

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

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**JIM SINCLAIR:** In fact, I think after the first Constitutional conference, or the second one, when I got into kind of a fight with Trudeau because Trudeau said to us at one time, he said, "I see here that with the Métis, or with the Aboriginal people we got a social problem," he said. And I told, I said "Mr. Prime Minister we haven't got a social problem in this country we got a political problem and the political problem's, the fact is that the government has not recognized our rights or give us the opportunity to exercise our rights or have not supported us in any way to exercise our rights." And that time when we raised hell that time, Trudeau had a supper at the Governor General's residence where I wasn't even going to go, I stayed home because it was in the hotel saying that everybody was against us, you know, what the hell's the use of going over there. And some RCMP came to my door, of course, they weren't there to arrest me and they said that the Prime Minister is waiting for you at the Governor General's residence. And I said, "What am I going to do over there?" And they said, "No he's waiting for you." So I got into my, all dressed up so I just got into a cab and went over there and they didn't start the supper until I got there. And I must have been a half an hour late and I thought I was just going to sit on the side and somebody came met me at the door and I sat around the table with the Prime Minister and the rest of the leaders. So, he showed respect to us as well and we became good friends after that, you know, to the point where, you know, that him and I got along very well but I knew what I was doing in Canada at that time that I'd always become like an outsider. I could never become a senator, you know, I was offered senate seat in 19-, at that time of the conferences. I never become part of

government because of the way I took Canada to task and it makes sense, even the Prime Minister today. I'm invited to all the meetings today, Prime Minister will invite me to meetings and invite me to a lunch, Paul Martin, but that's as far as I get. Because they know my history and everybody is, you know, you don't attack Canada and suddenly all of a sudden you're on the other side. So, it, it, it's the price you have to pay.

**RON LALIBERTE:** That would be looked at as a sell-out, wouldn't it, on the people.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** So, it, it's, it's kind of a, a thing that, you know, you have to look back, you know, and take a look again at the, at the respect I have for the people in the communities. That I have, all the communities that worked so hard and we had over a hundred of them, hey Durocher how many locals did we have about?

**JIM DUROCHER:** About a hundred and five.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** And they were active, active locals. Not just...

**JIM DUROCHER:** They were all active.

**JIM SINCLAIR:** It was, it was dealing with the issues and we had to deal as well with providing the services at the same time, housing and everything else because we would have become a laughing stock if we didn't deal with the issues. So we had to deal with the issues.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Bread and butter issues, bannock and lard issues yeah.

**(Video Tape: 6:34.37.04) RON LALIBERTE:** Well I'll tell you, you guys did a tremendous job at the Constitution meetings I'll tell you that. From my perspective anyways. Could we go back a little bit to the, you know, like

getting the Métis in the Constitution. What was Harry Daniels' role in that? Were you, were you working with Harry there?

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Do you want to speak on that?

**(Video Tape: 6:34.52.21) JIM DUROCHER:** Yeah, there was, you know, a number of people that, that were, that were around like Tony Belcourt and Harry was another, another fellow who, were belonged to the, the Native Council of Canada at that time. And they were, they were of the opinion that they, they could, you know, that that council could speak on behalf of Métis all across Canada. And of course we were like Sinclair said, we were opposed to that, you know, we thought that, you know, the Métis were always considered to be a western phenomenon and we wanted, you know, we wanted, you know, the Métis from Western Canada to speak on Métis, Western Canadian Métis issues. And, you know, of course, you know, we took, Sinclair took the Prime Minister to court, you know, they were, they were of course on the other side. You know, they were, that, one of the, one of the reasons, of course, that we decided to take the Prime Minister to court, at the same time we were trying to form an organization that would represent the interest of Métis people in Western Canada which we call, which is now known as the Métis National Council. But then and then, and then, you know, at that time we belonged to the, to the other organization, what's the, Briere's organization...

**JIM SINCLAIR:** Native Council of Canada.

**JIM DUROCHER:** Native Council of Canada yeah. Native Council of Canada was, was for example, a good example is the province of Prince Edward Island had just as much votes on Métis issues as we had in Saskatchewan. And, you know, it was really unfair and really not, not right and it's, you know, we didn't think that people from Eastern Canada should speak on our, our issues which, you know, which we had over here and so. And we were

denied that, we were denied that, we were denied that right at the Constitutional table and that's the reason we took the Prime Minister, or Sinclair took the Prime Minister to court. But then at the same time we had to do something about that whole issue as well so we made those changes. We fought hard and we had many arguments and we had a lot of discussion, heated debates and whatever you want to call them at, at, at our own tables, you know, at the Métis National Council I mean table, it wasn't the Métis National Council, Native Council of Canada at that time. And we said no, we want to get out of this Métis National-, out of this, out of this organization, which was led by Smokey Briere I think at that time, and Harry and, and, and of course Tony Belcourt and these folks. We said we want to get out of that, we want to form our own organization which is going to have, which is truly going to represent Métis people in Western Canada and that's what we did eventually. But we had a, we had a long struggle, it wasn't an easy thing to do.

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