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Letter from Senator Langer to Lyle Johnson Regarding Non-Indian Property Owners Living on Indian Lands, June 12, 1950

William Langer

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Indians

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June 12, 1950

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Hon. Lyle H. Johnson
Sanish, North Dakota

Dear Mr. Johnson:

With further reference to our previous correspondence concerning the rights of peroperty owners living on Indian lands acquired by the Government at Sanish and Van Hook, North Dakota, I have now received the following report from Mr. Paul L. Fickinger, Area Director of the Office of Indian Affairs, U. S. Department of the Interior, 804 North 29th Street, Billings, Montana:

"My inquiries as to the status of these non-Indian citizens who have placed houses on Indian lands indicate that their tenure has been secured through a revocable permit issued by the Superintendent of the Fort Berthold Agency, Elbowoods, North Dakota. A comparable question became an issue in 1948 relative to traders and others occupying tribal lands at Elbowoods. It was decided at that time that the responsibility for settlement of the claims of these individuals was that of the Department of the Army.

"The form of permit issued by the Three Affiliated Tribes for use of tribal lands provides that the permit may be revoked by the Tribal Business Council or by referendum vote of the General Council. It would appear, therefore, that permittees in Sanish and Van Hook have no cause for action against the Three Affiliated Tribes.

"The vacant and unreserved lots in the townsites of Sanish and Van Hook were withdrawn from further disposition by order of the Secretary of the Interior on September 19 and November 2, 1934 in accordance with the Act of June 18, 1934 (48 Stat. 984). Our records do not show if full restoration to tribal ownership was ever consummated for these lots."

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As you will note from my letter to you on May 16, a report should be forthcoming from the Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army, at Omaha, Nebraska, in the very near future and, just as soon as additional information is available, you will hear from me again.

With kindest regards, and hoping you are well and happy,
I am

Sincerely,

WL/lbn