

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

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RON LALIBERTE: Did the, did the Prime Minister though say well the, you know, the Native Council of Canada is representing you?

JIM SINCLAIR: He did they called **(inaudible)** organizations.

RON LALIBERTE: And they, but their impression was was that the Métis would have a voice within that organization but you disagreed with that, is that what you're saying?

(Video Tape: 6:11.22.06) JIM SINCLAIR: They would have a voice but because we were not, I was not the president, Smokey Bear at that time was the president, that he would speak on our behalf. And we said no because Smokey was an Indian and, and Bill Wilson was there as well from BC and Bill Wilson said we will get our rights first as Indians. We will fight for the Métis later and there was no deal. So that certainly caused us a problem and then when we agreed we would, we would, we would call this big meeting in Edmonton, of course like I said we had some discussions back and forth and one of them was the, Manitoba raised the issue of myself being an Indian and, you know, should I represent the Métis or should I not? And of course the question came up if what if I had, I failed and they said well if you failed, it's, an Indian doesn't really speak for us anyway. We, we have our own spokespeople and if we got lucky and were including them, it's just an incident in history, so. It was covered in some ways by some of the leadership who were a little bit afraid of doing this because we were radical and some of the other groups are not as radical as us, of course, and didn't

want to be. And so we, I was picked to do that and of course Durocher was very, very, wanted to spend our money so he volunteered that he would pay the bill and hopefully when we set up a national organization for the Métis that we'd be paid back. So it was a gamble. And we made that commitment and based on that I went to work. So we went back to Saskatchewan and got our case ready. We had to, stayed up two nights. We had to because it just becoming, it's only going to be two weeks away. We had Rob Millen was our key lawyer. We had John Weinstein, which was a consultant of ours that worked very closely with us. And we got our stuff put together and we took it to a Saskatchewan court. Saskatchewan court said no, Mr. Trudeau works in Ontario so you'll have to go there. We then went, proceeded to go to Ontario where we presented it to three judges because that's, you had to go to that higher court in order to make things happen prior to the Constitutional process or it had to stop, the Constitution would have to be halted. And at that time the three judges were appointed by Trudeau himself, so they were reluctant to go to court of course. But during that process of the week or, the week we had, I think, to get there or so, that we had meetings steady on a day-to-day basis. The Justice Minister Mark McGuinn at that particular time and the deputy Prime Minister and other peoples in order to get us into the Constitution, or get us at least come out at the talks, in a way we can speak. Even to where we were offered some time by the Native Council of Canada to speak for ourselves which again, you know, we wouldn't go for. And as a result of that we had, we had some huge arguments, of course, with the Justice Minister but the, the, the, when the court was to start and we got into courts to proceed with the court proceedings, every time I would get into the court to sit down for these three judges to start the court operations, or the court procedures, they wouldn't open the courts. They would, they would go back and the Justice Minister would call me, these guys are, Jimmy was out in the hall and the other guys would come and tell me this is what he's offering and I'd speak to them and I'd say no. And of course we had international TV there. We had ABC was there, I think CNN was just coming into being at that time. We had all the big news media there from all across

the United States and some of the world people were there, international news and so it was, it was a big issue. And one of the things I think that was, was, of course, being negotiated is the seats at the table. And there was two seats for everybody at the table that time, I think it was two seats for, to make, supposed to be two seats for the Métis, two seats for the Indians, two seats for the Inuit. So it came down to the point where they'd call me out of the meeting and they offered us, like I say, to say something for ourselves but to still be part of the council. We said no. Another offer came back and I can't tell you because this happened over a couple of days. Each time again we were going to start the court, it wouldn't start. The Justice Minister would call us out of the room from Ottawa and have another negotiations and it came to the point where they said, we will allow the, Mr. Sinclair to sit at the table on behalf of the Métis people at the Constitutional conferences. And the next, the next year, next conference we will let them have two, we will let them have the full slate. And I went out again and the press, of course, was there and I said no. We're talking about the Métis being represented at the Constitutional table and they will select who will lead them. It's not a matter of myself being at the table. It's a matter of the Métis having the rightful place at the table. So at the final result they agreed to that. So the court never did start. We sat in front of the judges for a few hours but it never got started. It just kept going back and forth. With that announcement people said they never had a larger press conference in Ottawa at the, at the press, press club. There was, you couldn't get in there because it was so full of reporters and that. And of course many were people that time who were really involved with this stuff were kind of shoved to the background and some of the leaders of the Métis were in there. And Durocher was kind of at the background too. After doing all of this work.

RON LALIBERTE: Why?

JIM SINCLAIR: Well because it was the Métis that took over hey.

RON LALIBERTE: Yeah.

(Video Tape: 6:17.14.30) JIM DUROCHER: We got, we got, we accomplished our mission.

(Video Tape: 6:17.17.03) RON LALIBERTE: Well I thought that was a brilliant strategy when I think, take the Prime Minister to court, you know, look what happened hey. They didn't even go anywhere, you know.

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