

Speech Day 1955



The 34th annual Speech Day of Hemsworth Grammar School was held on Wednesday 9th November 1955. The headmaster, Mr. R. W. Hamilton, said that in September 1954, the number of pupils in the school was 660, and last September it was 674. "Our numbers continue to increase each September, but so does the number of pupils who leave before completing the course," he added.

By the end of the school year last July, 141 pupils - 64 boys and 77 girls - had left. Of that number 14 had taken examinations at the "A" level, 63 at "O" level, and 64 left before they had time to reach the standard of the General Certificate of Education. Of those who took the G. C. E. at "O" level, 28 stayed on to enter the sixth form, but eight of those would leave halfway through the two year course. Careers taken up by the leavers were: to university, training college, and further education, 24; transferred to other schools, or left the district, 25; to the N.C.B, to industry and miscellaneous employment, 21; nursing, 4; laboratory technicians, 1; police, 1; clerks, shop assistants, factories (all girls), 23; Forces (boys), 2; no information whatsoever, 40.

Referring to examination results, Mr. Hamilton said that in the G.C.E. at advanced level, 15 boys and 4 girls between them presented 46 papers in 10 different subjects, and 36 of the entries were successful. "Generally speaking, the standard of our "A" level was somewhat disappointing," Mr. Hamilton added. "There is too strong a tendency on the part of the candidates to concentrate on those subjects they like best. This may be a human failing, but common sense ought to indicate that concentration on the weakest, and therefore usually the least liked subject, is the better way to ensure good progress."

The standard of work was satisfactory, but outstanding performances were not numerous. Only three scholarships were won - a State Scholarship, an Open Scholarship in Mathematics at Hull University, and a County Exhibition. "Whilst congratulating the winners, I feel there ought to have been a somewhat higher return for our efforts, and we hope that the present sixth forms, both upper and lower, will take note," said Mr. Hamilton. At the ordinary level, results were more satisfactory. There were 91 entrants with 366 passes between them - about four per pupil. That was better than their 1954 record, but it was a little disappointing at that stage leaving the school for good. "With 675 pupils in September 1955, a sixth form of 60 pupils is too small," he added.

Turning to school activities, Mr. Hamilton said they now ran five rugby teams which made it possible for about 80 boys to play for their school in any one season. Such a programme made heavy demands on the time of the staff, and it also cost the education Committee a little more on travelling expenses, but he thought the benefit to the boys justified the effort, time and money.



Dr. Edith Summerskill M.P., principal speaker at Hemsworth Grammar School Speech Day on Wednesday, said she had been disappointed to hear the headmaster say that a large number of pupils left school before taking their General Certificate of Education. If they did that they were hurting the older people, but were being so stupid that they did not know what they were throwing away. Turning to the parents, she said that the education which was offered their children was something which many of them would have given a great deal to possess but which they were denied. It was offered to the children, but they had a craving to leave it because they heard that there was probably a large wage which they could earn.

What kind of life did the scholars want? Did they want to see the world? When they watched television they were looking at people doing things which they themselves might secretly like to do. Did they always want to live second-hand lives? Their only chance of doing the exciting, adventurous, fascinating and colourful things of life was to see that they got the most out of school. "If parents allow children to leave school they might thank you for the next year or two, but they will never thank you ten years hence," said Dr. Summerskill. "They will turn to you in your old age and say, 'You should have known better'."

The world wanted scientists of every kind, and if people got bored with a job in this country there were many countries which would jump at their services. There was a thirst in those countries for bright young things who had had the sense to stay at school a year or two longer and improve their knowledge and learn self-discipline. Today they found women doing well in every field. As they stood over the sink doing the inevitable washing up, parents would say they wished they had a chance. They should see to it that their children did not develop a sense of frustration. In the past women fought for education for girls and they would be shocked to learn now that many girls were throwing their chances away.

When the boys and girls saw the new Science Block which was being built at the school, they should remember that it represented adventure. They were living in a scientific world which would control all their actions in the future. Referring to the fact that the headmaster was an Esperantist, Dr. Summerskill said she had visited many countries and the greatest obstacle was the fact that the people could not speak the same language. She hoped that if she returned to the school at some future date she would be able to present a prize for Esperanto.