

Linwood Library Gazette

"Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body." —Steele.

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THE GOVERNMENT'S NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE.

It is the Government's intention to organise a national library scheme with a view to assisting existing small country libraries and to provide facilities for districts which have no libraries.

A national central lending library will be established and will have as its main function the distribution of books on a nation-wide scale. It will buy and select the books in the manner best calculated to meet the educational requirements, particularly in regard to vocational requirements. Good recreational reading will also be provided.

It is the aim of the Government to bring every individual whether located in a small borough or country town or on a station, farm or works camp in touch with a good book supply and it is expected that the public, particularly through their local libraries, will take advantage of this service. In districts where there is no library, arrangements will be made through local societies or groups of, say, about 15 people formed for the purpose, to undertake the responsibilities for the care and local distribution of books from the national centre.

In the past the Government endeavoured to assist the smaller libraries by means of subsidies but owing to pressure of financial circumstances it was regretfully forced to suspend this library grant.

Moreover the system was found to be ineffective and as the Government is desirous of affording the best possible help it can to local libraries it was felt that it would be of much greater benefit to replace the old subsidy system with a new scheme of lending boxes of books at regular intervals from a national centre.

The plan is to give each library qualified to get the old subsidy, the loan of boxes of books of about 50 volumes. These boxes of books can be changed several times a year. This would be a considerable advantage over the old scheme whereby the library purchased a few books from their grant. These books became worn out and dilapidated and frequently remained on the shelves for many years after they had ceased to be useful.

It is proposed to lend books to libraries or groups free of charge on condition that they be lent to individual borrowers also free of charge. All details connected with the scheme are at present being worked out.

Since these books will be selected in accordance with the best standards and will contain books of an educational and the best recreational type, local libraries will be relieved of expenditure on such necessary but expensive literature. The local libraries will thus have more money with which to buy current fiction for their subscribers. In this way existing arrangements in local libraries will not be interfered with.

The scheme does not involve any interference with the local control of libraries. It is intended merely to increase their means of usefulness which are at present restricted by the limited funds at their disposal.

This is only the beginning of a much more comprehensive scheme. Later on it is intended to de-centralise the central lending library and to set up, throughout the Dominion, a number of regional depository libraries, each under a trained librarian with a small staff.

(To be continued)