

"Two Newspapers, One Solitude:
Canada's First Nations in the 1873 Press"

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(draft)

When the Gomery Commission, the body charged with investigating the so-called sponsorship scandal in Quebec, summoned sitting Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin to testify in early 2005, the press drew attention to the fact that the last sitting prime minister called upon to testify at such proceedings was also Canada's first, Sir John A. McDonald. The Pacific Railway scandal, which seemed to consume federal politics and the national press in 1873, summoned McDonald and thereby established a precedent acted upon by Justice Gomery when he beckoned Paul Martin. Such framing by the press lent weight to the espied seriousness of the commission's work.

Such a framing also lends support to the convention among Canadian historians that the Pacific Railway scandal loomed as the biggest political story and certainly the key news story of 1873. After all, legality and politics aside the core of the issue hinged around the common goal of settling the Canadian west. Grits and Tories differed in

their respective approaches to this issue—but the goal was basically the same: white immigrants should fill the west. In a sense, the railroads played a minor, if salacious, role in this larger Canadian meta narrative.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that one might expect that the pre-existing condition upon which Western settlement was predicated in 1873—that is, Indigenous occupancy of Western Canada—would also have been of some interest to the press. Treaty Three was inked in 1873, after all, and effectively turned over much of Northwestern Ontario and eastern Manitoba—an area that today includes 28 First Nations—to the crown, which then turned aggressively to promote white settlement.

Yet in Canada's two most widely read and influential English-language newspapers—the Montreal Gazette and the Toronto Globe, forerunner to today's Globe and Mail--Treaty Three earned one paragraph of coverage in total in the Globe and zero in the Gazette.

Now, press coverage is important because it serves as an imperfect mirror of public sentiment but also because it shapes, even leads public opinion. Much has been written about the so-called power of the press. On one hand, for example, some argue compellingly that we cannot help but be shaped by such a pervasive presence in our lives. Others

argue, well, the news is just stuff that happened. Any meaning it may have is something that you read into its presentation.

But then that's just the point, one might rejoin...that it's complicated and invested with meaning, at the very least, by its receiver. Or is it? Perhaps it's not complicated; maybe you are deliberately complicating it. And, besides, you cannot prove that the press influences anybody or anything.

But you can, in fact, do just that. And social scientists have been doing it—and calling it agenda-setting theory—for 30 years. It isn't easy, nor is it possible frequently to demonstrate readily. Yet several decades of empirically-grounded research have demonstrated clearly that the press can and does influence public opinion, shape thinking, tell readers what to think about and how to think about it.

The press in Canada has known this for more than a century. For example, during the last week of September in 1873 the Canadian Press Association held its annual meeting in London Ontario. At such a congregation it was customary that the outgoing president of the group deliver a keynote address. And John Cameron, of the London (Ontario)

Advertiser, boldly championing the power of the press, did just that.

And I quote:

Much has been said, at one time and another, of the influence of the Press. That influence augments year by year. The number of readers is multiplied. No class of society is entirely exempt from the direct or indirect influence of the Press, while large sections of the community are dependent entirely for opinions as well as for news on the daily or weekly journal. This influence may be for good or for evil. It is a terrible thing to vest power in the hands of men without any sense of responsibility; but a conscientious journalist will never forget his moral obligations....further, it may be laid down as a sound business axiom that the Press cannot afford to make a statement it cannot prove.¹

Cameron here, as reported in the staunchly liberal Toronto Daily Globe, forerunner to today's Globe and Mail, baldly

¹ As recorded in the Toronto Daily Globe 30 September 1873, p. 2. Also see: Globe 30 September 1873, p. 2. On another occasion, it is worth noting, Cameron claimed that Canada's press was the world's best. Globe 30 September 1873, p. 2. Also see an editorial, "Newspapers in the States," Globe 29 November 1873, p. 4

asserted the agenda-setting premise: the press shapes and influences. It leads yet is led by what its paying audience wants to read yet in some sense already believes, or is likely to accept.

Curiously, about three weeks earlier the Globe's chief English-language rival, the Montreal Gazette, which threw its political weight strongly to the Tories, agreed with these sentiments. In an article endorsing a view printed first in the New York Tribune, it recorded:

Newspapers are getting to be much more than mere transcripts of the news and gossip of the day. They are pioneers in learned explorations; they are foremost in geographical and historical discovery; they are the teachers of social science...The reporter of today is the adventurer who penetrates the desert and the jungle, the scholar who researches for relics of the forgotten past, the courier who bears the news of victory...across a wilderness and through hostile armies...we can hardly doubt that it is destined in a very short time to be the foremost of all the secular professions—the most powerful in its

operations, the most brilliant in its rewards,
and the most useful to mankind.²

No false modesty there.

Interestingly, in 1873, as noted, these two papers—one Grit and one tory--identified the other as the "opposition," the enemy--after all, Canada underwent a change in government as Macdonald was ushered out of office and Mackenzie came in. Predictably, then, the papers battled mightily on such issues as the Pacific Railway scandal and the Reciprocity Treaty with the United States--issues of considerable political relevance.

Yet on an issue arguably of considerably more import--the "Indian Problem," as it was frequently known--the papers spoke as if from one partisan colonial voice. That is, the contours of Canada's First Nations, as depicted--imagined, really--by the Globe and the Gazette, bear close resemblance during the year in which Treaty Three was struck--1873; Treaty Three, reaching in the south from the Northwest Angle at the Lake of the Woods northward through Red Lake, eastward to beyond Upsala and westward into Manitoba--14,245,000 hectares in all. These images were deeply and consistently stereotyped in the most pejorative

² Gazette 04 September 1873, p. 1.

of ways and certainly belie the notion that the press could marshal evidence to "prove" its case against indigenous peoples--for this should be understood as a blistering, even heartfelt, I suppose, cultural indictment of Natives-.

Now I have only a few minutes so I will necessarily be brief with the few examples I have to offer. But I would like to stress that the evidence I present is but the tip of an iceberg on this topic. This paper represents the initial chapter in a book-length study of the ways in which the mainstream press in Canada has imagined First Peoples (I presented a later chapter here last year). Nearly incredibly such a book has yet to be published in Canada.

The Canadian West was only just opening up to settlement in 1873; and the federal government was determined to push a railway through to the Pacific. The west was viewed very much in the press as the "wilds"--and inhabited, not surprisingly then, by wild peoples, savages, the uncivilized Red Man (Man in this case standing in for everybody Indian). This territory--an untapped garden, in fact, according to press reports--was coveted for geopolitical reasons but also as a source of wealth--a

principle source of which was expected to be rich agricultural lands.³

The thing of it was: how could peoples for whom senseless wandering was a way of life possibly make good use of the land?⁴ They could not, which served as a primary justification for usurping it in the first place.⁵ Yet Protestant Christianity demanded that Indians be settled, pacified, and taught, as best one might.

One of the central allegations against the land's occupiers—and I hesitate here, though it is fairer and more accurate, to say owners, following the press's lead—was that they hadn't the foggiest idea of how to use the land properly—that is, in the Canadian style. And here I am thinking of the way that historian Patricia Seed characterizes the crucial import of land tillage, the taming and subduing of nature, in her marvelous book, Ceremonies of Possession.

Conflate this prejudice with First Nations' espied paganism and you get a ready formula for Canadian-style

³ See: Globe 02 July 1873, p. 2; Globe 09 July 1873, p. 4; Globe 01 October 1873, p. 2; Globe 30 December 1873, p. 2.

⁴ Globe 02 July 1873, p. 2.

⁵ Globe 03 July 1873, p. 2. Also see: Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2; Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4.

colonialism—or, to put it in continental terms, Canadian-style Manifest Destiny.

Now I should tell that when I began this project I sought in the first case to investigate how the press framed the story of the negotiating and signing of Treaty Three. But the story here is that that it was barely a story at all. The Globe passed the signing of Treaty Three off in 56 words—among them that “the terms are very liberal towards the Indians”⁶ whereas the Gazette failed to mention it at all. Later the Globe printed excerpts of the treaty, advising readers that the shiftless First Peoples might now be effectively “quieted” by white Canada.⁷ But that’s it on the treaty per se.

Now that said, Natives did not escape substantive notice in either paper. In fact, as I will attempt briefly to show, both papers had much to say about them—ultimately leading me to conclude that the lack of interest in the treaty qua news reflected a sense that the treaties were minor incidents in the larger narrative of triumphal Anglo conquest, as sketched at least in these two daily newspapers, that is, the re-dawning of civilization, the vanquishing of savagery, heroic tales of the white man’s

⁶ Globe 08 October 1873, p. 1.

⁷ Globe 28 October 1873, p. 2

burden, as it were, and so on. Indians as a whole on the North American continent were believed, after all, to be moribund, in a state of moral decay and demographic disappearance, "dying out before the white man," as the Globe put it,⁸ on one of many occasions.

Both broadsheets expressed great interest in political news—Canadian and English. The Globe evinced greater interest in Ontario politics whereas the balance of Gazette political reportage tilted eastward to Quebec and the Maritimes. Both also featured a lot of advertising, including typically as much as 50 percent of the front pages alone—for items such as cigars, Railways, book-binding, sugar and syrups, grocers, liquors, furnaces, mechanics wanted, medical and dental, the legal profession, board and lodging, and such. Both also, in the style of the day, ran serialized literature. Mesmerism was taken seriously in 1873 as was phrenology. Religious news, especially, in the Globe figured prominently. The Gazette pitched itself as the "best commercial newspaper in Canada."⁹ Sports gained scant attention. On the other hand, news from the United States, effectively earning a standing

⁸ Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4; also see: Globe 24 September 1873, p. 4.

⁹ Gazette 23 January 1873, p. 1.

front-page column in both publications, garnered a lot of ink. In particular, these brief snippets of US coverage focused on violence, crime, and disease.¹⁰ A close reading of them, I would suggest—and this is another paper altogether—frames Canada not so subtly as woven of more durable moral cloth than its southern neighbor.¹¹

While the signing of the treaties received little attention, on other occasions treaties were discussed by the papers, and this discourse begins to shed some light on the more general news framing of the Canada's First peoples in 1873 in these two publications. Canada's plains Indians sought treaties, the Globe explained. First Peoples invited the protection of the white community at the same time as this gesture demonstrated an acknowledged (by the paper, that is) inability to govern their own affairs. In short, at some level, the argument ran, sensible Indians endorsed colonialism—and treaties--as good for them.¹²

In this way, then, Natives typically were portrayed as desiring treaties, explicitly for their own good. Moreover,

¹⁰ Examples abound. See: Gazette 11 February, 1873, p. 3; Gazette 11 June 1873, p. 2; Globe 29 August 1873, p.1; Globe 15 September 1873, p.1; Globe 24 September 1873, p. 1; Globe 6 October 1873, p. 1.

¹¹ See, for example: Globe 10 June, 1873, p. 1; Globe 11 June 1873, p. 1.

¹² See, for example: Globe 31 July 1873, p. 3.

such assertions—never quoting or, for that matter, even attributing the statement to any specific person or persons—were couched with a caution that for any such treaties to be successfully negotiated the Canadian government must make strong show of “force” to gain a favorable outcome.¹³ But make no mistake: this “prairie land” was deemed to be highly desirable; but it had lamentably been turned into little more than a “desert” through mis- and lack of use, according to the Gazette.¹⁴

Uncivilized

One of the principle all purpose wrongs attributed to Indians by these press organs stemmed from the observation that they were essentially uncivilized. But what did this mean in the 1873 press?

To begin with it meant that First nations were not properly Christian--in particular, because the papers also expressed a certain disdain for Roman Catholicism, this meant Protestant Christianity—which, the Gazette assured readers, Indians preferred. Catholics apparently engaged in

¹³ Globe 31 July 1873, p. 3.

¹⁴ Gazette 04 June 1873, p. 1. Also see: Gazette 18 June 1874, p. 3.

"religious persecution."¹⁵ In fact, the Catholic Church behaved in altogether un-Christianlike ways in its dealings with aboriginals, the paper warned. Even worse, the church actively discriminated against the thieving and needy Indians because it was known that Native peoples favored Protestantism. That the various churches aided and abetted the disenfranchisement of Natives from their lands the papers lauded because it was "to their advantage,"¹⁶ reducing a predisposition to thievery¹⁷ and improving hygiene, women's rights (in part, because of the practice of concubinage,¹⁸ and education all round for, in the Globe's words, the "dirty, miserable....degraded pagans."¹⁹

As the Gazette put it on another occasion, "let us bless God that he has brought a vine into this wilderness; that he has cast out the heathen."²⁰ Further, the Globe charged, even when converted to any variety of

¹⁵ Gazette 10 January 1873, p. 2.

¹⁶ Gazette 23 January 1873, p. 2.

¹⁷ Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4.

¹⁸ Globe 04 August 1873, p. 4.

¹⁹ Globe 03 July 1873, p. 2. Also See: Globe 17 July 1873, p. 4; Globe 04 August 1873, p.4.

²⁰ Gazette 15 February 1873, p. 1. Also see: Globe 23 June 1873, p. 4.

Christianity, Indians were probably just faking it, either because they were a) not trustworthy; b) because they just didn't understand it; or, c) most charitably, yet implying unintelligence, they needed more time to figure it out.²¹

Now you may object and note that indigenous peoples had rich religious traditions of their own. Not so, according to the Globe and the Gazette. It was a mistake to identify indigenous belief systems as religions at all because their first premises were the promotion of aggressive violence,²² patricide,²³ polygamy and infanticide.²⁴ Meanwhile, according to the Globe, sweat lodges, for example, served no religious function but instead provided a means by which the "miserable, starved-looking," superstitious, "invalids," "idlers," could and did plot mischief and criminal activities in "great Indian natural luxury," the equivalent of Russian baths taken to an extreme, a long article in the Globe related.²⁵ In

²¹ Globe 23 June 1873, p. 4. Also see: Globe 03 July 1873, p. 2;

²² Gazette 04 June 1873, p. 1.

²³ Globe 23 June 1873, p. 4.

²⁴ Globe 03 July 1873, p. 2; also see: Globe 04 August 1873, p. 4.

²⁵ Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4.

particular, according to the Globe, the attendant medicine man used gatherings in the "sweating booths" to plot vengeance upon personal enemies, employing other hapless Natives as so many transfixed pawns to aid and abet criminal activity.²⁶ Yet on other occasions Indian religion was merely derided as silly, childish and not only pointless but counterproductive.²⁷

Mentally Challenged

The allegation that Natives were stupid framed many news stories, going so far in the lack of control of their faculties as to be "insane," opined the Gazette.²⁸ Then there existed just plain idiocy. How else might one explain their love of trinkets,²⁹ and the fact that Indians were easily duped,³⁰ the Globe advised readers.³¹

Timid and Hapless Aggressors

²⁶ Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4.

²⁷ Globe 6 October 1873, p. 1.

²⁸ Gazette 13 October 1873, p. 3; Globe 13 October 1873, p. 3.

²⁹ Globe 05 February 1873, p. 2.

³⁰ Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

³¹ Also see: Globe: 30 July 1873, p. 2.

First Nations were often depicted as being simultaneously aggressively violent³²--"bloodthirsty" and "dangerous,"³³ and yet cowardly, quick to retreat from a fair fight.³⁴ That was, in the Gazette's estimate, as suggested by a headline, "The Trouble With Indians"--they were sneaky, thieving, treacherous,³⁵ and apt to turn tail at the first sign of resistance.³⁶ What more might one expect of a people bred on horse-thieving as a way of life,³⁷ helpless yet excitable to an unnatural degree?³⁸

Others and Hierarchy of the Races

Indians were not alone in their status as Other, but they fell in with the alleged weakest of three groupings, loosely identifiable by skin color and geographical location. In the first and best case, white Europeans such

³² Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2. Also see: Globe 04 July 1873, p. 4.

³³ Globe 21 July 1873, 4.

³⁴ Globe 12 February 1873, p. 2.

³⁵ Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

³⁶ Gazette 18 December 1873, p. 2. Also see: Globe: 16 October 1873, p. 1.

³⁷ Gazette 22 December 1873, p. 2.

³⁸ Globe 02 June 1873, p. 1.

as the French and Scottish stood above all others. In the second grouping you could locate Turks, Chinese, Japanese, and Persians. They occupied an area of mid-level damnation. And then, third, non-white aboriginal peoples from any where else constituted the sorriest and most deplorable bunch.

That said, this apparent hierarchy probably should not be seen as entirely fixed because stereotypes of Canadian Indians, while universally damning were not entirely consistent—for example, they were simultaneously depicted as both partially tractable and yet entirely intractable. And Canadian Indian artisanship, for example, compared favorably with “primitive” Japanese and Chinese work, the Globe judged.³⁹ Still, the Globe made it clear that in Canada an ordered hierarchy, however poorly defined, existed among the races. Whites came first, followed by pure Indians, followed by overtly sexual,⁴⁰ drunken, violent, and criminally inclined half-breeds⁴¹ (French-

³⁹ Globe 21 July 1873, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4.

⁴¹ Globe 17 July 1873, p. 3.

Indian being preferable to Scot-Indian⁴²), children, and then dogs.⁴³

The stereotyping of other Europeans emerges as rather tame by comparison. Take the Scots, according to the Gazette, and the "Scotchman's incapacity for understanding a joke."⁴⁴ Big deal! To their considerable credit the Scots were also shrewd, steady, and industrious, the Globe reminded readers.⁴⁵ And so this seems, all in all, almost harmless. Italians, on the other hand, were associated with slavery.⁴⁶ The pure French, meanwhile, exhibited vivacity, love of amusements, hospitality, courtesy, and warmth, for the Globe.⁴⁷ Though it is also well to remember that both French and Italian were smeared by their association with Roman Catholicism.

On the other hand both papers expressed strong aversions for the Chinese. Known pejoratively as "Chinamen," the Gazette reduced them in size--literally--and

⁴² Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

⁴³ Globe 05 February 1873, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Gazette 04 June 1873, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Globe 19 June 1873, p. 2.

⁴⁷ Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

stature by labeling them as imitative and crafty.⁴⁸ The Globe agreed, opining that they were "celestials,"⁴⁹ "little," "small," "pig-tailed," "resist" civilization's "influences," "heathen," "sneaky," yet potentially make good servants.⁵⁰ Still, the Gazette held, the Chinese, Japanese, Turks, and Persians appeared to be coming out of their collective "oriental darkness" and "are letting in the light of western civilization."⁵¹ And the Globe concurred, proclaiming that Canada must play its part, "to be a light to the dark places of the earth."⁵² The Globe had particular hope for Japan. "Western light," it claimed, "having once entered...will be impossible to exclude."⁵³

Colonialism, therefore, was just and necessary "not only for children, but for humanity in general," the Gazette explained in an editorial titled, "THE HEART OF

⁴⁸ Gazette 30 January 1873, p. 4. Also see: Gazette 03 June 1873, p. 2; Gazette 04 June 1873, p. 1; Globe 03 July 1873, p. 4; Globe 24 July 1873, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Globe 14 August 1873, p. 4.

⁵⁰ Globe 04 June 1873, p. 2.

⁵¹ Gazette 01 July 1873, p. 2.

⁵² Globe 22 July 1873, p. 4.

⁵³ Globe 18 June 1873, p. 2.

AFRICA,"⁵⁴ a continent and its inhabitants that fared poorly in press depictions. Mexicans, understood as half-breeds, were dangerously criminal.⁵⁵ And Spaniards had inexplicably "sunk" to the level of Indians.⁵⁶

American Blacks, in coverage that appeared also to serve the nationalistic purpose of championing Canadian civil society over that of the United States, earned nearly total condemnation. On the more positive side, they were portrayed as pathetically, comically unintelligent, sporting hair akin to wool and unable to speak English properly.⁵⁷ More typically, reports noted white lynchings of Black men who had "ravished" white women, in one representative case, "after knocking her on the head with an axe."⁵⁸ Blacks predictably exhibited "obnoxious characteristics," were "smelly...fat niggers," suffered from an "absence of self-will," and were as intelligent as

⁵⁴ Gazette 04 June 1874, p. 2.

⁵⁵ Gazette 08 June 1874, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

⁵⁷ See the Gazette 07 October 1873, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Gazette 17 June 1873, p. 3. Also see: Gazette 19 June 1873, p. 3.

dogs, the Gazette charged.⁵⁹ Expressed another way in a Globe headline: "Two Blacks Won't Make One White."⁶⁰

Among the Native Others Hawaiians earned probably the most favorable portrayals. They were merely ugly and dressed funnily.⁶¹ Likewise the Maori, in a single article in the Globe, gave "hope that at least one aboriginal race will not die out before civilization, but become absorbed by it."⁶²

Fijians stood out as the worst of the Others. At some length, these allegedly cannibalistic island people were tarred as unmitigated savages in an article detailing a "shocking massacre." A certain Mr. Burns, it seems, had been "clubbed and tomahawked; his brains were beaten out." His wife had been raped and murdered and their child likewise barbarously killed. All this, the Gazette insinuated, because of an inability to control crazed Native libidinal impulses.⁶³ The Globe agreed, reporting on

⁵⁹ Gazette 07 July 1873, p. 2.

⁶⁰ Globe 29 July 1873, p. 4.

⁶¹ Gazette 31 July 1873, p. 1.

⁶² Globe 13 January 1873, p. 4.

⁶³ Gazette 19 June 1873, p. 2.

the same news story, but embellished it with the charge of cannibalism.⁶⁴

Not surprisingly, then, portrayals of Africa and Africans were draped in stereotypes. Africa was the "White man's Grave," a Globe headline explained. The accompanying news story related how Africans dressed like lunatics, reveling in exotica and so many baubles. Further, they were unintelligent, not being able to speak English clearly or properly.⁶⁵ The Africans personified retarded social evolution; still engaging in slavery,⁶⁶ in particular the Ashantee.

Violent Children/Killers

Additionally, Natives emerged as needy and not self-reliant, much like children (you might ask: how had they flourished for thousands of years?). Like kids they were susceptible to bribery of sorts—fancy trifles and shiny inexpensive presents might easily win them over in negotiations, the Gazette and Globe instructed readers.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Globe 18 June 1873, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Globe 29 December 1873, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Gazette 13 February 1873, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Gazette 29 July 1873, p. 1; Globe 31 July 1873, p. 3. Also see: Globe 03 July 1873, p. 2

But let's be clear: Indians needed to be controlled for while the reservation Indian was invariably a "pauper," away from the reserve he became an "outlaw."⁶⁸

Lazy Drunkards

The Indian predilection for inactivity,⁶⁹ meanwhile, was only exacerbated, the Gazette warned, when combined with a love of drink.⁷⁰ Alcohol was a peril for all, it proclaimed on a variety of occasions.⁷¹ In fact, the Gazette championed temperance as the best option for all Canada, white and non-white.⁷² That said, First Nations not only had a weakness for inebriation but, in turn, such a characteristic reinforced the sense that temperate whites therefore needed to teach Indians the proper way to behave, to the extent that they could be taught.⁷³

⁶⁸ Gazette 28 August 1873, p. 2.

⁶⁹ See: Globe 02 July 1873, p. 2; Globe 03 July 1873, p. 2; Globe 04 July 1873, p. 2.

⁷⁰ Globe 03 July 1873, p. 3. Also see: Globe 08 July 1873, p. 3.

⁷¹ Gazette 14 August 1873, p. 2.

⁷² Gazette 08 October 1873, p. 2; Globe 12 August 1873, p. 2.

⁷³ See, for example: Globe 02 June 1873, p. 4.

Defeated Pagans

Beyond the standard and ill-defined allegation that Indians were savage and uncivilized probably the next most common image was of First Nations as moribund. This operated both as a sort of measuring stick for the mainstream—that is, by comparison, look how good whites are; at the same time as reminding Whites to forebear with respect to Indians, for in the pure state, at least, they were dying out—in part because they could not compete and in part because of the assumption that humankind as a whole was evolving in lockstep with some divine plan. And in that plan the stronger would lead and the weaker would perish.

From this context Indians emerged as dying out yet threatening, weak yet strong enough to menace the stronger race, dependent yet inexplicably having survived and thrived for millennia before the Europeans arrived. But such contradictions did not surface at these press outlets. Instead, in the very best, most positive portrayals some Indians were portrayed as more friendly than other Indians—but this should be mistaken for the paternalistic image of the Noble Savage. This defanged and dying creature

has little to commend him beyond a whimpering, shadowy, exotic toadyism.⁷⁴

Exotic Animals/Noble Curs

First Nations were held to human—yes, but at a vaguely inferior level. As the Gazette put it, “All the American Indians are supposed, on good grounds, to belong to one variety or family of the human species.”⁷⁵ They compared well, the Gazette said, to mosquitoes and grasshoppers (the latter of which in reality plagued Manitoba’s crops in 1873).⁷⁶

And on occasion savages were “picturesque,” the Gazette explained in a lengthy and glowing obituary of the American artist George Catlin,⁷⁷ but in a primitive way, the Globe reminded.⁷⁸

Tamable

⁷⁴ See: Globe 06 June 1873, p. 1.

⁷⁵ Gazette 14 February 1873, p. 1.

⁷⁶ Gazette 04 June 1873, p. 1.

⁷⁷ Gazette 10 January 1873 0. 3

⁷⁸ Globe 17 July 1873, p. 4.

Possibly because they were found the furthest from Ontario, British Columbia's First Peoples stood out as the most deplorable of a very bad lot. The Gazette explained that they were "thievish and licentious," murderers, engaged in slavery, and practiced cannibalism as a religious ritual. Yet with some relief the paper reported that these habits might be overcome through forceful education. Interestingly, the paper argued that some of the difficulties with Indians had been caused by an association with poor whites, conflating a racist slur with classism.⁷⁹

But on the issue of Indian peoples and education the two broadsheets wanted to have it both ways. The Indian was tamable insofar as he was educable, even if only reluctantly won, penned the Gazette.⁸⁰ On the other hand, because he is nothing short of an "incubus," the Gazette reported, "he is untamable and must be provided for"—again, like a needy child.⁸¹ But the Globe still maintained that enforced education was the best solution, because it promised the only real chance that Indians might "progress"

⁷⁹ Gazette 02 August 1873, p. 2. Also see: Globe 04 August 1873, p. 4. Paupers, according to the Globe were poor because they deserved to be poor. Globe 14 November 1873, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Gazette 05 June 1873, p. 2. Also see: Globe 07 July 1873, p. 4

⁸¹ Gazette 04 June 1873, p. 1.

and master "self-reliance," however imperfectly.⁸² The challenge was to overcome Indian "proclivities" for "obstinacy" and "craftiness," the Globe asserted.⁸³ Plus, Indians were closely associated with nature and with animals more plainly, both of which itself required taming in order to be made productive.⁸⁴

Conclusion

In conclusion, one might ask: what are we to make of such imagery? In some sense, given what we know full well about the latter part of the nineteenth century, such images were almost entirely predictable. Granted. Yet what troubles me, as I have had occasion to explore press coverage a century later regarding a land issue crisis in Kenora, Ontario, the very heart of Treaty Three country on the north shore of the Lake of the Woods, is that such imagery endured—that is from 1873 to 1974--and endures in the Canada's mainstream press, according to such recently published books as Discourses of Domination (UTP, 2003). In this sense, the ongoing charges emanating from the indigenous community that colonialism is alive and well in

⁸² Globe 09 August 1873, p. 2.

⁸³ Globe 13 October 1873, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Globe 17 July 1873, p. 4.

Canada, in fact, ring true, if the press is any barometer. And, of course, it is. And indeed I would go one step further to argue, drawing what I believe to be a correct interpretation and application of John Cameron's words from the introduction to this paper, that the press has served and serves as a principle champion of ongoing colonialism directed toward Canada's indigenous peoples.