

PLIGHT OF ARCHIVIST 5-15-49-68

U.S. Storage Problem: Billions of Papers on File

By PATRICIA GORMIN

If you think you have storage problems, consider what you'd do with 12 billion pieces of paper to file annually.

That's the plight of Dr. James B. Rhoads, archivist of the United States.

AS HEAD OF the National Archives in Washington, D. C., and a network of regional records centers, his job is beyond the comprehension of most housewives and businessmen who are plagued merely by overstuffed drawers and closets.

In a speech prepared for the Archival Administration Symposium held today at the Sheraton-Charles Hotel, Dr. Rhoads emphasized the necessity of careful selection of documents to be kept for government agencies.

The address was read by Ivan D. Eyster, of Ft. Worth, Tex., regional director of the National Archives and Records Service of the General Services Administration. Dr. Rhoads was detained in Washington, Eyster said, due to budget hearings.

ACCORDING to the nation's chief archivist, the Ft. Worth installation manages the country's records from the time they are created until they are destroyed as useless and earmarked for permanent preservation as part of the national treasury.

These records include textual documents, maps, photographs, sound recordings and microfilm, Dr. Rhoads pointed out. "They are records of any organized human activity that have enduring value," he said.

"Government agencies must have ready access to the records of their accomplishments and obligations.

"They are absolutely not a luxury," he noted.

ALTHOUGH THE yearly plethora of printed matter occupies five million cubic feet of space, it is considered vital

to the functions of the various offices from which it flows.

The archivist is responsible for the selection of what is to be preserved, and he must provide an effective and responsive reference service," Dr. Rhoads explained.

To ease the monumental task, archivists are harnessing the computer to help in the selection and categorization of the materials.

DR. RHOADS said he hopes to expand the number of presi-

dential libraries. There are four in existence now and two others being developed.

He also plans to add to the number of federal records centers and equip each with a complete set of National Archives microfilm publications. Each set costs \$250,000, he said.

Today's meeting was sponsored by the Society of American Archivists, the National Archives and Records Service and the Louisiana State Archives and Records Symposium.