

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK REVIEWING PROJECT

By LOTTIE HOOD*

In 1956, The School and Children's Section of the North Carolina Library Association, looking for a project with widespread and lasting benefit, decided to undertake a statewide book reviewing project proposed by the State School Library Adviser, Miss Cora Paul Bomar. In March, the Executive Board of the North Carolina Library Association gave its approval to the project.

The purpose of the project is "the evaluation of current book publications in the field of literature for children and young people." The sponsors include a Joint Committee (of the School Librarians' Section of the North Carolina Education Association and the School and Children's Section of the North Carolina Library Association) and the office of the State School Library Adviser.

On Saturday, October 20, the Executive Board of the School and Children's Section, NCLA, met in Conover to work out plans for the book reviewing project. Present for the meeting were: Cora Paul Bomar, Catherine Weir, Elizabeth Williams, and Lottie Hood. Miss Hood was elected chairman of the reviewing committee. Seven book review regions, representing all sections of North Carolina, were set up. For each region, a committee of book reviewers and a regional chairman were appointed. The committee members, including school and public librarians, were asked to serve for a three year period. The regions, with chairmen, include: Greenville, Mrs. Margaret Farley; Raleigh, Mrs. Dorothy Ellis; Charlotte, Elizabeth Williams; Catawba County, Elisabeth Councill; Greensboro, Margaret McIntyre; Asheville, Mrs. Elizabeth H. Fortner; and Boone, Eunice Query.

Procedures for book reviewing, developed by the office of the State School Library Adviser, and adopted by the state reviewing committee are summarized below.

Selection and assignment of review titles. Titles for review are provided by the State School Library Adviser, whose office receives review copies of most current publications for children and young people. At intervals fixed by the sponsoring body, the titles available for reviewing are divided among the seven regions, each region receiving a sampling of books representing various classifications. During the 1956-57 school year, two review periods have been set: December 15-March 15, and March 15-May 15. Within each region, the chairman is responsible for assigning books sent to that region to the members of her committee. It is recommended that each book be reviewed by two persons, in order to obtain varied opinions. Books which present a controversial subject or approach may require three or more reviews, and books in specialized fields or subjects may need evaluation by a specialist in this field.

Compilation of reviews. The chairman of each region is responsible for collecting reviews, and for returning reviews and books to the State School Library Adviser at the end of each review period. Her office will distribute mimeographed lists of the reviews periodically, and will compile bibliographies in special areas, from time to time, of titles recommended by reviewers.

*Library Supervisor, Catawba County Schools.

NORTH CAROLINA LIBRARIES

The book review. Mimeographed slips are being used for the reviews, with space for trade information and for listing areas and features to be evaluated. With each book assigned to a region, the School Library Adviser's office supplies two review slips, on which the trade information (author, title, publisher, date, price, etc.) and a tentative classification and reading level are given. The reviewer is asked to evaluate the physical features of the book (type, margins, cover stitching, and illustrations) according to a rating scale given on the review slip. Space is provided for the reviewer to suggest potential uses of the book, in terms of its probable audience and its value for recreational reading, curriculum areas, etc. The back of the slip is used for the reviewer's descriptive annotation of the book, followed by critical comment on any special features of the book, comparison with related titles, and the reviewer's purchase rating. Each review is signed, and any published reviews will bear the reviewer's name.

The first state meeting of the Book Reviewing Project was held in Raleigh on Saturday, December 8, when the sponsors and members of the seven regional committees met together to get the project underway. It is to be the forerunner of other such meetings, in which ideas and techniques for book reviewing can be shared. Several regions have already reported group meetings of committees, with enthusiastic response from reviewers. This may be one of the most helpful projects attempted by this section of NCLA. Reviews from the regional committees, compiled and distributed by the State School Library Adviser, should be of benefit in book selection throughout the state. Members of the book reviewing committees will profit from the experience of sharing together, and anticipate many happy moments in the future as books for children and young people are reviewed.
