

P059 Jim Tester fonds

1937-1994 (predominant 1961-1993)

3.25 m of textual records, 86 audio cassettes, and 20 photographs

Biographical sketch: James Bremner Ronaldson (Jim) Tester (1913-1994) son of James and Elizabeth Tester, was born in Victoria, British Columbia. In 1937, he married Doris Teeple in Timmins and they had 2 children: John and Erla. Known as union leader and a humanitarian, Tester was also a columnist at the *Northern Life* for 20 years until he retired in 1993 due to illness.

Tester graduated from Riverdale Technical School as a mechanical drafting specialist in 1929. From 1930-1935, he worked for Lake Shore Mines (Kirkland Lake, Ontario) 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 WWII, 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 contract negotiations in 1955, 1956 and 1959. From 1969 to 1974, he was President of Local 598 (then representing the Falconbridge workers) 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 a 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.

Jim Tester died December 29, 1994 after a long battle with cancer.

Scope and content: The James (Jim) Tester Fonds attests to the work of Jim Tester as a union member and journalist in Sudbury, Ontario from 1951-1993. 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 is reflected in the official and

personal correspondence contained in the fonds. His work as a journalist for the community newspaper *Northern Life* illustrates his lifelong commitment to social activism.

The fonds consists of correspondence, notes, trip journals, speeches and memorabilia. Negotiation notes, articles, briefing notes, pamphlets, collective agreements, press releases, audio cassettes, newspapers, and newspaper clippings inform us on Tester's role as a member of unions, and more specifically the Mine Mill Local 598 when he was President. The correspondence dates mainly from the years that Tester was involved with the Mine Mill Union. The fonds contains minutes of IUMMSW staff meetings (1969-1974), as well as minutes of the Canadian Executive of IUMMSW (1960-1964). Files of negotiations, proposals, and reports on work conditions are mostly of the 1969 negotiations with Falconbridge when Tester was President of the union. 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 thesis, copies of the union newspaper *Local 598 News*, and books, booklets, and pamphlets relating to unions, including Mine Mill Local 598.

Newspaper clippings and originals (some computer printouts) document the "On the Anvil" column that Tester wrote for *Northern Life* from 1974-1993, 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." Tester also wrote poetry – some of his poems can be found in the fonds.

Meeting minutes, a membership list, and news release for the Coalition for Responsible Local Government are also contained in the fonds, as well as a submission to the Province of Ontario by the Pensioners of Sudbury for Regional Tax Reform.

Note: Immediate Source of Acquisition: A donation agreement was signed by James Tester prior to 1993. A second donation agreement was signed by Mrs. Hawthorne, daughter of James Tester in 2007.

- : **Availability of other formats:** Some documents are only available in electronic format.
- : **Restrictions on access:** Some documents may be under restriction of access.
- : **Terms governing use and reproduction/publication:** Copyright regulations apply. Due to the fragile state of preservation restriction on reproduction may apply to some documents.
- : **Accruals:** This fonds was received in five accruals. The first two accruals were donated by Jim Tester, and they were received on March 15, 1993 and February 8, 1994. The third accrual was donated in February 1995. The fourth accrual was donated by Mrs. Doris Tester in July, 1996, and a last accrual donated by Mrs. Hawthorne (daughter of J. Tester) in 2007. No more accruals are expected.
- : **Finding aids:** A preliminary listing is available. Not all accruals have been processed.

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: **Related material:** P019 Mike Solski Fonds, P026 IUMMSW Fonds, P060 Dorothy Wigmore Fonds, and P073 Mick Lowe Fonds located at the Laurentian University Archives may contain complementary information.