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Association

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MANITOBA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Executive 1952 - 1953

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here we are again at the start of a new year, a time to look back on the accomplishments of the past, and ahead to the challenge of the future.

For the first time a President of the Manitoba Library Association has the privilege of extending greetings to fellow members in an association bulletin, and I hope that through the bulletin, we will be able to strengthen our membership and knit it more closely together.

You all know that our objects are to advance the common interest of those engaged in library work, and to stimulate public interest in libraries in the Province of Manitoba.

The past year has seen encouraging developments on the provincial library scene. The long-awaited appointment of a Director of Libraries was announced, and we had the pleasure of welcoming Mr. George Noble, the new Director, at our annual meeting. The formation of the Library Development Committee last winter showed an amazing amount of interest on the part of many organizations concerned with the welfare of the citizens of our province. The new Public Library in St. Boniface now has librarians for both English and French sections, and its Board is to be congratulated on the intelligence with which it is approaching the problem of establishing the library.

All these events give cause for real satisfaction, but on the debit side we must place the fact that no action has been taken following the request for a survey made by the Library Development Committee to the Manitoba government in the Spring, and that, in October, a bylaw, presented to the electors of the Rural Municipality of Dauphin to provide for the establishment of a regional library, was defeated. There is still work to be done, then.

And what of our aim to advance the common interest of those engaged in library work? No one will deny that, materially, the lot of librarians has been greatly improved in the past few years. In striving for this improvement, have we tended to concern ourselves more with rights than responsibilities? Let us make it our common interest to support our national and provincial library associations, and to accept our great responsibility to our profession and to the public we serve.

It is a great honour to be your President and with the wonderful cooperation I have come to expect from the officers and committee chairmen, I look forward to a good year. A programme is being planned which I hope you will find worth-while and enjoyable, and as always, your suggestions and comments are invited.

May I say welcome to all old friends and to any new ones who are joining us for the first time. I hope to see you all at the meeting on December 11th.

*Ruth Burgess*

## IMPRESSIONS OF THE BANFF CONFERENCE

Between June 9th. and 12th. the Canadian Library Association held its seventh conference at the town of Banff, an innovation from the preceding practice of holding the meetings on the campus' of the universities of McMaster, British Columbia, and Toronto, and the larger hotels of Ottawa, Montreal, and Winnipeg.

The three Chalets of the School of Fine Arts of the University of Alberta on Tunnell Mountain, overlooking the town and the valley, is, of course, one of the better known panoramic views of Canada's natural beauty spots - now bearing some of the marks of civilization - but the centre from which the visitor, or delegate, may find a view that stirs the imagination as it did the early explorers of this continent. Meetings were held in halls in the town as well as at the Chalets, and residential accomodation was also scattered.

The Bulletin of the Canadian Library Association for September includes the full report of the Proceedings (except that of the Special Interest Group on Government Aid to Libraries, one of the pertinent subjects of interest to Manitoba and other provinces) and consequently a further report appears superfluous now, except that one may give personal impressions.

A lasting memory is the welcome to eastern delegates given by Calgary librarians and trustees. The friendly reception, registration, and coffee party in the library of Mr. Castall provided an opportunity for renewal of friendships and the making of new acquaintances. The tour to the new residential-type branch libraries in park settings was equally interesting. A visit to Coste House is especially in mind. This is one of the finest illustrations of aesthetic and practical cultural activities and a target for all other Canadian communities, both large and small. We had read and heard about this centre, but to interpret the words it is essential to witness the adaptation of this early Calgarian mansion to faith in works.

The speakers of the Conference were notable. Dr. Bierney gave a dramatic reading of "David" and other of his poems with their environment in the mountains, at the foot of Mountain Norquay; and at a closing dinner presented his experiences as a Canadian author, which left his listeners laughless. This will be printed. Dr. Hilda Neetby outlined Massey Commission experiences and report, with verve, wit and eloquence. Dr. Harlow, the new librarian of the University of British Columbia (from California) read a scholarly but human interest interpretation of bibliography to the Bibliographical Society which should also be made available in print. Dr. Luther Evans, Librarian of Congress, spoke twice and each time left a message of world-wide accomplishments in librarianship and bibliography. Hon. E. C. Manning, Premier of Alberta, addressed a luncheon and told us how exceedingly important libraries and librarians were to society - past and present - with familiarly phrased cliches, but avoided responsibilities for any kind of support.

The "star" of the conference gatherings was the (now) past president, Miss Marion Gilroy, who met every occasion as presiding officer with an appropriate and purposeful comment, with a sense of humor, that happily integrated subject, speaker, and audience. You will have noted her

extensive quotation from the brief of Manitoba Library Development Committee in her official report for the year 1951-1952.

Mr. Robert D. Franklin, assistant director of the Toledo Public Library, in the October issue of the A.L.A. Bulletin, has put into words the one continuing impression of library conferences, though much may apply to conferences generally. He speaks of the frustration created by so many meetings upon so many subjects that one wishes to attend so anxiously that one's conscience is hereafter disturbed, but all occurring at the same time in so many widely scattered places. There appears to be too many divisions and sections and groups, dealing with so much that is related. This is the question it was intended to raise in this review of impressions, but Mr. Franklin does it better - though his comments pertain to the annual conferences of the national library associations of the United States.

An important decision, not given too great prominence in the conference proceedings, is that there will continue to be annual gatherings; the next at the national capital centred in the Chateau Laurier, and the 1954 meeting at Halifax, where Halifax's first public library will be in operation for its third year, and where Peter Grossman will preside as conference chairman and president. An opportunity will be available to witness his handiwork in establishing provincial-wide regional library systems with centralized provincially-supported financial, technical, and professional aid.

Leslie Johnston.

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"Adult education demands libraries, and not libraries that are mere collections of well-bound and well-printed volumes, but libraries that are staffed by men and women of social vision, who realize the tremendous responsibilities and almost unlimited opportunities for service that are offered the librarian."

Rev. Peter A. Nearing on Trans-Canada Catholic Hour, November 18, 1951.

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## ON BEING LIBRARY CONSCIOUS

About three hundred and fifty librarians from all parts of Canada met at Banff from June 9th. to 12th. for the annual conference of the Canadian Library Association. Anyone following the group during the four hectic days of meetings, discussions, etc., would be impressed with the enthusiasm displayed.

This spirit is indicative of a growing consciousness throughout the Dominion of the need for increased library facilities for the reading public.

This need is particularly acute in the province of Manitoba and as this is a problem which must find its solution in the Provincial government, the failure to cope with it is arousing criticism in various circles.

Recently a local paper revealed the disparity between the government grant and that of the neighboring province of Ontario.

Comparisons are usually odious and one might argue about the comparative wealth of the two provinces on a per capita basis. Still, the fact seems to remain that the local rulers have not properly grasped the situation or else are very dilatory in taking steps to cope with it.

All this time the people throughout the province are making increasing requests for books to read. This is particularly evident throughout the rural areas.

While this growing interest in books and reading is an encouraging sign of an ambition for the culture that reading can give, it should be fostered assiduously by all concerned.

As the writer of the editorial mentioned above remarked, every effort "should be made as quickly as possible, to remove the stigma from this province, of trailing the rest of Canada in library facilities.

The excellent work which has been done by the Manitoba Library Association in procuring the passage of the Library Act, the naming of an Advisory Board, and last but most important, the appointment of a Library Director, all this is worthy of the highest praise, for devotion to a cause in the face of great difficulties.

The appearance of a Bulletin, though modest in its beginning, will aid the Association in becoming more articulate, by keeping every member informed of its activities, thus bringing the group closer together. In union there is strength.

Arthur J. Cotter. S.J.

## THE MASSEY REPORT AND LIBRARIES

The report of the Royal Commission headed by the present Governor-General, on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, is a volume of 517 pages, including the Index.

The Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences was established by Privy Council Order on April 8, 1949. The Commission was instructed to examine and to make recommendations upon the principles which should govern broadcasting and television in Canada, and upon certain agencies of the Government, including the National Film Board, the National Gallery, the National Museum, the Public Archives, and the Library of Parliament. The Commission was also to make recommendations concerning aid to research in Canada, including scholarships, and the eventual scope of the National Library. Canada's relations with UNESCO, and the relationship of the Government of Canada with various voluntary bodies, were also matters for review by the Commission.

The findings of this Commission should be of supreme interest to all Canadians desirous of knowing "as much as possible about their country its history and traditions; and about their national life and common achievements; that it is in the national interest to give encouragement to institutions which express national feeling, promote common understanding and add to the variety and richness of Canadian life, rural as well as urban.

It would be a fine investment if the Canadian government were to supply every Canadian home with a copy of this report. Contrary to the popular concept of such documents, it is extremely interesting reading. Even from a literary point of view it is of high excellence.

The book abounds in passages, which for power to recreate scenes of half a century ago, could hardly be surpassed. Such a one is the description of the school which every Canadian who has reached the half way mark of the allotted three score years and ten, will recognize:

(page 20 #4) "The School of thirty or forty years ago occupied a central place even in the large communities which now it has perhaps retained only in our rural areas. Who would forget the weeks of preparation and the mounting excitement, reaching a climax in the school concert and the school play. The great night arrives, the curtains part - rather shakily and half an hour late - but the play with its lights and colour, its tears and laughter, its triumphs and disasters - the play is on! Or can we recall the final number of the concert with the entire school assembled on the rising tiers, charging into The Maple Leaf, a semi-tone too high and half a beat too soon, but with the easy skill of born musicians redressing the balance in the first few bars, to the astounded relief of the indignant conductor? But it was our play and our concert, and beyond doubt it was our audience."

Another long forgotten scene is conjured up by the following picture of the first library we knew:

(Page 20 #5) "We imagine too, that many Canadians will remember with grateful affection the librarians of the little towns and cities where they grew up who did so much both to create and to satisfy a taste for good books. There must be many of us who came to know the pure delight of reading because of a quiet suggestion from the rather aloof and amused lady, who seemed to us of great age, hardly visible behind the piles of books. We had no comics, so went home to read Treasure Island or the White Company, or began the long series of Henty which we hoped would never run out. Nor must we forget the Editor of the local paper with his strong views on politics and on cigars, who in his young days had met Mark Twain and who, long before the day of the syndicated columnist, recorded and commented upon the life of the community, respecting nothing so much as pungent English prose. He did not publish a mass medium of communication; he edited a newspaper."

Naturally the interest of librarians would be focussed on what the Report has to say about the library situation in Canada. It contains much that will come as a surprise to many Canadians. The following are a few of the more pertinent findings:

(Page 105 #15) "Education is the progressive development of the individual in all his faculties, physical and intellectual, aesthetic and moral. As a result of the disciplined growth of the entire personality, the educated man shows a balanced development of all his powers; he has fully realized his human possibilities. Modern society recognizes, apart from the common experience of life, two means of achieving this end: formal education in schools and universities, and general non-academic education when, as often happens, they are used by the school, they are a part of formal education. They are however, more generally the means by which every individual benefits outside school hours, and more often, after his school days are over."

(Page 105 #15) "Of local library problems we learned much during our travels. It was impressed upon us that among the local institutions of education and culture the public library must always hold a key position. It had its own legitimate and universal appeal, and serves also as an essential auxiliary to the museum, the art gallery, and to all other institutions of culture and education. Moreover, the library enjoys an advantage denied to the museum and the gallery in that its services are not limited by time or space. A library is working whenever and wherever its books are read."

(Page 106 #19) "Forty per cent of all municipal library appropriations in Canada is expended by six city libraries, four of them in Ontario; and sixty city libraries spend eighty per cent of the total sum. This we learned in Alberta. Saskatchewan, calculating in books rather than in money, stated that the number of library books per head of the population ranges from one for every person in Ontario to one for every six persons in Manitoba. Saskatchewan has two books for every seven persons in the province as a whole, but only one for every nine in the entire province outside the cities of Regina, Saskatoon and Moose Jaw. The Maritimes, especially New Brunswick with only two public libraries in the province (Saint John and Moncton) are also deeply concerned at the inadequacy of their library services. We were also interested to learn that there are in Quebec hundreds of parish libraries containing books for general information and recreation, in addition to religious works.

(Page 107 #20) "Some fifteen organizations expressed the need for better, or at least, for some library services. "The vast distances of the West, the long winters and isolation, make the adequate provision of reading an educational and emotional necessity ... Financial restrictions where income is dependent on the vagaries of the weather are a serious drawback...." we were told in Saskatchewan. Librarians are agreed that the paucity of the services is mainly a financial problem. One western province spends on library services only sixty-five cents per head even in its five chief cities, and only three and a half cents in rural areas. The optimum sum has been set at \$3.00 and the minimum at \$1.00. For most parts of Canada this minimum seems to be the unattainable maximum."

(Page 107 #21) "This does not mean that nothing has been done. Library services are usually a responsibility of the municipality. Municipal libraries however, offer effective library service only in urban or well settled regions, and provincial authorities have for this reason taken measures to meet the needs of the rural areas. Provincial travelling libraries have long existed in the western provinces. More recently, other provinces have dealt with the problem and there is now provincial library legislation in eight of the ten provinces. The preferred modern plan is to develop regional libraries instead of trying to serve the province by mail from one centre. The regional plan provides for buildings, not costly but adequate in the regional centre, and depots in smaller centres throughout the area."