

1936.  
NEW ZEALAND.

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# RURAL LIBRARY SERVICES.

REPORT BY THE CHIEF LIBRARIAN, GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY, RELATIVE TO.

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*Laid on the Table of the House of Representatives by Leave.*

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New York, 17th October, 1935.

To the Chairman of the Joint Library Committee.

SIR,—

In view of the valuable survey of the libraries of New Zealand made last year by Mr. Ralph Munn (Pittsburgh) and Mr. John Barr (Auckland) there is no necessity for me to go over the ground. Our library deficiencies are fully disclosed in their report, and plans are put forward for remedying them through a national system "to meet the needs of post-school education, cultural, vocational, and recreational." That report was considered and approved in principle by the New Zealand Library Association at its conference in Timaru in March, 1935, when a resolution was passed reaffirming the Association's desire to see public libraries in New Zealand entirely rate-supported.

One of the special aspects of library work which I was commissioned by the Government to study (in accepting the invitation of the Carnegie Corporation of New York to go abroad) was the improvement of rural services in New Zealand. In the course of my tour I visited Australia and South Africa and then proceeded to Europe. At the conference of the International Federation of Library Associations in Spain I met many of the leading librarians of Europe, Great Britain, and North America, and was able to discuss our problems with the highest authorities in library service. I afterwards visited the countries which appeared to have most suggestions to offer, notably Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and Scandinavia, spent several weeks studying the popular systems of Great Britain and Ireland, and then proceeded to Canada and the United States. I have to thank librarians everywhere, and officials of the Library Associations in Great Britain and North America, for information and advice given with uniform readiness and courtesy; and the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the invitation which prompted the Government to send me on this mission.

## THE ULTIMATE GOAL.

The following cardinal principles may be accepted as governing the efforts of modern library reformers:—

- (1) All libraries, whether municipal or county, reference or borrowing, should be completely free to users.
- (2) All the non-fiction book-stocks of the Dominion should be available, within reasonable limits, for the use of all serious readers.
- (3) Residents of rural districts, however remote, are entitled to as efficient a lending-service as those in the towns, within practicable limits.

The position in New Zealand to-day is well enough known, but might be shortly recapitulated. In the four large cities and some provincial towns are excellent public libraries, reference and lending, maintained out of the rates, but, with few exceptions, not sufficiently well financed to be able to dispense with a subscription for borrowing. In many smaller towns are libraries which, in spite of subscriptions and rate support, are not able to give an adequate service according to modern standards. Some of these libraries are mere collections of books, almost stagnant for lack of new accessions, rarely used even by

local residents who, if they are readers, have long since read all they want. Outside of these there is practically no public library service at all. In the less densely settled districts the residents are completely unprovided for.

This very unsatisfactory condition is almost analogous to that existing in Great Britain twenty years ago. The inauguration of the English county system under the Act of 1919 found certain towns, in fact all the larger municipalities, already provided with libraries. The problem was to give a book service to the country districts, the small towns, and new centres. To achieve this object the counties, as the existing educational authorities, were empowered—but not required—to establish county libraries. They had to begin *de novo*, omitting the existing library districts, however small, and ignoring the great resources of libraries already established within the towns. Headquarters, buildings, book-stock, and personnel had to be acquired without regard to the resources already in the area. Unless they chose to come in voluntarily, the small-town libraries were left out. The headquarters of the county library was established in the county town, in some cases not far from an existing library; and the county town was not necessarily the largest centre in the county.

The success of the English county system of libraries has been remarkable. Colonel J. M. Mitchell, Secretary of the United Kingdom Carnegie Trustees, in his introduction to the Statistical Report on County Libraries, 1934–35, says,—

“I can hardly believe that the total issues have risen from a few hundred thousands in the pioneer counties to nearly fifty millions in fifteen years, with a total stock of 5,500,000 books and a reading public of over two million who, broadly speaking, had no library service before.

“All this represents a great change in the opportunities enjoyed by members of village and small urban communities; and alongside it there have developed other cultural services—village halls, rural community councils, rural drama and music clubs on a large scale, young farmers’ clubs and many other humanizing agencies. I do not think it is too much to claim that the county library movement has in certain respects shown the way to these and other movements, and that it is now an ancillary service of primary importance.”

Thus the county library system in England has made great strides towards the objects of a rural library service as set forth in the report of the Departmental Committee on Education (G.B.) in 1927, *i.e.*,—

“To relieve the tedium of idle hours quite irrespective of intellectual profit or educational gain. It is sufficient to satisfy this purpose that the rural inhabitant should be rendered a happier—and not necessarily a more learned—man by the provision which is made for him. To enable the rural inhabitant to acquire without difficulty that general knowledge which alone can enable him to appreciate to the full what he sees and hears. To remove as far as possible all obstacles from the path of the serious student of any subject.”

There are variations of the county system in the United States, particularly in California, the State which provided the most successful experiment upon which the English system was based. There are features also in the State-supported systems of various European countries and of Australia, which promise to be helpful in solving New Zealand’s problem.

A most important point that emerges from a study of various systems is stressed by Messrs. Munn and Barr, that in devising an improved library service for New Zealand full advantage ought to be taken of existing library resources and of the experience of the trained librarians in the Dominion. The financial resources of the Dominion will not permit us to attempt to create a rural library service *de novo*—both books and personnel—thus duplicating much of the foundation book-stock and failing to utilize the all-too-limited trained personnel of the New Zealand library service. It would be a grave dissipation of resources in books and money to set up such a dual system; it would inevitably cause a permanent and wasteful duplication of effort. To avoid that we should, if possible, overcome at the very outset some of the problems which faced the English pioneers twenty years ago, and endeavour to arrange that all existing libraries within a district shall be brought into co-operation and the general book-stock most advantageously employed.

#### THE LIBRARY DISTRICT.

While the general features of the English county system seem capable of being successfully employed in New Zealand, certain radical variations are recommended by experience. Firstly as regards the unit of organization. In England the county has always been the educational authority. Library service is to a great extent adult education, and the Education Committee of the English County Council was automatically entrusted with the administration of the new systems. Moreover, the average population of a county was sufficiently large to ensure economical working. In New Zealand conditions are quite different. No one of our counties has a population sufficiently large to support a library service on an economical financial basis. An aggregation of counties would be essential so as to give a population sufficiently large to constitute an economical “district.”

The size and character of the library districts would require to be very carefully studied. Practice in Great Britain and the United States demonstrates that if a district is unduly small it cannot be economically operated. In Great Britain there are six county systems serving populations of over 500,000 each; twelve serving from 250,000 to 500,000

each; twenty-one serving from 100,000 to 250,000; and six serving less than 100,000 people. In Scotland there are five county libraries for 100,000 people and over, and twenty-one for populations of less than 100,000. According to Mr. M. Ferguson, who was associated for years with the highly successful county libraries of California, 20,000 is the minimum population for which it is possible to provide library service at the accepted American standard of a dollar a head. In both countries it is conceded that towns with less than 20,000 population cannot provide as effective a library service out of their own resources as by participating in the county system.

The dominating factors in deciding upon the size and boundaries of a library district should be—

- (1) The existence of a strong library, with a trained librarian, which could act as the bureau or administrative centre for the district:
- (2) Geographical entity, community of interest, and facility of communication between this centre and the limits of the area to be served.

It is not desirable to have too many districts, since this would not only tend to increase the overhead cost in each, but would be too great a burden upon the trained personnel of the Dominion. It is very desirable that a certain degree of uniformity should be observed, so that as far as possible all the library districts should start with a general level of service and of costs; and no small corner of the Dominion should be left out in the cold to provide for itself later at greater expense. In view of the standard created elsewhere as to costs and number of population to be served, it seems reasonable to divide New Zealand into nine or ten "library districts," with an average population of slightly under 200,000.

In the demarcation of districts and the selection of existing libraries to house and administer the bureau, the librarians and authorities of existing libraries would be the most helpful advisers. Their co-operation and good will at this and every stage is much to be desired, and will no doubt be readily forthcoming.

If a strong library does not exist in a region which otherwise would be suitable for organization as a library district, it would be advisable to defer taking action there until other parts of the Dominion have adopted the system. The creation of a district library *de novo* is not advisable.

The Province of Otago (including Southland) has a population of about a quarter of a million. Eliminating the cities of Dunedin and Invercargill, and perhaps the town of Oamaru, there would be 120,000 people to provide for under the new rural system. This is neither too small to be economically efficient, nor too large to be within the power of a capable librarian and staff to administer. In view of the geographical extent of the district, the alternative might be suggested of creating a separate district in Southland with its centre at Invercargill; but the population to be served would be very small, and the cost, however efficient the administration, would be relatively high.

Another district which suggests itself as a suitable entity is the Province of Taranaki, with such parts of the adjacent Province of Auckland as may be more easily served from New Plymouth. Eliminating the population already served by good libraries, there might be 60,000 people to be catered for. This is sufficient for economical service, it is ideally situated for book-distribution, and should be a very suitable demonstration area.

#### DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS.

When the selection of the headquarters library and the delimitation of the district is being decided at a meeting of librarians and representatives of library authorities, it should be clearly understood what duties and responsibilities are involved. The library—probably a municipal one—which accepts the important duty of the district bureau would have to provide—

- (1) A trained librarian as executive officer (or more often, permission to its own librarian to act):
- (2) District staff:
- (3) Accommodation for staff, catalogues, and district lending stock of books:
- (4) Furniture for bureau, boxes for travelling libraries, &c.

The bureau would have to maintain the catalogue of its own district stock and a union catalogue of all non-fiction in the libraries of the district (sending duplicate cards of the latter to the master catalogue at Wellington). It would have to buy the district books and to distribute the books to all the participating libraries, changing them at least twice a year. The district librarian would have to visit small libraries and local centres regularly to inspect and advise.

It is obvious that to control the work of the district would require the services of a trained and capable librarian with the requisite assistance. Some of the districts would probably be controlled by city librarians in addition to their present duties; but it is clear that if an attempt were made to organize the new district services throughout the whole Dominion at once, there would be difficulty in providing the necessary trained staff. This is an additional reason for beginning with one or two districts, and proceeding to organize the others when the system had demonstrated its value. By so doing, the experience of the earlier experiments could be utilized to improve the others, and in the meantime the prospects of expansion would attract into the profession more men and women of the proper class.

The housing of the bureau and catalogues, though not a very considerable matter, would require to be considered in advance, as even large libraries do not often have to spare the room or two that would be necessary for this purpose. The stack for the district book collection is not likely to cause difficulty. It should be a simple repository, inexpensively shelved, large enough to accommodate the initial stock of, say, 10,000 volumes.

Miss A. S. Cooke, in her *County Libraries Manual* (1935), says,—

“There is little doubt that at least in the larger counties, the most active and useful county library will be that which has the smallest possible reserve of books at headquarters and the greatest proportion distributed to branches and centres.”

Although most of the books for the first few years would be permanently on duty amongst the centres, the stock would be increasing each year, and must be housed. The stack would, of course, be used only by the district staff, and there is no reason why the same room should not be both stack and work room. Many travelling library depots find it convenient to make up the boxes in close proximity to the books on the shelves.

#### DISTRICT BOOK-STOCK.

The lending-stock of the district libraries should be a good collection of general literature, with a carefully controlled ingredient of fiction—in fact, all the classes of books that should be found in a good municipal library. Statistics in Great Britain show that the proportion of the book-stock which consists of fiction varies from 47·2 per cent. in Middlesex to 67·7 per cent. in Durham. Care is taken to control the proportion of fiction books sent out to the centres, but it must be remembered that the district library system is essentially of a recreative nature; that many adults in such areas would not read at all if they were not attracted by fiction; and that by interspersing fiction with serious literature the quality of the reading is gradually improved.

In the composition of the county library stock in British libraries the following are the average percentages of the various classes of literature: General works, 0·3 per cent.; philosophy, 0·5 per cent.; religion, 0·9 per cent.; sociology, 2·9 per cent.; philology, 0·2 per cent.; natural science, 2·8 per cent.; useful arts, 3·4 per cent.; fine arts, 2·3 per cent.; literature, 4·7 per cent.; history, 10·3 per cent.; fiction, 55·6 per cent.; juvenile, 15·9 per cent.

The standard number of books per 100 of population in the British county libraries is thirty, and most of the libraries have now reached that level.

The district library bureau should select and purchase all books, catalogue and prepare them for use, and send them out to the local centres. It should also be responsible for such rebinding and replacement as may be necessary.

The duty of the district does not stop here. It has a more serious class of reader whose needs are discussed under the heading of “Interlending.”

#### MACHINERY OF BOOK SERVICE.

The district stock being provided, the next step is to make it available for readers in every part of the district. It is the essence of the system that, instead of small collections of books being formed for preservation in a locality, there should be a continuous fresh stream of books, much more in number than the localities could possibly acquire, coming regularly within the reach of local readers. The books remain the property of the district as a whole, but the complete collection is at the service of each locality, reaching them in regular consignments, which are changed as soon as the freshness has worn off.

Units or centres can be formed wherever there is a group of persons anxious to receive books. Householders, school committees, libraries, church societies, branches of the Farmers Union, the W.E.A., women's institutes, or small study groups can apply to have books sent to their locality (with the strict provision that such books must be available equally to members and non-members). The only requisite is the existence of a small group interested in books and of some building—*e.g.*, a school, a church, or even a store—which can do duty as the local station, and some individual chosen to be responsible for receiving and returning the books. The success of the system depends very largely on the interest and enthusiasm of these unpaid workers.

An existing library, especially in villages and small towns which are unable to find sufficient money each year for a reasonable purchase of new books, may act as a borrowing-unit. Any existing library in such a position, participating in the district scheme, would give its readers a better service of books than they could possibly obtain out of their own resources.

In England and Scotland, and to a less extent in the United States, the small local units are usually located in schools; and no doubt in New Zealand the small country school, as the accepted rendezvous of the district, would generally be selected. In most cases the teacher acts as librarian, and both in Great Britain and the United States teachers so acting are encouraged to attend annual conferences with the county librarians. There is one sensible drawback to the use of schools, which has been remarked in Great Britain. The location of the local unit in the village school is apt to give the impression that the books are purely for the use of the children or the parents of the children, whereas it is the essence of the scheme that they should be equally free to all.

Consignments of books from the district bureau to the local centres or units should vary in number from 50 to 200 volumes, according to the population and the resources of the district. The British county system aims at a minimum of 100 books in all local centres,

and the proportion of the 17,400 centres in Great Britain which fall below that minimum has steadily fallen. In England in 1928-29, 60 per cent. of the centres held less than 100 books; now the proportion is only 19.1 per cent.

The consignments should be changed at least twice a year, so that at the lowest computation the smallest group should receive 100 volumes in a year.

#### INTERLENDING SERVICE.

The work of the district bureau thus far outlined deals with what are usually known as popular libraries—that is, libraries which are rather recreational and entertaining in purpose than educational and serious.

The “national” service which the more advanced countries to-day aim at, and which it is highly desirable New Zealand should develop, provides also for the more serious reader, the large class of men and women who desire something other than fiction. They may be “students” in the accepted sense of being enrolled at some educational institution, or they may be ordinary men and women who wish to read serious books—*i.e.*, works other than fiction—and are not within reach of a library which possesses what they require.

For this class of people the district organizes an interlending service, through which the whole of the resources of existing libraries in a district will be made accessible to serious readers who cannot get what they require in their own locality. The main instrument of this service is the Union Catalogue, a composite catalogue of all the non-fiction books in the district, the cards indicating what libraries have copies of each book and whether they are willing to lend to approved readers. Suppose a reader living near Gore wished to borrow a volume of some non-fiction work, say, Frazer’s “Golden Bough” or Motley’s “Dutch Republic,” he would first of all ask at the Gore Coronation Library. If Gore had no copy in stock the librarian would send the request on to the district bureau—in, say, Dunedin. The Union Catalogue would show perhaps that the Oamaru Public Library had a copy and was willing to lend it. The book would then be sent on to Gore and lent to the reader on the responsibility of the Gore Library. If Oamaru was willing to lend the book only under what are known as “reference” conditions, the reader would require to attend at the Gore Library to consult the book there. If a reader were out of touch with any local library, he would write direct to the district bureau, which, on locating an inactive copy of the book, would send it to him by post.

In some countries the borrower pays postage one way or both. In Prussia there is a fixed charge of 10 pfennig (say, 2d.) to the borrower.

It is very desirable that the Union Catalogue of a district should embrace the non-fiction contents of all libraries in the area. Even though some libraries might not be willing to lend their books, it is important to be able to locate a wanted copy and intimate to the inquirer where it can be seen. University libraries and special collections like that of the Royal New Zealand Society would possibly be unwilling to lend books as a general rule except to their own members. If so, there are good grounds for hoping that they would be willing, at any rate, to incorporate their entries in the Union Catalogue of the district and to indicate to what extent they would make their stock available for serious readers in the district.

The Union Catalogue should also contain entries for the serial publications, and continuations of all descriptions which are held and subscribed to by any of the libraries in the district. Such a catalogue should be the means of saving considerable sums of money to the constituent libraries through rationalized book-buying.

In entering into any system of interlending as outlined above, it is always understood that each library may decline to lend certain books on any conditions, or may lend with stipulations as to packing, insurance, reference conditions, &c. The borrowing library is always responsible to the library which lends the volume.

The proper use of the Union Catalogue in the control of the district bureau would make practically the whole book-stock of the district available to any serious reader, and would thus serve the double purpose of meeting the reader’s needs and properly employing books which otherwise would be hidden away in the stacks quite out of reach. Whether this “student” section should be attached to the district libraries or to the central lending library is a matter for consideration.

The books usually called for under this service may be divided into three classes:—

- (a) Books dealing with recognized subjects of study in a manner useful to the student:
- (b) Works of a recognized standard in English literature, including works by contemporary writers:
- (c) Books of a specialized character and expensive and out-of-print books.

In English practice classes (a) and (b) are kept by the county (or district) and class (c) by the central library. New Zealand should be guided by the size of the district and by financial considerations in deciding what part of this student service, which is individual and mainly postal, shall be entrusted to the districts and what to the central lending library.

#### THE CONTROLLING AUTHORITY.

In the absence of a new statutory authority to control the district library systems, no real difficulty need be anticipated in providing satisfactorily for all the interests concerned. Where the district library bureau is housed in a strong municipal library whose librarian

is the executive officer for the district, the interests of all parties would be conserved if the municipal library committee were called upon to co-opt, for this service only, a few members nominated by rural units or by the County Councils which contribute to the cost. A multiplicity of sectional representatives might easily be a source of weakness rather than of strength.

If, on the other hand, the financial assistance involved in the widening of library service to the county districts were provided in the form of a State subsidy towards the annual budget, it would be expected that the Government would have proportionate representation on district library committees. There is another form of service to be seen operating in the State of Delaware, where a large rural area rates itself and pays over the proceeds to the Wilmington Public Library. The library pays a special librarian and contracts to serve the rural population. This "contract" form of rural service appears in various forms in different countries.

#### THE CENTRAL LENDING LIBRARY.

The structure outlined above appears to me to be suitable and practicable for the organization of library districts in a country like New Zealand. In England and Scotland the county libraries—which correspond with these district systems proposed for New Zealand—have nearly all been organized in groups, or "regions," each "region" maintaining a regional bureau and a Union Catalogue corresponding with the Union Catalogue I have proposed for the district, but embracing the holdings in non-fiction of all the county systems and special libraries in the district. The population of New Zealand is so small compared with that of Great Britain, Germany, or the United States, the number of libraries of any size so few, and the financial resources and trained personnel so limited, that it would be uneconomical and cumbersome to erect any other organ or bureau between the district and the central lending library. Moreover, such intermediate machinery does not seem to be necessary in a country of the size of New Zealand.

The main purpose of a central bureau, or what is called in England a "national central library," is to act as a clearing-house between the district bureaux; to put districts in touch with each other's resources and requirements; and eventually to fulfil individual readers' demands which the districts have not been able to meet out of their own or another district's resources.

The main instrument of the central lending library is, again, the Union Catalogue, but in this case it is a master catalogue comprising duplicates of all the entries in the Union Catalogues of the districts. Special libraries may be brought in through the district catalogues or direct. When a district bureau has been unable to satisfy a reader's request from the book-stocks of the district, it sends the demand on to the central library. The central Union Catalogue discloses the location of a copy of the book in some other district, and the request is duly sent on to be dealt with by the library holding the book.

In general it is considered that the following types of books are outside the scope of the central lending library; if supplied at all, they should be supplied by the districts themselves:—

- (a) Fiction (except early novels which are more generally classed as literature):
- (b) Current issues of periodicals:
- (c) Current issues of annuals and other quick-reference books:
- (d) Popular travel, adventures, memoirs, and biography published within the preceding six months:
- (e) Students' text-books—(*i.e.*, books required continuously for examination purposes):
- (f) Books which are in print and which cost only a few shillings.

I should add to the excepted books New Zealand historical works and local collections, including, of course, newspapers. It is highly desirable that each district stock should include a special collection of New Zealand books, and that local bodies and libraries should specialize in the local history of their district. This duty can best be done locally; if left to the central lending library would be a grievous burden.

If the book asked for is not available in any library in the Dominion, or if for any other reason a copy cannot be obtained on loan, then the central lending library would consider whether a copy should be purchased for its own central stock. This is the second function of the central library.

It will be seen that, by trying to meet only such requests as the districts cannot satisfy from their own resources and by observing these rules, the central lending library would gradually build up a stock of out-of-the-way books, which might not be much used and which a local library would not be justified in purchasing, or which are merely too expensive for the average library to purchase. That is precisely its justification. The National Central Library in London each year pays a higher average price for the books which it buys to meet the requests of readers. By buying such books it is building up a stock which relieves all other libraries in the country of the necessity of buying them. One copy is generally sufficient for the whole country, and in the central lending library it is easily accessible when required. The saving to libraries from this service is recognized by the annual grants which the regional bureaux in Great Britain make for the support of the National Central Library.

Arising naturally out of the first two functions of the central lending library is the third, that of acting as the principal bibliographical bureau for the Dominion.

As clearing-house for unusual requests, the central lending library would naturally be called upon for bibliographical information, and if located in Wellington it would have the fullest resources available in this respect, especially as regards New Zealand literature. According to Mr. J. H. P. Pafford, the author of "Library Co-operation in Europe," the centre should be in the largest library available, and should keep all sorts of bibliographical works, book-sellers' catalogues, &c. It should not be an information bureau, except on such subjects as library science, &c.

A fourth function of the central lending library is that of the bureau for student readers. Whether this should be entrusted entirely to the central lending library or left partly with the district requires careful consideration. The former course seems to be preferable, at any rate in the early days of the system, until the districts gain strength and experience and can afford to maintain a specialized staff.

#### FINANCING THE LIBRARIES.

The main problem in extending our library service will be to decide how the requisite funds are to be provided. A great variety of methods came under my notice in the countries visited, accounted for generally by varying historical conditions. In Australia the various States themselves differ. Perhaps the best service in the Commonwealth is that provided by the New South Wales Public Library, through its box system and its attention to individual readers. The New South Wales Public Library is a State library, and the whole of the cost is borne by the State of New South Wales. In South Africa, again, such extension service as had been done was paid for by the Government. The conference held in 1929, at the time the visiting commission was in South Africa, recommended a considerable extension of State aid as the only means of providing the service required for the country districts. The State now finds £2,000 a year to subsidize extension work through the State Library, the City of Pretoria finding an equal sum, and a Carnegie endowment £1,300.

In European countries public-library service is to a great extent based on State finance, with varying degrees of local contribution. In Switzerland the State finances the National Library in its entirety. Local contributions are demanded for the establishment of centres of the *Bibliothèques pour Tous*, and the income of this service is provided mainly by the cantons and the Federal Government. Local centres pay for the loan of books. In Denmark the State takes a fuller control, though providing still only a portion of the funds. Control and supervision are exercised through a State Department, and the State, besides giving liberal service through its various fine national libraries, provides about 50 per cent. of the funds. The localities find the rest.

In Germany State initiative long ago enabled the more important libraries, which are for the most part State-supported, to develop an interlending service which is the admiration of librarians in other countries. There is also in the Ministry of Education a division charged with the control of popular libraries. These are now provided for all small towns and villages, the localities paying a portion of the cost. Norway has liberal laws for the provision of popular libraries. These are controlled to a considerable extent by a State Department, which provides a considerable part of the cost. In Sweden all libraries receive State support, and the libraries which act in the capacity of the proposed district libraries in New Zealand, receive extra grants for supplying to local libraries in the district books which they do not possess.

In the United States many of the great public libraries are State institutions. Others, like those of Boston and New York, are mainly financed from old endowments of great value. In the modern industrial cities the libraries are for the most part supported by municipal rating. It is stated by the President of the American Library Association (Mr. C. H. Compton) that 40,000,000 of the people of the United States have good libraries; 40,000,000 have an indifferent service; and the remaining 40,000,000, principally in rural districts, have no library service at all. The leaders of the library movement cannot see any prospect of providing for the latter out of their own resources, and for the last few years there has been an insistent demand for federal aid to do this work. The point on which supporters of federal aid differ is the fear that it would mean federal control. The general sentiment of librarians both in the United States and in Great Britain is emphatically averse to anything that might extinguish the feeling of local responsibility, with its logical corollary, local control.

In Great Britain the municipal free libraries are mainly financed out of the rates. The fine rural service which has grown up in recent years rests solely upon special rates raised by the County Councils for this purpose. The control is entirely through the Education Committees of the County Council. That the counties are able to finance these services is due to their close population and high rateable values. It should nevertheless be borne in mind that the capital outlay necessary to inaugurate the British county libraries was largely met by the generosity of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, who also gave liberal subsidies towards the operating-costs in the early years of the system.

## THE NEW ZEALAND PROBLEM.

In New Zealand the cities and some of the larger towns partially pay for their libraries out of the rates. The balance is derived from subscriptions, a method of raising revenue which is almost universally condemned abroad. A considerable extension of rating powers will be necessary to enable the municipal libraries of New Zealand to be fully rate-supported and free to readers—an aim which the New Zealand Library Association has again affirmed its desire to see achieved. Until this is attained it is out of the question to expect the municipal libraries to play their part either as nuclei or as administrative bureaux for a free lending service for rural readers.

In face of our backwardness as disclosed by these facts it is not easy to see how New Zealand will be able, within a reasonable period of time, to furnish its country and small-town population with an adequate library service unless financial assistance from the State or other new sources is forthcoming to establish it and more liberal rating-powers are provided to maintain it.

So much is required to be done forthwith to bring New Zealand up to the standard of efficiency recognized in library circles in Great Britain, the United States, and other western countries that, even if future finance is assured from rating or any other source, a certain amount of State and other aid to found and equip the system will be essential. In this connection New Zealand can probably rely with confidence upon receiving a due share of the Carnegie Corporation's funds, which have been so liberally and judiciously bestowed upon library service in Great Britain and other British dominions. The Corporation has already interested itself in New Zealand, especially in the improvement of the University libraries and in the education of librarians, and it will probably be willing to assist New Zealand towards a national library service in the same way as it assisted the county libraries in Great Britain—*e.g.*, by grants towards—

- (a) The compilation of Union Catalogues and the cost of the foundation stock of books for the various library districts which may be created;
- (b) The cost of the Union Catalogue and the foundation stock of books for the central lending library;
- (c) The education of librarians; and, possibly
- (d) The provision of a library service for the Maori people.

It is, however, a guiding principle of Carnegie policy not to expend money on undertakings which are not likely to be carried on by popular support when such expenditure ceases. Therefore it is essential to see in good time that the finance necessary to carry on the undertaking is assured.

## LEGISLATION CALLED FOR.

The development of a sound national library service in New Zealand calls first and foremost for an early amendment of the library law. In the first instance, to enable municipalities to free their libraries of the necessity for charging a subscription—*i.e.*, to enable them to make the libraries really free—the present limitation of the power of rating for libraries must be removed. At the same time the law should be amended to extend to counties the power of raising library rates and to empower both boroughs and counties to co-operate in library service, forming such mutual associations as may seem most advantageous. This will make it possible to serve the outlying parts of library districts either through a district bureau, which would be housed in the most central municipal library, or through the municipal library itself assuming the duty as part of its regular activities. It is very desirable that any amendment of the Act should leave it open to a particular district to adopt the special form of co-operation that appears most suitable to its conditions.

## EXPENDITURE TO BE MET.

The success of the district services will depend to a great degree on the efficiency of the established municipal libraries which shall be chosen to administer the district bureaux. Not merely the value of the services of the trained librarian, but other incidental advantages accrue to the district from this association. Rent will be light, if charged at all, and the library will as a matter of course act liberally in making loans from its own stock. But the out-of-pocket expenses of all the services carried out by a district bureau should obviously be defrayed out of special funds raised for the district service. It should be accepted as an axiom that any library undertaking the duties of the district bureau should be indemnified against any special expense resulting therefrom.

The district library would have to meet in the way of initial or capital expense the cost of compiling and housing the Union Catalogue; some part of the cost of providing the initial book-stock; shelving for the books and a work-room; boxes for transport of books, &c.

Any attempt to estimate the cost on the basis of the county systems in England or in California, where the conditions of distribution and the numbers to be catered for are so different, would be unwise. The minimum number of books recommended by the Departmental Committee on Libraries (G.B.) in 1927 is 30 volumes per 100 of population, and the English counties on the whole have attained that goal in about fifteen years. The reading strength of a district in New Zealand is not likely to be fully developed in less than ten years, and it would therefore be injudicious and wasteful to start the scheme with a full stock in proportion to population. A reasonable foundation stock would be 10,000 volumes, of which probably 60 per cent. would be fiction. Special financial provision would have to be made for that.

In English experience the cost of the Union Catalogue and necessary furniture has usually been about £2,500, and the cost of maintenance thereafter about £250 to £300 a year. If the districts in New Zealand were of the dimensions suggested, say, 200,000 people each, the Union Catalogues would probably not cost nearly as much as in England (where in one case sixty-one considerable libraries are included) and the maintenance would probably not take the full time of one assistant.

In Great Britain the Carnegie Trustees made grants towards the establishment of the county libraries varying from £2,300 upwards for the creation of the Union Catalogues, and grants for the purchase of book-stock at the rate of £5 per 1,000 of population.

The Carnegie Corporation has financed two experimental demonstrations in the Dominion of Canada. For the Fraser Valley demonstration in British Columbia it granted about £20,000 over a period of years. The result was so successful that the district assumed responsibility after a poll and the service is now provided out of rates. In Eastern Canada a sum of £16,400 was provided for a demonstration in Prince Edward Island which is still in progress, and which in all probability will be taken over by the provincial government.

This capital outlay having been provided for, the district would have to find each year from rates or some other source—

- (a) Salary of librarian (or contribution towards salary of municipal librarian in charge). The Carnegie standard minimum is £300 a year, but 10 per cent. of the English county librarians receive more than £500; 80 per cent. receive less than £450. In California the smallest counties pay £300 and the largest £800:
- (b) Salary of assistants:
- (c) Book-buying fund:
- (d) Packing and transport on books between district bureau and local centres:
- (e) Rent.

In some of the British counties a library van is used to distribute the books amongst centres and to change the collections. In view of the more scattered population in New Zealand and the fine facilities existing for distribution by rail and motor, it is probable that a van would not be the most economical method to employ. Its main advantage would be as a means of publicity.

Messrs. Munn and Barr estimate the capital cost of establishing a library service for a district with population of 50,000, including liberal allowance for rent, purchase of a van, and wages of chauffeur, at £3,100 for the first year, falling to £2,530 in the fifth. This latter figure would be at the rate of 1s. per head of the population served. In the United States a dollar per head is a recognized standard. Denmark claims to be able to give a service for the whole country at about 3s. a head. According to the County Libraries Statistical Report (1935), the highest cost per head of population served by English county libraries is 8d. (in the East Riding of Yorkshire). The splendid service given by the Kent County Library to its 600,000 people costs only 5·2d. per head, and that of Derby only 6d. per head. It is scarcely necessary to remark that most of the New Zealand districts would have a much smaller and more scattered population to cater for and could not be expected to give so cheap a service as the English counties enjoy.

#### THE CENTRAL LENDING LIBRARY.

What I have called the "central lending library" (corresponding with the national central library in the British system) requires now to be considered. This institution is to act as the clearing-house for out-of-the-way requirements in the various districts; to put the serious reader in touch with the book he requires or, if it is not available, to acquire a copy if it should appear to be advisable to do so.

In his book "Library Co-operation in Europe" Mr. Pafford shows that in most countries with a highly developed library service this duty is performed by the State or National Library, which is the recognized centre of bibliographical information and has usually the best book collection in the country. The National Library does duty as a central library in all European countries except Hungary, Denmark, and Great Britain. In Denmark, however, the State provides a special national centre or clearing-house, the Bibliotekstilsyn. Great Britain is the only country in Europe at present which does not finance its national central library. The reason for this is historic. The British Museum, in its fine book collection, is purely a library of preservation and reference. It does not lend books, and therefore cannot fill the gaps which are not satisfied from district stocks. Britain had consequently to go to the expense of creating a new institution, the national central library, as the coping-stone of the national library system.

In North America also the State libraries generally do the work of the national central library or (as I have called it) the "central lending library." In California, New York, and many other States the unusual requirements of readers are satisfied out of the national collections. It is fortunate that the State libraries are able to undertake this duty, since the Library of Congress at Washington, which is in many respects the finest national library in the world, is restrained from doing so by its obligations of preservation and reference. These forbid it to lend books in a general way; it can lend only to libraries, and to them only on behalf of advanced research workers.

#### A TASK FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY.

In New Zealand there is no reason why the General Assembly Library should not undertake the duty of the central lending library in the district scheme. It stands apart from the leading public libraries, which it is to be hoped will all play a part in the district

organization, and its stock includes many volumes which are not in other libraries of the country, and which could quite safely be lent to serious readers. As the library of deposit under the New Zealand Copyright Act and the centre of the International Exchange Service, it is specially strong in publications and bibliographical information not available to all other libraries.

With a proper understanding as to its own first duty to Parliament and its obligations for preservation and reference, the General Assembly Library could quite well play the part in the library service of New Zealand that the National Central Library does in that of England; and it could do so with less expenditure than would be involved in creating a separate institution with a complete new stock, as was done in the case of the National Central Library.

It would, however, be necessary to have a proper delimitation of the duties and responsibilities of the Library. On the one hand there must be no diminution, but rather a progressive improvement, in the services rendered by the Library to Parliament, the prime reason of its existence. Secondly, there should be an even clearer understanding than in the past of the duties of the General Assembly Library as custodian of the national collection of printed books. The treasures of the Parliamentary Library and the Turnbull Library, and the record copies of New Zealand publications under the Copyright Act should be carefully safeguarded and added to under conditions of trustworthy custodianship and reasonable accessibility which would encourage Parliament to vote the necessary funds and private citizens to deposit further valuable gifts. The same conditions should apply to the archives, the development of which is now a matter of urgency. With this understanding the General Assembly Library could and should play its part as the central lending library in the Dominion scheme of popular libraries.

Additional outlay would of course be involved. The central bureau would require rooms and furniture to accommodate the Union Catalogue, embracing the non-fiction stock of the whole of the district systems. It would require a central librarian and a limited staff to manage the catalogue and the interlending service, the purchase and preparation of books which are not available elsewhere, and the service of bibliographical information.

A good deal of the book-stock of the General Assembly Library could legitimately be made available for the purposes of student readers without injury to the interests of the library as the parliamentary reference library and the national book collection; but a special vote would be required to cover the outlay on books, preparation and shelving. A foundation stock would not be called for, but an adequate vote should be available for the purchase of books as they were found necessary. These services could not be undertaken by the General Assembly Library within its present income.

The National Central Library in London, created *de novo* in every department—quarters, book-stock, personnel, and catalogue—owes its existence to liberal grants (totalling £220,000) from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, and it cost nearly £10,000 to maintain in the year 1934-35. No such outlay is necessary for New Zealand. If assistance in the same spirit were forthcoming—*i.e.*, for the compilation and housing of the Union Catalogue and the purchase of books for the first few years—the charges thereafter might reasonably fall upon the Consolidated Fund as a development of the activities of the State Library, and a contribution to the library service of the Dominion.

Estimates are not easy, but, if the General Assembly Library assumed at the outset the duties of a central lending library for such regions as first organized district services, the extent of the liability would soon be ascertained.

The Carnegie Corporation extended substantial help to the Union of South Africa in regard to its national library. A grant of \$125,000, funded in South Africa, yields, say, £1,300 a year interest. This is payable each year to the National Library at Pretoria on the understanding that the Government of South Africa pays £2,000 a year and the City of Pretoria a like amount. In consideration of receiving this income the National Library is to become entirely free, and is to supply people throughout the country with specialist and other expensive types of books. It is also to promote library extension in the Union by appointing a permanent organiser, by convening an annual library conference, and by the encouragement of co-operation amongst government, institutional, public, special, and private libraries. Incidentally, the sum of £3,000 which was annually voted by the New Zealand Parliament for assisting small libraries in country districts could be advantageously devoted towards improving the service in New Zealand through either of the two channels proposed—*i.e.*, the district libraries or the student service.

#### MAORI TRAVELLING LIBRARIES.

There is another task which in New Zealand might require to be entrusted to the central lending library. The supply of literature for Maori reading urgently requires attention. When the average young person of Maori race returns from his Native school, to his home, whether in a pa or in the country, he is apt to fall back upon his mother tongue. Maori remains the vernacular; yet few books in Maori are to be found which have any association with modern life or which are purely entertaining. Consequently the average Maori, on completing his primary education, ceases to read at all, unless he happens to find employment and to live entirely amongst the pakeha.

As miscegenation of the races appears to be less active than formerly, and the Maori language shows no sign of dying, it is to be hoped that something will be done to make modern reading in Maori available to the Natives. Owing to the wide dispersion of the Maori people, it would be more satisfactory to entrust the service of Maori travelling libraries either to the central lending library or to one of the district bureaux in the North Island than to leave this duty to be performed piecemeal by all of the districts.

In this connection also sympathetic consideration is to be expected on the part of the Carnegie Corporation. Grants have been made for Native education in South Africa amounting to £4,000, including a subsidy of £2,000 to the Native press at Lovedale, where a good deal of publishing has been done in the Bantu languages. New Zealand will obviously have to consider the question of providing a wide scope of modern literature in the Maori language.

#### THE POSITION OF SMALL LIBRARIES.

The history of local government and of the library movement in the Dominion is expressive of our intense sentiment for local self-government. There are many small collections of books in New Zealand which express strong local patriotism and much sacrifice on the part of local residents. They may not be giving their readers an adequate library service; there is no doubt that most of them would be the better for the stream of new books they would receive from association with a district system. Yet it is important that no pressure should be put upon such institutions. Extinction should not be thought of. They should rather be guaranteed not only the ownership of their property and books acquired up to the time of joining, but, if their library is free, they should be welcomed as local units of the district system, and should be encouraged to devote any special funds they possess to the improvement of their reference collection and their reading-room if they have one.

The advantages to small libraries of participating in the district service are clear. Many country libraries in New Zealand have only sufficient money to purchase a few dozen new books each year, and these of the cheapest class (usually fiction, whether they wish it or not). By participating in the district service they would have the right to the whole book service of the region. At the lowest computation they would, when the scheme was fully operating, have the use of a completely new set of 100 volumes, changed twice in the year, and including a reasonable proportion of serious books (biography, travel, history, &c.). They would also have the right to request for their readers the loan of any book in any library in their district, or, failing that, in other districts in the Dominion. They would have a constantly changing stream of new books instead of a stagnant collection of long familiar and often shabby volumes.

Small towns having libraries of their own would not be called upon to part with them. They could still participate in the district system, with the full understanding, however, that the district books they received must be free to all potential readers.

#### ECONOMY IN BOOK-BUYING.

One of the tragedies of the old style of small libraries is the waste of money on the purchase of good books which are scarcely ever used. Mr. S. A. Pitt (Glasgow Public Library), in his memorandum on South African libraries, says,—

“The book-stock shown in official returns would appear to be adequate, but in variety and quality it is markedly inadequate. Each community having made its purchases of books without reference to purchases by neighbouring libraries, a large proportion of the total funds available has been spent uneconomically. The inevitable result is to be seen in a multiplicity of copies of expensive books, often little used, in adjacent libraries, with a consequent paucity of provision in other directions.”

Mr. Pitt's fellow commissioner, Mr. Milton Ferguson, says that they grew accustomed to look in small libraries for expensive sets of Frazer's “Golden Bough” and the Cambridge Natural History Series, and they often found them. “It is a sad waste of money,” he says, “for every library to have to buy every book which its readers may sometimes require. This practice is tying up capital in unproductive stocks and making it impossible for the people to have important special works which could have a direct bearing upon their success in opening up an undeveloped county.”

Mr. Pafford says: “It would be wrong for most libraries to acquire permanently books which are little likely to be wanted again by their readers, especially if these books may be borrowed.”

Experience in Great Britain, the United States, and elsewhere has shown that where the library service of a county is properly co-ordinated money is saved, a wider range of literature is available, and books are made accessible to every reader.

#### A VOLUNTARY SYSTEM.

All English-speaking countries have dealt with existing libraries in the same manner, by permissive legislation, giving them the right to come in or to remain out. Whether they come in or not has generally been dependent on the demonstration of the comparative advantages to be expected. The average town which is large enough to maintain an efficient service out of its own resources has usually remained at first outside the system. In quite a number of cases, both in the United States of America and in Great Britain, libraries which obviously could serve their readers better by joining the county system have preferred to preserve their independence and remain out; whereas others which could quite well have carried on independently have not only come into the system but have magnanimously handed over their stock to the county library.

Messrs. Munn and Barr (in their survey) urge the desirability of setting up fully unified districts. On this point there is not likely to be much difference of opinion amongst librarians who have studied the problem. It would enable the district to be administered as one unit, with a great saving in salaries and book-stock, the elimination of costly

duplication and jealousies, and the full utilization of the library resources of the district. Furthermore, the district bureau would be untrammelled in its efforts to give equal service over the whole area. It is to be hoped that every effort will be made to bring all existing libraries into the district schemes, so as to facilitate the establishment of a uniform service over the area.

Miss Cooke strongly recommends that the cost of a district library service should be met by a general rate over the whole district to be served, so that the richer areas would assist the poorer to receive a standard service. Differential rating, as applied in England, is scarcely likely to be favoured in New Zealand. To allow some ridings of a county to vote a library rate and others to refrain would be making two bites at a cherry, and might seriously reduce the revenue of the district. It would be unwise to proceed with the organization of a district library until the local authorities interested are unanimous in accepting the responsibility of striking the necessary rate.

Rate-supported libraries in towns within the geographical limits of a library district would probably elect to come under the rating of the library district and participate fully in the district system, keeping their own stock of books and adding thereto from local funds, gifts, &c., and using the district stock for current purposes. By participating in a district system, small libraries which are to-day stagnant would become active and co-operative. Even if they wish to remain completely independent they should be permitted to borrow collections of books from the district stock at a reasonable rental. In California that rental is fixed on a basis remunerative to the lending district. If the charge is too low the outstanding libraries might be encouraged at the expense of the district to remain outside.

Whatever action the managers of existing libraries feel disposed to take about entering a district system, it is to be hoped that if they possess an unusual stock—as, for example, that of the Warkworth Library—they will agree to its incorporation in the Union Catalogue so as to make its treasures known and available to the studious reader. Whether the books are available for loan or merely for reference is immaterial.

I have, &c.,  
G. H. SCHOLEFIELD.

#### POSTSCRIPT TO RURAL LIBRARIES REPORT.

30th April, 1936.

IN making my report on a rural-library service for New Zealand I believed that the Government, not having previously participated in library service beyond a yearly grant of £3,000 for small libraries, would not be prepared to undertake any considerable financial responsibility; and that the major share of the money and a good deal of the initiative would still have to be found by local residents. I proceeded on the assumption that the strong impulse for local control which is characteristic of New-Zealanders would have to be capitalized again in this matter, and that the Government would contribute mainly in the form of assistance and, if necessary, supervision.

During my absence from New Zealand a committee of librarians has put forward a plan which proposes quite a different sharing of the responsibility and control. This is based on the assumption that in the present state of opinion on local government the public would be disinclined to accept further taxing-powers, and that the only means of making any advance would be by the Government taking the initiative and in the first instance providing the money, part of which would be recouped by contributions from the local authorities as the scheme was accepted.

Approaching the question from this new angle, one adverts naturally to the practice in Scandinavia, where the Governments actually inaugurate library services and provide a large part of the cost. New Zealand resembles Scandinavia very much in the character of her people and their disposition for reading and education; and there is no reason to suppose that we could not operate equally well a country-library service in which the Government is the senior partner.

Regarding it as a matter of policy, I felt precluded from suggesting that the Government should take such a course. If it does decide to accept the financial burden, then I have no hesitation in agreeing that the administrative machinery should follow the example of Scandinavia rather than that of Great Britain, where the Government takes no part at all beyond subsidizing the National Central Library. Libraries are a social service or public utility which a Government can legitimately provide for districts which at present have none. If it decides to do so, then it seems appropriate that the control and supervision of such a service should be centred in what is in effect the State library—namely, the General Assembly Library. A bureau of libraries established in connection with the General Assembly Library, to control and supervise the rural service, would eliminate the need for associating the rural system with the existing libraries in the different districts, which are mainly municipal.

G. H. SCHOLEFIELD.

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