

Wisconsin Conservation Department  
Madison, Wisconsin  
53701

CONSERVATION REMINISCENCES OF WM. J.P. ABERG

(Pioneer in Wisconsin and National Conservation Movements such as the Izaak Walton League of America and National Wildlife Federation and formerly Chairman of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission)

Including Anecdotes on:

1. Aldo Leopold's Early Wildlife Management Work.
2. Formation of IWLA - Wisconsin Division and National.
3. Creation of Wisconsin's Conservation Act of 1927.
4. Political Influence in the First Wisconsin Conservation Commission.
5. First University of Wisconsin Chairman of Wildlife Management.
6. Background on Wisconsin's Forest Crop Legislation.
7. Early Wisconsin Conservation Department Financial Problems.
8. Investigation of Wisconsin Conservation Department in 1939.
9. National Wildlife Federation Beginnings with J. N. "Ding" Darling.
10. IWLA Wisconsin Projects such as Winnesheik, National Forests Enabling Act, and Horicon Marsh Restoration (including Curly Radke).

---

Transcript of a tape recorded contribution of Wisconsin's Natural Resources History Project produced jointly with the State Historical Society. Text reviewed by participants, Wm. J. P. Aberg, William Alderfer and Walter E. Scott as well as project cooperater C. L. Harrington of Madison, a former State Forester and Superintendent of Forests and Parks.

This is Bill Alderfer, State Historical Society. We are here at the ninth floor office of Lawyer Wm. Aberg, Madison, Wisconsin. Walter Scott is here also and we are going to interview Mr. Aberg on conservation history. Today is May 25, 1961. Now, Walter, your acquaintance with Mr. Aberg extends for many years. What questions do you have? I'm going to just sit here and if I find a place where I would want to break in, why I'll do it. Mr. Aberg, this is in the nature of a conversation that we are having--so Walter, why don't you start?

Mr. Scott: O.K., Bill. One of the things I would most like to know about would be how you got to know Aldo Leopold and when you first met him. I guess he moved here to Madison and you were already here. About when was that?

Mr. Aberg: Early twenties--Aldo came here as Associate Director of the Forest Products Laboratory. Cap Winslow was the Director then and we organized a Chapter of the Izaak Walton League in 1923. Aldo was one of the first men to become a member. We had in that organization a small group that met for lunch--oh, about once a week to discuss things that were then important and imminent and Aldo was in that small group, so I would say I first met him in 1923. I knew of him and I knew Cap Winslow, and through other friends in the Forest Products Laboratory, many of whom belonged to the League--such as Ed White and others who were active in the operation of the Lab.

Mr. Scott: Well, it was the Izaak Walton League, Bill, that really brought you together?

Mr. Aberg: That's right. We were both active in it and it was the League that served as the focal point or that crystallized the agitation going on about the state for a change in conservation controls and for strengthening the forestry program. You will recall 1924 was the year of the referendum on a constitutional change to make it possible for the state to go into forestry, the court having held it was a work of internal improvement and therefore unconstitutional. The amendment in 1924, which was passed by the voters of this state by a 2 to 1 vote, authorized the levy of a tax on property to finance a forestry program.

Mr. Scott: Bill, was there a Madison Chapter of the League at that time? Or was it just a little luncheon group?

Mr. Aberg: No, it was a Madison Chapter of the League organized immediately after the founding of the National League--in fact, the same year.

Mr. Scott: Then the State League was formed first?

Mr. Aberg: The State Division came about after Chapters had been formed in Madison, Milwaukee, Fond du Lac, Green Bay and several other places in the state.

Mr. Scott: When did the State League start?

Mr. Aberg: I would say in about 1925. That's my recollection. I know it wasn't later, but it might have been a year earlier--I'd say about 1925.

Mr. Scott: You were President of that State League. What was that year?

Mr. Aberg: In 1928 I was President.

Mr. Alderfer: Did you have anything to do with the national organization?

Mr. Aberg: I did later. I was on the National Executive Board. The first Wisconsin man on it was Haskell Noyes of Milwaukee who became a member of the National Executive Board. My recollection is about 1927 or 1928, and he served for about five years. I went on it in the early 1930's--about 1931 or 1932 and served on it for a number of years. I was chairman of the National Executive Board for two years in 1933 and 1934.

Mr. Scott: Bill, what else do you remember about Leopold's activities when he first came here? How long was it before he got connected with the game management aspect of things?

Mr. Aberg: He always had been interested in game management since his experience in the U. S. Forest Service. When he was located in New Mexico, he always stressed the game angle in aspects of the U. S. Forest Service work. I think Aldo to a large degree was responsible for the U. S. Forest Service taking into consideration the game aspects of all the lands of the Service and in the operation of the forests for the Service. He continued that as long as he lived to the point, as you know, that the U. S. Forest Service has developed a real game interest and carefully watches that aspect in all its work.

Mr. Scott: Didn't he make this survey of the game in the Midwest for the Sporting Arms Institute about 1928?

Mr. Aberg: The Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers got together about the late 1920's and were seeking a man who could make a national study of game management. Game management then was, I would say, unheard of. It was in its infancy and they finally agreed upon Leopold, and he accepted that commission. They gave him five years to make that study and the results--a monumental work on game management--was the original authoritative publication of its kind.

Mr. Scott: That covered just the Midwest states though, as I recall. I've got a copy in my library. He went around and interviewed people in Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and other Midwest states.

Mr. Aberg: Yes, in detail he covered the Midwest.

Mr. Scott: But he did cover the nation?

Mr. Aberg: Reference is on a national basis. That work was a game management bible for many, many years and the strange thing, it is still being sold.

Mr. Scott: Now you're talking about his book, "Game Management"?

Mr. Aberg: Yes, "Game Management".

Mr. Scott: The one I was talking about in his survey for the Sporting Arms and Ammunition Manufacturers Institute. That is the one which deals with the lake states mostly.

Mr. Aberg: He wrote that for them under this Commission. He resigned his position as Associate Director of the Forest Products Laboratory.

Mr. Scott: About what time? About 1927?

Mr. Aberg: Oh, I think it was a little later than that. I thought it was about 1930 or 1931.

Mr. Scott: Bill, then in 1927 the Conservation Act was passed. What part did Leopold play in the writing of the Conservation Act in Wisconsin and what part did you play? I think that would be interesting.

Mr. Aberg: Well, we worked together with a group of about four or five others in formulating the ideas which had been expressed for improving the Wisconsin situation. The basis of it was to get conservation out of politics to the point where the control of conservation activities would not be dictated by an incoming Governor who would change the setup from administration to administration as had been done. Now, under Governor Philip who was elected in 1914 (he took office in 1915), the state had a man with a great deal of vision. Our conservation activities were then in a turmoil. We had a state fish commission and we had a state forester. We had a state game warden and a hunting license which was the only revenue derived by any of them. Besides the hunting license, there was no fishing license or any other revenue coming in for administering conservation matters. Governor Philip conceived the idea of combining some of these activities and he created a Conservation Commission consisting of three men--one a fish culturist, one a forester and one a businessman--and he appointed three very able men. Moody, the forester, was an outstanding man. Nevin was the fish culturist. He was succeeded by Webster about several years later. They operated and did well with what they had to work with, which was little or nothing, because the Legislature appropriated the money received--but not all of it. All the revenue from licenses went into the general fund and some was spent for general purposes. The state parks were almost

and failed of re-election. Governor Kohler then was elected in 1928. Zimmerman failed largely because he didn't stick to his promises in conservation matters, and people who elected him turned on him because he wasn't reliable and responsible.

Mr. Scott: Was that because he didn't make sound appointments to the Commission?

Mr. Aberg: That was the beginning, because he had stated in speeches and in writing over the state during the campaign that he would make his appointments from a list of recommended candidates to be submitted by the conservation interests of the state and he would limit his appointments to those lists. He said he was going to ask conservation interests to get together and nominate 20 capable and able men, and he would make his six appointments from those 20. He said that in his speeches repeatedly, and he said it in writing and when the time came to make the appointments--- he had then been Governor for six months---in July of 1927 he made his six appointments. Prior to that, the group had met with him representing all of the conservation interests of the state to discuss with him a list of names submitted to him and to answer questions. But he didn't take one from that list of 20 submitted to him. Of course, conservationists lost faith in him. He took the stand that while he was elected now, he didn't have to keep his promises. He lost support of the conservationists throughout the state. Stevens Point where he won overwhelmingly in 1926 defeated him in 1928.

Mr. Scott: Bill, do you still have a copy of the list of those 20 people who were recommended at that time?

Mr. Aberg: I think I have it in my files.

Mr. Scott: That would be a very interesting list.

Mr. Aberg: I remember many of them from memory.

Mr. Scott: I'd surely like to see who was on that list. Was Aldo Leopold one of them, maybe?

Mr. Aberg: Yes.

Mr. Scott: Well, wouldn't that have been something to have Aldo Leopold appointed right off the bat?

Mr. Aberg: In fact, we were urging him as a Director. When the Governor made his appointment, we urged him as a Director. The Commission, of course, was entirely a political selection, and they picked a Director who was his former assistant as Secretary of State and chief assistant when he was Governor and he had no experience or background at all. His name was Louis Nagler. He lasted about a year when a change was made by the Commissioners when they saw how utterly impossible it was. The Milwaukee Chapter of the Izaak Walton League challenged that appointment in court. I would not join with them in that because of the legal aspects,

nonexistent--they were in existence in about five spots, often where land had been donated to the state, but park activity was very limited. When Governor Blaine came in after six years of this Commission, one of the first things he did was to repeal the law and create a one-man Commission because he had a man who was out of a job. Elmer Hall from Green Bay had lost a political position, so he was in need of a job and Blaine appointed him as Conservation Commissioner in a year or so. He was a very fine and interesting man, but with utterly no qualifications for the job. Hall served until 1927 when the new Conservation Act went into effect in July of 1927.

The new Act created a six-man Commission. Leopold did a great deal of work on that--furnished a lot of the research work. He had experience in the West--New Mexico. He was thoroughly familiar with their setup and he also had experience under federal operation. Then we surveyed Michigan and Pennsylvania. I had my first contact with Seth Gordon in 1926. He then was Director of the game commission in Pennsylvania. Seth Gordon furnished us with their complete setup. He had written an article for FIELD AND STREAM and the editor of FIELD AND STREAM gave us permission to reprint it and loaned us the photographs which we published for distribution among the legislators. When we got all through, we had a half dozen drafts of the proposed bill, studied them, tore them apart and rewrote them. We finally had a setup with six men as the Commission is now organized.

Mr. Scott: You said you had a half dozen drafts of this proposed bill. Also, as I recall, you said you had a copy of one of the drafts in your files. We ought to get a copy of that draft.

Mr. Aberg: We consulted with leaders in the Legislature before the session started in 1927 about introduction of the bill because it was a very revolutionary sort of thing. We had given an outline of our proposed program to Fred Zimmerman, who was candidate for Governor in 1926, and he took it--hook, line, and sinker--and used it for campaign purposes.

Mr. Alderfer: Was this the campaign with the fish on a banner?

Mr. Aberg: That's right. And up through the North it was received and welcomed with open arms every place. Mr. Zimmerman certainly capitalized on it--he was elected on it. The man who opposed him, Herman Ekern, died at 83 or 84 years, a few years ago. He was the Attorney General and was a candidate for Governor. In response to a call from him--he was a friend of mine--I went over to see him, and he wanted to talk conservation before the campaign. I handed him what we had--a prospectus of just what we wanted to do. I handed him that and said, "That's what you want for your campaign." He read it and said, "I think it's fine, but I can't use it." I wanted to know why. He said, "Well, it's sort of a slap at those in charge now." I said, "That's right--it's so intended." "Well", he said, "I have to live with them for awhile yet, and I'm sorry, but I can't use it." And he didn't but Fred Zimmerman did. Of course, Zimmerman didn't carry on. He was Governor only two years

it being my opinion the Commission selection was final. The law specified that a man must have knowledge of and interest in conservation matters and they tried to make out a case that he had no knowledge of conservation matters whatever. They lost the case.

Mr. Scott: Whose appointment was that?

Mr. Aberg: Louis Nagler.

Mr. Scott: He wasn't a Commissioner--he was the Director?

Mr. Aberg: He was appointed Director by the first Commission.

Mr. Scott: Oh, I see, But the law says the Director should be appointed by the Commission and it wasn't reviewable by the court.

Mr. Aberg: Didn't specify that it was reviewable. The only qualification was that he was a man who must have administrative ability, must have knowledge of and interest in conservation matters.

Mr. Scott: Bill, it would be interesting, besides yourself, to name some of the others of the 20 that you might remember. Would you recall?

Mr. Aberg: I wasn't on that list of 20 because I helped to make it up. Well, we had a man who was head of the aluminum works at Manitowoc.

Mr. Scott: Hanson?

Mr. Aberg: No, no. We asked for one man from the Izaak Walton League-- that was Haskell Noyes and the Governor agreed when his name was mentioned. "Bill", he said, "That's taken for granted; of course Noyes is going on." Well, he didn't go on. He didn't appoint him.

Mr. Scott: He later became a Commissioner.

Mr. Aberg: He later did because the man from Milwaukee resigned. A year later, that was, and then he appointed Noyes.

Mr. Scott: Who was on from Madison? Well, Leopold was one.

Mr. Aberg: Leopold was one from Madison.

Mr. Alderfer: Yes, I was wondering about that. Was there an attempt to make a geographical distribution of Conservation Commission members?

Mr. Aberg: Yes, there was an attempt because the law as passed required that three appointees be from the north half of the state and three from the south half. That was a compromise because the Legislators who were politically minded at first wanted the Commissioners picked from the congressional districts--one from each congressional district. Well, we wouldn't go along on that, and we finally compromised by saying that three should be from the north and three from the south. The original draft didn't draw any geographical lines and Commissioners were to be picked from the state at large, and it didn't matter where they came from, but the Legislature objected to that, and we had to make some concessions

to expedience. After all, we had to get this bill passed to be effective at all. That is another reason why the powers of the Commission were limited and restricted in the beginning. The Legislators felt that the authority given to the Commission was usurping the authority of the Legislature, and we didn't dare give the Commission powers to fix seasons, bag limits and things of that sort because, well, they just would have killed the bill. There would have been no Commission.

Mr. Scott: Those things came later then?

Mr. Aberg: Oh, yes. They came later--1931, 1933 and 1935--so those were concessions made in recognition of the fact that the Legislature is supreme and must consent to pass it in the first place. Without a bill--without an Act--we would be in the same old rut.

Mr. Scott: Well, this is interesting now--Leopold didn't become the Director of the Conservation Department, but he took the first Chair of Game Management at the University of Wisconsin. That was about 1932 or so, wasn't it?

Mr. Aberg: That was in the 1930's. I'm trying to remember. It wasn't too early in the 1930's. I think it was about 1935. The first job was to get the money and the first money for a general game management Chair was furnished by the Alumni Fund headed by the Brittingham Foundation. Tom Brittingham was responsible for it--\$10,000 per year for a biennium. I don't recall whether that was carried on for two or four years, but after the Chair had become established then it was necessary to get a separate appropriation through the Legislature. The University budget authorities would not include it because they said they were overloaded as it was. They welcomed an appropriation but couldn't put it in the University budget, so that was that. This appropriation really was lobbied through the finance committee by the conservation interests in the state. The bill provided \$10,000 a year as a continuing appropriation. These funds have been provided ever since--and that was along in the 1930's.

Mr. Scott: Again the conservation interests in the state were mostly the Izaak Walton League. Was that right?

Mr. Aberg: Yes. They were the spirit of it. We had the cooperation of many other groups. The League was very active in it and had quite a little influence. All they wanted was to be informed and told what was needed and what was a good thing and they have always gone along.

Mr. Scott: Bill, you were President of the Wisconsin Division of the Izaak Walton League. Didn't they have many chapters--a hundred and more throughout the state? Isn't that right?

Mr. Aberg: We had a total of about 12,000 members at one time and the State Division had a Secretary who devoted most of his time to the work. Frank Graass was the Secretary for many years. He started on a compensation basis and the compensation ended shortly thereafter because there weren't funds to pay so we ignored payment as he had independent means. In the legislative program I can't think of any one man more



responsible and more outstanding than Frank Graass because he knew the subject matter and he was a brusque, forceful, hard driver. When Legislators wouldn't go along with him, he rode right over them but he did accomplish things and he knew the inner workings and the fighting that goes on in the legislative matters which the public generally doesn't know anything about. He always was alert to opposition. He had been in the Legislature for years--since 1917. He was there all the time through the session of 1959.

Mr. Scott: That's an admirable record. I think we should interview Frank Graass as soon as possible.

Mr. Alderfer: Sounds to me as if we should.

Mr. Scott: One thing I wanted to cover before we stop here today is something about the Forest Crop Law. You mentioned it earlier but just what part did Leopold and what part did Blanchard play? Could you start back there in 1924 or so?

Mr. Aberg: It stems from the Referendum of 1924 adopting the constitutional amendment authorizing the state to appropriate money for forestry work. The Supreme Court had held that the state couldn't spend money on forestry because it was unconstitutional--as a work of internal improvement. That was in May of 1915 when Philip was Governor. There was a lot of opposition to the then forestry program by some very able men. Among them was John Barnes who was on the State Supreme Court for a number of years. He was from Rhinelander originally. He was very bitterly opposed to the state taking any part in forestry or spending any public money on forestry work. After the constitutional amendment was adopted then, of course, the necessary steps were to implement the constitutional amendment to put it into effect. The Legislature of 1925 created an Interim Forestry Committee, but between 1927 and 1929 this committee really formulated everything that they had learned and produced the Forest Crop Tax Law. As I recall it, the Act was passed in 1929. George Blanchard was in the State Senate at that time. He had been in the Assembly. He was a lawyer from Edgerton and was also a tower of strength in passing the Conservation Act. He was also Chairman of the Interim Forestry Committee. Raphael Zon, the Director of the Lakes States Forest Experiment Station, was technical advisor. He is deceased now. He was a very broad-minded and capable sort of man.

Mr. Scott: Blanchard was Chairman, wasn't he?

Mr. Aberg: Blanchard was Chairman of the Interim Forestry Committee which met regularly for a two-year period. I attended many of those meetings especially when they invited the pulp and paper mill people and the lumbering interests--all wood-using interests had a hand in that. The outstanding man in helping to frame a forestry program for the future was R. B. Goodman of Marinette. The result of the committee's effort was the Forest Crop Tax Law. Differences between industry and the public represented by such as the Izaak Walton League and groups of that kind were ironed out. These were honest differences of opinion. For instance, we advocated that all lands under the Forest Crop Tax Law and all lands state-owned or county-owned must be opened to the public for hunting and fishing, while the industry was very much opposed to that. Goodman took the lead in that opposition.

His reason was that fire protection was the most essential thing in this whole program and that letting the public have access to all forest lands would result in careless burnings. The result of the Interim Committee's efforts was the Forest Crop Law adopted and passed in 1927. It was hoped that privately-owned land would be filed under the law, that taxation would be limited to the extent that the individual would pay 10 cents an acre on any lands accepted and then the state would supplement such payment and the individual would be required to pay severance tax when he harvested wood products from the land. The first Act as passed did not contemplate counties entering lands under the law but, during the period of years that the Interim Committee worked and while the Forest Crop Tax Law was germinating, the tax situation grew more acute year by year until by 1929 I'd say half the cutover forest lands in northern Wisconsin were subject to tax deed for delinquent taxes. Then, by 1931, the counties found themselves in possession of several million acres of land and had not the slightest idea what to do with them or how to handle them. Wisconsin then was in the position that Minnesota is in now. That is a very distressing situation in Minnesota. They have no provision in their laws for counties building forests or developing them or anything like our Forest Crop Law or for the state taking a hand and aiding the county in development of forests. The counties up there own more land than we did in 1929 and just leave it to God and Nature to grow forests and are fortunate in trying in a small way to keep fires out—but there is no management. A recent book published by The American Forestry Association calls dramatic attention to the Minnesota situation.

Mr. Scott: I haven't seen that.

Mr. Aberg: It just came out about a month ago and I'm going to get a copy. ("Minnesota Lands"). I haven't seen it but I have read a review of it. It is very outspoken in its comment on the Minnesota situation. Then, in 1931, the county situation had become so acute with the depression coming on that the counties weren't even paying salaries to officers and employees. They were broke and were seeking a way out and a way to get some revenue out of the land they owned. There was a proposal to permit the county to file their lands under the Forest Crop Tax Law on a different basis from the individual—a basis whereby the county would not pay anything like the individual was required to pay, but the state forestry fund would pay to the county 10 cents per acre. Then a special law whereby the state subsidizes the county to the extent of 10 cents per acre on all lands filed was passed in 1931. That money was to be used for general purposes, not forestry. The 10 cents per acre that the forestry fund contributes had to be used for forestry purposes only. The law contemplated that lands filed by counties must be suitable for forestry purposes. Counties had to have a program and show intent to continue practicing forestry on these lands and to manage them for that purpose.

An acute situation grew up. Counties started filing everything to which they got title. I recall one hearing before the Commission, let's see, that was Ashland County. They had published an advertisement in the Ashland paper listing every acre that the county owned which was for sale. It

was a whole page in the Ashland paper full of descriptions. The following week they came down to Madison and appeared before the Conservation Commission with a petition that these lands should be filed under the Forest Crop Law which was entirely inconsistent under the law. I appeared at that hearing and opposed it. Senator Carroll appeared before the Commission on behalf of Ashland County. He was a friend of mine and when I opposed him, he took me to task for it and said it was none of my business; it was none of our concern, it was only their concern. Well, I suggested that the state was paying the freight and the mill tax which was 1/20th of a mill in 1929 (I'll come back to that) and was paid by the southeast quarter of the state to the extent of 3/4th's of the entire amount while the amount paid by northern counties was negligible. The Commission--Fred Wilson was the man in charge--picked and selected the areas that were approved on the basis of suitability.

Mr. Scott: That was before you were a member of the Commission?

Mr. Aberg: Oh, yes, long before.

Mr. Scott: That was during 1929. You became a member during 1939 and this anecdote you are talking about is about 1929.

Mr. Aberg: The Forest Crop Law Tax was passed in 1929 for a 20th of a mill, then a 10th and later 2/10th's because the law limits the tax which can be imposed to 2/10th's of a mill on all property. I believe the law was first enacted in 1929 under Governor Kohler. The various steps in the conservation program and progress had been thought out and developed so it was in recognition of the fact that you couldn't do it all in one session or two sessions or in three and a lot of it was basic and would be jeopardized if the whole program were forced too fast. It was too much for the Legislature in one year--more than they could digest.

In 1929 we had the fishing license bill on the docket and Governor Kohler had agreed to sign it so it could become law. The mill tax law wasn't even mentioned to him because we were saving it for the 1931 session. Well, then the fishing license bill was introduced in 1929 and it passed both Houses. There was a lot of opposition but it went through and it came to Governor Kohler, who was a very fine man and a fine Governor although a little naive politically sometimes, because his political advisors told him it would be "political suicide" to sign a fishing license bill. Winter Everett, a State Journal newspaperman, wrote editorials about it calling it "political suicide" for Governor Kohler to sign a resident fishing license bill. Well, old Governor LaFollette signed a hunting license law back in the 1890's and it wasn't political suicide for him. We tried to point that out but Everett had the Governor scared. He held the bill until the last day when I went to see him about signing the bill. He didn't say he wouldn't sign it but every question he raised, every remark made, was adverse. He said, "You include women?" Well, the answer was, "Why not." "Well, a lot of people think they shouldn't be included and you have everyone over 16." "Shouldn't that be 21?" There was a great deal of feeling that the law should apply

only to the rod and reel fishermen--the man who was wealthy enough to have a rod and reel. Well, of course, that's a lot of bunk. There wasn't as much money in the country as there is now--although the money was more solid. I was just about to leave him and was thoroughly dejected because I knew he was going to veto it. He said "no" this wasn't so, but I told him I could read between the lines and that's what he was going to do. I told him I wanted to make a prediction that if he vetoed that bill, by next Thursday he would have back on his desk a bill for a direct tax on property for forestry purposes. Well, this was late in the session and he took that lightly and said, "Well, do you think you could pass a bill like that this time of the year?" I said, "I not only think so, but that is a promise because we have the forces to do it in this session." Next day a veto of the fishing license bill came in. Senator George Blanchard was the Republican Floor Leader and came within one vote of passing the bill over the Governor's veto. That's how close it was. Well, anyway, they upheld the veto. That night Frank Graass and George Blanchard and I met in George's room in the Park Hotel to talk over the licking we got and what we could do to salvage the revenue situation for conservation. We all agreed that the thing to do was to introduce the mill tax law which was being held for 1931--this was 1929. So we discussed ways and means by which to do it and George said it was too late to introduce bills by individuals except with unanimous consent. He said, "I'll make a request to get unanimous consent in the Senate."

Mr. Scott: You mean George Blanchard?

Mr. Aberg: George Blanchard--I'll make a request to get unanimous consent and if there was any man who would be able to do it it would be George Blanchard. We didn't get through until after midnight and, early the next morning, I drafted a bill for a forestry mill tax using the language of the constitutional amendment--for acquisition, development and maintenance of forestry and it couldn't be used for anything else--that's still in the law. George got unanimous consent and in the meantime we were working on the other House getting them to agree to take it up immediately. It got over there by 11 o'clock on Friday, having passed the Senate. A lot of the members were Milwaukee fellows who wanted to get home and they just adjourned five minutes before we reached the Assembly so the bill didn't get in until Tuesday morning which allowed a little more time to work. Somebody was prepared to ask unanimous consent and make a little speech on it. Consent was granted and it was passed under suspension of the rules. The bill was referred to the Finance Committee and immediately withdrawn from the Finance Committee to comply with legislative requirements and it was passed and messaged back to the Senate the same day, on Tuesday. It was rushed to the printers and the Governor had the printed copy on his desk on Thursday. No one went near him to discuss whether he would sign it or not. He had no choice and he signed it.

Mr. Scott: That's really a record.

Mr. Aberg: That was how close we came to missing it. Well, that was the first money that forestry ever received as a direct appropriation--other than from the general fund--a direct property tax in the state.

Mr. Scott: I would like to have it in the record here. Isn't it true that prior to that time, say from 1915 on to this time, the fish and game fund (the hunting license) was paying for forestry activity whatever there was?

Mr. Aberg: That's right, and I think the foresters ought to recognize that a little bit. They forget about that. Yes, they carried the load and what wasn't spent went back to the general fund for general purposes.

Mr. Scott: In this way you got a mill tax in and helped the Conservation Department through a forestry appropriation.

Mr. Aberg: That's right.

Mr. Scott: This then took a little bit of the load off the hunting license so in not getting a fishing license you actually got another fund.

Mr. Aberg: That's right, and something to set up a fire department. There was an appropriation put in in 1925 for a direct appropriation from the General Fund for fire purposes. If I remember, it was \$50,000 for the Biennium, and that was considered a lot of money. Governor Blaine vetoed it and he wrote a veto message--still on file over there, that he would not be a party to spending taxpayer's money to protect the rich lumber barons of the north. There was no money forthcoming until the mill tax started producing after 1929--funds were first available in 1930 in the spring and, as I say, it was only a 20th of a mill. Then it was raised. Then finally it was to the limit of 2/10th's. Well, then Phil LaFollette was elected in 1930 and the LaFollettes had opposed any state tax on property. In bygone years the state's main source of revenue was a tax on property. There is a provision in the constitution that the elective officers of the state after the Legislature had appropriated--passed appropriation bills and knew how much money was needed--knew how much assessed property there was in the state, they would get together and decide on how much the property tax state levy would be. There was a mill tax that supported the University--that was the only source of revenue the University had.

Mr. Scott: You mean Phil LaFollette?

Mr. Aberg: No. Philips. Well, Phil LaFollette in 1931 adhered to the policy of the Progressives, which was good. The income tax had come in the meantime that there should be no state tax on property. Duncan was his financial secretary and the budget came out with an appropriation for all forestry purposes of \$600,000 which was really an unheard of amount for those days and the mill tax law was to be repealed. Well, that resulted in quite a clash. We had meetings with Duncan and he charged us with being political because here we are giving you more than a mill tax produces and then you come in and "bellyache" because it isn't a tax on property and he said it's political. You're just trying to embarrass the administration which wasn't true at all because we didn't take any partisan side in any of that program. I tried to explain to him that what we were interested in was continuity, unless that money was forthcoming year after year in an ascertainable amount that the forestry program couldn't succeed. That was the secret of forestry--adequate financing and continuity, certainty that it would be available

each year. In that connection, Michigan operates by direct appropriation-- when times are hard the Legislature doesn't appropriate any money. Then they stop their fire program and let the woods burn, and then the next session sees what wrong they have done and they try to catch up. Well, the result over there is it's "feast or famine" and they have a terrible time getting any continuity into their program. Well, we met it this way-- I drafted an amendment which everybody in the conservation group agreed to, that in any year in which the Legislature appropriated monies in excess of what the mill tax would produce there would be no mill tax. That was in 1931 and it is still on the books.

Mr. Scott: It's never been used either.

Mr. Aberg: Never been used since 1931. That year when they did appropriate more but in 1933 we were in the depths of the depression and no one ever thought of any direct appropriation. It operates automatically and it's still in operation. Assessable property in the state has grown by leaps and bounds. It gets larger each year and the mill tax revenue must be near \$3 million by now. Isn't it, Walter?

Mr. Scott: Yes, it is that or more. And, of course, this is why we have such a fine forestry program.

Mr. Aberg: I think it's the finest state forestry program in the nation. I think one of the very basic things that explains it is the fact that the continuity and assurance which the constitutional amendment and the law implementing it have provided are both so plain that the money can't be used for any other purpose. The Legislature tried to divert mill tax funds and have done that repeatedly and it has even been litigated. Two years ago the present administration stole about \$85,000 from the forestry fund for park purposes. If I didn't have too many other things to do, I would have started a suit on my own to require them to pay it back. It isn't too late yet--I still may start it. Governor Heil in 1939 saw by that time that the forestry fund was building up. A politician in office, when he sees money in the treasury-- it's a bait. Heil put in his budget to appropriate \$300,000 from the mill tax money for an emergency fire fund. Well, we protested very vigorously so they worded it like this: "To be held as a reserve for emergency fire use in case of big conflagrations in the north", the \$300,000 would be available for that use. Now in 1941 he tried the same thing, tried to put in another \$300,000 and that was blocked. The original \$300,000 that belongs to the forestry fund is still sitting there. It's been used by the state, of course. It's a book entry now. They still owe that to the forestry fund, but they wanted to continue that \$300,000 each year. You know what would happen--that would grow to millions in a few years.

Mr. Scott: Bill, when Heil was Governor, the thing that impresses me is that one of the fine things that he did was to appoint you to the Commission back in 1939.

Mr. Aberg: He said he regretted it later on, so that maybe that was a mistake. He said, "I made him too much trouble." He had a man by the name of Gus Frey who was head of his so-called efficiency departments.

Mr. Scott: Maybe it was the Research Department.

Mr. Aberg: Research Department and Frey was a bull in a china closet. He took it on himself to try to run all the departments in the state much like the present administration is trying now and interfered with all the departments. Department of Purchases--he would tell them what they could buy; Bureau of Personnel--he would tell them who they could hire! He had no right to, but with the force of the Executive Office back of him, this was bad. He had a representative at all Conservation Commission meetings and after awhile he thought our minutes weren't correct so he had a reporter there to take them. He inspired an investigation of the Conservation Commission by the Legislature. That was about 1941. The report volume is 1 1/2 inches thick. I have several of them on the shelves back here. Frey harassed the department and Commission throughout his term--throughout Heil's term (4 years)--tried to run it and he didn't know anything about it.

We set up the Flambeau River State Forest Area during his time and in one of his investigations or hearings that he held, he attacked that project. He said it was a great deal of swamp and cutover forest land which he said would cost \$3 million to clear and drain. I asked him why drain and clear it and he said, "to use it." I said, "You're right, that's what it might cost, but we don't intend to use it for golf courses or anything like that. It's for a state forest."

He objected to the nursery program in the Forestry Division. He said that the way to plant trees is to broadcast seeds in the woods in the areas where you want them to grow. Planting trees never succeeded. These plantations were a waste of time. He just was a trouble maker all the time. Many state departments were completely supine and quiet when he would bulldoze them into doing what he wanted done. It just amazed me. At one time he recommended to the Governor that all state employees be photographed and fingerprinted and that they all carry a passport to exhibit to the public or to anyone who inquired because he said many state employees never show up except on payday to collect their check. Well, that got to the point where the Governor called a meeting of the heads of all departments over in the Executive Office to work out a plan for each department doing this. I was invited because I was Chairman of the Conservation Commission at the time. The Governor, presiding at the head of the long table, asked, "Well, what do you think of this?" To my amazement they started going down the line all agreeing to the proposal until John Callahan was reached. He was State Superintendent of Education. I sat way down at the end of the table and I was worried because I thought, am I to be the first one to tell them that it's a damn fool proposition? But, John Callahan sat next to me on my right and it came right up to him. The Governor said, "John, your department will go along and cooperate on this for the program, won't you?" "We'll do nothing of the kind. It's a fool proposition. We'll have nothing to do with it, Governor." Well, that

helped. I was next. He said, "Bill, the Conservation Department hires more employees than a lot of these departments. Do you think that this plan is a good thing?" I said, "No, I don't, because everybody we have who deals with the public carries credentials--our wardens and people who deal with the public and the rest of them don't need it--there's no point to it. We don't want to go beyond that." I think from then on they started to object. But old John Callahan said, "We'll have no part of it--fool idea--we'll have no part of it."

Mr. Scott: Well, you've got to give him credit.

Mr. Aberg: Oh, yes. It left Frey out on a limb. Of course, the thing was never carried out.

Mr. Scott: Bill, I was wondering if you could say something about the National Wildlife Federation and how you met J. N. "Ding" Darling and also you were in on starting the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation back in 1936, weren't you?

Mr. Aberg: I was in on starting it nationally.

Mr. Scott: Leopold, too?

Mr. Aberg: President Roosevelt had appointed "Ding" Darling as head of the U. S. Biological Survey and that not because of any political consideration, it was just in defiance of political precedent. "Ding" Darling, cartoonist, had written and talked very vehemently about the biological survey and things they were doing (and were not doing) so the President (who had met him) heard and read some of his criticisms and attacks and said "call him in." He said, "Well, if you're so smart, maybe you can straighten it out," and "Ding" said, "I think I can." The President appointed him as head of the biological survey. "Ding" conceived the idea that the job required public support and it required more than the support of politicians in Washington. It required public understanding and acceptance, and he conceived the idea of forming a Wildlife Federation with representatives and members in every state--membership to be a very simple and easy thing. He's now 84 years old but still interested in conservation problems and I've had some more or less recent correspondence with him. (It is believed the tape recorder stopped a while at this point and something may have been left out).

Well, "Ding", on the new job, decided he needed public acceptance of his ideas because he was running into bureaucratic and political opposition in Washington and he was no politician. He was a man, a doer of deeds, not a talker about them. He pushed through some things that seemed quite impossible. He called a meeting of state representatives from around the country and most of them were official in that they represented state departments--conservation, fisheries and game, etc.--for a meeting in Washington. Now, Henry Wallace was Secretary of Agriculture and, of course, nominally the survey was under him. That meeting was held in Washington in 1934 as I remember and I attended that meeting for Wisconsin. We had four or five representatives from Wisconsin. Haskell Noyes was one of them. That's when the Federation



was organized. I was the first Director from Wisconsin on that National Wildlife Federation. Well, financing was the thing that was uppermost in the minds of everyone. It was questioned whether to carry sort of a membership fee for an organization like that. It needed a lot of public help but people, regardless of the cause, forget to pay dues and a lot of them don't pay. A young advertising executive came up with the plan that he presented to the committee of getting out a wildlife stamp. He had it thought out and organized to the nth degree and, based on his advertising background and knowledge, he sold the plan to the committee. That plan is still in use and is highly successful. The Federation has raised money by the millions--they built a new building in Washington and operate now in every state.

Mr. Scott: In fact, our State Wildlife Federation started to put out some stamps themselves, I think, didn't they? At one time or was that the Wisconsin Conservation League?

Mr. Aberg: That was the Conservation League. That didn't pay over the years. They had some difficulty in getting state groups going because organized state groups would try to affiliate and get to represent the Federation in the state. In this state there was rivalry. A group in Milwaukee--I guess still in existence--chief activity was to try to block good legislation and they wrote Washington wanting to represent the Federation in Wisconsin. Well, Herbert from Michigan (I think he is a leader now of the Wildlife Federation) came to Wisconsin and settled the matter by selecting the Wisconsin Federation of Conservation Clubs as Wisconsin representative of the National.

Mr. Scott: Yes, he is the new President.

Mr. Aberg: Well, Herbert was one of the organizers in 1934--made a trip to Wisconsin to decide which group--he called on me at that time. He made a connection with Woerpel's group and they still represent the Wildlife Federation. I was a Director from Wisconsin also--was it 1936-- or was it organized originally in 1934?

Mr. Scott: Well, I think the state group got started in 1936.

Mr. Aberg: They had one Director for three states--Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin. Herbert succeeded me after a three-year period.

Mr. Scott: Oh, then you were Director for three states?

Mr. Aberg: Yes, for the three states.

Mr. Scott: You were the first Director for this area?

Mr. Aberg: That's right and Herbert has done a splendid job. He devoted a great deal of time--he is now President of the Federation.

Mr. Scott: What were the three states?

Mr. Aberg: Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Mr. Scott: Well, that group kept alive for awhile, but it's now a different Federation than what you headed when you started up. You even had a publication as I recall, didn't you?

Mr. Aberg: You mean the National group?

Mr. Scott: No, didn't your state group have a publication that was issued for awhile?

Mr. Aberg: That may be.

Mr. Scott: I think C. J. Ballam was in on it. I have a few copies of that publication.

Mr. Aberg: I recall him. I read in the paper that he died about three months ago. But as a state group, it was not very cohesive although there are in the state, I imagine, several thousand members of the Federation who are annual subscribers under the stamp program. At least that many.

Mr. Scott: But the State Federation here in Wisconsin really is a Federation of Conservation Clubs. That's what it amounts to.

Mr. Aberg: That's the one Woerpel heads up now—operate pretty much as a one-man institution, but he keeps it moving.

Mr. Scott: Bill, what about the first Conservation Commission in 1927? Now you told us that the appointments made to the first Commission were not such wonderful ones and it took a couple of years before better Commissioners were appointed; but did you watch very carefully what they were doing? I presume you did. What do you think of their accomplishments those first years?

Mr. Aberg: I tell you, they were men that had no background or experience. The only man with any knowledge or background, in fact, was E. M. Dahlberg of Ladysmith who was a High School teacher and had a little tree nursery on the side and was a student of conservation and a very interested individual. Then the Governor appointed Frank Gilbert of Madison, an old lawyer--a former Attorney General whose only claim to knowledge or fame in that field was as Attorney General. He had been a member of the State Land Commission years and years before that. Then the Governor appointed a Milwaukee lawyer. I knew him--I never heard of him in connection with conservation activities. He wasn't affiliated with the League (IWLA) or any other group in Milwaukee and he appointed Ickes of Green Bay, who was a labor leader. The plan seemed to be to make appointments from various fields and political groups to satisfy everybody.

Mr. Scott: Politically, probably.

Mr. Aberg: Politically. He appointed one man from Fond du Lac-- Mauthe, a manufacturer. At the organization meeting of the Commission, he stated openly that, "I don't know a thing about this work or the program but I'm going to find out." That man devoted his time to doing just that and he was one of the finest Commissioners we ever had. He was a businessman with perspective and understanding. He knew men and knew human nature and devoted his time to finding out the purpose of the Conservation Commission and the objectives and to studying the program that had been set up for them. He became Chairman and was just a very outstanding man. I think he did more than any individual in getting the Commission off the ground and off to a good start. He went along appointing Nagler as the first Director, but he recognized in a very short time he wasn't the man for the job--and he ended Nagler's tenure in about a year--so he was a very cooperative individual when he did get into it. None of the conservation groups or organizations, including the League, had any respect for most of the Governor's appointments, but Mauthe got to be quite a friend of the League (IWLA) and so did some of the others.

Mr. Scott: Well, Bill, can we close this up with a little bit about what the League really did in some of these projects? For instance, the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge and the National forests and Horicon Marsh. I think it would be a good idea to get that into the record. You were in on all these things.

Mr. Aberg: Well, the Winnesheik project was one of the major projects--that is, acquisition by the government of a 300 mile stretch of the Mississippi River Bottoms extending from Wisconsin down through Iowa and Illinois and that required Congressional action, appropriation of large sums of money--and Will Dilg, who was the organizer of the League (IWLA) nationally, worked hard on that to get it through Congress. That was an accomplishment--I think it was a very major one and, when the time came to dedicate the Winnesheik, President Coolidge was in office. That was in 1928 when he spent his summer vacation up on the Brule River. He had a Summer White House in Superior at the office of the Blaine High School. I went up there with a League delegation to invite him to dedicate the Winnesheik. Of course, we had started here in Wisconsin. We planned to have it done on the Wisconsin side. That was wrong. Some Minnesota Congressman immediately grabbed the ball and started to promote having it done over in Winona, and the result was it scared Coolidge off entirely and the dedication never came off. We met with him at Blaine High School and Hoover was up there at the same time as a guest of Coolidge to fish on the Brule, and he was at the meeting when we extended the invitation to Coolidge to dedicate the Winnesheik. Coolidge listened and stood looking out of the window. I thought he was never going to come to and he looked out the window for several minutes and then turned around and said, "Who would write the speech?" Seth Gordon was one of our group and he said to the President, "We'll take care of that, we would provide for that--you need have no worry about that and it would be to your satisfaction," but our mission failed in spite of that. At that time, Sanders, his secretary, told us some of the incidents about the President in his fishing on the Brule.

There was quite a fine hatchery on the Brule operated by the owners of the estate and when they would decide which section of the river the President was going to fish, they would release a couple hundred good-sized trout. They kept them in a pen where they didn't feed them at all and they would let them out in this area and the guide would take the President down through that stretch of the river. We asked the President how the fishing was. "Wonderful! Wonderful!" And how is Mr. Hoover as a fisherman? He said, "He is better than I am." A newspaperman said, "May I quote you to that effect?" and he said, "I'd rather not." That reminds me of a story about the President going to the church in the little village of Brule, a church about twice the size of this room. Mrs. Coolidge didn't care to go this Sunday I guess, the Sunday before we went up there--we went on Monday. At dinner--they had several guests there, Coolidge, Grace Coolidge and their son--Mrs. Coolidge was trying to make conversation. She said, "Calvin, how did you like the sermon?" "Very good." "What did he talk about?" "Sin!" "What did he say about it?" "He was against it!"

Well, that was one of the experiences in Winnesheik problems and now, then, the programs for better forests. At that time, we were just trying to get the U. S. Forest Service into Wisconsin to acquire some of the cutover and burned over lands. In the interest of conservation in the state, we tried to use every means we could think of to get lands back into forestry use and operation and we had the assurance of the Forest Service that they were interested if we could get enabling legislation passed. The first attempt was made in 1925. Blaine was Governor and he was opposed, of course, to federal forests. He was opposed to the Winnesheik because he said it would disturb the sovereignty of the state. It was very difficult to get him to approve of the Winnesheik Enabling Act. He put a lot of restrictions on it but they did pass the Enabling Act as they did the Winnesheik. Then the Federal Forest Enabling Act came up in 1925 and he indicated that he would veto it. Every effort was made to get him to sign it and to amend it until he would be satisfied, and here's what we came out with: 100,000 acres! Think back; it was laughable! And the area required must have the approval of the Conservation Commissioner--that was one man, the County Board--that's the county in which the land is located, and the Land Commissioners of Wisconsin all have to approve it before the land can be acquired! The first reaction of the U. S. Forest Service was to ignore it and say "forget it!" They weren't interested in any 100,000 acre tracts but they set up a new district, District No. 9, comprising Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan with the headquarters in Wisconsin. We tried to get the district office in Madison but the headquarters are in Milwaukee and Tinker, a man with a lot of vision and foresight said, "Well, if we can get our foot in the door, let's take it." So they decided to go ahead. He came here and selected a tract in Vilas and Oneida Counties of 100,000 acres. He came to me and said, "How do we get these consents?" By that time, Zimmerman was Governor and I said, "Zimmerman was a good showman and he liked to show his authority, so let's go over to the Governor and tell him what it's all about and ask him to call in the Land Commission and the Conservation Commission. Call a meeting in his office and tell them to sign it." He said, "Well, I haven't anything for them to sign," and I said, "Well, we can cure that" and I drafted up a form of consent for them to sign. He had the area and descriptions. We made the date to assemble for 4 o'clock in the afternoon

and he agreed to call the officials in there. So there we were at the meeting and he was quite a persuasive sort of fellow. We had it all planned and laid the law out to them and said that it was necessary to act today because, if we don't, we are going to lose some of these lands where we couldn't get the federal funds again in ten years. We walked away with the consent of the three Land Commissioners, the Attorney General, the Secretary of State, the State Treasurer and the consent of the Conservation Commissioner. Then all that was needed was the county, and that takes up time because the County Board is not a very effective group. Tinker worked that out and it took about six months. We had all the consents except the county's immediately. We left the Governor's office and Tinker said, "That's one way to do business. It kind of makes me dizzy but I guess it will stick." So they started with that little tract and the following year in 1927 it was increased to 500,000 acres. In 1929, it was increased to 2,000,000 acres. The Federal Government has actually acquired about 1,600,000 acres for federal forests, land which is producing annually substantial income from forest products. And 25 per cent of the revenue goes to the locality, the county, towns and schools. Then there was that big valuable push--oh, that was terrific--but you know that we had our opposition right here in the department.

Before a committee, the Judiciary Committee of the Assembly, Mr. Harrington opposed Federal Forests for Wisconsin. There was an article in an early copy of the Wisconsin Conservationist by State Forester C. L. Harrington written in the early twenties--1920 or 1921--urging the Federal Forest Service to come into Wisconsin to use some of our noncultivated land as a demonstration area. I had dug that up and had it at the committee hearing and even there I knew they were going to oppose it and as a favor to Neal, I read this to this committee but, fortunately, our state foresters favored Federal Forests for Wisconsin.

Mr. Scott: What about Horicon Marsh?

Mr. Aberg: The restoration of Horicon Marsh was talked about in the early twenties but it reached the Legislature in 1925. A campaign was put on by Horicon people and whoever was interested in this restoration. The delegations appearing before the Legislature at hearings were headed by Louis "Curley" Radke, long time vigorous leader for restoration. The marsh had been acquired by private interests who were trying to drain it and sell the land for agricultural purposes. Their program was to build the lateral ditches, a big one right down through the middle and then laterals, and then their plan was to remove the dam at Hustisford which backed up the water on Horicon and drained lakes above the City of Hustisford. These landowners who acquired the marsh, bought the Hustisford dam and plant and then were going to remove it. That would have lowered the waters on Horicon Marsh to the point where they could have drained all the land. When they reached that state, a suit started and they were restrained from removing the dam at Hustisford.

Mr. Scott: By whom was that started?

Mr. Aberg: That was started by individuals, citizens, and taxpayers in Horicon who very bitterly fought drainage and the court held that the marsh owners couldn't remove the Hustisford dam because it had been there for fifty years or more and had created a lake. What originally was an artificial lake had become a natural lake with all the attributes of any

ordinary or natural lake. The rights of the public had accrued and could not be disturbed. They had to maintain the dam--they had to keep it. Well, that ended the dream of growing crops in Horicon Marsh and from then on it was growing up into cattails. There would be fires in the dry years which burned the peat way down and it was neither fish nor fowl. The migratory birds disappeared from it, unattractive to look at or for wild fowl or for muskrats or for anything else. That continued for a number of years until the Legislature passed the appropriation for \$20,000 to build a dam. Now that was in 1927. They seemed to think over there that all they needed to do was to build a dam and raise the water. The theory was that the water had been lowered illegally and that the surrounding lands which had benefited from a lowered water table could therefore be flooded without compensation. It was argued that borderland owners had no rights because drainage had been done illegally. But here again it had been done so many years before that their rights had become fixed and Radke, who was the chief exponent of restoration and a very vital fellow, would not accept the theory that marsh owners had any right to compensation.

He had a voice like a fog horn and was a high-strung and high-tempered man. I tried to persuade him that the state had to acquire the rights or acquire the land before they could raise the water an inch and the dam couldn't be used until they did that. Well, the only answer I could get was "you damn lawyers standing in the way of progress all the time." The Commission, with Mauthe as Chairman, was very much for the Horicon Marsh restoration and Mauthe's theory was to raise the water a little at a time. Well, that's like cutting off a dog's tail an inch at a time. The only man on the Commission that I could get a sympathetic ear from was General Immel, who was a lawyer, and agreed. But the Commission voted to close the dam. Well, when they did, they promptly drew a lawsuit and lost. So, there they were sitting again with the dam built, with the drained marsh and with no rights to raise the water.

Mr. Scott: And General Immel was the only person you could talk to, you said, and they flooded it.

Mr. Aberg: That's right and they had to open the dam again and let it down. The Public Service Commission had fixed levels-- that was all out of the way--Governor Heil came in 1939, and they were beseeching him to get action. We had a big marsh restoration meeting in Horicon with all the Legislature and the Governor invited. There must have been three or four hundred in attendance at that meeting.

Mr. Scott: What year was that now?

Mr. Aberg: That was in 1939. The marsh was sitting there for a number of years and the question was money. When they found out they had to buy the land then there was the question of money and where it was going to come from. Well, just before that the Pittman-Robertson bill had been passed-- that was passed in 1937--became operative in 1939, as I remember.

Mr. Scott: I remember when that first went in.

Mr. Aberg: The Commission had set up as their No. 1 project some upland game project at Poynette. I thought that Horicon Marsh should be the No. 1 project and that it was eligible for Pittman-Robertson funds. At this meeting in Horicon, the Governor talked and he talked about the money and there being none in the State Treasury. I was called and I said, "I know one source of money and if the Commission will adopt Horicon as their No. 1 project, we can get the money from the Pittman-Robertson fund." Well, the Governor seized upon that. That was meat for him. And we did change that designation, that Poynette project, and voted Horicon as our No. 1 Pittman-Robertson project. Pine Hollow at Poynette was a nice place, but it couldn't compare to Horicon Marsh. We got the consent of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service to set it up as a Pittman-Robertson project, (for state acquisition of the southern part of the marsh). Then came the program of acquisition of lands. Some of our representatives would call on landowners and get thrown out on their ear because they hadn't made good on earlier promises. The public relations conditions were terrible. We had a man in the department by the name of Henry Cramer. Most of these farmers were German and Henry was German. He was a trained forester from Germany and he was in charge of our forest protection work at Black River Falls. We pulled him off that job and sent him to Horicon and he spent, I don't know, a year or two years negotiating for the Horicon Marsh land. He called on these farmers and spoke German with them and often spent the night with them. He got to be a friend of these people and acquired every acre that was necessary for flooding. The dam was closed and restored Horicon Marsh to its present point. Then the federal government came in and acquired the north half of it.

Mr. Scott: Was that agreed to in the beginning, Bill?

Mr. Aberg: Tentatively, so we kept our active program in the south half, but they (USFWS) didn't finalize their part until about 1943. They built a big causeway to impound the water on two different levels to set them off, but it's done and it's working. And the Horicon Marsh is restored to where the federal authorities rate it now as the No. 3 refuge in the United States. Now, in that fight the League (IWLA) sponsored the legislative end of it during 1925, 1927, 1929, 1931, and 1933 for a period of ten years until it began to take form.

Mr. Scott: What year did it start again?

Mr. Aberg: In 1925. That was an independent project.

Mr. Scott: They stuck with it until 1939 then.

Mr. Aberg: Well, they stuck with it throughout but there wasn't any need for the active and aggressive work after it became accepted as a Pittman-Robertson project.

Mr. Scott: Well, Bill, you know I think you have done a wonderful job. Do you realize all the information you have covered? You have included a lot of the most important things that have happened in the conservation program in the State of Wisconsin over all this time, and I think this will be a very valuable document.