

LIBRARIES IN AUSTRALIA

Experts Find Lack Of Public Interest

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Authoritative, detailed information about Australian libraries has hitherto been obtainable only with difficulty, but the deficiency has now been made good by the publication of "Australian Libraries: A Survey of Conditions and Suggestions for Their Improvement," the work of Mr. Ralph Munn, Director of the Carnegie Library of Pittsburg, U.S.A., and Mr. Ernest R. Pitt, Librarian of the Public Library of Victoria, Melbourne. The book has been issued under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and published by the Australian Council for Educational Research. These two library experts, after a tour of Australia, from Brisbane to Perth, have not only made extensive comments on the habits and tastes of the public, but have made valuable recommendations towards remedying the deficiencies they found in them.

Their survey is introduced by Mr. Frank Tate, former Director of Education for Victoria, who, to his exceptional wide practical experience, has added a sympathetic understanding of the problem of enabling a community, compulsorily taught in early years, and further "taught" to knowledge by cultivating a taste for a further, more valuable self education. Speaking as his text Carnegie's maxim that "the greatest enemy of human progress is ignorance, and that the way to combat it is the cultivation of the habit of reading," he has laid out the steps taken by Carnegie to make books freely available to everyone. "If it is not," Carnegie argued, "that schools are maintained for the benefit of the community for the well-being of the whole, it is right also that libraries should be maintained. And so we have to every community that was willing to undertake the relatively small cost of maintenance, and to the United States, so far as the phrase recently voiced by His Majesty the King at the opening of the new Municipal Library, "magnificent opportunity for the advancement and for the pleasant use of leisure." To our urban population," the King said, "reading is as essential to health of mind as open spaces to health of body."

Carnegie's Endowment

Carnegie's work is completed, in Britain and the United States, so far as the provision of buildings is concerned; and the splendid endowments that bequeathed for the furtherance of adult education are peculiarly being utilised in improving the efficiency of the existing library services, of which British and American librarians are particularly given towards the training of librarians. "A mere collection of books, however large," quotes Mr. Tate from the report of the Public Libraries Committee, published in England in 1927, "cannot, by itself, perform the service which a well-administered library can, and should render to the community." For the larger majority of the population the library staff are the guides who introduce them into the kingdom of knowledge. But, as the same report goes on to say, "the qualifications can be too high, while it is a disaster to the community if it is too low." The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust has accordingly rendered great help in developing the training of librarians. Mr. Tate in his survey, however, points out which have been made in England during the past few years, not only in the provision of libraries and in their services, but also in forming those services into regional groups, which make available to the public a wide range of books within the regions; and in establishing the National Central Library, which acts as a feeder to the regional libraries, and as a collector throughout the whole of England.

The survey made by Messrs. Munn and Pitt is a most interesting and valuable work, after Mr. Tate's account of the splendid provision made in England and the United States, and in Australia was better provided with local libraries in 1930 than it is today. Almost every district in the town now contains a decent institute or school of arts, many of which give evidence of having had a former period of real greatness. Was the Great Britain, the United States, and to a lesser extent Canada and New Zealand, have made tremendous progress in the field of public libraries. Australia has accomplished almost any

conditions. Most Australians have had no idea of a progressive and complete library system, and know nothing of its functions or facilities. It is pathetic to observe the pride and complacency with which the committees exhibit wretched little institutions which have long since become cemeteries of old and forgotten books.

Reasons for Backwardness

"It is difficult to find the basic reason for Australia's lack of public libraries," say the authors. "Some observers point to the ubiquitous commercial libraries which are supplying the nation's reading matter. In fact, the commercial libraries are equally numerous library systems, which also have newspapers, sporting papers, and daily news-backed notes are sold and read here more than in other countries. Some Australian points to the favorable climate and the natural love of outdoor sports as leaving less time for reading. The fact that the public library service has deterred the establishment, although the Brisbane money can be put to other uses, and recreances. Library progress in other countries has been greatly furthered by the work of librarians, teachers and educators who have proved the value of good books and reading. In Australia, the librarian are few in number and quite inexperienced. Librarians have not yet become champions of public libraries. Finally, the great area and sparsity of the population present problems in library development which are admittedly difficult of solution even though there is a strong leadership and full appreciation of libraries by the ratepayers.

"Although there is difficulty in assigning the reasons, there is no doubt of the fact that the progress lagged behind in her development of libraries. Compulsory education prevails in Australia, and large amounts of public money are spent on the maintenance of schools. Libraries, however, are still regarded in some quarters as luxuries, and money is spent on the maintenance of groups of citizens should provide for themselves by subscription, aided perhaps by a subsidy from the Government. That the public library is an agency for popular education and culture, continuing the work of the school, is not a conception which is not yet accepted by the majority of the ratepayers. It is significant, however, that where a library service is offered, the response of readers is as eager as in England and other countries. The public libraries in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth are used extensively. It is not believed that there is no organized, or even audible demand for the establishment of free local public libraries. They would be maintained, if they were.

Continued on Page 21, Col. 2.

Continued from Page 18, Col. 6.

The library system of Australia, described with such understanding by the authors of the survey, may be briefly summarised to consist of State, University and Parliamentary Libraries in all the capital cities. In all the States there has grown up a series of independent libraries, known as the Queensland "schools of art"; in Victoria, "mechanics institutes," and in New South Wales, "schools of art." The public libraries, generally attached to public halls, with various social functions, are widely and generally available. Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth are dependent on them for lending service. A few of the best State libraries, however, are the Sydney Municipal Library and the Prahran (Melbourne suburb) Public Library. In Melbourne there is also the Carnegie Library, the State Library, and in Hobart, the Public (Carnegie) Library combines reference and lending services, and is managed jointly by the State and the city.

In commenting on the State Libraries, Messrs. Munn and Pitt point to the fact that the Australian library system. They have been described paradoxically as the backbone of the State. The State Library, the institutions which have kept the system from developing a backbone; and the State Library, the backbone of the population in the principal cities, which are so far apart that large reference libraries are not possible. "But in no case has the State Library been generally treated, and if the money spent on it is not used to benefit the public, many scattered libraries throughout the States, there might now be a few decent libraries in Melbourne and Tasmania, "independence and inefficiency." "We have kept their State libraries from being comparable with the fine reference libraries in the other capitals. Those in New South Wales had the best of the State Library, but, but in South and Western Australia the State libraries are highly

Country Services

The contribution of the Government to the improvement of libraries in the capital cities, in addition to their support of the State collection and Parliamentarianism, and their contributions towards the University libraries, they have in varying degrees accepted and encouraged the establishment and maintenance of Institutes and Schools of Arts. This has taken the form in New South Wales of a Department of Service from the State Libraries of boxes of books circulating among the country, combined with a free service of loans of books to individuals in any part of those States; and in South Australia of the distribution of books to the country, which eventually become their own property through the S.A. Institutes' Association, to the activities of which, in co-operative working, publishing a journal and so forth, several tributes are paid throughout the survey.

The Department of "Establishment Libraries" is devoted to a suggested plan for public library service in Australia. Its authors begin with a strong recommendation of the National Library at Canberra which can give a service to all the libraries throughout the country. It has a great depository collection, including highly specialised works that other libraries cannot purchase, which can be loaned to other libraries, giving historical records; giving bibliographical service, and so on.

In the capital cities, to the most economical method of supplying lending library service is through a combined State and municipal library service, with a separate metropolitan area, by which branches will be established in the suburbs, linked with the central libraries. Cities of 20,000 inhabitants and upwards, outside the metropolitan areas, could support from rates municipal free libraries; those in populous districts becoming regional libraries for their surrounding districts; for example Newcastle and Geelong. "The State Governments alone are capable of making immediate improvements," says the report. "In rural service, the system of regional reference libraries projected by the Public Library of New South Wales, is recommended to other States. In view of the strongly centralised State Governments in Australia, it is urged, consideration should also be given to the district systems of reference and lending libraries by the State Governments. Overseas experience indicates that public libraries should be established as a result of local initiative and be governed and financed by the local authorities. Their own conditions make local library development fall properly within the State's functions, and a separate municipal institute system, with its subscription fees, is entirely out of date from an overseas viewpoint, it is almost unnecessary in Australia, and inadequate to the need. Pending the further development of the country, the improvement in Australia, and the rise of a more general demand for libraries, it appears wise to concentrate attention on the Institutes. This is suggested in Australia, and co-operation which is suggested as a function of the State Library.

ADV. 20-1-35

END OF SCIENCE CONGRESS

Protest Against Banning of Books

CONCISE MEETING

MELBOURNE, JANUARY 23. After the executive committee of the congress had sat for an hour and a half today, considering resolutions passed by various sections, the General Council endorsed a large number of them. They included a resolution of protest against the scientific workers who had been expelled from Germany, and one protesting against the banning of books in Austria. On the banning of books to the Prime Minister (Mr. Lyons), and the Prime Minister of New Zealand (Mr. Forbes).

GEOLOGY OF S.A. HILLS

LATE SIR EDGEWORTH DAVID'S THEORY VINDICATED

Sir—It is very remarkable that so soon after the death of Sir Edgeworth David there should be forthcoming evidence in favour of the conclusions of his hills afford organic remains of a pre-Cambrian existence. The discovery of the fossils of the Cambrian at Tretees Gully in the Proterozoic zone, proves beyond all doubt that his beloved friend was right. It is a most interesting coincidence that geology friends that, when Sir Edgeworth published an account of his findings in the "Advertiser" in 1910, he had written "The Advertiser," asking for the closest scrutiny of the data, reminding our readers of Sir Edgeworth's reputation, and I called attention to the stir his announcement would create throughout the world—which was only too well verified! However, my present purpose is to call attention to the great importance this addition of Dr. Tillyard's work makes to the chain of evidence which takes us back to the beginning of things! How Darwin would have exulted in such a find! In the Proterozoic Period, which he believed to be the beginning of the Cambrian, he saw that of the succeeding Carboniferous, or even the Tertiary; and in which he believed were first developed the conditions of the succeeding organic beings. It is true he deplored of their remains being ever discovered. Congratulations, therefore, to Dr. Tillyard!

May I call attention to Mr. C. A. Sussich's address, "Australia in the Ice Age?" This period is not of course, the same that covered Europe at the end of the Tertiary, but was an interval following the outbreak of volcanic activity. The significance of this "ice age" following such extensive volcanic activity, and its importance to the suggestion that these outbreaks eject such quantities of ash as to entirely shut off the sun's heat rays from the earth, and so bring about glaciation. It is not surprising that the "ice age" has followed extreme volcanism in several instances, would go to support the view that the "ice age" has followed in several instances, which could only repeat what I have said in former letters in "The Advertiser."

EDWARD DUGDALE.
Prospect Gardens.

"I consider that the proceedings have been in every way satisfactory. The most successful meetings of the kind ever held in Australia. The Association was very successful in its work (Sir Douglas Mawson), when the congress ended today. The value of the work, which a gathering of Sir Douglas Mawson suggested, lay in several factors. It enabled scientific workers to exchange views, and to "freshen up." It gave a lead to Governments and other institutions which were interested in scientific progress, and perhaps, a little important, it stimulated, through the reports in the newspapers, public appreciation of the value of science."

Invitation To British Association

There is a possibility that the British Association for the Advancement of Science may be invited to hold a meeting in Australia in 1938, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Australia. This proposal was brought before the general council of the British Association, and was supported by Thomas Dunbin, of Sydney who suggested that the executive of the association should be invited to send an invitation to the British Association. It was agreed to refer the matter to the Executive of the British Association.

Unit Of Gravity Of Human Body

For the purpose of determining the unit of gravity of the human body, an ingenious machine has been devised and built at the University of Toronto. W. A. Osborne being responsible for the theoretical design, and Mr. H. Paul, of the mechanical department, for the construction.

In a joint paper read before the physiology section of the meeting, Mr. Paul described the machine, and later it was demonstrated. Although the machine was simple, yet the values obtained upon which the subject lies have his own gravity of gravitation. The machine is a third of an ounce placed on the foot from its own weight will disturb the balance. The distance of the centre of gravity of the machine.