

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE OPENING CEREMONY

Who to Invite?

The opening ceremony needs careful organising. It usually has three functions:

- (a) To thank all who have worked so hard to make the show possible.
- (b) To thank the press and media who have publicised it.
- (c) To ensure growing, self-generating publicity by inviting those who might loosely be termed "leaders of opinion".

In the third category we would expect to number chief librarians, head teachers, college principals, mayors and members of parliament, and representatives of education departments (where applicable) as well as of other municipal and government departments likely to have an interest in the subject being displayed. Leaders of the community, too, should be asked, whether they are tribal chiefs or bankers or industrialists. The great thing is to make sure that the guest list has been checked and re-checked by those competent to know who should be there: important people omitted, however accidentally, can take great offence.

Plugging in

Everything must be done, in however a simple manner, to make the opener's ride easy. So if he or she is known

to require the text or notes of a speech, there ought to be some sort of lectern, however makeshift. An orange-box carefully covered with coloured paper and placed at a slight tilt on a table will serve quite well. If the hall or space is large, then there ought to be amplifying equipment unless the speaker is known to have a stentorian voice, or, as in the case of an actor or actress, a voice that is well trained to carry a distance. Here again, you do not need anything particularly elaborate: an amplifier, a couple of small speakers and a microphone will do the trick. But find out well in advance where the electrical outlets are, what sort of plugs are required, and how much electrical cable is needed; and ensure that everything is available on the day - plus screwdriver, scissors and a strip of insulating tape.

Platform

Most openers prefer to speak from a raised platform. In schools, church and community halls, these often exist. Where necessary it is easy to construct a small makeshift one that will allow the speaker to be more easily seen and heard by the audience.

Press Facilities

The press, too, may require special facilities, though these are usually confined to a telephone with easy access in case they want to phone through an immediate story, and somewhere they can sit during the speech-making to make notes. If the opener or chairman of the proceedings is speaking from a prepared text, then a copy of this can be very useful to the press present.