

*The Government's Part**(a) District Development of Country Library Service with Co-operation of City Authorities.—*

It may be necessary in the meantime for a demonstration to be carried out to show how such a regional service would work, since it is not likely that agreement can be got from all the authorities concerned to co-operate with the Country Library Service, nor is staff and the necessary book stock available for an "all over" scheme. The Country Library Service therefore proposes to decentralize its work gradually, and at an early date plans to set up a district distribution from Auckland covering the northern half of the North Island. If the consent of the Auckland City authorities can be obtained, two steps can be taken at this point:—

- (1) If the Auckland City Library stock can be made available for district requests which cannot be satisfied by the Auckland Country Library Service district stock, just as it is now available to A.E.W.S., the Country Library Service would offer to second a reference assistant to the Auckland public libraries. This assistant would be directly responsible to the chief librarian, Auckland public libraries, but her salary would be found by, and she would remain an officer of, the Country Library Service.
- (2) Books of the Country Library Service in the Auckland district stock would be available for lending direct to Auckland public libraries. The staff necessary for the work of the district service would be Country Library Service staff, responsible, through a district librarian, to the Director, Country Library Service.

NOTE.—The city librarian would not be asked to assume at this point the responsibility of a regional librarian.

*(b) Regional Library Service administered by a Board representative of the Region and on which the Country Library Service would also be represented.—*The New Zealand Library Association might well discuss whether fuller development could be planned later in another area—for example, Otago and Southland—in order to test the working possibilities of the regional plan. Stages in this development might be—

- (1) The Regional Board would take over all distribution in its region, adopting the same plan for co-operation with local authorities as is followed by the Country Library Service.
- (2) Staff necessary for such distribution would be found by the Country Library Service, and all, including the Country Library Service district librarian, would be seconded to the regional librarian, who would have responsibility (for the work outside the city boundaries) to the national service through the Regional Board.
- (3) Books and equipment, including transport, needed for the country service are to be found by the Country Library Service.

*County Councils in District Development*

In order to give all local authorities a full chance to take advantage of the services offered, free service would be extended to county authorities as from a given date. This would involve the discontinuance of the present Country Library Service "B" service to independent subscription libraries for counties.

It is probable that for a year or two there would be difficulties in administering a service of the above kind over a wide area, because some counties would not want to participate until others had done so, and some might conceivably not want to at all. There might be cases of severe hardship if services were withdrawn from a library which had participated in the Country Library Service as an independent small unit for some years, and it is possible that special provision would have to be made to meet such a case. The new service would be available only on terms similar to that available to boroughs and Town Boards, but now extended to counties; in other words, books would be supplied free, but they would have to be issued free to borrowers:—

- (1) County authorities would be asked to make local provision for library service on the basis of, say, 1s. per head of population.
- (2) This money would be used—

(a) In the form of a grant to a contiguous borough library for service to county people in the areas able to be served by that borough. This would enable a much better standard of staffing and service to be maintained in such libraries.

(b) Also, the county may need to meet the charges of maintaining at a satisfactory standard the various smaller libraries within its boundaries which were previously independent.

(c) Provision for service to county residents not provided under clauses (a) and (b).

This sum would not be paid to the General Government, however, any more than is the money found for local free borough library service.

The main point is that minimum local expenses required for the adequate maintenance of free service to residents, whether county or borough, should be met by the residents served, and the partnership of General Government and local governments in giving library service will be preserved.

Further, the supply of light fiction—pay collection material—would not be a charge either on the local authority or the General Government, but the cost would be recoverable.

If a concerted effort were made appealing to the local authorities of a given region for their co-operation, and wide publicity were given, it is unlikely that many would abstain from co-operation if the issues were made clear.

Increased expenditure will be needed to carry out the proposed developments, but this expenditure will be mainly on staffing. It will be a valuable service to the community which we can produce in New Zealand, since, as it has been said, library service is a means of using skilled labour to make the fullest use of imports of books.

If, as is likely, the present shortage of books persists for some time after the war, the case for a fuller library service is thereby strengthened, since it is undeniable that the most economical use of books imported into the country can be got by a system of circulating them as widely as possible.

New Zealand is badly off for trained library staff. Vigorous action is needed to remedy this lack. The comments of the Association are invited as to whether the existing means of training for librarianship