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## Letter from Bigelow Neal to Representative Burdick Regarding the Terms of the Taking of Land for Construction of the Garrison Dam, May 14, 1956

Bigelow Neal

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Bigelow Neal  
Sanish  
N. D.

May 14, 1956

Congressman Usher L. Burdick  
House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D. C.

Dear Congressman Burdick:

By way of comment on your letter of April 27, 1956, I find one or two thoughts that might have a slight bearing on your problem.

I.

The lands of the Three Affiliated Tribes were purchased by Treaty and not by negotiation or condemnation.

In one of the Government Loan drives during World War I, North Dakota led the nation in per capita investment. McLean County led North Dakota. And that portion of McLean County within the Fort Berthold Reservation led McLean County. It seems reasonable to say that these Indians were among the most patriotic people in the United States.

It was that high patriotism which caused them to surrender their lands for the building of the Garrison Dam, although the taking of these lands was in direct violation of existing treaties between the Three Tribes and the Government of the United States, constituting an act of dishonor upon a conscience white men can look only with shame.

One of the promises under which they agreed to surrender title was a statement by General Pick of the Corps of Engineers, made at a conference at the Elbowoods Agency in which he said clearly before a great number of people that all the Government wanted was the right to flood the land and that the rights to any lands, purchased but not actually flooded, would remain with the original owners. Also they were to have the perpetual rights to hunt on these lands bordering the Reservoir and to fish therein.

Very sincerely yours,  
*Bigelow Neal*  
Bigelow Neal