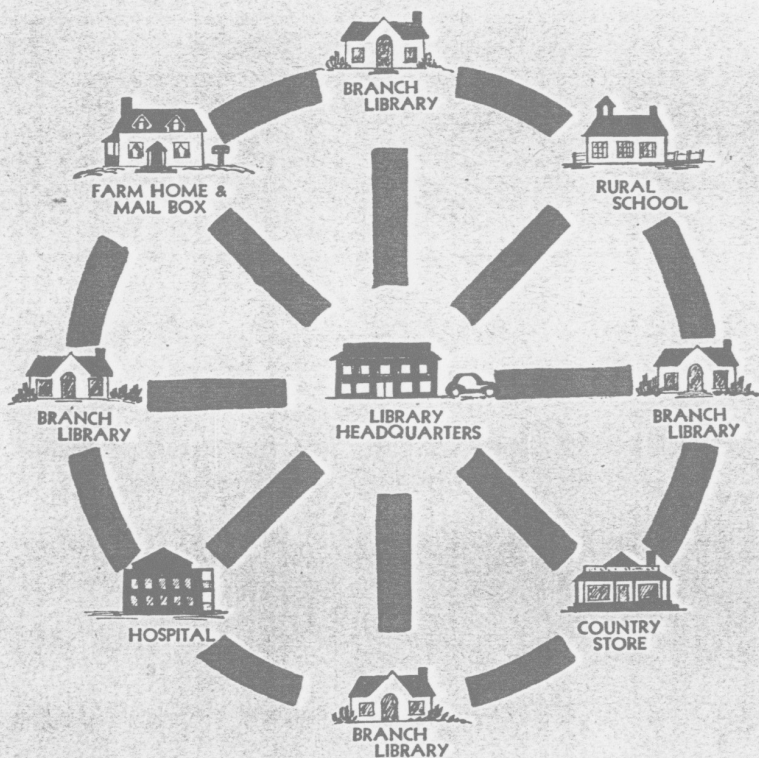
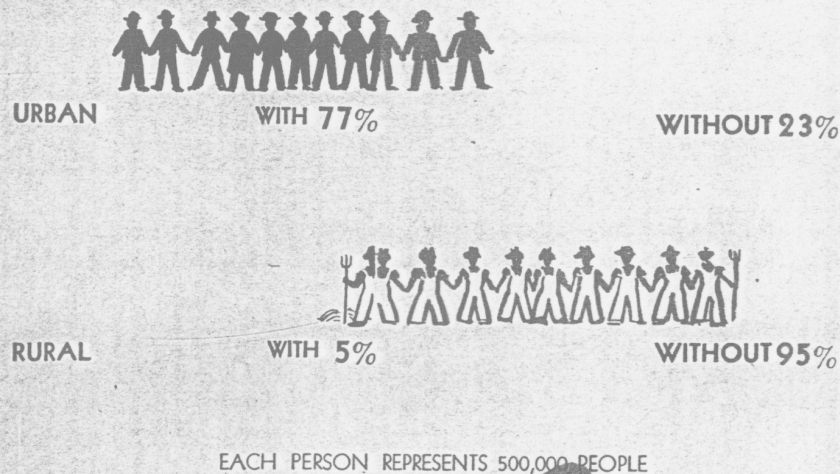


How Regional Book Service Operates



A coordinated library system reaches every local community and every citizen. Constant interchange of books between the central library and the branches and the wide use of requests make any book available to any reader in the entire region.

RURAL CANADA NEEDS LIBRARIES



5 MILLION WITHOUT LIBRARIES

LIBRAR
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER
ANTIGONISH, N.S.

RURAL CANADA
NEEDS LIBRARIES

by

NORA BATESON, M.A.

Director, Regional Libraries Commission,
Department of Education,

HALIFAX, N.S.



THE CANADIAN LIBRARY COUNCIL

1944

RURAL CANADA NEEDS LIBRARIES

AS the blaze from the first book-burning in Berlin has swept with the spread of Nazi conquest all over Europe, the Nazis have made brutally clear their hatred of "these lamps of freedom". The United States Army authorities have been as quick to recognize Hitler's great enemy as their own great ally. A generous torrent of books is pouring from Washington to the military camps and outposts and to naval ships and stations. As many as 3,000,000 new books up to July 1942 were bought for the Army alone and we understand that this is only a beginning. Mr. Roosevelt has declared that "books are weapons" in the fight for freedom. Technical books in this highly technical war are obvious munitions but of even greater importance are books which represent the tumult of ideas, social, economic, political and spiritual which lie behind the struggle and which will be determining factors in shaping the world after the war is over.

It is true that the war has only highlighted the relationship of books to freedom and slavery. In every civilized European democracy that relationship has been at least tacitly accepted. In the virile democracies it was built into their ways of living and in the Scandinavian countries, in Czechoslovakia, in Great Britain, in Russia, library service making available to every citizen the books he needed was becoming practically universal. If we except the large unserved rural population this was largely true also of the United States and to a lesser degree of Canada.

Recently Henry A. Wallace, Vice-President of the United States, has declared that the century in which we are entering, the century which will come out of this war, can be and must be the century of the common man with the common man of all countries a citizen of a world commonwealth. This statement was widely recognized as probably the most significant to come out of the United States since she entered the war. If it is to become more than words then the common man will have to be well-informed and intelligent and libraries must play their part. Schools and colleges are not enough. At best they only prepare young people for education. They leave off at an age before principles of government or the

simple economics of living have become important practical questions for the student. Means for intelligent investigation by adults must be provided. Organized adult study groups, forum discussions, radio talks, magazines and pamphlets dealing with political, social and economic questions, all these are instruments in the education of the common man but behind them must be the public library. Says Alvin Johnson, well-known authority on adult education, "Without the book there can be no adult education worthy of the name. The essential role of the public library in our democratic system is therefore cardinal. The average American cannot, or will not, buy the books that are necessary to keep his mind on an even keel through the troubled waters of our dynamic political and social life. Even if he were in a position to buy the necessary books, he would not know how to select the better ones from the huge stream issuing from the publishing houses."

The Library And The Common Man

China's guerrilla army, fighting its long war against the Japs and another war against destitution and ignorance has this legend on one of its banners:

WORK TO DO
FOOD TO EAT
HOUSE TO LIVE IN
CLOTHES TO WEAR
BOOKS TO READ

China has no time for unessentials in these tragic days, but it is likely that her leaders realize that without the last of these essentials the common man has not much chance of achieving and holding the other four.

On the level of workaday living there is today an immense variety of practical books from bringing up the baby to the final science of undertaking. Technical books simple and advanced on diesel engines, automobiles, aeroplanes, and all the myriad phases of a mechanistic world. The war has boosted the production and sale of such books as it has boosted the production of all

munitions of war. But the same books and others on building houses and barns and boats, on dairying, poultry raising and other aspects of farming, books making available the latest findings on nutrition and health, must be regarded as necessary tools in preparing the ground-work for a decent civilization when peace comes.

A hundred years ago "Agricola" wrote in a Nova Scotia newspaper "An ignorant boor may turn up the ground but it is only a wise man who can cultivate it." That was true then but it is much truer today when the intelligent farmer must keep in touch with the many advances in scientific agriculture, planned production and marketing. Even that is not enough. Today the dominating factors in agriculture are world-wide and the farmer is forced, at least in some degree, to stretch his horizon from his own fields to take in the whole world. The successful Farm Forums conducted during the last two years by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the discussions which they roused turned the attention of many intelligent farmers to books giving full and adequate treatment of questions which had been raised.

With Canadians fighting in every sector of this global war, world affairs have become matters of personal interest to a great many people. Of equal interest to those who think at all are the social, economic, political and spiritual forces which have brought the world to its present convulsion and the measures which may, when this convulsion is controlled, safeguard the next generation from its recurrence. These matters are the concern of the best minds of our age, and their views and convictions expressed in the common currency of books give men a groundwork of information and opinion on which to base their own convictions.

Books are indeed important weapons in the double-fronted fight for freedom. But in them is to be found, too, refreshment and recreation for the mind and spirit at all times. Biographies, histories, novels, poems, plays, books of philosophy, books on art and music: such books literally open up new worlds and new channels of interest and speculation. They give also perspective and balance to the immediate urgent problems of the day.

In Canada, enormous sums are spent on public education. Often however boys and girls are then

turned out into bookless communities where the only available reading is a variety of pulp magazines. The debasing of taste and ideals which results from this wholesale reading of cheap literature is widely deplored. The remedy, of course, is the provision of selected reading matter of a stimulating kind. To quote from a report on British libraries "Some of us may think that a policy which spends millions in teaching people to read and grudges thousands in providing them with books is as shortsighted as would be the policy of a railway company which provided trains but grudged the cost of time-tables."

The place of libraries in any "civilization of the common man" is indisputable, libraries meaning not only books but trained librarians to select them, arrange for their distribution and give guidance as to their suitability for particular needs.

Regional Library Service in Canada With a Glance at Great Britain and the United States

Statistics published by the Canadian Dominion Bureau of Statistics in 1938 show that while 92% of the city dwellers of Canada have public library service, only 42% of the people living in towns and villages and only 3% living in rural districts have this service, although nearly half the population of Canada comes under this category. What is true of libraries is true also of course of many other public services. They have been slower to reach rural communities because the difficulties of establishing them there are greater. Twenty-five years ago no satisfactory method had been devised by which rural communities could enjoy a library service comparable to that available in cities. It is true that villages and small towns built up small collections of books but funds were low and the collections soon became out of date. There were also travelling libraries. But something better was needed and the method of solution was the one which has solved many other rural problems, namely, that of cooperation.

There are three essentials for good library service, apart from buildings and accommodation.

1. A wide range of reading on all subjects of interest to users.
2. A constant supply of new up-to-date books.

3. Trained librarians to select the books, advise and guide readers and manage the library.

Small communities cannot afford such a service but several communities pooling their funds can. Today the general opinion of experts is that a minimum of 40,000 people is desirable with a minimum budget of \$25,000. The American Library Association publishes the minimum basis of support at \$1.00 per capita of the population. While this is very desirable the minimum figure in Canada is often put at 50¢ per capita.

Small libraries become stagnant and die, but the larger regional library can be an increasingly vital force in any community. This has been proved in Great Britain, in the United States, and in British Columbia and Prince Edward Island, as well as in many European countries.

GREAT BRITAIN

In 1917 a survey was made of libraries in Great Britain. There were libraries everywhere in the small towns and villages as well as in the cities, but the survey revealed an almost uniform state of stagnation in the smaller libraries. The report stated that "Whereas a town of 500,000 inhabitants will require roughly ten times as much gas or electricity as a town of 50,000 and a hundred times as much as a town of 5,000, this rule does not hold good in library service. A community of 5,000 may include readers with as great variety of tastes as a community of 500,000 and will therefore require to have access to as wide a range of books. For a public composed of general readers with a variety of wants, no small library can provide an adequate service."

As no small community could support the necessary service, a larger unit of support, larger in area and therefore population, was necessary. The county was taken as the unit and since 1922 in England there have been established in all the counties county libraries, linking up and strengthening the existing small libraries. They were helped for the first few years by the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust but when the experimental stage was over and they had proved themselves, they were left to local support. It is noteworthy that no county allowed its library to lapse and that Lancashire, which suffered great economic misery owing to the collapse of its cotton industry and the closing of many of its coal

mines, every year increased the county grant for library purposes. Evidently it was regarded not as a luxury but as one of the basic necessities.

These county libraries in England are linked into a national system and "the reader in a remote hamlet now has almost as easy access to the books he needs as his previously more fortunate brother in London or one of our other great library centres." This was indeed a new deal for the country reader.

All over the British Empire news of this British library system has resulted in an increased interest in the needs of rural and small town readers and an effort to meet them by large-scale library systems.

UNITED STATES

For over thirty years there have been county libraries in the United States. In recent years, however, it has been realized that the county, in the United States and in Canada, is not always a sufficiently large unit. English authorities now state that the minimum population for the support of an adequate library is 75,000. Authorities in the United States and Canada put the minimum at 40,000 with a minimum annual appropriation of \$25,000. Where the population of a county reaches the minimum the county is a convenient unit but often a larger region and population is advisable.

Within the last few years there have been innumerable experiments in district library service in the United States. Sometimes several counties or parishes have united, sometimes the unit of service has disregarded county lines. A study of what has been done in the United States offers valuable suggestions for us. The American Library Association publication "Regional and District Libraries"* is a summary of achievements and it has a list of references for those wishing to investigate further.

CANADA

British Columbia's Union Libraries

The Fraser Valley Union Library in British Columbia was the pioneer in the "regional" type of library organization in Canada. For five years beginning in 1930 the Carnegie Corporation gave

* A.L.A. Library Extension Board. "Regional and District Libraries," A.L.A. 1942.

the total sum of \$100,000 for a demonstration of rural library service in the Fraser Valley.

Previously in 1927-28 the British Columbia Public Library Commission had made a detailed comprehensive library survey of the Province. As there are no counties in British Columbia the Commission had recommended the organization of large library districts, made up of rural municipalities, cities and school districts, which would provide a tax-supported public library service for the area.

The Fraser Valley Library Demonstration proved its success, when, at the end of the demonstration period the library was taken over by the people of the Valley who have since that time financed it themselves. It consisted in 1940 of a book stock of 34,296, serving a population of 36,752 through a distributing system of 27 branches, 62 bus stations and 53 schools. This service is supplemented by a book automobile which serves those remote from branches, and ties the system together.

The Fraser Valley Union Library serves a territory which includes no less than 21 governing bodies, made up of two cities, two villages, eight district municipalities and nine school districts. The Library has a Board of Management composed of representatives from all the districts and is supported at a rate of 35¢ per capita of the population and assessed for the respective units in proportion to population. The governing body of each contributing unit has the responsibility of collecting its tax in one of several ways, a straight grant payable out of general taxation, a special library tax on land alone, a personal or poll tax, or any combination of these. There is evidently no uniform practice. The problems connected with this question of financing have been dealt with in two articles by the one-time Librarian of the Fraser Valley Union Library and his experience is instructive.*

Following the Fraser Valley Library Demonstration, and taking advantage of the library legislation which had been enacted, the British Columbia Library Commission was enabled through a grant of \$19,500 from the Carnegie

* MORISON, C. K. "Poverty and Progress in the Fraser Valley". Library Journal, October 15, 1939.

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Corporation to initiate two other regional libraries, one in the Okanagan Valley, serving a population of 16,112 at a per capita tax rate of 43¢, the other on Vancouver Island serving a population of 22,950 at a per capita tax rate of 40¢.

It is the opinion of those familiar with the British Columbia union libraries that the minimum tax should be 50¢ per capita if a reasonably good standard of service is to be maintained.

One of the difficulties encountered in the Okanagan Valley and Vancouver Island was the lack of any considerable initial book stock. There was some assistance from the Carnegie Corporation and some from the British Columbia Library Commission, but not enough to give them a really vigorous start. The Commission report of 1940 states however that it "has endeavoured to alleviate the situation by assisting the union libraries in the matter of book purchases. During the past two years substantial grants have been made for the purchase of non-fiction, selected by the respective libraries and left with them on semi-permanent loan."

In British Columbia, as in many of the States, the desirability of more Provincial aid is very clear. The report of 1940 states that "It becomes increasingly evident that more, not less, in the way of Provincial aid will have to be forthcoming if the library is to take its place as one of the essential services of the Province."

The Prince Edward Island Library

The administrative problem of providing library service in Prince Edward Island was comparatively simple. The population of this smallest of Canada's provinces is only about 90,000, largely engaged in agriculture and fishing, and could best be served through one province-wide system.

From 1933-36 the Carnegie Corporation gave \$110,000 to the Government of Prince Edward Island for a library demonstration in the Province. At the end of the demonstration the library was taken over by the Provincial Government. Today it is supported at a rate of 27¢ per capita. It consists of some 50,000 volumes, distributed through 24 branches and with deposits in many country schools. Every summer the book stock in each branch is changed so that the entire stock is being gradually circulated through the Island.

The Prince Edward Island Library has always worked in the closest cooperation with the provincial Adult Education League and is the distributing centre for its pamphlets and study material.

The per capita cost of 27¢ is low, though there are features about the Prince Edward Island system which make its operation economical. Neither at the Headquarters nor at any of the branches is there any rental, these costs being met locally by the district and at Headquarters from the general fund of the Province. The impracticability of using a bookmobile for outlying districts because of winter conditions removes that item of expenditure, and although all branch custodians are paid a small fee the total cost of their services is a modest one.

Ontario

Ontario, the wealthiest of Canada's provinces, has, as would be expected, the highest standard of library service. The rural areas even here, however, are not well served.

Steps have been taken in some counties in the last ten years, through informal cooperation of existing libraries, to strengthen the book collections and improve the service in the smaller libraries. There are now eight such county library associations. In each association the participating libraries contribute \$25.00 (in one county \$15.00, another \$10.00) to a common fund which is used to buy books for a common pool. The county councils also make grants varying from \$200.00 to \$600.00, grants which are matched by a like amount from the Provincial Government plus a small legislative grant.

The contributing libraries receive from 300 to 1000 books per year, depending on the size of the association and the length of time it has been in operation. There is every evidence that this blood transfusion vitalizes the small libraries and the books enjoy a good circulation.

These county library associations could not have been started except for the existence of strong central libraries to act as focal points and encourage and help in their establishment and organization. This help is in some cases voluntary but in others some payment is made by the association.

The fact that none of the associations has a budget of more than \$2,000.00 per annum, and

several considerably less, indicates the limitations of this service. It is also restricted by the fact that it can function only through established libraries. There is at present no legislation empowering County Councils in Ontario to levy taxes for library purposes, the annual grant being in the nature of a gift to be solicited each year. When adequate legislation and financial support is forthcoming the habit and framework of cooperation established by these associations will have paved the way for a real rural service.

Eastern Townships of Quebec Province

The Eastern townships Library Association has, since 1938, been experimenting in an informal cooperative library service on lines similar to the Ontario plan. The initiative came from the adult education service financed there by the Carnegie Corporation under the aegis of Macdonald College of McGill University. The McGill Travelling Libraries collection and its librarian at Macdonald College have given help and direction to the experiment.

Nova Scotia

British Columbia, Prince Edward Island and Ontario offer suggestive types of rural library service. Nova Scotia has as yet no established system but its plan, at the moment delayed by war conditions, has points of interest.

Since 1937 the Nova Scotia Government has shown itself aware of the need for libraries at present practically non-existent in the Province. In 1937 a survey of library conditions and needs was made and the report printed. On its recommendation in 1938 a Regional Libraries Commission of five members was appointed, and in December, 1938, a Director of Libraries was brought in.

The plan of the Nova Scotia Regional Libraries Commission was the establishment of seven or eight regional libraries as quickly as public opinion could be made conscious of the need. The matter was put before provincial and local gatherings of all the organizations that might be expected to get behind the scheme. While public opinion was being influenced in this way, the Nova Scotia Government has taken several further steps indicating its interest. Provincial support to the extent of one dollar for every three dollars voted locally (this was the Government support given

in Nova Scotia to public schools) was offered in 1939 and in 1940, this was increased to one dollar for every dollar voted locally for the support of regional libraries.

In addition to annual maintenance costs one of the problems to be faced in setting up libraries is initial book stock. The Carnegie Corporation has earmarked \$50,000 to be used for this purpose in Nova Scotia.

It was felt that with this substantial offer from the Nova Scotia Government and this generous help by the Carnegie Corporation it would be possible to induce rural municipalities to unite in paying the modest remainder of the 35¢-50¢ per capita required for the support of regional libraries. According to the Nova Scotia Regional Libraries Act the tax is to be a property tax, and the proportion to be paid by each unit in a county is to be in the ratio already determined in the Nova Scotia Assessment Act for all matters of joint-expenditure, a ratio fixed according to property assessment. Several Nova Scotia counties are large enough to form a satisfactory unit. Whether the smaller ones would contract with a neighboring county or would contract for service from the Commission was left for future decision.

In May 1940 the prospects of establishing the first library of this type in Nova Scotia seemed fairly certain. The fall of France in June had a paralyzing effect and since that time it has been impossible to take any action.

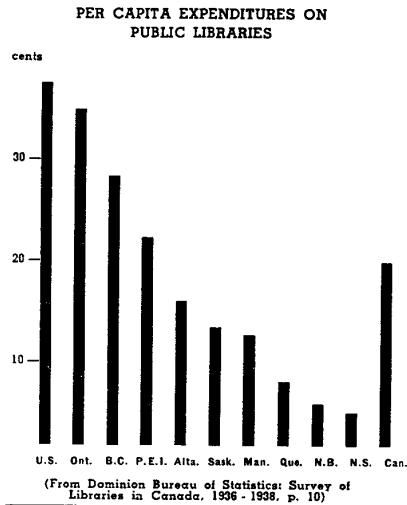
The types of library service so far sketched represent plans and achievements in up-to-date library systems. They all aim to put at the disposal of anyone in the area all the available resources of the printed word and the professional services of trained librarians. All the books in these regional libraries are at the disposal of any reader. Through periodical exchange of book collections and encouragement of requests for special needs, through book-lists and radio book-talks every effort is made to bring the library's resources to the attention of all users in the area served. By inter-library loan any specialized book and pamphlet not in common demand can usually be secured.

In all these libraries there is a large proportion of children's books. These are circulated from the branches and deposit stations just as are adult books. In Prince Edward Island there is also a deposit frequently changed in many of the rural

schools. In British Columbia the Council of Public Instruction makes a grant of money to the Union Libraries to be expended by them for school library purposes.

Other Provinces

As the purpose of this publication is to point the way to possible future developments in rural library service, no effort need be made to enumerate and describe all the miscellaneous methods of book distribution which have grown up in the various provinces through a variety of agencies. They have often been excellent palliatives but the need now is for enduring systems, tax-supported



and recognized as an essential part of our social and educational machinery. Something however should be said about Travelling Libraries and Open Shelf Libraries.

Travelling Libraries

In every province of Canada there are travelling libraries. These consist of boxes of books sent out to supplement the book stocks of small public and school libraries, and to provide one avenue to library service in communities otherwise without any. In Nova Scotia, Acadia, Dalhousie and St. Francis Xavier Universities offer such a service. McGill University circulates

travelling libraries in Quebec and the Maritime Provinces. Ontario and the four western provinces operate a provincial system of the same type.

Open Shelf Libraries

This service, the loan of a requested book or books by mail to individual borrowers, is offered in most provinces through Library Commissions, Departments of Education, University Extension services, etc.

Travelling libraries and open shelf systems are generally a stop-gap and no substitute for full library service. They may have their place in any provincial system but that place will be to supplement a real service. For very sparsely populated areas travelling library boxes may always be needed, and the mailing of books from a central agency eliminates unnecessary duplication of rarely used titles.

CONCLUSIONS

Even a brief glance at the type of rural library service existing and being developed in Canada shows that the type will vary according to provincial and local conditions and needs. It will depend on existing library facilities and how far these can be extended to serve adequately the rural areas. Ontario is experimenting in this direction. Local and provincial administrative tradition and usage have always to be considered. In some cases it is possible that university extension departments concerned with rural adult education might determine the pattern of the library scheme.

What is needed in every province is a library commission keenly aware of the need for universal library service which will formulate a provincial plan and work towards its establishment. Such a commission usually consists of five (sometimes seven) members, serving say five years, one member retiring each year. An alternative plan of having administration of libraries under another government department, often the Department of Education, is not usually advisable for the reason that libraries then are in danger of receiving only secondary consideration.

This library commission will need the cooperation of an experienced librarian. If this is not available within the province, application might be made to the Canadian Library Council which would at least suggest and might be able to provide

a suitable person. The various pamphlets and articles listed at the end of this statement will give many suggestions and warnings, as well as providing some ammunition for campaigns.

One problem is going to thrust itself more and more on the attention of people concerned with establishing new public services wholly or partly on a municipal financial basis. That is the general problem of municipal finance. While social and educational services, partly or entirely paid for by municipalities, expand and must expand, the municipality has very limited taxing powers to meet these increasing demands. At the same time municipalities have in the recent past been burdened with services which, in whole or in part, do not arise from local causes and should not be a local responsibility. It is natural that these overburdened municipal councils are reluctant to add taxes for new public services.

A very substantial degree of provincial support will usually be essential in establishing adequate rural library service in those areas where, up to the present, there has been practically none. The non-existence of the service indicates apathy or financial stringency, or both, and provincial support will be needed as an inducement towards local action. In some provinces it is possible that the most effective and economical plan would be a library service almost entirely supported by the provincial government. Some local participation is of course very desirable as an assurance of local interest and responsibility.

The fact that there are such marked inequalities in library provision between the Canadian provinces (see chart) suggests the need for some such equalization as was recommended by the Sirois Commission. Since library provision is generally proportionate to the wealth of the provinces it is reasonable to suppose that it is not greater enlightenment but a heavier purse that account for a fairly generous provision in some provinces. National adjustment grants as suggested by the Commission, or some suitable alternative, would ensure that no province would fall below a reasonable standard of library provision. This is important for Canada as a whole which is only weakened by its backward areas with low levels of education. The population of such areas has not the opportunity to play its proper part as enlightened citizens of a free country.

The prevailing scarcity of library service in rural Canada is today an urgent challenge to intelligent leaders in every field of social and educational activity in the Dominion. So far, except where the Carnegie Corporation has set up Demonstrations, very little has been done. Following the last war there was a remarkable extension of library service in all the democracies of Europe: in England plans for such extension were made in 1917 while the war was still in progress. There is need now for a similar library revolution in Canada while this one is being fought. When we win this war it is the common man in Canada as in all the United Nations who will be the victor and who will largely decide

on the kind of peace and the sort of world which is to follow. Information and knowledge about the issues at stake need wide circulation such as can only be effectively accomplished by books. Edgar Mowrer, well-known American journalist now at the Office of War Information of the United States, recently said "Believe me, whether we get a temporary peace or a lasting peace, . . . a bad peace or a good peace will result very largely from the kind of books our people read between now and the day the peace congress (if there is one) gets going. Authors will have a lot to say about it." Rural Canada should be given the chance to listen to them and to prepare for the great work of reconstruction that lies ahead.

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