

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.