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GLEN LINDGREN

Glen Lindgren has worked in northern Saskatchewan for many years in the field of education. He was active in the CCF/NDP party and was one of those responsible for drafting the proposal on the single agency for the north.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The CCF/NDP in La Ronge.
- Proposal for a single government agency in the north. Adoption by the NDP.
- Story of children missing school to visit Jim Brady.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Glen Lindgren has been a teacher, principal and educator in northern Saskatchewan for many years. He did not know Brady or Norris very well. He was active in the NDP after Brady and Norris died and tells here about the CCF/NDP in the years between '64 and '71.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I am speaking to Glen Lindgren of La Ronge. Glen, you

arrived in La Ronge about 1964 and although you didn't know Brady and Norris that well, you were active in the local CCF. Could you describe a bit for me what the CCF was like in La Ronge and how many people were active and was it an active group during the year or just for elections, that sort of thing?

Glen: Well, yes, it is very easy to answer that one. It was absolutely dead except for election times and even then we really didn't give support to the candidates. I can recall, what was it, Johnny Harp(?) running from Uranium City and later Tony Wood ran from Uranium City and I'm afraid he got very little support from the La Ronge people. We just didn't have an active membership nor an active organization.

Murray: What accounted for that? Was there an effort to build up an organization and it just wasn't working or...?

Glen: There just seemed to be a void and nobody did anything about it. And myself, I came in as a newomer and I had my hands

full with the school and I just didn't go out looking for anything more to do. In fact, our sports organization was so low here in La Ronge that any extra time I had, I devoted to that. And not in the political arena.

Murray: What were the elections like in La Ronge that you recall, the provincial elections?

Glen: The actual campaign was, provincially they were usually on the dirty side. Very much so.

Murray: Could you expand on that a bit?

Glen: Well, Allan Guy was a very difficult person to defeat because he could talk to people and would say one thing and then when it came election day you would find out that an awful lot of people going to vote with thick heads. And there was no doubt about it that there was an awful lot of liquor that seemed to appear from nowhere just the night before. And the same thing in the other communities, that cases of doughnuts would go into communities and cases of doughnuts have never gone in before nor since. And voting would turn around as to what you'd expect.

Murray: Would that indicate that native people didn't vote for political positions but were left out of the political system to a large extent? In terms of actual debates?

Glen: Oh yes, I think the Indian people, particularly out in the communities, really never did understand party politics. They could understand the appearance of a person that came in,

and what the person said as to the readings of eye to eye, sort of thing, but I don't think they really understood the

philosophical change. Now, some of the people over at Ile-a-la-Crosse did, I'm convinced of that now. But speaking of Stanley Mission and some of these communities around here, this constituency, I'm sure that they really didn't understand them. And when Bob Dalby campaigned, they learned a lot more about it then. A lot of the voters would promise their vote to a person because of what they knew of the person. As far as the party was concerned, they probably understood very little of it, excepting maybe in one instance.

In Stanley Mission they held a meeting two years ago this summer. And it was concerning the transfer of the school to the administration of the Indian band rather than the normal school board. And the Metis people were by no means ready to give up the school from the Northern School Board. Years ago, they wanted a school in Stanley Mission. It was in the days of Jeff Piercey, came out and took a survey in the north in 1944 and he found then that there was sorely needed financial assistance to get schools started in the north. And so it was through the CCF back in the '40s that some of these schools were started and Stanley Mission was one of them. And some of the old-timers remembered this, that the CCF came in and they must have associated the school with the CCF, and they promised them a school without having to pay. That is, there would just be tax payment but they wouldn't have to pay as if you were sending them to tuition, to a private school or something. And they thought this was just tremendous, that they would get a school and the government was doing it and they associate this with the CCF. Now this came up in the meeting, as I say, two years ago when they wanted to transfer the school to the Indian band and the Metis people were very, very concerned that they would have to then pay money to the band to have the children go there.

Murray: That wasn't the case but they felt that way.

Glen: It was very difficult to explain to them that, no, the government would pay the tuition costs. But they remembered thirty years ago when the CCF come in and set up the school and that meant an awful lot to them and there was no way they were going to let any part of that go.

Murray: So in some instances, the political memories are very long.

Glen: Yeah, I think one can understand. It was a very real thing.

Murray: But in terms of an ideology, it's different.

Glen: I think so, yeah.

Murray: Right. You were instrumental along with Allan Quandt and Bob Dalby in, if you like, selling the idea of a single agency and the decolonization of the north to the, well, higher-ups in the NDP party. Could you describe that process from the beginning to its conclusion? When you started talking

about that concept and how it developed that you brought it to the attention of the government?

Glen: Well, it was very shortly before the NDP came out with its literature for the election of 1971. And I don't recall the dates but I do recall the three of us meeting. And I think it must have been in the early fall of 1970. And it got to the point of where we said, "Well, what's the use of talking any

more. We've got to get somebody to buy the concept of a central agency for the north. And since the NDP have no platform about the north, it's about time that we approached them to see whether they are going to have anything in their election campaign about the north." And if they had, then we wanted to see how it compared to some of our ideas and maybe get them to change. But as it so happened that when we approached them, they actually had no platform for the north and in a way, I suppose, it was...

Murray: It was better for you that they didn't.

Glen: That's right. I think it was because they knew that they had a void there and that they'd better get something in it and really, they looked over... But actually Bob Dalby is the one that really started drafting out some of the points and stating it in print. And let's see now, it seems to me he had a comparison there with some other group but I can't recall just who else had been doing some thinking on this. But at least there was no clash, in principle.

Murray: Was it just the three of you that worked on it or were there other people involved?

Glen: Well, at the selling stage it was just the three of us. And at that time, really the membership in the NDP was...

Murray: Was about three (chuckles).

Glen: It would be just, very, very low. It wasn't until the election of 1971 that we really got out and hustled up some membership. Of course there was nominations and all the rest

that came in but we had to really scratch around to get an authorized convention, nominating convention.

Murray: Right. You had to have a certain number of members for a convention.

Glen: Yeah, and you had to be signed up so many days ahead before you could vote and so on.

Murray: Right. Who were the individuals that you approached to sell the idea?

Glen: I'm not sure who was the president of the NDP at the time.

Murray: It was MacMurphy was it? Or...?

Glen: MacMurphy was certainly in on the discussions but, oh, what's his name. The farmer from (inaudible) country?

Murray: I know.

Glen: It'll come to me in a moment. If he wasn't the president at the time, he was just elected and I have an idea he was just elected the fall prior to the '71 election. I think probably that's about it but he was quite agreeable to the idea of the platform for the north and for this central agency with the Department of Northern Affairs or whatever you wanted to call it. Then he came out to La Ronge with Allan Blakeney. I think one meeting there was MacMurphy and Alvin Hewitt, and Allan Blakeney. They were the three prime people there.

Murray: How did MacMurphy feel about the idea? Was he initially agreeable or did you have to interest him?

Glen: I would say he was more concerned about winning the seat than he was about the department. Because I don't know as he really appreciated at that time all the problems of the north. But he was pretty darn concerned about getting Allan Guy the heck out of there and getting an NDP candidate in. And, he was very concerned about that.

Murray: What about Mr. Blakeney's attitude? Was he interested in the north or did he view it as so many do as just an unknown quantity sort of?

Glen: I think he realized better than many of the cabinet ministers at that time that something had to be done about the north because, you see, Allan Blakeney was the minister of education for nine months at one time and he did come into the north and had a look at it and we fared better in the understanding of cabinet when he was the minister of education. So I think he had a sense of the north that just needed a little bit more attention than what they were getting, even when he was minister of education. I think now since he became premier that he realized that there was more in the north than just some bush and trees and some fish and a few Indian people. And also, I don't think we should underestimate Ted Bowerman's influence on this because, back in the '50s, the CCF had done a fair amount of looking into the question of a central agency for the north. But they just didn't quite put it through. Now,

it may have been that they weren't sure of themselves at that time or it could have been that there was pretty strong opposition, I don't know. But it seemed like that when it was brought up again, everything clicked very quickly.

Murray: Right. Perhaps because the government wasn't the government at that time; it was the opposition trying to compete.

Glen: Yeah, that's another thing too that probably had a lot to do with it.

Murray: Hungry.

Glen: Right. And they had to have some platforms and they had to have some policies and when they were elected and then they had to get moving on them very quickly. And the government, of course, was accused of being too slow but now having been in the department a bit myself here, I realize that some things were moved a little too quickly as it was. Like, there were a lot of problems that arose because the department really wasn't set up in its bureaucracy enough to really get some things going. There was a lot of floundering out in the field that shouldn't have happened. Ile-a-la-Crosse is a good example.

Murray: Right. Now, you didn't know Brady and Norris that well but could you describe the impressions you did get of the two men while they were involved in La Ronge? Whatever impressions you had?

Glen: Yes. Well, Malcolm Norris, it wasn't so much what he ever said because I really didn't hear him expound too much but it's more from the people that I talked to that seemed to have a great deal of respect for Malcolm Norris as a person and his ideas. And I suppose a lot of it rubbed off on Berry Richards, for example. Berry often spoke about Malcolm Norris. And, oh I don't know, it just seemed that when people talked about Malcolm Norris, he just had something extra. Both as a substantial citizen and as a person that was well-read and had some ideological background.

Jim Brady was a little different here because the only place I heard of him was just locally here in the community. And before, one time when his name did come up is when children were absent from school and I would quiz them as to where they were or why they were away from school. Quite often they would say they were over at Brady's cabin. And when you inquire, "Well, what are you doing there?" well, they were just visiting. And visiting meant that they were welcome to go to his place and spend whatever time I suppose that he happened to be around, and he always had time for the kids. And there is a difference between the kids being absent and going to Brady's place and going to some of the other people of the community. I was concerned at some of the other places they hung out at but when it came to Brady, I come to find out that it really wasn't that bad a day if they went over and spent it with Brady.

Murray: It wasn't time wasted.

Glen: No, it wasn't that they were drinking beer or anything of that sort. It was food for the mind rather than just to escape from...

Murray: Right. Were these high school students or were they public or grade school?

Glen: No. They were more about 10-12, 13 year olds.

Murray: Do you remember the names of any of the young people that used to go over to Brady's?

Glen: Well, unfortunately I really can't pin down a name for you.

Murray: It was quite a while ago.

Glen: But maybe Leonard Hayland might know. He would be about that age and - not that I can ever remember particularly chasing Leonard to come to school - but he just might recall some of the little guys that were over there. No, I just can't really remember.

Murray: Oh well, I can talk to Leonard and discover that probably. Do you remember any other anecdotes at all or stories about other men?

Glen: Well, the only other one was when Brady came to the school one day and I didn't know who he was and he asked for some catalogues, if he could borrow them. He wanted to find a source of supply for something. I don't know just what it was. And so I loaned him the catalogues and then shortly he came back with them. And I thought it was most unusual that an Indian or Metis fellow would be inquiring for this type of material. But the way he spoke and handled himself, I knew he wasn't kidding. Like, he had reason to look up certain references.

Murray: Right.

Glen: And that was really my only personal, as close as I ever got to personal contact with the man.

Murray: Right.

Glen: There is another thing I just happened to think of. There is a woman - oh what's her married name now? She was Agnes Olson, Aggie Olson. She married, oh golly, was it Peterson? I forgot her name but when Brady's books and that were left, she was very anxious if she could get some copies. And she got about five of them. One was a calculus or something, which was really of no use but there were some of the others and she really prized those. And I don't even know where Aggie is now. They moved away. But she's a person that might be able to tell you more. There must have been some reason why she wanted those books. She must have known. And it wasn't just because, "I knew the fellow," I think it was sort of the philosophy or something there that appealed to her and that either he expounded or had the books or something.

Murray: Do you recall either of them being active in the

CCF/NDP at all in the years that you were in La Ronge?

Glen: No, as I say the organization was absolutely dead.

Murray: Right, until just before the '70 election, and they were both dead by that time.

Glen: That's right. Really, that was the first thing that woke us up was the provincial election of '71.

Murray: So the Liberal years were pretty dead. Was that part of why the CCF was so dead, do you think? Was that they...?

Glen: Well, I imagine. See, I came in in 1964 just after Stonehawker had gone through the campaign of 1964. And I guess the political pitch was so high in La Ronge. I know that the school was relatively still smoking from the political battles of Allan Guy and the principal at the time who was an ardent NDP.

Murray: This was Mr. Stonehawker?

Glen: No, his name was Leo Marshall, the principal. And the various stories that I heard, that the whole community was just simply glad that that whole election was at least over. And they didn't want to talk politics or even mention politics for a month after.

Murray: It was a bitter struggle, eh.

Glen: It was, yeah.

(break in tape)

Glen: Yeah, as I recall, like Stonehawker moved away himself. Allan Quandt had had his round, the election prior, and I think some of the key people who had worked so doggone hard to beat Allan Guy had it just sort of, well given up hope. With the Stonehawker election they really thought they were going to take him.

Murray: That was their big chance, they saw.

Glen: Yeah. And it turned out to be such a dirty pool game and nothing really came out of it. There is lots of stuff on file but nobody really was willing to take it on. And so, from then on things just got worse.

Murray: They were exhausted after this election.

Glen: They were, yeah. They were exhausted and they just had their fill.

Murray: Do you recall whether that was true of the CCF generally in the province or was that just in the north or would you have got that impression?

Glen: I really wouldn't know because I just wasn't around enough any more than just in this little area at the time. Yeah.

Murray: Right.

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