

REMARKS OF U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JOHN E FOGARTY, SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND AT DEDICATION OF NEW UNION FREE LIBRARY, NORTH PROVIDENCE, R. I. ON SATURDAY, JUNE 2, 1962 AT 2:30 PM

### Building a Better Library

The dedication of a new public library building is always an auspicious occasion for any American community. A good public library is an educational resource which can play a vital part in the lives of every citizen. Children can use the library to stretch their imaginations and to build good reading habits which will benefit them all their lives; students can pursue independent study; housewives and mothers can get the practical information they need as consumers to guide the development of a healthy, happy family; businessmen can rely on a good library as an unbiased source of up-to-date and reliable, factual information; and, finally, senior citizens can continue to make their personal lives rich and productive through the pleasures of reading.

It is particularly appropriate that the Fruit Hill Junior Women's Club has provided the leadership in making this library building a reality. This community effort is in the best tradition of such social service organizations whose energy and initiative have done so much to enrich the cultural and intellectual life of America. Those of you who know of my deep and abiding belief in the importance of libraries will also know how sincere I am when I congratulate you on this outstanding achievement.

This building is tangible evidence that North Providence has joined with other communities in Rhode Island and across the Nation in recognizing the need for good libraries. It is also convincing evidence that local initiative and local support are absolutely essential if libraries are to reach their goal of good library service for all.



Important though such effort is, we should remind ourselves that North Providence, or any other single community, cannot be expected to do the whole job alone. We should remember that a building, however elegant, is not a library. A book collection, however large, is not a library. In this communications age a library is no less than a system of service which is designed to bring together the library user and the material of information he needs, regardless of its physical form or location. The library users of today and tomorrow will be more sophisticated, more highly educated, and more numerous than their counterparts of yesterday. Their library needs will be more complex, greater in quantity, and more expensive to meet. To do this job will require the full and effective use of the resources of all kinds of libraries working together - public, school, and academic, as well as special collections of various types. Current developments in communications technology--such as automated data processing, information storage and retrieval, and facsimile transmission will all be needed if this challenge is to be met.

Rhode Island is rich in both human and material resources which can be brought to bear in the interest of complete library service for every resident. We are a compact, heavily urbanized State with an opportunity to provide real leadership in making the total library resources of the State fully and freely available. North Providence, with this splendid new building and with a sound program of library service, can become an important part of a network of library services connecting the individual user with the total resources of the State and region.



The new Union Free Library is the primary library facility which residents will use, and therefore, the town of North Providence is primarily responsible for its continued financial support. But just as this library alone cannot be expected to meet all the needs of its users, neither can the town alone be expected to provide all of the necessary funds. Rhode Island is among the twenty-seven States which have programs of cash grants-in-aid to local libraries. The extent of this aid in our State, however, is wholly unrealistic in terms of today's needs. At the present time, a special State legislative commission on libraries is beginning to study the existing library laws and I am hopeful that this group will turn their attention to the proper role of the State in financing public library service.

It would, of course, be improper for any community to turn to the State until its local government is contributing its full share of the cost of library service. We must also recognize the fact that the library needs of today's citizens cannot be provided with the income from trust funds of another generation, however helpful these may be for certain specific projects. It is a simple economic fact that good library service cannot be cheap. As the need to provide additional books and materials has increased, so has the cost of these materials. Librarians should be paid and their salaries should be attractive enough to secure and to retain their skilled services.

I believe that the Federal government has a definite financial responsibility for the encouragement and support of better libraries. It is regrettable that North Providence and other communities of over 10,000 population are not presently eligible to receive benefits under the Federal Library Services Act. This popular and highly successful program has been in effect since 1956, helping to improve and extend public library services in rural



areas. I am interested in having this Act amended so that North Providence and other communities, regardless of size, could take advantage of its assistance in working toward library services of higher quality.

The adequate financial support of public libraries by all levels of government will unquestionably produce worthwhile dividends. Historically, a library was a storehouse of knowledge and culture and the librarian was the guardian of that treasure. Today, however, the library is a dynamic and positive force which actively supplements the agencies of formal education and the librarian is a skilled interpreter of its resources. A good librarian in a good library will be able to offer our young people constructive and beneficial alternatives to less acceptable activities. She can help provide citizens with materials which contribute to more fully-informed decisions, and she can help disseminate information which promotes better mental and physical health. Library materials and assistance in their use can help guide all of us laymen through the growing profusion of special and technical data which affects the lives of each of us. Thus, it seems to me, although good library service does cost money, it is an essential part of our daily lives and represents one of the best investments a community can make.

I am suggesting that by coming together here to dedicate this new library building we are observing both an ending and a beginning. For all those who gave tirelessly of their time and effort and money, this is the culmination of a wonderful dream. For all of the residents of North Providence and for those who will follow them, this is the beginning of a new era of library service. Our job now is to put this building to work. The Library Building Committee has provided a fine start. The library board and the library staff are eager to make this building of maximum value to you by



by learning your needs, by planning a program of library service that will build on other sources of library strength and by assuring the maximum effective use of library funds through planning and cooperation with other community agencies and with other libraries. Much of the rest of the job is up to you, the users of this library. Become acquainted with the materials in this collection, learn how you can use this library for your individual benefit, and inform yourselves about the present services and future needs of this institution.

My brief remarks would not be complete without a particular tribute to some of the people who have made this occasion possible. The gift of the site by Dr. and Mrs. Francis Allen was a crucial factor in securing this library building. The Fruit Hill Junior Women's Club donation of over \$3,000, the contribution by the Rhode Island Foundation, the encouragement and assistance of the Town Council, and the yeoman work of more than two dozen civic and veterans organizations, all combine to make this building a true community venture.

One of North Providence's greatest library needs, that of suitable housing, has been handsomely met. By meeting the future needs as well, this library can take giant steps toward a better and more inclusive collection of materials and toward guiding users in the productive use of these resources. If we truly believe that "knowledge is freedom" then the American public library is a major force in bringing freedom to all citizens in every endeavor. This is the promise held out by the public library and all Americans everywhere have a stake in its fulfillment.