

Don McLean

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**WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON:**

**UNSUNG HERO OF THE**

**"RIEL REBELLION"**

**Don McLean**

## PROLOGUE

On December 13 snow fell unobtrusively amidst the snarled traffic and the prosperous, bustling crowds of happy Christmas shoppers in New York. There was another side to this prosperous and happy scene, however. In the midst of all this wealth, poverty and racism were still to be found here. Landlords still evicted tenants. Some people still lived on the streets, and pockets of poverty infected inner cities like rapidly spreading cancerous cells.

In the hustle and bustle of the pre-Christmas rush of New York City most evictions simply went unnoticed. Yet, on December 14, 1951 American newspapers from New York to Savannah, Georgia began to carry the story of an old man's eviction from a New York tenement building. A picture of the evicted man appeared in the Savannah Press. He was on the sidewalk, seated on an orange crate, surrounded by a small mountain of books and papers - his worldly possessions, now being slowly ruined by the gently falling snow. He was 91 years old, and the press described him as, "Joseph Jaxon, recent occupant of a basement hovel at 157 East 34th Street."<sup>2</sup>

Jaxon's possessions, consisting almost entirely of books, journals and papers, were wrapped neatly in brown paper and piled in cardboard boxes on the sidewalk. They had been hauled out of the apartment on December 13, and were now covered with a thin layer of snow. The material "made a pile six feet high, ten feet across and thirty-five feet long."<sup>3</sup> Joseph Jaxon, referred to by

both the hobos of the district and the reporters covering his story as "the major", valued his pile of books and papers now undergoing damage from the snowfall at \$100,000.4

Major Jaxon's pictures, distributed widely by the press, revealed a wrinkled, bearded face, featuring sharp dark eyes that belied the indignity of the old man's situation. The face was crowned with a large black sombrero. The picture of Major Jaxon quickly attracted the attention and sympathy of American readers. Simon W. Baken, a Mohawk Indian working as a subway conductor for the City of New York Transit, offered him free lodging. (Jaxon had been described by the press as a man who had fought for Indian rights.) "I'm interested in anyone who crusades for my people" Baken told a reporter: "All I ask is if someone could keep him in food. I'm not a rich man or I would do that too. I have a wife and two children to take care of."5

On December 15, Major Jaxon was assisted by Harry Baronian, editor of the hobo paper called the Bowery News. He provided shelter for Jaxon in the small, cramped makeshift office from whence the paper was published. Baronian retrieved some twenty-five boxes of Jaxon's most valued books and correspondence, storing them in the paper's office at 204 East 36th Street. An old hobo friend named Boxcar Betty tended to the Major as best she could, bringing him soup and some old blankets. Another hobo - known as "Walter the Madman from Massachusetts" - chopped wood to keep the fire going overnight in the office's only source of heat, a pot-bellied wood burning stove.

According to newspaper reports, Jaxon had worked for the previous five years as the janitor of the apartment from which he had been evicted. Earning \$50 a month, he was also given the dingy cellar apartment, which could only be reached by a twenty foot iron ladder, extending down from a trap door off the sidewalk.

Jaxon both impressed and intrigued the reporters who covered the story of his eviction. Jaxon was obviously an articulate and well-educated man. Rumors of all kinds abounded about his past. Some suggested he had been an Indian fighter from Montana who, sickened by the carnage, spent the rest of his life crusading for their rights. Others indicated he had been a major in the Intelligence Corps of the U.S. military. He looked like a bum, carried himself like an aged aristocrat, and spoke like a professor.

There was no doubt about his intelligence, however. He spoke several languages, among them an esoteric Indian language - Cree - spoken by a once powerful tribe living on the Canadian prairies. He was fluent in French, German, Greek and Latin. His English was, of course, impeccable. The reporters, sensing a much deeper story than the simple eviction of a poverty-stricken old man, puzzled over the real identity of Joseph Jaxon. Who was this apparition appearing as a character from a 19th century Charles Dickens novel? And why was he suddenly transposed onto an American street to appeal to the conscience of the world's newest superpower? As it turned out, he was not an American. He was a

Canadian, and his original name was William Henry Jackson. This is his story.

## WILLIAM HENRY JACKSON

William Henry Jackson was born in Toronto on May 13, 1861. Canada was not yet a nation. It was a backward, rural colony of Great Britain. Toronto was a small city plagued by muddy streets. The second largest city in Canada was desperately trying to overcome its rustic nickname of "Muddy York".

In fact, Canada was little more than a sparsely populated, backward rural colony when William Jackson was born. In 1861, over 80% of Canadians lived outside any city, town or village. The only substantial cities were Montreal, in Lower Canada, now the province of Quebec, and Toronto, in Upper Canada (Ontario).

Young Will Jackson's parents, Thomas and Elizabeth Jackson, had recently immigrated from England. They moved to Canada in order to pursue their almost religious quest for a life of freedom and independence. Thomas and Elizabeth were both children of Methodist ministers. When they came to Canada they brought with them a combination of religious and secular ideas that were both progressive and revolutionary. His religious beliefs lent fire and passion to Thomas Jackson's liberal political demands for reform in Upper Canada. A great admirer of the Upper Canadian rebel, William Lyon McKenzie, Thomas believed - and taught his children - that the citizen had the God-given right to rise up in the face of oppression.<sup>6</sup>

Young Will Jackson was tutored by his father from early childhood in the arts of political reform. Accompanied by his father, Will

attended his first political meeting at the age of eleven. Will's progressive political training was reinforced in his home environment. The Jackson home was cluttered with good books. Charles Dickens and the great romantic poets such as Shelly and Lord Byron became early friends of Will Jackson as he avidly read their works. Thomas Jackson was a fan of the irascible Scottish poet-reformist, Robert Burns,<sup>7</sup> and young Will became imbued with that poet's cutting humor. While his childhood peers were out playing, Will Jackson was at home reading. At the age of nine he completed writing a history of ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>8</sup>

Will had a brother named Thomas Eastwood, who was referred to by both names to differentiate him from his father, Thomas Jackson. There was also a younger sister named Cicely. These children, like Will, were political activists at an early age. They identified with the liberal reformers and bitterly opposed the entrenched conservatives.

The Jacksons were a happy family, and Will was a happy child living in the comfort and security of a relatively well off, loving family. This environment fostered a stable and socially conscious personality in each of the children.

Thomas Jackson was a successful merchant who moved the family from Stanley Mills (a suburb of Toronto) to the small community of Wingham, some 150 kilometres to the north. Here, the family continued to prosper as the children grew up. Thomas Eastwood was sent to the Ontario College of Pharmacy, where he learned the skills of a pharmacist.

The family managed to finance Cicely's tuition at teacher's college and she too received her degree. In 1878, Will returned to Toronto where he enrolled in classes at the University of Toronto. He was enrolled in the classics, studying Greek and Latin as well as literature and philosophy. Although he was bright and studious, finishing near the top of his class during the first three years, he did not finish his degree.<sup>9</sup> By 1880 the family business in Wingham was bankrupt, and he had no way to finance his last year of university. He completed only three years of the four-year Bachelor of Arts degree.<sup>10</sup>

Economic depressions struck Upper Canada during the 1860's and '70s. In 1879 a fire in the Jackson store at Wingham finished what the depression had started - the financial ruin of Thomas Jackson. That same year the family moved west to the Saskatchewan territories. They settled in Prince Albert, where Thomas Eastwood set up a drugstore. Thomas Eastwood Jackson set about the business of survival on the frontier with typical Jackson courage and energy. The rough-and-tumble town of Prince Albert held no terror for him. The drug store was quickly built and turned into a thriving business.

Unable to finance his classes, Will Jackson left Toronto in 1881 and went west to join the rest of his family. He was 19 years old when he first set foot in Prince Albert. Prince Albert did not seem suited to the temperament of Will Jackson, a rather delicate and sensitive young intellectual. Ruffians and drunks fought in the streets. Politicians and aggressive speculators

were often allied with each other, using "inside" government development plans to their own advantage. A clique of these speculators had bought up land and property along the future sites of the planned rail, and telegraph, lines.<sup>11</sup>

The Prince Albert district was in a state of turmoil. Local farmers, unable to get their produce shipped to the international markets, anxiously awaited the coming of the promised trans-Canada rail line. Until the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) arrived, the farmers and businessmen could not expand their operations. The largest and potentially most powerful ethnic group in the North West Territories (NWT) was the French-speaking Metis. These were people of mixed Indian and French-Canadian ancestry who had formerly served as employees at the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) Fort Carlton, located some 50 kilometres from Prince Albert. These people had not received title to the lands they occupied. They were in desperate economic straits and were becoming increasingly angry with the federal government for its tardiness in granting them title to their lands. Their White and English-speaking Halfbreed neighbors had, for the most part, received title to the lands they occupied. This differential treatment was seen by the Metis as a serious insult. As a result, the Metis of the district presented a potentially volatile political situation.

The Metis had for the past hundred years made their living as traders and workers for the HBC, or as buffalo hunters. By 1881, however, the HBC no longer employed many Metis, and the buffalo

had all but disappeared. Thus, for these people, title to the lands they occupied was necessary for their continued survival. Like the other inhabitants of the NWT, they were turning to agriculture as the only alternative to the now nearly defunct fur industry. Title to their small farms was as necessary to their survival as the completion of the CPR, which was originally designed to pass through Prince Albert, then go due westward through Fort Edmonton to the Pacific Coast.

1881 was a bleak year for the people of Prince Albert and district. They had built up a large farming community based upon the "certain knowledge" that the main line of the CPR would pass through Prince Albert. In 1881 the CPR syndicate informed them that the railway would not be passing through the northern part of the NWT, as originally planned. Instead, new plans had been made and the railroad would be taking a route far to the south. In one stroke the entire community's future seemed ruined. With no railway, the entire commercial agricultural economy of the north would collapse, since there would be no way to transport their grain to the international marketplace.

This was the Prince Albert that Will Jackson entered, in 1881. Fresh from university, filled with the fires of political reform, he eagerly entered the political life of this frontier town, with its many challenges and possibilities. Prince Albert was in an economic and political shambles. A stout heart and an honest approach to these problems could turn the NWT around. It did not take Will Jackson long to get involved.

One of his first jobs was that of helping his father with his new farm implement business. As a salesman for this farm machinery, made in Ontario and protected by extremely high tariffs, Will soon found out just how much Western farmers hated the government's policies that had put the tariffs in place. These tariffs, part-and-parcel of Sir John A. Macdonald's Conservative government's national policy, were designed to protect the fledgling Canadian industries in the east from competition from the much more advanced industries of the USA. But these tariffs tended to place necessary farm machinery such as harrows, seeders and discs beyond the financial reach of many western farmers.

Will's impeccable speech, together with his refined manners, marked him as an educated man. His progressive political ideas were soon known widely, and at age 20 he was elected as the first secretary for the Farmers' Union. His election to this position was an historical event. The farmers who elected him had unwittingly widened their theatre of political action. With his classical education and his knowledge of history, he saw the conflict between the residents of the NWT and the Canadian federal government in much wider and clearer terms than the people that he represented.

Will Jackson immediately set about the creation of an alliance that would bring together the Indians, the Metis, the Halfbreed peoples and the White settlers of the Farmers' Union. These other groups, he recognized, had grievances with the federal

government that, in many ways, were more profound than those of the Farmers' Union.

Jackson knew that the federal Conservative government's national policy was designed to exploit the prairie farmers not only through the system of tariffs, but again through the grain marketing system. The people of the north west needed to set up a responsible government through the creation of a new province. Most importantly, they had to have control over their own resources. The federal government was ruling the NWT through its appointed body, the North West Council. There was only one elected member in this council, the member for the electoral District of Lorne (consisting of the Prince Albert region).

The national policy, designed to create capital from the new wheat economy in the west, simply set the west up as an underdeveloped colony of the east, a colony that was designed to remain dependant upon the industrial east. The west would produce one staple commodity - wheat. Canadian industry would remain only in the east, financed in large part by the tariffs on farm implements. Bad as this situation was for the farmers of the NWT, it was even more threatening for the Indians and Metis. They seemed to have no place whatsoever in the new order of things. The indications for them were clear; much of their land was already alienated from them, and they were now to be shuffled aside.

Jackson made these views known by publishing a small radical journal in Prince Albert; The Voice of the People, it was called,

and was first published on March 12, 1883. It failed to pay for its upkeep, and was abandoned after a few editions. During its brief life, however, it did attract other political reformers to Will Jackson's side. Among this group was Doctor Andrew Porter. Porter, the first physician in the NWT was also the leader of the local Liberal party. Dr. Porter consistently opposed the Conservative candidates for the one elected position on the North West Council, but failed to win an election.

Will Jackson joined the Liberal party, hoping to use it as the vehicle for the unification of all opposition to the Conservatives, including the Indians, the Metis, and the Halfbreeds. This was no small task that he had set for himself however, not even for a man of his considerable energy and talent.

By the summer of 1884 Jackson was publicly calling for the White settlers to widen their movement to include the Metis and the Indians.<sup>12</sup> But neither the Natives nor the White settlers were ready to seriously consider such an alliance. Religious and cultural differences stood in the way. There was a man - a Canadian expatriate - now living in Montana who might bring this alliance together. His name was Louis Riel.

William Jackson was not the only White in the district that wanted Riel to return to take the lead in the struggle with the federal government. Liberal leaders in Prince Albert, including Dr. Porter, the Jackson family, and prominent merchants such as J. F. Kennedy, J. O. Davis, D. E. Hughes and John Stewart,

agitated to pave the way for Riel's return to the NWT.<sup>19</sup> The French Metis welcomed this "English" support for Riel's return.

Riel had paid a heavy personal price for his stand against the federal government during the 1869-70 Red River resistance. He was blamed for the execution of Thomas Scott and banished from the country for a five-year period. Nevertheless, Riel's efforts had resulted in the passing of the Manitoba Act and the establishment of the province of Manitoba. He had been exiled by the Conservative government in Ottawa as a means of pacifying the Protestant element of Ontario, without causing an overreaction in Quebec - which his execution would certainly have done. But while Riel remained a political liability federally, as the man who personified the French Catholic-English Protestant split in Canada, it was felt by the Liberals in Prince Albert that he was the man who could unite the French Metis to the English in the NWT. This could be done through the one overriding commonalty, their shared grievances with the federal government's national policy.

Largely through William Jackson's initiative, meetings were held involving members of the Farmer's Union, the Liberal party and the Metis leaders. This informal alliance soon began to develop into a political movement. It became known locally as "the Popular Movement", and it began to challenge the local entrenched hierarchy of Conservative politicians, government bureaucrats and land speculators.

On May 6, 1884, during a meeting of the Popular Movement held at the Lindsay District school, a letter was drawn up asking Louis Riel to return to the NWT to act as their leader. The members of the Popular Movement agreed to finance his return. The letter closed by informing Riel:

Now my Dear Cousin, the closest union exists between the French and English and the Indians, and we have good Generals to foster it...The whole race is calling for you.<sup>14</sup> /

Jackson's plans seemed to be unfolding well. Gabriel Dumont, the famous Metis leader, left with two companions for Montana to bring Louis Riel back to the NWT. The Metis, now taking the initiative, began to organize their communities. Jackson renewed his education campaign in Prince Albert. He began publishing again, clearly laying out the grievances of the Metis and the White settlers of the NWT. He was now demanding responsible government in the NWT through the formation of a new province.<sup>15</sup> /

### A DATE WITH DESTINY

In response to the letter delivered to him in June, Riel returned to the NWT in the summer of 1884. Warmly welcomed by the Popular Movement, Riel immediately moved to strengthen the Metis alliance with the progressive Whites of the district. It was not long before Louis Riel and William Jackson met face to face. Jackson was instantly drawn to Louis Riel by the force of his charismatic, deeply religious persona. Riel, on the other hand, was taken by the forcefulness of Jackson's highly moral political motives.

This mutual attraction seemed unlikely, since these two powerful men were in many ways, opposites. Riel was a Catholic; Jackson was a Protestant. Riel's life and all his political convictions were shaped by religion; Jackson's views were modern and secular. Riel was conservative by nature and by political affiliation; Jackson was a liberal on both counts. It was the deeply spiritual nature of both men that unquestionably attracted them to each other, and provided them with a sense of destiny.

For Riel, this destiny was clear and unambiguous, he had been chosen by God to create a New Jerusalem in the Canadian west. This sanctuary was to be shared with other oppressed Catholics such as the Irish and Polish peoples. The Indians of the plains were to receive good treatment, and were to be taught the skills of farming. Jackson's destiny was soon tied to Riel's dreams. He was overwhelmed by Riel's unshakable belief in his mission. The vast differences in background and personality of these two

men proved to be beneficial, even though they were the source of many prolonged and heated arguments between them.

Jackson, the often flamboyant and passionate speaker, had a flair for organization that Riel, the ascetic philosophical man, lacked. Jackson gave Riel the push for action that he often required. Whereas Riel tended to procrastinate, Jackson moved surely and quickly on a project. He was constantly at Riel to finish his projects on time.<sup>16</sup> For Riel the nation builder, these projects seemed deceptively mundane. His overall goal was the establishment of responsible government in the west, but he desperately needed another highly educated man for the daily tasks, consisting of writing hundreds of letters, scheduling meetings, organizing resource people and preparing speeches. As the movement grew, many hundreds of hours had to be spent laboriously writing up carefully worded petitions, to be sent to the federal government.

Riel had chosen these peaceful means for the redress of Western grievances. Clearly, he sought a peaceful solution to the political problems facing the Metis and the White settlers of the NWT. As for the Metis, they placed their faith in Riel who, as an educated man, could bargain with the federal officials for their land rights. Jackson, though an outsider, was accepted for all the same reasons.

Prime Minister Macdonald had been kept informed about Riel's plans by his officials in the West, as was Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney, who sent Amade<sup>~</sup> Forget, the Clerk of the North

West Council to speak to Gabriel Dumont in the fall of 1884. Forget, who could speak French fluently, was sent North to see what was really going on with Riel's movement. Forget was informed by Gabriel Dumont:

The Government has not treated us as we are entitled. They have ignored our rights and looked down upon us with contempt. Seeing that, and not having any one among us capable of speaking and writing for us, we went for Mr. Riel and brought him here. Mr. Riel is now with us, and it is our duty to see to his personal safety. We need him here as our political leader. In other matters I am the Chief here.<sup>17</sup>

Gabriel's closing statement to the French-speaking Clerk of the North West Council carried a threat that he would have understood. Gabriel Dumont was the undisputed warrior chief of the Metis. Dumont made it clear that, while Riel was pursuing a peaceful approach to Metis political problems with the federal government, he and his men were ready to act for Riel's protection and for "other matters". Dumont was capable of mobilizing a substantial military force among the Metis and Indians of the NWT.

If Riel's peaceful methods did not bring results, Gabriel Dumont, the stubborn and courageous old buffalo hunter and warrior, stood quietly in the background. But, at this stage, Riel was being well received wherever he spoke in the Prince Albert district. In July, he addressed a large crowd in Prince Albert at a meeting sponsored by the Farmers' Union. He described the problems they all faced and suggested dealing with them through petitions. His moderate approach was applauded time and again by the crowd. Even

Father Andre~, the conservative priest who had so much influence with the Metis, was disposed to praise Riel. Until Riel's return, Andre~ had tightly controlled Metis politics. He had steered them into the camp of their most serious enemies. Andre~ had managed, through both persuasion and coercion, to get almost universal support among the Metis for the Conservative candidates running in the District of Lorne.<sup>19</sup> As well, Father Andre~ was keeping the federal government informed about the political agitation going on in the Metis communities.<sup>19</sup> Through Father Andre~, the federal bureaucracy, and indeed Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, were kept informed as to the movements of Riel and Jackson.

Andre~, however, felt that Riel's presence was beneficial to the peace and tranquility of the region. In a letter dated July 7, 1884, following Riel's speech in Prince Albert, he informed Lieutenant Governor Edgar Dewdney:

The arrival of Riel has acted as a calm on all the agitated minds, and all his words [are] to advocate peace and good feelings among all the people in the country.<sup>20</sup>

Andre~ was correct in his analysis of Riel's plans. Riel was embarked upon a peaceful campaign. In fact, the inflamed passions of the people of the north west had been moderated by Riel upon his return. The Riel-Jackson alliance showed promise of a new era of peace between and among the various ethnic groups in the NWT, as they moved towards the establishment of a local responsible government. Riel initially brought hope with him; the

hope, and indeed the expectation, that their grievances would be resolved, and their rights as Canadian citizens would be granted.

But the local Conservative party had a lot of money and power at its disposal. It consisted of the community's most influential government functionaries and businessmen. Lawrence Clarke, HBC factor, real estate speculator and businessman, was a past member of the North West Council. Lawrence Clarke was the power behind the Conservative party in Prince Albert. A known philanthropist who gave generously to the church and other civic causes, Clarke was a charming public speaker who did not hesitate to buy off political opponents when other methods failed. Clarke was undoubtedly the most wily opponent of the Popular Movement in the Prince Albert region.

Clarke's Conservatives had the electoral situation well in hand. Father Andre~, by ensuring Metis support, virtually guaranteed electoral victory for each Conservative candidate. Dr. Porter's Liberals were thus reduced to little more than a fringe party permanently resigned to the role of an ineffectual opposition. Even if the liberals could have taken the one elected seat on the North West Council, they would have been controlled by the other members, all of whom were appointed by the federal government. Jackson's Farmers' Union, in many ways, represented more of a threat to the Conservatives than the Liberal party. In 1883, Lawrence Clarke moved decisively against it in a most unorthodox way.

Clarke worked his way into the Union by donating one hundred dollars to it. After this gift earned him a membership, he invaded a regular meeting with a large entourage of fellow businessmen. He then moved that a one dollar fee be charged to gain, or retain membership in the Union. When the motion carried, many existing members had to be evicted, since they could not produce the required dollar. Indeed, Clarke's generous gift of one hundred dollars so endeared him to some of the more simple-minded executives that he was granted a life-time membership.

The first act of the new bogus members was that of the expulsion of young Jackson. The farmers who were bilked out of their membership were replaced by mill owners, merchants and real estate speculators. Jackson reported sardonically:

The books were opened for the enrollment of outsiders of all sorts. Mill owners, merchants, real estate agents and lawyers tabled their dollars and enrolled themselves as honest grangers, horny handed sons of toil.<sup>21</sup>

This rather absurd but nevertheless effective move by Clarke struck a serious blow to the Farmers' Union. Jackson, at least technically, had lost control of the Farmers' Union. Indeed, after Clarke reminded the farmers of Jackson's youth and inexperience, he was evicted from the meeting.

Despite such ignominious defeats, however, Jackson's efforts to unite the White settlers politically to Riel's Metis had some limited success. Jackson eventually regained some control of the

Farmers' Union, and used it as a means of organizing support for Riel. A French-Canadian historian commented:

More and more one could notice that Riel's lieutenants and the organizers of the settlers union were walking hand in hand. The Jackson family and friends were busy enrolling farmers as well as merchants under the banner of Louis Riel.<sup>22</sup>

Jackson was having some success within the Metis communities as well. He organized in these communities with the ultimate goal of presenting a new Bill of Rights to the federal government. He told Riel; "a clear, concise and logical petition will do more to help our cause than a month spent making speeches."<sup>23</sup> Both Jackson and Riel had been making many speeches, and delivering them to large crowds of both Whites and Natives. Jackson's speeches were more radical than those of his chief, Louis Riel. This speech, delivered in Prince Albert, was typical of young Will Jackson's style:

Louis Riel, that famous Manitoba hero, has rallied the Metis element to our cause. The party, whichever happened to be in power at the time, in Eastern Canada, had used Riel as a tool for their goals but Riel has warned against the danger of being separated from the white population just through party partisanship. The general impression is that Louis Riel has been made to appear worse than he deserves. As far as his public attitude is concerned, it is better to accept his services and have him on our side. As to his private record, it would be wise to reserve judgment until his personal version has been heard, especially since his manner is frank and loyal and reveals the sincerity of his intentions and his firm convictions.

As long as the two elements work together honestly, being fair to one another, there will be no conflict but marked progress towards our ultimate goal; justice in the North West.

It is by the might of what is right that we hope to win our cause and all inconsistencies on our part will be detrimental: it would cause us to lose the moral support of Great Britain and the United States. Let us refrain from all tendency that could force us to take our affairs into our own hands before we have exhausted all constitutional means.

We cannot rely on our own local newspaper. It is in the hands of a few government favorites who inspire its anonymous editorials. Because of this, an insane rumor is circulated about a so-called rebellion and imminent trouble with the Indians. A pretext is being sought that could warrant the imposition of martial law and would incite the people to take the wrong path.

Riel will do more to pacify Big Bear than twenty government agents could accomplish in a month of Sundays. If the Eastern Government had looked after our interests it would have treated the peaceful Indians with enough justice so that the turbulent ones would have had no moral sympathy and there would now be no cause for apprehension. There is, however, no danger of trouble from the Indians as long as we can keep Riel in the country.<sup>24</sup>

Such speeches were bound to bring a reaction from the federal authorities. This reaction came quickly. He was placed under police surveillance, and government authorities were kept informed about his activities.<sup>25</sup> The commanding officer of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) detachment in Prince Albert, Major L.N.F. Crozier, reported to his superior officer that William Jackson "did more harm than any [Metis] among them."<sup>26</sup>

By late September, Riel began to fear for Jackson's safety, so he wrote, asking him to come out and live with the Metis at St. Laurent. Since William's mail was being opened by the authorities, the letter was sent to his brother, Thomas Eastwood,<sup>27</sup> who passed the information on to him.

This communication from Riel marked the turning point in William Jackson's life. He accepted Riel's offer and moved out of Prince Albert to live with the Metis. He was moved into the home of Charles Nolin who, at that time, was a trusted Lieutenant of Louis Riel. For some reason he moved out of the Nolin residence fairly soon after his arrival. Jackson may have had some intuition that Nolin was a traitor, or a spy. Indeed, this later proved to be the case.<sup>28</sup>

Jackson moved into the home of another of Riel's Lieutenants, a Metis named Moise Dullette. There was no question about the loyalty of this family. Moise, an illiterate man, made Jackson, the learned "Whiteman", most welcome in his home. The family's friendliness and hospitality was something he was to remember all his life. Another transformation occurred for young William Jackson at the Dullette home. He fell in love with Moise Dullette's daughter, Rose, a young woman of sixteen years.

Will's love for Rose did not distract him from his work: it simply enhanced his efforts. During the winter of 1884-5, he produced a manifesto for the Popular Movement. In it he outlined the goals that both Riel and he sought. The manifesto declared:

We are launching a movement in this colony in order to obtain provincial legislation for the North West Territories and, if possible, the administration of our national resources. We have to be able to construct our own railroads and establish other industries that will serve our own interests instead of those of the Easterners.

All the wrong-doing stems from the fact that the legislators in Ottawa are responsible to the Eastern electors and not to us and they are constrained to

legislate in favor of Eastern interests instead of ours. The laws that have been adopted to date have already caused a major depression in the agricultural and commercial centers as well as in the labour force. The state of affairs will continue to worsen as long as the legislators of the North West are not elected by the citizens of our own land, Chosen men should have a stake in this country's interests.<sup>29</sup>

The goals outlined in the manifesto, that of the establishment of a provincial government, with provincial control over local resources, were not different than those already granted to other provinces of Canada, including Manitoba and British Columbia. Jackson felt that these demands would be accepted for the Saskatchewan territories if serious pressure was placed on the federal government. Thus, throughout the winter of 1884-5, he worked hard putting together the Bill of Rights.

The Bill of Rights was to be the centerpiece of Louis Riel's peaceful campaign for responsible government. The Bill of Rights is the only tangible evidence remaining that indicates just how moderate and reasonable the west's demands were under Riel's leadership. These demands were not revolutionary. They simply asked for what all other Canadian provinces had, responsible government, and control over provincial resources. This Bill was sent to the federal government in January, 1886.

The Bill of Rights that was sent to Prime Minister Macdonald closed by stating:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your excellency in Council would be pleased to cause the introduction, at the coming session of Parliament, for a measure providing for the complete organization of the District of Saskatchewan as a province, and that they be allowed as in

legislate in favor of Eastern interests instead of ours. The laws that have been adopted to date have already caused a major depression in the agricultural and commercial centers as well as in the labour force. The state of affairs will continue to worsen as long as the legislators of the North West are not elected by the citizens of our own land, Chosen men should have a stake in this country's interests.<sup>29</sup>

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they be allowed as in 1870, to send Delegates to Ottawa with their Bill of Rights; whereby an understanding may be arrived at as to their entry into confederation, with the constitution of a free province. And your humble Petitioners will not cease to pray.<sup>90</sup>

## TREACHERY AND WAR

The Bill of Rights was received and acknowledged by Henry J. Morgan, the undersecretary of state, on January 9, 1886, and passed on to the minister of the interior. The minister of the interior was none other than Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald. Wanting to ensure that the national policy was duly administered as planned, he had taken personal charge of that portfolio.<sup>91</sup>

Jackson received Morgan's acknowledgment, dated January 5, 1885, and immediately contacted Riel. He informed Riel, "it is evident that [the officials of the federal government] are prepared to communicate with us on something like equal terms".<sup>92</sup> Jackson, for once was dead wrong. The federal government was not about to lose control of western development, nor was it prepared to grant responsible government to the NWT. Instead, the Bill of Rights was passed on to the British colonial office. Prime Minister Macdonald later stood up in parliament and solemnly declared: "The Bill of Rights has never been officially or indeed in any way promulgated so far as we know, and transmitted to the government."<sup>93</sup>

In the face of such chicanery, the efforts of the Popular Movement began to fall apart. Despite the fact that the Metis under Riel had avoided confrontation and insisted on following the democratic process, troop reinforcements began to arrive in Prince Albert. A contingent of police were then moved from

Prince Albert, and were quartered in Fort Carlton, the HBC post still under the command of Lawrence Clarke.

Throughout January and February 1885, rumors abounded throughout the Metis communities along the South Saskatchewan River. There were rumors that the federal government was planning an offensive against them. There were rumors that the police were going to attempt to capture Louis Riel. As a result of these rumors the Metis leadership began to rupture and lose its solidarity. There were fears that spies were working among them, and tension mounted daily.

The rumors had begun in December when an ominous report was spread through a crowd gathered for a political rally at St. Laurent. Word was out that the police were going to break up the meeting and arrest Riel. Sergeant Gagnon of the NWMP, who had been keeping a close eye on the meeting, reported to his commanding officer that it took less than half an hour for the Metis to marshal over one hundred armed men for Riel's protection. The mysterious police build-up, coupled with the federal government's continued intransigence concerning Metis land rights was rapidly destabilizing the region.

In response, the French-speaking Metis became more and more militant. They were clearly gearing up for war. Elements of the English-speaking Halfbreed and White support for Riel began to draw back, fearing violence. Not knowing what part the government was playing in all this, Riel and Jackson were seen to be at fault. Members of the Popular Movement began to fear Riel,

whose actions now appeared inconsistent. William Jackson was warned by his old political ally, Frank Oliver, editor of the Edmonton Bulletin, to stop supporting Louis Riel. He warned Jackson that Riel

may be a man of great influence, and of noble patriotism but he is political dynamite, a real political boomerang. By seconding Riel you will be seen as seconding his entire conduct, and your enemies will thus have, in their hands, the best possible weapon against you. I am not telling you not to support him. You must judge that for yourself but I am warning you that it is a delicate matter and that, for my part, I would not wish to endorse this man from the few things I have heard about the matter until he has done something to eradicate the blot that weighs on him.<sup>94</sup>

Despite the obvious personal danger of continuing to support Riel and the Metis, young Will Jackson did not hesitate for a moment. He ignored the advice of Frank Oliver and others, and gave his full support to Riel. Jackson, instead of abandoning Riel as "a real political boomerang" decided he would support Riel to the death if necessary.

His conviction that Riel and the Metis had been wronged by the federal government was so strong that Jackson decided to change his identity in order to give full support to his adopted people. He turned to the Catholic religion and was baptized on March 19, during the feast of St. Joseph. He ceased to be known as William Henry Jackson, and took on the name of Honore~ Joseph Jaxon. Honore~ sounded similar to the name the French Metis had used. They had called him by his second name, Henry, which, in the French language sounded like Honore~. "Joseph" was taken from the patron saint's feast that corresponded to the day of his

baptism. "Jaxon" was chosen since it had Latin connotations, according to Honore~ Joseph Jaxon.

### HONORE~ JOSEPH JAXON

On March 19, 1885 Honore~ Joseph Jaxon put on the headband and the brilliant Metis sash, of the type often worn by his French-Indian brothers. With his dark hair and his strong, dark eyes, he was virtually indistinguishable from the people who had adopted him. His plans were to marry Rose and settle down among the Metis, but these plans had little hope of fulfillment. The intrigues of the local Conservative Party were rapidly leading to a state of war in the west.

Now things moved with a mysterious and lethal swiftness against Riel and the Metis. By March 19, the peaceful Metis resistance was all but finished, and war - a war that neither Riel nor Jaxon wanted - was being forced upon them.<sup>35</sup> In the face of the police build-up and the federal government's unwillingness to negotiate, Riel's temperament underwent a transformation. He became violently angry. He began to mistrust many of his compatriots, including Honore~ Jaxon. This was not mindless paranoia; some of his supporters were indeed informing the federal government about Riel's plans. Charles Nolan was acting as a spy for the government, as was Father Andre~.<sup>36</sup>

Riel and Jaxon quarrelled frequently. The rift that developed between them was widened by the actions of some of the Metis leaders who had been jealous of Riel's close association with his White ally. Jaxon, embittered by this, became loud and abusive. He began to argue against Riel's tactics and course of action.

The Metis, unaccustomed to hearing the normally rational Honore~ Jaxon swearing and losing his temper, began to fear that Jaxon was going mad. As the political situation deteriorated and military conflict became more and more of a likelihood, Jaxon, along with several other White men in the district, were jailed by the Metis and charged with spying. For some reason Riel did not intervene in Jaxon's case, even though he must have known a mistake had been made.

Just before war broke out, Riel allowed Thomas Eastwood Jackson to come to Batoche to visit his brother. Jaxon had been charged with spying and had faced a death sentence.<sup>97</sup> Thomas Eastwood saw that Honore~ Jaxon was suffering from nervous exhaustion. He was dirty, unshaven and unkept. This was in marked contrast to his usual deportment. He had always been clean and meticulously well dressed. Thomas returned to Prince Albert with the sad news that his brother had become mentally unbalanced.

Riel's imprisonment of Honore~ Jaxon had other consequences that were both far-reaching and tragic. All White support for Riel evaporated on the very eve of the war. Just when the Metis needed support the most, they found themselves on their own. While Jaxon sat helplessly in prison the hopes and dreams of his Metis friends came crashing down. Violent events swirled around them, making the fate of an individual such as Jaxon seem almost trivial. Indeed, an entire way of life was coming to an end.

War broke out on March 26, 1885. In fact, this war was the direct result of a taunt hurled at Major L.N.F. Crozier by

Lawrence Clarke. Having been called a coward by Lawrence Clarke for not attempting to arrest the Metis gathered at Duck Lake under the command of Gabriel Dumont, Major Crozier pushed a small band of police and civilian volunteers into a foolhardy and unnecessary foray against the Metis.

This same Lawrence Clarke had provoked the Metis into taking up arms by telling them that they were about to be attacked by the police. It was Clarke's public insinuation of Crozier's "cowardice" however that led directly to the armed conflict at Duck Lake.<sup>38</sup>

Major Crozier had been aware that a large contingent of police reinforcements were on their way to Fort Carlton from Regina. They were due to arrive the next day, March 27. But Crozier, responding to Clarke's charge of cowardice, did not wait for the reinforcements whose very presence might have prevented an outbreak by demonstrating to the Metis the futility of such action. Crozier, whose bravery and bad temper were already legend in the NWT, had to respond when Clarke shouted at him in front of the entire corps of volunteers and police to go to Duck Lake and "teach the rebels a lesson if he were not afraid of them".<sup>39</sup> In a fit of temper, Crozier set out for Duck Lake with his small, ill-fated force of police and volunteers.

The battle at Duck Lake was short, sharp and decisive. The police were surrounded, defeated and routed. They left their dead and wounded laying in the blood-stained snow behind them.<sup>40</sup> There was no going back for either side after Duck Lake. From March 26

onward, it was total war between the Metis and the forces of the Canadian government.

A small army, mobilized before the actual outbreak of armed hostilities, headed west using the CPR. On the night of April 4, the first eastern battalions reached Winnipeg. Less than a week later, with the British regular army's General Fred Middleton in command, the first of three strike columns left Qu'Appelle, marching through the knee-deep snow towards Batoche. In Batoche, Riel's militia of some three hundred poorly armed men awaited them.

Middleton's force was engaged by the Metis before it reached Batoche. At Fish Creek the Canadians received their baptism in fire. Dumont's men once again dealt the Canadians a heavy blow, forcing Middleton to exercise caution and restraint when he finally resumed his advance on Batoche.

The fire fight at Batoche began with an artillery barrage on the village on the morning of May 9. The Metis, desperately short of ammunition, held out for two days without suffering any casualties. Firing from a network of camouflaged trenches and rifle pits, they took a further toll of Canadian soldiers. But on the third day the Metis were overwhelmed by a frontal charge. Riel, together with other leaders of the resistance were captured and imprisoned. All were taken prisoner, except for Gabriel Dumont and a companion who made a daring race for the American border, and succeeded in escaping across the line. Riel was

removed to Regina where he was imprisoned while he awaited his trial.

Honore~ Jaxon and several other prisoners had been kept in a small earthen cellar under a house while the battle of Batoche raged around them. The three days spent by the prisoners in the cold, dark, cramped quarters of the cellar, with the sounds of battle intermittently rising and falling outside, took its toll. Honore~ was sick with concern for his companions outside, and was fraught with fear for Rose and her family. In many ways, the uncertainty of the prisoners in the cellar was worse than facing the concrete dangers faced by those who were fighting in the trenches. The prisoners in the cellar had faced a possible death sentence. Middleton had been warned by Riel that they would be executed in retaliation, should any Metis civilians be killed.

On the third day of the battle, just when the prisoners felt they could stand it no longer, the sound of the cannon and rifle fire suddenly ceased. The silence was broken by sporadic rifle fire, off at some distance. Then all went silent. The prisoners heard the large stones being rolled off the cellar door that had imprisoned them. The cellar door was lifted clear and there against the light was the silhouette of a Canadian soldier. The prisoners went free, all except Honore~ Joseph Jaxon. He was recognized as the "White rebel of Prince Albert" and was imprisoned again - this time by the Canadians. Honore~ had seen the last of his beautiful Rose and her people. It would be decades before he was able to return to them.

Jaxon, who had been jailed by the Metis, now suffered further abuse from his Canadian captors. Red-eyed, unshaven, dirty, hungry and shaken, he was looked upon by his new captors as a madman. Jaxon was charged with treason felony and taken to Regina for trial. Riel was charged with high treason, a charge that called for the death penalty upon conviction.

Jaxon came to trial in Regina in July, 1885, long before Louis Riel's trial began. The government officials found Jaxon, as the English-Protestant Canadian named William Henry Jackson, to be a political embarrassment. How could they claim the war of 1885 was purely a conflict caused by Louis Riel and the Metis when a prominent, well-educated Canadian of English extraction was also involved? Would not his evidence widen the range of conflict beyond purely "legal" parameters into the arena of politics? There were questions concerning the government's role in starting the war that might prove even more embarrassing. Thus, Jaxon's trial, like that of Louis Riel, became primarily a political trial.

Politics intruded into the courtroom, without question. Politics was introduced, not by Jaxon, but by the prosecution. The judge and jury were determined to have Jaxon classified as "insane". This would reduce his political platform, and the grievances of the farmers and businessmen that he represented, to a question of his personal sanity. If found insane, he could be given a "not guilty on the grounds of insanity" decision. This would discredit

Jaxon, and deal by default with the issues he might otherwise raise.

Against Jaxon's wishes, his legal counsel entered a "not guilty on the grounds of insanity" plea. This plea was accepted without argument by the Crown's counsel. Evidence of his insanity was presented by his brother, Thomas Eastwood, who was only concerned with getting Honore~ off. This evidence was supported by two physicians, the NWMP physician, Dr. Jukes, and Dr. Robert Cotten.<sup>41</sup> Dr. Cotten testified:

I have carefully examined the prisoner William Jackson first separately and independently without previous communication with Dr. Jukes, or without any knowledge of the purport of Dr. Jukes report. I have since re-examined William Jackson in the presence of Dr. Jukes and am of the opinion that he is now suffering from dementia.<sup>42</sup>

Letters written to government officials by Jaxon while he was awaiting trial in prison were produced as evidence, even though they were lucid, well written letters. A letter sent to Lieutenant Governor Dewdney was produced. In this letter, Jaxon had warned Dewdney not to hang Louis Riel or the consequences would be drastic and long-term. This, coupled with his written demands for responsible government in the NWT seemed to Dewdney to be presumptuous to the point of insanity. Dewdney wrote to Prime Minister Macdonald:

My dear Sir John:

I enclose a copy of a letter received from Jackson who is one of the rebels in jail here - I think he is crazy.

Yours Truly  
E. Dewdney.<sup>43</sup>

At this point, Jaxon's trial seemed totally irrational, with the prosecution arguing that he was not guilty by reason of insanity, and Jaxon, the prisoner, arguing that he was guilty - as guilty as his partner, Louis Riel. Jaxon informed the court:

As far as responsibility of mine [is concerned] about what you call "rebellion", I have always declared myself perfectly responsible, that is to say, as Riel's secretary I wish to share his fate whatever that may be. <sup>44</sup>

Incredibly, Jaxon's trial was over in half an hour. Jaxon was found not guilty on the grounds of insanity, and was sent to the lunatic asylum at Selkirk, Manitoba, which was not yet completed. He was detained as a mental patient in the temporary asylum at Lower Fort Garry (in Winnipeg, Manitoba) on August 14, 1885.

While incarcerated in the asylum, Jaxon's actions were clearly not those of a lunatic. He re-read Plato's Republic, a book that had acted as a source of inspiration for him during his youth. As well, he wrote long letters to friends, parents and government officials. These letters indicated that Jaxon was not only sane, but was as compelling a writer as anyone in the Canadian west at the time. <sup>45</sup>

Jaxon exhibited other artistic talents in addition to his writing. He carved a bust of Louis Riel and presented it to Dr. David Young, the warm and compassionate medical superintendent of the mental institute. Dr. Young, like Honore~ Jaxon, was "years ahead of his time". In an era when mentally disturbed persons were often locked up and treated as animals, Dr. Young gave his

patients a good deal of freedom, treated them with respect, and offered genuine therapy.<sup>46</sup>

Dr. Young probably recognized the brilliance of his patient, Honore~ Jaxon, and was aware that he had been incarcerated in a mental institute for political, not medical reasons.<sup>47</sup> Jaxon was well treated in the asylum, and virtually had the run of the place. The only complaint that his keepers had during his three-month stay with them was that he often refused to take orders. But, under the enlightened stewardship of Dr. Young this fault was not punished severely. Instead, Dr. Young "provided a congenial environment, a wide range of occupations and the complete absence of restraint."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Jaxon was free to leave the institute for short periods of time.

A lesser man might have chosen to give up the struggle outside, where he would face an unfriendly legal system and a possible jail sentence if he escaped. After all, life in this particular asylum was comfortable, even congenial at times. Nevertheless, Jaxon prepared for an escape. He often stayed out longer than the time allotted him, so that his keepers would not be unduly alarmed when he did make his break. On several occasions his privileges were taken from him for being absent without leave.

On Monday, November 2, Jaxon simply walked out of the asylum, never to return. It was a bitterly cold day and he did not have an outer coat or warm clothes of any kind. It took twenty-four hours for the keepers to send out the alarm, and by that time Honore~ Joseph Jaxon had made good his escape. He was free, but

- and this is typical of the man - his thoughts and concerns were for those patients remaining inside. He did not want his escape to be used as an excuse that would force Dr. Young to restrict the movements of the remaining inmates. In mid-November Jaxon wrote to Dr. Young:

I owe you some excuse for the cavalier and sudden manner in which I left your establishment last week. My reason for acting thus is that if I waited for my regular release, it would place me in the implicit obligation of abandoning the cause of Mr. Riel and the Metis. I estimated that I could not do such a thing with a clear conscience. Moreover, I considered it my duty to try to save Mr. Riel's life and I know that no words of mine would have the least influence unless I was free of all ties and on the American side of the border. That was the reason for my hasty departure. This endeavor has placed me in extreme need since I did not eat except for a few berries and nuts as well as a little flour, from Monday at noon to Saturday noon. Whatever the cost, I am now among friends and am well. <sup>49</sup>

These were the words of a highly moral and dedicated political activist. He had to be free of the asylum if he were to be of any assistance to his friend Louis Riel. However, he still showed concern for the good work that Dr. Young was doing at the asylum.

It was too late for him to help his former companion, however. Louis Riel had already gone to trial in Regina for treason. He was given the death sentence, despite a plea from the jury for leniency. Indeed, formal requests were made by the US government, and other governments and individuals around the world, to spare Riel's life. These requests fell upon deaf ears, and Riel was sentenced to death by hanging on November 16, 1885. The sentence was carried out.

That same day, Honore~ Jaxon's sister, Cicely, received a letter from St. Vincent, Minnesota. It was from Honore~. He had heard that Riel was sentenced to die soon. He gave her his reasons for leaving the asylum, and begged her to contact the Prime Minister to stay Riel's execution, offering to be hanged in his place. He wrote Cicely:

As you have probably heard, I escaped from Selkirk. If I had remained there until they set me free, I would thus have tacitly accepted the justice of the sentence passed on Riel and on my friends of Stoney Mountain. [Stoney Mountain was the jail a few miles out of Winnipeg where other Native leaders of the resistance were serving sentences.]

If, after having obtained my freedom, I would have failed to assist them, I would have been a traitor. If I had helped them I would probably have caused Dr. Young to lose his position. Now he is no longer responsible. Please offer my excuse to him and send this telegram to Sir John A. Macdonald:

If you hang Riel you will provoke a revolt even more dangerous and atrocious than the last one. He is the only interpreter of the Native people and you must listen to him and hang me in his place. <sup>so</sup>

The offer to be hanged in Riel's place was probably not an empty gesture of bravado. Jaxon's offer was made before he knew of Riel's date of execution. Needless to say, Prime Minister Macdonald would not have taken him up on his offer. The result of such action would have been political suicide for him, and his government.

When Jaxon heard of Riel's execution he began a series of public speeches inside the U.S., decrying the federal government's role in this brutal affair. He was still dressed in an old tweed suit during these occasions, and had not obtained an overcoat. It was

late November, the weather was unseasonably cold and the first winter storms were threatening. Yet, Jaxon continued with his public speaking tour of the central US. He eventually made his way - nobody knows how - to Chicago. This city was the hotbed of revolution in the U.S.<sup>51</sup> In Chicago, Honore~ Joseph Jaxon, the Canadian rebel, found a new home. Here, the working people might be persuaded to support the cause of the Canadian Metis. There were intellectuals in Chicago leading large movements that supported the concepts of international revolution.

Jaxon recognized that the Metis still had some support in the Canada he had left behind. Most of the people entering both Canada and the U.S. had left the Old World as a means of escaping oppression. These people might be a source of active support for the Metis, if only the true story of their struggle could be told.

This potential support was not a figment of Jaxon's imagination. The following newspaper article from the Ottawa Daily Press, dated November 24, 1985, was typical of such sentiment.

#### IRISH SUPPORT

##### TO THE EDITOR OF THE FREE PRESS

The Irish people of Canada have a decidedly strong feeling of sympathy for the French-Canadians for the simple reason that by the hanging of Riel it brought to their minds many a painful incident in the checkered, but not always unsuccessful, efforts of their own countrymen in their struggles for freedom. Instead of the Irish of Canada being indifferent or callous to the fate of Riel, the opposite is the case. The Irish people sympathize with the wrongs of the unfortunate

[Metis], for the [Metis] case had a similarity to their own countrymen's, which at once won their sympathy. No, no the Irish people of Canada do not support the government's action in hanging the political prisoner Riel. Riel was a political prisoner in every sense of the word, and as such was entitled to the usages of civilization--clemency, not to the treatment of feudal barbarism--an ignominious death. No man can voice the sentiments of the Irish people of Canada truly, who denies that they are strongly and intimately in sympathy with their French-Canadian fellow-citizens in the present crisis, and that they feel that the government has not only committed a blunder, but have perpetrated a crime.

The Irish in Canada were not alone in their sympathy for Riel and the Metis. Clearly, many western farmers, as well as large numbers of people in the province of Quebec, sympathized with the Riel family, and felt that the Metis had been treated unjustly by the federal government.

THE EVENING JOURNAL

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Monday October 4, 1909

RIEL MARTYR SAYS H. JAXON

Picturesque Figure Of Northwest Rebellion Visits Edmonton After  
Twenty-Four Years

A rotund little man with a huge forehead that shown out from beneath a spacious Christie set far back on his head, and with features that radiated good nature, walked up to the register of the Alberta hotel Friday morning and ascribed his autograph. He had no luggage save a small grip, to huge cameras and a iron tripod. He signed himself Honore H. Jaxon of Mista-wa-sis.

Aside from his pracular name and the equally peculiar name of his place of residence the rotund little man attracted no more attention at the moment that many of the other travellers that registered at the hotel that day; infact there were few, if any, in the rotunda of the hotel, say perhaps the proprietor himself, who knew that the peculiar man with the peculiar name from the peculiarly - named town was one of the picturesque figures in the history of Western Canada, that he played a prominent part in the exciting drama of the early days of the Northwest, the details of which have long since been forgotten in the hurray and scurry of the modern civilization that has swept over the prairies and transformed them from the stamping

ground of buffalo herds and the camping grounds of Indian war parties, to cities in towns and villages and cultivated farms.

The little man was no less than honoury Jaxon, one time secretary of the council of which Louis Riel was President, and which was held responsible for the Northwest Rebellion of 1885. In fact, this was the man who wrote all the letters, prepared all the documents, signed all the orders, and in short, furnished all the ideas in the attempt to put which into effect Louis Riel forfeited his head to the state on a memorable day in Regina in 1885.

While Louis Riel suffered death, a martyr to his ideals, this little man, who was his secretary, and who, next to Riel himself, had more to do with the Northwest Rebellion and any other man, quietly burned all the valuable of the council and took a train out of Winnipeg for Chicago, there to seek his fortune anew.

With Chicago as his headquarters, and with no other capital than his ability to express inconvincing language his irradical and socialistic ideas, honoury Jaxon once more brought himself into fame, and has succeeded in making himself one of the liveliest figures in the limelight of publicity.

Not since the day, late in the fall of 1885, that he dropped the valuable documents of the council on the fireplace thus destroying all record of the demands made by the settlers of the Northwest for

redress from there grievances, twenty-one years ago, has set honoury Jaxon set foot in Edmonton. In all those twenty-four years he has been busy making a career and the story of that career would read like a romance, were it published to the world in book form. In all these years Jaxon has not wavered a particle in his belief that the Northwest Rebellion was justified, that Louis Riel was not the corrupt person the government would have had the people believe, but was a martyr of the first class.

#### Riel Died A Patriote

Mr. Jaxon gave distinct evidence of this in his conversation with a Journal reporter last evening. "Louis Riel died a patriote," he said pounding his left palm with his right fist. "He was not a corrupt man. He could not be bought. He had his ideals and they were high ideals. He believed that he was right in attempting to put them into effect. I believed he was right. Fresh from Toronto University, and idealist myself, I joined him and his party, and did my best to back him up in his fight. We did not want the rebellion. It was not our intention to rebel. The rebellion was forced upon us. What we wanted was justice for the half-breeds and justice for the white settlers. We were fighting for representation at Ottawa and we got it. We did not get all we were asking for.

"We had our bill of rights drawn up and we are to submit it to Ottawa. But I saw that the bill would never get fair treatment and I burned it. Had that memorial ever reached Ottawa more white people

would have gone to Regina for trial than half-breeds."

Switching from the discussion of the Northwest Rebellion, Mr. Jaxon, in the forcible manner characteristic of him, expounded to the reporter some of his socialistic theories. Mr. Jaxon spent four years at Toronto University and was preparing to write on his final examinations for the Arts degree when he became entangled in "that mixed-up," as he termed the rebellion. Since leaving Canada he has been a student of all socialistic problems, and has been chiefly prominent in the educational branch of the labor movement. He is not a wealthy man. He left Canada without a cent and he is practically penniless today.

He has been responsible for some sensational stunts in the socialistic and labor world of the States. For instance, he it was who wrote the letter to President Roosevelt and brought forth the reply that Moyer and Haywood, the labor men on trial at Rose City, Idaho, were in a class with Harriman and the

The Daily Phoenix

Saskatoon, Canada

Friday, August 13, 1909

Page Number One

## THE DAILY PHOENIX

Page one Column 5

### CONCILIATION BOARD OPENS WITH A SPAT

Who is Jaxon, Mayor asks?

Chairmen pleads for peace

Short session held and delay follows request for stenographer by labor representatives.

The board of conciliation called ? and appointed to settle the dispute between the federal labor union men and the city regarding the trench contracts, made very little progress when they met this morning at the courthouse. The first session was called at 10:00 and at 11:00 the board ? to assemble again at 3:00 this afternoon. Such questions as the reading of all the correspondence connected with the case and the employment of the stenographer were brought up by the labor representatives the settlement of which occupied a full hour.

The members of the board are former senator ejmeilicke, Dundurn, chairmen; Alexander Smith and Edward Stephenson. The examiners representing the city are Mayor WM. Hopkins and Alderman Robert McIntosh, Chairmen of the board of works. The examiners for the labor men are Honore Jaxon and E. Sibley. A third examiner may be

appointed if found necessary. JH. Trusdale, City Clerk, accompanied the city representatives and about a dozen others were present. Neither of the parties were represented by legal men. The investigation is being conducted under the Industrial Disputes and Investigation Act of 1907.

#### Chairmen Opens Proceedings

To open the proceedings the chairman explained that the minister of labor had appointed a board to adjust a dispute between the municipality of Saskatoon and Members of the Saskatoon Federal Labor union number 12, 801 the necessary papers were before him and anyone present was at liberty to examine them. He suggested that the labor representatives established the complaints layed before the department. If the claim of the men was not established and true, there need be no further proceedings. The credentials of the labor representatives were laid on the table and the mayor stated that Mr. McIntosh and himself were there to conduct the case for the city. The statement was accepted as satisfactory to all concerned. Mr. Smith agreed that the labor men establish there case and the city afterwards lay their facts before the board.

Mr. Jaxson Asks For Correspondence.

On behalf of the federal labor union Mr. Jaxson requested that in all fairness to both sides the correspondence in connection with the appointed of the board be read so that every detail might be clearly before the parties in dispute. This in his opinion was necessary. Mr. Meilke said the the object of the act was not to tear the parties apart but to conciliate and make peace. Canada, he said, in this respect was taking a step in the right direction. It was his desire of chairmen of the board to see that the parties in dispute get together, administer justice and see the matter amicably settled. Mr. Jaxson again requested that the correspondence be read so that the fullest possible light be thrown on the matter and that both sides might have a full understanding from the beginning. There was no ill feeling but the facts he thought should be known on both sides so that they would understand each other's reviews. Mr. Stephenson suggested that possibility the correspondence could not be produced and might not be procurable within five days. Mr. Meilicke agreed. Mr. Smith pointed out that what the board had to do was to deal with the evidence now in the hands of the chairman. A. J. Sibley intimated that the labor men would place there correspondence on the table if the other side would do the same. Both Mayor Hopkins and Alderman McIntosh stated that as far as they were concerned there were not communications except what was now before the board. Mr. Meilicke ruled that the board was impartial. There was a charge before it and it had to be answered. It was moved by Edward Stephenson and seconded by Alex Smith that in view of the fact that the board had not copies of the correspondence before them that the

request of the labor men be refused. This was agreed to.

#### Chairmen Sees Rift Widening.

It was next suggested by Mr. Jaxon that a stenographer be employed to take the proceedings of the court. The cost of living, wages, etc. had to be gone into. Mr. Mellicke here warned the court that instead of being conciliated they were drifting further apart. From the word go he could see that the feeling was getting worse. There was no provision in the act in the act he thought for a stenographer, unless permission be granted by minister of labor. Mr. Jaxon suggested that the minister of labor be telegraphed. Mr. Stephenson agreed that a stenographer was necessary. The request was a fair one he thought and a record of the proceedings should be kept so as to assist the board in the course of their deliberations. Mr. Smith supported this view. Chairmen Mellicke again pulled on the reins the drift he concluded was to make the case a long expensive one. Mr. Jaxon suggested to the board that its final object was to settle the dispute, the expense was a secondary matter. The request for a stenographer was not actuated by any desire to extend the proceedings of the board but to establish its case. It was not made through any acrimonious feeling because the request for the reading of the correspondence had been rejected. Mr. Stephenson was agreeable to procuring the services of a stenographer and six copies of the correspondence. Mr. Mellicke did not favor delaying the court for the correspondence. It was agreed to wire for permission to engage a court stenographer and meet again at 3:00.

Asking About Mr. Jaxon.

Alderman McIntosh here asked who Mr. Jaxon was and was referred by the chairman to the credentials and his appointments as one of the representatives of the labor men. The alderman thought he might be a solicitor with his grip of newspaper clippings and other references.

Mayor Hopkins asked the chairman if Mr. Jaxon was a British subject or a American. Mr. Stephenson replied that the question was an unfortunate one "If Jaxon is an American", the mayor retorted, "He should not come over here interferring with Canadians and there work." Mr. Sibley informed that the court that the labor union made no stipulation as to the nationality of the union members. The chairman explained that member of the conciliation board had to be a British subject but this did not apply to the representatives.

Mr. Jaxon rose and said that he thought it unnecessary for him to make any statement but to clear matters up he would say that he was one of a small numbers of people born on this side of the line. He had lived on the other side for twenty-two years without applying for American papers. There was applause from the witnesses in the rear bringing a rebuke from the chairman. The court broke up, each side assuring the other that there was the best of feeling all around.

It is improbable that much business will be done this afternoon as no pay is allowed by the government unless a full session is put in. The proceedings when they do start, will involve minutes inquiry regarding the system in which the sewer and water extensions are carried on

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SASKATOON

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SASKATOON LABOR DISPUTE FINDING

OTTAWA RECEIVES COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

THE UNION IS NOT RECOGNIZED

Conditions Do Not Favor Such In View of Majority-Proposed Minimum  
Scale Refused.

Ottawa, September 14 - Hon. MacKenzie King, Minister of Labor, has received from Saskatoon report of the board of which was established under the industrial disputes investigation act to inquire into differences between the corporation of Saskatoon and workmen to the number of 150, members of the Saskatoon federal labor union.

The workmen demanded an increase in the rate of wages to twenty-five cents per hour for all unskilled labor; provisions for cribbing on public works to the depth of six feet, stipulation in all contracts in favor of employments so far as possible of resident labor, provision of proper sanitary arrangements for employes on all public works and the payment to working men shall made fort nightly in the form of cash.

It was suggested by the chairman and agreed to by the representative of the city that and a offer of twenty cents per hour

as minimum wage for unskilled labor should be made to employees with the exception of the months of August, September and October when the minimum wage will be twenty-two and a half cents, but the board could not prevail on either party to recede permits position.

In respect to employment of resident labor it was ascertained by the board that a clause for this purpose is already included in all corporation contracts.

The board recommends an addition to the clause requiring contractors to see that they are in possession of all information required to enable them to adhere closely to the clause and also that workmen are not to be imported directly or indirectly, except when necessary in the public interest, to carry on work in progress or in contemplation expeditiously.

The report shows a request on the part of the member of board appointed on recommendations of the employes that a provision should also be made for recognition of the federal labor union as a union.

The majority of the board, however, were unable to consider this position and it was urged on behalf of the city that it would be unwise to undertake that none but union men should be employed as long as a number of homesteaders of small means in Saskatchewan in Saskatoon district were desirous at certain seasons of obtaining employment.

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OFFICIAL REPORT ON THE DISPUTE

Final And Complete Statement By Board of Conciliation Between The  
City And Federal Labor Union

The following is the report in full of the board of conciliation and investigation as sent into the department of labor and signed by the chairmen, E. J. Meilicke, and Alex. Smith.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Fourth September. 1909. To the honorable MacKenzie King, Minister of Labor, Ottawa. Sir, - On the third of July, 1909, an application was made for the appointment of a Board of Conciliation Investigation, to adjust differences between the members of the Saskatoon Federal Labor Union No. 18, 801, and the Corporation of the City of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. The application was made in behalf of the employees and signed by Alfred J. Sibley and Albert E. Edjington, both of the City of Saskatoon.

The board which was duly constituted on August 13, 1909, consisted of E. Stephenson, recommended by the employes, Alexander Smith, of Saskatoon recommended by the Corporation of the City of Saskatoon, and E. J. Meilicke, of Dundurn, appointed by the minister of labor. Honore Jaxon, A. J. Sibley and Francis Muntz, president of the Federal Labor union, appeared on behalf of the laborers, and mayor

Hopkins and Alderman McIntosh, chairmen of the board of works, appeared on behalf of the city.

The board held its first session in the court house, Saskatoon, on Aug. 13, 1909, at the hour of ten o'clock am, having being furnished with approved copies from the minister of labor of the claims of the labor union and replies thereto from the corporation of the city of Saskatoon.

The differences referred for investigation where demands on the part of the employes as follows, viz; (one) that twenty-five cents per hour be the minimum scale of pay for all unskilled labor. (Two) that all contractors or corporations conducting public works shall furnish adequate cribbing after a depth of six feet; also that the boards of works shall acquaint the above mentioned contractor or corporation with the Saskatchewan Workmen's Compensation act. (Three) that it be mentioned in all contracts that residents be employed as far as possible. (Four) that all public works shall provide proper sanitary arrangements for employes (five) that all contractors and corporations shall pay employees fortnightly and not keep more than one days pay on hand. Also that the aforementioned pay shall be in cash, and not in the form of cheques.

The city replies to the complaints are as follows, viz; (one) the corporations pays twenty centes per hour for unskilled labor. This is the full value of such labor in Saskatoon. (Two) all trench work done by it is substantially and carefully protected with cribbing. (Three) it employs resident labourers as far as possible. (Four) no complaint has ever been made to the city engineer of lack of sanitary arrangements. (Five) wages are paid regularly every fort night.

(Six) employes are never discharged without a satisfactory reason. (Seven) the civic works are properly inspected, and due care taken of the life, limb, and health of the employes. (Eight) the accident mentioned in the application by the caving of trenches, did not happen upon works carried on by the corporation. (Nine) the proposal that the board of works shall acquaint contractors with provisions of the law is quite unreasonable. Firms and corporations can acquaint themselves with the public statutes, and the workmen's union may do so in case they think they're interests require it. (Ten) a clause is inferred in all corporation contracts requiring resident labourers to be employed as far as possible.

After several exchanges of ideas as to how to proceed it was decided that each party to the dispute be heard, and evidence submitted under oath dealing with the several points in dispute.

The representatives of the labour unions subpoenaed several witnesses in support of their contentions and were in turn submitted to a cross - examination by the representatives of the city. Before the board rose at 12 o'clock noon, it was suggested by the board that the parties to the dispute get together and try to agree on the points in which, to the mind of the board, there did not seem to be any great difference; and if such an agreement could be reached it would dispose of those issues, thus expediting the proceedings of the board, and would obviate references to them when dealing with further witnesses.

This suggestion was not agreed to but insistence made that the whole evidence must be placed before the board. At this point the board was asked, going to the complicated nature of the case, to ask

permission of the minister of labour to employ a stenographer to take report of all the proceedings. This request was entertained by the board and a message to that effect sent to the department. The board adjourned to meet at 3:00 p.m. anticipating a reply from the department of labour to their telegram. At the hour set for the adjourned meeting the board resumed its sittings, when shortly after the reply came from the department setting forth that experience had showned that the proceedings of boards have been on the whole, more satisfactory where evidence was taken informally and no verbatim reports obtained, which view was concurred in by the majority of the board.

The board decided that morning sessions should begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 12:00 noon, and afternoon sessions should begin at 2:00 p.m. and continue until 5:30 p.m., adjourning from time to time the fullest opportunity of presenting all the evidence available, and for the purpose of getting the parties to the dispute together with the object of effecting a settlement.

The board held 15 sessions in all, and heard 25 witnesses in support of the federal labour union's complaints and 9 on behalf of the City of Saskatoon. The different points of the dispute were taken up verbatim until all were disposed of as far as possible, and on such the board beg leave to report as follows.

The most vital point submitted to the board for investigation was the question of wages; the labourers asking in advance of 25% on the minimum wage paid by the city.

### Complaint One

In support of this complaint much evidence was submitted as to the cost of living, for the purpose of showing that the support of the labourers twenty-five cents per person as a minimum is necessary: also a letter from the Vancouver Civic Employes' union number one setting forth that thirty cents is paid there. The city, on the other hand, produced evidence setting forth that twenty cents per hour as a minimum wage is as high as is paid in any city in the west: for unskilled labour, and that a labourer can live on that wage in Saskatoon. The following cities were put in as evidence: Prince Albert twenty cents, Moose Jaw twenty cents, Regina twenty cents, Winnipeg twenty cents, Brandon seventeen cents. At the present time the City of Saskatoon is paying twenty-two and a half cents and twenty-five cents per hour for unskilled labour. Every effort has been expended by the board to bring the two parties together on these points. It was suggested by the chairman and agreed to by the representative of the city, that an offer of twenty cents per hour as a minimum wage for unskilled labour to be made to the employes, with the exception to the months of August, September and October, when the minimum wage would be twenty-two and a half cents, but the board could not prevail on either party to recede from its position.

### Complaint Two

The latter part of the complaint referring to the Saskatchewan Workmen's Compensation Act was withdrawn by the labour union. The

former part is embodied in all the corporation's and contractors' contracts.

In order to inimitate and reduce as much as possible the element of danger to which laborours are more or less exposed while engaged at their work in the trench, the board made a personal examination of the works and consulted with one of the most eminent engineers in the capital deed dominion of Canada, and as a result of that consultation recommended that the following be added to the paragraph as already in the contract, and which was unhesitatingly ascented to by the city, viz:

"That all lumber used as uprights in cribbing should be commercial or reputed two inch plank. In cases where quick sand is evident, then one inch lumber to be used in such a way as to be doubled, at the same time overlapping the cracks. Wood from six inches upwards to be free from shakes, loose nots, rot. Wallings to be sound plank two inches times ten inches or three inches time eight inches.

### Complaint Three

A clause such as is asked for is already in all corporation contracts. The board recommended that the following be added to the above contract clause.

"The contractors must see that they are in possession of that information which will enable them to adhere closely to the clause. Workmen not to be imported directly or indirectly except when necessary in the public interests to carry on the work in progress or

in contemplation expeditiously."

The representative of the labor union on the board on uncompromisingly insisted that to make this clause operative to his satisfaction the federal labor union as a union must be recognized. This position was interjected after all the evidence had been submitted and while the board was engaged in making out a report: The other members of the board taking a stand that as recognition of the union was not made in the schedule of complaints or demands, it could not be now entertained or considered by the board.

The city maintains that as the city of Saskatoon is peculiarly situated as being the center of a very large newly developing agriculture district, and to a very large extent at present depends on the progress of agriculture for its prosperity, - this district being newly settled to a large extent by homesteaders, many of whom are men of small means who from force of circumstances at certain seasons of the year are obliged to earn by their labor the ready cash which will enable them to subsist and make the necessary improvements on their homesteads until such time as they receive returns from their product from the soil: in view of this fact the city is averse to having any conditions imposed on the willing worker by recognizing the claims of the union that "none but union men may be employed as long as available". The city claims that the progress which has characterized the city would be jeopardized and the country's development as a whole would suffer in consequence.

#### Complaint Four

On representation being made to the city by the laborers as to the necessity of providing sanitary arrangements for their use while on works, the same where were provided by the different contractors as per instructions from the board of works of the city, and were in use before the first sitting of the board. Assurance was given that in future such sanitary arrangements would be provided.

#### Complaint Five

The city act of the province of Saskatchewan, page 11, section 51, read as follows:

"The treasurer shall daily or as often as the council may direct deposit in the name of the city in some chartered bank designated by resolution of the council all monies received by him in excess of \$100 and he shall jointly with the mayor sign all necessary cheques - thus preventing the city from complying with the demand set forth with this complaint. The city agrees to have the demand as in clause five inserted in its entirety in all future contracts, except the words "or corporations".

#### Complaint Six

"Discharge of employees without a reason being given". It was agreed that a reason be given when an employee was discharged and if such reason be asked in writing, that it be made in duplicate, one

copy to be given to the employee, the other to be filed with the chairmen of the board of works.

The parties to the dispute reached an agreement on all the differences except the minimum wage scale and recognition of the Federal Labor Union.

So long as the two parties to the dispute maintain there present attitude respecting these two clauses, conciliation is absolutely impossible. The board has exhausted every resource within its power to bring about the much desired conciliation, but, owing to the determines stand taken by both parties on the two aformention points, such as impossible.