

increased to £1700, although, with the admission of New Brighton to the city in 1941 and of Sumner and Redcliffs in 1945, there were fourteen libraries to be catered for from this amount. The grants were graded according to the size of the libraries so that the largest ones received £150 each while the smallest received £60.⁽⁶⁵⁾ It seems pertinent to ask whether the City Council considered that the service provided by the suburban libraries was equal to that provided by, or which ought to have been provided by, the central public library.⁽⁶⁶⁾ No matter what the Council thought, it is obvious that, in comparison to other centres, the amount devoted to the library system each year was entirely inadequate. However, as the Council considered the suburban libraries worth over £20,000 of public money in the period from 1925 to 1945, it is imperative that we discover the real value of the service being rendered.

First let us consider the nature of the system. With the exception of Woolston, each library is maintained and serviced entirely by volunteer labour,⁽⁶⁷⁾ each having, on an average, seventeen librarians of whom approximately fifty per cent. are women. All but Redcliffs and Woolston are open six days a week for an average of an hour and twenty minutes each day, although some of them are open for three hours a day.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Considering the volunteer nature of the system these figures are, indeed, very creditable and the suburban libraries are commendable from the standpoint of civic interest and neighbourly co-operation. However, as Munn and Barr point out, they

65. "Press" February 10, 1947.

66. By 1945 the Council subsidy to the Canterbury Public Library was £2000 per year.

67. Although most pay small honorariums to the President and Secretary.

68. The figures in this paragraph have been compiled from a table prepared by Mr. F.H. Dephoff J.P. in 1948, a copy of which is at the Opawa Library.