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Letter from George Register to Representative Burdick Regarding Elizabeth McCleskey, February 7, 1953

George Register

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GEORGE S. REGISTER

ATTORNEY AT LAW
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

February 7, 1953.

Hon. U. L. Burdick,
Congressman from North Dakota,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Burdick:

Re: Elizabeth L. McCleskey.

The above named person has been a Social Worker, in the Indian Service, at Standing Rock Reservation, for some time. Prior to such service, she was in civil service in Washington, D.C., and elsewhere, and had a record wholly satisfactory. Her services at Standing Rock have been under the jurisdiction of the Area Office at Aberdeen, South Dakota, of which Mr. Cooper is Superintendent and a Mrs. Heineman is Area Social Worker.

The relations between Mrs. Heineman and Miss McCleskey were unfortunate, and charges were preferred against Miss McCleskey concerning the performance of her duties. To these charges, written reply was made and filed. The Superintendent's decision sustained the charges (as one would expect), and an appeal was taken to the Secretary of the Interior. The file is at this office.

I have tried to be of help to Miss McCleskey, as have others, including Dr. Fredricks of the local Quain & Ramstad Clinic. We had been definitely informed that Miss McCleskey would have a right to a personal appearance before the Secretary on appeal, and the right to submit further and additional statements relative to the facts at any time prior to the hearing. Senator Langer is thoroughly familiar with this case, and he informs me that Secretary Chapman had definitely promised to order and effect a transfer for Miss McCleskey prior to the date of separation (January 22nd, 1953) under the Director's Order. However, no such transfer was made, and recently I was notified by Mr. D. S. Myer, Commissioner, of the Bureau, that the Bureau reserved the right to make its decision without giving Miss McCleskey the right to appear, and indicated that the decision may be made at any time.

Thereafter, in response to a telegraphic request to Secretary McKay, I received notice that no decision would be given until additional evidence which Miss McCleskey desired to file, could be received and considered--at which time also a decision concerning necessity for a personal appearance would be made.

GEORGE S. REGISTER

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BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

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The matter is, of course, imminent. If an adverse decision is issued, the effect is tragic to this young lady. In my opinion she is very conscientious, worked hard under very trying conditions, and had the unfortunate experience of apparently getting the ill-will of her area social worker, who apparently is very aggressive, and has made up her mind to try to have Miss McClekey discharged from the service, carrying with it all civil service rights.

Miss McCleskey is now in Washington, and is staying at the Continental Hotel. I hope she can secure proper representation there. Both Dr. Fredricks and I feel that she has been treated very unfairly, and only hope that she can receive a fair hearing before a person who will be impartial, and who is interested in seeing that justice is done. I am informed that Mr. Cooper was in Washington, talked with officials in the Bureau about the case, and it would seem that now the appeal matter should be presented to some official under the new administration who will not feel obligated to sustain any decision that a former officer wanted to make.

When Senator Langer was contacted, I believe he felt that, because of his relationship with Secretary Chapman, he could help this young lady. Of course, I know the present situation, and am writing to both Mr. Burdick and Mr. Krueger, and have written to Senator Young.

I regret very much that my first letter to you is in the nature of a request. It is my understanding that the area social worker involved is or has been recently in Washington. I know the difficulty facing Miss McCleskey. However, in America it would seem that something like this could just not happen. If you could take the time to look at the file, and read over the charges, you would see that many of them are based on hearsay, practically impossible to reply to, and indicates that the accuser, judge and jury was one and the same person, in effect.

Miss McCleskey is originally from Alabama, and has few local contacts. However, I know that you join with me in feeling that justice should be done, and, although I realize how terribly busy you are and the demands made upon you, I am taking the liberty of writing to you in this matter.

Thanking you, I am

Yours sincerely,

