

that we find in today's resolution. It was already in the air a long time ago.

Today we have before us a resolution based on consensus. This consensus is supported all across Canada. I mentioned the monument in Regina. We have to mention as well the monument in Winnipeg which dates back to about the same time; the Louis Riel Games in Edmonton; the postage stamp of a few years ago; the opera presented for Expo 67; several plays, a movie, many books, in fact more books on Riel than on any other Canadian politician, including Quebecers.

I am happy to add that a few years ago in Montreal, the Catholic School Board, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Lavoix-Roux, our colleague, gave the name of Louis Riel to an important high school, the Polyvalente Louis Riel.

I have no doubt that a national consensus has existed for a long time in Canada concerning the need for a change in attitude towards Louis Riel and for redress regarding the Métis people as they were called.

That is why I fully support this motion. Thank you for allowing me to explain.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition):

Honourable senators, unlike my honourable colleague Senator Riel, I cannot claim to be a relative even in the twelfth degree of Louis Riel. On the other hand, I have the advantage of having lived with the Métis people in Manitoba.

I come from a small village a long way from Winnipeg a village predominantly Métis and French-speaking and I have lived with these people I dearly love, and have the highest regard for, but who unfortunately have been misunderstood for the longest time, as Louis Riel himself was misunderstood.

Frankly, I blame our school system for that. As far as I am concerned, one of the great Canadian tragedies is that we have never managed to agree on one single Canadian history. We teach a French Canadian version of history in French-speaking schools, and a English Canadian version in English-speaking ones. Riel is therefore portrayed as two very different persons.

As I discovered, painfully at times, having left my small home town to study at the University of Manitoba and from there, after training in the Canadian Officers Training Corps, I joined the Regiment in Winnipeg, the Royal Winnipeg Rifle, one of those that fought Riel in Batoche. I can tell you that, in my Regiment, they viewed Riel very differently from me. On those occasions when we cheated, we would be taught French Canadian history in my school. It was an English school you see.

That is to say that there is a misunderstanding across this country. Let us not delude ourselves into believing this motion that I do support, is going to make everybody happy. There is still a lack of understanding. I want Canada to go beyond that. Someone should produce a history of Canada that really tells what happened in our country, one that we could accept and all be proud of, instead of presenting two points of view and having this difficult attitude that we see so often.

[Senator Riel.]

I therefore support this motion. Indeed, I think that one could go further and I even predict that one fine day Riel will be recognized as a Father of Confederation.

Consider the situation in Manitoba back in 1869. The Hudson's Bay Company, which until then was the government, was giving up. There were talks with Canada, for which the people of Red River felt no particular attachment. Were it not for Riel and his group, Manitoba could very likely have joined the United States. In fact, there was an American consul in Winnipeg at that time and he was doing all he could to attract this colony to the United States. We know what the American attitude then was.

So what did Riel and the Métis people do then? He ensured that Manitoba entered Confederation honestly, with demands that the people of the region had made themselves and that the government had accepted. Given that, I do not see why he cannot be accepted as a real Father of Confederation as far as Manitoba is concerned. Maybe the country is not prepared to go that far now. For now, I find this resolution worthwhile and I support it.

● (1540)

[English]

Senator Grafstein: Honourable senators, during Senator Riel's very learned and fascinating speech, I had an opportunity to obtain from the library a book entitled *Strange Empire* by J. K. Howard which recounts the history of the Métis rebellion. The role of Louis Riel and also the role of Gabriel Dumont is considered.

May I refer honourable senators to page 307 of that volume, where it is indicated that, when Batoche came into being in 1870, its leading citizen was Gabriel Dumont. He was 32 years old at the time.

Later on, there is a statement that Gabriel Dumont was chosen President in the territory they called Saskatchewan, and the group expressly said it had no intention of setting itself up as an independent state. In effect, I think this book lays a strong historical claim to also treating Gabriel Dumont as a Father of Confederation when dealing with Saskatchewan.

Strange Empire also explores the very fascinating tale of the relationship of the these two men, Gabriel Dumont being the military leader and Riel being the political leader. When Riel was imprisoned, Gabriel Dumont set up an underground railway, if you will, to see if he could rescue Riel. Riel at the time, so says this history, expected that the government of the day, Sir John A.'s government, would grant him clemency. The government of the day did not move for clemency, and Riel was executed.

Honourable senators, I do not intend to make an extensive speech about Gabriel Dumont, other than to say that one military genius once told me that Gabriel Dumont was the only Canadian military leader never to be defeated in a single battle when there was an equal number of forces. I think the history of Gabriel Dumont as a military leader and as the first provisional president, I believe, of Saskatchewan, should also be noted on this historic occasion.