

Roy Piepenburg

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Interviewer: Winston Gereluk

RP: A journalist here in Edmonton thought, "Well, we've heard so much about Edith Jose, maybe it would be nice to feature a story about northern trappers." So, he went up there to Fort McPherson. They really hit it off well and the guy from the *Journal* said, "Well, you and Cecilia used to trap together." He said, "We did, but my wife's health isn't so good so I go alone now and I go out for two months during the winter on the trap line." So the journalist said, "Well gee, that's a long time to be away from your wife." He said, "Yes it is and I get very lonely out there." So the journalist said, "Well, when you get back home I bet you're very excited." He said, "Yes, the first thing I do is push the door open of the log cabin and I jump right in bed with Cecilia." The journalist said, "And what do you next?" "I take off my snowshoes."

Q: First of all, just say your name for the camera.

RP: My name is Roy Lynne Peipenburg.

Q: Tell us about your background.

RP: I was born into the Great Depression. It certainly had an effect on my life, because my father was a businessman and his business was always on the edge of collapse. It looks as though I'm going to die in the depression, regretfully. My father was a Ford dealer starting in 1908. He had a franchise until 1942.

Q: Where was that?

RP: In Wisconsin, Reidsville, Wisconsin, which was a mixed community of Irish, Czechoslovakian and Germans. My mother was a schoolteacher who had attended a normal school. She was very politically motivated while my father wasn't. He let her carry the political ball, and she did it. She never liked Henry Ford because Henry Ford was anti-Semitic and he was anti-labour, and on those two grounds she wasn't very keen about having a franchise in the family. She recalled very well the First World War because she was old enough to remember that. She knew a lot of the history involving the First World War and when World War II came along she made a determination that she wasn't going to support it and she wasn't going to have the family support it. So around 1938 or 1939 she decided to join the Society of Friends or Quakers. She was a pacifist and my father went along with that and we became a pacifist family, and that hasn't changed. She was aware of the CCF development in Saskatchewan and at one point she wanted to move to Saskatchewan. She got the Saskatchewan provincial newspaper, she supported the philosophy, she liked the government program, so she wanted to move. But my father didn't want to move; he didn't want to be uprooted from all of his German relatives in Wisconsin. Strangely enough, later on my middle brother and I both migrated to Canada, and I think she would've been pleased about that. Politically she was aligned with the Democrats but she was basically a Socialist. She knew about the other minority parties but she was active in the women's movement in the 1940s and she was combatting racism, prejudice of all kinds. She was an amazing mother.

Q: She went through a period of McCarthyism.

RP: Yes. We lived in Manitowoc County and Joe McCarthy lived in the next county, Brown County, where the county seat was Green Bay. So we knew all about Joe McCarthy before he even went to Washington. He was best known at that time for granting quickie divorces to people; that's a fact. Later on I can tell you more about our experiences with Joe McCarthy.

Q: When did you and your brother immigrate to Canada?

RP: My brother came to Canada in 1952; he went to the University of Toronto. I came in 1961 and I went right to Yellowknife where I had a teaching job.

Q: Tell us about teaching in Yellowknife.

RP: At that time the federal government was hiring quite a few American teachers. Some time later that changed – in the hiring process they gave preference to Canadian citizens. But I was a landed immigrant and I went to Yellowknife. I guess I was so convinced of the goodness of Canada that I acted like a Canadian. Some of my colleagues weren't convinced. But I did get involved in the Northwest Territories Teachers Association and I served as the treasurer there for a couple years. I was involved in collective bargaining with the federal government during that period. It was at a time when the federal government had what they called the opening of the northern door to improve the educational, health and employment opportunities for northerners. I went there as a vocational academic teacher but I also was a vocational counselor part time. I was involved with the Mackenzie District Vocational Advisory Committee; I was the secretary for most of the time when I was in the north. Change was taking place, a lot of it positive, but some of it was very negative.

Q: What was the role of the advisory committee?

RP: They were trying to interest employers to hire indigenous people: Métis, treaty Indians, Inuit, people who had limited opportunities up to that point. Some had worked for the Northern Transportation Company, some had worked in uranium mining, but the focus was on getting people into trades. I supported that. At the Sir John Franklin School where I worked they trained carpenters, auto mechanics, and I can't think of the third one.

Q: So that was while going through the regular high school curriculum?

RP: Yes, the vocational program was attached to a high school.

Q: You mentioned that some of the changes were positive and some negative – could you explain that?

RP: A lot of the land in the Mackenzie district was under aboriginal title. When the people signed Treaty 11 they did not cede their land, it was looked at as a peace treaty. But while I was there the Department of Indian Affairs was trying to crank up negotiations with the treaty people to get them to take reserves. That's something that we discussed in the classes that I was teaching.

Q: Taking reserves meant basically getting of their land.

RP: Yes, right, it's a step in that direction. So I brought the subject up in one of my classes and a young adult named James said, why should we take reserves? We have all this land now. So the reserve program didn't take off. There are reserves at Hay River but that's the only place. I don't know just how that happened.

Q: That's what's different in the Northwest Territories than in much of Western Canada.

RP: Another negative aspect is that almost all of a sudden they had the equivalent of a compulsory education. They wanted to get all the eligible kids into school. That really upset some of the traditional economy because older children had responsibilities at home. Some of them were put into residential schools but more were put into what they called hostels, like in Inuvik and Fort Smith and Yellowknife there were hostels where the students stayed. So they were away from home almost 10 months of the year. They could go home at Christmastime but there was alienation because of that. . . .

Unfortunately, there was more racial discrimination that people wanted to admit. When I worked as a counsellor I heard a lot of the complaints of students. They would tell what was happening to them where they wouldn't tell the teachers and so on. So I'll give you a couple examples. There was a young Inuit fellow who was staying in the hostel at Yellowknife and he was being sexually molested. This was a young fellow about 22 years old. It reached the point where he wanted to get out of there, he wanted to get back to his community in Hudson's Bay. He wanted to get back there at any cost, and they would not let him go. Well he became suicidal. When that point was reached I put a lot of pressure on and I got him home. If you're interested in talking about the class system in a mining town, I can tell you something about that. There was a high school student from Aklavik, his father was a famous polar bear hunter. He was a mixture of Inuit and African. He got his African blood when the whalers came into the Northwest Territories, so he was a mixed blood person. He was talented, a good athlete, artistic ability. At the same high school there was a daughter of one of the mining executives. Well they developed a mutual crush. The vice principal of the school was determined to break that up. He didn't like what was going on. I didn't have a problem with it; I felt it's something that will resolve itself. So a lot of pressure was put on this young fellow to drop out. We knew this, I knew that. So how we handled it was this way. Three of us who were teachers found him a boarding home in Saskatoon and we arranged for him to continue in high school down in Saskatoon, and he went there. After that I lost track of him; I came south and I didn't know. But a few years later I found out that he had committed suicide, that's what happened.

Q: Who ran the boarding places where they stayed?

RP: The churches operated the hostels but the hostel in Yellowknife was operated by the federal government. The hostel in Fort Smith I think was operated by a Catholic religious order. While I was with the NWTTA something deplorable was exposed at Inuvik that was an Anglican hostel – it was discovered that there was gross sexual molestation going on there. The executive of the NWTTA took a stand on that, took a hard stand, so I think we had some influence in getting the pedophiles removed. At the hostel in Yellowknife there were some very sad episodes. There were three teenagers, three teenaged women attending school who stayed in the hostel and they were from the Great Slave Lake area. One weekend when they were downtown they were picked up by miners. They were taken to the Giant mine and they spent the weekend there and they were of course exploited all weekend. When that news came back to the administrator of the hostel he immediately expelled them. They were 16, 17 year old girls, they were expelled and as far as I know to this day nothing was done to the miners who victimized those kids. In the hostel there was a head supervisor who unquestionably was molesting young adults, guys. It was atrocious because some of these guys worked during the summer and made pretty good money, they'd come back to school in the fall and this guy would play banker for them. He'd handle their funds – not all of them, but for some of them. We came to the conclusion that in some cases he was bribing these young people. He was saying, you can't have your money unless you come across. We knew this was going on and it took us almost a year to get that guy removed. Later when I was with the Department of Indian Affairs in Alberta working in St. Paul it turned out that this guy had been hired by the United Church as a boys' supervisor in the St. Albert residence. I went to my boss in the federal building and I said, look, do you know what's going on? This guy had to give up his job in Yellowknife because circumstantially there was good evidence that he was molesting young adults. You know what my boss said? That may be true, but he's keeping a lid on it out at St. Albert. I shouted at the top of my voice to my boss in the federal building, I said, you're treating me just like an Indian. He never said a word after that. It's ghastly.

Q: Why does sexual molestation happen to such a great degree in the residential schools?

RP: I have a document in my archives dated 1953. The Oblate fathers had a conference in Winnipeg and they were trying to develop a psychology or indigenous people. Of course that original document was in French but I got an English translation of it. There were things in there that explained why this exploitation was taking place. For one thing, they said that Native people freely expressed their sexual desires because they didn't have any moral standards; that was one, so that made them vulnerable. They could be ripped off and nobody had to feel guilty. There was another comment in there that said they are not as human as white people are. All of this was terrible bigotry and every arrogant, condescending. That's some of the background.

Q: So the Oblate fathers and the churches were not only tolerating the behaviour but were actually laying out ground rules for it.

RP: That's right.

Q: Promoting it.

RP: Yep. That makes it all the more shocking. I have other stories about what was going on too. At the Blue Quills residential school, which is now a community college, there was an administrator there who relished the teenage girls. When I used to visit him he would go, they can't say no, they don't know how to say no. Well that led me to be rather suspicious. He had something going there. I don't know if you'd call it exploitation but it was a way to woo the most attractive teenage girls. He appointed them as monitors to work in conjunction with supervisors as helpers. They were getting \$20 a month; this was 40 years ago. Who knows what happened. But parents were apprehensive, in fact I know that some parents told their children, don't ever go into his office and close the door; that's what some parents said.

Q: Up until what time did you experience this happening?

RP: There's more background to that. It goes back to 1957 in the United States but in Canada I was aware of it from 1961 until 1969 when I wrote a series of ten articles for the Native People publication, which was a product of the Alberta Native Communications Society. I wrote ten articles entitled "Indian Education in Alberta as I Saw it". That was just after I resigned from the department. It wasn't very flattering, I can tell you that, because I had been supervising some residential schools in Northern Alberta, so I knew a lot about what was going on. One of the Oblate fathers, actually the leading Oblate father was out to destroy me. He found a woman who approached me to go to a motel with her, but what do you know, the woman tattled on the priest. So nothing happened, but that's as lowbrow as people can get.

Q: Have things improved substantially in those areas?

RP: When I was at university in the '40s and '50s racism was rampant where I grew up, really rampant against black people, against Indians, against Jewish people. It's incredible. Well I have a good friend who up until recently has been a very political activist. She's Cree. She had to go to the Stony Plain Hospital a few months ago. There was no room in Edmonton so she was sent to Stony Plain. She had trouble speaking because of her illness; she could barely speak. One of the nurses got frustrated and said, you're just a dirty Indian. I don't know what happened after that but she had plenty of grounds to go to the Human Rights Commission. I don't know whether she did. Another day when I took Beatrice to have some lab work done in South Edmonton I picked up Time Magazine and in it there was a featured story about an Indian community college in Montana. The college is on one of the Cheyenne reservations on Montana at a place called Lame Deer. It was an excellent article. But one of the students at that community college mentioned this. She said, we're tired of being called Prairie Niggers. This is 2009 – we're tired of being called Prairie Niggers. I think overall the situation is improving. I think now that Indian young people are getting more education, they know more about what

their rights are, they're more skillful in interacting even with people who may not like them, and they also know how to hold their ground. If someone tries to push them around verbally, they know what to say, whereas years ago they would sort of take it and then disappear.

Q: When you came to Alberta were you still involved with Aboriginal issues?

RP: Very heavily. I came to St. Paul, Alberta and I was an administrator for the schools in five reserves in that part of Alberta that used to be called the Saddle Lake Indian Agency. Then after three years in St. Paul I was still an American citizen and I got promoted to the CN Tower where I became the Assistant Regional Superintendent of Schools for Alberta, and all the authority that implies. But a crisis developed. Trudeau, who had many good qualities, had decided that the rights of Indian people be terminated. That happened on June 25, 1969 when the White Paper on Indian policy was introduced in the House of Commons. Being inside the department, I knew what was happening. I didn't like what was happening. The deputy minister of Indian affairs had sent a personal memo out to all of the staff in the Department of Indian Affairs; at that time it was called Indian Affairs Branch. It said that in five years there would be no more federal department, there wouldn't be any more Indian status as such. The Indian lands would no more be reserves but there'd be a way to turn the land over to the people. That was an assimilation scheme of the kind that was introduced in the United States in 1953, which the people eventually stopped in the United States. In Canada it was very much through the efforts of Harold Cardinal in 1969 and 1970, who compelled the federal government to backtrack. You probably know that he wrote the book *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians*.

There was so much deceit and so much propaganda and so much bending of the truth that in August 1969, even after I had become a Canadian citizen, I packed it up and I said, I'm finished. In February 1970 I went to work with Harold Cardinal at the Indian Association of Alberta. Between 1970 and 1986 I did two terms with Indian Association of Alberta, 10 ½ years, 19 years with overtime. I want to tell you about one incident that occurred involving Harold Cardinal and me and Indian Affairs. When Harold, who had been a student at the University of Ottawa, came back to Alberta he and others decided to try to form a Cree radio program, and they did. It was broadcast all across central and northern Alberta. They had no office of their own so somehow Indian Affairs offered them office space in the CN Tower on the 27th floor, so I saw Harold every day when he went to work and he saw me every day. We got to know each other quite well and we had mutual sympathies. So one day, and this was at a time when Harold was posed to run as president of the Indian Association, one day he came to me and said, you know, I'd like to review the regional budget. It's all about us, why shouldn't I look at it? So I found a copy of it and I gave it to him. He took it home, studied it and brought it back in the morning. But somehow the regional director found out what I had done, and I was treated as a traitor. So he confronted me in the hallway on the 27th floor and he put his fist up in front of my face and he said, we know what you did. I admitted it and I just stood there waiting for him to hit me. I would've fixed him, you know. But after that I resigned. Oh yes, and then I got a personal letter from the Director of Education in Ottawa, a fellow named Bob Battle, who was a war veteran,

probably an officer. He wrote me a very well conceived letter asking me to be loyal to the Department, but by that time I had already decided to leave.

Q: Was there anything explicitly in the policy that would've required you as a civil servant, a code of ethics or something that required you to be more loyal to the employer than to the aboriginal people?

RP: When I was hired in the Northwest Territories I didn't take any kind of oath, not at all. There probably is a code of secrecy but through bureaucratic bungling they probably forgot to administer it to me, so I can plead innocent on that.

Q: Were you involved with the Lubicon?

RP: For many years, I supported Bernie Ominiak and the Lubicons. I could write letters, I could let him know that I was supporting his objective to get a land settlement, but I didn't participate in the blockade up there. I don't know just what year that was but the roads were blockaded to keep the oil companies from getting to their drilling sites.

Q: What was the situation with the Lubicons?

RP: I could come to only one conclusion, and that was that the security and economic well being of the oil companies was the first priority. The rights of the Lubicon Cree were secondary. So their rights all these years had been on the back burner, and it's a hideous injustice.

Q: What was happening?

RP: There was a seesaw between the federal and provincial governments. The federal government had the constitutional obligation to make a settlement with the Lubicons. The province had an obligation but it wasn't quite as well defined. In 1930 when the Natural Resources Transfer Act was passed and the federal crown land in Alberta was turned over to the province, there was a provision in there that the province had an obligation to provide land in the future for reserves when the people were prepared to take it. So constitutionally they were both obligated. But I think in my mind the lobbying from the oil companies was so strong that the province couldn't respond properly. I'm talking about Peter Lougheed too, because from 1973 to 1976 I was employed by the executive council of the Alberta Government – Alberta Northern Development. I was a researcher and planner, I was a New Democrat. No longer a card-carrying member, but I was contributing financially every year, I was voting religiously New Democrat, and here I was sitting there working for the executive council and ? is turning in his grave. But look, Peter Lougheed, such a highly educated man with such a high profile, so articulate. I couldn't trust him.

In 1975 the isolated communities in the Slave Lake region, seven or eight small communities, attempted to, and this is in cooperation with the Indian Association, they attempted to file a

caveat on all of the crown lands in Northern Alberta, arguing that they had a constitutional right to do that. Well it put the Lougheed government in a panic. They had to fight it, and they did. The political battling back and forth went on for two years but in 1977 the Lougheed government passed Bill 29 and that was retroactive legislation back to 1975 and it said specifically that no one could file a caveat on provincial land. Pierre Berton and other people came out to Alberta and they backed the Indian Association on that. My understanding then was that in the British parliamentary system retroactive legislation is not looked at very legitimately. That's one instance.

When Canada was into the constitutional renewal process beginning 1979/1980, there was an effort by the First Nations to ensure that new provisions were put in the Constitution before it was patriated, that way it would give them better protection than before. In 1867, Section 91(24) which said the federal government had the mandate for Indians and lands reserved for Indians – that's all it said in the Constitution. The First Nation leaders wanted something better than that. Well Lougheed didn't think that was necessary. Peter Lougheed came up with a draft proposal for the Constitution in 1980 and what they were saying from the provincial side was that only First Nations language and culture should be protected in the constitution. Nothing more. That's what he wanted to fly with, but it didn't to anywhere because the First Nations cut it right down. Seventy-five hundred people went to the Legislature grounds to protest it, one of the largest demonstrations they ever had there. So Trudeau and Chretien, I think Chretien was a justice minister then, they back-pedaled. As a result of extensive lobbying in London by the First Nations, they did get Sections 25 and 35 entrenched in the constitution. They're still there; they're not clearly defined, but they're still there.

Q: What do they provide?

RP: The treaty and aboriginal rights of the people are affirmed and recognized, which is a big step ahead. Now about the Lubicons. That should've given political support to the Lubicons but it didn't happen. What did happen when the situation got stalemated after 50 or 60 years of lobbying, two consultants were hired. They went into that Peace River district where the Lubicon people live and they started dividing and conquering. They went in there and propagandized the people to fragment themselves so that there would be instead of one Lubicon Cree band there would be several bands, autonomous bands recognized under the Indian Act. Well that was the kiss of death for the Lubicons. There's still discussion about their rights but it's feeble now.

Q: Who hired the consultants? Do you know who they were?

RP: Yes I know who they were. I don't know who hired them but in all probability it was the Department of Indian Affairs who hired them. It was a colonial tactic of divide and conquer just as classic as it can be. It's like Chile all over again.

Q: Did you know Fred Lennerson?

RP: Oh Yes, I've known Fred for years.

Q: What was his role?

RP: Fred for years was an advocate. He came from the United States, by the way. He was doing community development in the Maritimes and then he came to Alberta. He was an advocate and advisor for Chief Bernard Ominiak. Some people felt that he was too high profile, that he was doing too much talking for the chief and that sort of undermined the confidence of the people in the chief. But Fred Lennerson is still involved as far as I know.

Q: He came to a convention and addressed the issue at a microphone from the floor.

RP: I remember that happening. Now he's been deposed. One of his rivals has been elected chief and he's out of it except as an opposition party.

Q: What's the current state of Lubicon rights?

RP: So much damage has been done, social and economic damage, that even if there were a solution now the impact wouldn't be very great I feel.

Q: Didn't the Lubicon say that they had never signed any of the treaties that some of the other bands had signed? Wasn't that part of their stance?

RP: Definitely. Treaty 8 when it was negotiated in 1899 some people were left out, and the Lubicons were one of the groups that was left out. They were called stragglers; they just hadn't signed. The following year in 1900 another commission came through Northern Alberta and they attempted to negotiate and reach an agreement with those who were left out in 1899. That's the truth of the matter.

Q: So that struggle is almost 110 years old.

RP: Yes, but I think the initiative of the Lubicon people really has been going on for at least 60 years, from the 1930s. Before the oil exploration peaked in that area it wasn't a big issue, but when the oil companies came in there in the '60s all across the Lesser Slave Lake region they really felt threatened by it, and they were being threatened. Their trap lines were being destroyed, the big game was being scared away, the caribou were being scared away, and so on.

Q: They were left very poor and their health conditions were bad.

RP: Yes, but when they were living off the land they were quite healthy. When they were still trapping, trapping could produce a pretty good income.

Q: Earlier you mentioned Beatrice – I understand that's your wife. Tell me about your life together and how you got to know one another.

RP: I call her Lady Beatrice. She has an amazing background. I didn't know about all of it when we got married, but over the years it all came out. But to begin with, I mentioned to you that my mother was an activist when it came to matters of racism and all the abuses of capitalism, things like that. In May of 1951 the state of Wisconsin had its first human rights conference. This was very timely because as I mentioned there was so much rampant racism and other kinds of bigotry. The state of Wisconsin had appointed its first Commissioner of Human Rights and that woman was Rebecca Barton, the wife of a University of Wisconsin Sociologist. She was really well committed to that job. So one of the first things she did was call a human rights conference to be held in the state capital, Madison, in May of 1951. That conference was almost exclusively on the rights of the registered treaty Indians in Wisconsin, who had been exploited in many different ways in the previous century. My mother thought it was an important part of my education to go to that conference, so she got a ticket for me. She went to Rebecca Barton and I was in, so I went there. That's where I met Beatrice's mother. She and her brother, who was hereditary chief of the Socagan Chippewas, were there. They were there to proclaim their treaty rights not just to hunting and fishing and gathering but to a right for their complete reservation. They were entitled to a reservation of 144 square miles and all they ever got was 1,750 acres. Her uncle, who had been chief, attended a residential school, a federally run residential school, for three years or something like that. Beatrice's mother attended a Lutheran residential school for eight years, so when she left there she was very ? and she had also lost most of her language. So I met Beatrice's mother and uncle there and in the next few weeks my mother and I went to their reservation to visit, and that's how it all began. She still had one daughter who wasn't married yet. I wasn't really looking but when I saw the photograph I thought I should be looking. So I had an objective to go and teach in an American Indian community.

You know, I dated a lot of nice American women when I was on campus. Some were Jewish, some were Protestant, but not one of them was interested in my objective of going to a reservation to teach school. So I said, okay I'll find someone who is. And I did. All these 57 years Beatrice has supported what I did. She wasn't very keen about coming to Canada but she's adapted to that. She's an email elder for her community now. In 1975 Exxon discovered one of the largest lead zinc copper deposits, one of the ten largest in North America. It just happened to be within the entitlement block that was supposed to be their reservation, so the politicking began right away. Exxon was very confident that they would be able to move in there and start mining. The people said no because the mining is going to destroy one of the best wild rice lakes in Wisconsin. No matter what you say, you're gonna destroy it with pollutants. Exxon started buying up land and they started doing core drilling. The way the people fought back was to form a coalition of environmentalists and non-natives to slow Exxon down, and they did. They hadn't solved the problem exactly because Exxon sold their interest to another mining company and that company when they found out their objective was stymied sold it to another company, and this went on and on for a few years. But in the end the Potomowoy and Anomawoy and Chippewa people through their coalition and with the support of many, many non-native people

brought the whole thing to a halt. But it took a long time, and it's still at a halt. There was another factor too. The copper market was depressed and it was cheaper for American companies to buy copper offshore than to mine it in the United States; that's always a factor. So as time went on I found out more and more about Beatrice's background. She's a mixed blood person – Chippewa and quite a few other nationalities. But she thinks Indian. . . .

Where was I now?

Q: You were talking about Chippewa and her being a mixture of nationalities.

RP: Oh ya. One of the early settlers in her part of the state came from New York state and he was from the family that developed the silverware company, Oneida Community Silverware. So ancestrally she's connected to that family, Ackley family. Theodore Roosevelt is her sixth cousin and I think she's proud of that but in some ways not so proud. But he was a great conservationist in spite of his charge uphill in Cuba, what do they call that? I went there to look at it and it's not much of a hill at all. But she's descended from, she has a connection with Theodore Roosevelt and therefore a connection with Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor, who were related. She's also related to Peter Skein Ogden, who was a western frontiersman, trader, explorer, guide and so on; she's connected to the Ogden family. The next one is a little bit more nebulous but there's a connection between the Roosevelts and the Spencers, the British Spencers, Princess Diana's family. So with tongue in cheek Beatrice says, I might be a distant cousin of Princess Diana. It's possible. So when Diana got killed Beatrice said, I'm not mourning for a prince, I'm mourning for a possible cousin. Beatrice's mother was amazing. She was an Indian mother of the year in 1967 in Wisconsin, and I think that happened because of the shift in human rights for better. Now our nephew is the tribal chairman of the Secogan Chippewa and they have a casino and they have a super bingo and all that goes with it. Beatrice is not advocating for that because she thinks her mother and her uncle, the chief, would not have advocated for that.

Q: What do you think all these casinos are doing to Native communities?

RP: In the United States?

Q: Well even in Canada.

RP: Well if you take the situation of the Cree casino out at Enoch, my understanding is the first year 40 percent of that revenue goes to the people who provided the start-up money, and they're Las Vegas people. They know how to cut a deal. There are so many casinos in the United States that are tribally run and in a way I think it lets the federal government off the hook so it can spend less on Indian projects and more on Afghanistan.

Q: Can you comment on the American Indian Movement and whether they've had an influence in Alberta?

RP: I'm quite familiar with a lot of that history; some of it isn't very palatable. I'm an old man. I'm 83 years old. In 1949 I was on a survey crew for the U.S. Geological Survey, a summer job. At that time I was thinking of becoming a geologist, a groundwater geologist. I changed my mind. That summer we worked in South Dakota in the vicinity of the Pine Ridge Reservation and the Rosebud Reservation. I had a chance to see first hand the deplorable living conditions at Pine Ridge and at Rosebud. But something very striking happened. When we were carrying the survey line across the White River in the Rosebud Reservation all of a sudden a very elderly couple showed up on the bluff above. They had a team of horses and a board wagon, and they sat there as if they were frozen, and watched what we were doing. At the time I didn't realize it but years later I recognized that some of those people in 1949 might have fled from the Wounded Knee massacre which took place in 1890. Not only that, if they weren't there they knew people who were killed, and that really struck me.

I was in the United States in 1970 when the American Indian Movement was spawned in the Twin Cities in Minnesota. I met some of the people who were the leaders. I was at an education conference in the Twin Cities and I met some of the people who were their leaders. They began first of all to fight the discrimination that Indian people were running into in urban areas, like not being able to get housing, not being able to find a job, and so on. That's how they started but then their interests expanded considerably after that. For example, they wanted to see the Black Hills returned to the Lakota people because the Black Hills were religious territory, sacred territory. But regardless of the Treaty of Laramie in 1870 the Black Hills were opened for mining and the Black Hills were mined for a long, long time. In December 2007 the Lakota national declared independence for the United States. That was a very remarkable historical thing. We picked this up on the internet and I've read their declaration. Russel Means was the leader in that declaration along with a woman named Young who was a lawyer. We don't know of any reaction from Washington DC, it hasn't been in the media, we don't know if it was a bluff or real. But that's what happened. But long before that the Lakota people when they were in extreme poverty approached the Soviet Union for economic aid. They were desperate and they wanted to embarrass Indian Affairs and congress. They approached the Soviet Union. Some of the people who were at Wounded Knee in 1973 were from Alberta; there are a few of them who are still living. Something happened involving AIM that affected me directly. I don't like to talk about it but it's just as well that you know about it. The AIM people in Alberta I think took the position that the Indian Association wasn't tough enough, too weak. So while I was in my second tour at the Indian Association working for Regine Steinhauer, who was the president at that time, we had an invasion from AIM people; they took over the office. I had to leave because I wasn't an Indian. They said every employee of this organization is going to be an Indian, so I left. But after six weeks their takeover collapsed. They didn't have the knowledge and experience to operate that kind of an organization, so their efforts were wasted and I was rehired and I went back. I charged it up to experience.

Q: The people who formed AIM in Alberta, where do they come from?

RP: I think they were more committed to militant action and I think this was demonstrated on the Piegan reserve when they had the standoff over water rights. AIM people occupied the dam there that controlled the water to the irrigation farmers. They said, nobody asked us about turning over the water to you. What happened was an agreement was hammered out so that the irrigation farmers paid compensation every year for their water. In the minds of the AIM people, that was progress, and I guess it is.

Q: Can it be explained by the fact that some people must feel desperate after all the years of deprivation and humiliation?

RP: Those AIM people knew the history of the people. Some of them were university dropouts and some dropped out because they felt that by staying in university they were losing their Indianness, that they were being so immersed in white peoples' philosophy and curriculum that they got off track. I've heard them say that.

Q: Tell us about your involvement in the Peace Movement.

RP: Well before we go on to that I'd like to mention about Leonard Peltier. He's dying in prison and I don't think Obama is going to pardon him. A number of years ago the FBI decided that Obama was going to die in prison and he's never going to get out. But I remember when Dave was the president of the Federation there was support there for Leonard Peltier and that support went to the Support Committee for Leonard Peltier Canada. That no longer exists; it's been collapsed. Federer and Frank Driever closed the books on their campaign of many years and all of their relevant documents are being turned over to some archive. It's one of the great tragedies of American history. When Don Mazankowski was the deputy Prime Minister I lobbied him to do what he could to get Peltier brought back to Canada. He listened. I caught his ear because I knew Don from the 1960s when he was operating his garage in Vegreville and because of efforts of people like me and those working for me he hired some Indian guys for summer jobs. That was good. But anyway, he turned the issue over to Anne McFallon, who was the minister of justice. When he got a response from Anne McFallon he wrote to me and he said, well the way it looks there isn't sufficient evidence to justify approaching the American justice department to have Peltier returned to Canada. That was the end of that. Regardless of the fact that witnesses had been corrupted by the FBI to make false statements about Leonard Peltier, saying that they knew he was present when the two agents were murdered, that was fraudulent. The fact that some of the logistic reports of the FBI pointed to the fact that his gun had not been used to kill the two agents was there but they didn't want to listen. So on those two grounds Leonard Peltier had to stay in prison. He was an AIM member. I don't think he was as militant as some of the others, but he was vocal. I'm very proud of the fact that the Federation recognized his plight and allowed us to address the issue; that's something I will never forget.

Oh now you're talking about the Peace Movement. Before we go on to the peace discussion I wanted to tell you about one incident, one horrific incident that I was witness to in the United

States. From 1957 to 1959 I was an academic teacher in a Navaho adult education program to prepare young people to take jobs off the reservation. It was referred to basically as a relocation program and the justification for it was to find jobs for people who could not find a job in the reservation. There was some truth about that. But hundreds of young people between 18 and 25 were brought into this program for academic upgrading and trades training and it was very, very structured and almost assimilation oriented. The idea was the more that they accepted non-Navajo values the better they could succeed in Cincinnati or Portland or wherever. When they finished that training they were exported all over the United States, wherever they could find employers. Well the pressure to conform to the program got out of hand. I know for a fact that a young man that I was teaching, who openly was defiant whenever they tried to attack his Navajo religion, he refused to have his long hair cut and of course that's always been an issue with Indian people in residential schools, because their attitude about hair is different than ours. So one school day two supervisors came from the dormitory to my classroom and they dragged this nonconformist to the dormitory to cut his hair, and he resisted all the way. So they knocked him unconscious and they cut his hair; that's what happened. I wasn't alone in being concerned about things like this – there were a few other teachers who had the intestinal fortitude to protest it. So we put our jobs on the line. We got in touch with Senator Frank Moss from Utah, we told him what was going on, and eventually the BIA sent out an investigation team. They came on a weekend and interviewed some of the staff and they went back to Washington and the file was closed.

Young women were being affected too, and this is very important. A lot of those young people were traditional Navahos when it came to religion and customs. The way it happened is some of those young women achieved puberty while they were at the Inner Mountain School. They weren't necessarily in the vocational arm, they were in the academic. But they reached puberty and when that happened it was imperative that they have a ceremony, what they called a See. They had to have a ceremony to recognize them as young women and to be informed about all the responsibilities that that involved. They would not let them go home. It was anywhere from 500 to 600 miles to the Navaho reservation and very callously some of them were told, oh you can go if you want to hitchhike. Of course they were afraid. So what happened was some of those young women became very emotionally upset and neurotic. That's another kind of oppression. Well after the investigation was whitewashed some of us packed it up and left. But several years later the place exploded and they had very bad riots there, and shortly after that the institution was closed. That's something that I'll never forget.

Now about the peace movement. I mentioned to you that my family joined the Quakers. The Quakers and still are war resisters. When I was in grade 12 there was a lot of pressure put on me to enlist; this was in 1944. It got to me after a while so I quit high school, but my parents made me go back. They said, you're going to finish your year, so I went back. When you have to go to a draft board and make an application for conscientious objector status, it's very frustrating because you're talking to people who don't believe the way you do and I'm sure they have very little respect for what we believe in. One of the common questions that the draft board would pose was, what would happen if everybody believed the way you do? Well the answer is

obvious, but they didn't get it. Or another question was, what would you do if somebody was raping your grandmother? Would you be nonviolent? Stuff like that. Anyway, the pressure was there and I finally said, I'm gonna compromise, I'm gonna be conscripted but I'm going to be a non-combatant soldier and I'm gonna ask to serve in the medical corps. Well that didn't fly with my parents. They said, if you go that far you're compromising too much.

So I was conscripted when I was 18 years old and didn't know very much but I had to learn things quite fast. At one point when I was in these camps I was going to walk out and go to prison because about 6,000 American war resisters did go to prison during World War II. I didn't like the camp environment, I got tired of eating potatoes and cabbage every night for supper. Some of the federal supervisors were quite sympathetic to our position. For example, I worked in North Dakota on an irrigation project along the Missouri River and that's where I learned quite a bit about topographic surveying and boundary surveys and all that. Then after being there in 1945 some of us volunteered for the smoke jumpers in Montana, and this was because there was a shortage of men to fill those positions, so many people had been drafted or enlisted in the services. So the Mennonite central committee negotiated with the U.S. forest service and they set up a smoke jumper training program exclusively for conscientious objectors, and that's what I went into. That was not without conflict either. When we arrived for training we were all lined up, and we were being trained by some guys who had seen service in World War II in the Pacific. They treated us quite well. But when we arrived there the guy in charge of that program came out from Missoula to talk to us. He couldn't claim to have been a smoke jumper; he made his first jump and he broke his ankle. But that was his background. He came out and he said, look you guys, you've got two strikes on you now, don't strike out here. I was turned off, but I stuck it out. I spent the season there and then after that I went to Oregon on another reclamation project where they were building a damn and I was actually the gatekeeper for the dam. I got a medical discharge. They sent me to a panel of doctors to be examined because I had actually injured my back training to be a smoke jumper, doing tower jumps. So they took all the X-rays and did the report and they said, you never should've been conscripted to begin with. I was 4F material. I'm not sorry I had the experience. Then after the war I started university in Madison at the University of Wisconsin. Of course ROTC was a requirement for freshmen so I had to go and make my peace with the military officers. They weren't very kindly to me, but I toughed that out. Would I have done the same thing again? I think so. After seeing what's happened since World War II about the lies about why people are dying, it can't be justified. That applies to Iraq and Afghanistan. Warren Churchill at the University of Colorado got into a lot of political trouble because he intended to make a public speech saying that he understood why 9-11 occurred – really the result of U.S. imperialism and other factors. They set out to destroy him. He was head of the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of Colorado, a scholar, a very courageous person, and absolutely honest. They couldn't stomach that. I followed his case for a long time. Eventually he sued the University of Colorado and he was awarded \$1 compensation.

Q: Do you remember some of the first peace actions you took part in in Alberta or Northwest Territories? Do you remember what some of the earliest causes were when you came to this part of the world?

RP: When I moved to Edmonton in 1967, it was at that time that I worked in support of the Vietnam war resisters who were coming into Canada. I understand about 50,000 came to Canada. I thought the government was right to accept them as political refugees, so I actively supported that. Some of those people are in Edmonton right now; I know who some of them are. I worked with the support committee for El Salvador for a long time. The leader of that committee's mother was in San Salvador in church the day that Bishop Oscar Meril was murdered; that was the connection there. Her two sons were involved here in the support committee for El Salvador and they were totally dedicated, absolutely honest about things. But we were infiltrated. I'm quite positive that we were infiltrated by someone from the RCMP, and that was a factor in the committee winding up. I say I'm quite positive because at that time I was also involved in the Canada USSR Association and a journalist from Urkutz came to Alberta and I took on the responsibility of taking him around in the city and to the Alexander reserve. He wanted to visit an Indian reserve so I took him there and he was well received there because he was very clued in in hockey and maybe other reasons too. But anyway when I went to the hotel to pick up my friend, the same person who had joined the El Salvador support committee was there shadowing us, the same person, and that I'm positive of. I was involved with Project Plowshares for quite a few years and then I dropped out, and it was because the director of Project Plowshares at Waterloo University took a political stand that I couldn't support. So I dropped out. I still maintain a relationship with people in Project Plowshares.

Q: What was it that caused you to leave?

RP: Well it had to do with just and unjust wars. He was a Mennonite, maybe a pacifist, maybe not – not all Mennonites are pacifists. He wrote an article in which he said that there are times when you have to go to war, alluding to the 'just war' concept.

Q: Was he referring to the Vietnam War at that time?

RP: No, this was much later. When I decided to come to Canada I decided that I could not support the Vietnam War. When I decided to come, the U.S. was already sending advisors into Saigon and I could see what would happen in the future. So, I decided to leave. I had two sons and I had no intention of having them go to Vietnam if it was within my control. But I also came for economic reasons, because teachers' salaries were so low in Wisconsin that we could barely survive. In fact, the first year I taught on a Chippewa reservation in Northern Wisconsin the Indians helped to feed us. They brought trout, they brought musky, they brought ducks, and even beaver and bear. We ate it all.

So in 1995, I really wanted to go to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, so I joined an American delegation that was going there. That delegation of nine people represented the Fellowship of

Reconciliation, which is an international peace organization. Well that was a very interesting group. There were socialists in there and there were Mennonites, there was me, missionaries, but everybody was heading for Japan. So I wanted to address the conference in Hiroshima so I made a deal with Project Plowshares that I would make my statement on behalf of Project Plowshares. They approved what I had put together and that's how I did it. I was really deeply moved by what I experienced in Japan. We had visited Habaksha, people who were survivors but in poor health. We liaised with a lot of trades people who were in the Japanese movement – educators, journalists, and I was especially pleased because there were tradespeople involved. That was really good. I came back and reflected on everything I had heard and seen for five months and I decided that I would declare myself to be a world citizen, and I did and I am today. I'm domiciled in Canada but all people around me, it doesn't matter what the ethnicity is or religion or nationality, they're all my brothers and sisters. That's the message I've been giving to people. The way I see it, workers around the world all have the same problems. Sometimes the unions are suppressed or even outlawed; they're locked up for contempt and they're looked at as traitors and so on. I don't think that's right. I think the matter of justice as workers is universal. That's why the United Nations is very important; the International Labour Organization. I remember here in Alberta when the Federation was fighting the oppressive legislation, there as an overture made to the International Labour Organization. I remember that happening; that's good.

July 14, session 2

Q: Go ahead and talk a bit more about the First Nations.

RP: During the period 1952, up until quite recently I was involved either fulltime or part time in activities that had to do with the First Nations, mainly in the field of education but also in other areas such as media relations, research, and political development. In 1952 the chiefs and councils in reserves had very little freedom to make all their own decisions; there was always an Indian agent present. That's what I saw right up until about the middle of 1960s in Alberta, and as a result of the White Paper controversy of 1969, the First Nations asserted themselves very strongly to have self determination and to have more autonomy. That thrust has continued until the present. In the 1960s there was a community development program in Alberta sponsored by the provincial government and the Indian Affairs branch, and I strongly supported that, and in some ways, I was actively involved in it setting up meetings and coordinating these activities. The objective of the community development was to take the people away from a powerless situation and put them in a more powerful self-directing situation. Even though there were criticisms about that because demonstrations resulted, marches resulted, the overall effect was positive. The Indian Association of Alberta where I worked for ten and a half years began in the 1940s and as a result of the White Paper controversy, it became very strong. In the reserves, some of the things that I helped to facilitate were enhancement of the school committee activities to give them more authority and responsibility. That turned out to be positive, and I helped establish seasonal kindergartens where there had been no kindergartens before. In the 1970s there was quite a bit of controversy among the post secondary students because they

were struggling to keep reasonable financial allowances, and to have something to say about the confidentiality of their records; for example, their transcripts. They organized provincially with the help of the Indian Association, so the students became a force to be reckoned with. Their leaders went to Ottawa and they negotiated with the Minister of Indian Affairs directly, so it was a good example of political development.

Q: Do you remember the name of the student association? Regarding the confidentiality, was something happening to the transcripts that was out of the ordinary?

RP: First of all they formed the Native Students Association of Alberta. That didn't endure but it endured long enough to resolve some of their crucial problems - a few years. As far as the transcripts were concerned, Indian Affairs obtained transcripts from the college or university to make an assessment to see whether their performance was good enough to be financed for another year. The students felt that the college or university faculties couldn't make the decision about whether or not they were qualified for further work, that was the crux of the issue. In another area, the people on the reserves started to form transportation companies or cooperatives. This was a form of economic development and something that I personally encouraged and assisted with. In July 1970, there was an occupation of the Blue Quills Indian residential school at St. Paul and that occupation last two weeks, day and night. I was there for the whole period. The outcome was positive in that it became the first Indian controlled institution in Canada. Of course the Indian Association strongly supported that. In the next five years the National Indian Brotherhood built on that and they got the federal government to accept a policy of Indian controlled education, which was a real milestone. We worked very hard to bring that realization about.

Q: Is that what the occupation was about?

RP: Well they were made an offer by Indian Affairs. They said, we won't close this residential school as long as you accept provincial jurisdiction for running it. So, it was a White Paper issue. The people said, we're going to run it under Indian jurisdiction, and that's the way it turned out, and it's still that way today, 38 years later. Eventually Blue Quills became a community college and that spawned movements in other reserves and other parts of Canada for the people to have their own community colleges. Now it's a North American trend and has been for quite some time. I think that covers it pretty well.

Q: Can you explain the role of an Indian agent?

RP: The policy of the Indian Affairs branch and whatever department existed before that was to have an Indian agent in every reserve. He had his own residence, his own office, and he was like the local governor. Up until 1951 the Indian Act was much more repressive than it is at present. The Indian agent had many prerogatives. When it came to people leaving the reserve to go someplace they would have to have a pass. If they produced some grain or beef they couldn't sell it without going through the Indian agent. The chief and council functioned in the reserve

but the president officer was really the Indian agent. He prepared the resolutions, he did all the paperwork, and all they did was sign it or put their X on it. Starting in the middle 1960s, that changed. That was when the first pilot projects in delegating programs to the reserves began. The first program that was delegated was social assistance. People still joke about the Indian agent today, and some of them were all right guys, but they had to go by the Indian Act.

Q: It was a vestige of colonialism.

RP: That's right.

Q: Were there any events in the peace movement that you'd like to mention that you were personally involved in?

RP: For quite a few years in Edmonton, Project Plowshares protested the testing of cruise missiles in Alberta in the Northwest Territories. Every time there was a test, which ended up at the Cold Lake airbase, a demonstration was held in front of the Legislature. That went on for probably seven or eight years, but eventually the tests stopped. We don't know whether it was for other reasons or because of the protests; we don't know.

Q: What were these cruise missiles?

RP: Cruise missiles were capable of carrying atomic bombs and they were transported by a large bomber. They would be carried to the target by the large bomber and they released and then fly on their own to the target.

Q: So why here?

RP: Oh because of NORAD, because of the North American military treaty. I guess that's still in effect too.

Q: Do you remember what any of the other concerns were in the '50s and '60s?

RP: Well certainly there were protests because of the continued testing of nuclear weapons in Nevada.

Q: What do you remember about the disarmament movement?

RP: The disarmament movement was international and Canada was one of the key players I think. I don't recall specific events that I can tell you about.

Q: Do you remember the atmosphere during those days?

RP: Beginning in 1995, I had a very close liaison with the Japanese leaders in the disarmament movement, and I still have that association today. I'm involved with four of their national organizations, and they're active every day of the year.

Q: Do you remember anything in particular about the Cold War?

RP: One of the things I remember is the spy plane incident, where the U.S. spy plane was brought down over the Soviet Union. I guess the pilot's name was Gary Powers. That was absolutely a violation of Soviet sovereignty, yet in the minds of American politicians it was necessary for survival. Then, of course, there was the missile crisis in Cuba in 1962.

Q: What do you remember about that? Where were you at the time?

RP: I was in Yellowknife at the time. Was it 1962 or '63, '62 I think. That came about one year after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba. I think the Soviet leaders felt justified in putting missiles in Cuba because the NATO forces and mainly the United States had surrounded the Soviet Union with missiles capable of delivering atomic bombs. So that was the nature of the controversy.

Q: The McCarthy campaign was intended to create fear and insecurity in the minds of progressive people. Do you remember any of that impacting upon you? Do you remember anything that might indicate that you were also one that they intended to target?

RP: Yes, definitely. I did my first year of teaching in the Chippewa reservation in Northwestern Wisconsin. I was appalled by some of the racism that existed, some of the indifference about the needs of the people; for example, giving whatever jobs were available to people outside the reserve while the people in the reserve were on welfare. So eventually I got into conflict with the school board I was working for. I was very vocal about my concerns and it reached the point where they told me it'd be better if you resign than getting fired. So eventually I did resign. But before that happened a supervisor from the State Department of Education came to a school board meeting, and I was there, where this issue was discussed. He was a retired commander from the U.S. navy. I think he was a pacifist. His parting words to me were, if you don't like our system why don't you pack your goddamn bags and get out of the country? That was McCarthyism. Well nine years later I did come to Canada but I came when I was ready.

Q: Do you remember the atmosphere that was in the air at that time?

RP: Yes, that was exactly the situation. So I took it on the chin and I learned from that.

Q: Were there any similar situations where people attempted to say you shouldn't be so active and outspoken?

RP: When I was working out of the St. Paul office, those reserves were being impacted by the community development program. I made a point to attend quite a few of those meetings at

night in the reserves. One day I was confronted by two assistant superintendents out in the parking lot. They had been drinking and they cornered me and they said, you're spending too damn much time in those reserves. It was a threat, but nothing came from it.

Q: You just continued doing what you were doing.

RP: Oh yes, oh yes.

Q: How is it possible for a person to maintain a reasonable balance in his life when you're doing all these things? Did you find that it got in the way of the family?

RP: I think to this day my children feel that I was away too much, and that my priority was too much in the work I was doing and not enough with them. But now there's been sort of a change in their attitude because now they realize how urgently those issues needed to be coped with and someone had to do it. They know that's why I'm here. It was difficult but Beatrice was very supportive and she knew why I was involved.

Q: Did she become part of the movements?

RP: No.

Q: You brought this cap which is loaded with buttons. Can you tell us about the Change the Law Campaign?

RP: I don't know which year this was initiated.

Q: '86.

RP: '86? Well I had a good association with Dave Werlin, when he was president of the Federation, and that's how I got familiar with some of the lobbying efforts of the Federation and also some of the picketing that was done in Edmonton when people were on strike. I don't think I know everything about the Change the Law Campaign, but I do know that the labour legislation allowed for replacement workers to take the jobs of people who were on strike. Those people were always sarcastically referred to as scabs; in Cuba they would say they're worms. I don't know to what extent the labour legislation has been improved since '86.

Q: Do you remember the Gainers strike?

RP: Certainly I remember the Gainers strike. I remember Pocklington bringing in a strike breaker from the United States to defeat the workers. I wasn't on the picket line, but my daughter went there - my daughter Catherine went there. I participated with the Federation people when Zeidlers were on strike. We went there and picketed very often. I was involved when the

Safeway workers were on strike and more recently when the workers of the beer warehouse were out, but I haven't been since then.

Q: What is it that made you participate in those things? You weren't a member of that union, were you?

RP: No, but I had worked in industry in United States. For example, when I went to work for the Seattle Cedar Company, which was a large cedar sawmill, the first thing I heard about was how one of the workers had suffocated in the sawdust silo. He was working in the sawdust silo moving the sawdust around as it came in from a blow pipe. The union had taken the stand where there should be always a second person observing so that nobody would get suffocated while working in the silo, and that was a very critical issue. When I worked for the corrugating company in Wisconsin I was a machine operator's helper. Fabricating culverts is a very noisy operation. You have corrugated pipe and you have a lot of riveting by machine, and we had no protection for our ears at all. We protested about that.

Q: Do you remember Lucien Royer?

RP: I do.

Q: Tell us what you remember about him

RP: I only know about his involvement in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. I didn't know Lucien before.

Q: Okay sorry, I thought you did. Let's talk about another thing here. I notice you brought the Council of Canadians pin. Canada is not for sale, it says. Tell us about your relationship to that.

RP: The way I remember that issue, the Council of Canadians wanted to maintain sensible controls over foreign investment in Canada, much more control and sense than we have at present. It was a matter of preserving Canadian sovereignty to regulate investment in Canada and also to insure that domestic industries could be developed without external interference. Of course that meant security of job opportunities for the workers. That's what I recall about it.

Q: Then you've got something called Free Canada, Trade Mulroney. What's that all about?

RP: In spite of the fact that there was a lot of opposition to the first free trade agreement, Mulroney pushed it through and later came NAFTA, which really enhanced the free trade agreement. As we have found out since then, Canada is very vulnerable because strong economic demands can be made on Canada by the United States.

Q: Yesterday you said that you came to the conclusion that the ultimate message has to be the universality of man; i.e., we don't believe in borders, the working man has no country. How

does that square with what you're talking about there? Why should I worry about continentalization, free trade, and all of those things?

RP: The development that I would like to see fulfilled would be one in which there would be an international organization of workers from all countries, from all industries, from all trades, so that the workers would be able to not only defend their rights, but refrain from killing each other off in wars that they never created.

Q: You worked for the WCB for a while.

RP: It was in February 1972 that I competed for a job at the WCB, and that job was Director of Vocational Training and Rehabilitation, something like that. The person who was in that position before I went there was appointed by the board, not a competition. He was in the position for about a year and he had very little aptitude for it. He didn't have the human relations skills that were needed to work in such a sensitive program, so he had to be replaced. I got hired through a consulting agency. The day I arrived there I realized that quite a few things were amiss. First of all, they had a couple of rehabilitation counselors that they felt weren't doing the job and they wanted me to assess them, and if they weren't doing well enough, fire them. I didn't like that because I felt that should've been done before I was hired. I didn't come in there to do anyone's dirty work.

Q: I was dealing with WCB at that time from a workers' point of view and that's when I met you. What sort of things were amiss?

RP: One of the things that shocked me was that, in the administration, there was a rehabilitation fund that was a financial reserve to help workers who were on pensions. We knew that people who were on temporary pensions seldom had enough money to live on; they weren't being paid anything like what they were earning before. So, I became familiar with the rehabilitation fund and I found out that in the previous year only \$50,000 had been spent to assist workers who were temporarily disabled as a result of accidents. So I moved on it. When people were referred to me or if I saw them directly, I made assessments and I tapped that fund. So the first year I was there, those expenditures went up to \$500,000, and I think that got some people's hackles up. There was an air in the WCB that I sensed and that air was that we're protecting the employer's interests. Burt Hohol was the Minister at that time, Minister of Labour. Well then, there was an unfortunate incident. We had a job opening for a rehabilitation assistant, who was really an administrative assistant. We ran a competition. We had a short list of four people. The first three people declined, they didn't take the job, but the fourth person was willing to accept it. The fourth person was a recent graduate in business administration at NAIT with an honours diploma. He was from Guyana and he was black. I felt that he was well qualified for the job. He had a slight accent, having come from Guyana, but I felt it wasn't enough of a concern to not hire him. Well what happened was the personnel director, who of course was involved in this, and his assistant, called me up to their office. They slammed the door, and we sat. They made it very clear to me that they didn't want that guy hired.

Q: Because?

RP: They said, what do you think the employers are going to say if we hire a black person? I said, considering the legislation that Lougheed is putting forth, I think they would be pleased. So he got hired and he stayed with us for about a year. But there were all kinds of subtle ways to aggravate him, to upset his personal security. So, eventually he left and took a job in the United States.

Q: My sense when I was helping workers in the WCB system was that the voc rehab section was often a place that workers almost feared, it was a place where they had to toe the line. Workers were encountering problems in that department, especially where they didn't feel that the rehabilitation program was appropriate or they felt they weren't being treated with respect, etc. Do you have any comments about that?

RP: I was involved in the activities of the rehab clinic on a case by case basis. One of the things that was going on was this; I felt it had an adverse effect on workers. If there were people who were dissatisfied with decisions of the board about say temporary pensions, partial disability pensions, and if they protested too much in the office or if they made too many phone calls, they had a way of handling that. They'd sit down with that person and say, look, there are jobs in Ontario, we know that. Would you like to have a bus ticket to Ontario? That happened quite often.

Q: Get them out of the jurisdiction.

RP: Yes, out of sight, out of mind. But one of the big episodes that occurred while I was there had to do with an injured surveyor named Ted Davy. Ted Davy had serious mental problems and he was very persistent in protesting to me and to other people in the Board. His situation came to a head and a sort of tribunal was set up to deal with him, and his whole case file was turned over to him for him to review it and also to defend the position that he was taking. I got caught in the crossfire. Actually I had quite a good relationship with Ted Davy but when this thing really started boiling, I got caught in the crossfire between the Board and Davy. I had actually defended him because he was really getting the runaround. The more he got the runaround the more frustrated he got. They had sent him to Ontario too, but he always came back. That's what was going on. But in the end, Davy was so frustrated that he vented his wrath on me, too. I was so disgusted with the way his situation was handled that eventually I quit and I went to work for the Executive Council of the Lougheed government, Northern Development.

Q: Talk about working for the Executive Council.

RP: When Lougheed came in he did some reorganizing in the Northern Development branch. I was interested in going there because a lot of the projects done in Northern Alberta involved

Indian and Métis people and I felt with my experience that would be a good step. But there were rather bizarre things that happened while I was there.

Q: How long were you there?

RP: From 1973 until 1976. This was at a time when the federal government was promoting a western diversification program involving Alberta. There was an agreement between the federal and provincial governments to do something about the unemployment and underdevelopment in Northern Alberta, particularly around Slave Lake. Well there were three people in the Lesser Slave Lake region who were very critical of what Lougheed was doing. It wasn't so much the program, but it was because he was a Conservative. One of those three people was a newspaper publisher in Slave Lake, another one was a community development worker in Wabasca, and then there was a Catholic priest who was working for the Company of Young Canadians. So those three people got very critical about the Lougheed government. This was at a time when Lougheed was ready to introduce his first legislation, Bill 1, which is the *Alberta Human Rights Act*. The government didn't like the criticism they were getting, so the attorney general of Alberta asked the RCMP to investigate those three people, who were treated as subversives. Well that became a very scandalous matter. In the end the government backed off and left those three people alone, but that wasn't very nice at all.

Q: Do you recall the government at that time passing an act called Northeast Alberta Development Act? They hired an ex-RCMP superintendent to be the Northeast Alberta Commissioner.

RP: Yes. The intent of that movement was to see that the development in the oil sands was done on an orderly basis. Basically that was required, but the Northeast commissioner seemed to have the authority of a governor again. That wasn't always well received in the Fort McMurray area, although the man they selected seemed to be very good on human relations. He didn't come across as a dictator; he came across more as a negotiator. While I was with Northern Development, I worked in '75 and '76 on the Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Research Project (AOSERP). This was a ten-year agreement between the federal and provincial governments to sort out the problems involved in oil sands development. The federal government had earmarked \$50 million over ten years for the project. I headed up one of the technical committees for about a year and a half; it was the Human Environment Committee. There were about eight technical committees that dealt with water, vegetation, wildlife, land, etc. Well, this was at a time when the Indian Association in the isolated communities in the Slave Lake area were trying to file a caveat to protect their interests from the oil companies. I proposed to the land technical committee that they invite Harold Cardinal to come in to discuss his interpretation of the land issues in the oil sands and even outside the oil sands, but they wouldn't hear of it. They just wouldn't. So that was the end of that.

Q: What say, if any, did the aboriginal communities have in the whole thing? They didn't want to hear from Cardinal, but they heard from some of them, didn't they?

RP: No. There was no voice from the Native community, none. At that time Stan Daniels was active in the Fort McMurray area and people were being forced to move. Trappers were being forced to move from locations that they had been on most of their lives. They had to get out so high rises could be built and parks and golf courses and so on. So Stan Daniels was very much involved there, wisely.

Q: And his daughter too, Christine.

RP: Yes. I told you last night that all the while I was with the Executive Council, I was supporting the New Democrats. I wasn't a card-carrying member, but I definitely supported the New Democrats financially and by voting for them. When they found that out they arranged a lateral transfer for me to head up what became known as the Land Tenure Secretariat to resolve land issues of people living in the green zone, people who didn't have land tenure. Well, they gave me an offer I couldn't refuse and that was to go to the Department of Municipal Affairs as director of the Land Tenure Secretariat. As soon as I arrived there, I knew there were problems because the deputy minister of municipal affairs wasn't convinced that that program was a good thing. So, the cooperation I got was very limited.

Q: Who were some of the people we're talking about?

RP: Mainly Métis people who had 25 year leases in the green zone. What the government had in mind was to give them land titles to make their situation more secure. But even though that was the objective, all kinds of problems resulted later from that after I was no longer with the secretariat. There was a racial incident in the Department of Municipal Affairs that I want to tell you about, something deplorable. I had to hire a number of people to work with me and one of the people I needed was a map draftsman because we were dealing with land surveys and so on. We advertised, we took applications, and the person who was best qualified was an East Indian. He had the credentials, he had drafting credentials from India, and he was seen as a suitable employee. He was hired, he went to work, and then at a Christmas where the minister and deputy minister and many others were present and I was there and the liquor was flowing quite freely, somehow the deputy minister got into a discussion with somebody about the guy I had hired, the East Indian fellow. The comment I caught was this. He said, who hired that black bastard? That was a direct reference to the guy I had hired, and I really felt ill about it. But the guy still stayed on. His relationship to the administration there was not good at all; it didn't have to be that way.

Q: It seems that racism is an issue very dear to your heart.

RP: That's true. In my mind racism is cancer of the soul, that's the way I put it. It's something that's so hard to eradicate, but people must never stop trying to eliminate racism and all forms of bigotry from society. All during my working career I've always hit that issue head on, and I continue to.

Q: Perhaps the Aboriginal people have suffered from it worse than anybody.

RP: When I think of the chief in council from Big Trout Lake in Ontario, who were convicted and put in jail for six months in Thunder Bay in March of 2007. . .

Q: Why?

RP: This happened because they were protesting a mining development by the Platinex Corporation. I supported those people and I communicated with them. I'd like to know to what extent such a severe decision was related to racism. That's a fair question. As a pacifist, I have never been attacked very much for having that philosophy. I've been fortunate that way. Of course it's something that you share only with your closest friends; that's the way that is.

Q: I see a button on your cap with a picture of Che Guevara. He's saying, we have no right to believe that freedom can be won without a struggle. What does that mean to you in terms of your life?

RP: I've had quite an interesting connection with the Cuban government starting in 1979. I got interested in the Castro revolution very early, but in 1979 I made my first visit to Cuba as a tourist and after that I did a lot of studying. I maintained contact with a friend in the Cuban embassy in Ottawa, I read the newspaper frequently. So in 1980, when I was with the Indian Association, we had a strong focus on healthcare and as a result of that I joined a delegation of First Nations people who went to Cuba in 1980 to study the public healthcare system. That was a very beneficial experience but it was also at the time of convulsive activity in Cuba because of the exodus from Mariel Bay, where in the course of time, 100,000 Cubans were allowed to leave.

So there was a lot of tension in the country while we were there, but we were given very good treatment. We had a lot of time with the healthcare authorities in hospitals, and we really got to understand how their system worked. One of the things that we learned is that the polyclinicals that exist in Cuba are really patterned after similar ones in the Soviet Union. In other words, these polyclinicals were an institution where total health services were integrated under one roof. That was in contrast to what we have in Alberta where it's very fragmented and you have to run all over the city to look after your health needs. Vast difference. While we were there, we visited the daycare training institution, we met with the Cuban women's league leaders, we met with the leaders of the small farmers association, and other organizations just to give us a broader view of what was happening there.

Q: I've heard that their healthcare system provides near universal coverage. How do they manage to do that?

RP: The thing is there's a difference in attitude. I think in Cuba at that time, and even now, perhaps professional people who are committed to health are willing to sacrifice personally to maintain the system. That means lower wages, lower salaries, so that the total population can be serviced. I think when we were there, clients in the healthcare system had to pay part of their medications; that was their contribution. I don't know what the situation is now. Oh yes, and we visited a psychiatric hospital, which was also patterned after one in the Soviet Union. They had a number of programs to assist patients. One of them was a musical program where they participated in an orchestra and learned more about music so that when they were released they could find a job in that field. Others raised roses, which they marketed to help pay for the operation, then when they were released they could work as florists. There were others who did clerical work that was assigned to them by the government, clerical work doing mailings and things like that. There was also a very good athletic program. So it was a very comprehensive, positive sort of rehabilitation program that existed. What was done to help political prisoners, I don't know. That's something we didn't see and we didn't ask about.

Q: Did you go back to Cuba after the fall of the Soviet Union?

RP: No. I went back in 1981 and I spent a month traveling the country solo. That was a tense time too because it was at a time when they thought there'd be an invasion by the U.S. So, they were really mobilizing. I spent some time in Guardalavaca in eastern Cuba and I sat down in the same dining room with Soviet military advisors who were there doing artillery training. I had a couple of tense moments too. When I went into Cuba I took an office typewriter with me because I intended to do some writing at Guardalavaca, and I did. But somehow because my passport said I was born in the United States some of the people were very vigilant about me. I think some even thought I was a spy and that I had radio equipment and was going to help provide information for an invasion. But once they saw that it was a typewriter and I let them look at it, there was no problem.

Q: Did you see poverty in Cuba?

RP: No. I traveled a lot in rural areas on the rural buses with the people. The people seemed healthy, they were clean and outgoing. But one of the most favourable things I experienced was at Santa Lucia where they had built a new regional hospital, a rural hospital. The executive director of that was a black physician, a young black physician, and he was very proud of his role and he was very cordial to me when I came to visit the hospital. Before Castro, that would've been impossible.

Q: You were around when the Soviet Union fell. What do you remember about that?

RP: I think I was shocked because I didn't expect that to happen. I think it sent shock waves through the city, and it wasn't very long after that that some meetings were held to form a coalition of leftist parties. I attended several of those meetings but nothing came to bear from that. I think there was a feeling that the socialist movement had to be preserved somehow, it

could be preserved in Canada, and if we become allies instead of critics of each other we can do something good for Canada. But it didn't take hold.

Q: So where are we now?

RP: I think Nancy Riche was the Federal Secretary [of the NDP] and when she left her position, she must have sent out a copy of the Regina Manifesto to all the members, because I got one. I still have it. I think she was reminding us that all of the tremendous work that was done in the '30s by people like Tommy Douglas and others shouldn't be lost. I believe that to this day.

Q: What's that poem you're going to read?

RP: I've always been devastated by the loss of life in the Middle East, particularly between the Jewish people and the Palestinians. It seems to be a problem that goes on eternally. I know that people like Obama are gonna try to cultivate peace between the Jewish people and the Palestinians, but it's going to be very difficult. But it has to happen. So I wrote this and distributed it to all the people on my mailing list. This is written in August 2006, and my intent was to try to imagine what Middle East children say when they're living in such a hostile environment.

[Poem] I was born to Jewish parents, my father's in the Israeli army. Mom's in the army reserves. Uncle Isaac says he's a pacifist. I was born to Palestinian parents. Our home's in the West Bank. We used to grow fruits but now the trees are gone. Uncle Abdul's a political prisoner. I was born to Christian Lebanese parents. Somehow my parents survived the Civil War. We don't hate Jews, Muslims, Syrians or Kurds. Uncle Chris teaches in American university. I was born to Kurdish parents. My father is a shepherd in Northern Iraq. We are known as the people with no friends, the Indigenous people without our own nation. I was born from a mixed marriage – Muslim and Christian. My parents are devoted, deeply in love. They worry about the disharmony of nations. I was born from Catholic and Jewish parents. Friends are aghast – what a strange partnership. Sometimes I feel confused. Who am I? Mom and dad console me – first and always you're a precious human being. We the children have to speak out, stop the killing and destruction, ask Creator to take away our fears, plead to heads of state, promote love and compassion. We the children have no enemies. Creator, some parents press us to be warriors, suicide bombers, F16 pilots, tank drivers, rocket launchers. Creator, we need schools, doctors, water and electricity. We the children say, no more war, Shalom.

Q: Talk about your involvement in the NDP.

RP: I told you yesterday that my mother was very familiar with the development of the CCF in Alberta and Saskatchewan, but mainly Saskatchewan. She read the Saskatchewan news and I read it too when I was in high school. I found it very interesting and certainly it had an influence in my developing philosophy for government and services. When I moved to Edmonton in 1967, that was really the first time that I made a point to get involved in politics. I started attending

the Woodsworth Urban Socialist Fellowship and I attended their meetings and activities right up to the time when it was disbanded. I became a card-carrying member of the New Democratic party and eventually I became the president of the Whitemud provincial constituency. While I was there some unfortunate things happened. We were going into a provincial election and I think, at that time, Dave Wallace was with the New Democrats. I didn't know that at first. This was before he went to the CP. We had a riding meeting to talk about a candidate and we were very serious about it. But what happened in practise was that a candidate was parachuted into the constituency, and that person was an Indian from Fort Simpson. His name was Joe Mercredi and he was living in Edmonton. He was parachuted in and he became the candidate. I think Joe was a very agreeable person and friendly, but I discovered that he knew very little about the New Democratic party. I was shocked by that and I felt that he wasn't the right choice. Later I found out that he was really aligned with the Liberals. So that created a sore spot that I never got over. If he had been an adherent to the New Democratic principles, it wouldn't have been a problem. I remember that. When Howard Leeson was running for parliament I worked very hard on his campaign.

Q: The Strathcona constituency that now is NDP.

RP: Yes, right. I don't know what year it was. But I liked Howard and I worked hard for him. He didn't get elected, and then he went to Regina and I think he became an official in the provincial government. . . . as a New Democrat. I kept very complete records of the people I talked to. I had the list of all the people in the riding and I would make notes about whether they were party members, whether they were sympathetic and potential members, or opponents. I felt that that kind of information could be used to build a grassroots kind of movement to bring in new members, to have an educational program, workshops, to be maintained between elections. I saw that as a means to build the party not only in numbers but in quality. I couldn't sell it, and I was dismayed about that. So eventually I just said, well I'll keep voting New Democratic and someone else can try it. But that's a shortcoming I saw in the party at that time.

Q: It never was a grassroots party.

RP: Yes. There was a lot of potential there just as there is now. You have to identify those people and motivate them and bring them in as supporters. So, my role as a president of a constituency didn't last very long. I went on to other things like the Bethune Socialist Education Centre.

Q: What was that all about?

RP: This is something that developed when Norm Broudy was in Edmonton. I had a very good relationship with Norman. I think in some of the other provinces they had socialist education centres; probably in B.C. they'd had it a long time. So we wanted to launch something like that here in Edmonton, and we did. We had a good start. I was with it for about a year and a half and

then I had to withdraw because I had too many things on my plate. Then I think Doug Tomlinson took it over; that's what happened. But eventually it dissipated, but it was a good thing.

Q: You never joined the Communist party?

RP: No, I never did.

Q: Why not?

RP: Well I guess I had some fears of persecution, considering my experience in the United States. I was a party follower, still am. I have a lot of respect for Miguel. He's an internationalist, he's a good analyst, and he's a good communicator. I've been asked to join but I'm glad I never joined.

Q: Why did you give up your American citizenship?

RP: Well I came here in 1961 and by 1968 I had decided I was going to stay here. So I took out citizenship. At that time I was still with the federal government. So I felt it was the right thing to do if I was going to be an administrator in the federal government.

Q: But you could've kept joint citizenship.

RP: Dual citizenship? I never thought of it. When I left the United States I had made up my mind that I wasn't going to live in a superpower anymore. I believed that the U.S. would always be involved in wars; sadly, that's been the case. I would like to say I feel that's going to change, but I think the U.S. is still going to be a warrior nation, and it's going to be to the detriment of everybody.

Q: That's Barack Obama's Achilles heel.

RP: Yes, if they're going to spend \$455 billion a year on the military and if he wants to reduce that he's going to have a problem, because military-industrial complex is so powerful. They're extra-governmental, and that's the sad reality.

RP: You mentioned last night about capitalism. I do a lot of reflecting on what I've seen in the last 70 years, and here's what comes to mind. The communist system has failed in many ways. The capitalist system has failed in many ways, and this is paramount now. What I foresee is a new and better ideology developing in the future. I don't know what it's going to be called or what it's going to look like, but it's going to be something to surpass the two that have been so ridden with weaknesses. It's going to have some bearing on survival on the planet. It's going to be nonmaterialistic. It's going to be humanitarian. It's going to be global. It won't be called communism or capitalism. If I were able and time allowed, that's the sort of thing I'd like to

work on. This idea I have of the universality of workers' welfare in a peaceful world is part of that.

Q: That takes you right back to your boyhood when you were raised as a pacifist.

RP: Every day I notice how embedded violence is in the U.S. culture. It's horrific. But they live in that situation and they're victims of it, and they don't sense how bad it really is. When Bill Clinton was president he did take one step that was remarkable. He was concerned about violence in the society and he called the corporate people to the White House to discuss it. These were the movie makers, the video game makers, and all those who make money from the violence agenda. But he didn't get anywhere. He didn't, but he made an effort. People could've picked up on that, but they didn't. They're so satiated with violence, and unfortunately it's spilling over here.

Q: What do you remember about Action Canada Network?

RP: I remember when the Action Canada Network was spreading across the country, and I saw that as a great unifying force for working people in particular but in a broader sense for all Canadians to ensure that the voices of the people would be heard not just through members of parliament and senators but through the people themselves and their organizations, to feel a solidarity that was widespread and so desirable in dealing with socioeconomic issues. When it was disbanded – and I don't know exactly what happened – I felt really disappointed. Now when we're faced with an ultra conservative minority government that doesn't really relate well to the population, something like the Action Canada Network is greatly needed to exert the kind of pressure on government to do what's right. That's it. In 1997 I published a trilogy called the *Celestine: A Trilogy*.

Q: I got that.

RP: You probably read the first volume then. . . . I self-published it through Earth Harmony Publishing, and my son and I maintained that company for ten years. Then I got too old to do it. But anyway, in that fictional trilogy, yes - a lot of the bigotry that the First Nations people are subjected to was well described, but at the same time there was a good focus on their efforts to build structures and organizations to better their situation. That's particularly true in the second volume where there's a Cuban connection. This is real, because in the 1970s and '80s American and Canadian Indian people were going to Cuba, not to learn about violent revolution but to learn about how to do things for development, how to build solidarity and mutual support. That's all in there. The third volume is very much about First Nations people in an urban setting. We tried to market the whole trilogy on CD Rom, but it wouldn't go. People would buy paperbacks but not CD Roms. Beatrice said, do you think I'm going to read volumes 2 and 3 and hold a monitor in bed while I try to read it?

[END]

