

City Council. Besides being staunch supporters of the existing system, the members are even opposed to mass importation of books through the central library on the grounds that overseas buyers are not familiar with their individual tastes! One could readily write a number of poignant comments on this attitude. Another tenet of their belief is that loss of individuality would mean loss of interest, which, together with the previous argument, suggests that, if they were no longer able to purchase the books which they wished to read, they would not read those which were purchased for them. It may seem a harsh criticism, but to a disinterested observer it would appear that a number of people in the city are so determined to be big frogs in their own small ponds that they are willing to see hundreds of tadpoles die for the want of a larger pond.

The suburban libraries claim that they have saved the City Council thousands of pounds over the years. Unfortunately, the City Council over the years has apparently been too blind or too parsimonious to see the fallacy of this assertion. "Travel and reading are the two main agencies by which a nation attains culture and breaks the shackles of parochial thought. The average citizen must depend upon the latter, and his need for continuous cultural development demands efficient and up-to-date libraries."⁽¹⁰¹⁾ The value of culture cannot be measured on the monetary scale, but if, as I consider likely, it can be measured by the standard of a city's libraries, then Christchurch is very heavily in debt. The practice of making public libraries free to the public is justified by exactly the same principle that has made public education free. The

101. Hon. Robert Masters, M.L.C. Minister of Education, 1934. in Munn and Barr. op. cit. p. 41.