

in the previous pages and is corroborated by Mr. Bell, the present Librarian, who, in nearly forty years service to the city, has, only in the last eight years or so, noticed a definite weakening in the apathetic attitude of the Council. Now that the City owns the Library, it is to be hoped that this new interest continues. Present signs of extensive building alterations and the installation of a modern reference library certainly augur well for the future. Given continued interest, there should be no reason to prevent Christchurch having a modern, well conditioned library at an early date. Unfortunately this does not provide a complete solution to the library problem for the existing suburban libraries, totalling fourteen in all have no organic connection with each other or with the central library.

Naturally this position has been aggravated by the delay in the acquisition of the central library by the City Council, for it has obviously been impossible to inaugurate a centralised library system until the main library has come under public control. No doubt the question that springs to mind is the reason for the protracted refusal of the Council to assume any share in the provision of an adequate library service. It is impossible to state any definite reason but, having studied all the facts, it would be feasible to suggest that a likely answer does emerge from the confused mass of discussions and debates. Stated plainly, it would appear that the City Councils over a number of years preferred to tolerate a poorly equipped library which involved no burden on the rates rather than to support an adequate library by an annual subsidy. Although this opinion would seem harsh to the casual observer it is, nevertheless, a truism, that New Zealand local bodies are notorious for the tight hold they maintain