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WAR DISTRESS FUND.

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COUNTY MEETING AT CHICHESTER.

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COMMITTEE FOR WEST SUSSEX APPOINTED.

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ADMINISTRATION QUESTIONS.

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**MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS' GENEROUS
OFFER.**

A representative meeting of many of the leading public men in West Sussex was held at the Chichester Council House on Wednesday for the purpose of considering the measures necessary to deal with any distress that may arise in consequence of the war.

The meeting was convened by his Grace the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, K.G., as Chairman of the County Council, and he presided over the proceedings, supported by the Clerk to the County Council, Mr. S. Thornely. Those present included the Duke of Norfolk, E.M., K.G., Lord Leconfield, the Countess of March, Lady Bridport, Sir Harry and Lady Johnston, the Mayor of Chichester (Councillor S. A. Garland, J.P.), the Deputy Mayor of Arundel (Councillor W. W. Mitchell), Mr. and Mrs. Weller-Poley, Mr. H. H. Gibbs, J.P. (Chairman of the Bognor Urban Council), Mr. Alan Thompson, J.P. (Chairman of the Littlehampton Urban Council), the Town Clerk of Chichester (Mr. J. W. Loader Cooper), the Clerk to the Bognor Council (Mr. Joseph Jubb), the Clerk to the Littlehampton Council (Mr. Arthur Shelley), Mr. F. B. Tompkins (Clerk to the Chichester Board of Guardians), Alderman E. Lake (Chairman of the Chichester Board of Guardians), Mr. W. H. B. Fletcher, J.P. (Chairman of the Westhampnett Guardians and Rural Council, etc), Mr. W. D. Rasell (Clerk to the Westhampnett Guardians and Rural Council), Mr. H. L. Staffurth (Bognor), Colonel Bor, R.E., J.P., Colonel Gem, the Chief Constable of West Sussex (Mr. A. S. Williams), the Deputy Chief Constable (Superintendent Horace Ellis), and representatives of other parts of West Sussex more distant than the places named.

The Official Circular.

In opening the proceedings, the Chairman referred to the circular issued by the Local Government Board which led him to convene the meeting. The following is the text of this circular:—

SIR,—I am directed by the Local Government Board to inform you that the Government have constituted a Committee, of which the President is acting as Chairman, to advise on the measures necessary to deal with any distress that may arise in consequence of the war.

In the opinion of this Committee it is desirable that there should be formed throughout the country representative local Committees, whose function it will be to consider the needs of the localities and co-ordinate the distribution of such relief as may be required.

It is proposed that there should be a local Committee in each Borough and Urban District whose population exceeds 20,000 and in each county exclusive of those areas.

Mr. Herbert Samuel feels sure that he can count on your assistance, and he accordingly desires me to invite you to take immediate steps to establish such a Committee, of which you will be the Chairman. The Committee should comprise representatives of the local authorities, including the Boards of Guardians, of the Distress Committee, if any, of the Trade Unions, and of philanthropic organisations, such as the Soldiers and Sailors' Families Association. It is important that some of the members should be women. In many of the larger towns, and in county areas, it will probably be found desirable to work through subsidiary local committees.

By circulars which have been already addressed by the Local Government Board to the Councils of areas within which Distress Committees are in existence, the suggestion has been made that schemes should be prepared in advance, which would be put into execution in the event of a serious lack of employment arising. Local Authorities generally can mitigate the results of the dislocation of industry by expediting schemes of public works upon which surplus labour can be utilised, and the Local Government Board will be happy to facilitate any such schemes.

In addition, in districts where there is an exceptional amount of unemployment, the Road Board will be able to afford financial assistance to plans of road improvement, and the Development Commissioners will also be ready to aid suitable schemes within the scope of their powers.

A national relief fund is about to be organized, and it is intended that the local distribution of the sums thus made available shall be entrusted to the Committees, over which the Mayors and Chairmen of Councils will preside.

Further communication will be made to you with reference to this fund, and also with regard to the work of the Committee generally.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,
H. C. MONRO,
Secretary.

be in their scheme would be Worthing, which had a population of over 20,000.

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association.

Colonel Gam, as Hon. Secretary of this Association, said they were already relieving the families of soldiers and sailors who had gone to the war. They had relieved 70 or 80 families, and they were coming in at the rate of twenty a day. They naturally wanted to run their own Association, with representatives on the Committee they proposed now to appoint. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association did not do anything for the unemployed, but they hoped to get a share from the National Relief Fund.

The Countess of March, who is Chairman of the Association for West Sussex, said she was in London the other day, and she was told on very good authority that their Association would receive help from the National Relief Fund. The Association undertook to look after the wives and families of those fighting, and they ought to receive a part of the Fund. It was also suggested that two representatives of the Association should be on the General Relief Committee.

The Rev. E. D. L. Harvey (Horsham) thought they should make use of the existing organization of the Local Government Board. Parish Councils and Parish meetings should be asked to furnish particulars of people requiring help. These might be sent to the Union Authority, whose Relieving Officers could help, and in that way overlapping would be obviated.

Prebendary Palmer (Thakeham) contended that they should make use of the poor law machinery without identifying themselves with the poor law system. (Hear, hear.)

Feeding the School Children.

Mr. W. H. B. Fletcher supported Mr. Harvey's suggestion that the basis of distribution of relief should be the Local Government Board organization, beginning with the County Council, the several Boards of Guardians, the Urban and District Councils, and the parish Councils. He supported it first because he had received a letter from the Board of Education expressing their intention that all children in the schools, who needed it, should be fed by the Education Committee by means of local Committees, and secondly because it would be the means of saving many children from impairment of physique after the war, such as occurred after the Franco-German War of 1870.

Lord Leconfield said he could not see why the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association should not continue as independent body. If they supplied the names of the families they were assisting to the Committee proposed to be appointed it would prevent anyone going from one organization to another.

The Deputy Mayor of Arundel thought they could reconcile Prebendary Palmer's suggestion with that of Mr. Harvey's by leaving out Boards of Guardians and taking in Rural District Councils. He also pointed out that it would be necessary to look about for people in distress. Many were too proud to come forward, and if they left it to the officials they would only get those who came to them.

The Countess of March said they had had several wives of soldiers and sailors in Chichester who had asked to give in their names to the Association, pointing out that though they did not require relief for the moment they might want it in a few weeks' time.

A Lesson of the South African War.

The Chairman said what was proposed that day was to try to make some arrangement as to the best means of getting responsible people in the different districts to see to the administration of the National Relief Fund. He was not asking that day for any money; indeed, he had no power to do so, because if an appeal was to be made for money the Lord Lieutenant was the proper person to make it and not the Chairman of the County Council. He fancied that on the last occasion, when they were at war a good many people were in receipt of more relief than they were entitled to—(hear, hear)—and they made something out of it. They wanted to avoid that and to see that the really deserving people in distress received the money. They would want a Committee, not too large, composed of people who were acquainted with their own localities and could find those really deserving of help. It had been suggested to him that they should secure the assistance in the country districts of the Parish Councils, who had had little to do hitherto, but who might help in undertaking this very valuable work. Then they would also have the help of representatives of the various District and Urban Councils, and, he presumed, with regard to Chichester and Arundel, the Mayors would help them.

The Mayor of Chichester, in reply to his Grace, said he had had a telegram from the National Relief Fund, but he had had no other notice except the one from his Grace himself.

The Deputy Mayor of Arundel said he thought the only district in West Sussex which would not

Local Funds a Mistake.

The discussion was continued by the Chairman, Mr. Staffurth, Mr. Pullen-Bury, the Rev. E. D. L. Harvey, and Captain E. H. Hills, R.N., J.P., the last named proposing that a Sub-Committee should be appointed to present a report to another meeting a fortnight hence.

Prebendary Palmer seconded this.

The Mayor of Chichester asked what could be done about appealing for funds in the meantime.

The Chairman said the appeal for funds had nothing to do with that meeting. The financial question was outside their duty that day.

The Mayor said he was anxious to know whether they might make an appeal on behalf of a local fund so that the money could be kept for the locality in which it was subscribed.

The Chairman: You are asked to send everything to the National Relief Fund.

The Duke of Norfolk said he thought it would be a mistake to have a lot of independent collections started. There should be the one central fund, and they would be wise to set their backs against the creation of others. It would be necessary that they should have on their Committee representatives of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association so that they could be in touch with that Association.

The Chief Constable suggested that money would flow in much quicker to a local fund.

Speeches followed by Mr. Tompkins, Mr. Jubb, and the Clerk to the Council, the last named expressing the opinion that the whole thing could be worked quite smoothly and easily by the local bodies which already existed acting under a General Committee.

The Decision of the Meeting.

Eventually the Rev. E. D. L. Harvey, after accepting a number of suggestions, proposed the following resolution:—

“That the County Council be the General Committee for the relief of distress, such Committee to consist of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Chairman of the existing Committees of the County Council, and the Chairman and Secretary of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association, with power to co-opt, and that particulars of distress be obtained by means of municipal corporations, Urban and District Councils, Parish Councils, and Parish Meetings.”

Mr. J. T. Strong moved an amendment that the Chairmen of Urban and Rural Councils also be members of the Committee, but this was defeated, and Mr. Harvey's motion was carried.

The Countess of March asked whether the Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association would receive sufficient help from the National Relief Fund to enable them to go on, or should they issue the appeal for further funds which had been prepared.

The Chairman said he was afraid he had no power to give any guarantee.

The Duke of Norfolk said as Lord Lieutenant of the county he was bound to deprecate fresh funds all over the place. The Central Fund Committee had not decided whether they would allow the augmentation of the separation allowance to the families of Territorials and therefore the Territorial Force Association had passed a resolution that they should collect a fund for that purpose if necessary. If the Central Fund did not undertake it they would be forced to do it. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Families' Association would be in the same position, but he would urge them to wait and see if the National Fund would include it, otherwise it would lead to terrible confusion.

The Doctors' Good Offer.

The Chairman pointed out that the Committee which had been appointed would have power to co-opt, and any district which thought they were not properly represented could apply to have representatives put on. No one need be afraid of being left out.

The Duke of Norfolk asked for the opinion of the meeting about the issue of an appeal to the people of Sussex for support to the National Relief Fund.

The Chairman said he thought the appeal should go forth at once, and it was understood that while the Duke of Norfolk's appeal would be to the county generally, a similar appeal should be made at the same time by the Mayors of the various boroughs.

It was left to the Chairman to call the first meeting of the Committee.

The Clerk announced at the close that he had received a notice that the medical practitioners of West Sussex had offered to attend free of charge the dependents of those who had gone to the war where the absence of the bread winner was the cause of distress.