

the Council would soon be in a position to provide, through each suburban library, a vastly improved service. He concluded on the enquiring note that it would be interesting to know whether the Mayor's promise to prevent suburban libraries from being "absorbed" was a promise to oppose this very necessary degree of centralisation. (83) The Mayor's silence on the matter was eloquent.

Three weeks later, speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Waltham Library, Councillor Andrews expressed the opinion that the suburban libraries were doing a very noble and useful work in serving their respective localities and it would be a disaster if they were allowed to go out of existence. This statement showed an even greater dread of some unknown peril than did that of the Mayor. In order to safeguard myself from any suggestion of misrepresentation I prefer to quote the remainder of his speech verbatim.

"Many people complain that they cannot obtain books of reference from suburban libraries and for that reason would do away with suburban libraries altogether. They forget, however, that suburban libraries are for the most part unable to provide the expensive books such as are required for reference purposes. A reference library is a library to which professional men - doctors, lawyers, scientists and engineers - can have access, and from which they may be able to obtain those works that will help them in their separate studies. A thoroughly well equipped reference library in the centre of the city would meet those requirements. People would not mind travelling some distance to avail themselves of the opportunity for self education that such a library would afford. But I do not think that people would travel some distance simply for the sake of light reading. Light reading is best supplied by the suburban libraries, and I, for one, hope that the suburban libraries will continue to exist." (84)

Surely this attitude shows complete and utter ignorance of the meaning of the words "public library". It would seem apparent that the speaker regarded such an institution as synonymous with a commercial

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83. "Press" February 12, 1937.

84. *ibid* March 4, 1937.