

As the book clubs seem to have beaten the subscription libraries at a game they need no longer play the opportunity is open to make public libraries provide a public service worth paying for as such.

It would no doubt be expected that such sharp criticisms, as have been detailed in preceding pages, would have had some effect on the policy - or at least on the civic pride - of the most slothful municipal council. But at the annual meeting of the Spreydon Library in 1938, Councillor Andrews said that, although criticism was still fairly frequent about the constitution of libraries and the library system in Christchurch, he personally considered that the system was "on the whole pretty fair".⁽⁹²⁾ This prompted strong editorial comment from "The Press" which, although a notoriously conservative paper, has taken an enlightened view of the matter throughout. While admitting that it was only fair that an efficient suburban library, measured by prevailing standards, should be praised, the Editor declared that Councillor Andrews lost, among praises and regrets, the opportunity to promote an advance in library organisation and service in Christchurch. In contrast to the councillor's opinion, the Editor considered that "on the whole, however, what we are doing is disgracefully bad, and when Councillor Andrews went on to forecast, 'a change in the system of subsidies' enabling the libraries to 'get some more funds to carry on their good work', he seemed to forecast nothing but a more liberal extension of the present bad system. Christchurch stands far behind Auckland, Wellington, and Dunedin and it will never catch up till the central principle is adopted and until a library rate frees library policy

92. *ibid* July 22, 1940.