

Conservation of Game



WILD DUCKS BY OAKLAND, CALIF.

Congress to See Lively Debate Over Public Shooting Grounds Bill

By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN

MILLIONS of interested Americans—both men and women—will watch with close attention the progress in the Sixty-ninth congress of the Public Shooting Grounds—Game Refuge bill. Its known and declared supporters include about five million members of more than one hundred affiliated organizations. There are about six million hunters who annually take out licenses. The checked career of the measure in previous congresses shows that it has powerful opponents. Its supporters express confidence that it will pass during the coming congress. In any event the debate is likely to be livelier than ever because of charges made by Dr. William T. Hornaday, director of the New York Zoological park and trustee of the Permanent Wild Life Protection fund. The situation shows a battle among conservationists which will do the cause no good.

Dr. Hornaday publicly asserts that his efforts to reduce the federal bag limits on ducks, geese and other migratory game birds are being frustrated by manufacturers of arms and ammunition. These, he claims, exert their influence through John B. Burnham, president of the American Game Protective and Propagation association, and that association in its turn brings pressure to bear upon the Bureau of Biological Survey of the Department of Agriculture, which under the Migratory Bird Treaty act makes the federal game regulations. A composite of Doctor Hornaday's charges, in part, reads like this:

Our American system of game "protection" is rotten to the core. It is idiotic in conception and murderous and exterminatory in execution. The game of North America cannot long endure present conditions. Our present bag limits and open seasons are wicked and brutal. They require sweeping reductions forthwith. Sanctuaries and food-planting are, all very well, but they are slow in getting results. Today 6,000,000 devils of game destruction are annually swarming like bloodthirsty hounds all over the United States where traces of game still remain.

First, the American Game Protection association and then the United States Department of Agriculture very firmly decided that the federal bag limits on migratory game birds should not be reduced by the annual federal regulation. John B. Burnham, president of the gunmakers' association, opened the attack on the reform measure. The source of income of the association is the annual profits of the Remington Arms company, the Winchester and Savage Arms companies, and we know not how many more gun-cartridge and powder companies. I believe that the association's influence is to blame for the fact that the Biological Survey and the Secretary of Agriculture have flatly refused all appeals to reduce the bag limits and open seasons on migratory game, and have "passed the buck" to the states to do as they please about it.

Dr. Edward W. Nelson is biologist and chief of the Biological Survey. He has been connected with the bureau in various capacities since 1890 and has been its chief since 1916. His re-



DR. WILLIAM T. HORNADAY

EDWARD W. NELSON

ply accuses Doctor Hornaday of "egotism, conceit and an imperfect knowledge of conditions throughout the country."

President John B. Burnham of the American Game Protective and Propagation association has this to say, among other things, as to Doctor Hornaday's charges:

This attack on me and on the Biological Survey was carefully planned as the opening gun of a campaign against the Federal Game Refuge bill. I have been getting letters from the West warning me against an attack which was to be sprung in New York. Commercial game dealers, opponents of the Migratory Bird law, advocates of spring shooting of ducks, and that type of men, are all aware how Doctor Hornaday is being used. This is not in any way to be construed as a reflection on Doctor Hornaday's personal character, which is of the highest. But he is easily led by men with ulterior motives, who have taken advantage of his disappointment over the failure of his campaign for the arbitrary cutting of bag limits.

Doctor Hornaday is the only outstanding conservationist in the country today who is opposed to the Game Refuge bill. The New York Zoological Society, the Zoological Gardens of which Doctor Hornaday is director are among the many endorsers of the measure. The Biological Survey has in its employment men of scientific attainments all over the country. To supplement their judgment an advisory board assists the bureau in making necessary regulations in regard to migratory birds. I am its chairman.

The board consists of 22 men who are notable for their achievements in conservation. It was this board, of which Doctor Hornaday is a member, and not directly the Biological Survey, which rejected Doctor Hornaday's application for a 75 per cent cut in shooting privileges in the United States. The vote against his proposal was taken after thorough discussion and was practically unanimous.

The board has as members such men as George Bird Grinnell, who received recently from President Coolidge the Roosevelt medal for conservation; George Shiras who, to save the birds, conceived the idea of putting the 1877 species found in our country under the control of the federal government, and Dr. T. Gilbert Pearson, president of the National Association of Audubon Societies.

Doctor Hornaday regards just one method, that of closed seasons and reduced bag limits for game birds, as the way to conservation. It is not a universal remedy because it has been worked to the limit in enlightened sections of the country, and in unenlightened sections it is useless for lack of efficient law enforcement. Of much greater value are refuges, where the wild life is at all times protected, the game species as well as the non-game.

The makers of arms and ammunition deny Doctor Hornaday's charge of undue influence. They also insist that they are strong supporters of public movements for the conservation of game, inasmuch as its extermination would largely put them out of business. The more the game, the better

their business. One does not have to believe these makers of arms and ammunition philanthropists in order to see the logic of their statement of position.

The Public Shooting Grounds—Game Refuge bill proposes the establishment by the federal government of public shooting grounds and game refuges out of funds to be provided by a one-dollar license to be paid annually by shooters. Jurisdiction is provided by the Migratory Bird Treaty act. This act saved the birds from extermination. But it does not provide food and rest for them. Nor does it provide for adequate development as a great economic natural resource.

Migratory waterfowl are pretty well provided with winter refuges on the Gulf of Mexico. They are safe in Canada during the nesting season. They are rapidly increasing in numbers. But there is obvious necessity for feeding and resting places during migration. The ability of waterfowl to recognize protection and their quickness to use it are marvels of nature. The photograph herewith reproduced is an object lesson. Moreover the many natural breeding places this side of the Canadian line are being rapidly eliminated by the movement all over the country to drain marsh areas for agricultural purposes—an inevitable result of increasing population.

This bill has been thoroughly threshed out in congressional debate in two congresses. Its supporters have maintained that it does not further extend federal jurisdiction; that it does not narrow state rights; that no lands can be acquired except upon state consent; that it does not withdraw areas that can be used to greater economic advantage; that it will increase rather than diminish the number of state hunting licenses. Its opponents hold to the exact opposite of these claims.

The Migratory Bird treaty with Canada was ratified in 1916. The present bill, in substantially the same form, passed the senate and failed by a small margin in the house in the Sixty-seventh congress. In the Sixty-eighth congress it passed the house. In the senate it was placed on the preferred program by the steering committee. Its supporters assert that it would have been passed had it come to a vote. They charge that a western senator prevented a vote—and openly name the senator. The bill will be reintroduced in the Sixty-ninth congress.

The National Conference on Outdoor Recreation, which was created to function as a clearing house in conservation matters should take the situation in hand. Both President Burnham and Doctor Hornaday are members of its Advisory Council of One Hundred.



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