

The October Crisis

Appendix U

“Riel’s Revolutionary Bill of Rights (1885)”

The Revolutionary Bill of Rights (probably written by Will Jackson), adopted on 8 March 1885, in the village of St. Laurent on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River close by and southwest of Prince Albert.

1. That the half-breeds of the Northwest Territories be given grants similar to those accorded to the half-breeds of Manitoba by the Act of 1870.
2. That patents be issued to all half-breed and white settlers who have fairly earned the right of possession of their farms.
3. That provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan be forthwith organized with legislatures of their own, so that the people may be no longer subjected to the despotism of Mr. Dewdney.
4. That in these new provincial legislatures, while representation according to population shall be the supreme principle, the Métis shall have a fair and reasonable share of representation.

5. That the offices of trust throughout these provinces be given to the residents of the country, as far as practicable, and that we denounce the appointment of disreputable outsiders and repudiate their authority.

6. That this region be administered for the benefit of the actual settler, and not for the advantage of the alien speculator.

7. That better provision be made for the Indians, the parliamentary grant to be increased and lands set apart as an endowment for the establishment of hospitals and schools for the use of whites, half-breeds, and Indians, at such places as the provincial legislatures may determine.

8. That all lawful customs and usages which obtain among the Métis be respected.

9. That the Land Department of the Dominion Government be administered as far as practicable from Winnipeg, so that the settlers may not be compelled as heretofore to go to Ottawa for the settlement of questions in dispute between them and the land commissioner.

10. That the timber regulations be made more liberal, and that the settlers be treated as having rights in this country.”

(Maggie Siggins, “Riel, A Life of Revolution”, Harper/Collins 1994 at pp. 368/9 and 452.)