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Vancouver, -----

May 23, 1938.

Dear Mr. Irwin:

I have to refer to your letter of February 17th, file 2-10, in the matter of an application by Mr. J. F. Anderson to lease a part of Kootenay Indian Reserve No. 10, Lot 9999. It was understood that Mr. Anderson also included in his application the area of Kootenay Indian Reserve No. 4, Lot 10002, which would remain to us after a settlement with Dr. Bruner for the reclamation of the Reserve. As the Department only recently advised definitely the terms on which a settlement with Dr. Bruner would be acceptable, it was not possible to give consideration to Mr. Anderson's application until the above-mentioned information from the Department was received. It may now be too late to do anything this year about leasing the area of I.R. 10, Lot 9999, applied for by Mr. Anderson.

You probably gathered from the conversation you had with Colonel Fragnell and myself at Creston, after the meeting with the Indians regarding the resolution dealing with Kootenay I.R. No. 4 included in the Bruner project, that our policy is to discourage leasing of Indian lands. There are, of course, cases where leases should be made because of circumstances where it is in the best interests of the Indians and the Department to do so, but where any able-bodied Indians are available and could, with some training and assistance, farm the lands themselves, every encouragement should be given to them to do so. It is my considered opinion that the policy of leasing is having a baneful influence on the Indians of the Interior in that it is setting up a loafer landlord system destroying initiative the Indian lessor may possess and is depriving the younger men of an opportunity to use the resources available to them to earn their own living, and is placing in their hands a very good argument to demand relief. If reclaimed lands or similar acreage in your Agency are leased, it should only be for short terms and with a view to getting the lands in shape for the Indians to take hold themselves. I am satisfied you appreciate the importance of doing everything possible to encourage Indians to work their own lands and to get into the way of realizing that they must depend on the resources available to them and their own labour and effort to provide their living.

There may be an opportunity later on on the year to discuss this whole matter with you again, and once a settlement has been made with Dr. Bruner, we should attempt to formulate a definite policy with respect to the farming of reclaimed areas and other similar lands.

Yours faithfully,

A. Irwin, Esq.,  
Indian Agent,  
Cranbrook, B.C.

D. M. MacKay,  
Indian Commissioner for B.C.

DM/AC

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