

**Alberta Labour History Institute (ALHI)**

**Oral History Interview**

Interviewee: Peter Jany

Interviewer: Don Bouzek

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Location: Brooks

My name is Peter Jany. I born in southern Sudan.

We have been war in Sudan for long time, approximately 42 years before I was born. In 1983 I was 18 or 19 years. I know this background of history from 1983 until the end now. I have been in the middle of that situation, so I know a lot about what happened in Sudan. That war took 21 years. A lot of people lost their lives, not just for the war. There is a lot of problems, people die for hunger. Some people die of water, some people die disease, some people die by fire, some people die thirsty, no water. The people of war, especially those on the front line, die in the war. So there is a lot of different disaster that is killing the people down there in southern Sudan. I see it by my heart and I touch it, and I was there too.

What lead the country to be in war or disaster, what I learned in my homeland is Sudan is diversity country. There is so many different tribes. The majority of the public is black African people. The northern Sudan was ? by Arabs and they come to Sudan for trade. At the time of colonize ?. They tell the ? they are the people who was needed the country. The independent was given to them. They ignored the black African, and they come into power. So when then come to power, they dictate the other African black people. They come up with what they call ? laws. That mean if you are not a Moslem, you cannot rule. They take ? of the government, they don't even think about who are these people. Then they treat us like a second citizen. This is our homeland. The main problem because they don't treat people equally as a citizen of the country. They say that if you are Christian or

you have your own traditional religion, then you are not capable to lead Sudan. That is why it took us for long time for the war.

This is a part of the problem. Let me talk about the canals. That one is a relation between Sudan government and Egypt. Northern Sudan, they come through Egypt. When they get the power, independent country, then they build that relation with Egypt. Egypt to survive there's the water of Niles. They think that if we are going to be independent or the black African will be in power in Sudan, maybe they will change that quality. This is one of the problems is the water. Egyptians supply the wide Nile water, that is where they get their supply of water. In this relation, it bring Sudan and Egypt to tie up with Middle East countries, and they call Sudan now one of the Middle East countries. That is not true, they are lying. Sudan is not a Middle East country, we are true African. So in this traditional history, they don't even want it. They don't even say, ya I'm from Africa. No, they want us to say, I'm Arab. But we are not Arab, we are African. This is one. Two, the Arab countries, when they knew that southern Sudan are very strong, because they oppose Islamic in Africa. We are opposed Islamic ? from Sudan to Ethiopia, from southern Sudan to Kenya, from southern Sudan to Uganda, from southern Sudan to Central Africa, from southern Sudan to ?. Because we have a border for all these neighbor country. Then we oppose the Islamic, and then the ? is all. They united and they support the government of Sudan. For these 20 years when we fight, we capture some Middle East pilot. Then you will get ? from Egypt, from Iraq, from Iran, from anywhere. They give them a lot of money, because they want to destroy us. Part of it is oil. Sudan is the largest country in Africa. The richest part of the Sudan is southern Sudan. You have oil, you have uranium, you have gold. We have lots of resource. In this case they wanted if they eliminate the number of native, maybe they will have a chance to control their lands. So in this case, they think also if we are going to be independent, then we will have to ? quickly. But they want to kill us in that ?. That what they did, they developed the northern Sudan. They don't develop the southern Sudan. We have no school there in southern Sudan. We have no good hospital in southern Sudan, no clean water in southern Sudan, and no agriculture in southern Sudan. They keep southern Sudan like a remote

area. But they like to use the resource. The time when we're in war we stop them and they will not go ahead.

I came with my family. My wife and two kids are with me now in Calgary. I got three boys too here in Canada.

When I was in Ethiopia I was in a refugee camp. The situation, every country in Africa were in war. At that time in Ethiopia they have a civil war, in 1990. Then I move away from Ethiopia. I walk through Ethiopia and come to Kenya. I was in Kenya in refugees camp for one year and a half, then I got a settlement form for Canada. I choose to come to Canada, so that is where I came.

Canada international policy, if you read international policy, Canada is number one country for human right. Then I decided, why don't I go to Canada? Maybe, god willing, I would be in better life, letting my children there go to school, a peaceful country, do whatever you want. We learn all this in Africa before you come to Canada. We learn all the province, we learn all the land. We learn even geographic of all Canada lands. We learn it at the school before you come to Canada. We know each province what they got. International world laws, what is the best country. We know Canada before I come, that's why I choose it. For what? For better life.

I myself? I speak Arabic, I speak English, I speak of little bit Amharic, and I speak my dialect from southern Sudan.

Because I move around from place to place. As I left my country I moved to Ethiopia. I liked to learn some words, because when you go shopping you must communicate with the people. Then when I come to Kenya, I was trying, but had no interest. I tried to learn, but nothing impressed me. I learn Arabic because Sudan national language is Arabic. English I learn it when I was in Ethiopia. That is where I start my school from primary. So we started in English. That is where I learn a little bit of this language, plus my dialect where I born.

The first day when we land in Toronto for one hour, then we were in the airport. After one hour we get a plane and went to Winnipeg. Then I was in Winnipeg. My destination from Africa from Kenya to Winnipeg, that is my province and that is where the government decided that I had to be there. I was there for two weeks in Winnipeg. Then I talked to my friends, I have a friend they come ahead before me. They were in Edmonton. At that time it was April and I feel cold. I say why this is very cold like this? And it's April. They told me, now is good. But when the winter is coming, you will be suffer. I say, what should I do? They say, now you are alone there. If you go to shop in winter you have to call taxi or use bus. You have kids to go to school, so it would be very hard for you. You come here in Edmonton, and we will help you. We have some car if you want to go shopping. That time also I don't even understand English. I know English but I don't understand the accent of Canadian or America it's different. At that time I need some people to interpret for me, but nobody. Then I decided to my counselor, I have to move where my friend is, maybe they gonna help me. Then I struggle for one week. The second week they said, ok you have to move to Edmonton. So I was in Winnipeg for two weeks, and then the third week I came to Edmonton, 1993.

When I was in Edmonton 1993-1995, then I moved to BC. The reason is at that time I was looking for job. I left my brothers, sister and friend in Africa, and I know they will suffer. But when I come and I was in Edmonton, I get only the assistance from government, and that money I could not even help. Then I decide to look for a job to help them. So when I was looking for a job in Edmonton, it was really very hard. Some people even when I call they said, no your English is not good, you're not qualified to work. Then I go to school, I looking for part time. Then I get part time in Comfort Inn. I worked as a housekeeper. Very good job, I liked that. So I worked there for part time \$7 an hour. But it's not enough. Then I decide to go to BC, because I heard that in Prince George there is planting trees. You go in forest and plant tree. How much you make for a day depend on your speed or hard work you're doing. Then I went Prince George, I did not get a job there. One guy told me, go to Prince Rupert, there is a lot of job there. At that time I don't even know what is Prince Rupert. They took me to bus station and I buy my ticket, then I went to Prince Rupert. That was 1995. Then I get a job there in Prince

Rupert in ???. Then I work for summer. When I finish my job then I come, I move my family to Prince Rupert. I was in Prince Rupert for two years. Working there, get money, send my family, pay my telephone bills. At that time we use only direct phone. It cost me a lot of money. I was there and pay my bill and send my family and friends money. Then I'm happy. Then 1998 I moved from Prince Rupert to Calgary. I got a job in Calgary in ? International. Before I get a job, when I move from Prince Rupert to Calgary, I was in my friend house and I was looking for a house for my family. At that time I don't have income because I did not get a job. Then I decided, okay, why don't I go to school to get student funding. So I did apply to student finance. Then I went to Bow Valley College. They give me a grant, \$1,700 for a month for all my family, we are five people. It's good money, I get a house, then I rent it. Then I go to school. I don't even thing to go to work, but I decide to go to school. After one year they find out that I was in Alberta for only three months and I went to school. This is against law. They say to be approved for student funding unless you have one year in Alberta. They said, look now you went to your school for three months, so you violated the law. We need this money back, around \$12,000. They say now, you are a liar, you are a cheater. We give you a subsidized house for \$480 a month. Now you have to pay \$750 for a month. I have no job at that time, my wife has no job. They need money from me and they told me to pay \$700. Then I got depressed. That was an incredible situation. Then I run around and find job for ? International, \$11 an hour. Then I pay the rent, \$750. Then the rest is for food. My wife tried to find a job, she couldn't find a job because she don't speak English. I managed for one year. Then in 2000 I decided to go to United States. When I was try to pay the money back, I could not get even \$10 to pay back. The interest for \$12,000 is \$200 a month, and they want the interest. Then I went to United States all around the Midwest looking for job. They told me, okay you can work, but you need a work permit. Then I did apply, I paid \$?, no that's ? Then I come back. My wife told me, look Peter, this is a hard situation we are. We have kids, you are only looking for a job to pay money back. Because it made me depressed when I was thinking to pay \$12,000. But the government say, if you don't pay this money you and your wife won't go to school. Unless you pay this money back. I say, this is a mission, I come to Canada to pay \$12,000 back? What should I do? My wife is not going to school, I'm not going to school. We come here for better life, we come for

the future of our kids. My wife told me no, don't work. You have to ?. The next following day I decide to come to Brooks, because I know Brooks before I come to United States. I bring some people to work here. Then I say, I have to go to Brooks and work. My wife say yes. That's the reason I come and my wife is there in Calgary. I'm not coming here to work for investment or buy house or for life, I come here for purpose to pay money back to the government. I talked to human resource, I told them I have a loan \$12,000. At that time, because I went three years, they going to \$18,000 for interest. Then I told them every paycheck give \$400 to the government, every paycheck. The interesting also every month \$200. Total in all it cost me \$24,000 for four years, and then I pay all this money. Last May I finished them. This May 2005 I finish up all. Now I'm happy, because it's a good experience too.

When I come in 2001 I was employed by Lakeside. I work in processing. What we do in there is process the meat. Inside the plant there is many different departments, and many different jobs, different levels. Even the money is not the same when they hire you, they have some up, medium, and low. I was working in level two, so this is my line, 30 people for one line, but they have a different job. When I was in level two they call it stripper. So this is part of the cow backbone, like ribs bone. We pull it out by hooks, then right side fold it like this. I have a scar, you see this one? That's a hook. When I pull it, it breaks two gloves and caught my finger here. Very hard job. If you do two pieces all your body is wet. The glasses in your eye, they frozen, because the air is cool and your body is hot. When you're breathing all the glasses, you never see anything unless you bring it down like this. Some people come and say, let's go break. You don't have time even to look your best. We coming like this... Maybe you are five or six people doing the same job, ... Hard job. That job I was working for six month. After six month I get injured in my back here, shoulder. Then I went to WCB for one month, then they sent me to Calgary for treatments in WCB. I went to the ?. They say now it's healed, for one month. Then I come back. When I talked to my superintendent he told me, no, you have to go back to your work. I say no, this one is serious. I battle, I battle, they don't like. Then I went back to doctor and doctor give me note. He say, you must be changed from this job to another job. When I come with note, they change me from that strip job, they took me to

packaging. They call it chop line packaging. Very heavy job, but no knife. Then we packaging the meat, chop meat like this, 120 pound. When you're carrying up, it's very hard. Then I worked there. One day I slipped because the floor is wet. Then I get my ankle twisted. So I was ? also for three weeks. Then I want to see the doctor. My supervisor told me no, you cannot see the doctor. I said, look, my ankle now is this way. He say no. I say, what is the reason? He told me, last year you were in ? and you went and see the doctor. So last year the supervisor of the ? they did not get a bonus, because you went to doctor. I said, what bonus, what do you mean? He say, I don't allow you to go, because if you go now to see the doctor, that will be a bad report, and then we are not going to get a bonus. I say, how might you get for bonus. He say, we have to get a jacket, green jacket. That is a policy for them as a supervisor, if your people keep them not see the doctor, they want to get a bonus. They give employees a jacket, but they give supervisor money. They keep you battle with supervisor if you are not as much, they're gonna fire you right now. They don't want to report anyone on the line as sick or injure, because of the bonus. I don't see doctor. Then the next one, my ankle when I was in Africa got bit by a snake. So when I worked there standing in my machine, that machine stand like this and pull back and pull the meat. Because I was twisted for one year ago and it get rubbing my ankle, it is swollen again. I say, what should I do? They say, no you cannot see the doctor. Then I stay for three weeks swollen like this. It was stiff to work on it, but I did not see the doctor. When I see the other people, they have the same problem. I say, what will be the end of this? I see young people below 19 years, they give them level 5 if you are young. Level 5, level 4, level 3, level 2. Look, where I get injured when I work in my first job is a level 2. Do you know level 5, do you know level 4, do you know level 3? If you see them, you can't ?. Young people, if you are above 30, they will not tell you that. When somebody get injured, they fire. You get injure if you work two month, you have to complete three months before you qualify on that job. But if you complete three months, four or six months, you will get injured definitely. When you come to doctor he will ask you which level you work. You say, I work on this level. They know the level you work is a damage in your body. The doctors know it definitely. Because that job you're doing has a level that is a definite damage in your body. Some people work like this, cut it fully like this all the time. Some people carry the meat like

this. Some people in level 5, they take the bone of ? up to here, they call it level 5. The next bone... Then when I see it I say, look, all the people now they get injure, they get fire. What will be the end of this? I say, that is no ?. I call my community, because ? to the company. This is killing us. Some people their hand claw like this from the hook. Some people get damage in their backs, shoulder, leg, everything. But the company wouldn't accept. We told them, you have to slow the speed down, because the big problem is the speed. They say business is business, and I say okay. So job condition is bad. They treat us like garbage. While we are the production, they don't keep us happy. The only company they respect supervisor and superintendent, but the rest of these yellow hat, treat them like nothing. I never seen in Canada. I worked for different companies. They employee they have been treat happy, because they had a production. But here you never even see the plant manager one day. When I was in International, we had been 4000 employees. The owner of company every three months would come and ask for meeting. You guys, this is your company, we make a product. Be happy, this is your company, let us work together, 4000 employees, we don't even think about union. We feel that this is our company. When they're telling us that this is your company, if we make more profit then you get more money. In Lakeside you never see a planning manager, never. Why? Because they know that they're killing people. It's a military job, when you're ordered to go do that job, you're going to kill people over there. That is what they're doing here. Even supervisors say, nothing we can do. They quit also. They don't have policy. They keep people like nothing. So this we learn it from them, they have a lack of leadership policy. That means the workers are not happy.

In April 21, 2004 the work is slaughter, because that is too big department, processing and slaughter. That is a group from slaughter, 2004, they walk out from work. When they walk out from work, they decided that this work condition must be changed. I was given a surprise, why do guys walk out? They don't even listen to me, all the people come out, around 400 people on the floor. And they rally, they rally, they rally. Then I come and I talk to them, what do you want, guys? When I went to human resource management and say, why these people are out? What you can do for them? Say say, no. This guy's name is Paul. He's now there still. He say, no, we can't do anything for these people. Now we

have to give them a choice. They may leave this compound, or they come back to work. Anyone who is leaving, fire. Anyone who is coming is okay. I say no, if you're doing that, all this 400 employees you have to lose them. I know the mind of my people. When they say no, it's no. When they say yes, it's yes. Now they go out. If you tell them, guys if you want to leave, go, then they will go out. But don't do that, so let's go and talk to them and find out what they want. Then we come out. There's assistant manager, his name is John, he's still there now. So we talk to them, we ask them what is the problem? What do you want, guys? They mention seven concerns. One is WCB. One is we will be allowed to go to see the doctor. And we will be allowed to go to washroom when you want to go to washroom. When you are sick, you will allow to go home even you don't get paid, but you will not get warning. Because at that time if you call in sick they give you a warning, and they put it in their policy also. When you call sick, you never get warning. But they give people warning to threat people. This one they say, we need seniority. It's the biggest problem. The company, when you work for 5 or 10 years, they bring someone who is new to come and be head of department for 40 people as a supervisor, because they do nothing. They leave ? work 10 years, the promote somebody who's coming two months, because he's a relative. When he come in he will say, fuck you, why don't you do this? ... That one they raised as important concern. So when I go and talk to management, I told them this is their concern. They say, okay, we have to think about that.

When I talked to management I told them, this is several concern for the workers. Do you have idea to solve this problem? They say yes. That was Mark, assistant planning manager, he's here now. And Paul, human resource management, and John was assistant human resource manager, and ? assistant human resource manager. Five people. I said, okay. Now I had to go out and talk to these people, and they go back to work. So what will you do for them tomorrow? They say, nothing. I say, if you're going to give them the warning tomorrow, let me know. They say, no we're not going to give them a warning. So let them go back to work, and tell them that next week we are going to sit down. They choose nine people, those who walk out, they were in the table together. At that time I act as a mediator. I don't want to be with the employees and I don't want to be inside the company. I was a mediator. They have nine people and they say, Peter, you have to be in

nine people, these are the worker people. I says, okay. The next Friday they called all employees, they give them a warning. If you have a ? warning they give you a red warning. I come to Paul and Mark, what happened, why you give these people warning? They says, Peter, business is business. I say okay, business is business. What about what you say? You promised me that next week we had to meet to see what you can offer for them. Do you think this thing is simple? It's not simple. They say no, business is business. I say okay, I'm going to call my community. If you give them a warning, next Saturday I'm going to call my community, and we will make a decision too. If you use the business law, I'm going to use my community law too. Because you guys you playing for us. Then we disagreed. Next Saturday I called the meeting. When I called the meeting, all the community decided we had to leave the company. I said no, if we leave the company, nowhere to go. But let us talk to them. The next Monday midnight I get call from Calgary, my little boy has asthma and was admitted to hospital. I went to Calgary. The nine people went to the company to meet with the manager. I was not there, because I got an emergency. Then they fire all these people. When they fired the nine ?, when the workers heard our penalty was fire, they walk out. That is the cause of walkout from work, 70 people. They decided to go out because this one is no solution. In the afternoon Monday I came. When I came, I'm being told that this nine ? had been fire. Then I run to the company directly and talked to John and Paul and Mark. Bring these people back, guys, if you want your company to ?. They say no, they walk out and leave the job. I say, what do you do for them. They say, we have to fire them. I say that is bringing chaos. When they met they decided to fire people. We come rally to the town, we talk to mayor. Mayor say, no help, we have no jurisdiction. Then I run to the human right, 70 people fire. Human right say, is this a united company? I say no. Then I went to labor board, these are the people who has law. I went to labor board. They come here and talk to me at my office. When I talk to them, can you help me bring these people back to work? They say no. I say, why? They say, the company is not unionized. I say, okay if it's not unionized, what should I do? They say, these 72 people fire. But if you need help for your people, unless you bring the union in. I say that is only the help? They say that is only the help. I say okay, I will do it if it is a matter of union. At that time, from the point of walkout until we end up with fired people, I know that the company is not going to solve

anything. The next day the other people come and talk to me at my office. I say, I need help with these people. They say, we cannot help you with these people. If you need help, we will give you a petition form. Give it to all your people, let them vote. Then we have to send the petition to Calgary labor board. Then we will call to meet the election. I say okay. Then I went to the company human resource. I told them, look guys, you failed to bring these people back. I know that everything I told you, you ignore me. And you use the word also in your ????. You ? me, you ? Sudanese, you ? Africa. All these thing now become a chaos. I know you don't want to help me, but when you have a problem, you call me and help you for three things. Last year when our ? in Calgary, we had been called for a funeral to go there. Then you told me, go Peter, and then I talked to all these people to let them not go on Friday because you're going to lose \$3 million. Then I help you, I convince people not to go. Some they went, but some they did not go. We worked on that day. You didn't even say thank you. Number two, when the people walked out I went and helped you talk to people and convince people, and they went back to work. Then you give them a warning. That means you put me in ?, bad record for my future. That mean I told my people come back to work no problem, and then there is a problem. The last one, when you hire people, I tell you bring some people back to work you rejected. You need help from me, but you don't want to help me. Right now I'm joining the union.

Ok, it's here. You see this scar?

[end]