Social work director

Dr. Earl Sullenger, '20, is a Sooner whose nationally recognized social research work has been crowned by appointment as director of the department of sociology and social work and of the bureau of social research of the municipal University of Omaha.

Nearl all commencement speakers have something to say to graduating classes about "rendering some kind of service to the society in which they will soon play an active part." Most of the graduates, wrought with reverence by the solemnity of the occasion, listen attentively; some of them resolve to try to help society. Others look to society for the living they think it owes them and are contented with a social system in which they can live comfortably without having to bother about the welfare of humanity.

Dr. Earl Sullenger was graduated with the class of '20. We don't know whether he attended his commencement address or whether the speaker mentioned service to society, but Doctor Sullenger's work in social research since leaving the University has brought him national recognition. He has not been satisfied to sit in an office and hazard guesses about what will happen to the race, about what is wrong with it. His findings have been packed with facts and figures, obtained by active, objective research in Omaha, Nebraska, where he is director of the department of sociology and social work and of the bureau of social research in the Municipal University of Omaha. His research has been appreciated by leading sociological workers and students in the country for interesting and important revelations about the social problems of a good sized American city.

People in Omaha appreciate what he is doing. Not long ago Doctor Sullenger made a study of how children spend their spare time, especially school children. He worked in the city, collected facts, and drew conclusions that caused the city to build ten new parks as the result of his research. Leaders of the city have been interested in seeing his department in the University grow, in seeing his work carried on in a more extensive way.

After his graduation he was on the extension staff of the university for a year and then he accepted a better position as executive secretary of the Y. M. C. A. in the Medical College of Virginia. While he was there he gave lectures for students in the Richmond School for Social Work.

He remained in Virginia for two years and then returned to Oklahoma, where he was married in 1923 to Miss Dorcas Fleming, who received her B. A. degree with the class of '18. They moved to Omaha where Doctor Sullenger established the department of sociology which he has directed ever since, expanding it so that now it is one of the leading departments of the University of Nebraska. In connection with his university work he is a director of the bureau of social research, in which he carries on the social research for which he is becoming so widely known.

He uses the city as a social laboratory where he makes tests, delves into important social problems and gets statistical material that is used as a basis for studies by other sociologists all over the country. He showed us "quotes" from what 43 enthusiastic social leaders thought of the work he is doing. Here are some taken at random: "I wish to commend you upon your work which you are doing for the city; not only are you providing important data for the rest of us, but you are performing a service for the city, which is of real significance." "Your social studies of conditions in Omaha cannot fail to be of real value to those interested in developing the community life." "I want to congratulate you and your students for the research work you are doing. It is valuable for the community to have someone who can go into the analytical side of social work and dig out facts on which our work ought to be based."

And he thoroughly enjoys his work. Here is what he says: "Omaha offers me a splendid laboratory for sociological work and I feel that much of my success so far is due to the services I have tried to render to the city. I like my work very much and feel that no other period in history offers a greater opportunity for constructive sociological work than is offered now. The solution of the present social problems rests on our college and university students, who will become the leaders. I am hopeful and have much confidence in our youth and think that if we guide them aright all will be well in due time."

Many of his studies, especially "Social Determinants of Juvenile Delinquency," are being widely used as tests. Here are a few titles taken from a long list of his published work: "How High School Students Spend Their Leisure Time," "Shell Shock," "The Mexican Population in Omaha," "Youth and the Church," "Modern Youth and the Movies," and "Juvenile Delinquency and Poverty."

All told, Dr. Sullenger has had fourteen years experience in social research. He has taken advanced courses in methods of social research in the graduate school of the University of Chicago, University of Wisconsin and University of Missouri. His publications number 20. He is on the staff of abstractors for the Social Science Research Council, New York, and is a member of the Society for Social Research, University of Chicago, Alpha Kappa Delta, national honorary sociology fraternity, and many other national organizations interested in social research. He is often called upon to lecture on this subject, and his published works are frequently commented upon in leading sociological journals of the country.