

COVERING THE WATERFRONT

might I hope that I can convey to you some of the excitement and drama, together with a few reflections on our impressive record of performance and leadership in the field of water resources. I have come to the chairmanship of this Program item with a deep sense of humility because of the long, proud history of the League in water, but also with a deep sense of pride and a determination to try to meet the challenges it presents.

While I do not intend to dwell overlong on the past-- for this is indeed only a prologue to the decisions you will soon be making in your units, it does seem important to consider how we got where we are today and how this ties into the matters on which we are attempting to reach consensus this fall. Even though we in the Wisconsin League have always had considerable interest in this Program item as indicated by the fact that we adopted almost simultaneously with the national League a state Program item back in 1957, we have not been quick to recognize the opportunities and the demands were were possible for local Leagues under the national water item. I share with you the responsibility for this lack of foresight and it is only since I have had the chance to see the truly amazing extent and diversity of study and action which has and is going on across the United States that I realized our shortcomings. *Lake Erie Study* Perhaps in our own attitudes we were only reflecting the then current public attitude that Wisconsin was a water-rich state with little to worry about. With some perceptiveness, following our state study, we did agree to some principles which are now State CR XI. We did also show the same concern manifested in the national consensus for the administration of water resources and the duplication of agencies for its management. But somehow we did not really "gear up" for the long pull on this item and the sense of dissatisfaction and frustration of our members seemed most apparent when we did, in 1965 adopt a broad state item on conservation with emphasis on water resources. *- Went*
importance of citizen follow-up

For the next few minutes while I review briefly for you some of the history of the in water resources, I would like you to keep in mind a few factors which seem to me important that we recognize. These are, in a sense, by-products of our water work subjective results which we did not anticipate, but which we have been quick to advantage of.

1--The work of the League in water and the way in which it has been handled has made substantial changes in the method of Program work on national items. It has served as a pace-setter and a testing ground for new ways of doing things.

2--It has noticeably enhanced our national, state, and local reputation as an effective active organization.

3--It provides a point of departure and a common meeting ground of agreement for discussion with those citizens who are not in sympathy with other of our national Program positions.

4-- It has given us the opportunity to demonstrate, to government and citizen alike, the possibilities of regional study, action and cooperation.

5--Our work in water in support of our positions has proved to be an unusually successful way of showing League members and others how to be effective citizens and has served as a demonstration project for learning about the League and learning about government.

6-- This item has brought us members, money, friends, stature and publicity beyond our wildest expectations. Later I shall return to these five rather blunt theses, but I present them to you at the beginning so that you may test them against historical and chronological fact.

Later than some, but earlier than most, the LWV recognized that nationally we faced a problems of flowing shortage, obsolete management, inadequate knowledge, and, worst of all, public ignorance and apathy about one of our greatest national resources. ^{They} demonstrated this by adoption at the national convention in 1956 an item: "Conservation: A study of water resources." At that time drought was plaguing some parts of the country, floods were devastating other areas. The country as a whole was beginning to recognize the water crisis created by a rising population, increased industrialization and city growth. League members had been quick to sense that positive measures were needed on a nation-wide scale at every level of government if the available water supply was to continue to meet our water needs.

Through this decade the League with no special interest to advance except the public interest as the League sees it, has been trying to understand the complexities of water management-- planning, administration, financing -- and on the basis of this knowledge to participate

and the decisions which are citizen responsibilities. By 1958 the League had learned a great deal about the theory of water management as well as about the way it is practiced by government agencies. Members were ready to consider and summarize what they had learned in a statement of position which was adopted by delegates to the national Convention.

This statement of position includes support for:

... overall long-range planning of water resources development. We believe that development of our waterways should be undertaken only after comprehensive consideration of different ways in which water can be used--for human consumption, industry, navigation, conservation of wild life, recreations. Once some types of development have taken place on a river, for instance once a series of dams has been constructed, the character of that river is sealed and can never be changed. Sometimes the best development of a river is no development at all leaving it at all, leaving it in its natural state. Sometimes a workable compromise is possible between these two extremes. To insure thing long range planning the League agreed that better coordination, organization and procedures were needed at the federal level of government; that the Executive and Congress should be provided with adequate data, so that all alternatives can be considered and intelligent decisions made.

...managing water resources on a regional basis. Each river basin has characteristics all its own and should be developed to meet the particular needs of the region as long as this development is not in conflict with the national interest.

This necessitates machinery appropriate to each region to provide coordinated planning and administration among the federal, state, and other agencies which are working in the region, and procedures to provide citizens in the region with the information and the opportunities they need for taking part in policy decisions about the direction development will take.

...the necessary role of the federal government in financing water resources development, but the League recognizes that state and local governments and private users should share the costs as far as possible based on the benefits received and the ability to pay. Not spelled out but certainly implicit in this position are: support for clean water for reasons of health, aesthetics and recreational use; the goal of citizen participation in value judgements; and the understanding that land use affects water so directly that it is often part of the prob

League work under this position has been directed toward:

...Coordination--Support of national legislation to bring all national and state agencies involved in development together at the planning stage and to establish a national non-bureaucratic committee to offer suggestions, review proposals and be available for consultation. Leagues have urged states and localities to assume a fair share of responsibility for development of their water resources while encouraging them to seek the state and federal aid needed in carrying out development.

...River basin and regional planning--Leagues have supported appropriations for this kind of planning; urged that preliminary studies be truly comprehensive; supported legislation that would further such planning; testified on its need before congressional committees. Where Leagues have banded together in inter-League groups to study and take action on solutions for the region's problems they have found this has broadened members outlook and experience and ^{has} made their action more effective.

...Financing- The League has supported federal grants in aid for construction of sewage treatment plants and increases in federal authorizations for many clean water programs. Local and state Leagues supported bond issues for local and state funds to be used in pollution abatement and in their legislatures state Leagues have supported appropriations to match federal funds for pollution control projects.

...Information--The League has supported funds for research in pollution control bills; establishment of water research centers in land grant colleges; research funds for other institutions.

...Citizen participation--The League has strongly emphasized the importance of giving consideration to alternative plans for water development, so that the people who will have to live with the resulting development will be able to make choices before irrevocable decisions are made. They have urged that citizen leaders be involved from the beginning of planning. League members are always working for public hearings, newspaper reports of plans; wider public discussion of water needs.

...Better water quality and land use -- This has been the area of maximum activity at all levels since 1960. The League has supported improvements in water pollution control each year in Congress and has supported enforcement of federal, state and local pollution abatement laws. Members have attended federal enforcement conferences and kept an eye on how these laws are being administered.

In 1960 this item became by Convention vote, a CR--designated as "active" under which Leagues were authorized to continue regional study and action and the national board was directed to adopt a flexible policy regarding action to be taken on this CR. Two restrictions were placed on activity: (1) Regional consensus was not to be the basis for action unless the general topic was considered by the national study; (2) Permission of the national board was required for taking local or state action under the national item. Thus the tradition breaking precedent was set on two points -- that of "flexible handling of Program items -- and the concept of Leagues taking action under a national consensus on local and/or state and regional measures which implemented the national decisions.

By 1964 League members had become so engrossed in the possibilities of this item and so involved that they, by Convention action, returned it to the Current Agenda where it remains today. Through the years we have concentrated our attention on three major phases of water problems: administration, planning, and financing. It is to the point of financing that we are directing attention currently. There may be those among you who think that this is a specific and technical question -- that of whether or not the federal government should offer financing in the form of incentives to industries for abatement of their pollution. It can be both specific and technical if you make it so. I hope you will see the larger, basic questions involved--as in the title of our every member publication.. "Who pays for a clean stream?"

Under our positions we have supported federal grants for construction of municipal treatment facilities. Now one might say, "the heat" is on both government and industry to speed up in pollution abatement. The provision in the Water Quality Act of 1965 which requires that all states set standards for inter state waters by June, 1967, has greatly accelerated the demands for construction of facilities and for process changes in industries which will

reduce amounts of effluent. Inherent in the consensus questions which are being put to you is the proper role of the federal government in offering assistance in some form to private industry for this purpose. You will, by your replies, be letting us know what you think about such things as: is pollution control a production cost? Should help be given to all plants or only some? On what basis? Which do you prefer--direct help (through loans and grants)? or indirect aid (through tax changes)? Are financial aids and incentive to industry to improve their methods of treatment? What other ways are there to motivate industry to reduce water pollution?

Obviously one need not be a sanitary engineer or a tax expert to make these decisions. We do need to be informed citizens to decide and we have made every effort to provide you with the basic materials for your decision. We also hope that you will avoid the twin pitfalls of (1) considering this matter only in the light of your local situation; and (2) becoming bogged down on the details of financing and implementation. As usual we are seeking agreement on a principle which will permit us to measure legislation against. For this reason we will be eagerly studying all of your additional remarks about the criteria you would like applied and limitations you may want placed on any position we reach on this subject.

Time and action changes positions even in the LWV. This is possibly more evident in this Program field than others where values may be more constant. It is an inescapable fact that there is an ever-growing peripheral edge to our positions in water resources, because of constant change in the way in which they can be implemented. For instance, let's take water administration. In our first few years of study, we were deeply concerned about multiplicity of agencies and the need for coordinated efforts. We became somewhat enamoured of the concept of a single agency to administer all water matters. As we have become more knowledgeable and politically sophisticated we have also come to recognize some realities such as the veritable impossibility of a single federal agency for this purpose and have realized that important element in this idea is the coordination of over-all comprehensive planning in river basins. Each of these beliefs leads quite logically to support of other "fringe" type proposals which will implement this concept. We have seen

many changes in climate of opinion both in and out of government in the past ten years and it no longer seems quite as important (or effective) to insist on an overall federal water policy or agency as it does to speak up for coordinated administration and regional or river basin planning. Lest you think we have entirely forgotten our original desire for overall federal review of programs, let me point out that in the 89th Congress we supported a bill for the creation of a National Water Commission for this purpose and although this did not pass, we will always be on the alert for the change to support this basic philosophy.

What I am trying to say to you is that every action we take in support of our positions in water resources advances those positions to a degree and that since we have not gone back to you for eight years specifically to ask for a new consensus, we consider this one doubly important. Your responsibility is two-fold in the water work of the League. First, it is to keep abreast of what we are saying and doing in your name when we take action -- through the National Voter and through copies of statements and testimony which are sent to all local presidents, and to let us know if you think we are moving too rapidly, or too slowly and whether we are choosing the right instruments to express our positions. Your second responsibility is to use to the fullest, the opportunity you have now this fall, to let us know explicitly not only what you think about the question of federal financial incentives to industry, but what limitations or criteria you want us to observe in determining our national position. You may be certain that if you do bear this responsibility that we will carry out our obligation to express your wishes in the next session of Congress and in state legislatures across the US where Leagues may take action if we do reach agreement. with renewed confidence and security for having gone through this process. In the past we have been guided by the statement in our position that we recognize that state, and local government and private users should share the costs as far as possible based on the benefits received and the ability to pay. This has been the basis for our support of federal funds to assist in construction of treatment plants when matched by state and local monies. It would not be ^{surprised} inconceivable for the national board to decide that under this umbrella we could also support financial assistance to industry for this purpose. But because we were not sure that you would think that assistance to local

government and aid to private industry should be equated, we decided to go to the "grass-roots" as we properly should for the final determination. Do not abrogate your responsibility therefore, in the belief that this is not something which you can or should decide.

Now, let's go back to the 5 theories which were advanced at the beginning of this discussion and see how well they have stood the test of experience and history.

1) Did we by the way we handled the water item change methods of work on national Program?

This was the first instance of League organization to do regional work on an item; it was the first time that Leagues were permitted to take local and state action under a national consensus; it was the forerunner of the idea now prevalent in the League that different Program items require different degrees of activity--in other words "flexible handling" and when the water item became a CR it was with the understanding that work could and would continue to go forward regionally.

2) Has it enhanced our League reputation noticeably? No one who has read "The Big Water Fight" the new book published by the Education Fund which sets forth the trials and tribulations of Leagues working under the water resources item can question either our stature or effectiveness in this field. Or if you have read any of the recent books on water from other sources, "Death of the Sweet Waters," "The Big Water Famine," "Disaster By Default" you have noted the boquets which have come our way from outside sources. Inside government one could compile a weighty and impressive list of evidence to support this thesis. This was most dramatically brought home to me when I appeared before the House Public Works Committee this summer and the Chairman said, ^{Jan Wright in Def} "Of all the organizations that appear before us and in many cases the most constructive, the LWV is an organization that has no particular axes to grind. Your activities do not benefit your own members any more than they benefit the nation as a whole, so it is an honor, always to have a representative of this splendid organization with us." When this was followed by the inserting our testimony into the Congressional Record during debate on the bill; then by including the full text of the National Voter article "Seeking New Water Ways" into the Record later; and climaxed by our presence at the White House for the signing of the ~~Federal Water Pollution~~ legislation, we are justified in a feeling of satisfaction and pride in our reputation.

3) Does this item provide a common meeting ground for those who do not always agree with us? It does, indeed. In those sections of the community and the country where it may be the better part of valor not to emphasize some of our foreign policy or equal opportunities positions, we can use our work for clean water as a talking point on finance drives, in seeking membership and in building public support for the League as a whole. Water problems is a very popular subject just now--even the most uninformed and apathetic citizen has some knowledge of this and some interest even if only from a recreational point of view. Make the most of the current tide and parade our long-standing work and accomplishments in this field for the greater good of the League.

4) My contention that it has given us the chance to show the possibilities of regional study and action are not hard to prove. As we all know governing bodies are great respecters of state lines, county boundaries, even municipal limits---the League of Women Voters is not--and we have shown through river basin groups that those who are joined in a common cause against a larger evil can forget this geographical state of mind. If you observe the state and national scene you, too, will see that these old shibboleths about local jurisdiction are giving way and I do believe that we have had a part in the change of climate.

5) Have we used the water item to teach women about the League and about government? Because this item is a "natural" for woman's normal concerns about such things, as health, recreation and aesthetics it has provided the opening for drawing in women who are not normally interested in or concerned about government. In the course of caring about the problem and its solutions, League members have looked at the sources of pollution, examined local and state budgets for the necessary funds to cope with problems, learned how to lobby for their beliefs, become acquainted with governmental officials and learned how to work with many other organizations with the same concerns and goals. Is this not the best way to teach -- learning by doing? We believe it is and that we have been a practical laboratory for political effectiveness which can be transferred to other fields.

In the beginning I promised you drama and excitement. Perhaps you are wondering where I find these elements in the sometimes dry, technical, exacting and complex field of

of water resources. I can remember when I thought the same and wondered about the fascination which this item had for so many. Now that I have become one with those who have caught the germ I am almost like one who has discovered a new truth and wants to spread the word far and wide. We speak dry words at times, but if one has eyes to see and the mind to perceive that what we are working for is the quality of our environment in this and the next generation, one cannot but feel a quickening of the senses. A tide of concern is rising in America today over the fact we are not only an affluent society but an effluent one as well. We in the LWV who have been aware of this for some time are in an enviable position because we are able to provide a core of knowledgeable experienced citizens who care for the inevitable controversy ahead over the cure. We have long recognized that the question is no longer, who pollutes, but what is to be done about it, and finally who pays? Never has the time and the tide of affairs been more right for this dialogue. It is up to us to "lift our sails and catch the winds of destiny." Having invested so much in time, in study, in discussion, in action in the not so distant past when only the truly perceptive knew or cared, I have little doubt but what we will do just that.