

April 15, 1874

moved for it and was its Chairman, he was sorry to say, was an officer of that Company whose actions at Red River, in 1869, he had found so much fault with. He had nothing to say against the hon. gentleman except in this character as a Commissioner. In that capacity he must say that he had the greatest possible fault to find with him. The hon. gentleman had gone to Fort Garry, and found himself and fifty other persons in prison. He knew that one of these prisoners was condemned to death, that many were more or less ill from scurvy, some had families suffering outside—and yet when on the occasion of a mass meeting being held, and three hundred people offering to open the prison doors and tear down the Fenian flag, the hon. gentleman would not consent; and he and his companions might have been there yet, so far as the officials of the Company to which the hon. gentleman belongs were concerned.

Mr. MacKENZIE (Montreal West) rose to a point of order. He held that the discussion of the conduct of the Hudson's Bay Company had nothing to do with the motion or the amendments.

The SPEAKER thought that the greatest licence should be given in this debate. He did not see exactly how these observations bore upon the question, but the hon. member for Selkirk was in his place and could answer the charges that were brought against him.

Mr. SCHULTZ noticed that nearly every speaker seemed to assume that nearly the entire population sympathized with Riel's movement, and held that his Government was a *de facto* Government. But he begged to state that such was not the case. Only about one-fifth of the population joined Riel, and without the assistance of the governing authorities he could not for a day have held his position, and never at any time did there cease to be armed opposition in some part of the settlements or other. Riel commenced and continued his act of barricading the road with twenty-five men. This force had only increased to fifty when the possession of Fort Garry was given to him, and the Hudson Bay authorities had at that time a force of forty pensioners, the ordinary constabulary of the country, and three hundred special constables liable to be called upon when needed. Canadians and others offered to assist in putting down the rising and to guard Fort Garry, but the offer was rejected, the Fort Garry gates were not shut, and Riel, once in, was master of the situation, with abundance of provisions and rum, a stand of Enfield rifles and thirteen cannon with which to compel obedience. Little wonder that he could accomplish his ends; robbery was easy and murder not difficult under the circumstances.

A great deal of sympathy had been thrown away on Riel. He was represented as a patriot, as the representative of a class who had been imposed on. He could only say that Riel had few of the qualities of a pure patriot. Courage, and its concomitant virtue, mercy, were the attributes of a patriot; but, though he had often heard Riel declare that if he were the last man to pull the trigger he would stand in Fort Garry gates and defend them, what did he do when the time came? He ran like a whipped hound before even that danger came. (*Cries of "Order, order"*.)

So much for his courage. His mercy was exemplified in his treatment of his helpless manacled victim. Patriots were supposed

to water their country with their own blood, but the patriot Riel watered it with the blood of his helpless but dauntless victim.

Even if Riel had been entitled to an amnesty at the close of the events in 1869 his subsequent course had been such as would forfeit his right to any clemency. He was prepared to put evidence before the Commission, if one were appointed, that Riel was engaged in the Fenian movements of 1871, and he would read the following affidavit in support of that assertion:

"I, J. François Charette, of the parish of St. Norbert, make oath and say: That at the church of Père Ritchot, on Sunday the 8th day of October, 1871, I was present, and in the morning, before service commenced, I heard Louis Riel say to a number of French half-breeds who were assembled outside the church, "You see," said he, "that our friend O'Donohue is taken prisoner at Pembina. He has always been our friend, and we should fight for him and try and get him released." Pierre Delorme said, "Our Mr. O'Donohue is a prisoner, and we can do nothing, as the English are stronger than we; but the best thing we can do is to go and see the Governor and offer him our services, to show that as we can do nothing for O'Donohue we are all on his side now". To this Riel agreed, and they all went away to see the Governor. From what I have heard Riel and others say, I knew that it was the intention of him and his party to join O'Donohue and the Fenians."

"Sworn before me at Winnipeg by François Charette this 12th day of October, and interpreted and fully understood by François Charette."

"J.H. Ashdown, J.P."

In conclusion he would urge hon. gentlemen to take into consideration the importance of the subject to the interests of the Northwest, and condemn the granting of an amnesty to Riel.

Mr. SMITH (Selkirk) thought that a better Committee to enquire into the difficulties in the Northwest could not have been appointed. In reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Lisgar (Mr. Schultz), he would say he had no connection with the Hudson's Bay Company until he went there as the agent of the Dominion Government. If it were thought there was any ground for the charges that the hon. gentleman had made with regard to him, he should not have been returned four times for the same constituency, the English portion of his constituents giving him a larger majority than the French; and that though a large portion of the former were Orangemen.

In connection with his services with reference to these troubles, he had received a letter from the Queen's representative in this country acknowledging in terms he would be ashamed to mention the value of the services he had rendered. He had also been offered remuneration by the Government for his services, but had never accepted, nor did he not intend to accept one dollar. (*Applause.*)

For the allegations the hon. member for Lisgar had made with reference to the Hudson's Bay Company having interfered in these difficulties there was not the slightest foundation. Seeing just before recess the turn the debate was taking, he had brought some papers with him, and amongst them he would read a deposition of one