

: MINISTER FOR EDUCATION VISITS PARKES :

VISIT TO PARKES

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION.

New High School Opened.

The Hon. W. Davies (Minister for Education) arrived at Parkes on Tuesday night, and at 10 a.m. yesterday was accorded a civic reception in the Municipal Chambers, when there was a representative gathering of citizens.

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Revs. H. S. Bunn and W. W. Danks, Messrs. R. Job (President Goobang Shire), C. F. Willis (President Chamber of Commerce), W. I. Bassett (President Parkes branch of the Farmers and Settlers Association) and E. C. Best.

The Mayor (Ald. F. W. Spicer, M.L.C.) said that all joined in extending a cordial welcome to the Minister, not only because he was a Minister of the Crown but because he would open the new high school. He had been acquainted with Mr. Davies for many years and knew that he would have preferred not to have had a civic reception, but he (the speaker) would not have been forgiven by the people of Parkes if he had not extended the courtesy. Mr. Davies realised the great responsibility which had been placed upon him in administering such a huge department as that of Education, and the position could not be in better hands. Although it was against Labor principles, perhaps Mr. Davies was always the first to arrive and the last to leave his work, and he was most conscientious in the discharge of his duties. The people

discharge of his duties. The people of Parkes hoped that before long they would be given a fully-fledged high school and better buildings to replace the dilapidated ones on the old site. It was realised that the Minister's activities were hamstrung by the financial position; but it was hoped that that condition would soon pass, and it would not be the fault of Mr. Keast if their wishes for the improvements were not realised.

Praise for the Mayor.

Mr. W. J. Keast, M.L.A., thanked the Mayor for the welcome, stating that in Ald. Spicer the people possessed a man who always tried to push ahead a town which was surrounded by some of the finest land in the State. The Council had been strenuous in its campaign for the building of the new high school, and Ald. Geddes had been one who would not take "no" for an answer. In Mr. Davies they had a Minister who was conversant with the needs of the country people, and he was sure he would agree to the requests which would be made by a deputation later in the day. The Minister would be impressed with the importance of the town and district, for it was the

impressed with the importance of the town and district, for it was the best-lighted and one of the most up-to-date towns in the State, much of the credit of which was due to the Mayor, who worked in season and out of season for the good of the community.

Mr. A. McGregor (President of the Parents and Citizens' Association) thanked the Minister for accepting the invitation to open the new high school. The people of Parkes had been plugging along for many years to improve the educational facilities for their children, and they had secured a secondary high school, but the mistress of the infants' school had informed him that the accommodation was insufficient and that one class had to be housed in the primary school. In addition, the buildings at the primary school were very much out of date, and it was for these reasons that they wished Mr. Davies to visit the school.

Western Spirit.

Mr. C. G. Preston (Headmaster High School) said that a few days previously another Minister, Mr. Davidson, had referred to the boundless hospitality of the people of the West, and he could assure Mr. Davies that the hospitality of Parkes was as boundless as that of any other town. Personally, he had been six years in the Far West and realised its fascination and the hospitality and friendliness of its people, which brought to mind the lines:

"I love a sunburnt country,

A land of sweeping plains——"

The speaker referred to the spirit of the people of the West, the spirit which prompted one who had suffered under a burden of drought and debt to ask, "Do you think you can break my spirit? No. I will fight again." The West possessed men and women with a spirit akin to

again. The west possessed men and women with a 'spirit akin to kindling wood which would break into flame when lighted by the match of opportunity. He was glad that the

Minister would visit the school which provided a mirror in which the parents were reflected, and in Parkes he had some of the finest boys and girls whom it had been his privilege to teach.

Ald. D. Gededs (Deputy-Mayor) referred to the long agitation which had resulted in the erection of the new high school, and he was very pleased that the Minister was present to open such a fine building. He hoped that Mr. Davies' sojourn in Parkes would be a very pleasant one.

Need for Knowledge.

Mr. G. A. Gibbons, M.H.R., also extended a welcome to the Minister, but stated that he regretted that he had been unsuccessful in his efforts to have an agricultural high school established in Parkes. Recently having in view the fact that £20,000,000 worth of tobacco was imported into Australia, he had questioned 19 or 20 boys as to what they knew of tobacco growing, and not one could give any information on the subject. If Parkes was to prosper it would have to secure co-ordination in its industries, and this could not be achieved unless the elementary knowledge was imparted to the school-children. He regretted that the Minister could not make a thorough inspection of the district, for he would find that the people were of great heart. He (the speaker) had been through other wheat belts recently and found the people very despondent, but the people of this district were bearing

people of this district were bearing up well and it was not showing the depression as greatly as other country towns.

Minister's Reply.

Responding, Mr. Davies stated that he greatly appreciated the welcome, Mr. Keast that morning had shown him a good deal of the district, and he was impressed with its possibilities. At the same time, he was informed that he would have to be tactful in his public utterances, as there was very strong rivalry between Parkes and Forbes. That rivalry, if it were healthy, should be productive of good results, however, and both towns should receive substantial benefit. If the rivalry were merely as to which could bring about the lowest death rate, the best lighted town or the nicest streets, it would be a very fine thing. Unfortunately, the world to-day was suffering from another kind of rivalry, the commercial rivalry between nations, and the world would be a far happier place if the competition between nations could be placed on the same basis as that which he had suggested between Parkes and Forbes. What a happy place the world would be to-day if the money which had been spent on the war had been expended in some form of constructive effort—the world would be a real heaven.

Another cause of the trouble was the triumph of the machine. Recently he had walked through the Domain, and saw a big machine digging a trench 5ft. wide and 5ft deep, putting the earth to one side as neatly as it could be done by human hands, and it was followed by only a few men in charge of it. It would be safe to say that that machine alone had taken away the employment of 200 men. At Port Kembla

and Miss F. Clifton controls the infants. There are eight assisting teachers in the secondary section five in the primary boys' and four in the primary girls' departments, and six in the infants', making a total of 26 teachers at the school.

Description of New Building.

The new secondary school building at Parkes has been erected by the Building Construction Industrial Undertaking from plans prepared by the Government Architect. Construction is of locally made bricks on reinforced concrete foundations, and has roof covering of terra cotta French Pattern tiles.

There are six full-sized classrooms and two smaller ones, providing seating accommodation for 252 scholars. A large assembly hall on the ground floor and a science room and a preparation room on the first floor are important features. Suitable provision has been made for the teaching staff, and for shelter sheds, lavatory and other accommodation for pupils, including bicycle sheds with racks for 56 bicycles of boys and girls.

Ground improvements include turfing, tar-paving, new roads, paths, fencing, gates, etc., and there is a new septic tank, and absorption trenches for waste water. The total cost of the work was just under £12,000.

A vote of thanks to the Minister was proposed by Mr. Keast, seconded by Mr. Gibbons, and carried with acclamation.

The Town Band rendered the National Anthem and "Advance Australia Fair," and the Deputy-Mayor then presented Mr. Davies with a key, with which he unlocked the main entrance door and declared the building officially opened.

The Minister and visitors were en-

tertained by the ladies of the P. and C.A. at a dainty afternoon tea.