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THE FARMERS' UNION.
INTERESTING MEETING AT CHICHESTER.

The Executive meeting of the West Sussex Farmers' Union was held at the Chichester Corn Exchange on Wednesday, when Mr. Padwick, J.P. presided over, in contrast to the usual number present, a somewhat smaller attendance, there being present among others Messrs. H. W. Drewitt, A. Downer, L. H. Eames, T. Gatley, John Harwood, J. D. Lugg, W. Lawson (Agricultural Organizer), W. E. Mason, P. Norman, J. T. Strong, J.P., F. H. Sawtell, J. Stratton, and John Tompkins.

A letter was read from Mr. Herbert Brown, appealing for support of the British Farmers' Red Cross Fund, but as the Union had already pledged itself to help the Agricultural Relief of Allies Fund, the proposal could not be entertained at present.

A letter of regret for absence was read from Mr. Passmore, who took the opportunity of suggesting some innovations in the wholesale milk trade, which is to be dealt with by the Milk Sub-Committee, to whom it was referred.

Sand Bags for the Front.
 Acting on suggestions made by several members, the Secretary reported having written the War Office, asking if offers of manure bags would be acceptable, as it was understood that a very large supply of sand bags at the front was essential. While expressing thanks and appreciation of the patriotic offer, the War Office replied that while "the demands for bags are very heavy, aggregating in fact several millions monthly," necessitating special contracts and special transport arrangements, the work involved in collection, checking and subsequent handling of comparatively small private contributions would not produce an adequate return in the results obtained, and the Council were obliged, with regret, to decline offers of private contributions.

New Works.
 In regard to the steps decided upon at the last meeting in connexion with new works at the present time, the Secretary reported that no reply had yet been received from the Local Government Board, but it is understood that intimation has since been received that the matter is to be the subject of special inquiry in the locality affected.

Central Executive Meeting.
 The Chairman, as the representative of the branch, reported on the meeting in London of the Central Executive of the N.F.U. which deliberated on such subjects as "The commanding of hay," "Security of tenure," "Lloyds' Insurance," "The Parliamentary Fund," "Damage to crops, etc. by manoeuvres," "Septic Pneumonia," "Milk contracts," "Slaughter of Calves," and a variety of other topics.
 With regard to the provision of hay for the forces, the Defence of the Realm Act provided that hay as well as many other things could be requisitioned, but would only be brought into operation as a last resource. The setting up of County Produce Committees was calculated to obviate this difficulty and had been attended by very good results on the whole.
 In connexion with security of tenure, the proposition of a Bill was referred to the Distribution Committee.

The Insurance Question.

The Chairman went on to refer to Lloyds' Insurance. Under the arrangements with underwriters it required still a considerable number of policies to permit the Union to participate in the profits. On the understanding that the matter would have the benefit of more publicity and consideration by branches which had not hitherto given the support it merited, it was offered to waive the further number required, and the Union would be credited with 15 per cent of the profits from 1st May.

The proposal that this should be transferred to the Parliamentary Fund is to be considered by the branches, and if approved, the Fund will be considerably swelled, as the amount available to be made, the Chairman urged, to multiply the number of policies effected, not only to the benefit of each individual, which, in itself, is sufficient cause to decide in its favour, but the commission on the profits increased as the numbers advance.

For the Belgian Relief Fund.

On the motion of Mr. Drewitt, a cheque was drawn for £521 13s. in favour of the Belgian Relief Fund, representing the total amount realized, with interest, by the recent sales.

The Training of Troops.

The Secretary reported attending, accompanied by Mr. P. Norman, a meeting of the Compensation Officers of the Aldershot Command, which had been convened to discuss the question of future training of troops, having regard to the possible damage which might be done to growing crops. The Chairman had originally been invited to attend, but the date was not suitable.

From the remarks made at the meeting it became evident that the system of flagging crops susceptible to damage, the employment of "out of bound" boards, and the arrangement of advising Area Compensation Officers of manoeuvres likely to take place in their locality, had not been so successful as intended. The suggestions made might be crystallised in the following recommendation which was accepted for consideration by the authority by the military representative present, viz.:-

"That each Area Compensation Officer be asked, after conferring with the landowners and occupiers, to mark on maps to be supplied for the purpose, the land in his district on which the training of troops would be of least detriment to the food production of the country, i.e., on which compensation for damage would be of a minimum nature."

It was explained that the Defence of the Realm Act gave the military authorities the right of use of any land, but where practicable, they were desirous of obviating expensive damages entailed in using the more productive land.

It was generally agreed that notice of damage should immediately be given the local Compensation Officer, who would then view the crop damaged, and again it deemed advisable at harvest. Claims were generally met on the spot, and settled on their merits; settlements on a rental basis were avoided where possible, and this arrangement seemed to be working quite satisfactorily.

Mr. Norman, who supplemented the Secretary's remarks, contrasted the arrangements made by the Aldershot Compensation Authorities with those obtaining in the Eastern Command, in whose case his farm at Barchin was situated. He had had a great part of his arable and grazing land taken for hutments and trenching and had been subjected to considerable annoyance by troops training on cropped land not taken,

sham fighting in and around a lambing yard and among in-calf cows in spite of flags, out of bound boards, and promises to the contrary. Unfortunately there were no District Compensation Officers to appeal to, but matters were supposed to be dealt with from Whitehall, and although claims had been submitted since the commencement of the war, no compensation had yet been received. He spoke in terms of appreciation of the consideration shown by Staff Officers who had done what they could to mitigate the evil. There were several farmers in a similar position, and they appealed to the Union to use its influence on their behalf to get the Authorities in his area to emulate the arrangements in force in the Aldershot Command.
 It was decided to instruct the Secretary to that effect, and to press for a settlement.

A Dispute Settled.

Mr. L. H. Eames reported on the work of the Special Committee appointed at the last meeting to investigate the dispute between a member of the Horsham Branch and a firm of corn merchants at Cratleigh, over damage caused by some adulterated bean meal fed to some dairy cows. A sample had been sent to Dr. Boelcker for analysis, who stated it to be a mixture of various kinds of cereals with a large percentage of dirt.

After reviewing the evidence, the Committee unfolded to the parties concerned the seriousness of the situation and offered its good offices to arbitrate in the matter, which both disputants accepted.

The award allowed £60 compensation in addition to amount for the meal.

Farmers and Milk Prosecutions.

Consideration was given to a member's application for support in defence of an action in respect of the standard of his milk.

The solicitor being of opinion the evidence would prove it to be unadulterated, support was granted.

At this juncture Mr. Sawtell gave his recent experience in a similar matter. He was summoned at Portsmouth on two samples being below standard, and secured dismissal on proving the milk to be as it came from the cows. The procuring of witnesses, which necessitated the presence of railway officials, and all others who handled the milk complained of, besides being an expensive item, proved the urgent necessity of removing the onus of the producer to prove his innocence, whereas, as in his case, he is held guilty although his milk is pure, until he has proved to the contrary.

The Chairman intimated that the Central Executive were fully alive to the importance of the question, but the present was an inopportune time to press for measures of social reform. They were, however, on the look out for a good case where a conviction had been made after it had been proved the milk was as the cow produced it, in order to support an appeal.

County Council Candidates.

The Secretary was instructed to interview candidates for County Council honours in the vacancies caused by the death, etc. of several members.