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Reviews

Louis Riel: A Review Essay

NO FEATHER, NO INK. Saskatoon: Thistledown Press, 1985. 190p.

1885: METIS REBELLION OR GOVERNMENT CONSPIRACY? Don McLean. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1985. 137p.

THE BATTLE OF BATOCHÉ: BRITISH SMALL WARFARE AND THE ENTRENCHED METIS. Walter Hildebrandt. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1985. 120p.

I FOUGHT RIEL: A MILITARY MEMOIR. Charles A. Boulton. Ed. Heather Robertson. Toronto: James Lorimer, 1985. 225p.

BIG BEAR: THE END OF FREEDOM. Hugh A. Dempsey. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1984. 227p.

its not enough they take
your life away with a gun they
have to take it away with their
pens in the distance he could
hear the writers scratching
louder & louder

bpNichol, "The Long Week-
end of Louis Riel," in *No
Feather, No Ink*, 118.

More than a century after Riel's death, the writers are still "scratching louder and louder." Louis, wherever he is now, should appreciate this obsession to write his story. He himself was an inveterate scribbler who always hoped to be recognized as an author. He even received a revelation about it: "Publiez: Dieu choisira celui de vos écrits qu'il voudra"; and he hoped that publication might "accomplish a miracle or something wonderful [sic]."¹ What author has not felt the same hope?

The literature on Riel is immense. The bibliography produced by the Louis Riel Project contains 462 titles relevant to his life, without trying to assemble the broader literature on the Métis people.² At least three noted historians have recently published review articles covering a broad sweep of scholarly writing about Riel.³ Still, each year sees new publications, and 1985 brought an unusual, if not unexpected number, because of the centennial of the North-West Rebellion. Four of the 1985 books on Riel as well as Hugh Dempsey's 1984 biography of Big Bear will be dealt with here. Each work will be evaluated and placed in the wider Riel literature. The reader must be asked to forgive any subjectivity in judgment of books that come from fields as diverse as Canadian poetry, political history, military history, and Indian history.

No Feather, No Ink is an odd book. Even though it was subsidized by the Canada Council and other public agencies, no editor's name is given, prompting one to wonder who will collect the royalty cheques. The contents are rather miscellaneous: a few historical prose documents about the events of 1885; a couple of excerpts from poems by Riel; and about fifty poems or parts of poems about Riel, Gabriel Dumont, the Métis, or Canada. Some are actually about Riel, while his name merely appears *en passant* in others. Illustrious poets are included: Al Purdy, George Woodcock, John Robert Colombo, Don Gutteridge, etc. But many readers may prefer Henry Letendre's colour illustrations to most of the poems. These paintings have an almost mystical quality that captures the mood of Riel the prophet.

Modern poetry, paralleling developments in art and music, has largely given up formal constraints such as metre and rhyme, leaving imagery and eccentric orthography to carry the meaning. This may lend itself to the expression of the poet's personal experiences, but it makes it hard to write about formal or historical subjects.

Some readers may like certain poems in *No Feather, No Ink*, and thus think their money well-spent; but the book is not much use from an academic point of view. No information is given about the authors or their works, and no attempt is made to explain why these items rather than others were included. Cuts in original texts are not indicated. The acknowledgments may be enough to avoid violation of copyright law, but they are in many cases inconveniently brief for scouting up the original sources.

There is, however, much work to be done in Riel studies by literary critics. One worthwhile endeavour would be the analysis of Riel's own poetry. His *Poésies de jeunesse* was published in 1977, and now his entire poetic *oeuvre* is available in *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits complets de Louis Riel*; but only a few critical essays have appeared.⁴ Riel was by no stretch of the imagination a great or important poet, but some of his works show technical mastery of verse forms as well as flashes of poetic inspiration. He deserves a minor place in the history of Canadian letters. Those who specialize in such matters should set about selecting some of his better pieces for inclusion in anthologies. English translations would also be a welcome contribution.

Another task needing attention is the study of the image of Riel and the Métis in Canadian fiction, poetry, and drama. Although Canadian critics have produced a few papers on this subject,⁵ the best work thus far is by the German scholar Wolfgang Klooss in his *Habilitationschrift* (the second dissertation demanded of career academics by the German university system).⁶ Although regrettably inaccessible to most Canadian readers, this work is a major piece of historical and interpretive research. Following Riel's image from his day to ours, Klooss shows how perceptions of the Métis have followed broader social trends. The rise of Canadian literary nationalism in the 1950s, coupled with the break-up of European colonial empires, has led to a transformation of Riel's

image. From backward barbarian, obstacle to the advance of British civilization, he has become a heroic revolutionary and liberator of oppressed peoples. To quote bpNichol again:

its always these damn
white boys writing my story
these
same stupid fuckers that put me
down try to make a myth out of
me they sit at counters scrib-
bling their plays on napkins
their poems on their sleeves &
never see me ⁷

Klooss has marked out the path for scholars of Canadian literature to follow if they want to put Riel in a context that can be shared by historians and social scientists.

Turning to political history, the interpretation of the North-West Rebellion developed by G.F.G. Stanley dominated the literature for generations. In brief, Stanley saw the Rebellion as the tragic result of governmental indifference to the problems of the Métis in the North-West.⁸ Preoccupied with other matters and unsympathetic in any case to the Métis, Sir John A. Macdonald allowed their grievances to fester for years without resolving them. Stanley did not view the Métis' resort to arms as legally justifiable, but he did present it as an understandable uprising of men who saw no other way to achieve justice. The attentive reader will see behind Stanley's analysis the oratory of Edward Blake, leader of the Liberal opposition in 1885.

As many reviewers have pointed out, my own book, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered*, marked something of a return to the views of the Conservative government of 1885.⁹ The book argued that the Métis grievances over land claims were at least partly of their own making, and that in any case the government was well on the way toward resolving them when the Rebellion broke out. In this view, Riel misled the Métis and provoked the Rebellion for other reasons, including a millenarian religious vision, a grandiose political theory of aboriginal rights, and

a desire to enrich himself, which had little to do with the specific grievances of the Métis of Batoche.

Neither Stanley nor I exhaust the question, however. There is yet another tradition, expressed by Métis writers or those closely associated with Métis organizations, which sees the Rebellion as deliberately perpetrated by official manipulation. The germ of this conspiracy theory was already in A.-H. de Trémaudan, *Histoire de la nation métisse dans l'ouest Canadien*. Howard Adams took up the idea in *Prison of Grass*, stressing the critical role of Charles Nolin as *agent provocateur*.¹⁰ Don McLean's *1885: Metis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy?* belongs to the same genre but puts the accent on Lawrence Clarke, Chief Factor of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Carlton and Prince Albert, as *agent provocateur*. McLean made the same argument in an article in 1983,¹¹ and now he has blown it up to book-length proportions; the added length, however, does not make it any more convincing.

In simplest terms, McLean's thesis is that Clarke wanted a Métis rising in order to bring money into the country. Clarke, who was thought to be a friend and advocate of the Métis, encouraged them to bring in Louis Riel to lead their movement. When he went to Ottawa in the winter of 1885 to present their grievances, he and Macdonald secretly agreed to goad the Métis into taking up arms. Clarke then alarmed the Métis with a report that 500 police were coming, and he brought about the actual fighting by convincing Superintendent Crozier to confront them at Duck Lake.

The proof of this improbable story consists of shreds of evidence, much of it anecdotal, torn out of context and pieced together. Contrary evidence is simply ignored. Tellingly, McLean does not even cite the contemporary literature on Riel, Dumont, and the Rebellion.

One example will have to illustrate the weakness of McLean's evidence. Clarke's trip to Ottawa in early 1885 is crucial to the argument because that is

when Clarke and Macdonald are supposed to have agreed on the plot. McLean himself writes concerning that trip:

Existing records do not indicate who [*sic*] Clarke met in Ottawa. It *could have been* Sir John A. Macdonald, himself, or one or more of his cabinet ministers. It does *seem likely*, however, that as an official emissary from the North West Territories, Clarke *would have met* with high-ranking government officials during his stay in Ottawa. . . . Clarke *may or may not have informed* Dewdney about the plans to start a rebellion. There is no record showing what exchange of information occurred between Clarke and Dewdney at this meeting. (pp. 98-99, my italics)

Although McLean's book provides useful information about Lawrence Clarke, a figure about whom little has been written, the overall interpretation is untenable. Its chief value is to illustrate the pitfalls of trying to infer motive from event. Although history is to a large degree the record of the unintended consequences of human action, such a view is unsatisfactory to those who would like to think that mankind can bring history under conscious control. McLean thus joins the company of demonologists of the right and of the left who persist in interpreting events in intentional terms. Although the ideas and motivation are different, the logical processes resemble those of Jim Keegstra and Ernst Zundel, who attempt to prove the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy to enslave the world. It is indicative that McLean did not bother to compile an index, and that the publisher forgot to print a table of contents. In short, this book is a political tract and has nothing to do with scholarship.

Although the theory of deliberate government provocation is highly implausible, it deserves a better exposition

than it has yet received from Trémaudan, Adams, or McLean. The historian D. N. Sprague, who has done pioneering work on the land rights of the Métis in Manitoba,¹² is now preparing a full-length study of Macdonald's policy towards the Métis. Avoiding unprovable or tautological assertions about intentional causation, he promises to show how Macdonald managed to dispossess the Métis of their lands in Manitoba and hoped to repeat the same manoeuvre in Saskatchewan. If he did not directly cause the Rebellion of 1885, he made it inevitable and welcomed it when it happened. The appearance of Sprague's work will mean that readers will have access to three differing and highly documented views of the Rebellion, from which they can make an informed choice. No matter whose interpretation ultimately carries the day, even publication of error can serve the cause of truth.

Leaving McLean's farrago, it is a pleasure to turn to a valuable work of scholarship: Walter Hildebrandt's *The Battle of Batoche: British Small Warfare and the Entrenched Métis*. Hildebrandt's work is another example of what can be achieved by historical researchers working for Parks Canada who write extremely detailed studies related to specific historic sites.¹³

The military history of the Rebellion is not so controversial as its political history. Hildebrandt does not present an alternative view of the battle of Batoche but rather the most complete and accurate account ever written. The maps are particularly illuminating. This book is the first to give one the feeling of truly understanding the fighting from start to finish. Given its narrow subject, it is certainly better than other military histories of the Rebellion.¹⁴

Like all writers on the battle, Hildebrandt makes extensive use of the government's military documents and of many soldiers' memoirs, but he is much better than previous researchers in using Métis material. The main source of Métis accounts of the battle is the two notebooks of testimony collected by Mgr.

Cloutier, who conducted an inquiry on the spot in 1886 at the request of Archbishop Taché. Perhaps because they are difficult to read, the notebooks have usually been overlooked by previous researchers, except for Gilles Martel.¹⁵ Hildebrandt should be congratulated for using them so effectively.

Some of Hildebrandt's conclusions are worth mentioning. He shows that the Métis' tactic of entrenching themselves in rifle pits was widely practised in the warfare of the late nineteenth century. The introduction of repeating rifles gave an advantage to entrenched defenders against massed infantry charges. He also gives an objective appraisal of the strategy and tactics of General Middleton, showing that, for the most part, Middleton did the right thing under the circumstances. His lack of tact towards his inexperienced Canadian officers and men led to much subsequent criticism in Canada, which persists in the literature to this day. Middleton's campaign, however, was viewed as a model in the authoritative book by Sir Charles Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (1896). Middleton's job was counterinsurgency, and he got it done fast and effectively. The image of "Colonel Blimp" that still clings to him is undeserved on military grounds, whatever may be its suitability to his personality.

Anyone who has browsed through a Coles bookstore knows that military history is by far the most popular form of history among the reading public. This eternal popularity helps to explain James Lorimer's decision to reprint an abridged version of Charles A. Boulton's *Reminiscences of the North-West Rebellion*, first published in 1886. Boulton participated in both Riel uprisings. He was imprisoned and at one point sentenced to death in 1869-70, and in 1885 he raised a troop of scouts among his Manitoba neighbours to fight alongside Middleton. Like all such retrospective accounts, his memoirs must be used with care, but they are definitely an important primary source for the history

of the period.

Lorimer has done a creditable job of making the text accessible to the modern reader. It is printed in attractive type with the catchy title *I Fought Riel: A Military Memoir*. The editor, Heather Robertson, has provided a brief but informative introduction and has abridged the original by omitting some sections which are not directly part of the story of the two uprisings. There is, however, no academic significance to the publication. The book has always been available in libraries and has been used by all writers on Riel. This edition is convenient to own, but Heather Robertson's abridgements mean that the historian will still need to consult the original from time to time. Her introduction is useful to the general reader but not a contribution to scholarship: neither has she provided an index or annotations that might benefit the researcher.

The North-West Rebellion was not exclusively a Métis event; it also included several Indian risings loosely connected with each other as well as with the Métis insurrection. That Riel did not succeed in organizing these uprisings into one powerful movement sealed his fate, and makes Rebellion history intersect importantly with Indian history.

Big Bear: The End of Freedom, by Hugh A. Dempsey, is a major contribution to the field. It is far and away the most thorough study of Big Bear ever written. Its strength is its combination of written sources — manuscripts, especially Indian Affairs Records; newspaper accounts, including several previously unknown ones; memoirs of white and halfbreed observers; and published government documents — with Indian oral traditions collected by the author as well as by Cree writers like Joe Dion and Edward Ahenakew. This imaginative use of a wide variety of sources produces a far more detailed account of Big Bear's life than we have ever had before.

The story is a tragedy in the dramatic sense. Through his courage and political astuteness, Big Bear became the leading chief of the Plains Cree. He tried

to use his influence to hold out against the process of treaty-making so as to obtain better terms from the white negotiators. His only weapon was delay, first in adhering to Treaty No. 6, then in selecting a reserve after he finally took treaty in 1882. But he overplayed the weak hand that fate had dealt him. In the end, he alienated not only the government but also his own followers. Government officials saw him as a troublemaker and a beggar, and the members of his band tired of living on thin and uncertain rations while they waited for a reserve.

By the time Big Bear's people finally settled at Frog Lake, the old man was chief in name only. His sons and sons-in-law, themselves eager for leadership, had either moved away or were openly ignoring him. The slaughter at Frog Lake and the subsequent rising happened against the advice of Big Bear, who did his utmost to protect the white captives. His conviction for treason-felony and his imprisonment in Stony Mountain were probably an injustice, but Dempsey does not belabour the point. Sadder than any miscarriage of justice were the harmful effects of Big Bear's failed leadership. By pushing too hard and discrediting himself, he created a political vacuum in which reckless younger men like Imasees and Wandering Spirit could gain a following. Also, his long years of stubborn resistance against the government must have heightened his people's hostility and sense of grievance. In that respect, he may have helped set the stage for violence, even though his own tactics had always been non-violent.

Big Bear is a worthy successor to *Crowfoot* and *Charcoal's World*, two of Dempsey's earlier biographies of Indians.¹⁶ Dempsey is perhaps Canada's best writer on Indian history because he treats his subjects with sympathy but without sentimentality. Indians emerge from his pages as genuine human beings, not cardboard cut-out victims of imperialism and racism. The tragedy of Big Bear's old age is as moving as a performance of *King Lear*. Big Bear's Cordelia

was his youngest daughter, Earth Woman, who nursed him to the end after his other children, even his last wife, had deserted him.

The one historical criticism I would make of Dempsey's book concerns his use of oral material. He does not always give enough guidance to the reader when he weaves traditional or legendary material into his account. For example, he reports that Big Bear, after the small-pox epidemic of 1833-38, had a vision in which he saw "the coming of the white man, his purchase of the land, the bounteous presents from the Great Mother," and as it was sarcastically described in later years, "the generosity of the new-coming race to his" (17). The spare endnote reference to the *Toronto Mail*, 25 July 1885, makes one suspect that this is a story told by Big Bear after surrendering on 4 July 1885. If so, it is a recollection by a sixty-year old man, given under strained circumstances, of what he purportedly experienced at age thirteen. The memory of the vision appears to have been considerably affected by subsequent events; it strains credibility to think that a Cree boy in 1838 could have foreseen the land-surrender treaties. Yet Dempsey several times refers to this vision as if it were an unquestionable event in Big Bear's life. Would it not be more sensible to point out the process of retrospective mythification at work in Big Bear's awareness of himself as a leader?

The problem is not really very great in this book. Sometimes the author explicitly discusses the difficulties of oral evidence, for example the American "promise" to give Big Bear a reservation in Montana (103); and even when he does not, the source notes are usually sufficient to alert the reader's skepticism. The issue merits discussion, however, because more and more oral material is being used in writing Indian history. This is a great benefit to a field in which many topics simply cannot be addressed on the basis of written evidence, but researchers must make an effort to extend into the oral domain the rules of evidence

developed to analyze the worth of written sources.

Research is often bunched and repetitive, so that one type of study may be a harbinger of others similar to it. Thus some fields are often intensively worked for long periods of time while others are ignored. By way of conclusion, let me mention two important areas of Riel studies which may be ignored because so little has yet been achieved in them.

Martel and I have developed an interpretation of Riel as a prophet and of the North-West Rebellion as a millenarian movement. Others are extending this line of analysis, and the general approach seems to have embedded itself in the literature.¹⁷ Yet almost nothing is known about the proximate literary sources of Riel's prophetism, apart from his reliance on the Bible. Riel's special devotion to the cult of Lourdes,¹⁸ plus everything we know about his intellectual formation, suggest he must have been familiar with popular French prophetic and devotional literature. Research in this area might do a great deal to illuminate his thinking. Riel also tried to write a systematic theologico-philosophical treatise using concepts like "monad" and "electricity." Moreover, he was fascinated with diet and unorthodox approaches to medicine, and he aspired to write on cosmological phenomena such as sunspots.¹⁹ Research into popular science and medicine in the Victorian age might give his seemingly disconnected writings a more intelligible context.

Another worthwhile project would be to seek out the American background of Métis land claims in Canada. Jacqueline Petersen has studied the Métis of the Great Lakes region and has shown some ties with the Métis of Red River.²⁰ The Red River settlement straddled the international boundary, and the two thousand or so Métis who lived in Pembina and St. Joseph of the Dakota Territory were bound to the "British" Métis by close ties of kinship and commerce. For fifty years before there was ever a land claims issue in Manitoba, the American

government had repeatedly bought out groups of Métis with land grants and scrip. Although almost nothing has been written about it, this American experience might have influenced Canadian practice through two channels: the transmission of expectations about scrip from the American Métis to their Canadian cousins, and the imitation of American precedents by Canadian officials.

Two suggestions for future work are enough. The best ideas are undoubtedly ones that are now germinating in the minds of graduate students and young scholars. When I began research on Louis Riel fifteen years ago, someone (not George Stanley) said to me, "Why do you want to do Riel? Stanley has done him already." But Riel was not then, nor ever will be "done." As a permanent feature of the Canadian mental landscape, he will be resurveyed in every generation. This attention could only please the man who, shortly after being sentenced to death, told a reporter from the *Montreal Star*:

Deeds are not accomplished in a few days, or in a few hours. A century is only a spoke in the wheel of everlasting time. By formulating I have brought about practical results. Much work is still undone.²¹

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NOTES

1. George F.G. Stanley *et al.*, eds., *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits complets de Louis Riel*, 5 Vols. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1985), vol. 3, p. 217. Hereafter *CW*.
2. *CW* 5, pp. 131-205.
3. Donald Swainson, "Rieliana and the Structure of Canadian History," *Journal of Popular Culture* 14 (1980), pp. 286-97; Douglas Owrain, "The Myth of Louis Riel," *Canadian Historical Review* 43 (1982), pp. 315-36; George F.G. Stanley, "The Historiography of 1885,"

in F.L. Barron and J.B. Waldram, eds., *1885 and After* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, forthcoming).

4. Gilles Martel, Glen Campbell, Thomas Flanagan, eds., *Louis Riel: Poésies de jeunesse* (Saint-Boniface: Les Editions du Blé, 1977); *CW* 3, ed. Glen Campbell. See: Glen Campbell, "The Political Poetry of Louis Riel: A Semiotic Study," *Canadian Poetry* 3 (1978), pp. 14-25; Campbell, "Dithyramb and Diatribe: The Polysemic Perception of the Métis in Louis Riel's Poetry," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 17 (1985), pp. 31-43; Thomas Flanagan, "Louis Riel and Métis Literature," *World Literature Written in English* 24 (1984), pp. 135-44; Thomas Flanagan and John Yardley, "Louis Riel as a Latin Poet," *Humanities Association Review* 26 (1975), pp. 33-45.
5. E.g. Margaret Gail Osachoff, "Riel on Stage," *Canadian Drama* 8 (1982), pp. 129-44; Rota Herzberg Lister, "A Distinctive Variant: 1885 in Canadian Drama," Western Canadian Studies Conference, Edmonton, November 1985.
6. Wolfgang Klooss, *Geschichte und Mythos in der Literatur Kanadas: Die englisch-sprachige Métis- und Riel-Rezeption* (Kiel: Habilitationsschrift der Philosophischen Fakultät, 1984). In English, see Klooss, "Louis Riel and the West: Literary Images of a Canadian Myth," *Zeitschrift der Gesellschaft für Kanada-Studien* 2 (1982), pp. 19-36; and "Canada's Forgotten People: The Métis in Nineteenth-Century Fiction and Drama," *World Literature Written in English* 24 (1984), pp. 144-57.
7. *No Feather, No Ink*, p. 118.
8. George F.G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada* (1936; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963); Stanley, *Louis Riel* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1963).
9. Thomas Flanagan, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983).
10. A.-H. de Trémaudan, *Histoire de la nation métisse dans l'ouest canadien* (Montréal: Editions Albert Lèvesque, 1936); Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass* (Toronto: New Press, 1975), ch. 9.
11. Martin Shulman and Don McLean, "Lawrence Clarke: Architect of Revolt," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3 (1983), pp. 57-68.
12. P.R. Mailhot and D.N. Sprague, "Persistent Settlers: The Dispersal and Resettlement of the Red River Métis, 1870-85," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 17

- (1985), pp. 1-30; D.N. Sprague, "The Manitoba Land Question, 1878-1882," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (Fall 1980), pp. 74-84; Sprague, "Government Lawlessness in the Administration of Manitoba Land Claims, 1876-1887," *Manitoba Law Journal* 10 (1980), pp. 415-41; D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Métis Nation* (Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications, 1983).
13. Cf. Diane Payment, *Batoche (1870-1910)* (Saint-Boniface: Les Editions du Blé, 1983).
 14. Desmond Morton, *The Last War Drum: The North West Campaign of 1885* (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1972); Bob Beal and Rod MacLeod, *Prairie Fire: The 1885 North-West Rebellion* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1984).
 15. Gilles Martel, "Saskatchewan 1884-85: L'enquête de l'abbé Gabriel Cloutier en 1886," *Riel Project Bulletin du Projet Riel* 3 (1980), pp. 4-5.
 16. Hugh A. Dempsey, *Crowfoot: Chief of the Blackfeet* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972); Dempsey, *Charcoal's World* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978).
 17. Gilles Martel, *Le Messianisme de Louis Riel* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1984); Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979); Peter Beyer, "The Religious Beliefs of Louis Riel." Ph.D. Diss., University of Toronto, 1981; Manfred Mossmann, "The Charismatic Pattern: Canada's Riel Rebellion of 1885 as a Millenarian Protest Movement," *Prairie Forum* 10 (1985), pp. 307-25.
 18. *CW* 4, pp. 396-98.
 19. *CW* 2, pp. 387-99, 235-39; *CW* 3, pp. 338-39, 361, 371-73.
 20. Jacqueline Petersen, "Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Métis." *Ethnohistory* 25 (1978), pp. 41-67. See also her essay in Jacqueline Petersen and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).
 21. *CW* 3, p. 566.

The Quiet Revolution in Quebec's Welfare State

SERVICES AND CIRCUSES: COMMUNITY AND THE WELFARE STATE.
Frédéric Lesemann. Translated by Lorne Huston and Margaret Heap. Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1984.

This is a disturbing book in several ways. First, it will disturb the technocratic planners it so deftly skewers. That we can applaud. Second, it clearly will create unease among those who feel themselves to be well-intentioned and progressively-minded but who do not accept the book's theoretical perspective because it presents and richly documents an analytic approach that is not widely understood or applied in North American social welfare circles. It is a Marxist analytic approach and its intellectual and political antecedents — if not its immediate application — are considered by many to be ideologically unacceptable. This we have to contend with. And finally, for those like me who agree with the analytic approach it can leave a sense of dismay or resignation because the analysis and documentation are so compellingly pessimistic. This we must struggle against.

The real question the book should and clearly intends to raise, of course, is none of the above; rather it is, given the analysis, what must be done? And herein lies the major disappointment, for Lesemann concludes only with a modest refusal to draw conclusions, which he offers as "the best way to keep the terms of analysis open." He does "underline the importance of concrete applications and struggles," but the reader is left yearning for some discussion of what those concrete applications might be and where we go from here.

Briefly, the study argues that the transformations which have occurred in the fields of health and welfare in Quebec since 1960 "can be understood only in the context of a progressive penetration of new state functions into health and