

## Introduction to Document Six: The CCF and the Saskatchewan Métis Society

F. Laurie Barron

In 1944, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) came to power in Saskatchewan to begin what at the time was described as the first socialist government in North America. Led by the dynamic Tommy Douglas, the CCF promised to revolutionize provincial society and, for that reason, its every move was eagerly scrutinized by academics, political commentators and the media. Although this attention produced an array of literature on the new government, the Euro-centric bias of most commentators meant that almost nothing was said in the secondary literature about the Native policies of the CCF. This neglect notwithstanding, the Douglas government did evolve a series of policies meant to ameliorate the deplorable conditions found in most Native communities. Among other things, this led the premier in 1946 to call a Conference of Métis people that is the subject of the following document.

Unlike those of other conventions of the era, the proceedings of the 1946 conference were published by the government and thus offer rare insight into the relationship between the government and Métis. A central issue at the convention—and the subject of the excerpts cited below—was the need to revitalize the Saskatchewan Métis Society (SMS), sometimes referred to as the Métis Association, or perhaps even create a new provincial association. While the excerpts speak for themselves, a number of things might be noted for context. First, although the CCF took credit for organizing the convention, in actual fact Fred DeLaronde, the president of SMS, had lobbied the provincial government for such a meeting on a number of previous occasions. In reality, the CCF simply grafted its own agenda onto an already existing Métis organization. The nature of that agenda is outlined in the comments of both Douglas and Dr. Morris Shumiatcher, the main legal counsel for the Executive Council and Douglas's principal advisor on Native affairs. Second, although the Métis Society had existed in one form or another since the early thirties, by the time the convention was held the SMS was in disarray. Much of the energy and leadership of the organization had been siphoned off as a result of the war and there were deep divisions in the Society, principally between the southerners who wanted the organization centred in Regina and those in the north who favoured Saskatoon. Finally, despite the Regina conference and other efforts to breathe life into the provincial organization, the SMS remained unorganized and largely ineffectual throughout the Douglas years.

## Document Six: Conference of the Métis of Saskatchewan—Proceedings\*

Regina, July 18th, 1946.

Dear Friend:

So long as any person or group of people in this province is underprivileged, the social and economic democracy to which this Government is pledged cannot be realized. Last fall, I requested representatives of the Indians of this province to meet with me for the purpose of organizing themselves into a single union which might speak for the Indians of Saskatchewan with one strong voice. As a result, the Union of Saskatchewan Indians was formed and its work is today going forward with vigor and success. A committee has been appointed by the Dominion Government to investigate the revision of the Indian Act and it is hoped that in the near future, a fuller life may be enjoyed by our Indian brothers.

The problems of the Métis of Saskatchewan are every bit as pressing as those of the Indian. For this reason, it is desirable that the Métis people of Saskatchewan reorganize into an association which may better understand their problems and more effectively further their objects.

I therefore invite you to attend a conference of Métis people at the City of Regina on Tuesday morning, at ten o'clock on July 30th, 1946. The meeting will be held at the Court House at Victoria and Hamilton Street. I hope that Métis representatives will be able to attend from every part of the province, and letters are going forward to those persons whose names have been forwarded to me by the Association. I hope that you may come and attend these deliberations; feel free to bring as many representatives from your district as you wish.

Since the meeting is to be held during Exhibition Week, there may be some difficulty in securing accommodation; the local committee at Lebreton has undertaken to secure what accommodation they can, but I would suggest that you endeavour to make your own arrangements for this day.

Looking forward to seeing you in Regina, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

"T.C. Douglas."

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\* SAB, J.H. Sturdy papers, M14 file 198, Métis Conference, 1946

## Métis Association of Saskatchewan

A conference of the Métis Association of Saskatchewan was held in Regina on July 30th, 1946.

### Present were:

Ballantyne, W.J.; Kinistino  
De Laronde, Fred; Mont Nebo  
Pritchard, Sol.; Baljennie  
Pelletier, Chas.; 327 Smith St., Regina  
Allary, Mrs. Phelomene; Yorkton  
Robillard, J.B.; Lebret  
Bodiou, Mrs.; Eldersley  
Lafontaine, Albert; Lestock  
Pelletier, Mike; Lestock  
Lilley, Louis; Crooked River  
Denomie, Frank; Lestock  
Anderson, W.L.; Punnichy  
Gosslin, Ed.; Lebret  
St. Denis, R.O.; Saskatoon  
Desjarlais, Peter; Ituna  
Poitras, E.L.; RR#1, Ituna  
Ross, Joseph; Balcarres  
Daniels, Harry; Regina Beach  
La Crocque, J.J.; Lebret  
MacKenzie, Mrs. J.E.; Moosomin  
MacKenzie, Joe; Moosomin  
Knudsen, Mrs. C.; 1846 Rae Street, Regina  
Knudsen, Martin; 1846 Rae Street, Regina  
Amyott, Mr.; Balcarres  
Klyne, Alex; Balcarres  
St. Denis, John; Lipton  
Pelletier, Leo; Grayson  
Lavallee, Alphonse; #12 District Depot (Marievale)  
La Rocque, R.A.; 1810 Albert Street, Regina  
La Rocque, John J.; Lebret  
La Rocque, Mrs. J.J.; Lebret

J.S. White, Department of Social Welfare,  
K.F. Forster, Department of Social Welfare,  
Alderman Wilkie,  
Dr. M.C. Shumiatcher.

## Métis Convention

Held at the Court House, Regina.  
Tuesday, July 30th, 1946

CHAIRMAN: Dr. Morris C. Shumiatcher

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, it is with a great deal of pleasure that I wish to welcome you to Regina today for this meeting of the Métis Society. As you know, some time ago Premier Douglas called together the Indians of the Province of Saskatchewan with the object of bringing them to a mutual understanding whereby they could forget their individual differences and form a single society. That society became known as the Union of Saskatchewan Indians, and it is a result of the work that was done here that today in Ottawa there is being held a hearing, at which are representative Indians across the country, with the object of revising the Indian Act and improving the conditions of life of the Indian people. Now the problems of the Métis are every bit as great as those of the Indians. If anything they are greater. You have all the white man's problems and you have some of the Indian's problems as well, so that together that makes a very formidable set of obstacles which must be overcome in order to bring to you a reasonably good share of the good things of life. As you know, it is the policy of the present Saskatchewan Government to assist any group of persons in need of help in the way of health, or welfare, or education. It is true that we are handicapped in many ways through lack of funds, but we have proceeded as best we could to ameliorate the conditions of life of a great many people. We feel that as long as there is one group of people in our community that does not enjoy the good things of life we are not discharging our duties as a government. That is why today Premier Douglas requested that representatives of the Métis people gather in Regina for the purpose of bringing to the notice of the Government the desires of the Métis people. What we hope will happen is this, that your Society and all those Métis outside the Society will band together, through democratic methods will elect representatives who can speak for, not just a group, a segment of the Métis people, but for all Métis people in this Province. When we have representatives who can speak for the Métis people, we hope then to meet with those representatives. Our Department of Social Welfare hopes to be able to meet and consult with you, that together we may work out some method of assisting you with your problems. We do not believe in simple hand-outs, and we know that you do not believe in hand-outs

of charity. Those benefits which we hope you will have we want to be yours as a matter of right, not as a matter of grace, and we feel that we can best secure that end by working together, by all of us getting together and trying to work out a solution of our mutual problems. It is in that spirit that we are meeting today, and it is in the hope that we will hear from all of you. . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: . . . Now ladies and gentlemen, you will notice on the agenda a number of matters for discussion, the first of which is Organization, and then Welfare, Education, Health and Veterans' Affairs. Now I think probably the question of Organization might be considered at this time. I certainly do not want to do all the talking but I would like to raise this point here. As I mentioned before, the Government is anxious to deal with representatives of the Métis who are elected in a free and democratic fashion. Now the Saskatchewan Métis Society has been in existence for several years. As I understand, today it represents primarily the Métis of the northern part of the Province. The Métis around Lebreton and around Regina have not participated actively in this organization during the last year or two. Now I wish to make this clear, that in this organization, and in all organizations, we as a government wish to exercise absolutely no influence. I think it is common knowledge in the past that your Society has been a tool of politicians from time to time. We wish to make it very clear here and now that this Government wishes to exercise no influence upon you, wishes to use you for no political purposes, and hopes that this organization will be non-partisan and non-sectarian. We do not want these political differences which may exist between you, we do not want any religious differences which may exist, in any way to effect the work of the organization carried on for and in behalf of the Métis people. We wish to emphasize here and now that in calling this meeting there was no desire to use the Métis people politically. They have been used in that manner long enough. They have been abused long enough for political purposes. We wish it to be clear that this is a democratic organization governed by the by-laws which you yourselves set up. Now I understand that you have a constitution and Mr. St. Denis has brought it here from Saskatoon. I think we should have some discussion at this time, and particularly some expression of opinion from the people of the south, as to whether they wish to join this organization, or whether they feel it better to organize a new society and precisely how they wish to carry on from here and in the future. Now I see my friend Mr. LaRocque is

present, and I see Mr. Ross is here too. Perhaps first of all Mr. St. Denis might tell us something about the Métis Society as it exists today.

...

MR. KNUDSON (Of Regina): Mr. Chairman. I believe, Mr. Chairman, in order to promote discussion and mutual understanding between we, the Métis, here—I believe the way to shorten that would be as a suggestion I am going to make in a minute or two, because, why I am going to make that suggestion, Mr. Chairman, as I think we are heading into a long dragged out discussion whereby no agreement is going to be reached, by listening to this last few minutes discussion at least. I think the best way we can do that is to take a vote off the floor of the house right now and a vote of confidence more or less of the present Métis organization, and so you can carry on with that. If not, if the vote of confidence doesn't carry, then we will have to find ways and means of carrying on our business. I am not going to move that motion just at the moment, I would like to have a little bit of discussion on it.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like to move the motion and then we will have some discussion on the motion. Are you prepared to move the motion?

MR. KNUDSON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are moving a vote of confidence, to be registered by this gathering, in the Saskatchewan Métis Society? That is correct?

MR. KNUDSON: A vote of non-confidence.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, you are moving a vote of non-confidence?

MR. KNUDSON: Yes, I am asking for a vote of non-confidence.

THE CHAIRMAN: A vote of non-confidence in the present Society?

MR. KNUDSON: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is there a seconder to that motion?

MR. ROSS: I will second it.

THE CHAIRMAN: It has been moved by Mr. Knudson, seconded by Mr. Ross, that this convention go on record as moving a vote of non-confidence in the Saskatchewan Métis Society.

MR. W.J. BALLANTYNE: In the first place, who is this Government prepared to meet, the oldest society, or a non-organized people? Now we have come forward. Our President comes up here and advises you

people who are not affiliated with the Society, they used to be and we would like to see them. And then he makes a motion to the effect that they are going to take a non-confidence vote. Then who is eligible to vote on that, the Métis Society or outsiders?

THE CHAIRMAN: Perhaps I can clarify something. I have had a long talk with Mr. DeLaronde yesterday and I pointed this out. Mr. Ballantyne asks, who is the Government meeting with. I say the Government is interested in meeting with and dealing with the Métis population as a whole. We are not interested in the Society as such. We are not interested in perpetuating any society unless that society represents the Métis as a whole. We are not going to give any hand out to this Society if we don't feel that it represents as well as possible all of the Métis throughout the Province. So I would say in answer to your question, the Government is interested in obtaining an expression of opinion from the Métis as a whole, and when this vote is taken everyone is eligible to vote. Naturally the people of the Society will vote in favour of the Society, but others may wish to know as to whether this Society does represent the Métis of the Province as a whole. And I think Mr. DeLaronde agreed with me, when we discussed it yesterday, that that was important.

MR. BALLANTYNE: Well then, is that motion then in order?

THE CHAIRMAN: I would say, yes, the motion is in order.

MR. BALLANTYNE: Well then, who is eligible to vote on the motion?

THE CHAIRMAN: Everyone present.

MR. BALLANTYNE: You see, as long as a person is not affiliated with the Society, and he votes on different questions, as far as the Government is concerned they are accepting that regardless whether they are affiliated with the Society or not.

MR. MacKENZIE (Of Moosomin): We are only following what we read in the press as to being present and I think a non-confidence vote is quite legal at any time. You can vote on a non-confidence vote at any time. So I think Mr. Ballantyne is wrong when he says that people not affiliated with the Society. I think we are all here and can answer the call of the present.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any more discussion on the motion?

MR. LaROQUE: I would like to say that I don't think the motion is very fair to the present executive and officers of the organization that, as you said before, Mr. Chairman, have carried on this thing for the last two or three

years and that. Personally I don't think that it is fair at all to a group that have carried on the business like they have. They have done very good, I think, so I would like to ask Mr. Knudson for the time being to withdraw, if he could, his resolution to take a vote of confidence vote.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any more discussion?

MR. ROSS: I feel that Mr. Ballantyne here is not right, with regard to this meeting, that the Métis people will not be permitted to vote unless they are affiliated with the Society. Now we have never been able to affiliate with the Society because of such action. You see, the Métis people in the south have never had a fair chance since the Society went up to the north. The officers are always elected beforehand. I was there at the Convention where the officers are elected the first day, so if the Society, the present organization is going to have any discussion or anything to do with the welfare of the half-breed people, such as we are, I don't think we should allow the present organization to carry on, unless there is drastic changes made.

MR. St. DENIS: Our Convention, all branches were invited when we had a convention. Every delegate, two delegates from every branch were allowed to come. You know that, Mr. Ross.

MR. ROSS: Yes—when you first sent it out.

MR. St. DENIS: Ever since, every year. We are running it in a democratic way. If officers were elected the first day, that is because it was voted for at that convention. There was nobody put into office or elected before or underhand. Any person there, at the call of any person who was at this convention, every one that attended our convention, cannot say that they were not elected properly. And we have worked very hard for the association the last five years, and we are interested in all of the people of Saskatchewan, all the Métis people. I went a way north, Lac la Ronge, north to Cumberland, assisting there the organization of our people down there. Lately I went to Willowfield here, and thanks very much to officers of the Government, that they were able to see that they were not driven out. As far as our Society is concerned, it has been run in a democratic way all the time. This vote of non-confidence, I don't believe it is fair, because, if Mr. Knudson wants to attend a convention in Regina or in Saskatoon, he would be welcome any time. Everybody is welcome to come. Everybody knows that. I thank you very much.

MR. ROSS: Mr. Chairman, since this gentleman has been talking so much of the Society. Now he was at Lebreton here this spring. Why didn't he

reorganize the Saskatchewan Society there? He made no attempt to meet the Métis people at all while he was at Lebret.

MR. St. DENIS: I was there primarily because I was invited there by the Indians and I called Mr. LaRocque and yourself, that we were to be there, in order to meet you people down there. I was invited to Lebret by Chief Beaver, John Tootosis and Chief Pound Maker.

MR. J.Z. LaROCQUE: I am quite ready to verify the statement of Mr. St. Denis. On that occasion at Lebret, when he called the original convention, we sent out invitations and announced at the regular time, and I am sorry to say that when the meeting took place—I don't know whether I should say it—where were all the people? Where were they? In the beer parlour? Never came near the place. There was just a handful there, and I think Dr. Shumiatcher can verify that. Well then, how could Mr. St. Denis meet them? I went to the beer parlour and asked them to work for their welfare, please come. No—we were talking. That was the net result. I am sorry to say that transpired. I can agree with this organization. We started in the late fall in 1937 and I was elected the first President of the organization and it went on. It went on and in the summer of 1938 I covered the most part of the Métis' centres in Saskatchewan, trying to organize it, and there was a vast indifference and I must admit that the Métis are hard to organize. There is always a suspicion that the officer has an ulterior motive, that they might gain some political prestige, and so on and so forth, and systematically there is that influence and otherwise at work to wreck the whole thing. I am sorry. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is there any other discussion? Well, are you ready to vote on the motion then?

MR. KNUDSON: Mr. Chairman, after the discussion on the motion I would like to say just a word or two before. I brought on that motion, ladies and gentlemen, more or less, as I said at the outset of my remarks, to get the general feeling of the people present, and, as they all understand, it is a democratic organization we are speaking of, and everybody is absolutely free to vote as he wishes. There is no restriction in that. So, as I said, whichever way this motion carries will give us a lead, what steps to take and how to carry on the rest of the meeting that is going to take place. So I would say that we take a vote on the motion.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any more discussion?

MR. DeLARONDE: Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Chairman, it has always

been my idea among the Métis people, co-operation is something that I have been working for, and we are all fighting for the one cause. If it was not for that I would not be here. You know we have got to co-operate. Unless you do that you are going to be scattered and you will get nowhere. We are having a little difficulty here. We have an organization. All you people need to do is join in with us, and so long as I am the President of the Métis Society, ladies and gentlemen, I will endeavour to put all my efforts behind it, in fact behind the Métis people of the Province. Now try and get together, try and work, don't fight one another but pull together. You know, you never gain anything by fighting, you never gain anything by a big army, and that has been my past experience and I believe it is going to exist as long as the world stands. Now co-operate with one another and try and get your minds on that particular point. We have an organization, we don't try to put anything over anybody. We invite you people to come to our Convention, you are welcome to come, in fact we want the people to come. Now then this thing would be settled just within a minute. All you have to do is to follow the organization and we will carry on together, so that the disputes will be all settled. Thank you.

MR. BALLANTYNE: Which is our Government prepared to receive here as a delegation, the Society or appointed by the people? Well, I think the present one, they are willing to accept that, disregarding the Métis Society. Is that right?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, not quite, Mr. Ballantyne. What I said was this, that the Government was anxious to ascertain what people best represent the Métis population of the Province as a whole. That is, it may be that the Society does, it may be that it doesn't, but the Government does not wish to treat with any society or organization unless it is reasonably certain that it does represent the Métis population of the Province as a whole and not merely one segment or a group.

MR. St. DENIS: If the Government is now prepared to meet this Convention here, as it stands, it seems to me that that motion is still, in my opinion, out of order, because I will tell you why. Those of us who have been endeavouring for the last few years to uphold our Society, we have sacrificed both time and money and made every endeavour to try to move our Society with Government in harmony. Now those who have dropped out through their own idea, whatever the reason was, I am not criticizing them now, they are justified to drop out or come back in. Well, they have been out. Well, if we take a vote on this non-confidence, it doesn't give the supporters of that Society a very good chance. I think

that if the Government is going to accept this convention, all right, go ahead with the business, but I think that vote of non-confidence is out of order. We would like to go home and bring to our people back some report, we have always wished to, trying to bring about solutions of the problems of our people.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have ruled the motion to be in order, for this reason. It is more than a question of the Government meeting this Convention; it is a question of the Government knowing whom to deal with. If the motion is defeated the Government will be perfectly willing to meet with the Métis Society as such, so that I feel the Métis Society has nothing to lose and everything to gain, because if the motion is carried the Métis Society is bound to go on, and if the motion is carried the Métis Society has everything to gain. The motion, moved by Mr. Knudson and seconded by Mr. Ross, is moving non-confidence in the Métis Society as representing the Métis of Saskatchewan. Now those people who will vote in favour of the motion will be voting against the Métis Society. You understand that? Is there any question about the motion? All right. All those in favour of the motion, that is non-confidence in the Métis Society, raise their hands. Against the motion? Well, the motion is lost. Therefore you have indicated your confidence in the Saskatchewan Métis Society. Now I would suggest, because of that, those persons who are not members of the Métis Society should take steps to join the Society and, not only to join the Society, but to take an active part in the business of the Society, and if they feel that the Society does not represent them, I think it is their duty to get in and make it represent them, by speaking their minds at Society Conventions and Society meetings.

MR. St. DENIS: Mr. Chairman, those that have not joined should join as quickly as possible. I will tell you why. At our last Convention we did not name a place for our next Convention, so that it will be brought up, where you want the next Convention. It is really up to you people. It is up to the full executive and I thought I would bring that to your attention now.

MR. LaFONTAINE: We would like to know how many branches there are in Saskatchewan of the Saskatchewan Métis Society.

THE CHAIRMAN: Could you give that information?

MR. St. DENIS: We had up to fifty-three branches but I can't tell you off hand exactly how many are active at the present time. They are coming in all the time, you know. You have Battleford coming in, there is Jack

Fish Lake, there is Midnight Lake, and I believe Mr. DeLaronde has a few more in his district, but I couldn't tell you off hand how many active branches we have.

MR. LaFONTAINE: Have you no records?

MR. St. DENIS: Yes, we have records.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think it is a big trouble of the Métis Society that the Secretary Treasurer of the Society has been away for a year or more. I would make this suggestion, that in view of the fact that Miss Moore is away, that a Secretary Treasurer of the Society be elected, since there is none at the present time. I think consideration should be given to that.

MR. KNUDSON: Mr. Chairman, in reference to the motion that has just been passed, I wish to assure the delegates here that as far as I am concerned I have no ill feeling in any shape or form for having my motion defeated. We have a clearer understanding, so that our Government can have a basis of working for our people, and I believe that motion clarifies some of that more or less.

MR. LaFONTAINE: I don't want this question to embarrass any branch or anybody, but the Touchwood branch has kept their obligations all through the war, and we wanted to know whether other branches are doing the same.

THE CHAIRMAN: In other words, you feel that the business has been carried on in a loose manner?

MR. LaFONTAINE: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Without proper records?

MR. LaFONTAINE: No. We just wanted to know how the other branches had been carrying on.

MR. DeLARONDE: You give me your name and address and I will have that sent on for you.

MR. ANDERSON (Punnichy): This meeting has been called, we did not have a chance to get the books in order, but I believe that he can make a statement and send it to the various branches that are at this meeting, and wherever he feels that it should go. That is what we would like to have. Now I have been in the army myself, the same as he has, and just got back, and we have very little to go on, to know what has been going on in the Society since we left, and in that way, that is why we are asking a few questions. But if we can get that information, we will endeavour

to carry on and help in every way possible.

MR. St. DENIS: Any of these that want a list, we will compile it, and please leave your name and address and I will send them to you as quickly as possible.

THE CHAIRMAN: I might just say that my office has been at work for the Indian Union, in order to put them on their feet. It has, for example, given them a record of their meetings. Now we are having a record made of exactly whatever is said. We have also your names and addresses. I think I will have a further list from the Society and, if so, this Government will be pleased to send to each one who is here, and to other members of the Society, a statement of the proceedings together with a list of branches and sufficient information to keep you posted, so that you will be able to continue your work further. I will also make this suggestion, that the Society consider publication of a monthly mimeographed sheet which will keep the members informed of what is going on, so that the members can be assured that the executive is not slipping, and if we can be of assistance in the publication of such sheet we will be only too glad to help, and I hope that Mr. St. Denis will provide me with a further list, and we will provide all the delegates here with a complete statement of these proceedings together with a financial statement of the Society, which I think should be sent out to members too.

MR. ROSS: Just a while ago you said something about electing a Secretary Treasurer.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just passed that suggestion out. It depends on what you think of it.

MR. DeLARONDE: Mr. Ross, you see we have Mr. St. Denis as a temporary secretary. I think it would be better to wait till during the Convention. You know, you might need a new president and a new secretary. So you might as well wait. I had in mind that I would call a very early Convention, and you would be notified.

THE CHAIRMAN: We could notify them.

MR. St. DENIS: Let me tell you, I would like to see a secretary elected, because I have enough work as it is without doing this work too. I have been very very busy.

MR. DeLARONDE: This is the very thing that Dr. Shumiatcher has offered us here. Now don't pass that up, gentlemen. Grab that right now, that

is worth something. He said he is going to publish a little monthly paper.

THE CHAIRMAN: We will be glad to help you on that.

MR. DeLARONDE: We will furnish you with some material and possibly Mr. LaRocque can do that. Whatever is going on in the branches. See, I don't know what goes on way down here. You know, a little paper like that is just what we need. Some morning I get my mail and I see Mr. LaRocque got up early there one morning and went to work with the Métis people. Not in that form, but I mean, you know, they had a meeting. There is another thing you should do, in your branches, where you live. In Mount Nebo, every Saturday night we have a little meeting, we discuss how is Mrs. so and so getting along down there. Well, we found one woman there was getting ten dollars a month relief and she had to pay four dollars out of that for rent. Now she had to live on six dollars with that money after paying the rent. You see, we have discovered things like that, by holding a few meetings among ourselves. You don't have to make it formal, you can sit on the ground, or around the fence, just more or less talking things over. That is what we discovered. If we hadn't done that we wouldn't have known that this particular lady wasn't getting enough that she could live on. Now co-operate not only with me but amongst yourselves. It is going to help you along. Mind you, it is all for your own benefit. Not only your own, but the coming generation. We are building now the destiny of our people. Now it is up to you, and to just co-operate with one another and work with all your might to build up this here organization so that it becomes one group. I thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now then that completes the discussion on "Organization" unless there is something else that any one wishes to raise. . . .

HON. T.C. DOUGLAS (Premier of Saskatchewan): Well, Dr. Shumiatcher, ladies and gentlemen, this is not going to be an extended speech, I can assure you, because we feel that the purpose of your coming here is to give us information rather than us to give you information, and we want to hear what you have to say and get your suggestions rather than making speeches at you. They say you have two ears and one mouth, so that you can listen twice as much as you can talk. Most politicians do not follow that, but on this particular occasion we are going to try to. That is, we do not want to give you our ideas of what should be done or what should not be done. We feel that you people have a better idea of

what the problems are and the solutions may be. Therefore we wish to discuss with you, and any organization you may set up, just what can be done in that regard.

The Government of Saskatchewan has pretty well worked on the belief that we have a responsibility for all the people who live in this Province and that while, as far as jurisdiction is concerned, as far as responsibility is concerned, it may be divided up and there may be, say, certain people are the responsibility of the Federal Government, certain people are the responsibility of the Provincial Government, others are the responsibility of Municipal Government—and as far as the Métis people are concerned, it seemed to be the responsibility of nobody, since no one has undertaken any responsibility for them. While that may be true, the fact remains that we cannot divide people up, and that what affects one affects all of us; that if there is any one section of our people which is not healthy, who have sickness, then it will affect the health of all the other people in the community, because sickness does not know anything about jurisdiction and constitutional fine points; and that if we have people growing up in the Province who are not getting adequate educational instruction and getting adequate social welfare direction, then it is going to affect the whole social life of the people of the Province; and for that reason the Government of Saskatchewan feels that there are groups of people in the Province to whose particular problems probably not enough attention has been given. As Dr. Shumiatcher has already told you, we did last winter have in the different Indian groups in the Province, and they have formed an Indian Society and are tackling their problems, making suggestions as to what they think can be done. Then representations will be made to the commission which is to be appointed by the Federal Government, and so we have made a start as far as the Indians are concerned.

Now with reference to the Métis people, very little has been done, as you know, to put their case squarely before governments and before responsible bodies. You have had some assistance, they have been varied in principle, but there has not been really a serious attempt, we feel, to grapple with this problem. We feel that the time has come now when we ought to face up to the whole problem of the Métis people, because of the fact the Métis people will affect other groups of people in the Province, and particularly in communities where the Métis people live. Now the attitude of the Government I can put in a very few simple words. We have never tried to adopt and we do not want to adopt an attitude of being the big policeman, nor the attitude of being a big boss to whom people come for a hand-out, to whom people have to ask

"Please give us something to eat," to whom people come to ask for something to wear, to whom people come to ask "Please help us out in some particular." No, gentlemen, that is not a happy condition, a condition generally described as paternal. What we feel is that any group of people in our Province, given a proper opportunity, given a proper chance, can do for themselves if only they are given a chance. In other words, our idea is not so much to help a group of people as to help them to help themselves. Now you people will know better than we do how we can best go about helping the Métis people to help themselves. Mr. Valteau will probably tell you something about the experiment which has been made of the farm at Lebret. If that experiment seems to please all parties concerned, that may be the solution to be tried in other places. As you know, Mr. Phelps has been doing work in the North country on muskrat leases and on various undertakings there for the Métis people as well as the Indian people who live in the North. But whatever it is going to be, whether it is going to be muskrat leases, whether it is going to be trapping or timber farming, or whether it is going to be agricultural farming in the South here, either co-operative farms or whatever the case may be, we feel that the function of the Government is not to look after people; primarily the function of the Government is to make it possible for those who can to look after themselves, and then only to look after those people who are unable to look after themselves, but the great majority of our people are able to look after themselves if they are given a chance. But you can't take men and turn them out in a bush with a team and a hoe and a mower and expect them to make a living. You can't do, as has been done in the Northern woods, you can't turn men out with a fishing net and expect them to make a living. This is an age when you need equipment; this is an age when you need training; this is an age when you need some assistance, and it is to find out how that assistance can best be given, the kind of assistance that can most be beneficial, that we are calling you in here today, and what we are hoping will come out of this convention is that we will get two things. First, we are hoping that you yourselves will be able to form some organization. I once heard Clarence Darrow say in the State of New York, to a great audience of negroes, who at that time were being very badly persecuted—and he said: "Remember this, remember, I am a white man and I want to say to you that ultimately your salvation lies within yourselves, that you must do these things yourselves. The white man may guide you and advise you, but your salvation lies in your own leadership and your own education for other things." That is true of any group of people and that is why we are hoping you will

have an organization that will speak with one voice, that the Government and other bodies will have one group with whom they may consult, one group with whom they may deliberate and from whom they may receive recommendations and advice. I am certain that most of our Indian friends would tell you that they already feel that they are speaking more clearly and more effectively because they are speaking unitedly, and I think that will be true of the Métis people, and I hope that one of the first things will be that you will set up some kind of organization, at least that you will set up the machinery to set up an organization of Métis people all over Saskatchewan, irrespective of their religion, irrespective of their politics, irrespective of their particular way in which they make a living, they have one thing in common, that they are a group of people who have been too long neglected, who have too long been nobody's particular responsibility, and that you get an organization that can speak for this group of people, as up to now they really have had no one to speak for them in a united and authoritative way. And the other thing I am hoping will come out of this Convention will be that you will be able to give to the Ministers who are responsible, particularly Mr. Valteau, Minister of Social Welfare, and his officials, some ideas, your reaction to various proposals, so that they may be able to sit down and work out a long term policy for the rehabilitation and re-establishment of the Métis people, in order that that programme may be submitted to the Government and to the Legislature for approval and be implemented by the Departments responsible. These are the two things we are hoping will come out of this discussion: the formation of a Métis organization and representations to the Government and to the governing bodies, giving to them your recommendations and your ideas. I think that is all I want to say, except to close with this word. That it is never good for any community to neglect or forget any section of the people, and in Canada I have felt for many years that we have forgotten both the Indian people and the Métis people. They are an important part of our population. There was a time when they were declining in number and many people thought they were not an important factor because eventually they would die out. Well they have now adapted themselves to the white man's diseases and their population is on the increase and they are going to constitute a very important part of our population in the years that lie ahead, and you can't have within a community, if it is a good community and a happy community, you can't have a section, a certain section of people roped off with a different standard of living, and on a different level than the rest of the community. You can't do that without harming the whole community. I have had an opportunity of discussing with

some of the men from New Zealand the position of the Maori people there, and the Maori people have, with the assistance of far sighted and socially minded men in New Zealand—the Maori people have today won for themselves a place in the community life in New Zealand. I think in the last Parliament of New Zealand there were twenty-three Maori members. They sit in city and town councils, they are in all the professions, in all branches of business, they farm, they have sheep farms, and the Maori has proved to the world that given a proper opportunity, given an education, given training, given an opportunity to play his part in the community, that the Maori, the native of New Zealand, is just as able as the white man to live in this modern mechanized age and play his part in the world today, and I am equally convinced that the Métis people and our friends the Indians have a part to play in this country, and it seems to me that your job and mine and all the rest of us who are interested in this Province can, if we set ourselves to the task, begin to get a new deal for the Métis people, to the end that they may become a self-respecting, a self-supporting, important part of our community life. Thank you very much.

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