

MANITOBA.



ON September 4, 1812, Captain Miles Macdonell, in the name of Lord Selkirk, took formal possession of the District of Assiniboia at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. This was the first act of government in what is now Western Canada.

The deed of the District of Assiniboia to Selkirk reserved to the Company "all rights of jurisdiction." For this reason the Company's commission was given to the governor appointed by Selkirk. The governor could act as judge. But to do this correctly, he must act with his Council. A Council of Assiniboia was appointed to safeguard the judicial functions of the governor. It was not so much a Council of Assiniboia as the Council of the Governor in Assiniboia, not so much a legislative or administrative body as a judicial tribunal. From the time of Governors Bulger and Pelly the Council began to assume administrative and legislative functions. It began also to divest itself of judicial functions. In the former it was entirely successful; in the latter, only partly so. The minutes of the Council of May 4, 1832, show the Council launched upon its career of legislative activity. It adopts regulations concerning pigs and stallions allowed to range at large, fires, statute labour for the improvement of roads and bridges, public fairs and the taking of horses from their grazing grounds.

The Council never was in any degree responsible to those whose interest it was expected to regard and foster. But its membership was largely representative of the leaders in the community. It enacted a great variety of measures that sought to promote the public welfare in relation to fires, animals, horse taking, hay, roads, intoxicating of Indians, liquor laws, customs duties, police, debtors, intestate estates, marriage licenses, contracts for service, surveyors, postal facilities, premium on wolves, administration of justice and other matters of general concern. On June 25, 1841, was formed the Municipal District of Assiniboia which extended in all directions fifty miles from the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. To carry out its resolutions the Council of Assiniboia organized a board of works, a committee of economy, a volunteer corps, legal and judicial machinery, a tariff system and postal facilities. It appointed public officials and erected the necessary buildings. It supervised the whole social life of the settlement, imposing duties and restrictions on the sale and importation of liquors, superintending the building of roads, the issue of marriage licenses and the encouragement of native industries.

The little community at the forks of the Red River knew nothing of self-government. The suffrage was unknown though every proprietor of land was held qualified and liable to act as juror. But the desire for self-rule at last found expression and not in the District of Assiniboia alone. In the settlement of Portage la Prairie the inhabitants actually established a provisional republic. Though the Council of Assiniboia governed, it gave no security. The presence of the Sioux revealed the