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NORMAN BRUDY:

Brudy is a member of the Communist party and was provincial party organizer for Saskatchewan in the early 1960s when both Brady and Norris were party members.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Brady and Norris as party members.
- Their application of Marxism to the native question.
- Comparison of their personalities and lifestyles.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

NORMAN BRUDY-Communist party member - political associate of Norris and Brady. Give impressions of Norris and Brady as political leaders and Marxists.

INTERVIEW:

Murray: I'm talking to Norman Brudy of Toronto, previously of Saskatchewan. You knew Malcolm Norris in Prince Albert. I'm wondering what connection, first of all, Malcolm had at the time with the Communist party or what connection he may have had in the past, his history with regard to the party.

Norman: Well, when I knew Malcolm Norris, he was a member of the Communist party. He was a card-carrying member of the Communist party and we met as members of the same party as well as personal friends in Prince Albert. Well, I knew Malcolm before Prince Albert, but in Prince Albert I often visited his home with his family and we, on numerous occasions, have gone to meetings together. One of the things I remember best is

around the time when the health problem, setting up the community clinics, was a very hot issue in Saskatchewan and he was interested. And we've gone to other meetings together, so I knew Malcolm that way.

Murray: When did you first meet Malcolm? You say you met him before Prince Albert.

Norman: Yeah, I would say that both Malcolm and Jim Brady, I would say somewhere around 1946 or 1947, somewhere in there when I first met them personally. I knew of them before because I knew something about, well, I knew that they were active in Alberta in the Metis organization. I didn't know them at that time but I knew that they were active and so when I met them I knew who I was dealing with.

Murray: Right, right. I'm trying to get a feel for what the size of the party in Prince Albert, the number of members, the activities. Were there very many meetings of the party itself or...?

Norman: Well, the party was never, you know, a big party. There was a fair number of, well, a dozen or so members but there was rather a much wider periphery of people.

Murray: Right.

Norman: And mainly Malcolm's work wasn't so much directly in the inner workings of the party or of the club or of anything

like that. He spent most of his time among the native population and since his employment was of the nature that took him out of Prince Albert, I would say that most of his time and most of his energy was spent in dealing with, directly, problems related to the native people of the north.

Murray: Right. Would he often get together with you and discuss issues and that sort? Was that more of his activities and...?

Norman: Yes. We would discuss, well, we would discuss many problems as Marxists, how we saw the international situation or the situation in Canada or any particular issue that may have come up in Saskatchewan. One thing about Malcolm, he had a rather, a very wide range of interests, a little different from Jim in some ways. Malcolm was interested in and took some active part and certainly kept up to date with rather, the whole gamut of politics and...

Murray: International, national...

Norman: International and national and local. And of course, always try to relate it to how it affected the native people. Sometimes a little artificially but nevertheless, that was constantly in the back of his mind. He never addressed you any other way except 'paleface.' Never. And I was a comrade of his, I was a personal friend of his. It was always 'paleface'

and that was, I think, a deliberate stance of his in order to get across a point - that the native people were a people and they needed to be recognized as a people and there were some differences between the native people and...

Murray: So he maintained that distinction at all times.

Norman: Yes. Some people may have thought it was a little bit artificial. I think probably it was, but his motive and his thinking, he was not...

Murray: He had a deliberate idea of what he was doing.

Norman: Yes, it wasn't just frivolous or anything, that was rather...

Murray: It was part of a political understanding.

Norman: That's right. I don't think I, or probably many other people like myself, fully understood that in its full meaning but I believe that it was a very conscious and serious effort on his part. Not just a frivolous, glib...

Murray: Deliberate needling or something like that.

Norman: No, I don't think so. Even though he could needle.

Murray: I've heard it said that he liked to needle but it was...

Norman: But I think the needling, even when he said, "I'm trying to needle," was not so much needling as his way of getting across a point.

Murray: Right.

Norman: A serious question.

Murray: I've struggled with a number of people to try and find exactly how he would have applied his Marxist analysis to the situation that Metis people faced. Did he ever have a sort of well-developed, coherent strategy for native people or was it a more, a shotgun approach, do you think?

Norman: Well, I must say that I don't think he considered - I think he had an idea that even other comrades of his weren't fully that interested and I don't think he went out of his way to develop that kind of a discussion. And he wasn't really searching out my opinions on that. But I do believe he did have. I think they had a, both him and Brady, had rather well thought out in their own minds. I don't know how accurate it was or how practical it was, but I think both of them just didn't work on, you know, off the top of the hat. They had a concept. I think you'd have to appreciate that nobody to my knowledge, and that includes people like myself who should probably have had, we, I don't think, fully studied and gave full consideration to how you apply Marxism to the specific

problem of the native people, say of Saskatchewan. What exactly concretely would you...

Murray: What should be the strategy.

Norman: Yeah, you know. And I don't think they had. Well, I think they had one, but just what it was I wouldn't like to say even though I thought when I recall there were some discussions of whether the native people don't have to move from where they are to some form of private ownership and so on as part of a process to further... So, as far as I'm concerned, I think they had some well thought out ideas but I don't think they were ever really debated amongst ourselves. Not with me anyway.

Murray: Perhaps between Brady and Norris but not with anyone else.

Norman: That's right. I don't think, or maybe Berry Richards might have been. I don't know. But I would tend to believe that that was kept mainly between themselves.

Murray: What reason do you think would be for that? It just didn't come up or was there a mistrust of white people even if they were Marxists?

Norman: I think there was that, I think there was that. And that's understandable, even though it may not be very helpful, but I think there was that. And I think also because it's a very complex thing and nobody has really... Maybe they spent a lot of time but if a guy like Norris and Brady did all the talking amongst themselves, it's too narrow to be able to get a kind of a comprehensive concept of things.

Murray: Right.

Norman: And I think maybe it suffered. Their work suffered. I'm not saying it's their fault. I think we were very glad that they were doing it and we weren't spending the kind of time that it required. And I think critically we must say that we just didn't. Now not that we weren't doing it. We were busy people too as you well know, but I think that was the situation.

Murray: There is one aspect that I was wondering that you might shed some light on. Do you think that their approach to the problems of Metis people involved an idea of integration along with a radicalization, or did they see it as perhaps trying to maintain some of native lifestyle while giving them a better standard of living or something? There is a certain division there and I am wondering where they might have come down on that.

Norman: I remember discussing with them the concept of that the government at that time in Saskatchewan might have helped more of the native people establishing sawmills and that kind of thing in the woods instead of giving the contracts to whites

and, you know, so on. So I think that they did have, their thinking was to make the native people - it's not the same as French Canada in any sense - but I do think they were fighting for a recognition of the fact that the native people were a people within our country and while they are not a separate nation in any stretch of the word, but there were certain

rights that they needed and certain recognition so that their culture could be maintained as well as improving their economic standards. I don't think they were advocating they should just remain hunters and fishermen but I think... after all, probably a lot of their ideas came from, quite justifiably so, from the fact that in the Soviet Union where you have over a hundred different nationalities, while you only have fourteen republics and so on, but you have people recognizing people but also given certain autonomous regions. You know, various forms...

Murray: Relating to their culture.

Norman: To their culture and so on. Well, I don't say they had a well worked out plan - I don't know how they could - I don't know how anyone could - but I think that was the guide that they were working on. Oh, there were many debates I'm sure and many revisions. There was a difference in the two of them.

Murray: Could you expand on that a bit?

Norman: Yeah, I think Malcolm... and it's reflected in their lifestyle, in everything about them. As you know, Malcolm worked with the government. I think he was a mining...

Murray: Ran the prospecting school.

Norman: Prospecting school. But that was his work and he lived in a home in Prince Albert and in other words he was fully...

Murray: Middle class sort of existence.

Norman: Well, fully integrated in the society while maintaining without any... He was not anything else but a Metis and he didn't, no matter what his status was in the community. That and the culture. The culture of his people was always part of him. He never traded that even though he could fit in to any society because he was fully inte... and he spent, and the work he did reflected that too. The fact that he conducted a prospecting school and the fact that, you know, I mean... Where Brady, on the other hand, was much more dedicated to working strictly among his people, on their terms, in their surroundings. And Brady spent all of his time doing just that. The two really complemented each other. Even though they may have, I would say that one would emphasize his particular field of work or ideas, but they really complemented each other quite well in their approach because I think both things were needed to be done. And Brady, well, Brady was much more... I don't know how to put it but...

Murray: Much more warm.

Norman: ..the native heart, you know. He suffered with all the suffering that each individual Indian that he knew, or Metis that he knew; he suffered terribly with them. Malcolm felt the discrimination, felt the poverty, felt - but it was much more practical, you know, a much more practical approach. And he didn't live in the shack that Brady lived. And I think part of that was Brady's concept that you have to be at the same...

Murray: Be with the people to understand and work with them.

Norman: Well, I think you can absolutize that and there may be something to that with Brady. And on the other hand, I'm sure, like anything else, if you do the other, you know... In other words, no matter what you do, you are affected by the surroundings and both of them would have weaknesses from that point. But I think they really complemented each other quite well because they had approaches that, in my opinion, were very helpful to the people in general and the two of them together made a rather big contribution.

Murray: Right. Do you think their politics in terms of their understanding of Marxism or strategies differed that much?

Norman: I don't think so. I really don't think so. I think the differences really stem from their day to day activity. And Brady spent a great deal of time...

Murray: In the bush.

Norman: In the bush. And therefore the problems that he was confronted with and the problems that he dealt with were more down-to-earth. And Malcolm had more opportunity to discuss it in a much, well not broader, but divorced at least from the immediate problem. Put bread on the table, you know. How do you find something to eat or how do you find a pair of shoes for the kid to go to school?

Murray: A different level somewhat.

Norman: Yeah, and I think that's what separated them. Well, as I said, I don't recall maybe once or twice in all those years that the three of us were at one time in the same room, so I really don't know how much different. But I would gather from, for over the years that they maintained their friendship, maintained their relationship, that the differences, whatever they were, were never that fundamental that it caused any split in their approach to questions.

Murray: What makes me ask that question is that I seemed to have picked up from various people and from some of the correspondence - not between the men but their own correspondence to other people - that Brady had pretty well been disillusioned with the CCF by the early 1950s whereas Norris perhaps, and you could correct me on this if you think

this is wrong, that Norris perhaps had more hope in the CCF/NDP in terms of what they might accomplish for native people.

Norman: Well, I wouldn't like to say that. I think Malcolm Norris knew what the CCF was.

Murray: Historically and...

Norman: Yeah, and knew just what you can expect and how far you can go. And that doesn't mean to say that all of the NDPers or all the CCFers were that way. Quite obviously there were always, at least in my time, always a good percentage of the members that you would call the left wing and there would be very little differences there. But I think again, because of the work, Brady was out in the field so to speak, out in the bush, and the complete failure to provide certain basic needs for the native people, he...

Murray: That's where he was.

Norman: That's where he was and therefore he could see the full impact of that and probably reacted to it, naturally. You know, how...

Murray: Yeah.

Norman: Where Malcolm, while he understood that...

Murray: Was a little bit removed from that.

Norman: He was a little bit removed from that but was quite able, he knew and correctly so, if you were going to get anything.... they were the government and that was the place to... and you just couldn't throw up your arms and say, "To hell with you." You may think that they are not doing anywhere near what they should, which they didn't do. But I think that was the difference. I think Jim, because he seen the complete, really,...

Murray: Destitution...

Norman: The failure that the NDP government, or CCF government, did in regard to the native people. Well, they did

certain things but they were pretty superficial. Not really very basic and certainly not very, didn't uplift the life of the native people very much. And Brady was there. Where Malcolm had the native people at prospector school, you know. So he could appreciate or probably be a little more patient than Jim.

Murray: Right. Although in some ways, Malcolm always had a sense of urgency about him and Brady didn't.

Norman: Well, I think it appeared that way. Again the lifestyle. A bushman, he walks through the woods, he knows where he is going but he also knows that you don't start

galloping. You move. Where Malcolm, again in his temperament and so on, reflected the bustle of the city and of the thing. And I think, that's why I say they both complemented each other really quite well. I don't think by design but just by what happened.

Murray: So their political ideas didn't vary that much. It was their temperament and the situation they were in that...

Norman: Yeah, and the situation they were in. And as you know, if you are working in a certain situation that takes preference and your thinking is directed to that.

Murray: Sure, it determines to some extent...

Norman: That's why you always need some outside force in order to make sure that you don't absolutize and just do that. But I think the two of them were two distinct individuals, personalities. And particularly their lifestyles of what they were doing made them quite different in their approach to powers even though fundamentally there were no differences. At least I don't think, at least I wouldn't have any...

Murray: You never saw any sign of that?

Norman: No, I never saw any signs. No one could accuse Malcolm Norris of being a reformist instead of a revolutionary. And I certainly don't think you could accuse Jim Brady of not being a revolutionary and also not understanding the need for some reforms. You know, work.

Murray: At the same time.

Norman: Yeah, I don't think. I think that's there. It comes out then.

Murray: They both had a pretty solid Marxist understanding of what was...

Norman: I would think so, I would think so. Well, whatever that means, you know. I mean, I can consider myself with a pretty solid Marxist understanding and background after 38 odd years serving the party. Well, but how solid that is remains...

Murray: Open to analysis, right.

Norman: Well, because it depends on what you are doing at a given time. The situation doesn't remain the same and if you are not able to apply it tomorrow as well as you are applying it today, then tomorrow you may not be very calm.

Murray: (Inaudible) Right. But they certainly considered themselves Marxists.

Norman: Oh yeah, I don't think there was any question and

there never was, in my knowledge that I had of either one of them, never any questioning in their minds of Marxism.

Murray: Right.

Norman: That doesn't mean to say they might not have some opinion that the party wasn't doing what it should be doing at a given - but I don't think there was any time in their lives that they questioned the...

Murray: Validity of...

Norman: The validity of Marxism and socialism and that the Marxist approach to questions as a solution, overall solution. I don't think so.

Murray: Native people, in the native movement now, are critical of any political tendency, or any party for being... I've heard them say that various groups are opportunistic and using the native movement for their own ends. Was that kind of argument ever, or that kind of criticism ever put to the party by Norris and Brady?

Norman: I don't think so. I don't think so. The criticism was that we probably never paid sufficient attention to the problem and that could have been quite justifiably stated even though, on the other hand, we may not have been able to do it. It's not enough to say okay, we should put more time but...

Murray: Being busy doesn't solve the problem necessarily.

Norman: No, and also your ability. The knowledge that we had of the native people...

Murray: It was pretty skimpy.

Norman: I mean, even to this day, how many native people have I, in my 57 years of life, how many native people have I really got to know? How well do I understand the culture of the natives? So, you know, there are some legitimate difficulties that the party had, certainly at that point, going back. Maybe now we have less, you know. But there was never any criticism that the party was opportunistic or anything of that. I think you have a problem with the present native leadership. And it's partly our fault because I don't think we've been able to establish that kind of a relationship. I don't know who has, to tell you the truth. I don't think anybody has. And partly, partly because the native people don't trust anybody and I don't blame them.

Murray: Right, it's a racial thing again which is justified historically to some extent.

Norman: But I don't blame them because I have no bloody reason to. There is no experience of trust, you see. But on the other hand, I would have to say that there is a great deal of

non-scientific thinking among the native people. That's understandable too, but there it is. And because those of us who might have some scientific approach haven't been able to establish that kind of an interplay, so you do have a, "Well, be dammed with all your houses." Well, you see, that really is not an answer. And I don't believe, and again I am speaking very... because I don't know the present leadership. I'm not that familiar. I'm not so sure that a good number of them don't think in terms of solutions that are really within the capitalist system. No matter how much they protest the approach. Which wasn't the approach of Brady.

Murray: Well, I think that Brady and Norris were almost unique in that sense and still would be considered that I think, among the native leadership.

Norman: But there is a great deal of... see, I think it's understandable. There is tremendous sums of money being spent. I'm not saying wisely but being spent. And there are tremendous possibilities of oil rights and land rights and mineral rights. You...

Murray: Very complicating factors.

Norman: Yeah, but you can't say that those things don't influence the thinking of the native leadership. And I don't know why it wouldn't. I mean, it would influence anybody else, why wouldn't it influence them?

Murray: Right.

Norman: And I really don't think that there is a sufficient grasp of really socialism and Marxism among the native leadership. Now, even though among them are very radical, very left wing, very genuine too. I'm not questioning that at all. But Brady and Norris were of a different stature I think. Well, that may have something to do with when they started, which was quite a period back where there wasn't none of these things we talked about.

Murray: There was no money.

Norman: There was no money, you know. And that may have been the reason and I'm not saying that these people won't change. I think they will. I think experience will teach them that...

Murray: The corrupting nature of....

Norman: That's right, it's not the answer. The answer is much more fundamental than that. The native people must have, enshrined in law, certain rights. And on top of it they need certain help of a kind that will help them, first of all, maintain their culture, their traditions and whatever it is, and at the same time, be uplifting economically and everything else that goes with it. That takes more than fighting for land claims, as much as I think part of that fight is quite

necessary. But I don't see any signs of the leadership understanding the same understanding of Norris or... Now there may be but I don't...

Murray: No, I don't think there are from my - and I know quite a few of them. You mentioned that Malcolm was a member of the party at the time you knew him. Was Jim also a member?

Norman: Yes. But a member in the sense, yeah, he was a member but...

Murray: But not an active member.

Norman: Well, he couldn't be.

Murray: Right.

Norman: It wasn't a matter of much of a collective. But he was a man, he considered himself a Communist. I believe there is no question about that.

Murray: I talked to Bob Deverell in Saskatoon and he mentioned that Brady had contributed some writing to the party. Do you recall any articles that he may have written or any contributions of that nature?

Norman: I know that he did some writing, very little, but some writing for the Trib. But I also know that he did a lot of writing. It's not that he didn't...

(End of Side A)

(Side B)

Norman: You know, already, well in his fifties and I guess not so easy to....

Murray: He'd been doing that for thirty years.

Norman: Yeah, you don't change so easy. I think Brady, well, he wasn't a public speaker and he didn't, but his approach was much more sympathetic to people, much more....

Murray: Patient..

Norman: Patient and to try and get people to understand. There was that difference.

Murray: Would you say that Brady was more likely to sort of accept the weaknesses in people where Norris was more impatient with people?

Norman: Yeah, well I think Norris accepted the weaknesses in the native people. He wasn't very impatient with native people. I never got that impression. But he certainly was with 'palefaces' including his own comrades. I mean, he didn't

make much distinction when it came to that. I mean, he could talk to me and almost in the same tone and in the same, you know, as he would to some drinker, you know.

Murray: Fascist or whatever.

Norman: On the appearance of how he presented a case, he wasn't very tactful. He wasn't very tactful. And I think he lost a lot. Those that knew him well had a great deal of respect for him because in spite of the outward appearance of being a nagger or a griper, they could - those that knew him well, those that would maybe go to his house once in a while, sit down and spend an evening - they could see the depth of the guy. But at a public meeting,...

Murray: All you see is what you get.

Norman: I mean, he was impossible. And I think in that sense, it prevented him from achieving more than he achieved in getting across the fight for the natives. I think that was...

Murray: So, much of his frustration was self-created in that sense.

Norman: Well, I think some of it was anyway. And how one develops a style, I really never thought. I know I have a style of working that is mine. I mean, it can't be anybody else's exactly. How one develops that, I'm not exactly sure.

Murray: It's a complicated process.

Norman: Yeah, I'm not sure what are all the influencing factors. There is no doubt, as I said, Malcolm would spend more time among the white people arguing his case where Brady spent his time among the native people arguing his case and the two situations are quite different and therefore you would develop a different approach. I'm not really, by any stretch of the imagination, knowledgeable in native culture. I know a little bit and I don't think among native people, in their councils, that there is that same type of debate that goes on in the white people. It's a little more... Well, first of all, there is a great deal more respect for one another and therefore there is a listening. Whether they agree or not, it's not important. But at least that atmosphere exists which would tend to develop a certain style of approach...

Murray: Which would account for Brady's approach.

Norman: Yes, I would think so. I mean, I'm only talking, because I really don't know. I've never made a study on this.

Murray: Yeah, well, it has to be speculation because there is no other way of doing it.

Norman: Yeah, but that's what would strike me. And I might

say that same criticism that one could give to Norris, you could give to a hell of a lot of other people that I know in my own party and in other left wing groups.

Murray: That's a common thing.

Norman: Yeah, what I think it is is that you've decided you are right and that is quite true. And then you find that, god-damn it, nobody wants to listen and you, you know. You think, I guess, if you shout louder that that would be more for...

Murray: To get their attention.

Norman: Yeah, you know. That's the way it goes, I guess.

Murray: Right.

Norman: Both of them were extremely fine people. You know, Brady was really a very fine individual. He had the qualities of a person that were, well, I guess come from a person that is first of all dedicated to helping someone else. And he really was a kind of a real nice guy to know. And when you spent any time with him you had a feeling that, there goes a fine guy.

Murray: Right.

Norman: And that could be also said of Norris.

Murray: If you knew him.

Norman: Yes, you would have to know him. Well, Brady you would also, because he wouldn't say very much.

Murray: It took a while to get to know Brady too.

Norman: Yeah, but Norris too, had really... I think both of them tried to live their lifestyles and their everyday life the way their principles... Now, there is some limitation to that but I was in Norris's home - his wife, children, you know - and there was a relationship there that was quite good, quite good. And I think they practiced what they preached to the best of one's ability. I think that was true of both of them.

Murray: Do you think that the fact that Norris had a family influenced his lifestyle at all? Would he have worked harder to maintain that kind of lifestyle because of his family?

Norman: Well, I'm sure that must have had an influence. As you know, one of the characteristics of a young, inexperienced person who is a revolutionary, you decide that you dedicate your whole life to it, in the sense that it can happen next week. Therefore you give everything to it. In the fact you even decide you don't need to go to school and you don't need to do - you know what I'm getting at?

Murray: You come to those decisions, yeah.

Norman: Yeah, because there is a certain amount of romanticism about it, certain amount of idealism and so on. And all of those things are necessary otherwise I don't know how we would...

Murray: You couldn't be motivated otherwise.

Norman: Yeah, you know. But that lacks really a real appreciation of reality, eh. I think Norris, because of his lifestyle, had a much more realistic approach of, first of all, the tempo of how fast that thing would really move. I think maybe that were some of the things that Brady and him might have disagreed on because I think Malcolm was more realistic in the sense that it wasn't going to happen and...

Murray: You thought you felt that Brady... could you expand on that a bit in terms of how Brady saw it...?

Norman: Well, as I said, I thought that Brady thought that it was much more important for him to spend ten or eleven months away out in the bush when there might have been some things that he could have done much more so in Prince Albert. But he felt you got to be right...

Murray: With each individual trapper or...

Norman: Yeah, that's right. And I think probably Brady had a little more romanticism of that kind than Norris had. Well some people would say, "Well, that means Norris was an opportunist," and so on. I don't think so. I don't believe that. I know when I joined the Communist movement, I was 18 then but I was already active five years before that in the CCYM and in the movement. And I really thought in those days that, "Oh, hell, the revolution is just around the corner." Especially since I joined it, you know. I mean, that made it for sure. Well, today, I don't look at things that way. After all, thirty years later you should have some kind of a....

Murray: The corner might be quite a ways away.

Norman: Yeah, you know. But also, it doesn't make you less revolutionary, less enthusiastic, but it does make you more realistic. And I wouldn't decide that I should quit my job because the revolution is imminent and everything is needed to put it over the hill. Whereas some younger person with less experience might do that. Now that person might decide that I am getting too conservative or getting too...

Murray: Sell out or whatever.

Norman: Well, I think sometimes that accusation was made of Norris. Well, I wouldn't say that. You know, if you are making decisions every day, some of them are not right. Some of them are influenced by wrong thinking. That's all of us. But I really don't think that Norris was anything else but what

he was. But he understood better because of his method that he was operating.

Murray: You mentioned some people might have criticized him as being an opportunist or whatever. Was it people within the party that he knew or...?

Norman: Well, it's not beyond my thinking that a guy like Lloyd might even make that accusation at a time because Lloyd could decide tomorrow, like he did when he went to Cuba. He just quit his classroom. Right in the middle of the term. He just left and never came back. Well, if you do that kind of thing, you could also accuse the other guy who doesn't do that of being - and there are people like that who think that - and I'm sure that there must have been that kind of discussion. I don't think that that was the situation. I don't think Brady would ever accuse him of that. I don't think Quandt would have made that kind of an accusation, but I'm sure that it was they...

Murray: It was quite conceivable that people could make that.

Norman: Yeah, I think so.

Murray: I want to get back a bit to the Communist party in Prince Albert. Would Malcolm come to meetings of the party or would it be more informal?

Norman: No, he would come. Well, as I said, at different times it would be different. But the times that I'm thinking, when I was the provincial organizer of the party (and that would be around 1960, I think, somewhere in that area) that from 1960 on until the time I left which was 1966, we had an active club functioning in Prince Albert.

Murray: On a regular basis?

Norman: Regularly meeting on a regular basis. Probably not doing everything it should do but it was meeting. And in that circumstances, Malcolm would attend the meeting. But again, his job you know, I mean....

Murray: He was here, there, and everywhere.

Norman: That's right. So both of them really, no matter that they were members, both of them had to operate... I would say 90% of their time was individuals.

Murray: Right.

Norman: They participated collectively when the opportunity presented itself but that was not as frequent as one would, well,...

Murray: As they would have liked it.

Norman: As they would've liked it, yeah. I think so.

Murray: What kind of contributions would Malcolm make to meetings when he came? Was he the same chip on the shoulder sort of guy when he was in a meeting? What things would be discussed?

Norman: I think depending on what you are talking about, but they were talking about international affairs. The guy had a fairly good grasp of what was taking place. He was able to quite objectively analyze what he thought this meant or that meant or what move and so on. I think he could participate in a discussion quite objectively. If you were discussing native people's problems I think...

Murray: A little more emotion would be involved.

Norman: Yeah, more emotion even though that was not the major discussions of the collective. I had many discussions with him about it and well, between us we were quite able to, you know, to bandy about and I knew him well so it didn't matter.

Murray: How did other members of the party view him, do you think?

Norman: Quite well. I mean they had a great deal of respect for him. Maybe some of it was a little bit because he was a native person, even though he was only a quarter, you know...

Murray: Yeah, he was pretty far removed...

Norman: Yeah, but I mean to our people he was looked upon like he wanted to be looked upon, and they did look upon him that way. And they had a considerable amount of respect for him.

Murray: So he fit into the group quite easily?

Norman: Oh yes, he was quite highly thought of by almost all the party people that I knew that knew him. They had quite a respect for him.

Murray: Did he antagonize people in the party? Like he might at a meeting, say?

Norman: I don't think so. I don't know because there wasn't that much experience. I really don't know. I think generally speaking that at party meetings, even if a guy is a little bit rugged, because you are part of the same... you adjust to that and in fact you don't think about it. You just look at it as a method of expression. So, within the party I think...

Murray: He fit in quite easily.

Norman: Yeah, there were no problems. Even at meetings, you know, at these meetings that I am talking about, people had a lot of respect for him because he was well-known.

Murray: Right.

Norman: He was well-known among the white circles in the progressive movement. And they respected him. But I'm saying, a stranger sitting in that meeting...

Murray: Might be quite shocked or put off.

Norman: Might be taken aback, you see. Well, I don't have to tell you that if you are going to a meeting (and these were generally meetings that I can think of, were called by the NDP) well, you have somebody who is a chairperson or somebody who is a speaker and they are defending their position, quite an attack

like that, to say the least, gets the hackles up a bit. And there was that kind of a thing. Sometimes that was not necessary. He could get across his point much better another way. But he didn't, he had, he was almost a style. You knew exactly what he was going to do, you know.

Murray: And you said this before, I wanted to make sure what you meant, that he did see that style as being the right style and he never really accepted the criticism then that it wasn't working?

Norman: No, I don't think so. I think he listened to what I had to say and he would say, "Well, maybe you have a point, maybe." But he didn't change so I had to follow...

Murray: Obviously he didn't think you had a point.

Norman: That's right, you know. His style, as far as I could recall my experience with him, was no different. That's what it was; it was a shock method approach. He figured that that's what was needed, that's what he...

Murray: Shock therapy.

Norman: Yeah. I really think that, and that was his style.

Murray: Right. How often would the party meet in Prince Albert over those years that you mentioned that it was fairly active?

Norman: Well,...

Murray: Was it a regular sort of thing or...?

Norman: Well, I think it would meet give or take, at least eight times a year, you know, at least that. If I came up or Bill Beeching came up or somebody came up, more. And both of us did a fair amount of travelling around so that you could say there would be an average of eight meetings a year. Roughly once a month, give or take some. But a good portion of the time he wasn't there. But whenever he was in town he certainly would come. And he would even be prepared to organize it in his own house. You know, I mean, there was no problem.

Murray: Right. What were some of the activities of the party at the time? Were you ever involved in an election in Prince Albert?

Norman: Yes, we were. We didn't, well the most queer thing is that we did support the... Berezowski was the candidate and a lot of our people spent a great deal of time working for Bill. We put out some of our own independent material, you know, on things. The party in Prince Albert during that period lacked that public spokesman. We had some very good people. Some who might have been able to be a spokesman but because of jobs couldn't be. Others who the job factor wasn't the problem just weren't..

Murray: They just weren't cut out for that particular kind of thing.

Norman: They weren't cut out for that. And because we lacked that it prevented us from fully playing the kind of a role, that even a small party of conflict could've played. They didn't. They depended a great deal on, if I came up, well then they would be quite prepared to organize a public meeting you know, and so on.

Murray: To have you speak or...

Norman: Yeah, that kind of a thing. Or have a meeting in somebody's house and invite quite a few people outside of the party. But because we didn't have a spokesman, it was difficult.

Murray: Was there a group, say in the left wing of the CCF and NDP, that might come to a meeting you called? These were the people that would show up?

Norman: Yes, yes. And there was, even in the period before then. I'm thinking right after the war. Right after the war, there was rather a big club in Prince Albert.

Murray: How many members would there have been?

Norman: I would say closer to 35. Yeah, closer to 35 or 40. And people with rather substantial connections. One was a railroad engineer, active in his union. One was, I think one was an alderman. You know, I mean...

Murray: This was common across the country probably.

Norman: Yes, and right at that point. You got to remember right at the fifties when the full force of the cold war had had an impact plus the fact that in those days Saskatchewan was not exactly a place one hung around a great deal. We lost,

well, there were more people in B.C. Probably we could go to B.C. and pick up more party members from Saskatchewan than there are in Saskatchewan, you know.

Murray: But that's because of the population in general.

Norman: Yeah, but that's the nature of the beast and certainly Prince Albert was certainly no different. And therefore in the later fifties, I mean in the sixties, while we still had a group, we didn't have a public spokesman that we needed. And we suffered.

Murray: Were you more public after the war do you think when you had that larger group?

Norman: Yes, yes. Right at that point, yes we were.

Murray: And that lasted until McCarthyism....

Norman: That lasted until McCarthyism. We ran in the elections, civic elections. We ran in the federal election. We had a candidate against John Diefenbaker at one point. Phyllis Clarke ran up there. You know, we did a whole number of public things. But it dwindled away to the point where...

Murray: It dwindled to twelve or so which it remained right to your...

Norman: Oh, it's probably still there. I don't know what's there. If I went there now, you see, it's not very hard to call a meeting of 25, 30 people who know you and would come and discuss the international affairs or politics and so on.

Murray: Would Malcolm, for example, have been active in any of the election campaigns that you mentioned like when Phyllis ran against Diefenbaker?

Norman: I don't think so. I don't know if he was even there at that time. For many, many years I never knew really where he lived. You know, I mean I really didn't know.

Murray: So it was really not until the late fifties and early sixties that you got to know him?

Norman: Yes, I got to know him more when he was settled. He wasn't moving about and there he was. I don't think he, I really don't think - I may be wrong and this may be doing him an injustice - but certainly not in my influence or area, I don't think he ever took a public position in the name of the Communist party.

Murray: No, I think you are right there. He avoided it.

Norman: Yeah, he avoided it on one hand and on the other hand he let everybody know he was a Communist, you know.

Murray: Quite a complicated individual.

Norman: Yes, I've known all kinds of people who would do that. Up in Regina we had a guy by the name of Peter Mickelson.

Well, you wouldn't know him but back in 1936 he was elected to the company and he was a Communist; he was a member of the Communist party. Everybody knew that, you see, and he was elected as a - and then a few years later he had an out with the party or something, I don't remember. But I remember after the war, there he was in city council and everybody knew he wasn't a member of the Communist party. But when he was in city council, he made it known that he was. I could never understand the...

Murray: The flip flop...

Norman: Yeah, but there it is. Well, I don't think either Jim or Malcolm, well Jim wasn't so much public, but Malcolm never spoke on behalf of the Communist party to my knowledge.

Murray: No, no, I think that's what I've understood as well. There was a question I was going to ask and had forgotten. Do you know from what year their membership dated?

Norman: Oh, I think there was a break in it, in the sense, not because of ideologically just organizationally, but I think it goes right back to the time they were in Alberta.

Murray: Yeah.

Norman: They were members early on. I don't know exactly, but I would imagine in the thirties.

Murray: Would there be any way of finding that out? Would the party have those kind of records or not?

Norman: The only person you might ask who might know, Bill Tuomi of Alberta might know.

Murray: What's that, how do you spell his last name?

Norman: T-u-o-m-i, Bill.

Murray: Right, I've heard his name before.

Norman: He is the provincial leader of the party in Alberta. Now he might know. He has been around all that time and he might know that. Anybody else, I couldn't really think of anybody who is around now who would know, but he might know. But I'm sure it dates back to the thirties. Whether it's the late thirties or the early thirties, I couldn't say, but I'm pretty sure that it dates back to that period. But as I said, I think there were times when it was broken mainly because of their nomadic existence and...

Murray: It was a practical matter not a political matter.

Norman: Yeah, that's all. At least I have no reason to believe that there was....

Murray: Any disillusionment or...

Norman: Any disillusionment or anything about it.

(break in tape)

Norman: ...that I think probably you know, that I think they really spent their life and they made quite a contribution to, I'm sure, literally hundreds of native people who now....

Murray: Reap some benefits...

Norman: Reap some benefits from their teaching, if you want to use the word. And I think that's rather much more widespread than anybody can really say I know about.

Murray: Can sit down and show or...

Norman: Yeah, I have a feeling from what knowledge I know of them and their intimate knowledge of the people, that you couldn't possibly do that without having really a wide range of influence over the thinking of who knows how many hundreds and hundreds of people. And maybe some of the present speakers who are not Marxists in the same sense, but who probably can relate to some of the teaching, some of the talking, some of the experiences. And I believe that if there was ever a time when we could write a history of that movement where we have the sources to date, you know, that you don't have now, that I think one could honestly say that they made rather a substantial contribution to the development of the native people's thinking. I haven't seen too much of Jim Brady's writings and I don't know if he's put down on paper any

concepts of how he thought the native people might be, say, under a socialist Canada. I don't know if he...

Murray: Went about it that way or not.

Norman: Yeah, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if Jim Brady didn't. I know Malcolm did. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if Jim Brady didn't have. That's the kind of thinking...

Murray: Bent he had.

Norman: Yeah, he would not only be very interested in the day-to-day immediate problems but he had a ...

Murray: Philosophical...

Norman: Philosophical approach. And I would be very much surprised, if one could find all of his works, that you would find some. I don't know how well thought out. But I really believe that they, and probably others, made rather substantial contribution to the....

Murray: To the consciousness if not the individual organization.

Norman: Yes, that's right. I really believe so.

(End of Side B)

(End of Interview)

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