

# SCHOOL FOR LIBRARIANS

## New National Service Gets Under Way

ANYONE who rings 44-051 in Wellington now and expects to hear a voice say "Country Library Service" when the call is answered, will note a change. The voice says "National Library Service." There still is a Country Library Service. But it is now a division of the newly-established National Library Service, together with the National Library Centre, and the New Zealand Library School.

The establishment of the National Library Service was announced last October by the Minister of Education (the Hon. H. G. R. Mason), and the Library School has been in session since early in February. But it is only in the last week or two that the telephone operator has had to learn the new name, and the students of the school have settled into their own premises in an old house in Sydney Street East, Thorndon. They share a part of it with the C.L.S., which overflows from another old house next door. When things settled down a bit, *The Listener* went along with a photographer to see the school at work, and to talk to G. T. Alley, Director of the National Library Service, and

Miss Mary Parsons, Director of the School.

### Functions Defined

We asked Mr. Alley what notable changes had been made, now that the telephone girl was using a different name, in the service he directs. Had its status changed much? What would the new arrangement mean to an ordinary public library subscriber?

And he began to explain that the decision to establish the N.L.S. followed a recommendation from the New Zealand Library Association, which put a plan for a National Library Service before the Government in February of last year. So now the National Library Service is in working order (apart from difficulties left over from the war, such as accommodation, staff, etc.) and its three divisions have their functions defined in this way:

(1) *The Country Library Service*—now to be extended by the establishment of regional depots to maintain closer contacts with the libraries that want to participate. (It is hoped that public libraries, governed by local authorities, will later assume responsibility for their own region.)



SPACE is at a premium in the new Library School. The photograph shows the students in their one class-room. The lecturer is Miss Alice Minchin

(2) *The National Centre*—to carry on work begun by the Book Resources Committee of the N.Z. Library Association and the staff of the C.L.S., such as bibliographical projects, and the maintenance of the Union Catalogue (which enables a librarian anywhere in New Zealand to find out from Wellington if a certain book is in New Zealand, and if so, where it is). The intention is to ensure that at least one copy will be in the country of every book in English that is likely to be of use here.

(3) *The Library School*—to supply trained reinforcements for understaffed libraries, and help to build a better service throughout the country.

The C.L.S. began by helping little libraries in country districts. Now, Mr. Alley told us, the Government help is extended to the bigger libraries—if they want it. The National Centre (for which a librarian—A. G. Bagnall—has now been appointed) is to be in Mr. Alley's words "the nerves and brains of the scheme."

It will be concerned on one side with the conservation of resources, and on the other side with their exploitation. The School is "a guarantee of the Government's intention; students can go through the school and then flow out into the public libraries, and not all of them will be public servants when they have finished the course."

### No Coercion

Collaboration with the national scheme will be purely voluntary, Mr. Alley told us. The Service will work through the local libraries, and it is conceived in that way. It makes one demand—a library must "go free" before it can claim the full privileges and advantages of participation.

Auckland and Dunedin are both free libraries. Wellington and Christchurch still charge their borrowers. So do Wanganui, Hutt, and Invercargill. Palmerston North and Timaru have the two

biggest free libraries outside of Auckland and Dunedin, and there are 64 smaller free libraries in the country, many of which "went free" in order to make use of the Country Library Service.

This policy will continue and, although libraries that still charge their subscribers will continue to participate in the Library Inter-Loan Service (which has been centralised now for two years), they will get only limited help from the Service.

Libraries that do join in the scheme will get various kinds of assistance, including seconded staff—librarians who will be lent for special work—and the cost of any necessary extension to buildings will be shared.

"And if a library of any size doesn't join in, what then?" we asked Mr. Alley.

"If any local authority finds it inconvenient or for any other reason decides not to go free, we will simply operate a parallel scheme in the same place, in a different building."

"There'll be nothing withheld, as a kind of sanction?"

"Operating a parallel service is a kind of withholding."

"And will there be any material benefits to borrowers in the near future, or is everything still on a long-term basis?"

"Dunedin may get going soon. If so, staff and books will both be supplied, according to what they need."

### Staff and Students Mix

After our talk with Mr. Alley we visited the Library School itself, and saw something of the life of its 30 students—"a pretty good bunch at about graduate level," as Mr. Alley had called them.

They work in fairly cramped conditions, and if you stand around in the top landing of the old house that is their school, without knowing quite where you



KATHLEEN HARVEY (centre), who takes the course in Children's Books, seen with four students in one of the Country Library Service rooms. These are next-door to the Library School