

1936.
NEW ZEALAND.

RURAL LIBRARY SERVICES.

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

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

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