

McDougall and the Message

The National Committee had its work cut out for it in the days after its formation in late-September or early-October of 1869. Everything, it seemed, had to be done at once, and to those outsiders not familiar with the yearly activity of the Métis people, it appeared that everything was done at once. To put it simply, Riel and Bruce had to declare that there was a special kind of "buffalo hunt" to organize and then to delegate the necessary organization to certain dependable key men. These men were well-known from years of experience gained in organizing the great expeditions out onto the plains in search of bison.

Riel had been too long away from the Settlement to be familiar with this part of the work, but there were many men readily available who were, and Bruce was well acquainted with them. It was simply a question of sounding men out and giving them the appropriate assignments. Much, but not all, of this organizing work had gone on by the time Mr. McDougall appeared at the international boundary.¹ Ambroise Lépine, for example, later one of the acknowledged commanders among the Métis, was not available until October 30, when he arrived from the North-West.²

While this work was going on the Committee's headquarters were wherever Riel and Bruce happened to be: at St. Vital, where Riel lived, at Father Ritchot's at St. Norbert, or elsewhere. At the end of October, when the Committee was waiting to meet with Mr. McDougall, the headquarters were at St. Norbert, near where the barrier had been erected to command the trail to Fort Garry.³

The problem of coping with the Lieutenant-governor-designate probably gave the National Committee its greatest cause for concern, since it had to be viewed from several aspects. McDougall was a subject of Her Majesty just as the Métis were. He had, it appeared,

been appointed by the government of the recently-federated Canada.⁴ He had to be respected. He must not be harmed. He had to be given a chance to do what Canada had not done: declare to the people of Red River what kind of government was planned and what were to be the principles upon which it was to be based.⁵ At the same time the Committee had to keep in mind the rumors of one kind and another which had come to the Settlement and caused concern. The one about the large "staff" which McDougall was bringing with him might or might not be true.⁶ The one about the shipment of rifles said to be accompanying him might or might not be true. These questions could be answered eventually by good scouting, and scouts were at work on this.⁷

But what about the man himself? Was he friendly or unfriendly towards people like themselves – French-speaking, Roman Catholic people of mixed blood who had only recently begun to think of themselves as a "nation"? So long as he was on the American side of the "line" he was just another tourist travelling along the long trail from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Fort Garry. Once on the British side of that "line", however, he could suddenly be perceived as a commander by the Canadians in the Settlement, many of whom had often shown their hostility to the Métis. If the rumored "rifles"⁸ were real and were allowed to cross the "line" the National Committee could find itself confronted by an armed and disciplined regiment of soldiers ready and willing to command the Settlement by force of arms.⁹

Once again the answer came from the long experience the Métis had had in dealing with the native peoples who occupied the great plains where the buffalo were. Some were hostile; some were not. The great Sioux nation, notably, had often challenged the right of the Métis to hunt where they wished. Many men under arms at the moment could remember the great confrontation on the Grand Coteau in July of 1851. The Métis had sent out scouts to parley with

the Sioux, but found that they had to "circle the carts" and fight off the Sioux by superior discipline and fire-power.¹⁰ The only way to ascertain McDougall's attitude towards them was to send out a scout and find out. McDougall might represent a large and distant "puissance" – or power – much larger than the Sioux, but the procedure was the same.

The National Committee decided to prepare a note and to send a man to meet McDougall at Pembina and hand the note to him. The response of that gentleman would answer many questions.

The note was prepared and a copy of it is to be found in our country's National Archives.

It is a marvel of compression and succinctness. There is not one unnecessary word in it:

Le Comité National des Métis de la Rivière Rouge intime à
Monsieur W. McDougall l'ordre de ne pas entrer sur le territoire
du Nord Ouest sans une permission spéciale de ce Comité.
Par ordre du Président John Bruce
Louis Riel - Secrétaire¹¹

Janvier Ritchot evidently acted with the correctness to be expected of a good sheriff's bailiff sent to "serve" someone with a legal document.¹² According to McDougall's report written the day after the event:

[A]t the American Customs House at Pembina, a half-breed [sic], who had been waiting there for the last three or four days, put INTO MY HANDS [emphasis mine] a Letter...and immediately disappeared.¹³

It is to be noted that Ritchot did not threaten McDougall, or trouble him by waiting for a reply or misbehave in any way. He simply left, presumably to report back to headquarters.

Anyone who takes the trouble to read this letter will notice the note of authority in it and the implied invitation to talk. McDougall is not told flatly that he may not enter the North-West. He is told that he is not to do it without the special permission of the Métis National Committee. That means that he must talk to that Committee. And that Committee was prepared to talk.

When Provencher, following McDougall's orders, made his way north on the 31st, no one prevented him from doing so. However, he noticed that he was under surveillance by men on horseback all the way, even when he stopped for the night. Then, once arrived at the barrier at St. Norbert, he was conducted to the Métis headquarters – even invited to take part in the church service already under way! At last he talked with several Métis leaders and finally with John Bruce, National Committee president.¹⁴

All this could have happened to McDougall.

McDougall wrote that he “paid no attention” to the letter, but it is to be noted that he did not tear it up either, but eventually forwarded it, along with other correspondence, to Hon. Joseph Howe, the secretary of state for the provinces. It has to be assumed that McDougall DID read the letter, or had Provencher read it for him, for on Tuesday, November 2, he showed it to Lépine and Léveillé when they came with orders to expel him from British North America.¹⁵

On October 31 McDougall sent Mr. Provencher north with orders to go to Fort Garry, with a verbal message to Mr. Mactavish announcing McDougall's arrival and claiming protection for himself and party. McDougall stated that, if Provencher saw the “Insurgents” he

was instructed to ascertain from the Insurgents by a friendly conference, if possible, their object, and the extent of the force at their command. He was instructed to assure them of the determination of the Government to deal justly with all classes, and to respect existing rights without reference to race or religion. But he was to explain to them that until the new Government was organized, and so long as they remained with arms in their hands **NO OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION COULD BE HAD WITH THEM BY ME OR ANY ONE ON MY BEHALF [emphasis mine].**¹⁶

Provencher started early in the morning of the 31st. No one accosted him or opposed him, but after he had travelled a few miles from Pembina he noticed that he was under surveillance. Scouts on horseback were constantly in sight. He was being escorted! About five o'clock in the

afternoon one of these scouts began to follow the wagon closely. He did not give Provencher his name, but said he was going to accompany him as far as the Salé river, where the barricade was. Provencher did not reach the barricade that evening, but put up for the night at a house near the road. He noticed that every precaution was taken to prevent his escape during the night.

The next morning Provencher went north to the place called Salé river and found that there was a fence across the road and a guard of thirty or forty men. Provencher got out of the wagon and asked for the chief officer in command. He was taken under guard to a house and the driver of the wagon was made to follow him with the wagon.

It was November 1 – the Toussaint – or All Saints Day. There was a service under way in the church and Provencher was invited to attend. He accepted the invitation. Then he was taken to talk with men who appeared to be "leaders".

The conversation which then took place was long and useful. Provencher recorded that the men did not appear to know anything about the actions taken by the Canadian or Imperial Parliaments relating to the North-West Territory. They only knew that Canada had paid the Hudson's Bay Company for their rights in that territory.

Provencher explained to them that the Imperial Parliament had authorized the transfer of the North-West to Canada, and that the Canadian Parliament and the Hudson's Bay Company had agreed upon the terms of the transfer. The new government, when established by the issuing of the proclamation to that effect, would represent the Crown of England and the Government of Canada.

Provencher explained that many members of the new council would be taken from among the population of the Red River Settlement, so as to represent as faithfully as possible all the various interests of the people.

Provencher wrote that these "leaders" seemed now to see the matter in quite another light, but they told him that it was too late. A new government was already in place. Elections had taken place and negotiations were under way with the English and Protestant Half-breeds to arrange all details. The "leaders" said that their people had not been consulted on the political changes about to take place. They had been "greatly abused by a few people looked upon as representing the views of the Canadian Government," and had been "led to fear that great danger would arise to them from the establishment of the new contemplated government". Accordingly they had decided not to allow the newly-appointed governor to come into the country.

The conversation had taken a number of hours and had covered a great deal of ground. About four o'clock Provencher was introduced to John Bruce, the "President of the so-called Special Committee". Bruce began by asking Provencher in what capacity he was there. Provencher then told Bruce what he had been told to say. The interview was over in about twenty minutes, and Provencher was told that he must leave for Pembina.¹⁷

There is much to observe and much to regret in Provencher's account. Most important of all, the conversation could have included McDougall. The horsemen who had kept Provencher under surveillance all the previous day did not know who he was. He could have been McDougall for all they knew. No attempt was made to arrest him or molest him or anything of the kind. Instead, he had been invited to attend a church service where many of the parish people were. Then he had been given hospitality during a long afternoon. In the conversation which took place all the basic grievances of the Red River affair were touched upon and many difficult points were cleared up. It is conceivable that McDougall, had he been there, could have found an opportunity to initiate negotiations satisfactory both to himself and to the National Committee.

Why did McDougall not accompany Provencher? Was it simply that he chose to believe rumors about Métis hostility which he had heard on the trail from St. Paul?¹⁸ We cannot know, and can only draw inferences. No doubt the men at St. Norbert drew as many inferences as there were men there, and the inferences all led to one conclusion: McDougall was hostile to them and must be kept out of British territory.

It is certain that the men of the National Committee were not slow to take action once Provencher had told them what McDougall had said.

Before we consider the actions these men took next it will be useful to stop for a moment and assess the situation as it existed at the moment that Provencher directed his driver to drive him back to Pembina. We may be sure that the men of the National Committee did this.

Almost all of the participants in the events unfolding were British subjects. The most distinguished of these was the man who had not come to meet them, William McDougall, Lieutenant-governor-designate, then at the Hudson's Bay Company establishment about two miles north of Pembina. McDougall had attended all three of the Confederation conferences and had, in addition, gone to London to assist Cartier in the negotiations leading to the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canadian authority. He was already referring to the Métis National Committee as "insurgents".¹⁹

More than a day's drive north of Pembina and about nine miles south of Fort Garry, a band of about forty men, under the command of the Métis National Committee, had gathered at the recently-erected barricade controlling access to the Red River Settlement from the south.²⁰ This band was constantly being enlarged as men came from the Upper Settlement to join it. Some of these men were saying that someone should burn down Mr. Schultz's house.²¹ At the headquarters nearby the "leaders" were concerned about the shipment of rifles known to be in

McDougall's caravan. The efforts of all these men, while quite understandable in the circumstances, were, nevertheless, quite illegal.

A few miles away to the north and west Captain Webb's survey party, which had been stopped in its work by the Métis National Committee on October 11th, was quietly making surveys in areas north of the Assiniboine at some distance away from any settlement.²² Milner Hart's survey party was likewise at work in a safe area. Both parties had come to Red River under Mr. McDougall's orders.

At Fort Garry William Mactavish was still the legal head of the government of the Settlement. He and Mr. Cowan, the chief factor at the Fort, were concerned about the safety of the Fort and the state of affairs in the Settlement generally.²³

In the village of Winnipeg, a good-sized group of Canadians, mostly residents of Garratt House, were talking about the advisability of making a concerted move on Fort Garry and taking control of it.²⁴ Like the survey parties, most of these men had come to Red River because of Mr. McDougall's initiatives as minister of public works of Canada.

In the Lower Settlement most people were comparatively untouched by recent events and were simply watching to see what would happen. Some had attended a meeting and had signed an address of welcome to the Lieutenant-governor-designate.²⁵ Others were scouting around in an effort to understand the purposes of the Métis National Committee. There was a widespread feeling among these people that they had not been consulted in any way about the new order of things so could not feel enthusiastic about the transfer of their country to Canadian authority.

In Winnipeg the editors of the Nor'Wester had already referred to the people of the National Committee as "rebels" and "the enemy".²⁶

That November 1st William Fraser and John Sutherland, Point Douglas, visited Governor Mactavish and recommended that he call out "loyal" men and prevent anyone from taking Fort Garry.²⁷

That same evening the Métis National Committee met and discussed their next moves. The conversation with Mr. Provencher gave everything a different complexion, they agreed. It was not advisable to allow him and McDougall to stay on British soil. Their presence there might induce the men who had come to Red River under McDougall's orders to put on their uniforms and take action. The National Committee must act first. The next day – November 2nd – a detachment of men must expel Mr. McDougall from the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Pembina and another must occupy Fort Garry.²⁸

¹ "Correspondence... 1870", 4, McDougall to Howe, October 31, 1869.

² Writings – Riel, Vol. 1, 332, "Réponse au docteur J.S. Lynch".

³ "Correspondence... 1870", 20, J.A.N. Provencher to W. McDougall, Nov. 3, 1869.

⁴ Nor'Wester, Sept. 7, 1869; Guide to Canadian Ministries Since Confederation, July 1, 1867 – April 1, 1973, 5.

⁵ "Correspondence... 1870", 52, Copy of a Report of a Committee of the Honourable the Privy Council dated 16th December, 1869, signed by John A. Macdonald, 52-4.

⁶ Writings – Riel, Vol. 1, 330, in "Réponse au docteur J.S. Lynch."

⁷ W.G. Fonsoca, "On The St. Paul Trail in the Sixties", in The Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba (afterwards HSSM), Transaction No. 56, January 25, 1900, 8-14; John H. O'Donnell, Manitoba As I Saw It, 11.

⁸ See, above, the chapter "The Rifles".

⁹ G. Dugas, Histoire, 54, 53.

¹⁰ W.L. Morton (ed.), "The Battle at Grand Coteau", in Donald Swainson (ed.), Historical Essays on the Prairie Provinces, 45-59.

¹¹ "Correspondence... 1870", 8, Comité National to W. McDougall. Note the misprinting of St. Norbert as St. Forbert. The note was dated October 21, 1869.

¹² Canada, Sessional Papers (afterwards C.S.P.), 1870 (12).

¹³ "Correspondence... 1870", 4, McDougall to Howe, October 31, 1869.

¹⁴ "Correspondence... 1870", 20, J.A.N. Provencher to W. McDougall, Nov. 3, 1869.

¹⁵ "Correspondence... 1870", 14, McDougall to Howe, November 5, 1869. Note the misprinting of Lévêillé as Lavaillo.

¹⁶ "Correspondence... 1870", 4, McDougall to Howe, October 31, 1869.

¹⁷ "Correspondence... 1870", 20, J.A.N. Provencher to W. McDougall, Nov. 3, 1869.

¹⁸ "Correspondence... 1870", 4, McDougall to Howe, October 31, 1869.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ "Correspondence... 1870", 20, J.A.N. Provencher to W. McDougall, Nov. 3, 1869.

²¹ PAC MG19, B8, Vol. 2, Cowan's diary, entry for Nov. 2, 1869.

²² A.C. Roberts, "The Surveys in the Red River Settlement in 1869", in The Canadian Surveyor, Vol. 24, No. 2, June 1970, 247.

²³ PAC MG19, B8, Vol. 2, Cowan's diary, entry for Nov. 1, 1869.

²⁴ Saskatchewan Archives, Diary of P.G. Laurie, 15, 19, 32; Rev. George Young, Manitoba Memories, 108.

²⁵ Nor'Wester & Pioneer, Oct. 26, 1869.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ PAM MG12 Box 16/19 Schultz Papers, John Sutherland to Schultz, March 18, 1871.

²⁸ PAC MG19, E8, Vol. 2, Cowan's diary, entry for Nov. 2, 1869; "Correspondence... 1870", 21, McDougall to Mactavish, Nov. 4, 1869.

An Act of Folly

The Schultz houses incident began before any proclamation was issued either by Lieutenant-governor-designate McDougall or his "Conservator", J.S. Dennis, and must be seen in the context of the verbal sparring and searching for advantage that went on throughout 1869 and was reaching some kind of climax in October and November of that year. As early as November 27, 1869, Louis Riel wrote a warning note to John C. Schultz:

Your house is suspected as going to make trouble or be a place of trouble. Mind you, Docteur, and believe that I am serious and would be very sorry to be compelled to [take] any energetic action against you.¹

We must pause here and take stock of the alignment of political forces in the Settlement insofar as these were visible in the fall of 1869. Our task is not made easier by the fact that some of the actors like John C. Schultz wanted their political acts to be invisible. Nevertheless it is possible to get an indication of what was going on.

In early November Fort Garry was occupied by the same committee that had prevented McDougall from entering the Settlement. On November 6 a notice was published asking all English parishes to send delegates to join with the French to "consider the present political state" of the country.² A few days later an unsigned letter was taken to Colonel Dennis and transmitted to McDougall. It had come "through the same channel" as one that had been similarly dealt with a few days before, and was probably from John C. Schultz in Winnipeg. It gave an assessment of the situation at that part of the Settlement. Concerning the proclamation referred to above it offered this prediction:

In most of the parishes no answer will be made to Riel's Proclamation, or, if acted on at all, will be simply to send a letter, protesting against their past and present action....

The cause is quietly and surely advancing with the English element, and gaining ground even with the French, and we feel sure that all will be well.³

The author of the unsigned letter was not correct in his predictions. "Answer" was made by all the parishes, and talks began in the Court House on November 16.⁴ When John C. Schultz wrote to creditors that day he referred to "an armed force" being "in possession of Fort Garry". He said he had "secured most of his movable stock". As for his last purchase, it had not crossed the line yet and he would arrange to have it stored at some point in "American territories". He signed this letter.⁵

Discussions went forward at the Court House without anything conclusive being arrived at. In the view of the English delegates the Métis National Committee had acted illegally and unconstitutionally in taking up arms, in opposing McDougall's entry and in taking Fort Garry. The English parishes did not wish their delegates to involve them in illegal or disloyal acts. In this they apparently had the support of Governor Mactavish. Near the end of the first meeting a proclamation written by him was read to the delegates by Henry McKenney, sheriff under the old administration and delegate for Winnipeg at the convention. It summarized the illegal acts which had been committed, and called upon those who had committed them to disperse. It asked the meeting to "ratify and proclaim with all the might of your united voices this public notice and protest". It closed with these words:

You are dealing with a crisis out of which may come incalculable good or immeasurable evil and with all the weight of my official authority and all the influence of my individual position let me finally charge you to adopt only such means as are lawful and constitutional, rational and safe.⁶

One must express admiration for the tact and diplomacy shown in this message. Mactavish was in a difficult position. He had been urged by Lieutenant-governor-designate

McDougall⁷, then at Pembina, to issue a proclamation and the "loyalists"⁸ of the Settlement had followed suit. However, there were those among the "loyalists" whom Mactavish did not trust⁹, and, on the other hand, he well knew that those who had committed the illegal acts had always been the mainstay and support of his government in time of crisis.¹⁰ There were probably men from the French parishes present in the Convention who had been sworn in as special constables on occasions when the government of Assiniboia needed their assistance. Mactavish, as governor, was acting correctly and at the proper time without alienating those to whom his proclamation was directed.

After the proclamation had been read, James Ross, delegate for Kildonan and chief spokesman for the English parishes, told Riel that the acts of the National Committee were now acts of rebellion, and that he was awaiting "with confidence the evacuation of the Fort by the French of the Colony". However, Riel responded by saying that if the National Committee was rebelling against the Company which sold them and against Canada which wished to buy them it was not rebelling against the English government. Riel then turned some of Mactavish's construction around and said that "from the decisions of this assembly [could] come inestimable good."¹¹

The second meeting saw an attempt on the part of the English delegates to find out what the French meant to do. It soon developed that there was no agreement at all on the subject of what to do about McDougall. The English favored letting him come in: the French were opposed. James Ross was again the chief spokesman for the English parishes, and a careful reading of Riel's notes would suggest that Ross knew he was fighting for his chance to have some kind of appointment in a government organized by McDougall. Ross said he had spoken with McDougall before returning to Red River earlier in the year. He had made McDougall

"see" that "his government and the measures" it adopted "might be somewhat harmful to the present colonists."¹²

Ross was a native of Red River and had been educated at St. John's College and the University of Toronto. Between 1860 and 1864 he and William Coldwell published the Nor'Wester.¹³ For some time Ross was sheriff, but was dismissed from this position because of his criticism of the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1865 he went to Canada to further his legal experience and to work briefly for the Hamilton Spectator and the Globe.¹⁴ He returned to Red River in 1869. He said he understood people's fears that McDougall's government might be "more interested in advancing the interests of a large number of immigrants than the interests of the first settlers." However, he preferred to silence these fears and trust Mr. McDougall. To do otherwise, he believed, might cause misfortunes such as the colony had never known.

Riel was quick to spot the weakness in Ross's armor. He stated that he admired the "nobility in the remonstrances" that Ross had made to McDougall in Ontario. He admired Ross's concern for the interests of the first settlers. Now, asked Riel, why did Ross not join the half of the Settlement who wanted nothing more than the guarantee of those rights that Ross himself saw as needing guarantees? "Mr. Ross," said Riel, "speak up for your country[;] do not seek to silence it."¹⁵

Late that night a "loyalist" in the town of Winnipeg – almost certainly John C. Schultz – wrote another unsigned letter for the attention of Dennis and McDougall which gives us another tiny window on what occurred in this session. The writer had had "an interview with three of the principal English delegates". Riel, they said, had argued that the Hudson's Bay Company's government was a very weak one. A better one was necessary. The counter argument was made, they reported, that the Canadian alternative was the only one possible. O'Donoghue had

evidently lectured on the wrongs of Ireland. Riel had "pointed" to a republic, "but would not say so directly". According to the three delegates the English delegation, "with the exception of the two from the town", was working well together. The English delegates were "very determined" and would have meetings with their own people during the coming recess. No reference was made to the exchange between Ross and Riel.¹⁶

The convention adjourned until November 22 in order to allow the General Quarterly Court to hold its sessions. Riel and the Committee were insisting that they still "recognize[d] the government of Assiniboia."¹⁷

Considerable behind-the-scenes political activity took place during the four-day adjournment. Alexander Begg recorded in his journal that his partner, Bannatyne, was being accused of "influencing the present movement of the French".¹⁸ James Ross, Begg wrote, was "suspected of working in favor of the McDougall clique and against the interests of the settlers".¹⁹ The next day – the 19th – an incident occurred which annoyed both partners:

Towards evening Mr. James Ross called on Mr. A.G.B. Bannatyne and invited him to spend the evening with him. Mr. Bannatyne accepted the invitation wondering what could have brought it about as he was not on visiting terms with Mr. Ross. What was his surprise on entering the house to find Dr. Shultz [sic] there to meet him. He sat down and both Ross and S[c]hultz tried to draw out of him his views on the present state of affairs. They were unsuccessful however. It was a mean shabby trick on the part of Ross and could only have been done to try and waylay Mr. Bannatyne into trouble. It goes to show that Mr. James Ross is in hand and glove with the McDougall-S[c]hultz party irrespective of the claims of the settlers here – a two faced traitor.²⁰

On the 20th Begg recorded statements made by delegates Thomas Bunn, Maurice Lowman and Henry McKenney, to the effect that they would insist on a "full and elective representation at the council board of the country."²¹ That same day – a Sunday – John C. Schultz met with "a

number of clergymen and others" at the house of James Ross "to discuss the political state of the country."²²

One result of the week-end's round of consultation became apparent Monday morning. A petition was being taken around by Dr. Bown with a view to handing it to the Convention when it met. This petition had for one of its objects the unseating of delegates McKenney and H.F. O'Lone, and had been signed chiefly by "strangers". Bannatyne refused to sign it. He was so angry at certain recent developments and rumors about his actions as postmaster that he prepared a letter explaining his reasons for not signing, with the intention of handing it to a member of the Convention: "I have refused to sign this document," he wrote, "because those engaged in getting it up have been to a very great extent the cause of all our present troubles. The course they have adopted in their relations with the Canadien [sic] Government and its officials is well known to all here – and their connection with the latter has not been fruitful of good to the country."

The Petition has been written by one who has broken our laws headed by one who has broken our laws and handed me by one who has broken our laws. I could not consent to mix myself with such people and have on these grounds refused to sign it.²³

A second petition was being passed around too. This one had been started by D.A. Grant, bookkeeper for Col. Dennis, and had two main points. One was to the effect that those signing showed a willingness to conciliate between various parties. The other was a recommendation that the French should lay down their arms. Begg recorded that G. Ellwood, a Canadian, had signed it.²⁴

The meeting of the Convention on November 22 must have taxed the patience of everyone concerned. Ross and Riel were the chief speakers, Ross underlining the importance of the Red River Settlement as a "keystone" of a great national undertaking, Riel agreeing, but

insisting that it must be put on such a "footing" that the settler might go on living prosperously and that outsiders might find institutions ready for them. Thomas Bunn pointed out that three days had been spent and nothing had been accomplished. The French should lay down their arms and state exactly what they wanted. McDougall should be allowed to come in. Riel was adamant that McDougall would never enter the Settlement, "either in the capacity of a private individual or as Governor."²⁵ While it appeared at adjournment that there was little enough reason for them to meet again, the two groups agreed to meet the next day.

Riel's adventure in statecraft had not, on November 22, been a conspicuous success. If someone like the diarist Begg had made a tally sheet of the achievements of the National Committee it would have shown that it had little to its credit, except for the maintenance of order in those areas covered by its patrols. A court of inquiry would likely have said, with Mactavish, that it had "obstructed" people's movements, "seized" private goods on the highways, "interfered" with the public mails, "billeted" men in Fort Garry, "compelled" McDougall's party to leave the Hudson's Bay Company fort at Pembina, and "avowed" their intention to resist arrangements for the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada. The tally would not have included one very important point: the National Committee was forcing the Canadian Cabinet to reconsider the details of the transfer. On November 22 Prime Minister Macdonald received news of the stopping of McDougall, and the Cabinet began to study the implications of what had happened.²⁶ Before they made their decision Riel and his committee would have pushed even further into the uncharted waters of impromptu statecraft.

Early in the morning of November 23 George Young and other servants of the Company noticed an armed guard of several men accompanying John McTavish and John Balsillie, both Company officers, from the residences to the main office of the Company. At breakfast Young

and others heard that the officers had been forced to give up the books, records and cash of the Council of Assiniboia. Young supposed that this had been done to "impress" the delegates with Riel's determination and power.²⁷ However, there was probably a much more practical reason for this action, as was to be seen in Riel's subsequent acts. Young's reaction to the incident was to spike one of the Fort's guns and then to attempt to go to Winnipeg. He was made prisoner, but managed to escape and report the incident in Winnipeg.²⁸

Riel may have been contemplating both this and his next move for some time. He had suspected that there was tampering going on with the English delegation, and had written in his notes, "Schultz and the 'Canadas' are raising the devil".²⁹ However, another event probably forced his hand. The scouts of the National Committee had brought word that a string of carts belonging to John C. Schultz was on its way to Winnipeg. Schultz was generally known to be "very far behind" in the payment of duties on his imported goods.³⁰ Since these duties were one of the chief sources of income for the local government it was important that there be an authority in the Settlement powerful enough to insist on payment of them and to keep track of whatever was imported. There is no reason to impute any other motive on Riel's part at this point. There was good enough reason for him to be suspicious of Schultz. He could not know that Schultz's own recent purchases were in storage in the United States and that the materials now en route for Winnipeg were Canadian government stores that had been consigned to Schultz.

Unknown to Young and others, lights had burned both late and early during the night of November 22-3 as the National Committee met for seven hours, and Riel had striven to persuade

it "to form itself into a Provisional Government". We have it from Riel himself that it was no easy task:

Not one was ready. What fears and hesitations there were to overcome. It is incredible what misgivings I had to overcome in them. That which was feared most was the appearance of a rebellion against the Queen.

Riel had to use all his powers of persuasion to convince the Committee that they should form a Provisional Government. He had to remind them that McDougall had had over a month to reply to their note of October 21. "If he declares himself governor on December 1, he will be no more governor than before. Assiniboia will be dead. Let us form a Provisional Government beforehand." He went on,

Let us speak about it tomorrow to the English representatives. Let us seize the public accounts, the public funds in order to force McDougall to deal with a public body. Those books and that public money also belong to the public. McDougall must not take possession of them in spite of us. The members of the Committee consent at last....³¹

November 22-3 was one of the longest and most difficult waking periods in Riel's life. From persuading the National Committee to form a provisional government he went to trying to persuade the English delegates in the Convention to join in. The English, as Riel no doubt expected, found themselves unable to act in this "emergency", but stated that they must go back to their people for direction in this. The Convention adjourned to Wednesday, December 1.³² Riel then sent for Roger Goulet and attempted to determine what had been that gentleman's policy with regard to collecting the duties on goods imported into the Settlement.³³ He learned that Goulet had made a practice of taking notes for the amounts due from the several merchants. This was done to accommodate them and to make the payment of duties easier than if they had been obliged to pay upon the receipt of goods. The result was that Schultz and some of the other

merchants were behind in the payment of their notes.³⁴ Goulet was detained for a short time and released. Begg speculated that if a provisional government were agreed upon the collection of these overdue notes might be one of the first things done.³⁵

John C. Schultz's carts arrived on Wednesday, November 24, and were instantly the subject of intense interest.³⁶ Riel had the cart train stopped at Fort Garry and, when Schultz went to see why, said that he wanted to know whether there were arms in the cases, and whether the duties had been paid. Schultz replied that there were no arms. Riel accompanied him to the store and asked whether the goods were all Schultz's. Schultz answered that they were government stores. Riel then said that he might as well take an inventory of them, in case, as he said, any "parties should remove any portion, and it would be laid to us". He began the inventory, but did not finish it. The story of how Schultz hired Riel's guards to help unload the shipment is familiar to historians. However, the letter which contains this account is of more interest because of the suggestions it makes than because it is a narrative of what happened on November 24. The letter was written by D.A. Grant, one of the "Canadian" party, and shows that those people were spoiling for a fight. "Now," Grant began, "there are Canadians here willing to protect the property of Canada, and remove the stores to the Stone Fort for safe keeping. We propose the following plan":

We (the Canadians) to proceed in a party of twenty or thirty, with hired sleighs to be procured in the Scotch Settlement, and go to Schultz's store about noon, and remove them (the stores) down to the Stone Fort and leave *** (armed of course) in charge. If we meet oppositions we will defend the stores, and remove them against all comers. This will have the effect, perhaps, of PRECIPITATING MATTERS [emphasis mine]... This will also give us an excuse to occupy the Stone Fort, where a large amount of ammunition is stored. Yours, etc. D.A. Grant. P.S. It is understood that if we act in this matter, we act upon our own responsibility – not wishing to compromise authority – we only desire to have ADVICE [emphasis his].³⁷

It is to be remembered that this letter was written November 24 – a full week before McDougall issued his famous commission naming Dennis as “Lieutenant and conservator of the peace.”

In his reply Dennis advised caution, and gave four points of advice, the first of which was to apply to the local authorities “for a sufficient police or other force to prevent [the seizure of the stores]”.³⁸ Grant made this request, Mactavish arranged for a guard, and for a time there were “two sets of sentries on one beat”.³⁹ Once Riel knew what was in the shipment it had not taken long for him to decide that the National Committee must place an armed guard near the Schultz warehouse to see to it that the pork – for that is what the shipment turned out to be – was not removed by Schultz to some other point in the Settlement. Schultz’s efforts to “secure” his own stock had been noticed early in November by the Métis patrol and reported to Riel, but no attempt had been made to interfere with this movement of private property.⁴⁰ The strategic importance of this large shipment of government pork, however, meant that the Schultz warehouse would have to be watched.

With the government pork under a double guard we can now return our attention to the efforts being made to arrive at some resolution of the Settlement’s political problems. The Convention had long debated whether or not McDougall ought to be allowed into the Settlement. That gentleman was still at Pembina. Now the English parishes were faced with a proposal to join a functioning government which, while it might be illegal, was nevertheless in command of the situation at Winnipeg-Fort Garry and controlled the main road to the United States. From the point of view of John C. Schultz nothing had really changed. Mactavish was still governor in Fort Garry and those who had supported the government in the past were now patrolling the streets of Winnipeg and the main roads. The delegates from the English parishes had managed

to brake the Métis movement. They had not really checked it. Somehow he must work to broaden his base of support. This would not be easy but he must try. The evening before the arrival of his carts he sent a message to delegate H.F. "Bob" O'Lone, asking him to come to his house for a talk.⁴¹ O'Lone refused. The incident involving the government pork had forced Schultz to come into the open. The two sets of guards now showed the opposition to Riel that he had tried to keep secret.

For others in the Settlement this new development was fraught with danger. On Friday, the 26th, it became common knowledge that Schultz's friend Hallett had gone down to the Stone Fort to see if he could raise a "force" to "rescue" the government pork.⁴² He had not succeeded, so far as Begg knew, but concerned citizens began to talk of ways of avoiding violence. A group met in the office of Bannatyne and Begg and decided that instead of joining a provisional government they should allow the Council of Assiniboia to continue as the legislature of the Settlement while the people set about electing an executive council to negotiate with the government of Canada as to the terms on which the country would join Canada. The idea had much to recommend it, and it provided a focus for intense political activity at the end of November. William O'Donoghue was one of those present, and he pledged himself to persuade his associates of the value of the scheme.⁴³ On the morning of the 27th everything possible was done to persuade Riel that the idea had merit. Even American consul Oscar Malmros so far forgot his position as to try to convince Riel of the desirability of this course.⁴⁴ However, it was not until in the evening that Riel told A.G.B. Bannatyne that he would agree to this plan. On the strength of this assurance plans were made to acquaint certain English delegates of this change of plan and persuade them to attend the Convention on the first of December. Begg volunteered to go and notify the people of St. Andrews parish and to speak to Thomas Bunn about it.⁴⁵

The next day Begg set out on his mission while Bannatyne went to see Robert Tait about the same proposal. Almost everyone they met that day was favorably disposed toward the suggestion. The same thing happened on the 29th as the circle of those acquainted with it grew larger.⁴⁶ Donald Gunn gave notice of his willingness to attend the Convention on December 1, and said that if ill-health prevented him from doing so he would send a letter to that effect. Enthusiasm was general when Riel suddenly withdrew his support for the idea.⁴⁷

What had happened?

It is impossible to answer this question with certainty, since the documents which mention it are so few,⁴⁸ but it is clear that forces were at work that were inimical to peaceful solutions of any kind. On November 27, the same day that Riel expressed his approval of the "executive council" plan, something happened which caused Riel to write the note to Schultz which was quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "Your house is suspected as going to make trouble or be a place of trouble..." Begg recorded that there was "excitement" about the government pork. Schultz "represented his property as being endangered by having the Pork in his possession...Some Canadiens[sic] influenced by Schultz got excited over this and resorted to arms...the whole thing was quieted down by an assurance to Dr. Schultz that neither private property nor the Canadien [sic] Pork would suffer by the guard being put upon it..."⁴⁹ The diary of P.G. Laurie confirms this and states that as early as November 24 Schultz "had a quantity of arms made ready and a number of volunteers in his house..."⁵⁰ Presumably these men remained at Schultz's from that day forward, and were eventually noticed by Métis guards.

The next report – on the 28th – came from the Lower Settlement. Begg had been driven by Mr. Flett from Lower Fort Garry to Thomas Bunn's. Bunn reported that "a great deal of excitement had been caused in his neighborhood by false reports regarding the Government Pork

question..." Bunn had had to "turn back over two hundred men... who had turned out armed to go to Fort Garry and rescue the Pork. In justice to these men," Begg concluded, "it is right to say that it had been represented to them that private property and lives were in danger." After sending his own people back Bunn "had to send back about fifty more who had come from the Indian Settlement..."⁵¹

On the 29th Begg was on his return trip, calling on influential people in St. Andrews parish including Edward Hay, Rev. Gardiner, Mr. Truthwaite and Donald Gunn. Begg had heard a great deal about the government pork: "It is reported today and substantiated by parties who were present at the time," he wrote,

that Mr. James Ross and Maurice Lowman attended a meeting at St. Andrews and led the people to understand that 220 Two Hundred and twenty [repetition is Begg's] of the Scotch were ready and in fact that One hundred and eight were going to the Town the next day (Friday last) to take charge of the Government Pork and called on them to support their fellow countrymen. As soon as this was heard by the Scotch (early next morning) Alex. Polson was sent down the Settlement to say that Mr. Ross was not authorized to make such statements and as far as the Scotch were concerned the Government Pork might go to the d—l... There is a very strong feeling against Canadiens [sic] and others trying to start a fight prematurely and Maurice Lowman at the same time made a war speech...⁵²

Reports of this kind were not guaranteed to persuade Riel and others in the National Committee that it was time to step aside and let some still-to-be-elected executive council take over and be responsible for keeping the peace and checkmating John C. Schultz. With companies being formed for drilling purposes in several English parishes it was obvious that the National Committee had to remain on the alert.⁵³

The "executive council" initiative, however, had had the effect of bringing a number of people into Winnipeg, and on the 30th some of these people met "by chance" at Bannatyne and

Begg's and a spirited discussion took place. The group included John Bruce, Thomas Bunn, Colin Inkster, Louis Riel, James Ross, Robert Tait, William Tait, and, of course, A.G.B. Bannatyne and Alexander Begg. James Ross expressed the view that Canada had the right to a certain number of councillors in the new council of Red River. Strictly speaking, this was the only possible correctly "loyal" view, since it was completely in accord with what was to be done under the Rupert's Land Act. William Tait and Thomas Bunn, however, insisted that the people had certain rights, one of which was representation, and that the people would fight, if necessary, for their rights. Ross retorted that the people of Red River did not have enough pluck to fight for their rights. Ross was then accused of being inconsistent – he had asked the people of St. Andrews to come forward and fight – and was forced to admit that he had been excited and had made a great mistake, since he knew that the calling out of these men might have plunged the country into civil war. All those present except Ross agreed that they were ready to support the rights of the people. Ross said that the people themselves wouldn't defend those rights. Bunn and Ross nearly came to blows, but with this exception the discussion was friendly enough.⁵⁴ Riel does not appear to have taken a prominent part in the discussion, but it must be observed that as the men conversed two sets of guards were seeing to it that no one touched – or moved – the government pork, and Métis patrols moved through the streets. The National Committee was on the alert. The men who were talking and waiting for December 1 to bring the meeting of the Convention could not know that Sir John A. Macdonald, a few days earlier, had cabled Sir John Rose not to pay over the 300,000 pounds on December 1.⁵⁵ While the Métis patrolled the streets and guarded the pork the legal government of the Settlement was still that of Governor William Mactavish.

The story of the "spurious" proclamation of William McDougall has often been told, and it is not our purpose to repeat it here, except to point out a remarkable feature of the way it was presented to the Settlement. McDougall was so determined not to appear to recognize the "de facto" government of the Settlement that he also did not recognize the "de jure" government in the issuing of his proclamation. Henry McKenney, the sheriff, saw this at once,⁵⁶ knowing that a proclamation of the kind should either have been sent to Governor Mactavish, as retiring Governor of Assiniboia, or to someone like himself or another of the "Public Officers and Functionaries" who, according to the Rupert's Land Act, were to "continue" "with the same duties and powers as before".⁵⁷ As it was, Governor Mactavish did not have a copy of the proclamation in hand until given one by A.G.B. Bannatyne on the evening of the second of December.⁵⁸

The importance of McDougall's proclamation does not lie in its effect upon Riel and the National Committee. That "de facto" government, strictly speaking, was illegal before and after the issuing of the proclamation. Nothing could alter this. Riel was ready then -- as well as later -- to be called before the bar of public opinion to give an account of the acts he and his people had felt obliged to perform. The importance of the proclamation lies in the acts of those who obeyed it and Dennis's commission and in what they thought they were doing in so obeying. Unless we look into their acts and thoughts much of what happened in subsequent months and in the Archibald administration has no meaning. We shall look at these acts in due course.

We must now look, however, at the last meeting of the November Convention. The French delegates assembled, as had been agreed upon, on Wednesday, December 1. The English did not join them at first, partly because, as they thought, the Queen's Proclamation was out and partly because many of them "had ceased to be delegates."⁵⁹ James Ross recorded the numerous

discussions that the proclamation caused, having decided to keep a journal of events as they transpired.⁶⁰ At Bannatyne's Henry McKenney said the proclamation was not the Queen's, but the others were ready to accept it as genuine.⁶¹ Bannatyne was then appointed to take the proclamation to the French delegates, then in session at the Court House. The French then invited the English to come and join them. After reading the proclamation Riel is supposed to have said that it "staggered" him.⁶² However, he soon recovered his composure, and said to his fellow French members, "My friends, if it is the Queen's Proclamation, pay attention. Let us weigh our acts before acting. It is more than ever necessary for us to be prudent in the vindication of our rights..." After the English delegates had arrived Riel addressed the Convention in this way:

If McDougall is really our governor today, our chances are better than ever. He has no more to do than to prove to us his desire to treat us well. If he guarantees our rights, I am one of those who will go to meet him in order to escort him as far as the seat of his government.⁶³

Ross asked Riel what they would ask of McDougall if they went to see him. The answer was not immediately forthcoming. After a period of "disorderly discussion" the French delegates asked for two hours in which to draw up a "list" of rights, and it was this two-hour session which drew up the first "bill of rights".⁶⁴ At the end of two hours the two groups convened again to consider what the French had done. Ross had this to say of this first "bill of rights":

They seemed loosely drawn up and many of them [seemed] impossible. We pointed out [a] good many of the objections, but as passing of them depended on [a] majority, of course, all passed. And we did not care much, for we were ready to ask anything almost.⁶⁵

It would appear that Riel had had time to reflect during the two-hour session, for his attitude toward McDougall's proclamation seemed to have changed. Or it may be that he had

learned from Bannatyne or someone else how it was that the proclamation had made its way to them. At any rate he had quite recovered from being "staggered". He insisted that McDougall could not be allowed to enter the Settlement until an act of Parliament had been passed assuring them their rights.⁶⁶ The English delegates would agree neither to this nor to the sending of emissaries to McDougall. The English delegation appeared to be paralyzed at this point, not able to agree, even among themselves, on the proposal to send two of their number to speak to McDougall.⁶⁷ And, strangely, at the end of the first day of the new regime, no emissary had come from McDougall to either set of delegates bearing any kind of peaceful proposal. It is difficult to understand why this should be so, unless it is true, as Riel was to write four years later, that McDougall "desired only war".⁶⁸ This point is to be pondered if we are to arrive at an understanding of the events surrounding the Insurrection. All these people were British subjects, whether Canadians or citizens of Rupert's Land. No blood had been shed; Canadians were moving freely about Winnipeg and in and out of the Schultz houses. Why could not a Canadian Lieutenant-governor-designate send an emissary to a National Committee or to a Council of Assiniboia? Was it that for men like McDougall to ask anything at all was to ask too much? Or had decisions already been taken which allowed of no modification? McDougall himself stated that he had "paid no attention" to the note handed to him by the Métis on October 21, 1869.⁶⁹ For their part Riel and the Métis expected that they would have a reply from him, and wondered why they did not receive one.⁷⁰

Meanwhile J.S. Dennis, McDougall's "Lieutenant and conservator of the peace" had had a very busy day.⁷¹ He had arrived at William Hallett's, on the Assiniboine, at five o'clock that morning. He then sent for James McKay and Robert Tait. When these men came he showed them the proclamation and his own commission as "conservator of the peace". He explained that

he was instructed to see how much support there would be for organizing a force "to put down the malcontents". If it appeared that there was support he was to issue an appeal, organize a force, and put down the outbreak. Dennis learned of the Convention and of Robert Tait's intention to attend it. Dennis learned also that a petition opposing the National Committee had been passed around in the English parishes. The result was a majority of "some hundreds over the French party". Tait was to take the petition to Winnipeg so it could be handed to Riel. Dennis gave him a copy of the proclamation, with the understanding that he would read it to the Convention.

Hallett was of the opinion that the English people would respond "eagerly" to Dennis's appeal. Dennis later reported that McKay and Tait "agreed with" Hallett that people were tired of rule by the French party but feared the result of an appeal to arms. Dennis said they had had to agree that there was no other course to follow if the French insisted upon a provisional government.⁷³

Robert Tait then drove Dennis to Winnipeg and went about his own affairs. In Winnipeg Dennis found John C. Schultz in a state of "much anxiety". Schultz alleged that the guns of the Fort had, a day or two previously, been pointed directly at his home. He said that he had resisted Riel's suggestions that the government park be removed to Fort Garry for safe-keeping. Since both printing offices had been seized by the National Committee Dennis called upon Mr. Grant and "a number of other Canadian gentlemen" for help in writing "a lot of manuscript copies" of the proclamation. These were then distributed during the afternoon and evening, and some were sent to Portage la Prairie.

Dennis then called upon a number of people in the Lower Settlement, including Bishop Machray, Archdeacon McLean, James Ross, Rev. Mr. Black, and Judge Black. Dennis learned

that Major Boulton had been in communication with these gentlemen and that men had been enrolled and had begun to drill at several places in the Settlement. Dennis met Rev. Mr. Gardiner and Archdeacon Cowley and talked with them. Since what they said agreed with what Dennis had learned from others he concluded that it was his duty under his commission to make an appeal for volunteers. Having made this decision he proceeded to the Stone Fort and called for volunteers to guard it. Before the morning of the 2nd there were 120 men occupying that Fort.

Dennis was equally busy on December 2. With the help of Mr. Hart, the surveyor, and Major Boulton the organization of parish companies was set in motion. Dennis now sent a message to Governor Mactavish reporting the occupation of the Stone Fort, explaining the object of its occupation and enclosing a copy of his commission. Twenty-one Canadians arrived from Winnipeg and "enrolled". Dr. Lynch was given instructions to enroll a company in Winnipeg. Since most of the Canadians had had experience with drill Lynch was ordered to have the men return quietly to their lodgings until further orders. Captain Webb was ordered to go to Portage la Prairie and organize a force of four companies there.

With these various arrangements made, Dennis assembled Chief Prince's men in the Fort. The proclamation was read and explained to them in Cree. Dennis knew that McDougall was opposed to the use of Indians in putting down the Insurrection, and he agreed with this view himself. Accordingly he had Prince select fifty of the best men to remain in the Fort as a garrison. Dennis explained to Prince that these men would not be used in fighting unless it became necessary to defend the Fort. The rest of Prince's men were paid and sent home with Dennis's thanks for having turned out so readily.

During the evening of the 2nd Dennis conferred with William Dease and John C. Schultz. Dease was certain that many of the French could be relied upon to give their support to Dennis's

undertakings. Dennis learned that Schultz had a small hand press and some type. P.G. Laurie, printer for the Nor'Wester, was sent to Winnipeg to fetch this press and some type.⁷³

A unique situation existed in the Red River Settlement on the night of December 2. The legal Governor of Assiniboia and Rupert's Land was in Fort Garry, unable to do anything about the fact that Fort Garry was occupied by a Métis force. The Lieutenant-governor-designate of Rupert's Land was in Pembina and powerless to do more than issue orders through his "Lieutenant and Conservator of the Peace". There were two Hudson's Bay forts and a garrison illegally occupying each. All across the English parishes men were drilling. In the French parishes men expected to receive a call to arms. In Fort Garry was a National Committee which had failed to win the adhesion of delegates from the English parishes. In the Stone Fort was J.S. Dennis, who apparently had the support of the English parishes and of the "loyal" French, and who was in constant contact with his advisors, Schultz and Dease. Both governments were interested in getting the use of a printing press. The situation as it then existed could likely have continued all winter but for one volatile factor: the three Schultz buildings presented an intolerable situation for both commanders. Dennis could not defend them: Riel could not tolerate them while they were in hostile hands.

Dennis had good reason for satisfaction on December 3. Work was going forward in a number of ways, and returns were coming in from the parishes indicating a "satisfactory" response. Laurie arrived from Winnipeg with the hand press and set up and printed the proclamation, which Dennis then had distributed throughout the Settlement. However, Laurie also brought some disturbing news from Winnipeg. A party of Métis under Riel's command had searched Dr. Schultz's residence about midnight. If Schultz had not called in at John Tait's on his way home from the Stone Fort he would certainly have been captured at home. Dr. Bown,

editor of the Nor'Wester, had also eluded capture, and arrived at the Stone Fort about noon. Dennis was afraid that some incident would precipitate matters before his force was assembled, so he wrote to Schultz to have the Canadians remain perfectly quiet "in lodgings". They were "not to invite either by word or deed, any attack from the French".⁷⁴

It would appear, however, that when the party of Canadians returned to Winnipeg from the Stone Fort they had not gone into "lodgings", as ordered, but had "collected" at Schultz's houses, at Schultz's request.⁷⁵ Dennis's report on this point is confirmed by the diary of A.W. Graham. According to Graham, who "enlisted" on December 3, "about forty" Canadians were guarding the Schultz houses at that time. "Squads of French" appeared "at intervals", Graham wrote. "Once they drew up their forces in front of our buildings. We expected they would fire on us, but they soon dispersed."⁷⁶

People in Winnipeg had other reasons for concern that same day. News had come from the Portage that George Racette or "Shawman", a confederate of Schultz's, was on his way into the Settlement with a large party of Sioux.⁷⁷ Racette, a thoroughly disreputable character and enemy of the Hudson's Bay Company, could always be expected to assemble around him the worst characters in the community, and several days of drinking and fighting could be expected.⁷⁸ Winnipeg people now met together to form a company to protect the village from the Indians. A committee was appointed to see what arms could be obtained in town.⁷⁹

Dennis's review of his situation on December 4 made him decide that he had no option but to order the withdrawal of the Canadians from Winnipeg,⁸⁰ and he wrote instructions to that effect to Major Boulton and to John C. Schultz.⁸¹ In addition he wrote a "memorandum of Orders for the Enrolled Canadians".⁸² In each of these letters he explained his desire to have the

Canadians withdraw to Kildonan, where they would form an outpost of his force at the Scotch church. He did not anticipate that his orders would be disobeyed.

That evening Dennis had a visit from James McKay and a Mr. Nolin. They had with them a copy of the "French List of Rights". They said they were eager to have peace restored, and wanted to know whether Dennis was in a position to say that McDougall would agree to what the French were asking. Dennis stated that he could give no assurance whatever concerning the list. Some of the points might be part of McDougall's policy, some not.

McKay begged Dennis to delay the order to arm for action as he was sure that matters could be settled amicably. He thought that if the French could be persuaded that McDougall's proclamation was genuine they would allow him to enter the Settlement.⁸³ Dennis then wrote out a memorandum suggesting that he would go to Pembina, obtain McDougall's commission and take it to Governor Mactavish for examination, along with a certificate from McDougall's legal adviser as to its authenticity. When the French had signed an agreement not to oppose McDougall further Dennis would give orders to the English to cease arming.⁸⁴ Whether this initiative could have succeeded we can never know. What is certain is that at this point the Canadians could have left the Schultz buildings without difficulty. People were going and coming freely and without interference. However, those in the Schultz buildings had decided that they knew more than their commander and were planning to disobey him. Late in the evening Dennis received two notes, one from Major Boulton and one from Schultz.⁸⁵ Boulton reported that Dr. Lynch, Mr. Snow, John C. Schultz and he had consulted together and decided that with the force of seventy men in the house they could resist a "strong attack":

It is now 9 o'clock, the men are all posted, and the Rebels know it. There are no men moving about, and no indications of any attack, and a retreat would or might inspire the Rebels with more confidence than they appear at present to possess. Your

memorandum to the Canadians says "they had better come down this evening", which apparently gives us the opportunity of using our own judgment under existing circumstance.⁸⁶

Boulton added that he intended to go down to see Dennis the next day. In his note Schultz gave an interesting bit of news which further indicates that on December 4 various initiatives were being taken in the hope of arranging a peaceful settlement. President Bruce, of the National Committee, had been to see Schultz, and they had talked of old times. Bruce asked where the "sticking point" was for Schultz in the French list of rights. Schultz mentioned "the insulting nature of the last one". Bruce replied that "they had not so meant it, and that [Schultz] must have an incorrect copy".⁸⁷ Explanation is required concerning this exchange. The only list of rights that Schultz apparently knew of at this point [Saturday, December 4] was the one which Dr. Bown had somehow obtained in mid-November, and of which he had sent a copy to Sir John A. Macdonald. This list contained eight demands, the "last" of which read as follows:

That Dr. Schultz and others shall be sent out of the territory forthwith and unless these demands are assented to by Mr. McDougall he shall not be permitted to come within the territory.⁸⁸

Evidently the two men must not have had a copy before them of either the first list to appear on the first of December or of the printed list which came out on Saturday evening.⁸⁹ In this conversation Bruce had also expressed a willingness to speak with Dennis.

Dennis was wise to order the withdrawal of the Canadians from the Schultz buildings. He could not assist them, and their presence in the buildings was of no particular value, while at Kildonan the men could have been useful as an "outpost". The three Schultz buildings stood near the corner of King or Main Street and a street that led toward the Red River. They were near the southernmost end of the village and in full view of Fort Garry, only Rev. George Young's house being nearer to the Fort than they were.⁹⁰ George Young, the son of Rev. George

Young, and one of the men "placed" in the three buildings, has left us a description of them.

One house was of "brick veneer" and one and one-half storeys in height, one was a "rough cast" of two storeys, and the third was a log building of two low storeys used as a storehouse for government stores.

There was no passage way or other means of communication or intercourse between these three buildings or any two of them. No provisions were laid in. No supply of ammunition was provided and worse than all no water was on hand and only a small supply of fuel....⁹¹

Dr. Lynch was the Canadians' captain, Mr. Miller the major, Mr. Allen the lieutenant.⁹² George Young was "posted at one of the front upper windows of the brick store, and at the same window was stationed... Thomas Scott".⁹³ "We have been assured," wrote Young, "that if we made the first step, as being Canadian born, that the settlement would rise to our support and the rebellion be at an end. The settlement did not rise..."⁹⁴

As we have seen, the government pork had arrived on November 24 and the National Committee placed a guard around the building immediately. We cannot know how many Canadians were in the houses before the group that had gone down to the Stone Fort to enlist "collected" on December 3. A.W. Graham helped Dennis to write out the copies of the proclamation on December 1, but did not "enlist" until December 3.⁹⁵ George Fortney left James Ross's employ and "enlisted" on the 4th.⁹⁶ Graham wrote that there were "about forty" in the buildings on the 3rd, seventy on the 4th.⁹⁷ None of the sources has indicated how this body of men were fed, but obviously some sort of arrangement must have been made. Before the 6th they may have slipped out in small groups to eat at one or other of the eating-places. The buildings themselves were indefensible, but the presence in them of a large body of armed men could not be tolerated by the National Committee for fear that they might make a rush for the Fort under

cover of darkness.⁹⁸ Dennis saw this, first urging that the men remain quiet in lodgings and then ordering that they leave the buildings and go to Kildonan where a house was available for them.⁹⁹

Boulton paid a visit to the Stone Fort on the 5th, and asked to have the Canadians allowed to remain in Winnipeg. It appeared that, uppermost in his mind was the "natural desire to prevent the provisions" from falling into the hands of the National Committee. Dennis told him that whoever stayed there after the orders he had given "assumed the responsibility" for whatever happened. Dennis did not consider keeping a guard over the provisions worth the risk.¹⁰⁰ On the 6th Boulton wrote Dennis another letter concerning the state of affairs in Winnipeg. Boulton said he had pointed out to the men's officers the reasons why the men should not stay on the premises any longer. The officers – Dr. Lynch, Mr. Miller and Mr. Allen – had agreed that all should leave. Boulton had then gone to St. James parish and drilled one hundred men there. When he returned to Winnipeg he learned that the Canadians had not left and that it was not safe for him to go into the buildings as there were armed "provisionals" all around them. It was estimated that there were no fewer than six hundred men at the disposal of the National Committee by this time.¹⁰¹ He sent a note to Dennis reporting this. Upon receipt of this note Dennis promptly wrote a letter "to the enrolled Canadians" instructing them to leave the town and establish themselves at Kildonan.¹⁰²

That same day A.W. Graham, one of the Canadians in the buildings, wrote as follows in his diary:

Things look serious. The French have taken several prisoners in the streets. The women are leaving the houses for fear of the cannon from the Fort. They have completely surrounded us, preventing ingress or egress. No word of help. Some of our men have gone out and not come back. We are now about 50 strong.¹⁰³

Graham and his companions were still occupying the three Schultz buildings because his captain, Dr. Lynch, in listening to the arguments of Schultz and disobeying the orders of "the conservator of the peace", was making a serious error of judgment.¹⁰⁴ One of those in the buildings, Dr. O'Donnell, saw this at the time and later wrote of it as the "Schultz blunder", knowing, as he did, under whose influence Lynch had fallen.¹⁰⁵ As for Dr. Lynch, his feelings of guilt regarding the unnecessary imprisonment of the men under his command drove him to become an implacable enemy of Riel and the Provisional Government and to continue as such long after Riel had been induced to leave Manitoba.

December 7 was a day of frustration for Colonel Dennis. The failure of the men in the Schultz houses to obey orders meant that he did not have them as an outpost at Kildonan. Their continued presence in Winnipeg meant that he must somehow change his strategy to assist them in some way. The night before, Alexander Black and his wife had called on him with a report of a visit to Winnipeg to consult with John C. Schultz professionally. Mrs. Black was able, but with difficulty, both to go into the village and to speak with Schultz, so closely was the house surrounded by "provisionals". Schultz had asked her to bring a message to Dennis since he could not be sure that a messenger would get through with a letter: the Canadians were in a state of siege and could not go out either for food, wood or water, and needed help. Dennis reasoned that allowing the Canadians to be captured would have a bad moral effect on the object he had in view. He decided, therefore, to operate on the theory that the appearance of an armed force would cause the French to "fall back on Fort Garry", thus allowing time for the besieged Canadians to make their escape. The forty men of the company whose headquarters were at the Stone Fort were willing and ready, so Dennis set out to mobilize another sixty men in St. Andrews, where he had found plenty of enthusiasm when he had first come. Much to his

surprise, however, there was “an entire absence of the ardour which existed previously”. Donald Gunn, Joseph McDonald, and Thomas Sinclair, officers of the two companies in the parish, met him at Rev. Gardiner’s and informed him that such a force could not now be raised. Dennis expressed the view that “some agency” was at work producing a change in people’s views. These men replied that the distribution of the printed copies of the French “List of Rights” had brought about the change. They admitted that “up to the time of the dissemination of this document, no one but themselves knew what the demands of the malcontents were”. Now that the demands had been published and appeared reasonable, the people were much less “jealous of French domination”, particularly since there seemed to be a willingness to send a deputation to Pembina to “treat” with the Lieutenant-governor-designate.¹⁰⁶

It seems clear that Riel and the National Committee had erred seriously in not issuing such a statement before. No doubt the lack of a printing press was a critical factor – they had had to get Coldwell to print the list.¹⁰⁷ It may also be that before December 1, when they had worked hard for two hours to systematize their objectives, they had simply been too busy with the multitude of administrative details that the exercise of statecraft had suddenly thrust upon them. At any rate they had adroitly outmaneuvered Schultz and his impressionable delegates – not to mention Dennis and his companies – by going over their heads and publicizing their objectives. The people now had a reason for not joining Dennis’s companies.

Then upon his return to the Stone Fort Dennis found to his dismay that McDougall had issued still another proclamation. This one was based upon section six of the Rupert’s Land Act and directed “all Public Officers and Functionaries” holding office “excepting the Public Officer or Functionary at the head of the administration” – this meant Mactavish – to continue to be public officers “with the same duties and powers as before”.¹⁰⁸ Such a proclamation, issued at

this time, could not help but confuse the general public as to the state of affairs in the Settlement. Since the messenger was to return at once Dennis "hurriedly" wrote a reply, outlining the changed situation. He then sent a note to the besieged Canadians, urging them, if obliged to surrender, to get the best terms possible.

Dennis then left the Stone Fort to go to Rev. Mr. Black's at Kildonan, where he convened a meeting of the leading men. He soon learned that the Scotch people would act only on the defensive. A public meeting had just been held, at which delegates were appointed to meet with him at the Stone Fort and tell him to abandon aggressive moves. Before he left Kildonan news came from Winnipeg that the Canadian party had had to surrender. His report on the "unfortunate affair" of the Schultz houses can hardly be improved upon:

... [T]here was no force with which this party could have been relieved: and the French, being in overpowering numbers, there was no alternative but to surrender; indeed it was an act of folly their remaining there to be made prisoners of, as I have reason to believe they could have made their escape a few hours previously without danger or difficulty.¹⁰⁹

The story of the actual surrender has been told before, but there are aspects of it which need to be examined here, since they became topics of controversy later. One of these is the part played in the surrender by Thomas Scott.

As we have noticed, Scott was, in November, staying at Garratt's and awaiting trial for his part in the incident at Oak Point. The trial took place at the General Quarterly Court for which the November Convention adjourned temporarily. We have testimony from P.G. Laurie that Scott, Frank Mogridge, W.J. Davis, William Allen and James Devlin came to the Nor'Wester office on November 30, inquiring "where the damn Half-breeds were" and saying that they would soon "throw them downstairs and hold the office" until any work that was wanted could be done.¹¹⁰ Scott was likely with the group of Canadians which went down to the

Stone Fort on the 2nd and returned on the 3rd. According to George Young, Scott was stationed at the same window as Young in the "brick store".

There is difficulty, however, in deciding how Scott was taken prisoner, and probably it cannot be resolved with the information now at hand. According to Begg's journal Scott and McArthur were taken prisoner on December 6, Hallett on December 7.¹¹¹ A. W. Graham wrote in his diary for December 7 as follows: "We sent three delegates to the fort to make terms, especially to let the women get out to a place of safety. The delegates Scott and Hallett were locked up. McArthur returned at 2 o'clock, followed by about 300 French, headed by Riel, Lépine and O'Donhue [sic] with orders to surrender."¹¹² G.D. McVicar wrote an account for the Toronto Leader mentioning that John Snow was "commissioned to go to Riel and state to him that we were not there to attack Fort Garry, but [to] protect our lives and property...." He made no mention of Scott, Hallett or McArthur. McVicar suggested that Snow was less than firm in his dealings with Riel.¹¹³ Snow responded to this with an account in the Ottawa Citizen, describing how he and McArthur had gone to Governor Mactavish and requested an interview with Riel. Snow made no mention of Hallett or Scott, but quoted Riel as saying, "Dr. Schultz and his men must surrender. If they do, their lives will be spared. The women and natives will be allowed to go free."¹¹⁴ The Globe published an interview with Stewart Mulkins, who had been "sent from the house to see Riel but on his arrival at [Riel's] quarters was arrested and placed in confinement". Mulkins then told how "Mr. Snow, of the Government Roads, was despatched from Schultz's house with power to make terms of capitulation with Riel."¹¹⁵ What can we conclude when faced with these accounts? Quite likely the loose organization and lack of communication between the buildings allowed for a number of initiatives to be made. Remarkably enough, George Young, who was with Scott in one of the buildings, made no

mention of Scott's being chosen to be part of one of them. However, it is certain that Scott was taken prisoner.

In one of the earliest published accounts of the Insurrection Alexander Begg made this statement:

... While we condemn the attitude they assumed at the time, we respect those Canadians who, FROM A SENSE OF DUTY [emphasis his] enrolled themselves as soldiers in defence of their country's honour. It is quite evident they were misled, as many others were, regarding the actual position of affairs: AND WHO WAS TO BLAME THEREFOR? [emphasis his]¹¹⁶

There was no doubt in Begg's mind, and there can be none in ours. If Schultz, Lynch and Snow had done what they were told to do there would have been a completely different unfolding of the efforts made by the Red River people to have their views heard where decisions were being made. Now a party of men who had believed themselves to be legally enlisted Canadian soldiers would complicate matters as prisoners-of-war in Fort Garry, while in the English parishes there were men who had shouldered arms and drilled in response to an illegal proclamation. As for the National Committee, while it was still illegal it had significantly broadened its base of active support and passive acceptance.

Appendix "A"

"The demands they make are as follows:

1. That the Indian title to the whole country shall be at once paid for.
2. That on account of their relationship with the Indians a certain portion of this money shall be paid over to them.
3. That all their claims to land shall be at once conceded.
4. That two hundred acres shall be granted to each.
5. That they and their descendants shall be exempted from taxation.
6. That a certain portion of lands shall be set aside for the support of the R.C. church and clergy.
7. That a Council shall be elected and at once chosen.
8. That Dr. Schultz and others shall be sent out of the territory forthwith and unless these demands are assented to by Mr. McDougall he shall not be permitted to come within the territory.

(Macdonald papers, Vol. 101, Bown to Macdonald, November 18, 1869.)

- ¹ Writings – Riel, Riel to Schultz, Nov. 27, 1869.
- ² Begg's Journal, 164.
- ³ "Correspondence – 1870", 33.
- ⁴ Begg's Journal, 165; Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions of the November Convention", 420.
- ⁵ PAM MG12 E3, Schultz to Darling and Jordan, Nov. 16, 1869.
- ⁶ Begg's Journal, 165-9.
- ⁷ C.S.P. 1870 (No. 12), McDougall to Mactavish, Nov. 2, 1869.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* Petition dated Nov. 12, 1869.
- ⁹ New Nation, July 16, 1870, interview with Mactavish in New York. Hargrave, Red River, 439, gives a reason.
- ¹⁰ PAM MG10 F1 Box 6, "Les Dessous Diplomatiques des Evénements de la Rivière Rouge" par M. Guillaume Charette, n.d., 12.
- ¹¹ Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 422.
- ¹² Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 423.
- ¹³ J.J. Hargrave, Red River, 146, 321.
- ¹⁴ Manitoba Library Association, Pioneers and Early Citizens of Manitoba, 205.
- ¹⁵ Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 423-4.
- ¹⁶ "Correspondence – 1870": Unsigned letter to J.S. Dennis, Nov. 17, 1869, 39.
- ¹⁷ Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 424.
- ¹⁸ Begg's Journal, 172-3.
- ¹⁹ Begg's Journal, 172.
- ²⁰ Begg's Journal, 173-4.
- ²¹ Begg's Journal, 174.
- ²² Begg's Journal, 175-6.
- ²³ Begg's Journal, 177-8. Schultz, Stewart and Bown had been involved in the jail-breaking of 1868; Hargrave, Red River, 423-8, 437-9; 504-6. See Begg's Preface to Begg's Journal, 154.
- ²⁴ Begg's Journal, 179.
- ²⁵ Begg's Journal, 179; Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 425.
- ²⁶ PAC Macdonald Papers, Vol. 101, Macdonald to Sir John Ross, Nov. 26, 1869.
- ²⁷ Begg's Journal, 181; Saskatchewan Archives, George Young, Historical Paper No. 1, 9.
- ²⁸ Saskatchewan Archives, George Young, Historical Paper No. 1, 10-11.
- ²⁹ Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 426.
- ³⁰ Begg's Journal, 184.
- ³¹ Begg's Journal, "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 427.
- ³² Begg's Journal, 182; "Louis Riel's Notes of the Sessions", 427. It should be noted that the agreement of Riel's Notes with Begg's Journal breaks down at this point. Begg's Journal gives November 23 as the date of Riel's request to the English to join the Provisional Government. All evidence points to the error as being Riel's. This may be explained by the fatigue Riel was experiencing.
- ³³ Begg's Journal, 182.
- ³⁴ Begg's Journal, 184.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ Begg's Journal, 183; "Correspondence – 1870", Grant to Dennis, Nov. 24, 1869, 56-7.
- ³⁷ "Correspondence – 1870", 56-7.
- ³⁸ "Correspondence – 1870", 57.
- ³⁹ Saskatchewan Archives, Diary of P.G. Laurie, 44.
- ⁴⁰ Begg's Journal, Schmidt's Memoir, 467. Schmidt thought Schultz's stocks had been sent to Portage la Prairie.
- ⁴¹ Begg's Journal, 182-3.
- ⁴² Begg's Journal, 184-5.
- ⁴³ Begg's Journal, 185.
- ⁴⁴ Begg's Journal, 187.
- ⁴⁵ Begg's Journal, 188.
- ⁴⁶ Begg's Journal, 189.
- ⁴⁷ Begg's Journal, 190.

- ⁴⁸ MacBeth in The Making of the Canadian West, 52-3, and in The Romance of Western Canada, 121-2, makes a very brief reference to the initiative, but adds nothing to what is known.
- ⁴⁹ Begg's Journal, 188.
- ⁵⁰ Saskatchewan Archives, Diary of P.G. Laurie, Nov. 24, 1869, 44.
- ⁵¹ Begg's Journal, 188-9.
- ⁵² Begg's Journal, 189-90.
- ⁵³ Begg's Journal, 191.
- ⁵⁴ Begg's Journal, 191-2.
- ⁵⁵ PAC Macdonald Papers, Vol. 101, Macdonald to Sir John Rose, Nov. 26, 1869.
- ⁵⁶ Begg's Journal, A Notebook of James Ross, 437; Begg, Creation, 108.
- ⁵⁷ Rupert's Land Act, Section 7.
- ⁵⁸ Begg's Journal, 196-7.
- ⁵⁹ Begg's Journal, A Notebook of James Ross, 436.
- ⁶⁰ The notebook covers only the period Dec. 1-14, 1869.
- ⁶¹ Begg's Journal, A Notebook of James Ross, 437.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*
- ⁶³ Begg's Journal, Riel's Notes of the Convention, 427.
- ⁶⁴ Begg's Journal, Riel's Notes of the Convention, 427-8.
- ⁶⁵ Begg's Journal, A Notebook of James Ross, 437.
- ⁶⁶ Begg's Journal, 193; Begg's Journal, Riel's Notes of the Convention, 428; Begg's Journal, A Notebook of James Ross, 437.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ Begg's Journal, Memoir by Louis Riel, 532.
- ⁶⁹ "Correspondence - 1870", 4, McDougall to Secretary of State for the Provinces, Oct. 31, 1869.
- ⁷⁰ Begg's Journal, 426.
- ⁷¹ The following account is drawn from "Correspondence - 1870", Dennis's Record of Proceedings, 85. See also Boulton, Reminiscences, 76ff.
- ⁷² McKay and Tait later denied that they had counselled an appeal to arms. See Begg, Creation, for their statement from the New Nation, 141.
- ⁷³ "Correspondence - 1870", Dennis's Record of Proceedings, 86.
- ⁷⁴ "Correspondence - 1870", 86.
- ⁷⁵ "Correspondence - 1870", 87.
- ⁷⁶ Elgin Historical and Scientific Institute Publications, "Diary of A.W. Graham (Afterwards "Graham")", 74.
- ⁷⁷ Begg's Journal, 198.
- ⁷⁸ Begg, Creation, 147.
- ⁷⁹ Begg's Journal, 198.
- ⁸⁰ "Correspondence - 1870", 87.
- ⁸¹ See (A2) and (A3) of "Correspondence - 1870", 92.
- ⁸² See (A1), "Correspondence - 1870", 92.
- ⁸³ "Correspondence - 1870", 87.
- ⁸⁴ "Correspondence - 1870", 93.
- ⁸⁵ "Correspondence - 1870", 87.
- ⁸⁶ "Correspondence - 1870", 93, Boulton to Dennis, Dec. 4, 1869.
- ⁸⁷ "Correspondence - 1870", 93, Schultz to Dennis, Dec. 4, 1869.
- ⁸⁸ PAC, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 101, Bown to Macdonald, Nov. 18, 1869 (See Appendix "A").
- ⁸⁹ Begg's Journal, 204-5, 209-10.
- ⁹⁰ There is a map of the village on page 206 of Begg's Journal.
- ⁹¹ Saskatchewan Archives, George Young, Historical Paper No. 1, 12.
- ⁹² "Graham", entry for Dec. 3.
- ⁹³ Saskatchewan Archives, George Young, Historical Paper No. 1, 12-13.
- ⁹⁴ Saskatchewan Archives, George Young, Historical Paper No. 1, 13.
- ⁹⁵ "Graham", entry for Dec. 3.
- ⁹⁶ Begg's Journal, A Notebook of James Ross, 440.
- ⁹⁷ "Graham", 75.
- ⁹⁸ Begg, Creation, 151.

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- ⁹⁹ "Correspondence - 1870", Dennis to Canadians, Dec. 6, 1869, 95.
¹⁰⁰ "Correspondence - 1870, 87.
¹⁰¹ "Correspondence - 1870, 94-5.
¹⁰² "Correspondence - 1870,, 88, 93.
¹⁰³ "Graham", 75, entry for Dec. 6.
¹⁰⁴ Saskatchewan Archives, Diary of P.G. Laurie, 54.
¹⁰⁵ O'Donnell, Manitoba As I Saw It, 34.
¹⁰⁶ "Correspondence - 1870, 88.
¹⁰⁷ Begg's Journal, Notebook of James Ross, 440.
¹⁰⁸ "Correspondence - 1870, 88.
¹⁰⁹ "Correspondence - 1870, 89.
¹¹⁰ Saskatchewan Archives, Diary of P.G. Laurie, 46.
¹¹¹ Begg's Journal, 212.
¹¹² "Graham", 75.
¹¹³ Toronto Leader, April 16, 1870.
¹¹⁴ Ottawa Citizen, April 26, 1870.
¹¹⁵ Globe, Jan. 28, 1870.
¹¹⁶ Begg, Creation, 151.

The "Canadian" or "Loyal" Party

Of all the factors in the Red River Insurrection the most identifiable and well-documented is the so-called "Canadian" or "Loyal" party, men who were made prisoners at the end of the Schultz houses incident.¹ Several lists exist which give the names of those composing this party. Some were made at the time for various reasons. Others were made later as historians strove to assign praise, or blame, or to put the events of the Insurrection into some kind of perspective.²

The first of these lists was made on October 1, 1869, when John A. Snow, the superintendent of works on the Fort Garry section of the "Red River Road", made his report on an incident at Oak Point. He had been "dragged by violence from the government depot and threatened with grievous bodily harm" if he persisted in refusing to pay what the men were asking.³ Twenty-three names appear on the list, along with figures showing the amount paid to each man. Twelve of the names are those of Red River Métis, and it is clear that someone has written their names for them and that they then made their marks. Another eleven names appear as signatures, some barely legible, of those of the Canadians who had been ringleaders in the affair. The names, placed in alphabetical order here for convenience, are as follows: W.J. Allen, Geo. A. Bubar, A. Chisholm, Angus Chisholm, George Fortney, John Harris, Francois J. Mogridge, James Robb, Thos. Scott, Joseph H. Stocks, William F. Walsh. Charles Mair's name is on the list as paymaster, while A.H. Hamilton, Robert Holland and Geo. Parker signed as witnesses. All but two of these men were later imprisoned after the Schultz houses incident.

The second of these lists was made secretly by Alexander Begg, who had begun keeping a daily journal of events on November 16, with the meeting of the twenty-four delegates called for by Riel and the National Committee. The surrender of the men in the Schultz houses on

December 7 ended a crisis which began some time in late November. Begg made a list of those who had been in the three buildings.

Begg's list is in two parts. The first contains the names of 45 men who were actually in the Schultz houses when the decision to surrender was taken. The second, made on December 14, has the names of thirteen men who had been "arrested since the surrender of Schultz's party for being implicated with it". There are seven additional names too, of men about whom Begg was not certain. It is not known what Begg's source of information was, but it was quite reliable, and his list stands comparison with other lists made later that winter by members of the "Canadian" party.⁴

The third list was made by Dr. James Spencer Lynch. Dr. Lynch, a recent arrival from Canada, had been appointed by Dennis a "Captain of Canadian and other volunteers in the Town of Winnipeg". In February of 1870, when he wished to leave the Settlement and go to Canada, Lynch left a document authorizing Dr. O'Donnell "to pay to the persons named on the other side goods or clothing to an amount not exceeding Ten pounds sterling each to be charged to the account of the Canadian government." There are sixty-four names on Lynch's list.⁵

A fourth list was made by Charles Mair for publication in the Toronto Telegraph. His list is in three parts, and contains sixty names of "those released on parole after several weeks of imprisonment", "those who escaped on the night of the 9th January" and those "released upon demand made by forces under command of Dr. Schultz and Major Boulton".⁶

Another list came to light in 1913, when the Niagara Historical Society published Henry Woodington's "Diary of a Prisoner in Red River Rebellion".⁷ Like Mair's list Woodington's included the places of origin of the men. It is not a copy of Mair's list, however, since it differs from it in many details. It reveals, for example, that Woodington was with the Portage party in

February of 1870, and was among those taken prisoner. His name is not in either the list of that party made by Alexander Begg at the time or the list made by the historian Robert B. Hill some time later. Woodington, however, thus shares with Thomas Scott and George Parker the distinction of having been twice imprisoned.

Woodington's diary is one of several diaries of prisoners which have been published since the events of 1869-1870. The diary of A. W. Graham was published by the Elgin Historical and Scientific Institute Publications.⁸ It too contains many interesting facts. One of them concerns the prisoner Thomas Scott.

In the years after the Insurrection the Rev. George Young, Dr. James S. Lynch and others made much of the fact that Scott was not taken in arms when those in the Schultz houses were forced to surrender. An entry of Graham's indicates clearly that Scott, along with Hallett and McArthur, had been with others in the Schultz houses, and that, if he was not actually in one of the houses at the time of the surrender, it was because he had been sent to the Fort as "delegate". Here are Graham's words:

We sent three delegates to the fort to make terms, especially to let the women get out to a place of safety. The delegates, Scott and Hallett, were locked up. McArthur returned at 2 o'clock, followed by about 200 French, headed by Riel, Lepine [sic] and O'Donohue [sic], with orders to surrender in fifteen minutes or they would fire on us from the Fort. We held a hasty council of war, when it was decided best to surrender.⁹

Other lists of prisoners exist which must be mentioned here. In 1871 Alexander Begg's The Creation of Manitoba was published. In it is to be found a list of the men mentioned by Begg in his December 1, 1869, journal entry. The name "Limgerard" has been corrected to "Langman", but, unaccountably, "Wrightman" now appears as "Werghtman". However, it is basically the same list. George Dugas probably copied this list for use in his Histoire Véridique.

published in 1905. Opposite John Ferguson's name, however, he mistakenly placed the words "Beau père de Schultz" (Schultz's father-in-law). James Farquharson was imprisoned, but not, apparently, at this time. His name may be found in the government publication known as "Schedule of Claims arising out of the late Insurrection at Red River".¹⁰

A comparison of the lists brings out some useful points.

Mair's list includes the place of origin of each of those listed, as does Woodington's. While the two lists do not agree on all points, it is clear that almost three-quarters of the men were from the Canadian provinces, the overwhelming majority of these being from Ontario. Mair listed nine as from Red River, counting Schultz as being from Amherstburg, Ontario. If Schultz is added – he had been in Red River for more than eight years – the number is ten. Three of the men were from Great Britain. Mair listed Fortney as being from Nova Scotia.

Woodington said he was from Texas. Of the Red River men William Hallett was known as one who had helped release James Stewart from jail in 1863, at the time of the Corbett affair.

All lists agree on twelve of the men who had been at Oak Point in October of 1869. Three of them, Mair, Parker and Scott, are in Mair's list of those who escaped.

It is remarkable that George Miller's name is not on Lynch's list. Lynch forgot to include him and it is curious that he should do so. P.G. Laurie recorded that Miller was chosen by the Canadians as leader in the days before the National Committee occupied Fort Garry.¹¹ And after the taking of that Fort he and Boulton were to have led an assault on it! Lynch's fellow prisoners Mair and Woodington included Miller in their lists, and his name appears as one who made claims for sixty-six days of imprisonment. The diary of A.W. Graham referred to "Dr. Lynch, captain; Mr. Miller, major; Lieut. Allen", while G.D. McVicar, in a letter to the Toronto Leader, wrote: "Dr. Lynch is captain; Miller as Lieutenant, and Allen as Ensign."

The reader is warned that the names in the list as given below may not be spelled correctly in all cases. The reader is also warned that the list must not be regarded as definitive.

In early March of 1870, with the hostilities of February safely in the past and a Provisional Government maintaining order in the Settlement, Begg made an entry in his journal which illustrates this. He wrote as follows:

Mr. Ellwood claimed pay on account of having enrolled himself as a volunteer under Dennis – he was not generally known as a volunteer until now but had Dr. O'Donnell's orders to receive 10 pounds sterling on account of the Canadian government.

Dr. O'Donnell the gentleman left by Lynch to act as his attorney in paying the men enrolled under Dennis is reported to be paying out money to some extent on that account.¹²

Two days later Begg mentioned the subject again:

Mr. McArthur of the firm of McArthur and Martin leaves today. He takes with him over 500 pounds sterling of orders on the Canadian government for supplies furnished the men enrolled by Col. Dennis and captured by the French in Schultz's house.¹³

Begg's final comment on this matter was written in April:

It is strange to note how men who kept shady during the late troubles now come forward to claim their reward from the Canadian government.¹⁴

The "Canadian" or "Loyal" Party

W.J. Allen

L.W. Archibald

J.H. Ashdown

George Brandon

George Bubar

Donald Cameron

D.W. Campbell

A.R. Chisholm

Joseph Coombs

Matthew Davis

William Davis

James Dawson

James Devlin

John Eccles

John Ferguson

George Fortney

Thomas Franklin

Charles Garratt

A.W. Graham

William Graham

J.B. Haines

John Hallett

William Hallett

Arthur Hamilton

John Harris

Charles Heath

Andrew Hill

Robert Holland

W.F. Hyman

John Ivy

James Jeffrey

William Kittson

George Kline

Thomas Langman

Frank LaRose

John Latimer

Thomas Lusted

Dr. James Spencer Lynch

Charles Mair

P. McArthur

G.D. McVicar

R.P. Meade

F.C. Mercer

George Miller

F. Mogridge

John Mooney

Stewart Mulkins

James Mulligan

Alex Murray

George Nichol

William Nimmons

Dr. John H. O'Donnell

Philip Otterwell

Charles Palmer

George Parker

James Robb

John C. Schultz

Thomas Scott

Robert Smith

William Spice

James Stewart

Joseph Stocks

Charles Stodgill

Henry Woodington

A. Wright

H. Wrightman

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- ¹ The earliest, and possibly the best, analysis of the factors leading to the Insurrection was made by Alexander Begg in the preface to his Journal. See W.L. Morton (ed.), Alexander Begg's Red River Journal and Other Papers Relative to the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 (afterwards Begg's Journal), 151-165. See also in House of Commons, Journals, 1874, VIII, "Report of the Select Committee of 1874" (Afterwards "Report - 1874"), a number of depositions made by men who had taken a prominent part in the events of 1869-1872.
- ² See, for example, Begg, Creation of Manitoba (afterwards Creation), 164-5, for his list of the Schultz houses party.
- ³ PRO CO 537, Supplementary Correspondence, Canada, 1870. Snow's report of payments made.
- ⁴ Begg's Journal, 217, 228-9.
- ⁵ PAM MGA1 No. 11, "List of Prisoners in Fort Garry confined by Riel and associates, December, 1869".
- ⁶ Toronto Telegraph (afterwards Telegraph), April 6, 1870.
- ⁷ PAC Niagara Historical Society, "Diary of a Prisoner in Red River Rebellion".
- ⁸ PAC Elgin Historical and Scientific Institute, "Diary of A.W. Graham".
- ⁹ "Diary of A.W. Graham", 75.
- ¹⁰ Canada, Sessional Papers, 1872 (No. 19); Begg's Journal, 302.
- ¹¹ Saskatchewan Archives, E.L. Storer papers, Diary of P.G. Laurie, 1869, 1870.
- ¹² Begg's Journal, March 10, 1870, 333.
- ¹³ Begg's Journal, 335.
- ¹⁴ Begg's Journal, April 16, 358.