

Empire Games

B++

2nd

Royal Empire Society

Essay competition

1936

c
1936
2nd

1936

Class C

Name DAVID BRIAN MEEK.

Age 13 YEARS.

School Wairakei Boys' High School,
Dunedin
New Zealand.

How is Empire Day observed in your District and how do you think the celebration could be made more effective?

In the district of North Otago, Empire Day is not celebrated by any public function at all. However, the Rector of our school, Mr. F. Melner C.M.G., M.A., thought it fitting that the school should have some small function, to show to the boys, the significance of Empire Day. Unfortunately the actual day fell during the school vacation, but when the next term was resumed, it was decided to have the celebration as near to the King's birthday as possible.

After lunch on June 26th., the programme was commenced by a parade of the school cadet corps in the quadrangle. We marched round twice to the strains of the school military band, and then filed into the beautiful Hall of Memories. This fine hall was presented to school by the old boys, to and is intended to be a reminder to anyone who sets foot inside its doors, of the gallant Waitakians who died for serving their country in the Great War. This place is very appropriate for such functions, and it fills one with a certain amount of awe when one realises what it stands for.

The ceremony was begun by the whole

school singing the National Anthem, with accompaniment given by the school band. Following this, came some organ selections excellently played by Mr. M. A. Fastier, school organist. The wonderful organ was also given by the old boys. The organ is a great asset to the spiritual sides of school life, and the value of it has been proved by the attendances when recitals are given.

The next item on the programme was an address by Mr. Milner. He prefaced his speech by reading the late Earl Beatty's Empire Day message to the school, which had been forwarded by the Royal Empire Society. He impressed upon the minds of the boys the meaning of the great Empire to which we belong, and the inner meaning of Kingship, as the great unifying factor in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and also the unswerving sense of freedom that exists in the many countries of the Empire. Another point which was brought out very strongly, was, that amid all the chaos of kingdoms and empires being torn apart, and hated dictatorships installed in former positions held by royalty kings, Britain along with very few others still has their royal family, whose love is even more entrenched in the hearts of the British subjects than ever it was before. Another point was the administration of her brown colonies. Good examples were the grant of self-government to Southern Rhodesia, and also provincial self-government to India. The Rector finished by conveying to the boys the great political principle, the principle of liberty and justice for all.

Following the address given by Mr. Milner, the Roll of the British Empire was read by Mr. H. B. McDonald, M.A. One cannot help feeling when one hears it read, what a great Empire it is, with almost a branch in every corner of the globe. The lesson, "Let us Now Praise Famous Men", was read next by G. W. Grave. Then the fine and stately hymn, "Blake's Jerusalem", was sung by the school with organ accompaniment, which, I am sure, stirred the heart of anyone who heard it. After that came another organ selection rendered by Mr. Fastier.

Perhaps the most impressive part of the ceremony came, when down the aisle came sixteen boys, all bearing flags of the British Empire. These flags were all presented to the school by world famous ^{men}, some of whom were General Smuts, the Viceroy of India, Lord Lugard, Sir Alexander Godley, and many others. The flags which were borne were, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Newfoundland, India, Nigeria, Sudan Condominium, Jamaica, Gibraltar, Malaya, Singapore, Kenya, Samoa, Falkland Islands, flown at Port Stanley on anniversaries of Admiral Sturdee's great naval victory. Each flag bearer in turn made a short summary of the outstanding features of the part of the Empire his flag represented.

Following this, Recessional was sung by the school with accompaniment given by Mr. Fastier at the organ. Then Mr. M. K. McCulloch read the roll of the hundred and twenty Waitakians who fell on the Great War. The appalling carnage that was carried out in the Great War will well be remembered by Waitaki,

who gave what assistance they could, so that the nation might still live on. The last item on the programme was the Last Post and the Reveille, played by Bugler Cameron. I am sure, as the clear notes of the Last Post rang out, any boy with some imagination pictured some scene of a battle-field scarred by a recent conflict, and honoured dead being placed in their last resting place. The ceremony was then concluded, and Mr. Milner's successful effort at some celebration, will linger in every boy's heart when they think of Empire Day.

Empire Day could be made more effective by the introduction of national gatherings with extensive programmes of Empire games, music, folk-songs, and dancing. These national gatherings could be preceded by massed parades of not only the children of all schools, but by grown up people. In these parades there would be representation in character of all the peoples of the Empire, and also representations of the leading statesmen, poets, authors, generals, admirals, and all manner of past and present men and women who helped to build the Empire. If New Zealand had more national songs, these songs could be sung at such gatherings with the result that we would have a great army of voices singing, with one voice and spirit,

Sonny New Zealand is a soldier of the King,
One of the Empire band,

A far flung outpost of the grand old school,
A stalwart in the family of old John Bull,
Sons of the shamrock, the thistle and rose,
Maori and Pakeha cling.

To the Empire grand - for in Maoriland
Sonny New Zealand is a soldier of the
King.