

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIFTY-FIRST LEGISLATURE.

SENATE.

No. 51.

STATE UNIFORMITY OF TEXT-BOOKS.

The County Institutes cost the State four thousand dollars, County Supervisorships sixteen thousand dollars. Whole amount expended in the interests of schools the past year was over ten hundred thousand dollars. Two per cent. of this amount would more than meet the sum required above for institutes and supervision. The amount raised directly by taxation and realized from the school fund is about six hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. A little more than three per cent. of this amount would be sufficient for the above purposes. Or if the cost—20,000—be laid as a tax on the entire valuation of the State—225,000,000—it would be less than one mill per dollar. As a per centage on the present amount of school expenses, the schools themselves would be shortened less than two days. I feel confident that what we thus lose in *quantity* is more than compensated by *quality*, in better instruction and inspection. As a direct tax the amount is slight and what the State thus contributes from its property meets rich returns in a more complete public culture and increased intelligence. Can we not, however, avoid both the shortening of schools and the extra tax or at least save sufficient in some way to meet the requisite amount. This brings us to the matter of school books.

Our people are now *burdened* with the great variety of text-books and the frequent changes made—and not only burdened but often times deprived of school privileges. Let me illustrate. This winter a laborer resides in Augusta. His children attend school. Next winter he moves to Gardiner. His children go to school the first day. At noon or night they return with their books—such as were used in Augusta—with the announcement that entirely different books are used in the schools of Gardiner.

New ones must be furnished or the children will derive no benefit from that winter's school. The father cannot afford to purchase new books, but feels that he must. Thus it is a burden. Or possibly he is wholly unable to buy new ones, and concludes to set the son at work, or puts the daughter in the cotton or woolen mill. Thus the child is deprived of school opportunities and grows up in ignorance. This is a sad fact *felt* especially by the floating, laboring population, by itinerating clergymen and particularly by settlers in the townships, coming from all quarters of the State. To show the variety used in this State I submit the following taken from Messrs. Bailey and Noyes' list of books to supply the demands of our schools :

Arithmetics.....	24
Algebras, Geometries, &c.....	17
Astronomy.....	5
Anatomy and Physiology.....	4
Book-Keeping.....	7
Botany.....	3
Chemistry.....	4
Dictionaries.....	16
French and German.....	20
Greek.....	13
Geographies.....	18
Grammars and Parsing Books.....	18
History.....	6
Latin.....	19
Philosophy.....	7
Readers and Spellers.....	46
Speakers.....	6
Writing Books.....	4

Such a variety of books naturally implies constant efforts on the part of the various publishers, each to hold his own ground and to supplant others. We find, therefore, smart, active book agents in every part of the State busily employed effecting exchanges. These changes have become so frequent, in direct violation of the existing "five year law," that the people have fairly lost their patience; many, indeed, are disgusted with the manner in which the text-book question is handled. As an extravagant illustration I quote a newspaper item. "A few days ago a gentleman in Gardiner took his son to the book store to purchase a new school-

book. Having secured the right one, the kind father, taking the lad by the collar, hurried him out of the store with the earnest command, 'Run, boy, run, or they will change the book before you get to the school-room.''' There is hardly a house in the State which has not one or more shelves crowded with school books thrown aside and out of use. This has been and continues to be a great expense. Can this needless outlay be prevented? I think it can, if honorable, honest, earnest men will take hold of the matter with determination. How? By *State uniformity of text books*. Establish through legislative authority one series of readers, one series of arithmetics, one series of geographies, grammars, &c., for the entire State—reducing the present large number of one hundred and sixty-seven text-books down to less than one-fifth of that number—thirty-two. Wealthy and enterprising publishers have supplied the market with a great variety of excellent text-books from which surely a good selection can easily be made by competent persons. Having secured books best adapted to our school wants, contract in due form with publishers to furnish such books for a certain period—five years, more or less—at stipulated retail and wholesale rates, said rates to be plainly and legibly stamped or printed on every book thus furnished. Violation of this contract to be accompanied with a suitable penalty. These books could be furnished either through the town committees or through the ordinary channels of trade. The saving to the people would amount to a sum more than sufficient to cover the expense of Teachers' Institutes and County Supervisorship. Superintendent Swett of California, states as follows: "I am confident that this single provision of the 'School Law,' (requiring State uniformity,) has saved to the people of the State, during the past five years, \$50,000 in the purchase of books, to say nothing of the incalculable advantages derived from it in the classification of the schools." That is equivalent to a saving of \$10,000 a year on a school population of 94,349. Our school population is 225,200—which would demonstrate a saving of \$24,000 to our people. Mr. Davis, publisher of the New Practical Arithmetic, informs me that the people of Vermont pay a "uniformity" price of 63 cents for a book which costs them \$1 at retail—a saving of 37 per cent. The city of Bath provides pupils with books at a discount of 40 per cent. from former retail rates. The State of Maryland established uni-

formity three years ago. I "tear a leaf" from the Superintendent's report and enter it here:

List of Text Books adopted by the *State Board of Education* for use in the Public Schools of Maryland, showing the price at which each Book was furnished to the counties for introduction, including cost of Freight and Boxing, also showing the retail, or store price of same, for school year, ending June 30th, 1866:

NAME OF BOOK.	Price at which furnished.	Retail price.
Sargent's Standard Speller.....	\$00 9 1-5	\$00 17
“ Pronouncing Speller.....	00 11 1-2	00 34
Webster's School Dictionary.....	00 69 3-5	1 00
Wilson's Primer.....	00 11 1-2	00 25
“ First Reader.....	00 17 1-4	00 40
“ Second “.....	00 23 1-3	00 60
“ Third “.....	00 39 1-10	00 90
“ Fourth “.....	00 57 1-2	1 35
Sargent's Fourth Reader.....	00 38	1 20
Wilson's School and Family Charts.....	15 52	18 00
Quackenbos' First Book English Grammar.....	00 17 1-4	00 50
“ English Grammar.....	00 46	1 20
Davies' Primary Arithmetic.....	00 16 1-10	00 30
“ Intellectual “.....	00 24 3-20	00 50
“ El. of Writ'n “.....	00 27 3-5	00 60
“ Practical “.....	00 56 7-20	1 00
“ Elementary Algebra,.....	00 72 9-20	1 34
Walton's Arithmetical Cards.....	00 6 9-10	00 12
“ “ Key.....	00 28 3-4	00 45
Cornell's First Steps in Geography.....	00 17 1-4	00 45
“ Primary Geography.....	00 31 1-20	00 90
“ Grammar School Geography.....	00 60 19-20	1 50
Goodrich's Child's History U. S.....	00 37 19-20	00 90
“ Pictorial “.....	00 85 1-10	2 00
Payson's, Dunton & Scribner's Penmanship.....	1 55 1-4	2 40
“ “ “ “ Double Entry Book-keeping.....	00 86 1-4	1 60
“ “ “ “ Single Entry Book-keeping.....	00 42 1-8	00 67
“ “ “ “ Blanks for D. E. Book-keeping..	00 51 3-4	00 75
“ “ “ “ “ “ S. E. “.....	00 39 1-10	00 50
Well's Science of Common Things.....	00 57 1-2	1 25
Webster's High School Dictionary.....	00 90 1-4	1 25
Wilson's Fifth Reader.....	00 77 1-10	1 80
Sargent's “ “ Part 2d.....	00 46	1 46
Quackenbos' First Lessons English Composition.....	00 40 1-4	00 90
“ Composition and Rhetoric.....	00 69	1 75
Cornell's High School Geography and Atlas.....	1 43 3-4	3 50
Warren's Physical Geography.....	1 03 1-2	2 00
Worcester's Elements of Universal History.....	00 57 1-2	2 00
Emerson's Manual of Agriculture.....	1 10	1 50
Hart's Constitution of the U. S.....	00 25 3-20	00 65

The above stands as an indisputable fact and shows a difference between "uniformity" and "retail" prices ranging from 50 to 249 per cent. Surely this indicates that a saving may be effected by State uniformity. The whole school population in this State is 225,000; 60 per cent. or 125,000 ought to be in attendance at the public schools some portion of the year. No one puts the annual expense for books less than one dollar for each scholar; most with whom I have conferred place it at three dollars. Taking the former estimate, and the whole annual amount expended for school books would be \$125,000. Fifty per cent. of this amount saved as in Maryland, equals \$62,500—40 per cent. as in Bath, equals \$50,000—37 per cent. as in Vermont, \$46,250—25 per cent. equals \$31,250; or taking the customary discount allowed by the wholesale trade, 20 per cent., and we still economise to the amount of \$25,000—more than sufficient to meet the sum required for Institutes and Supervisorship. Evidently our school books cost us much more than they ought. In every well regulated factory, or machine shop, or business of any kind, a careful statement of running expenses is kept; from the analysis of which an accurate knowledge may be obtained of the losses and profits, the well directed and ill directed expenditures of time, force and money, the retrenchment and additional outlays necessary for the most economical results. It seems to me that at least \$20,000 per annum could be saved in our educational operations in the single item of books, and furthermore that the additional outlay of \$20,000 in Teacher's Institutes and County Inspection—for the term of five years at least—would add immensely to the forces and productive capacity of our public school system. I have no doubt upon this point.

Again, State uniformity—as has already been stated—would contribute much to a better, simpler, and more effective classification in the school room. A few days ago I visited a school in one of the largest country villages of this State. It was near the close of the afternoon session. I found the teacher—a lady with several summers' experience—weary and worn out with the labors of the day. I was a little surprised, for she seemed to be a woman of strong constitution, naturally able to do a good school day's work. In the rapid "call" and "return" of classes, I soon discovered the cause of "wear and tear" to nervous power. "How many pupils have you?" "Sixty," was the answer. This was an ordinary grammar school. "How many classes?" I asked.

“Thirty.” “Why, these will be the death of you,” I said. “I know it,” she replied, “but each child has a different book, and how can I help it?” Such a variety results in “confusion confounded,” the minimum of good to the scholar, and the gradual wearing out and final breaking down of the teacher. The State can prevent this terrible waste of time to the pupil and loss of power to the teacher. Recognizing this waste and loss, conscious of her own power in public school matters, she *ought* to legislate with intelligent purpose to effect better results—to accomplish all that is possible in the brief eighteen week school period.

Furthermore, the frequent changes in books detract from the teachers' *power*. The farmer can hoe better with the “old hee” or chop better with the ax to which his hand and arm have been accustomed. The “helmsman” who *knows* his craft feels *sure* when he grasps the rudder wheel, and steers *confidently* out into storm and “black darkness.” The grim gunner of the “Swamp Angel” *knew* when he touched fuse or pulled lanyard, the terrible missile would speed away miles on its errand of death and destruction and would explode only when it should reach the heart of the town. Books are the *instruments* of the teacher, and he will do much better execution with those to which his thought and method of teaching have been accustomed, than with those of which he knows nothing, or but little. Think not that I do not approve of changes in text books. It is the *frequent* changes I object to; from one book or series to another, no better, sometimes inferior. Great improvement has been made in school books, and will continue to be made. But the ordinary teacher will do more and better work with the same ordinary book for five years in succession than with a new book every year, or every term.

I am aware that it is said the teacher should be a person entirely *outside* of books, to whom the book is only a matter of convenience between himself and the pupil, and that so far as the teacher is concerned a change in text books is a matter of small consequence. I grant the teacher *should* be one who knows his profession; to whom the book is only another man's method of expressing naturally and logically in brief what he himself should know in *toto*—to whom any text book should pass in hand as easily and conveniently as the various cutlery and ware he uses on his dining table. But what the teacher *should* be is strikingly different from what

he is. I refer more particularly to our country school teachers. There are among them excellent scholars, excellent instructors, judicious disciplinarians. But the great body of country teachers are young, unqualified in scholarship, limited in expression, ignorant of the simplest laws of mental development and growth. With a good deal of toil and struggle they "cipher" through even *one* arithmetic or "parse" through one "Parsing book." They are obliged to solve the "puzzles" in even one arithmetic or unravel certain "peculiar grammatical constructions" in the book which they have before they dare attempt another, especially as a teacher. A 1 teachers in the public schools of Maine are limited in number, When we secure that grade six thousand strong, then book changes will not harm the teachers' corps.

How shall we secure a suitable selection of text books? Doubtless some plan can be devised whereby this can be done fairly, honestly, with proper restrictions and with a view to the best interest of all. I suggest the following: Let the sixteen County Supervisors, together with the State Superintendent (personally I should prefer not to be a member of the board,) constitute the Text Book Committee. Coming from different parts of the State, acquainted with the intellectual wants and capacities of the various communities among which they reside, knowing the school books now in use—such persons, it seems to me, would be generally well qualified for the duty required. It would be too large a body for easy, cheap *purchase*. But even after such a committee has made a selection of books, I would not have such a selection valid till approved and authorized by the Governor and Council, as a *check* on the way, should money be used, and to give dignity and authority to the State series, when established. A committee selected from college officers, or the principals of our High and Normal Schools, or from the great body of teachers, or from all these classes—with a like check in the Council Chamber, would perhaps answer as well. I do not intend hereby to reflect on the honesty and honor of any person or class. But the world is as it is. Every man is said to have his price. The money power represented by the school book publishers is immense. Such power has been used and will continue to be used. It is but a part of common prudence to surround both government and people with proper checks and securities; to exercise such prudence is no insinuation against general integrity.

“Monopoly!” some one exclaims. Such a procedure on the part of the State would throw the publication of the school books into the hands of one man or of one house! Prices would go up immediately after introduction, and the people would be obliged to pay as high or even higher rates than at present, without any remedy! Hold a minute. Let us analyze this matter. *Now*, five different publishing houses are furnishing the State with as many different readers. It is natural to infer that each house realizes certain profits or the business would be relinquished. Suppose the entire profit on readers amount to \$25,000, and that the same be divided equally among the five houses, giving each \$5,000. Now if a single house could have all the readers with a clean profit of \$10,000—double the previous amount—still the State would save \$15,000; and then, again, such books being furnished under contract secured by sufficient bonds, obligations and penalties, with wholesale and retail prices stamped or printed as heretofore indicated, I see a monopoly over which the State has control. She is mistress of the situation, and holds the power in her own hands. No more combinations among book-dealers and publishers in this State to dragoon country dealers into line, and maintain high rates for school books. *These* are the real monopolies. I most heartily approve of “cornering” such.

But “the State has no more right to legislate on books, than it has on boots, shoes, or wearing apparel generally.” Is this true? Let us examine. The State says, “I must educate my children.” This is a duty of the State, founded on self-preservation and the *right* of the youth to a trained, intelligent, vigorous citizenship. In the discharge of this duty, the State imposes upon towns the necessity of raising money, building school-houses, selecting proper officers, &c. The children must go to school. The direct necessity of books follows. Now the State having imposed the necessity of books, should provide that that necessity be as light as possible. The child can wear any kind of a boot or shoe, or even go without. But he *must* have a book. The State not only has a *right*, but it is the *duty* of the State, a resultant of her own action, to regulate a matter so closely connected with the Common School System, so intimately interwoven with its daily life, and with the full realizations of its capabilities as is the School Book question.

Finally, the “uniformity plan” will dispense entirely with that great army of “book agents” that now marches over every square

UNIFORMITY OF TEXT-BOOKS.

mile of the State—where there are school-houses, school agents and school committees. Every school district, every school meeting, every educational convention, every teacher in some way or another, feels the “book agent.” I find no fault with the “book agent.” I do not speak reproachfully of him or his business. I admire his pluck, tact and persistency. He is a man of business, on business. This agency, however, costs somebody something. Who is this somebody? Of course, the consumer. Who are the consumers? The great people, away out on the periphery of active agencies, unable to make themselves felt except through central powers. Banish the “book agent” through the “uniformity method,” and one great item of expense in the distribution of books will be dispensed with. Bring the consumer directly in contact with the producer. Avoid intermediate exorbitant commissions.

In brief then I advocate State uniformity of text-books for the following reasons:

- 1st. Attempts at town uniformity have failed as a State measure.
- 2d. State uniformity has *not* failed.
- 3d. The best educators are *agreed* as to its *desirability*.
- 4th. The people and teachers of Maine, the general press, S. S. Committees and Board of Education *demand* it.
- 5th. Other States are moving in this direction.
- 6th. The saving thereby to the scholar in time, and to the teacher in efficiency will be at least one quarter—while the people will save from \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually.
- 7th. We shall release ourselves from an army of book-agents and the constant wrangling and powerful influences of rival book-houses.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, February 13, 1872.

Ordered, That so much of the Report of the State Superintendent of Common Schools for the year 1868, as relates to "State Uniformity of Text-Books," be printed for the use of the Legislature.

Read and passed. Sent down for concurrence.

SAMUEL W. LANE, *Secretary*.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
February 15, 1872. }

Read and concurred.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk*.

A true copy—Attest:

SAMUEL W. LANE, *Secretary of the Senate*.