

**P059 Jim Tester fonds**

**1937-1994 [predominant dates 1961-1993]**

**3.25 m of textual records, 84 audio cassette tapes, and 20 photographs**

**Biographical sketch:** James (Jim) Tester (1913-1994) graduated from Riverdale Technical School as a mechanical drafting specialist in 1929. From 1930-1935, he worked for Lake Shore Mines as a junior draftsman, and as a machine apprentice. By 1932, his interest in unions began, but he was blacklisted by the mining companies for union activity, and later discharged. Until 1940, Tester worked for the Consumers Cooperative Movement in the Kirkland Lake and Timmins areas, where he eventually became the Educational Director of the Workers' Cooperative. During WW II, he worked as a machinist in Southern Ontario, and by 1941, he helped to organize a union for skilled workers at General Motors in Oshawa. He was elected as the Chief Union Steward, and was a co-founder of the Skilled Trades Council of the Canadian Autoworkers Union. In 1951, Tester was hired by Falconbridge Nickel Mines in the Sudbury area as a millwright and machine mechanic. He was a member of the International Union of Mine Mill and Smelter Workers (IUMMSW), Local 598, from 1951 until his retirement in 1976. Tester was involved with the IUMMSW on many levels. He participated in the contract negotiations in 1955, 1956 and 1959. From 1969 to 1972, he was President of Local 598, and led the union negotiating teams. During these years, Tester was also active on the international labour scene, specifically with trips to Cuba, Scotland and Norway. During his retirement, he was the Secretary/Treasurer of the Falconbridge Pensioners Association.

Tester also served the larger Sudbury community. From 1974-1989, he wrote weekly labour column in the Northern Life newspaper ("On the Anvil"). From 1974-1975, he was a member of the Board of Governors at Laurentian University. In 1982, he was an instructor at Cambrian College of applied Arts and Technology. He was also an active member of the Sudbury and District Committee on Pollution, Chairman of the Steering Committee of Pensioners for Sudbury Regional Tax Reform, and one of the founding members of the Coalition for Responsible Local Government.

**Scope and content:** The fonds provides information about the work of Jim Tester in Sudbury from 1951-1989. His efforts in promoting cooperative efforts and negotiation, as a union member, and as a retired citizen are well documented. The position of Tester in union matters are reflected in the official and personal correspondence contained in the fonds. His work as a journalist for Northern Life illustrates his life long commitment to social activism. The fonds consists of correspondence, minutes, notes, trip journals and memorabilia, articles, briefing notes, pamphlets, collective agreements, press releases, audio cassettes, newspapers and newspaper clippings. The correspondence dates mainly from the years that Tester was involved with the Mine Mill Union. The pamphlets, press releases, trip journals and memorabilia, photographs and articles also relate to activities of the union. The fonds contains minutes of IUMMSW staff meetings (1972-1974), as well as minutes of the Canadian Executive of IUMMSW (1960-1964), the collective agreements are mostly for Falconbridge (1949-1994), but include sixty-two different booklets. Other printed materials in the fonds include a copy of an MA theses and three

books, and copies of the union newspaper, "Local 598 News". Newspaper clippings document the "On the Anvil" columns that Tester wrote for Northern Life from 1974-1987, and the Steel Raids of the 1960s. The audio cassettes are mostly interviews of persons related to union activity, as well as lectures used as source material for "On the Anvil". There are also minutes of the Coalition for Responsible Local Government. A membership list and a news release for the coalition are also contained in the fonds. The brief is a submission to the Province of Ontario by the Pensioners of Sudbury for Regional Tax Reform.

**Note: Immediate source of acquisition:** This fonds was donated by Jim Tester in March 1993.

: **Accruals:** This fonds was received in four accruals. The first three accruals were donated by Jim Tester, the first on March 15, 1993; the second on February 8, 1994; and the third in February 1995. A fourth accrual was donated by Mrs. Doris Tester in July 1996. There is no record of any materials that may have been donated prior to 1993. A fifth accrual was received in 2006 by Mrs. Erla Hawthorne, daughter of Jim Tester.

: **Related material:** The following fonds may contain complimentary information:  
P019-Mike Solski fonds  
P026-IUMMSW fonds

: **Finding aid:** A finding aid is available at Laurentian University Archives.