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JAMES GRAY

James Gray was a farmer who went to work for the Saskatchewan government when the CCF came to power. He had helped in the organization of the Wheat Pool and was involved in the cooperative movement. His government work was in the area of fish, fur and timber marketing.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Timber board activities in northern Saskatchewan.
- Malcolm Norris - his outspokenness.
- Fish marketing in Saskatchewan.
- Education and religion in the north.
- The government box factory.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Jim Gray was a senior bureaucrat with the new CCF government and was the head of the Timber Board as well as being a member

of the Fish Board. As a government employee, he was acquainted with Norris and Brady.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I am speaking to Jim Gray of Saskatoon. Jim, Mr. Gray, was active in the north from the beginning of - when the CCF government first came to power. Jim, I guess we could first talk a bit about the Timber Board which is one of the things you were most active in. Could you tell me when the Timber Board was established and what were its goals at the time?

Jim: Well, I'm not so good on dates now because I had a stroke two years ago and it affected my memory. I can't remember dates. Maybe you can get the dates from another source.

Murray: Yeah, the dates aren't that important.

Jim: The idea of the Timber Board was to try and preserve some of Saskatchewan's timber for future generations. The way timber has been handled in the past - and so far as I can see, it's been that way nearly in every country starting up - contractors went in where they could make more money by slaughtering the trees, riding over them with caterpillars, engines, picking out the best and let the rest rot. When the CCF government came into power, one of the principles of the CCF was that the people, the citizens of Saskatchewan, owned the trees. They owned the forest; they were entitled to use that forest in the best interests of all the citizens. Of course, that naturally interfered with the personal interests of those who were only interested in making profits. And when the Timber Board was established, the purpose of the Timber Board was to call the (inaudible) for tenders to harvest the trees, that was to cut and saw them into timber. And the government, through the Timber Board, would then market the lumber. And, of course, if there was any so-called profits to be made, it would go to the people of Saskatchewan. Mind you, this was only for Saskatchewan because it was a Saskatchewan government. I had been quite interested and active in all

movements for the benefit of what I considered was the welfare of all the people, and I was, oh I would say, conscripted to come into the government and take part in the northern development because it was quite well known that I was also very interested in the welfare of our first Canadian citizens, the Indians. And I always felt that the Indians were not treated the way human beings should be treated. They were more or less treated like animals. So I was invited to take part. The Hon. J. L. Phelps was the minister. He knew me from years back because his farm wasn't very far from mine, up in the Wilkie district, and he said he wanted me to take charge of some crown corporations, fish, fur, and timber. So I agreed to that and I was in there for eight years as resident director of those crown corporations, stationed in Prince Albert. That is

the history of how I got, and I never lost my feeling for the north or the people in the north. The biggest trouble that we had in the north was too many white men who were only interested in making as much money as they could out of the - well, I would say the northern population, Indians and others. They weren't particularly interested in building anything except their own bank account, and of course, I never did agree with that idea. As part of my proof of that I helped organize the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and I was a Wheat Pool delegate for twenty years. I helped organize the co-op movement and I was a director of Federated Co-ops for almost twenty years.

Murray: Right.

Jim: So I wanted to utilize some of that.

Murray: Apply that to the north?

Jim: Yeah, in the north.

Murray: As much as possible, right. Were there any studies done by the government before the board was set up into what kinds of things should be done? Do you recall that at all?

Jim: Yes, there were studies done by the government but I'm afraid that most of the studies that I became acquainted with were not of a great deal of help, because we lacked people with the knowledge that was necessary and the will to build a system entirely different to what the people had been used to.

Murray: There weren't enough socialists involved in the...?

Jim: Well, I don't call it socialist, I just call it business. Well, you use this word socialist. A lot of people don't know what socialism is, and I'm not fussy at learning.

I'm one of the early pioneers. My father and a few other fathers at that time wanted to educate their children. There was no school district and there was no money. A bunch of them got together and they did raise enough money to build a school; they all did. I never heard of anybody not taking part, even the bachelors. They realized that in a matter of time they would get married and have children and they had to educate their children. We didn't call that socialism. I never had this word socialism and the only time I ever hear socialism is from a guy who doesn't know what it is. He's a rank capitalist and doesn't know it. All he's interested in is his own welfare and he bleats and hollers and yells about socialism. When we organized the Wheat Pool it was "Socialism! Socialism!"

Murray: Anything that was against profits was socialist, was it?

Jim: Yeah, and to me I think that it's 'socialism' just to scare the people, that's all. And it's a misnomer, just ordinary business.

Murray: Right. So that the studies that were done weren't that useful. What were some of the problems that the board faced then when it was established? What were the things that seemed to be the most difficult to overcome?

Jim: Well, I would say that the greatest problem was that when you did have to make a study, naturally you've got to study everything. You've got to get a study done by people who know what they're talking about. And you might have people who are interested enough and their purpose is good, but they don't know what they actually do want. Oh, I don't know. There's an old saying, "trial and error," and this was about the way that we done it. You see, for instance, which one of the pioneers had any experience with a prairie fire? A roaring prairie fire. No experience? Didn't know what to do with it. But by golly, we handled it, you see. It was the same with treating your cattle. We didn't have no veterinarian. When a cow or a horse took sick, you done the best you could. As a matter of fact the same thing with human beings. And sometimes it didn't work.

Murray: What were some of the problems you had to tackle in the Timber Board? What sorts of things and what sorts of solutions did you come up with?

Jim: Well, one of the big problems we had with the Timber Board was for years - I'm not going to mention any names, you can dig them up - for years we had lumber companies which was private individuals who got a hold of a tract of land at a very, very cheap rate, fleeced the workmen, and all they were interested in was profits. And with the result that there was chunks of Saskatchewan cleaned off. They cleaned off the timber and then when I talked to some of those lumber men, they said that we were too hard on them, the Timber Board was too hard. They said, "Just leave us alone for another five years. That's all we want." And I said, "And then what?" We'll move out to another place." And I says, "How about me and my people in Saskatchewan? We'll be left without any timber just because you're so damn greedy - nothing doing. You're not going to clean off the timber if I can stop it."

Murray: Can you remember any of details of that kind of confrontation? What did you do about those private companies? Were there regulations established for them?

Jim: Oh yes, oh yes. There were regulations but then again you had to be careful with your regulations because you can't very well put through a regulation to stop stealing when everybody's been stealing for years. They feel that your taking...

Murray: That you're stealing.

Jim: (laughs) You're taking their liberty away from them, you see. Well, you had to be as reasonable as you could and at the same time don't let down your principles of what you are

trying to build. Actually, we were trying to build a Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and just the same, you see, I revert back to the cooperative where I took such an active part. While I was a director, I ran into difficulties with individuals who said that you shouldn't have a cooperative store, it just restrains private business. You should let everybody go, you see. In other words, every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost. And I didn't agree with it. Well, strange to say, I had many good friends who didn't agree with me on that particular thing.

Murray: That was the same in the north as well, was it?

Jim: Pretty well. Pretty well.

Murray: How did Mr. Phelps feel about those companies? He and you were pretty much of the same mind as to those things. What was his approach to deal with the private companies?

Jim: Mr. Phelps, although he lived thirty-five miles from me, he farmed at Wilkie, and of course, he went through the robbery era in farming. And I have no apologies to make. I, as a farmer, was robbed in the marketing of my product. And the government done damn little to protect the farmer. They still believed that the government shouldn't interfere with business. No, they didn't interfere when it came to exploitation.

Murray: What about Mr. Phelps in the north? What was his approach to exploitation of those resources? How did he feel that those companies should be dealt with?

Jim: I was instructed by the cabinet and Mr. Phelps to carry out my duties as laid down by them and I told them what my principles were, and any time that they laid down some principle I considered not sound, I would disagree with them. And if it was bad enough I would just refuse to carry it out or I would hand in my resignation. And I had no difficulty that way at all. Oh, I can't say that I didn't disagree and have cabinet ministers disagree with me, but disagreement is for little things.

Murray: Right, right. Was there any consultation at all with native people in the north about the Timber Board and what it was trying to do? What effort was made to sort of educate native people as to the purpose and goals?

Jim: Well, this was another thing. You were dealing very, very largely with a group of uneducated people who - pretty hard to hold a consultation with them. You've got to pick out what I would say is their so-called leadership, and in many cases that so-called leadership were more interested in private enterprise than they were in building something for the welfare of the people. And it's awfully hard to hold a conference to get anywhere, but so far as it was possible, so far as it was possible, I, with the instructions from Mr. Phelps and the

cabinet, held consultations with as many groups that were concerned before action was taken. But it was very much different than what it is now because now they're getting to the place where they're starting - those groups are starting to be educated and thinking for themselves.

Murray: And fighting for their rights. At that time this wasn't the case at all?

Jim: Oh well, practically nil, practically nil.

Murray: Was communications a major problem in the north at that time?

Jim: No, no. Communications, of course, was difficult. Nothing like it used to be down in the prairies in 1907, 1908, and 1909. Of course, I'm used to that. No, no, I would say it was difficult, yes.

Murray: But not insurmountable?

Jim: No, no. We had airplanes and we had - what do you call it? - the shortwave.

Murray: The radio telephone. What was the extent of forest operations in northern Saskatchewan when you first arrived? Was the industry fairly active at that time?

Jim: Yes, yes they were.

Murray: And where would it have been active? What kinds of operations?

Jim: Well, The Pas Lumber Company had a large holding between Carrot River and The Pas, which they cleaned out before they left. They went to B.C., I think, and got another chunk of the people's timber out there and nobody stopped them. But there were small logging outfits all over the north and a lot of them, of course, are not acting now. A lot of that territory is cleaned out. When you as a, well greenhorn so far as timber is concerned, as you go through the country you'll probably see what looks like a lot of timber alongside the highway. Well it's really not. It's too small for anybody to go in and...

Murray: And use it.

Jim: Yeah, and use it. It just stands there, you see. Another thing is there is no firewood used now so nobody's interested in...

Murray: Picking it up.

Jim: Picking it up. In my first years in Saskatchewan, of course, we drove forty miles to pick up a load of firewood, you see. I wasn't connected with the field officers except

working with them. I think they had a pretty fair good field staff because they would cruise a bunch of timber, what they call cruise it. They would send their inspectors through there and they would know how much timber was in that block - probably a block of timber twenty-five, fifty miles square or

round - and they would mark the timber that should be cut. You see, timber is something the same as wheat. Wheat has to be cut at a certain time, has to be harvested or you lose it. Well, same thing with timber. As a matter of fact, all timber is that way. If it's not cut at a certain time...

Murray: At the proper time.

Jim: It deteriorates.

Murray: What areas were the companies active in? Was it primarily the Meadow Lake and around Cumberland and those areas that there was cutting going on?

Jim: Yeah, you had some at Cumberland and some at Meadow Lake, some at Buffalo Narrows and they started into - I guess they were logging there before. You see, they were logging and hauling logs into the middle, in Prince Albert, in 1910. (laughs) Of course, there was none hauled into Prince Albert while I was there; this was all cut out, you see. Big River had a sawmill there that my brother-in-law worked in, I think he said it was 1908, in the winter of 1908. The sawdust burner, a great big sawdust burner was hooked up to the dwelling houses and heated the dwelling houses. Burning the sawdust in Big River.

Murray: As long as the mill was going the houses were warm?

Jim: Well even when the mill wasn't going they arranged to have the - what do you call it? - offal, we call it in cattle...

Murray: Right.

Jim: Burned.

Murray: Were there many native people involved in the forest industry at the time that you arrived in the north?

Jim: No. Very few, very few.

Murray: Even in the cutting operations, eh?

Jim: In any operation. You see, the white people had been educated that those people were savages, and we had to educate them to believe in the white man's way. Then, of course, the white man's way was to have his squaw and his family riding on a wagon reach, peddling willow pickets at the highest possible price they could possibly get - and, of course that wasn't very high. Now and again his family and himself would have to eat gophers for dinner, and I've seen them eating gophers. And

they were always hungry. I always wondered if there was anything I could do to change that. But, unfortunately, I couldn't do an awful lot and age caught up with me and eliminated me.

Murray: How did the native people feel? What was their major activity in the north? Were they primarily nomadic people in those days when you first...?

Jim: Pretty well, pretty well all and the majority of native people didn't have any use for the white man and I don't blame them.

Murray: It was a mutual separation then between the two groups.

Jim: Well, of course, the white man didn't care. He got enough to eat so why should he worry. But the native people, they did care because there was times when they didn't get enough to eat. And they saw the white man with plenty to eat but they couldn't get it. So I haven't had anything to do with the north for about twenty years. And some of the men that I worked with - one of them in a very responsible position dealing with the natives of the north - he didn't agree with me, which I expected. He told me he knew how to handle Indians. He said, "I handle them with a horsewhip." I said, "Yes, I know. But that's not my way." Unfortunately that man drew a very high salary and was high up until he retired.

Murray: This was in the government?

Jim: Not provincial, no.

Murray: Federal government?

Jim: Yeah. So you see, there was other people like that. But now, of course, I'm hoping that some of those young Indians that I know will be like my late friend, Malcolm Norris. He and I were very good friends because he was a halfbreed. As a matter of fact, he called himself an improved Scotsman because his father was a Scotsman and I told him that if it hadn't been for a Scotsman he'd be running around with a bunch of feathers in his head and a tomahawk in his hand.

Murray: He used to like to tease?

Jim: I liked Malcolm and he was loyal to his own race, the Indian. He's a good speaker too. I used to get quite a kick out of him when he went to talk to some of the mining men. He knew a heck of a lot more about the mining than I did, which meant he didn't have to know an awful lot. But he used to

apologize when he started out his meeting. He says, "I've got to apologize to you folks tonight. I have to speak to you in a foreign language. I've got to speak to you in English."

(laughs) Oh, poor old Malcolm; I liked Malcolm. Well-behaved, he had a nice wife, nice family, he wasn't afraid to speak his

mind, and disagree with the powers that be whenever he felt like it. And, of course, that's one thing that I appreciated. Certain employees who were in a position to know better didn't have enough guts to suggest that their superior was wrong. I don't agree with that at all because they made a lot of mistakes.

Murray: Malcolm wasn't one of those?

Jim: No, Malcolm wasn't one of those. He had enough guts and wasn't afraid to express his opinion.

Murray: What kinds of discussions did you and Malcolm used to have? What were things that concerned him the most about the north?

Jim: Oh, we got tangled into everything. We used to go down to that school down east of Regina. What do you call it?

Murray: The Qu'Appelle?

Jim: The Qu'Appelle, yeah. We used to go down to Qu'Appelle.

Murray: These were conferences were they, of people?

Jim: Well, some of those Qu'Appelle schools used to give Malcolm and I a pain in the neck. We used to come home before they were over, we couldn't be bothered with them. Too many old women of the male sex. I think we were too highly educated and hadn't used the rein, and you see, we were pretty critical, maybe a little too critical. Looking back now I can see where I was probably too critical for those people to understand.

Murray: Not patient enough perhaps.

Jim: No, they don't get the opportunity to think. I don't know just how to explain it but you take my own sons. My oldest son is one of the directors in the Co-op Implements and he asked me on various occasions how I got my education without any schooling, when he went to school all his life and he hasn't got the education I've got. And I told him. I said,

"Well, we used to call a meeting for farmers to discuss some problem affecting farmers. One farmer would take a team and a sleigh and he'd probably pick up about eight or ten other farmers and you would drive probably five, six, seven miles to the schoolhouse. You would have an elected chairman, but on the way down there you would argue over everything, in the sleigh box. If you got cold you got out and run, beat your hands to keep them warm, but the argument went on. It could be anything that is up-to-date. Of course we wouldn't argue about abortion because we didn't know what that was. But we would be arguing about the price of wheat, even tariffs - why a tariff? With the net result that the most of the people that were members of parliament, members of the legislature, came from the farming class and they had an education much superior

to those other people. I listened to one man giving a talk on the CCF and somebody said, "What caused the CCF to build up in Saskatchewan? What caused it to start?" Well, he went on to a long harangue that, in my opinion, didn't amount to a damn. I know what caused it. When you take a load of wheat into an elevator and you get a cheque for \$3 and something, and you have three kids to buy shoes for, that's all you get...

Murray: That's what caused the CCF?

Jim: That's what causes you to be a rebel. The CCF was a rebel except we were loyal rebels. We wanted to build a country that you could live in and enjoy. And a lot of people seem to have the idea, well it was a nice idea you know and somebody reached up and pulled this sort of thing down out of the sky. Oh no, they didn't. I know what started it because I lived through it, and you see, the oppression was so great little things would help out. The government set up the grading system which helped out a lot, but it didn't help out the least bit when you hauled a load of wheat into the elevator and you knew very well that you had sixty bushel on that wagon, but you only got paid for forty. Nothing you could do about it.

(END OF SIDE A)

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Jim: Mr. Dent was one of the first and he had a Dr. Setka, a very good friend of mine. He had a very active part. They didn't call it the Medicare, they called it the State Hospital Medicine Aid. But all of those things had to have people fighting for them.

Murray: Right, I see.

Jim: And apparently all those unfortunate things, some of them that I have mentioned, and I could mention to you dozens more - children going to school with potato sacks wrapped around their feet, all kinds of stuff like this - and that is what caused the revolution in Saskatchewan.

Murray: Right. Well I would like to try and get back to the northern part of that because that's the area I'm studying at the moment. I'm wondering if, in the establishment of the Timber Board, the government was looking at trying to employ as many native people as possible. Was that one of the goals of the board?

Jim: Yes, that was one of the goals so far as I had something to do with that. We had some people but, again, well you are trying to work into an age. For instance, with all of my experience with everything, would they employ me as one of the experts to take them to the moon? I don't know the first thing about it and this is what we were up against.

Murray: Everybody was up against the same sort of thing, eh?

Jim: Well, not everybody, no. Usually it was the white man that got a little bit of training in fish handling and fish buying and particularly in fish selling, and the natives didn't have that opportunity. You see, it's a hard thing if you don't know of it. When the natives went to fish a lake they had to go to the local storekeeper to get the nets and they couldn't pay for them. So what happened is the local storekeeper sold them nets on credit. They made sure, of course - he knew the prices fish were at, he knew the fish market. Because I was in charge of the fish board for a while. I knew the fish market before it was there. And, of course, he would advance the credit in accordance with...

Murray: How much he knew he was going to make.

Jim: Yeah.

Murray: And it would be just about the same?

Jim: Well, some storekeepers apparently, they liked them. But in one particular case I know that I pleaded with the fish dealer at a certain point to have his fish go through the fish board and the fishermen themselves turned me down. Two weeks later they sent a radiogram in to me saying that the fish dealer had refused to take the fish, would I take the fish? Well, I had to get busy and make my contacts all over, which I did. A week later I got another one saying that the fish dealer had changed his mind and came back into the district and

he'd buy the fish and give them two cents a pound more than what I have stated. So I said, "Okay, go ahead. Okay by me." A week later another one asked if he could take fish. This is what - it just disgusted you.

Murray: This went on all the time then, did it?

Jim: Yep. Went on all the time.

Murray: And this was a game being played by the fish buyers? This was all calculated on their part was it?

Jim: Well, the fish buyers! Oh there's not very many of them on the road and they're usually buying for somebody in New York and somebody in Chicago and somebody in -- I can't use the words to explain what kind of people they are. But as far as I was concerned I never met an honest fish dealer.

Murray: How long did the confrontation with those dealers go on? Did the government finally win the battle against those dealers?

Jim: No, no. You see, they can buy fish wherever they like and the only time you win is if they're short of fish. If they're not short, they're not going to (inaudible).

Murray: If they're short they will pay a decent price because they need the fish.

Jim: Yeah, well then every different lakes... You see, I believe the best whitefish in Saskatchewan - I don't like making those statements - the best whitefish in Saskatchewan is in Redberry Lake down in the prairie. The fish dealers will give you double the money for that fish.

Murray: As opposed to the northern whitefish.

Jim: Yeah.

Murray: A lot of cysts and that sort of thing?

Jim: Then the poorest fish is at Long Lake near Regina. Can't get rid of the damn things - they are lousy. But what you do then is you tell the fish dealer that you'll get two carloads of Redberry Lake fish providing (laughs) he take two carloads of...

Murray: So with the government fish board you had a bit of bargaining power?

Jim: Sure you had a control.

Murray: You'd tell them that they wouldn't get the good fish unless he took a bit of the medium grade?

Jim: Yep. And then the Indians don't know that. They haven't been educated to this, you see.

Murray: So they were at a disadvantage when dealing with the fish buyer.

Jim: Yeah, yep. And, of course, this all goes on. I don't want to put it in there but I've been offered bribery, considerable amount, to sell out the government.

Murray: By the buyers? Did that happen often or was it...?

Jim: And of course, I'm of a suspicious nature. I think some of the fellows I had probably would take it. I can honestly say that I never did.

Murray: Some people had their price then?

Jim: Oh, yes.

Murray: These would be people down at the lower end of the scale. Would they be government employees then?

Jim: Oh, I don't know.

Murray: They would be private individuals? What kind of things would they do for a price? They would sell to the

buyers instead of the government if there was a bribe involved?

Jim: Yes, bootleg, bootleg.

Murray: Oh, I see.

Jim: It was the same with the fur. We had certain (?) bootleg beaver, muskrat. The private dealer.

Murray: When it was legal only, at that time, in certain areas just to sell to the government.

Jim: Yeah, it wasn't that you could sell to the government. They paid the highest price. But again they weren't under control. (laughs) I had a funny situation; an old Indian gave to me with a mink and I didn't pretend to know very much although I was in charge of the fur marketing. I didn't pretend to know anything about - that wasn't my job. My job was to see that the thing run honestly. Well, he couldn't

speak English and the Mounted Police were with me at the time. I said, "Do you know what this fellow wants?" They said, "Yeah. He said the local Hudson's Bay man has offered him \$10 for that hide and he thinks it's worth more. And he said you and I are going up to Camsell Portage by plane. He wants you take this with you and try and sell it at Camsell Portage." I said, "That's a good idea." So we got on the plane. Camsell Portage is way up at the far corner.

Murray: By Uranium City.

Jim: Yeah, it's further up. It's right up there. But anyway, he took this hide up. There was no place to stay at Camsell Portage except with the Hudson's Bay manager. We slept on the floor. And while we were sitting there, the Mountie pulls this mink out of his pocket and he said, "By the by, how much would you give me for this?" Well, the fellow said to the Mountie, "I didn't know you were trapping mink." "Oh," the Mountie says, "I do that in my spare time." He knew he wasn't going to get any information out of that. "Well," he said, "I'll give you \$8 for it." And this old Indian had been offered \$10 down at the Stony Rapids. "No," the Mountie says, and he wouldn't sell it. So on the way back he says, "Okay, Gray, will the fur marketing service take this?" "Well," I said, "you've put me on a spot. I'm not supposed to buy fur." "Well," he said, "I'm not going to sell it to that so and so for eight or ten bucks. I think it's worth a lot more than that." So we left it on hold until we got to Stony Rapids. I said, "Give it to me. You tell the Indian that I got it and I'll pay him what I can get, some time." No money was exchanged or anything. So I took the mink and I sent it to the fur marketing side of it, and I didn't tell them what it was, where it came from, or anything about it. And I got back seventeen dollars and fifty cents. And I turned it over to the Mountie and he presumably gave it to the Indian. I think he would, too, because that was one thing in the north that I did admire, was that every Mounted Policeman I ran into was trying

his best to suit the natives. But it was difficult because you've got to keep in with (laughs) everybody.

Murray: That's right. You've got to be on the side of everybody at the same time.

Jim: Well, it's more than that. You're living in the community and you've only got one church, well you'd better keep in.

Murray: With the white community.

Jim: And you see, they only had the two communities in the, in the north, the English church and the Catholics. And of course, every pilot, when they are flying in the north, just as soon he saw that building with the cross on it, "Gray," he said, "there's the sign of poverty." That's what happened.

Murray: Well what were your observations about the role of the church in the lives of native people at this time?

Jim: Most of them that I've run into, they were interested in the children to a certain age and then they seemed to wipe their hands of them. This is where the trouble came. They would educate them until they got to the fifth or sixth grade or something like that. And the kids got so fed up with the damn school which had too much religion in it for them, the kids ran away. And what's he gonna do? So they ran into the white man's trap; it was all set up. The girls went into prostitution and the boys went into thieving, stealing, robbing.

Murray: And both drinking.

Jim: But I had a funny situation. I can't really understand it yet at Beauval. I didn't work officially with someone who was in the organization, but I worked unofficially with them, and when I finally resigned from the government, I got mad at them and I resigned. And I put it in the paper why I resigned because, in my opinion, they were not carrying out what they were suppose to do. And after I resigned the Catholic mission or whatever they called it, Beauval, I think it was, they sent me a radiogram inviting me to come there for supper. So I went. They had a banquet put on for me and I think there were twelve Catholic priests and myself. I'm not a Catholic. They put me up overnight and pleaded with me to withdraw my resignation. They said, "You're only angry, but (inaudible)." Oh, I told them, you know. Anyway I kidded them. I said, "You know, it's a funny thing when first I came in, some of you fellows called me an athiest, and one father over here said he believed Russia would pay me to come in here."

Murray: Well everybody in the CCF got that I guess, eh?

Jim: Oh, they were opposed to them. No wonder. They sent a bunch of highly educated fellows that were more interested in quarreling with the priest, than they were in

doing something for the natives. I told them straight, "I don't give a damn what his religion is. Don't try and convert me. Can't be done. But I do want your help to help that native."

Murray: Who were the people who wanted to confront the church? Were these government people, do you mean?

Jim: Oh no - yeah, they were government. I was the only one - that's what the priests said. They said, "You're the only government employee that we trust. It was the same with the labor unions. I carry my labor union card in my pocket but I never told them that. I could get into any of those labor meetings. That's one thing, when the government didn't like my actions, because I wouldn't lie to the labor about the balance sheet. I'd take it up and show it to them. "Oh, you shouldn't do that. That's confidential." "Well," I said, "get me out of here."

Murray: You resigned in the middle fifties from the government, was that about it?

Jim: Well, I quit the government in 1950. I went with the government in '44, and I quit eight years later, that would be...

Murray: '52.

Jim: '52, yeah. And then I went with the Farmers Union. I was the assistant to the president.

Murray: What prompted you to quit the government? Were there a number of things that you felt were being done incorrectly? You had mentioned earlier that they weren't carrying out what they were supposed to. Could you elaborate a bit on that?

Jim: Are you reading any of those?

Murray: Yes.

Jim: Have you seen the situation? Well, as I say, it's twenty years since I quit, but when I was there the white man going in, they built nice house for them. The Indian was still having a shack. I didn't agree with them.

Murray: And so this was a government policy that you were...

Jim: Oh, I don't know if it was or not. But too many fellows in there have done what they damn well liked.

Murray: Was that a lack of political direction in your view?

Jim: No, I think it was a lack of understanding what the damn government was set up for.

Murray: Mr. Phelps had an understanding of that when he was in.

Jim: But he got defeated after four years.

Murray: He was out to '48.

Jim: Well it was all right when he was in.

Murray: But there was a noticeable change after Mr. Phelps lost?

Jim: As far as I was concerned, yes.

Murray: And Mr. Brockelbank came in after Mr. Phelps. Was he the next minister?

Jim: Yep, he came in.

Murray: Was it a lack of understanding on his part that led to some of these...?

Jim: Well, nobody can tell what the reasons are, all you can go by is results.

Murray: Can you remember any specific kinds of things that changed after '48?

Jim: No, just your general working conditions. And then, oh they want to change something. You have to have this higher education thing. And of course I never did have that. And I suppose if I had had something I could hang up on the wall - cover the fly specks over - I could get quite a higher raise in salary for it.

Murray: This is when the bureaucrats started taking over? Was that the period?

Jim: Well, difference of opinion. Difference of opinion. I will say that perhaps if I had been - I didn't join the civil service. I had no use for the civil service. They've lost their freedom, they can't say what they like and I found that it would just be a case of disagreement. So that's why I'm saying(?) "To hell with them."

Murray: This was disagreement with people higher up in the civil service, deputy ministers, that kind of position?

Jim: Yeah, well yes, yeah. You see, you got sick of the damn thing.

Murray: Sick of fighting.

Jim: Well you suggest things and, "Yeah, yeah we'll see that's done." And it's never done.

Murray: What kinds of things?

Jim: Oh, you'll probably want a school. We wanted a school at Sturgeon Landing. And we thought it was all working well, because Norris and I were working hard to get it there because there was a bunch of young Indians there. And the powers that be decided not to. And we didn't know - you don't know who decides. It just isn't done.

Murray: That was the frustration of it probably then. You didn't really know where the decisions were made.

Jim: That's right.

Murray: You just knew they weren't made. Did that start almost immediately after 1948, that process? Was it noticeable pretty quickly?

Jim: Oh I think so, yeah, to anybody that was watching it. You must remember that I was one of the old original CCFers. And anything that deviated from that plan just struck me like a bullet. Another guy probably never saw it.

Murray: Didn't strike him at all?

Jim: No, no he just thought it was another political dodge.

Murray: So in the days of Mr. Phelps, Mr. Phelps took an active role in what was going on in the department. Was that part of the difference do you think?

Jim: That's exactly what happened, you see. Mr. Phelps would phone me and tell me, "I want you to fly north here two hundred miles. We got to have a meeting with the fishermen." And I said, "Where?" He said, "Out on the ice." Well what

the hell (laughs) twenty below. "Well," he said, "if you don't, I'll go up there myself." And my God, he would. Sure. (laughs) Of course I was independent too, you see. Now and again, he was right; now and again, I was right. I don't know who fished on the lake when I told him not to fish it and I told him why. Yeah, one of these highfalutin' friends coaxed him different (laughs) and they fished the bloody lake. Well, they had fish all over the little town. They couldn't sell it. I knew they couldn't. (laughs) He didn't.

Murray: So there was a flexibility when Mr. Phelps was the minister?

Jim: Yeah, well, you see, he was interested.

Murray: He was committed to the north?

Jim: Yeah, well he's that way with anything. If I told him that I didn't agree on a certain thing he'd look at me and say, "By George, you're determined on that are you?" I said, "Sure. I'm right. Don't do it." "Well," he said, "Okay, I

won't. But God help you if I find out you're wrong." I said, "You won't." He wouldn't do it. He had so much trust in the fellows. And if he ever found that you sold him out, he'd just fire you as soon as look at you, you see. And I liked that method of doing work.

Murray: What was it like working with Mr. Brockelbank?

Jim: Well, I didn't work with him because he's a different nature. He didn't go out and look at the things.

Murray: He was removed from the north was he?

Jim: No, no, I wouldn't say that, but he was more the type of man that the civil servant would like to work under. And, of course, I wasn't a civil servant.

Murray: He was more accepting of the traditional role of the bureaucrat and the civil servant, was he?

Jim: Well, he said he was a socialist and I've already told you I don't know what that is. But I don't know. I was quite friendly with Tommy Douglas. Quite friendly. I took over the fishing industry at Meadow Lake, much against the wishes of the millionaire, Clark. He had the whole control, and he had a little Frenchman there that he turned everything over to. I think his name was Bedard, something like that. Well he tried everything he could to chase me off that lake and

finally he offered me \$2,000. I wouldn't take it so he phoned Tommy Douglas, got him in his office and he said, "I've got a man here, Jim Gray, and I want to know what you have him for." Tommy told him. "Well," he said, "I'm not going to deal with him at all. He's not taking over anything here." And he [Tommy] said, "Well, what did he say?" He says, "He told me I'm finished." And Tommy said, "I guess it's true." (laughs) And he was finished - that's when he offered me the \$2,000.

Murray: I'm not sure how true it is, but I've heard that the CCF had given Joe Phelps a bit of a rough time after 1948 and during the election. That perhaps they felt he was causing a bit too many waves. Was that the impression you got at the time that maybe they could have treated him better?

Jim: No, I don't think so. My father, you see, was quite a religious man, and he said, "Now, Jimmy, you're trying to build a Co-operative Commonwealth. But I want to draw your attention to - you're still dealing with human beings. And human beings is what's caused all the trouble, but you're still dealing with those same human beings." And this is what you're up against, you see. You've got the same thing today, you've got the same thing today. We have this very much in the senior citizens, old age pensioners and - I don't know - something in the human set up. I run into it with the senior citizens quite a lot, but they change. As a matter of fact (laughs) I think the senior citizens are hard at work with them kids, sure.

Murray: One of the things that you were probably involved in, while you were on the Timber Board, was the box factory. Can you give a bit of a history on that?

Jim: Oh yeah, they turned that over to me against my wishes. That was Woodrow, the late Woodrow Lloyd. Phelps got blamed for it, but it wasn't him, it was Lloyd. And, of course, I knew Woodrow quite well and I knew all the Lloyd family. There's nine of them, and pretty well all the Lloyd family I got along with very good, except Woodrow. Woodrow just got swelled-headed. But what happened in the box factory was it was a mediocre box factory in the first place. I forgot his name. Mitchell was it? Mitchell? I think that was it, yeah. He had bought up old machinery for next to nothing and he had built certain buildings. Building lean tos and scrap lumber and so on. And anybody looking for a job, and in those days there was quite a few fellows looking for a job, he would hire them at seventeen cents an hour. They had no union and of

course they had to take it. And they was doing fine. All of a sudden somebody got wise to this thing within the government - I don't know who it was, it wasn't me - that doesn't make any difference. Anyway, the government decided that - oh yes, it was the government legislation - the minimum wage had to be fifty-five cents an hour. So, of course, they passed this legislation and he refused to obey it. Well they went to him and they told him that he either had to obey the legislation or they'd take over his box factory. Well, of course, I thought that was all right. But instead of taking over the box factory they decided to buy it from him at a high price. And they bought a bunch of junk. I can't tell you why they didn't do it. I was mad over it. They didn't have to take it over. All they had to do was say, "You obey that law or we'll close you down." Instead of that... (laughs) Of course, they couldn't make it pay.

Murray: It would only pay if you pay the workers half the minimum wage.

Jim: That's all, yeah. Well finally, by gum, the board of directors decided I was to take charge of it. They finally started picking managers for me. The only time the box factory made any money was when I asked the working men to appoint a committee to run it. And I told them, I said, "Listen, I'm not going to have a damn thing to do with this thing. It's your worry. I got it wished on me but they can use my name and I'll help you all I can. But by God, it's up to you boys, now."

Murray: So you handed it over to the workers?

Jim: Yeah, I said, "It isn't my job, it's yours. You appoint a committee and I'll turn it over. I'll okay anything you do and I'll raise your wages accordingly." So I got their wages raised to \$1.14 an hour.

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