

in these events, that he should make a speech. Therefore, from a historical point of view, the records of the Senate would show that due consideration was given to the role played by others beside Riel and that it was not for family reasons or for glory or because all those events were so dramatic that we try and reconcile today with words such as the ones used in this motion.

I wanted to say that I cannot let this motion pass without speaking to it. I approve it entirely. I agree completely with the terms of this resolution. They are suitable for yesterday's situation and that of today. In short, this motion, in plain language, can be summed up as: Louis Riel has served his country well.

I heard on television the speeches made in the other place by the members for Churchill and St. Boniface. I read the speech made by the President of the Privy Council. This motion is particularly interesting because it is an action of redress, the recognition by Parliament that a citizen has been wronged in paying with his life at age 43 his dedication to a just cause. I never favoured nor supported the requests for pardon made in the past in favour of Louis Riel because I felt it was admitting faults not our own. Even though Louis Riel and his followers resorted to extreme measures, we have to admit that the Metis claims were legitimate. Every time the issue of pardon came up, I wanted to know to whom pardon had been granted up till now and if it had been for crimes, of small or medium importance. In short, the pardon in question applies to a criminal matter.

Here we are dealing with a strictly political matter. If we had to take an example, we should go back to the United States, some 20 years earlier, after the Civil War, when no secessionist leader was hanged. Yet Riel was hanged. He had not called for secession, indeed he brought a new province into his country.

Today's resolution, a resolution of reconciliation as Senator Roblin called it, satisfies my sense of unity of opposites as they say in philosophy, the harmony of opposite tensions, as in the lyre and the bow, as expressed by an English author, i.e. to a remarkably unfair treatment there must be an exemplary redress.

I consider the resolution before us today, which I hope will be passed, to be an exemplary redress. It is also intended for the Metis nation as the Metis called themselves at that time. If I have the time under own Rules, I would like to tell you briefly how I am related to Louis Riel. According to Quebec's Civil Code, we are distant collateral relatives, since we are related in the twelfth degree. In the collateral line, the degrees are reckoned by adding up the generations from both collateral lines up to and not including the common ancestor. I am not descended from Louis Riel, and he is not descended from my family branch. We have a common ancestor, Jean-Baptiste Riel, who came to Canada around 1694. There is something very special or remarkable about this man; he was born in Ireland circa 1670.

This being St-Patrick's Day, I am happy to rise to pay tribute to this ancestor of mine. In 1704, at his wedding on Du Pas Island, close to Lavaltrie, north of Montreal, according to documents still existing, he said he was the son of Jean-Baptiste Riel and Louise Fountain or Lafontaine, from the parish of St. Pierre, in the cathedral town of Limerick, in Ireland. I have a copy of his marriage certificate and even of his marriage contract, confirming his place of birth. Also as proof, there are letters of naturalization, as were called at that time the naturalization documents entered in the record of decrees and deliberations of the superior council for the year 1710, volume 6, page 115, letters in which the Versailles royal authorities granted the French nationality to listed English citizens, among which was an Irishman called Jean-Baptiste Riel, whose place of birth is indicated.

So that makes us one of the oldest Irish family in the country, whether senator Doody likes it or not! Anyway, I do not think a poor soldier, from the King's army, would have invented, on his wedding day, the name of Limerick and the church in St. Pierre, in the town of Limerick, since this city and this church do exist, as I learned one day during the 1967 World Exhibition. As a member of the board of directors, and as the etiquette would have it, I was always seated next to the Anglican Lord Bishop of Montreal, a man called Kenneth McGuire. Beside being a real gentleman, the Anglican Bishop of Montreal spoke perfect French, as do graduates from English universities, and he was from Ireland. We talked on several occasions, and one day, I told him: You are from Ireland, Your Grace. He said, of course. Then, I told him: Well, I have an ancestor from Ireland, from a town called Limerick.

• (1520)

He was baptized in the Church of St. Peter. He told me: That's funny, I was a curate once in the same church, in Limerick. I thought for a minute and then I said: It couldn't be the same church, because you are an Anglican and we are Catholics. He said: No, at the time it was a Catholic church. We had several changes back and forth like that in Ireland. So then he said: But you won't find any records on your family if you go to St. Peter's, because in Ireland, all church records were burned several times.

And then he looked at me with his blue eyes and said: I must say Jean-Baptiste is not a very Irish name.

To satisfy my curiosity, I went to Limerick and I stopped at St. Peter's Church, and of course I found nothing. I was anxious to see the records to find out whether our ancestors were really Irish or had come to Ireland from France to fight against King William III, who defeated James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1680. Since my ancestor, Jean-Baptiste, arrived in Quebec in 1692 or 1694, this was not impossible. Unfortunately, I couldn't find any records to prove it.

To get back to Louis Riel, we can trace our ancestry to two different branches of the family. I was born two and half centuries and eight generations after the first Jean-Baptiste arrived. On our side of the family, I am related to him, twelve times removed. I could still inherit, according to section 634 of