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P.G. LAURIE: THE ASPIRATIONS  
OF A WESTERN ENTHUSIAST

A Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

Patrick Gammie Laurie was a western enthusiast who came west to work as a writer and printer on various newspapers in Manitoba between 1869 and 1878. Eventually he established his own newspaper, the Saskatchewan Herald, which he published from 1878 until 1903. His aspirations for the West were remarkably similar to the national and imperial sentiments expressed by the Canada First Movement. He envisaged an organic, "holistic" society for Western Canada which would be modelled on British customs and institutions.

A Conservative politically, Laurie was an ardent supporter of the nation building policies of Sir John A. Macdonald. He was a stern critic of those who disagreed with his visions of an Anglo-Canadian West. Laurie believed that such a society was the only factor to prevent the West from being absorbed into the United States.

Laurie was frustrated with the slow progress of settlement. He had difficulty, at times, reconciling his position as a westerner and as a Conservative, and his writings reveal ambiguous and sometimes contradictory arguments on policies that affected Western Canada. Laurie's uncertainties were due, in part at least, to the difficulties the federal government had ironing out the details of their Land, Railway, Tariff and Immigration policies to the satisfaction of most westerners.

But in spite of the many criticisms Laurie had of government policies, he remained a loyal Conservative. As an immigrant from

Eastern Canada he remained essentially dedicated to the imperial and national ideals as expressed by the Canada First Movement. Laurie saw the West as an integral part of Canada and the Empire and not primarily as a separate region.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

Patrick Gammie Laurie was a western enthusiast who came west to work as a writer and printer on various newspapers in Manitoba between 1869 and 1878. Eventually he established his own newspaper, the Saskatchewan Herald which he published from 1878 until 1903. His aspirations for the West were remarkably similar to the national and imperial sentiments expressed by the Canada First Movement. He envisaged an organic, "holistic" society for Western Canada which would be modelled on British customs and institutions.

A Conservative politically, Laurie was an ardent supporter of the nation building policies of Sir John A. Macdonald. He was a stern critic of those who disagreed with his visions of an Anglo-Canadian West. Laurie believed that such a society was the only factor to prevent the West from being absorbed into the United States.

Laurie was frustrated with the slow progress of settlement. He had difficulty, at times, reconciling his position as a westerner and as a Conservative, and his writings reveal ambiguous and sometimes contradictory arguments on policies that affected Western Canada. Laurie's uncertainties were due, in part at least, to the difficulties the federal government had ironing out the details of their Land, Railway, Tariff and Immigration policies to the satisfaction of most westerners.

But in spite of the many criticisms Laurie had of government policies, he remained a loyal Conservative. As an immigrant from

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## Chapter One

### P.G. LAURIE: THE ASPIRATIONS OF A WESTERN ENTHUSIAST.

I was born without pomp or glory,  
Unfettered but uncaressed,  
Amid hills eternal and hoary,  
In the land of the Golden West.

By the side of a rushing river,  
Sweeping with tireless speed,  
I have sprung into life and being,  
To ACHIEVE and to SUCCEED.

As the pilgrim sad and foresaken,  
Toils on his weary way,  
So, with a faith unshaken,  
I will work while 'tis still to-day.  
from The "Herald's Song".

On August 11, 1878, Patrick Gammie Laurie, then forty-five years of age, reached Battleford to establish the first newspaper in the North-West Territories. He made the six hundred and fifty mile journey from Winnipeg in two months walking beside an ox cart which carried his printing press. This journey was undertaken by a man stubbornly determined to see the West settled. This idea had captured his imagination while he was working as a printer in southern Ontario in the 1850's and 1860's.

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<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan Herald, August 25, 1978. (Hereafter referred to as Herald.)

Two weeks after he arrived at Battleford, the new territorial capital, he published the first issue of the Saskatchewan Herald and optimistically announced: "Today we present to the public of the Dominion the first number of the Saskatchewan Herald - the pioneer press of the Great North-West - the light that is destined to dispel the gloom that has long enveloped the Great Lone Land."<sup>2</sup>

It was with this unbounded optimism that Laurie continued, in spite of numerous setbacks, to extol the great possibilities of the North-West. Laurie was to spend the next twenty-five years at Battleford - it was the longest time he had ever spent in one place.

Laurie's life up to 1878 appears to have been restless and uncertain. It was filled with a variety of ventures, but he was still searching for a purpose to consummate his life's work. It seemed like a prolonged adolescence, eventful and unsettled. But here at Battleford, in a corner of the British Empire, Laurie found a home. The imperial connection provided a paternal guidance and protection, consistent with Laurie's Anglican, hierarchical view of society.

P.G. Laurie was born at Pitsligo, in Aberdeenshire, Scotland in April, 1833.<sup>3</sup> Three years later, after his mother's

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<sup>2</sup> Herald, August 25, 1878.

<sup>3</sup> Reliable bibliographical information can be found in the Laurie Letterbooks and Storer Papers in the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (hereafter abbreviated to P.A.S.). See also, "The Letters of P.G. Laurie" edited by Alan Turner, Saskatchewan History, vol. XIV, 1961.

death, Laurie, along with his father who was an Anglican minister, and his brother, attempted to sail to Canada. Their ship, however, was swept to shore during a storm and seized by dock workers who were on strike in the port of Greenock. The family remained in Greenock until 1842, when a second successful journey landed them in New York, from where they travelled to Toronto. In 1843 Patrick entered grammar school in Cobourg, Ontario, but stayed only one year. The next year, having completed grade 5 or 6, he began his apprenticeship as a printer for the Church, a publication of the Anglican church. In 1846, the Church moved its offices to Toronto and Laurie followed to finish his apprenticeship. He then worked at a variety of jobs. Over the next ten years he lived in Brantford, worked for a time in Owen Sound on the Advertiser, which was owned by his future father-in-law, Richard Carney, and then returned to Toronto where he remained for a number of years. In 1855, at the age of 22, he returned to Owen Sound and married Mary Eliza Carney on December 4 of that year. Some time between 1855 and 1859 he became the owner of the Owen Sound Times and in 1859 he sold it. With this money he intended to emigrate to Red River, after being persuaded by John Christian Schultz to establish a newspaper there. Laurie made it to Windsor, Ontario where news reached him that a newspaper, the Nor'Wester, had already been established at Red River by William Buckingham and William Coldwell.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Nor'Wester was the voice of the interests of the Canadian Party through the late 1850's and 1860's. In 1860, James Ross, the son of Red River historian Alexander Ross, bought out Buckingham's interest in the paper. In 1864 John Christian Schultz bought out Ross and in 1865 purchased Coldwell's interest in the paper.

For the next two years he commuted between Windsor and Detroit working in both cities as a printer. In 1861 he bought the Essex Record, which he published until 1869.

In the prospectus of the Essex Record, Laurie reflects the Victorian themes common to other writers of the time and shared by many in the Canada First Movement. In the 1850's, Upper Canadians were ready for the revivalist themes of optimism and common sense that the Victorian spirit offered. The individual was not alone. In the conflict between the individual and the collectivist forces, Victorians preached that progress could only be inspired through the community, led by those at the top of society. "Reflecting their traditionalist orientation, they assumed a community was always endangered by the uncontrollable behaviour of individuals especially those who constituted its lower classes."<sup>5</sup> Discovery, Civilization and Progress were the watchwords, which along with Christian morality, were to provide the ingredients for a united and prosperous nation. The new nation would draw its inspiration from Britain and not from the 'effeminate', degenerate republicanism of the United States. Each individual was seen as a part of society which was being guided by forces beyond his control and hence, institutions were more important than ideas. This anti-intellectual tendency, common to Victorian thought, is reflected in Laurie's philosophy:

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Rutherford, "The New Nationality, 1864-1897: A Study of the National Aims and Ideas of English Canada in the Late Nineteenth Century", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1970, p. 287.

But while the publisher thus avows himself solicitous of attracting and arresting the favour and substantial patronage of a large public, he declines to sue the same by putting forward a formal and pretentious catalogue of political theories, professions and pledges, by which he shall be henceforth circumscribed and governed. He says in a word, he hates all kinds of platforms, because both common sense and experience reject them as foolish and inappropriate, since they must necessarily eventuate in embarrassing and confusing their authors, and all others who adopt them. In a new country as this is, and in these days, when throughout the whole range of both physical and political sciences; such rapid and gigantic progress is taking place, and such new and unexpected developments are daily made, platform and systematic pledges are monstrous shams, or sheer impertinences; for every important change in the physical world implies the co-relative modification in the political hemisphere.<sup>6</sup>

This common sense view of politics indicates that Laurie's ideas were consistent with those of the conservative spirit which advocated the institutions of the mother country over the ideas of Americans which inevitably led to revolution.

"What passed for political philosophy at the time was an inherited or assumed body of ideas, not without some theoretical vigour, which reflected a distaste for things American and a zeal for things British."<sup>7</sup> The basis for the beliefs of conservatives like Laurie lay in the slogans of peace, order and good government which to them were the most important features of the British tradition. This was the crux of the choice - it was either republicanism or monarchism and Laurie's position had already been clearly taken with the latter

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<sup>6</sup> Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan (hereafter referred to as PAS), Prospectus of the Essex Record in the Storer Papers.

<sup>7</sup> Rutherford, op. cit., p. 90.

school:

He [Laurie writing in the third person] therefore, begs to give assurance that the Essex Record will, under no possible contingencies, "look to Washington" either for physical aid to remodel our political institutions, or to the Halls of Congress for patterns to guide our own legislature. Whoever may hold the reins of government and whatever may be our temporary dilemmas, this journal will be conducted uniformly and persistently on true conservative and purely logical principles.<sup>8</sup>

The potentialities for Canada were great and Laurie pledged "to make the Essex Record all that a good country paper should be. In regard to general politics there will be in its columns no recognition of a dividing line between what are called Upper and Lower Canada. It will, therefore, be found to give sure and ready and zealous support to every act of the legislature, having for its object the greater prosperity and welfare of the united provinces; and so also a measure necessarily limited in special sections or localities of the same."<sup>9</sup> The ideas Laurie expressed in the Essex Record had much in common with those voiced, after the 1860's, by other young Canadian nationalists and imperialists. Laurie's ideas were particularly similar to those of a small group of men who organized the Canada First Movement.

The Canada First Movement grew, informally, out of a meeting in Ottawa, in 1868, of three young men: Henry Morgan<sup>10</sup>,

<sup>8</sup> PAS, Prospectus of the Essex Record.

<sup>9</sup> PAS, Prospectus of the Essex Record.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Morgan (1842-1913) was born in Quebec and educated at Morin College, Quebec. He was a civil servant until 1895 when he retired. He published a number of works including a biographical dictionary entitled Bibliotheca acandensis and edited Speeches and Addresses of the Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee on British American Union.

Charles Mair<sup>11</sup> and Robert Grant Haliburton<sup>12</sup>, "all writers, all dreamers".<sup>13</sup> It began as a loosely knit literary group which discussed, among other things, the future expansion of Canada into the North-West. A nationalistic movement, similar to the nationalist movements that swept Europe in the nineteenth century, Canada First exuded the powerful romantic and emotional characteristics unleashed by the tendency to aggrandize states with common interests and aspirations. This late nineteenth century nationalism "was considered to be of positive value, a force that liberated and created whole countries and states...it was a zeitgeist of tremendous inspiration".<sup>14</sup>

The group attracted the interest of other intellectuals which

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- <sup>11</sup> Charles Mair (1838-1927) was born at Lanark in Upper Canada. He was educated at Queen's University and proceeded to a career as a journalist, poet and eventually civil servant in the West. He was an original member of the Canada First Party of 1868. He was active during the 1885 Riel Resistance in the Governor-General's Body Guard. He married a niece of John Christian Schultz, Elizabeth Louise MacKenny. He was the author of numerous pieces of prose and poetry, his most famous perhaps was Tecumseh, a drama published in 1886.
- <sup>12</sup> Robert Grant Haliburton (1831-1901) attended King's College until 1852. In 1853, he was called to the bar and practised law until 1881. He wrote on a wide range of topics including a pamphlet entitled Intercolonial Trade (1869). He also published a book of poems, Voices from the Street and a study on the pygmies in North Africa called The Dwarfs of Mount Atlas.
- <sup>13</sup> W.L. Morton, The Critical Years The Union of British North America, 1857-1873. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1964), p. 235.
- <sup>14</sup> Norman Shrive, Charles Mair, Literary Nationalist (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 24.

included William Foster<sup>15</sup>, George Denison<sup>16</sup>, and Goldwin Smith.<sup>17</sup> In the early 1870's, its membership swelled to over thirty, with the majority of the members being based in Toronto. It was this fact which led some to point out that the movement might well have been labelled 'Ontario First' rather than 'Canada First'. "They were not the first or last 'Canadian Nationalists' who were only spokesmen for Ontario or Quebec or the West or the Maritimes."<sup>18</sup>

There is some difficulty in stating definitively the position that Canada First took on issues they concerned themselves with since their definition of 'Canadianism' varied, sometimes significantly, as each had his own opinion of what was most important for Canada's future.

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<sup>15</sup> William Alexander Foster (1840-1888) studied law at the University of Toronto and entered the bar in 1861. His pamphlet Canada First (1871) was one of the first to outline the aims of the Canada First Movement. He helped to found the Nation (1874-1876) and the National Club in Toronto.

<sup>16</sup> George Taylor Denison (1839-1925), author, soldier and magistrate, was educated at Upper Canada College and the University of Toronto. In 1866 he became lieutenant-colonel in the Governor-General's Body Guard and saw active service in the Fenian Raids of 1866 and the 1885 North-West Resistance. He was an original member of the Canada First Movement and a leader of the Imperial Federation Movement. He was the author of numerous books on military topics and of two reminiscences.

<sup>17</sup> Goldwin Smith (1823-1910) was educated at Oxford, taught law at University College and history at Oxford. He wrote voluminously on a wide range of topics but is best remembered for his view that Canada would ultimately be absorbed into the United States.

<sup>18</sup> Carl Berger, The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 77. (See also D.R. Farrell, "The Canada First Movement and Canadian Political Thought", Journal of Canadian Studies, v. IV, n. 4, November 1969, p. 17).



They did, however, address themselves to a number of common problems. One was the question of race. Generally the members at Canada First agreed that Canada's future lay with traditions and institutions that the Anglo-Saxon race brought with them to the new world, especially British parliamentary and social institutions. This entailed an anti-Americanism which, with the exception of Goldwin Smith, was a common sentiment of Canada Firsters. The members of Canada First also reflected the Victorian themes prevalent in Canada in the late nineteenth century. The optimism evident in their work was perhaps the most important common denominator indicative of the Victorian spirit. Their general support for a 'holistic' hierarchical society which opposed excessive individualism was another concern they shared with other Victorian thinkers. The ubiquitous influence of Social Darwinistic thought could also be felt lurking beneath the surface on many social and moral issues discussed by the Canada Firsters.

Laurie shared many of the ideas of the Canada Firsters and, directly or indirectly, reflected the nationalism of Canada First. Though he never acknowledged his debt to this movement, perhaps because he was unaware of it, its influence on his thought, particularly through John Christian Schultz, was unmistakable.

Canada First was, in a sense, an expression of an imperialistic Ontario sentiment which desired expansion of Ontario to the West. It was a sentiment felt more strongly in Ontario than in Lower Canada because, "The Upper Canadian frontier was overripe for expansion into new territory, and had only to vault the shield from

Fort William to Fort Garry."<sup>19</sup>

Canada First was opposed to the "partyism", as they termed it, of the traditional political parties. It hoped to become a pressure group that would be as effective as a third party might be. Basically it advocated an Anglo-Saxon character for Western Canada and did not recognize any distinctive role for Lower Canada in the settlement of the West.<sup>20</sup> The movement "contained much that was bigoted and violent, but it also reflected the high-minded and exuberant patriotism of the young...many, especially the Reform side of politics, had immense faith in the moral and material improvement of Canadian society".<sup>21</sup>

Canada First has been criticized for being a "heady and silly" part of an exuberant "frothy Canadian nationalism".<sup>22</sup> It has also been portrayed as a movement of little depth: "...without Goldwin Smith's talent and money, without Edward Blake's talent and political influence, Canada First was merely a congeries of young nationalists with little to hold them together but a rather callow English-Protestant nationalism."<sup>23</sup> Carl Berger, however, in his recent study The Sense of Power, has argued that the movement, because of the variety of views brought to it by its members, was far too complex to be so easily characterized. Though it appeared only briefly, the movement was too significant and influential to be dismissed as a 'flash in the pan'.

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<sup>19</sup> Morton, The Critical Years, p. 235.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 237.

<sup>21</sup> P.B. Waite, Canada 1874 - 1896 Arduous Destiny, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971), pp. 9-10.

<sup>22</sup> Morton, The Critical Years, pp. 236-237.

<sup>23</sup> Waite, Arduous Destiny, p. 34.

Their platform was not innovative nor did it strike out in any new direction, but it did assimilate the feelings and aspirations preponderant in Upper Canada in the last decades of the nineteenth century: "Later imperialists recognized Canada Firsters as their own ancestors, and rightly so, for they shared that group's chief assumption and were moved by the same anticipation."<sup>24</sup>

Compelled, perhaps because of advice he was giving to others on the Essex Record, Laurie set out for Red River in 1869. He arrived there in September of 1869 and began work for the Nor'Wester; but he was expelled from the settlement in December of that year for refusing to print a proclamation for the Provisional Government. He returned to the East, only to journey back to Red River with his son William in September of 1870. From this time until he left for Battleford in 1878, he worked in various capacities on a number of newspapers including the Manitoba Newsletter, the Manitoba Liberal, The Manitoban, The Standard, and the Manitoba Free Press. From 1878 until his death in 1903, Laurie, by his own enterprise published the Herald, and made it into what he believed would be the guiding light for the North-West.

It would be a mistake to view Laurie primarily as a spokesman for regional interests. The East, he believed, provided the nurture without which the West would wither. It was not the environment which was the invigorating factor but the ties with the mother country and the East. Laurie went to great pains to attack eastern newspapers for failing to understand the plight of those in

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<sup>24</sup> Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 77.

the West. He did so not to gain recognition for the region as a separate part of Canada, but so that settlement and development could proceed more rapidly. He frequently criticized the sensationalized reports from the East depicting the prairies as a wild west infested with uncontrollable savages. The ignorance of public figures needed to be exposed, eastern officials would need to be made more aware of how important the West was to the whole. In 1883 Laurie wrote:

It is time for the people of the East and especially those who occupy the position of legislators, to recognize the fact that the prairies form an integral and most important part of the Dominion, that they no longer consist of an uninhabited tract of country lying somewhere beyond the great lakes, but having a population greater than some of the provinces, and in point of intelligence and enterprise equal to any.<sup>25</sup>

It was one of the avowed purposes of the Saskatchewan Herald to dispel myths about the West. Laurie worked diligently to this end and attacked, when necessary, false reports about the West. His aims were also achieved in a more positive way by including in the Herald lengthy articles on climate, soils and on the possibilities of mining and agriculture. There were also notes on livestock, plants and gardening. He reported at length on the Peace River Country and on scientific explorations such as those of John Macoun. Extensive coverage was given to politics: the complete text of debates from the House of Commons on matters relating to the West were printed, as were important speeches of the Governor-General; these were often fully reproduced along with any other speeches of political importance.

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<sup>25</sup> Herald, November 24, 1883.

Reporting was also provided for the visits of dignitaries such as the Marquis of Lorne or cabinet ministers. These were items intended to inform not only local subscribers but eastern readers as well.

For local consumption, the Herald included a section of gossip on the first page, informing readers of comings and goings of members of the community. Detailed coverage of the actions of the North-West Mounted Police was also featured - Laurie remained an unflagging partisan supporter of the Mounted Police and tried to deflect criticisms aimed at them whenever possible. Laurie also frequently included "Victorian" stories in his papers with their moralistic themes of muscle-christianity, self-help, self-education and self-denial.

Reports from Europe were included when the mails allowed. Articles from Eastern and European newspapers were reproduced, often in their entirety. Special coverage was given to events within the Empire such as the Fashoda Crisis, the Boxer Rebellion and the Boer War. Laurie's broader focus and imperial ideals prevented the Herald from becoming merely a local, parochial newspaper.

Laurie insisted on a strict moral standard in the execution of his profession. Hard work was the only way to achieve a high standard and Laurie promised his readers "ceaseless and untiring energy and assiduity toward this end".<sup>26</sup> The goal of his mission, to establish a strong, virile, progressive West, was not simply for material gain, but also for the invigorating feeling brought about by hard work and achievement.

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<sup>26</sup> PAS, Prospectus of the Essex Record.

This, in Laurie's mind was the ultimate reward. Life was a serious undertaking and Laurie ended the prospectus of the Essex Record with the sober motto: "Fortier in re, sel suovitor in modo - no scurrility, but much firmness of expression."<sup>27</sup>

It was in this atmosphere of enterprise and adventure that the desire to establish a strong nation to the north to combat the spread of republicanism was born. This could only be realized if the West could be settled as soon as possible. The Essex Record dwelt on themes concerning the North-West and urged its readers to emigrate west.

Laurie's life was dedicated to developing the West as an extension of the Empire. This end, he believed, could best be achieved by supporting Sir John A. Macdonald's National Policy. Laurie made support of the Conservative Party seem as though it was the only choice open to Westerners. In 1887 he wrote: "This, however, we assume, the favoured candidates will be of conservative leanings. It was under Conservative rule that the country emerged from a state of painful solitude and barren unproductiveness."<sup>28</sup> The West could not be allowed to evolve without guidance, it would need critics to direct its progress and it would need a framework within which to develop. With an already defined Weltanschauung, Laurie came to the West as a spokesman on all policies and events which affected it.

In many ways, Laurie's personality fits the image of a respectable Victorian gentleman. Though not well educated, he worked hard to improve

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Herald, January 15, 1887.

himself so that he would be able to rub shoulders with the politicians, community leaders and businessmen of his society. He was, by his own estimation, a major figure in his community and enjoyed the status he held in Battleford society. As well as editing the only newspaper of the area, he held numerous other positions in the community: he was the crown lumber agent, issuer of marriage and billiard table licences, coroner, supervisor of public schools, inspector of schools and game guardian. He maintained a prominent and active interest in public meetings which frequently recommended changes to the federal and territorial governments on matters affecting the community.

Laurie did not seek a high station in society to gain excessive wealth; rather, it was his hierarchical view of society, probably instilled in him from his Anglican background, that compelled him to seek a station in the higher echelons of society. He saw society as a hierarchical structure where the most civilized occupied the upper classes. While living in a humble house in Battleford and without enough money to afford help outside the family, Laurie looked upon many in his community as "lower classes" and considered the Indians as "lesser breeds". He quite clearly saw himself as part of the governing elite.

His espousal of commercial enterprise and progress exposed the basically bourgeois tendency that Laurie held in common with the Victorian spirit of the time. He was obsequious to important male visitors to Battleford and was always pleased to give notice to his readers of the dignitaries who passed through his office. They were men who, to Laurie at least, occupied positions of significance in society.

Laurie's daughter, Effie Storer, recalled some of those who passed through the Herald's Office - "Explorers such as Professor Macoun, Sir William Francis Butler, dignitaries of the church such as Bishop John McLean, Rev. George and John McDougall, Rev. Father Lacombe, Bishop Grandin, Rev. D.M. Gordon, Chief Factor McTavish, Richard Hardisty, Factor Lawrence Clark, Commissioner Graham of the Indian Department, Col. J.F. MacLeod of the N.W.M.P., Col. W. Osborne Smith, Archibald Macdonald of Swan River and Lord Lorne".<sup>29</sup> Laurie worked hard to be among the elite of western society, his guiding motto: "Time is money. To steal it is a crime", reflected a typically Victorian concern for thrift, an obsession he shared with many of those he admired.

From the reminiscences of his daughter, Effie Storer, a sometime journalist at Battleford, the image of Laurie as a dedicated family man emerges. Though virtually humourless (especially when compared to Bob Edwards<sup>30</sup>) and pedantic in his writing, he was according to his daughter, a kind and loving father. He was a busy man, though never too hurried to spend time with his family. Of her parents, Effie Storer writes: "My parents were a perfect example of complementary opposites. Six foot tall, strong and vigorous in body and essentially reflective and philosophic in mind, my father's personality was balanced by my small, active and practical mother."<sup>31</sup> Laurie was also apparently well liked in the community. From his daughter's portrayal an almost saintlike image of him emerges "sandy

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<sup>29</sup> PAS, "My Story" manuscript, The Storer Papers.

<sup>30</sup> Bob Edwards (1864-1922) was educated in Glasgow University and came to Canada in 1895. He became renowned in Canada for his humorous and satirical articles in the Calgary Eye Opener.

<sup>31</sup> PAS, "My Story".



beard, neatly trimmed, his hazel eyes twinkling a welcome...he was a favourite of old and young. Capable, unassuming, yet thorough in his press, a force to be reckoned with, his influence was widely felt in the community."<sup>32</sup>

In addition to all of this, he was an avid gardener and wrote frequent articles in the Herald on the successes and failures of planting various trees, fruits and vegetables and flowers ordered from eastern Canadian seed catalogues. According to his daughter, "he spent...all his spare time in cultivating vegetables, flowers and fruits and I have been told that the Hon. Frank Oliver in referring to him in conversation spoke of him as a man who published a paper for the good of the country and cultivated a garden in order to get things to eat".<sup>33</sup> In one letter, Laurie, the provider, evidently hoped to bribe his daughter with the fruits of his garden: "...if you behave yourself and are real good I will let you have a little lettuce to scale for yourself and a few onions for the young ones, and some scarlet China winter radishes for the crowd and maybe a pumpkin and a squash".<sup>34</sup> His letters to his daughters reflect a genuine concern for their families. Newsy items from Battleford and continual pleas for Effie to visit him in Battleford are common in his letters. At home his daughter remembers him as a quiet man who, besides his gardening, enjoyed smoking a pipe and reading for relaxation.

Laurie tried to make the West appealing to prospective settlers

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Glenbow Alberta Institute, DeGear Papers, Laurie to Jessie DeGear, Battleford, May 8, 1895.

with the same zeal with which he worked at gardening. He stayed at Battleford even though the transcontinental railroad was re-routed through the south in 1881 and the Territorial capital was moved from Battleford to Regina in 1883. He remained convinced of the possibilities of the West and his optimism was reflected in the motto he chose for his newspaper - "Progress". As he wrote in the first edition of the Herald, "The word selected as our motto indicates most expressively the course laid down for the HERALD. It will seek to promote the prosperity and further the march of progress of the whole North-West, by advocating all measures having this for its object, and by making known the vast resources now only awaiting development and in keeping with the onward movement, the HERALD will always be found in front."<sup>35</sup>

Although never clearly articulating a comprehensive, conservative ideology, it was evident from Laurie's writings over the years that he envisaged an "organic", "holistic" society for Canada. As a transplanted westerner, the conservative persuasion entailed the acceptance of a number of broad propositions. One of these was the acceptance of British institutions as the basis for defining and maintaining western Canadian society. This in turn meant the condemnation of the "revolutionary" American way of life. A second was the acknowledgement of the hierarchical nature of society where liberty was superior to equality and where social classes were inevitable. A third broad position which is evident from Laurie's writings was the recognition of the necessity of the role of government

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<sup>35</sup> Herald, August 25, 1878.

in directing the development of society. This direction could only be realized if broad principles were laid down through a kind of spiritual guidance rather than a direct specific interference in the affairs of society. Laurie was part of the conservative tradition which accepted stability as the key to the maintenance of order in society, but this order could not be forced upon a society but had to arise from within, "...from an equilibrium reached among the elements of society by usage, tradition and law. It is what the philosophers call an organic order, not an order mechanically contrived, but one resulting from growth within".<sup>36</sup> W.L. Morton has picturesquely described this tradition as follows:

Now such an order in an actually living organism or, metaphorically, in a living society results in two characteristics. One is unity, the other is wholeness. A tree, for example lives only as one tree; branches prune away and die; and if the trunk is chopped through, the tree dies. Similarly, a society exists by means of ligaments of language, custom, belief, law, neighbourhood. If its people should be dispersed, the society dies. What then would conserve society, the conservative principle, is the principle of unity of a society as a whole. It is concerned with every part, with every individual element, and with the relationship of each to every other part.<sup>37</sup>

Laurie frequently spoke out trenchantly on certain issues, but the action he demanded was always to be taken within the established British institutions that provided for change within society. He could brook no methods that would usurp traditional channels of change. An example of this was the harsh condemnation of

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<sup>36</sup> W.L. Morton, "The Conservative Principle in Confederation", Queen's Quarterly Review, vol. 71, 1964, p. 529.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

the "rebels" in 1885, on whose behalf he had pleaded for action from the government only months prior to the fighting. When, however, they took matters into their own hands, they were viciously condemned. Direct, separate action by one sector of society could not be tolerated.

The West was an integral part of Canada; indeed the East was, in Laurie's eyes, as important to the West, by providing the necessary British influence, as the West was to the East - an outlet for settlers from crowded areas of Ontario.<sup>38</sup> The West was only one region of Canada and would need to develop within the larger organism of Canada and the Empire to realize its full potentialities. Even though Laurie became a champion of western grievances and often criticized the complacency of the eastern establishment which impeded development in the West, he saw the prairies as part of a larger pattern - the West had duties to the rest of Canada and the Empire of which it was only one part. Without the whole, the sections would die. It was part of his faith in the future of the West within this framework that made Laurie persevere at Battleford in spite of the miserable existence he must have experienced in his early years there.

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<sup>38</sup> "Almost as much as industrialization, the prospect of a new frontier excited the conservative. Often the conservative spoke of Canada's duty, sometimes as if imposed by God, to civilize the northern portion of the continent. By civilize, of course, he meant exploit, the expansion of the Canadian economy westward. Obvious in conservative rhetoric was the expectation that the frontier would play the role of the economic catalyst in Canada's future similar to that played by the great plains of the American past." Rutherford, op. cit., p. 184.

Generally Laurie's outlook reflected the conservatism that the United Empire Loyalists brought to Canada. One historian has described this tradition as "...the respect for history, the primacy of the community over individual selfishness, society conceived as an organism of functionally related parts and structured to reflect different human aptitudes, religion as the mortar of the social order and the distrust of materialism".<sup>39</sup> Laurie's advocacy of British institutions and democracy (as forged by tradition over many years) showed that he had at least some respect for history and that he believed that the community guided by its "British" institutions was superior to "individual selfishness". Laurie's abhorrence of "revolutionary" change as evident in his reactions to the 1869 and 1885 Riel "rebellions" and his warnings that change could only be effected in a gradual, evolutionary manner indicates his preference for an organic society.

A belief that religion was the mortar of society is not explicit in his writing, but it is implicit in his belief that Anglo-Saxons had a mission to civilize and settle the North-West, to prevent it from being absorbed into the United States. The son of an Anglican minister could hardly have been left unaffected by the missionary zeal of "British election": "The Anglican myth of British election was to have a long life, whether in the Upper Canadian expansionism of a Charles Mair, [or in] the Anglo-Saxon racism so prevalent among those Canadians caught by the vision of Empire at the century's end...".<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 103.

<sup>40</sup> Wise, S.F. "God's Peculiar People" in W.L. Morton (ed.), The Shield of Achilles, Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age (Toronto, Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 59.

Laurie's outlook also included a mistrust of materialism which was peripherally evident in his writings. Though an advocate of "Progress" especially if it meant the establishment of an Anglo-Canadian society in the North-West, he was critical of the blatant greed of American annexationists. This sentiment is revealed in his diary of 1869 where he describes the Americans as "freebooters" ready to move into the North-West as soon as the opportunity arose. Material advancement, if it enhanced the development of an Anglo-Canadian society was acceptable, but the materialism of the opportunistic American annexationists could not be tolerated.

In the sense that Laurie criticized and feared American annexationists and promoted what he believed was the manifest destiny of a British North-West, he reflected the nationalism that grew out of late nineteenth century Ontario conservatism.<sup>41</sup> Had the ideas that Laurie advocated been more deeply rooted in Canada's heritage it might well have been that George Grant's Lament for a Nation would never have been written.

The more general influence of a conservatism established by the United Empire Loyalist tradition was effected by a number of currents of the late nineteenth century milieu. One of these was a Canadian nationalism which left a deep imprint on the ideas of nineteenth century Ontario conservatism, but also effected other creeds of the time.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Brown, R.C. and Wise, S.F. Canada Views the United States: Nineteenth Century Political Attitudes (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1967). Also Grant, George, Lament for a Nation: The Defeat of Canadian Nationalism (Toronto, Montreal: McClelland and Stewart, 1965).

<sup>42</sup> See Brown and Wise, Canada Views the United States.

Victorian themes of Progress and Optimism also nudged conservatives into a direction not entirely consistent with the original conservatism of the United Empire Loyalists.

All these influences are evident in Laurie's writings. In addition Laurie's experiences on the frontier of the North-West made an impact on the ideas he brought with him from eastern Canada. This experience caused him to modify beliefs he held that were obviously unacceptable in the prairie environment.

## Chapter Two

### THE CRISIS OF 1869.

I will speak in tones of thunder,  
Undaunted by human fears,  
I will scatter and rend assunder  
The gloom of a thousand years.

I will open this mighty region  
Till the land shall ring again  
With the tramp of a restless legion  
Garnering its golden grain.

from the "Herald's Song".

Laurie set out for the West inspired by the prophetic vision of Thomas D'Arcy McGee:

I see in the not too remote distance, one great nationality bound like the shield of Achilles, by the blue rim of ocean - I see it quartered into many communities - each disposing of its internal affairs but all bound together by free institutions, free intercourse and free commerce. I see within the round of the shield, the peaks of the Western mountains, and the crests of the Eastern waves - the winding Assiniboine, the five-fold lakes, the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, the Saguenay, the St. John, and the Basin of Minas - by all these flowing waters, in all the valleys they fertilize, in all the cities they visit in their courses, I see a generation of industrious, contented, moral men, free in name and fact - men capable of maintaining, in peace and in war, a constitution worthy of such a country.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas D'Arcy McGee, 1860 in W.L. Morton (ed.), The Shield of Achilles, Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1968).



Laurie sympathized with the sentiment of the Canada Firsters who envisaged a 'new nationality', which "would in the future become a great northern monarchical nation to rival the republic to the south".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Schultz, a sometime medical doctor, had persuaded Laurie to come west in 1869 to work on the Nor'Wester, a newspaper which by then he owned. Laurie was eager to move to the North-West he had heard so much about.

Schultz, the leader of the Canadian faction at Red River during the Resistance had, by this time, strong ties with the emerging Canada First Movement. In 1869 the poet Charles Mair, one of the founding members of the Canada First Party, had recommended to Lieutenant-Colonel George Denison that Dr. Schultz become an associate of the movement. Later, Schultz was introduced by Denison to Robert Grant Haliburton and William Alexander Foster. Schultz, who was active in the resistance to Louis Riel's Provisional Government in 1869, returned to the East after the Resistance for a number of speaking engagements, which were sponsored by the Canada First members. One meeting ended with an impassioned resolution which was sent to Ottawa:

That this meeting expresses the strongest indignation of the cold-blooded murder of poor Scott, sympathizes deeply with his relatives and friends, and considers that it would be a gross injustice to the loyal inhabitants of Red River, humiliating our national honour and contrary to all British traditions, for our government to receive, negotiate or treat with emissaries of those who have robbed, imprisoned and murdered

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<sup>2</sup> Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 52.

loyal Canadians, whose only fault was zeal for British institutions whose only crime was devotion to the Old Flag.<sup>3</sup>

The Red River Resistance and the killing of Thomas Scott were primarily responsible for the publicity that the Canada First Movement received. Canada First exploited the issue of disloyalty to the Crown raised by the Resistance, sensationalized it in the eastern press, and presented Schultz as a hero. Schultz's prominent position within the party is evident in the eulogy written by Lieutenant-Colonel Denison who ended an article entitled "Sir John Schultz and the 'Canada First' Party" as follows:

As one of the original members of the little 'Canada First' Committee, I wish to bear testimony to the thorough, hearty and loyal manner in which our comrade did his work. To the day of his death, love for his native land was the predominant feeling, Canada owes a great deal to the memory of so true a son. As I have on another occasion suggested, the nation should erect a statue of him and place it on the main street in Winnipeg on the spot where, in 1869, he hoisted the Union Jack with the word 'Canada' upon it; and it should depict him in full vigour of his early manhood, raising the flag which he always loved, guarded and honoured.<sup>4</sup>

Laurie was profoundly influenced by the events of 1869 and by his contact with Schultz, as his diary of 1869 indicates. Through Schultz, he became acquainted with the ideas of the Canada First Movement and with Charles Mair who remained his life long friend. The themes of Canada First became common and repetitive in articles in the Saskatchewan Herald, especially "The prospect of acquiring the North-West territory which generated an indescribable sense of liberation

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<sup>3</sup> Lt. Col. George T. Denison, "Sir John Schultz and the 'Canada First' Party", Canadian Magazine, vol. 8, 1896-1897, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

from the past and faith in the future".<sup>5</sup> The promotion of immigration which would create an Anglo-Saxon society in the West, thereby ensuring the British character of Canada, was one of the most important positions that Laurie held in common with the Canada First Movement. There was great optimism in the spirit of the Canada First Movement that the North-West territories would become a 'Northern Nation' inhabited by tough, hardy northern races.<sup>6</sup> There was a confidence in this spirit which grew out of the belief that the northern races and especially the Anglo-Saxons were a people chosen by God to build a British nation in the northern half of the continent.<sup>7</sup>

Laurie was, however, rudely surprised on arrival at Red River to find a community on the verge of rebellion, largely dominated by the Catholic clergy and ineptly governed by the Hudson's Bay Company. It was a community ignorant of British institutions and unaware of the dangers of annexation to the United States.

Laurie reached Red River near the beginning of October 1869 and began work immediately on the Nor'Wester. He arrived at a time of impending crisis, when the "society" that had been established on the banks of the Red River was being threatened with annexation to Canada.<sup>8</sup> Laurie, however, did not understand the fibre of this society with its half-breed population stemming from French and Scottish fathers

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<sup>5</sup> Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Chapter Two.

<sup>7</sup> S.F. Wise, "God's Peculiar Peoples", In W.L. Morton (ed.), The Shield of Achilles, Aspects of Canada in the Victorian Age (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1968).

<sup>8</sup> W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), p. 121.

and Saulteaux, Cree and Assiniboine mothers.<sup>9</sup> Here, since the early 1800's, the metis or winterers worked as "huntsmen, tripmen and guides"<sup>10</sup> while the Scottish half-breeds earned a living primarily by farming. Laurie did not see the society at Red River as an autonomous, self-sufficient society. He shared the views of the Canada Firsters and saw the West as a vast and empty territory whose future could be shaped and moulded along the lines of the British Empire.<sup>11</sup> Laurie had come, like other Canadians, to share in the development of the North-West and to extend the Anglo-Saxon character of southern Ontario to what Laurie believed was a largely unsettled prairie. The Canadians, insensitive to the desires of the settlers within Red River society, were determined to annex the rich agricultural land of the North-West as quickly as possible to wrest the society from the weakening clutches of Hudson's Bay Company rule. Laurie and other Canadian imperialists believed that "the government and external relations of the Red River Settlement had ceased to meet the need of the country and the times".<sup>12</sup>

Laurie's response to the resistance by the metis at Red River provides an insight into his views for the potential of the North-West within Canada. It is also the focal point for the reactions of Laurie, the conservative, to the actions of Louis Riel and the rebels. The actions of the "rebels" were denounced as selfish and senseless since

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Generally, the majority of the members agreed on this, though there were exceptions such as Goldwin Smith. See Berger, The Sense of Power, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> Morton, Manitoba: A History, p. 112.

they threatened the security and hence the potential for development that the North-West could enjoy within Canada and the Empire. The stopping of Lieutenant-Governor McDougall, the establishment of the Provisional Government, the seizure of power and the killing of Thomas Scott, were all heinous acts of treason which could not be tolerated.

Here also, and more vividly than Laurie ever displayed in the Herald, is an insight into his opinion of French-Canadian influence in the West. Like the rebels, French-Canadian priests were a disruptive force who looked outside of Canada and the Empire, to Rome, for their guidance and inspiration. This was entirely incompatible with Laurie's own visions for the North-West. The details of Laurie's Weltanschauung as laid bare during the 1869 Resistance were the basic ideas which he later presented and expanded upon in the Saskatchewan Herald.

Laurie had been warned of the unrest at the Red River Settlement on his arrival at Buffalo Coulee, but decided to continue on even though, as he recorded in his diary, he was advised to return east...

Met Father Gussier at Fort Abercrombie on his way home from Red River... He urged me to return home because an insurrection was brewing with the object of keeping out the Canadian Government and all that business would be so far suspended as to render employment of any kind precarious... on asking for details he said the French half-breeds had determined to resist the establishment of the Canadian Government on the basis proposed, they were unanimous in their demands for recognition of their

rights, otherwise the governor should not be allowed to enter the territory.<sup>13</sup>

Laurie kept a diary during the time he spent at Red River in which he recorded the events of the Resistance as he saw them. His diary begins on September 26, 1869 and ends on December 7, 1869, at which time he escaped from the settlement after refusing to publish a Proclamation for the Provisional Government, in the Nor'Wester. His vantage point, as he recorded events, is not always clear. There are events which he quite clearly experienced directly and was involved with, but much of what he recorded is also second hand information gathered from those he was in contact with at this time. His interpretation of the events recorded in his diary bear the unmistakable marks of the influence of the Canadian Party.

Laurie, the western enthusiast, saw the Red River Settlement as a divided, parochial and primitive society. He foresaw little future for the community of mostly half-breeds since they, especially the metis, lacked the drive and the determination that the Canadians possessed. Red River was not a vibrant, growing society but was inward-looking and crumbling as each faction tried to claim for themselves as much as possible before inevitable annexation. The society lacked the greater, worldly aspirations that the Canadians had. This sentiment is most clearly described by Laurie in speaking of the demands made by the metis.

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<sup>13</sup> P.A.S., Laurie Diary in the Storer Papers, September 26, 1869. The original diary written by Laurie was very difficult to read. The copy made by E. Storer has been checked for accuracy. This source will hereafter be referred to as L.D.

First they want a title to the land then occupied by them, and as the government was about to give away the land to the foreigners they wanted 200 acres for each of their children and that their squaws or wives should be put on the strength of the Indian band from which they were extracted that they might become entitled to a share of the money that would be paid for the extinguishment of the Indian title. They also wanted that track of land lying south of the Assiniboine should be reserved perpetually as a French colony, to be self-governing and free from the operation of general assessment or taxation law. This would be considered indispensable because superior skill, industry and enterprise of the Canadian settlers around and amongst them would deprive them of the jobs, that now fall their share, and lead to so large a production of cereals and other crops as to glut and destroy their markets, leaving nothing for them but move off [sic] either to the plains or to the Saskatchewan Valley. They got along very comfortably as they are and did not desire change.<sup>14</sup>

This special status within society did not sit well with Laurie's conservative instincts. The fragmented, divided society at Red River could only be brought to life with the new blood of Canadian settlers. The Canadians could give the community a focus outside themselves and prevent the trend of each group fending for itself.

Perhaps because of his Anglican background, Laurie was especially critical of the role the French-Canadian clergy played in the settlement. Their hesitancy to give support to the expansion of the West was offensive to him. The Roman Catholic priests were primarily interested in maintaining their influence over the community and had little interest in the larger development of the West under Macdonald's expansionary policies that Laurie and the Canadians

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<sup>14</sup> L.D., October 8, 1869.

envisaged.

The opposition which he offered [Bishop Taché] for the settlement of the country even by French Canadian Catholics, as was proposed by Mr. Cartier is explained on the theory that their superior intelligence - and that is nothing to boast of - would lose its influence on the Halfbreeds and Romanist Indians and lead them to look with little favour on the vassalage in which they are now kept by the church.<sup>15</sup>

Laurie not only feared that the French-Canadian influence would prevent the settlement of the West, he also feared the power of the clergy to incite their people to unrest. They did not share the same imperialist spirit and enthusiasm for an Anglo-Canadian North-West. Laurie was especially critical of Father Ritchot<sup>16</sup>, whom he accused of supporting "an armed demonstration against the government".<sup>17</sup> He also viewed as treasonous Ritchot's practice of administering oaths at the altar which included a promise of allegiance to their "commanders" (who were the priests). Laurie described the kind of emotional appeal that Ritchot used to sway his "flock": "he [Ritchot] shed tears as he drew a picture of the route souls would follow on unchallenged establishment of Canadian rule in their country...".<sup>18</sup> The fears Laurie had over the

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<sup>15</sup> L.D., November 10, 1869.

<sup>16</sup> Father Ritchot (1825-1905) was born in L'Assomption, Lower Canada and entered the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church in 1855. He was the first parish priest at Qu'appelle when he came west in 1862. In 1870 he was arrested in Ottawa when he was sent there by Riel to act as an intermediary. The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography and W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History.

<sup>17</sup> L.D., October 19, 1869.

<sup>18</sup> L.D., October 27, 1869.



influence of Ritchot are further reflected in a brief character sketch he wrote of Ritchot. "Father Ritchot, of Stinking River, is a partly middle aged Frenchman, an enthusiast in the cause of the rebellion, as he looks for immense [sic] advantage arising from it to the church. He favours a French Republic or colony, with the church as its government. He is a most accomplished speaker and possesses very great control over his flock."<sup>19</sup> Laurie feared that a conspiracy existed among the Catholic priests to keep the populace uneducated and the agricultural potential of the region undeveloped and he maintained that this influence originated from Rome.

A letter, written by Bishop Taché, and published in the Globe, in which Taché stated that he had gone to Rome to discuss the problems of the North-West with the Pope, was cited as evidence supporting Laurie's "outside influence" theory. Of the trouble that had transpired up to November 10, 1869 Laurie wrote: "...it is universally believed that he [Taché] knew all about and countenanced this movement. The recent paragraph in the Globe reporting an interview between that dignitary and Mr. Cartier justifies that belief."<sup>20</sup>

Laurie's mistrust of the French-Canadian influence increased after a speech made by Monsieur Provencher<sup>21</sup>, a journalist from Quebec. M. Provencher arrived at a barricade erected by the metis. His visit had been welcomed by the Canadians who thought that Provencher might

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<sup>19</sup> L.D., October 19, 1869.

<sup>20</sup> L.D., November 10, 1869.

<sup>21</sup> Joseph Albert Norbert Provencher (1843-1887) was born in Lower Canada and called to the bar in Quebec in 1864. He was editor of the conservative newspaper La Minerve from 1866 to 1869. In 1869 he came to the Territories as an appointed member of the council of the North-West Territories and acted as an intermediary during the Resistance. He

have some influence over those higher up in the church's hierarchy and might possibly result in the "rebels" surrendering their positions and withdrawing their demands. Provencher, however, to the chagrin of the Canadians, ended his speech "by telling the breeds that they certainly had rights which Canada was bound to respect and that by maintaining a firm position at the outset they would secure them."<sup>22</sup> This statement outraged both Laurie and the Canadians...

...intense indignation prevailed and curses both loud and deep were heaped on all French Roman Catholics. The opinion that had long prevailed received confirmation - that every Frenchman and indeed every Romanist were rebels; that this was a church rebellion and as such would have to be treated. It was seen that the instigators were French and that almost all the rebels were papists and when on the 1st of November a flag was flung to the breeze its clergy established the belief.<sup>23</sup>

This was the worst kind of disruption and Laurie's conservative temperament could not tolerate it. He thought that the church should work with the state to create harmony and unity in society. For the church to work against this, to incite insurrection, was the highest treason.

Laurie recognized and saw justification in some of the grievances of the metis, half-breeds and even white society at Red River, and he believed that the uncertain atmosphere that existed could

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was an Indian Commissioner from 1870-1876 and returned east in 1881 where he acted for a time as editor-in-chief of La Presse. The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography.

<sup>22</sup> L.D., October 28, 1869.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

be alleviated if the settlement was absorbed by Canada. But in order for the North-West to become and remain a part of Canada, British institutions and laws must be respected. Only when such authority was established could the political, social and economic problems at Red River be solved. But the grievances could not be dealt with by rebellion; treason was the most serious of crimes and the "rebels" were guilty of treason by refusing to allow the Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable William McDougall, into the North-West Territories.

The difficulties at Red River, however, were not solely the fault of the French Catholics. The Council of Assiniboia had failed to assure McDougall safe passage into the territory. This was in part due to the decadence that Laurie believed the weakening authority at the Hudson's Bay Company had allowed. In an unpublished article written for the Nor'Wester entitled "How Our People Feel" Laurie wrote:

Great indignation is felt among all classes at the indifference shown by the Council in not taking prompt and energetic steps to disperse the crowd and bring the ring-leaders to justice. It is felt that every day that is allowed to pass without such an effort being made increases the difficulty of the task, and gives weight to the arguments used by those who are drumming up recruits that some of the authorities are on their side, and that no punishment will be awarded to them if they are unsuccessful.<sup>24</sup>

And in another article entitled "Where Mr. McDougall Is" he stated:

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<sup>24</sup> L.D., Found at the end of the first part of the diary.

Report has it that they [McDougall and his party] are short of provisions there: but this can scarcely be true. If it be, however, it will be taken as additional evidence that the company's officers are in league with the rebels.<sup>25</sup>

Laurie despised the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company and its control of the Council of Assiniboia. He became an opponent of the Company because of the reluctance and inability of the Hudson's Bay Company to enforce laws and keep the peace. There were other tensions between the Company and the Canadian Party which made the Company the scapegoat for many of the problems in the colony.

His antipathy towards the Hudson's Bay Company was also the result of the influence of John Christian Schultz. Schultz dominated the Canadian Party during the 1870's and was the strongest proponent in the settlement for union with Canada. His ideas for the future development of the West were much the same as Laurie's. "He proposed to grow rich with the development of the broad lands opening before the settler, and he was prepared to risk much and strike hard to promote that opening."<sup>26</sup> Schultz had personal and ideological reasons for opposing the Hudson's Bay Company rule. The personal reasons for his hatred of the Company resulted from his arrest for failing to pay a debt owed to the Company. He resisted arrest and was imprisoned but was later freed by sympathizers; consequently he attacked the Company for the injustice of his arrest.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Morton, Manitoba: A History, p. 110.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Schultz had also supplemented his income as a medical doctor with, among other things, a business as a free trader. As a free trader he was naturally antagonistic towards the monopoly that Company rule entailed. As such, he advertised the agricultural prospects of the West and attacked the Company "as an intolerable obstacle to the settlement of the northwest and annexation to Canada".<sup>27</sup>

Laurie's opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company was further intensified as a result of circumstances arising from the demand made by the Canadians for the Lieutenant-Governor to issue a proclamation condemning the rebels. In his diary, Laurie included a copy of a letter written by Schultz to William McTavish, Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company. Part of the letter written on November 12, 1869 reads as follows:

Beholding with great alarm the unsettled state of feeling existing in this territory and the threatening position assumed by a portion of its French speaking population towards the Crown in the person of Her Majesty's representative the future Governor of this territory, and believing as we do that this dissatisfaction is the result of various slanderous misrepresentations having been from time to time - disseminated among the people by persons unknown:

We do, therefore now demand that you as representative of Her Majesty in this Territory do proclaim among the people either by convening a public meeting for that purpose, or posting in conspicuous places throughout the country, a full and correct exposition of the transfer of this Territory to the Dominion of Canada.

We also request that you will explain, so far as it lies in your power, the policy likely to be adopted by the Canadian authorities relative to the governing of the Territory. Also, that you deny the numerous libellous slanders which are in circulation regarding

the purposes for which the Territory was acquired. That you warn them of the danger they are incurring to themselves by persistence in their present violent course, thereby imperilling the future welfare of the country; and that you do entreat them to lay down their arms, and return peaceably to their homes.<sup>28</sup>

The Council met on November 17, 1869 and issued a proclamation which condemned the "outrages the French had committed". The Canadians were able to secure a copy of the proclamation from the Council and planned to publish it. The Canadians, however, discovered that there was no reference to the expulsion of McDougall and no reference to any means which might bring him into the settlement. This was of paramount importance to Laurie and the other Canadians who believed that law and order could only be restored if the Lieutenant-Governor was treated with the dignity commensurate with his position. To correct the omission of the Council, the Nor'Wester made some alterations in emphasis and added a commentary when publishing the proclamation some days after it was passed by the Council.

The publication met with a storm of disapproval from the Provisional Government. As Laurie stated: "Fearful that his long looked for action on the part of the company would prejudice their cause the rebel leaders very assiduously circulat[ed] the report that the documents issued by the Nor'Wester were forgeries."<sup>29</sup>

Laurie further mentions the opposition of the Company officials, though their protests were less vociferous than those of the Provisional Government: "the companies officers also demanded their authenticity - some of them wrote very indignant letters to St. Paul's newspapers

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<sup>28</sup> L.D., November 12, 1869.

<sup>29</sup> L.D., November 17, 1869.

denouncing in very strong language the "base forgeries perpetrated by the Canadian politicians of Winnipeg".<sup>30</sup> When the official proclamation was finally issued by the Company, Laurie wrote:

"its distribution was chiefly entrusted to well known rebels or rebel sympathizers so that very few of the public saw any of them."<sup>31</sup>

These events, in addition to the influence of Schultz, increased Laurie's opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company's authority. He viewed the influence of the Company less as an active opposition to the Canadians, but rather more as a danger because of its lack of effective opposition to the rebels. The hesitancy of the Company in opposing the Provisional Government was seen by Laurie as an important factor in the success of the "rebels". The Council had issued a proclamation criticizing the "rebels" but - "with the issuing of the proclamation all recognition or interference with the insurrection seemed at an end as far as the Council and the company was concerned."<sup>32</sup>

Laurie also rebuked the Hudson's Bay Company for complacency and acquiescence during the days before the Provisional Government was established. The disruption of the mail service by the "rebels" who had erected a barricade across the road at Stinking River, received no response from the authorities. Though both incoming and outgoing mail was tampered with, the barricade remained; which to Laurie was evidence that the Hudson's Bay Company was being intimidated by the "rebels". This subversive action by the rebels which disrupted the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

routine business at Red River and interrupted contact with the East, undermined the stability and unity of society. Laurie claimed that if the authorities had taken a stand against the "rebels" at this time, no further trouble would have arisen - especially among the Scots. Among the Scots "loud demands were made that the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company should call out the local constabulary and arrest the ringleaders and so put an end to the struggle and allow peace and good order to be restored."<sup>33</sup> But no action was taken by the Company and to Laurie this was a turning point.

Had the constables been called out at that time it is altogether probable that, with the admixture of Canadian blood that would have fallen in with them and the volunteers that would have joined them from the Scotch settlement, such action would have been taken as would have compelled them [the Scots] to keep the field - their pride would have impelled them to maintain their ground - and the very pressure of an opposition organized would have prevented the French from taking up arms, as it was want of the opposition gave them [the "rebels"] the necessary courage.<sup>34</sup>

Laurie indicated that the Canadians were the only ones who attempted to organize any opposition to the "rebels". This was further evidence to Laurie that the authority of the Company was no longer effective and power was being thrust upon the Canadians. It was agreed on November 7, 1869 that the Canadians would attack the rebels if permission was given by Colonel Dennis<sup>35</sup>, who was then

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<sup>33</sup> L.D., October 20, 1869.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> John Stoughton Dennis (1820-1885), surveyor and civil servant was born in Upper Canada. He was sent west in 1869 to organize a survey system in the territories. It was partially because of the actions of the surveyors and the threat that was posed by



chief of the Canadian survey party and soon to be appointed by Lieutenant-Governor McDougall as Deputy-Governor and conservator of the peace.

But Colonel Dennis hesitated "saying the time had not yet come".<sup>36</sup> As a result of this, the "rebels" were able to maintain their positions with little opposition. If there was to be effective opposition to the "rebels" there would have to be leadership, for without it Laurie believed that support from groups like the Scots could not be relied upon.<sup>37</sup>

Laurie pinned the blame for the poor response from the settlers against the rebels on the Hudson's Bay Company as well. Of the Scots Laurie stated: "These men have become so much accustomed to let the company do their thinking for them that they seem utterly unable to do anything for themselves."<sup>38</sup> The Scots, as Laurie reflected, were hesitant to become involved in a quarrel, afraid that the French would burn their hay and kill their cattle. These Scots, Laurie believed, were symptomatic of the myopia from which the settlement suffered. They failed to see the benefits that would accrue to them if they became part of the larger whole and joined Canada.

Other attempts to organize opposition also failed. Near the end of November, an attempt was made to organize a group of volunteers to march on Fort Garry and most of these were to be Scottish half-breeds.

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the new survey system for the metis at Red River, that the Resistance led by Riel was begun. In 1881 Dennis became Surveyor-General of Dominion lands and served as Deputy Minister of the Interior from 1878-1881. The Macmillan Dictionary of Canadian Biography.

<sup>36</sup> L.D., October 20, 1869.

<sup>37</sup> Laurie used the terms "Scots" and "Scottish" very broadly. It is not clear when he uses these terms whether he is referring to the Scots who worked for the Hudson's Bay Company or the Selkirk settlers. At times he appears to use this term to include Scots half-breeds who farmed in the area.

<sup>38</sup> L.D., Ibid.

When it became known that volunteers would be paid as special constables "almost every man capable of bearing arms joined the force and things looked as if the rebels would soon be swept off the earth, and so they could [have] if these brave volunteers had been worth a pound of pemmican apiece".<sup>39</sup> However, after a few days of drilling and when a move on Upper Fort Garry was imminent, "white feathers stuck out all over them".<sup>40</sup> When Colonel Dennis asked for men to volunteer for the action, only one man stepped forward "and he an Englishman".<sup>41</sup> Laurie was greatly disappointed by this showing. It reflected a lifeless society which lacked the "pluck and determination" of the Canadians. Disillusioned, Laurie wrote, "...and so ended the Scotch-Halfbreed company at Lower Fort Garry".<sup>42</sup> Laurie was extremely critical of the selfishness of the Scottish Halfbreeds at this time:

Good government, prospective wealth, and advancement of civilization, internal development - everything sank to insignificance before their grain sacks - their 'scretos' as they called them. As long as the French kept out of their settlement and let them alone they could not be dogged into taking any steps to repel their advancement or disband their "army".<sup>43</sup>

Laurie was wrong in this essential fact of the rebellion: the reason for the reluctance of the Scottish half-breeds in joining the opposition to the Provisional Government was not that they were

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<sup>39</sup> L.D., December 1, 1869.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> L.D., Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> L.D., November 2, 1869.

selfish or primarily motivated by economic factors. They quite simply substantially supported the proposals of the Provisional Government.<sup>44</sup> His failure to understand the motives of the Scottish half-breeds stemmed from his Canadian bias which coloured his perception of Red River society and prevented him from recognizing the history that bound those at Red River together.

The only support, besides the Canadians, that Colonel Dennis could count on was that offered by the Cree Chief, Old Fox. Old Fox, for selfish reasons Laurie claimed, was anxious that a stable government be restored so that he could receive payment due to him for the title to lands he wished to sell to the federal government. Training for infantry duty however, proved too difficult and the only use the Indians could be put to by Colonel Dennis was guard duty.

In spite of the failure to organize an active, effective opposition, Laurie believed that a grass roots opposition did exist. If the population could be made aware of the Canadian Party's position, Laurie thought they would agree that it was the only sensible course for the Red River settlement to follow. He believed that Riel was a usurper and gave as evidence the high-handed methods used by the "rebels" at meetings. This was Laurie's proof of attempts made by Riel and his followers to coerce others to accept their position.

There were times when Laurie believed that even the French were unsure of their support for Riel. Laurie, while recognizing the grievances that existed, suggested that the majority of people in the

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<sup>44</sup> See W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History, Chapter 6. Also G.F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada. For an interpretation that challenges this view see Frits Pannekoek's article, "The Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett and the Red River Civil War of 1869-70", C.H.R., vol. LVII, No.2, June 1976, pp. 133-149.

Red River settlement did not accept the methods of Riel, since even some of the French wanted to allow McDougall into the territory. Laurie indicated that the majority of the population would have followed the Canadian Party had conditions allowed it. Only a few, according to Laurie, were willing to follow Riel and "his band of thieves". But the hesitancy of the Hudson's Bay Company, the interference of the Catholic clergy, the ineffectiveness of Indian support and the selfishness of the Scots half-breeds all contributed to the failure of the opposition. An opportunity to strike out towards a "Canadian" West was, for the time being, lost.

The image of Riel as a usurper emerges from a character sketch of him that Laurie includes in his diary. "The total disregard of public opinions" and his "vacillating in his priest opinions" suggest not only that Riel was not a true leader but that he was mentally unstable and unbalanced. The passage also reflects a lurking anti-French and anti-Catholic feeling:

Louis Riel - Halfbreed, Papist, 22 years of age. Educated at some of the religious houses. Speaks English tolerably well except when he gets excited, but understands it thoroughly. Poor as a church mouse, had to sell his mother's cow to buy clothes wherein to appear respectable when created Secretary of State. He is possessed of a good deal of courage and unbounded ambition, but vacillating in his priest opinions. This failing is overcome by a total disregard for public opinion - that is, for the opinion - [sic] that is, for the opinion of those opposed to him, a willing tool in the hands of the more cleverer powers, when carrying out his instructions he is very apt to mistake imprudence for cleverness, and put on airs which do not become either his character or carriage. In negotiations of any kind or in the executions of his orders, he could be foiled almost everytime if it were not for the

presence of his shadow the priest O'Donahue, an Irish Fenian...<sup>45</sup>

The role of the radicals was presented, by Laurie, as a calculated attempt by a minority to control the majority by force or trickery. During meetings to decide whether McDougall was to be allowed into the territory the efforts made by the Canadians to have matters discussed were either ignored or when matters seemed favourable to the Canadians, votes were delayed.

...an adjournment was always moved just when the Council was ready for a vote and when reassembled no compromise would be listened to - Non! Non! was the cry of these breeds who had not sense enough to discuss a subject! They were always schooled in the intervein [sic] as what they should do when a proposition was submitted, on the other hand by the English delegates it was discussed and very often acknowledged as reasonable by a majority of the Council when an adjournment of several days would be had....<sup>46</sup>

Opposition to the Canadian Party was emphasized at all times by the "rebels" and filibustering would be resorted to when resolutions were about to be passed. Such pernicious behaviour by Riel and his followers indicated to Laurie that the French did not understand the custom and respect that were embodied in British democratic institutions. First and foremost they had to be treated with reverence and only gentlemanly behaviour was acceptable, an attitude obviously absent from the conduct of the Provisional Government. The "rebels" did not appreciate the spirit of British democratic practices. One method, according to Laurie, used by the "rebels" was to show letters supposedly written by eastern Canadians to convince the members

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<sup>45</sup> L.D., October 19, 1869. Underlined portions in original.

<sup>46</sup> L.D., November 19, 1869.

of the Council that expansion westward was to be undertaken with a view to increasing the wealth of easterners. These, Laurie believed, were obvious forgeries since he and other Canadians had argued that the benefits from development to the West would be far greater than to the East. These letters, Laurie believed, could only have been written to instill fear in those in the settlement who were afraid of losing something. The Canadians had already pointed out that what they might lose would be minimal in comparison to what they had to gain.

The French and the metis were not always sure of the course they ought to follow. At the beginning of November they were undecided whether to allow McDougall into the settlement or not: "...one section wanted to let McDougall in as a private citizen with whom they might have a private or unofficial chat on the state of affairs, in the hope that arrangements might be effected; the others that they would not let him in unless he had a commission empowering him to deal with the matter at once."<sup>47</sup> This position was taken before the Provisional Government was established and before the influence of the radicals had been felt, an influence which led them to what Laurie believed was the treasonous decision to keep the Lieutenant-Governor out of the territory.

There were, however, other underlying reasons for the uncertainty of the French in not taking a stronger position against the Lieutenant-Governor. This uncertainty stemmed from the fear that the French and especially the French clergy had, that the Red River

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<sup>47</sup> L.D., October 20, 1869.

settlement might be annexed to the United States; a fear that Laurie understood. Riel's associate, O'Donoghue, advanced the idea that the best course for the settlement might be annexation to the southern republic. Laurie believed that this was merely a ploy used by Riel to prod the government to faster action on their grievances. There is evidence presented by Laurie which suggests that Riel was at heart loyal to the Crown: Riel "...was particularly pointed in denying a rumour he had heard that this was a war for religion. He was, he said, a loyal subject of Her Majesty, but could not consent that the Canadian Government should send them a Governor and a Council to rule over them without consulting them".<sup>48</sup> They were, it seemed, more afraid of losing their way of life in the United States than in Canada. Laurie warned the French of the consequences that agitation of Americans for annexation might bring:

A nice little plot is arranged amongst those free booters which is liable to afford Frenchy food for reflection. They [the Americans] are wise enough to know that the Empire cannot be dismembered by the passage of half a score of deflations and look for troops early in the spring. So they will keep up the excitement all winter and on the opening up of spring make a raid on some of the stores in town, make a swoop on the prairie and pick up what horses and cattle they find and cross the mountains to Montana.<sup>49</sup>

Laurie's fears of annexation by the United States were linked with his fears of Fenian attacks on the Red River settlement. He believed that there were subversive Fenian elements within Red River plotting its overthrow which would eventually lead to annexation. Reports that Laurie heard in the settlement caused him great concern

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<sup>48</sup> L.D., November 23, 1869.

<sup>49</sup> L.D., November 19, 1869.

and heightened the agitation of the Canadians for the presence of some British authority in Red River. There were numerous supporters for annexation in the settlement and among them were a family of Fenians, the Kennedy's: "...they boasted of their connection with the movement and said that before spring the country would be overrun with Fenians and filibusterers who would oust the country from Canada and annex it to the States".<sup>50</sup> Laurie also heard "that the movement was fostered by Americans of influence both in the Western States and at Washington and that funds would be supplied by the Fenians".<sup>51</sup> This was a serious threat and the Canadians were the only faction who understood what the British tie meant and they were the only force that could save the settlement from the "disloyal" Fenians and from succumbing to American influence.

Laurie found evidence of American interference in the action of border officials who were trying to dissuade settlers on the way to Red River from entering the territory. Of his entry into the territory Laurie wrote: "They offered to cancel the bonds on our goods in value of over \$8,000.00 if we would take up land on the Pembina or St. Joe's River".<sup>52</sup> Laurie went on to state: "All the U.S. customs and other officers are actual sympathizers and abettors of the rebels. They get the ear of all the immigrants and endeavour to convert them to their own views or frighten them back to Canada."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> L.D., October 19, 1869.

<sup>51</sup> L.D., September 26, 1869.

<sup>52</sup> L.D., Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> L.D., Ibid.



Laurie's reaction to the interference by the Americans was mixed as is evident when he writes of the loss of the immigrants: "This is to be regretted that they have even in a few cases been successful..."<sup>54</sup> and of the immigrants that did not persevere "...it is no great loss to this country that such fickle minded people should inflict their presence on some other community."<sup>55</sup> The settler who did not know what the advantages of an Anglo-Canadian West would be were not welcome since his ignorance would limit the contributions he could make to the development of the great North-West Laurie foresaw.

Laurie's diary indicates that he was disappointed with the lack of opposition to the "rebels" and he saw union with Canada as the only acceptable way to retain the connection with British institutions and the Empire, and as the only effective opposition to the emergence of a "French Republic". The French would have to shoulder the greatest share of the blame for causing the rebellion. From his diary and later writings in the Herald it is clear that he saw the "rebellion" as being primarily inspired by scheming Catholic priests whose motives were to preserve the French-Canadian influence in the West. Laurie thought that Red River society was being misled by Riel and his priests, that given a stable society and time for reflection the majority would have recognized that the future of their society lay with the Canadian Party. The rebellion was able to unfold because the lack of effective authority of the Hudson's Bay Company allowed subversive elements like the Americans and the Fenians to combine with the French priests to blind the majority

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<sup>54</sup> L.D., November 2, 1869.

<sup>55</sup> L.D., Ibid.

to the real consequences of their actions.

The diary is not always accurate or exhaustive in recording the events that happened at Red River while Laurie was there. These events have been documented elsewhere<sup>56</sup>. The diary does however provide an insight into the outlook and emphasis of Laurie's conservative Weltanschauung. Laurie regretted that the circumstances failed to allow the Canadian Party to play a larger role in the course of events at Red River. Of the role they were able to play, by publishing the events of the rebellion in the Nor'Wester, Laurie stated:

Had it not been for it, they said [the rebels] the wealth of the country would never have been known nor the cupidity of the Canadians aroused, and had it not been for its presentations the Canadian government would have never ventured to send a Governor and council without first consulting the inhabitants.<sup>57</sup>

The debt that the rest of Canada owed to the Canadians at Red River was immeasurable. In this light Laurie placed himself among those who would have to be counted among the fathers of Manitoba. He gained valuable experience while in Red River, experiences which enforced his convictions that the North-West belonged as part of Canada. Laurie envisaged a western Canadian society which differed significantly from the French, Roman Catholic inhabitants of Red River. Laurie believed that the old society at Red River was parochial, had outlived its usefulness, and could not be allowed to impede progress and change.

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<sup>56</sup> W.L. Morton, Manitoba: A History and Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada.

<sup>57</sup> L.D., November 2, 1869.

The West needed new ideals to inspire a prosperous future and these were the ideas advocated by the Canadian faction at Red River. The society that Laurie and the Canadian Party envisaged was, for them at least, the only path to follow. After working for a series of newspapers, Laurie set out from the new province of Manitoba to Battleford, the new capital of the North-West Territories, to occupy a position of prominence and influence greater than he had ever held in Red River.

## Chapter Three

### A WESTERN CONSERVATIVE'S RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL POLICY.

I will grow as the vine which twineth  
Till I stand alone in my might;  
I will live as the star that shineth  
Thro' the shadows of the night.

If danger, or gloom, or sorrow,  
Should lower their pall today  
I WILL LIVE, for a sunny tomorrow  
Shall glorify my way.

from the "Herald's Song".

Laurie remained a stalwart, loyal supporter of the Conservative Party throughout his life. As an English speaking Protestant sympathetic to the nationalistic and imperialist ideals of the Canada First Movement, it was the party closest to his beliefs. His politics were marked with the Victorian spirit of optimism and progress. The nationalistic policies of the Conservative Party appealed to Laurie and other Conservatives who dreamed of a country stretching from sea to sea.

Laurie remained a supporter of the Conservative Party even though at times party policies were not necessarily in the best interests of the West. He emphasized imperial and national objectives over those primarily concerned with the region. For example, lower tariffs on goods coming from the United States would have meant cheaper machinery for western farmers; but Laurie stuck by his position that the West must remain British-Canadian. Freer trade might lead to increased dependence in other areas and this

was one of Laurie's greatest fears. Economic dependence on the Americans must be avoided. This position again clearly reflected one of the main tenets of the Canada First Movement. The fragile society of Western Canada would need to be protected from the aggressive expansionism of the southern republic. Absorption and loss of the British influence on western society might follow greater economic reciprocity. Laurie's loyalty to the Conservatives remained even after the immigration and expansion he desired was implemented by the Laurie Liberals. Even though the Liberals adopted many policies of the Conservatives, they could not be trusted since they were less interested in maintaining the British tie and more concerned with what Laurie believed were the latent materialistic interests embodied in their policy of unrestricted reciprocity.

Laurie's Conservatism was firmly rooted in his admiration of the Conservative Party's great leader. Sir John A. Macdonald was, in Laurie's eyes, the only man capable of giving Canada competent leadership. On February 19, 1887 while endorsing a local Conservative candidate prior to a federal election Laurie wrote:

The principal issue before the electors has been made the endorsement of Sir John Macdonald or that of Mr. Blake.

The policy of Sir John Macdonald points to the opening up and development of the Territories and the region beyond, which means prosperity and comfort to pioneers... To vote for a man who will follow Mr. Blake's Big Bear policy of "wait a little" is to doom the country to stagnation if not to retrogression; to send one who will sustain Sir John's progressive policy means unchecked advancement; therefore vote for Mr. Macdowell.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herald, February 14, 1887.

On the death of Macdonald, Laurie issued a special edition of the Herald with black borders around the columns to emphasize the mourning of western Canadians. Laurie greatly admired Macdonald's role as a unifier: "For nearly half a century he has been a leader, and as such has done much to raise Canada from the position of a weak, poor and divided country to that of a rich, prosperous and powerful one".<sup>2</sup> Macdonald was a leader who stood above the ordinary man; he was one whose judgement could be trusted in laying out the guidelines along which the country needed to develop. Few had "...his clearness of foresight, his energy, his wonderful knowledge of human nature and his incisive eloquence that so often conquered opposition to his plans and gathered around him men of ability by whose aid they were brought about".<sup>3</sup>

Macdonald was a father figure to Laurie. His wise decisions, though at times questioned by some, seemed to Laurie in retrospect to have been the right ones. At the apex of society, making decisions that could not always be understood by the common man, Macdonald dedicated his life to service: "...the public have not yet fully recognized the importance of his contentions; but when the record of the past quarter century comes to be carefully scanned, and the arguments for and against the principle measures he advocated are dispassionately considered - when evidence shall be given place [sic] to political antagonism, then it will be universally acknowledged that Sir John A. Macdonald was an able and thoroughly unselfish friend of his country, and one to whom his strongest opponents will grant a keenness of perception

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., June 21, 1891.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

as to the time, and the sagacity to select the right men to help him in his work."<sup>4</sup> Of significance to Laurie was that Macdonald was a dedicated, selfless and unifying force for Canada.

Party, faction, class, in or out of power - all differences are forgotten, and all join in mourning one whose death is a national loss, and in acknowledging that he was a man possessed of extraordinary powers of mind, and that all his great talents were devoted to securing the good of his country, without a thought of self.<sup>5</sup>

Above all, Macdonald's image fit the Victorian ideal of a man of action who worked hard and relentlessly for the betterment of society.

He was always a busy man, and the manner of his taking off was most sorrowful. With momentous issues at stake, and knowing that in the order of nature he could not hope to live many years longer, he bent all his energies to the accomplishment of the task he had set himself and overtaxed his strength - the crisis came - the silver cord was snapped - and death claimed him for his own. The Premier was an indefatigable worker, and when the end came he died in harness. May he rest in peace.<sup>6</sup>

Laurie was an admirer not only of Macdonald's personality. He also supported his policies commenting extensively on the features of the National Policy: the tariff, railway and land policies.

Laurie, like many other members of the Canada First Movement was a strong supporter of the Conservative tariff policy. It is not always clear, however, if Laurie understood the differences between

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., June 12, 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., June 21, 1891.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

reciprocity, unrestricted reciprocity or commercial union as variously advocated by the Liberals. Even Macdonald favoured reciprocity with the United States if it could be on terms similar to those of the 1854 Reciprocity Treaty, but Macdonald rejected any unilateral Canadian trade concessions advocated by the Liberals.

Laurie, and many other Conservatives, however, lumped all reciprocity proposals for freer trade with the United States together in order to leave the choice for or against the protective tariff clear. Laurie believed the tariff served Canada's interest. Reciprocity would lead to greater economic dependence on the United States and was therefore a threat to the establishment of a unique northern monarchy in Canada.

The anti-American feeling, partially created by the Canada First Movement, led Conservative journalists like Laurie to lash out indiscriminately against all reciprocity proposals with a fervour bordering on hysteria. In 1887 the Liberals advocated a policy of commercial union with the United States.<sup>7</sup> This was a proposal for a customs union similar to the German zollverein, which had been successful in stimulating the economies of independent German states in the nineteenth century. Though commercial union offered some hope to the sagging Canadian economy in the 1870's and 1880's Macdonald opposed the scheme: "...commercial union would never do. It would crash head on into the National Policy, kill the tender Canadian industries, and probably

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<sup>7</sup> C.D. Allin and G.M. Jones, Annexation, Preferential Trade and Reciprocity (Toronto: Masson, 1912).



carry the Dominion into annexation."<sup>8</sup> Laurie purposely (or perhaps unwittingly) explained commercial union as a threat to the Canadian identity. He made his opposition to any tampering with the tariff more emphatic by lumping commercial union and reciprocity together, often in the same breath, and warning that the consequence was annexation.

Though Laurie strongly endorsed maintaining the tariff, he was not a passive bystander when he believed the tariff was excessive. In 1883 when Ontario manufacturers asked that an additional tariff be levied on American agricultural implements, Laurie argued against the increases. Laurie argued that although the Canadian implements from the east were suited to eastern agriculture, "...they showed that they did not meet the requirements of prairie farming as well as those of the American makers, who had greater experience, and who manufactured a class of goods especially adapted to prairie work; and further that the Canadian manufacturers were not able to supply the demands for their machinery."<sup>9</sup> Laurie's compromise seemed reasonable:

The settlers in the Territories deserve some encouragement, and should be permitted to buy the implements best suited to their work where they can get them cheapest. The ordinary tariff and the advantage of an all Canadian route, free from the annoyance and expense of custom-house restrictions are certainly in favour of the Ontario manufacturer; and when to this is added that they have orders that keep their factories going to their utmost capacity,

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<sup>8</sup> Donald Warner, The Idea of Continental Union, Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849 - 1893. (University of Kentucky, 1960), p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> Herald, May 12, 1883.

and even then falling short of the demand, the protection afforded ought to be enough to satisfy them.<sup>10</sup>

One of Laurie's tactics in his campaign against what he termed "Commercial Union" and the candidates that supported this movement, was to publish excerpts from American newspapers which gave their views on the subject. From the Chicago Times Laurie quoted:

Unless, therefore, the Dominion is prepared to make complete and unconditional surrender of all control over its own tariff our Congress may choose to enact from time to time, the scheme of Commercial Union in the sense in which that phrase is used is entirely out of the question.<sup>11</sup>

Also from the Buffalo Commercial:

By Commercial Union, so far as practical trade relations are concerned, Canada would become a State of the American Union.<sup>12</sup>

After citing eight such sources, Laurie concluded the article with an attack on the Liberal candidate.

Commercial Union means Annexation. Mr. Clink advocates Commercial Union, and therefore Annexation. But that any considerable portion of the people are in favour of Annexation cannot be for a moment entertained. There is no reason to believe Canada would be more prosperous as a State in the Union than she is now. Indeed some of Mr. Clink's strongest supporters have, after giving the United States a fair trial, found failure there and returned to Canada.<sup>13</sup>

On January 30, 1889, with the Conservatives still firmly in

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<sup>10</sup> Herald, June 28, 1888.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

power, Laurie optimistically and confidently announced:

Commercial Union is dead - killed by its friends. Little by little its American promoters let out that the object sought to be obtained by its advocacy was annexation. The first to go back upon the scheme were those who ignorantly yet innocently confounded Commercial Union with Reciprocity. Next, those who thought to ride into power through deceiving the people as to what the real character of the thing they held up as a cure for all the political ills which they said the country was suffering. The people saw what Commercial Union means and would have none of it.<sup>14</sup>

Laurie not only opposed commercial union but was also critical of proposals that Canada and the United States negotiate specific, mutually advantageous tariff adjustments. The distinction he made between the two terms, however, is not always clear as he intermittently continued to publish aggressive excerpts from American newspapers which advocated freer trade.<sup>15</sup> Always apprehensive of the consequences of freer trade with the United States, Laurie, with a note of relief, wrote on February 18, 1889:

The establishment of clear trade relations with the United States is apparently not to be thought of, either on the grounds of reciprocity or otherwise; for notwithstanding that some of her people have been working in favour of placing our commerce under the control of Congress, that body will have nothing to do with it. They will not in their present mood, have reciprocity or commercial union, or free trade; in fact the wirepullers who have obtained temporary control of the public voice, are rather

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<sup>14</sup> Herald, January 30, 1889.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., See also April 13, 1889.

emphatic in condemning any closer trade relations...<sup>16</sup>

Laurie, however, ended the article with the warning that, "there might be change in this respect when Mr. Harrison and his cabinet take the running of things into their own hands as they will next month".<sup>17</sup> Though relieved, Laurie continually cautioned that matters might deteriorate.

The issue of reciprocity and its consequences continued to bother Laurie. It was particularly bothersome to Laurie who was afraid of the vulnerability of the sparsely populated Territories, and the consequently greater likelihood of annexation, than in the more heavily populated east. On the day before the federal election in 1891, Laurie, in an editorial, isolated the issues facing Canadians at the time. On the same page were interspersed statements from American newspapers in bold fact print; from the Detroit Tribune: "A few years unrestricted reciprocity in trade would make two peoples one.", and from the New York Sun: "One flag, one country and one tariff is the true Yankee-Canuck platform."<sup>18</sup> But more directly, Laurie's position was felicitously stated in the editorial as follows:

The great issues before the people are to be decided at the polls to-day, and everything goes to show that the verdict will be in favour of preservation of Canadian autonomy and British connection. Deep and desperate plotting has been practised by political leaders who would like to see our growing nation converted into a voiceless State of the neighbouring republic; but their machinations have all been in vain, and today's vote will convince both

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<sup>16</sup> Herald, February 18, 1889.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Herald, March 4, 1891.

these and the American politicians who have been doing their utmost to create disaffection by cramping commercial intercourse, in the hope that this disaffection would ripen into rank disloyalty and create feeling in favour of annexation. But their efforts are in vain, and from Saskatchewan to the Atlantic the vote of the people will be in favour of continuing to manage our own affairs and work together to make the most of our resources.<sup>19</sup>

Laurie's agitation for the retention of the tariff, however, was not only to protect Canada from absorption into the United States but also because he felt that only a select group would benefit from freer trade. In 1893 he acknowledged that freer trade was an issue that cut across party lines, and that even many in the Conservative Party were leaning towards a more conciliatory position. Laurie nevertheless retained a hard line on this issue: "...whether reciprocity is secured or not, this piece-meal patching of the tariff will have to be abandoned because it savours too much of class legislation, being generally in the interest of some trust or combine, and because it has the tendency to unsettle business".<sup>20</sup>

By October 27, 1893, Laurie's stand against reciprocity softened somewhat. "The government policy of protection will be adhered to, but as in many instances the tariff has accomplished all it was intended to by rendering possible the establishment of industries which would not otherwise have been started, it is proposed to revise

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Herald, March 24, 1893.

the tariff so far as to make it a tariff for revenue only."<sup>21</sup> But on November 17, 1893 he again attacked those who favoured freer trade with the United States.

On speaking at the different conferences with farmers and others on the effect of the tariff the Hon. Mr. Foster has repeatedly declared the hostility of the Government to combines and given assurances that where such are formed with a view of raising prices to the consumer the duty on the article so dealt with will be at once removed and the combination broken. But even this does not suit the political agitators. They want everything the farmer raises to be protected, and all that he uses to be free, without considering the rights of all other classes than farmers who naturally want things to suit themselves. But the farmer must also remember that were it not for the market afforded by the manufacturers they would have but a limited sale for their products.<sup>22</sup>

Laurie's Conservatism is reflected in his attitude to the tariff. Initially a firm opponent of reciprocity, his position gave way through the 1890's to a point where he became a guarded advocate of some tariff reform. Change, however, would have to be slow and gradual and could not significantly benefit one sector of society more than another. Even farmers, the backbone of western society, would need to show restraint in their demands, since acquiescence in their favour would be against the interests of eastern business. It is evident that Laurie's political philosophy was not blind support of policies of benefit only to the West. All parts of Canadian society

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., October 27, 1893.

<sup>22</sup> Herald, November 17, 1893.

would have to work together to establish an Anglo-Canadian West; only then would Canadian society be protected from foreign influences. The West could only remain strong enough to withstand foreign intrusion if its ties with Britain and eastern Canada were maintained. Therefore, if the reduction of the tariff was a significant detriment to eastern business interests, it would need to be raised again, even if it were against the interests of western farmers. Laurie was not doctrinaire and he did not closely follow any ideological position. This frequently left him in what appeared to be an ambivalent position on issues like the tariff. His writings on the tariff show that he was not primarily regionally minded, but that he had a broader national and imperial perspective.

Agitation for new and improved transportation facilities to the West was perhaps the theme that received the most attention from Laurie until his death in 1903. Railways were needed to bring the necessary population to build a prosperous West. Settlement of the West with acceptable Anglo-Saxon stock was the dream of the Canada Firsters.<sup>23</sup> Though the laying of track was slow and disappointments, especially for Battleford, frequent, Laurie continued to be a significant spokesman for western transportation needs. His optimism never seemed to die; in speaking of the rumours that the railway to the Pacific was soon to be completed, Laurie wrote in one of his first editions: "With the first assurance that the work is to be gone on with, a tide of immigration will set into [sic] our glorious valley that will stud it

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<sup>23</sup> Berger, The Sense of Power, Chapter Two.

with happy homes where the wild coyote now makes his solitary lair. The tenders are to be opened in London the 1st of December next - until then we must wait with patience, satisfied that the enterprise has not been lost sight of altogether."<sup>24</sup>

In order to be certain that settlement could proceed with as few snags as possible, Laurie believed that charters to railway companies would need to be granted with great discretion. Development was necessary, but problems that went along with rapid expansion would need attention as well. Laurie outlined the difficulties involved with granting charters as follows:

The government grant of six thousand four hundred acres of land per mile of road is a princely gift, and should enable any company possessing capital enough to justify it in applying for a charter to carry its work through to completion; and yet so thoroughly impecunious do the majority of the promoters of railways nominally intended to open up the west appear, that from the time they obtain their charters until the final collapse takes place, all energies are bent on borrowing - borrowing on the strength of their proposed land grant to begin their work with, trusting to being able to borrow more when that is spent or to forcing the municipalities through which they pass to vote them extravagant and undeserved bonuses. It should be the work of the Dominion Parliament to promptly annul all companies not fully complying with the requirements of their charters.<sup>25</sup>

The West was rich in grains, lumber and minerals and cattle and the possibility of western trade with China and India once the Pacific

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<sup>24</sup> Herald, September 9, 1878.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., November 2, 1885.



was reached offered the West unlimited potential wealth. But the realization of these dreams was being hampered by what Laurie thought were dishonest companies, whose primary interests were their own personal aggrandizement. Laurie believed that unless these companies were dealt with as soon as time would allow and with severity, opportunities would be lost, confidence in the West would diminish, investment would lag and a great potential would be left undeveloped.

Promotion of the Battleford area was a continual concern of Laurie's. After the Canadian Pacific was re-routed through Regina in 1881 Laurie was bitterly disappointed though he did attempt to encourage others to build to Battleford. In 1886, Laurie was hopeful that the North-West Central Company would build a road through Battleford but the company failed to assume the liabilities of a former company (the Souris and Rocky Mountain Railway) and the opportunity was lost.<sup>26</sup> Laurie, however, continued to fight for the development and settlement of the Battleford area in spite of the re-routing of the main road. In speaking of the potentialities of the northern areas he wrote:

... in the nature of things the present ranges [in the south] must soon be fully stocked and the owners of small bands of a few hundred or even a few thousand head forced to seek new pastures. These they will find on the Battle River, in the Sounding Lake and Tramping Lake regions, and on the north side of the Saskatchewan. The popular idea of the usefulness of the north country was thoroughly dispelled by the reports of many intelligent observers who accompanied the troops in their northward march last summer [1885]. The

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<sup>26</sup> Herald, April 19, 1886.

farther you go inland from the great river the more luxuriant is the vegetation, with an abundance of the purest water, plants of shelter from summer heat and winter cold.<sup>27</sup>

The announcement of construction of a railroad to Hudson's Bay was met with approval and excitement by Laurie. It was seen by him as an important event for the development of the West. Of significance to Laurie, the imperialist, was the fact that this railway would provide Western Canada with a closer and more direct route to the mother country. He saw the route as providing an outlet for the huge volume of grain and cattle he anticipated would be traded to Britain. He hoped that Britain rather than the United States would become the preferred market for Canadian raw materials. In return, the new route would mean that imports through Hudson's Bay would be more accessible to westerners. Canada would further benefit by this outlet.

The experiment of taking young cattle from this country to be matured by professional feeders in England and Scotland has met with so much success that it will open a market in addition to that afforded by the fat cattle trade and the steady progress of the Hudson's Bay Railway will be a sign to farmers to the west of it to hasten in the building up of their herds that they may at the outset be in a position to avail themselves of what is to be their future market.<sup>28</sup>

Laurie found fault both with the companies which were directed by the monopolies and those which advocated free trade in railways. Both were simply guilty of not proceeding fast enough with the work

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<sup>27</sup> Herald, June 28, 1886.

<sup>28</sup> Herald, October 26, 1886.

on trunk and branch lines. In particular, Laurie criticized those who were delaying the resumption of the construction of the Hudson's Bay Railway. As Laurie wrote of the railway owners and their unfulfilled commitments, "...the people have become sick of their promises."<sup>29</sup> The solution to the problem could only be imposed by Parliament. The country was not yet populous enough to allow free competition to regulate matters. In the meantime, the settlement of the North-West was being held up by these companies.

The remedy lies in the hands of Parliament. When a company applies for a charter the promoters make it appear that they are able to carry out their undertakings. This is the first thing insisted on as a condition on which a charter is promised, and if the promoters fail to go on with the work in a reasonable time, their "monopoly clause" should be declared void and the territory affected thrown open to anyone able or willing to build a railway, but who is prevented by a worthless charter from doing so and opening up the country to settlement. ...Let this be done and the settlement of the Saskatchewan Valley and the whole northern country will advance at a rate that will benefit the people already there, afford room to thousands of others who would gladly follow a railway, and add to the glory and prosperity of the Dominion.<sup>30</sup>

On March 27, 1889 in an article entitled "Railway Promises", Laurie called on the government to grant the Canadian Pacific Railway Company \$150,000.00 to build a bridge across the Saskatchewan River so that the long-promised Qu'appelle Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railroad and Steamboat Company (1883) could be completed. But even though the Canadian Pacific Railway had given assurances that they would complete the road if the charter could be transferred to them,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., August 25, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., See also March 27, 1889.

"...hitch after hitch has occurred to prevent the carrying out of their wish".<sup>31</sup> The government would again have to be called upon to intervene to solve the situation: "...we hold that the government are bound to grant it, if the road cannot otherwise be built. They have granted charters to railway companies without requiring satisfactory evidence that they were financially able to complete their undertakings, and often it has been proved that the charter holders had no intention of carrying out their agreements they have time and time again granted extensions of time, thus locking up a fertile section of country that others were ready to enter and develop."<sup>32</sup> The government was responsible for the fiasco that had been allowed to develop and it was now their duty to right the situation. Railways needed to be completed not only for immigrants but also for those prospective settlers who wanted to see the land before they decided to immigrate or not.

Like most other westerners in the 1880's, Laurie was critical of the concessions given to the C.P.R. to build the transcontinental railway. He was suspicious of the monopoly status given to a private corporation especially if the interests of the entrepreneurs were at odds with what he believed was best for the settlement of Western Canada. He was inherently skeptical of the desirability of monopolies.

There are all over this country monopolies that ought to be crushed out. They do no good for themselves, nor will they let those who are willing and able to develop the country carry out their desires. We allude to those

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<sup>31</sup> Herald, March 27, 1889. This company's charter was still held by private promoters, not the C.P.R. See T.D. Regehr, The Canadian Northern Railway, Pioneer Road of the Northern Prairies, 1895-1918. (The Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1976).

<sup>32</sup> Herald, March 27, 1889.

rapacious individuals who by false representations as to their ability to carry on the proposed work obtained charters for railways and then resolutely set themselves to prevent anyone from doing the work they had undertaken unless they were paid high prices for their charters they had succeeded in obtaining.<sup>33</sup>

Laurie was less concerned over the high freight rates westerners had to pay to the C.P.R. than he was over land grants given to them and branch lines that he believed needed to be built for incoming settlers. In the interests of settlement, Laurie suggested that the C.P.R. surrender its monopoly privileges. The land, Laurie maintained, should be sold to the government at \$1.50 an acre and then this money could be used in the improvement and extension of existing lines. This would lead to more feeder branch connections to the main trunk arteries and in turn to the greater prosperity of the West. Most importantly, however:

The surrender of this tract of land will also enable the government to foster the desirable scheme now being so vigourously pressed, of making close settlements, by throwing all land open to entry for actual occupation. The Canadian Pacific has by its extensions in the eastern Provinces lost the characteristics of a North-Western colonization road under which it was considered only equitable that one half of the land should be reserved for sale to recoup the Dominion Treasury for the advances made to secure its construction. The value of a settler is estimated as being equal to more than a quarter section would sell for, so that in this way the company would gain rather than lose by the bargain.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., August 25, 1888.

<sup>34</sup> Herald, April 7, 1888.

Laurie, as a supporter of the National Policy, was not convinced that free trade in railways was necessarily the best alternative to monopoly. In spite of his criticisms of the C.P.R. monopoly, his Conservative instincts made him hesitant to support whole-heartedly free and open competition in railways. A general paternalistic guidance from government was still preferable because absence of governmental protection might bring in American railways. In 1888 after the Liberal government of Thomas Greenaway succeeded in breaking the C.P.R. monopoly in Manitoba, Laurie's feelings were mixed.<sup>35</sup> Laurie still acknowledged that there was a moral justification for Macdonald's insistence on granting the monopoly to the C.P.R.

A couple of years ago almost every paper in Manitoba and the North-West was emptying the vials of its wrath against monopolists in general, and the Canadian Pacific Railway in particular. The country would be ruined, they said, unless this monopoly was removed. Free trade in railways must be enjoyed, or the country would never prosper; and so persistently was this repeated that people came to believe it, [including Laurie] and in Manitoba they overthrew one government [John Norquay's Conservative government] and elected another on this issue only.

But they did not seem to have bettered their condition. The new men do not show that they possess the ability to solve the question of monopoly on which they road into power, or that they are better able to dictate terms to the gigantic "monopolies" amongst the railways south of the boundary line than were their predecessors in office to other alleged monopolies.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Regehr, The Canadian Northern Railway, pp. 7-20.

<sup>36</sup> Herald, August 25, 1888.

Monopoly, in Laurie's eyes could be justified in some cases if its ends were to keep American railways out of Canada. It was a difficult and contradictory position for Laurie to hold and one that he did not convincingly solve.

Laurie was, at various times, both a critic and a supporter of the C.P.R. He recognized that in some ways it was a necessary evil and yet he persisted in exposing what he believed were its faults. The financial and technical problems with building a railroad to the West were enormous but Laurie insisted that the railway companies were making profits and that they were not using these profits to build new railroads.

Settlement, however, had simply not proceeded rapidly enough to make the railways profitable in the West; "The Canadian Pacific Railway, considered from a simple business point of view, was built in advance of immediate operational requirements and along an unnatural route. When it was incorporated in 1881 there was simply not enough traffic to justify the project in conventional business terms."<sup>37</sup>

Not everyone shared Laurie's enthusiasm and faith in progress of western Canada. It appeared, however, that Laurie was asking entrepreneurs to sacrifice their capital for the good of Western Canada even though the schemes Laurie proposed were financially unsound.

By 1891 Laurie's editorials were less critical and vociferous on the subject of the corruption and incompetence of the railway companies. In a number of articles, a congratulatory tone became evident. As a Conservative, Laurie could not allow the impression that he was primarily a critic without some praise for government

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<sup>37</sup> Regehr, The Canadian Northern Railway, p. 3.

railway policies. The West he portrayed was rather an auspicious one; the future he envisaged was grand indeed.

But much has been accomplished in these few years than was hoped for by the most sanguine. With its splendid fleet of steamships on the Pacific, and the arrangements entered into with the Atlantic steamships, travellers to and from the Orient can make the trip at a rate of speed and with a degree of comfort undreamed of a few years ago. Instead of opening a way from the Provinces of Canada to the Pacific only, the company has created a line of travel and commerce half way around the world, and has in contemplation the establishment of a line of steamships from Vancouver, thus opening up another avenue for the trade of Canada.<sup>38</sup>

On the matter of strikes by railway workers, Laurie's position was predictable. They disrupted the construction of the railroad and thus delayed immigration. During a strike of engineers, who were members of the Brotherhood of Engineers, he expressed regret that a group of intelligent men would "forego their personal independence [and] place their interests in the hands of a gang of foreign agitators who live in luxury and idleness at the expense of those who work."<sup>39</sup> He called the strike leaders anarchists and conspirators, who had no interest in the growing prosperity of the West. His organic outlook of society no doubt contributed to his displeasure at seeing men organize to divide society along class lines, especially when the impetus for change was coming from the lower classes and from Americans. This was not the natural way for a society to solve its problems and progress could not continue under such conditions: "...so long as these classes are kept at variance

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<sup>38</sup> Herald, July 3, 1889.

<sup>39</sup> Herald, May 15, 1891.



by demagogues there cannot be that friendliness and mutual confidence which ought to exist."<sup>40</sup> Here, in the same vein as he criticized monopolies, trusts and combines, Laurie criticized unions for fragmenting Canadian society.

Laurie was most ebullient as a critic on railway matters. He made a careful distinction between the great leadership given to Canada by the railway policy of the Conservative Party and the evil monopolists, land sharks and speculators who were taking advantage of and undermining development in the West. He was a regular commentator on all schemes affecting the settlement of the West. The railway, the agent of his dream of a prosperous and well settled Anglo-Saxon society was perhaps the most significant arm of the three-pronged National Policy. Laurie, through his ceaseless articles of the 1880's and 1890's, seemed bent on ensuring that his vision of an Anglo-Canadian West would be realized. But in this, his position was not parochial or myopic. He considered other parts of the country; the West could not develop at the expense of the East, nor could the West be neglected by eastern politicians. Laurie made certain, however, that the Herald was not silent on railway matters affecting the West.

The land policies adopted by the federal government were another vital part of the National Policy. Laurie's basic attitude towards land policies was simple. He wanted the fertile prairie lands to be settled, preferably by "British" immigrants, and cultivated with the least possible delay. He criticized any action or policy which he

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., April 1, 1892.

thought might retard settlement, and the establishment of a "British" society in the West.

As with reciprocity it is not clear that Laurie understood the land policy adopted by the Dominion government or appreciated the problems involved with the settlement. His editorials on this issue were those of a polemicist, trying to direct and persuade rather than those of a reporter sensitive to the difficulties confronting the development of the West. Laurie's attention was usually focused on the failures of the land grant system.

The legislation that guided the federal government in its administration of the natural resources of Manitoba and the North-West Territories was embodied in the Dominion Lands Act with its subsequent revisions and amendments. A permanent feature of the Act was the survey system, the necessary prerequisite to settlement. The government adopted the rectangular system of survey used in the United States. The land was surveyed in townships extending north from the 49th parallel, and each township was six miles square and contained thirty-six sections, each one mile square. Attention was given to previous surveys and allotments already taken up. An earlier survey party sent out in 1869 under Colonel Dennis to examine the country in the vicinity of Fort Garry had quickly learned of the chaos that would result if a system of survey was adopted which cut across the river lots of the metis (a fact not recognized by Laurie).

The Hudson's Bay Company had imposed upon the Dominion the condition that it retain one-twentieth of the land set out for

settlement, a condition that did not sit well with Laurie. The Dominion Lands Act of 1872 provided that the Company should receive section eight in each township, section twenty-six in each township whose number was divisible by five and the southern half and north-west quarter of section twenty-six in all other townships. The Act also arranged that sections eleven and twenty-nine in each surveyed township be reserved as "school lands". The money gained from the sale of these lands was to aid education in Manitoba and the North-West Territories.

In the Dominion Lands Act of 1872, Canada took over the homestead policy adopted by the United States. Settlers were granted a quarter section free on the condition of three years' residence and cultivation. The system was based on the idea that 160 acres was enough for a family of four. By an amendment to the Dominion Lands Act, provision was made by which a person homesteading 160 acres might also obtain a three year option to purchase an adjoining quarter section. Many settlers who filed pre-emption claims were never able to take them up, being unable to pay at the appointed time. This was repealed in 1890. Laurie agreed that pre-emption rights ought to be repealed.<sup>41</sup> "Experience has shown that the pre-emption right has done much to keep the country unsettled without benefitting the settler, as very few who made pre-emption entry fulfilled the conditions. If anyone wants to get more for the purposes of immediate occupation and improvement, he might be allowed to buy it, but not to lock it up from settlement by merely saying that he might need it in three or four years."<sup>42</sup> Laurie's

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<sup>41</sup> Herald, April 7, 1888.

<sup>42</sup> Herald, April 7, 1888.

motives, as reflected above, were to adopt measures that would ensure rapid settlement of the prairies. His short-sighted criticisms of land policies, however, show that he did not appreciate the larger problems involved. There were not enough settlers in the West to tie up even the most fertile land and cancelling pre-emption rights would not necessarily lead to increased settlement.

Initially only the even numbered sections were to be opened for homestead entry while odd numbered sections were reserved for railway land grants or sale. This tended to scatter settlement. While other systems might have been adopted, Chester Martin has claimed that the government was successful in accomplishing what he calls "the purposes of the Dominion".<sup>43</sup> The two main purposes of the Dominion Lands policy, according to Chester Martin, were the railway land grant system and the free homestead system. Following the transfer of Rupert's Land, the construction of a railway was a prime necessity. The purpose of the railway land grant system was to get the railway built "by means of the land through which it had to pass".<sup>44</sup> The money derived from the sale of odd numbered sections went directly to the railway companies. But this was not always enough to encourage the companies into ventures on the prairies. Closely integrated with this was the free homestead system. Free homesteads fostered rapid immigration which in turn enhanced the sale of railway and government lands. According to Martin, the Canadian Pacific Railway was very much in favour of the free homestead system.<sup>45</sup> It was important

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<sup>43</sup> Chester Martin, "Dominion Lands" Policy (Toronto: 1973), (first published in 1938).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., Chapter Five.

for them that settlers be able to get land under cultivation quickly to create a market for C.P.R. lands and to produce a staple for world markets. Martin found the railway land grant system very successful in its ability to provide settlers with cheap acreage for agricultural expansion and he felt that the land grants to the C.P.R. contributed more than any other category of the Dominion Lands policy to the prosperous settlement of Western Canada.<sup>46</sup> Land speculators were discouraged because of the tax that had to be paid on unoccupied land. Furthermore, school lands retained by the federal government were an attraction to settlement and the sale of them formed a substantial endowment for the purposes of education.

Laurie's own criticisms of settlement and land policies lacked a systematic, broad overview of the problems facing the government. This issue, more than any other, showed that at times his criticisms were superficial and lacked depth of insight. He was desperately concerned with a limited number of issues and approached government land policies from a very narrow perspective.

One of the problems that concerned Laurie, a problem he believed arose from the rapid progress of railway construction, was the appearance of speculators after a "quick buck". He outlined some of the evils allowed under the system in an article entitled "Land Grabbing". The method followed by these "land grabbers" was to plough up a few acres of "pretended claim" and then later demand exorbitant prices for this land from railway companies. Further efforts were

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 84.

made to extract money from "honest" settlers as soon as they established themselves, by swindlers smooth enough to persuade naive, hard working immigrants into agreements they could not uphold. Laurie called on land agents to be more vigorous in policing colonization companies and in applying penalties to fraudulent companies.<sup>47</sup> Laurie knew the difficulties of settlement and concluded his argument by stating:

It often happens that new comers become homesick before they get fairly established in their prairie homes, and are apt to make any such annoyance, or any other unforeseen difficulty, an excuse for leaving the country; and although such weakminded men are not as a rule combative enough to maintain their rights against the impudent assumptions of the land shark, they make good settlers and valuable citizens when once they have a footing in the country. If the practice is not put down by the interference of the authorities, it is more than probable that local regulations will be adopted that will put a stop to the practice.<sup>48</sup>

Large groups of foreign, non-British settlers offended Laurie's concept of the society he envisaged for Western Canada. He preferred to have individuals come out to settle, not in large communities, which he believed would prove difficult to assimilate into the Anglo-Saxon mould, but as independent farmers. Laurie frequently criticized this pattern of settlement established by colonization companies.

Colonies of any class are undesirable on many grounds. They tend to foster narrowness of mind and cramp the ambition of the young. They are prone to keep alive bitterness of feeling that had better be forgotten.

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<sup>47</sup> For a more detailed discussion of colonization companies, see Chapter 4.

<sup>48</sup> Herald, July 18, 1881.

They stand in the way of the development of the country and the true interests of the settlers themselves, by confining them to methods of working to which they have been accustomed but which are unsuited to their present environment. They are so hemmed in that they can learn but little from the practical experience of those acquainted with the country and its needs, and sacrifice comfort and prosperity in a vain attempt to establish their early habits and customs on an unsuitable soil.<sup>49</sup>

Unwittingly, Laurie advocated policies which seemed to work against his own goal. He hoped for an organic society which would be directed by the ideas he was advocating in his newspaper. His opposition to block settlement, however, and the cancellation of pre-emption rights simply meant that farmers were more isolated and less exposed to the ideas Laurie was expounding in the Herald. Settlement as anticipated did not materialize in the 1880's and 1890's. Settlers, especially those isolated out on the prairie, were forced to rely on their own initiative to deal with the problems they faced. There were no institutions in the still infant society of the North-West Territories to help these settlers in their struggle to survive in an often harsh environment.

Laurie not only gave considerable time to coverage of national politics and how they affected the West, he also paid significant attention to local, territorial and private matters, especially as they related to weaving the fibre of Western Canadian society.

Territorial Rights was one issue that Laurie frequently addressed himself to.<sup>50</sup> There was a need for legislation in local matters with

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<sup>49</sup> Herald, July 15, 1892.

<sup>50</sup> See L.H. Thomas, The Struggle for Responsible Government in the North-West Territories 1890-1897 (Toronto, 1956).

the influx of population and Laurie felt that the powers of the North-West Territories Act had to be extended. He argued: "The Territories have a larger population, and contribute more to the Federal revenue than...British Columbia or Manitoba, when an excessive parliamentary representation was given them."<sup>51</sup> Specifically, Laurie felt that the Territories should have greater powers in local matters; law for election of members, schools should be under local jurisdiction and powers to grant letters patent or letters of incorporation ought to be delegated.

In 1884 Laurie considered the need for parliamentary representation.

The most pressing need of the Territories today is representation in the House of Commons. This granted, there would always be a means of pressing on the attention of the country such changes in laws governing the Territories as their growth in population call for. With a representative man in Parliament to whom reference could be made on matters relating to our affairs, the members would be enabled to vote intelligently. Some object to representation in the Commons because they would, like the Territorial representatives in the United States Congress, be unable to vote. But we need not follow our neighbours in this particular: if we are granted representatives, they must have all the powers and privileges of ordinary members.<sup>52</sup>

After representation was granted in 1886, Laurie spoke for further changes in the west such as Rebellion losses claims, more members to represent the Territories, half-breed scrip, and amendments to the Dominion Lands Act to speed settlement.

<sup>51</sup> Herald, June 24, 1882.

<sup>52</sup> Herald, November 14, 1884. On June 14, 1886, a Bill granting representation to the Territories was passed in the House of Commons.



Laurie was also a constant supporter of the North-West Mounted Police. He backed them throughout periods of criticism and exalted their actions in times of triumph, especially after the 1885 uprising. The police were an important segment of Battleford society and set the standard for acceptable behaviour. Their most significant contribution to civilizing the West was as mediators between white and Indian populations. In this capacity they were extensions of the impending Anglo-Canadian settlement and succeeded in pacifying and subduing the Indians.<sup>53</sup> But they also played an important role in the white society that they came in contact with. The Concert Hall on North-West Mounted Police property was the site of important social functions of Battleford society, where the customs and culture of predominantly eastern policemen were displayed.

The Mounties assisted in assimilating the newly arrived immigrants to the West. The immigrants were housed by the police in their so-called Immigrant Sheds, on police property, until able to take their lands. It was particularly in this capacity as an assimilating factor that Laurie approved of the North-West Mounted Police. The Gothic-revival style of the Police buildings designed by the Department of Public Works in Ottawa were harbingers of Anglo-Canadian society Laurie hoped would be established in the West. The retired policemen who became farmers and important functionaries in Battleford society were ideal settlers and helped to swing the balance in favour of the society

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<sup>53</sup> R.C. McLeod, The North-West Mounted Police and Law Enforcement 1873-1905 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

Laurie desired. The police were seen by Laurie as significant not only in pacifying the Indians but also because they came to symbolize the Anglo-Canadian presence in the West.

In the final analysis, Laurie was practical rather than theoretical in his conservatism. It was this quality that helped identify Laurie as a Conservative. As one author has written: "The genuine Conservative engages reluctantly, and never really comfortably in political speculation."<sup>54</sup> He was, as he wrote in 1885, "devoted to the interests of the Territories - more especially the Saskatchewan side".<sup>55</sup> On September 29, 1883 Laurie published under the title "Our List of Rights" a memorial to the federal government demanding action on the following matters:

...abolish the Regina reserve, the Moose Jaw reserve, to throw open the mile belt reserve and recognize the claims of those, who have bona fide settled therein; to make easier the acquisition of patents; the recognition of the rights of Half-breeds in the reservations; to grant a subsidy per capita for expenditure by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council in the North-West Territories; insisting on the necessity of more surveys in the North Saskatchewan District; the amendment to the Land Act, allowing all homesteads cancelled for any cause to be opened for entrance and not held for sale; the necessity of vaults in lands and registry offices; the protection of actual settlers on Hudson's Bay and school lands prior to survey; the appointment of additional Stipendary Magistrates; of giving power to the North-West Council to incorporate companies having territorial objects; asking for the annulment of grants of land made to colonization companies of land

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<sup>54</sup> Clinton Rossiter, Conservatism in America, The Thankless Persuasion (New York, 1955), p. 20.

<sup>55</sup> Herald, December 7, 1885.

previously settled on; the abolition of excessive duty on agricultural implements imported into the Territories; the representation of the Territories in the Dominion Parliament; greater power to the Council of the N.W.T.; and power to compel the entering of Ordinances by fine or imprisonment or both.<sup>56</sup>

This comprehensive list of grievances was the core of Laurie's beliefs for reforms in the North-West. The issues raised above would be mentioned again and again in the pages of the Herald. Emphasis would vary as it did later in 1885 when Laurie requested action against colonization companies, completion of railway lines running north and south as well as east and west, completion of the Hudson's Bay Railway for better access to Europe, and further revisions to give homesteaders legal rights to occupied lands. Laurie ended these grievances, which were put forward at a mass meeting, with the plea "That the Government should promptly recognize the claims of half-breeds as was done in the Province of Manitoba, and thus determine a question calculated to disturb the present development of the country."<sup>57</sup>

Laurie's main concern, in spite of his many tirades, was to enhance the settlement of the West. Anyone who stood in the way of increasing immigration bore the brunt of Laurie's wrath. In response to reports of "anti-immigration" resolutions passed by the Farmers Convention in Manitoba, which would result in a slowdown of branch line construction, he argued: "Instead of activity there is absolute stagnation; instead of reaping the benefit of large expenditure of foreign money, the farmers have nothing to look forward to but their

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<sup>56</sup> Herald, September 29, 1883.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., December 7, 1885.

growing crops..."<sup>58</sup> Completion of the transcontinental was an accomplishment of great importance, but branch lines were also needed, "the rapid construction of tributary roads is something that would directly benefit the Territories, and through them the Dominion at large".<sup>59</sup> Further benefits of such construction were also pointed out: "During the first rush of settlement there will in most districts be a good local demand for all kinds of produce, but it cannot last more than a few years, and then the railway becomes a necessity."<sup>60</sup>

Laurie did not always agree with the methods adopted to redress grievances. In 1885, when farmers in the Battleford area met to organize a boycott against local merchants, Laurie took a firm stand against such organization. The farmers complained of high prices, fixed prices, manipulation of contracts, merchant monopolies, their indebtedness to the merchants, and the profits of "middle-men".<sup>61</sup> In this local dispute Laurie sided with the merchants and condemned as "communistic" the route the farmers chose to improve their lot. This incident again reflected his organic view of society. Farmers and merchants should work together and not against each other. His reaction to this local incident best reflects his basic conservative tenets that when society needed to change, factions had to work together. He was suspicious of any change which originated from lower stations of society; the desire for change had to be initiated from the top of society by those who knew what was in the best interests of society as a whole.

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<sup>58</sup> Herald, June 13, 1884.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Herald, January 16, 1885.

## Chapter Four

### THE DESIRE FOR AN ANGLO-CANADIAN WEST.

And perchance, in the long, long future,  
E'er the star of my life goes down,  
I shall know that this land shines the brightest,  
Of the gems in the British crown-

That I was her proud defender  
Till she bore a victorious sway,  
In her robes of matchless splendor  
That will never fade away.

from the "Herald's Song".

Laurie knew that the immigrants attracted to the west would determine the kind of society established there. Events such as the 1869 rebellion had shown Laurie to be firmly behind those who advocated an Anglo-Canadian society. His ideas on the society that ought to be established in the Territories, as they were expressed in the Essex Record, reappeared and were elaborated on in the Herald. Statements indicating his desire for English speaking, hard working, ambitious settlers loyal to the British Crown and British institutions were a consistent theme in his newspaper.

Always the conservatives saw Canada as a British nation, an integral part of an imperial community, united by sentiment, tradition, and interest to the Crown. It became the task of Canada, then, to uphold the British banner upon the North American continent. This belief, obviously rooted in the colonial past, had been reinforced by the unionist movement, whose spokesman had interpreted Confederation

as a consolidation of British power and institutions in the face of republican pressure. To many conservatives, then and later, the reaffirmation of Canada's "Britishness" was final, irrevocable, an assumption which underlay their continuing suspicion of the liberal definition of national destiny. The liberal call for independence, his criticism of imperial policy and his desire for an American alliance, seemed less a matter of debate and more a matter of treason. The fervent, often intolerant emphasis on loyalty usual in conservative circles reflected the conviction that without this loyalty there would neither be a Canadian destiny nor a Canadian nationality.<sup>1</sup>

It was Laurie's expression of loyalty to do what was within his power to ensure that the West would be "British". The main stock of settlers would have to be of British extraction and the remainder should only be those who would accept these British values and institutions.

Laurie's enthusiasm for populating the West was evident in the first few years after the Herald was established. On March 10, 1879 he wrote that "healthy immigration" into the territories could be expected to Prince Albert, along the South Saskatchewan, Carrot River Country and Battleford. As Laurie optimistically noted "from private correspondence we have reason to look for considerable additions to the populations of other settlements on the Saskatchewan".<sup>2</sup>

In the earliest editions of the Herald were articles promoting the English settler. In an article entitled "Emigration in England"

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<sup>1</sup> Rutherford, op. cit., p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> Herald, March 10, 1879.

written on April 21, 1879 Laurie, in a hopeful note stated: "The advantages of the North-West as a field for settlement by settlers of the right class are being brought before the people of England, and are receiving much attention."<sup>3</sup> This was followed by statements by a number of promoters who promised to send only the best immigrants. Of these "tenant and artisan classes" being recruited for settlement in Canada Laurie wrote, "...I hope that Canada may get her fair share of them, as they are a class of persons who will be sure to prove useful citizens in whatever country they may settle".<sup>4</sup> In this way the Herald made known who the preferred settlers were.

But in line with the Victorian emphasis on industry and thrift, the ideal immigrant must also be a hard worker, a point which Laurie constantly reminded his readers of:

This we can say, that to those who are willing to work at anything to which they are accustomed, whether as artisans or professional men, there are brilliant openings in almost every rising town. The greatest need of the country is men, and as many as can come who are able and willing to work, may reasonably depend on finding remunerative employment. We have never known a man to leave the country because he could not get work, but we have seen some set out for home because they could not find situations where good salaries were paid for nothing.<sup>5</sup>

To promote settlement of the West the Conservative government adopted a scheme in 1881 to allow companies to purchase large blocks of land at \$2.00 per acre. In return the company was required to

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., April 21, 1879.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Herald, May 13, 1882.

establish two settlers on each of the odd and even numbered sections within a five year period. The companies were also to benefit from a government rebate of \$160.00 for every bona fide homesteader who settled on the land. The government hoped that by selling ten million acres of land to the colonization companies they could "recover the twenty-five million dollars it had pledged to the Canadian Pacific Railway syndicate..."<sup>6</sup>

Although some companies initially offered investors windfall profits, the schemes were largely a disappointment.<sup>7</sup> Crop failures in Manitoba and critical press reports of the scheme lessened the attractiveness of the West for potential immigrants prior to 1885. Then the uprising of 1885 "...brought settlement to a virtual halt, and dealt a damaging blow to John A. Macdonald's vision of a densely populated Canadian West."<sup>8</sup>

Because of the inability of these private corporations to attract settlers to their lands, twenty-seven companies had negotiated termination of their contractual obligation by 1887.<sup>9</sup> For a myriad

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<sup>6</sup> A. Lalonde, "Colonization Companies in the 1880's", Saskatchewan History, vol. XXIV, Autumn 1971, p. 109.

<sup>7</sup> Lalonde, op. cit., p. 106. Between 1881 and 1891 they were responsible for 6 to 8 per cent of the population that came out west. Lalonde, op. cit., p. 109.

<sup>8</sup> A. Lalonde, "The North-West Rebellion and Its Effects on Settlers and Settlement in the Canadian West", Saskatchewan History, vol. XXVII, Autumn 1974, p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> The government collected only \$756,507.00 of the expected \$10,000,000.00. Lalonde, "Colonization Companies...", p. 108.



of reasons then the scheme failed and most companies went bankrupt...

With the availability of substantial amounts of arable land in the United States and the decline in the price of agricultural products, the development of the West stagnated. Macdonald dreamed of building the Canadian West while company directors entertained visions of securing astronomical profits. Their prognostics were based on hope rather than corroborative evidence. The failure of colonization companies contributed to the waning of the enthusiasm which had characterized the early 1880's and to the general discouragement and meagre progress of settlement which persisted into the next decade.<sup>10</sup>

The government colonization scheme of 1881 was not acceptable as Laurie wrote, because "it tends to perpetuate a sectionalism and exclusiveness at variance with the best interests of the country, and to prevent the intimate fusion to the people of different races into that of the homogeneous whole so desirable in a new country."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, Laurie maintained that immigrants should come West at their own expense without the aid of colonization companies, to ensure that only the most ambitious, hardy settlers would be attracted. Money should only be loaned to immigrants who came out to the land and borrowed against this land. This was to ensure that, as debtors, they would have something to lose if they left. Granting reserves or colonies to companies on the condition of bringing in settlers would both encourage block settlements and could also hinder

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<sup>10</sup> Lalonde, "Colonization Companies...", p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Herald, June 20, 1881.

immigration if the companies were lax in fulfilling their contractual duties in hiring out settlers.

Laurie argued that by giving land to colonization companies, this land could be tied up for years without ever being settled. This was unacceptable since, as Laurie maintained, so much of the land was not free for settlement anyway: "The necessary grant to the Pacific Railway Company, and the school and Hudson's Bay Company Reserves - the two latter requiring nearly one-ninth of all the land south of the North Saskatchewan - when added to the tracts of untillable land, such as to be found in all countries, greatly reduce the amount to be selected from by the settler."<sup>12</sup>

Laurie was also critical of the practice of "landlordism" - "as it affects the British Isles today". Immigrants brought over by sham colonization companies, would soon find themselves indebted to their landlords. "After a lifetime spent on enriching the promoters of the society, these men will find themselves without homes and completely at the mercy of their landlords, for such the promoters of the schemes will turn out. All the taxes and assessments on the lands must be paid by the occupant, while all profits, present and prospective, will go to the landlord."<sup>13</sup> Laurie went on to state that colonization companies might be desirable if they would settle people in areas where settlement might not easily take hold, and in such a capacity they would be useful. Since these companies settled people in areas where immigrants were already going however, they were, in most cases, unnecessary.

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<sup>12</sup> Herald, April 29, 1882.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Laurie also made known his choice of desirable immigrants by being critical of those he thought could not conform to the Anglo-Canadian mould. In response to the possibility of Mennonite settlers coming west Laurie wrote: "The Mennonites are perhaps a very good sort of people in their way, but we would prefer native Canadians, English farmers and Germans direct from the fatherland, as future occupiers of the North-West Territories."<sup>14</sup> The Mennonite request for special status that would exempt them from military service was unacceptable. This special status threw into doubt their patriotism and loyalty. There was no need to accept into the Territories groups who might not be willing to die for their country, and furthermore, Laurie wrote, "...the North-West is bound to fill up, and its resources will be developed in due time, because circumstances are favourable in every particular, tending strongly in that direction, more so at this time than heretofore. Therefore, special privileges or exemptions in favour of any creed or sect, to insure successful occupation, are neither necessary, wise or judicious, by any means."<sup>15</sup>

Mormons were another group singled out by Laurie as being unsuitable as settlers for the Territories. Their polygamous marriages were a direct defiance of the law. Such settlers could not be tolerated. They were also to be rejected because they settled in colonies and tended to divide communities where they settled. As Laurie put it: "Canada cannot permit the planning of a system in her midst that will cause a repetition of the troubles that have so long convulsed Utah

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<sup>14</sup> Herald, March 28, 1881.

<sup>15</sup> Herald, March 28, 1881.

and Colorado."<sup>16</sup> It was the proclivity of the Mormons to settle together, so that their aims could be achieved by gaining control of local government, that offended Laurie most.

In an article entitled "Hebrew Immigration" Laurie also indicated apprehension over the proposed Jewish settlement in Western Canada, led by Baron de Hirsch.<sup>17</sup> Though sympathetic to their plight in Russia, he objected to the special status being given to these prospective immigrants. "If aliens seek to make homes they must be required to conform to all the conditions imposed upon the natives of the Eastern Provinces who came west at their own expense, prepared to bear their share of the political burdens devolving on them in the development of the country; and if exceptional privileges are to be given to any class our own people should be the favoured ones."<sup>18</sup> Laurie again emphasized that the new society in the West had to be homogeneous: "We object to planting in a solid mass a body of men whose sympathies are all alien to the country, and whose chief efforts will be to perpetuate the customs and methods of their fatherland and prevent assimilation with the surrounding population."<sup>19</sup>

It does not appear that Laurie was overtly anti-Semitic. Jewish settlers or any colonies on the public domain were free to hold

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., December 11, 1889.

<sup>17</sup> Baron de Hirsch was a philanthropist who donated money for the settlement of Jewish immigrants on agricultural land. His donations were instrumental in the establishment of the Jewish Colonization Association in 1891 for the settlement of poor and needy Jewery from Asia and Europe to North and South America.

<sup>18</sup> Herald, February 5, 1890.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

their religious beliefs as long as they were not at variance with the prevailing laws of the land. As Laurie wrote, "it was not too much to require obedience to our laws in return for free homes and other advantages given to them."<sup>20</sup> Laurie ended with a warning that the Jewish settlers could provide the same problems as the Mennonites in Manitoba, who "are aliens in much that goes to make a good citizen" and like the Mormons who threatened to be troublesome, he went on...

...this foreign speaking Jewish colonization scheme is objectionable on account of the tenacity with which they will cling together, ignoring the true development of the country, striving only after the preservation of their own particular tenets and practices. If scattered throughout the country, surrounded by people of liberality and intelligence, they would be much more likely to enter into competition with their neighbours, developing the energy so characteristic of their own race where they mix on equal terms with a surrounding population; in the end becoming good citizens and none the less faithful in their traditions that they are loyal to the country of their adoption.<sup>21</sup>

Laurie frequently pointed to the United States for lessons to be learned by Canadians in matters related to immigration policy. Laurie wrote that for years the Americans did not believe that a man who was untrue to his native land would be the same in the land of his adoption. He indicated that the Americans were too anxious to attract settlers of any class.

The hope that they would become citizens as well as settlers has not been realized. Foreign nationalities were planted, and customs and habits of thought alien to American progress nourished until they have

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Herald, February 5, 1890.

become important elements in politics and seriously threaten the prosperity of the country. Colonies especially of non-English speaking races, have always proved non-progressive and often an impediment in the way of settlement. Much as an increase in population is to be desired, we must be careful not to pay too dearly for it.<sup>22</sup>

Caution would also need to be exercised in dealing with French Canadians who were trying to establish their influence in the West. The blame for Riel being present to lead the metis in 1885 did not rest solely with the failure of western authorities to capture him in 1869. In Laurie's opinion the blame also lay with the politicians from Quebec, "...their [French-Canadian] prejudices have been consulted to the detriment of the majority."<sup>23</sup> Now after a second "rebellion" the cries for amnesty must certainly be denied. Laurie reacted harshly against requests for special consideration for the rebels. Though he tried to maintain the appearance of impartiality in his writings, there were times when he could not hide his feelings towards the French Canadians. Laurie found it audacious that the French Canadians not only wanted amnesty but were also demanding "State aid to migration of French Canadians to the North-West, with fair distribution of public offices among them".<sup>24</sup> Laurie replied:

If any class of people choose to come here and make homes for themselves, well and good. They may settle either in a colony or scatter about the country, whether the

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<sup>22</sup> Herald, March 25, 1892.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., December 14, 1885.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., January 18, 1886.

immigrants be French-Canadians or anything else. Farming colonies of any class, especially if they are not English speaking, does not promote the same advancement and general prosperity, the same improvement, in the condition of colonists as to be secured by a free admixture of races. Colonists of a particular class are too apt to strive for preservation of customs and methods that however well suited they may be deemed for old and thickly settled districts, are out of place in a new country, whose development calls for the best energies of its people and the best system of management.<sup>25</sup>

As to the suggestion that the French Canadians ought to receive their fair share of offices Laurie responded:

The country is as free to French-Canadians as to any others, and if they feel like coming they will be made welcome. As to the distribution of offices, they must take their chances with those who were here before them. A look at the civil service roll will show that they have so far received a very fair share of good things in the shape of offices the Government has to dispense.<sup>26</sup>

After 1885, Laurie remained ambiguous on the question of French-Canadian immigration to the West. Privately in his diary of 1869 he had expressed reservations about French-Canadian settlement, but in the Herald he was more cautious. He did publish an article outlining the intentions of the Orangemen in Manitoba who were encouraging immigration from Protestant areas in Britain to offset attempts by French Canadians "to capture Manitoba and the North-West".<sup>27</sup> Laurie, however, did not take sides in this matter; he reiterated that "colonies of any class are undesirable on any grounds"

<sup>25</sup> Herald, January 18, 1886.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Herald, July 15, 1892.

and then added that the standard of eligibility for settlement in the West was "willingness and ability to work".<sup>28</sup>

In 1896, Clifford Sifton, the minister of the Interior in Laurier's government, initiated an ambitious promotion to attract settlers from Europe to the West. Among those who answered his call were immigrants Laurie found objectionable. By 1898 the tone of the articles relating to immigration changed; the articles and editorials began to take on a note of urgency for the assimilation of non-English speaking immigrants (although he never specifically mentioned French Canadians). This change in emphasis coincided with articles published in the Herald by Protestant ministers expressing concern over the growing number of aliens coming to the West. Derogatory comments on the cultures of non-English speaking people and the inferiority of alien cultures appeared as more immigrants arrived. Previously Laurie had criticized these people for their failure to learn English, but now his criticisms extended to their cultural and social practices which differed from those of Anglo-Canadians. The emphasis was still on assimilation but now there was increased concern that these aliens would not be able to participate in the political and social life of an Anglo-Canadian West.

Laurie was concerned with the anxieties of alarmed church leaders over the "increasing large foreign element". He alleged that these new foreign colonies were retarding the growth of the West and maintained that these immigrants brought "habits and prejudices opposed

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



to Canadian thought and practice".<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, he believed that there was no hope for them to adjust their way of life. As long as they were kept in separate settlements they would never "become Canadians in sentiment or custom".<sup>30</sup> They were a burden to this new developing society since along with cultural differences which posed difficulties for their assimilation, they did not appear hardy and were prone to disease: "The habits of life they bring here are not suited to this climate, and as soon as they discover this they become charges of the public, and the unfortunates find their condition here worse than it was at home and without any prospect of becoming better."<sup>31</sup>

The Galicians were singled out as examples of the worst of the new flood of immigrants. In one article Laurie wrote: "They [Galicians] are as tough a looking lay-out as can be imagined, and the Lord only knows what possessed the Department of the Interior to dump such people on the Territories. They are not even fit for Manitoba which takes anything to make a showing, figuratively speaking."<sup>32</sup> The influx of diseases was also linked to the Galicians. "Coming in such crowds as they do there is a danger of bringing contagious diseases with them. Measles and diptheria have already been traced to them in the Territories, and more recently a vessel arrived with a thousand Galicians and amongst them five cases of small pox."<sup>33</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup> Herald, June 10, 1898.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Herald, June 10, 1898.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

blame for this situation was placed entirely with the immigration policy of the Liberal Government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier which was dotting the country with these undesirable alien colonies.

The Doukhobors were another target of Laurie's more emotional attacks. Laurie was particularly bitter that these new immigrants had their passage paid to the West and were fed on the trip west as well. "Being fed and clothed at the public expense the Russians are given an advantage over the Canadians, who have to rustle for themselves. To give aliens - for aliens they will continue as long as they perpetuate their present mode of living - the monopoly of homestead entry in a rich country into which a Canadian or British immigrant may not enter is unpatriotic and most unjust."<sup>34</sup> He also published sensationalized reports from other newspapers in the Herald. In an article entitled "Undesirable Immigrants" Laurie published the official report of embarkation: "The count showed 1,977 Doukhobors. This included a number of cripples who had to be brought down on sledges, and three or four idiots, who were not capable of walking from the buildings to the steamer."<sup>35</sup> To this Laurie responded: "A nice kind of people to bring out to open up a country where clear heads and strong arms are so much valued in the work of development."<sup>36</sup> This was a rather impetuous generalization made from very limited evidence.

Laurie also began to print sarcastic reports on the customs of those groups he found unsuitable. His relative silence on the customs

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<sup>34</sup> Herald, February 17, 1899.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., March 3, 1899.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

of people who were willing to work, which was the trend up until the late 1890's, began to give way to intolerance. Of the Doukhobor marriage ceremony he wrote:

It is simpler and less ceremonious than even marriages among the Indians. The high contracting parties shake hands and kiss each other and they are man and wife. Five such marriages took place on the way from Halifax to St. John. Will Mr. Sifton honor their prejudices in this matter by exempting them from coming under the marriage law as they are from military service? Their peculiar tenets must have been respected or they might as well have been left in Russia.<sup>37</sup>

In the late 1890's Jewish immigrants were again pointed to as undesirable settlers. The special status given them and their inability to assimilate were now raised more strongly than they had been earlier.

Other concessions are promised them, but judging from past experience of Jews as colonists they will only reside on their claims as long as they get something for nothing. The placing of a thousand families of these most exclusive alien foreigners in a group will make another blotch on the map of the country. The town railway station and post office will bear the name of the rabbi through whose exertions a thousand families are to be transferred from a Government that does not want them to one with whose population they will never assimilate. The country is paying too much for them, for they will never become good Canadians.<sup>38</sup>

After publishing a report from the Edmonton Bulletin which contained complaints about the problems created by blocks of "alien"

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<sup>37</sup> Herald, February 3, 1899.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., April 7, 1899.

settlers, Laurie felt vindicated. These were issues that had long concerned the Herald, Laurie pointed out. In the early years when the prospects for settlers were uncertain it was easier to justify allowing non-English speaking settlers into the West. But now it was no longer necessary. Experience had shown, Laurie argued, that block colonists would not assimilate and often broke up as soon as government assistance was withdrawn. "Help English speaking people to homes on as easy terms as the coming 'colonists' are given", Laurie pleaded, "and there will be no fear for the future."<sup>39</sup> If this course were not followed, Laurie warned, trouble would follow.

One group that Laurie favoured for settlement even though they did not speak English were the Finns, who were emigrating from Russia. The Finns had other qualities that Laurie admired. They were intelligent, he wrote, paid their own way, came of their own free will, were educated, industrious and had good morals. Also, though he did not state it, they were likely attractive because they were a race from Northern Europe. As Laurie wrote, "they form a most desirable class of immigrant".<sup>40</sup> Laurie compared the Finns to the Galicians, who it was rumoured were coming in even greater numbers, because of free food and clothing in the winter and Government assistance in the summer. "Unlike the Finns, who will leave their families behind until they have homes prepared, the Galicians will bring their wives with them and let them do the digging and the ploughing."<sup>41</sup> So, in spite of what

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<sup>39</sup> Herald, April 14, 1899.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., May 26, 1899.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., March 21, 1900.

he sometimes claimed, language was not always the determining factor for acceptable immigrants. A good work ethic, and the desire to "make it on your own", were also qualities for the proper "class of settler".

One measure for determining the degree of civilization of immigrants was the way in which they treated their women. While Laurie admired the Finns for leaving their women in Europe until a proper home had been established he quite clearly found the manner in which the Galicians and the Doukhobors treated their women, most offensive. He found it incredible that: "At three different places there were twenty-two [Doukhobor] women hitched to a breaker plough and turning over sod, and somewhere [else] about seventy women at work digging with spades."<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, Laurie included a story from a gentleman in Winnipeg who had been labelled a lying Tory intent on condemning government immigration policy, who reported seeing Doukhobor women harnessed to a plough, because "it was not believed possible that the mild mannered Russians would make draught animals of their wives and daughters".<sup>43</sup> These stories were particularly offensive to Victorians who believed that a woman's place was in the home, protected from the outside world, left free to perhaps dabble in painting or to read the latest literature.

Laurie was opposed to giving the vote to the new immigrant before they were "educated" (otherwise they would undoubtedly vote Liberal).

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<sup>42</sup> Herald, June 2, 1899.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

It would give them control of constituencies before they were assimilated or before they understood the practices of British democracy. Some of the harshest words were reserved for this issue.

The Doukhobors with all their good qualities, deserve even less than some of their more ignorant neighbours. They have conscientious scruples against learning the English language lest it should alienate them from their own traditions and hasten assimilation with our people. Compulsory education and an educational test for citizenship would be a reasonable offset to their selfish exclusiveness. If they will not learn the language of their adopted country they are not likely to give the study of its constitution the attention necessary to vote upon it intelligently.<sup>44</sup>

Immigration was one of Laurie's greatest concerns. If the west was to develop along the lines which he foresaw, then immigration would have to be controlled so that only the best immigrants, most able to assimilate, would be accepted. But equally important as choosing hard working, preferably English speaking immigrants, was choosing a proper system of settling immigrants. Settling them in block colonies led to the fragmentation of society. Small pockets of immigrants did not form the organic society Laurie hoped to establish.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Herald, June 9, 1899.

<sup>45</sup> By opposing block settlement, Laurie was unconsciously contributing to the triumph of the independent farmer, free from the collectivist ideas he hoped would influence them. These farmers began a tradition of direct action to redress their grievances, a practice at odds with Laurie's conception of change in an organic society where change must be directed through proper channels. Immigrants who struggled to eke out an existence on their 160 acre homesteads often took direct action to resolve their problems without careful consideration of national or imperial interests. Here, the environment had a levelling effect. Like Abe Spalding, the hero of Frederick Philip Grove's The Fruits of the Earth, whose outlook was profoundly affected by the prairie elements, the ideas of the farmer were shaped more by the environment than they were by the ideas of

The interests of the parts should not be greater than the whole, but this was what the government policy of colonization was leading to. Laurie argued relentlessly against this trend, and continually presented what he believed were the interests of the "whole" in the Herald. Initially it seemed to him that he was fighting a losing battle. Anglo-Canadians, however, still held key positions in the emerging society of the Territories and this together with the polemics of Laurie ensured that Anglo-Canadians would feel most comfortable in western Canadian society.

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journalists like Laurie. As Abe stated of farming in southern Manitoba: "Farming! There are farms all over the country down east. But I never dreamt of anything like this. It's like being in a prison, cast off by the world" (p. 48). The false-fronted facade of western society was unmistakably Anglo-Canadian but behind this front were many who could not escape the influence of the environment nor did many have time to pay much heed to these imposed structures.

## Chapter Five

### THE 1885 UPRISING:

#### A RESIDENT'S VIEW.

I will toil with a zeal unceasing  
Through my springtime and my youth,  
Till I stand with a power increasing,  
Th' exponent of steadfast truth.

Till the red man's wild traditions  
Lose their triumphant way -  
Till errors and superstitions  
Be scattered and swept away.

from the "Herald's Song".

Much to Laurie's chagrin the uprising of 1885 disrupted the flow of settlement that he expected for that spring. What was equally distasteful to him was that this event created an image of the West which was sensationalized in the eastern press, of an uncivilized and dangerous frontier. This last factor perturbed Laurie for it would dampen the enthusiasm of potential settlers. Laurie spent much of his time in succeeding years trying to dispel the rumours that the West was filled with uncontrollable savages roaming freely on the plains.

Laurie felt it was important to determine the causes of the "rebellion". Assessing blame and dispensing justice was significant to him for it would show that the British legal institutions were firmly entrenched and functioning in the West. His analysis and explanation for the fighting was parochial: he saw the rebellion as an isolated incident and not as a broader discontent



with federal policies that was shared by many westerners. Although Laurie placed the major portion of the blame for the "rebellion" with Riel and the metis, most of his editorials were concerned with the threat posed by Indians of the area. Perhaps this was due to the preconceived notions about "savages" prevalent among Victorians and shared by many whites in the West who were terrified by the Indians even before the rebellion.<sup>1</sup> The disproportionate amount of time Laurie spent condemning the Indians is remarkable, since their participation in the actual fighting was far less significant than that of the metis. His exaggerated perception of the Indian threat was perhaps partially due to the large numbers of Indians settled in the Battleford area.<sup>2</sup> Also, as one of the "beseiged" in Fort Battleford during the fighting, Laurie seemed temporarily to forget the effect his writings might have on prospective settlers and he tended to actually overestimate the role played by the

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<sup>1</sup> A prejudiced image of the Indian created by British, American and Canadian newspapers was partially responsible for the fear of the Indians that was felt by the white immigrants. The coverage of the 1885 "rebellion" resulted in a significant drop in immigration: "...the reports of Indian atrocities circulated by Canadian and foreign journalists and the 'tall tales' related by some members of Canada's expeditionary force occasioned a substantial decline of immigration to the Canadian West. A. Lalonde, "Colonization Companies in the 1880's", Saskatchewan History, vol. XXIV, Autumn 1971, pp. 111-112. See also A. Lalonde, "The North-West Rebellion and Its Effects on Settlers and Settlement in the Canadian West", Saskatchewan History, vol. XXVII, Autumn 1974.

<sup>2</sup> There were seven reserves in the immediate Battleford area in 1885. See J.H. Richards and K.I. Fung, Atlas of Saskatchewan, (Modern Press, 1969), p. 12.

Indians in the "rebellion".<sup>3</sup> But his almost pathological concern with "putting the Indians in their place" after the fighting reflected Laurie's deeper anxiety over assimilating so many Indians.

One noticeable difference between his analysis of the 1885 uprising and the 1869 resistance was his attitude towards the French-Canadian influence in the west. Though he suggests that French-Canadian priests influenced Riel, his condemnation of them is much less vitriolic than it had been in 1869. This reflected a greater tolerance towards most religious groups (with the exception of the Mormons) evident in his writings in the 1880's. But it was also due to the fact that he had other more immediate matters to turn his attention to.

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<sup>3</sup> This so-called siege of Fort Battleford was more apparent than real. The magnitude of the Indian threat was exaggerated because the townspeople were not aware of the situation that most Indians on the reserves found themselves in after the difficult winter of 1885. White settlers rushed to the fort "panic stricken" from conjured images of savage reprisals. Of deference paid by the press to the N.W.M.P. Desmond Morton writes: "Exaggerated accounts of its [N.W.M.P.] prowess brought recruits from all corners of the British Empire and it became the beneficiary of the sentimental adulation that marked the heyday of British imperialism." Desmond Morton, "Calvary or the Police: Keeping the Peace on Two Adjacent Frontiers, 1870-1900", *Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 10, 1977, p. 33. General Middleton did not agree with the praise and adulation heaped on the Mounties by the *Herald*: "At Battleford, in a fort jammed with able-bodied men, Inspector W.S. Morris used his telegraph to send piteous appeals for help. More redoubtable officers, like Superintendant Herchmer and Inspector Sam Steele, demonstrated unusual fortitude and leadership. However it is hard to disagree with Middleton, the British officer responsible for bringing the campaign to an early conclusion that, when good, well-trained troops were needed, the Mounted Police did not qualify." Morton, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

Laurie's conservative instincts were offended by rebellion. Laurie condemned rebellion as the most treasonous, despicable course to follow. Rebellion disrupted settlement and consequently progress. It also threw into disharmony a society which should ideally work together to improve conditions peacefully.

Laurie also was influenced by Social Darwinist theories of the Victorian age. He saw Indian culture as inherently inferior to Anglo-Saxon and even metis society. The metis culture was a step up from Indian culture and he seldom criticized metis culture with the same venom he had for the Indians. Laurie's fixation with the problem of assimilating the Indians partially explains the attention they received. But Laurie was not unique. Attitudes like his towards natives and their cultures were common among colonizers in the last half of the nineteenth century:

The decline of aboriginal populations in the nineteenth century in New Zealand, Hawaii, Tasmania, America and South Africa, with which the British Aborigines Protection Society had been struggling since 1843 was considered again in the light of popular Darwinism. The principle of the survival of the fittest seen to be working itself out in these regions, was proving conclusively that civilized and uncivilized nations could not mix and in a conflict situation the latter must perish.<sup>4</sup>

To avoid this fate Laurie maintained that the only alternative for the natives was to participate in the development and progress that the Anglo-Canadian way of life offered. He was far more concerned with assimilating the Indians than he was with any of the "mixed-blood" populations.

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<sup>4</sup> Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 20.

From Laurie's perspective, the rebellion was an ungrateful act by the Indians and metis in a country whose material possibilities could be realized by everyone. But in order to realize these possibilities all sectors of society would have to share in the spirit of progress and work in harmony to improve the human situation. Laurie despised the resort to violence by the "rebels" and insisted that every means possible should be employed to punish the traitors. Improvement could not take place in a fragmented society where individual sections took matters into their own hands. Co-operation and not confrontation were the most desirable means to effect the change.

Laurie maintained that the grievances of the "rebels" could, over time, be solved by non-violent action. In fact, on the eve of the "rebellion", Laurie wrote in the Herald that he believed that the problems of the native populations were on the verge of being solved and that the Indian in the West had no cause for complaint. Little attempt was made by Laurie to see the problems of the Indian from their perspective, or to listen to what they wanted, but much attention was given to discussing the best possible means to pacify and absorb them into Anglo-Canadian society. The presence of such a large, distinctive group of people was an obstacle to settlement that Laurie wanted removed as quickly and as quietly as possible. It was only when the danger of Indian unrest was gone that the eastern press would relent in its portrayal of a lawless west. Only then could settlement take place as Laurie desired. Laurie was consequently convinced of the necessity to crush the rebellion ruthlessly in order to bring back stability to the West so that settlement

could be immediately resumed. If, as Laurie demanded in his editorials, the strictest justice were meted out to the "rebels", that would serve as an example to others, and then the rest of Canada could see that law and order existed in the West. Only when law and order prevailed could individuals feel safe to carry on their "business as usual".

Laurie's views on the causes of the rebellion, as expressed in his editorials, were not consistent. On June 15, 1885 he stated that the Indians had no cause for complaint:

The Indians can give no ground for complaint, but the Opposition manufacture grievances for them in the hope of making political capital. The parties who are loudest in their complaints have no knowledge of what they speak about the Indian than the Indian knows about them.<sup>5</sup>

Yet on March 20, 1885, before any fighting had broken out, in an article entitled "The Indian Policy", Laurie had criticized the bureaucracy in the Indian Department at Regina. Before the fighting broke out Laurie seemed willing to find blame for the plight of the Indian with some federal agencies. He mentioned specific, justifiable Indian grievances in his critique of Indian Policy such as: shortage of food, disease among Indians because of poor meat, need for more ovens, and the need for bread instead of bannock. Furthermore, he criticized the Department for its lack of initiative in preparing the Indians for the transition from a nomadic to an agricultural way of life. Of the functioning of the Department and of their policy Laurie wrote:

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<sup>5</sup> Herald, June 15, 1885.

Men who are in a position to suggest and carry out practical measures are not listened to. Eventually the Department would save many thousands of dollars, and the Indians be more comfortable and less exposed to the ravages of disease. As long as it is attempting to regulate the management of details on the reserves by subordinates at Regina there will be no actual progress among the Indians. Their policy seems to be comprised in these six words: feed one day, starve the next.<sup>6</sup>

This blame that Laurie placed in the lap of the Indian Department lost its significance as a cause of the Indians' troubles, when fighting began a few weeks later.

The apparent contradiction in his editorials needs to be understood in the wider context of his aspirations for Western Canada. An understanding of this contradiction helps to clarify the vision he had of the West. On the one hand, before the outbreak of the rebellion, Laurie was willing to criticize the bureaucracy in the Indian Department for not acting to alleviate the living conditions of the Indians. After the uprising, however, Laurie was adamant in his insistence that the Indians had no justifiable grievances.

Through his criticisms of the government's handling of the Indian problems Laurie envisaged a gradual improvement of conditions on the reserves. Laurie, however, seemed reluctant to dwell on this issue in his editorials. He realized that there were faults with Indian policy, but he nevertheless wanted to give the rest of Canada

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<sup>6</sup> Herald, March 20, 1885.

the impression that the West was a stable and potentially prosperous place to settle. Laurie did not want the Indian problem to become a political debate among politicians who, for expedient reasons, might exaggerate the seriousness of the situation. He simply wanted the Indian Department to follow the recommendations made by westerners like himself. Whenever alarming reports of Indian trouble reached Laurie from eastern newspapers, he tried to dispel them. Laurie wanted to hear neither that there was unrest among the Indians, nor that they were suffering from lack of food or shelter, especially from journalists who did not understand the West or the consequences that their reports might have. He denied reports from eastern newspapers that Indians were starving: a usual reply of his was that, "Indians get more than many whites who live beside them".<sup>7</sup> To one report of Indian trouble Laurie wrote:

...the papers received by the latest mail, contain a number of sensationalized stories of Indian troubles at Battleford, not one of which has the slightest foundation. It is difficult to imagine how they ever got into circulation, unless by supposing them to be the creation of someone interested in deferring settlers from coming in.<sup>8</sup>

The predicament of the Indians was, as Laurie explained, a result of their lack of determination and ambition, a characteristic common to their race. They were more apt to wallow in the mire than good, hard-working Anglo-Saxons were.

We do not wish to convey the impression that the Indians as a body are happy. That they can never be according to their notion of happiness as long as they have to work.

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<sup>7</sup> Herald, September 20, 1884.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., October 31, 1884.

But they realize that it is for them either to work or starve, and having accepted the former alternative are to that extent content.<sup>9</sup>

After the "rebellion" Laurie's position shifted; he no longer focused on taking the Indian Department to task for mismanagement, as his attention was now primarily with the part played by the Indians and metis in precipitating the fighting. This allowed Laurie to retain the appearance of consistency - by recognizing the problems of the Indians while not accepting them as a major cause of the rebellion. In this way, Laurie was able to argue that for the West to become an attractive place for settlement again, all that was needed was to bring the "rebels" to justice and thus restore peace to the West. It was, in retrospect, a rather superficial and expedient analysis of the situation. A simple explanation for the cause of the "rebellion" would, he hoped, end discussion in eastern newspapers over the real causes of the rebellion. By publicly hashing out the unpleasanties of treatment of the Indians and metis and their reaction to this, only settlement could suffer. The political mileage that was being made by some politicians was distasteful to Laurie. It contributed nothing to the development of the West. Again it was the eastern press who were to blame for the irresponsible reporting.

There is nothing here to justify the uprising. Within the past week we have been placed in possession in our files of eastern papers for the past two months, and find that they are all wrangling about the causes that fed [sic] to the uprising. Each political party and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



clique is blaming the other, with the object of making capital at the expense of its opponents; some blaming Mr. Dewdney, some Sir John, while others see no wrong cause for it but the wrongs of the Indian officials and Mounted Police have done to the Indians.<sup>10</sup>

In Laurie's opinion, these leaders and agents of Anglo-Canadian society were surely not to blame for the "rebellion". Even the Indians, Laurie maintained, were admitting their guilt. "Now the Indian himself being witness they are all wrong [sic]. He has not a word to say against the treatment he received."<sup>11</sup> The culprits were clearly identifiable to Laurie, and he hoped the sooner they were punished the sooner the whole matter could be forgotten.

We agree with the eastern press that men who caused all the bloodshed and distress must be held accountable for it; but we differ from them as to whom the guilty ones are, and charge the Committee of citizens of Prince Albert who sent for Riel to come into the country and everyone who contributed to the fund raised to defray his expenses hither, as equally with Riel, and more guilty than the savages they set on the warpath.<sup>12</sup>

Again it appears that Laurie overestimated the participation of the Indians in the fighting: "the savages set on the warpath" were a very small proportion of those who might have joined the uprising.

It was not enough for Laurie to find that the actions of the metis and Indians were primarily responsible for the "rebellion", but he went on to comment upon the degenerate nature of the Indian character. The image that emerged from his editorials reflected the

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<sup>10</sup> Herald, June 8, 1885.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

popular image of the Indian as a primitive "savage". The influence of Social Darwinistic ideas are evident in Laurie's opinions; the Indians were obviously much further behind in their development than were the Anglo-Saxon races. As evidence of their backwardness Laurie pointed to the ease with which Riel seemed to lead and mislead the natives. Their lack of direction and initiative were characteristic of their retarded development. Laurie believed that this was a reflection of Indian racial inferiority even as compared to the half-breeds and metis. He thought the Indians were basically lazy, irresponsible and deceitful. They were willing to accept hand-outs from the government, while taking no steps to improve their own plight. Laurie argued that the treaties were a contract between the government and the Indians; the government was required to provide certain materials to the Indians and the Indians in turn were obliged to use these tools and supplies to improve their condition. The Indians, however, were "slow to adopt a new mode of life".<sup>13</sup> In most cases the Indians failed to live up to their part of the contract and to Laurie it was the character of the Indian that was to blame. His opinion of the Indian is evident in an article entitled "Repatriated Pets" where he writes: "The Indian is nothing if not a nuisance. The shifts an able bodied one can make to get out of work would shame his Jeremy Diddler of a higher civilization...Their memory is good when a benefit is to accrue to themselves, but exceedingly short when anything is required of their

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<sup>13</sup> Herald, December 9, 1882.

hands. They remember how many horses and cattle the treaty promised them, and insist on full count; but they forget that they promised to put up hay for them."<sup>14</sup>

Laurie showed little understanding for the situation or aims of Big Bear<sup>15</sup> and his discontented followers. Laurie spent considerable time questioning what he believed were the selfish motives of Big Bear and those in his retinue who by 1885 had still not settled on a reserve. In spite of Big Bear's genuine concern that western Indians were not getting the best deal from the government, Laurie mocked Big Bear's reluctance and his concern to negotiate a better settlement for his followers:

Big Bear has come to the conclusion that there is something wrong in the management of Indian Affairs. He has seen and conversed with many of the chief officers of the Department, but none of them seems to be "the head" - there is always somebody higher. To settle who this higher is has become the one object of his life. To this end he has made up his mind to go to Ottawa calling at Regina on his way. If there is a head to the Department he is bound to find him, for he will deal with no one else. If the old growler gets down to Ontario it is to be hoped that he is kept there.<sup>16</sup>

Laurie made almost no attempt to understand the problems of the Indians in their transition to an agricultural way of life. Religious

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<sup>14</sup> Herald, August 4, 1883.

<sup>15</sup> Big Bear (died 1888) was the chief of a band of discontented Cree Indians who had refused to sign a treaty, believing that they could obtain better terms by negotiating directly with those at the head of government. Though he was convicted of treason and sentenced to prison, he did not condone the actions of his war chiefs in the killings that took place at Frog Lake.

<sup>16</sup> Herald, March 8, 1884.

beliefs and cultural practices of the western Indians made this transition to a sedentary way of life difficult. But Laurie had little patience with discontent among the Indians, and those such as Big Bear's band who posed a threat to the peaceful and stable image of the West Laurie was trying to create for future immigrants.

The need to assimilate the Indian as quickly as possible was a great concern of Laurie's editorial comment from 1878 to 1885. The weak and beleaguered situation of the Indian in an atmosphere of a "blooming west" that Laurie tried to create, led him to write about the Indians as though they were children who needed to be disciplined if they did not obey the authorities or work to improve their situation. According to Laurie, the government did more than was necessary to help the Indians. This paternalistic view of the Indians led him to expect gratitude from the Indians for everything the government had done for them. As early as 1882, in an article discussing the great effort the government made to assist the Indians by supplying them with farm instructors, Laurie wrote:

Provision for the Indians was on a most liberal scale and would have been received with thankfulness from any other people having the remotest idea of gratitude. But unfortunately the beneficiaries in this case have no notion of feeling - they have all that is given them as if it were theirs by right and clamour for more if the charity does not cover all their wants.<sup>17</sup>

There was little hope held out by Laurie for improvement of the present generation of adult Indians. They were too set in their ways

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<sup>17</sup> Herald, December 9, 1882.

and were extremely slow to adapt to a civilized, agricultural way of life. But Laurie was slightly optimistic about the future. Even though culturally primitive, Laurie believed that if individuals, especially children, were taken out of their old environment, their attitudes and habits could be changed to conform to the Anglo-Canadian standard of behaviour. Consequently Laurie was a great supporter of the Indian Industrial Schools established in the 1880's. In these institutions Laurie foresaw the possibility that Indian youth could be trained so that they would not have to suffer the same deprivations as their parents. The ultimate aim was to make them self-reliant individuals with the social graces to allow them to live easily in white society.

These institutions would be based on the English school system where the pupils would learn the basic subjects. They would also be taught how to cultivate a garden (something Laurie, no doubt, heartily approved of) and were generally instructed in the fundamental manners for living a civilized life. The running of the school was to be based on a military plan where regimented duties would be allocated to each student daily, a practice introduced to rid the Indians from being habitually tardy. The physical surroundings would be Spartan to build character in the student, "each youth will be supplied with a separate bed; and the board will be plain but sufficient".<sup>18</sup> But the process would be a difficult one since the Indians brought habits with them incompatible with the new way of life. Laurie argued that in this new approach "will be found the great dissatisfaction among the pupils, and out of it will grow a

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<sup>18</sup> Herald, August 18, 1883.

desire to return to their wild life, for this feeling invariably comes upon the Indian as soon as he ceases to be hungry and is freed from suffering".<sup>19</sup> Here in the Industrial Schools, away from parental influence, its pupils were taught to despise their ancestors' way of life. It was, Laurie believed, the last and most effective hope for assimilation.

Laurie's impatience with the progress of assimilation of the Indians and with their complaints was at least partially due to his desire to present the grievances of the West as a whole. Laurie maintained that the Indians would benefit as much as others by growth and settlement of the West. He was disturbed that at times Indians received more from the government than whites who settled beside the Indians. Laurie advocated that no group should be singled out for special consideration. Western society should act as a whole to ensure that its grievances were dealt with.

As editor of the Herald, Laurie claimed to serve as spokesman for the grievances of Western Canada. His editorial appeals to the federal government were made on behalf of all citizens for the betterment of the West. To him improving the conditions in the West was in the best interests of all Canadians. Grievance lists published by Laurie usually emphasized problems of settlement, such as requests for better communications systems and improved transportation, but reforms on behalf of the Indians and metis were also asked for.<sup>20</sup> During the winter prior to the "rebellion" requests were made on behalf of the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Herald, October 27, 1883.

metis in hope that peace could be assured as settlement resumed.

The members of a Citizens Committee asked among other things "that the government should promptly recognize the claims of the half-breeds as was done in the province of Manitoba, and thus determine a question calculated to disturb the present development of the country".<sup>21</sup>

Laurie thought that all western grievances could be dealt with through traditional channels, by representation in parliament. Those that rebelled against this system had to be punished; they could not be allowed to stand above the law. Laurie was extremely critical of the way in which the rebellion was being debated in Eastern Canada. Riel, the murderer of Thomas Scott, should be portrayed as a criminal and not as a hero, as was the case in the Quebec press. The special consideration asked for by French Canadians enraged Laurie...

If, however, they [the French Canadians] push their race and revenge policy to extremes, and go to the country on the square issue that the French are above the law they will have but themselves to blame if the English-speaking people unite to enact the equal laws on observance of universal rights in the Dominion. In the past they have been allowed privileges not accorded to any other nationality; but while these privileges have been ungrudgingly extended to the French, they must not be carried away with the idea that they can over-ride all law and govern the country by resolutions and manifestos emanating from the slums of eastern Canada.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., January 9, 1885.

<sup>22</sup> Herald, January 4, 1886.

There was no question in Laurie's mind that the rebels had to be severely punished. This would be necessary to re-establish law and order in the Territories. Laurie argued that most of the problems of the metis and Indians were being listened to and were being dealt with by the government; they were therefore guilty of causing the rebellion because of their impatience. He wrote shortly after the rebellion: "The rising was a senseless and unprovoked one, brought about and engineered by Riel and the men who brought him into the country; and while the Indians must be punished for the murders and other crimes committed by them, the heaviest penalties - the fullest measure of justice - must be meted out to Riel and his associates and those who led them to enter on their career of blood."<sup>23</sup>

Laurie's experiences in Red River in 1869 made him emphasize the need for punitive action. He maintained that after the 1869 rebellion the government had erred in not punishing those responsible severely enough. "The great mistake was that it sought to conciliate the rebels before they had been conquered."<sup>24</sup> This mistake could not be repeated and to Laurie the "rebels" of 1885 had less to complain of than did those of 1869. He bitterly resented the special consideration being given the Indians and the metis:

The duty of the government is plain. The guilty must be punished, whether they be white, half-breed or Indian. No exceptional favours to Half-breeds or any other class must be granted. Instead of giving Half-breeds greater privileges than are being enjoyed by others,

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<sup>23</sup> Herald, June 18, 1885.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., May 11, 1885.



give them all the rights to which either white or Indian is entitled, and the choice to rank with whites or Indians just as suits their taste. Equal rights and equal opportunity under the law which must be the same for all classes; and when peace has been conquered, not bought, the country will be ready to take up afresh its career of development so rudely interrupted by the present.<sup>25</sup>

Hanging was the answer:

Riel's apologists for the troubles of 1869 say his one great mistake was that we did [not] [sic] hang Riel then. Let not history repeat itself in this respect, lest when Riel returns again, as he certainly will, if he is let off now, our children and our children's children condemn us as the authors of their troubles, because we did not catch him in '69 nor hang him when caught in 1885.<sup>26</sup>

Laurie's attitude toward the defeated Indians and metis was harsh and vindictive. The winter of 1885 had been a hard one and even Laurie admitted, before the outbreak of violence, that provision for the Indians had been inadequate. Many Indians had not survived the winter because of the lack of food and poor shelter, some were barely able to subsist on what they had. Though it appears that punishment of the rebels was the sentiment of the majority of the population in the Territories, Laurie was excessively vengeful, especially when compared to the more balanced analysis of Nicholas Flood Davin, the editor of the Regina Leader. Davin, like Laurie, favoured the hanging of Riel and spoke out against French Canadians who demanded amnesty...

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25 Ibid.

26 Herald, May 18, 1885.

That he had some French blood in his veins - [Davin asked]. Is this an excuse? Has it come to this in Canada that any criminal has only to prove himself French and tables of law are to be broken at the bidding of thoughtlessness and justice to be flung prone on the street? But what have the French Canadians to do with Riel any more than the Irish or the Swedes? One should think it is the half-breeds and the whites in the North-West who are most concerned. Do we hear the half-breeds discontented with his sentence? No indeed, they understand Louis Riel too well.<sup>27</sup>

But though Davin agreed with Laurie on the question of the sentence for Riel, Davin's condemnation was less severe than Laurie's.<sup>28</sup> They were, however, not in agreement over the punishment to be handed out to the other "rebels". For example, their reactions to the early release of Poundmaker differed considerably. Davin, an admirer of Poundmaker "The Great Chief", was pleased that he was released early from prison for good conduct, while Laurie denounced the early release as unjustifiable because of the suffering Poundmaker had wrought. Laurie also sarcastically commented on Big Bear's sentencing even though his guilt in the rebellion was at least questionable: "...Big Bear was found guilty with a recommendation for mercy. He gets three years board at Stony Mountain, unless his admirers can induce the government in the meantime to transfer him to a first class hotel in Winnipeg."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Quoted in Charles Koester's "Nicholas Flood Davin: A Biography", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Alberta, 1971, p. 135.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Herald, September 21, 1885.

Laurie's uncompromising position towards the "rebels" must be understood in relation to the events of the rebellion at Fort Battleford while it was "beseiged" by the Indians. His greatest concern was still to woo settlers to Battleford, while Davin, a resident of the capital, with more immediate potential for growth and further away from the large number of Indians in the Battleford area, was less concerned with the consequences of leniency towards the Indians. Davin wanted Riel executed for two reasons: as a westerner and a lawyer he did not want to see a western decision overturned by an eastern court and secondly as a Conservative he was bound to stand up for and defend the Conservative cause. Laurie, closer to the fighting during the "rebellion", had more practical, existential reasons for demanding stiff sentencing; justice had to be done for the protection of the residents and to ensure that settlement, especially to the Battleford area, could resume.

## Chapter Six

### THE ENTHUSIASMS OF A WESTERN CONSERVATIVE.

Thus amid wild turmoiling  
I will live to a good old age,  
And the deeds of a ceaseless toiling  
Shall shine in a deathless page.

When my works from the nations records  
Shall gleam without shade or stain,  
I shall feel with a thrill triumphant  
That I have not lived in vain.  
from the "Herald's Song".

It is difficult to assess the influence Patrick Gammie Laurie had on the society in which he lived. Little evidence is available from those who were in contact with him in either a private or a professional capacity. He was, from his children's point of view, a warm and loving father. From these children we have the impression that he was a significant figure in Battleford and even western Canadian society. From his work, we know he was a diligent and tireless editor who was dedicated to his goals. Though dedicated to creating an atmosphere of progress in the West, he was a polemical pedant, whose thinking, at times, and on certain issues was cumbersome and convoluted.

If Laurie had the influential stature that both he and his children claimed he had, it is remarkable that he stayed in Battleford as its significance as a political and economic centre declined rapidly after the early 1880's. Perhaps Laurie merely wanted to be a "big time"

editor in a small time town. Perhaps he left the east and Winnipeg because he lacked the depth of perception and talent as a writer to make it anywhere else but in Battleford, where there was little opposition to the ideas he expressed. What opposition there was, could quite easily be deflected by Laurie who could be exceptionally vindictive to those who criticized or disagreed with him. In Battleford he could be king, his ideas could be expressed freely and his critics could be dismissed as misled fanatics. He found solace in his isolation in Battleford by admiring and perhaps identifying with the glories of Sir John A. Macdonald and other men of significance whose exploits he gave enthusiastic recognition in the Herald. He wrote at length of the conquests of the men he admired and paid virtually no attention to the role women could play in the new society in the West, except in their traditional roles as mothers and housewives. It is interesting that one of his daughters, Effie Storer, who spoke so fondly of him in her reminiscences, became a journalist, a profession Laurie likely would have considered suitable for men only.

Though the influence of Laurie's ideas is difficult to measure, they were at least recorded in the Herald for those interested to read. They were the ideas of a conservative who tried to transplant a piece of Ontario in the West. His philosophy was expressed with the vigour and optimism of the Victorian society he came from. What he left behind in Ontario was soon reconstructed around him. The blueprint for the society he hoped for in the West was closest to the ideas that had been roughly laid down by the Canada First Movement. Laurie shared their desire for an Anglo-Canadian West based on British parliamentary and social institutions and their zealous anti-Americanism. He envisaged an organic,

"holistic" society which opposed excessive individualism. Laurie's Conservatism, though usually blatantly partisan, became tempered to some extent in his later years by the realities of the environment he lived in.

The Conservatism that emerged in later years was slightly more tolerant of religious differences, if not racial or ethnic distinctions, from the views he had expressed in his 1869 diary. His initial intransigence towards Roman Catholicism disappeared from the columns of the Herald and gave way to an advocacy of religious toleration for most religious groups.

Laurie's collectivist aspirations for an Anglo-Canadian West changed to some extent as a result of the individualism of farmers which emerged out of the settlement patterns determined by the Dominion Lands Policy. The individual action of farmers (and unions) intent on direct action to redress their grievances was not consistent with the gradual economic progress with which town businessmen were content. Laurie gradually recognized that the fortunes of the West lay with the farmers and that other sectors of society would need to pay greater deference to their problems. Towards this end Laurie modified his stand on the tariff in the 1890's and realized that lowering the tariff did not mean annexation to the United States.

To some extent the environment tempered Laurie's hierarchical view of society. The realities of prairie life did not permit a super-structure of a privileged sector of society to become established to guide the lower classes in their behaviour. The North-West Mounted Police were the closest group that Laurie could find in Western Canada to

substitute for this kind of influence. His attitudes towards the Indians as an inherently inferior species, however, did not change and he continued to accept the proposition that direction for society should come from the father figure at the top of society, who knew best.

Laurie's conservatism as it emerged at Battleford was, however, not significantly different from the Tory fragment established in Upper Canada. Laurie was a messenger of the imperialist zeal that Canada First came closest to expressing and remained an easterner disguised in a westerner's cloak. He was not a spokesman for the West who was closely in contact with the feelings of westerners. In fact his coverage of the 1885 uprising shows that he did not understand the nature of this resistance. His aspirations for the West were derived from the adventurous spirit of progress brought from Eastern Canada. Unlike Red River society before 1870, which had developed a distinct culture in some harmony with its environment, and had its chroniclers in people like Alexander Ross<sup>1</sup> and James Hargraves<sup>2</sup>, Laurie did not speak for a society that already existed. Laurie's aspirations were to build a "British" society in the West. This was not the society that had existed in the West before 1870; nor was it necessarily one best suited to prairie conditions. The attempt to build a western society on the basis of inherited or borrowed ideas did not meet with complete success, but the ideas and aspirations of men like P.G. Laurie

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement, (London, 1855).

<sup>2</sup> James Hargraves, Red River, (Montreal, 1871).

guided Western Canadian society through its infancy. Laurie was instrumental in establishing a British conscience for Western Canada; in part it was this conscience that restricted the outlook of western Canadians and stifled the development and definition of a new western society.



Appendix A

A Chronology of Major Events During  
the Resistance at Red River, 1869-1870.

July 1869

Colonel Stoughton Dennis sent to survey land around Oak Point and Red River.

August 1869

Metis prevent Colonel Dennis' party from further surveying amid rumours that metis settlement would be disrupted by the government survey.

October 5, 1869

Laurie arrives at Pembina, North Dakota.

October 6, 1869

Laurie starts for Fort Garry.

October 31, 1869

McDougall stopped at Pembina border crossing from entering the North-West Territories.

November 2, 1869

Metis seize Fort Garry.

November 5, 1869

M. Provencher arrives at Red River to act as an intermediary between the metis and the Canadian faction.

November 6, 1869

Riel publishes notice inviting representatives from the parishes to meet on November 16 to discuss strategy to follow with regard to the impending transfer of Hudson's Bay Company lands to Canada.

November 8, 1869

Laurie and Dr. Bowen refuse to print Riel's proclamation in the Nor'Wester. The metis, however, use the facilities and print it themselves.

November 9, 1869

Governor William McTavish, of the Hudson's Bay Company, issues a proclamation warning the Council that their disruptive actions are illegal.

November 12, 1869

Dr. Schultz sends a letter to Governor McTavish expressing concern over the lack of authority in the settlement and the hostility of the French speaking population towards Lieutenant-Governor McDougall.

November 23, 1869

Riel proposes the organization of a Provisional Government.

November 24, 1869

Riel attempts to take salt pork from Schultz's general store but fails.

November 26, 1869

Armed meeting attended by Riel, Schultz and other officials at Red River. The meeting ends in a compromise between the French and English to make representatives through a united executive council under the authority of the Hudson's Bay Company.

November 26-27, 1869

Sympathizers of the Canadian Party attempt to remove pork supplies from Red River away from Riel and the metis who were short of food supplies.

November 30, 1869

Riel, after hearing of the attempt to remove pork supplies from Red River, decides to reject the earlier compromise and seizes power by force.

December 1, 1869

Rupert's Land according to McDougall transferred to Canada with provision for administration by a Lieutenant-Governor and Council. Neither the Hudson's Bay Company nor the residents of Rupert's Land had been made aware of the details of the transfer.

McDougall, against instructions from Ottawa, crosses the border and reads a proclamation transferring Rupert's Land to Canada, to an empty plain, and returns to the United States. This was not an authentic proclamation.

Colonel Dennis brings the illegal proclamation to Fort Garry where it is read.

Metis prepare a list of rights to be taken to McDougall, to be in turn ratified by Parliament.

First Convention dissolved after a disagreement over the validity of the transfer.

December 2, 1869

Riel suppresses the Nor'Wester and the Red River Pioneer.

December 6, 1869

Governor-General Sir John Young issues a Proclamation giving amnesty to all those who would lay down their arms.

December 7, 1869

Laurie flees from Red River to the east.

December 8, 1869

Riel issues the "Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land" in which a Provisional Government was declared to commence on December 24, 1869.

December 9, 1869

Colonel Dennis leaves the settlement after unsuccessful attempts to organize a force to oppose Riel.

December 27, 1869

Riel becomes President of the Provisional Government.  
Donald Smith of the Hudson's Bay Company is sent to Red River as a mediator.

January 23, 1870

Schultz escapes from Fort Garry.

January 25, 1870

French and English delegates meet to discuss Smith's proposals.

February 14, 1870

Supporters of the Canadian Party march on Fort Garry to release prisoners held by Riel, but were captured the next day by Riel's men.

March 14, 1870

Execution of Thomas Scott.

July 15, 1870

Act proclaiming Manitoba a Province passed.

August 24, 1870

Riel flees Red River as a Canadian militia under Colonel Grant Wolseley approaches.

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Jessie DeGear was a daughter of P.G. Laurie. This collection contains the P.G. Laurie Letterbooks, 1866-1898, most of which are illegible because of water damage. These papers also contain fragments of an early diary of P.G. Laurie (1857 and 1859). An autobiographical manuscript entitled "The Story of My Life 1868-1940", written by Mrs. DeGear, is also included.

DeGear Papers - Glenbow Alberta Institute.

These papers contain a valuable collection of letters that P.G. Laurie wrote to his daughter.

Innes Papers - Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

Campbell Innes was a school teacher and well known local historian of the Battleford area. This collection includes correspondence pertaining to the North-West Historical Society of which he was editor and secretary. The collection also contained newspaper clippings, articles and photographs relating to the history at Battleford.

Macdonald Papers - Public Archives of Canada.

These papers include a number of letters that Laurie wrote to Macdonald and other government officials. These letters were of limited use for the writing of this thesis.

Storer Papers - Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

Effie Storer, a daughter of P.G. Laurie, worked as a journalist in the Battleford area. She left behind an extensive collection of material relating to Battleford and its history. There are a number of unpublished manuscripts including an autobiographical account of her life entitled "My Story" and a biographical manuscript of her father's life with the title "The Queen's Printer". P.G. Laurie 1869 Diary is also located in this collection. Family correspondence,

newspaper clippings, articles, photographs, and notes are also contained in the eight boxes that make up this collection.

Wetton Papers - Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

Mrs. A.N. Wetton was a well known historian and newspaper correspondent for the Battleford area. This collection contains a variety of sources including four folders with information on the Laurie family. These folders include letters, notes and newspaper clippings concerning the Laurie family.

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