

REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE JOHN E. FOGARTY, M. C., SECOND DISTRICT,
R. I. AT THE MEETING OF THE PAWT LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS HELD AT
THE HENRY J. WINTERS SCHOOL, PAWTUCKET, R. I. ON NOVEMBER 27, 1961
AT 8:00 P.M.

When responsible and articulate citizens like members of the League
of Women Voters bring a community problem to light and set the wheels in motion for
constructive action upon that problem, healthy improvements are on the way. The
League of Women Voters of Pawtucket is to be congratulated for calling this meeting
to draw public attention to the present state of the Deborah Cook Soyles Library. I
understand that the League has adopted the Library as its project for another year, so
I suspect that Mrs. Thomas E. Kiernan, the President, will not permit this meeting to
be the last you hear about the Library. Through the interest of Judge James McCoy,
the Chamber of Commerce has also taken an active part by exploring ways of improv-
ing the Library. You who sit in the audience this evening are likewise to be congratu-
lated, for your attendance suggests that you share with these organizations concern
for the neglect of an important community service, your local public library.

The achievements which may result from this essential effort may be
likened to the phoenix, a bird of great beauty fabled to have lived in Arabia. Every
500 years it was consumed in fire by its own act and rose from its own ashes with re-
newed life. I am not suggesting, however, that you take this fable literally!

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Pawtucket

Your public library is short on books, short on services, short on professional staff and leaves something to be desired in physical facilities. You and your children are now being short-changed for years of neglect of a service which has come to be recognized elsewhere as essential to the educational and cultural life of a community.

A community which can boast of a fine library is a better community because its citizens have access to the best that has been said and thought in the world. Its children develop their imagination and establish good reading habits that will help them thereafter; its students have access to sources for the new demands made upon them by education; housewives and mothers may obtain practical information which they need as consumers and to guide the development of their family and home; the businessman may find the answers and facts he needs in his daily work; and finally, the leisure time of those who have retired can be enriched by the pleasures of reading. There are few institutions in any community that can do so much for so many.

In a city of more than 80,000 people it is safe to assume that the range of informational needs and interests are as broad as those in a large metropolitan community. Pawtucket is many worlds in one and its library must reflect those worlds. It is un-American to claim that library service is a luxury.

That the expenditure will produce worthwhile dividends is evident.

Since ancient times libraries have served the civilized community as storehouses of information. Today, the public library serves as a constructive force in the community, supplementing its educational system, offering to the young a positive and healthy substitute for less acceptable activities, giving to the individuals of all ages the opportunity for self-development, for intelligent participation in public affairs, and for the pursuit of happiness and special interests. A well-developed library can be a factor in attracting business and industry to a community and thus indirectly contribute to its economic as well as its social and cultural welfare.

Obviously increased public funds are necessary, and to obtain them, community-wide support is required. The good start you have made this evening can act as a springboard to extend community knowledge of the problem, and to enlist help for prompt and positive action.

As you well know, I am not a librarian and don't pretend to speak authoritatively on professional requirements, but in my capacity as Chairman of the Congressional Subcommittee which makes appropriations for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, I have had a great deal of experience with budget justification for education and library services and have consequently gained considerable knowledge of the standards for adequate services which are the basis for such requests. I have also observed in the past two sessions of the Congress, growing respect for services which libraries are performing all over the nation. As a trustee of the Harmony Public Library I have an immediate interest in public library development. I have also visited many rural communities in Rhode Island on a bookmobile and have seen how people of all ages crave books.

Before you can attack a problem you must know the facts. Printed national standards for good public library service exist and can be used as a yardstick by which to measure the quality of the public library of Pawtucket. These standards will help you to translate into action the goals which you mean to attain.

To serve my library I sometimes read books and articles on library problems, and my reading of the standards leads me to ask some questions about Pawtucket. For example, the standards say that a library system serving up to 100,000 people should have 100,000 volumes of currently useful printed materials. In this community of more than 80,000 citizens do you have access to this number of volumes? Are you adding 4,000 - 5,000 carefully selected titles each year? Are you discarding soiled and obsolete books as conscientiously as you select them? Can your library boast between 300 and 400 current magazine subscriptions? Are the back issues of your magazines bound and maintained so they may be used readily by students and others doing reference work? Are films and phonograph records available? Are the back issues of your newspaper available in bound or microfilm form? This is an important reference source for local history and a responsibility of a library to preserve.

A collection of books is of limited usefulness without a professional staff to put it in order and service it. Standards say that there should be one staff member for each 2,500 population in the area served, and that of those staff members one-third should be librarians with a degree from an accredited library school.

Dividing 90,000 by 2,500 indicates that you should have a staff of 32 persons. That the staff must be adequately paid should be a foregone conclusion. These are only a few of the considerations by which you may evaluate the effectiveness of your library.

Providing for the intellectual health of your community is just as essential as providing for its physical health. Pawtucket is not a hamlet, but a city of substantial size capable of supporting health, welfare, education, police and fire protection, highways and other services. The intellectual health of citizens of Pawtucket must no longer be short-changed.

The need for adequate and continuing support requires that the public library be firmly fixed in the local governmental structure. Although local support is

your primary responsibility you will want to consider supplementary sources of revenue.

It is regrettable that the Library Services Act, by which the federal government supplies funds for the development of rural libraries, is not applicable to a community as large as Pawtucket. State funds, however, are a resource which you should investigate.

Improvement and expansion of Rhode Island's program of state aid to libraries is a project which is long overdue and can mean much to Pawtucket.

At the present time only 27 states out of the 50 have grants-in-aid programs to public libraries. Rhode Island is among this group, but its program is wholly unrealistic in terms of today's needs. But many changes will have to be made in existing library laws to establish liberal grants, standards of qualification for grants, encouragement of larger units of service, and guidance and consultative services.

At the next session of the General Assembly the Rhode Island Library Association will seek establishment of a commission to revise and modernize the public laws pertaining to libraries. Discuss this matter with your state legislators and give your support to the Rhode Island Library Association.

I must emphasize, however, that it would be improper for any community to turn to the state until its local government is contributing its full share of support for library service. The development of most public and school libraries in this state has been locked in a deep freeze due to a shocking disregard for governmental support. The library needs of today's citizens cannot be provided with the income from trust funds of another generation. Only by citizen action can these attitudes be replaced by the admission that adequate support of libraries is part of the educational expense of a community.

There has been talk of a fund drive here in Pawtucket to raise money to improve the library. A fund drive has certain publicity value because it will directly involve many people, both solicitors and donors, but it cannot be relied upon as the chief source of income on a year to year basis.

To do its job effectively today, the public library cannot afford to operate in a vacuum, but must draw upon the resources of other libraries. It is possible to increase the strength of the Pawtucket library by working out agreements with

nearby public library systems which have special services and book collections in greater depth than a community of this size might be able to support. In other states economy has been achieved by cooperative buying and cataloging, and all citizens can receive the benefits resulting from the coordination of reference and research facilities. This principle of cooperating libraries is the most important recommendation of the standards for public libraries. Such arrangements, however, would not obviate the necessity for adequate local and state funds.

You should examine carefully the Brown University Study of Library Service in Rhode Island when it is completed in March. Although it will not deal specifically with Pawtucket, it will offer a set of principles by which college, school and public libraries in this state may cooperate more closely.

There are other considerations fundamental to a sound library program to which your attention should be directed. It is essential that the library board be divorced from partisan politics and that the criteria for selection to the board be qualities of leadership, initiative, imagination, and an informed and enthusiastic approach

to the problems of public library development. Indifferent leadership can lead only to a library of indifferent quality. A responsible library board, broadly representative of the community with provision for turnover and the consequent infusion of fresh thinking, which meets regularly, establishes policy and lends support to the librarian and staff, is the best guarantee for curing the ills of the present, and for maintaining a vigorous library system.

Behind such a board of trustees must stand a community marshalled in support of adequate financing and intelligent library administration. Only firm citizen determination to set to rights a public institution which is something less than a pride to the community can uproot patterns of neglect which have existed for years.

It is encouraging for the future of library service that in many states, librarians and trustees are facing up to the demands which are being placed upon libraries today, are assessing in depth the needs of the next decade, and are planning the necessary steps to achieve quality service for all citizens. You should lend your support to the Trustees Committee of the Rhode Island Library Association whose purpose is to involve trustees throughout the state with the awareness of needs and means for achieving such goals.

As a gesture of cooperation, and a means of achieving some immediate progress, it is my pleasure to announce that Stuart C. Sherman, Librarian of the Providence Public Library has offered to conduct a one-day survey of the Deborah Cook Scyles Library, and to make preliminary recommendations for its improvement. Six of the ablest members of his staff would survey the selection and training of personnel, the cataloging and processing of books, the content of the children's book collection, the adult collection, the reference collection and the physical aspects of the building.

If the people of Pawtucket were to seek a competent authority to conduct this survey it would cost at least \$1,000. Mr. Sherman has offered to perform this study at no cost providing he is given assurance (1) that the control of the library will be placed in the hands of a library board consisting of responsible and respected citizens who are divorced from politics and are interested only in restoring high standards of library service for the benefit of the community; (2) of the appointment of a competent and experienced professional librarian; and (3) of evidence that there

will be a substantial increase in local government support of the library during the next fiscal year and thereafter.

The citizens of Pawtucket are in an enviable position to provide the incentive and leadership to other libraries in this state which need similar development. I have tried to show how you can benefit from adequate library service which is now so essential everywhere. It is now your responsibility to see that your local government supplies the funds to meet your needs, and to restore the Deborah Cook Scyles Library to a position of respect and service to the community.