

## NORTHAMPTON POLYTECHNIC, LONDON

## OPENING OF EXTENSIONS

IT is exactly sixty years ago since the Northampton Polytechnic, in St. John Street, London, E.C.1, was first opened to students, and therefore it was fitting that in celebration of its diamond jubilee the Minister of Education, Sir David Eccles, should have been invited to declare open the new extensions. Since 1896 there has been a number of improvements both by way of alterations and additions to the original building (established on a site given by the fourth Marquis of Northampton—hence the name of the Polytechnic), and also by additional buildings, for example, the Connaught Building in 1932 and its annexe in 1939.

The present extensions form the first phases of a comprehensive scheme of expansion of the Polytechnic and have been concerned with the provision of new laboratories and workshops for a wide variety of subjects, including: aeronautics; hydraulics; production engineering; instrument manufacture; instrumentation and process control; heat engines; advanced applied physics; high-voltage testing.

Provision has also been made for a new and magnificent library known as "The Skinners' Library". The Worshipful Company of Skinners was a joint founder of the College, and its continuing interest has been maintained not only by its financial grants, but also through its representation on the governing body, the chairman of which has invariably been a 'Skinner'. The furniture and fittings in the Library have been provided out of a gift from the Company of £5,000.

Other amenities in the extensions include the Great Hall, which has a seating capacity of 700, and refectories for staff and students which will accommodate more than 400 at a sitting. The total cost of rebuilding and re-equipment is of the order of £400,000.

The reopening ceremony was held in the Great Hall at 3 p.m. on May 7. The speakers in order were Mr. Hamilton Fulton, chairman of the Governing Body, Sir David Eccles, Minister of Education, Mrs. Helen Bentwich, chairman of the London County Council, and Mr. Beresford Ingram, vice-chairman of the Governing Body.

After welcoming the Minister and the guests, Mr. Fulton spoke on the work of the Polytechnic and its place in the educational system of Britain. He emphasized particularly the value of its status as an aided institution; while acknowledging that the bulk of the financial support of the College was due to the liberality of the London County Council, the Governors did enjoy limited funds of their own, and this ensured for them that liberty and autonomy essential for efficiency and enterprise.

Mr. Fulton spoke of present students as "the life blood of our competitive capacity against production in other countries and the ability of our technicians and our technological institutions to cope with competition, provided they have the necessary support of organized labour".

Although the Governing Body could not have known it, the timing of the opening ceremony was but a few days too soon, as the Minister in his speech revealed by his guarded response to the chairman's demand for some information regarding the future

status of the College under the Ministry of Education plans for higher technology. The Minister stated that while he could not say anything in anticipation of the forthcoming debate on the White Paper in the House on May 14, it was obvious that the White Paper had been misunderstood in regard to the number of colleges to be designated colleges of higher technology. A very much smaller number would be so designated to form, as it were, foundation members of this top level of the four-tier structure to be established. While the Minister could not say in which level the Northampton Polytechnic would be placed, he added: "It seems to me to be the Senior Engineering Institution in London and therefore a place to which we will have to pay great attention. . . . Here you have a remarkable College which I know has a great reputation, but it is the sort of college which must do something for technical education as a whole as well as for its own students. You are the kind of people who can raise the flag and it is flags that people follow".

The guests, who comprised local dignitaries, representatives of City Companies, donors of gifts, principals of colleges, headmasters, representatives of professional bodies and industry, old students, past members of staff, and the present members of the Polytechnic—governors, staff and students—were afterwards shown the various laboratories and workshops, where exhibitions and demonstrations were staged. Of particular interest was a colour film taken by the staff of the Ophthalmic Optics Department showing the fitting and use of contact lenses. Other exhibits included demonstrations in applied physics, applied chemistry, electrical engineering, heat engines, hydraulics, aeronautics, watch making and repairing, instrument making, materials testing, automobile engines and vehicle maintenance, etc.

The purpose of the present extensions has not been so much to increase the number of students it is possible to accommodate as to improve the facilities for the existing enrolment. Thus, laboratories which hitherto have had to perform a double function, for example, heat engines and hydraulics, have been replaced by separate laboratories with much more adequate space for each different function. In turn, this has made it possible to increase the amount of equipment in these laboratories. Something of the order of £65,000 worth of new equipment has been added in the past three years and a further £85,000 worth is expected over the ensuing three years.

The more important pieces of large equipment include: a Ferranti Pegasus computer for the Mathematics Department; a full-size anechoic room for the Acoustics Laboratory; a supersonic wind tunnel for the Aeronautics Laboratory; a variable-slope water channel for the Hydraulics Laboratory; an electrode boiler and a Rover gas turbine for the Heat Engines Laboratory; high-voltage testing equipment for the Electrical Department.

As an exception to the foregoing, the National College of Horology and Instrument Technology, which is housed within the Polytechnic, has gained three rooms for additional workshops and laboratories in order that more students may be accommodated.