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Letter from Representative Burdick to Representative John Taber Regarding Appropriations for Garrison Dam, December 22, 1952

Usher Burdick

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December 22, 1952

The Honorable John Taber
Chairman, House Committee on
Appropriations
Room 1126, New House Office Building
Washington, D. C.

In re: Garrison Dam

Dear Mr. Taber:

The law creating this dam provided that in the building of it there should be no interference with the present or future beneficial uses of the waters of the Missouri River West of the 90th Meridian. That provision is in the law and the Army Engineers know it.

There are three irrigation projects in this area which will be affected if the Army Engineers can proceed with the creation of a reservoir with a proximate water level at Williston of 1850 feet. Besides this the water plant of the City of Williston will be destroyed. All of these projects are now located with a water level of approximately 1830 feet above sea level.

To get around this, and build a high reservoir the engineers now propose diking the City of Williston, the Great Northern Railroad and the irrigation plants above named. Congress has never authorized this huge expenditure of building dikes and neither has Congress passed upon any of the matters in connection with dikes. Without this authority the engineers now, through their land division, which is a huge real estate office, are purchasing land up to an elevation of 1854 feet and are actually buying and paying for this land at this moment. They go as high as \$110.00 an acre, and this extra high elevation requires 90,000 additional acres more than the plans originally called for. This land purchasing matter at this level has never been authorized, and you can see what a mess we will be in, after spending on that dam a billion dollars, and find that the land owners are not protected as provided in the act creating the dam. It seems to me the Army Engineers should be made accountable for this unauthorized and lavish expenditure of the people's money.

I do not here present facts as to the waste, extravagance, negligence and ignorance displayed in the building of the project thus far. But the facts will show that General Pick's mistakes in engineering in Burma and North Africa, (of which we are now all aware), will be in the primer class compared to the same or worse engineering performance at the Garrison Dam.

I think before any more money is appropriated for this venture, the Congress should make some inquiries and determine whether the Army Engineers are running this government or whether Congress has at least a little to say about the expenditure of the people's money with the reckless abandon which recently has come to light. I have not prepared any resolution calling for an investigation, and will not do so until I consult with you. We should, however, put a stop to this high-handed performance which has definite damages and questional benefits.

Sincerely,

USHER L. BURECK, M. C.