

GROW FOOD OR GO HUNGRY.

Sumter County Organized To Make Itself Self Sustaining.

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Committee of Public Safety, Held Saturday, April 7th—Plans Outlined to Increase the Acreage of Food Crops and to Grow More Food to the Acre.

The plans of organization of the Sumter County Committee of Public Safety, for cooperation between the city and the rural districts, and the white and colored people of Sumter county to prepare our county against a threatened food famine, having been adopted by the recent Atlanta conference and telegraphed to every county in the South, after Messrs. E. W. Dabbs and A. C. Phelps, our delegates to the Atlanta conference submitted report of what Sumter county is doing through the Sumter Chamber of Commerce, cooperating with the masses of the people, we are receiving numbers of inquiries regarding Sumter county's methods of cooperation.

As it is almost impossible to reply immediately to every inquiry, I am sending you minutes of our meeting of the township committees of the general committee of Public Safety for publication either in whole or in part as you see fit, for information of other counties.

Yours truly,
E. I. Reardon, Secretary.
Sumter County Committee of Public Safety.

Sumter, S. C., April 7th, 1917.

Pursuant to a call issued by a meeting of Sumter county citizens held at Sumter Chamber of Commerce on April 5, 1917 for the purpose of forming a Sumter county Committee on Public Safety, a meeting of the committees from the different townships was held at 11 o'clock today, at Chamber of Commerce rooms. The object of today's meeting being to form a permanent organization by the election of a chairman and such other officers, and for the purpose of defining the scope of the work to be undertaken.

The purpose of the Sumter county Committee on Public Safety is to aid and assist the government and the people of Sumter county in the present crisis. Mr. Neill O'Donnell, temporary chairman called the meeting to order. The call for the meeting was read.

As suggested by Mr. Neill O'Donnell a permanent organization was entered into at once, and the following officers were unanimously elected by acclamation:

Chairman, A. C. Phelps, president of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce; 1st Vice Chairman, H. Drane Tindall, of Tindall, Privateer Township; 2nd Vice Chairman, Col. J. L. Irby, of Boykin, Rafting Creek township; 3rd Vice Chairman, E. W. Dabbs, of Mayesville Township; Secretary, E. I. Reardon, Managing Secretary Chamber of Commerce; Treasurer, G. A. Lemmon, president City National Bank of Sumter; Director of Publicity, H. G. Osteen.

On motion of Mr. I. C. Strauss it was agreed that the chairman of each township committee compose the Finance Committee, and that each chairman be requested to solicit funds from the people of his township to defray the expenses connected with this movement.

Messrs. A. C. Phelps and E. W. Dabbs, delegates to Atlanta conference from Sumter county Committee on Public Safety made a report of their attendance on Atlanta meeting and gave out a great deal of valuable information and suggestions received at that meeting. It was announced by these two delegates that the Atlanta conference after learning of the plans inaugurated by the Sumter County Committee on Public Safety adopted the Sumter county plans for the entire Southern cotton growing States as a part of the campaign for increasing the production of food for man and beast.

Chairman Phelps read copy of a letter he had written as president of the Sumter Chamber of Commerce, to every white pastor in Sumter county under date of April 6th, 1917, asking these ministers to cooperate by giving warning from their pulpits on Sunday, April 8th, to their congregations of the serious crisis confronting the country and urging the people to plant every foot of ground possible in life sustaining food.

Mr. Phelps suggested that a similar letter be sent to every colored minister in this county.

On motion of Mr. I. C. Strauss, Mr. H. G. Osteen was selected as publicity agent of the Committee on Public Safety of Sumter County all matter of publicity being left to him.

As suggested by Mr. O'Donnell, ev-

ery township committee chairman was requested to visit every farmer, white and colored, in his township and impress upon them the objects of the whirlwind campaign to produce food crops, and to urge every one to plant all the corn needed on every farm, for man and beast, and all other food crops possible. It was agreed that as much as \$25.00 be appropriated, if so much be necessary to defray the expenses of each chairman in canvassing his township. Mr. I. C. Strauss added to Mr. O'Donnell's suggestion that every member of each township committee assist the chairman in his work of inducing the people to comply with the requests of the County Committee of Public Safety.

Mr. Neill O'Donnell for O'Donnell and Company of Sumter subscribed for the Committee on Public Safety Fund the sum of \$100.

Mr. A. C. Phelps, for Harby and Company, Inc., of Sumter, for the same purpose, subscribed the sum of \$100.

Mr. Dabbs suggested that the circular issued by the special committee appointed on April 3, 1917, constituting an appeal to the farmers of Sumter county to plant an abundance of food crops be amended to meet the ideas embraced in the suggestions and actions taken by today's meeting.

By unanimous consent the chairman appointed Messrs. Dabbs, M. L. Parler and Neill O'Donnell to draft an amendment to the first circular and authorized the secretary to have 5,000 copies of the revised circular printed for distribution by the township committees, and otherwise as the chairman and secretary of general committee deem advisable.

A letter from Acting Chairman Neill O'Donnell to R. W. Westberry, of Sumter, a local leader of the negro race in this county, asking him to cooperate with the Committee on Public Safety for Sumter county in organizing the colored people, colored farmers particularly, to plant sufficient corn and food crops was read. A letter from R. W. Westberry to Mr. O'Donnell, in reply, promising his hearty cooperation and saying that he had called a meeting of colored farmers for next week was also read. These two letters were received as information and ordered made a part of the minutes of this meeting, and the chairman authorized to use these two letters for publication or in any way he thought best.

April 3, 1917.
R. W. Westberry, City.
Dear Sir: There was a meeting held at the Chamber of Commerce this morning, of which I was chairman.

The object of this meeting was to endeavor to prepare our people for the conditions that may arise as a result of our war with Germany. The principal thing necessary to be done in this connection, is to impress upon our people as forcibly as possible, especially the farming element, the great need and necessity for planting not only home crops for their own use, but for others as well, and I was asked as chairman of that meeting, to communicate with you, as a representative colored man of the county, and probably the leader among your people in this section, and to ask you to get your people to cooperate with the white people, by which I mean particularly the colored farmers and to use your influence with them to plant all the food crops they possibly can, for I can not help but believe, that everybody will need everything in that way they can possibly raise and I think that those who will have a surplus, will be able to sell it at a greater profit than cotton, even should they obtain their maximum expectation for the fleecy staple.

This meeting today called for another meeting to be held on Saturday next in the Chamber of Commerce rooms at 11 o'clock and notices will be sent to at least five of the leading farmers and business men of every township in the county, asking them to come in for the purpose of the organization and formation of an executive and directory committee to take charge of the situation and advise those who need advice along the lines they think the most profitable to them.

Personally I have written numerous letters to customers of my firm throughout this and adjoining counties, imploring them to increase their corn acreage and impressing upon them as forcibly as possible, the fact,

that I candidly believe corn is going to be worth \$2.00 per bushel before the next crop is harvested, but it is not only corn, we want everybody to devote a good part of their attention, time and talent to all food crops, every farmer should have a vegetable garden, not only for the use of his family, but to sell, as there is going to be an enormous demand for same.

One of the objects of this meeting was to try and get every farmer if possible to plant at least 1-2 of an acre of early corn for the use of his family and livestock at a time when they might not be able to obtain it through the channels they usually depend upon, credit.

Please be kind enough to acknowledge receipt of this letter, expressing your disposition to cooperate and use your influence as far as possible with the colored people, over whom you have a great deal of influence, to use every means in their power to comply with the wishes and suggestions of their white friends and neighbors.

Yours truly,
Neill O'Donnell.

Westberry's Patriotic and Practical Reply.

Sumter, S. C., April 6, 1917.
Mr. Neill O'Donnell, Chairman Chamber of Commerce Committee of Public Safety.

Dear Mr. O'Donnell: In reply to your letter of the 3rd instant, I will say that your letter is in keeping with what I have tried to teach for many years.

I have never believed that cotton should take the leading place on our farms, for as long as cotton is king the food problem can never be settled or solved among us. Your letter has encouraged me to put forth more effort to teach the colored farmers of Sumter county to plant more grain and other products, and raise more hogs and cattle for our own consumption.

I shall call the farmers together early in next week for the purpose of discussing the new situation and to prepare our people to meet the conditions that are now confronting us, and for what may come in the future.

I am quite sure that my people will be glad to cooperate with the white people for our own protection against a famine. I concur in your opinion, concerning the price of corn before the next crop is harvested. I shall speak strong along that line to impress my people to plant an early patch of corn, and wherever it is possible there should be a garden for every home in the city and the country, for it will pay for itself.

I believe the good white people have been willing to cooperate with the colored people to better their conditions. I have done all I could to impress my people with this idea, and whenever it is possible, to cooperate, for real good, to do so most willingly. With my best wishes for a success of your meeting next Saturday,

Yours sincerely,
R. W. Westberry.

Telegrams from Congressman A. F. Lever, and Senator E. D. Smith, from Washington to Secretary E. I. Reardon regarding government furnishing garden seed for free distribution among poor white and colored people were read.

Senator Smith's telegram announced that he would have sent early next week what seed he had been able to secure. Congressman Lever wired that his quota of garden seed was exhausted and the supply of United States department of agriculture also, and impossible to obtain this season. Secretary Reardon said he had hopes that Senator E. R. Tillman might be able to secure some seed, but had not heard as yet.

R. W. Westberry, colored, having been invited to cooperate with the Central Committee of Public Safety was given the privilege of the floor. He said he would be glad to organize his race and do anything in his power to cooperate with the white people in this crisis, and thanked the committee for their interest in his race and the privilege of addressing the meeting.

Westberry also said: "Sumter county is the best county in this State for prosperity, harmony and peace between the races.

"To my mind this is due to the better understanding between the leaders of both races. Where there is a misunderstanding it breeds strife and trouble and there cannot be any material advancement.

"The farmers of our community are remaining at home, because of the splendid treatment they receive from the merchants and neighboring white farmers. Colored farmers are always willing to cooperate with white farmers for improvement of their conditions.

"A good many of the negro farmers do not know how to make corn, consequently there is a continual shortage in the food crop, another reason for shortage of food crops is, they are not given enough encouragement from the landlords from whom they rent, or share-crop and from the merchants, where they get their supplies.

"The president of the United States has ordered the citizens of our great country to prepare themselves for a conflict with Germany. There are three things most essential in our preparation; the soldier himself, the weapons of war and food for strength to fight with.

"We realize that the farmers must furnish the third great weapon of war, before we are prepared. No nation is poor or can be made poor as long as there is plenty of food in their country. In conclusion I will say, I shall urge the colored farmers of Sumter county to raise all the food crops necessary for their consumption, and help to feed the warring nations of the world.

"My idea is very much like Mr. O'Donnell's; as to the quantity of food stuff that we should raise. We should raise not only enough for ourselves, but enough to supply others."

On motion of Mr. O'Donnell, Westberry was requested by the committee to make a canvas of the colored people and colored farmers particularly, to try to organize the negroes in every township, to hold public meetings, and to otherwise impress his race with the importance of cooperating with the white people in this emergency confronting the nation.

Dr. Parler suggested that township meetings of colored farmers and colored laborers be arranged for by Westberry, the white members of the township committees cooperating with Westberry in arranging these meetings, and that the chairman or other members of township committees attend these colored township meetings to address the colored farmers with Westberry.

Mr. H. G. Osteen suggested that Westberry organize colored township committees on public safety to work among their own race, just as the white farmers and business men are doing to obtain quickest and best results.

Mr. I. C. Strauss suggested that Westberry get some of his lieutenants of the colored race to assist him in stirring up interest among the colored farmers and laborers to plant gardens.

Westberry agreed, as per suggestion of Mr. O'Donnell, to begin his campaign by having the ministers of colored churches in Sumter to announce that there will be a public meeting held by Westberry on Sunday night to discuss cooperation as outlined above.

Rev. William Haynsworth urged that township committees appeal to employers of colored labor to allow and induce their employees to attend these conferences.

"Plant Food Crops or go Hungry" was adopted as the slogan of the Sumter county Committee on Public Safety.

Mr. O'Donnell suggested that those committeemen present ask their pastors throughout this county to direct attention on Easter Sunday to the importance of planting an ample crop of corn and other food crops for man and beast.

Mr. A. C. Phelps for Harby and Company, Inc., and Mr. Neill O'Donnell for O'Donnell & Company said that their firms will provide seed of any kind recommended by the committee to any farmers, white or colored, who were unable to buy seed, provided that the parties receiving the seed will enter into an agreement to pay for seed when crops are harvested.

Any farmer in Sumter county who is in need of corn, peas, rice, bean, amber cane or other food crop seed for planting will be provided with same by applying to the Committee of Public Safety through his township committee.

Any farmer who has on hand a surplus of Early Dent corn seed, speckled peas, velvet bean seed is requested to communicate with Managing Secretary E. I. Reardon, Sumter, S. C., the committee having directed the purchase of seed for distribution, and home grown seed are preferred.

The Southern Cotton Oil Company, Sumter, S. C., will advance soy bean seed to farmers who are unable to pay cash, if those receiving seed will enter into agreement to reimburse this corporation when harvest of seed is completed. It is thought that other business establishments in Sumter handling grain will do the same thing on recommendation of applicant by township committees. Mr. C. M. Emanuel announced he had a limited quantity of Early Dent corn seed for sale.

The following resolution offered by Mr. I. C. Strauss was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted by a rising vote as a tribute to our President of the United States:

"Whereas, we, the Committee of Public Safety of Sumter county, South Carolina, recognize the infinite patience, tact, and wisdom of the President in his handling of the different relations had by the government of our Nation with the imperial government of Germany, and

Whereas, we approve, with whole hearts, the conduct of affairs by our

Chief Executive, and

Whereas a State of war now exists between the United States and Germany, not of our seeking, but forced upon us,

We do now pledge our loyalty and support to the president, and we pledge every assistance which we are capable of rendering in trying times now upon us, even to the extent of our resources and our lives if need be. Respectfully submitted,

I. C. STRAUSS,
C. J. JACKSON,
E. W. DABBS,
Committee on Resolutions.

The secretary, by unanimous vote was instructed to telegraph these resolutions to President Woodrow Wilson.

Mr. H. G. Osteen suggested that in as much as Hon. John L. McLaurin will speak in Sumter on April 21st on the subject of the Sumter cotton market, and it being likely that there will be a large crowd of farmers and other business men here from Sumter and other counties to hear him, that the Committee on Public Safety of Sumter county use this meeting to have Mr. McLaurin and other speakers emphasize the importance of farmers preparing for the emergency confronting the country by planting food crops.

Mr. J. M. Kolb suggested that those present ask their ministers in different churches throughout this county to announce that there will be held community or township meetings in every township on Monday night, April 9th, the local committees to arrange the places of meeting today and be ready to inform the ministers.

Following the suggestion by Chairman Phelps that it is the duty of Sumter county to take care of those dependent upon the patriotic young men and all others who volunteer to serve their country in this crisis, the following resolution offered by Mr. I. C. Strauss was unanimously adopted by a rising vote, and applauded.

"We pledge to those men of our county who may be called to the colors in our defense that we shall see to it that their dependents suffer no want."

The meeting went on record, by suggestion of Chairman Phelps as being willing and anxious to cooperate with the women of Sumter city and Sumter county in the Red Cross work being planned by these ladies.

Dr. M. L. Parler said that the Sumter County Medical Association had met and offered their services to their country, and to assist the ladies in the Red Cross organizations.

It was agreed that the Sumter Chamber of Commerce shall be the central bureau of organization and activity for the plans of the Sumter County Committee on Public Safety, and President Phelps announced that he and Managing Secretary Reardon, with the entire machinery, office force, and membership of this commercial organization is at the disposal of the committee and the farmers and other citizens of Sumter county, to do anything that the Chamber of Commerce can do or may be called upon to do for our county and our country.

It was decided that it would not be necessary, for the present at least, to call a general county mass meeting of the people in Sumter, but to work through townships, communities, schools, churches, and other civic bodies.

Saturday, April 21st, at 11 o'clock a. m., at Sumter Chamber of Commerce was the date set for next meeting to hear reports of progress from the township committees, unless called together by the chairman sooner for any special reason. Mr. I. C. Strauss delivered a very inspiring talk regarding the duty from a patriotic standpoint of the township committees and the importance of every man, woman, boy and girl cooperating for self-preservation and the assisting of the armies of our country by helping to feed the soldiers and feeding the civil population at the same time.

He also stressed the importance of frequent meetings, at least once a week, if not often of the local or township committees who should pay close attention also to seeing that colored tenants, white tenants, and all small farmers are supplied with seed for planting food crops, and that the small farmers, white and colored, and the people of this city and smaller towns are interested in planting gardens, and assistance rendered those who need help.

The township committees selected the following chairman after the meeting:

Shiloh township—J. K. McElveen.
Mayesville township—E. W. Dabbs.
Concord township—J. J. Britton.
Privateer township—S. A. Harvin.
Manchester township—Geo. T. Gedding.
Middleton township—M. L. Parler.
Stateburg township—Richard Richardson.
Rafting Creek township—D. V. Keels.
Sumter township—I. C. Strauss.
Providence township—B. McLaughlin.

President A. C. Phelps of the Chamber of Commerce announced after the meeting that he had ordered by wire and secured promise of immediate delivery for Harby & Company, Inc., and O'Donnell & Company, one hundred bushels, each, of velvet beans, and twenty-five bushels, each, of amber cane seed.

Meeting adjourned.
The Plan Outlined.
Sumter, S. C., April 3, 1917.

To The Planters:
At a meeting called under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce the undersigned were appointed a committee to take immediate steps to increase the food supply in Sumter county.

To this end we suggest that for each plow one-half acre of Early Dent corn be planted at once in best land near lot, and that this corn be fertilized when planted and cultivated rapidly, to supply food for man and beast in July and August.

We also suggest that every family plant a goodly quantity of six weeks' snap beans, which is the quickest vegetable that can be grown, and owing to its protein contents largely takes the place of meat, which price is now prohibitive to any but the well to do, and what is more to the point there will not be a sufficient supply at any price.

We further recommend that every family plant not less than one-half acre of sweet potatoes, and that all places suitable for rice be planted in moist places, and fertilized and cultivated just like cotton.

We also suggest that sorghum be planted nearby lots to feed stock on, and the remainder to be used for making syrup.

We urge the planting of velvet beans in the corn crop in April if possible, and not later than the 10th of May. The meeting today arranged to have a supply of beans shipped here and as soon as beans arrive proper notice will be given where they may be obtained and the price.

As there may be a great many farmers who will not be able to purchase these seeds, we would urge upon land owners and supply merchants the patriotic duty of seeing that no tenant or customer fail to be supplied with planting seed.

E. W. DABBS,
C. J. JACKSON,
J. FRANK WILLIAMS,
A. C. PHELPS,
Committee.

Adopted Saturday, April 7th, 1917:

Your committee most earnestly desire to have impressed upon our farmers that the food situation in the South is giving the national government more uneasiness than any other feature of the national defence. It is so recognized that the assistant secretary of agriculture is attending meetings in the South to impress upon our people that cotton is no longer king—that cotton would have to be 30 cents per pound to be on a parity with what it was when it was 12 cents. That on account of the needs of the national government and the car shortage there will be actual suffering in the South before another harvest, unless immediate steps be taken to grow more food crops. By the South we mean Sumter county.

Therefore we advise that the recommendations of the committee of last Tuesday be carried out wherever practicable, that six weeks peas, speckled peas and other quick growing food crops be planted at once. And that under no circumstances should the cotton acreage be increased but that additional field corn be planted; that corn be given special attention in culture and fertilizer, for we believe it will be a more profitable crop than cotton next fall at any price we can anticipate for cotton. Grow food or go hungry.

M. L. PARLER,
N. O'DONNELL,
E. W. DABBS.

The Sumter Committee of Public Safety hereby endorse the above.

Shiloh—W. W. Green, Isadore Truluck, M. McClam, E. T. Mims, J. K. McElveen.

Mayesville—L. C. Tisdale, E. W. Dabbs, J. F. Bland, R. A. Chandler, R. J. Mayes, Jr.

Concord—J. M. Brogdon, J. J. Britton, Howard Jones, G. W. Mahoney, Hazel Brunson.

Privateer—J. M. Kolb, Rev. Wm. Haynsworth, S. A. Harvin, Drane Tindall, J. M. Jackson.

Manchester—Miller Coulter, Geo. T. Goddings, W. J. Ardis.

Middletown—E. E. Aycock, R. J. Ball, W. H. Ramsey, Eno J. Goddings, M. L. Parler.

Stateburg—Richard Richardson, C. J. Jackson, J. F. Williams, J. L. Frierson, Geo. Mabry.

Rafting Creek—J. L. Irby, D. V. Keels, C. M. Emanuel, Julian Saunders, R. E. Atkinson.

Providence—Dr. Bush McLaughlin, J. C. Dunbar, Paul Bowman, Porcher Gaillard, M. L. Moore.

Sumter—J. H. Myers, Willie Shaw, N. O'Donnell, A. C. Phelps, G. A. Lemmon, Jno. F. Jenkins, I. C. Strauss, L. D. Jennings.