

I have no objection to the motion as it stands, other than to add these words so that we may more fully understand the very intricate and complex role of history and the role of Gabriel Dumont in the history of the Métis people.

• (1550)

Hon. Len Marchand: Honourable senators, I will not take much of the Senate's time in debating this motion today. I wish I had had more notice in order to do a better job in speaking to the motion so that I could properly recognize this great man, who is a hero in the eyes of the aboriginal people of Canada. He is a great hero especially in the eyes of the Métis people of Canada.

I rise today merely to say I am pleased with this motion, as far as it goes. It properly recognizes and puts into perspective some of the true history of Louis Riel and the contributions he made not only on behalf of the aboriginal people but also on behalf of Canada. In the history of Canada—often it was too little history—which we were taught in our schools, the story of the aboriginal peoples was badly told. Louis Riel was portrayed as a rebel, a villain, a traitor. Those were the characteristics attributed to this person whom we have now come to believe was a real hero on behalf of our people at the time.

Honourable senators, I am glad that this resolution has been brought forward. I am happy to support it. Perhaps, if the constitutional conference process goes on a little longer, we will have all kinds of history coming out and being told in the proper light.

I was thinking last Friday night that the speech given by the right honourable Joe Clark in that conference was quite extraordinary. It was one of the better speeches in recent times to be given by a government minister. He wrapped everything together—the history and some admissions. If we could read between the lines of history, and could place people in the situations to see what really happened, we would see that some terrible actions were taken by people we now think of as great. Nevertheless, Mr. Clark made quite an extraordinary speech. And this is an extraordinary resolution to be making in these times. I am happy to support it.

Hon. Efstathios William Barootes: Honourable senators, I also wish to endorse the resolution as presented, but I want to draw your attention to a modern historical fact about Louis Riel.

Almost since I returned to Saskatchewan in the 1950s, we have had each summer a dramatization of the trial of Louis Riel played by amateur actors. It has often run through the whole summer tourist season. We have a tremendous tourist season in Saskatchewan, as you can imagine, made up chiefly of people passing through on their way to the mountains or from the mountains. We have encouraged many of them to go and see "The trial of Louis Riel". If you had witnessed the dramatization that went on in that courtroom scene and heard the speech given by Louis Riel as his closing speech before the jury were dismissed to make a decision, you would agree it is a

most moving episode. I think it has run now in Regina for over 25 years, chiefly in the summer months.

I should tell you also that one of my very good friends, who is a lawyer in Regina, had made such a career of playing this role that he continued to wear Louis Riel's beard for many, many years until he gave up the role. I bring that to your attention to add to the affair.

Unfortunately, they told me last year, when I went there, that that was the last year in which the play would be performed. I hope they will renew it again this year, considering all the accolades that have been made about Mr. Riel and his contribution to Western Canada and to the Confederation of this country.

One other historical fact is of interest. Batoche has become, if you will, almost a sacred place to the Métis of Saskatchewan. Each year there is a celebration called "The Return to Batoche", and the people are caught up in an almost religious agony. "The Return to Batoche" occurs every summer in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, senators.

The Hon. the Speaker pro tempore: Is it your pleasure, honourable senators, to adopt the motion?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

THE BUDGET

STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE—DEBATE CONTINUED

On the Order:

Resuming the debate on the inquiry of the Honourable Senator Murray, P.C., calling the attention of the Senate to the Budget presented by the Honourable Don Mazankowski, P.C., Minister of Finance, on Tuesday, February 25, 1992.

Hon. Brenda M. Robertson: Honourable senators, a number of studies on children living in poverty in Canada have been done in the last few years. Senator Marsden referred to the study which our Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology did, which was tabled in the Senate in January 1991. Some of us who worked on that particular study are now somewhat comforted and pleased with the hours that we spent. In the new child benefit package announced in the Budget, although we may not see everything we had wanted, some of us do see a direction that is encouraging.

I want to speak just on those reform benefits for a few moments this afternoon, honourable senators, to get a perspective of where we are going. We do know, of course, that governments cannot buy their way out of poverty; nor can they eliminate child poverty. However, collectively, we can work together toward that most desirable end.

In September of 1990 the Prime Minister co-chaired the World Summit for Children at which 71 of the world's leaders committed their governments to act on behalf of the world's children. Last May the Throne Speech reiterated our commit-