

Métis Nation

a vote on the Louis Riel issue. Hon. Members rise in the House and pay him tribute. There was a time, long ago, when none of them would pay him tribute. But they have gradually come to realize that since it is no longer possible to attack Louis Riel in 1986, they must glorify him. They suggest that he was a great gentleman. Some will say that he was one of the founding fathers of Manitoba. They go as far as saying that he is a Father of Confederation. They will add that we should celebrate with the Metis their unique culture and heritage. They will recognize the important contribution of the Metis people to the development of Western Canada and to the creation of Canada. We all agree on this. But we talk and we talk, and we refuse to let the motion come to a vote.

I think we should ask ourselves—and my comments are directed to the Hon. Member for Jonquière (Mr. Blackburn) and his Quebec colleagues—I think we should ask ourselves the real question: Why do we never get to a vote? Because there is always the same uneasiness. I think it is time we got rid of that feeling. There is no one in this House who is guilty of committing the acts that were committed at the time. Today, we could finally decide to recognize what Riel and what the Métis people mean to Canada.

Last week, a number of Members were on the Hill to commemorate the Armenian holocaust. Why are the Armenians still coming back 71 years later? What do they want? They want the Turkish Government to recognize that an act was committed and they want this to be historically recognized. They want a remedy.

I could even go so far as to say: What do the Palestinians want today? They want justice for what they and many others consider to be an injustice, since Canada voted in favour of two States in 1947-48. Canada, the Soviet Union, the United States and Czechoslovakia voted in favour of Resolution 181. What do they want? They want the job to be finished properly. What do the Métis want? You can draw so many parallels, and it all boils down to the same thing. Mr. Speaker, we will understand when we realize what makes people act in desperation. We will understand if we go back to the root of the problem.

[English]

When we are faced with difficult problems, we should go back to the root of each problem in an attempt to understand. We are not asking for much. My colleague, the Hon. Member for Cochrane—Superior (Mr. Penner), who presented the motion is not asking for much. He is not asking anyone to apologize. He is asking Canadians in 1986 to make a great gesture by recognizing the Métis and Louis Riel.

It seems that this matter will not be brought to a vote today. I see the Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona across the way. Perhaps he and I, the Hon. Member for Kitchener (Mr. Reimer), the Hon. Member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo), and my colleague who introduced the motion could put our heads together and come back some day with something which is acceptable to everyone and upon which we could vote. That

may be the solution. It seems that we always come back with a motion or a petition to recognize what Louis Riel did. It will always be divisive. Let us not fool ourselves; let us not lie to each other. We know why. Some people are very uncomfortable with Louis Riel. Hon. Members will notice that I am not referring to Conservatives, Liberals or members of the New Democratic Party. In fact, they were non-existent at that time. However, some people are uncomfortable with Louis Riel, but I like to tackle things head on, publicly. Perhaps such is the case. Maybe this is the beauty of debate and why 5.55 p.m. is more important than people think. I have listened to my colleagues. I see the Government Whip coming into the House. Perhaps he is coming here to ensure that we vote or we do not vote; I do not know.

In conclusion, I should like to indicate that we should try to come to terms with each other. I say openly that I am ready to sit on a smaller committee of interested Members of Parliament. I am sure the Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona would be delighted to do that. I am also sure the historian from Kitchener would like to participate, as would the Hon. Member for Scarborough East (Mr. Hicks). Perhaps that small committee could consider the motion and would come to the conclusion that a debate on supporting self-government and a land base for the Métis would be too long at this time. Maybe it would be okay the next time.

The Métis are what they are today. There are people who believe in what Louis Riel did. Surely Members of Parliament who believe that the time has come to recognize him can come together in a small committee. I see some Hon. Members indicating that they agree with what I have said. I will pursue it, because I am honestly tired of seeing a debate on Louis Riel every year, where people watch each other and other Members rush to the House to participate in the debate in case a vote is taken. I do not think that is fair to Louis Riel. I do not think that is fair to the Métis. If we could have the kind of debate to which I referred, perhaps it would be better than what we are trying to do today.

[Translation]

Mr. Blackburn (Jonquière): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect for my colleague from Saint-Denis (Mr. Prud'homme), he says he has been listening to comments on the debate for 20 years. He is still talking about it today. Indeed he was in the House for several of those years.

Mr. Prud'homme: Of course, it is because it has always been proposed by Opposition Members. I did not want to raise a political argument, but if the Hon. Member does, then so will I. There were Bills, but invariably they were all talked out. This is what I was trying to tell you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): Order, please. Let us go on with the debate.

[English]

Mr. Blaine A. Thacker (Lethbridge—Foothills): Mr. Speaker, I have only a couple of minutes. First I should like to