

Supply of Books and Periodicals.

The collection and sorting of the great amount of material needed for all the needs of the War Library Service have taxed the time and energy of many, librarians, their staffs, volunteer helpers, organizations such as the New Zealand Boy Scouts' Association and the New Zealand Returned Soldiers' Association. Although much material received has been useless a very handsome proportion has been of great service. The generosity of the people of New Zealand in helping so liberally is gratefully acknowledged. The press has assisted very greatly in giving publicity to appeals, as have the radio broadcasting services.

Development.

Plans are in hand for further improvement of the library facilities in all camps and for the strengthening of the supply of books and periodicals to all units of the armed forces, particularly those which are overseas. Bigger stocks of modern worthwhile books are to be built up in the main-camp libraries, by purchase where necessary. These, added to the considerable loans of books from the Country Library Service and the provision of the adequate library buildings and staff already made, will ensure that those who are training to fight for this country will not lack opportunities for information, culture, and recreation through reading.

CENTRAL BUREAU FOR LIBRARY BOOK IMPORTS.

Since the inception of the Bureau in February, 1940, until 31st March, 1941, 210 recommendations for special license to the value of £6,686 (N.Z. currency) have been made for twenty libraries. The recommendations have covered non-fiction books and periodicals and children's fiction of recognized quality. This was included because of the importance of encouraging libraries to raise their standard of fiction in junior departments, and fiction of this type is rarely included in local booksellers' stock. The Bureau has refused to recommend for special license social, illustrated, and fiction periodicals and adult fiction.

In order to fulfil the functions of the Bureau—namely, to prevent unnecessary duplicate buying and to discover, with a view to eliminating, gaps in the stocks of the main libraries—an easily consultable record of the orders recommended had to be made. This was done by using standard-size library catalogue cards 7.5 by 12.5 cm., one card to a title, and stamping on the face of the card the location of the book. This record, however, covered only current buying by libraries for which special licenses were required. More information as to library holdings was necessary if the Bureau was to perform its functions efficiently.

Union Catalogue.

This led to the revival of the union catalogue project using the Central Bureau already in existence as a basis. The New Zealand Library Association asked libraries to co-operate by forwarding to the Central Bureau as from 1st January, 1941, copies of their main catalogue entries for all non-fiction accessions for inclusion in the union catalogue. Thus the Bureau would be able to record all current accessions by contributing libraries, and not only such titles as were ordered through special license. Even so, valuable as this information is proving, not until all non-fiction holdings of New Zealand libraries are incorporated in the union catalogue will the book stock of the Dominion be marshalled to provide an adequate basis for scientific as opposed to haphazard coverage of books published to ensure that at least one copy of all essential books should be available in New Zealand.

The second function of the union catalogue—that of acting as a clearing house for inter-library loans—suffers under the same handicap of insufficient records. In spite of this, however, the catalogue has already provided useful information as to which libraries possess certain books.

Since 1st January, 1941, twenty-three libraries have notified accessions, the total number of entries received being 4,144. The card-stock of the union catalogue now approximates 18,000 entries.

REPORT OF THE LIAISON OFFICER (MISS E. J. CARNELL).

Sixteen local libraries taking the free service were visited, and in nearly every case the committee or representatives of it interviewed and invited, in fact urged, to voice criticisms and suggestions. Many committees were unable to make any adverse comment at all, complete satisfaction with the Country Library Service was frequently expressed, and in no case was there, on balance, dissatisfaction.

Results of Participation.

Increases in the number of registered readers of from 90 to 320, from 30 to 146, from 75 to 260 are typical of those reported. These figures need to be treated with some reserve, for in a free library the discrepancy between the number of registered readers and the number of active readers is greater than in a subscription library, but it is indisputable that "going free" and participation in the Country Library Service has everywhere increased, and in many towns has multiplied the number of people using the library. Statistics of daily issues, where they are available, are satisfactory; in several cases they reach the high average of fifteen books per head of population per year. An average of ten per year can be considered good. The site of the library building has a direct bearing upon the extent to which it is used. The quality of the work done is dependent mainly upon the quality of the local librarian. Even in the least active of the free libraries the wide range of books available means that the quality of the book service offered readers compares favourably with that of any library of similar size outside the Service, and in the most active of the free libraries it is incomparably superior. There