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| LM 5.8 |  | Analysis: Louis Riel’s Summation to the Jury  (page 1 of 2) |

This activity is designed to help you with the activities on page 189, and give you the opportunity to be the judge and jury at Louis Riel’s trial. Part of Riel’s summation is on page 187. Here is the complete text of that summation given on July 30, 1885. It is important to note that Riel was not allowed to give his statement until *after* the verdict was announced.

*When I came to the North West in July, 1884, I found the Indians suffering. I found the half-breeds eating the rotten pork of the Hudson Bay Company and getting sick and weak every day. Although a half-breed, and having no pretensions to help the Whites, I also paid attention to them. I saw they were deprived of responsible government. I saw they were deprived of their public liberties. I have directed my attention to help the Indians, to help the half-breeds and to help the Whites to the best of my ability. We have made petitions, I have made petitions with others to the Canadian government asking to relieve the condition of this country. We have taken time; we have tried to unite all classes, even if I may speak, all parties. The only things I would like to call your attention to before you retire are:*

*1st That the House of Commons, Senate and Ministers of the Dominion, who make laws for this land and govern it, are no representation whatever of the people of the North West. 2nd That the North West Council generated by the Federal Government has the great defect of its parent. 3rd The number of members elected for the Council by the people make it only a sham representative Legislature and no representative government at all.*

*British civilization which rules today the world, and the British constitution, have defined such government as this is which rules the North-West Territories as irresponsible government, which plainly means that there is no responsibility, and by all the science which has been shown here yesterday you are compelled to admit that if there is no responsibility, it is insane. [Riel is referring to Crown witnesses who testified that he was insane.]*

*Good sense combined with scientific theories lead to the same conclusion. By the testimony laid before you during my trial witnesses on both sides made it certain that petition after petition had been sent to the federal government, and so irresponsible is that government to the North West that in the course of several years besides doing nothing to satisfy the people of this great land, it has even hardly been able to answer once or give a single response. That fact would indicate an absolute lack of responsibility, and therefore insanity complicated with paralysis.*

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*If you take the plea of the defence that I am not responsible for my acts, acquit me completely since I have been quarreling with an insane and irresponsible Government. If you pronounce in favour of the Crown, which contends that I am responsible, acquit me all the same. You are perfectly justified in declaring that having my reason and sound mind, I have acted reasonably and in self-defence, while the Government, my accuser, being irresponsible, consequently cannot have but acted wrong, and if high treason there is, it must be on its side and not on my part. The agitation of the North-West territories would have been constitutional, and would certainly be constitutional today, if, in my opinion, we had not been attacked. Perhaps the Crown has not been able to find out the particulars, that we were attacked, but as we were on the scene, it was easy to understand. When we sent petitions to the Government, they used to answer us by sending police.*

**1.** Analyze this primary source document:

a) What are Riel’s purposes in making this speech?

b) What is Riel’s tone?

e) What other sources of information could you use for comparison?

f) What opinions is Riel expressing?

g) What conclusions can you make based on Riel’s speech?