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FOOD PRODUCTION PROBLEMS. 

WAR AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE MEETING AT CHICHESTER.

POTATOES IN THE VILLAGES.

GERMAN PRISONERS FOR THE LAND.

All sorts of matters relating to the big question of food production are being dealt with by the War Agricultural Committee of the West Sussex County Council, and many steps of special interest were discussed at a meeting of the Committee held at the Council House in Chichester on Monday. Mr. F. J. Hirst presided over a good attendance of members, including one lady—the Countess of March, who is developing a great amount of land to the subject of food production in the country.

The Substitute Scheme.

Some catching was forthcoming on the evils of small plots of land by the military. Mr. W. J. Drivett pointed out that they were doing a man away and putting a poor produce in its place.

The Chairman said the difficulty was created by the men not being bound to stay with the farmers. He had known of a case where the substitute scheme was tried in and then the men were not under the direction of the army, but were free to do as they liked.

Mr. W. A. Mackenzie said there was a meeting with the Military the following day, when the future substitute schemes would be prepared, and it was hoped that it would be put into operation next week.

Mr. O. N. Wyatt J.P. said he was told at the Chichester Tribunal last week by the Military representative that a substitute was sent for, and if not satisfactory another was sent for another week, and the usable employee was not taken until the matter had been brought again to the notice of the Tribunal.

The Chairman said this was not so in practice. On the suggestion of Mr. J. Rapley it was decided to wait until the scheme was made known.

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had recently seen Sir Sydney Oliver, of the Board of Agriculture, and he assured him that within two or three days all the seed potatoes in the country would be commanded.

Mr. A. C. Harris: Of course that would not apply to the cottagers.

The Chairman: I was told all seed potatoes. Mr. W. Lawson, the Agricultural Officer, said that it would be difficult to commandeer potatoes in the hands of small men.

Mr. H. A. Rigby, R.C., said the question being asked in the parish was whether they would have the amount they required.

Mr. Lawson replied that there was a limit of five cwt.

The Chairman: If only potatoes, four tons are required to plant an acre. Mr. Hirst said if the potatoes were to be commandeered it would always go on holding his own seed, which had been bought by his own capital the year before and spent and they had sufficient.

The Chairman suggested that they were not alive to the benefits of a change in seed.

The Countess of March remarked that many villagers had been grateful for the suggestion that they would do better for a change in seed.

Mr. Mackenzie said at West Dean last year they gave the people their seed potatoes, and with the result that they yearly doubled the crop of their own seed. They were now asking for fresh seed.

The Chairman: You did good by opening your own.

Mr. Rapley, referring to a statement that there was likely to be a shortage of seed potatoes, said that this was not very encouraging to them to plough up the land for the production of potatoes, if they were to have afterwards there was no seed available.

They should get from the Board of Agriculture the quantity of seed potatoes required for the county.

Mr. Drivett said go tons would apparently be required for West Sussex.

The Chairman replied that they would have all this information soon from the Board of Agriculture.

The Countess of March, as Chairman of the Ladies Committee, said the cottagers, and those with small gardens in West Sussex, would require more.

The Chairman: Have they estimated what sort they would like?

The Countess of March: Twenty-six different sorts. (Laughter).

Mr. Drivett: Twenty-six different names.

The Countess of March alluded to certain cottagers who had no gardens, and she was distressed to find that the owners refused their request to provide them.

Mr. Wyatt asked if there was any guarantee that the people would not eat the seed potatoes. (Laughter).

The Chairman: We can only rely on the local Committees to safeguard such a thing.

The Countess of March mentioned that she had been to the Board of Agriculture and had had communicated an idea that potatoes grown from the seed to be supplied would be commandeered.

In the course of further discussion Mr. Lawson said the idea of potato seed distribution originated at Eastleigh, and then it was copied on a large scale last year in Somerset.

It was decided that the quantity of seed potatoes should be left in the hands of the Ladies’ Committee.

Pig Keeping.

The Countess of March, referring to the
The Chairman stated that some of the farmers were already restricted to certain crops due to the war. He said that he had been informed by the Ministry of Agriculture that certain crops were essential for the war effort.

The Rev. E. D. L. Harlow asked whether the Green family would be able to continue growing vegetables despite the restrictions. The Chairman replied that the restrictions were necessary to ensure the availability of food for the soldiers and the population. He encouraged the farmers to find alternative crops that could be grown under the new conditions.

The Secretary informed the Committee that the Ministry of Agriculture was planning to introduce a new scheme to help farmers affected by the restrictions. This scheme would provide financial support to farmers who were forced to change their farming practices due to the war.

The Chairman thanked the Secretary for the information and expressed his support for the scheme. He believed that it was essential to ensure that the farmers were well taken care of during this difficult time.

In conclusion, the Chairman encouraged the farmers to adapt to the new conditions and reminded them of the importance of food production for the war effort.
of their wanting to acquire them. They had received a reply from the Estate Office, and in the case of four cases obtained consent, and would, no doubt, get it in other cases if necessary. At the second meeting there were several applications before them, and so far as he knew all applicants were satisfied in regard as allotments being allocated them. Whether they would accept them he did not know. If there were further applications they still had land which they could allot. Of course, in some cases it would involve a certain amount of hard work, but this was naturally expected, as it was not idle cultivation, and they would not have everything their own way. The Surveyor was directed to stamp out the plots already acquired, and this was about as far as they could go at present. The Committee had, however, got no time in getting to work, and he thought the Council would agree they had done everything under the circumstances in the time they had had at their disposal to go into the matter.

The Chairman said he hoped there would be a sufficient quantity of applications to take up this spare land. It was desirable that the land should be made the fullest advantage of.

Mr. Cubitt asked whether all the old plots were under cultivation.

It was stated in reply that practically all the old plots were still utilized. In cases where the trees had gone, arrangements were made for the wives or someone else to manage them. In others, where some of the plots were turned up, it was for the purpose of reclamation, or for the purpose of making them suitable for cultivation.

The Chairman said the land the Allotment Committee had in view was grassland, or what.

Mr. Hayward explained that it was what had been reserved for building purposes in various parts of the town. Among the places were plots being acquired were at the top of Arundel Road, North Ham Road, God's Road, on the Beach, and in St. John's Road. It comprised from two to two-and-a-half acres.

The Chairman also asked whether the first occupier would have to turn up the grass land, or whether they were making arrangements to plough it.

Mr. Hayward said they were not making arrangements to plough the land, as they thought it would be more beneficial to the cultivators to turn it up themselves.

The Chairman said the wives of several men on service had told him of their intention to cultivate the plots themselves. This was gratefully received.

Mr. Hunter said there was any suggestion that the Council would cultivate land not taken up by private enterprise.

The Chairman said further applications might yet be received, in which case the Secretary would consider whether it would be in the national interest that they should take up the land and cultivate it themselves.

Mr. Hayward said he thought the idea was that everyone should have a piece of land, and cultivate it themselves.

The Chairman replied that they were doing it in other places.

Mr. Hayward said they had a very large number of allotment holders. He thought, as regards the regular allotments, that they did far better than any other locality in the size of the town throughout England. This had been so for some years, so that there was not the difficulty over the question there as there would be in places which had not the allotments they had.

Mr. Barrett observed that the Allotments Committee had seemed to him to have grasped this matter firmly, and they could not do better than leave it in their hands.