



## Gratia A. Countryman and Family Papers.

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A. L. A. MIDWINTER MEETING - Chicago

December, 1932 Council Meeting.

Discussion of Mr. Tolman's paper.

①

~~If I have heard in  
advance the discussion which  
has preceded me, I might  
have avoided duplicating what  
they have said.~~

We are all fairly agreed  
that tax reduction is  
necessary, especially on who <sup>live</sup>  
in the agricultural states. But  
<sup>hear much of the farmer's hard plight</sup>  
we are agreed that the present  
drastic sweep is frenzied  
and unreasonable.

I think we are all agreed  
that our budget should be  
most carefully scanned and that  
not a single dollar should be  
spent by any public agency  
that it would not spend if  
the institution were the private



(2)

Property of the governing Board  
And we are willing to live  
as others are doing on  
shortened rations.

But the springs of life  
can be dried up by  
misfeeding and growth  
can be arrested. <sup>the great</sup> <sup>agencies</sup>  
are suddenly being asked  
to dry up the springs  
which feed the social, <sup>educational</sup>  
and spiritual life of the nation.  
which after all measures the  
real happiness and prosperity  
of any nation.



2/12

I have recently been reading  
with much interest, President  
Coffman's report to the Regents  
of the University of Minnesota.  
Everything he says for his University  
applies equally well to libraries.

I would like to quote some  
of his compact sentences.

"There are two kinds of  
deficits, one financial and  
~~other~~ social; one is a  
matter of balance sheets  
the other is a



deficit in the life and opportunities (3)  
of the people". Again he says  
that "It is a wise and courageous  
people which dares to build  
a democracy in which the  
training of youth does not  
fluctuate up and down with  
every shift of the stock market."  
But asks "shall we surrender to  
this depression our spiritual  
vision, our intellectual outlook  
and our social hopes for the  
youth of our generation".

In other words shall we  
accept without a real effort  
to change them, the paralyzing  
cuts which threaten the usefulness  
and almost the existence of our  
libraries and schools.

We all know that the cost  
of maintaining the construction  
agencies has been enormous



(4)

And it is perhaps no wonder  
that this large sum has  
attracted the attention of this sudden  
and well organized movement  
for tax reduction. But however  
large it seems, John Erskine  
declares in a recent  
article that "it is not too  
great for the results. There  
is no measure of the cost of  
being civilized". And we  
all believe that civilization  
is on the march, with big ups  
and downs occasionally, but  
permanently on the march. ~~And~~  
President Coffman reminds  
us that it is in the course  
of great business depressions  
that we test our intelligence  
and inventory our convictions.



✓  
During and immediately following  
other great economic depressions  
there has been a great  
educational re-awakening.  
We know in the library world  
that <sup>soon</sup> after the severe crisis  
of 1873, the A. L. A. was  
organized. Just after the  
depression of 1893, the free  
Public library movement began  
to have its greatest recognition.  
Out of the chaos of other  
depressions has arisen  
a stronger faith in the value  
of education and a firmer  
grasp on the finer things  
of life which today seem



to be so threatened. I believe <sup>6</sup>  
History will repeat itself and  
following this crisis, will come  
a period of unprecedented  
library growth. But it must  
come by surrendering to the  
situation, not by looking forward  
to the new day & working toward it.  
And so Mr Tolman's paper  
seems to me to be a challenge  
to action. In his closing  
paragraphs, he suggests  
that librarians are in a  
position to serve as a  
rallying center for groups  
and organizations who may  
co-operate for the preservation  
of those finer and permanent



Values upon which Civilization  
rests. What we cannot  
perhaps do alone, we might  
do with other similar organizations.

We cannot spend much time  
deploring our situation. We  
cannot sit in watchful and  
resentful waiting, else when  
the shouting and the tumult  
die where will we be.



(7)

~~Abandoning but the Turnover die,~~  
~~where vice in be.~~

To quote again from President  
Coffman: "Clearly this is a time when  
frenzied and unreasoned appeals  
should be replaced by Constructive  
programs looking to the future."

We need a program, Mr Tolman's  
suggestion of Concerted action among  
the educational and cultural agencies  
looks to me like the beginning  
of a Constructive program for action

I have no apologies to make  
for waste and extravagance. I have  
in my hand a chart that shows  
the upward trend of expenditures in  
the 14<sup>th</sup> largest cities. Libraries  
have had no noticeable upward trend.  
The library expenditures are at the bottom  
throughout the period surveyed.

I have no apologies to make  
for the deep sacrifice and labor.



which has gone into the building <sup>of</sup>  
of the free public library system.  
We have <sup>also</sup> runned all corners in  
order to do the largest possible  
amount of work with the money  
at our disposal. We must and

can demonstrate specifically  
and I believe convincingly  
the economy which we have  
practiced and the value of our  
service. We have a good case.

And we cannot wait too long.  
~~We can wait for the repair~~  
~~or equipment~~ The years are  
passing for our young people  
and we cannot restore  
lost years to youth.

We are told that 300,000  
young boys are out on the  
road begging their way



(9)

from place to place becoming  
vagrants. One gentleman  
told me that men were  
calling this the lost generation:  
And this lost generation may cost  
the nation more than all  
the taxes trimmed from the  
social agencies.

There is a tomorrow.  
There are many thoughtful  
citizens, growing in number  
constantly, thinking of that  
tomorrow, and stressing the  
need of sustained support  
of the social agencies. Men  
like Newton Baker, Alfred Smith, John  
D. Rockefeller, such } <sup>Erskine</sup> <sup>and numerous</sup>  
gentlemen, to do some } <sup>others</sup>  
construction planning together



so in Mr Tolman's words,  
to take the field in the  
defense of the things of the  
spirit and the cultural  
services of the government,  
seems to me our next  
forward step.



Publicity Ala  
as corrected  
for printing  
1932

In times like these no one needs to draw any picture of the financial and physical distress everywhere. The reality is too close to us; none of us escape it. Relief agencies everywhere are trying to relieve the basic needs of food and shelter. There are other needs quite as basic. The mental depression which we see everywhere is just as real and just as disastrous to our future as the physical deterioration. The need to support the courage, the faith, the determination of men and women is as basic as the need to feed the body. And the young people; we cannot see a class graduating from high school or college into a world that has no place for them without sadly wondering what will become of their youthful ambitions and their eager zeal to do something worth while. Will their courage stand up under this long testing; will they keep their ambition or grow bitter and resentful and turn against society?

We all of us are feeling the facts and we all recognize that we are one of the most effective agencies there is for stemming the wave of mental depression. We are a great relief agency, able in some measure to help the discouraged, hopeless, beaten man to regain faith in himself and to fight his way back to mental health through the stimulus of books. How shall we put ourselves in contact with these men and women? That is what I understand by the problem of publicity under the peculiar situation of today. Can we interpret our service to the man who is filled with the bitterness of enforced leisure through unemployment? Can we get it across to him that if he must endure financial reverses and heavy losses amounting to actual poverty that he may glean something that will be profitable to him in the days to come from the reading rooms and shelves of the public library? Just how far should we undertake schemes of publicity? Should we plan any organized campaign different from usual to overcome the lack of knowledge on the part of those who have not heretofore used our service?

What we might do, if we could function to full capacity, up to



the extreme need of our community, would be to present our various services through newspapers, through placards, through exhibits, at conventions, through personal talks over the radio, and displays on the movie films, through talks before labor groups, church groups, service clubs, and civic bodies. In this time of deep need we would gladly advertise our usefulness and give our urgent invitation in the highways and byways, wherever men may be found.

But what we would do is not the measure of what we can do. Most of us are suffering from diminished budgets, to meet an already increasing demand. The amount of publicity which we dare to indulge in must be governed by the extent to which we can fulfil our promises. Mr. Charles Brown laid down a principle at a previous publicity round table, with which I think we would all agree. "Publicity must be backed up by service. The slogan to the effect that 'we are advertised by our loving friends' holds particularly in the case of established institutions such as public libraries. If you cannot give service, let the publicity go until you can."

To most of us the question we propose to ourselves is something like this: Is it worth while to advertise much when the demands are already bearing so heavily on our resources that we cannot meet them or, on the other hand, is this the time to make our wants most vocal to the general tax paying public, and a statement of our widespread usefulness most convincing? That would be a fruitful question for discussion in this group. A letter to several librarians brought the following expressions which are fairly similar:

"We have not been following any campaign of special publicity during these difficult times, because we are overwhelmed with patrons as it is."

"We have curtailed our publicity steadily for the last year or two. We have discontinued exhibits at various shows, - food shows, automobile shows, etc. Anything which seems to imply that we have time or funds to do more work than we are now doing would I think be poor publicity."



"We have not been doing any especial publicity work during the period of depression with a hope of increasing the demands made on the library but we have been trying to have some publicity to help emphasize the place of the library as a stabilizing influence in the present situation. . . . We have been trying very definitely to abstain from any publicity or other expression from the library which would show any nervousness on our part. None of us knows what the future will bring forth, but I believe it is good psychology for us to maintain a calm attitude and to inspire confidence that in spite of the present depression, the community will see to it that the library will be supported to the best of the community's ability."

Mr. Bostwick of St. Louis with his usual unfailing optimism writes, "We ought not to cease our efforts at publicity because we are at present overworked."

These statements probably cover pretty much what all librarians would say. The effort at publicity in our minds seems to be directed toward two different objectives, that of stressing the value of the library to the community and its consequent claim to support and that of reaching individuals with helpful suggestions of service.

With reference to the former, that of keeping our claims for support to the fore, we will have to agree that the old arguments to secure funds are rather obsolete. People are clamoring for decreased taxes; they are scrapping in a heartless way some of the things they were most proud of. Public services which have been built up with great effort and pride are being ruthlessly pulled down. Hard times do strange things; they warp judgments; people's souls shrink. Just now instead of being proud of being a public official one feels after reading the papers that it is rather a disgrace to be drawing a salary from public funds.

But we must keep on molding public opinion. In the library economies we are adapting public habits to our changed and hampered services. We



are certainly experimenting in how best to keep public approval of library support. One librarian expressed his opinion that "We should practice balance, not press our claims for recognition too incessantly;" adding, "We librarians should face our problems as linked up with human problems and civilization generally."

I could not if I would, go into any discussion of methods and ways of preparing newspaper publicity. As a rule the newspaper man can see a story better than we can. Now, as always, items of our progress, the increase in our work, the type of work we are doing, and the response of the people to it, are welcomed by newspapers, and it is due to the public to keep them in touch with the activities of this public institution, even if we deliberately do it with an eye to our budget. In looking over our newspaper clippings of the past few months, I find that the amount of library publicity covers a good many columns, and contains a good deal of attractive and persuasive material. There is no better channel for publicity than the newspaper except our own patrons.

If we have through all the years past, developed a deep-seated place as a vital part of our community, if we have for years sold the library in season and out of season to our people, we will have to depend upon them to be our best possible publicity agents. If we have made ourselves indispensable in the homes of our people, if we have entered practically every home through children or father or mother, we have done beforetime the publicity which will support us best.

We must have publicity through outside channels but much can be done through inside methods: Quiet publicity through book lists, through courtesies, through simple unostentatious helpfulness. Using our own library as a typical one, we have not been able to afford our regular monthly bulletin of new books so we have multigraphed numerous short lists of recommended new books, or books on interesting subjects. From the Technical Department, a list on "Spare-time money making," on "Beauty culture,"



on "Sound pictures," on "Oil burners and fuel oil," on "Home renovation and repair," on "The spring garden," "Readable books on science," etc., following the interests of readers in choosing the subjects. We have issued lists of the good magazine articles on "Gold and silver," on "A plan for America," on "A changing world," to direct people's minds to the better magazines. Because so many new borrowers feel a little lost in using the library, we have the Open Shelf collection better labeled than usual. We have small display shelves of interesting books standing around on desks or tables. It is apparently so much easier for people to choose from a dozen titles than from the bewildering hundreds of unknown titles. For the library has been full of people who ordinarily are not given to much reading but who have been driven to it to occupy their minds. We all know that this interesting situation can be capitalized, often to the great benefit of some people whom we never before have reached. The readers' advisers all over the country can bear testimony to this. But these people with their new found interest in the library are our eager advertisers. They have found the library unexpectedly easy to use. We have wiped out practically all red tape; they have met courtesy and helpfulness, and they quite evidently tell their neighbors and perhaps carry books home to their neighbors. Our library is situated on a busy corner directly upon the sidewalk with windows at eye level. People wait on this corner for street cars. It is an ideal place for publicity items. We have taken full advantage of it with attractive window displays changed frequently. We have found that those posters attract most which suggest some new way to make money, and people come in constantly to make further enquiries about something that has been suggested by the window display.

We cannot be an employment agency, yet as people who have had good experience ask us to remember them if we have a chance to turn employment their way, we do keep names of people who can qualify as tutors or high



class stenographers, or in various other lines. The readers advisers have intimate knowledge of the ability of people who are taking reading courses with them, and they keep a record of those who are doing good, serious work, and give them permission to refer to us. This function has to be used with much judgment, but it is a practical service and has helped people in a number of instances. On the whole there is no publicity which has better advertising quality than that done within our walls and by our own staff efforts and carried out by satisfied borrowers. Even our economies and small inside exactions to save expense have caused some good and favorable publicity. In the language of another Librarian, "We have made it clear that we don't intend to have the general tax payer pay the high costs of services caused by the careless minority," and the public commented on it and commended this stand in newspaper articles. The co-operation of the public with us in carrying out overhead economies has been somewhat unexpected, but most gratifying.

May I return now to a previous statement that the library must be considered in these days as a great relief agency. We are accustomed to ally ourselves and rightly so with the educational agencies. But we belong just as much with the social agencies, and every library should be a social service agency, recognized as such by the other organized social agencies. Perhaps no more telling publicity just at this time could be launched either in the minds of the contributing public or in the minds of the general and non-employed public, than the identification of the librarian with other social workers and the efforts of the library to reach into every corner of desolation with our particular method of relief as a real contributory social agency.

We have found widespread sympathy with the Library's efforts, when speaking before business men's clubs, or women's clubs, if we have stressed our direct efforts to help supply the lodging houses, the missions, the cheap



hotels, the public relief rooms, with reading matter. Besides, these social workers, church workers, city relief agencies, the community chest, the research groups making surveys of unemployment, are in close touch and have intimate contact with people who need us most but whom we might not find with any other kind of publicity. If these other social agencies know us as one of themselves, if they know that the Library is an active ally in the relieving of distress in our own particular way, they will send men and women to us and be our representatives in their field of action. It isn't bigness that makes greatness, and some of the smaller libraries are doing a greater work these days through being a real community agency than are the larger libraries.

What is our education worth if it does not relate us to all of our human obligations? The library is a very human institution; it must be known to every one as such. We librarians are not only librarians; we are citizens with great human obligations as individuals. Nothing can so establish the attitude of our institution as our own known attitude toward social activities. Why shouldn't the librarian be one of the outstanding leaders on civic boards and committees? Why shouldn't the librarian help to direct city-wide movements to increase recreational facilities, to further vocational guidance? Why shouldn't the librarian be on the Boards of Federated churches and known to all the groups of ministers as one vitally interested in righteousness? Why shouldn't library assistants be encouraged to render every possible service to other organizations until the idea of the library is connected with every kind of human obligation. When the librarian and library assistants are known, apart from their professional duties, as sympathetic workers in every kind of effort for social betterment; then the feeling toward the library takes on the same idea.

We are in a crisis greater than any we have ever experienced. We spent millions during the War to maintain the morale of our citizens. We



will have to spend ourselves these days to maintain the morale of today's citizens. And we ourselves, and our staff, can be our own best publicity.

How are we going to make contact with these hopeless men and women that we want most to reach, the man who perhaps has always had plenty and now under great adversity withdraws into himself with pride and bitterness, the man who doggedly faces his losses and begins without any illusions to pull a few embers from the quenched fire of his ambitions? We believe that he may sense the new type of library we are building to fit a new condition. He will sense from our attitude that he can be at home, no embarrassments, no questions asked, in one public institution where there is fuel for his flickering fire, or comfort for his anxious mind.

This is not theory, not visionary. We deal with books, but the profoundest learning is only effective in our human life if it be joined to an understanding heart, and able to enter sympathetically into other people's problems. Together with the old methods of publicity, we must add the new and more personal method of establishing in the minds of the public that subtle, sympathetic relationship that claims their affectionate acceptance of as well as their respect for this very human institution, the public library. Are we ourselves willing to spend and be spent for the new library of the new day ahead?