
Chapter 5

The War Years

South Carolina had five delegates attend the London conference of the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) in 1939. Those attending were: Mrs. J.L. Williams, Mrs. Landrum Sellers, Mrs. Ernest Kaminer, Miss Margaret Fernell, and Miss Elizabeth Watson. (Minutes, 1939)

In 1939, a Liaison Committee for the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) was formed to meet during the three year periods between international conferences so as to sustain interest among the U. S. Constituent Societies. South Carolina became affiliated with this Liaison Committee at this initial meeting. (Minutes, 1939) In 1946, its name was changed to the Country Women's Council (CWC) and meetings have been held annually since its formation.

No sooner had conditions started to level out after the Great Depression than war clouds again gathered in Europe. By 1940, it was fairly obvious that the United States would again be involved. Extension workers holding reserve commissions began to be called in 1940 and, in December 1941, the United States declared war. Fifty-two Extension agricultural agents were called into the armed services during the next four years. Their places were filled by acting specialists and agents. (Morgan, 1970)

Wartime Extension work included the responsibility for promoting the production of food and fiber for the war effort. Cotton, soybeans, grains, and livestock stood high on the list of items needed by the United States and its allies around the world. Victory gardens flourished and the state tightened its efforts to meet the needs. Here again the farm and home agents were given the responsibility of expanding food production, and directing drives of many types. Miss Lonnie Landrum's leadership ability, her understanding of human limitations, and her unfailing belief that a job could be done, left its imprint on the work and the workers.

In addition, farm families were asked to produce food for themselves and nearby urban people and thus release commercial and processed foods for shipment to U. S. armies and allies overseas. Farm families who produced 75 percent of their food and feed needs were publicly recognized and presented a certificate of accomplishment. (Morgan, 1970)

Practically all young men on farms went into the armed services or were employed in plants producing materials for the war. Farming was done mostly by older men, boys, women, and girls. Practically no new machinery, trucks, or automobiles were available during the war, and the small amount that was produced was made available under a severe rationing program. Extension workers assisted farmers in keeping their old machinery running, and in impro-

vising many substitutes for materials and equipment to keep farm production up to the maximum possible under the circumstances. As a result of these efforts, farm production was maintained at a high level during the war years. (Morgan, 1970)



York County Fair, 1941

During the war years, home economics programs emphasized "living at home" and dealt with food production and meal planning in view of food shortages, energy, and time management and home improvements using the materials on hand or skills of the family such as re-upholstering, refinishing furniture, chair seating, etc. Restricted use of gasoline limited the training of county home demonstration staff by the state staff and their assistance with county workshops to do more intensive teaching. (Woodall, 1992)

In the 1940's, the Palmetto Council established a loan fund for students attending South Carolina State College. The amount in the fund was small when the councils were integrated in 1968. The South Carolina Extension Homemakers Council over the years has made regular contributions to the fund from the sale of cookbooks and from the treasury. (Woodall, 1992)

Council War Work

Throughout the war years, the work of the Council of Farm Women was centered on war activities. The tremendous job given farm people was the production of wood for our armies, our allies, and our own civilian population. Farm labor was scarce. Council members and other farm women labored in the fields and gardens to help produce food, and in their kitchens to conserve it.

In many counties, the Councils of Farm Women fixed up and furnished rest rooms for service men. In others, Red Cross work, help with war bond sales, collection of scrap iron and paper, and collection of clothing were actively engaged in by council members. Other war conscious council members were active in Red Cross work, both sewing and nursing. Many took first aid courses and others assisted in holding Red Cross classes. Some groups of council members worked at observation posts and also as air raid wardens. (Minutes, 1943)

In 1943, the Legislative Program of Work recommended: (1) a state supervisor of the school attendance teachers, (2) teacher retirement and teacher tenure, (3) an industrial school for Negro girls, and (4) a bill calling for women to be placed on the boards of the industrial schools, the penal board, the probation and parole board, etc., provided the women and

men on these boards meet the necessary qualifications for such position. (Minutes, 1943)

Curtailment of travel due to gasoline rationing and the scarcity of tires only cemented the bonds of council membership more closely, and through united efforts, women participated in the following activities:

- (1) Purchase of savings stamps and bonds by all county councils, and also by the state council.
- (2) Red Cross work, First Aid Courses, Home Nursing Courses.
- (3) Conducted centers for the making of surgical dressings.
- (4) Held sewing bees to provide garments for military use, for hospitals, and for shipment to our allied countries.
- (5) Women served at observation posts and as Air Raid Wardens.
- (6) Salvage drives were conducted with one county alone collecting 976,675 pounds of metal.
- (7) Worked as volunteers in the school lunch program, while working through legislative channels for the improvement of lunch programs to provide meals for needy children.

With a full realization of the stresses suffered by young people during war periods, council women worked to provide wholesome recreation, health services, school activities, and adequate libraries to meet the needs of our youth. (Cochran, 1971)

One of the activities of the Council Women in several counties that meant a great deal to the women as well as the men in service was council nights at the USO's. Fried chicken, home-made cakes, and other home cooked foods were very popular.

It was not until 1943, during the war, that it became necessary to have a Consumer Education Committee. The goals of that committee were: law enforcement for protection of the consumer; enrichment of flour, grits, and bread; and fortification of oleomargarine with vitamin A. The committee cooperated closely with the State Nutrition Committee, OPA, and other agencies. Among the committees accomplishments were:

- talks on consumer education and enrichment programs.
- contacted delegations on enrichment and fortification.
- helped issue ration books.
- checked ceiling prices at local stores for OPA.
- studied labels on food and clothing.
- worked against black marketing
- helped with fat saving, salvage and other drives.

In 1943, the President, Mrs. C.D. Sowell, stated: "The theme for our convention is 'Women in a World at War,' and



Household equipment was making life a little easier on the farm

I shall try to speak to you for a few minutes on this subject. We are in a war, a war that must be won; a war which demands unstinted work, sacrifice, and the devotion of every homemaker. We homemakers must strive to match production for military needs against production for the necessities of civilian life." (Minutes, 1943)

During 1941-45, the council continued its efforts in the public policy

arena contacting their county delegations with regard to the enrichment bill and the marriage law. The school hot lunch, increased salaries for teachers, appropriation for a State Library Board, and appropriation for extension service were other measures which received considerable attention from council members. All of these measures were enacted into law during this period, with the exception of the marriage bill. (Minutes, 1943)

Leadership Recognition

Mrs. C.D. Sowell, from Chesterfield County, was elected State Council President in 1942. In 1941, Mrs. W. Humphries from Union County was elected Southern Region Director for the National Home Demonstration Council and, in 1944, Mrs. C.D. Sowell, from Chesterfield County, was appointed the National Citizenship and Legislative Chair.

Accomplishments for this period reported in the 1945 minutes included the following:

1. An appropriation of \$50,000 for cancer control.
2. An appropriation of \$25,000 for education services for the hard of hearing.
3. A marriage bill requiring a 24-hour waiting period.
4. A bill passed for certification and re-certification of teachers, assuring qualified teachers better salaries.
5. A teacher retirement law.
6. An appropriation of \$3,000 for the State Library Board.
7. A bill requiring the enrichment law to be enforced as of November 1, 1945.

Membership

After reaching a high point in the 1930's, membership declined during this period. Membership figures for 1941 through 1945 are as follows: 1941 - 14,053; 1942 - 12,558; 1943 - 12,225; 1944 - 11,047; and 1945 - 11,532.