

research and the writing is consistently clear and lucid. I do raise some queries on the balance of the work. Nowhere does the writer introduce the reader to housewife, labourer or artist. What was the price of a loaf of bread in 1925? What was the wage level in 1935? What of libraries, art galleries, hospitals, air service? One final query! How could any author write of Calgary in the post-1945 era and omit mention of the Grey Cup victory of 1948? Not that the win itself was so worthy of mention but the invasion of staid Toronto by Calgary supporters said more for the Calgary image than a score of pamphlets. The event focussed national attention on the foothills city. The photograph on page 151 hardly covers the development of football as a professional sport!

John H. Archer  
 Professor of Western History  
 Saskatchewan Archives Board

**The Métis of Manitoba: Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity**, by Joe Sawchuk. Toronto: Peter Martin Associates Ltd., 1978, 96 pp. Soft cover, \$4.95.

Few of the contemporary writers about the Métis of Western Canada have attempted to define their contemporary identity.

Arguments have been provided about the use or misuse of the term Métis, but materials concerning the Métis people's use of the term vis-à-vis themselves are scarce. In his volume on *Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity* Sawchuk attempts to show that the contemporary identity that the Métis promote towards Canadian society is no longer based upon historical events of 1870 and 1885. His thesis is simply that the main ingredient uniting the Métis of today is their economic poverty and not an attachment to Cuthbert Grant, Dumont or Riel.

Sawchuk provides the reader with a detailed description of the disintegration of Métis cultural identity through several periods within their history — a cultural identity that today has been reformulated by cultural and economic factors. His basic theory is that the growth of modern Métis political organizations has been the determining force in reformulating this new Métis ethnic consciousness.

Métis ethnicity or identity is no longer based on traditional indicators since this new consciousness has absorbed within itself many natives and whites who are not inheritors of the traditional Métis identity. Thus the contemporary term "Métis" has no relationship to its historical meaning. Since non-status Indians and whites married to Indian or Métis women are now included within the "corporate"

definition, it becomes obvious that the term "Métis," as used today by Métis people, has little if any attachment to history.

Sawchuk argues at length that Métis ancestral cultural traits have all but vanished and that those remaining in the folklore are rather insignificant. Thus, he argues that economic poverty is the main ingredient for their new identity and their unity, and for the rise of Métis organizations representing a diverse collection of mixed bloods. In the process a reformulation of their new identity developed, eventually leading to the "raison d'être" of the organizations.

What is lacking in Sawchuk's thesis, however, is a discussion of the split that has occurred within the Métis population regarding the Manitoba Métis Federation (M.M.F.) and the repercussions the split has had in Métis communities. Sawchuk does not expand his point about the many Métis people who have not joined the M.M.F. because of their belief that the organization represents non-status Indians. Furthermore, many locals are closed to other Métis people because relatives have been able to get together nine members to form a local; they can then elect their own executive and decide among themselves whom to allow in and whom not to.

Many French speaking Métis in Manitoba do not want to associate with "les sauvages," nor do some of the Cree, Saulteaux, Chipe-wyan or Sioux-speaking Métis want anything to do with "French-Canadians" (a term used to describe French-speaking Métis during the debate about two pages of the newspaper "Le Métis" being in French). Thus, disunity from within exists on cultural matters, a point that Sawchuk does not fully develop or at times discuss.

Though his thesis on economic poverty is well taken, Sawchuk should have reflected on the number of people who became "Métis" when grants became abundant. In other words, many Métis people became Métis (i.e., paid \$1.00 membership to M.M.F.) when housing, fishing and educational grants became available. Once grants had been allocated, many Métis who received them no longer participated actively in the organization; others who did not receive any grants became hostile not only towards the organization but also towards those Métis who did.

Sawchuk has presented relevant evidence to support his "economic poverty" argument, but one must remember that the Métis are a fragmented group wherein each community sees itself as uniquely Métis — in other words, any Métis organization represents only the Métis who have decided to join — the sad fact being that the majority of the Métis population has not joined. It is they who still cling to their history for identity.

Antoine S. Lussier  
Native Studies Department  
Brandon University