

A.D. SUTHERLAND

The following comments are based on a profile of A.D. Sutherland which appeared in the March 1988 Wisconsin Waltonian, and on a personal reflection written by Mr. Sutherland in 1974.

When A.D. Sutherland died on October 9, 1987, he left behind a legacy of caring for his fellow man and the environment he lives in. He dedicated more than sixty years to the cause of conservation; he was politically involved with the problems of pollution and land reclamation.

According to Mr. Sutherland: "My interest in conservation started in the 1920 period. A number of people employed me to stop the pollution of our river by a tannery that poured the scraping of fat, meat, and hair into the Fond du Lac River. ... I wrote the company that it would have to stop polluting the river, or I would force them to do so by a court order. They replied that if they could not use the river for their refuse, they would move out of the city. My reply was that I knew of only one thing they had to do, that was to stop polluting the river and do so promptly.

As a result the company connected their outlets with the city sewage plant which treated the waste..."

In the 1930's Mr. Sutherland was involved in work on reclaiming the Horicon marsh area to restore water levels for

wildfowl and the public. The marsh had earlier been drained and sold for agricultural speculation, but as rich peat soils were depleted, ". . . vast areas became wastelands." Sutherland's efforts, together with other members of the state division of the Izaak Walton League resulted in state and federal action to create the Horicon Marsh.

At the same time, Mr. Sutherland was involved in efforts which resulted in state, and eventually federal funds to purchase lands for the public use in the Kettle Moraine area.

Mr. Sutherland continues . . . "In 1941 when I was state president of the League we discussed the growing number of no-tresspassing signs that appeared in the southern half of Wisconsin. It was evident that before long the public would have no place for recreation in this area."

"We proposed a public hunting ground program and I drafted a simple bill that would earmark 50 cents of all hunting licenses for the purchases of hunting grounds and their maintenance. Our local senator introduced the bill. I corresponded with officers of other chapters of the League and four hundred conservation clubs, urging their support. As a result the bill was passed unanimously, and ours became the first public hunting ground program in the United States."

"During 1948 and 1949, when I was president of the state division of the . . . League, it was decided that something

should be done about the pollution of public waters. . . . We held meetings once a month on different phases of the pollution problem at which the public was invited, and we made certain that the press was represented. We found that . . . a pollution commission had been existing for many years. . . . We concluded that there should be a full-time director with ample funds to hire experts who could locate the sources of pollution and recommend ways to correct the problem. . . . The proposed bill [creating the director's position] . . . empowered the agency with authority to set a time limit . . . for compliance. . . . A penalty of up to \$1000 a day was imposed."

After a lengthy and acrimonious hearing, things looked bleak for the bill. In spite of strong testimony in its favor, the hearing had apparently been packed with opponents. Sutherland returned to his office and phoned the President of the Federated Women's Clubs, the state president of the American Federation of Labor, the state president of the CIO, and the president and secretary of the State Chamber of Commerce, eventually securing their agreements to get their lobbyists and members to contact the legislature in support of the bill. He gave talks throughout the state, explaining the pollution problem. The presidents of the conservation clubs, and the Izaak Walton League chapters in Wisconsin received letters urging them to contact their assemblymen and senators in support of the bill.

Sutherland continues: "About one month later I met our state senator who told me he had never before known of such a change of

sentiment in Madison. . . . When the a vote was taken our bill passed unanimously in the senate and assembly and the governor . . . signed the bill."

Mr. Sutherland played an important role in what has become a landmark case in defining the public's right to waters in a natural state. Thanks to his advice and briefs filed on behalf of the Izaak Walton League in the "Muench vs. Wisconsin Public Service Commission" case, the principle of the primacy of public rights to natural waters was affirmed. The battle was fought successfully at the state supreme court level. Shortly thereafter the principle, and the principle of state jurisdiction over state waters, was defended successfully again at the federal level in arguments before the Federal Power Commission.

What later became known as the "soil bank program" started as a proposal to a national Izaak Walton League convention from a chapter in Illinois. As chair of the resolutions committee at this convention, Mr. Sutherland conducted the committee hearings, and carried the proposal to the convention floor. After it was passed at the national convention, Sutherland sheperded the efforts to put the plan into effect at the national level. Coordinating the efforts of his committee, he obtained the support of the Secretary of Agriculture, and managed to get a bill drafted and introduced. Faced with strong opposition, the bill passed and was signed into law because of a stong letter-writing campaign which Sutherland's committee instigated among the chapters of the Izaak Walton League around the nation.

These highlights of A.D. Sutherland's conservation career are a small reflection of the life of the man. He has held numerous offices at the state and national level in the Izaak Walton League of America, and has been recognized for his contributions by both state and national organizations. His articles, books and speeches influenced many thousands of people, and surely played a strong role in fostering the environmental movement which swept the country in the late 60's and 70's.

I am proud to present Alfred Delloyd Sutherland for induction into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.