

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

(Concluded)

These depository libraries will house collections of books for distribution to local libraries and community centres throughout their respective districts, and also by means of a book-mobile will provide a travelling library to isolated settlers if required.

Under the preliminary scheme books only will be provided. In the final scheme a full library service will be provided, and it will be based, it is hoped, on a co-operative system between the general Government and local authorities. It will entail the pooling of resources in order to make a very much larger number of books available.

Details of this ultimate stage are being worked out by a committee of expert librarians and Government officials. Later on steps will be taken to carry out this final stage.

Meanwhile, much good can be done by the inauguration of the service outlined above. It is well known that one of the main difficulties of residents in rural districts is the insufficient supply of literature. This need is particularly felt by young people who may wish to continue their education after they leave school.

It can be realised, for example, how useful it would be for a young man in a back country district to be able to have access to good and up-to-date books on subjects in which he is interested. For example, subjects like electricity, cabinet-making, or those connected with the various aspects of farming practice itself. It will be possible under this scheme for application to be made either through the local library, or if there is no local library, direct to the centre for the loan of such books.

A national library system such as I have outlined above is in operation in many countries throughout the world. The best system of all is, perhaps, that in operation in Great Britain. Britain now has a free library service for nearly every resident. The whole thing is simple and efficient and has been achieved by the business-like consolidation of existing services. It began in a small way by the simple system of providing books for the small and isolated centres.

It developed into a nation-wide county library service and now the various counties and large towns have co-operated to form regional groups.

Books are lent throughout the region and if the books required are not available within that area they can be borrowed from a national central lending library in London.

Many other examples could be given of countries which have adopted a similar plan. Recently in New South Wales the Government provided £150,000 for the inauguration of a regional library system.

In New Zealand the whole position has been carefully investigated and reported upon recently by Mr Ralph Munn, a representative of the Carnegie Corporation, and associated with him was Mr J. Barr, one of New Zealand's leading librarians. These gentlemen issued a most valuable survey and report upon New Zealand library conditions and needs.

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The Public Libraries of New Zealand in 1926, the year of the last census, numbered over 400 and range from small collections of a hundred volumes to libraries such as those in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, and Timaru, which can stand comparison with libraries of towns in England of similar population.

From "Outline of Library Development,"
Munn-Bar Report on N.Z. Libraries.