

As a consequence the family remains firmly established as the unit of communal rural life; and as a corollary to this the country doctor remains the medical adviser, counsellor and friend of families that he knows well rather than the somewhat casual mentor of individuals who may be here today and gone tomorrow. That the sympathetic advice of a friend in whom one has had confidence since childhood is good medicine is well known to anyone who has ever tried it. The doctor is repaid by a trust in his skill and a gratitude for his good offices which is only too uncommon among city people.

So it may be said that there are compensations which should make country practice tolerable, indeed attractive to certain types of men. The establishment of scholarships which would make the study of medicine possible for country boys is needed on a larger scale. For these are the men who will make the very best country doctors as they have in the past.

The efforts of the rural and small town doctor are of particular and far reaching

importance because it is so often he who sees the patient first and it is his responsibility to be able to recognise the presence of serious disease in its very earliest stages when prompt treatment is so often effective. Again, he is the keystone in the arch of preventive medicine for without his co-operation public health workers can accomplish little. They will find him at times critical but rarely unkind, somewhat attached to the old ways but willing to share the burden of all good works even to the point of being careless of his own rights. His life is no idyll. It has nothing of the romantic or sentimental about it and many of its values achieve permanence by a kind of indirection. In the unaccented reality of each days effort and gain or loss he learns the simple courage of things that seem drab and ordinary, the courage of the poor who conquer pain in silence asking no pity yet knowing compassion. And from such as these he learns respect for suffering and can come to endure not only hardship but his own hopeless imperfection.

Public Library Systems

By SIRHINDI

I MAKE no apology for classing Public Library Systems as Public Affairs. They are admittedly desirable. If books are truly medicine for the soul they are as necessary to public well-being as departments of public health. Unfortunately in public affairs it is too often customary to leave matters of the soul for Sundays only. When it comes to libraries I deplore it.

Considering their literary traditions, the Maritimes should don sackcloth and ashes when contemplating their library systems. Prince Edward Island may claim to be excused. The particularly small province tempted the Carnegie Trust to venture on an experimental hand-out and the Island accepted; nevertheless we seem to have heard little of

that system of late. New Brunswick has a system as inactive as the Sleeping Beauty, and Nova Scotia has not even that.

Let us look first at things in general, however. It cannot be much more than a decade ago that the library-conscious first heard of county libraries. It was natural that when the limitations of city and town libraries were recognized the county should be the first regional unit tried. Soon a larger administrative unit than the average county was found desirable. Regions were formed and these usually were and still are groups of counties.

Every library region requires a central circulating and reference library, and as many branch libraries as population

demands and communications permit. Book depots and reading rooms may form library outposts and these may or may not be embryonic branch libraries. Usually a rural population without easy access to libraries or depots needs a travelling library or bookmobile system. The "open shelf" is a service of great value; it is a collection of the more expensive books such as professional people in the country districts—e.g. doctors, clergymen, teachers and so on—would like to read but cannot afford to buy. Generally they are circulated by mail. Methods of moving books round among the libraries of a region vary according to geography, climate and existing transport facilities. Those wishing to study regional policy and practice might well begin with California, then British Columbia and Ontario, bearing in mind that in application of principles to other regions various characteristics may entail changes. In the Maritimes, for example, the Acadian element is a factor to be considered.

Once regional libraries came, it was inevitable that a co-ordinating state or provincial system should be demanded. It is logical too. Within one recognized governmental unit it is absurd to have varying regional systems and even one area with and another without regional libraries.

Be it stated here and now, it is useless to play with makeshift, modified, half-and-half provincial library systems. If a province is not prepared to establish a complete system, it had better leave libraries alone. For example the idea of a bookmobile service is a sure-fire attraction for the politician; it is so easy to dress up as a vote-catcher. But it, or any other feature, alone is trifling with the affair; it is not a suit of clothes unless trousers, coat and waistcoat are all there.

A comprehensive view of the purpose of public libraries should never be lost. There are some who think of a library system as educational only. It should never be so limited. It is designed to place at the disposal of the public the entire range of literature. That requires a balanced combination of the instruction-

al and the entertaining in books and periodicals. The stomach of the average soul cannot stand its medicine too strong.

A department of education should not be given control of a province's library system. The reason is that a sparrowhawk and an eagle in the same cage are likely to end in the slow starvation of the former and some bitter fighting before that happens. Ask Ontario librarians.

Immediately before hard times descended on us the government of New Brunswick had given sympathetic ear to a scheme designed for provincial libraries in a system. A Library Bill was enacted and a Commission appointed. This law provides for a Provincial Library Council as an advisory body to the Commission.

The Commission worked out a definite scheme, dividing the province into five regions, one to be established annually. The yearly cost during the organization period was estimated at \$30,000, to be borne one-half by the province and the other half by the county and municipal councils of the regions organized. The councils would thereafter assume maintenance, the province, through the Commission, undertaking certain functions and apportioning grants from the province as necessary.

In the first year of its existence a region would be set up with its initial requirements of central and branch libraries, book depots and travelling libraries and coached in their administration. Emphasis was laid on a correct start. The Commission was prepared to operate an open shelf system for the whole province, at first in any case. It also proposed to maintain a central index, listing every known book in libraries—not in its system alone, but also in university libraries if these would co-operate. The advantage of this to meet demands by inter-regional loans is self-evident. The Commission envisaged a co-operative purchase plan, if desired by regions.

It happened that, while details of this were being worked out for presentation to the legislature, a committee investigating the library situation right across Canada on behalf of the Carnegie Trust

visited New Brunswick. This committee, as its report shows, heartily commended the plan and one member gave it as his personal opinion that the New Brunswick act is the best in the Dominion. It is highly significant that the Prince Edward Island experiment, financed by the Carnegie Trust, adopted almost exactly the plan devised for a single New Brunswick region, the Island's population being roughly one-fifth that of its neighbor. Operating a province as a single region simplified the financing of the system as there would be no need to divide cost between two or more taxing authorities.

It was the fate of the promising New Brunswick plan never to be presented to the legislature. The onset of the depression made it imperative to retrench and no launching out could be considered. The system sleeps somewhere in Fredericton.

The Nova Scotia system is soon disposed of—*non est*.

Now what about it? Is this state of affairs to go on? The governments are unlikely to move without pressure. There will be no demand until the Maritimes become more library-conscious and library intelligent as distinct from library-emotional. Here and there in the Maritimes are excellent local libraries, isolated and bereft of the support of a provincial system, mostly starved, inadequately staffed and struggling gallantly. Their utility is therefore circumscribed, their expansion precluded. Yet I dare declare that, speaking generally, there is a keen desire for libraries that really reach the whole population. It is less widely appreciated that only through provincial systems can it be brought about—unless the unlikely were to happen and the three provinces combine to the extent of operating a joint system covering the entire section.

Emotionally there is a desire for proper library organization. That would be a powerful force if directed. Who is to do this? It must not be left to librarians. Look upon librarians as the officers of a regiment and the chief librarians as colonels; but how many are fit to become

generals, plan and direct campaigns involving all arms? Few, obviously.

There are others also who are inclined to talk about library systems without knowing the first thing about them. Their talk may be encouraged, but they must not be accepted as authorities. There is no need to play with half-baked ideas. Regional library science has been reduced to formulae, though doubtless vast unexplored possibilities remain. So mistrust him who whispers that he can influence the Carnegie people. Do not be misled by the adult education enthusiast who thinks in terms of textbooks only. Discount the facile suggestions of some Womens' Institutes speakers for the danger that lies in a little knowledge. Enlist all these to help, but when a plan is needed, let one who has really studied the subject frame it.

We want to find out who have studied library systems—again let me emphasize, not libraries, nor librarianship, but library systems, the library acts, the technique approved by real authorities. Then we want to get library systems discussed and pick out those willing and able to study until we have a body of leaders capable of bringing library systems definitely within the visible orbit of public affairs and organizing the mass of public opinion already existing.

I have sometimes wondered whether a kind of Friends of the Library Association in every community might not help. An F.L.A.'s function is that of a supporting auxiliary, actively giving moral and material backing to a library in being. By the same token, Saint John has set a feather in the Maritime's cap by establishing the first F.L.A. in Canada. Well, it has occurred to me, why not organize F.L.A.'s before libraries, in order to start systems from which libraries will spring? I know it is a cart-before-the-horse notion. On the other hand it has never been decided whether the chicken or the egg comes first. Another point is that something of the sort lies behind the Library Council in the New Brunswick plan. Advising on local conditions was only a part of the Council's

proposed functions. Its members were intended to return to their homes as missionaries. At any rate it is an approach worth consideration.

I shall leave it at that. My purpose has been to start a few people thinking of library systems as a definite phase of public affairs. If I manage to set a few talking, so much the better. If action follows, that will be splendid.

I believe there is unlimited enthusiasm, most of it dormant. I know there is a quicksand of loose thinking about library matters, and somehow we shall have to

build a firm road across it. A very trifling steadying agent may suffice to provide the first step over shifting grains. A blanket thrown on the surface is often enough—just as often it is not, and then a blanket is lost. However, it is worth trying. I look on what I have written as a blanket cast on the quicksand. If it is swallowed up and disappears, not anything of value is lost. But if it starts the crossing, why then it will have proved of that much value. And I hope it does.

Pasture Lands in the Maritime Provinces

By C. F. BAILEY

THOSE who have had the privilege of visiting the rural communities in the British Isles must have been impressed with the relatively large number of live stock carried on the average farm. There are several reasons for these heavily stocked farms. Undoubtedly the British farmer is a lover of good livestock, but it will also be found that his splendid pastures play an important part in the development of this industry. Apparently these farmers are quite prepared to devote as much and oftentimes more attention to their pasture lands than to the area set aside for cereal and forage crops. In fact, the maintenance of pastures in a high state of fertility is considered of national importance and we find that the British Government has recently announced that a liberal allowance will be made to all land owners for the purchase of fertilizer to be used in keeping pastures in a high state of production.

Let us contrast conditions in the British Isles with those in the Maritime Provinces. It is true that we have a large number of progressive farmers who

have become "pasture conscious" and the number is increasing annually. Unfortunately however, there are a great many farmers who look upon their pastures as a cheap and convenient place to carry live stock during the summer months. Some of these pastures are so unproductive that the animals have great difficulty in finding sufficient food to meet daily maintenance requirements. These farmers show the same lack of interest in their live stock and we find their animals are usually undersized and generally unprofitable.

In spite of the apparent lack of interest on the part of many farmers, the future looks bright for the development of good pastures "down by the sea." The soils of the Maritime Provinces vary greatly, but generally speaking, it will be found that they are deficient in phosphorus, potash and organic matter. However, they respond rapidly to the intelligent use of fertilizers and good pasture management. This is mainly due to favorable climatic conditions which are not unlike those found in the British Isles, especially during the growing season. The most important factor contributing to the development of pastures in these provinces is the annual precipita-

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