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Letter from RR Robinson to Senator Langer, Senator Young, and Congressman Lemke Regarding Garrison Dam, July 19, 1946

R R. Robinson

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Washburn, North Dakota

July 19th, 1946

Hon. Milton Young,
United State Senator

Hon. William Langer
United States Senator

Hon. William Lemke
Congressman

Hon. Charles R. Robertson
Congressman
Washington, D.C.

My dear Sirs:

I am writing you on a great humanitarian question. This important matter involves the entire population of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

While we here in North Dakota, are for, and need a great water conservation dam in central North Dakota, yet, when we look at the human side of this serious question it presents a pathetic picture.

If this great structure developes into what has been claimed for it, the homes, farms, cemeteries of the entire population of the great Fort Berthold Reservation will be under many feet of water. There is, I understand, over 2,000 individual member of the three Affiliated Tribes of this great reservation. It has come to my attention that it has been suggested, that some of these Indians be removed to other various reservations, this would mean separation of tribes circles and societies, even perhaps the separation of individual families.

In our aggressive clamor for water conservation or an endeavor to create employment, let us be mindful of the fact that the Indians are after all human beings, and have as much a God given right in this world as their white brothers. In fact it would seem to me that perhaps the red man has more of a right to the American continent than any other man who treads here, because this particular territory has ben the home of the Indian for centuries, while the white man has known this section of the country slightly over fifty years. Here along this Missouri valley, the Indian had lived for so many years on and on, he has hunted and fished in a paradise which he could call his own. Along this stream, lays and slumbers the bones of his ancestors.....no wonder then does this great tragedy of being driven from his home cause a pain in his heart.

The red man was driven from place to place, then the Powers that be set out certain reservations, and told the Indians that this

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"this is your home and you stay on the reservation". Now here another force and says move again, and leave behind all, memories, legends and traditions, ending in the fact that tribe separates from tribe, societies separate from societies, families separates from families.

The Indian, are a loveble and a mysterious people, they live and thrive on legend and customs which have been handed down from generation to generation. What may seem like a trivial little silly thing to a white man may be serious and of far reaching consequence to the Indian.

I do not know, nor have I a solution for this big problem, but it is upon us and we must take time out right now to settle this matter to the satisfaction of our friends, THE ONLY REAL AMERICANS ON THIS CONTINENT. Let's not split these groups up, cause heart ache to the people who have been driven from place to place. What a pity and a shame to remove from all time all those historical spots which are so deeply embedded in the hearts of the Indians. It causes sadness when we are reminded that those old cemeteries are to be flooded away, wherein rests the bones of the great forefathers, numbered among those bones are those belonging to those Indians who served the United States as Custers Scouts.

We are today spending millions like drunken sailors, in all four corners of this earth, doing what we say are to protect those peoples who are oppressed, we are sending food in billions to the copper colored men of the orient and the black man of the Pacific isles, yet right here in our midst we are pushing our brothers around every time the wind blows from some direction which might serve our desire.

I am asking that the human side of this vital matter be considered and some plan worked out with fairness and consideration for all. I feel that this great law making body of the United States Senate and house of representatives, will use its unwaivering sense of fairness and loyalty to our OWN PEOPLE.

With kindest personal regards to you and each of you.

Most sincerely yours,

R. R. ROBINSON