

Section 4.—Public Libraries

The biennial survey of libraries in Canada, 1948-50, reports increased activity in the field of library service. At the national level, first steps have been taken toward the establishment of a National Library for Canada.

In June 1948, Parliament approved the principle of establishing a Bibliographic Centre at Ottawa and the preparation of a National Union Catalogue which would provide a nucleus for the reference department and the catalogues for a National Library. A National Library Advisory Committee was established with representatives from each province under the chairmanship of the Public Archivist. After some months of preparatory work, the Centre came formally into existence with the appointment of a Director and an initial staff on May 1, 1950.

The Bibliographic Centre has proceeded with the preparation of the National Union Catalogue. The catalogues of 21 libraries, covering more than 1,250,000 volumes, have been reproduced by means of microfilm. These reproductions will be co-ordinated to provide an index of the holdings of the main libraries in Canada, including information on the location of rare books that may be obtained on the basis of inter-library loans. Eventually the National Library will offer procurement services but, in the meantime, the catalogue represents a record of the book resources of Canadian libraries and provides a means for more effective use of those books.

A second project of the Bibliographic Centre is the monthly publication of *Canadiana*, a bilingual list of commercial and government publications relating to Canada. At present the Centre has a small stock of reference books that will be supplemented by volumes not in steady demand and located in various libraries across the country, and by standard publications of the United States. The index will be expanded to include holdings relating to Canada in the libraries of Great Britain, the United States and France.

Local Public Libraries.—As local institutions of education and culture, public libraries are mainly the responsibility of the municipalities in which they are located. In certain provinces, the provincial library authorities supplement the efforts of the municipalities by annual grants, by assistance to building-construction funds and by aid in the procurement of book stock. The public libraries in the cities represent the largest proportion of all such service in Canada. The libraries of seven cities, each with a population of over 100,000, held 36 p.c. of the entire book stock reported in the survey of libraries, and were responsible for 51 p.c. of all the expenditures recorded. The libraries in a second group of 29 cities, with populations of from 25,000 to 100,000, held 17 p.c. of the book stock and accounted for 22 p.c. of the expenditures. In the smaller cities with populations of from 10,000 to 24,999, 26 libraries held 9 p.c. of the book stock and were responsible for 9 p.c. of the expenditures. In all, the city libraries held 62 p.c. of the books and accounted for 82 p.c. of all expenditures on public library service.

It is estimated that some form of public library service is available to about 75 p.c. of the population but that barely 50 p.c. of the population has anything approaching adequate library service. In the small towns, villages and rural communities many public libraries are supported and administered by organizations or associations within the communities. Including these, less than 12 p.c. of the rural population has public library service and, where it does exist, it is in most cases quite inadequate.