

Margaret (Ma) Murray (1966)

ANNOUNCER: On the afternoon of Tuesday, September the 6th of this year, Margaret Murray dropped by the Sound 55 Studios. We'd like for you now to have a listen to our talk with Ma Murray.

TERRY BELL: Well, I consider it quite a privilege at this time to, uh, be sitting across from a, a young lady who is 73 years of age as of—

MARGARET MURRAY: 79.

TB: 79 years of age, as of the, uh, 3rd of August, I believe. And, uh, her name is Margaret Murray. And I think perhaps, uh, most people will know you as Ma Murray. Is this correct?

MM: That's right, that's right.

TB: Now, Ma, I'll call you Ma, so that everybody knows who I'm talking about. My first name is Terry.

MM: Terry. I'll try to remember that.

TB: All right. Now you're here in Prince George, uh, undoubtedly, because of the election. Is this correct?

MM: Yes, I am.

TB: What do you think of the election?

MM: Well, I don't think that we needed this election, at all. I think that Mr. Bennett had 2 more years to go, and I think that it's untimely.

TB: It's untimely and possibly unnecessary.

MM: Unnecessary, you're right.

TB: M-hm. How about the \$500 grant, Ma?

MM: Well, of course, it's just a bribe, in my opinion. I, uh, think that, uh, the people, the young people of British Columbia, uh, shouldn't be polluted with a, a politician, or a political promise to give them \$500. The best young people in the world are those who earn what they get. And, uh, you agree with me, I'm sure, Terry that the wages that you earn, you're very careful to see, uh, that you get every, uh, bit of value out of. The wages or the tips or the horse race bets you win or something like that, that you practically get for nothing, goes pretty easy, too. And, uh, I think if you want to put a backbone and, uh, fortitude into young people that, uh, what they earn and what they get together is, uh, far more valued to them and they're far happier, trying to do it.

TB: So you feel, then, that the \$500 grant is, uh, nothing really more than a bribe.

MM: That's right. I think it's a bribe, and I doubt very much whether Mr. Bennett could make it work, even if he does get elected.

TB: Why do you say that, Ma?

MM: Well, because, uh, when you consider this, uh, grant towards home—this homeowner's grant, the whole thing is phony from start to finish. It is 10 years ago this time, 1956, that Mr. Bennett jerked a, an election in 3 years, from '53, to give the people \$28 a month. Now then, uh, that's gone on and on until you see where it is now. It's uh, 100, some are talkin' about 100. Uh, that homeowner's grant is given back to people, and, uh, it puts a fear into people that it might be taken away from them once they get it. But if there ever was a stupid, uh, way of doing, British Columbia, as you know and I know, is the greatest, is the heaviest taxed province in the

Dominion of Canada. We pay the highest taxes per capita in, uh, in this coun— in pro-- in B.C than any place else. Now then, all we'd need to do would be to have an overhaul of our tax structure, and give the people the benefit of a little bit less taxes. We're taxed on everything in British Columbia, everything they can think of. And so, what does he do? He simply gives this Homeowner's Grant. He builds up a bureaucracy for himself, and he intimidates the people by giving it to them. And I don't believe in the Homeowner's Grant. Now, if you gotta live in your own home to get the Homeowner's Grant, what about all these people that rent houses, that pay for rented houses? They don't get any Homeowner's Grant. And, Terry, what about all these people that have been living in apartment houses, for all these n—ten years. Now, it's just now come into effect that they're going to get something. But isn't that unfair to go to work and give the fella who was a own— because he owns the home, to give him back his half of his taxes or the Homeowner's Grant, whatever it is? And these other people who have to have a home and a shelter over their heads, to get nothing at all? And why should young people be given the \$500 Grant? The happiest young people are those that are very busy, and those that are scrambling very hard to get ahead.

TB: They appreciate what they've had.

MM: And what they—when you marry—when young, uh, newlyweds, when they get married, why my goodness, look at what they've got in each other. It's a new life for them, and anything that's given to them after that isn't worth half as much as what they acquire and get together themselves. And I'm all—I'm all against it. I think it is nothing but purely a bribe. It's not fair to the rest of the taxpayers and it is not equality, with one, one kind of homeowner and another kind of a homeowner. The fellow who pays his rent for a house is got just as much of a home as the one who owns the taxes, or owns the home and is paying the taxes. And I think that it's just in line with some of the other extortionist things that are done, uh, especially the last ten years. I'm against any government being in power too long

TB: And you think Bennett has been in power too long, Ma?

MM: I think 14 years is long enough. He g—uh, g—has done everything that he can possibly do now, and now he's going to recede, because he's got to recede to keep up with the pace. And, uh, I think 14 years is plenty long enough. I'm not so stupid, Terry, as to think that Mr. Bennett will be defeated. Uh, as a matter of fact, it'd be rather a tragedy, in a way, for him to be completely defeated, because he has obligated this province to such terrific, uh responsibilities and commitments for so long, uh, that there will be and awful mess when it goes to clean up. And, uh, he, uh, here he is, he, uh hasn't had strong enough Opposition. He's had a full treasury. He's had a full house. He's had a majority all of the time, and he's had a weak Opposition ever since he's been in there. And, uh, it's the most stupid thing, because there's only 39-½ % of the people that he represents. There's, uh, the other 60 percent have no representation in there at all. Only through the Opposition, and they haven't any representation, practically, because they've had a weak Opposition.

TB: Well, Ma, your basic reason, then, for traveling around the province, would be to, uh, drum up a stronger Opposition in the B.C. Legislature.

MM: Well, that's exactly what I'm trying to do. I don't want to tell anybody how to vote. Everybody knows that for 3 years I've been trying my very best to get a gentleman's agreement or some sort of a workable thing, where all the people that truly believe in Opposition, that truly believe in something else besides Bennett, that they would get together and, and be one force. Uh, I came here to Prince George in April. Uh, some of you will remember reading it in the paper. And, uh, at the nomination of Allan Hope, a nice boy, a Liberal, I said to him, I said, "You haven't got a Chinaman's chance, if you're gonna have three or four opponents, uh, running, and one- against one." And, uh, I said to him then, I said, "Don't you take this nomination, and don't this convention give a nomination to anybody who won't be willing, uh, to take a gentleman's chance, on a thing like that. Uh, I—I don't know, I don't know what you're gonna do here. You have a very strong man in Mr. Williston. You don't hardly shoot Santa Claus, you know, Terry.

TB: Yeah, that's right.

MM: And he surely has made it look like he's a Santa Claus. And, uh, they say that Mr. Williston gives them this and gives them that. Well, how the hell could Mr. Williston give them to them if the province wasn't when Mr. Williston come in? And the hills weren't clothed with timber when he came here? And all these natural resources was here for him to do it?

TB: That's right.

MM: As a matter of fact, I think Mr. Williston has given, uh, every piece of timber that was worth a damn away at the present time. Uh, they've come on like a rash, and just as sure as you're sittin' in that chair, my boy, there will be over-production of pulp. There will be over-production of this and we'll have to go begging to the world's markets to take it. And instead of, uh, feeding this to the world, as the time would come along, Mr. Williston they say Mr. Williston give it to them. Well, hell's bells, that belonged to the people before Mr. Williston came in at all. He hasn't any right to that any more than you or I had! He happens to be the Minister. And I think that he usin' damn poor judgment in bring it on, bringing on the industry so fast here and givin' away the resources of this province. And I—but it's awful hard to get anybody to go along with me. I'm sure it'd be very hard for me probably to convince you of that. And so it is the same with these two young boys who is running against Mr. Williston. Mr. Williston was a school trustee in Fort Saint John when I went there in 1942 to start a paper up there. Now that's what his background was. And he is now, I can't, don't know how old he is, but he's been in now for 3 elections. He's been in there for 14 years, and his ship of state has got barnacles on it. And no wonder he's an easy mark in the eyes of all these, uh, foreign investors who come in here, uh, to build these pulp mills. He's an easy mark, and he's no match for them. And consequently, there isn't a decent piece of timber left in this province to be given to anybody else when Mr. Williston is gone.

TB: Ma, you've been, uh, to Prince George a couple of times before, I believe. What do you see is a future for the City of Prince George?

MM: Well, I always saw the—a great future for the City of Prince George, and uh, being splashing printer's ink around for 54 years, I can remember calling it the hub of British Columbia in 1921, when, I think it was, when John McInnis ran here. I remember calling Prince George the hub, and I remember in our paper us boosting for Saint George to be the hub, uh, uh, Prince George to be the hub. When I went to Fort Saint John, in 1943 and got a paper started up there, I immediately began to, uh, to toot for Prince George to be made the, uh, the center of a judicial record. Here we were in the Peace River country and everything had to go around be Edmonton at that time, and if we wanted to register a piece of land, or we wanted to find out something, or we wanted an _____ [??], or we wanted any judiciary of any kind, we either had to go to Kamloops or Victoria. I said, "Bring it all to Prince George." And when my husband was elected as an M.P. for the Cariboo in 1949, and he sat until 1953, that was one of the hardest things that he worked and fought for, Prince George to be made the Judicial Center of the North Country. I think the future of Prince George is unlimited. And the future, Terry, of any place is unlimited, so long as God has blessed them and endowed them with natural resources. Prince George is a, it's a, really a unique town. Uh, it has, uh, people in it who are in, come up here to the north, and they endure, and they persevere, and they stay here, and they just go to work literally and whittle a country out of the wilderness. Uh, Prince George has proven to British Columbia that it had the best Lumbermen's Association. Uh, Prince George has so many things that, I'm sorry, I wouldn't have time to mention them all. But I can assure you that I have no doubt, and no qualms about Prince George. I think Prince George has got the brightest future, probably, of any one given place now in British Columbia.

TB: Ma, we've covered timber. We've covered pulp. What about the Peace River Project?

MM: Well, I'm glad, uh, Terry, to have a word to say about the Peace River Project. I think, probably, it's a colossal deal. It's, uh, a colossal potential. Probably, it's the greatest, uh, one of the greatest engineering feats in the world. But, uh, it's about, I would say, 2 generations ahead of it's time. Uh, It's costing too much. It's cost—it's gonna cost a lot more than they ever intended. And, uh, not only that, uh, a power project, such as that, must bring on secondary industries to make it successful. Now, then, gettin' back before the, uh, Peace River Power Project came in, and Wenner-Gren came in, in 19, uh, 51 up there, we struck natural gas. And natural gas is a cheap fuel. Before we got any power up there at all, uh, first we made our, all of our power, the Canadian Utilities and the Northland Utilities at Dawson made their power with diesel oil. Then, when the natural gas

come in, they all converted to natural gas. It proved that we could heat our buildings for half what any place else in British Columbia was heating them for. It was cheap fuel. We had from, uh, 1951 until, uh, they began to talk about this Peace River Project, to develop some secondary industries. Now, then, in the Peace River, there is everything up there for secondary industries. It is really the only big decent farming and dual-purpose part of British Columbia. It's an empire, and inland empire in itself. Not only that, but the Peace River in Alberta would be able to draw from, from Alberta, into any power project, or any cheap fuel that we had up there. We have, it's a great grain country, as you well know. It's a great livestock country. It is, we have our, an abundance of timber. They're now getting' all these pulp mills in there showing you that we did have them there. Uh, we, we just had everything in the world to go to work and start in on secondary industries out there. We didn't have very many people. There was no, uh, no intention on the part of Mr. Bennett in 19, uh, 5—58, when the railroad got to Fort Saint John, finally. I went to Mr. Bennett, and I said why not, uh, let us put on, uh, colonization scheme up here, and settle some of this land. There's millions of acres up there that's not being used that could, uh, be added to the community. Uh, we have cereals; there would be no reason why there couldn't be a big distillery up there. We have the finest grains. We grow the finest, uh, malting barley in the world up there. And there's everything in the world to induce secondary industries. First of all, we didn't have the people. Well, we had to get in more people. I wanted to put on this farm project, and I got publicity in the paper and everybody knows I tried, but I didn't get to first base with it. And, uh they never done one single thing about it. And, uh—

TB: Why do you think there was such a blockade in Victoria?

MM: Well, because there wasn't any glamour to it. Mr. Bennett couldn't glitter and glamour to anything where people would be comin' in and getting on to land. That's a hard job. When you go to work and settle land, and get people to stay on it. And you couldn't do it unless you went into it with an organized proper plan. And you would have to have people that would stay on the land. Uh, during the war and right following the war, we tried to bring out a lot of immigrants, uh, to Canada. We brought a lot from Holland. We brought some from Switzerland. We brought them from all over, over there. Well, it's a great big, a terrible big country, a wilderness, you might say, with beautiful soil, lots of moisture, never have been known to have any pests, we don't even have hail storms, like they do on a. But we couldn't get these people who were coming from thickly populated countries in Europe to go to work and settle down there. And, so, of course, and then besides, there wasn't very much glamour to it. And besides, I proposed it! I went to see Mr. Williston in his office. And he remembers well, if he'd take the trouble to think. I went to see Mr. Bennett, and I laid the plan in front of him. You must remember that we had a plan, in 1938, just the year before the war, where we were gonna settle 6,000 people from Britain, in around Smithers and Terrace and Prince George and, uh, Sir Henry Page Croft came out here. And it was all laid on. And then the war came the next year and knocked it all into a cocked hat. And they were gonna be, is it, an agreement made between Canada and Britain. And we would subsidize these people to tea and coffee and sugar to the cash, you know, that they would have to lay up. And it would run over a term of 21 years. And if ever they wanted to buy themselves out, they could if they would pay back to the government what they'd had out of it, if they wanted to abandon the land. And if they went to work and proved up on the land, when they were there 21 years, the two governments would write off anything that they had ever given these people to do. There's lots of things that could be done with this great enormous country that we have, if people began to think about it.

Well, now then, that's why I wanted to promote this after we got the railroad into Fort Saint John. I knew that there had to be more people, if we were gonna have secondary industries. I'd been trying, since 1951, in my paper, the Alaska Highway News, to '58, when the railroad come in, to get different industries in there. I went to work and took my own time, and took a man from the Goodrich Tire Company, and took him all around. And he took a lease on a piece of land at Taylor, intending to put up a factory that would probably employ 300 people. Well, they dilly-dallied along so much about it, that they finally gave up the option and they never came. And there hasn't been one secondary industry been promoted up there. They get sulphur out of this gas, because of the na— of the nature of the gas that we get up there. And, uh, they have got a sulphur plant, and they do ship this sulphur out. Uh, they could make butane. They could make propane. They could make all these different things that they do as secondary industries. And, uh, they haven't done it. And, uh, that whatever power that comes out of the Peace River will have to go into a grid, and it will cost more than the power off of the Columbia or the power would have come off the Moran Dam, or off of the Hat Creek, uh, uh, lignite coal, that is there, that was in the part of the B.C. Electric, before Wenner-Gren came in and before the upset came on the

B.C. Electric.

And so, there's the Peace River Country, which is enormous country, which is a great asset to Prince George, but somebody has to think about it. But it is costing so much money, and it is 800 miles away from where the industry is, down at the Lower Mainland. And, not only will the people have to pay for the cost of the excessive, uh, price that we're paying to even get the power, to produce the power, but they will have to pick up a chip in any grid or any other thing where they're gonna use this Peace River Power, which will cost from 4, from, uh, 4 cents a, 4 cents as against 2 and a quarter or 2 and a half on the Columbia River. Or on any one of these others, that would have been brought in. You must remember that B.C. Electric had a plan already laid out.

TB: Mm-hm.

MM And the only reason in the world, that, uh, Mr. uh, uh, Dalrier [??] couldn't go along with it, he told me himself, he used to be coming up there when, uh, Wenner-Gren and Bernhard Gore and Sir Thomas Foy and all that crowd were comin' in, and after Wenner-Gren got interested in it. And he said, "It is not feasible," he said. "It can't be done." He said, "It can't be done enough to, uh, sell it, after we get it." And so that's, of course why Mr. Bennett riled with him and why he finally grabbed the B.C. Electric. Now, then, that's uh, people don't—that don't know, that haven't been in the know on it, are liable to forget that. And Mr. Bennett pushes it all under the rug, and goes merrily along. Uh, also, uh, there's a, the Columbia. Mr. Bennett has called this election, really and truly in his heart, because he's in trouble. He, uh, can't go to work and get more money. He can't, uh, he thinks that he can't face—he's pulled two or three and real big boners on people. He's pulled an awful, uh, boner on the money that he got out of the United States, on the Columbia. And, uh, he, you know and I know and everybody else knows that he's financing British—uh, the Peace River, out of bond—borrowed money and out of the consolidated revenue. And he simply cannot do it. And he's in trouble, but he won't tell us the trouble that he's in, so we—he treats us like we're a lot of children.

TB: Ma, do you think we have a dictatorship in B.C.?

MM: Well, we certainly have somethin' that's gettin' too damn close for comfort, in my opinion.

TB: What do we do to, uh, get away from a dictatorship, Ma?

MM: Well, what do we do to get—we get a damn good Opposition that'll pull the man apart. And they'll make it difficult for somebody to run away,uh, with, uh, it's almost fascism. You might call it fascism. When they, uh, when the man like Mr. Bennett will go to work and do things, and not even discuss it with the people that're givin' him a chance. That know what he is putting them in for. And he does treat us like we were poor relations or, or children. That, that's plain to be seen. Anybody who's listening to me knows very well that we didn't need this election any more than a cat needed two tails. He didn't need this election to give all these promises. He didn't need this election to give \$500, if he can, to the newlyweds. And he's not out of government. He has a right to be in government until the 17th of December, 1968. He doesn't need to give us the malarkey about the Centennial, because he could take all the kudos that there would come out of the Centennial, and not call an election until say, November, 1968, and it'd be all over but the shoutin' by that time.

TB: Mm-hm.

MM: So that we have, really and truly, we've got a dictatorship, right now. And this is what hurts me. This is what uh, m—uh, impels me, from within. Uh, I mustn't be the only one that knows it, but probably I'm the only one that's got enough courage to come out and say it. And, and, and, give you a pointer or two, on how you might stop it or how you might try to head it off. Or how you might get in under bec—before it gets absolutely fascist.

TB: Well, one of his favorite expressions, uh, in the last little while, it's been used by a number of people, and, uh, most particularly, Mr. Bennett. And that, uh, phrase is the dynamic society. Ma, what about the Dynamic Society?

MM: Well, Terry, I'm glad you asked me that. Uh, that, just like a lot of more things is phony as hell. Uh, excuse me for sayin' it, but that's just what it is. Uh, the, all this big talk about this, um, about this, uh, booming economy and dynamic society and how, what great, how great everything is, is a falsehood. If you stop to, if you stop to analyze it. If everything is so rosy, and everybody is making so much money, and our markets are what Mr. Bennett says they are, why, in the name of God, have we got all this frustration and unrest at the present time? Now, we know it as well as the Meads and the Persians. It's as old as the Iroc [??] that a laborer must be worthy of his hire. Now, I'm not a union person. I've run a union shop. I'm not a socialist. I believe, though, in being, uh, charitable and, uh, loving my fellow man. And I think my record will prove that. And, uh, I do not, I do not think that there can be all this great accom—all this great boom, and all this when, when these men who make this money, they are either thieves in their heart that they will make the money and hoard it and keep it, and be so niggardly and so mean about giving the man who helped them to make it a fair deal. And if they were giving it to them, there wouldn't be so many strikes. There never, in, uh, my 54 years, have I seen so much confusion, so much unrest, so much unhappiness, so little possession, as the possessions that people have as it is at the present time. Now, wouldn't you say that's untrue? Does one stand up against the other? I think one—saying that, is just about as silly as saying that they're doing so much for the people in giving them back the taxes when they taxed them too high for it.

TB: Mm—hm.

MM: Why, honestly, the people of British Columbia, I believe—I'll be dead and kickin' up the daisies and they won't wee it, I won't see it—but they'll, some day, rue the day that they had been so damn stupid, to swallow everything that they been swallowin', especially these last three years.

TB: Ma, if we don't have a dynamic society, what kind of society do we have?

MM: Well, we've got a phony society, in my opinion, now. And, uh, what is dynamic, after all? It's a mighty, bloody, uh, dangerous thing to go monkeying with dynamite, unless you know how to set the fuse and how to get out of the way when she goes off.

TB: Ma, what can we do, come election time on September 12?

MM: Well, you can just go out, and you can vote Opposition. I don't know how you feel about it. But, Terry, I am all for young blood. I remember I had young blood my once—myself once, and I know that it was great to be audacious. It was great to be courageous. It was great to be adventuresome. And today, we're, even our children, are losing the desire to be adventurous. You cannot go to work and accept everything. Security is the last thing in the world that people who have red blood in them and life want. There's always an adventure around the corner, and who wants to be secure in anything? I don't want to be secure. Even now, at 79 years of age, God forbid that I would ever somebody would say to me, "Now you've got everything you want, and that's it. Take it." I would die, right then and there. And anybody dies. You might be young, even, and you will die within you, if you have complete security. And I, I think that that is a tragedy of this time. I think that the time is due for some new and young blood. And what can I do about it?

I don't know how my time is running, Terry, and maybe I'm tiring people in talking this long. But about all that each one of us can do is to turn it over carefully in our minds. Admit some of these things that maybe we're not eager to admit. Uh, forego a few of the shekels that might be coming in to us through some gravy or the other of a Homeowner's Grant. And take an overall picture of the whole thing. I think that we want to look at this election that this is our last chance. If Mr. Bennett gets his 7 year term, and he stays in for 7 years, Terry, he will be 73 years of age. That's too long. That's too long. We need young people. We thought Mr. Bennett would bring somebody along probably. I give Mr. Bennett credit for everything he did. I have no quarrel with Social Credit. It's a way of life. Probably it's something new. Probably it's the thing to come in. I don't know. I tried it out myself once, because there was nothing else. There was a last resort. There was no, my two parties, there was Conservatives and Liberals chopped their heads off. But, no matter what it is, you must bring somebody along. Mr. Bennett is expendable. His government will be expendable. It will go and there will be something new will come in, and they won't make many more mistakes than Mr. Bennett did, when he first come in. And I would say, to you, what could I do about it? I can't do very much. But what can you do about it? You can go to work and turn this over in your mind, my boy, with a heart in you, with a heart for those who're gonna come after you.

It isn't all just a day, you know. We don't live just for ourselves and for our, uh, today. If we did, if everybody else did, we wouldn't have the Canada that we have at the present time.

TB: Well, Ma, I think then, what you're trying to say is that before we vote on September 12th, we should think it over, think it over very carefully, and then vote whichever way we see fit.

MM: And not only vote yourself, but go and dedicate yourself if you feel—if you feel as though there is a need for a stronger Opposition, if you're not one of those who are so kindly going along with this rich and great economy that we have. If you feel like your children, you want to do something for your children and you're in opposition at this time-- and my dear, Terry, there never was a time when we needed Opposition a little bit more than we do now—then you go to work and you choose, you look over your candidates and you see the one that you think would, uh, probably have the best chance. Maybe he isn't the best man, but he might have the best chance. I'm sorry, as I told you in the beginning, that they didn't have a gentleman's agreement, that they didn't do something to put one man up against one man, and then you go and you vote for it. And I'm—is my time nearly up? I'm afraid it is.

TB: Just about, Ma.

MM: And I'm gonna speak to you out there in the zether waves that is listening to me, I never asked anything of you more heartily and more sincerely than I do today. I am telling you that for your own good, for the good of this province, in God's name, give Mr. Bennett a stronger Opposition. You people who are on the fence, make up your mind. Th—there'll be lots of these people, there's lots of these people who go along with the status quo, but let them do that. If you know any disgruntled Social Creditors, and you can convince them to vote Opposition, you do, in God's name. You send a strong Opposition. Don't be afraid. If you send a minority—a majority, and Mr. Bennett has a minority, you are working for the best interests of this province. It's awfully nice to come to Prince George again. I love Prince George. You were very good to me here. You gave my dear husband a great majority, and he worked hard for you. And so I plead with you tonight, with all my heart, that you will consider what I've said seriously, and do something about it. Good night and God bless you.

TB: Thank you, Ma. Thank you very much.