

dwell on the cruelties and evils of the tribal life they condemned. The converts who were held up as sterling examples of the transforming power of mission work tended to speak of the wickedness of their former pagan lives. The same tendency toward a selective presentation is evident in sources such as Hudson's Bay Company documents, and Alexander Morris's account of the Treaties. The introductory notes might have said more about the nature of sources, and they might also have provided more historical context. Chapter one, for example, presents an imperfect understanding of the factionalism among the Hurons that resulted from Jesuit missionary work. Simplifications and generalizations are perhaps unavoidable in a book that attempts to represent a time span of over three hundred years. A more topical, less chronological approach might have been more satisfying. Chronology tends to reflect the evolving Euro-Canadian perception of native people, who were first regarded as vital military and trade allies, then as potential converts to Christianity, then as chronic complainers unable to adjust, and then as feathered and painted curios reciting legends at garden parties and on public platforms. A more native-centred approach might, for example, have begun with the ancient myths and legends.

This book suffers from some organizational problems. Simply being Indian does not appear to be an adequate organizing principle, as, like any other group of people, Indians have spoken and written on a wide variety of topics. Modes of expression as diverse as poetry and political speeches cannot be included in the same collection without danger of doing a disservice to both.

Sarah Carter
Department of History
University of Manitoba

The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits Complets de Louis Riel general editor George F. G. Stanley. Edited by Raymond Huel, Gilles Martel, Glen Campbell, Thomas Flanagan, and Claude Rocan. 5 vols., Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985.

The collecting, editing, annotating and publishing of primary documents has a long scholarly tradition in Canada. Few leading Canadian historical figures will have had their complete writings so carefully and successfully scrutinized as Riel. There are two areas in which this considerable and wise investment on the part of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the University of Alberta must be scrutinized: the standards of scholarship in editing primary documents and, second, the contribution to the historiography and understanding of Riel. The five volumes succeed much more in setting new standards for the scholarly editing of docu-

ments than in making a contribution to a new understanding of either Riel or the prairie West.

The standard for the collecting, editing, annotating and publishing of primary documents has been set by the Champlain Society, the Hudson's Bay Record Society, and the Hakluyt Society. These volumes, with scholarly introductions that have placed the documents in their social and economic context, have always been carefully edited, and exhaustively annotated by researchers who have devoted a lifetime to the study of their subject.

The Riel Papers have attempted similar standards but within the tight time frame imposed by SSHRC. The impression is that the Riel project was a learning process for the editorial team. That the Riel project has however already initiated a new interest in Riel is reflected by the publications of the various Métis associations, of government agencies, and of the editors of the project.

The Riel editors decided to divide the papers into four volumes: volume one, 1861 to 1875; volume two, 1875 to 1884; volume three, 1884 to 1885; and volume four the poetry. Volume five is an invaluable reference volume which includes articles on Métis spoken and written language, the Riel family genealogy, Riel family photographs, a chronology, a bibliography, and biographical notes on the major figures mentioned in the correspondence. While the chronology might strike one as a trifle facile, it is in fact an admirable guide to the documents. The biographical index is also useful, but it is not as complete as it could be.

The bibliography, while generally exhaustive on matters relating to Riel, has some astonishing omissions. All of the research papers printed in the Parks Canada Manuscript Report Series have been ignored. This is puzzling given the energy the Department has devoted to the restoration and interpretation of, for example, Riel House and Batoche. Some of the manuscripts relate directly to Riel, for example R. Gosman, "The Riel and Lagimodière Families in Red River Society" (Manuscript Report Series, No. 171). While the bibliography stops in 1982, there is an appendix updating it to 1985. The book by Walter Hildebrandt, *The Battle of Batoche* (Ottawa: Environment Canada, 1985), appears even though a manuscript report from several years earlier is not listed. The bibliography has located several previously unknown documents and lists them as being available in "private collections." Initially it was intended to have a copy of all difficult to find material on microfilm at the University of Alberta. If this has happened it should have been mentioned.

The other support material is useful and the editors should be complimented, although there are the occasional problems. The 1885 map of the Saskatchewan Valley (Map 6) is so crowded that a different

scale would have been useful. In some of the other maps, especially Map 4 of Montana 1879-1884, it is difficult to decipher some of the place names. A small point worth raising concerns the naming of geographic features. Québec place names are in French, but those in the West are in English although usage by the communities at the time may have been French. Maps should reflect cultural reality. Also on Map 4 the location of Fort Macleod is confusing. Originally the Fort was on an island in the Oldman River, and later on the south shore of that river. It was never on the north shore. It would have been useful as well to indicate the trail systems on all of the maps, rather than just on a select few. This would have assisted immeasurably to contemplate Riel's possible movements.

The photographs of the Riel family make it easier to identify with Riel, although as printed they do not do the originals any service. The pictures of Riel himself are useful as frontispieces in the various volumes although as reference items they probably would have been better in volume five. While it is understandable that photographs were confined to Riel and his immediate family, some of those of his councils and immediate associates would have been of interest.

The introductions themselves are unfortunately limited, although intentionally so. Rather than offering the dynamic new interpretations or synthesis that several years of immersion in the documents could have produced, the introductions comment narrowly on the letters themselves and the editorial problems they present. This is a different approach from that used by the Champlain Society, the Hakluyt Society or the recently mourned Hudson's Bay Record Society. This is not to say that the editors have not made major contributions—they have, but they have decided instead to publish elsewhere. Thomas Flanagan probably has been the most prolific with his publications like *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983). It is to be hoped that the other editors will attempt similar insights no matter how controversial. Indeed, given the highly volatile state of emotions on the Riel question, the editorial decision to minimize the introductions was probably wise.

One of the other major criticisms that will be levelled at the volumes is that they are inconsistent in their scholarly notations. There are also occasional errors of fact. For example in letter 3-151 footnote four, Flanagan indicates that Father Belcourt was not involved in the free trade events of 1849 when there is ample evidence that he was. In letter 1-191 footnote 23, Huel states that Robert Machray was the first Anglican Bishop of Rupert's Land in 1866. David Anderson was consecrated the first Bishop May 1849, Machray was the second Anglican bishop.

The depth of the annotations is also extremely limited. Rather

than referring readers to volume five for biographical details every letter has one-line biographical footnotes. The practice is, however, not consistent. Many letters have no biographical notes at all. Letter I-171 is typical with no notations for names like Amable Audry, Charles Neault, Louis Sansregret, or Paul Proulx, etc. While it is not necessary to do so, given the support biographies in volume five, the one-line biographies of people like James Ross or William Mactavish in some of the other letters provide very little information and certainly not enough for contextual support. The problem is essentially editorial. There should have been some rules to ensure consistency. Possibly the best decision would have been to confine all biographical information to volume five and increase the depth of information there.

There are other problems of definition as well. There is confusion between terms of Métis, French Métis, English Métis, half-breeds, Métis anglais, Métis écossais—terms which are extremely important. From a quick reading of the documents it would seem that Riel differentiated between the English-speaking and French-speaking mixed bloods. James Ross for his part would not have appreciated being called a Métis, which is what Huel does.

One of the other major problems with the project is the almost exclusive orientation to political history. Indices to the Hudson's Bay Record Society, for example, tend to concentrate on topics that might be of concern to a variety of interests, including social and economic histories. The Riel index reflects the use of computer selection process. If the computer had been programmed with the intention of concentrating on those items which would reflect the direction of Western Canada historiography, it would have been possible to include complex social and economic items. If researchers interested in Riel's use of the word Métis (a topic of some debate recently) wanted to use the papers, every document would have to be read. Riel's attitude to the English-speaking mixed bloods, or the place of his family in Red River society, are equally relevant topics with no entries. While not every topic can be registered, the editors in their effort to make the volumes timeless showed no discipline or topic prejudice and have inadvertently emphasized traditional political concerns.

Nevertheless, these volumes will justifiably be recognized as one of the major contributions of western Canadian scholarship in the 1980s. Students will and should use the volumes frequently. It is hoped however that this will not be to the exclusion of the other primary documentation which is so plentiful both on Riel and the Métis, but hardly as accessible.

F. Pannekoek
Aspen Gardens