

THE CARNEGIE CORPORATION'S 350 BOOKS ON AMERICA

The December 1957 issue of Books from the U.S.A., the monthly publication of R. R. Bowker Co., 62 West 45th St., New York 36, N.Y., prints a carefully selected list of American books (pp. 532-558) which may be a useful guide to any institution that is seeking to build up a basic United States library. The introduction (p. 531) to this bibliography indicates its scope:-

A gigantic Bookshelf of 350 books that together present 150 years of American life and thought, has been assembled by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a philanthropic foundation dedicated to the advancement and diffusion of knowledge. The primary purpose of the project has been the distribution of the Bookshelf to countries in the British Commonwealth where the Corporation operates. (Its charter limits its activities to the United States and to areas of the British Commonwealth other than India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom.) However, we are reprinting the list of these books on the following pages, because we believe, along with its compilers, that it will be valuable wherever there are readers with a curiosity about America. Individual titles may be ordered from the usual sources.

Perhaps the attempted scope of the selections is best expressed by John W. Gardner, President of the Carnegie Corporation, who writes: "What we sought was a list of three to four hundred books illustrative not only of good American writing but of the entire range of American thought and behavior, books which taken together would present a kind of portrait of America - its past and present, its daily life and its dreams, its avenues and its alleys, its economy and its art."

Previous efforts to provide a picture of present-day American life and its origins, have seldom been successful, for, as Mr. Gardner says: "The country's very size, its physical diversity, the heterogeneous backgrounds of its 170 million people, and the rapidity of social change have made most portrayals seem more in the nature of caricature."

To launch the formidable undertaking, over 140 specialists contributed their advice and time - librarians, book reviewers, authorities on specific regions of the country; specialists on art, music, the theater, history, economics, industry, education and so on - experts who had special competence with respect to the categories to be covered if the books were to form a reasonable portrait of the United States. It was from their lists of pertinent books - some 60 in all - that the final selections were made.

Eric Larrabee, associate editor of Harper's Magazine, and editor of American Panorama (New York University Press. \$4.95) containing essays on the 350 books compiled as a guide to accompany the Bookshelf, reminds readers in his introduction that "the collection is not put forward as a literary monument ... It is rather the best selection of books which its compilers could make, within the limits of availability and of their knowledge, to convey the breadth and depth of America to a relatively uninformed, but interested reader."

The British Association for American Studies should be proud to notice that amongst these 350 titles are two by members of the Association: D. W. Brogan's The American Character and Frank Thistlethwaite's The Great Experiment.

MICROFILMING OF CANADIAN NEWSPAPERS

Newspaper Microfilming Project. Catalogue No. 6. 1957. Canadian Library Association gives details of the progress of the Canadian Library Association in microfilming Canadian newspapers during the last ten years. On pages 10-17 is an inventory of these microfilms and a list of purchasing libraries (including British).