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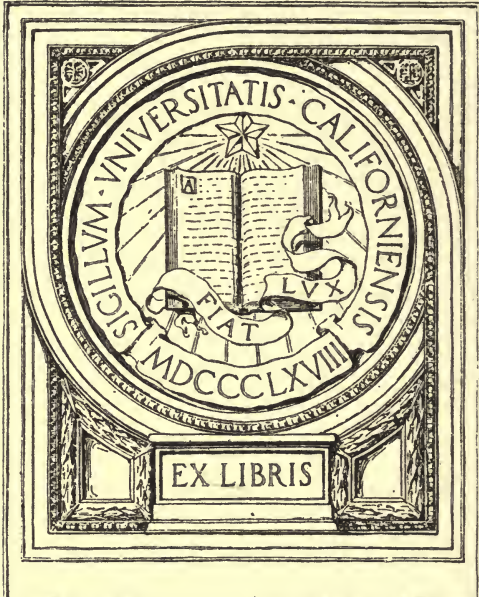


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The California Textbook System

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SECRETARY CALIFORNIA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

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An indictment of a plan that bars free textbooks, that prevents a democratic system of local adoptions, that interferes with our educational development, and that costs the people unreasonable prices for poorly dressed books.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA



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MAIN

THE CALIFORNIA TEXTBOOK SYSTEM

At the last session of the Legislature, the Senate appointed a committee of five of its members to investigate the general question of textbooks for our elementary schools. This committee has made a promising beginning. Its recent hearings in San Francisco have fully sustained the charges made by the State Board of Control that for years there has been shameful mismanagement of the State Printing Office. It was shown that if a business-like administration of that office could be secured, the price of our textbooks would be materially reduced.

INTEREST IN THE TEXTBOOK INVESTIGATION

The investigation has attracted wide attention. The people of California are vitally interested in the question of textbooks, especially in the cost feature. The press of the State has commented freely on the investigation. An editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle* is especially stimulating:

"The investigators of the State Printing Office are merely finding out the details of what all those familiar with such business have always known must exist there.

"Any State Printing Office is, and will remain, a State scandal. There may be a temporary spurt of purification such as is now going on, but unless human nature has suddenly experienced a revolutionary change the office will speedily drift back into its old rut.

"For, frankly, that is precisely what the office is intended for. It was not and could not have been to promote any public interest. It was organized with the deliberate intent to find easy jobs for a few scores of people at the expense of the taxpayers and school children, and to enable the State Printer to do politics or worse with contractors.

"Nor will any installation of a cost-keeping system prevent it. It is perfectly easy to beat any cost system when those in control so desire, and the very existence of such a system will make it safer by allaying public suspicion.

"The *Chronicle* will not, and the people should not, prejudge the personal conduct of the State Printer. That will be justified or otherwise by the facts as they appear.

"But we shall none of us err if, without further knowledge than we already have, we make up our minds that the system itself is rotten."

AN EXPERIMENT IN TEXTBOOKS

This editorial in the *Chronicle* would seem to indicate that the people of California are about to come out of a twenty-six-year trance. Back in 1885 California ventured upon an experiment that no other state had ever tried, and one that no other state since then has deemed wise to try. Through specious argument and gross misrepresentation, the people of California voted in 1885 to compile and publish their own textbooks. It was loudly proclaimed and fondly believed that such a system would yield superior books, at a reduced cost, to those offered by the several publishing firms—denominated for political purposes as "the book trust." Thus the people enthusiastically created a real monopoly in the authorship, manufacture and sale of textbooks. All competition was eliminated. The grave responsibility of compiling the books was entrusted to the State Board of Education—a board containing no members experienced in producing texts. It was cheerfully assumed, however, that successful authors of textbooks were indigenous to California even as the giant redwoods. The serious task of managing the business end of the undertaking—the manufacture of the books—was placed in the hands of a politician selected, in nearly every instance, by big business interests which hoped to profit from favorable contracts. Truly a promising combination of politics and business to handle free from competition an enterprise running well toward a quarter million dollars a year! And this combination could not lose because it had the big purse of the State to fall back upon. The cheerful confidence of the people in 1885 in establishing this system seems pathetic to us now.

FRUITS OF THE SYSTEM

Was not the plan in both its features an invitation to disaster? On the authorship side we deliberately turned our backs on books that had been tested in the fierce heat of competition all over the United States. Surely it was a provincial, short-sighted pride that refused the best the country at large had to offer, in favor of the work of unknown, untried California authors! On the business end we provided an unholy combination of politics and business, thereby laying a sure foundation for faulty service and grave scandals. With such a plan,

what could we expect? Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

We were not slow in harvesting the natural crop. We saddled the children of California with books that were worse than disappointments. As a whole they were a crime against helpless childhood. Competent students of education bear witness that of the eighteen books prepared by local authors and published at the State Printing Office from 1885 to 1903, not one book could be considered a thoroughly satisfactory text; not one could bear comparison with books issued by the regular publishers. As the new State texts gradually replaced the former and better books, the situation grew worse, and finally became intolerable. Evasions and violations of the law were every-day occurrences. The law requiring children to use the State texts was evaded through the purchase by the districts of large numbers of supplementary books, which were quietly used in place of the State texts. In many instances children bought these other and better books in place of the State texts—a clear violation of the law—while those in authority winked at it. Teachers and principals talked learnedly of the advantages of the topical method, and under its mantle brought in supplementary books galore. Thus, for the sake of the children, did we circumvent a bad law. The habit of supplementary books became so strong that when a happier day dawned, in 1903, it required a firm crusade to place reasonable restrictions on the use of supplementary books. Hundreds of thousands of dollars were spent by parents and districts for supplementary books as a direct result of the rotten series of State texts. And yet the plan of state publication was adopted as an economy measure!

REFORMING THE AUTHORSHIP FEATURE

Finally the storm of complaint against the State texts became so fierce and continuous from teachers and parents alike, that the Attorney General came to the rescue. In 1903 he rendered an opinion that the constitutional provision requiring state compilation and publication of textbooks would be complied with if the books were actually printed at the State Printing Office. A statute was framed accordingly, enabling the State Board of Education to adopt the best books from the open market, leasing the plates from the original publishers and paying a royalty on each book sold. By this legal legerdemain we managed after eighteen years to squirm out of one-half of a bad plan. But the other

half—the manufacture of the books in the State Printing Office—is still with us. For several valid reasons, this feature also must go before we shall have a system worthy of California.

MISLEADING COMPARISON OF PRICES

In the first place, the character of the work done in the State Printing Office confirms the belief that the fundamental plan is inherently wrong, as pointed out in the editorial in the *Chronicle*. We can not reasonably expect a clean, businesslike administration of that office. A strong, efficient Governor, an alert Board of Control, and a determined Senate committee may force a temporary reform. But so long as the product of that office, freed by law from competition, is accepted by the State, just so long will the office remain a political one, whether elective or appointive. For it will remain an asylum for political henchmen, who will determine for themselves what constitutes a fair day's work. A few illustrations of the character of the work done may prove illuminative of the contention that the State Printing Office must go.

The State Printing Office recognizes only one fundamental problem—that of publishing the books adopted by the State Board at a few cents less than the list prices of these same books as sold by the publishers. Now a book is a book to some people, just as a horse is a horse to others. But a lover of books recognizes a difference in books just as a lover of horses recognizes a difference in horses. Two men may both have a set of Shakespeare, but one set may be worth ten times the other. Since the plan of leasing plates was adopted in 1903, the State Printing Office has not issued one book equal in binding and paper to the same book as published regularly. To bring this point home with its attendant implications, compare our present State text in history with the same book (McMaster's Brief History of the United States) as sold in the open market. In the State text we find paper so poor that the illustrations are not clear; the margins have been reduced, evidencing skimpiness and stinginess; and, worst of all, the leaves are merely pasted to the back, while the regular publishers' edition is strongly mounted with a reinforced linen back to which the leaves are securely stitched. Any competent bookbinder will testify that the book from the publisher will easily last twice as long as the book from the State Printing Office. What is true of the history is true of the other books. Compare the geographies published by the State with the same books issued by the regular publishers. But why multiply instances?

The State Printer claims with pride that he can undersell the regular publishers. Can he really undersell them, quality for quality? His one great advantage is a ready market—safely his by law. With no expense for establishing a demand for his goods, such as all regular publishers must meet, he issues books that no reputable publisher would dare offer the public. In each case the State Printer prepares for the use of our children an illegitimate brother of a well-born book, a counterfeit presentment of few days and full of trouble for the children. When the State Printer can produce books equal in paper and binding to the regular editions of these books, we shall listen to a comparison of prices. A comparison of prices that does not take varying qualities into consideration is worthless. This comparison at the present time on a false assumption of equal paper and binding is thoroughly reprehensible because its deliberate intent is to mislead. It is unfair to the publishers and also to the children. For have we not vaunted ourselves, saying that the best is none too good for our children? But we continue a system that places in the hands of these children books that are decidedly inferior in paper and binding to those used in any of the other states of the rank of California.

THE COMING OF FREE TEXTBOOKS

There can be little question that we shall soon have free textbooks in California. Since the State undertakes at great expense the education of her children, it would seem that she must not stop short of providing the necessary tools for doing the work. Well-equipped buildings and competent teachers are provided, but these will fall short of the goal unless supplemented by good books in the hands of all the children. The textbook is an indispensable part in the circle of instruction, second only to the teacher. We endanger the whole edifice of public education when we leave this gap. For many parents are unable to furnish books for their children, but still are unwilling to confess pauperism to secure the books under the present law for indigents. Free textbooks have been tried in other states, and under certain safeguards the plan has worked well. A sentiment in favor of free texts is growing rapidly in California. Is it not wise to face the situation now and prepare a carefully considered plan against the day of their introduction?

In maturing this plan we shall find a compelling reason why the State

Printing Office must go. If that office were charged with the duty of furnishing free textbooks, there would be less incentive to keep its work up to a decent standard than at present. For so long as parents pay directly for textbooks, they will have an active interest in the quality and cost of the books. But with textbooks furnished at public expense, this critical interest would be materially lessened. To the average man there is a big difference between the misappropriation of a dollar that comes out of his pocket and one that comes out of the public purse. The fierce indignation throughout the State at the shameful mismanagement of the State Printing Office is due in considerable measure to a realization of personal loss. Why do we hear so much discussion of the cost of textbooks? On its face it seems strange, when we consider that of all the money spent annually in California for education, not more than four per cent goes for textbooks. And yet ninety-six per cent of all the talk concerns the four per cent spent for books! Why? Because the ninety-six per cent is raised by taxation, while the four per cent is paid directly from our own individual pockets. Furnish textbooks at public expense, and we shall hear no more criticism of the cost of textbooks than of buildings, desks, supplies and teachers' salaries.

Is it not clear that before we may safely lessen the public scrutiny by the introduction of free texts, we should reject a plan that has proved conducive of poor books at high prices? Before committing ourselves to free textbooks, we should evolve a plan that will safeguard the securing at reasonable prices of good books, clearly printed and well bound. We believe that we should steadfastly resist free textbooks in California until the State Printing Office is done away with.

MEETING THE EXPENSE OF FREE TEXTBOOKS

This position will be further justified by a consideration of the possible methods of inaugurating free textbooks in California under the present constitutional provision calling for state publication. The expense of free textbooks would have to be met by the State, or the county, or the district, or by combinations of the three.

The State certainly would not pay the entire cost of free texts. It is a well-established principle that appropriations granted by the State should be supplemented by money raised by local taxation. In no other way can extravagance be prevented and a proper sense of responsibility developed. Furthermore, it seems extremely doubtful whether the



State should pay any portion of the cost of free texts. The State is now paying toward teachers' salaries about one-half the total cost of our elementary schools. We believe that the law should not be changed to include anything else. The State is doing her full share now. The people are paying directly for textbooks to-day. Would it not be better and fairer for them to continue to do so through local taxation? The cost of textbooks seems legitimately a local expense along with other supplies. This plan would have the advantage also of providing a suitable check on expenditures. For, of course, there can be no such thing as *free* texts. We believe the best possible plan would be for each city and county, or possibly each district, to decide for itself whether it desires to pay for its books collectively or by the parents individually. We believe that the principle of local option, sharpening responsibility and educating it, should prevail in all cases unless clear reasons can be shown for its suspension. In a democracy questions should be brought home to the people as closely as effective administration will permit. With local option on texts it seems safe to assume that a majority of the units would forthwith decide upon free texts.

Thus it would seem safe to conclude that when we do have free texts in California the expense will be borne locally—probably by the county with the assistance of the district. Under the plan of state publication, however, we should face the necessity of purchasing the books from the State Printer. And that would mean that we should be worse off than we are today. Freed by law from competition, the State Printer could still furnish inferior books. Effective remonstrance would be more difficult to secure because people do not readily respond to public injury. We call a man who steals from us collectively a grafter; him who steals from us individually, a thief. Say what we will, our indignation in the second instance is more apt to lead to action. So long as the State maintains a monopoly of the manufacture of textbooks in the hands of a politician, we believe that the introduction of free textbooks should be postponed. Let us not make a bad matter worse.

LOCAL ADOPTIONS VS. STATE UNIFORMITY

We believe that a frank examination of our system of uniform State texts will point to a solution of the problem. State publication and state uniformity go naturally hand in hand. If the reasons for doing away with state publication are valid, we believe that it can be shown that

we should profit educationally by substituting local adoption for state uniformity of texts. While this assertion may seem a little startling in California, it would be considered a truism in every other progressive, well-settled state in the Union with the exception of Indiana. Let us name all the states that have uniform textbooks: Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Kansas, Indiana and California. This list contains food for thought. With the exception of the last four named, the list falls into two big classes—the Southern States and the Plateau States. In a broad way we see clearly that the two most sparsely settled sections of our country favor state uniformity. Is this merely a happening, or is there a reason for it? We believe that state uniformity in those two big groups of states is a genuine educational adaptation to environment. In a sparsely settled section public education costs far more per capita than in more populous regions. The schools must make humble beginnings and develop with the section. The cost of education is usually so great that only the rudiments can be attempted at first. And to make sure of even a humble beginning, the power and assistance of the state are invoked. Until a system gathers headway with the years, it seems necessary for the state to make sure that certain minimum requirements are enforced. State uniformity of texts is a natural means of handling the problem. Thus we should expect to find state uniformity in the South; for the public school systems in those states have been built since the Civil War. There were no public schools in the South in 1860. We should also expect to find state uniformity in all new states, as evidenced by the Plateau group as a whole.

Does it not follow conclusively that with the gradual settlement and development of a state, the plan of state uniformity of texts must complete its purpose and give way to a system more responsive to the needs of the people? With an effective public school system in full swing, backed by an alert public consciousness of the worth of education, state uniformity is no longer necessary to safeguard minimum requirements. Then the state must have a system that recognizes the inevitable differentiations among the people; that meets the varying needs of rural and city schools; that bases itself on variety as co-equal with unity in achieving progress; that stimulates progress by permitting ready adjustment to organic variations.

This process of educational evolution has been shown clearly in the state of Washington. When it was first made a state, the plan of state uniformity rightly imposed upon it as a territory was continued. But with the rapid settlement of the state, with the growth of great cities, with varying needs among the people, Washington a few years ago set aside its outgrown system of uniform texts in favor of a progressive system of local adoptions. Several other states have done the same.

Now let us turn to the four states that seem to be out of their pew in favoring state uniformity. Kansas and Oregon may not have developed sufficient educational momentum safely to do away with state uniformity. But how about Indiana and California? At last we understand why Indiana has been called "the Hoosier State." Even Missouri has been "shown," changing a few years ago from state uniformity to local adoptions. Why should our own beloved California, progressive as she truly is, stand squarely across the path of educational evolution? Why should California and Indiana have the unenviable distinction of serving as the exceptions that prove the rule? We believe that but for our system of state publication, we should have discarded our plan of uniform texts long ago. May they both soon pass away together and keep themselves company in the limbo of worn-out plans!

UNITS OF LOCAL ADOPTION

If we do away with state uniformity of texts in California, what should be made the unit or units of local adoption? The unit of local adoption should always coincide with the unit of supervision. Our supervisory units in California are the counties and the cities. The same authority that prepares the course of study and supervises its execution in the schools should select the books that will prove most effective in carrying out that course of study. As no two courses of study ought to be alike, the folly of uniform texts for all these courses is apparent. It may safely be assumed that the average county board of education understands the needs of the schools of that county better than does the State Board of Education, none of whose members has direct contact with elementary school work. The selection by the State Board of the books to be used in all the schools of the State is truly an anachronism. The only way to make that function of the Board consistent would be to add another requiring the adoption of a uniform course of study.

Surely the authority that lays out the work should also prescribe the tools. Supervision, course of study, and adoption of texts rightly belong together. Educational evolution in California has brought supervision and the course of study together in their rightful place. One step more—local adoption—and we shall have adjusted the three main factors of effective administration of schools.

SCANDALS UNDER LOCAL ADOPTIONS

And now a paragraph or two for the doubting Thomas who admits the educational superiority of optional free texts and local adoptions, but who says frankly that he fears scandals in local boards over adoptions. This honest doubter agrees that state publication must go, but asks would it not be better for the State Board of Education to make contracts directly with publishers for all the schools in the State. The doubter fears that possible scandals in local boards might more than offset the advantages of such adoptions. The doubter admits further that the judgment of county and city boards of education concerning books for use in their schools would be superior to the judgment of the State Board in its well-nigh hopeless task of adopting books suitable for all the schools of the State. Thus the doubt comes squarely to a question of probity.

It would seem that the doubter is taking counsel of his fears rather than of educational experience and present beliefs. We must bear in mind that all county adoptions would be made by school people, and that in all reputable city school systems the boards would ratify pro forma the recommendation of the superintendent and his assistants from the teaching body. Thus local adoptions everywhere would virtually be adoptions by school people. This being clear, we fail to understand why the doubter has more confidence in the probity of the average normal school president than in that of the average city or county superintendent, or the average high school or grammar school principal.

Practically and theoretically the doubter has the wrong end of the argument. Admitting that all men are human and should pray sincerely to be delivered from temptation, the greater the temptation the greater the danger of falling. Where would the temptation be greater, with a State Board handling a two hundred thousand contract or with a county board letting a five thousand dollar contract? If a man has a purchase price, on which board would he be most likely

to get it? As a general proposition the plan of state boards far removed from the people and handling large contracts is to be deprecated. The temptation is necessarily increased while the sense of responsibility is lessened. Local adoptions fit in perfectly with the present tendency to favor boards closely responsible to the people and not handling sums approaching the temptation point.

We believe that our doubter is temperamentally a conservative. If he were accustomed to local adoptions—the plan followed in all the great progressive states—and the proposal were made to substitute uniform adoptions by a State Board, we believe that our doubter would have stronger doubts than at present. And his questions, in that event, would be more difficult of answer. Finally, let it be said to allay the doubts of the doubter, that it was a scandal connected with a member of the State Board of Education that led to the taking from the State Board and vesting in county boards the right to issue teachers' certificates—a legitimate function of the State Board and one that should be returned to it, for the power of certification determines minimum requirements throughout the State.

THE COST OF TEXTBOOKS

Since educational experience and educational theory both strongly sanction local adoptions and optional free texts, we might fairly rest the case at this point. But we desire to meet the advocates of state publication on the only point left—cost of books. Some people might be disposed to put up with a confessedly poor system if it could be shown that such a system is cheaper than the one proposed. A system of local adoptions necessarily involves the purchase of books in the open market. It does away necessarily with state publication. Can books be purchased under local adoptions at prices comparable with those charged under state publication?

A study of conditions and prices in states having local adoptions will prove instructive. Where boards representing cities or counties deal directly with publishers, the books are laid down to these authorities, or to dealers in non-free-text territory, at 20 per cent off the list price. In several states the books are laid down at the capital at 25 per cent off the list price. The list price of a book is the price fixed by the publisher at which the book should be sold in ordinary trade over the dealer's counter. The list price includes the profits of both the jobber and the retailer. Co-operative buying from publishers direct

cuts out these profits and makes a material reduction in the cost of the book to the pupil. With city and county adoptions in California, the books could easily be delivered to boards of education, or to dealers in non-free-text territory, at 20 per cent off the list price.

We are now ready for a specific comparison of prices under our present system of state publication with those that would prevail under local adoptions. California publishes six texts in reading and sells them to the children as follows: primer—28 cents; first reader—25 cents; second reader—30 cents; third reader—45 cents; fourth reader—60 cents; fifth reader—60 cents. The total cost of the six books is \$2.48. The list prices of the same books as published regularly follow: Aldine primer (Newson & Co.)—32 cents; Progressive First Reader (Silver, Burdett & Co.)—32 cents; Brooks' Second Reader (American Book Co.)—35 cents; Brooks' Third Reader (American Book Co.)—40 cents; Stepping Stones Fourth Reader (Silver, Burdett & Co.)—60 cents; Stepping Stones Fifth Reader (Silver, Burdett & Co.)—60 cents. The total list price of the six is \$2.59. Deducting 20 per cent we have \$2.07, the price at which the books would be delivered to city and county boards, or to dealers in non-free-text territory. Adding 10 per cent of the list price for the cost of handling by superintendents or dealers, we have \$2.33 as the price to be paid by the children. This is 15 cents less than we are paying now for these books on inferior paper and with poor bindings.

But some one objects that the total cost of \$2.48 for the State readers would be materially lessened if all the graft could be squeezed out of the State Printing Office and business-like methods introduced. This is certainly true. Fortunately we have the figures of the secretary of the State Board of Control, an expert accountant, to help us on this point. He furnished the senatorial investigating committee with an estimate of the rightful cost of the primer and the first three readers as follows: primer—24 cents; first reader—22 cents; second reader—25 cents; third reader—33 cents. This estimate makes a total cost of \$1.04 for the four books as against the present price of \$1.28, the difference of 24 cents representing the extracted graft. Under local adoptions, what would the four books cost our children? The list prices of the four total \$1.39. Deducting 20 per cent for county or city adoption, and adding 10 per cent for handling, we have \$1.25 as against the estimate of \$1.04. But let us remember that this

apparent difference of 21 cents is not based on equal values in paper, binding, and workmanship. It means the difference between books properly made and those that readily fall to pieces. It means books that will last twice as long. The difference in quality and lasting power probably more than offsets the 21 cents. Furthermore, be it remembered that the estimate of \$1.04 is merely an estimate that rests upon an assumption of a business-like administration of the State Printing Office—an assumption negated by the experience of twenty-six years.

EXCHANGE OF TEXTBOOKS

However, let us be optimistic. Let us assume that the State could sell these four books at \$1.04 without calling upon the legislature for a special appropriation for the State Printing Office. Let us also waive the question of qualities in paper, binding, and workmanship. In connection with that apparent difference of 21 cents, there still remains another consideration which knocks the last prop from under a belief in the lower cost of State texts. We refer to the exchange of books granted by publishers under local adoptions. On a four years' adoption, publishers would grant in California an exchange price of 40 per cent off on all books sold the first year of the adoption. Figures show that under exchange not less than 40 per cent of all books sold under a four years' contract are sold the first year, and that 75 per cent of these purchases are on exchange. This represents an average reduction of 12 per cent on every book sold during the entire period of adoption. Under our plan of state publication there is a total loss whenever a book is changed. Since educational progress makes occasional changes in texts necessary, would it not be far better to have a system that would not leave the old books a dead loss to pupils and parents? If the book bills of some families could be cut 40 per cent through the privilege of exchange, there would be a strong incentive to keep books against the day of exchange.

EXCHANGE AND THE DEALERS

Supplementary to the question of exchange lies a question of administration that has worried every school official in California. We refer to the impossibility, under our present system, of getting enough books the first week of school to supply all the children. Practically every teacher, principal and superintendent in California will bear elo-

quent testimony that never have the children under his charge been able to secure all the necessary books the first week of school. At such times the newspapers all over the State are voicing the complaints of superintendents. The reason for this state of affairs is not far to seek. Usually the State Printing Office is partly at fault; but even when its skirts are clean, the trouble persists owing to the unwillingness of local dealers to order freely for school opening. With cash accompanying all orders for State books, with no return privileges, and with only a small margin of profit, the dealers dare not take the chance of being "stuck." Hence they invariably order light and continue to re-order for two or three months. Experience has shown the dealers that this is the only safe way. Meanwhile the schools suffer. Many parents who naturally expect to buy books for their children at the time of school opening object strenuously later on. Local adoptions (with or without free texts) would enable every school in California to be fully equipped the first week. How so? Whenever a book is displaced under local adoptions, the publishers of the new book take from the dealers at dollar for dollar all the stock on hand. Thus protected against loss, dealers have no hesitancy to order freely on the estimate which the superintendent or principal is always glad to furnish. In free-text territory the problem of securing books on time solves itself. To encourage boards to order adequately for prospective needs, publishers grant a return privilege on the books up to 20 per cent of the original order.

TWO PAYMENTS UNDER STATE PUBLICATION

There still remains another important factor in the cost of textbooks that usually is lost sight of completely. Under state publication the people of California have been called upon to make an indirect second payment for textbooks in addition to the sums paid directly by parents. From the inception of state publication to June 30, 1910, the parents in this State paid \$2,553,824.29 directly for textbooks. No doubt the great majority of these parents believed they were paying the entire cost of the books. Far from it. During the time mentioned the legislature made special appropriations aggregating \$607,600 to further the work of state publication. Thus in addition to the sums paid directly by parents for books, we were obliged to add from the State treasury 23 per cent more. However, the man who paid four dollars for his children's books did not realize that he was adding

nearly another dollar for books in his taxes. If he had realized it, we should have heard from him. That realization would have shaken his loyalty to a professedly independent system that needs 23 per cent of coddling from the State to make it go. If this parent were a business man, his loyalty to the system would probably have been completely destroyed by the consideration that if these special appropriations of \$607,600 had been placed at interest at 5 per cent, they would now amount to at least \$1,250,000, or approximately 50 per cent of the amount paid by the parents. Any comparison of the cost of books under state publication with the cost under local adoptions that does not take these special appropriations into account is manifestly incomplete and unfair. For, waiving the question of interest, these appropriations aggregating 23 per cent of the sums paid directly for the books loom up in any honest discussion of the subject. Though usually overlooked in textbook discussions, these appropriations are as big and significant as the Fairmont Hotel on the skyline of San Francisco. They are significant, first, in removing the last reasonable doubt as to relative costs under state publication and local adoptions. Secondly, because of the ease with which we lose sight of these appropriations—the money of all the people rather than of individuals—they are significant in enforcing the necessity of a system of publication and adoption close to the people and responsive to their varying needs, before we dare commit ourselves to free texts. No more serious educational blunder could be made than free texts under state publication. Since free texts are right and desirable, it is evident that our rigid, cost-concealing system of state publication must give way for the introduction of free texts under an open, elastic, less expensive and more democratic plan.

SUMMING UP THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT

In summing up the economic points disclosed in this comparison of state publication and local adoptions, we believe that the facts clearly confirm the belief that state publication is the more expensive plan. Under local adoptions our children would have books strongly and artistically dressed. This fundamental right of California childhood has been persistently denied under state publication. If the State Printing Office could produce books equal in paper, binding, and workmanship to the books issued by regular publishers, it is highly probable that the cost of these books would equal, if not exceed, the

list prices of the publishers. Under county and city adoptions, however, these list prices would be materially reduced through eliminating the profits of jobbers and retailers. Under local adoptions a generous allowance of 40 per cent would be made for the exchange of books. Under state publication every change means a dead loss. Under local adoptions our schools would be supplied on time, for boards of education, and dealers in non-free-text territory, would both be protected against loss. Under state publication we can not hope to have books enough on opening day, for dealers are wary of a plan that carries high risks and small profits. Finally, under local adoptions we should be obliged to pay only once for our books. Under state publication we have added 23 per cent to the sums paid directly by parents. In view of all these economic factors, who can honestly doubt that state publication is the more expensive plan?

POLITICAL BENEFICIARIES OF STATE PUBLICATION

When the man who thinks with his brains and not with his prejudices realizes that state publication is not only undesirable educationally but is also more expensive than local adoptions, he begins to understand the textbook situation in California. He grasps the real reason why critics of state publication are persistently accused of being "pliant tools of the book trust." From the day years ago when Supt. J. W. Linscott, one of the most highly esteemed schoolmen in California, raised his voice against the evils of state publication, and paid for his temerity by having his political aspirations killed and his personal character assailed; from that day to the present, the honest critic of state publication has been abused and his motives impeached. Why do not the advocates of state publication join battle fairly without abuse and without misrepresentation? Do they not realize that abuse and misrepresentation are always a confession that the system under investigation will not bear the light? As might have been expected, the system of state publication soon developed a well-organized body of beneficiaries. Many a soft job has it furnished for political henchmen! Many a juicy contract has it awarded to big business for timely assistance in political stress! A fine political asset, the machines of the two great parties have fought persistently to control it. What more natural than a fixed policy of both parties to hush criticisms that might possibly lead to the removal of the "plum"? What more natural than for the beneficiaries of the system to resent attacks upon it? And was

not the weapon of defense ready at hand? The critic could be dubbed "an enemy of the peerless school system of California," and a sure means of completing his public discomfiture was to brand him as "an emissary of the book trust." This waving the red rag of "the book trust" was cleverly and persistently done to confuse the great mass of honest voters. Apparently this appeal to prejudice—this little game of stop thief—would have worked forever had it not been for a progressive, honest governor and an inquiring State Board of Control. Even then the comments from a goodly portion of the newspapers of the State on the shake-up in the State Printing Office were singularly interesting. The headlines showed that many an editor somehow felt it incumbent upon himself to blame "the book trust" for the misdeeds of the system designed and established "to free the people from the cruel exactions of the book trust." The editors were honest, too. The habit of making "the book trust" the scapegoat for all our educational ills was so strong upon them that they were simply unable to adjust themselves promptly to the real situation.

SIGNS OF A BETTER DAY

Very shrewd have the beneficiaries of state publication been in distracting attention from the educational and economic defects of the system. Their method was the time-honored dodge of an appeal to state pride on the one hand, and to prejudice against publishers on the other. This hoary political ruse worked unflinchingly up to the expose of the real inwardness of the State Printing Office. But that revelation opened the eyes of the people and prepared the way for a dispassionate estimate of state publication. There can be little doubt that the people are beginning to realize that state publication is a failure both educationally and financially. It is being made plain to all that state publication is without honor both at home and abroad. Not five prominent school people in California to-day approve of state publication. Several other states through legislative committees have carefully examined the California plan of state publication, and without exception have reported against it. These adverse reports were based on the clearly perceived educational and financial shortcomings of the system. These reports now have added confirmation through the scandal in our State Printing Office.

We are nearly ready for a new day and a better order of things. State publication is seen to be not merely bad in itself but also a


barrier to progress. It stands squarely across the path of free textbooks, for the evils incident to state publication would be increased under free texts. Secondly, state publication compels uniform texts throughout the State. Educational evolution demands that California replace her system of uniform texts with a system of local adoptions, so that the varying needs of the several sections of the State may truly be served. California must cast aside the swaddling clothes of state uniformity and don the only dress worthy of a grown-up state—local adoptions. But so long as state publication is continued, local adoptions are impossible and no satisfactory system of free texts can be devised.

To the administration of Governor Johnson we owe the turning of the light upon state publication. Free from demagogic claptrap, the investigation of the State Printing Office is rendering a valuable service. The people are studying the question dispassionately, and there can be no doubt as to their final conclusion. When they once see clearly that state publication is not only bad educationally and financially, but that it is also a real barrier to free texts and local adoptions, the present plan will forthwith be swept aside to make way for a better day. We look to the present administration to complete the work so auspiciously begun. There are now many fair jewels of achievement in the crown of the present administration. None could be fairer than the establishment of a system of optional free texts and local adoptions. For such a step would bring California into the enjoyment of her inalienable right to the best.

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