

number of Métis people, I am very happy to stand in this House today and support the motion that is before us.

It is not the first time that I have had the opportunity to get up on this very important issue. In 1982, on the 97th anniversary of the hanging of Louis Riel, I, seconded by the then hon. member for Saskatoon East, Father Bob Ogle, asked for a posthumous pardon for Louis Riel. That was the wish of the Métis people at that time. Things have evolved over the years and that is no longer the direct demand of those people. It was a wish and a concern that I had and I expressed on behalf of my constituents. Unfortunately that request was denied under the rules of the House of Commons at that time.

Later on, in 1986, I also had an opportunity to speak on Louis Riel and his contribution to Canada. If I may, I would like to quote one paragraph from that speech because it really relates to what we are doing today in the House of Commons. In the speech I said the following:

The history of Louis Riel does not have to be debated in this House. I think all of us recognize his contribution. There may be some who would argue about the details of it. However, there can be no legitimate debate with respect to the fact that Louis Riel was the founder of Manitoba and through the process he established, the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were able to develop in a way which may not have happened had the negotiations not taken place between the people of the Red River settlement and the Government of Canada in the years 1869-1870. That was a recognition which took place between the people who lived in Red River and the people who were running the Government of Canada. It set out the Manitoba Act which is the basic Constitution of the province. It obviously influenced the development of our province. By anyone's definition, that would be good enough to ensure that Louis Riel be recognized as the founder of Manitoba and a legitimate Father of Confederation in his own right. I hope that this would not be questioned by anyone in this House.

The motion that goes before us today moves in that direction. I am happy that the Government of Canada is recognizing Louis Riel as a founder, but I do believe we must go that further step and recognize him as a true Father of Confederation.

As other speakers have indicated, he did negotiate with the Government of Canada. He did set up the rights, the very constitution of the province of Manitoba. He recognized the English and the French, the native and the non-native. It was a true negotiation, in many ways, in almost a Canadian scene where we have the situation where Louis Riel and his supporters were in Fort Garry negotiating through the Catholic Church with the Government of Canada. They were negotiating for their rights. They were negotiating for their people.

Louis Riel

They were negotiating for the people of the west. They did represent a legitimate authority and a legitimate voice of the people of western Canada.

That recognition is in part being met today, but I think we should go further. I would hope that at some time in the future that would happen. I too would like to bend the rules of the House and recognize the people in the gallery. I know that the minister, when he spoke, recognized that he maybe should not have done that according to the rules, but I think their contribution and their presence today in this House is very appropriate.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Murphy: In the few minutes that I have left, I would like to say that we cannot stop here. We are in the process of another constitutional round. The Métis people must be recognized. They must have their rights enshrined in the Constitution in a more definite manner than is presently being suggested. That must happen. We have had over 120 years since Louis Riel was in Fort Garry and things should be happening on the constitutional scene at this time.

In addition, it should be recognized that the economic plight of many Métis people is still something that is a disgrace to this country. In terms of education, social services and housing, we have a situation which is completely unacceptable. They have been left out as the white men have made the rules of this country and have developed the social programs of this country. They have lost the land base that the minister spoke of. They have lost the economic base and that must be restored. The responsibility of the federal government to the Métis people of Canada must be recognized and must be restored at full value.

• (1030)

Mr. Pat Nowlan (Annapolis Valley—Hants): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I want to draw to your attention this rule that only allows parties and spokespeople from parties and a minister to comment.

I was in the House yesterday but unfortunately went up to my office and just saw the tail end of the parliamentary secretary saying that there had been consultations with party leaders on this motion. Without getting into the debate of the motion, I do not think Standing Order 33(2) precludes other members who are not members of parties from participating in a brief way in this debate.