

Jim Sinclair, Jim Durocher, and Ron Laliberte:

Métis Political Activist Interviews (April 17, 2004)

Tape 2

Start Clip: 7:54:45.25

(Video Tape: 7:54.45.25) RON LALIBERTE: Could you say a little about your work in the Primrose case?

(Video Tape: 7:54.50.08) JIM DUROCHER: Ah yes, Primrose was a, a developed I guess, it was instituted oh back in the 1950s I guess, '51, '52, '53 or something to that effect. Where the federal government made a, a deal with the provincial government, and here again is a classic example of Aboriginal people not being involved. Nobody in that, in those communities like, Canoe Lake First Nations, Cold Bay, Jan's Bay, Beauval, Ile a la Crosse, nobody was included, was asked whether they, they, you know, they wanted, they. Federal government approached the province and said, "Hey we want this piece of land." They marked it off and said, "We want to use it for, you know, for, you know, for air weapons range, we want to test our air weapons." And the province signed on the dotted line. They said, "Sure you can have it," for, you know, I forget, \$250,000 a year. That's what they've been getting. Two hundred, it started out at \$200,000 and every seven years they are able to renegotiate that, and it's up to about \$250,000 a year is what the province gets for that use of that land. And, but what happened was after they signed, the first thing that happens is the conservation officers went in there, the Department of National Defence guys went in there and they started kicking out these guys, you know. They say, "Hey you can't live here anymore. We're going to use this as a air weapon's range." And they kicked out all of these people that used to make a living, that were living on there, you know, old George Larivierre and, and, you know, Louis Roy and McCallum and, you know, Aubichon and all these guys. They were all kicked

out of there. There was a couple of Lalibertes there, for example, and they kicked them all out and told them you can't come here anymore. And so, what did that happen, what did that cause? It caused a tremendous amount of problems for the surrounding communities because these other communities like Ile a la Crosse, Cold Bay, Jan's Bay, Beauval, had, had their own trap lines, for example, hey. And so these folks that were kicked out of there, had to move some place to follow their traditional way of life. So they tried to go into places like Beauval or Ile a la Crosse. There was no room for them and so that caused, you know, some further hardships and further problems for them and, and Lawrence Yew, he was another, there's another leader who passed away a few years ago. He decided at that point in time that he wanted, he wanted to do something about this and so under the Municipal, Northern Municipal Council, he said, "Hey listen," you know, "We want, we want..."

JIM SINCLAIR: He was chairperson.

JIM DUROCHER: Yeah we want to help these folks. We, we, we think that they should by, you know, there should be some form of compensation, some form of recognition because they were kicked off that bombing range. They had no choice in the matter but to move. And, and so he organized, he organized folks around there and then I came in there very, very late in the picture trying to help get the federal government to the table to start negotiating, because we didn't want to go to court on the issue. Because if you go to court it's going to take you ten years and by that time, Christ, you know, half of you're people are going to, are dying off. As it is we're having a, we don't have that many people left that were actually, you know, that were actually affected, you know, personally affected. We have a lot of, you know, they're...

RON LALIBERTE: They did compensate First Nations people?

JIM DUROCHER: Well that's exactly what they did. See they compensated the First Nations people. They compensated the Alberta side. They got 15 million dollars in Alberta and they got 13 million dollars, ahh Canoe Lake First Nations. And they did not call it compensation, like Sinclair was saying, they have a problem with that work compensation. So I said well I don't care what you call it, I said, you know, you still have to recognize the fact that Métis, that, you know, Aboriginal people were kicked off that bombing range. We congratulated them on giving the First Nations people their money and we said, "Now what are you going to do with the Métis?" And they would not, they still have not, and they, they're, you know, pussyfooting around and that's where things are at right now, so. Ralph Goodale was there four years ago, three and a half years ago. Ralph Goodale was there and he, he said, you know, "Hey I want to resolve this issue within one year." Well that's three and a half years ago, Ralph has not resolved the issue and we're saying now let's do something. Let's, let's, you know, figure something out here.

(Video Tape: 7:59.18.11) RON LALIBERTE: Uh huh. And so where is it at now?

JIM DUROCHER: Well, where it's at right now is we're waiting, we're waiting for, for Ralph Goodale, we've written him a letter here just very recently and we've written a letter to Anne McLellan as well. I had a meeting with Anne McLellan last week asking, asking for, asking for her to, to tell the Department of National Defence to get back to the table so that we can continue negotiating for this thing and, you know, I have asked Jim as well and his connections with Ralph Goodale to, to get Ralph Goodale to fulfill his commitment, you know, on that issue. It's not really that difficult an issue because I've told Ralph Goodale, I said, "Ralph," I said, "You've dealt with the First Nations people on this issue. They're fairly happy with the way that you've have handled this thing. All you have to do is deal with the Métis in the same manner," I said. And if you're afraid of the word compensation, the people over there don't really care what you call it. Yeah they don't care. Call

it honour payment, you know, whatever and, you know, he hasn't, he hasn't really, you know, come across with anything.

(Video Tape: 8:00.28.03) RON LALIBERTE: Are you optimistic that something will come across?

(Video Tape: 8:00.30.10) JIM DUROCHER: Well, I'm optimistic in the way, in, in, in the sense that, you know, I got, you know, you know, Jim and I got the, you know, the deputy Prime Minister now, Anne McLellan I met with her last week, like I said, on that issue. And she's going to be talking to, with Ralph again and she's going to be talking with Dennis Codere, who is the minister responsible for Métis. And she, and she's also going to be talking to Pratt, David Pratt with the Minister of National Defence to try and get back to the table again and try to deal with this issue. So that's where things are at, at this very moment. And I'm just waiting for a word from somebody and, you know, I've been getting a lot of heat from the people in the North, who take it to the press and go, go, let's, let's take it to the press and start putting a little bit of heat on these guys, and I'm just giving them a little more time to, you know, hope that Jim can talk to...

RON LALIBERTE: Well it's unconscionable that they would compensate one group and not the other.

JIM DUROCHER: Yes exactly.

RON LALIBERTE: Just, to me...

JIM DUROCHER: Well I asked them, I asked them about that. I said, "How come you're able to do that for the First Nations people and you're not able to do anything for us?" I said. And they're answer was, PCO's, answer was well they have a process in place. You know, they have the comprehensive

land claim process in place. And so I said, "Well if that's all it takes, give us a process." What the hell is the big deal, you know? Nothing has happened.

RON LALIBERTE: Well...interesting.

JIM DUROCHER: Absolutely.

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