

assistance for the smaller libraries. The plan he proposed was to give each library qualified for the earlier subsidy free loans of books, which were to be forwarded by rail and other transport services. The scheme submitted by the New Zealand Library Association to the Minister of Education, Mr. Fraser, in 1937, and approved and put into operation, was more detailed and far-reaching, and included free service only if certain conditions were carried out by local authorities.

The Carnegie Corporation of New York in 1937 was not unwilling to make funds available for a regional demonstration of library service in one small area, and a preliminary study of Taranaki was made. The Government, however, felt that the development of good book and information services was of such importance that funds should be available from within New Zealand without help from an overseas foundation. Accordingly the plans already referred to were prepared for State assistance to be given in the form of a circulating supply of books for smaller centres throughout New Zealand. Thus the Country Library Service started on 30th May, 1938, giving assistance to public libraries in centres of under 2,500 population. By degrees this service has been extended to provide some measure of assistance in all but the four main centres.

The decision to give assistance in the form of books and other services was based on the recognition that local authorities were the best authorities to administer public libraries. In New Zealand this conception goes back to the first Act of 1869, and it is still a valid one, even though the tendency in some branches of Government has been to reduce the fields of activity of local authorities and to substitute a State activity. It would have been comparatively easy for the Country Library Service to administer public libraries on a national basis, as for example, education is administered by a central Education Department, with the assistance of local committees which would parallel local School Committees. In many places this would undoubtedly have resulted in a service superior to that at present given by some local authorities. From a long-term point of view, however, such a plan is not desirable; local-government interest is of vital importance and the system of its support by State assistance, generally accepted overseas, is still the best form of administration.

The pronounced improvement in public library services in the smaller centres, all the more striking because it has been achieved in such a brief period, is due to Government assistance for local effort, and has drawn much favourable comment from overseas experts. It has become clear, however, that only a certain standard of service can be attained locally when assistance from the State is restricted to one form—that of books. Past that level it is impossible to go without further forms of assistance, probably in the form of subsidies. At present, even with books made available, the majority of local authorities find it impossible to give anything more than a token service from their own income. Only two or three boroughs of under 20,000 population have been able to demonstrate to the others the kind of library service that all might have.

In attempting the formulation of a modern definition of a library, Carleton B. Joeckel, in his *Government of the American Public Library*, states the essential elements in efficient library service include the following :—

- Active and efficient administrative direction.
- Centralized financial administration and accounting.
- Centralized book purchasing under competent technical direction.
- Centralized (or centrally directed) cataloging and classification by trained personnel.
- A central reference collection of broad scope, including printed materials of all types.
- A central reservoir of circulating books large enough and live enough to meet a wide demand from many types of readers.
- A staff of specialists sufficient to provide a high quality of general and technical reference service, readers' advisory service, service to adult groups, and service to children and schools.
- A system of community and school branches, and other extension agencies.
- Additional service to outlying communities through stations and book wagons.