

is the executive officer for the district, the interests of all parties would be conserved if the municipal library committee were called upon to co-opt, for this service only, a few members nominated by rural units or by the County Councils which contribute to the cost. A multiplicity of sectional representatives might easily be a source of weakness rather than of strength.

If, on the other hand, the financial assistance involved in the widening of library service to the county districts were provided in the form of a State subsidy towards the annual budget, it would be expected that the Government would have proportionate representation on district library committees. There is another form of service to be seen operating in the State of Delaware, where a large rural area rates itself and pays over the proceeds to the Wilmington Public Library. The library pays a special librarian and contracts to serve the rural population. This "contract" form of rural service appears in various forms in different countries.

THE CENTRAL LENDING LIBRARY.

The structure outlined above appears to me to be suitable and practicable for the organization of library districts in a country like New Zealand. In England and Scotland the county libraries—which correspond with these district systems proposed for New Zealand—have nearly all been organized in groups, or "regions," each "region" maintaining a regional bureau and a Union Catalogue corresponding with the Union Catalogue I have proposed for the district, but embracing the holdings in non-fiction of all the county systems and special libraries in the district. The population of New Zealand is so small compared with that of Great Britain, Germany, or the United States, the number of libraries of any size so few, and the financial resources and trained personnel so limited, that it would be uneconomical and cumbersome to erect any other organ or bureau between the district and the central lending library. Moreover, such intermediate machinery does not seem to be necessary in a country of the size of New Zealand.

The main purpose of a central bureau, or what is called in England a "national central library," is to act as a clearing-house between the district bureaux; to put districts in touch with each other's resources and requirements; and eventually to fulfil individual readers' demands which the districts have not been able to meet out of their own or another district's resources.

The main instrument of the central lending library is, again, the Union Catalogue, but in this case it is a master catalogue comprising duplicates of all the entries in the Union Catalogues of the districts. Special libraries may be brought in through the district catalogues or direct. When a district bureau has been unable to satisfy a reader's request from the book-stocks of the district, it sends the demand on to the central library. The central Union Catalogue discloses the location of a copy of the book in some other district, and the request is duly sent on to be dealt with by the library holding the book.

In general it is considered that the following types of books are outside the scope of the central lending library; if supplied at all, they should be supplied by the districts themselves:—

- (a) Fiction (except early novels which are more generally classed as literature):
- (b) Current issues of periodicals:
- (c) Current issues of annuals and other quick-reference books:
- (d) Popular travel, adventures, memoirs, and biography published within the preceding six months:
- (e) Students' text-books—(*i.e.*, books required continuously for examination purposes):
- (f) Books which are in print and which cost only a few shillings.

I should add to the excepted books New Zealand historical works and local collections, including, of course, newspapers. It is highly desirable that each district stock should include a special collection of New Zealand books, and that local bodies and libraries should specialize in the local history of their district. This duty can best be done locally; if left to the central lending library would be a grievous burden.

If the book asked for is not available in any library in the Dominion, or if for any other reason a copy cannot be obtained on loan, then the central lending library would consider whether a copy should be purchased for its own central stock. This is the second function of the central library.

It will be seen that, by trying to meet only such requests as the districts cannot satisfy from their own resources and by observing these rules, the central lending library would gradually build up a stock of out-of-the-way books, which might not be much used and which a local library would not be justified in purchasing, or which are merely too expensive for the average library to purchase. That is precisely its justification. The National Central Library in London each year pays a higher average price for the books which it buys to meet the requests of readers. By buying such books it is building up a stock which relieves all other libraries in the country of the necessity of buying them. One copy is generally sufficient for the whole country, and in the central lending library it is easily accessible when required. The saving to libraries from this service is recognized by the annual grants which the regional bureaux in Great Britain make for the support of the National Central Library.