

discharging its full responsibilities to the public if it has been able to show a large fiction issue.

This is a position which would not for a moment be tolerated either in Great Britain or the United States where the function of the public library is realised as educational, vocational and only to some extent recreational. The order in New Zealand has tended to become reversed. Indeed things have come to such a pass that public libraries are coming into actual disfavour with some sections of the community, because their light fiction service is not as slick, fresh and up-to-date as that supplied by shop libraries." (82)

This passage has been quoted in full because to my mind it gives a perfectly clear and concise account of the dangers of the subscription system. Christchurch suburban libraries which complain of competition from the commercial book clubs are obviously not fulfilling their proper function.

But it is not only the libraries that have mistakenly believed that their service to the community has been all that it should be. A similar attitude has been characteristic of many City Councillors, and so has militated against any satisfactory reform. The first major stir occurred early in 1937 when, at the annual meeting of the Addington Library, the Mayor (Mr. J.W. Beanland) renewed his assurance that, as far as he was concerned, the suburban libraries would not be "absorbed into the central system." Since this course had never been suggested, the Editor of "The Press", in a following editorial, suggested that it might seem reasonable to ask Mr. Beanland to go beyond negations and explain his views on the library situation in Christchurch. The Editor outlined the system which operated in Wellington and Auckland and opined that, as arrangements for the transfer of the main library to municipal control were in the offing,

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82. "New Zealand Libraries" (Official Bulletin of the N.Z. Libraries Association) Wellington, April 1938. N.S. Vol. 1, No. 9, p.1.