

(b) *Public Libraries* situated outside a borough or a town district, and controlled by a properly constituted committee of subscribers, and situated not less than ten miles by the shortest route from any of the four metropolitan public libraries mentioned in (a) above.

Membership of these libraries has been required to be open to the whole of the community before they have been considered eligible for participation in the service.

An annual charge at the rate of £4 per fifty books supplied as initial loan stock has been made. This means that at least one hundred and fifty books have been placed on the shelves of each library for the payment of £4, since replacement of the whole of the initial loan stock has been made by the Service without further charge.

(c) *Groups of Readers* in isolated or remote parts of the country where no public library exists and where it is not practicable for one to be maintained.

The service has consisted of the supply on loan of an initial collection of fifty (50) books. At intervals of two months, one-half of the collection has been replaced by a supply of twenty-five (25) books, and the group has been required to forward at its own expense twenty-five (25) books so replaced to any other group or to the headquarters of the Country Library Service as requested by the Service.

(d) *Individuals* in any country district included in (a), (b), and (c) above who wish to obtain books or information on a particular subject or subjects.

The book or material reaches the borrower free, and he or she pays the return postage. Books for library exchange are posted at specially reduced rates.

Books or material have been supplied free on a variety of subjects. A few examples of subjects upon which material has been made available are—child study, economics, education, costume, physiology, hygiene, dietetics, public health, applied electricity, fruit culture, home economics, food, carpentry, cabinetmaking, plumbing, landscape and flower gardening, interior decoration, and photography. Certain types of books are not supplied under (d), such as fiction, certain types of current non-fiction, rare or expensive editions, or students' text-books.

PLAN FOR FIRST YEAR FULFILLED.

It is satisfactory to be able to state that the Country Library Service has fulfilled, and at some points exceeded, the plan laid down for the first year of its operation.

From the 1st December, 1937, to 30th May, 1938, time was taken up in preparation for the actual carrying-out of the service. Important things that had to be done were—

- (i) The appointment of staff, including the adapting of the personnel of the staff to a type of work not hitherto attempted on this scale in New Zealand.
- (ii) The ordering, accession, classification, cataloguing, and preparation of books for circulation.
- (iii) The planning and ordering of all equipment to be used in the service, including two book-vans.
- (iv) The preparation for work in the field itself, involving extensive correspondence with libraries and interested local bodies and groups.

The time available for preparation with a full staff was much less than six months. It is therefore a tribute to the enthusiasm and energy of the staff that the service was able to begin as soon as it did. By 31st December books had been distributed regularly in every province in New Zealand by means of the book-vans, by transport and rail services, and by post.

THE SMALL COUNTRY LIBRARY.

One of the problems that had to be faced at the outset was that of the small independent subscription library. Three hundred and fifty-nine libraries received money subsidies during 1929 or 1930 from the Education Department. Many libraries received no subsidies at all; and statistics compiled from all available sources show that over five hundred small country libraries have existed in this country, although some of them were not functioning in 1938.

Although the subsidy method was comparatively easy to administer, it left the libraries concerned very much to their own devices. In spite of letters that were sent by the Department from time to time requesting that a due proportion of "works of a serious nature" be purchased with the moneys granted, libraries tended to buy the more popular and cheaper types of fiction—gaining quantity rather than quality. When the grants were discontinued after 1930 the stocks that had been bought wore out very quickly, and by 1938 a number of the libraries had ceased to function altogether.

The first major task of the Country Library Service was therefore to help these smaller libraries, if possible. Certain difficulties had to be met. For example, should the existing subscription basis of these institutions be interfered with and the free issue of books made a condition of each library's participation in the service? Had this been done, many of the small libraries would have found it impossible to carry on—through lack of finance to pay their necessary expenses. Voluntary librarianship has not yet appealed widely to country people as a truly public service, but rather as a favour performed for one's neighbours or fellow-members of an institute or club.

To enable a beginning to be made with the problem it was therefore decided to make a small charge to each independent subscription library that had no means of establishing a publicly supported free service. The charge of £8 per annum for a hundred books, or £4 for fifty, changed three times during the year, was considered low enough to be attractive.

It was estimated that approximately 176 libraries would take advantage of this service during the first year of its operation. The estimate was based on a careful analysis of libraries in one part of New Zealand.