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Letter from Senator Langer to Martin Cross Regarding US Senate Bill 809, March 5, 1958

William Langer

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Cross, Martin

COPY

March 5, 1958.

Hon. Martin Cross,
Box 124,
Emmet, North Dakota.

c. 5809

Dear Martin:

Your letter has arrived, and I was not particularly surprised at its contents.

You see, Martin, it just bears out what I have said in various speeches on the Senate Floor....namely, that the Indian Bureau was organized in 1884 with millions and millions of dollars of appropriations and that these Indians are worse off than they were before the Bureau was organized.

Now, we have been successful in getting established on several reservations, headed by our Jewel Bearing Plant at Rolla, industrial plants. And Carl Beck, before he left the Indian Department, made arrangements to establish two more on two other Indian reservations to make a total of nine. Just a short time ago, I had a hearing with the Seminole Indians, and they want to put in an industry dealing with the selling of frog legs, which from all reports and estimates furnished by the three tribes and their lawyer, H. A. Silver, would very likely be successful.

You are mistaken, however, in your assumption that S. 809 is dead, because in spite of the fact that the Committee would not take any action last year, I have just had a letter from Senator Neuberger, Chairman of the subcommittee, whom I have seen repeatedly, which I am enclosing and which I would like to have you return to me with your comments. We plan to have a hearing.

Also, today I got a letter from our mutual friend Miss Peterson advising me that there would be a dinner at the Sheraton Park Hotel on March 16th to which a great many tribal members have been invited and a great many of whom she expects to attend.

Martin, this S. 809 in my opinion is the greatest bill ever introduced for the Indian population. This entire

To: Hon. Martin Cross.

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March 5, 1958.

Indian question appeals so much to me that I induced the Committee to let me go to various states, and I have been to practically every Indian state holding hearings with Senator Kefauver of Tennessee. And when he couldn't go, I had Pete Chumbris, the lawyer whom you have met. In every one of these places, the testimony is about the same....the Indian women complain that the men go off fifty or a hundred miles, even 200, to work, which often results in breaking up the family. The Indians themselves do not like it because if they become ill and are taken to a hospital off the reservation, they have to pay the hospital bill which they don't have to do on the reservation.

The feeling is practically unanimous in favor of each one of these tribes having their own industry operated by some big outfit for a dollar a year, just like the Bulova Watch Company gets one dollar a year for operating the jewel bearing plant and training the help so that in a comparatively short time the Indians can run their own industry. This, of course, may not be the entire solution to the problem, but in my opinion it certainly would be a long step in the right direction.

What do you think about it?

With kind regards, I am as always,

Your friend,

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