

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 1

Start Clip: 3:11:01.06

JIM SINCLAIR: We were all oppressed. We were all oppressed people, we were all, you know, treated with racism and in many ways hatred, you know, and I think the Northern people, when we sat down with them, found out that the church controlled their lives, and, you know controlled their lives. And so many of our elders, even at that time, were tied to the church so close that even the younger people said something, they would be chastised by the older people and so people like Durocher and Jonas Favel and some of these more militant people that grew out of the movement, had to get out and fight with their own community. Change the views of the community and that took a lot of work and that, because to fight the church in those days was a very, very difficult thing. And it was used against them because people like myself and others, and Durocher could speak much better than maybe the priests could in a meeting. Because I remember now like, at La Loche they called a meeting. Five hundred people showed up to actually try to kick us out of the community including the church, the priests, the church, the police, and the Hudson's Bay at that time. And the problem was when I got up to speak it was tough enough for me to speak to the Dene, who again were a little at odds with the Cree. To speak to the Dene in the North and then to have the priest get up there and speak in Dene himself, to convince these people to, not to have anything to do with me and yet we had some, some militants and radicals amongst us who were able to out, out-organize and actually use those kind of meetings to their advantage, to our advantage. Remember Ted Bowerman tried the same thing with four or five hundred people in Buffalo Narrows to get rid of us once and for all. And it more or less entrenched us into believing much more in our rights and our

goals. Because we, all's we talked about is our right to self-determination, the right to land, all these rights we talked about and that came up again as a result of the old, Trudeau coming into power in '68 and Trudeau saying, "Look you people, you know, I am going to make sure things change." And that really helped us and I think again the North and the South were, the Southern people were, were, were really subject too so much racism that there was a bit of envy for the North because the right to hunt, you know we felt the right to hunt and trap and fish anyway, even though it was restricted to some degree, but we couldn't move and do anything. We had to hide when we killed ducks. We had to be very careful if you shot a deer and people would come and check our pots to see if we were cooking wild game. And even on the road allowance we used to dig Seneca root and you know, and stuff like that and try to, try to make a living and people would be after us from all over for trespassing and stuff like that. So we had a really, really tough time. And I think the, again when you talk about instigating these, what made us move is I, in 1945 there was a movement to move our people up North out of the road allowance. Again to help us, but really to clear the land of our people. Try to shift us where no one was and they had the old Green Lake project, of which they shipped our people in trains, not in trains, in boxcars in 1947. I think in '46 and '47. They moved all our little belongings into the boxcars. I remember that as a boy and one of the things that really bothered me and it still bothers me today, our people lived in tar paper shacks, you know and, very little shelter and as these people left their community with all their stuff piled on their wagons and chairs and the little bit they had, the houses were purposely set on fire as they were leaving, as if to say it to them, these people "Don't ever come back here again." And that was done at Crescent Lake, that was done in Lestock and it was done in other communities. And as I, as I met with other half-breeds a few years later they had the same experiences. So again, it was, you know, people speak about the holocaust for the Jews, well it was much the same for as in terms of trying to drive us from one place to another. And it was difficult for us and it wasn't very long 'till most of those people just made their way back

to Regina. And then we set up a tent city, then we start moving into the nuisance grounds around Regina where all the half-breeds lived and then we had tent cities and then people would come in there with their cars and trucks at night and run over people's tents, you know drive people out.

RON LALIBERTE: These were people from the city of Regina?

(Video Tape: 3:15.58.17) JIM SINCLAIR: These were, these were, yeah, they were right from the city and they done that to the half-breeds and even the Indians started to move into the city at that time after the war and, you know. And really, I guess, that again started us to start to really hate the system and start to realize that we had to do something. So, it, it helped us move into another level and it caused the kind, I hate to use the word hatred, but that's exactly what it caused amongst our people we were, we were being treated. And again how do we, how do we fight that? How do we fight that? And I think like Jim said one of the biggest things that ever helped us was getting together with the North. That, that kind of changed the whole political spectrum in Saskatchewan. And the good thing for us in those days is because the demonstrations were going on in the United States with the Blacks, the Panthers and the, and who we met with a number of times and actually, you know he predicted what would happen to us and here, you know, and when we met them.....

JIM DUROCHER: Surveying, surveying, surveillance, you know they **(Inaudible)**...

RON LALIBERTE: Oh really?

JIM DUROCHER: Oh yeah for years. With the Black Panthers, especially when the time uh....

(Video Tape: 3:17.05.09) JIM SINCLAIR: Yeah we met with Hampton that time, what was his first name, Hampton was the leader of the Black Panthers came to Regina with these seven guys. They said they were going to get killed very shortly, two weeks or three weeks, like that they all got shot in Chicago.

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