

could not be imagined and which had a shattering and long-remembered effect on the psyche of the Canadian nation.

Those 1885 events, of course, were after 1870, long after Louis Riel's part in Manitoba's creation was over, and nothing can take away from his role as a founder of my native province.

Now, in 1992, the passions of those far-off and distant days are perhaps but the faint echoes of history in the minds of those who even remember them. Now is a time when we have come to the conclusion that we can look at our Manitoba history squarely, with all its bittersweet emotions. We may conclude that in that history there is enough honour, tragedy and compassion for all.

Louis Riel lies buried in the churchyard of St. Boniface. His family is still to be found in Manitoba, and his people, the Métis of the western plains, are some 150,000 strong and more. With us, they are the heirs of the legacy to Louis Riel.

So this resolution is about reconciliation, but it is also about recognition; recognition that there are legitimate rights pertaining to the western Canadian Métis people in 1992.

As we struggle through the current constitutional obsessions, let us remember the interest of our Métis fellow citizens in what is taking place. It is far from clear what current events can or should hold in store for them. But now is the time to do our best to recognize, to consult, to conciliate, and to satisfy, as best may be, the legitimate hopes and aspirations of those people. They are the heirs of Louis Riel. We have an obligation to remember their part in the history of our country. We have a resolution before us which attempts not only to reconcile but to recognize the place these people occupy in the history of our country. It is my hope, honourable senators, that this resolution will be a step along the way of the future and the way of justice and equity.

Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Jeremiah S. Grafstein: Honourable senators, I do not intend to speak on this matter, but I wish to refer to statement number 6 in the motion, and perhaps the senators who have tabled this resolution can enlighten me. I read this motion for the first time this afternoon and I have not had an opportunity to research it as I might.

Statement 6 reads:

That the Senate take note that, until his death in 1885, Louis Riel led the movement which fought for the maintenance of the rights and freedoms of the Métis people.

It is my recollection that Louis Riel, after 1870, left Manitoba and moved to the western territories, and then south of the border. During that period, for some decade and a half, one of the leaders—or the leader—of the Métis movement was Gabriel Dumont. If that is correct, perhaps the government might consider amending that sentence to read:

... until his death in 1885, Louis Riel was a leader of the movement which fought for the maintenance of the rights and freedoms of the Métis people.

[Senator Roblin]

We are all concerned about history, but we should be meticulous about our concern for history, if I am correct.

Senator Roblin: If I understand the question correctly, my honourable friend is questioning some of the phrasing or the wording included in this resolution. I must confess to him that I did not see it myself until about five minutes before I rose to speak. Although I was aware of the subject, I was not aware of the precise terms in which these various sentences were phrased. I am sure no harm will come from examining them carefully, but I would rather hope that we could avoid taking an action of that kind. Once you start opening up these various clauses, you open up many other subjects which perhaps other folk would like to see included in the very elaborate and minute statement that is contained in this resolution. It is not a subject that lends itself to an easy decision, nor to an easy correction.

• (1510)

I should like to take my honourable friend's question under advisement—at least, I would ask those who are responsible for drafting this resolution to take it under advisement.

My own opinion is that we should make no change unless it is absolutely essential. Once we start that process, heaven knows where we will end up.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Would it be possible to get a copy of the resolution if Senator Roblin has it?

Senator Roblin: I would be happy to give it to my honourable friend. I thought that it was distributed to everyone in the Senate.

Senator Molgat: No, it did not get here.

Senator Grafstein: I appreciate Senator Roblin's response. Gabriel Dumont was a great figure in Canadian history. His memory has not been very well commemorated here or in any place. I thought it would be appropriate at this time to raise that point, particularly because he played such a crucial role in the life of the Métis and of Canada.

[Translation]

Hon. Maurice Riel: Honourable senators, if I may join the debate on the question raised by Senator Grafstein, I would have to say that it is probably because Louis Riel was always considered as the leader of the movement which fought for the Métis people. There were also Dumont Ambroise Lépine and a few others mentioned in history books. Second, the motion 8245 it is Riel who led Manitoba's entry into Confederation. That is one of the most important fact that has to be recognized. That is why, if we have to make a list of all the deserving people who have run or protected the Métis in those days, we will have to amend this motion extensively. I am not saying this to contradict in an unkind way my friend Senator Grafstein, but simply because I have had the opportunity to read the motion ahead of time. I think it is just fine the way it is.

It would be appropriate, if Senator Grafstein has specific points to make on the events that took place and participation