote Samuel Taylor in 1863, "the Weather was never seen, people say, so long without rain, it Thunders often and yet no rain . . . it gets very rain like sometimes but it clears off and there is no rain."<sup>3</sup> With the drought came declining crop yields, the closing of the grist mills, the virtual cessation of water transport, a slowing down of the economic tempo of the Settlement. All this was bad enough: but there were the grasshoppers as well. . . .

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3. Joseph Howard, *Strange Empire*, Swan Publishing, Toronto, 1952  
p.p. 88 - 89

In the autumn of 1867, Father Lestanc in St. Boniface remarked on the "devastation caused by the grasshoppers" and "the consternation in the hearts of our poor métis." Never had anybody ever seen so many of the "voracious insects" within the limits of Red River. The grasshoppers: "were as snow in the air and as flakes of snow upon the ground. They penetrated into the parlours and kitchens, bed chambers and bedding, pots, pans, kettles, ovens, boots and coat pockets. One scarcely dared to open one's mouth. On the rivers they floated like scum, or were piled two feet deep on the banks where they rotted and stunk like carrion."<sup>54</sup> In the spring conditions were even worse. Everything green was devoured, and the colony faced starvation. What made the situation particularly bad was the fact that the buffalo hunters "instead of furnishing their large share of provisions, arrived starving from the usual hunting grounds."<sup>55</sup> The buffalo had apparently disappeared from the plains that were within reach of the Red River hunters."

4

The grasshopper plague of 1867, and the drought were not isolated events. Following is a list of crop failure in the Red River settlement:

"Between 1812 and 1870, there were *at least* 30 reports of partial or complete crop failures (see Table 1). These crop failures, and the food shortages which inevitably followed, were largely determined by the combined effects of an inhospitable environment and an unsophisticated agricultural technology. Over the long run, the agriculturalists in the Settlement were, for the reasons outlined above, incapable of providing the colonists and the personnel of the Hudson's Bay Company with an adequate and reliable source of food.

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4. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel, Ryerson Press, Toronto, 1963 p. 49

TABLE I  
A LIST OF PARTIAL AND COMPLETE CROP FAILURES  
IN THE RED RIVER SETTLEMENT

Year of Failure	Frost	Locusts	Drought	Other or Unspecified	Source
1813			X	X	W. L. Morton, 1949: 307 fn6
1817	X			X	Selkirk Papers in A. S. Morton, 1938:20
1818		X			Stanley, 1908:11
1819		X			Nute, 1942:246
1820		X			West, 1966:22-23 Rich, 1967:250
1821		X			Nute, 1942:326 West, 1966:62-70
1822				X	Rich, 1959: v.2, 507
1823				X	Rich, 1959: v.2, 507
1825				X	MacIwan, 1952-20 Giraud, 1945:837
1826	X				Giraud, 1945:640 fn6 Nute, 1942:445
1832				X	Hargrave, 1938:102
1836	X				Ross, 1957:187-188
1837	X		X		Giraud, 1945:778 Gluck, 1965:20
1840			X		Bayley, 1969:72
1844				X	Giraud, 1945:836
1846				X	W. L. Morton, 1967: 513, note 73 Bayley, 1969:79
1847	X				W. L. Morton, 1956: xxviii Giraud, 1945:836
1848		X	X		Giraud, 1945:779 W. L. Morton, 1956: xxgiii
1850				X	Giraud, 1945:837
1855	X				Giraud, 1945:779
1856	X				Giraud, 1945:779
1857	X	X			Giraud, 1945:777-9
1861				X	A. S. Morton, 1938: 37-38
1862				X	A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1863			X		A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1864		X	X		A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1865		X			A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1866	X	X		X	A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1867		X			A. S. Morton, 1938:38
1968		X			A. S. Morton, 1938:38

X — Cause of crop failure "

5. G. Herman Sprenger, article, *The Metis Nation: Buffalo Hunting versus agriculture in the Red River Settlement, 1810 - 1870, From The Other Natives, The Metis*, edited by Antoine S. Lussier and D. Bruce Sealey, Manitoba Metis Federation Press, Winnipeg 1978, p. 24, 25.

It was not until 1870 that a relatively early ripening variety of wheat was introduced to the western plains. The following article spells out the dates etc., when a sufficient technology was developed to turn the prairies into an agricultural area. This occurred as a part of Macdonald's Canadian Policy, and did not occur until long after the Metis people had lost their land to speculators.

Early Canadian farmers freely exchanged wheat samples and many varieties were brought over from the 'Old Country'. One of these imported varieties was Red Fife which, at the time, was far superior to any other variety in yield and quality. Red Fife was introduced into Canada by David Fife who farmed near Peterborough, Ont. In 1842, he asked his friend in Glasgow for some good seed wheat preferably Russian for hardiness. Fortunately, a cargo ship had just arrived from Danzig and from it, a few seeds were sent to Mr. Fife. Since these seeds arrived in Ontario early in the spring, they were planted immediately. But only one plant matured as the seeds were from an unknown winter wheat variety. However, the grain was carefully harvested and replanted the following spring. From this small beginning, the amount of seed steadily increased and soon Mr. Fife had enough to sell to his friends and neighbors. The new wheat variety became known as Red Fife. It soon became popular in southern Ontario and northern United States because of its high yields and excellent bread-making qualities. By 1870, Red Fife was well established on the Canadian Prairies and during the next 30 years or more, it was regarded as the best variety of spring wheat.

Occasionally, an early fall frost destroyed large areas sown to Red Fife. Because it was too slow in maturing in northern areas, western farmers and plant breeders sought an earlier maturing variety. The search was accelerated after the disastrous crop failure of 1888, when an early frost caught most of the Prairie wheat in blossom stage. In the next few years, thousands of wheat varieties were tested for earliness, yield and quality but all had one or more failings.

In 1904, Dr. Charles Saunders, working for the Canada Department of Agriculture in Ottawa, after years of study, selected a wheat variety that matured about a week earlier than Red Fife. It was a cross between Red Fife and Hard Red Calcutta - a cross made by his brother, Dr. A.P. Saunders in 1892. Dr. Charles Saunders repeatedly sowed and selected various strains of this cross until he had a wheat variety that appeared to have the good qualities of both parents. When the baking test confirmed the excellent quality of this new wheat, he sent small samples to western experimental farms for yield trials and seed increase. In 1908 this new wheat variety was named Marquis and, in 1911, it was released for Canadian farmers. Marquis was an immediate success and became world famous for its quality. For many years, Marquis was the principal wheat grown by grain farmers in Canada and northern United States. "

As can be seen, a good commercial variety of wheat with an early ripening characteristic, combined with "hardiness" was not developed until 1911. The Red Fife brand could be grown on the prairies but this was not made available until 1870, after the Hudson's Bay Company had sold Rupertsland to Canada.

Despite all, the Metis had proven to be very successful subsistence farmers. Their river lot system had been practical and equitable. Supplemented as it was with "plains provisions" of buffalo, the small Metis farms complimented their own political economy, and made life easier. Old hunters could retire to a quiet sedentary life-style when the hunt became too onerous.

In line with Hudson's Bay Company requests the surplus-population of Metis, left over after amalgamation, were convinced by the clergy that they should settle down on small plots, and farm the land.

Tremaudin wrote:

"Monseigneur Provencher benefited by encouraging his parishioners to settle on farms on both sides of the confluence of the Red and Assinboine Rivers. He had no trouble making them understand the advantages of staying in groups. It was easier, too, for their children to attend school. In this way, by degrees, religion influenced the Metis to renounce their nomadic way of life - perhaps not without regret."

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Just as the French-speaking Metis were convinced that they should "settle down" by their priests, (though with little real effect, until the buffalo disappeared), so were the English-speaking half-breeds settled in as farmers at White Horse Plains.

McLeod and Marton wrote:

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7. Ouguste Tremaudin, The History of the Metis Nation in Western Canada, p. 81 (unofficial translation) Gabriel Dumont Institute.



" Quite clearly, then, the founding of the Red River Settlement was basic to the expansionist plans of the Hudson's Bay Company. From the above letter, it is obvious that the demands placed on the colonists were considerable. They had to produce provisions not only for themselves, but also for the personnel of the Hudson's Bay Company. In their efforts to meet these demands the colonists often fell short of their goal. The harsh environment coupled with a relatively simple technological inventory placed severe limitations on agricultural productivity."

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"In addition to the setbacks brought about by unfavourable environmental conditions, the productive capacity of the colonists was also handicapped by their unsophisticated, or simple, agricultural technology. Operations such as seeding, reaping, and threshing, were carried out by archaic and time-consuming methods. Seed was broadcast by hand; sickles and cradle scythes were used for reaping; threshing was done by hand flails and the trampling of animals. Before 1824, no ploughs were in the Settlement, and only spades and hoes were used to prepare the fields. After this date, wooden ploughs with iron points and wooden mould boards, and some with iron mould boards, were introduced. These, however, were not very efficient in the thick and heavy soils of Red River (Murray, 1967:38-40; W. L. Morton, 1949:319; MacEwan, 1952:204-206).

Throughout most of the history of the Red River Settlement (1812-1870), the benefits of mechanized agricultural machinery, which was to revolutionize farming in the west, were not available to the colonists. Mechanical reapers and threshers reached Red River in the 1850's, but these were few in number (two reapers, eight threshers). Steel ploughs with polished steel mould boards were not introduced until 1867, and mechanical seeders arrived later still. In 1856, there was only one steam-powered flour mill. There were also eighteen wind mills and nine water mills. These, however, were subject to the vagaries of nature: for example, the latter had to be shut down during the prolonged drought in the 1860's (Murray, 1967:38-40; W. L. Morton, 1949:319; MacEwan, 1952:204-206).

Productivity was further offset by the lack of adequate facilities for preparation and storage. This contributed to significant losses, and affected meat and dairy products as well as cereal crops."

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8. G. Herman Sprenger, op. CIT. P. 120

9. Ibid, p.p. 120 - 121

Several varieties of soft wheat, such as White Russian and Club, were grown in the Settlement. Unfortunately, none of these grains was particularly well suited to the climate of Red River. The colonists were continually importing new strains (MacEwan, 1969:33; W. L. Morton, 1949:311-312). The flour which was produced from these wheats was also of dubious quality. Lewis Henry Morgan was only one of many travellers who complained about Red River bread (1959:127):

The wheat may be good, and they say it is, but we saw no good bread. The flour is dark and the bread heavy. They use a good deal of unleavened bread, but it is very hard.

When Red Fife wheat was introduced to the Settlement, it quickly replaced the older varieties. It was a hard spring wheat

... which yielded well, usually matured before the fall frosts struck in the Manitoba lowlands, and gave a white smooth flour of exceptional baking strength. (W. L. Morton, 1967:182)

Red Fife, however, only reached the Settlement in 1876 (MacEwan, 1969:32-33). "

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Nor did the farm technology of Red River enable the agriculturalists to provide sufficient hay for stacking during the years of drought. So that:

"By 1849, although the absolute numbers of sheep and cattle stood at 3,096 and 6,014 respectively, they did not constitute a secure economic base, since the population of the Settlement itself was by that time over 5,000. Indeed, cattle were still being imported in an effort to improve quality as well as quantity, and the numbers of sheep actually declined in subsequent years!"

11

Nevertheless, the Metis, under Cuthbert Grant did establish a successful colony at White Horse Plains (between the Red River Colony and the hostile Sioux Nation to the south). This colony was a successful agricultural colony because it used agriculture as a supplement to plains provisions.

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10. Ibid p. 122

11. Ibid p. 123

" Yet the same Cuthbert Grant was the founder of Grantown, which became the mission and parish of Saint-François-Xavier on the Assiniboine. That settlement of his folk, the Métis buffalo hunters of the plains, some of whom had been the warriors of Seven Oaks, became the bulwark of the settlement against the Sioux. Its presence for almost fifty years gave the colonists of St James, St Johns, Kildonan and St Andrews an ever present sense of security. They slept more quietly in their beds knowing that to westward lay those hunter-warriors and their chief who were the terror of the Sioux. And well they might, for Grant not only made his own people friends of the Red River Settlement, but his influence with his Indian kin, the Assiniboines and Crees of the plains, helped to keep those tribes at peace with the white men; he was a warrior feared and respected by the untamable Sioux.

It is this contrast between the surviving memory of Cuthbert Grant and the history of the greater part of his life which prompts this book on the man's life and the settlement he founded. That his name should be cleared, if cleared it can be, of the opprobrium of the massacre, is only right. The work he did in founding the second colony in Red River and bringing the nomad hunters of the plains to settle and take up the tasks of agriculture ought to be set beside the brief tale of violence which was his youthful career. These things must be done if justice is to be done Grant. He merits justice, not only as all men do, but because historically he was one of the founders and leaders of the Red River Settlement.

Grant was the leader, in some sense the maker, of the Métis nation.

This book, then, is not only the life of a man, but a history of his settlement of Grantown on the White Horse Plain which became the parish of Saint-François-Xavier. There can be no doubt that only the influence and example of Grant, with the urgings of Rev. J. N. Provencher and Rev. Picard Destroismaisons, brought the Métis to accept the Red River Settlement and to become a colony within it. Without such an example the great majority of them would have remained nomads of the plains and, perhaps, enemies of the Settlement. But once committed to the cause of the colony, the Métis became its protectors and one of the factors which explain its survival. In leading his people to throw in their lot with the colony and become its defenders, Grant was fulfilling his role of leader of the Métis nation. He was able to persuade them to settle because of the completeness of his identity with them. And because his leadership was effective, Grant himself through his care for his people was transformed from the youthful scourge of the colony to its friend and defender. His story is not to be separated from that of his people and his settlement. They are interwoven from beginning to end.

The picture of Grant that this book offers, then, is not only that of the dashing youth who brought the wild *bois-brûlés* down the Assiniboine to the clash at Seven Oaks. It is a picture of "Mr Grant" the pacifier and civilizer, the leader of the settlement, the western seigneur placing his people around him on his fief of six mile frontage of the Assiniboine, the farmer, the miller, the leader of the hunt, the dispenser of medicine, the magistrate, the Councillor of Assiniboia."

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12. Margaret McLeod and W. L. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown, McClelland and Stewart, 1963. (introduction)

It is evident that the settlement of Scotch and French Metis in Grantown served a multiple purpose for the Hudson's Bay Company. It provided military protection, a labour force for securing plains provisions, and it became a successful agricultural settlement. Clearly, the Metis were most capable at every task that was given them by the Company. Just as they became expert hunters, voyageurs, labourers and cartmen, so they became expert farmers within the given technology of the time. Indeed, their methods had proven superior to those initially installed against their will. The river-lot system was the only viable system of the age. In order to farm commercially, land, labour, and capital must be available. We shall see how the Metis were deprived of capital by Canadian government policy, so that commercial farming became impossible for the Metis people despite their superior record in subsistence farming prior to Canada's take-over of Rupertsland.

## Chapter IX

The Canadian National Policy, and the Destruction of the Metis Dream

The events in Red River from 1870 onward moved with a rapidity that, even now, has left historians with a hundred years of "hindsight" wondering, at times, what happened? In the heart of this "wilderness" a drama of empires was being played out. The United States of America was carrying out its "mopping-up operations" against the plains Indians. Westward settlement was proceeding by leaps and bounds. Industry was following, and America was seeking markets westward across the pacific, in fierce competition with Imperial Britain.

Vernon Fowke wrote:

"The American Revolution introduced nationalism to North America. Originally it was merely defensive nationalism".<sup>1</sup>

By 1850 the early defensive nationalism of the United States had given way to aggressive economic and political philosophy which fully sanctioned territorial aggrandizement within continental limits.<sup>2</sup> This "philosophy" was named "Manifest Destiny". It provided the rationalization for the American take-over of the continent, in the name of "liberty".

But the American capitalist class, now in control of their national State apparatus, was not the only group that was becoming dangerously aggressive: "Continental ambitions were not, however, exclusively American...Aggressiveness had by no means been lacking in the conduct of the commercial pursuits of the St. Lawrence merchants. (Canada's class of National capitalists) The construction of the Grand Trunk Railway in 1850's may nevertheless be regarded as the last attempt at economic aggression on the part of the St. Lawrence commercial interests. It became increasingly clear that the American commercial system, and the American manufacturing system as well, was more than a match for any rivals.

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1. Vernon C. Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat Economy*, University of Toronto Press, 1957, p. 25

2. *Ibid*, p. 26

By 1860 it was apparent that the St. Lawrence commercial system had no chance of sharing in the Agricultural trades of the American frontier."<sup>3</sup>

And what of trade with Great Britain? During the epoch of the fur trade, Britain had been virtually the only "trading partner" of the Canadian North West. The previous "imperial trade preferences" with Canada were removed by Britain in the mid-nineteenth century. After the depletion of the fur staple, Britain it seems, had lost interest in the colony.

" The economic forces which contributed to Confederation and the establishment of the Dominion government were, like the political forces, both internal and external. (The decision to create and develop an integrated economy on a national basis was adopted because of the disappearance of not one but two more highly regarded alternative possibilities—those of imperial and of continental economic integration.) The alteration of British trade and fiscal policy at mid-century, as represented by the removal of imperial preferences not only ended any hope of the immediate extension of imperial integration but also seriously reduced that which had previously existed. The Reciprocity Treaty, put into effect in the 1850's with the United States, restored temporarily to full vigour the persistent belief among British North American economic groups that continental integration offered a practicable and preferable alternative to close imperial economic relationships. This belief, however, waned in proportion as the conviction grew that the Americans were unlikely to renew the treaty upon the expiration of its first term."

4

As profits from the fur trade fell, the ruling class of British merchants lost interest in supplying troops to the colony as well.

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3. Ibid p. 26

4. Ibid, p. 5

"Political alterations which pointed urgently to the necessity for change in the relationships among British North American territories appeared both internally and externally after 1850. Internally there was the political impasse in the United Province of Canada arising out of rigidities created by the Act of Union. These rigidities, originally immaterial, became evident when unexpected shifts occurred in the regional and racial distribution of population within the united area. Externally, there were new and disturbing developments in the matter of defence which applied alike to the St. Lawrence and to the maritime provinces. After 1850 the Imperial government displayed an increasing reluctance to maintain the burden of defence of British North American territories. This development coincided with a period of increasing friction between Britain and the British North American provinces on the one hand and the United States on the other. The central government, to be created by the act of Confederation would, so it was reasoned, assume responsibility for defence on a national basis, otherwise the defence requirement would either impose an intolerable burden on the individual provinces or else would have to be left in default."

5

Now, with the market reduced in Great Britain, and with the long hoped-for dream of an American frontier agricultural market smashed by overwhelming American competition, the rising class of Canadian Montreal-based merchants had only one choice left, the creation of a Canadian agricultural frontier. And there was no question as to the profits that could be obtained in such a venture. The American experience had shown that with massive immigration came a business boom.

"When Canadian leaders in the 1850's and 1860's looked back, they saw clearly that earlier periods of expansive prosperity had been characterized most prominently by an abundant immigration and agricultural settlement. This was true whether the area examined was on the Canadian or the American side of the St. Lawrence. The lesson was particularly pointed up by an examination of the American economy, since prosperity and immigration persisted simultaneously there in a manner not to be mistaken for coincidence, while by 1855 prosperity and immigration had together deserted the Canadian economy. For the entire century following the Revolutionary War the most important feature of North American economic life, and indeed of the economic life of the entire Atlantic region, was the westward movement of the agricultural frontier. The British colonies on the St. Lawrence shared generously in this movement until the middle 1850's and particularly throughout the generation from 1825 to 1855. The rate of economic growth in Canada thereafter was relatively low in contrast to what it had been in the earlier period. The simultaneous decline of agricultural immigration and settlement could not escape attention."

6

Clearly, then, western settlement would benefit one group more than any other. It would provide the basis for industry and with sufficient money to invest through trade and transportation, profit for the Montreal merchants.

" Attempts to expand the Canadian agricultural frontier in the 1850's failed as completely as did the efforts to establish commercial contact with the American agricultural frontier. Immigrants entering at Quebec averaged 10,000 a year from 1858 to 1860 and 20,000 a year from 1861 to 1865. These figures were barely comparable with the yearly totals of a generation before when no assistance had been extended to immigrants. The most discouraging contrast, however, was with the persistent buoyancy of American immigration and settlement. By 1860 New York was receiving seven immigrants to every one arriving in Quebec. Free grants and colonization roads on the Canadian frontier were inadequate to divert the European immigrants from settling in the American Middle West where land was obtainable only at a price. Instead of proving a land of opportunity for scores of thousands of new settlers each year, Canada was, in fact, unable to retain her native sons.

It was in this context of economic frustration that the national policy was gradually evolved. "

7

The economic requirements of the Montreal merchants became the major determining factor of Canadian development policy long before Canadian nationhood in 1867. In effect, the formation of a national parliament simply acted as the formal institutionalization of this class power. Prior to the creation of a national state, the interests of the Canadian merchant class were disorganized, while the system primarily served British imperial interests. However, with the creation of Canada as a nation-state, imperial capital and Canadian capital blended into a mutually beneficial symbiosis. Fowke wrote:

The National policy took shape over the decades before and after confederation.<sup>8</sup> (emphasis mine)

Fowke, below, indicates quite clearly what class of people controlled National Policy.

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7. Ibid, p. 24

8. Ibid, p. 25



"THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATIONAL POLICY represented a major change in the views of St. Lawrence commercial interests concerning the location of the Canadian frontier. Successive generations of resident and non-resident merchants, from the earliest establishment of European trading-posts on the St. Lawrence River, had refused to recognize any limit to their commercial domain within the confines of the continent. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the commerce had been in furs and the investment frontier had been a fur trader's frontier, but after the Revolutionary War, and particularly after the beginning of the nineteenth century, the westward expansion of agricultural settlement on a continental basis completely overshadowed the fur trade as a source of investment opportunities for labour and capital. St. Lawrence merchants abandoned the fur trade and directed their efforts toward the servicing of the new frontier. T

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Now that rapacious overdevelopment had depleted the fur resource and impoverished the Indian tribes that had become dependent on the fur trade, the Montreal merchants, abandoned by Britain, were to create a new staple economy in the west, based upon settlement and wheat production. With the establishment of the Canadian national state they now had a vehicle that could be used as a multipurpose servant to create laws favorable to themselves, to assist in providing capital for the required transcontinental railway (the C.P.R.) and finally, to provide a military force that could overcome Indian and Metis resistance, or for that matter, organized resistance from the settlers or labourers.

"THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICA ACT of 1867 established the political constitution, the first step needed for the elaboration and implementation of the national policy, and created the federal government, the major instrument by means of which the plan was to be carried out. It is necessary at this point to indicate the nature of the constitutional provisions made in the British North America Act for the furtherance of the national project and to examine the development and integration of the main non-constitutional elements of the national policy, that is, those relating to railways, immigration, settlement and land policy, and protective tariffs. "

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Prior to 1867 the merchant class of Monreal had set the process in motion: Britain was finished with its colonial conquest of Rupertsland, and the fur trade with its stifling of agricultural and industrial growth was all but finished.

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9. Ibid, p. 25

10. Ibid, p. 40

The Canadian Policy opened the floodgates of immigration and settlement. And it was controlled and arranged in such a way that the benefits of the new economy were to accrue, not to the pioneers or settlers, but to the Montreal merchants. They were to amass fortunes taken from the Indians and Metis through scrip, and from the settlers who paid inflated prices for their industrial supplies and lost again to these same merchants, when they sold their grain through them, frequently at less than the cost of production.<sup>11</sup>

The teachery exhibited by the Federal government in the coming events in Red River must be seen in light of all this. Historians have tended to infer that the Canadian governments under Macdonald and MacKenzie were simply ignorant of the local problems or did not understand the Metis people. Nothing could be further from the truth. The following events in Red River were necessary components of the implementation of the national policy of the ruling class of merchants, through its new institution, the Canadian Federal Government. And if the American experience was any indication of what might happen to Native people who "stood in the way of progress", things looked bad for the Metis of Rupertsland.

As an epilogue to that 200 year epoch dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company the following are included. The first is a letter dated:

23 August, 1846 George Simpson, York Factory, Hudson's Bay to  
Governor and Committee, Hudson's Bay Company, London.

In this correspondence, governor Simpson writes,..."The fur trade has of late years been so unproductive that, every measure of economy which could be derived has, in this department been resorted to".<sup>12</sup>

Ironically, the Company had taken such pain over the years to ensure that there was no surplus of agricultural or industrial commodities produced in the colony, that local business could not supply a few additional troops that were brought in to protect the Company, with sufficient food. It had to be brought in from England. With the buffalo herds disappearance, even meat was not being imported.

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11. For a detailed analysis of this process read Vernon Fowke.

12. Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Ottawa A12/3, f. 313

"we have reduced our depot of goods to a very low ebb, which the demand from the interior, arising from the large collection of furs during the three past seasons, has brought our reserve stock of goods below what it has ever been at any time within my recollection; so low, indeed, as to endanger the lives of our servants and the Indians in the event of any accident occurring to the outward bound ship, whereby the goods expected from England might not be forthcoming. We have, in consequence, considered it advisable to increase the requisition for next season very largely, say from £12,500, the amount of Requisition last year, to upwards of £20,000 this year, independent of the demands of Red River Settlement. Heretofore, we have been in the habit of getting the greater part of our supply of flour, pork etc. from the Settlement for the use of the Factory; but from the increased demand there, arising from the introduction of the troops, which there will be great difficulty in meeting for a year or two, until the agricultural part of the community extend their farms and increase their live stock, we must depend entirely on England for our beef, pork and bread stuffs.... "

13

Finally, a copy of testimony is enclosed dealing with a petition brought against the Hudson's Bay Company in relation to charges that it was mistreating the Indians through starvation and super-exploitation. This was organized by a group of Red River reformers known as "the memorialists," and was signed by virtually the entire adult population of Red River. Although the transcription reads almost like "comic opera", the charges and the "whitewash" given them by Lord Earl Grey are indeed, deadly serious. This document is enclosed because of its self-evident value as a condemnation of an evil company in an evil era. The transcription follows, verbatim:

1. "Testimony of Retired Servants of the Hudson's Bay Company"

The following questions were proposed by John Laughton, Esquire Merchant Street, Margaret's Hope Orkney to,

1. William Banks (8 years in the Service of the Company)
2. Magnus Tait 15 years in the service of the company, left 1808.
3. William Nicholson 11 years in the service of the company, left 1834.
4. John Sandison - 17 years in the service of the company, left 1840.
5. Peter Walls 6 years in the service of the company, left 1844.

In the presence of the undersigned witnesses on the 22nd of April and on the 29th June 1847.

Questions

1. At what post or posts in the Hudson's Bay company Territories were you stationed and how long did you remain in each

Answers

- a) I was two years at Fort Albany, one at Fort Aslkial (?) two years at (?) House one year at Lac La Pluie, One year at Lake Winnipeg and one year at Martins falls. W. Banks.
2. I was one year at Fort Albany, seven years at Asnabury, one year at Saskatchewan, one year at Lake St. Anne's and five years at Red River. W. Tait
3. I was one year at Jack River four years at Fort Simpson, and one year at Churchill.  
W. Nicholson
4. York Factory one year, Oxford House two years, and eight at McKenzie's River.

J. Sandison

2. What tribe or tribes of Indians belonged to the Forts where you were stationed? Stating whether they were numerous or not and their disposition whether peaceable or friendly to the company.

5. One year at Norway House, one year at McKenzie's River, and the remaining four at Rael's River. P. Walls.

1. Crees - Willaim Banks

2. Crees at all those places but Red River. Assiniboines and Stone Indians. Mandans and Gros Ventres Indians at Red River. Magnus Tait.

3. The Crees at Jack River and Rabbit Skin and Dogrib Indians and Mountain Indians at Fort Simpson. The Crees were not numerous but friendly and peaceable - The Indians at Fort Simpson were numerous and very peaceable. A few Slave Indians visited Fort Simpson They were also of a peaceable disposition.

William Nicholson

4. At York Factory, the Cree Indians, Oxford House the same, McKenzie's River Rabbit Skin Indians, Dog Ribs, Yellow Knives, Mountain Indians, Chippewayan Indians and Rat Indians - The different tribes mentioned above were pretty numerous and their dispositions peaceable with the exception of the Mountain Indian upon the Quarters of the Russian settlements.

P. Walls

3. Are the Indians where you have been, increasing or decreasing in number?

5. At Norway House Creees, At McKenzie's River Chippewyans and Dog Rib Indians, and at Peel's River Fond du Lac Indians and Rat (?) P. Walls

1. They were decreasing.  
W. Banks

2. I do not know - M. Tait

3. I cannot say - Wm. Nicholson

4. Do not think they were increasing.  
John Sandison

5. Not exactly certain, but think they be on the decrease.

Peter Walls.

6. Are the animals that supply food to the Indians such as Buffalo, Moose, Deer increasing or decreasing throughout the country, and do the company use any regulations for preventing their destruction as they do in the case of the beaver and other animals that supply the furs for the trade?

3. The animals I think, are decreasing and I am not aware of the company using any regulations to prevent their destruction.

Wm. Nicholson

4. I rather think they are decreasing - no orders or fines to prevent the destruction of the animals mentioned in the question.

John Sandison

5. To the best of my knowledge, decreasing. No means used by the company to prevent their destruction so far as I know.

Peter Walls

7. How far are the Indians dependent upon the Company?

1. They could not live independent of the Company.

Willaim Banks.

2. At that time they were independent of the Company.

M. Tait

3. The Indians having in most places become accustomed to the use of the gun cannot live independent of the Company.

W. Nicholson

4. Partly on the Company and partly on their own resources.

John Sandison

5. They principally depend upon the Company.

Peter Wall

8. What are the most common diseases among the Indians and do they in general die of a natural death.

1. They generally die of a natural death.

William Banks

2. The Indians are very healthy, and in general die of a natural death.

Magnus Tait

3. I do not know of any disease prevailing among them. They generally die of a natural death.

William Nicholson

4. Not aware J. Sandison

5. Not aware Peter Walls

9. Are those Indians that may be affected with disease or sickness usually received into the forts for the purpose of being cured?

1. Very rarely - William Banks

2. No - Magnus Tait

3. I never new any case, but one of an Indian having been taken into Fort for the purpose of receiving medical assistance. This case was at Fort Simpson.

William Nicholson

4. Not to my knowledge.

10. Is it customary for those who are too old to hunt or who are disabled in any way from supporting themselves to be maintained at the forts?
1. There may be some cases, but it is not customary.  
W. Banks
2. No - Magnus Tait
3. This is not customary.  
W. Nicholson
4. I have never known anything of the kind being done.  
J. Sandison
5. Never knew of anything of the kind being done. P. Walls
11. Do the Indians often starve and from what cause?
1. They do sometimes from indolence and sometimes from scarcity of animals.  
W. Banks
3. They do; the cause is attributed to the scarcity of animals.  
W. Nicholson.
4. I have heard of them dying from the scarcity of animals as well as not being able to obtain any fish.  
John Sandison.
5. I have often heard of them dying for want of food on account of the scarcity of animals.  
P. Walls
12. How do the Indians support life in times of famine?
1. They gather roots or eat anything that will support life.  
W. Banks



2. They were not in want at any of the places where I have been.

Magnus Tait.

3. They often times have to eat their own Clothes, Dogs are considered a dainty in such times. Their flesh is eaten greedily, and in fact many things revolting to human nature.

W. Nicholson.

4. Sometimes on roots and sometimes obliged to support nature by cannibalism - rockweed is also sometimes used.

John Sandison

5. I have heard on such occasions being obliged to eat dead bodies of one another and during my residence I was aware of two whites being killed and ate by them and who where at the Fort with me.

P. Walls.

13. Which class of Indians do you consider most comfortably situated, those who are entirely dependent upon the Company for their supplies or those who have but lately become acquainted with the whites, and are not dependent on them - that is to say which of them is best supplied with food, and most comfortably clothes and lodged.

1. Those who are least dependent on the Company are best supplied with food, but those who trade with the Company are best clothed.

William Banks.

2. The Mandan Indians were not dependent upon the Company, and I may say that in general, those who are least dependent upon the Company are mostly comforably lodged and clothed.

Magnus Tait

3. I cannot say - Wm. Nicholson

4. All those who have frequented the posts that I have been at are more or less dependent on the company.

John Sandison.

5. Those who are dependent on the company may be best lodged, but those independently are most comfortably fed and clothes - Peter Walls.

Means of Instruction

14. Are there any schools for the instruction of the Natives where you have been?
1. I do not know of any.  
William Banks.
2. None. Magnus Tait
3. There are no schools for the instruction of the natives.  
W. Nicholson.
4. None at the posts I have been at.  
John Sandison.
5. A school was lately established at Norway House by missionaries, but nothing of the kind at any other place where I was.  
Peter Walls.
15. Are you aware of any attempts of any kind having been made by the company to civilize the natives and instruct them in religion?
1. They are kept in ignorance and darkness. William Banks
2. No Magnus Tait
3. None William Nicholson
4. Not in any way John Sandison
5. Not aware of any Peter Walls
16. Do the company's agents use any endeavours in those parts of the country where climate and soil are favourable, to collect the Indians into villages and direct their attention to farming?
1. They do not. William Banks
2. They do not. Magnus Tait
3. They do not but rather everything to the contrary.  
William Nicholson.
4. At Norway House a little.  
J. Sandison.
5. At Norway House only.  
P. Walls

17. Are you acquainted with any tribes who practised agriculture as a means of support?
1. I haven't seen or heard of any. William Banks
  2. None. Magnus Tait.
  3. I am not aware of any. William Nicholson.
  4. Not any. John Sandison
  5. Not any. Peter Walls.
18. Are the missionaries in the country encouraged and assisted in civilizing the Natives by the Company's Agents?
1. Not any William Banks
  2. There were not any missionaries in the Country at that time. M. Tait
  3. I am not aware that they are. W. Nicholson
  4. I do not know. John Sandeson.
  5. I believe they are Peter Walls.
19. What is the condition of the Indian Women?
1. They are rather modest. William Banks
  2. The women are modest and seldom hold improper intercourse with the whites. Magnus Tait.
  3. They are in general chaste, but polygamy is common. W. Nicholson.
  4. I am not aware. J. Sandison
  5. I am not aware. P. Walls
20. Do you consider that the Natives derive much benefit from their intercourse with the Whites; in any improvement from their example?
1. I think they have not derived any benefit, but on the contrary their morality is even corrupted by the whites. William Banks
  2. I think they have not. M. Tait

21.

3. I do not think they have benefitted in any sense by their intercourse with the whites.

William Nicholson

4. I suppose they may in some cases.

John Sandison

5. I suppose they may in some cases.

Peter Walls.

22. When the Indians commit any crime, have they the benefit of any sort of trial before they are punished?

1. I had no opportunity of knowing, as I never knew one guilty of any crime within reaches of the Company.

William Banks.

2. I had no opportunity of knowing.

Magnus Tait.

3. I do not know.

W. Nicholson.

4. I have known of no other crime but petty theft; which merely received a reprimand.

J. Sandison.

5. I have known of no other crime but petty theft, for which they would receive a reprimand from the agent.

Peter Walls.

Trade

23. What is the average hunt of an Indian?

1. I think about a hundred beavers a year.

William Banks.

2. I do not know.

M. Tait.

3. I am not certain.

W. Nicholson.

4. I am not exactly certain.

J. Sandison.

5. I am not exactly certain.

P. Walls.

24. What articles are most in demand by the Native?

1. Guns and ammunition, English Cloth, Brandy, Tobacco, knives, axes, trinkets.

Wm. Banks.

2. The Mandan Indians did not trade much with the Company. All the other exchange their furs for guns, ammunition, (Br ?), tobacco, beads, paint, hatchets.

Magnus Tait.

3. Guns and ammunition, tobacco, axes, ice chisels.

W. Nicholson.

4. Guns, ammunition, tobacco, axes, chisels, flints, and steel.

J. Sandison.

5. Ammunition, tobacco, and beads.

Peter Walls.

25. Are the Indians kept in debt?

1. They generally were.

W. Banks.

2. They were frequently.

M. Tait.

3. I cannot say.

W. Nicholson.

4. In some cases.

J. Sandison.

5. At Norway House they were.

Peter Walls.

26. Are the Indians supplied with ammunition by the Company, whether they can pay for it, or not?

1. No.

William Banks.

2. They were sometimes.

M. Tait.

3. Very rarely.

W. Nicholson.

4. Only on rare occasions.

J. Sandison.

5. Only at times.

27. Are intoxicating liquors supplied in any part of the country to the Indians and where?

1. Intoxicating liquors were supplied to the Indians at all the places where I was.

W. Banks.

2. All but the Mandan Indians are desirous to obtain intoxicating liquors and the Company supply them with it freely.

M. Tait.

3. At Jack River I saw spirits given in exchange for furs.

W. Nicholson.

4. At York Factory and at Oxford House.

John Sandison.

5. At Norway House only.

P. Walls

28. In the Case of the removal of trading Posts what becomes of the Indians attached to it?

They Generally follow or resort to the nearest. William Banks

2. They generally go with their furs to the nearest or where they can get a supply of liquor.

M. Tait

3. The trading posts are seldom removed, but when such does happen the Indians resort to the nearest one.

William Nicholson

4. Generally go to the nearest trading post. John Sandison.

5. Generally go to the nearest trading Post.

Peter Walls.

29. Is an Indian allowed to do with his furs what he thinks proper?

1. The Natives at that time had liberty to do as they chose except in cases where they were in debt

at any of the Forts.

2. At that time there were several rival Companies and the Indians generally had power to dispose of the furs as they thought proper.

3. He has no other resource than to give them in trade to the Company's agents.

W. Nicholson

4. No, they are not.

J. Sandison

5. No, they are not.

Peter Walls

32. Do the Company ever alter the price of the trading goods to the Indians?

1. Not so far as I know.

William Banks.

2. No I think they do not.

M. Tait

3. They do not at least where I have been.

W. Nicholson

4. At the several Forts the prices are different.

John Sandison

5. At the different posts they do.

Peter Walls.

These certify that the above Queries have been proposals to William Banks, Magnus Tait, William Nicholson, John Sandison, and Peter Walls and answered in our hearing.

Witnesses

Pat Banks  
John Sutherland  
John G. Guthrie  
Charles E. Henderson"

This is necessary to keep in mind that the individuals whose evidence where given, were stationed in different parts of the Hudson Bay Territories, which will account for any apparent discrepancy with their testimony.



"Findings of the Commission in Britain  
Based upon the evidence heretofor

Downing Street London, England

Sir,

With reference to my letter of the 5th March, in which I stated that it was the intention of Earl Grey to refer your allegations respecting the conduct of the Hudson's Bay Company towards the inhabitants of their territories in North America for a report.

A. K. Isbister Esquire.

report from that Company, I am directed by his Lordship to acquaint you that on the 24th of April Sir John Pelly addressed a letter to this office containing the answer of the Company to the charges you had brought against it. The examination which it has been necessary to institute into this paper has unavoidably occupied some time, but after carefully wieghing both your accusations and Sir J. Pelly's answer, Lord Grey is of the opinion so far as he can form any judgement upon statements which rest on both sides to a great extent on mere observation - that the charges you have brought against the Hudson's Bay Company are groundless. Notwithstanding this conclusion it is Lord Grey's intention to transmit copies of your charges and the defence of the Company to the Governor General of British North America, with instructions to his Lordship to institute a further enquiry into the subject which you have brought under the notice of this office, and to ascertain what steps it may be necessary to take for the benefit and protection of the persons residing within the limits of the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories.

All the correctness of the statements made on this subject will be more carefully ascertained by a full and open testimony of retired servants of the Hudson's Bay Company."<sup>14</sup>

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14. Transcription of the Hearing sponsored by "THE Memorials" of Red River, concerning alleged Hudson's Bay Company mistreatment of Natives: AMNSIS Library Gabriel Dumont Institute, originally copied from Hudson's Bay Company

The decision of Lord Earl Grey was logically absurd. It was an obvious "whitewash" of the charges in favour of the British merchant class through its Prince Rupert company. Grey said in effect that the charges were groundless since they were only based on what people had seen with their own eyes. There is no record of any further inquiry. If one was sponsored by the British parliament it must have been as biased as Lord Grey's decision on the previous one had been, since no criminal charges were brought against the Hudson's Bay Company for murder, manslaughter, or indeed, for crimes against humanity.

The Company, having wrung from the territory all that it could, and having reduced the Native population to a state of dependency, poverty, and in many cases to outright starvation, departed from Rupertsland ignominiously without warning the inhabitants of the impending storm that would replace its old mercantile dictatorship. The vast territory was transferred to the Montreal merchant class, through its new medium, the federal government for:

" £ 300,000 and a grant of some thousands of acres of land around the Company's posts, together with one twentieth of the 'fertile belt' in order to extinguish the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company in Rupertsland"<sup>15</sup>

George F. Stanley recorded this event:

"The terms agreed upon at London were ratified by the Canadian Parliament and the date of the transfer was fixed for October 1st, 1869.<sup>75</sup> This date was, however, altered to December 1st, owing to a delay in making the necessary financial arrangements. In the meantime the Canadian Government, in anticipation of the transfer, passed "An Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land,"<sup>76</sup> which provided for the administration by a Lieutenant-Governor and Council not exceeding fifteen and not less than seven persons, and the retention of all the laws then in force in the territory not inconsistent with the British North America Act or the terms of the transfer. The choice for the position of Lieutenant-Governor fell upon the Honourable William McDougall. It was regarded by many as a fitting reward for his public services in bringing about the acquisition of the North-West—although his enemies suggested that the

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15. W. L. Morton, *The Kingdom of Canada*, McClelland and Stewart, 1969  
p. 334

Government were anxious to disembarass themselves of an unpopular colleague.

In order to be present at Red River when the long-negotiated transfer should finally take place, the Governor-designate, accompanied by his prospective Provincial Secretary, his Attorney General, his Collector of Customs and his Chief of Police, set out, by way of the United States, for the seat of his prairie government. Towards the end of October he arrived at the frontier village of Pembina where he was greeted, not by the expected address of welcome, but by

" A Monsieur McDougall.

" Monsieur—Le Comité National des Métis de la Rivière Rouge intime à Monsieur McDougall l'ordre de ne pas entrer sur le Territoire du Nord-Ouest sans une permission spéciale de ce Comité.

Par ordre du président.

JOHN BRUCE  
LOUIS RIEL, Secrétaire.

Daté à St. Norbert, Rivière Rouge,  
ce 21e jour d'octobre, 1869. " "

17

As Stanley indicated earlier, in the Birth of Western Canada, McDougall was one of the main "advocates" (agents provocateurs) of the acquisition of Rupertsland for land settlement. The Pay-off for services rendered by McDougall to the Montreal merchants was to be the governorship of the new territory. However, his first meeting with the Metis of Red River should have convinced him that they were not to be "bought and sold" or "transferred" from one dictator to the next, like property or sheep and cattle. When McDougall tried to enter the territory, he was given a rough ride back across the border by the Metis who had formed a provisional government.

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17. See The Birth of Western Canada, for details of this. Stanley pointed out that McDougall had worked long and hard to bring about the transfer - He also was responsible for imposing the unpopular american system of survey on to the local people of Red River. This was of course, basic to the requirements of the National Policy, as spelled out by Vernon Fowke in The National Policy and the Wheat Economy, and was being implemented into the planning for the take over of Rupertsland before Canadian Nationhood in 1866

The stage had been set for the following events by the Montreal merchants through the newly created state machinery in Ottawa. The plans for the expropriation of the west and its future development as an agricultural colony of the east had been hammered out by the merchants and the politicians.

The following is, then, simply the story of the chain of events thus set in motion by MacDonald and his competitors and successors. This action is what historians have tended to pass off as "history", something arbitrary, unplanned, controlled by this, or that strong personality. Indeed, strong personalities were involved on both sides but they were not the determining factor in the fate of the Metis and the settlers of the west. Canadian government policy was the determining factor. All resistance was to be crushed, no matter how scandalous some of the scoundrels on the government side were.

On one side was a new historical class of people on the ascension, on the other was a way of life that British imperialism had depleted and impoverished until it could no longer function or survive on its own. The buffalo were gone. The furs were scarce and the market had dried up.

The new Canadian owning class had seized control of the fledgling state apparatus and were ready and willing to use its military power to further its own class interests which included the seizure of western land from the Natives, the sale of this land, with immense profits, to the settlers, many of whom were to be indebted to the land development companies and the C.P.R. for the rest of their lives.

Immigration meant profit. The profit was to be used to industrialize the east, and the wheat economy was to be exploited through the marketing network. This was the National policy. Following is the story about the characters on the national scene who played their parts in the drama whose stage had been set in Ottawa and London, and in Washington.

The conflict can be described as one between the local, or "inside" forces of Red River, and the outside forces such as the new Canadian state, American expansion, and the retreat of Britain, at least as far as direct military conquest was concerned.

The "inside" forces at work were not all similar in kind. There were conflicts within the Red River settlement, race and class conflicts. There were competing and opposing forces from the outside, such as the competition between the American merchant-state and the Canadian merchant-state for land and markets, and control of colonies.

In Red River the Metis had found a charismatic leader in their struggle for survival. He was Louis Riel, Louis "David" Riel as he later called himself. Indeed, "David" was an appropriate name. The Metis were not unlike the tribes of Israel, also an insignificant force in the wilderness of an earlier time, at the crossroads of empire. But the Jews had invented mercantilism, they moved it to the forefront of the world stage. Instead of standing firm against impossible military odds, they simply became the merchants and middle men among the conflicting super-powers. Not so with the Metis. They attempted to make a stand.

The Metis middle class had taken their brighter children and sent them to Quebec for their "higher education". Thus, Louis Riel Junior, son of the "miller of the Seine", and leader of the Metis free trade movement, at an early age had been sent to Quebec for indoctrination into the classic studies of the Catholic educational system of the day. Riel must have become embroiled in the Catholic intellectual debates of the age, the "debate" between catholic liberalism and the implacable Ultramontanes of Montreal. In one of the frequest ironies of history, Louis "David" Riel became indoctrinated into the ultramontaniam of Bishop Ignace Bourget of Quebec. This man and this ultra-conservative doctrine supported Louis Riel's chief protagonist, Sir John A. Macdonald, and his conservative Party in Canada. Thus, Riel, in his youth, belonged to the same ideological grouping that was later to destroy the Metis dream of a Catholic nation in the West. But, as a student, Riel had been exposed to Catholic liberalism as well; "In opposition to the Ultras, were the

Rouges, (Reds) led by men like L.A. Dessaulles, Joseph Doutre, Arthur Bruies, and Eric Dovan, who were no less nationalistic than the Ultras, but who talked of political liberalism, of republicanism and of the subordination of the Church to the State".<sup>18</sup>

" Modern ultramontaniam—literally "beyond the mountains to Rome"—developed in Europe early in the nineteenth century under Jesuit auspices. It aimed at restoration of the medieval Catholic spirit and union of Church and State, with the political power subordinate. Protestantism, it held, was not a religion and had no rights; a true Catholic could not forsake the dogma of intolerance. The laws of the Church were universal, binding even upon heretics. No one, Catholic, Protestant or unbeliever, had the right to read a proscribed book. No judge or Parliament

could annul a marriage, and children of a second union were illegitimate regardless of the religion of their parents. Priests had the right and duty to designate favored political candidates in pre-election sermons, and to determine subsequently in the confessional if Catholic voters had obeyed their orders.

This authoritarian movement, aimed frankly at the suppression of all freedom of thought, made little headway in Canada until about 1870. In 1872 Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal committed himself to leadership of the "New School"—ultramontaniam—by incorporating its principles in a *Circulaire* distributed to his clergy. In this he acted in flat defiance of the "Liberal" Archbishop of Quebec and in opposition to the well-established Sulpician Society and the Recollets (Franciscans); but he was strongly supported by the Jesuit Order and the Congregation of Oblates, the most powerful missionary groups.

*Le Nouveau Monde*, a Montreal newspaper, became the leading ultramontane organ, and its proprietor, Senator Alphonse Desjardins, soon was recognized as the movement's political spokesman.

Through Desjardins, long a loyal friend, Louis Riel of the Métis was caught up in the ultramontane crusade. It was based upon esoteric political and theological concepts which he never clearly understood, and his involvement may have helped to upset the precarious balance of his mind and to encourage his fantastic religious ventures, a decade later, in the little church of Batoche, two thousand miles from Montreal. About all Louis Riel got out of ultramontaniam was hero-worship for its leader, Bishop (later

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18. George Stanley, Louis Riel

Archbishop) Bourget, and there was a fine irony in the fact that he ultimately attempted to set up this prelate, who preached subservience to the Vatican in all things, as superior to the Pope.

Senator Desjardins lived in Terrebonne, which also was the home of Mme. Joseph Masson, whose generosity had made possible Riel's education, and whose son, L. F. R. Masson, may also have helped to draw Riel into the ultramontane orbit. Masson was educated in Jesuit centers of the movement before he became a lawyer, politician and writer; he was eleven years older than Louis and may have had considerable influence on him.

19

The result of the Metis middle classes' dependency on the Catholic clergy for the education of the local intelligentsia was catastrophic. Because of the church's control of their education, the leaders became imbued with an ideology that did not fit their specific needs as Metis. Thus, Stanley wrote: "Riel was now thoroughly imbued with the interpretation that Desjardins, Lachapelle and the French-Canadians had given to the Metis rising in 1869/70. It was a matter of French rather than half-breed survival."<sup>20</sup>

To the extent that Riel's leadership directed the Metis struggle into the French Ultramontain orbit, the Metis struggle was co-opted in favour of French feudal imperialism over British capitalist imperialism. The old Indian communalism passed out of the struggle through default, having no political spokesman. (Gabriel Dumont was later to become the hero and talisman for the Indian element within the Metis people.) It has already been recorded that the protestant missionaries were used by the Hudson's Bay Company to manipulate the "half breed" population's ideology in a way favorable to the Company. Both Churches, then, represented the interests of foreign powers, foreign classes who now looked with greedy eyes at the vast expanse of fertile prairie occupied by the Indian and Metis populations.

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19. Joseph Howard, Strange Empire p.p. 268-269

20. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel, p. 209

The Montreal merchant class was also embroiled in such "harmless ideological debates". However, they were on the march a national class of ruthless entrepreneurs on the ascendancy. They did not rely on "debate" to establish a new investment frontier; they sent out spies, agents provocateurs, and finally used military force to deceive and conquer. And the American State was in a stage of revolutionary capitalist expansion as well. Stanley wrote:

" It was the north-westerly movement of the American frontier of settlement that brought home to Canadians the urgency of securing the north-western territories for British rule. In 1849 there had been fewer than 5,000 people in the territory of Minnesota, south of Assiniboia, but by 1860 there were more than 172,000. St. Paul had become the distributing centre for the Red River Settlement and the overland route via the United States had displaced Hudson Bay as the principal trade route to the interior of the British North-West. The natural direction in which further expansion would take place appeared to be the Red River valley, and it was evident that, unless Rupert's Land was in the hands of a power stronger than a trading monopoly, American frontiersmen would pay little heed to the existence of an imaginary boundary line. It was not difficult to foresee the serious international complications which might arise from a sudden and unauthorized influx of immigrants from the United States. The Americans were, as a rule, anti-British and strongly biased in favour of republican institutions, and the doctrine of "manifest destiny" was a powerful force in American politics. Peaceable American penetration had been the preliminary step to the annexation of Oregon and Texas, and it was not beyond the bounds of possibility that Rupert's Land and the North-West might go the same way. "

21

Even the ponderous bureaucracy, the Hudson's Bay Company had considered raising capital for the exploitation of mines, timber etc, when the fur resource was depleted, "and A.K. Isbister (The same Isbister who handled the 'memorials petitions', who was a Metis lawyer in Britain) urged before the Select Committee that Great Britain should take over the North West because the United States are fast peopling the territory along the frontier, and they will have the territory from us unless we do people it".<sup>22</sup>

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21. George F. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p. 24

22. Ibid, p. 25



Just across the border from Red River, another group of people who thrived on hatred for things English, watched and waited, organizing politically and militarily for a strike at Canada. They were the Irish Fenians. For years they carried out raids along the border of Canada, from within the U.S.A., in a futile attempt at revenge against the omnipotent empire, that class of Englishmen that had ravaged Ireland in a previous decade and sent millions of Kelts to their death. Howard wrote, describing Bill O'Donoghue, later a member of Riel's provisional government.

" O'Donoghue was born in 1843 in County Sligo. Before he was ten years old a million of his compatriots had perished by famine, and a desperate insurrection, with weapons fashioned on village forges, had dragged to its inevitable end. Thomas Francis Meagher, the silver-tongued rebel whom the tides of destiny were to carry to the Governorship of Montana Territory, was an exile in Van Dieman's Land; and the caoiner, the wind of mourning, sobbed ceaselessly over Ireland.

The lad escaped as soon as he could to the New World. In New York he completed his education and joined the Fenian Order, dedicating his life to the interminable strug-

gle for Ireland's freedom. Then he headed west. At Port Huron, Michigan, in 1868 he met Bishop Grandin, who was en route to Red River, and offered his services in the Western missions. The bishop and his companion, Father Giroux, were favorably impressed; O'Donoghue, the priest concluded, was "a gentleman in the strict meaning of the word." They took him along, got him a job as professor of mathematics at the College of St. Boniface, and left him there. Soon he decided to study for the priesthood, but he abandoned this venture when he joined Riel at the start of the Métis resistance in 1869.

By any standards save that of the Canadians, who hated him even more than they did Riel, he was an unusually handsome man. He was tall and slim and, in contrast to most of the slouching Métis, erect of carriage. His thin face was sharply modeled, the cheeks somewhat hollow, and he had a brooding look; enemies regarded his aspect as "satanic" but friends could claim with equal accuracy that he resembled a disciple in an old religious painting. Though he was an excellent speaker he lacked the emotional power of Riel; on the other hand he was less subject to fits of despondency, less timid about bloodshed and less easily influenced by the priests. The priests had disowned him anyway after they had learned of his Fenian affiliation, which was frowned on by the Church.

23

The Fenians, at the height of their power represented a real danger to the British Colonies in America. Following the American Civil War their numbers stood at 5,000 well-trained fighting men.<sup>24</sup> Despite their numbers, however, the Fenian's raids were often fiascos, and were never really effective.

Within the framework of these political and social forces, then, the events at Red River unfolded and dragged to their inevitable end.

The Americans had placed their agents in Red River to convince the Metis and the settlers that they should be annexed to the United States. Oscar Malmos was the American Consul in Winnipeg. He watched events closely and kept J.C. Davis, the Acting Secretary of State, posted. In September 1869 he wrote Davis suggesting that America invade and that "in case of insurrection the people of Red River could probably raise a small regularly armed force of say 1,000, which would form the nucleus around which volunteers from the North Western States might collect."<sup>25</sup> Malmos advocated financial support for the Metis as a means of bringing them into the American orbit by making a rebellion against Canada successful. And it was Malmos who almost brought recognition of the Metis Nation to the point of having legal status when, after the establishment of the provisional government; "Malmos raised the question of the de facto recognition of the provisional Government."<sup>25</sup>

Malmos had been a poor spy, however, and his outspoken mannerisms quickly made his life in Red River untenable. Stanley wrote: "Small wonder that after the publication of his indiscretions Malmos felt it advisable to leave the settlement."<sup>26</sup>

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24. See Joseph Howard's Strange Empire.

25. George Stanley, Louis Riel p. 81 It should be noted that if recognition had been given, the Metis would have been officially a nation under international law.

26. George Stanley. Louis Riel, p. 81

James Wykes

"Taylor, however, was a man of a different stamp. He was discretion itself. After reading Taylor's letters from the west, the Secretary of State, the notorious expansionist Hamilton Fish, appointed him "special agent" of the State Department—euphemism for a spy—with instructions to investigate the troubles in Red River and keep the United States government advised on all developments. From December, until his appointment in April as consul in Winnipeg, and indeed for some time afterwards, Taylor sent numerous and detailed despatches to Washington. There is much of value to the historian in these letters. They reveal Taylor as an astute observer and a man of balanced judgment, but they are always coloured by their writer's obsession with the idea of annexation and twisted by his association with Jay Cooke and the Northern Pacific. It cannot be doubted that Taylor's and Malmros's communications were taken seriously in Washington. Indeed, Fish was sufficiently interested to cause inquiries to be made by the United States ambassador in London regarding the alleged pro-American sympathies of the Hudson's Bay Company. "I am convinced," wrote the Deputy Governor of the Company in January, "that the government at Washington feels a much greater interest in this Red River affair than anyone supposes, and the settlement may possibly take a very different turn from what we supposed two months ago."

27

These characters were accompanied by another colorful American in Red River. Enos Stutsman, a legless cripple who worked tirelessly agitating in Red River for annexation to America.

These men were also working for American railroad interests. Taylor was a shareholder of the American railway company and his interests in annexation of the colony may not have been entirely abstract or philanthropic. But of the outside agitators and agents provocateurs, the representatives of the Montreal merchant class through the medium of the Canadian Federal government were, by far and away, the most malevolent. At times some of these characters took on almost arch-villain characteristics, lacking the upper class arrogance and style of the British aristocracy or the pretentiousness of the American "new-rich", these agents resembled simple thugs and criminals. Their plots were transparent, their treachery as devious as it was shallow, and they did not stop at "shady deals" only, but went on to theft and murder.<sup>272</sup> Let us now trace out the events that have been described in broad, historical class terms, so that we may have a look into the "character" of Sir John A. MacDonald, Donald Smith, "Governor" MacDougall, et al.

27. Ibid. p. 81

272. For details, read The Gibbet of Regina, by Napolian Thompson, Thompson and Moreau, New York, 1886

Who were the people that were to be destroyed so that the Canadian National Policy could be carried out? "The population of Red River in 1831 was only 2,417. In 1843 it numbered not less than 4,143 souls, in Fort Garry, St. Boniface and surrounding areas. The 870 families consisted of 471 Metis (including a few Indians), 152 French Canadians, 118 Scottish and 24 English. The rest were a mixture of European stock. In 1870, at the the time of the provisional government of Louis Riel, the population consisted of 11,963 people. 1,565 were whites, 558 Indians, 5,757 Metis, 4,083 Half-breeds. There were 6,427 Catholics and 5,716 protestants.<sup>28</sup> It should be recalled that like the war in Ireland today, many people saw the 1870-1885 conflicts as "religious" conflicts. They were not, of course, they were economic, but these religious differences within the community were used by the Canadian government's agents, and indeed by the churches, to break-up internal solidarity.

So the Community of Red River was itself a "hodge-podge" of conflicting race and class interests. The Metis themselves had developed along the capitalist class lines of the time.

W.L. Morton explains the historical nature of the class split among the Metis themselves, going all the way back to the French Regime:

" But among the *coureurs de bois* there were distinctions to be made. In the first place, it must be realized that they were the first manifestation of a recurrent necessity of Canadian agricultural life, the need of the young men to go out to work for wages if the family was to be supported and the young men themselves were to make a start in life. This was as necessary for young Canadians as it was for young Scots, Irish, or Swiss to hire themselves out as mercenaries. It was first the fur trade, then the timber trade, then the canal and railway construction that gave them seasonal employment and cash wages. Nor could the young men be kept content subsisting on the farm; labour was free in New France. For the majority of the young men, the life of the *coureurs de bois* meant no more than this, and they engaged themselves, as perhaps their fathers had done to come from France, to serve in the up country for a term. From these men the *voyageurs* of later fame derived.

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28. Auguste Tremaudin quoted the first Canadian Census of the Red River Region.

Other *coureurs*, however, obviously did not work for wages but were themselves employers. These might perhaps be called master *coureurs de bois*. They were the equivalent of the *bourgeois*, the wintering partners of the later North West Company. Of this type the most outstanding in the seventeenth century were Louis Jolliet, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, Nicolas Perrot, Daniel Greysolon, Sieur du Lhut, and Antoine de Lamothe-Cadillac. These men were really inland traders, who were financed by the merchants of Montreal to go up-country to

bringing down furs under licence, or, if need be, without licence. In Acadia their equivalent was the *capitaine de sauvages*. They were the managers of that mixture of exploration, peddling, Indian intrigue and tribal warfare called the fur trade.

The above description of the *engagé* and the *bourgeois* as two types of *coureurs de bois* does not, however, by any means exhaust the significance of the term. The *coureur de bois* of the records was usually an unlicensed trader; that is, a free trader, one who defied authority in trading and who perhaps took, or threatened to take, his furs to Albany. When he did come down to Montreal, wild, exuberant, perhaps defiant, he drank and rioted, spending his profits on women and finery. Often for good reason he did not return to his parish to rejoin his family and make confession, but remained in the woods, living the life of the Indians and mingling his blood with theirs to begin the race of the métis. As such, he was a threat to the prosperity of New France and a danger to its morals. What wonder that devout governors fumed at him, and that the ecclesiastics censured him, as the police and clergy were later to fret when the lumberjacks came out of the woods or the harvester expeditions came to town? But to prosper, New France had to contain this brood of her wild and lawless children; chide as she might, she dare not disown them. And the expansion of the fur trade alone could hold them for it gave them occupation and the life they loved."

29

Above, W. L. Morton explained the origins of the class split among the Metis. As well he indicated how the "free trade" pull to the United States was constant throughout the history of the fur trade.

Among the "Half-breed" population of Red River (the Scotch, English and Irish Metis) who had been employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, the same class divisions existed. Many of these people had been workers, voyageurs and laborers for the Hudson's Bay Company, but a few were offspring of the aristocracy, and most were English-speaking and protestant.

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29. W. L. Morton, *The Kingdom of Canada*, McClelland and Stewart, 1969 p.p. 65 66

Nevertheless they all shared in common their maternal Indian ancestry. This was the tie that bound them together despite the imported cultural, religious and political splits that came originally from Europe. Tremaudin wrote that, after the brutal massacre of the Highlanders at Seven Oakes was more-or-less forgotten by the settlers, the whole community got on peacefully and amicably together and would have gone on so, had it not been for the invasion of the Canadian government and the following influx of settlers to the region. Yet, the divisions were there in a dormant "non-malignant" form, so that when the agents provocateurs of the federal government arrived on the scene, they were able to divide and conquer on the basis of the existing class (and race) differences.

In 1859 a newspaper was founded in Red River. The Nor' Wester it was called by its founders, two Canadians, William Coldwell and William Buckingham. These people were "moderates", but the paper quickly fell into the hands of agent provocateur, Dr. Schultz. Dr. Schultz used the paper to agitate for the Canadian take-over of Red River, but he used it to stir up hatred against the Metis in general and their new leader, Louis Riel, in particular. In 1865 the paper became the sole property of the malevolent Dr. Schultz.

In 1867 two plagues struck at Red River. One was a hoard of locusts so dense that they fouled the river, laying two feet thick on its surface. They devoured crops and layed bare all the fields. The other was J.A. Snow's arrival with government employees who were there to build a road to connect the colony with Canada from Red River to Lake of the Woods. The notorious "poet" Charles Mair, also another government agent, arrived with Snow. All of their "purchases" were made from Dr. Schultz' store. Schultz acted as a doctor, a merchant, a speculator, and as a thug and strong arm man for the Canadian government.

The Metis first resisted the Canadian policy in an organized way when, in 1869, Colonel Stoughton Dennis began to survey their land in preparation for its expropriation. There was conflict here, armed meetings and confrontations, but no deaths on either side. In 1869 the Metis found out through Macdougall that the Canadian government gave no quarantee of Half-Breed (Metis) land

tenure<sup>30</sup>. At this time the Metis and half-breeds turned to Louis Riel as their political leader. Meanwhile Macdougall, who; "more than anyone else had been the consistent advocate of Canadian expansion"<sup>31</sup>, and who had "pushed through" the unpopular survey, was rewarded by the government as Minister of Public Works.

When Riel took the leadership of the Native population he was also supported by the majority of the white population, if not openly, then certainly through the tacit approval of their inaction. As the surveys threatened the Natives with expropriation, so too did Schultz, Mair and their ilk scream louder for Metis blood.

" The apathy of the majority of the English-speaking citizens was known to the half-breeds, but with good reason they anticipated violent reaction sooner or later from the militant Canadian group. Dennis was organizing this faction to resist and the Nor'wester was clamoring for a "loyal" uprising to put the "rebels" in their place.

In the minds of Riel and his followers, one word loomed large — "rifles." McDougall had three hundred of them packed in twelve cases, waiting at Fort Abercrombie. Three hundred and ninety were stacked in the arsenal at Fort Garry, which also had thirteen six-pounder cannon. Though many of the Canadians boasted militia experience, they were inadequately armed and would stand little chance against the sharpshooting Métis cavalry unless they could get possession of these guns.

For this reason, though traffic was permitted on the Pembina road, a rigorous search of all freight was instituted as soon as the barrier was erected, lest McDougall attempt to smuggle arms to his supporters. But there still was the supply in the fort to worry about. So on November 2, the same day McDougall was ejected from the country, Riel and 120 of his men seized Fort Garry.

Governor Mactavish, confined to his bed, and his staff expostulated. Riel told them he had acted to preserve order, that the Canadians otherwise might have seized the fort and precipitated a civil war—which might well have been true. He confined the Company men to their quarters and posted guards.

The Canadians angrily accused the Hudson's Bay officials of complicity in the coup. Riel had been virtually invited, they said, to move in: the gate had been wide open

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30. See Lois Riel, G. F. Stanley

31. G. F. Stanley, Birth of Western Canada, p. 66

and, though some Canadian militia pensioners had offered to garrison the fort, no defense measures whatever were taken.

The Métis themselves always said that they had had at least tacit support from the Company's local employees, and one of them claimed that he carried a message from Mactavish to Riel in which the Governor suggested that the Métis take the fort. The evidence is far from conclusive, especially since Mactavish publicly condemned the Métis movement soon after seizure of the fort; but unquestionably the Governor originally had much sympathy for the desperate half-breeds. He had grievances of his own: as a representative of the winterers he had gone all the way to London to try to get them a share of the money to be paid to the Company by Canada, and had failed; besides, he despised McDougall.

"As one man to another," he said in a revealing letter, "it is a question whether Mr. McDougall should not be starved out for his arrogance." Then he continued:

Only I strongly advise you to risk nothing for the greedy London directory, from whom we are not likely to receive any thanks, but who will themselves receive full compensation for the stores, etc. . . .

As for Riel, he is every day strengthening himself, and all our work-people are with him."

32

With the exception of the professional government agitators, Riel had the support of the vast majority of the community, both Native and white, when he took Fort Garry. Certainly he had the tacit approval of the dying MacTavish, governor of the dying Hudson's Bay Company. MacTavishes' essential decency came out once again, when he pleaded with Riel to "form a provisional government for God's sake, and restore law and order" which had dissipated, then disappeared, a victim of Dr. Schultz's agitation. "Anarchy" threatened when the Company sold out to Canada, and for a period the Canadian government had no constituted authority in Red River. At this point, Louis Riel, having achieved sufficient community support and unity, despite Dr. Schultz and Mairs' efforts, formed a legitimate provisional government, and re-established law and order. Dr. Schultz' immediately organized armed resistance on behalf of the federal government.



This provisional government was the "body politique" whose members met the foppish MacDougall at Pembina, in his new role as governor, and sent him scurrying unceremoniously back across the line. The provisional government was an established fact in 1870.

The legitimate government formed under the leadership of Louis Riel, during its short life-span attempted to unite all the local forces under a democratic, pluralistic structure that guaranteed the rights of the minorities (the whites) and guaranteed the rights of the French-speaking Metis to be taught in their own language. (See appendix I for legislation enacted).

Nevertheless, Dr. Schultz had been successful at stirring up a counter-revolution against the democratically elected provisional government. Schultz had been unsuccessful at creating enough dissension in Red River itself. The English-speaking Metis were passive supporters of the provisional government while the settlers were content to remain neutral. They were, in fact, given equal representation in the provisional government and seemed content with the state of affairs under Riel's leadership. However, Schultz had created an armed insurrection, bringing in a small militia from Portage La Prairie. This group, "The Portage Party", though largely ineffective, caused two local deaths.

"The "Portagers" came to the home of Henri Coutu, a French Canadian and distant relative of Riel whom the latter frequently visited. They surrounded the house. Boulton and Thomas Scott, the young Ontario Orangeman who had escaped from Riel's prison, forced their way into the house and searched it on the chance that the President might be there. At that moment, however, he was in Fort Garry pleading with his men to be patient.

When Riel was found, Scott boasted loudly, he himself would shoot the Métis scoundrel.

At Kildonan, Schultz and his main force—more than three hundred men—joined Boulton. The Canadians now numbered about five hundred but they still were poorly equipped and, because most of them were farmers, wholly untrained for combat. They had one small cannon, hauled by oxen from the Stone Fort; Riel had thirteen. They had few horses, whereas nearly every one of the six hundred Métis was mounted. For food they relied upon the meager winter stores of the settlers who were becoming more unfriendly as they encountered the Canadians' bullheaded determination to commit suicide. Riel's food supply—the great stocks of the Company—was more than adequate.

No more foolhardy military expedition was ever organized, and at Kildonan the Canadians were at last convinced of it. They were billeted in the Anglican church and school, and there the settlers came to plead for abandonment of the attack. A delegation of the older, wiser Englishmen told them the movement was futile and inopportune; the Provisional Government established by the convention would be the "most certain means of preserving peace until the Dominion, with whom the delegates from the convention are treating, takes the whole matter in hand."

The argument raged; and a feeble-minded Métis youth named Parisien wandered into Kildonan on his way home from Fort Garry, where he had been employed splitting firewood. He was seized by the Canadians as a "spy." The next morning he escaped, stole a rifle from a sled, and ran, hotly pursued by his guards.

Across the river, John Sutherland, a prominent Scotch settler, had just returned to his home from Fort Garry. He and others had pleaded with Riel, Bannatyne had persuaded the remaining prisoners to sign the pledge the President demanded, and all had been released. He had hurried back to Kildonan with the news; now he sent his son, John Hugh, on horseback to notify Major Boulton.

Riding hard, young Sutherland encountered the fleeing Parisien. The half-witted youth, beside himself with terror, mistook Sutherland for one of his pursuers. He raised his rifle, fired twice; Sutherland plunged from his horse fatally wounded.

Parisien's momentary pause to shoot the young Scot finished him as well as his innocent victim. The dying Sutherland pleaded for him: "The poor simple fellow was too frightened to know what he was doing!" But the Canadians struck him down with an axe which sliced open one side of his head, then bound him with two sashes. They dragged him head-first through the snow until Boulton met them, forced them to untie the blood-soaked, unconscious youth, and obtained medical aid. Parisien died a few days later.

These tragedies, the first violent deaths since Riel had seized the reins of government three months before, sobered the Canadians. They began to give more heed to the entreaties of Kildonan's peacemakers. "

The settlers did not really want war any more than Riel did. In a noble gesture the young Highlander had pleaded for his killer to be spared, knowing that the retarded lad had been driven by fear of the armed party that was terrorizing the district. Indeed, Schultz and his fellow Canadian government agitators were directly responsible for these deaths. Since two deaths, one from each race, was sufficient to deter the Portage Party, it would appear that they too, really wanted little to do with civil war.

Nevertheless, Schultz retained a small following. Just as he was well educated, devious and cunning, and was involved in obtaining land and money from the civil war he was creating, so Thomas Scott was ignorant, naive, and although he had little to gain in monetary terms, yet he was a racist bigot.

Scott had been captured along with other ringleaders in the plot to kill Riel. Riel asked them all to sign a pledge of allegiance to the provisional government. They all signed except for Scott. (Schultz had escaped to Ontario.) Scott was given several chances to relent, or leave the area as a free man, but he insisted that he would kill Riel if given the chance. He taunted his Metis captors, calling them cowards, and attacked Louis Riel with his fists while Riel was visiting the political prisoners, seeking their loyalty. Howard wrote:

" Recaptured, he renewed his abuse of the guards. And one day when his cell door was opened as the President walked past he leaped into the corridor, flung himself upon Riel, and screamed: "You son of a bitch! If I'm ever free I'll kill you with my bare hands!"

34

" It started March 1, when the guards complained to Riel that Scott's obstreperous behavior was encouraging the other jail inmates to become insubordinate. Riel warned the prisoners, but Scott, he said, sneered at and insulted him. The guards, Scott jeered, were a pack of cowards. He continued to make trouble.

On March 3 a court-martial was ordered and Scott was brought before it. Riel acted as translator (the defendant knew no French) and also as prosecutor, a hardly defensible expedient resorted to probably because he was the best English scholar among the Métis. Ambroise Lépine, Adjutant General, was president of the court; other members were his brother Baptiste, two uncles of Riel, Elzéar Lajimodière and André Nault; Janvier Ritchot (a Métis, not the priest of the same surname); Elzéar Goulet, and Joseph Delorme. Joseph Nolin, brother of Charles and secretary of the court, and one other witness offered defense testimony.

The culprit was condemned by a four-to-three verdict, Lajimodière and the Lépine brothers voting to spare him. Ambroise Lépine pronounced sentence: "Since the majority is in favor of the motion, Scott will be executed."

35

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34. Ibid p. 163

35. Ibid. p. 163

Scott was executed by a Metis firing squad. Although he had been a "bastard" in life, he died bravely and with dignity. His body was hidden away immediately by the Metis. Riel must have known, even before Scott's blood had dried on the snow of Fort Garry, that this execution had created a martyr.

Schultz must have been elated when he heard the news. Sir John A. MacDonald must have known that the fulfillment at the National Policy was a certainty because of Scott's death. Just as the death of twenty settlers had forced the union of the warring fur companies, so now Scott's death, the result of the dissension sown among the Red River people by the agents of the federal government, was to enrage the working people and the middle classes of Ontario. For them, Scott's death turned the federal government's economic aggression against the people of Red River into a "holy war" of Protestant Englishmen against "French-Metis" Catholics. Indeed, a martyr had been created. A "sinner" had become a "saint". Ottawa immediately made ready with an invasion force. It was now politically expedient to do so. Howard wrote:

*"The Métis, like their Indian forebears, could be savage in a fight; but they could not justly be charged with an impulse to senseless cruelty. In the ten months they controlled Rupert's Land, Scott was the only person they killed—although they were armed, their acts had quasi-legal authority, they were sometimes drunk, and many of them, especially Riel, walked in daily danger of losing their lives. They lost their tempers, they took prisoners (at least once, when Boulton was captured, without adequate excuse), but they did not kill. With one exception.*

*"Consider the circumstances," Riel pleaded later. "Let the motives be weighed. If there was a single act of severity, one must not lose sight of the long course of moderate conduct which gives us the right to say that we sought to disarm, rather than fight, the lawless strangers who were making war against us."*

*But there was no placating the Province of Ontario, where Scott's brother and the malevolent Schultz built high the fires of vengeance. A young Protestant citizen of Ontario, high-spirited perhaps but harmless, had been bestially done to death by bloodthirsty French Papists. Though it really was none of Ontario's business—the crime, if any, occurred not only outside its borders but even outside of the Dominion—nevertheless the Province offered \$5,000 reward for capture of the "murderers" of its hero. (This, unlike the money it once had pledged for Red River relief, Ontario finally had to pay: ten claimants divided it in shares ranging from \$290 to \$2,000.)*

Scott and Riel ceased to exist as men. They became symbols solely: Scott the Protestant, Riel the Catholic. As often happens, this was distortion. Scott, although he was a rabid Orangeman, was not noted as a churchgoer; Riel, who regarded himself as the most zealous of Catholics, was sufficiently insubordinate to put his bishop under house arrest and before his life ran out was to be branded anti-christ by a priest.

But for popular purposes that was the picture: young, progressive, dedicated Protestantism destroyed by entrenched, superstitious, corrupt Catholicism. It was a good sharp picture and it made for a foul and vulgar fight, whose repercussions echoed ominously throughout the next fifteen years."

36

From the moment Scott's body hit the ground, Riel and the Metis cause in Manitoba was lost. One suspects that Louis regretted this act even before the body had turned cold. It was singularly the worst political blunder in an otherwise brilliant career, and it was fatal to the Metis cause.

Riel and O'Donoghue had many differences of opinion during the ten month term of the provisional government before the sneak attack by Canadian troops smashed it, and brought a reign of terror to Red River. Riel did not have the experience with the British establishment that O'Donoghue had brought from Ireland. The millions of Irish dead had left O'Donoghue and his compatriots with nothing but scorn for the British aristocracy. He knew they could not be trusted to keep their word. Louis did not know this. Time and again he proved his loyalty to Canada and the British Crown. Just as O'Donoghue despised and feared the British aristocracy, so did Riel despise and fear the American new-rich class. The people in Red River were aware of the American wars of extermination waged against the Indians. The "free trade" might be an economic pull toward the United States, but bloody genocide in that unhappy land, forbade political alliance between Riel's Metis and the American government that was committing repeated atrocities.

Riel was, then, trapped in a dilemma. On the one side was the treachery of the Canadian establishment, the anger of Protestant Ontario, and on the other side was the American republic, ruthless, ambitious and repulsive in the extreme, given its savage treatment of its Native population.

O'Donoghue had emotional and historical ties with the United States. Many an Irish expatriate republican had received political asylum there. The hungry thousands of Irish emigrants had found a home there, as they had in Canada, as menial labourers and "navvies" of the railroad construction crews. But the hated Union Jack flew over Canada. Thus, Canada's first "flag debate" was undertaken by Louis Riel and his right hand man, Bill O'Donoghue. When Riel received word that the Canadian government was sending troops to Red River to ensure "law and order", Riel ran up the Union Jack as a token of his loyalty:

" Riel issued a jubilant proclamation praising the convention and legislative council. The latter, now become a deliberative body which took its responsibilities seriously, settled down and wrote a code of laws to replace the defunct statutes of the Company. Peace had been restored, Riel affirmed; highways were open and business could be resumed. He negotiated an agreement with the Hudson's Bay Company and it again set up shop. By dogsled, cart or canoe the "outfits" headed north and west for trade. The Métis began thinking about the hunt. Money was circulating for the first time in months.

Then Louis raised the Union Jack of Great Britain on Fort Garry's tall flagstaff.

O'Donoghue, furious, took the hated ensign down. Riel restored it, stationed his uncle, André Nault, beneath it, handed him a rifle and instructed him to shoot the Treasurer of the Provisional Government if that irate Irishman again attempted to strike the Queen's colors.

O'Donoghue, thwarted, sulked for a day or two; then he got an idea. He went to "Fort Schultz," uprooted the flagpole there and brought it to Fort Garry, planted it and ran up the flag of the Provisional Government.

Riel let it go at that."

But the split between Riel and O'Donoghue went deeper than just a question of the symbolism of the flags. O'Donoghue went south of the border to organize his redoubtable Fenian warriors in preparation for an assault on Red River's new garrison. He had hoped that the Metis would rise up and join this force. With his typical flamboyance, O'Donoghue had let it be known when and where they would come across the border. Riel would have no part of it, however, and Metis scouts directed the militia to the place and assisted with the capture of their one-time ally. Since it was O'Donoghue who led the charge against the Portage Party when they were captured by the Metis - Riel's actions in assisting the Canadians to capture O'Donoghue and his "army" of some fifty fenians seemed, indeed, to be an act of political opportunism. The new governor, Adams Archibald, shook hands with Riel, and in his correspondence to Ottawa, recognized that, had the Metis joined the Fenians, the North West would have been taken into the orbit of the treachery.

Just as the Provisional government's emissaries to Ottawa had been first imprisoned, then released and deceived by Ottawa, so now the "peace keeping" force went into immediate action against Riel when it arrived, after its gruelling cross-country march. This "peace-keeping" force was made up of Ontario volunteers, men who sought revenge for the murder of a fellow orangeman, but moreover, they were men who were out to take land and power unto themselves. These were more than mercenaries; they were soldiers of fortune, Killers for the Crown, land grabbers and future speculators in Indian and Metis scrip.

The troops arrived in a torrential rain and entered the undefended Fort Garry. They were led by Colonel Wolsely, a professional British soldier. Nevertheless, the troops slugging knee deep in mud could have been annihilated as they approached Fort Garry, had Riel decided on armed resistance. Riel, however, had once again put his faith in the honour of the Canadian government. He was in for a "rude awakening".

Tremaudin Wrote:

"Meanwhile, William Fraser, a Member of the Legislature, came to visit Riel.

"Have you seen the troops?" asked Riel.

"No," Fraser replied.

"Well, I saw them," Riel retorted. "And now, more than ever, you will have the opportunity to appraise my intentions." But, before he had time to say anything further - he had intended to speak of the transfer of the Fort to Wolseley, the Canadian Government Representative - James G. Stewart arrived at full speed on horseback, and shouted: "For the love of God, save yourself. The troops are only two miles away, and the soldiers' only topic of conversation is slaughtering you and yours."

To avoid a bloody clash, and without getting excited, Riel saw to it that the Fort, already more than half empty, was completely evacuated. Once the last man had gone, he made sure that all the gates were wide open, and then, in turn, he left. He went down to the ferry, climbed on, and, to escape pursuit, cut the cord that held the little boat to the bank. Once arrived at the bluff on the St. Boniface side, he went forthwith to the Bishop's residence and asked to see Monseigneur Tache. To him he said as he pointed to the soldiers who were running here and there filling the



air with their noise: "Do you believe now Monseigneur that they have come? And don't you think we are running a great risk of being hanged thanks to the lack of precaution on the part of those to whom we entrusted our interests or who held themselves responsible for them?"

"What do you plan to do?" asked the Bishop, suddenly comprehending the perils of the situation.

"Mount a horse and go and trust myself to the mercy of God", said the Metis leader. And he added: "What happens now matters little. The Manitoba Act had assured Metis rights, their religion and their language. That's what I wanted. My mission is ended."

At this precise moment, he should have added what he might have said fifteen years later at the foot of the scaffold: "I know that I am the founder of Manitoba." He might even have added that, thanks to his opportune and energetic intervention, the entire Canadian West was assured its liberty.

Despite all that had happened, Riel was justifiably proud of having executed a grand and glorious mission. In the company of two well-armed, faithful Metis, he took the road to Pembina, while Wolseley and his gallant soldiers were celebrating, with copious and noisy libations, their truly astonishing prowess in having broken down an open gate!

c) The Canadian Government: its Establishment.

Colonel Wolseley, who possessed no civil authority,

requested Donald Smith (as representative of the Hudson's Bay Company) to be responsible for the Government of the country while awaiting Mr. Archibald's coming."

38

Thus Louis Riel, founder of Manitoba, the man who dreamed of creating a Catholic sanctuary on the plains for the dispossessed people of the world, people left over from the dissolution of the feudal order, and unacceptable as members of the new capitalist order, was forced to flee for his life, while Donald Smith, former functionary of the Hudson's Bay Company in an era known for the Company's cruelty to the Indian people, moved in and seized direct political power to enhance his direct economic interests involving future C.P.R. ownership, land speculation and the acquisition of a vast fortune built upon the misery of the Native people.

There was talk of "amnesty" for Riel, amnesty for the "murder" of Scott. No one was ever tried for the murder of the two youths through the actions of the "portage party" under Dr. Schultz. No one was charged when the drunken militiamen under Colonel Wolseley terrorized the town and beat and killed Metis civilians.

Sir John A. Macdonald, in order to appease the Quebec Catholic voters, manipulated a double-deal that even for politicians of his ilk (circus actors for the super-rich) must stand out in history as a remarkable feat.

"Sir John forwarded \$1,000 to Bishop Tache to induce Riel and Lepine (also charged with murder) to remain outside Canadian jurisdiction until the political storm had blown over. To appease the wrathful feelings of Ontario he publicly declared; "where is Riel? God knows; I wish I could lay my hands on him".<sup>39</sup>

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38. Auguste Tremaudin, Unauthorized translation p. 211, 213

39. George F. Stanley, (see The Birth of Western Canada p.

In the midst of the double-dealing, and the government and orangemen of Ontario's plots to take Riel's life, Riel constantly shifted back and forth between the American West and Quebec. Riel returned to Quebec after he was again elected as the federal representative of Assinaboia. However, he could not take his seat because he knew that he would be immediately siezed and charged with murder - or worse. Treason carried the death penalty as well. Nevertheless, in a daring episode, Riel entered the legislature in Ottawa and signed the register, thereby making his election a significant reality, one that must be dealt with openly, through the political process. Despite Quebec opposition, Riel lost his seat in the House. However, the open political debate resulted in his being given official "amnesty". He was banished from the Country for five years. Riel had been incarcerated in a mental institute and had been charged with "insanity",

Riel, like O'Donoghue, lived in Montana where, like O'Donoghue, he became a teacher for the state. Riel married during this, the most peaceful years of his life. So did O'Donoghue, but the slim, handsome O'Donoghue did not have long to enjoy it. He died at age 36 of tuberculosis, a disease that had ravished his people in Ireland, and was brought on by conditions of extreme poverty and starvation. The same year as he died:

" It was disclosed that the new Canadian Pacific Railway Company, to which the Government had given the charter in 1873 to build the transcontinental railroad, had contributed large sums to the Macdonald party's campaign the previous year. The Premier and his ministers (especially the indiscreet Cartier) had repeatedly asked and received large sums, totaling about \$350,000. Though Sir John tried to defend the contributions on the ground that he had given no promises to get them (as he had not promised amnesty to win the submision of Riel), the exposé drove him from office in November, 1873, and Alexander Mackenzie, Liberal, formed a Government. Mackenzie appealed to the people in a general election about two months later and was triumphantly returned. " " 40

The C.P.R. "scandal" was not really a scandal at all. Right from the beginning the federal government worked in the political interests of the emerging Canadian capitalist class, and this

class returned the "best" of these people to parliament by providing them with funds and support. This time, however, they were "caught in the act", and public support was temporarily lost. The Metis fared no better under Mackenzie and the liberals than they had under Macdonald's conservative government. Sir John's defeat was temporary. He was returned again in the next election and began in earnest his political exploitation of the west.

O'Donoghue was dead. Riel was banished. The Metis cause was lost despite the democratic popularity of Riel, despite the fact that he was widely accepted by Metis half-breed and white people in the west. Wolsely's expedition was, as Tremaudin indicated, "a real invasion". It conquered, and reason and democracy went down to defeat. The warrior was victorious, the poet had been silenced, and the parasites were going to get fat on Metis and Indian lands. Some of these parasites had come in as soldiers under Colonel Garnet Wolsely. As the following account indicates, they stayed on as speculators, made a fortune from Indian and Metis scrip, converted it to capital, and became famous bankers. The Alloway and Champion bank later merged with what is now the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.<sup>41</sup> Below, this process is described:

"MY narrative must necessarily start with personalities for the reason that the private banking firm of Alloway and Champion was made up of individuals, who, each in his own way, contributed something to the building, and commercial life, of the City of Winnipeg and Western Canada.

It would appear that the young men of the period about 1870 were not much different from those of today. Whether it is a trait of Canadians or not, it has always seemed to me that "we want to go places, learn what is to be learned and see what is to be seen." This spirit must have formed part of the life of the young men resident in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec in the days of 1870, when, at the request of the Imperial Government, there was organized a Red River Expedition under Colonel Garnet Wolseley, consisting, we are told, of some 400 Regulars and 800 Canadian militiamen, most of whom came from Ontario...

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41. Read All Western Dollars, Peter Law, Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba.

William Forbes Alloway, familiarly known as "Bill", was a private in the Quebec contingent, while Henry Thompson Champion, later known as "Champ", was a sergeant with the Ontario militiamen. These two men, together with Charles Valentine Alloway, the younger brother of Private Alloway, who came west with the second Wolseley expedition in 1871, were later to become partners in the private banking firm of Alloway & Champion. But before we reach his stage, let me give you some of the highlights of the lives of these young men during the years 1870 to 1879, or the period prior to their launching into the banking business.

W. F. Alloway was born in Ireland on August 20, 1852, the son of Captain Arthur William and Mary Alloway. His mother and father were first cousins and were descendants of very old-time families who originated in Lincolnshire, some of whom went to Ireland in the year 1690 as part of King William's army and fought at his side in the Battle of the Boyne. Mr. Alloway was named after an uncle, William Forbes Johnson, a brother of his mother, who in turn had been named after Sir William Forbes who became the founder of the Union!

42

"Alloway and Champion" became a financial firm that made a vast fortune from the acquisition of Metis and Indian lands.

The "legal" and illegal acquisition of Native lands was built into the Canadian Policy. It was the prerequisite for successful settlement, (successful as defined by the profits of the speculators - not the success of the individual settler; that was a matter of little consequence to these new capitalists and their parliamentarians.)

Following is a letter written by Sir John A. MacDonald to Sir John Rose (the reader will recall that Rose had originally been placed as a member of parliament to protect the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company, by the then governor Simpson). It seems Rose was now working for Donald Smith and the C.P.R. et al. Sir John wrote (selected excerpts) (see appendix 2 for entire letter)

February 23/1870 "Everything looks \_\_\_\_\_<sup>?</sup> for a delegation coming to Ottawa including the redoubtable Riel. If we once get him here, as you must know pretty well by this time, he is a gone goon. There is no place in the Ministry for him to sit

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42. Peter Lowe, All Western Dollars, a paper written in a journal of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, 1946. This article is available at AMNSIS library Gabriel Dumont

next to Howe but perhaps we may make him a senator for the territory. I received your cable to the effect that Her Majesty's government will co-operate in the (Wolsely) expeditions. ...These impulsive Half-breeds have got spoilt by the emeute (popular uprising) and must be kept down by a strong hand until they are swamped by the influx of settlers."<sup>43</sup>

These excerpts from Macdonald to Rose are clear statements of the National Policy. It was no "accident" that Wolsely's troops pillaged and murdered in Red River. Members of the provisional government were brutalized and H. F. O'Lone, a fenian, was killed in his saloon, while Francis Ouilette, Elzear, and Roger Goulet and James Tanner were also killed by the drunken soldier-mob. Riel's family was terrorized and people were beaten up in the streets. This was the "heavy hand" that Macdonald spoke of. Gradually the Metis let their property go to the speculators, loaded their belongings, and left Red River forever. They were moving to Saskatchewan to escape the oppression of this government. Below, Tremaudin lists the "practical results" of the Metis struggle in Red River. The Manitoba Act is of course, the most lasting one.

- "1. Instead of being annexed to Canada as a colony of a British colony, the Red River settlement had become a Province of Confederation. This one point alone would be sufficient to justify a rebellion.
2. The public educational system was settled to everyone's satisfaction.
3. The question of the two official languages, English and French was settled.
4. Section 22 of the Manitoba Act assured generous subsidies and an equitable taxation policy.

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43. Letter, Sir John A. Macdonald to Sir John Rose, dated Feb 23/1870 taken from The Saskatchewan Archives Board. See this copy at AMNSIS library, Gabriel Dumont Institute.

5. The laws regarding customs duties and internal revenue already existent in the colony and satisfactory to the inhabitants, were retained.
6. Children of Metis and Half-Breeds, who resided in the country at the time of the transfer had right to a grant of 1,400,000 acres of arable land.
7. A generous homestead law was adopted.
8. It was stipulated that the remainder of the North-West Territories be admitted into Confederation at a future date, and that, in the interim, laws at present in force should continue.
9. To assure to the inhabitants of the new Province the peaceful possession of the lands they were occupying at the time of union, it was understood that:
  - a) All absolute titles turned over by the Hudson's Bay Company until March 8, 1869, would be, at the owner's request, confirmed by Crown titles.
  - b) All titles other than the preceding, agreed to by the said Company until the above date, would be, at the owner's request, converted to Crown titles.
  - c) All titles of occupation, sanctioned by the said Company, until the above date - relating to land situated in that part of the Province, where Indian titles had not yet been settled, would be, at the owner's request, converted into absolute Crown titles.
  - d) All people in peaceful possession of certain areas at the time of the transfer to Canada, in these parts of the Province where Indian titles had not been settled, would have the right to preemptions on this land, on such terms and conditions as the Governor-General in Council decided.
  - e) The Lieutenant-Government was authorized, by regulations that would be formulated from time to time by the Governor-General in Council, to do what was necessary to define and to fix, according to just and equitable conditions, common rights, such as the rights to hayland (that the settlers enjoyed), and to transform them into Crown lands.

Briefly, except for the many-times-made but never-granted-until-ready promise, and except for a few details

of secondary importance, in its Manitoba Act of 1870, the Canadian Government had acquiesced to all the demands presented in the List of Rights of the Red River and North-West Metis. Three Provisional Government delegates had presented this famous List and had been received and recognized in their official capacity by Ministers of the Federal Government in Ottawa."

44

Manitoba was born of this struggle. The 1,400,000 acres of scrip granted the Metis in Manitoba was soon re-taken. What good was farm land without farm implements? The Metis had no access to capital for these implements so they let land go for what they could get, and in the forlorn hope that the old free ways could still be found further West, they migrated:

"Many migrated to old settlements ...but others formed new communities--St. Laurent, St. Louis, and Batoche on the South Saskatchewan and Duck Lake nearby. Less permanent groups were at Cypress Hills, at the Qu'Appelle Lakes and at Fort Pelly. All of these were French half-breeds. English half-breeds went to Fort Carlton...and to the present site of Prince Albert"

45

Fifteen years more is all they had left as a free nomadic people. In Red River, now that the fur trade was finished and the Buffalo were gone, how could the Metis earn profit for anyone? The more aggressive of the immigrants expressed the opinion that "the Metis should be wiped off the face of the globe".

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44. Auguste Tremaudin unofficial translation p. 237, 238, 239

45. A. S. Morton, History of Prairie Settlement, Macmillan Co. Toronto p. 64



Summary of Chapter /X

Great Britain, by the mid-nineteenth century, had nearly depleted the resources that could be exploited from Canada through that particular method of colonial conquest, known as the "chartered company." Thus, Canada was no longer granted a "trade preference" by the mother country. But this method of colonial conquest had spawned a new class of people, a national class of wealthy merchants, centered in Montreal. These were the original owners of the North West Company who had grown rich from the fur trade. This class of national capitalists, forsaken by Britain, attempted to compete for the American frontier market but failed. The Canadian federal government was then created to implement the National Policy of the economic development of the western frontier, as a means of creating markets for eastern industry, and as a means of generating profit through speculation in land, transportation, and grain markets. This policy involved the creation of a new staple commodity - wheat - to take the place of the old staple commodity - fur. But the new economy called for immense tracts of land that was not encumbered with ownership titles or deeds. This land was to be used to create capital to finance eastern industrial growth. For this to take place, the Metis and Indian people of the plains - surplus - population "left over" from the old economic order, would have to be disposed of, or shuffled aside. The first and second Metis rebellions" must be seen in light of this conscious policy of oppression. Historians have argued that the Conservative government acted out of ignorance or stupidity in its dealings with the western Metis. Nothing could be further from the truth; the oppression of the Metis was part and parcel of the overall plan of the Montreal merchant class for its conquest of Canada. The Canadian government was created for this purpose. It sent out spies and provocateurs to Red River. They created divisions within the community and agitated until the Metis were "forced" to kill Thomas Scott, a Protestant Orangeman. Thus, the economic needs of the merchant class of Montreal were popularized into a holy war against the Metis.

The Manitoba Act of 1870 did entrench some "pie-in-the-sky rights" for the Native people that had been economically and militarily destroyed but, at best, the Manitoba Act was a temporary victory, since the 1,400,000 acres of land granted through scrip was soon to be lost because lack of capital by the Metis made commercial farming impossible. Throughout the whole affair, the role of the state was transparent. The capitalist class of conquerors and exploiters was the state. They were one-and-the-same, and they made no pretence at "technical" separation. Even technical separation did not exist with the chartered Company, where the merchant was the judge, the executioner, the jailor and the law maker. Thus, politicians took on aspects of "double dealers," liars or "corrupt people". This "corruption" was simply part of their role as legislators, civil servants and politicians in a system based upon inequality and class exploitation and oppression.

## Chapter XI

Scrip and Scrip Speculation

Scrip was used throughout the North West as a means of quickly placing Metis and Indian lands into the hands of speculators (as per the Canadian policy). The American experience had shown this to be a very expedient way of obtaining Native lands at next-to-nothing prices so that the land's title could be "extinguished" legally and speculation could begin immediately. The banks bought most. This was a process of the "magic" creation of capital. This is what happened. A bank bought scrip for, say, ten dollars. It could then be sold for, say, one hundred dollars providing a "neat" profit. But it did more than that. Banks were able to loan about ten times their reserve capital, so that by purchasing one hundred dollars worth of value for ten dollars, the bank could make loans of 8% on one thousand dollars. Thus, from a ten dollar investment they made, in one year,  $8\% \times \$1,000.00$  or \$80.00 on interest alone. Consider the millions of dollars worth of scrip bought and sold, and we see that capital was produced for industrialization and settlement through this magic sleight-of-hand. Copies of Hansard from 1870-80 in the AMNSIS library show that some politicians were concerned about this practice by the banks long before the "great crash" of the 1930's.

\* Following is a copy of Hansard for March 1, 1934, Hous of Commons, Ottawa. In it Mr. H. E. Spencer, M.P. for Battle River, discuss the relationship between a bank's cash reserve and its ability to loan up to ten times that amount:

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" Mr. H. E. SPENCER (Battle River): Before this bill receives second reading I would like in a few words to indicate something of its importance. The two previous speakers have outlined very clearly to the house the tremendous hold on our whole financial machinery of a small group of men through interlocking directorates. I think from the information already given to the house one can readily see that, when all is said and done, unless the government is very strong indeed and is prepared to take a very definite stand in the interests of the public it will in all probability play second fiddle in comparison with the enormous power of organized finance. The issue of money in Canada is a government prerogative, but we must recognize at present our money, although comprising coin and currency is to the extent of 96 per cent simply a matter of bookkeeping; and that the control of this credit has practically been turned over to the banking fraternity, which can create money in large volume by making loans and can take money out of existence in large volume through the cancellation of loans. Therefore we can see the power they have in increasing or decreasing prices and to that extent affecting the entire economic life of the country. Under the Bank Act the banks have certain definite privileges given them. They have for instance the privilege of making money to the extent of issuing in the form of notes an amount equal to their paid up capital. Also for six months in the year they can issue an additional amount equal to 15 per cent of their paid up capital and reserve. They have also the privilege under the Finance Act of taking a variety of securities to the treasury board depositing them as collateral, and getting dominion notes for a certain charge. These dominion notes can either be put into circulation or they can be kept in the bank's safes as most of them are, in the shape of large legals to be used in settling balances between themselves. Or if they wish, they can take these dominion notes and deposit them in the central gold reserve in lieu of gold and issue their own notes or promises to pay against them. These are the definite privileges given to the banks as far as putting

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money into circulation is concerned. but there is nothing said in the Bank Act, as far as I can find, with regard to putting money into circulation other than by those three methods. We know, however, that a great deal more of so-called money is put into circulation, largely by the extension of credit by the banks, secured on the assets of their clients, which means new money written into existence. I have in my hand a statement showing the total amount of all money, that is notes and subsidiary coin, in Canada on December 31, 1933. It amounts to \$349,594,078. At the same time there was on deposit in the banks of Canada, \$2,242,222,079. Deducting the total cash from the total deposits leaves a difference of \$1,892,628,001. Now if any one is caught increasing the amount of money in existence by counterfeit note or turning out fictitious coin, he is severely punished. But at the same time we find that banks are allowed by the issue of credit against collateral to increase the amount of money, up to nine or ten times the amount of the actual ordinary money in existence. I can find nothing in the Bank Act that gives them this privilege. They have just taken it and been allowed to carry it on.

But although in most cases the money thus written into existence is only bookkeeping entries, at the same time interest is charged to the clients of the bank for it just as if the bank had lent actual money belonging to the bank. The credit that is extended really belongs to the individual or the community but borrowers have to pay interest on it just as if it were money belonging to someone else. The banks really are credit agencies, and the sooner we recognize that fact the easier it will be to understand our financial system. I have before me a brief statement by a very eminent banker who is often quoted in this house, in support of the statement I just made. Right Hon. Reginald McKenna said:

The amount of financial credit in circulation in any country depends entirely upon the actions of its bankers in creating and issuing it and in retiring and destroying it.

Mr. McKenna is one of the great bankers of the world, and he speaks very freely indeed with regard to what is done and what can be done in regard to our monetary system.

Section 75 of the Bank Act, which allows banks to put notes into circulation, makes no reference at all to the development of the credit structure. It is easy to see, therefore, that with the power the banks have of increasing the amount of money in circulation at any time "

Indeed, the banks may have lent money on a much higher ratio than 10 - 1 during the period between 1870 and 1900. The following is a description and analysis of scrip and scrip speculation based on many months computer research by AMNSIS personnel. See appendix 3, for the letter by Adams Archibald, indicating that scrip was the best means of obtaining Metis and Indians lands from them cheaply and quickly.

## I Introduction

The term scrip and the benefits it bestowed on those who received it, are probably among the most misunderstood facts in Canadian history. The word itself is often confused with the word script, and is believed by many to have been a form of money which could be used to purchase goods. During the early days of settlement in the North West, it was a household word among the Metis people who were to have been its main beneficiaries. It was favoured by the politicians as a way of disposing of claims against the government or of granting rewards for special service such as military service. It was favoured by the speculators as a means of getting access to land and other resources which they could not get access to in any other way, or as a means of making a quick profit. It seems to have been favoured as an asset by the banks against which they could create low risk money for high rise investments.

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the political, economic and social events surrounding the issue of scrip. In particular, the paper will attempt to show how scrip was used to achieve certain political and economic objectives by the government under the guise of recognizing the aboriginal claims of the Halfbreeds and through the claim that the issue of scrip extinguished the "Aboriginal or Indian Title" of the Halfbreeds.

## II How Did it Originate and What is Scrip?

According to Webster's Dictionary, scrip is a certificate which gives the person or corporation, to whom it has been granted, the right to receive something. It is a temporary asset which can be exchanged for money, land or goods. The government which granted the scrip therefore had to have resources to back up the value of the scrip, or had to guarantee to redeem it with money if other resources for which the scrip could be used, were not available.

In North America, scrip was first used by the United States government as a means of allocating land. In some cases it

was granted to settlers already in territories before they were acquired by the United States. In other cases it was used to satisfy the claims of certain aboriginal groups of Indians and/or Halfbreeds. In some cases it was granted as compensation for military or police service. Scrip was only redeemable in land to the value of the scrip. The idea of scrip and the way in which it was distributed, was tied closely to the prevailing philosophy of land ownership and to the government's policy of promoting rapid settlement in the Central and Western Plains of the U.S.<sup>1</sup> The land related objectives were as follows:

a) to distribute land to potential settlers in a way which would allow them to select land wherever unclaimed and surveyed land was available.

b) to distribute land in a way which would encourage the recipient of the scrip who did not want land to quickly sell it to someone else who would use it to acquire land. This, it was believed, would encourage rapid settlement.

c) to give the person redeeming the scrip clear undisputed title to the land which allowed them to use the land as they pleased. The belief was that the best way to develop land was to give owners the right to use the land in the way which was most profitable to them.

This basic philosophy of land development and to the use of scrip, is important to keep in mind, because as we shall see later, that it was adopted and adapted by the Canadian government. Our research has not explored whether scrip was used by the Canadian government in Eastern and Central Canada. For example, land grants were given to the United Empire Loyalists and their children but whether this was done by the use of scrip has not been researched. Our research indicates that the first use made of scrip in Western Canada was to satisfy certain Halfbreed and other claims and to grant military awards.

The volunteers who served in Wolseley's Expedition to the Red River were all granted scrip to the value of \$240.00. The purpose was to encourage them to settle in the West. This accomplished two objectives: one, the promotion of settlement, the second, the availability of Manpower with some military training in case this was needed. Scrip was then issued to certain heads of Halfbreed families and to the Selkirk and the old settlers and their children. It was also used to satisfy hay and woodlot claims and in addition, to satisfy the supplementary claims of Halfbreed children in Manitoba when the 1.4 million acres set aside for this purpose proved inadequate to satisfy all claims.

In the 1880's, the government granted scrip to Land Colonization Companies to compensate them for investments in lands they acquired for colonization, when it proved to be difficult, if not impossible, to attract settlers. Starting in 1885, the government granted scrip to Halfbreeds in the Northwest born prior to July 16, 1870, in areas where the Indian Title had been extinguished. As new treaties or adhesions were signed with Indians, Metis in these areas were also granted scrip. In 1900, the rules of eligibility were changed to allow those persons born between July 16, 1870, and July 16, 1885, to also qualify and further scrip was granted to Halfbreeds. In addition, military bounty scrip was granted during this period to N.W.M.P. personnel and to volunteers who served during the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. In the early 1900's, scrip was also granted to Canadian veterans of the Boer War in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

### III Kinds of Scrip Issued

The original practice had been to issue what was known as money scrip. The scrip notes specified a money value on the face of the scrip and these notes could be used to acquire open Dominion Lands (lands to which no one else had made a claim or which had not been set aside for other purposes) up to the value of the scrip. For example, if the going price for land was \$2.00 an acre, a \$160.00 scrip note would acquire 80 acres of land.



If land was \$1.00 per acre, it would acquire 160 acres of land.

When provisions were made for the issue of scrip in an O.C. on March 30, 1885, this O.C. only provided for the issue of money scrip.<sup>3</sup> When the first Halfbreed Commission began to hold hearings at the Qu'Appelle Lakes in 1885, the Halfbreeds who appeared before the Commission refused to accept money scrip certificates for their approved applications, demanding instead a grant of land.<sup>4</sup> It appears their stand was taken on the basis of knowledge about how people had been cheated of their land rights by speculators in Manitoba. The people were also being counselled and encouraged by the priests in the local mission, not to accept money scrip.<sup>5</sup>

As a result the government amended this scrip order on April 18, 1885, to allow the granting of certificates entitling Halfbreed children to a grant of 240 acres of land or the usual \$240.00 money scrip.<sup>6</sup> The practical implications of this move were several. First, it was more difficult to speculate in land scrip than in money scrip. Second, a different set of laws applied in each case. Money scrip was covered by personal property laws, whereas land scrip was subject to real estate laws. These differences in the scrip along with the practical implications will be explored in more detail below.

#### IV Differences Between Land and Money Scrip

Money scrip notes were made out to the bearer. That meant that whoever was in possession of them could take them to a Dominion Land Office and apply them on land to the value of the scrip. Up until approximately 1900, for purposes of applying scrip, the Government of Canada valued land at \$1.00 per acre. Thus, a \$160.00 scrip note would acquire 160 acres of land and \$240.00 worth of scrip would acquire 240 acres of land. Because money scrip was considered personal property, the person to whom the scrip was granted could dispose of it as he could have disposed of any other personal property.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, although money scrip was not money, it did have a cash value on the speculative market. It was usually discounted to about 1/3 to 1/2 of its actual value, but was nevertheless very popular with speculators, financial institutions, and with merchants and lawyers. It, at some point, had to be redeemed in land but the value of the land which could be acquired with it was considerably more than scrip bought on the open market. It should be noted here that not all money scrip was considered to be personal property. Only Halfbreed money scrip had that dubious honor. Military bounty and colonization scrip was considered to be real estate. Also Halfbreed scrip became real estate when it passed from the allottee to the assignee; i.e., from the person granted the scrip to the buyer of the scrip.<sup>8</sup> There are interesting rulings ✓ which will be explored in more detail later in this paper.

Land scrip, which was only issued to Halfbreeds, was always considered to be real estate. The name of the person to whom the scrip was issued, always appeared on the face of the scrip. The rules were that land scrip could only be located on land by the person to whom it was issued. Powers of Attorney were only recognized in exceptional circumstances, and Assignments were not recognized as being legal.<sup>9</sup> The Department of the Interior always insisted that patents for such land be issued in the name of the allottee. There were exceptions to this rule which will be explored when we discuss scrip rulings and speculation. There were also ways of getting around these legal requirements, some of which involved fraud.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, this meant that land scrip was not popular with speculators generally and demanded a lower price than money scrip. It was, sometimes, bought by small town lawyers and merchants or taken by them for trade or services, where the speculator had easy access to the allottee and where such a person would co-operate in getting the scrip located.

Land scrip always specified on the face of the scrip note, the amount of land for which it could be exchanged. Like all other scrip, it could be located on any open Dominion Lands.

V      The Legal Provisions for Scrip and the Distribution Process

The Manitoba Act of 1870 did not specifically provide for the use of scrip in settling natives' claims. However, it was enabling legislation which left open the method to be used in allocating land in the 1.4 million acre reserve. This land was then allocated in each parish by a draw system. Scrip was later used to satisfy the claims of children when the 1.4 million acres provided was insufficient to deal with all Halfbreed claims. The scrip to Halfbreed heads of families was distributed under the Dominion Act of 1874. This Act extended Halfbreed benefits which had been overlooked when the Manitoba Act was being drafted. In the Northwest Territories, outside Manitoba, the enabling legislation for an issue of scrip to satisfy the "Indian Title" of the Halfbreeds, was included in Amendments to the Dominion Land Act made in 1879. However, this legislation was only enabling and did not provide the legal instruments for the actual issue of scrip.<sup>11</sup> This was consistently done through Cabinet Orders-in-Council. There were many Orders-in-Council for scrip. These were compiled in 1927 by N.O. Cote, a government employee.<sup>12</sup> There were numerous amendments to O.C.'s dealing with special cases and O.C.'s to deal with special issues of scrip, like the issue to Halfbreed residents in the United States who were resident in Canada at the time the grants were approved.<sup>13</sup>

There were however, three main Orders-in-Council which set the pattern for all scrip transactions. These included the Order-in-Council in 1875 providing for the distribution of scrip to old settlers and Halfbreed heads of families in Manitoba. The second O.C. was the one issued on March 30, 1885, providing for the distribution of scrip to Halfbreeds of the Northwest born before July 16, 1870. This Order-in-Council covered the Halfbreeds in those areas where the Indian Title had already been extinguished through the signing of treaties. This included all those areas covered by treaties 2, 4, 5, and 6. The next major Order-in-Council was issued May 6, 1899, and extended scrip to include all Halfbreeds born in the Northwest Between July 15, 1870, and July 16, 1885.

These Orders-in-Council set down the general policy and legal provisions regarding the issue of scrip and appointed commissioners to take applications. Commissioners then received more detailed procedural instructions from the minister of the Interior.<sup>1</sup> In addition, as problems or questions of a legal or policy nature arose, these would often be referred to the senior officials of the Department of the Interior in Ottawa. If these questions primarily dealt with policy, an official in the department would usually make a policy ruling. If the question had legal implications, it would be referred for a ruling or verification of departmental opinions, to the Department of Justice. The rulings became known as "Scrip Rulings". Between 1870 and 1930, these rulings numbered in the hundreds. Specific rulings and their implications will be examined in more detail in the next section of this paper.

The procedures for issuing scrip were as follows:

a) The travel schedules of the commissioners would be advertised in advance by the means available at that time. There were usually notices posted in parish halls, churches, trading posts, land offices, and in other places frequented by the Halfbreed population. Also, newspaper advertising was done where newspapers were available. A good deal of this information was spread by word of mouth. People in isolated areas or who were gone from their settlements for some reason, were often missed.

b) The schedule indicated when and where sittings would be held and advised those who had a claim to present themselves to the commissioner when he visited their home territory.

c) Claimants were given application forms to complete. These forms asked for identifying information and had to be accompanied by affidavits or other official documents which verified this information, established that the applicant was a Halfbreed, and that he belonged to that class of Halfbreeds who had a valid claim which could be dealt with by the commissioners.<sup>15</sup>

d) The commissioners after studying the applications would deal with them in one of three ways. If they met all the

criteria established by the government, they would be approved. If there was doubt about the claim or inadequate information, the applications would be deferred for further study and/or investigation. If the commissioner was of the view that the applicant did not have a claim, the application would be disallowed.

e) Approved applicants were given a "Scrip Certificate" on the prescribed form. This document indicated that the person in possession of it was entitled to scrip. When the scrip certificate was turned into the Department of the Interior with a request that scrip be issued, a scrip note or notes for the land or money value indicated by the certificate was issued, and sent to the allottee. The rule followed was that wherever possible, the scrip was to be delivered into the hands of the allottee. This was so for both money and land scrip. Exceptions were, however, made particularly where Powers of Attorney had been granted.<sup>16</sup>

f) The scrip notes to be redeemed for land had to be taken by the allottee, in the case of land scrip, and by the bearer in the case of money scrip, to a Dominion Land Office. The person presenting the scrip had to identify the land he wanted. The scrip was then registered against the land that was selected and patents to this land were granted.

## VI Scrip Rulings

In addition to the provisions in legislation, and in orders-in-council, there were numerous legal opinions or rulings rendered by staff of the Department of the Interior and/or by solicitors in the Department of Justice. These covered a wide range of questions not covered by the legal provisions for the issue of scrip. In many cases these rulings dealt with the question of how other laws applied to scrip distribution and use. As previously mentioned, money scrip was ruled as being the personal property of the allottee. Once sold, or assigned to someone else, money scrip became real estate. These rulings were first made in the 1870's when scrip was being distributed in Manitoba.<sup>17</sup> This ruling was confirmed in a May 1885 ruling. This ruling also said that money scrip became

real estate when it passed to the heirs of an allottee. Since substantial quantities of money scrip was granted to heirs, this ruling is important.<sup>18</sup> Halfbreed land scrip was always considered real estate, since these notes were drawn in such a way that they clearly could only be applied to land by the allottee. It is of particular importance to note that "bounty or military scrip", which was also money scrip, was ruled as being real estate.<sup>19</sup>

The rulings which we have been able to obtain generally do not indicate the legal rationale behind the rulings. For example, why is Halfbreed money scrip personal property and military scrip real estate? We are left to guess at this. It may be that since Halfbreed scrip was considered to be an extinguishment of Indian Title, that the right to such title was considered a personal right based on the person's Indian ancestry. If a personal right, the individual under British Law would be free to dispose of that right as he/she saw fit. The government in this case would consider that it had discharged its responsibility since it had delivered the scrip into the hands of the allottee. From there on, it was the responsibility of the individual to use or dispose of that personal property as he/she saw fit. In the case of military scrip, the person receiving the scrip had no such right. Therefore, the scrip was given as compensation for services that had been performed and the government could then set the conditions on which that compensation or scrip could be redeemed.

The rulings dealt with a great variety of matters. The following are just a few examples of rulings which were made.<sup>20</sup>

a) Are heirs entitled to the scrip claims of relatives who are deceased? The ruling was yes.

b) Can patents be issued to persons holding assignments from Halfbreeds, to their land? The government refused to recognize such assignments.

c) Can Powers of Attorney be recognized? The ruling was yes. This was important since the Power of Attorney is a legal document entitling the person holding such to act on behalf of the

person granting the power. This enabled many speculators to get around the government objections to assignments and receive scrip on behalf of their clients. Scrip would not be delivered to assignees.

d) Can scrip be used to acquire timber leases, coal leases, pasture leases, etc.? The ruling was yes.

e) In 1899, the rulings on assignees was changed to recognize properly executed assignments. Scrip certificates could now be delivered to assignees rather than only to the allottee.

f) If two persons acquire Powers of Attorney for the scrip of the same person, whose Power of Attorney is recognized? The government rules that the person who first sent their Power of Attorney to the government along with their request for the scrip would receive first consideration.

g) Can Halfbreeds withdraw from treaty to claim scrip? The government rules that they could but that the value of any treaty money received would be deducted from the scrip entitlement.<sup>21</sup>

h) Can homesteaders use scrip to acquire their pre-emption lands? The ruling was that they could.

i) Can scrip be applied outside Manitoba and the Northwest Territories? The ruling was that it could not be so applied. The basic reason would have been that the government did not control land or resources outside these areas. Nevertheless, records show that scrip was applied to land in parts of British Columbia.

j) Is the Department of the Interior responsible to investigate complaints of scrip being fraudulently acquired by speculators? The Department ruled that it had no such responsibility. The individuals who had a complaint had recourse to the courts and would have to seek legal remedies through that channel.

The above are some of the more important rulings. Many rulings were repetitious, or made changes to previous rulings. Also, many individual cases were settled by rulings.

VII The Relationship of Scrip Rulings to Government Policy?

Although the government was always able to rationalize its rulings, these rulings seem to have an interesting relationship to government policy. The government policy for the Northwest was as follows:

- a) To open the country for settlement.
- b) To establish law and order in the territory to ensure that settlers would be attracted.
- c) To develop the other resources such as coal, timber, etc
- d) To provide transportation services to facilitate these policies. (roads, railways).
- e) To provide communications services to facilitate these policies. (Telegraph, mail services).<sup>22</sup>

To accomplish these goals, the government had to do the following:

- a) Acquire clear unencumbered title to the land;
- b) have in place a military or police presence;
- c) create a climate for the investment of the capital necessary to accomplish its goals;
- d) establish policies which would ensure that land would be available for settlers wherever they chose. This meant that it would be undesirable for large blocks of land to be set aside which was not available for immediate development; and
- e) be in control of land so they could make large land grants to companies to promote the building of railroads.

In December 1870, Lt. Governor Archibald, laid the cornerstone for such government policy, when he recommended to Macdonald against granting Metis titles to land which would be inalienable for three generations or more. He recommended that Halfbreeds be given clear title to their land. His argument was that these people didn't know the value of land and would leave it unused and lying idle. This would discourage orderly development. If they had free



title, they would likely sell it, even if for a pittance, to someone else who would make good use of the land or to a speculator. He would sell it to new settlers. Declaring money scrip as personal property seemed to facilitate the achievement of this objective, since it made it simple for land to pass quickly into the hands of developers and speculators who in turn, it was believed, would facilitate getting the land into the hands of settlers.<sup>23</sup>

In the case of volunteers who served in both Wolseley's and Middleton's armies, as well as N.W.M.P. personnel, the objective was to encourage these men to settle in the Northwest and stay there. This would provide a ready supply of Manpower with military training if any extra ordinary troubles arose.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, the rules made it as attractive as possible to obtain and settle on land and as difficult as possible to dispose of the scrip for money.

In addition, by granting scrip which extinguished Indian title and which could be located only on any open Dominion Land, the government could maintain its control over the use and allocation of land for other purposes. For example, the government could designate, as it did, all the odd numbered sections on either side of a proposed railway, for a specified distance, for the company building the railway. Setting this land aside was therefore not complicated by some of that land already being reserved for other purposes such as a Metis reserve. It also meant that the government could set aside the right of way for railways, roads, and telegraph lines without having to buy any of the land or to satisfy claims to that land. Also this enabled the government to establish a definite pattern for the designation of school lands and the Hudson's Bay Company lands.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, opening up the country would require a ready supply of labour. Settlers would be busy developing their land holdings and small entrepreneurs would be busy getting their business established. If the Metis people were not tied to the soil, they would be available as that ready labour supply. It was assumed that the Metis would dispose of their scrip and continue to live as hunters, fishermen, trappers, etc. As the supply of wild life

diminished, many would not be able to continue to live in that way and would have to go to work on the railways, roads, as agricultural workers and in other labour jobs.

In the allocation of scrip and in the distribution of scrip, the rulings were always made so that the process would be seen as being strictly legal and therefore a valid extinguishment of the Metis claims against the land. However, the methods chosen were flexible enough to ensure that scrip passed from the hands of the Halfbreeds to the speculators. Powers of Attorney are recognized even if the person so designated, had an assignment from the allottee. Assignments are recognized once scrip has been delivered to the allottee. The rules were then changed to accept assignments when the scrip certificates are delivered to the allottee. Speculators have ready access to information about when scrip is to be issued, where it is to be issued, and how it can be used. Other examples could be cited, but it becomes obvious that the process is designed to help achieve and did help achieve the government policy objectives.

#### VIII Scrip Use

This may seem like a redundant question since the scrip was issued originally to be used to acquire land. Indeed the bulk of the scrip was used to acquire land. However, the scrip could eventually be used for a number of other legitimate purposes. At the request of scrip speculators, special Orders-in-Council were passed authorizing the use of scrip for the following:<sup>26</sup>

a) As payment by anyone holding the money scrip for Dominion Lands. Land agents were instructed to post this information on bulletin boards in land offices along with lists of who scrip could be bought from.<sup>27</sup>

- b) To acquire lots in townsites owned by the government;
- c) to pay for pasture leases;
- d) to acquire timber rights; and
- e) to acquire coal rights.

Scrip was used in a number of other ways some of which were legal and others which would have to be considered illegal. In both Manitoba and the Northwest, scrip acquired the status of money in that it could be used to acquire goods and services, other than land or resources. As money, it was always at a considerable discount, from its stated value in land. Merchants took it in exchange for groceries and supplies, implements, livestock, and other goods. Lawyers accepted it as payment for legal fees and so forth. Scrip was acquired by banks and used as an asset against which to create money for the purpose of making loans. In one case a merchant in Medicine Hat, indicated he wanted to buy scrip to pay off taxes which he owed to the government. Whether or not he was allowed to do this isn't clear, but there seem to have been no legal provision to allow such use.<sup>28</sup> There were some speculators who traded in scrip as if it were a commodity. They would buy low and sell at a somewhat higher price to settlers or developers who wanted the scrip to acquire land. For example, the chartered banks and private bankers, like Alloway and Champion, bought scrip and sold it to farmers over the counter. It was usually used by farmers to acquire pre-emption lands but could also have been used to acquire other lands. They also sold to companies like Haslam Land Company, who amassed large land blocks of land for colonization schemes. The C.P.R. bought scrip to acquire all the land around the selected townsites when those townsites fell on even numbered sections. Various other uses were found for scrip in the commercial market. Eventually, however, scrip would have to be applied to open Dominion Land, before the date of expiry set by law, otherwise it would have no use.

It was primarily money scrip that was used in these ways since the form of the note made for a great deal of flexibility in its use. Land scrip, because it had to be located on land by the allottee, was used mostly by small town merchants, speculators, lawyers, etc., who had easy access to the allottee. However, banks, both private and chartered, did buy money scrip. They devised numerous schemes to get it applied to land, some of which were fraudulent.

IX How Much and What Type of Scrip was Issued?

There seem to be some discrepancies in regard to how much scrip was issued to Halfbreeds in Manitoba and the North West. Martin, in his book on the Northwest, indicated that there had been a total of just over 26 thousand recipients who were granted land and scrip to the equivalent of over six million acres.<sup>29</sup> Cote in compilation of land grants and scrip arrived at a figure of approximately 23,000 recipients, who were granted the equivalent of approximately 5.3 million acres.<sup>30</sup> However, Cote's compilation does not include the scrip issued to Halfbreeds living in the United States, land grants made to heads of families in Saskatchewan, or special cases which were reserved and dealt with later, in some cases by special orders-in-council.

Regardless of which figure is more accurate, it is to be noted that both the numbers of recipients and the amount of land entitlement conveyed, was substantial. This would account for the interest and activity of scrip speculators. The following summary, prepared by Cote, of scrip issued in the Northwest outside Manitoba, indicates the degree to which speculators were active in determining what kind of scrip was issued. In the early years, land and money scrip had the same value when applied to land. Therefore, most of the scrip issued was money scrip. In the early 1900's when land prices were increased and land became more popular, the amount of land scrip issued increased dramatically, even though it was more difficult to locate. However, by that time the government had also somewhat simplified the process thus making land scrip more attractive.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>MONEY SCRIP</u>	<u>LAND SCRIP</u>	<u>NUMBER APPROVED</u>
1885	\$279,201	55,260 acres	1815
1886	61,689	2,640	1414
1887	122,424	3,120	753
1889	183,568	NIL	881
1898	286,800	110,520	1190
1900	315,000	477,840	3306
1901	344,267	117,680	1190
1903	55,564	296,564	1326
1904	NIL	32,640	136

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>MONEY SCRIP</u>	<u>LAND SCRIP</u>	<u>NUMBER APPROVED</u>
1906	65,040	54,480	498
1908	14,160	28,560	178
1909	NIL	7,440	31
1910	2,160	18,480	86
1923	-- a cash issue of \$41,280 instead of scrip.		

The above clearly shows the pattern which was established. In '85 - '89, just over 90% of the scrip issued is money scrip. In 1898, money scrip makes up 70% of the scrip issued. Starting in 1900, the amount of land scrip issued increases dramatically and in the period from 1900 to 1910, approximately 57% of the scrip issued was land scrip. In a second paper on scrip speculation, we will examine in more detail, the whole process of scrip speculation which largely determined what kind of scrip was issued at different times.

X            Who Acquired the Scrip?

The question of who acquired the scrip is an important one since it is indicative of whether or not the Metis people benefitted from what was supposed to have been a settlement of their aboriginal claim. The evidence gathered to date indicates that probably as high as 90% of all Halfbreed scrip passed into the hands of persons who can only be classed as speculators.<sup>31</sup> These were persons or corporations who bought and used or bought and sold scrip to make a profit, acquire land, create money, and/or acquire access to other valuable resources such as timber and coal. The topic of scrip speculation, who was involved, how it took place and the government policies which facilitated it, will be examined in depth in a subsequent paper.

The Association has gathered extensive information on a large number of individual scrip cases, approximately 15,000. These have been committed to computer and we are just now beginning to analyze this information. A preliminary investigation, however, indicates that in the combined case of both land and money scrip, those who acquired and used the scrip in some way can be categorized as follows:

a) The Individual Allottee	10%
b) Chartered Banks	60%
c) Private Banks, Trust Companies and other financial institutions	20%
d) Small-time speculators (lawyers, merchants, and other businessmen)	10%

The scrip buyers paid prices which varied during the period that scrip was on the market. The following are prices paid for scrip during various periods:

1985 - 1998:

- money and land scrip 30¢ on the dollar

1999 - 1915:

- money scrip from 40 to 50¢
- land scrip from 40 to 50¢ per acre up to 1903 to prices ranging up to \$5.00 per acre after that
- scrip was exchanged for equivalent value in groceries and supplies, for a cow or a horse, or farm implement in some cases
- some speculators acquired scrip for as little as \$25.00 for a 240 acre or \$240 scrip by telling people this was a down payment and having them sign a quit claim deed. They were told that the paper they were signing simply entitled the speculator to act as their agent.<sup>32</sup>

In summary, it is possible to say that approximately 80% of the scrip was acquired by large financial and commercial corporations, 10% by small-town speculators, and that the remaining 10% was used by Metis people themselves to acquire land.

XI Benefit of Scrip to the Metis People

In general it can be said that the Metis people themselves benefitted very little from scrip. Of those few who used scrip to acquire land, many later lost their land for taxes, sold the land when they could not get help from the government to establish themselves in farming,<sup>33</sup> or simply moved away and left the land. In a survey conducted by A.M.N.S.I.S. researchers in the summer of

1976, we only located two out of 120 families interviewed who still had land in the family which was acquired with scrip and these proved to be marginal farms providing a very low level of income to the families who owned them.<sup>34</sup>

Those who sold their scrip generally received an immediate and very short term benefit. The Metis were poor and needed immediate cash to survive. Much of the money received from scrip went for staples such as food, clothing and shelter. In some cases it enabled families to meet such basic needs over one winter. By that time, the few dollars they received for their scrip were exhausted and the great majority of the people were again destitute. They were left to make their living as best they could by trapping, hunting, fishing, and doing casual labour.

A few used their scrip to acquire basic agricultural needs to start farming and then entered a claim for a homestead. Some of this group did manage to establish themselves as farmers. A few still farm in areas around Prince Albert, McDowell, Batoche, Duck Lake, Debden, etc. Of these, most are marginal farmers having to supplement their farm incomes by cutting bush, or by other available casual or seasonal labour. We have been able to find only a handful of Metis farmers who are successful and prospering farmers.

On balance it can be categorically stated that the great majority of the Metis people received no permanent benefits of any kind from the scrip they were granted. In most cases even the short-term benefits were of a limited nature. The clearest evidence of this fact is to be seen in the large scale poverty and unemployment found among Metis people in Western Canada, and in the serious social problems and social dislocation with which they are burdened.

## XII The Trust Responsibility of the Federal Government

It is the contention of the Association that having claimed sovereignty over native lands and having accepted the responsibility for settling native claims, both the government of

Great Britain and of Canada had a trust relationship and responsibility toward the native people. As trustees, it was the government's responsibility to ensure that this trust was wisely and legally administered for the benefit of the native people. We plan to look at this concept of the trust responsibility of the government in detail from a legal perspective in a separate paper. However, we make the following points here.

First, the Government of Canada recognized the claim of the Metis people, only when forced to do so by the Red River Uprising in 1869 - 70, and later by the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. Although the Government recognized its trust responsibility toward the Indians and passed legislation to ensure that this responsibility had a legal basis, no similar action was taken by the government in its dealings with the Metis. The steps the government did take seem designed to ensure that the extinguishment of the claim had a sound legal basis which could not be challenged in court. (The question of benefits to the Metis received little consideration except when Macdonald used it in 1884 to justify the lack of action by the government on the Metis claims.)<sup>35</sup>

These steps were as follows:<sup>36</sup>

- a) to ensure that land scrip was entered on land by the allottee; and
- b) to ensure that money scrip was delivered into the hands of the allottee.

Indeed, Archibald in 1870 argued that the process for distributing Metis lands be as free as possible to allow land to pass to others who would make constructive use of it, even if this meant that individual Metis people did not benefit from their land.<sup>37</sup> Money scrip was designed for easy use by speculators. Also rules were later changed to recognize Powers of Attorney and Assignments.<sup>38</sup> When Metis people or others complained of fraud and irregularities, the government argued that this was not their responsibility but that individual Metis could take speculators to court.<sup>39</sup> When this was done, in one case, the government set up a special tribunal to investigate these complaints. This tribunal absolved



R. C. McDonald and the government even made a special ruling to allow him to locate land scrip he acquired from Halfbreeds in the U.S. without their presence.<sup>40</sup> In another court case involving an Edmonton firm by the name of McDougall and Secord, the government passed a special law, the Statute of Limitations, which gave this company immunity from prosecution.<sup>41</sup>

These events clearly suggested the government did not take its trust responsibility seriously or that it even admitted to such a responsibility. Surely this is a serious indictment against the government of a country which prides itself on its human rights and social justice record.

FOOTNOTES

1. Noonan and Hodges, Report of a Committee to Investigate the Legal, Equitable, and Moral Claims of the Metis people of Saskatchewan; Volume 7, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
2. Ibid.
3. Privy Council Order Relating to Scrip, compiled by N.O. Cote, Volume 17A, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
4. Volume 1, Sessional Papers, 1867 - 70, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
5. Dewdney Papers, Volume 21, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
6. Supra, Volume 17A, Orders-in-Council.
7. Department of the Interior Rulings, Volume 67A, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Dealing in Half-Breed Scrip, Filmore, Manitoba Law Review, 19 A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
11. Statutes Dealing with Half-breed Rights and Title, Volume 10, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
12. Supra, O.C. File 17A.
13. Ibid.
14. Cote-Walker Commission, Volume 69A, Letters of Instructions to Commissioners, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
15. Samples of Scrip, Assignments, etc., see Volume 25, A.M.N.S.I. Library.
16. Ibid.
17. Supra, Scrip Rulings Volume 67B.
18. Ibid.
19. Manitoba Scrip Files, Metis Land Commission Library.
20. Supra, Scrip Rulings, Volume 67A.
21. Sessional Papers, Volume 1, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
22. Colonial Office Papers, Volume 60A, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
23. Supra, Dewdney Papers, Volume 21A.
24. The Birth of Western Canada, George F. Stanley.
25. Supra, Volume 10, Dominion Lands Act.
26. Supra, Volume 17B, Material on Cases Involving Fraud.
27. Supra, Scrip Rulings, Volume 67C.

28. Personal Papers of Dixon Brothers, Volume 35B, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
29. Dominion Land Policy, Chester Martin, Volume 23, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
30. Supra, Volume 17B, Fraud.
31. Scrip Registers and Speculators Accounts, Volumes 75 - 79, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
32. Supra, Dewdney Papers, Volume 21, Rutan's Letter to Dewdney.
33. Department of the Interior Correspondence, Volume 16, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
34. Community Questionnaires, Volumes 29A and 29B, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
35. House of Commons Debates, Volume 9B, A.M.N.S.I.S. Library.
36. Supra, Scrip Rulings, Volume 67A.
37. Supra, Dewdney Papers, Volume 21, Archibald on Land Policy.
38. Supra, Scrip Rulings, Volumes 67A and 67B.
39. Ibid.
40. Supra, Sessional Papers, Volume 1A.
41. Ibid.

## Chapter XII

Gabriel Dumont, Hero of the Metis People

When the Metis created the province of Manitoba through their revolutionary actions in 1870, they had been in the majority. Red River carts still plied their noisy way south to St. Paul, laden with trade goods. The last of the buffalo were being slaughtered, remnants of the fur trade still existed and the western prairies were largely unfenced areas of sparsely populated grassland. But by 1885 Sir John A. MacDonal'd's National Policy was working effectively, and peasants from Europe and entrepreneurs from Canada were pouring in. In the United States, rail lines criss-crossed the nation, the Indians had all been "settled" and a vast agricultural economy had been established across the prairies. Even the west coast had been settled and a large stable population existed there with local industry and a booming "gold rush" economy.

The American expansionist spirit of "manifest Destiny" had not materialized in the form of military conquest. Instead it was conquering the world through trade and commerce, using the military only where necessary, as against the plains Indians. America was becoming a substantial force in world affairs, threatening British omnipotence in many ways. Thus British interests were impatient to get a rail line completed across the northern route, so that a friendly colony would provide a trade route to the pacific rim. Canadian capitalists (the Montreal Merchants) were equally anxious to see this accomplished but the amount of capital required was too great. To a large extent they joined forces with British, and to some extent even American investors, to provide capital for the C.P.R. construction. Even this was not sufficient for the task. This left one thing for them to do, use tax money from the "public sector" to pay for the private ownership of the rail line. This capital they eventually obtained from the government of Canada. Sir John A. MacDonal'd, and Donald Smith were both men of mixed allegiances. In so far as Canada could provide the latter with a vast personal fortune, he was loyal to Canada, but he was first and foremost a "British Imperialist". The C.P.R. was absolutely essential for Great Britain following her successful war with China.

The "carving up" of that vast country by Britain, France, and America was complete by 1885, and an overland rail route to the Orient had become necessary to Britain, just as it had to America. Fowke wrote:

"The land masses of the Western Hemisphere had first appeared to European discoverers as a tremendous barrier lying athwart a possible water route to the Indies. Throughout the centuries which followed the voyages of Columbus, Europeans never abandoned the search for the Northwest Passage. By the end of the eighteenth century it had become apparent that such a passage, entirely by open water, did not exist. The western continents would have to be circumvented, as they could be by way of hazardous Cape Horn, or portaged, as they might be at the Isthmus of Panama or even at other places where the extent of land was immensely greater. Not till railway technology was well advanced, however, as it was by the middle of the nineteenth century, was there a serious possibility of a trade route from Europe to the Orient across rather than around the Americas. By the same date, Britain had established new commercial contacts with far-eastern countries, notably China. Neither the Suez nor the Panama canal had yet been constructed.

Under these circumstances it became apparent that transcontinental North American railways were potential and essential allies of any group or region desirous of competing effectively in the renewed world rivalry for the far-eastern trade. In the letter written in 1860 and cited above, E. W. Watkin advocated the extension of the Grand Trunk Railway to the Pacific, and commented in partial justification: "Try for one moment to realize China opened to British commerce; Japan also opened; the new gold fields in our own territory on the extreme west, and California, also within reach; India, our Australian Colonies—all our Eastern Empire, in fact, material and moral, and dependent (as at present it too much is) upon an overland communication through a foreign state."<sup>12</sup>

1

For both groups then, the British Imperial power, and the rising class of Canadian merchants, the trans-Canada rail line had become the absolutely essential first step in the trade route to China, and in the creation of a vast new market potential through western land settlement.

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1. Vernon C. Fowke, *The National Policy and the Wheat economy*, p. 32

"The commitment to build the Pacific railway within ten years alarmed many of the supporters, as well as the political opponents, of the government. To allay their fears a resolution was introduced in the House and after considerable debate and modification, was accepted in the following form: "That the railway should be constructed and worked as a private enterprise, and not by the Government, and that the public aid to be given to the enterprise should consist of such liberal grants of land, and such subsidy in money or other aid not increasing the present rate of taxation."<sup>9</sup>

2

The Canadian government had given to the amalgam of British and Canadian capitalist interests the following:

"The extensive assistance given to the Company by the government included \$25 million and 25 million acres of agricultural land "fairly fit for settlement"; land for right of way, sidings, and structures; substantial exemptions from taxes and duties; and a twenty-year guarantee against certain competitive construction in the West."<sup>17</sup> In addition the government agreed to complete those sections of the railway which it had already under construction in 1881, and to transfer them to the Company on completion, without equipment, but without cost to the Company. These were the Lake Superior section from Fort William to Winnipeg, and the western section from Kamloops to Port Moody. The Pembina branch was also to be conveyed to the Company. The portions of the railway thus constructed by the government and transferred to the Canadian

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49

Pacific Railway Company totalled 713 miles and cost the government \$37,785,320.<sup>18</sup> "

3

The Canadian government had to in some way justify the "gift" of public monies.

Among the recipients of this government money was to be found the ubiquitous Donald Smith, the same man that MacDonald sent out as a government spy and agitator to Red River in 1870. As can be seen, American capitalists were involved in a big way in this Canadian railroad, just as Smith had been involved in American railroads. Again, we see international capital on a friendly basis, even while they promoted the struggle between Canadian "nationalism" and Metis "nationalism".

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2. Ibid, p. 46

3. Ibid, p.p. 48 - 49

" Among the central figures in the Canadian Pacific Railway syndicate were George Stephen, president of the Bank of Montreal, Donald Smith of the Hudson's Bay Company, interested anonymously, and J. J. Hill; these three had also been the central figures in the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway which was linked with the Pembina branch railway in 1879. The profits which the promoters of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway secured on the American frontier were adequate to ensure their interest in further expansion of their holdings."

4

As well, the government agents and politicians had directly involved themselves with land expropriation. They had directly benefited as businessmen from their actions as government functionaries. Just as bankers came in dressed as soldiers in the Wolsey expedition, so land speculators dressed as politicians and governors benefited from the expropriation of Metis lands. In fact, a new historical class of National capitalists was being created through the theft and "purchase" of native lands. Stanley wrote:

"The Canadians not only had their eyes on the political jobs, they had their eyes on the vacant lands too. There was good land in the Settlement—Mair had written frequently on this subject—and it was to be had for the taking. Certainly men like Schultz and Mair were not likely to lose any opportunity to turn an honest or dishonest dollar when the Canadian immigrants would come pouring into the country. Good land close to the river and the centres of population would demand good prices. There is evidence that not only did Schultz and Mair speculate in lands, but that Snow and other government employees did likewise."

5

To these spys and insurgents went the spoils of profit from the very land that they, as government employees, elected representatives, etc. expropriated from the Natives. The C.P.R. received its "public money" in a more subtle manner. Instead of displacing Canadians by military conquest, they simply had the conservative government of the day give them the money and the land, and the taxpayers were left with the bill.

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4. Ibid, p. 50

5. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel, p. 55

Despite the amount given the C.P.R. by the government, it was still short of funds in 1881, and it began to look like the project would not be successfully completed without further government funding. It was becoming difficult to continue giving away these vast sums of money to the super-rich. In turn, the super-rich were kicking back generous amounts to the political funds of MacDonald and Cartier. The "C.P.R." scandal brought down the MacDonald government once, when they were caught by opposition members taking "bribes" from the capitalists. Given the "grass roots" resistance to this overwhelming tax burden, taken from the workers and farmers and given to the rich, it was becoming an unpopular project. What the Canadian government needed was a rebellion in the West.

If a rebellion occurred, the people of Canada would once again "rise to the occasion", and make the financial sacrifices necessary to "keep the old flag flying". They had insufficient fire-power to put down a general Indian uprising in the west. A rebellion of about two or three hundred "half-breeds" would be just right. Just as the slaughter of the Highlanders brought on the amalgamation of the fur trading corporations, and just as Scott's death had brought the province of Manitoba into being, would not another Metis uprising in Saskatchewan ensure the completion of the C.P.R., by uniting Ontario labour with Ontario capital in a holy war generated on the basis of nationalist sentiments and anti-French, anti-Catholic hysteria?



Indeed it would, and Canada would exist sea-to-sea. The settlers would swarm in, each one of them representing dollars to the merchants by generating profits for the C.P.R. in getting to the west, by generating profits to the speculators who had expropriated Metis land through scrip and who then could sell it at a mark-up, and by generating profits when they purchased farm machinery and supplies, and by generating profits when they sold their grain through the private marketing system. There was the potential here for the creation of an empire that could generate billions of dollars, and there was the potential for this new empire to create a trade route to another empire across the Pacific. But first this small, proud band of Metis farmer-hunters must be disposed of.

The following chronology of events, again passed off in our history books as "history" must be seen in the light of the requirements of the ruling class of the time. Thus, the rebellion of 1885, instead of being "something that made history", was simply the reaction of the Metis people to the policy of the ruling class of the time through its agency, the Canadian state. And it looks as though that rebellion was engineered by Ottawa to justify the use of more public funds to finish the railway, "so that the rebellion could be smashed".

The population figures had changed dramatically after 1870. In 1881, Manitoba had a total population of 62,260 of which only 6,388 were of Indian and Metis origin. The "North West Territories", (now Sask. Alta, B.C. and N.W.T.) had a population in 1881 of 56,446, of this 49,472 were Indian and Metis.<sup>6</sup> This was the result of the Native migration after the Red River struggle.

From 1870 to 1885 the Metis moved in a slow but steady migration from Red River to Qu'Appelle, Batoche, St. Louis and other remote sections of what is now Saskatchewan. They moved to escape oppression but in more practical terms they moved to acquire land, land that could successfully be farmed within the framework of their own technology and social organization.

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6. Stats from Canada year books 1910. Kings printers.  
Courtesy of Regina City Library

Then, having settled on this land, they began to seek title to it. They had learned from the treachery in Red River that this important "piece of paper" was needed if they were to retain their little piece of land. But, as the excerpt from a letter written by governor Adams Archibald to governor Dewdney (who was to become an important civil servant who speculated extensively and got very rich) reveals, that scrip was designed to be a simple way to extinguish Native title, at the same time forcing a situation such that title would quickly pass from the Metis to the speculators, banks, and land development companies. Governor Archibald wrote:

"It is only because the French half-breeds and their leaders treat the question, not as one of business, but rather as one of race, and creed and language, and because they are unwilling that their people should form part of a mixed community, that they prefer having \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_ which they are entitled \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_ off in one block.

But there is another feature in the arrangement they contemplate which would, I think, work more injuriously \_\_\_\_\_ ? \_\_\_\_\_ in depreciating the value of their lands.

The grants to the half-breeds are, by the act, to be made "in such ways and on such conditions as to settlement or otherwise as the Governor General in council shall from time to time determine. The French or their leaders wish the lands to be so tied up, as to prevent them at all events, for a generation from passings out of the family of the original grantee. Now of the Half-breeds more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  are under 10 years of age,  $\frac{1}{2}$  are under 20. The effect, therefore, of any such arrangements as that suggested would be to render absolutely inalienable, for a long period of time, a large portion of this reserve.

Take a neighborhood where this policy obtains. Much of the reserve is owned by children: nothing can be done till they come of age, even they cannot sell. The land must descend to their children after them. It would not become alienable till the third generation. The effect would be to lock up a large portion of the land of the country, and exclude it from the improvements going on

in localities where land is unfettered. The whole tendency of the modern legislation, not only on this side of the Atlantic, but beyond it is to strike off the fetters which clog free traffic in land. There is no state in the Union, and no province in the confederation, so far as I know, that has not abolished Estates Tail".

All the tendency of Modern Legislation is in the line of abandoning the feudal ideas respecting lands and bringing Real Estate more and more to the condition of personal property and abolishing restraints and impediments on its free use and transmission".<sup>7</sup>

The above document clearly indicates that the intention for scrip was to be used so that the land could be quickly taken back from the Native "legally". Thus, by this sleight-of-hand, the government officials opened up "investment possibilities" for themselves and their friends. Governor Dewdney was heavily involved in scrip speculation and amassed a fortune in Saskatchewan from it.

Following the migration to Saskatchewan by the Metis they began an organized but peaceful campaign of humble petitions to the federal government asking only that they be granted title to the lands that they lived on. Hundreds of petitions were sent to Ottawa, signed by Metis people in Qu'Appelle, St. Laurent, Batoche, and throughout the North West. (see appendix 4). These petitions were effectively ignored by Ottawa. The Native people were not the only ones with grievances in Saskatchewan. Capital was a problem for the settlers. As well

"Nor did the farmers always realize that ~~another aspect of their problem was the fact that adequate sources of credit had not been devised for them to obtain the land, the machinery and the stock they needed to make their operations a success.~~ All they could see was the gap between the prices they received at the track and the prices that were obtained by the millers in the east for the produce they had grown. Therefore they laid the blame for their misfortunes on the federal government which tolerated and protected the railway monopoly of the Canadian Pacific, and on the milling companies that amassed the profits."

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7. Copy of letter from Adam G. Archibald, governor of Manitoba, to Governor Dewdney, December 27, 1870.
  8. George Stanley, Louis Riel p. 266

Finally, a delegation led by the new Metis leader Gabriel Dumont, was sent to Montana to beg Louis Riel to come to the North Saskatchewan to represent the Metis people in their demands for land title. This delegation had been appointed by the meeting in the Lindsey district school house on May 6, 1884. The message to Riel said in part:

"It is late, but it is the time now more than ever, for we have right and justice on our side. Do not imagine that you will begin the work when you get here; I tell you it is all done, the thing is decided; it is your presence that is needed. It will, in truth, be a great event in the North-West; you have no idea how great your influence is, even amongst the Indians. I know that you do not like the men much, but I am certain that it will be the grandest demonstration that has ever taken place, and the English are speaking about it already. Now, my dear cousin, the closest union exists between the French and English and the Indians, and we have good generals to foster it. . . . The whole race is calling for you!

On June 4th the delegation, which had been appointed by the meeting in the Lindsay School House on May 6th, arrived at St. Peter's Mission in Montana, and consulted Riel. They informed him of the state of the country and invited him to return to the North-West."

9

When Louis Riel returned from exile to take up the struggle of "his people" once again, he was well received not only by the Metis but by the Indians and the white settlers as well.

Riel was invited by the settlers to address a large meeting in Prince Albert. At first he refused but eventually accepted. Following his speech with its moderate tone, asking only for unity in demands on Ottawa, he was widely accepted as the West's leader by all races.

Stanley wrote:

"During the spring of 1884 the agitation was in full flame throughout the District of Lorne, the bellows being assiduously applied from Prince Albert. Meetings were held and grievances discussed, the principal agitators being whites. Early in May a large meeting was held at the Pocha School House. A working committee was formed and a list of complaints—non-representation, non-recognition of the half-breed claims, and alleged discrimination against residents of the North-West Territories in the filling of public offices—was drawn up. They seem, wrote the *Times*, to be fully alive to the fact that the farmers' interests are all alike and that union is strength."

10

9. George F. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada p. 297

10. *Ibid*, p. 267

From this union of races and classes, a Bill of Rights was drawn up.

" The platform of the new movement was formally adopted at a meeting at the Colleston School House on February 25th. The resolutions adopted at this meeting subsequently formed the basis of the " Bill of Rights " which was forwarded to Ottawa in December by Louis Riel and the Settlers' Union. . . . Tariff reduction, representation of the Territories in the Federal Government, and a Hudson Bay Railway were the white demands. To these were added protests against the land regulations, the obnoxious timber dues, and the non-issue of scrip, grievances largely half-breed in character. "

11

W. H. Jackson, a white farmer and chief organizer of the settlers Union that supported the Metis cause, signed the petition and sent it to the secretary of State. Certainly, at this point, it was not too late for the federal government to redress the grievances of both the settlers and the Metis. Their demands, in terms of money required, were insignificant. The land was there; all the federal government had to do was grant title for it, and make some money available for farm equipment. The real problem, however, would not allow for such an easy solution. The National Policy was designed to enrich the eastern merchants at the expense of the Metis and the western settlers. Consequently, Sir John A Macdonald, Prime minister of Canada, denied receiving the "Bill of Rights".

"The petition embodied the grievances of all parties in the North-West Territories. It demanded more liberal treatment for the Indians : scrip and patents for the half-breeds : responsible

government, representation in the Dominion Parliament and Cabinet, provincial control of natural resources, modification of the homestead laws, vote by ballot, a railway to Hudson Bay and reduction in the tariff for the white settlers. It also contained a long complaint, obviously prepared by Louis Riel himself, of the treatment of the North-West delegates in 1870 and the non-promulgation of the promised amnesty. In view of the above letter and this petition, 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 the Government. The Government not only received the petition and forwarded it to the Colonial Office, but apparently acknowledged the receipt of the petition, for, on January 27th, Jackson wrote to Riel that the reply from the Under-Secretary of State was a "good sign"

12

Even Father Andre, a priest friendly to Dewdney and the federal government, who had been active in sowing the seeds of dissension between the French and English Metis, wrote, requesting that the grievances be dealt with or there would be trouble. Following are excerpts from his letter to Dewdney regarding the government's lack of response to the petitions:

" I share your feelings in this regard and you may rest assured that I take no particular pleasure in writing again concerning him; but circumstances are such as to render it imperative that you should be fully acquainted with the present state of affairs.

Riel and his friends have been anxiously waiting for an answer [to the pleas] made by them to the Government through Capt. Macdowall and myself. But seeing that the Government persisted in keeping silence on the subject of their requests, they are feeling great indignation. It cannot be denied their minds are excited ["excités"] and excited [excités] at thus finding themselves seemingly disregarded; and, such excitement might easily lead them to extreme acts.

Chs. Nolin and Maxime Lépine had intended to put in a tender for the supply of telegraph poles, as advertised in the papers, and they entertained hopes that the contract would be awarded them.

The situation being such that I requested Capt. Macdowall to communicate with you, by wire, at once. I do not apprehend any immediate danger, but this continued state of excitement is dangerous. The Government is, I believe, quite wrong in not leading itself to some arrangement which would prove satisfactory to all parties concerned. A rebellion I know could soon be squelched, but what trouble would it not cause in the country! Although I do not see actual danger, you may be certain that if the halfbreeds make any more, a large number of Indians would join them and make a common cause with them; and the troops, at present, in the country will not be able to prevent such a movement.

The Government, certainly, takes upon itself great responsibility in thus delaying so long to redress the grievances of the halfbreeds and rendering them the justice to which they are entitled. "

13

The government authorities both locally, and in Ottawa obviously knew what was going on. The local authorities repeatedly expressed concern, and requested that the demands be met immediately. They all feared an Indian uprising. Jackson was aware that the federal government was goading the Metis into taking military action by refusing to answer the petitions. The Prince Albert paper, originally on the side of the Metis and settlers, now did a "political turnaround", and had become the organ of the Federal government. In the last paragraph of his manifesto, "Jackson referred:

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13. Letter Father Andre, to Dewdney, Feb. 6/1885 from MacDonald

..... briefly to the Indian problem, declaring that false rumours were being deliberately circulated by the press of the Territories, seeking a pretext for placing the country under martial law and so goad the people into a false step. Louis Riel, he maintained, will do more toward pacifying Big Bear than could be accomplished by twenty agents in a month of Sundays."

14

Indeed, Riel, more than anyone else had the Indians' respect. The federal government had broken its word to them so many times that they were desperate, being short of food, and having no viable alternative to the old way of life, penned up as they were on the new reserves.

" in August, Big Bear met Riel at Jackson's house in Prince Albert. Jackson's brother, describing the latter interview, said Big Bear complained that the Canadian government had broken the terms of the treaties and asked Riel and his friends if, when they had secured their rights, they would help the Indians obtain theirs." It was with Riel's assurances of help from the North-West movement (which, incidentally, adopted more liberal treatment for the Indians as one of its objectives) that Big Bear and other Indians met in council at Carlton in August. The Lieutenant-Governor was frightened at what the Council might bring forth."

15

Stanley summed up the tactics of Riel's people and the settlers. Their combined agitation was directed at creating another province and obtaining sufficient human rights simply to exist as independent self-sufficient farmers and workers:

" Riel had no intention of fighting the Dominion with arms; it had not been necessary in 1869; it would not be necessary in 1885. Philip Garnot, the Secretary of the Provisional Government of 1885, stated in his evidence that the half-breeds had only risen to force the attention of the Government to their needs, that every day they expected that the Dominion of Canada would send commissioners to negotiate with them. But instead of

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14. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel p. 281

15. Ibid, p. 282



commissioners came troops. Riel, in his weakness, made one great mistake; the situation in 1885 was vastly different from that of 1869. In 1869 the North-West had not belonged to Canada, there were no military forces in the country, and Red River was effectively isolated from Canada by the formidable barrier of geography. / In 1885 everything had changed. The North-West had been transferred to Canada and was now Canadian territory, there was a strong force of Mounted Police in the country, and the barrier of geography, which had made the North-West the Great Lone Land, had been penetrated by the Canadian Pacific Railway."

16

When the peaceful petitions failed to get a response from the federal government, most of the white settlers dropped out of the movement, fearful that war was imminent. The police had been busy, travelling from farm to farm warning them against continued support.

The clergy had been successful at breaking Native unity as well. A provisional government had been proclaimed consisting of:

" Pierre Parenteau was elected President; Charles Nolin, Commissaire; Gabriel Dumont, Adjutant-General; and Bapt. Boyer, Donald Ross, Damase Carrière, Amb. Jobin, Norbert Delorme, Moïse Ouellette, Bte. Parenteau, David Tourond, Pierre Gariépy, Maxime Lépine, Albert Monkman, Bte. Boucher, members of the Council; and Philip Garnot, secretary. The Council chosen, one of the first acts of the newly-formed "Provisional Government of the Saskatchewan" was to place Gabriel Dumont à la tête de l'armée with Joseph Delorme and Patrice Tourond as his assistants."

17

As the direction of the movement was forced away from any possibility of peaceful settlement by the actions of the federal government, the Metis internal organization changed form and Louis Riel, brilliant orator, religious mystic, charismatic political intellectual became a less important figure while Gabriel Dumont, seasoned Indian fighter, leader of the old buffalo hunt, expert marksman and brilliant guerilla warrior began his rise to power. This was simply a spontaneous reaction to the threat of invasion from Canada. So too did the direction change as regards the control of the church over the Metis people.

16. G. F. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p 314

17. G. F. Stanley Louis Riel p, 282

"By this time Riel had definitely broken with the Roman Catholic clergy. His religious unorthodoxy had long been suspect. Even prior to his return to Canada, he had given evidence of religious peculiarities. In the Saskatchewan his proposals to change the Mass and the liturgy and to establish Archbishop Bourget as the Pope of the New World, added to the growing violence of his agitation, gained him the complete disapproval of the clergy. Finally the priests met together and decided that Riel was *non compos mentis* and therefore should not be admitted to the sacraments. On March 1st, Father Fourmond preached against Riel, who replied with the accusation that the priests are spies of the Police." During the Novena Father Fourmond declared that the sacraments would be withheld from any who took up arms, a proposition which led to another dispute between Riel and the clergy. Notwithstanding

the efforts of the clergy to win over the métis they continued to remain loyal to Riel.

On March 15th the clergy made a determined effort to bring about a division in the métis ranks. Charles Nolin, who had fostered the agitation in the beginning but who was not in favour of a recourse to arms, was selected to counter Riel's inflammatory agitation. Nolin met with no success. On the 19th, when the Provisional Government was formed, Riel felt strong enough to demonstrate his authority. He seized the Catholic Church as his headquarters and ordered the arrest of Nolin. Towards midnight Nolin was brought before the Council and charged with discouraging the movement to take up arms. He defended himself with vigour and accused Riel of working more for his own ends than for those of the métis. In the end he was acquitted but the counter movement had been broken, and Nolin, to save himself, promised to throw in his lot with the Provisional Government.

More significant to Riel than the alienation of the clergy was the attitude of neutrality now assumed by the English half-breeds and white settlers."

18

The Protestant clergy and the police had dissuaded the white settlers from further action, but it was the Catholic church that smashed Native solidarity.

Stanley wrote:

"If Riel had not achieved the solidarity in Saskatchewan that he had achieved in Manitoba, it was largely because of his rupture with the Catholic Church. Despite the enthusiasms of Fourmond, Riel had never convinced the stronger-minded and more influential members of the clergy that they should give him their unqualified support."

19

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18. George F. Stanley The Birth of Western Canada, p. 316, 317  
 19. George F. Stanley, Louis Riel p. 307

Thus the settlers had been separated from the struggle, and the Natives were again divided along "ethnic" and "linguistic" lines. It only remained to neutralize the Indians, and Ottawa could shriek "rebellion" and thus bring the C.P.R. into being with public funds and public sympathy.

At Duck Lake the Metis under orders of the provisional government seized some supplies and placed Canadian government officials under arrest. Arrested were Hilyard Mitchell, John Ashley and Hugh Ross. The last two were police scouts while Mitchell, a store owner, was believed by Gabriel Dumont to be a police spy.

At Fort Carleton Major L.N.F. Crozier received the news and assembled a task force. At Duck Lake the two parties met on the road. Assiyiwin, an Indian, leaped upon Joe McKay, a Metis in the service of the police. "Gentleman Joe drew his revolver and shot Assiyiwan, while the police opened fire, killing Isadore Dumont in the saddle".<sup>20</sup>

The battle of Duck Lake was a resounding victory for the Metis, although the recklessly courageous Gabriel Dumont had been wounded in the head. But the damage had been done. Before proceeding with the military destruction of the Metis, Ottawa had one more task of subversion to complete:

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20. Frank Anderson The Riel Rebellion 1885, Frontier series 1965

" When the news of the rebellion reached Ottawa the Canadian Government, realizing the absolute necessity of placating the southern Alberta Indians, acted promptly. On March 24th, two days before Duck Lake, Macdonald telegraphed to Father Lacombe, a missionary greatly beloved by the Indians, asking him to see Crowfoot and endeavour to ensure the loyalty of the Blackfeet.<sup>20</sup> Lacombe went to the reserve, and on the 31st, replied to the Prime Minister that Crowfoot promised me to be loyal no matter how things may turn elsewhere. To assist Father Lacombe in his efforts, and to remove any possible cause for complaint among the Indians, Macdonald advised Dewdney that extra rations should be issued to the Indians. In addition to complying with this request, Dewdney also recalled Agent Denny, who had resigned as a result of the economy cuts, and himself visited Blackfoot Crossing for assurance as to the sincerity of Crowfoot's professions. On April 12th he forwarded the following message from the Blackfoot chief :

On behalf of myself and people I wish to send through you to the Great Mother the words I have given to the Governor at a Council held, at which my minor chiefs and young men were present. We are agreed and determined to remain loyal to the Queen. Our young men will go to work on their reserve, and will raise all the crops we can, and we hope the Government will help us to sell what we cannot use.

Continued reports are brought to us, and we do not know what to believe, but now that we have seen the Governor and heard him speak, we will shut our ears and only listen to and believe what is told us through the Governor.

Should any Indians come to our reserves and ask us to join them in war we will send them away. I have sent messengers to the Bloods and Piegans who belong to our treaty to tell them what we are doing, and what we intend to do about the trouble. I want Mr. Dewdney to be with us and all my men are of the same mind. The words I sent by Father Lacombe I again send. We will be loyal to the Queen whatever happens. I have a copy of this, and when the trouble is over will have it with pride to show the Queen's officers, and we leave our future in your hands.

We have asked for nothing, but the Governor has given us a little present of tea and tobacco. He will tell you what other talk we had at our Council ; it was all good, not one bad word.

It was not, however, a deep sense of loyalty which inspired these words, but rather the fact that the Indians, realizing their powerful position, were determined to use it to extort concessions from the Government. Father Lacombe, who had lived for many years among them, and who fully understood Indian character, wrote confidentially after the rebellion was over :

For my own part what I have seen of the Blackfeet and their kindred since last spring makes me believe, that, if they have been quiet and have made loyal promises during the Cree rebellion, it was purely out of self-interest in order to get more and more out of the Department. From the beginning of the war any one who knows the Indian character could very early perceive that they were not pleased when told of the victories of the whites ; on the contrary they were sorry and disappointed. Crowfoot received into his camp and fed for months many Cree families, and was very much displeased when we tried to send away these Crees, and it was very generally believed that a great many of our soldiers were killed by their Cree friends.

To discourage any inclination upon the part of the Blackfeet to go back on their word and to reassure the panic-stricken settlers, troops were quickly despatched to southern Alberta!

20

Father Lacombe had, through his knowledge of the Blackfeet, been used to placate them with fake promises. He initially prevented them from joining the rebellion, and troops were quickly moved in. The metis had been set up, isolated, and forced to fire back after they had been shot at. This "rebellion" had been cynically and ruthlessly brought on by the Conservative Government of the day, knowing it would obtain support and money for westward expansion.

The C.P.R., in desperate financial straights, "came to the rescue", although, as can be seen, the "rebellion" in reality rescued the C.P.R.:

236  
 " In Ottawa, Van Horne of the Canadian Pacific told the Government that he would get the troops over the gaps in his unfinished railroad in eleven days if he could have two days' notice and a free hand. He got them. Van Horne had moved troops on the Chicago & Alton during the Civil War and he knew what was required; but that had been a railroad, and the C.P.R., the potential corridor of empire, was hardly a railroad yet. Technically it now reached to the foot of the Rockies, but 250 miles along the north shore of Lake Superior were under construction, with temporary track or no track at all.

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. Stephen and Smith had sold or

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pledged everything they owned. "Donald," Stephen said, "when they come they must not find us with a dollar." They were ruined and 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.

So Van Horne moved about five thousand men, most of them eighteen hundred miles and some twenty-five hundred, into the land of the Métis. It took nine days to get one bunch over that unfinished section but others made it in four, and none needed the eleven he had given himself as a safe limit. He put rails down on ice and snow, ran trains over frozen rivers, used construction trains and work engines, imported Chinese coolies from the United States to lay track. Sometimes his locomotives could move only six miles an hour; for ninety miles there were no locomotives because there was no track; the men rode in sleighs if they were available and if not they walked. But they moved, and by April 10 most of the expeditionary force was in the Northwest, marching on the Métis. And on April 30 the C.P.R. got its loan. "

Macdonald's dream was assured. The Metis' dream was dying. The only questions left were, how long would it take? How many people would have to die with it?

"A total of 7,982 men were mobilized, along with the Mounted Police with about 500 men in addition to the troops. The artillery consisted of nine guns and two machine guns."<sup>22</sup> This force would have been insufficient had the Indians joined the rebels. "The number of Indians in Treaties 4, 6, and 7 totalled about 20,000."

The senseless little fight (at Duck Lake) had lasted only half an hour. Nine Prince Albert volunteers died at that time, while three police were killed. The force could have been wiped out, but Riel's humanitarianism intervened and he forbade the Metis to pursue the routed Canadians. This battle had cost the Metis five dead. "They were buried at St. Laurent by Father Fourmand."

"Even as the bodies of the five Metis were being laid to rest at St. Laurent, even as funeral orations were being said over the fallen loyalists at Prince Albert, the Canadian government announced that Messrs. Forget, Roger Goulet and W. P. Street had been appointed as a commission to inquire into grievances."<sup>23</sup>

Thus, after the rebellion was engineered, and the correct forces sent into motion to establish the C.P.R. and the National Policy, the Metis were further divided by granting a Royal Commission that immediately gave some land title out to encourage people to stay neutral. This despite the fact that the government had silently ignored the thousands of petitions that had been sent during the preceeding fifteen years.

<sup>22</sup>George F. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p. 352, *ibid*, p. 353.

<sup>23</sup>Frank Anderson, The Riel Rebellion 1885 Series, p. 22.

Dumont's force of about 450 Metis and Indians dealt another blow to the enemy when they defeated the overweight and somewhat stupid General Middleton at Fish Creek. Middleton had divided his force, but it still vastly outnumbered the Metis force. Nevertheless, thanks to Gabriel Dumont's tactics of picking the battle scene, and firing from ambush, Canadian casualties were high, Metis casualties relatively light. Here Dumont had lost four dead and eleven wounded.

" The dead were later brought to the village and buried by Father Moulin in the little cemetery between the church and the river. Francois Boyer and Michael Desjardain, who had been critically wounded, died three days later, bringing the total dead to six. It was later learned that Middleton had lost 10 killed and 44 wounded — nearly one tenth of his effective force!

Had the Metis been in greater strength, or even armed with weapons comparable to the Sniders and Winchesters of the army, the halt given to Middleton would undoubtedly have been a defeat of heroic proportions, for it is a military maxim that one guerilla fighter can defeat three regular militiamen with ease — and the Metis were guerilla fighters par-excellence. Many of the troops later testified that they never clearly saw the targets at which they fired so industriously all day. Even during Dumont's charge through the smoke, the Metis and Indians had kept under cover with remarkable skill. Whether misguided or not, the Metis had put up a magnificent battle and Fish Creek deserves to be enshrined as a monument to their incredible courage and bravery. Frontier history was enriched that memorable day.

Two days after the battle, Middleton sent a dispatch to Colonel Irvine at Prince Albert, the opening sentence of which was: "Attacked here on 24th, and after a smart fight drove the enemy back, but lost too many men to repeat . . ." The General later deemed it wiser to modify this statement and claimed that he had not followed up his "victory" because of other strategic reasons.

The plain fact of the matter is that the battle was a draw, if anything, and when one considers the numerical superiority of the troops and their overwhelming superiority in firepower, one is tempted to call it a Metis victory — with no quibbling or reservations. Certainly the Metis proved their right to take a place among the best fighting men Canada has ever produced!

Nonetheless, having won the skirmish at Duck Lake and having given a definite check to Middleton at Fish Creek, Louis Riel and his followers were farther than ever from achieving their ends. The Commissioners had not yet arrived from Ottawa to treat with them; the troops had kept together so that it was impossible to capture a small segment to hold as hostages, and the army was camped but thirteen short miles from Batoche.

John Astley, one of the prisoners confined in the home of Joseph Boyer, temporary jailor, pointed out to Riel on April 26th, that this would seem an opportune time to sue for terms, but Riel, refusing to correctly translate the writing on the sky, retorted. "No, we must have another battle. If we gain another battle, the terms will be better."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p. 36 - 38.

The Canadian volunteers fighting these guerilla warriors were green troops, unlike the professional killers involved in genocide south of the border. Howard comments:

"of Riel. Some of the livestock had been taken along, but much of it had been left in pastures or on the prairie. Stored crops, farm equipment, furniture and prized personal possessions — holy pictures or musical instruments or the children's homemade dolls and toys—remained untouched; sometimes unfinished meals still rested on the tables. Bewildered, the Canadians helped themselves to souvenirs. But didn't these strange people know what war was, and that they were engaged in it?

Riel and Dumont knew what they were about, no question of that. But as for the rest, the Canadians wondered. They fought off their sense of guilt and relieved their inner tensions by impatient outbursts. Let's get on with it! Let's hang Riel and Dumont and go home!

Despite the looting, which every invader (sometimes including commanding generals) has justified to himself, this was the most righteous army to take the field in modern times, and the most ingenuous. Its young volunteers had responded to the summons out of sincere patriotism, and most of them, only two months ago, had stepped out of the doors of good middle-class homes where they had been reared in the strictest nineteenth-century Protestant tradition. Without some drive as strong as patriotism, which was now being weakened by inaction, few of them would willingly have hurt even a stray dog.

They were race-conscious, but unrealistic about it; they had none of the cold, cynical resolution of the American regulars just to the south of them. The Yankees, to start with, were a wholly different type of men; moreover they had learned from horrible experience how well savages could defend themselves. There were some vindictive Orangemen in the Northwest Field Force, preachers of religious hatred, and as usual they made themselves heard; but they were few and ineffective in comparison to the number which accompanied Wolseley west fifteen years before. These well-meaning young militiamen for the most part had no grudge. And they would have been utterly astonished, then outraged, had they heard Riel's tirade accusing them of plotting to rape, disembowel and finally annihilate the Métis.

They were punctilious about church attendance, even while on the march on the prairie. They had virtually no liquor and no women; of five thousand men only one required hospital treatment for alcoholism and there were no recorded hospital cases of venereal disease. That further set them apart from the hard-bitten United States cavalry, whose camp followers, Indian and white, were quickly ensconced in "whiskey gulch" slums on the outskirts of whatever military reservations the tough American regulars chanced to occupy. True, liquor and women were hard to get on the Canadian frontier, but what is significant is that it rarely occurred to the conscientious young men who made up this army to complain about it. They complained about the waiting. There was nothing for them to do but fight, and General Middleton wouldn't let them do that.

If the morale of the men was bad, that of the officers was worse. The commanding general, many of them felt, was a pompous ass, a chucklehead, and a coward. There had been no excuse for the setback at Fish Creek; there was no excuse that they could see, despite the difficulties with the wounded, for the long delay before the advance on Batoche. "

25



But this amature army with its "comic opera" general had one professional killer in its midst. He was a lieutenant of the United States military who was here to experiment with a new weapon of war. (The United States government was very co-operative, this thim, and no doubt would have intervened had the Indians joined the uprising.)<sup>26</sup>

" The venturesome Howard was farther from home than any other member of the expedition. He had left a wife and four children in New Haven to involve himself in a quarrel which certainly did not concern him in the least—because he loved a gun. Dr. R. J. Gatling, who had invented in 1862 the first successful machine gun ever devised, made it clear that Howard was not an employee of his firm; he had gone to Canada, Gatling said, merely as "a friend of the gun."

There was no question about that. Howard had chivied and coaxed and cursed until the Connecticut National Guard had authorized the organization of machine gun platoons; then, in thirty days, he had the first one ready, fully equipped and splendidly trained.

He was no dewy socialite Guardsman, addicted to crisp uniform and show-off drill and soirees. He had had five years of Indian fighting with the United States cavalry as a private and noncom before he went back to Connecticut to settle down. There, because he was an expert machinist, within a few years he built a carriage manufacturing business which was netting him fifteen thousand dollars a year. He sold it and devoted his full time to inventions, most of them connected with firearms and munitions. He had used the Gatling in his American service and he knew as much about it as any man alive; when he learned that Canada was going to try it out against the rebellious Métis he hastened to offer his services.

He had a comfortable, happy home in sedate New Haven and he loved his family, but he also loved that gun. He thus joined the company of implausible characters who strode across the stage during the climatic scenes of the Northwestern historical drama. He had travelled more than twenty-five hundred miles into a foreign country to kill men against whom he had no feeling whatever; yet he was not a grubby soldier of fortune and he was not a killer—he was a maniac. His interest in the mass murder of Métis was wholly scientific, cold as mercury in a tube. Batoche was to be his laboratory."<sup>27</sup>

26. See George Stanley's, The Birth of Western Canada, for details.

27. Joseph K. Howard, Strange Empire, p. 380.

In contrast to this professional, and the buffoon general, were the Canadian troops, many of whom sympathized with the Metis whose small, neat farms they were burning. They had heard that the Metis were savages, but the small homes, the religious pictures, the comely people were not at all what they expected. So they "did their duty" half-heartedly, and as they marched, they sang:

"The volunteers are all fine boys and full of lots of  
But it's mighty little pay they get for carrying a gun  
The Government have grown so lean and the C.P.R.  
so fat  
Our extra pay we did not get—  
You can bet your boots on that!

They will not even give a shed that's fitting for our drink  
For Ridgeway now forgotten is, and also Pigeon Hill,  
But now they's wanted us again, they've called us out  
that's flat—  
And the boys have got to board themselves;  
You can bet your boots on that!

To annexate us some folks would, or independent be  
And our Sir John would federate the colonies, I see  
But let them blow till they are blue and I'll throw up  
my hat  
And give my life for England's flag—  
You can bet your boots on that!  
The flag that's waved a thousand years,  
You can bet your boots on that!"<sup>28</sup>

Let Tremaudan, himself a French-Metis, describe the last battle of the Metis people:

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid. P. 340.

"Since the Fish Creek melee, the Metis had not been idle. Gabriel Dumont, much of whose tactical experience he had learned while fighting Indians, had had a network of trenches built on both sides of the river. They encircled the village. They were from 10 to 50 feet apart, 2 or 3 feet wide, 1½ feet deep, and 5 feet long. A sort of rampart of stones, earth and branches, about a foot high, was constructed at each end. According to the contour of the land, from 5 to 25 were dug in rows that allowed retreat from one to another following the natural position of the coulees and bush.

As Middleton approached anew, Dumont suggested to his people that they retire into the woods to spare his fighting men the mental anguish of hearing the pleas and seeing the tears of their women and children. As before, none heeded his advice. When he heard that the enemy had destroyed his stables to fortify the "Northcote", he was convinced that it was intended to take part in the projected attack on Batoche. On his side of the river, his plan of defence was quickly conceived and put into execution. He stationed a body of men opposite the Church to prevent the crew from landing. Then, as the boat was navigating through a certain rapid, the steersman was to be killed. In which event, the craft would drift and a steel cable thrown across the current would capsize it.

Actually, on May 9, as the infantry was advancing on

Batoche, Middleton's "marines" (the "Northcote" and 35 men) were steaming downstream. Acting on Dumont's orders, the Metis fired, not only on the steersman, but on all they saw on the bridge deck. As foreseen, the vessel began to drift immediately. But the Metis didn't lower their cable quickly enough; it hooked on to the smokestack and this started a fire. With considerable difficulty, the men aboard, exposed as they were to Metis fire, extinguished it. They lost four men of their effective force. Nevertheless, the "Northcote" dropped anchor 3 miles downstream from Batoche where it lay useless right to the end of the approaching battle.

At the same time as the "Northcote" was setting out on its fateful journey, Middleton's 917 foot-soldiers, with four cannon and the Gatling machine-gun, formed an attack column which was marching towards Batoche. Four miles from the village, they heard the "Northcote's" siren. The cannon shot in reply to this signal warned the Metis of the approach of the troops.

A mile from the first houses, the Gatling opened fire on an unoccupied building. Soon, smoke filled the river valley and the soldiers could not distinguish anything. They continued to advance and the Gatling was effective in the burning of two empty houses. Three-hundred rods further on were the Church and the Presbytery where Fathers Moulin and Vegreville resides with Mrs. Charles Nolin - all under the protection of the white flag. The village itself in which

lived only women and children and a few old men was riddled with grapeshot.

Middleton's soldiers, who had thought it expedient to fire from a distance, soon realized that this tactic failed to accomplish anything worth-while. Suddenly, under their noises, the Metis, entrenched in a ravine, rose and fired with telling effect. The cannon was forced to fall back. Alone, Lieutenant Howard, with his machine-gun, replied to this fusillade; but he was so high up in the gun-carriage that the shells passed over the heads of his foe. The Middleton advance had begun at 7 P.M.; it was now 9:45 P.M. At 11:30 P.M., the Colonel issued the order to fall back a short distance; he had to abandon the wounded lodged in the ditch. At this precise moment, the Metis and their Indian allies rose on all sides, and it looked for a while that they were the complete masters of the situation. But the Federal troops had cannon and used them effectively to dampen the ardour of Dumont's men. At 1 A.M., a group of Metis appeared all at once scarcely 100 rods from Middleton's left flank. Discharging their Winchesters, they threw confusion into the enemy ranks, killing one man and wounding two. The Canadian troops were forced to retreat further. At 2 A.M. firing had almost ceased. It began again, however, when some of Middleton's soldiers attempted to pick up the dead man and the two wounded. At 3 A.M., all firing ceased. At 6 A.M., the Metis began

again, but the firing ceased altogether at 7 A.M.

At the end of this first day, despite the numerical odds of 1 to 5, the Metis were decidedly the victors. They had not lost a single fighter. Moreover, they had discovered a method of inflicting great losses on the enemy. They had also ridded themselves of the "Northcote" which, had it been able to maintain a position midstream between the two sections of the village, could have impeded their efforts noticeably. The Gatling, which had discharged 3,000 shells, hadn't killed or wounded anyone. It is only fair to add, however, that it prevented the Metis from swooping down on their foe. On the evening of this initial success, Riel had his men kneel to thank Providence for having granted them the victory, and to pray that He continue to protect them. But, during the night, Dumont and his better sharpshooters went as near as they dared to Middleton's camp (pitched barely 200 rods from the Church) in order to put the fear of death into the exhausted Canadians.

About five o'clock on the morning of Sunday, May 10, the battle recommenced. A salvo of artillery was directed at the ravines whence the Metis had repulsed the previous day's attack - and also at the houses on the east side of the river. At 8 A.M., Lieutenant Howard went ahead with the Gatling and a few Grenadiers. During the succeeding half-hour, he had expended a great quantity of ammunition - unsuccessfully - as the Metis trenches seemed to be abandoned.

Dumont's soldiers were sparing of their cartridges, not firing until the enemy undertook to attack. Then they rose precipitately in order to make them take to their heels. From time to time, too, they raised dummies that Howard riddled with shot, probably astonished that they stayed erect so long.

Arranged in a crescent, the Metis trenches - with their ramifications and immensely practical communication system - appeared impregnable. At 6 P.M., the Federal soldiers were no further ahead than at the beginning of the operation except that they had lost several men, killed and wounded. The Metis had sustained no losses. That night Middleton announced that he would not renew the attack on the next day. He had decided, he said, to starve the Metis out. Nevertheless, it is well-known that Middleton arrived at this decision only - as he states himself in his report - after the Priests had informed him about the Metis defences and had assured him that the rebels had comparatively little food and ammunition. On hearing this news Middleton's courage and that of his soldiers was reborn. Consequently, they resolved to harass the besieged Metis whatever the cost.

As the first, the second day witnessed a Metis victory. At the beginning of the month, they had despatched a courier to ask their Indian allies to send food, and now they were waiting hopefully for its arrival. If this were effected, they felt they could cope with the disciplined, well-fed troops that confronted them.

About seven o'clock on Monday morning, May 11, Middleton caused a reconnaissance to be made. Then, despite his resolve to starve the rebels, he decided to launch an authentic attack. At 10 A.M., the artillery received orders to fire with everything it had. Houses were again riddled with shot and shell.

At the outset, the besieged responded to the enemy fire vigorously. But soon it became clear that their ammunition was low and their volleys diminished. The stubborn resistance that they had maintained on Sunday night and all Monday had discouraged Middleton temporarily despite the missionaries' information, and he had sent Lord Méglund with two scouts to Humboldt to procure reinforcements quickly.

The third day's results were the same as that of the two preceding days - with this difference - the Canadians had only 4 wounded. Their total for the three days was 3 dead and 13 wounded. The Metis loss remained at nothing.

Dumont reports that throughout the engagements, Riel walked unarmed in front of the Metis lines, encouraging the combatants with advice and prayer. The Metis and their wives and children were both short of food and ammunition, and were also deprived of their Priests' spiritual aid on which they were accustomed to rely in times of adversity. What could they not have accomplished if their Priests had supported them?

On the morning of Tuesday, May 12, the fourth day, Middleton, ever deploring the fact that he had not twenty



times more men than the Metis, but helped by the Missionaries' information, sent forward 150 Mounted Policemen who, under Colonel Irvine's command had joined the Canadian troops, which now numbered upwards of 1,200 men. To them, he allocated one cannon and the Gatling. Soon, artillery and musketry fire was blasting its way towards the trench-shelters, and continued without interruption until noon.

Riel intervened. By way of the surveyor Astley (a Metis prisoner since the Battle of Duck Lake) he sent a letter to Middleton warning him that if he massacred Metis families, he, Riel, would be forced to resort to reprisals on the prisoners he was holding. In his reply, Middleton recommended placing the women and children together in a house identifiable by a white flag, on which he promised not to fire. Riel acknowledged receipt of the General's reply (via Jackson), and asked for an interview or better still - the withdrawal of the troops. If this weren't done, he said, the prisoners would be executed. Middleton ordered his men to withdraw slowly towards their camp and, in so doing, gave the Metis the impression that he intended to attack them from the prairie.

After dinner, Lieutenant-Colonel Williams and his 60 Midland men deployed left towards the cemetery whilst Lieutenant-Colonel Grassett's 160 men marched in columns towards the right as far as the Church. Artillery fire redoubled, and, under the command of Colonel Van Strauenzie,

a mass frontal attack was launched.

With the Gatling's assistance, the Canadians succeeded in dislodging the Metis from the first line of trenches. They captured some houses north of the Church and delivered the prisoners held there. During this attack, the first Metis victims fell: Jose Ouellette, 93 years; Jose Vandal, 75 years; old Ouimet, 75 years; Donald Ross, very old, too. Isidore Boyer, another old man, was bayoneted to death. Also killed were Michel Trottoir, Andre Batoche, Calixte Tourond, Elzear Tourond, John Bunn, and two Sioux. Damase Carriere who, to start with, had a broken leg, was dragged along with a rope around his neck, behind a horse.

After four days of fighting, the balance sheet stood as follows: for the insurgents, 3 wounded and 12 killed plus one young girl shelled and an infant machine-gunned. And, according to Brigade-Surgeon E.A. Gravely's official report of Federal losses, 8 killed and 46 wounded. Dumont, however, thought the Federal losses were much greater. "I believe," said he, "that, as at Duck Lake, those brave Englishmen picked up only regular soldiers and left the volunteers to lie where they were,"

When the Metis evacuated the trenches, they retreated towards the village. From a piece of rising ground, Dumont and six of his bravest men found a way to slow down the march of the enemy forces for an hour. The famous leader tells the following story:

"What kept me at that post was, I must say, old Ouellet's courage. Several times I said to him: "Father, we should retreat." And the old chap replied: "Wait a minute; I want to kill another Englishman." Then I, I said to him: "That's good. Let's die here." Then he was hit, I thanked him for his courage, and I couldn't stay there any longer and I withdrew towards my companions."

Dumont continued to relate how, on the river bank, he met 7 or 8 men who, like others, were fleeing for their lives. He stopped them, and with their help, he held the Canadians in check for another half-hour.

Then, in their turn, these brave men withdrew into large copse there they found Riel at work encouraging what men were there to fight. A brief conversation took place between the two leaders:

All: "What do we do now?" "We are beaten!"

Dumont: You must have known when we took up arms that we would lose.

Riel: "Then we must perish."

At this juncture, Dumont spoke of going to the camp for blankets. Riel begged him not to expose himself unnecessarily.

Dumont: (laughing) "Bast! The enemy isn't smart enough to kill me." (Adding) "I swear I'm not afraid of anything!" Thereupon, he departed under Canadian fire to look for the blankets in question and gave them to Riel's wife and children.

He made a second trip and returned in the same manner with dried meat and flour which he distributed to the women with children.

Here is a typical paragraph describing the personality of this brave warrior; it merits quotation as it was written:

"As I saw that the others wanted to get further away, I asked my wife Madeleine Welkey (Scottish Metisse) to wait for me there, telling her "If the enemy takes thee and reproaches thee for my behaviour, tell them that since the Government direct me, it wasn't easy for thee to do so."

After a variety of sallies of the same nature, replete with disingenuousness and open gaiety, it is needless to add that Dumont knew how to avoid capture. "I set out with my mare", said he, "and my wife - with a sack of flour (both horse and flour having been 'found' practically within the enemy lines), and led them to an open glade in the woods there we camped for the night."

In his report on the battlefield, General Middleton wrote: "I was astonished at the strength of the rebel position and by the ingenious manner and care expended on the construction of the trench-shelters."

Another English writer, who took part in the Batoche campaign, wrote these lines, which are, perchance, the finest eulogy that could be expressed of the courageous defenders of the small Metis fort - and of Dumont:

"We may hate Riel, and regard with horror

the rebellion of which he was leader - recognizing that when sufficient time has elapsed to allow us to view in correct perspective the events of this sad affair, no Canadian worthy of the name will not recall with pride and respect Dumont and the gallant little troop of his compatriots who fought so valiantly for a cause predestined to failure."

It is now Wednesday, May 13. Silence has replaced the noise of battle. Proscribed, lacking ammunition, overwhelmed in number, the handful of remaining Batoche Metis had no recourse but surrender. Preceded by white flags, they went group by group to submit to the victors and hand over their poor weapons. Some went alone; the Priests led others.

Middleton held on to 13 prisoners, two of whom were in Riel's Council, and sent the others home warning them that they would be subject to arrest if any complaints were preferred against them. Neither Riel nor Dumont were part of any group that threw itself on the mercy of the conquerors. According to the word of an unnamed Priest, Middleton claimed the Metis casualties were 51 killed and 173 wounded! The brave General's way of bragging about his victory!

On May 16, 1885, Middleton received orders from the Honorable Adolphe Caron, Minister of Militia, to send Riel to Regina. On May 19, on his way to Battleford, he crossed the Saskatchewan at the Guardupuy Crossing. On the 20th, General Strange left Edmonton by boat with the 65th Battalion;

the remainder of his force, almost 450 men, left on foot for Fort Pitt. On the 23rd, Riel was brought, under guard, to Regina. The same day, Middleton was at Carlton where he received a letter from Poundmaker offering to surrender. To this, the General replied that he could not promise any quarter. The Grenadiers left Prince Albert for Battleford; except for the Winnipeg Battery, which remained at P.A., the rest of the troops left, too. On the 24th, Middleton arrived at Battleford, and, the next day, Poundmaker and his Chiefs' surrendered unconditionally. They were made prisoner.

On the 27th, Big Bear defeated General Strange (True descendant of Charles Martel and Charlemagne that he was!) at Frenchman's Butte, and forced him to return to Fort Pitt. Hearing this, Middleton left Battleford by boat on May 30, with two machine-guns, some infantry and cavalry to relieve Strange. On June 3, he and 260 cavalrymen went in pursuit of Big Bear. The next day, the Mounted Police received orders to patrol the route from Prince Albert to Green Lake to bar the wily Indian Chief from using this trail. The same day, Colonel Steele's scouts encountered Big Bear at Onion Lake. Again, the Indian won - he killed 3 of the scouts! On June 6, Strange moved towards Beaver River, and on the 9th, arrived at the Chippewyan Mission Crossing. Meanwhile, Colonel Otter was ordered to report to Turtle and Brochet Lakes. The Fort Pitt Grenadiers opened all

the routes, and the Midland Battalion travelled to Frog Lake - all this to prevent Big Bear's escape! That same June 9, Middleton crossed over the narrows on Eagle Lake - on a raft! Then suddenly he decided to abandon the pursuit because, he vowed the country was impassable! Just a month later - on July 2, 1885 - Big Bear, subdued but not beaten, surrendered, thus ending the North-West Campaign.

Total loss of life: Federal, 39; rebels, 30, of whom one was a non-combatant and 9 were the victims of the Frog Lake massacre. Some time afterwards, 9 rebels were executed - thus making a total loss of 39 lives.

To speak reasonably - if it took no fewer than 5,000 well-disciplined, well-equipped troops over three months, and an expenditure of \$20,000,000, to overcome 1,000 badly-armed rebels who lacked ammunition and provisions, would it not have been more sensible to have expended all this energy, all this time, and all this money, before March 19, 1885, for the purpose of ameliorating the existing conditions of the North-West Metis and Indians! . . .

c) The 1885 Insurrection: Its Ending.

The Battle of Duck Lake on March 26 was the real be-

## EPILOGUE

The "rebellion" itself did not take a heavy toll in human life. However, the aftermath of the rebellion did take a tremendous toll of Metis lives. The Canadian forces lost far more men than did the Metis. Their names have been recorded elsewhere.

The Metis casualties from the battle of Fish Creek, April 24, 1885, were as follows:

"Pierre Parenteau, (25 years of age); Joseph Vermette, (56 years of age); Francois Boyer, (28 years of age); and Michel Desjarlais, (30 years of age). There was also a Sioux warrior killed at Fish Creek, as well. His name was not recorded.

All of the Metis casualties occurred on the 12th of May, the last day of the battle of Batoche. The Metis were killed when the Canadians, going against the orders of their "buffoon" general suddenly charged the Metis position. The Metis had insufficient ammunition left to repulse the charge. The names of the patriots killed: Donald Ross, Damase Carriere, Andre Letendre dit Batoche, Colixte Tourand, Elzear Tourand, John Swain, Joseph Vandal, and Joseph Ouellette. All but the last, Joseph Ouellette, were buried in the common grave. Ambroise Dumont who died of tuberculosis was also buried in the common grave. Other casualties of the battle were Michael Trottier, age 64; Isidore Boyer, age 60; and Ambrose Jobin. These three died of wounds after the battle.

Four Sioux warriors died at Batoche. It is not clear where they were buried. It was the Sioux custom to bring their war deal home for burial. According to an account of Mme. Christine Pion, their names were: Japa-Topa, Wa-pa-to-te-tipe, Ah-si-we-in, and Cha-pi-to-la-ta. Nothing else is known, by this writer, about these warriors who came north to fight and die for their Metis brothers.<sup>1</sup> There were deaths in years to come, as a result of wounds received at Batoche, but no record has been kept of their

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<sup>1</sup>The writer is indebted to Ms. Diane Payment, Parks Canada, for all the information concerning Native casualties and burial details. Ms. Payment obtained the names, etc., from original Church records in Batoche.



casualties. The "official" number of dead on the Native side stands at 15. No record has been kept regarding the number of patriots that were wounded in action. Tremauden estimated the overall cost of the rebellion at twenty million dollars. This is slightly more than one million dollars per kill. Canadian deaths stood at 39, including those civilians killed at Frog Lake by Wandering Spirit and his warriors.

The irony of it all is that the Canadian Government could have settled all the Metis land claims in Saskatchewan for less than the cost of the war against the Metis. Again, from this, the inference is clear--Ottawa wanted a small uprising that would "legitimize" and popularize the subsidy paid to the private capitalists to push through the railway, thereby securing Britain's trade route to the Pacific, and thereby ensuring the initial success of the Canadian Policy and the new Western economy based on wheat production.

Although the cost was small in terms of those killed in battle, the resulting oppression of the Metis people from 1885 onward took a terrible toll. With their old way of life gone, with the racism engendered by the war, and in the absence of sufficient assistance to enable them to enter into the new wheat economy, the Metis' social fabric came apart. Their culture could no longer exist in a vacuum, removed from the economic system that created it in the first place. The Metis people died of poverty, disease, mental breakdown and alcoholism. Many simply packed their few belongings up and began a trek northward to the woodlands and the fringe of the Arctic. Many of these people moved out beyond the control of the bureaucrats and government officials so that they disappeared from the population statistics of Canada. Many others died of poverty-related diseases such as tuberculosis, venereal disease and just plain hunger. From 1885 to 1900, the Metis population dropped by approximately 50%. The following is a description of the aftermath of the war:

The sequel was a bitter one. The Métis were not only defeated, as a politically cohesive group they were practically destroyed. Their homes were burned and their property looted or destroyed. Those who had taken part in the Provisional Government were sentenced to terms of imprisonment. A number of Métis were compelled to seek entrance to the Indian treaties by virtue of their Indian blood; others moved westward, towards Northern Alberta, to escape the merciless pressure of civilization. Those who did not join the rebellion received the scrip and patents which Louis Riel had demanded — tacit admission of the justice of the Métis grievances. But just as the Manitoba half-breeds had done so too the Saskatchewan Métis disposed of their scrip to eager and unscrupulous buyers. They lived only for the present and forgot the future. What did it hold for them? Destitute and disillusioned, unable to compete with the white men either as traders or farmers, they gradually sank further and further in the social scale. their life, society and spirit crushed and destroyed. 2

The Indians, having largely been "bought off" by government officials just prior to the rebellion suffered less than the Metis as far as government reprisals were concerned. Of their leaders, some were hung, others, including Big Bear and Poundmaker were imprisoned. However, in 1886, a general amnesty was declared and the political prisoners were released.

Gabriel Dumont, the brilliant guerilla leader had led the overwhelming Canadian forces a "merry chase". Absolutely fearless, he had delivered lightning-swift blows to the superior forces, picking the location for the battles, using ambush tactics, hit-and-run tactics, camouflage, the setting of prairie fires, he consistently took the initiative and, were it not for Louis Riel's basic humanitarianism that, time-and-again stopped the Dumont force from following up on their advantage, the casualties of the Canadian forces would have been much higher. As well, Riel refused to let Dumont move out and "blow up the railway". Riel recognized, however, that a military solution was not possible from the very beginning. And to the very end, he only let his forces be used as a reaction to Canadian military aggression.

The Canadian government had answered petitions with bullets. They fired the first shot against the Metis and killed the just man.

Louis Riel was to be killed despite all this. The brilliant general, Gabriel Dumont, the man with the charmed life, escaped the dragnet and went to live in the United States where, sadly, he became a side-show personage in the "Wild West" shows.

Louis "David" Riel knew that he must stay and die, if anything was to be gained from the struggle for the Metis people.

Riel was charged with high treason. This carried an "automatic" death sentence upon conviction. The "trial" was rigged from the beginning. Howard comments:

On July 6, 1885, an information charging high treason was laid against Louis Riel. A complainant was required; to fulfill this formality the indictment was signed by Alexander David Stewart, chief of police in Hamilton, Ontario, and reputedly a member of the Orange Order.

Trial, before Hugh Richardson, stipendiary magistrate of the Northwest Territories, was set for July 20 in Regina. High treason is modern society's greatest crime; under British law the only penalty upon conviction is death. Riel was the only rebellion culprit to face this charge; about seventy were indicted, but most of those who finally were tried were accused of the milder crime of treason-felony, not a capital offense.

A stipendiary magistrate was a barrister of at least five years' experience who served as a part-time judge in the Territories, was paid a stipend for the time he so worked, was appointed by the reigning political powers in Ottawa and continued in office at their pleasure. He was, consequently, a servant of the party in power; moreover, Richardson was the legal adviser to the Territorial Governor.

Treason, as distinct from any other crime, is an offense

against the current political regime of the state and the regime therefore becomes an intensely interested party to the proceeding—not as agent for the social community, as in an offense against the moral order such as murder, but in its own right. Acquittal of a treason defendant is an implicit repudiation of the policies of the ruling regime.

There can be little question that the circumstances of Louis Riel's trial were immoral. Whether the trial itself was also illegal has been debated ever since it was held.

Imperial statutes originally required that trials for capital crimes committed in the Territories could only occur in Upper Canada (Ontario) before full provincial courts. But in 1877 the Dominion Parliament, by legislation subsequently affirmed in London, established the stipendiary magistrate system to ease the burden of the provincial judges. This act, which gave the stipendiary magistrates almost unlimited powers, nullified the earlier imperial statute without actually repealing it.

The stipendiary magistrate was permitted to work with a jury of six. This was a reasonable provision in most cases because of the sparse settlement of the Territories; but it was the contention of Riel's counsel that the right of jury trial as won by the Magna Charta and later defined in imperial statutes for capital crimes, meant trial before a full jury of twelve.

The fate of Louis Riel, nevertheless, was given to six men. All were Protestants of Anglo-Saxon stock; the defendant was Catholic and French. Moreover the jurors were unfamiliar with the French language, which Riel and some of the witnesses habitually spoke, and thus were dependent upon translators for much important testimony. Riel himself, in his two speeches, used English, but the necessity for doing so put him at some disadvantage.

Mr. Justice Richardson was no stranger to the problems of the region, and he was fully aware of the historical significance of his present assignment. He was born in England, had been admitted to the bar in Ontario and practiced there until he became counsel for the Territorial Governor in 1876. The defense overlooked, or chose to ignore, a letter he had written in 1880 to the Ministry of the Interior. It urged prompt dealing with the Métis grievances because the half-breed colonies had been "latterly subjected to the evil influences of leading spirits of the Manitoba troubles." These

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influences had been circulating in the Saskatchewan doing at least no good. This characterization of Métis leadership as evil and up to no good should have cast some doubt upon his fitness to judge the man whom the Métis regarded as the greatest leader of them all.

Yet Richardson's conduct of the trial, at least up to the time he gave his charge to the jury, was above reproach. His charge, while perhaps legally sound (no exception was taken to it on appeal), was definitely prejudicial, and the wording of the sentence would seem to have been unnecessarily cruel. "

3

Riel's trial and execution came close to splitting Canada along French-Catholic/English-Protestant lines:

"The Dominion Government tottered, religious and race hatred swept across Canada like a withering wind, angry speeches in Parliament split parties and wrecked lifelong friendships, Ontario newspapers spoke openly of secession or armed subjection of the clamorous French. The Prime Minister, angrily stamping his foot, made his position clear in an Ottawa interview. "He shall hang," said Sir John, "though every dog in Quebec bark in his favor!"

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<sup>3</sup>J. K. Howard, *Strange Empire*, pp. 425 - 426 - 427.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* p. 456.

The white "firebrands" of the Settlers Union supported Riel to the last, but the "trial" refused to convict them. Jackson insisted that he was as guilty as Riel, but he was adjudged "insane" so that any remaining white settlers' sympathy for the Metis cause would be neutralized and made to be seen as "foolish" or "crazy". The same tactic was used against Riel. He was given a choice; plead insanity and live, otherwise you will hang. But Louis would not plead insanity, because as he knew full well, the cause of the Metis people was just. Their fight against oppression was just. If he were to plead insanity, the whole struggle would be discredited.

So the white rebels were spared to prevent Native-white solidarity, despite their objections. Howard wrote:

"Will Jackson, Riel's aide at the start of the movement, was tried for treason-felony a few days before his chief and was acquitted on the ground of insanity. Justice Richardson, who was soon to prove so skeptical of this defense, instructed the jury to free Jackson and it did so without leaving the box. Dr. Jukes testified that Jackson held "peculiar ideas on religious matters" and "the slightest excitement produced a great effect upon him." A few days later he was to testify that the man who originated those same religious ideas and who was even more excitable was, in his opinion, quite sane.

Jackson, to his credit, fought almost as hard as Riel did to get himself convicted. He interrupted the trial twice, once to insist that he had never denied responsibility for anything he had done while he was secretary to Riel, "whose fate, whatever it may be, I wish to share"; and again to protest, "I never considered myself a prisoner of Riel's." But his efforts were fruitless; he was a white man; he must have been mad. The trial took only a few minutes.

Thomas Scott of Prince Albert, the only other white man accused of complicity, was also speedily exonerated by the jury."

This use of the term "insanity" was an old trick, and had been used for centuries in Great Britain to discredit the leaders of potential mass movements against the ruling classes. Indeed, in 1868, the same tactic was used to smash the re-emergence of Scottish clan solidarity as the following account indicates:

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 457.

"The Clan's agitation was successful. Indeed, Robertson considered standing as 'a Working Man's Candidate' in the city of Perth in 1878, and in the same year the Roads and Bridges Act abolishing tolls was pushed through Parliament before the labour movement could fight a general election on the land and labour issue. But the vicious, insecure provincial elite had old scores to settle with the Chief of Dundonnachie; and the winners who usually write history portrayed him as an eccentric and threw him into a lunatic asylum. Just as they previously depicted John Duncan, the Dundee Chartist, as a lunatic, and just as they subsequently dubbed John MacLean, the famous Clydeside socialist, as a lunatic, so they resolved the dilemma of integrating Alexander Robertson into Scottish history by declaring him mentally unsettled.

In 1868 the Chief of Dundonnachie decided to challenge the Duke of Atholl for taking toll money from Free Church members who used his bridge in Dunkeld on Sundays; and he was supported by the whole of the Scottish labour movement. The *Glasgow Sentinel*, the main working-class newspaper, supported Robertson's direct action methods of struggle in an editorial entitled *How Highlanders Abolish Tolls: the Revolt of a Clan*"

6

However, no one counted on a man being brave enough to die for a principal. Riel, by refusing to present a plea of insanity to the kangaroo court, forced an issue that was to have repercussions across the length and breadth of the land for many years.

"There remained but two legal ways by which Riel could escape the noose: an official determination that he was insane, or the clemency of the Crown. Lemieux, still acting as chief counsel, immediately tried the first, appealing to the Governor General of Canada to bring about the appointment of a medical commission.

The Marquis of Lansdowne, Governor General, had already had some correspondence with Prime Minister Macdonald about the rising tide of protest over Riel's sentence at home and abroad. Sir John had tried to allay the Governor's concern: Riel's movement had been, he said, "a mere domestic trouble, and ought not to be elevated to the rank of a rebellion." Lansdowne was not deceived. "I am afraid I could to elevate it to the rank of a rebellion, and with so much success that we cannot now reduce it to the rank of a common riot."

Sir John was persuaded, therefore, that some such gesture as appointment of a medical commission might be expedient. But he did all he could to limit its effectiveness. It could not investigate Riel's delusions, he decreed; its function was solely to determine whether he was sane now. The condemned man was granted a third reprieve to permit this inquiry; the new date for the hanging was November 16. "

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<sup>6</sup>James D. Young, *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1979, pp. 121 - 122.

<sup>7</sup>The above quotation again refers to the J. K. Howard, *Strange Empire*, pp. 460 - 461.

As can be seen, the question of "sanity" became paramount in this trial, not the question of the justice of the Metis struggle.

The governments' actions in "promoting a rebellion", or "elevating it to the rank of a rebellion", had been expedient in getting the C.P.R. railway completed. Ironically, it was now causing much national dissention because of Riel's courageous stand in court. Riel went to the gallows with the quiet dignity expected of a national martyr.

Just prior to his brutal execution, Louis Riel wrote the following poem:

" Kindness is a star  
 Ever more bright  
 Than glory in war  
 Crowning the valliant  
 One day, pure goodness  
 To a captif might  
 Surpass in brightness  
 The most skillful fight.  
  
 Would the governor  
 And the Government  
 Grant me a favor  
 In my detainment  
 My wife, my children  
 Are poor, have no bread  
 Could I use my pen  
 In Jail, for their need." 8

<sup>8</sup>AMNSIS Library, Vol. #4, N.W. Rebellion, p. 416.

This poem was to prove prophetic. Following the destruction of the Metis social order at Batoche, the Metis and their Indian brothers were to keep the jails of Western Canada full to overflowing for the next hundred years. Even today, the "Correctional Institutes" in Regina, Prince Albert and Saskatoon are disproportionately populated by Indian and Metis people. So much so that the visual impact on a "visitor" to the jails is overwhelming. It looks like a Native institution with white jailers and guards.

G. F. Stanley, Canada's "eminent" historian recognized that the "acceptance" or "rejection" of the Native Peoples of Western Canada and the United States was related to the dominant economic order's needs. He wrote:

.. "The experience of the Western United States was not without a lesson for Canada. There the military had had no trouble with the Indians until the white settlers appeared upon the scene. As long as the Indians were regarded by the whites as partners in the chase and sale of furs, there were no racial conflicts. The Sioux, when dealing with Kittson, Rice, Choteau and the Missouri Fur Company, boasted that they had never shed the white man's blood. It was a different matter when immigrant trains crowded the Californian trails, and the buffalo fled before the surveyor and the settler. Similarly in Western Canada, trouble began with the coming of the white immigrants. "The settlers," wrote Colonel Irvine, urging an increase in the Mounted Police force in 1880, "unaccustomed to the Indian manner and habits, do not make due allowances and exhibit that tact and patience necessary to deal successfully with Indians."<sup>9</sup>

The newcomers looked upon the aborigines with contempt." 9

<sup>9</sup>George F. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada, p. 274.



SUMMARY

The exploitation of the Indian commodity producers of fur by the Company of New France, Hudson's Bay Company, and later the Canadian North West Company was, like other colonial conquests of that age, very uncomplicated and straight forward. It was the simple rapacious conquest, military and economic, of a so-called "primitive" people to provide capital for industrial development in the imperial country. This type of pirate-like plundering was legitimized by the religious institutions, both Catholic and Protestant, and their support made possible the growth of the capitalist state as an instrument of oppression, rather than a "servant" of the people.

The history of the conquest of the Metis people was, however, far more complex. The Metis, as a new race of people, were created as a response to the material economic needs of the Imperial countries through the mercantile corporations. These corporations literally created their own work force for the production of one staple commodity--fur. Consequently, the study of the relationship between the Metis work force and the Companies in the exploitation of this one, single resource represents an "almost" laboratory setting, where other economic and political variables were largely absent, so that we can trace the companies growth from feudalism, to entrepreneurial capitalism, to monopoly capitalism, recording the concentration of capital and the concomittent replacement of labour by capital, as labour-intensive modes of production are transformed and replaced by a capital-intensive mode of production. Thus, by tracing the history of the Metis and the fur economy from beginning to end, it has been established that the capitalist political economy has, within its own set of internal dynamics, produced a vast surplus-population of people who must continually be displaced as the economic system moves from its labour-intensive to the capital-intensive phase.

The surplus population (the Metis Nation) who, because of the material economic contradictions described here, could no longer be fitted in and exploited as a productive labour force once the fur resource had been depleted, and they were, therefore, "shuffled aside" or directly oppressed by the military so that their lands could be expropriated for the creation of capital in the new wheat economy.

Since the history of the fur companies in Canada is the history of the capitalist exploitation of virtually a single commodity, and since the Metis were a unique race created as a response to the needs of the ruling class for a local work force to produce that commodity, the creation of a surplus-population through this process can be seen with great clarity. Therefore, by tracing the rise and fall of the Metis "Nation" through this process, it is possible to make some predictions about the final destiny of much of the working class within the framework of world-wide monopoly capitalism. The Metis were, after all, created to exploit the fur resource to generate profits for the ruling class. When, through their ingenuity and efficiency they had overdeveloped this staple commodity, they were destroyed as a people by the military arm of the ruling class. The Canadian state destroyed the "dream" of a sanctuary for the poor on the Western Plains, with massive fire power. For this they employed a scientific killer with his new gatling gun.

The Metis patriot, Jim Brady, political organizer and leader of the political movement for the recognition of the Metis contribution to Canada as its first work force, summed up his experience:

"Our Metis people made a grand contribution to the democratic struggle. We have seen the passing of the buffalo, the Hudson's Bay Co., and the passing of our tradition to the militant labor movement of our time who are the true inheritors of our tradition of democratic struggle and we know that with their help we shall see the passing of the monopolists of the 20th Century. (LTB, 14/9/52, p. 8)

Of course, the Metis as a national unit are breaking down and disintegrating. This is true. Our breakdown has been a complex and lengthy process. It is not simply a spontaneous process, but a struggle connected with the conflict of classes. We have a rich historic experience of that conflict. As a racial group which must leave the historic stage we are unconvinced that our role is finished. We have no independent social base other than the working class. With the working class as the necessary assisting force, we can be strong. If we go against the democratic forces we are converted into nothing. (~~PIMA, 10/52, p. 5~~)

We often hear of the conflict between the old and the new. What is old is what is left of the primitive society or its survivals. Also old are the remnants of the older Euro-Canadian society who maintained the equilibrium of social forces in a past historical period but whose consolidation as a basic social force would be artificial and an obstacle to well ordered northern development. (PTA, undated, p. 4)

The Metis will always be the victims of deceit and self-deceit as long as they have not learned to discover the interests of one or another of the classes behind any moral religious, political and social phrases declarations and promises. The Metis will always be fooled by the defenders of those who support the 'status quo' policy as long as they do not realize that every institution however absurd or rotten it may appear, is only a device to blind us, divide us, and deflect our strength into abortive inner dissension and chicanery and delay the way into liberation.

No hope, no inspiration--poor beaten creature that drift with the tide. Living epitaphs of dead souls. thought of and seen destitute working mothers and famished children and I thought too of the bloodstained gold of Canada's rulers and where could one find more eloquent witnesses that criminals are enthroned on positions of power in Canada today.

I thought too of our own people, our unfortunate ones, woefully unequipped fearing the rocks of life. Too many with life meaningless and empty, no guidance, drifting on the remorseless tide of life that stirs the deep of the vast forces that toy with puny humanity. ... Today it almost seems a denial of life. I have seen it so much."

<sup>10</sup> Jim Brady, letter to Tomkins, no date. Courtesy of Murray Dobbin, researcher and author, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

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