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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL MEETING OF MINISTERS  
ON ABORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

Press Release - November 2, 1983

"Riel was a Metis Patriot"

Metis National Council

Ottawa, Ontario  
November 2-3, 1983

METIS NATIONAL COUNCIL  
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - NOVEMBER 2, 1983

**"RIEL WAS A METIS PATRIOT"**

THE METIS NATIONAL COUNCIL QUESTIONS RECENT STATEMENTS BY BRIAN MULRONEY TO THE EFFECT THAT THE PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HAS PAID OFF ITS HISTORICAL DEBT TOWARDS FRANCOPHONES BY SUPPORTING A CONSTITUTIONAL RESOLUTION FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN MANITOBA. IF A DEBT IS TO BE PAID, IT IS TO THE METIS PEOPLE WHOSE LAND RIGHTS, LIKE FRENCH LANGUAGE RIGHTS, WERE BUILT INTO THE MANITOBA ACT, WERE ALSO STRUCK DOWN BY AMENDMENTS, BUT UNLIKE LANGUAGE RIGHTS, ARE IN NO WAY COVERED BY THE RESOLUTION. THE DEBATE IN MANITOBA IGNORES THE FACT THAT RIEL WAS A METIS, NOT A FRENCH-CANADIAN, NATIONALIST, AND THAT WHAT HE FOUGHT FOR - THE RIGHTS OF THE METIS TO A LAND BASE AND SELF-GOVERNMENT - ARE STILL NOT RESPECTED. IF THE TORIES HAVE CLEARED THEIR NAME IN QUEBEC, THEY STILL HAVEN'T ADDRESSED THE GRIEVANCES OF RIEL'S CONSTITUENTS, THE METIS.

ONCE AGAIN WE HAVE BEEN RELEGATED TO A FOOTNOTE TO THE ENGLISH-FRENCH CONFLICT IN CANADA. WE ARE DISMAYED BY THE SELECTIVE JUSTICE BEING SHOWN BY ALL NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES AS THEY TRY TO RESTORE FRENCH RIGHTS IN MANITOBA

WHILE DENYING OURS. IF MANITOBA WAS GUILTY OF DOING AWAY WITH FRENCH LANGUAGE RIGHTS, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS EQUALLY GUILTY OF DOING AWAY WITH OUR LAND RIGHTS. AS A RESULT, THE METIS ARE A LANDLESS, HOMELESS PEOPLE. WHY ISN'T MR. MULRONEY OR PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU CONCERNED ABOUT THAT? ONCE AGAIN THE METIS ARE LOST IN THE SHUFFLE OF RIGHTS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND FRENCH-SPEAKING CANADIANS.

WHILE MR. MULRONEY'S STATEMENT IS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, RECOGNIZING THAT THE GHOST OF RIEL REFLECTS A DEBT TO BE PAID, THAT DEBT IS TO THE METIS AND SHOULD BE PAID BY SUPPORT FOR THE RESTORATION OF OUR RIGHTS IN THE CANADIAN CONSTITUTION. ON NOVEMBER 16TH, THE 98TH ANNIVERSARY OF RIEL'S HANGING, THE METIS NATIONAL COUNCIL IS MEETING IN WINNIPEG. THIS WOULD BE A PERFECT OPPORTUNITY FOR BOTH MR. MULRONEY AND THE PRIME MINISTER TO COOPERATIVELY ADDRESS METIS CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND THE REALITY OF RIEL.

**NOTE:** THERE WILL BE A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, NOVEMBER 2, 1983 AT THE GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE CENTRE, AT 1:00 P.M., FOR MORE INFORMATION: 992-1729.