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Letter from Pansy Pawson to Senator Langer Regarding Illegitimacy Cases on the Fort Berthold Reservation, November 17, 1954

Pansy Pawson

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS

New Town, North Dakota

November 17, 1954

PLEASE RETURN TO
SENATOR LANGER

Honorable William Langer
United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

My dear Senator Langer:

Mr. Ralph Shane, Superintendent of the Fort Berthold Reservation, requested that I make a report on 20 cases of illegitimate mothers here at the Fort Berthold Reservation.

I should like to introduce myself as the Social Worker of the Fort Berthold Agency. I have worked here since November 27, 1953. I have repeatedly requested, from Mr. John B. Hart, a list of the 20 cases mentioned, as there is no list here at this agency; and I have no knowledge of where he got that figure. No mass effort is made to prove paternity on each and every case of illegitimacy reported on the birth certificate at the Fort Berthold Agency. Individual cases are given individual attention. Each client knows and is given information as to how to go about proving paternity, and changing the birth certificate, so that the child will be legitimate. Clients here at the agency are not given assistance until effort of some kind is made, through court action, to prove paternity. Quite often psychological factors prevent the mothers from taking definite action unless they are given emotional support by the agency to try to get the fathers to accept the children. By virtue of the fact that the father quite often is a married person, it is evident that it is useless to force marriage, but in those cases an out of court settlement can be made. Clients here at this agency know that it is the individual's responsibility to prove themselves eligible for assistance the same as if they were getting State Assistance.

On the 20 cases in question, I have no report to make. I am sorry that I was unable to remain at the Hearing until I was called upon, as I would like to have discussed the welfare problem here at Fort Berthold more fully than it was discussed during the day while I was at the Hearing.

Sincerely yours

Pansy Pawson
Pansy Pawson
Social Worker

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SENATOR LANGER