

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 1

Start Time: 2:46:35.29

JIM SINCLAIR: Poverty was the driving force.

RON LALIBERTE: Yes...

(Video Tape: 2:46.44.16) JIM SINCLAIR: Poverty was the driving force because again, we were very, very poor. We were not recognized by any government. We couldn't go to school because at that time we weren't paying taxes because of the road allowance. We couldn't benefit from housing because they wouldn't put a house on the road allowance. So, therefore our people had a struggle of being on the outside of the system and that time if you got any schooling at all you had to go here and there to find a school. At least that is what I had to do to get some education.

RON LALIBERTE: You're not First Nations so you couldn't take any, any of the benefits there from schooling...

JIM SINCLAIR: I couldn't, that's right.

RON LALIBERTE: So you are really caught in between there hey?

JIM SINCLAIR: Yep.

RON LALIBERTE: Did you experience any of that poverty in your community Jim, when you think back on growing up in your community?

(Video Tape: 2:47.31.17) JIM DUROCHER: Ah yes, although it wasn't, you know it wasn't quite, quite, you know, drastic I guess as it is in the South as people describe it sometimes. Because, in the North, you know, you always still had the bush, you always had the lakes and the rivers and there was, you know, there was, you know, if you needed you could still sneak out, I know it was illegal for Métis people to go shoot a moose out of season for example, but a lot of that still happened...

RON LALIBERTE: Well sure.

JIM DUROCHER: That is part of our survival. And that's you know that's how we, we, we became such good at the, you know, at the living off the land because we had to do it in secrecy a lot. And, and yes, the, the, the poverty was not quite as prevalent, even in the '30s I remember talking to some of the elders in the North and, you know they were finding it a little bit, a little bit strange that people from the South were coming into the North, like you know, non-Aboriginal people because they were hungry in the South and, you know, in the '30s I guess it was very difficult. And, and, you know so it wasn't quite, quite that bad. What happened in the North though was the, you know the fact that, that the, you know, the rights of people, the rights of Métis people, you know, was always dominate, dominated by outside forces. Like the missionaries you know, the RCMP, the social, you know, the social welfare people, Hudson's Bay and all of those types, you know and that's what happened, that's what kept people down a lot you know in the North.

(Video Tape: 2:49.12.02) RON LALIBERTE: That's interesting that you say the missionaries because were the missionaries political in the sense that they asked you to vote in a certain way, are you saying?

JIM DUROCHER: Oh yes absolutely, yeah. They, they, they made sure that, you know, people voted the right way and were you know doing...

RON LALIBERTE: The right way? Was it the right way? Which party were they talking about here? Which party was involved in ... **(Inaudible)** ...

JIM DUROCHER: Well they, they didn't you know, I think the right wing parties were you know...

RON LALIBERTE: The Liberals.

JIM DUROCHER: Yes absolutely and...

RON LALIBERTE: And the missionaries were, why would they do that, were they getting patronage from the Liberal...?

(Video Tape: 2:49.45.17) JIM DUROCHER: Well a lot of them were French-speaking...

RON LALIBERTE: Oh yes, okay.

JIM DUROCHER: ...missionaries and they came in from Quebec and you know they, they never did like the Conservatives I guess and, you know, they really had no use for the socialists and so a lot of them were predominantly Liberal and you know they. I think, I think the old saying in the North is that if you're, you know, if you're a good Catholic you go to church on Sundays and then you, you shop at the Hudson's Bay store and you go to a Catholic church on Sundays, so that's...

RON LALIBERTE: Interesting.

JIM DUROCHER: There was two winters together, so.

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