

# Newspaper boys save the day

**WHEN 'SALESMEN' WERE NEEDED, NEWSPAPER BOYS FILLED THE BILL**

Report **GEOFF HOWE**

It was a brilliant idea — employing newsboys, an essential part of the Fairfax newspaper empire, to raise money for the Boys Brigade, a long-held passion of the Fairfax family.

Between 300 and 400 newsboys from all over the city crowded into the assembly room on the third floor of the Education Department building in Bridge Street at 10 am on Wednesday, August 20, 1924.

Winning instant support by calling the audience "business boys", Mr A. J. Blythe, organiser of the Boys Week movement, explained the object of Boys Week, to be held from September 7-13, was to raise £10,000 to build and equip a new building for the Boys Brigade at Pymont. The week was being sponsored by the Rotary Club of Sydney.



J. O. Fairfax, chairman of the Boys Brigade.

As part of the fundraising campaign, a mock company would be floated, a prospectus issued and the newsboys would sell the shilling shares for whatever price customers would pay.

Cheers greeted Blythe's announcement that the boys could keep a commission on the sale in the same way they took a commission on the sale of newspapers.

However, he appealed to the boys' sense of fair play not to neglect the sale of newspapers at the expense of the bonds. It would be unfair to the newspaper companies to sell bonds instead of papers during the busy time of the day.

Blythe said the fundraising scheme would allow boys to tell the public, "We are going to help ourselves".

More good news was on the agenda for the boys. On the platform besides brigade chairman J. O. Fairfax, and other Education Department officials was the NSW minister for education, Albert Bruntnell, a former Salvation Army officer and real estate agent.

Loud cheers were given for the Welsh-born minister when he announced that Tuesday, September 9 would be a school holiday to allow the boys to come into the city and sell the bonds.

On Monday, September 9, 14 or 15 processions of several thousand boys were planned across the city to publicise the fund-raising.

Bruntnell, the member for Surry Hills (1906-07), Annandale (1910-13) and then Parramatta, could not resist giving advice to the boys, too.

After referring to the saying "God helps those who help themselves", he said: "Though you are now newsboys and though any work we do, if we do it well, is perfectly honourable, yet you want to make up your minds to do something more with your lives. Aim at being something and doing something ambitious."

Amid cheers, he said: "Ambition is like a bicycle saddle; it often gets sat on, but it always keeps



Briefing headquarters: The Education Department building in Bridge Street comes peaceful again."

on top." The Boys Brigade in Sydney had got underway in 1882 at Kent Street, later moving to a building on the corner of Campbell and Fitzroy streets, Surry Hills. Sir James Fairfax, the father of J. O. Fairfax and a founder of the brigade, had opened the new brigade centre in Riley Street, Surry Hills in 1912.

By 1924, there were more than 1600 boys on the roll with an average evening attendance of 200 or so and more than 300 on concert and film nights.

The building offered craft and hobby rooms, a concert and cinema hall with films supplied free of charge by the Paramount Picture Company, a reading room, billiards room and gymnasium.

The only difficulty was when members of different pushes turned up on the same night.

One commentator said: "Here the part of the mediator comes in and with a little tact all be-

The fundraising went like a dream with the newsboys selling the bonds for one pound each or more, sometimes much more.

Before Boys Week had started £2400 had been raised and by mid-September the total stood at £7000.

On September 18, J. O. Fairfax, who died while playing a round of golf on the Royal Sydney course in 1928, was able to tell a meeting of the Boys Week executive that the week had been a memorable success and work would shortly begin on the building on the corner of Bulwarra Road and Fig Street, Pymont. The land had been donated by a supporter of the Boys Brigade, while several city businessmen offered help with the building work.