

EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES: PROSPECTS GLOOMY



RAZOR GANG CUTS

THE PROPOSED CUTS in government expenditure have serious implications for libraries and for free access to information. With reduced grants to the states announced at the Premiers' Conference a few days later the outlook for education and for libraries is grim.

Hopes of federal funding for public libraries have faded. The reduced role of the Schools Commission will certainly have an impact on school library resource centres.

The decision to hand over to private enterprise the bookshops of the Australian Government Publishing Service will inevitably restrict the publication of items which are valuable to libraries and to the public but which are not likely to be profitable. Work of the Government Printing Office is to be contracted out and some statistics gathered by the Bureau of Statistics will no longer be collected.

In addition some of Telecom's activities are to be given to private enterprise. All these reductions have serious implications for the

library profession which is concerned with the provision of ready access to information.

Tertiary institutions

The decisions will profoundly affect the tertiary institutions. Inevitably this includes courses in librarianship.

The major effect will be on the student numbers. The introduction of fees for second awards could be disastrous. As yet it is not quite clear what is meant by 'recognised double degree and diploma combinations'. This definition may include graduates who are not qualified for a vocation who want to add librarianship. But what will be the standing of a graduate teacher, who has a vocational award, who is adding librarianship?

Of course the decision on fees will affect masters' and doctoral programs, at the very period when we need leaders in the profession who can think about and plan for developments in libraries and other information

agencies in a period of rapid technological and social change.

Restrictions on the eligibility for financial aid under the Tertiary Education Allowance Scheme will affect all students, including those doing undergraduate awards. And the proposed loan system will not help much either.

Not only are student numbers likely to drop, with the consequent effect on staffing in tertiary institutions, but the decision to return more responsibilities to the states is likely to result in uneven provision across the nation.

'Favoured' colleges

Those colleges which develop courses in business studies and in technology are to be favoured. 'An amount of \$5 million will be earmarked within the general recurrent grants for universities and colleges of advanced education in the years 1982 and 1983 to facilitate this process'.

The document appended a list of 30 colleges under threat of withdrawal of funds. In some cases the colleges listed had already announced plans to amalgamate, so that their inclusion in the list was inaccurate.

Altogether the release of the Razor Gang Report marked a black day for librarians throughout Australia. | *Joan Brewer*
Adelaide College of the Arts and Education

AGPS under threat

AS A RESULT of decisions by Fraser's Razor Gang the work of the Government Printer is to be restricted to Parliament and urgent and confidential Government needs. All other printing for government departments is to be placed with the private sector.

At the same time AGPS bookshops are to be eased to the private sector.

As librarians, we should be concerned about this change of policy because the AGPS is our major link to Government information. Without this link governments may be less likely to release information in published form particularly if it considers it 'sensitive' or not commercially viable.

Even the truncated Freedom of Information Bill proposed by the present Government was expected to lead to a rapid expansion in AGPS publications - a figure of an additional 100 items per annum has been suggested.

With the present cuts, much of influence of the AGPS will be lost together with a great deal of potentially publishable information.

Information to the public

The LAA is a partner in a joint liaison committee of AACOBS and AGPS that has been meeting over the past year to improve the flow of information through libraries to the public.

As well as concerning itself with the better organisation of AGPS publications through CIP, use of ISBN and ISSN and the improvement of AGPS catalogues and lists, the committee has improved the flow of government information.

All statutory authorities are now required to inform AGPS of their publications and these are being included in the Weekly Official List. It is expected also, that minutes of evidence to Parliamentary Committees will be listed.

Legal deposit scheme

The Legal Deposit Scheme of Commonwealth Government Publications in state and university libraries has come under discussion as well. The Northern Territory Library Service has been added to the scheme, but the Committee decided not to press for inclusion of colleges of advance education. It decided instead, that if there was to be any extension of deposit schemes, then preference should be given to public, rather than academic libraries.

If LAA members wish to receive further information on the work of the committee, or to place items on the agenda for the next meeting they should get in touch with the undersigned.

Euan Miller, LAA General Secretary

PEO abolished

FROM TIME TO TIME employers notify the LAA office of library vacancies. Trying to help them and to place members who are looking for work has proved to be a very time consuming and not altogether satisfactory arrangement.

At the end of March we contacted the Professional Employment Office, part of the Commonwealth Employment Service. Since then the LAA and the PEO have been co-operating to our mutual advantage.

All vacancies notified have been successfully filled, with an average of one librarian a day being placed. Then the PEO was abolished by the Razor Gang.

Whilst other professionals might be covered by commercial employment agencies (for a fee), librarians certainly are not; and the PEO in Sydney has 100 of them on its books. Similarly, employers will no longer be able to avail themselves of a service which has a pool of qualified staff, not just one or two in a particular local area, and dedicated and effective placement officers.

The saddest thing about the loss of the PEO is that it was working.