

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON CEREMONY, JULY 27, 1942.

Speech by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education,
Mr. J. Chuter Ede.

I am very glad to have this opportunity of meeting those concerned with the Scheme for Scholarships to Oriental Languages.

It is not often that the educational ventures with which the Board of Education are concerned received so impressive an ovation as the one in which we are taking part to-day.

The present is a happy instance of partnership between a number of different agencies. The demand for men able to speak Turkish, Persian, Chinese and Japanese came from the War Office. The tuition in these subjects is being given by the School of Oriental Studies. Dulwich College has provided the scholars with a home. The Board of Education's function has been the usual comparatively obscure but essential one of making the preliminary arrangements, making the preliminary selection of the candidates for scholarships and obtaining sanction from the Treasury to the expenditure involved. I would also like to mention the very helpful part played by the Scottish Education Department, and also the Department of Education for Northern Ireland, who shared the work with us. Indeed I understand that when at one stage there was a question whether the financial arrangements which we had made were generous enough, it was as might be expected the Scottish Education Department who did valuable pioneering work in our negotiations with the Treasury for more money.

A very important piece of work which fell to the Board of Education was that of selecting the scholars to be interviewed. It was by no means easy and it had to be done with great care as the success or failure of the scheme very largely depended on it. We had to decide what should be the minimum educational qualifications and the age limits, and how much weight to attach to the recommendations of the Head Masters in selecting candidates for interview. On all these points we have gained valuable experience for future guidance.

It is interesting to see the long list of schools from which the scholars have come, representing all the varied traditions of the national life. I observe with pride that one of the few schools which contributed more than one scholar was the Raynes Park County School, the opening ceremony of which, as Chairman of the Surrey County Council, I had the pleasure of performing only seven years ago.

The previous speakers have already commented on the wider aspects of this scheme and I do not think I can add much to what they have said. It does not lie with my Department to decide how the knowledge acquired by the scholars is to be applied. They have our good wishes, however, in the tasks that lie ahead of them. Their numbers may not seem very large when distributed over four considerable countries, but I understand that they are likely to be followed next year by a further contingent. When the history of the war comes to be written, a short chapter will have to be devoted to the various ways in which the Board in co-operation with the Education Authorities and Institutions concerned have assisted in training men and women, for the many specialised tasks which war-time circumstances have demanded. This present scheme is one instance. Should the work of these pioneers prove of such value during the war or after that the Departments concerned call for an expansion in the numbers of scholars trained or the range of subjects studied, the whole-hearted cooperation of my Department will be forthcoming.

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