

In this connection also sympathetic consideration is to be expected on the part of the Carnegie Corporation. Grants have been made for Native education in South Africa amounting to £4,000, including a subsidy of £2,000 to the Native press at Lovedale, where a good deal of publishing has been done in the Bantu languages. New Zealand will obviously have to consider the question of providing a wide scope of modern literature in the Maori language.

THE POSITION OF SMALL LIBRARIES.

The history of local government and of the library movement in the Dominion is expressive of our intense sentiment for local self-government. There are many small collections of books in New Zealand which express strong local patriotism and much sacrifice on the part of local residents. They may not be giving their readers an adequate library service; there is no doubt that most of them would be the better for the stream of new books they would receive from association with a district system. Yet it is important that no pressure should be put upon such institutions. Extinction should not be thought of. They should rather be guaranteed not only the ownership of their property and books acquired up to the time of joining, but, if their library is free, they should be welcomed as local units of the district system, and should be encouraged to devote any special funds they possess to the improvement of their reference collection and their reading-room if they have one.

The advantages to small libraries of participating in the district service are clear. Many country libraries in New Zealand have only sufficient money to purchase a few dozen new books each year, and these of the cheapest class (usually fiction, whether they wish it or not). By participating in the district service they would have the right to the whole book service of the region. At the lowest computation they would, when the scheme was fully operating, have the use of a completely new set of 100 volumes, changed twice in the year, and including a reasonable proportion of serious books (biography, travel, history, &c.). They would also have the right to request for their readers the loan of any book in any library in their district, or, failing that, in other districts in the Dominion. They would have a constantly changing stream of new books instead of a stagnant collection of long familiar and often shabby volumes.

Small towns having libraries of their own would not be called upon to part with them. They could still participate in the district system, with the full understanding, however, that the district books they received must be free to all potential readers.

ECONOMY IN BOOK-BUYING.

One of the tragedies of the old style of small libraries is the waste of money on the purchase of good books which are scarcely ever used. Mr. S. A. Pitt (Glasgow Public Library), in his memorandum on South African libraries, says,—

“The book-stock shown in official returns would appear to be adequate, but in variety and quality it is markedly inadequate. Each community having made its purchases of books without reference to purchases by neighbouring libraries, a large proportion of the total funds available has been spent uneconomically. The inevitable result is to be seen in a multiplicity of copies of expensive books, often little used, in adjacent libraries, with a consequent paucity of provision in other directions.”

Mr. Pitt's fellow commissioner, Mr. Milton Ferguson, says that they grew accustomed to look in small libraries for expensive sets of Frazer's “Golden Bough” and the Cambridge Natural History Series, and they often found them. “It is a sad waste of money,” he says, “for every library to have to buy every book which its readers may sometimes require. This practice is tying up capital in unproductive stocks and making it impossible for the people to have important special works which could have a direct bearing upon their success in opening up an undeveloped county.”

Mr. Pafford says: “It would be wrong for most libraries to acquire permanently books which are little likely to be wanted again by their readers, especially if these books may be borrowed.”

Experience in Great Britain, the United States, and elsewhere has shown that where the library service of a county is properly co-ordinated money is saved, a wider range of literature is available, and books are made accessible to every reader.

A VOLUNTARY SYSTEM.

All English-speaking countries have dealt with existing libraries in the same manner, by permissive legislation, giving them the right to come in or to remain out. Whether they come in or not has generally been dependent on the demonstration of the comparative advantages to be expected. The average town which is large enough to maintain an efficient service out of its own resources has usually remained at first outside the system. In quite a number of cases, both in the United States of America and in Great Britain, libraries which obviously could serve their readers better by joining the county system have preferred to preserve their independence and remain out; whereas others which could quite well have carried on independently have not only come into the system but have magnanimously handed over their stock to the county library.

Messrs. Munn and Barr (in their survey) urge the desirability of setting up fully unified districts. On this point there is not likely to be much difference of opinion amongst librarians who have studied the problem. It would enable the district to be administered as one unit, with a great saving in salaries and book-stock, the elimination of costly