

libraries and some of the most dingy and uninviting subscription libraries is most sharp. It is the difference between hope and despair, or day and night. In terms of the use being made of the free libraries, as against that made of the subscription ones, it is sufficient to state that the borrowers from the former have in one case reached the excellent total of nearly 50 per cent. of the population of the local area. Naturally, it can be expected that if the subscription barrier is removed more people will register and the number of borrowers will grow. But the free libraries have been able to issue more and better books to more people than have the subscription libraries, because the latter have rarely a democratic basis, but are associations of neighbours and acquaintances "supplying themselves with pleasant reading-matter, partly at the public's expense" (Munn-Barr Report on New Zealand Libraries, 1934).

Table showing Details of Free Public Libraries participating in the Service.

| Controlling Authority.            | Population of Local Area, 1936 Census. | Number of Books lent Free by the Country Library Service. |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>North Island.</i>              |                                        |                                                           |
| Bulls Town Board .. .. .          | 527                                    | 100                                                       |
| Featherston Borough .. .. .       | 1,050                                  | 158                                                       |
| Huntly Borough .. .. .            | 1,942                                  | 289                                                       |
| Kaikohe Town Board .. .. .        | 662                                    | 100                                                       |
| Kaponga Town Board .. .. .        | 406                                    | 100                                                       |
| Morrinsville Borough .. .. .      | 1,796                                  | 270                                                       |
| Otaki Borough .. .. .             | 1,744                                  | 261                                                       |
| Pahiatua Borough .. .. .          | 1,668                                  | 250                                                       |
| Taradale Town Board .. .. .       | 1,206                                  | 180                                                       |
| Te Karaka Town Board .. .. .      | 355                                    | 100                                                       |
| Woodville Borough Council .. .. . | 1,031                                  | 162                                                       |
| <i>South Island.</i>              |                                        |                                                           |
| Alexandra Borough .. .. .         | 871                                    | 130                                                       |
| Motueka Borough .. .. .           | 2,169                                  | 320                                                       |
| Queenstown Borough .. .. .        | 931                                    | 140                                                       |
| Rangiora Borough .. .. .          | 2,239                                  | 336                                                       |
| Waimate Borough .. .. .           | 2,315                                  | 346                                                       |
| Total .. .. .                     | 20,914                                 | 3,222                                                     |

Assistance to the free libraries shown in the above table has been more than the mere delivery and periodical changing of the numbers of books shown.

In addition, help has been given to the libraries by the staff of the Service. The field librarians in charge of the book-vans have undertaken the bulk of this work, but other members of the staff of the Service have been sent to libraries as circumstances permitted and when the occasion warranted this step. It has generally been possible for each participating library to make a speedy change-over to the free service (which necessarily involves dealing with a larger number of borrowers) with the aid of the trained assistance that the Service has provided. Methods of recording issues, of classifying books, and of library administration have been to a great extent improved and standardized.

THREE PROBLEMS OF THE FREE COUNTRY LIBRARY.

(1) *Librarianship.*—Of the numerous problems and difficulties that have been met with in dealing with the free libraries participating in the service, three stand out as important. The problem of librarianship will remain unsolved until country librarians receive improved rates of pay and are better trained for their work. With the acknowledgment of the importance of the library in the community, there should come gradually a realization of the necessity of having an adequately paid and trained person in charge. The five-year programme of the New Zealand Library Association should do a great deal to help rural librarians to become properly fitted for their work.

(2) *Library Provision for Children.*—Few of the country boroughs can attempt even a moderate service for children. All of them wish to give the service, and would welcome the inclusion of a proportion of books for children in their loans of books. It is expected that provision will be made during 1939 for children's books to be available to libraries from the Service.

(3) *The County and Library Service.*—Inquiries have been made by several county authorities about the possibility of the areas under their control being included in the free service. Subscription libraries situated in county areas have been given a contract service, but the ultimate goal should be the abolition of the subscription method of financing these libraries and the achievement of free service to counties as well as rural boroughs. It is because boroughs and town districts have already taken responsibility for library service that it has been possible to co-operate with them at this stage. Also, county residents within range of borough and town-district libraries have had the advantage of a wider choice of books. It will be necessary to arrange for county authorities to contribute a fair share of the cost for free library service to their residents, the service to be given through the borough library where this exists, and in isolated parts of the county as well.