

# MAKING MANITOBA

The Role of the Métis in the Red River Resistance and the Formation of the Provisional Government 1869-70

## LA CRÉATION DU MANITOBA

Le rôle des Métis dans la résistance de la rivière Rouge de 1869-1870 et la formation du gouvernement provisoire



The fur-trade significantly fueled the social, economic, and political landscapes of Indigenous nations on the plains. Along with other nations, the Métis Nation became heavily involved in trade with three fur trade companies: the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the North West Company (NWC), and the American Fur Company (AFC). From 1820-1869 the Council of Assiniboia formally extended the law of England in accordance to the Royal Charter over the District of Assiniboia through the HBC.

La traite des fourrures a considérablement alimenté le paysage social, économique et politique des nations autochtones des Plaines. La Nation métisse, ainsi que plusieurs autres nations, s'est fortement impliquée dans la traite des fourrures et faisait affaire avec trois compagnies, soit la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson (Hbc), la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest et l'American Fur Company. Entre 1820 et 1869, le Conseil d'Assiniboia de la Hbc assure l'application de la common law d'Angleterre conformément à la charte royale sur le district d'Assiniboia.



Source: Library and Archives Canada (Item ID Number: 3392788)



Source: Library and Archives Canada (Item ID Number: 3248548)



Source: Library and Archives Canada (Item ID Number: 2975023)

In 1821, the NWC and the HBC merged, and the HBC retained its name. Following the merger, many of the HBC and NWC trade workers became free agents. Concurrently, the economy was beginning to shift because of a diminishing demand for furs from Europe. In kinship with other Indigenous nations, the Métis Nation continued to work hard to earn a livelihood, raise their families, and support the economy in the North-West, despite the shifting economy on the plains.

In 1868, the British government and the HBC reached an agreement that allowed for the transfer of the territory to the newly confederated Dominion of Canada. The people of the North-West, including the people living in Red River, were not informed, or consulted regarding this transfer of land and the establishment of a new government.

En 1821, la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest et la Hbc fusionnent et la Hbc conserve son nom. Après la fusion, de nombreux ouvriers de ces deux compagnies deviennent des agents libres. Parallèlement, l'économie commence à ralentir en raison d'une diminution de la demande de fourrures de la part des Européens. Malgré la transformation de l'économie dans les Plaines, la Nation métisse et d'autres nations autochtones continuent à travailler fort pour gagner leur vie, élever leur famille et soutenir l'économie dans le Nord-Ouest.

En 1868, le gouvernement britannique et la Hbc concluent un accord permettant le transfert du territoire à un Dominion du Canada nouvellement confédéré. La population du Nord-Ouest, y compris les habitants de la colonie de la Rivière-rouge, n'a été informée ni consultée au sujet de ce transfert ou de la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement.

Over the summer, fears grew within the settlement that the foreign government might not respect the people of the North-West as valued citizens, who were worthy and willing to participate in their own governing affairs. Furthermore, newly arrived ‘loyalists’ from Ontario reinforced such ideas due to the growing hostility geared toward French-speaking Catholics among the local population.

On June 22, 1869, the *Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory when united with Canada*, was passed by Parliament in Ottawa. The passing of this Act gave Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald the power to appoint and task a Lieutenant Governor to enter the North-West and establish a new system of government in Red River. This would officially replace the previous order of government—the HBC’s Council of Assiniboia—and its former Governor, William McTavish. On September 28th, 1869, William McDougall was appointed as Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories.

Early in October of 1869, eager Canadian surveyors began marking off lands. On October 11, a group of Métis confronted the surveyors and rejected the activity by standing on the survey chain near St. Vital —marking the first sign of the resistance that would follow.

Shortly thereafter, a National Committee of Métis was formed, among the nominally French-speaking parishes of the Red River settlement. This committee of 12 was known as “le Comité National des Métis” and had elected John Bruce as President and Louis Riel as Secretary. The committee’s goal was not to speak for all residents, but rather to begin the process of finding a solution regarding the future of the Red River Settlement and its residents before Canada took over the territory.

Au cours de l’été, la crainte grandit au sein de la colonie que le gouvernement étranger ne respecte pas les habitants du Nord-Ouest en tant que citoyens valorisés, dignes et désireux de participer à leurs propres affaires gouvernementales. De plus, les loyalistes nouvellement arrivés de l’Ontario ont renforcé cette idée en raison de l’hostilité croissante envers les catholiques francophones, au sein de la population locale.

Le 22 juin 1869, le Parlement à Ottawa adopte la *Loi concernant le gouvernement provisoire de la terre de Rupert et du Territoire du Nord-Ouest après leur adhésion à l'Union*. Cette loi donne au premier ministre sir John A. MacDonald le pouvoir de nommer un lieutenant-gouverneur et de le charger d’entrer dans le Nord-Ouest en vue d’établir un nouveau système de gouvernement au sein de la colonie de la Rivière-rouge. Ce système permet le remplacement officiel du gouvernement précédent, soit le Conseil d’Assiniboia de la Hbc, et de son gouverneur, William McTavish. Le 28 septembre 1869, William McDougall est nommé lieutenant-gouverneur des Territoires du Nord-Ouest.

Au début du mois d’octobre 1869, des arpenteurs canadiens enthousiastes commencent à délimiter les terres. Le 11 octobre, un groupe de Métis les confronte et les empêche de poursuivre leurs travaux. Le geste de marcher sur la chaîne d’arpentage près de Saint-Vital fut le premier signal manifeste de la résistance qui s’en suivit.

Peu de temps après, les paroisses nominalement francophones de la colonie de la Rivière-rouge forment le Comité national des Métis. Ce comité de 12 personnes élit John Bruce comme président et Louis Riel comme secrétaire. Son objectif n’est pas de parler au nom de tous les habitants, mais plutôt d’entamer le processus de recherche d’une solution concernant l’avenir de la colonie de la Rivière-rouge et de ses habitants avant que le Canada ne s’empare du territoire.

On October 21, 1869, the Comité National des Métis issued a letter to Governor William McDougall ordering him not to enter the North-West without permission from the Comité. This decision was made in an aim to prevent McDougall from taking his place in Red River and formalizing the new government before the Comité National des Métis could find a solution to represent the residents of the territory. The Comité National des Métis also erected a barricade across the Pembina trail in St. Norbert at the end of October and turned away McDougall's party on November 1, 1869, who had no choice but to turn back to the nearest town in the U.S.

On November 2, 1869, the Métis seized Upper Fort Garry, where the Council of Assiniboia met and where the HBC had its main administrative offices. The Comité National des Métis issued a public notice on November 6, 1869, requesting twelve representatives from the nominally English-speaking parishes to meet on November 16 at the Court House in Fort Garry with the aim of finding common ground with the English-speaking Métis.

On November 16, 1869, the Convention of 24 was formed with 12 English and 12 French-speaking representatives gathering over the period of 6 days. On November 24, 1869, Louis Riel proposed the formation of a Provisional Government, equally representative of English and French speaking parishes. It was identified that the goal of the Provisional Government would be to protect the North-West and its citizens and to negotiate with the Government of Canada the conditions of entry into confederation.



Source: Library and Archives Canada (Item ID Number: 2837187)

Le 21 octobre 1869, le comité remet une lettre au gouverneur William McDougall lui ordonnant de ne pas entrer dans le Nord-Ouest sans sa permission. Cette décision est prise dans le but d'empêcher William McDougall de prendre sa place au sein de la colonie de la Rivière-rouge pour établir un nouveau gouvernement avant que le comité ne puisse trouver une solution pour représenter les habitants du territoire. Ce dernier érige également une barricade sur le sentier Pembina à Saint-Norbert à la fin du mois d'octobre et, le 1<sup>er</sup> novembre 1869, refoule William McDougall et son parti, lesquels n'ont pas d'autre choix que de retourner dans la ville américaine la plus proche.

Le 2 novembre 1869, les Métis s'emparent de Upper Fort Garry, où le Conseil d'Assiniboia se réunit et où la Hbc a ses principaux bureaux administratifs. Le 6 novembre 1869, le comité publie un avis demandant à 12 représentants des paroisses nominalement anglophones de se réunir 10 jours plus tard au palais de justice de Fort Garry afin de trouver un terrain d'entente avec les Métis anglophones.

Le 16 novembre 1869, la Convention des 24, composée de 12 représentants anglophones et de 12 représentants francophones, se réunit pour siéger sur une période de 6 jours. Le 24 novembre 1869, Louis Riel propose la formation d'un gouvernement provisoire, également représentatif des paroisses anglophones et francophones. Ce gouvernement se fixe l'objectif de protéger le Nord-Ouest et ses citoyens et de négocier les conditions d'entrée dans la Confédération avec le gouvernement du Canada.



Source: Library and Archives Canada (Item ID Number: 3194516)

On December 8, 1869, a *Declaration of the People of Rupert's Land and the North West from Upper Fort Garry* was issued from President John Bruce and Secretary Louis Riel. The Declaration proclaimed that a Provisional Government was established on November 24, 1869 and that it would be the only lawful authority in Rupert's Land and the North-West. Furthermore, the Declaration identified that the Provisional Government would ready itself to enter into negotiations with the Canadian Government.

Le 8 décembre 1869, le président John Bruce et le secrétaire Louis Riel publient la *Déclaration des habitants de la terre de Rupert et du Nord-Ouest*, laquelle proclame l'établissement du gouvernement provisoire le 24 novembre 1869. Ce gouvernement serait la seule autorité légale sur la terre de Rupert et dans le Nord-Ouest. En outre, la déclaration indique que le gouvernement provisoire serait prêt à entamer des négociations avec le gouvernement canadien.

DECLARATION  
Of the People of Rupert's Land and the North  
West.

It is demanded by all men, as a fundamental principle that the public authority commands the obedience and respect of its subjects. It is so admitted that a people whom it governs, or over whom it has jurisdiction, has a right to form a government in preference to another or others, according to their own purposes. In this instance will be the true principle of government known as also Hume's Rule.

A company of merchants known as the Hudson's Bay Company, established itself in New France, and is the North-West Territories for trading purposes. The Company, consisting of many persons, engaged in a general commerce, but at their own pleasure, of extracting the government out of the interests of people already existing in the country, it has been necessary for government to take measures to be efficient. The Hudson's Bay Company, in consequence, collect the country up to certain rules.

The foregoing general principles, it will be generally supposed, the Government of the United States, in its relations with the Indian tribes, has observed, and will continue to observe.

The named by him above mentioned principles this people concretely upholds. The present government given to it a different direction. And, contrary to the law of God, which had of course been in all ages and unfeignedly manifested to man, it has now, in all respects, renounced every thing in accordance with which the

This also generally resulted that a people that became too numerous would be compelled to migrate to a foreign power; and that in that case their culture would be transferred to the new country.

It is, that is, *old* and *transient*.  
1st. We find the associations of the people in Germany to be  
after having a rest, at the end of a week, resting on those old and transient  
things existing in the mind of man, and remaining there on our own terms, before God and man,  
but from the day on which the German nation had always expected, anticipated, and  
translating by a strange power, the world and every country, in the right of his  
Emperor. In Berlin, he became free and seen, a brandish allusion to the old German  
spirit.

9. That we refuse to recognise the authority of Canadian vice-roys to govern and to accept in a legal form of government still more centralised and oligarchic than British empire when such goes counter to what we hold dear.

Red. That is second or new, isn't it on the 1st of November's change to introduce Mr. William McLaughlin, our last organization, resulting in the name of the City Council, as I recall it, in his second right, which commands every citizen to offer emergency applications.

Be it known, therefore, to the Canadian Government, that we have placed at your disposal, and that it is not to our pecuniary which we have to contribute to the cost of our building, whatever funds or buildings we have now or hereafter may be held surplus to military purposes.

Each meanwhile we hold ourselves in readiness to enter upon a negotiation with the Cuban Government, which may be opened in its appropriate and most propitious season.

To support of this declaration, we have, we generally publish, in our paper, the names of our friends.

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Preliminary draft

On account of ill health, John Bruce resigned from his position as President on December 27, 1869, and Louis Riel was chosen to replace him. On the 19 and 20 of January 1870, a public meeting was held outdoors at Upper Fort Garry where Donald A. Smith, a commissioner from Canada, was sent to communicate Canada's intentions as it pertained to their existing rights. Following the meeting, Riel proposed a motion to bring 40 representatives equally from French and English-speaking parishes together to decide how to proceed in light of Smith's assurances and Canada's promises.

On January 25, the elected representatives, known as the Convention of Forty, convened at Upper Fort Gary until February 10. It is during these sessions that the representatives collaboratively drafted a revised List of Rights, which set out the terms by which the Provisional Government would agree to join into Confederation with Canada.

Pour des raisons de santé, John Bruce démissionne de son poste de président le 27 décembre 1869 et Louis Riel est choisi pour le remplacer. Les 19 et 20 janvier 1870, une assemblée publique est tenue sur les terrains de Upper Fort Garry où Donald A. Smith, un commissaire du Canada, est envoyé pour communiquer aux habitants l'intention du Canada à l'égard de l'application de leurs droits existants. À la fin de l'assemblée, Louis Riel présente une motion visant à réunir 40 représentants à parts égales de paroisses francophones et anglophones pour décider de la façon de procéder compte tenu des assurances de Donald A. Smith et des promesses du Canada.

Le 25 janvier, les représentants élus, connus sous le nom de la Grande Convention, se réunissent à Upper Fort Garry jusqu'au 10 février. Lors de ces séances, les représentants rédigent, de façon collaborative, une liste révisée de droits qui énonce les conditions requises pour l'adhésion du gouvernement provisoire à la Confédération.

LIST OF RIGHTS.

4. That the people have the right to elect their own Legislature.
  5. That the Legislature have the power to pass all laws necessary to the carrying over the work of the Executive by a two-thirds vote.
  6. That no act of the Dominion Parliament passed in the Territory be binding on the people until sanctioned by the Legislature of the Territory.
  7. That all Bills, Magazines and Circulars, School Commissioners etc., be elected by the people.
  8. A free University and one million £ per year.
  9. That a portion of the public lands be appropriated to the benefit of Schools, the building of Bridges Roads and Public Buildings.
  10. That it be guaranteed to connect Winnipeg by Rail with the main line of Rail road, within a term of ten years; to be granted to the Local Legislature.
  11. That for the term of four years all Military, Civil, and Municipal expenses be paid out of the Dominion funds.
  12. That the Military be composed of the inhabitants now existing in the Territories.
  13. That the Right and Faculty to pass, be communed in the English language and that all Public Decrees and Acts of the Legislature be published in both languages.
  14. That the Judge of the Superior Court speak the English and French languages.
  15. That Treaty be concluded and ratified between the Dominion Government and the several tribes of Indians in the Territories to secure justice on the frontier.
  16. That we have a full and full representation in the Canadian Parliament.
  17. That all privileges, charters and leases existing at the time of the incorporation be preserved.

The meeting which the author remembers most vividly was held at Mrs. Harry M. Westcott's home, Winona, Minnesota, in 1906.

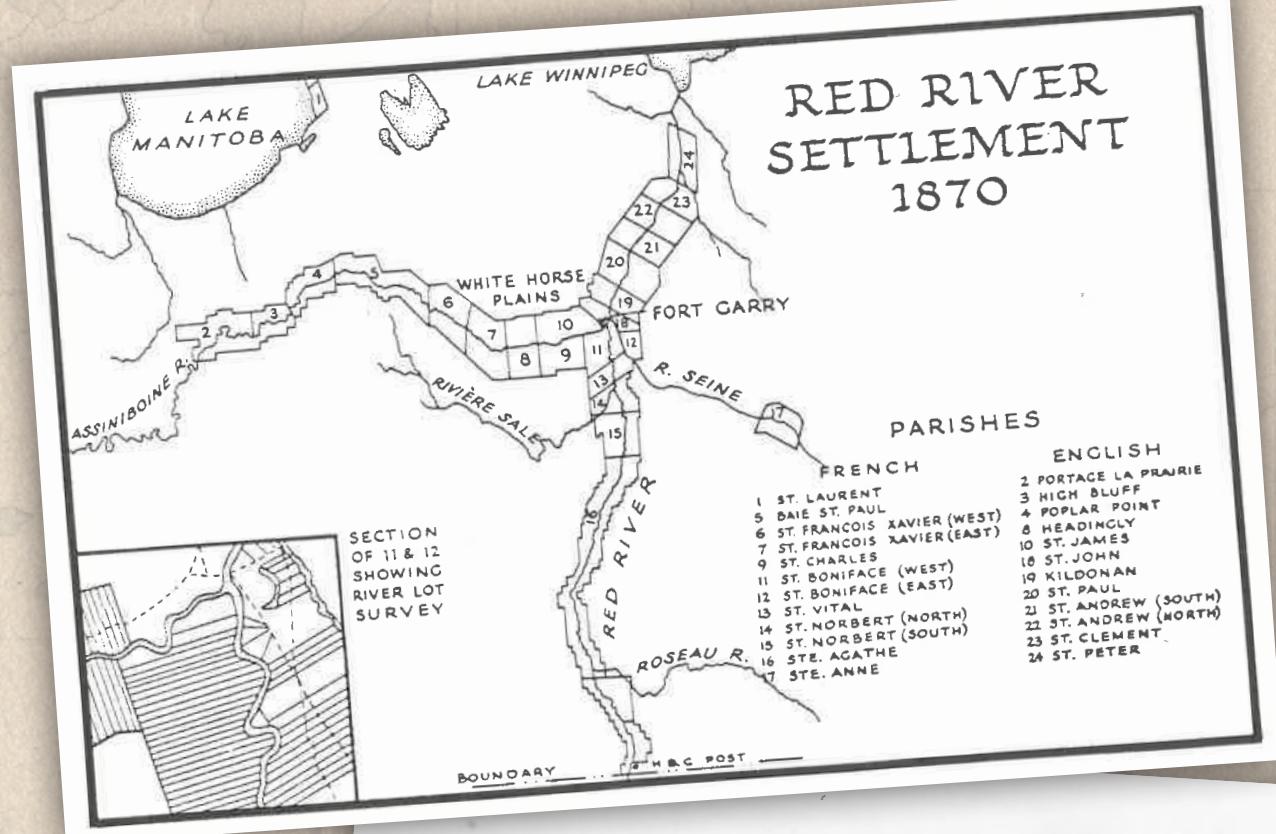
Lemma 2.1

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Source: "Early Printing in the Red River Settlement," 1851.

February 10, 1870, the Convention of Forty selected three delegates to represent the Assembly and negotiate with Canada in Ottawa. The three delegates were: Alfred H. Scott, Judge John Black, and Rev. Noël Ritchot. During the Convention of Forty, Riel put forward a proposal to re-organize the Provisional Government to include elected representatives from all parishes of the Red River Settlement. The members of the Convention of Forty voted in favor of his proposition, thus marking the beginning of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia.

Le 10 février 1870, la Convention choisit trois délégués pour représenter l'Assemblée législative d'Assiniboia lors des négociations à Ottawa, soit Alfred H. Scott, le juge John Black et le révérend Noël Ritchot. Au cours des délibérations de la Grande Convention, Louis Riel dépose une proposition visant à réorganiser le gouvernement provisoire de façon à inclure des représentants élus de toutes les paroisses de la colonie de la Rivière-rouge. Les membres de la Convention votent en faveur de sa proposition, marquant ainsi le début de l'Assemblée législative d'Assiniboia.



The first elected legislature in the North-West—the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia—operated from March 9, 1870 to June 24, 1870. On June 24, 1870, the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia convened for a special session to hear the report of Rev. Ritchot, the first delegate to have returned from negotiations in Ottawa. Rev. Ritchot submitted the *Manitoba Act* for the Assembly's consideration. While not every right that the Convention of Forty had drafted in their List of Rights was contained in this Act, the Assembly was satisfied that the rights they valued the most had been recognized.

Hon. Louis Schmidt moved “that the Legislative Assembly of this country do now, in the name of the people, accept the *Manitoba Act*, and decide on entering the Dominion of Canada, on the terms proposed in the *Confederation Act*”. While the members of the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia cheered, Hon. Pierre Poitras seconded the motion and the session was adjourned.

La première assemblée législative élue dans le Nord-Ouest, soit l'Assemblée législative d'Assiniboia, siège du 9 mars au 24 juin 1870. Le 24 juin 1870, une session extraordinaire de l'Assemblée législative est convoquée pour entendre le rapport du révérend Noël Ritchot, le premier délégué à revenir des négociations à Ottawa. Ce dernier dépose la *Loi sur le Manitoba* auprès de l'Assemblée pour examen. Bien que cette loi ne contienne pas tous les droits que la Convention avait énumérés dans sa liste de droits, l'Assemblée est satisfaite que les droits qui lui tiennent à cœur soient reconnus.

L'honorable Louis Schmidt propose que « l'Assemblée législative de ce pays adopte la *Loi sur le Manitoba*, au nom des gens du pays, et décide de faire partie du Dominion du Canada en vertu des conditions proposées dans la *Loi sur la Confédération* ». Alors que les membres de l'Assemblée législative applaudissent, l'honorable Pierre Poitras appuie la motion et la séance est levée.



On that day, June 24, 1870, when the Provisional Government, known at that time as the Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia, ratified the *Manitoba Act*, 1870, the Métis made history. It was the vision and bravery of President Louis Riel and the members of the Provisional Government, most of whom were Métis, that brought Manitoba into Confederation—officially making Manitoba Canada's fifth province.

Ce jour-là, le 24 juin 1870, lorsque le gouvernement provisoire, connu à l'époque sous le nom d'Assemblée législative d'Assiniboia, ratifie la *Loi de 1870 sur le Manitoba*, les Métis entrent dans l'histoire. C'est grâce à la vision et au courage du président Louis Riel et des membres du gouvernement provisoire, dont la plupart étaient des Métis, que le Manitoba est entré dans la Confédération, faisant officiellement du Manitoba la cinquième province du Canada.

#### REPRÉSENTANTS FRANÇAIS

L'HONORABLE ANDRÉ BEAUCHEMIN Saint-Vital	L'HONORABLE JEAN-BAPTISTE BEAUCHEMIN Saint-Charles
L'HONORABLE FRANÇOIS DAUPHINAS Saint-Charles Vice-président	L'HONORABLE PIERRE DELORME Pointe Coupee
L'HONORABLE LUIS LACERTE Pointe Coupee	L'HONORABLE AMBROISE-DYDIME LÉPINE Saint-Vital Adjudant général
L'HONORABLE FRANÇOIS-XAVIER PAGE Saint-François-Xavier	L'HONORABLE WILLIAM B. O'DONAGHUE Saint-Boniface Militaire
L'HONORABLE LOUIS SCHMIDT Saint-Boniface Secrétaire d'état	L'HONORABLE PIERRE PARENTEAU Saint-Nobert
L'HONORABLE BAPTISTE TOURNOD Saint-Nobert	

WILLIAM COLDWELL  
Clerk of the Assembly /  
Greffier de l'Assemblée

HONOURABLE / L'HONORABLE LOUIS RIEL  
Président / President

JAMES BOSS  
Chief Justice /  
Chef de justice

REV. NOËL JOSEPH RITCHOT  
Delegate to Ottawa /  
Mandataire d'Ottawa

HON. ALFRED H. SCOTT  
Delegate to Ottawa /  
Mandataire d'Ottawa

JOHN BLACK  
Delegate to Ottawa /  
Mandataire d'Ottawa

#### ENGLISH REPRESENTATIVES

HON. A.C.C. BARNABYNE St. James Postmaster-General	HON. DR. CURTIS JAMES BIRD St. Paul Coroner	HON. THOMAS BURN St. Clement's Secretary of State
HON. WILLIAM FRASER Kildonan	HON. WILLIAM GARRISON JR. St. Mary's Lapointe	HON. GEORGE GUNN St. Andrews
HON. E.H.G. HAY St. Andrews	HON. JAMES MCKAY St. James Commissioner of Indian Affairs	HON. JOHN NORQUAY St. Marguerite
HON. HUGH F. ODINE Town of Winnipeg	HON. ALFRED H. SCOTT Town of Winnipeg	HON. JOHN SINCLAIR St. Peter's
HON. THOMAS SINCLAIR JR. St. Andrews	HON. WILLIAM AULD TAIT Headingley	

*Legislative Assembly of Assiniboia /  
L'Assemblée législative d'Assiniboia*

March 9 to June 24 / Le 9 mars au 24 juin  
1870

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