

CENTRAL BUREAU FOR LIBRARY-BOOK IMPORTS.

The 50-per-cent. restriction on the importation of books which the Government found it necessary to impose in October, 1939, would have prevented New Zealand libraries from obtaining through the usual channels book-supplies comparable with those obtained in the past. Not only would there have been fewer books available, but, as booksellers tend to bring in only those publications the resale of which is certain and the profits from which are highest, there would have been a qualitative as well as a quantitative decline in the books available in local bookshops. It is obvious that if importations of books are restricted the cultural and educational effects will be lessened if libraries are reasonably well stocked and people can have access to them. To meet the position the Hon. the Minister of Customs approved special facilities for the importation of books for public and university libraries. A Central Bureau, under the administration of this Service, was set up with authority to recommend to the Customs Department the issue of special licenses for library-book imports.

Such licenses for book imports, when granted by the Customs Department, whether to a local bookseller acting on behalf of a library, or to a library itself, are treated as additional to the licenses granted in the normal way and are not a charge against the allocation of 50 per cent. of 1938 imports which is used as a basis for the import of books and printed papers.

The book fund of each library during the year ended 31st March, 1938, is taken as the basis of calculation for the issue of special licenses. It is presumed that libraries will have no difficulty in obtaining books to the value of 50 per cent. of their 1938 book funds. The Central Bureau recommends the issue of special licenses to import books to the value of the remaining 50 per cent., *provided* that this 50 per cent. is spent on non-fiction books and periodicals, and that lists of these are submitted to the Bureau for checking, to avoid undue duplication. The Bureau does not recommend the issue of special licenses for the purchase of fiction in or translated into the English language, or for non-fiction books of a very trivial type. It also reserves the right to refuse to recommend a license for the purchase of any book of which, in the opinion of the Bureau, there is an adequate number of copies in the Dominion.

The result of the activities of the Bureau should be to encourage better standards of book-selection and to prevent any deterioration of New Zealand libraries as a result of the book-import restrictions, to eliminate duplicate buying where this would be wasteful, to discover gaps in the stocks of the main libraries, to build up a union catalogue of books in New Zealand libraries, thereby very much facilitating inter-library loans, and to stimulate the co-operative use of book stock by New Zealand libraries. These aims will take time to realize in their entirety, but it is encouraging to note that a beginning has been made.

It was necessary that any library undertaking the work of administering such a bureau should have the requisite bibliographical material and trade publications giving full information about published literature, be a large enough purchaser of books on its own account to be interested in and familiar with current books, be situated in Wellington and have recognition from the Government, and be in touch with a large number of smaller libraries. The Country Library Service, although it has been established but a short time, was able to fulfil these conditions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

The past year has been a very busy one, and thanks are due to the staff of the Service for their loyal and cheerful assistance at all times.

The co-operation given in many ways by hundreds of libraries throughout the country is gratefully acknowledged.

I have, &c.,
G. T. ALLEY, Officer in Charge.

Approximate Cost of Paper.—Preparation, not given; printing (770 copies), £7 10s.

By Authority: E. V. PAUL, Government Printer, Wellington.—1940.

Price 6d.]

2—H. 32A.