

# First, land; next, buffalo; now oil

BY LLOYD OMDAHL

Does the white man have no shame?

Our consciences ought to be enraged by the effort the state is making in relation to oil that belongs to the Three Tribes under Lake Sakakawea. But before getting into the specifics, we need context to grasp the infamy of the proposed action.

The white man came to the Plains where he acquired the land by overpowering, killing and exiling the Native Americans who lived here. Then he took their land - 70, 000 square miles. That's 280,000 quarters, 45,000,000 acres.

Next came the malicious slaughter of 30,000,000 buffalo, depriving Native Americans of their only source of food, clothing and shelter. They were then shoved onto some of the poorest land in North Dakota while the kids were ironically shipped off to schools to become Christians.

"All of your needs will be met" the government promised but it never came close to being true. Crooked U.S. Indian agents siphoned off vast quantities of what the government did provide. Some Native Americans starved.

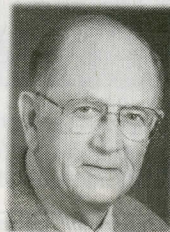
At the state level, we have done nothing significant in the last 50 years to help the tribes brighten the future. As I reported earlier, the North Dakota Indian Affairs Com-

mission met monthly and painfully reviewed the needs on reservations. It was there that I learned that compassion without money was worthless. Instead of money, both the budget-makers and the money-appropriators bought off Native Americans with token recognitions and honors. However, when the legislative sessions finished, there was little or nothing for the tribes.

This is a travesty when the state treasury is bursting with a "Legacy Fund" of \$6,000,000,000. There are restrictions on raiding this fund but the legislature seems to find a way to drain two or three hundred million of the Fund to balance the budget. So funds would be available for a Marshall Plan of sort if we had the political will to do it.

According to a report by Forum Communications Writer Dave Kolpack, the white man has reported that there is a cache of \$100,000,000 in oil money under the Missouri River adjacent to the reservation. And since new drilling techniques enable oil companies to draw oil from much larger fields, including deposits under Lake Sakakawea, they are more than willing to challenge ownership by the tribes.

While the oil companies are



eager to extend drilling under Lake Sakakawea, the tribes have ownership of the oil and want the revenue to be treated accordingly. Disregarding of shame or regret for the sordid history of the white man's genocidal inclinations, state officials are planning to invalidate tribal ownership and grab the money.

According to Kolpack's report, declarations have validated the native-American claims to ownership of the river bottom back to 1820. Administrators in the U. S. Interior Department are supporting the state's claim.

This shabby treatment of our people will be catalogued with all of the other outrageous evil we have perpetrated on a helpless people.

Will the "have-nots" ever see economic or social justice? When I see how our society keeps brutalizing Native-Americans, I have to believe in ultimate justice, maybe not on this earth but on some day of reckoning.

At the gate, Peter may ask all of us about two items in the New Testament. James says that it is sin if we know the good that ought to be done and not do it. Paul writes in Romans that if we just consent to the evil others are doing, we are just as guilty as those in the chicken coop.

We shouldn't be caught sitting around doing nothing while justice is being battered into submission.