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# TEXT-BOOK LEGISLATION IN IOWA

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O. E. KLINGAMAN

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## I

### THE TEXT-BOOK PROBLEM

An examination of the legislative journals of the American Commonwealths reveals the fact that few subjects receive more continuous attention at the hands of State legislatures than the subject of education. "Every other winter the legislatures of about forty States meet in deliberative session. They consider approximately one thousand bills on educational questions and enact about two hundred of them into law."<sup>1</sup>

Among the educational questions demanding solution is the question of the best method of selecting and providing text-books for pupils in the public schools. Indeed, in practically every State legislature which met in 1913 one or more text-book bills, in some form or other, were under discussion. Commonwealths not having State uniformity of text-books were considering bills establishing such a system; while in States where that system was already in operation the legislatures were discussing amendments. In Kansas, where, under a system of State uniformity, the prices of text-books were fixed by law at a rate so low that publishing houses were not able to offer even their second-class books for consideration, the legislature considered and finally enacted a bill which provided that the State should hereafter publish its own text-books. Thus it is evident that the text-book problem is receiving considerable legislative attention in the United States. Moreover, numerous articles on the subject are to be found in the pages of current periodicals, both technical and popular in character.<sup>2</sup>

That the text-book is an important factor in the educa-



tional system would be admitted by everyone. The text-book is the tool with which the pupil works. If the tool is poor the work of the pupil must necessarily be poor. To be sure, there are teachers who can, if need be, rise above the text-book and teach the subject rather than the book; but as a rule teachers confine themselves largely to teaching the subject-matter in the book. If the book be unsatisfactory the work of the teacher is hindered. This fact apparently is not fully appreciated by the general public, and as a result the public is too often ready to accept almost anything in the way of a text-book, providing the price is low. For instance, in some States (notably in Kansas and Indiana) a limit was placed on the prices for which school books could be contracted, thereby placing a premium on cheap books — a policy which was very short-sighted from the educational standpoint. The saving amounts to very little when the pupil is thereby forced to use a text-book so greatly inferior that he is hampered in his advancement.<sup>3</sup>

The need of some regulation of text-books is fully realized only after a consideration of the real problem — which is to provide pupils in the schools with suitable texts on the subjects contained in the curriculum and to insure the use of these texts in the schools for a reasonable length of time. In most States where contracts are entered into for the use of certain text-books a specified period is prescribed, usually five years. This is the case in Iowa. No text-book once legally authorized to be used in the public schools in this State can legally be changed for another text until the expiration of the five-year period, unless the people of the school district shall by popular vote so determine.<sup>4</sup> Even this vote is safeguarded: it can be taken only at a specified regular election, and due notice must be given of the fact that a change in text-books is to be voted upon at that election.<sup>5</sup>



The frequent change of text-books is now regarded by educators as one of the chief causes of the retardation of pupils — a condition which is looked upon as one of the greatest evils in public school work, because in a majority of cases the retarded child leaves school before he has completed the grades.

Again, it is very clear that in a sense changes in text-books operate as an additional tax upon those who send children to school. Without some form of regulation many teachers are prone to change text-books frequently. The reason for this state of affairs is to be found in the fact that many teachers become so proficient in teaching a certain text that they object to being required to use a different text in the same subject, even when moving to a new school where that particular text has not been in use. This frequently happens in Iowa, where the same tendency often characterizes superintendents of schools. Little attention is paid in such cases to the length of time the text-book which it is proposed to abandon has been in use. For example, in a given school a certain series of Arithmetics may have been adopted in the autumn of 1913. In the spring of 1914 a new superintendent of schools is chosen. When he reaches his new field of labor he expresses himself as being dissatisfied with the choice of Arithmetics made by the school board in the previous autumn; and he recommends that the books then in use be displaced by those he himself may favor for one reason or another. If his wish is allowed to prevail the patrons of the school or the taxpayers, if free text-books are furnished, are obliged to pay for two sets of books within a single year.

Sometimes this result is accomplished through the regular process of securing an affirmative vote of the people authorizing a change of text-books. Or, as frequently occurs in rural schools, a new teacher insists that she can do



better work with texts other than those regularly adopted; and so unauthorized books are purchased, thus causing additional expense to the patrons.

Another reason for the frequent change of text-books is to be found in the solicitations of representatives of the various publishing houses who are naturally eager to secure new business. The way to secure new business, of course, is to bring about a change of text-books. The representative of Blank and Company is desirous of displacing the books of Doe and Company—irrespective of the statute which provides that the books of Doe and Company, having been regularly adopted, shall be in use for at least five years unless voted out by the people at a stated election. Oftentimes the arguments of these representatives in favor of the books of their respective companies are sufficient to cause a change of text-books before the expiration of the legal period set for the use of the books already adopted.

Two considerations should be borne in mind in any regulation of the length of the period of time during which a given text-book shall continue in use. In the first place, it is desirable that a text-book shall be used for a reasonable length of time in order that, as far as possible, pupils who have become familiar with a given author's method of treating a subject may not be deprived of that knowledge before they have completed the study of the subject. For example, the author of an Arithmetic builds his text-book around a certain method of teaching. Having become accustomed to the author's method of presentation, it becomes easier for the pupils to make progress in the study of the book. But if this book is taken from their hands while they are still in the midst of the subject, and a new book is substituted, much time is lost even by the better pupils in becoming familiar with the new methods, while the poorer pupils are apt to fail completely in the work of the new text.



On the other hand, the length of time for which any book is used should not be too long, since a change is often desirable in order to secure better and more up-to-date texts. In Indiana, which formerly had let contracts for five-year periods under the State adoption system, it was thought that a longer period of time than five years should be specified. The legislature, therefore, amended the law and provided that certain books which were to be adopted in the future should be adopted for a period of ten years. It was soon discovered, however, that it might be necessary to change books oftener than once in ten years in order that the pupils might have the advantage of the best text-books. Accordingly, the law providing for a ten-year period was repealed; and now all the contracts in the State of Indiana are again drawn for five-year periods.

Three other aspects of the problem of text-book regulation which receive more extended discussion in the following pages are: uniformity of text-books, the regulation of the price of school books, and the question of free text-books. In the absence of some system in the selection of text-books pupils moving from one school district to another are almost certain to find that they must buy a majority if not all of the books which they will use in the new school. Consequently, some system of uniformity is necessary. But should the State or the county be the unit in the system of uniformity? Again, should the prices of school books be left to competition or should they be subject to State regulation? Finally, should the school corporation, the county, or the State, as the case may be, purchase school books and supplies; and if so, should these books and supplies be furnished to pupils free of charge or at cost? These are among the questions which present themselves in connection with the regulation of text-books.



## II

### HISTORY OF TEXT-BOOK LEGISLATION IN IOWA

When the first schools were established in Iowa each teacher was apparently his own authority, not only deciding what text-books should be used by his pupils but also determining the length of time during which these books should continue in use. In the pioneer settlements almost any text-book was acceptable, since the number of different books on the same subject was limited, as was also the financial ability of the settlers to buy new books. Pioneer families coming from other States naturally brought with them among their most cherished possessions such school books as they might have. Consequently, when the district school was conducted for its limited session several different books on a given subject were used in the same class. This situation resulted in confusion and detracted from the efficiency of the work of the teacher, who in many cases was compelled to hear as many recitations in a given subject as there were various text-books on that subject in use in the school. It was due to this chaotic condition of affairs that the necessity for uniformity of text-books, at least in the same school district, was early recognized by the people.

After uniformity of text-books began to be established in the various school corporations or school districts it was found that persons moving from one school district to another were at a disadvantage in that the books used in one district might not be the same as those used in another. Thus, in time agitation was begun to secure a larger unit within which uniformity of text-books should prevail.



The first legislative provision in Iowa concerning uniformity of text-books is to be found in the law passed by the General Assembly in 1849. By this act it became the duty of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to "examine and recommend to the several school districts a uniform series of text books, to be used in the schools thereof."<sup>6</sup> The Superintendent, however, was given no power to compel schools to use the books which he recommended. At the same time, the law was a step in the direction of the selection of text-books by a central authority.

In accordance with this law Superintendent Thomas H. Benton, Jr., recommended the following books:

Sanders' series of readers and spellers, a first book in drawing by Josiah Holbrook, Winchester's penmanship in four books, Mitchell's geographies, McElligott's Young Analyzer and Manual, Parley's Universal History with Engravings, Colburn and Perkins' arithmetic, Wells' grammar, Wilson's History of the United States, and Webster's primary school and pronouncing dictionary.<sup>7</sup>

Teachers were urged by the State department not to use books that were not in the recommended list, and in this way an attempt was made to secure a greater degree of uniformity throughout the State. School book publishers were active in Iowa then as now, and in the attempt to induce the Superintendent to recommend their publications had sent to his office a large number of samples of their respective texts. "In 1849 there were some three hundred volumes in this text-book library which were accessible to citizens of the State."<sup>8</sup>

In 1854 Mr. James Eads, then Superintendent of Public Instruction, made an almost complete change in the list of text-books which he recommended. Webster's dictionary, Mitchell's geographies, and Parley's history were retained. The remainder of the list was new, and was made up of the following books:



Calvin and Eunice Cutter's books on physiology and hygiene, Lincoln's chemistry, Parker's natural and experimental philosophy, Pinneo's grammar, . . . . Burritt's Atlas of the Heavens, Wood's botany, Ray's arithmetics and algebra, McGuffey's readers and speller, Foster's book-keeping, Emma Willard's history, . . . . Bayard's Exposition of the Constitution of the United States, and Mansfield's Political Grammar.<sup>9</sup>

This list is perhaps more interesting than the previous one, since it was the first recommended list containing texts for high schools.

At this time the leaders in the educational field in Iowa were making strenuous efforts to secure uniformity in the use of books in the schools of the State. It was declared that uniformity was absolutely necessary if the schools were to be efficient. In order to appeal to the parents and secure their assistance, statements were made that uniformity would save money since texts would be used for a much longer period of time. Parents were also appealed to on the ground that frequent changes of texts were detrimental to the best work of the children. Claims were made then, as now, that many of the changes were brought about by agents of the text-book houses or were made for the purpose of satisfying some personal preference of the teacher. At any rate the leaders in education insisted that frequent changes of school books must cease and that uniformity of texts must be secured.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that the State Superintendent himself made frequent changes in his recommended list, so that, had all the schools followed his recommendations, changes in texts would still have occurred with considerable frequency. For instance, the list recommended in 1854 by Superintendent Eads was changed within the very short period of two years, that is, in 1856, when he recommended the following list of books:

Greene's grammars, Bernard's History of the United States,



Webster's Definer, the Constitution of the United States by W. Hickey, Cotton and Fitch's geographies, Cowdy's Elementary Moral Lessons, Brookfield's First Book, Parker's Aids, Davies' Legendre, and Davies' Surveying.<sup>11</sup>

This list was to be added to the list recommended in 1854, thus practically destroying any attempts which may have been made theretofore to secure uniformity of texts, for it will be seen that there was now allowed a choice in grammars, histories, dictionaries, civics, and geographies.

When Mr. Maturin L. Fisher became Superintendent of Public Instruction he reported in 1857 that "schools were more dependent upon good teachers than upon good textbooks", and therefore he made no recommendation of texts.<sup>12</sup>

The office of Superintendent of Public Instruction was abolished in 1858 and a State Board of Education was created. Upon its organization a committee of this Board was appointed for the purpose of revising the recommended text-book list. This committee retained most of the books recommended by Mr. Eads, with the following exceptions: Grey's botany was substituted for Wood's botany, and Mayhew's book-keeping displaced that of Foster. Norton's Primary Natural Philosophy was added to the list. Mention has been made of the fact that on the recommended list at this time there were two different grammars. Evidently the committee sought to get back to uniformity by recommending only one grammar. "But the committee could not agree on the grammar to be recommended, Bullion's, Clark's, and Pinneo's each having an adherent. The Secretary, it seems, was finally given authority to decide, whereupon Pinneo's book was retained."<sup>13</sup>

The committee went on record as opposing frequent changes in text-books and urged for the first time that books should be sold throughout the State at a uniform price.



"Your committee", reads the recommendation, "are further of the opinion that some arrangement might be made, and should be made, by which text books may be furnished throughout the State at a uniform price, and we trust this Board will recommend the Secretary to endeavor to make such an arrangement."<sup>14</sup> It does not appear, however, that any action was taken upon this recommendation.

The Board of Education convened for its second session in Des Moines in December, 1859. The question of text-books was discussed with great freedom, and suggestions were made to the effect that district boards should be authorized to adopt texts without recommendations from the State Board. A majority and a minority report were made by the committee on text-books. The majority report rejected all texts on geography that had been submitted, claiming that all were filled with errors with regard to the location of streams and towns in the western States and in respect to the population of cities and towns in Iowa.<sup>15</sup>

The minority report concurred in this condemnation of the geographies but insisted that "in many portions of the State, great efforts have been made to obtain a uniformity of text books in the schools, and those efforts have been crowned with a good degree of success. This success, I consider, due almost entirely to the fact that the same recommendations have been adhered to for several years, and no course has contributed so much to that end as the refusal of the Board at its last session to change the recommendations formerly made by the State Superintendents." The minority report, however, favored certain changes in high school texts on the ground that these "studies were but little pursued in our common schools," and that changes could be made with but little expense.<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note that in accordance with an act passed by the Board of Education it became the duty of the



Secretary of the Board to recommend from time to time to county superintendents such books as he thought suitable for use as text-books. Such lists were to be transmitted by the county superintendents immediately to the presidents of the several district boards of directors in their respective counties.<sup>17</sup>

It was not until 1860 that the General Assembly enacted a law giving to the electors in school districts the power to "determine the branches to be taught and the text-books to be used in the schools"—a power which might be delegated by the electors to the district school board.<sup>18</sup> This act of the General Assembly provided for township uniformity, inasmuch as the law to which it was amendatory specified the rights of electors in each district township. As a matter of fact, the township is still the largest unit of uniformity except in those cases where counties have voluntarily accepted county uniformity.

On December 19, 1861, the State Board of Education made its last recommendation of text-books. The list was as follows: spellers, McGuffey's; readers, McGuffey's new series; writing, Spencerian and Beer's system; arithmetic, Ray's series; algebra, Ray's; grammar, Pinneo's; geography, Monteith and McNally's latest edition; music, Bradbury's school music; history, Wilson's; dictionary, Webster's; book-keeping, Palmer's; natural philosophy, Wells'; natural philosophy, Wells' Science of Common Things; chemistry, Youman's; botany, Grey's; geometry, Robinson's; trigonometry, Robinson's; surveying, Robinson's; physiology, Cutter's; astronomy, Brocklesby's; meteorology, Brocklesby's; geology, Hitchcock's. In this list only one change appears: Pinneo's grammar was once more recommended.<sup>19</sup>

There is nothing to show that this last recommendation carried any weight with the township boards of directors,



although it is to be assumed that the agents representing publishing companies that had books on this list were active in their endeavors to promote sales.

The *Iowa Instructor and School Journal*, which was then the leading school journal in Iowa, made strong appeals to the township boards of directors to determine the series of books that should be used in their schools for a considerable period of time to come. It also suggested that supplies of these texts should be kept at some central or other convenient place and sold at a cheap rate; and it was even suggested that the books might be loaned or furnished free. Moreover, arguments were advanced to prove that no one thing would so handicap a pupil as the use of "corrupt or badly written school books."

In 1864 the Board of Education was abolished and the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction was once more established.

Three years later Superintendent D. Franklin Wells made the announcement that the chief interest in text-books centered in the subject of uniformity. He declared State uniformity to be impractical. Uniformity was desirable for the county and very important throughout a township, but he took the position that the only place where uniformity was absolutely essential was in each school district. The law at that time, as has already been noted, gave to the electors in each district township or to the board of directors the power to secure uniformity of text-books in the schools in the township. It was urged very strongly by Superintendent Wells that this township uniformity should be required, and not merely permitted, by the directors.<sup>20</sup>

In some of the counties of the State, notably in Dallas County, uniformity of text-books was early secured throughout the entire county. The process was simple. A convention of the school officers was called, and by mutual



agreement a list of books was agreed upon. This plan was also followed in Louisa County; and a similar plan has been followed during the last few years by Osceola County. According to the plan employed in Osceola County at present each township wishing to enter the county uniformity system appoints a committee with power to act. These various committees meet in conference with the county superintendent. A list of books is agreed upon and selected. These books are then put into use in the rural schools of the county, thus securing county uniformity. A somewhat similar plan was followed in Franklin County a few years ago. Furthermore, it appears that during the earlier years in some counties a committee from the county teachers institute recommended lists of books that were accepted by some of the schools.<sup>21</sup>

The General Assembly in 1872 evidently felt that text-books were being changed too often, thereby entailing too large an expense upon patrons of the schools. A statute was therefore enacted which prohibited the change of texts oftener than once in three years, unless they were voted out by the electors, due notice of the election having been given.<sup>22</sup>

During this same year the Superintendent of Public Instruction suggested that the only way to make the public schools free to everybody and at the same time provide for text-books that should be suitable was to provide that school boards should purchase and own the text-books to be used in the schools — in other words, free text-books should be furnished to pupils.<sup>23</sup>

It appears that there were those who advocated the idea of State uniformity at about this same time, for State Superintendent von Coelln objected to the proposal very strongly in a report which he made in 1877, quoting the Minnesota State Teachers' Association as being opposed to



a law of this character which was then in operation in Minnesota. He did, however, recommend the Wisconsin law of 1875 which provided that boards of directors could purchase text-books for their respective districts — such books being thereafter the property of the district.<sup>24</sup>

In the meantime Iowa became the battle-ground for text-book companies, because each township board was empowered to select its own books. Since the statute provided that books should remain in use for at least three years, if satisfactory to the electors, in many cases boards of directors of district townships entered into contracts with publishing houses to supply all the books needed for the township for a period of three years. But before the expiration of the three years perhaps some opposing company would send an agent into this township, who would endeavor, possibly with success, to convince the school board that the books of his company were better than those already in use, and would propose an even exchange whereby the company would give to the pupil a new book free in exchange for the copy of the book displaced. This practice led to a great many abuses, especially where changes took place, as they frequently did, during the school year. The people began to feel that there must be a very large profit in the text-book business. Applying the old adage that "one never gets something for nothing", they suspected that the publishing houses recouped their losses from these even exchanges by charging exorbitant prices for those books actually sold.

To put a stop to the frequent changing of text-books and to secure books at lower prices was one of the problems a solution of which was demanded of the General Assembly which met in January, 1880. Five distinct bills were introduced in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate, all of which had for their purpose the securing of



uniformity of text-books and lower prices than had formerly prevailed. For instance, House File No. 205 was entitled "A bill for an act to provide for a uniformity of text books in the common schools of the State." Another bill proposed "to create a State Board of text-book control and to define their duties." A third was framed with the idea of "providing for a uniform system of text-books for schools, and giving school districts power to provide text-books." Again, another bill had for its object the securing of "cheap and uniform text-books in counties."<sup>25</sup>

All these bills were referred to the Committee on Schools, which on February 13th was given the instructions indicated in the following resolution:

WHEREAS, The patrons of the schools of the State have to pay exorbitant prices for their school books, doubtless double their original cost; and

WHEREAS, Said patrons are, and of a right ought to look to this General Assembly for relief; therefore

*Be it resolved*, That it is the sense of this House that the Committee on Schools should take special care to devise means and measures that will secure the text-books to the schools of the State at the lowest possible price.<sup>26</sup>

On March 1st the Committee on Schools made the following report:

Your Committee on Schools, to whom were referred House Files Nos. 242, 249, 454, 205 and 400, bills for acts to provide cheap and uniform text books in counties, beg leave to report that they have had the same under consideration and have instructed me to report the same back to the House with the recommendation that a substitute for all of said bills herewith submitted do pass.<sup>27</sup>

This substitute measure, however, received but little active support in the House, while outside of the General Assembly it was condemned by leading educators of the State. As a consequence the bill failed to pass the House. In the Senate the subject was scarcely considered.



Four years later (1884) Governor Buren R. Sherman, in his message to the General Assembly, suggested that the State should proceed to publish its own text-books. This plan, he believed, offered the only possible solution to the problem of the cost of text-books. Furthermore, he was of the opinion that text-books written by Iowa authors would be the most suitable to the use of pupils in the schools of this State; while the plan would have the additional advantage of securing uniformity of text-books throughout the State.<sup>28</sup> Although this suggestion was not productive of any legislation it is indicative of the fact that interest in the text-book problem had shifted from the question of uniformity to the matter of prices.

In 1886 the questions of the uniformity and prices of text-books again arose. "United States Senator James F. Wilson expressed his opinion in a letter to Superintendent Akers. The document was pronounced 'an eloquent plea for free text-books', but it was utterly opposed to any attempt on the part of the State to enter upon the publication of the same or to dictate the selection in any manner." The Senator insisted upon what has now come to be called the principle of home rule, declaring that "districts should not only be allowed to select but also to own the books used therein."<sup>29</sup>

That people throughout the State were interested in the subject is indicated by the report made in 1885 by the Commissioner of Labor Statistics, wherein he included excerpts from letters received from working people expressing their views on various subjects. "I think", wrote a miner, "we ought to have a uniformity of school-books, printed by the State." A fellow-worker declared that "there are far too many changes in text-books; I can't afford it." A carpenter found the buying of school books "quite a tax; and it is an outrage on the people, the price that publishers put



on these books." On the other hand, a blacksmith emphasized the need of uniformity, for, he said, "with so many changes all the time, it is very hard indeed for the poor people to send all their children to school, as we would like to do." The same attitude was revealed in other letters.<sup>30</sup>

The Superintendent of Public Instruction, John W. Akers, devoted thirty-five pages to the text-book question in his report of 1885. "There is no question in connection with the entire subject of education", he declared, "which has been so generally agitated and discussed, and which is so difficult of any satisfactory solution, as that which relates to the selection and supply of text-books." For this reason "some relief from the evils which the public has so long and so patiently borne" was demanded.<sup>31</sup>

The Superintendent then proceeded with a discussion of the evils from which the people were suffering, namely: frequent changes, the cost of text-books, and the lack of uniformity. He pointed out the fact that while the burdens and bad results caused by frequent changes of texts had been very great the evil has been magnified out of all proper proportion in the public mind. In fact, because of this feeling "boards, in many cases refused to change books when changes really should have been made. So sensitive has the public mind become on this question that the promotion of a child from a lower grade of work to a higher, requiring a more advanced book, is resented as 'another change,' and is roundly and unqualifiedly denounced." His conclusion on this point was that "a really good book may be used in any school for a life time, provided no book surpasses it in the mean time"; but if "a book proves, after a fair trial, to be bad and unsatisfactory, a board of directors should be free to discontinue its use at any time."

Turning to the subject of the cost of school books Superintendent Akers stated his belief that the price of text-books



should and could be reduced to prices from forty to fifty percent lower than those charged at that time. While he expressed the hope that "the time may soon come when we shall have uniformity of text-books in the schools of each school district", he was not in favor of State uniformity. Furthermore, he did not believe that the reduction of the prices of school books could be accomplished through any scheme of uniformity. On the contrary the solution of the whole problem lay in the establishment of a system of free text-books. In support of this contention he presented in detail the results of an extensive investigation of free text-book systems in the United States.<sup>32</sup>

As a result of all this agitation as many as seven bills dealing with the uniformity and prices of text-books were introduced in the House of Representatives in 1886; and a large number of petitions were presented from various sections of the State asking for the passage of a law on the subject.<sup>33</sup> In spite of this general interest, however, none of these bills was enacted into law.

The subject of text-books again received attention from Superintendent Henry Sabin in his report in 1889. He discussed at some length the methods by which the merits of a text-book could be determined and the qualifications which the author of such a book should possess. A series of effective arguments was then presented against State publication of school books in which it was shown that the State was in no position to compete with the publishing houses, except in the one matter of the price of the books: the quality must necessarily suffer under any system of State publication.

Superintendent Sabin likewise disapproved of the plan of State uniformity of text-books which, he declared, had nowhere been a success. There were many objections to the plan. In the first place, it would be impossible to select a



list of books that would be suitable for use in all the different grades of schools, from those in rural districts to those in the largest cities. No body of men would possess the wisdom necessary to make a selection that would be satisfactory to all concerned. In the second place, there would be a large pecuniary loss in replacing the books then in use throughout the State by a uniform set, or else the new books would be of an inferior quality. Finally, the administration of a system of State uniformity, especially if the books were to be purchased by the State, would require elaborate and expensive machinery for the distribution and disposal of the books. Space would not permit of further consideration of the plan.

In fact, Mr. Sabin, like his predecessor, came to the conclusion that the best way to solve the problem of the cost of text-books was to do away with the services of the middleman as far as possible: he believed that the price of books could thus be reduced by as much as a third. Finally, he was of the opinion "that the surest and quickest relief will be found in giving the people of each district the power to furnish the text-books, as they furnish the desks and other equipments of the school, without cost to the individual pupil."<sup>34</sup>

The Twenty-third General Assembly, which met at Des Moines in January, 1890, witnessed the culmination of the movement for reform in the regulation of text-books. Nearly a score of bills on the subject were introduced in the House, while almost an equal number were placed on file in the Senate. Furthermore, both houses were flooded with petitions and memorials from citizens of Iowa favoring or opposing the plans proposed in these bills.<sup>35</sup> Naturally, if any legislation was to be the outcome of this wholesale introduction of bills there must be an effort at compromise. Consequently, in both houses the committees to whom these



bills were referred prepared substitute bills which were recommended for adoption. It will not be necessary, however, to discuss the proceedings in the Senate since it was the House substitute bill which was finally enacted into law.

It was on March 27th in the House of Representatives that "Mr. Holbrook, from [the] Committee on Text-Books reported relative to House files Nos. 27, 32, 50, 62, 65, 68, 102, 121, 140, 184, 200, 225, 258, 298, 321, 364, 380, 382 and 390, recommending substitute for them to pass, and that the bills be indefinitely postponed." A substitute bill proposed by the minority of the committee was also submitted. The matter was then made a special order for Tuesday, April 1st. At the appointed time the House took up the consideration of the proposed substitutes, which for several succeeding days were the principal topics of debate. The proceedings were enlivened on April 3rd, when Mr. Norman B. Holbrook rose to a question of privilege and remarked that, according to the morning *Leader*, "Mr. Dobson charged that a lobby had been here all winter working for State uniformity and had promised some members a finger in the job if it prevailed." He therefore moved the appointment of a committee of investigation. The matter was eventually laid on the table, but it served to stimulate the interest of members in the text-book bill.

After much debate and after several amendments had been made the bill proposed by the majority of the committee finally passed the House on April 11th by a vote of sixty to thirty-four. Many members, however, felt called upon to explain their votes at various stages of the proceedings. One member who favored State uniformity supported the bill because it was "a step toward the law which the people seem to want." Another voted against the bill because it was "not in the interest of the laboring classes" and it was "not in accord with the fundamental principles



of our government". "This bill may prove better than no law on the subject" was the justification offered by still another for his affirmative vote. The attitude of others who opposed the measure was expressed in the words of the member who stated that "I do not believe that any measure that satisfies the school-book trust as this bill does will afford any relief to the people."<sup>36</sup> The editor of an Iowa school journal, who heartily favored the law, made the following comment on the vote in the House:

The sixty-one votes which were for the passage of the bill, were from men who are willing to make any reasonable compromise in order to get some legislation. About thirty of the votes in the negative were for "State uniformity or nothing." Some eight or nine members of the House favored "no legislation." About thirty-five members were in favor of a local option clause permitting free text-books.<sup>37</sup>

The bill passed the Senate on April 14th by a vote of thirty-two to fourteen;<sup>38</sup> and on May 7th it became a law by receiving the approval of the Governor.

The law thus enacted authorized boards of directors to adopt, contract for, and purchase text-books and other school supplies and sell them to the pupils in their respective districts at cost. The books were to be paid for out of the contingent fund and the contract was to be awarded to the bidder offering the lowest prices "taking into consideration the quality of material used, illustrations, binding and all other things that go to make up a desirable text-book". Text-books thus adopted could not be displaced before the expiration of a period of five years, except upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the electors voting at the regular, annual March meeting.

The distinctive feature of the law, however, is to be found in the optional system of county uniformity therein outlined. A "Board of Education", consisting of the county



superintendent, the county auditor, and the members of the board of supervisors, was created for each county. If one-half of the school directors in the county should sign a petition asking for a uniform series of text-books in the county, it became the duty of the county board of education to arrange for a vote on the question at the annual school election in March. In case a majority of the electors voting at the election favored the proposition the board of education was required to "meet and select the school-text-books for the entire County, and contract for the same under such rules and regulations as the said Board of Education may adopt." Further details of the plan were specified, and it was stated that the law did not apply to schools in cities or towns, although such schools might adopt the books selected for the county and buy them at the prices fixed by the board of education.<sup>39</sup>

This law apparently met with general approval, for it was many years before there was further serious agitation of the text-book question. Furthermore, as will be seen later, many counties immediately took advantage of the provisions for optional county uniformity; others followed in succeeding years, until at present the plan outlined in the law is in operation in over half of the counties of the State.<sup>40</sup>

Section one of the law was amended in 1894 in such a manner as to place all school books and supplies in charge of the board of directors or board of education, as the case might be, instead of holding the presidents of these boards solely responsible, as had previously been the rule. Furthermore, one or more persons might be selected within the county to keep text-books and supplies for sale, but such persons were required to give bonds "to insure the safety of the books and moneys".<sup>41</sup> At this same session of the legislature permission was given to school boards "to furnish the necessary books for indigent pupils, when they are



likely to be deprived of the proper benefits of the school unless aided by the district with books."<sup>42</sup>

The last piece of text-book legislation in Iowa is the free text-book law enacted by the General Assembly in 1896. According to the provisions of this act, upon the filing of a petition signed by one-third or more of the voters in any school township or independent district the board of directors is required to submit the question of free text-books to a vote at the next annual meeting. In case the vote is favorable it becomes the duty of the board to "loan text-books to the pupils free of charge". Pupils may, if they choose, purchase books at cost; otherwise they are to be held responsible "for any damage to, loss of, or failure to return any such books". The loaning of text-books, however, may be discontinued at any time by vote of the electors at the annual school election.<sup>43</sup>

Although there has been no legislation concerning text-books since 1896 there have been several indications of a continued interest in the subject. In 1897 a House resolution directed the Superintendent of Public Instruction to "investigate the various methods of obtaining and furnishing our public schools with text-books and supplies, and to report to the Twenty-seventh General Assembly the most practical system for supplying the people of Iowa with suitable text-books at the lowest possible cost price to the taxpayers." Furthermore, he was requested "to secure from not less than three reputable and responsible publishing houses, which are not in any way engaged in the publication or sale of school books, estimates showing the cost of the material, press work, and binding, per volume, of each of the various kinds of text-books necessarily used in the public schools of the state".

Superintendent Sabin complied with the first part of this resolution, making an extensive investigation of the prices



of school books in Iowa and in five other States, including California where the system of State publication was in operation. As a result of this investigation it was his conclusion that the prices paid for text-books in Iowa were no higher than those paid in other States. He was not able, however, to satisfy the request made in the last part of the resolution, for the reason that no publishing firm was willing to spend the time required to make such estimates as were desired without receiving compensation therefor; and no appropriation had been made by the legislature to defray any such expenses.<sup>44</sup>

A similar effort to secure data relative to the cost of text-books was made in the General Assembly in 1898, when a resolution was introduced in the House but failed to receive consideration. This resolution reads as follows:

*Resolved*, That the state printer and binder be requested to furnish for the information of this House, the cost per copy, according to the schedule of rates established by the code of 1897, of a series of school readers from the first to the fifth inclusive, equal in point of illustration, binding and material, to the Barnes' series of readers now in use in this state. All material to be furnished by the state.<sup>45</sup>

Occasional bills relative to text-books have been introduced in the General Assembly since 1896, but without success. Interest in the subject has not ceased, however, as is evidenced by the fact that several text-book bills were introduced in the Thirty-fifth General Assembly, two of them providing for a system of State uniformity administered by a State text-book commission.<sup>46</sup>



### III

#### THE PRESENT SITUATION IN IOWA WITH REGARD TO TEXT-BOOKS

Under the laws as they stand in Iowa to-day text-books may be selected, purchased, and supplied to pupils by any one of a number of different methods. School books may be selected in two ways: (1) by boards of directors, both in rural and independent districts; and (2) by the county boards of education, in case the people of the rural districts of the county take advantage of the provision for optional county uniformity and vote in favor of a uniform set of text-books for the schools of the county outside of cities and towns. Books and supplies may be purchased by local school boards, by county boards of education, or by book dealers.

Several methods are also provided whereby texts and supplies may be furnished to pupils. In the first place, local and county boards which have purchased books and supplies may sell them to pupils at cost. In the second place, if the electors so decide, text-books and supplies may be furnished to pupils free of charge. In either case the business of handling the books may be committed to an agent or agents, of whom a bond is required. Finally, the selling of school books may be left entirely to dealers, with or without regulation. Books once adopted must remain in use for a period of five years unless voted out by the electors of the district at the annual school election.

Thus it appears that opportunity is given to the people of every school district to provide text-books suitable to their



desires and needs by almost any method which they choose to select. If texts are unsatisfactory the people have it within their power to vote them out at the annual school election. In fact, thus far no complaint has been made by any body of teachers or by any school board that under the present systems it is not possible to secure satisfactory text-books.

Furthermore, the only cases on record of districts having voted out a list of books before the contracts had expired are the cases of certain townships in Page County. In one of these townships, namely East River, it appears that a certain list of books had been adopted by the school board without advertising for bids as is required by law. An election was called in a manner contrary to that authorized by law and the people voted out certain books which had previously been adopted. A case involving the validity of the transaction was brought in the district court and later appealed to the Supreme Court of Iowa. The latter court declared the change of texts to be illegal on the grounds that the law had been violated both in the calling of the election and in the selection of a list of books without advertising for bids.<sup>47</sup>

As far as the cost of school books is concerned a study of the statutes of Iowa reveals the fact that boards of directors are clothed with sufficient authority to enable them to sell books at the net wholesale price asked by the publishing house. They must, however, proceed according to law. For instance, in the independent district of Iowa City a few years ago the school board attempted to have certain dealers sell text-books to pupils at the wholesale prices charged by the publishing houses, the board agreeing to reimburse the dealers for handling the books by paying them lump sums out of the contingent funds. The matter was brought into court on a writ of injunction asking that the board be



restrained from paying the dealers the sums agreed upon. The case was appealed to the State Supreme Court which reversed the decision of the lower court in an opinion containing the following statement:

The statutory plan is for the school board, if it sees fit to do so, to contract for and buy books, to keep the same for sale to scholars at cost, and to select one or more persons to have charge of the sale of such books. Without doubt, as incident to the employment of such agent or agents, the board has implied power to pay them a compensation for their services. But unless there is occasion to employ such agents — that is, unless the board has bought books, and is keeping them for sale to scholars at cost — there is no occasion, and therefore no authority, for employing such agents. And the method provided for purchasing books is on competitive bids made after publishing notice in newspapers in the county. Now the method pursued by the defendant board was a wholly different one from that authorized by statute. It did not advertise for bids or receive competitive bids. It did not purchase any books. It did not provide for the keeping of any books purchased for sale to scholars. But, on the contrary, it arranged with the publishers of certain books that the books should be supplied for sale to scholars at specified prices, and contracted with booksellers that they should, in consideration of annual payments to be made to them by the board by way of compensation, sell these books, without additional cost, to such scholars as should desire to purchase them. Perhaps the plan adopted by the board was a more satisfactory plan than that contemplated by the statute. It may be that advertisements in the local papers for bids to supply copyrighted books exclusively under the control of certain publishers would have been of no advantage in securing the books at lower prices than those at which they were offered by the publishers. It may be that it was not to the advantage of the district that it should become owner, by purchase from the contingent fund, of quantities of schoolbooks, the cost price of which, when paid by the scholars purchasing them, should be returned to the fund. . . . The fact nevertheless remains, as practically undisputed, that the school board did not in any respect attempt to exercise the authority given it by statute to purchase books for sale to scholars at cost; and therefore it had no authority to contract with persons for the sale of such books, for it had no such books for sale.<sup>48</sup>



In the forty-six counties of the State which do not have county uniformity, authority for the selection of text-books for the rural schools rests with the board of directors of the school township. As has already been noted, county uniformity does not affect the schools in city or town independent districts, unless the electors in these districts by vote decide to adopt and purchase the same books as are in use in the county at large.

All of the methods provided by law for the distribution and sale of text-books are employed in the various school districts of Iowa. For instance, the school boards in a number of independent districts are handling their own text-books and selling them at cost to the pupils. This is the case in Creston, Villisca, Webster City, and a number of other places. In these towns some one connected with the city superintendent's office is authorized to handle the books.

In some instances the freight is added to the wholesale price of the book. In other cases the price of the book to the pupil is the wholesale price quoted by the publishing company f. o. b. Chicago. Still other city independent districts, taking advantage of the authority of the section of the law which gives them the right to select one or more persons within the county to keep the books for sale, purchase the books and designate some particular dealer to whom they pay a certain commission as compensation for handling the books. The commission varies, though it is usually ten percent of the wholesale price of the books. In some cases this percentage is added to the cost of the book, making the selling price to the pupil an amount equal to the wholesale price, f. o. b. Chicago, plus the dealer's commission.

The counties having county uniformity allow a commission to these depositories, which is usually ten percent. Some counties add this commission to the contract price,



and fix the resulting amount as the retail price which the dealers shall charge for the book. Other counties pay the commission and the freight out of the general fund of the county, thereby making the net contract price the retail price to pupils. Some boards of education in city independent districts and most boards of education of school townships do not elect to purchase the books and sell them at cost, but allow a dealer to handle them, who may charge any price which he sees fit, although the price is usually the list price quoted in the publisher's catalogue. This is true in Johnson County which operates under county uniformity.

Thus, it can readily be seen that the same text-book may retail in the State at three different prices. The publishers of a certain geography, for example, quote a wholesale price, f. o. b. Chicago, of ninety-four cents. A city school board or a county board of education which would handle this geography and sell it to the pupils at cost would fix the retail price of this book at ninety-four cents. Another price would be established by a district which, while buying the books itself, allows a dealer to handle them at a commission. In many cases this commission of ten percent would be added to the wholesale price of ninety-four cents, making the retail price of the geography in these districts one dollar and four cents. In still other districts where a retail dealer is permitted to buy the books and sell them at a price fixed by himself, this book would sell at the publisher's list price of one dollar and twenty-five cents. It is to be noted in this connection that by none of these three different methods of handling text-books does the publisher of the geography receive more than ninety-four cents for each book, f. o. b. Chicago. Furthermore, in every case it is possible, if school boards will take advantage of the provisions of the law, to reduce the price of the school book to the wholesale price f. o. b. Chicago. Many boards of education, however, do not take advantage of this provision.



On the other hand, it has been seen that it is possible for the school board of any school corporation to furnish free text-books for the use of the pupils in the public schools; and the same provision applies to counties where county uniformity is in operation.

The leading city independent districts which have established free text-books are Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Council Bluffs, Grinnell, Marshalltown, and Red Oak. The free text-book system has also been adopted in a number of smaller towns and in several country districts and school townships — as for instance, Fairview Township in Allamakee County and Welcome Township in Sioux County. Altogether, in 1913 free text-books were in use in over sixty school districts in thirty-two counties.<sup>49</sup> It is interesting to note that but one school district has discontinued the use of free text-books, namely, Preston, which, by vote of the people, abandoned the plan in 1914.

For the purpose of ascertaining the results in other States a questionnaire was sent by the writer to a number of towns in Nebraska and Minnesota in which free text-books have been in use for several years. From the replies to this questionnaire there has been formulated the following general statement of the advantages of the free text-book system: first, each child has a book at the time when school opens or when he is promoted; second, the burden rests upon the whole body of taxpayers rather than entirely upon those who have children in school; third, changes in texts can be ordered when desirable without working a hardship upon parents; fourth, the plan results in much greater economy in the cost of text-books to the people as a whole; and finally, the system is in accord with the policy of maintaining free public schools.

In addition to the general advantages noted above a number of other beneficial results are indicated in the replies.



"It permits those responsible for the curriculum to adapt the text-books to its needs, and those of the community", writes a city superintendent from Nebraska. "It makes compulsory school attendance possible of enforcement." A Minnesota superintendent calls attention to the fact that the plan makes it possible to have "a larger supply of supplementary texts on hand." "It encourages school attendance somewhat on the part of the children from poor families", writes another. "It does away with the stigma attached to the loan of books to poverty students *only*." Still another declares that the plan "means better text-books and, as a result, better work from the pupils." Finally, in one letter is to be found the suggestion that under a system of free text-books it is possible to enforce better care of books on the part of pupils — a point which will be appreciated by those acquainted with the pernicious manner in which school books are sometimes marked by pupils.

In the questionnaire these superintendents in Nebraska and Minnesota were also asked to state "the average amount expended per pupil per year for books in the last five years". According to twenty-five replies which were received the cost per pupil per year ranges from as low as forty cents to as high as one dollar and fifteen cents. The cost seems to be the highest during the first year under the system of free text-books. The average cost for a five-year period in the twenty-five towns and cities was sixty cents per pupil per year in the grades, and about seventy-five cents per pupil in the high school.<sup>50</sup>

It is interesting to compare these figures with the cost of school books in certain cities of Iowa where the free text-book system is in operation. The expenditure in the city of Des Moines for the five-year period beginning in 1909 is indicated by the following figures:



YEAR	AMOUNT EXPENDED	ENROLLMENT
1909	\$ 8,805.05	16,299
1910	10,384.85	17,032
1911	8,201.42	17,179
1912	10,949.16	17,577
1913	5,379.40	18,067

On an average, covering the five-year period, there were 17,230 children enrolled in the city schools of Des Moines. The total amount expended for text-books for these pupils for the five-year period was \$43,719.88, or a total cost for the five-year period per pupil of \$2.537, and an average annual cost per pupil of a fraction over fifty cents. This amount includes text-books for the high school as well as for the grades.

For the first year after free texts were installed in Council Bluffs the cost was \$1.75 per pupil for both the high school and the grades. Since that time the expenditure has steadily decreased until the cost averages forty cents per pupil per year. The average cost per pupil in Clinton is seventy-seven cents per year, based on a five-year period. Corning reports approximately one dollar per pupil—a sum which seems to be unusually high, and undoubtedly includes the cost of certain school supplies. In fact, the chief difficulty in securing data relative to the cost of books under the system of free text-books lies in the fact that in most cases the secretary's report includes the cost of school supplies, which is always greater than that of text-books.



#### IV

### COUNTY UNIFORMITY AND ITS WORKINGS IN IOWA

Provision for optional county uniformity of text-books in Iowa was made in an act passed by the General Assembly in 1890.<sup>51</sup> The following counties availed themselves of the provisions of this act in 1891, that is, as soon as it was legally possible for them to do so: Appanoose, Buena Vista, Butler, Cherokee, Davis, Emmet, Greene, Grundy, Hardin, Harrison, Howard, Jasper, Johnson, Jones, Linn, Louisa, Madison, Mahaska, Marshall, Mills, Mitchell, Muscatine, O'Brien, Plymouth, Polk,<sup>52</sup> Ringgold, Shelby, Tama, Winneshek, and Worth. Since that time text-book uniformity has been adopted in the following counties: Adair, Adams, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Cerro Gordo, Chickasaw, Clay, Dallas, Des Moines, Dickinson, Fayette, Floyd, Guthrie, Ida, Monona, Sac, Taylor, Union, Warren, Washington, Woodbury, and Wright.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, uniformity of text-books is in operation in fifty-three counties of Iowa in all the schools excepting those in the independent districts. Moreover, many small independent districts have taken advantage of the provision of the law which allows them to adopt the same books as are in use in the county at large and to buy them at the prices fixed by the county authorities. It is perhaps worthy of mention that while thirty counties adopted uniformity as soon as it was legally possible for them to do so, in the twenty-three years since that time only twenty-three counties have put the plan into operation. At this rate it would be about



forty-six years before county uniformity would prevail throughout the State under the present law.

There are at least two reasons why more counties have not adopted uniformity of text-books. In the first place, it appears that when county uniformity first became possible the people expected that the plan would afford them much lower prices on text-books. This expectation has not been fulfilled: it has been found that prices of school books have remained about the same, in spite of the enlargement of the unit of uniformity.<sup>54</sup> A second reason which is frequently assigned to explain why county uniformity has not been more universally adopted is to be found in the fact that a certain large text-book company holds most of the contracts in those counties where the township is the unit of adoption. It has been said that any attempt by county superintendents or other persons interested in education to bring about county uniformity in these counties has been bitterly fought by this publishing house. For example, it is alleged that this was the case in Buchanan County three years ago.<sup>55</sup>

Some attempts have been made in various counties to secure county uniformity without a vote of the people. For instance, the representatives of a certain book company, which has contracts in most of the townships in the counties not having county uniformity, call upon the boards of directors of the school townships and urge upon them the adoption of a uniform list of books selected wholly from the publications of that company. If this plan succeeds the county may be said to have county uniformity without having submitted the question to a vote of the people.

One objectionable feature of this method of securing county uniformity is the fact that the contracting boards have no option as to what books shall be selected since the question of what books shall be submitted lies wholly with the representatives of the publishing house. Another ob-



jection is the fact that in most counties the book company representatives have not been able to get all the school boards to adopt the entire list of books submitted. Furthermore, no competition either in the price or the quality of books is possible under this method of securing county uniformity. Attempts have been made by various publishing houses to compete in township adoptions, but it has been found that the expense incurred in such competition in an area with so small a population was out of all proportion to the profits received on contracts when secured. The cost of samples and their distribution, together with the salary of the agent while working in the township, more than overbalances the profits which would arise if the contract to supply the entire township with books is secured.

It is not to be understood that all the counties not having county uniformity under the statute have actual uniformity by the method above described: in fact, there are very few which do have such uniformity. Most counties have varied lists of text-books, inasmuch as townships do not all adopt the same books at the same time. For instance, the following books were in use in the various schools of Buchanan County in 1912:

## GEOGRAPHY

Redway and Hinman's  
School  
Redway and Hinman's  
Natural  
Fry's  
Tarbell's  
Rand McNally's  
Swinton's  
Tarr and McMurry's

## CIVICS

Iowa and the Nation  
Peterman's  
Townsend's  
Seerley and Parish  
United States (Shimmell)  
and Iowa (Weaver)  
Young's  
Macy and Geiser's  
Willbanks' "Our Nation's  
Government"



## HISTORY

McMaster's Brief  
McMaster's School  
Macy's  
Eggleston's  
Barnes'  
Montgomery's

## LANGUAGE

Reed's  
Metcalf and Bright's  
Metcalf's  
Harvey's  
Steps in English  
Mother Tongue

## READERS

Brooks'  
Baldwin's  
Graded Literature  
Cyr's  
Sears and Brooks  
Swinton's  
Lights to Literature  
Progressive Course

## WRITING

Palmer Method  
Coursey's  
Spencer's Practical  
Barnes' Natural Slant  
Spencerian  
Economy System  
Ransomerian

## PHYSIOLOGY

Overton's  
Smith's  
Steele's  
Blaisdell's  
Appleton's  
Krohn's  
Tracey's  
Hutchinson's

## SPELLING

Hunt's Progressive  
Modern  
Swinton's  
Rand and McNally  
New Business  
Bell's  
Pattengill's

## GRAMMAR

Reed and Kellogg's  
Steps in English  
Metcalf's  
Conklin's  
Harvey's  
Mother Tongue

## PRIMER

Brook's  
Beebe's  
Aldine's  
Stewart & Co.  
Pollard's  
Swinton's  
Ward's  
Brumbaugh's



## ARITHMETIC

Milne's Standard  
(Two book series)  
Milne's Standard  
(Three book series)  
Milne's Progressive  
(Two book series)  
Milne's Progressive  
(Three book series)  
Fish's  
Walsh's  
Prince's  
Robinson's Complete  
Smith's  
White's  
Hall's  
Wentworth-Smith's

## AGRICULTURE

Wilkinson's Practical  
Goff and Mayne's

## MUSIC

Uncle Sam's  
Golden Glee  
Fullerton's  
E. Smith's Songs  
American School Songs  
Leslie Day School Songs  
Palmer's  
Handon's<sup>56</sup>

In Buchanan County the proposition for county uniformity was submitted to the electors of the county first in 1910 and again in 1913. At both times it seems to have been bitterly opposed by the agents of a certain book company; and the opposition was strong enough to defeat the proposition.

It should be observed that while the system of free textbooks may be disestablished at any time by vote of the people at the annual school election, there is no method provided in the law whereby the people of a county may rid themselves of county uniformity, in case they should wish to do so after the system has once been established. A bill containing a provision giving the people this power was introduced in the Thirty-fifth General Assembly, but was indefinitely postponed.<sup>57</sup>

In order to obtain data relative to the workings of county uniformity of text-books in Iowa questionnaires were sent to the ninety-nine county superintendents in the State. The following list of questions was sent to the superintendents



of the forty-six counties which have not adopted county uniformity under the provisions of the statute:

1. In your opinion, is uniformity of text-books in your county to be desired?
2. If county uniformity is now in operation in your county, by what methods is it obtained?
3. If county uniformity is not desirable, in your judgment, what are your objections to it?

Replies to these queries were received from the superintendents of thirty-six out of the forty-six counties in which statutory uniformity is not in operation. The replies to the first question were mere affirmative answers, with two exceptions. One superintendent writes as follows:

Uniformity of text books is highly desirable in any system of schools, whether it be city or country. From the fact that the majority of rural school teachers are secured from our city schools, it is very essential that such students be accorded the privilege of the opportunity of study of the uniform text, as used in the rural schools. . . . Thus, I feel that if we could only secure the cooperation of town and city schools, from whence our teacher supply comes, that as students they would familiarize themselves with the uniform text in use in the rural schools, it would be worth much to the children under their jurisdiction as teachers. This could be carried out to the greatest benefit, if the Normal Training High Schools would require these students to use as a basis for their work in the common branches, the texts in uniform use in the county in which they more than likely will secure a position.

"Uniformity of text-books", says another superintendent, "at the price of School book lettings by Boards of County Bridge and Road Builders is in my opinion altogether too high to warrant a change in the manner of selection of desirable texts." In justification of this attitude he declares that "boards of education of the school districts are made up of men who are interested in the schools of their district and who as a rule have children attending the home school. Boards of supervisors are made up of men



who as a rule have had little experience in school matters, and are not interested in the schools so much as in the county bridges." Of course this comparison of the ability of supervisors and school directors to make a wise selection of text-books is obviously a misstatement of facts. It is believed that the average county supervisor is as well qualified to select school books as is the average member of the district school board, and he has an equal interest in the schools.

In replying to the second question twenty-two superintendents stated that county uniformity was impossible in their counties under present conditions. Thirteen reported that while uniformity as provided for by law did not prevail in their counties, an approach to a uniform system was secured by the adoption of the same list of books by all the boards in the various school townships. Ten of these thirteen superintendents expressed dissatisfaction with this method of securing county uniformity, adding that township adoptions did not result in complete uniformity throughout the county, since even under such an agreement a number of unauthorized text-books were in use. One county superintendent stated that after years of effort to secure county uniformity through township adoptions uniformity exists in eighty-five percent of the books in use in the rural schools.

The replies to the third question reveal no objections to county uniformity in general. In fact, a number of the superintendents expressed themselves in favor of a law providing for compulsory, and not merely optional, county uniformity. But there were objections to certain features of the present law relative to county uniformity of text-books. The attitude of one superintendent is expressed in the following statement:



I am not in favor of county uniformity under the provisions of the present law. The selection is made by the boards of supervisors, many of whom are not capable of judging text-books. Again, they have too many other duties to attend to, and things are not always done in the best manner. The legal adoptions arouse bad feelings and produce friction by the manner of selections. Those vitally interested and capable are in the minority, and their opinions are of little weight against a board placed through politics. Teachers should take the place of Boards of Supervisors and impositions would be few.

Another superintendent expressed the same skepticism of the ability of county supervisors to make the wisest possible choice of text-books, and declared that "uniform selection must be made by practical school people". In view, however, of the statement that "the average teacher's knowledge of the common branches is so meager that she is unable to separate the chaff from the wheat", it would seem very difficult, if not impossible, to secure a board composed of "practical school people".

Another objection to the present law was voiced by a superintendent who pointed out the disadvantage of being required to adopt the entire list of text-books at one time, and suggested that permission should be given to adopt a part of the books one year, another part the next year, and so on — each adoption to be, as at present, for a five-year period unless sooner voted out by the people. He argued that this plan would make it possible to change one text-book each year if a better book should be offered than the one then in use. Thus the schools could be constantly supplied with the best text-books on the market without arousing so much antagonism on the part of the patrons of the schools as is sometimes aroused when the entire list comes up for consideration once in five years and a large number of changes are made.

In addition to the above questionnaire the following sim-



ilar list of questions was sent to the county superintendents in the fifty-three counties which have adopted the system of county uniformity provided for by law:

1. From your experience with county uniformity would you say that county uniformity is desirable?

2. If it is not desirable, what are your objections to it?

(The above questions apply to the value of uniformity of books in your county; not to the method of adoption.)

3. In your opinion, is the present County Board of Education properly constituted to select books?

4. If not, what changes would you suggest?

The answers to the first question were all in the affirmative. Very few objections are revealed in the replies to the second question. "I certainly do not like the method of adoption", declared one writer. "I can see no reason why the rural and town schools should not all use the same books, if they are all supposed to be graded." Another superintendent suggested that when text-books "are not changed for a long time the schools become narrow."

In reply to the third question twenty-four county superintendents answered in the negative — some of them quite emphatically. The remaining replies reveal all shades of opinion. One superintendent said, "Don't know, doubtful"; another answered "yes" without further comment; and still another regarded the present board as "probably as good as any continuous board that might be formed." The suggestion was made in one reply that "the present county board might be improved upon by including the assistance of some of the heads of the schools of the independent districts for review of the text-books offered by the board before adoption." One of the most experienced and successful county superintendents in the State declared that it is "an unusual thing to find a country school teacher who would be competent [to select text-books]. Town superintendents do not always make wise selections for their own



schools. Therefore, all things considered, I would not suggest a change." A few other replies expressed a similar belief that the present county board of education is about as efficient in the selection of text-books as any other possible board would be.

On the other hand the objections to the present method of adopting books for use in the schools of the county are illustrated by the statement that the members of the board "as now constituted do not know text-books and are not interested in their examination. Those who sell the books know men better than the majority of the board know books, hence the board is at a disadvantage." The influence of public opinion on the board in a certain county is indicated in the reply of the superintendent who stated that "we are using books which were adopted ten years ago, and at the last adoption the board of supervisors and the auditor were so afraid of being criticised that it was impossible to do anything in the way of getting rid of the old books."

The answers to the fourth question varied greatly, but they were to the effect that the board which adopts text-books under county uniformity should be made up either of persons who are in school work or of persons who have kept in touch with the situation and are acquainted with present-day needs, methods, and conditions in the field of public education. For instance, it was suggested that the county superintendent should be empowered to appoint a committee to select text-books, made up either entirely of teachers or partly of taxpayers of the county who are not teachers. Several replies advocate a committee made up entirely of rural school teachers inasmuch as only the rural schools are affected; while one superintendent recommends a board composed of a successful rural school teacher, a graded school teacher, a city superintendent, and the county superintendent. The prevailing opinion, however, was that the size of the board should be limited to three members.



Finally, a few superintendents recommended State uniformity as a method of improving the present system. One who favored this plan suggested that "the books be selected by competent school men, and that they be required to carefully examine every book before its adoption."

Summing up the replies<sup>58</sup> to the two questionnaires, the following points may be noted concerning the attitude of county superintendents — who are the persons best qualified to pass judgment upon the actual workings of county uniformity. First, the seventy-nine superintendents from whom replies were received were, without exception, in favor of county uniformity as a general principle. Secondly, the objections to county uniformity have to do chiefly with the composition of the board which makes the selection of text-books. This board is composed of the county superintendent, the county auditor, and the members of the board of supervisors. Thirdly, there is not much agreement as to changes which should be made in the composition of this board. And fourthly, among the county superintendents at least, there is very little sentiment in favor of State uniformity in Iowa.



## V

### STATE UNIFORMITY AND THE COST OF SCHOOL BOOKS

There seems to be a general misconception concerning the amount of money actually spent annually in any one State for school books. In view of the fact that a statement is said to have been made in a legislative committee meeting in Iowa that State uniformity in this State would save the people a million dollars annually in the cost of text-books, an effort has been made to secure data on this point.

It has not been possible to ascertain the actual amount of money spent for text-books in this State. A request for information was sent to every county having county uniformity. The replies which were received did not take into consideration the value of the books on hand in the various county depositories, and hence the sums indicated were too high. Still other counties apparently handled the books for city independent districts which are not on the uniform county list, thereby making the data of no avail. Indeed, in view of the various methods of supplying pupils with text-books now employed in Iowa, to secure accurate figures concerning the total amount of money spent in this State each year would require a more extensive investigation than the writer has been able to make.

There are available, however, statistics of other States which can well be examined for comparative purposes. Pennsylvania, for instance, has provided free text-books for all the pupils enrolled in the graded schools, both rural and city, for the pupils in all the high schools, and for the stu-



dents in all the State normal schools.<sup>59</sup> From the reports of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of that State the following statistics have been compiled:

YEAR	NUMBER OF PUPILS ENROLLED	COST OF TEXT-BOOKS	SUPPLIES, INCLUDING MAPS, GLOBES, ETC.
1908	1,231,200	\$1,006,491.05	\$ 884,757.15
1909	1,263,034	1,110,670.66	882,381.92
1910	1,282,965	1,094,608.61	748,290.62
1911	1,286,273	858,671.89	1,072,188.13
1912	1,322,254	889,392.47	1,413,559.89
		<hr/> \$4,959,834.68	<hr/> \$5,001,177.71

The average amount of money spent annually per pupil during the five-year period was \$.776; while the cost of supplies was somewhat higher, being \$.783 per pupil. The total school expenditures of all kinds for the same five-year period as shown by the reports of the Superintendent was \$187,278,655.69. Of this amount the total sum expended for text-books was two and sixty-five hundredths percent.

In Oklahoma the system of State uniformity is in operation. There are no exempt cities, and consequently every pupil attending the public schools must use the books adopted by the State authorities. The State depository is the Oklahoma Book Company of Oklahoma City, which handles all the text-books sold in Oklahoma. In reply to an inquiry this company stated that the sale of text-books during the five-year period beginning with 1909 amounted to approximately \$250,000 a year.<sup>60</sup>

The total enrollment in the schools of Oklahoma during the same five years, with the exception of the year 1909, is as follows:

In the year 1910 the enrollment was 415,116  
 In the year 1911 the enrollment was 443,227  
 In the year 1912 the enrollment was 438,901  
 In the year 1913 the enrollment was 469,809



The average annual enrollment during the four years was 441,763. The average annual sale of text-books amounted to \$250,000 a year. Thus the average cost of text-books to each pupil was \$.566 per year. The Oklahoma list of school books during this period was a fairly representative list, and included a large amount of what is known as supplementary material — which material was sold in large quantities.

The difference between the expenditure per pupil in Oklahoma and in Pennsylvania can be accounted for by the fact that in Pennsylvania high school pupils are very much more numerous in proportion to the number of the grade pupils than in Oklahoma, and high school text-books are much more expensive than books used in the grades. Hence, if figures were available showing the expenditure for grade texts in Pennsylvania the cost in both States would be about the same.

The enrollment of pupils in the schools of Iowa for the five-year period beginning in 1909<sup>61</sup> was as follows:

In the year 1909 the enrollment was 518,446  
In the year 1910 the enrollment was 510,661  
In the year 1911 the enrollment was 507,294  
In the year 1912 the enrollment was 507,109  
In the year 1913 the enrollment was 507,845

The average yearly enrollment during this period, therefore, was 510,271. On the basis of the cost per pupil in Oklahoma the total school book business in Iowa would average \$288,813.39. On the basis of the Pennsylvania figures, which are a little too high for Iowa inasmuch as in this State text-books are not furnished free to students in the State Teachers College, the text-book business in Iowa would amount to \$395,970.30 a year. In either case it is very apparent that it would be impossible to save the people of the State a million dollars a year on text-books.



Twenty-four States in the Union have attempted by uniform text-book adoption laws to lower the cost of school books to the pupil. Two of these States, namely, Missouri and Washington, abandoned State uniformity some time ago and adopted the plan of county uniformity. This leaves twenty-two Commonwealths still operating under State uniformity of text-books.

The following tables are taken from the report of the school book investigating committee of the General Assembly of Georgia made in 1914:

COMPARATIVE COST OF THE REQUIRED BASAL SCHOOL BOOKS  
USED IN THE GRADES BELOW THE HIGH SCHOOL IN TWENTY-  
TWO STATES HAVING UNIFORM TEXT-BOOK ADOPTION

ALABAMA

Primer .....	\$ .22	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.28
First Reader .....	.20	History, 3 books .....	1.80
Second Reader .....	.25	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader .....	.30	Physiology, 2 books .....	.86
Fourth Reader .....	.35	Civics .....	.55
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling, 2 books .....	.41
Arithmetic, 4 books .....	1.24	Writing, 6 books .....	.30
Grammar, 3 books .....	1.09	TOTAL .....	\$9.85

ARIZONA

Primer .....	\$ .30	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.75
First Reader .....	.25	History, 2 books .....	1.50
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture, no text .....	
Third Reader .....	.40	Physiology, 2 books .....	1.05
Fourth Reader .....	.40	Civics, no text .....	
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling, 2 books .....	.55
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	1.10	Writing .....	.45
Grammar, 3 books .....	1.45	TOTAL .....	\$9.95

FLORIDA

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books .....	\$ 1.28
First Reader .....	.25	History, 3 books .....	1.64
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader .....	.45	Physiology, 3 books .....	1.35
Fourth Reader .....	.45	Civics .....	.50
Fifth Reader .....	.55	Spelling .....	.18
Arithmetic, 3 books .....	1.09	Writing, 9 books .....	.45
Grammar, 2 books .....	.71	TOTAL .....	\$10.10



## GEORGIA

Primer .....	\$ .14	Geography, 2 books.....	\$1.28
First Reader .....	.16	History, 3 books .....	1.70
Second Reader .....	.18	Agriculture .....	.55
Third Reader.....	.25	Physiology .....	.50
Fourth Reader .....	.40	Civics .....	.44
Fifth Reader.....	.40	Spelling, 2 books.....	.24
Arithmetic, 2 books.....	.55	Writing, 7 books.....	.35
Grammar, 2 books.....	.76	TOTAL .....	\$7.90

## IDAHO

Primer .....	\$ .30	Geography, 2 books.....	\$ 1.75
First Reader .....	.35	History .....	1.00
Second Reader.....	.40	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.45	Physiology, 2 books.....	1.10
Fourth Reader .....	.50	Civics .....	.54
Fifth Reader .....	.60	Spelling .....	.20
Arithmetic, 2 books.....	.95	Writing .....	.40
Grammar, 3 books.....	1.55	TOTAL .....	\$10.09

## INDIANA

Primer .....	\$ .15	Geography .....	\$ .90
First Reader .....	.15	History .....	.75
Second Reader .....	.20	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.25	Physiology, 2 books .....	.80
Fourth Reader .....	.30	Civics, no text.....	
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling .....	.10
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	.95	Writing, 5 books.....	.25
Grammar, 2 books.....	.65	TOTAL .....	\$5.85

## KANSAS

Primer .....	\$ .12	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.05
First Reader .....	.10	History .....	.50
Second Reader .....	.17	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.23	Civics .....	.40
Fourth Reader .....	.30	Spelling .....	.10
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Writing, 8 books.....	.40
Arithmetic, 3 books.....	.80	Physiology .....	.45
Grammar, 2 books.....	.55	TOTAL .....	\$5.57



## KENTUCKY

Primer .....	\$ .10	Geography, 2 books.....	\$1.20
First Reader .....	.12	History, 3 books .....	1.75
Second Reader .....	.20	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.20	Physiology, 2 books .....	.90
Fourth Reader .....	.35	Civics .....	.45
Fifth Reader .....	.45	Spelling .....	.12
Arithmetic, 4 books.....	.98	Writing, 7 books.....	.35
Grammar, 2 books.....	1.65	TOTAL .....	\$8.82

## LOUISIANA

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.28
First Reader .....	.25	History, 4 books .....	2.50
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader.....	.35	Physiology, 2 books.....	.80
Fourth Reader .....	.35	Civics .....	.60
Fifth Reader.....	.40	Spelling .....	.18
Arithmetic, 4 books .....	1.01	Writing, 8 books.....	.40
Grammar, 2 books.....	.62	TOTAL .....	\$9.94

## MISSISSIPPI

Primer .....	\$ .20	Geography, 2 books.....	\$1.28
First Reader .....	.23	History, 3 books .....	1.70
Second Reader .....	.32	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader.....	.36	Physiology, 2 books.....	.82
Fourth Reader .....	.30	Civics .....	.54
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling, 2 books.....	.26
Arithmetic, 4 books.....	1.26	Writing, 8 books.....	.40
Grammar, 3 books.....	.87	TOTAL .....	\$9.54

## MONTANA

Primer .....	\$ .30	Geography, 2 books.....	\$ 1.80
First Reader .....	.30	History, 2 books .....	1.55
Second Reader .....	.30	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.40	Physiology, 2 books .....	1.10
Fourth Reader .....	.50	Civics .....	.65
Fifth Reader .....	.50	Spelling .....	.25
Arithmetic, 3 books .....	1.15	Writing, 8 books.....	.95
Grammar, 2 books.....	.90	TOTAL .....	\$10.65



## NEVADA

Primer .....	\$ .30	Geography, 2 books.....	\$ 2.00
First Reader .....	.30	History, 2 books .....	1.80
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.50	Physiology .....	.75
Fourth Reader .....	.50	Civics, no text.....	
Fifth Reader .....	.50	Spelling .....	.30
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	1.00	Writing .....	1.20
Grammar, 2 books.....	1.15	TOTAL .....	\$10.65

## NEW MEXICO

Primer .....	\$ .20	Geography, 2 books.....	\$ .95
First Reader .....	.25	History, 3 books .....	2.35
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture, no text.....	
Third Reader.....	.40	Physiology, 2 books.....	.85
Fourth Reader .....	.40	Civics .....	.75
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling, 2 books.....	.45
Arithmetic, 2 books.....	.92	Writing, 8 books.....	.40
Grammar, 4 books.....	1.75	TOTAL .....	\$10.42

## NORTH CAROLINA

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books.....	\$1.35
First Reader .....	.25	History, 2 books .....	1.55
Second Reader .....	.27	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader.....	.32	Physiology .....	.55
Fourth Reader .....	.32	Civics .....	.60
Fifth Reader .....	.36	Spelling, 2 books.....	.41
Arithmetic, 3 books.....	1.09	Writing, 7 books .....	.35
Grammar, 2 books.....	.70	TOTAL .....	\$8.97

## OKLAHOMA

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books.....	\$1.31
First Reader .....	.25	History .....	.90
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader.....	.45	Physiology, 2 books.....	.90
Fourth Reader .....	.45	Civics, no text.....	
Fifth Reader .....	.55	Spelling .....	.20
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	.70	Writing, 8 books.....	.40
Grammar, 2 books.....	.89	TOTAL .....	\$8.20



## OREGON

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography .....	\$1.00
First Reader .....	.25	History, 2 books .....	1.50
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture .....	.70
Third Reader .....	.45	Physiology, 2 books .....	.95
Fourth Reader .....	.45	Civics .....	.65
Fifth Reader .....	.55	Spelling .....	.23
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	.93	Writing .....	.45
Grammar, 2 books .....	.81	TOTAL .....	\$9.52

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.33
First Reader .....	.25	History, 3 books .....	1.60
Second Reader .....	.25	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader .....	.30	Physiology, 2 books .....	.75
Fourth Reader .....	.35	Civics .....	.60
Fifth Reader .....	.35	Spelling .....	.26
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	.76	Writing, 7 books .....	.35
Grammar, 2 books .....	.68	TOTAL .....	\$8.68

## TENNESSEE

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.28
First Reader .....	.18	History, 3 books .....	1.85
Second Reader .....	.25	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader .....	.30	Physiology, 2 books .....	.63
Fourth Reader .....	.35	Civics .....	.55
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling .....	.18
Arithmetic, 3 books .....	.84	Writing, 7 books .....	.35
Grammar, 3 books .....	1.08	TOTAL .....	\$9.09

## TEXAS

Primer .....	\$ .18	History, 3 books .....	\$ 1.60
First Reader .....	.18	Geography, 2 books .....	1.36
Second Reader .....	.25	Agriculture, 3 books .....	2.10
Third Reader .....	.30	Physiology, 3 books .....	1.60
Fourth Reader .....	.35	Civics .....	.75
Fifth Reader .....	.40	Spelling .....	.18
Arithmetic, 4 books .....	1.16	Writing, 8 books .....	.40
Grammar, 3 books .....	1.02	TOTAL .....	\$11.83



## UTAH

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 7 books.....	\$ 3.55
First Reader .....	.25	History, 5 books.....	3.55
Second Reader .....	.35	Agriculture .....	.75
Third Reader.....	.45	Physiology, 5 books.....	2.35
Fourth Reader .....	.48	Spelling .....	.20
Fifth Reader .....	.48	Civics, 2 books.....	1.50
Writing, 8 books.....	.40	Arithmetic, 3 books.....	1.20
Grammar, 3 books.....	1.65	TOTAL .....	\$17.41

## VIRGINIA

Primer .....	\$ .18	Geography, 2 books .....	\$1.28
First Reader .....	.15	History, 5 books.....	2.75
Second Reader .....	.22	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader.....	.28	Physiology, 3 books .....	1.40
Fourth Reader .....	.30	Civics .....	.55
Fifth Reader .....	.30	Spelling .....	.20
Arithmetic, 2 books .....	.66	Writing, 8 books.....	.40
Grammar, 2 books.....	.52	TOTAL .....	\$9.79

## WEST VIRGINIA

Primer .....	\$ .25	Geography, 2 books.....	\$ 1.28
First Reader .....	.25	History, 4 books.....	3.81
Second Reader.....	.31	Agriculture .....	.60
Third Reader.....	.41	Physiology, 2 books.....	1.15
Fourth Reader .....	.41	Civics .....	.53
Fifth Reader .....	.41	Spelling .....	.22
Arithmetic, 3 books.....	1.05	Writing, 9 books.....	.45
Grammar, 2 books.....	.84	TOTAL .....	\$11.97

At the present time the pupils in the grade schools of Iowa are equipped with text-books at approximately the following prices:

Primer .....	\$ .19	Physiology, 2 books.....	\$ .83
First Reader .....	.22	Geography, 2 books .....	1.31
Second Reader .....	.26	Grammar, 3 books.....	1.05
Third Reader.....	.30	History, 2 books.....	1.20
Fourth Reader .....	.30	Speller .....	.16
Fifth Reader .....	.30	Agriculture .....	.56
Sixth Reader.....	.38	Arithmetic, 3 books.....	.97
Seventh Reader.....	.38	TOTAL .....	\$8.41



For the purpose of comparing the prices prevailing in Iowa with the prices prevailing in the States which have State uniformity it is necessary to take the entire list of books at the net contract prices quoted above, that is, at the prices at which any Iowa school board may buy these books at the present time if it proceeds in a legal manner. Attention should also be called to the fact that the Iowa list provides for eight readers, while the State adoption lists show but six. Furthermore, the number of books may vary in other respects. For instance, the prices shown for the States having State adoption include the cost of writing books. In most of the schools of Iowa writing from copy-books has been abandoned, and therefore writing books are not included in the Iowa list. Hence, for purposes of comparison the cost of writing books in the States having State uniformity has been deducted, making the total cost of a complete set of text-books for use in the grades as follows:

Alabama	\$9.55	Nevada	\$ 9.45
Arizona	9.50	New Mexico	10.02
Florida	9.65	North Carolina	8.62
Georgia	7.55	Oklahoma	7.80
Idaho	9.69	Oregon	9.07
Indiana	5.60	South Carolina	8.33
Kansas (old law)	5.17	Tennessee	8.74
Kentucky	8.47	Texas	11.43
Louisiana	9.54	Virginia	9.39
Mississippi	9.14	West Virginia	11.52
Montana	9.70	Iowa	8.41

The Utah list is so complicated that it is not just to include it in this list.

The price of \$8.41 represents the actual price at which any school board in Iowa can secure the above named list of books if it takes advantage of the statutes now in force, giving it authority to purchase books and sell them at cost to the pupils or to adopt the free text-book plan. The



figures quoted would, of course, eliminate the dealer. It is to be borne in mind also that the text-books suggested for the schools of Iowa are of regular editions and are supplied under a system of sharp competition. There are at the present time about seventeen book houses competing for business in Iowa.

From the comparison of the prices just presented it is apparent that State uniformity does not actually lower the cost of text-books to the pupil, or to the school corporation in case free text-books are furnished. Furthermore, no advocate of State uniformity has yet claimed or proved that under that system better text-books are placed in the hands of the pupils.

A brief examination of the workings of State uniformity in a given Commonwealth will further illustrate the results of the plan. As a rule State uniformity laws either fix the maximum prices at which the school board can make contracts for each particular text-book, or they limit the board to a certain amount of money which can be spent for an entire set of books. Laws of this kind are wrong in principle since they make it impossible to take into consideration the merit of the text-book.

The original law of Indiana establishing State uniformity specified the maximum price at which the State Board of Education could contract for any book. This law applied only to texts used in the grades. In 1913, however, the legislature provided for uniformity of text-books in the high schools.<sup>62</sup> This law did not fix the maximum price for any book nor did it limit the amount of money which could be spent for the entire set of high school text-books. As a result when the State Board of Education met to select high school text-books they were surprised to find most of the text-book publishing houses bidding their regular editions of texts in regular bindings, instead of offering speci-



ally constructed editions as they had done previously to meet the prices and qualifications of the law with respect to uniformity of texts in the grades. The letting of this contract proved conclusively that the publishing houses were anxious to submit regular editions wherever it was possible.

The charge had previously been made in Kansas that text-book houses were opposed to State uniformity and hence did not submit their best books. That their best books were not submitted in Kansas is true, because the prices of books were fixed by law at such low figures that the text-book houses could not offer their regular editions.

The law of 1913 in Indiana was passed by a legislature which expected to secure greatly reduced prices on high school texts. The law required the publishers to give as good prices as they gave elsewhere in the United States—a feature which is also to be found in the legislation on text-books in many other States. In Ohio the discount which every publishing house must give to every school board in the State is fixed by law at twenty-five percent of the publisher's list price; and the freight is paid by the boards, which also guarantee the payment of bills. Under the Indiana law the freight must be paid by the publishing house securing the contract. It was, therefore, found that publishers could not sell books in Indiana at seventy-five percent of the list prices. Furthermore, the Indiana law attempted to control retail prices. As this was manifestly illegal the State Board of Education agreed with most of the publishers that the wholesale price should be seventy-six and one-half percent of the list price. This would meet the Ohio price and allow the publishing house one and one-half percent of the list price with which to pay freight charges on books sold in Indiana.

The workings of this plan in Indiana may be seen in the



case of a certain history text, which is one of the books adopted. The list price is \$1.50, and wholesale price \$1.1475 f. o. b. Chicago. With the retail price the publishing house has nothing whatever to do. As a matter of fact the retail price on this book in Indiana is \$1.35. The same history can be purchased under contract by any school board in the State of Iowa for \$1.12, plus the freight charges which in Iowa are paid by the board. Thus, again, it can readily be seen that State uniformity does not reduce the prices of text-books.

Another circumstance which is nearly always overlooked by those who advocate State uniformity as a remedy for the present high prices of text-books is the fact that in nearly all the States having State uniformity there is practically an entire new list of books adopted once every five or six years, according to the length of the time for which the contract is written. No State has ever readopted more than approximately twenty-five percent of the list of books previously in use. Such wholesale changes are obviously burdensome to the people unless free text-books are furnished.

The following arguments in favor of State uniformity are often advanced: (1) it makes possible the establishment of a State course of study, and (2) those persons who move from one locality to another in the same State are not called upon to buy new books. These arguments of course are valid; and yet it may be objected that a State course of study is not desirable because it is not flexible or easily changed, thereby making it virtually impossible for schools to raise their standards if they wish to do so. Furthermore, the second advantage may be secured equally well by a State-wide adoption of the free text-book system.

There is still another argument in favor of State uniformity which seems not to have been advanced by advocates of the plan. Competition is as desirable in the sale



of text-books as in the sale of any other commodity. One of the great objections to township adoption of text-books is the fact that there is no competition, or if there is it appears to such a slight extent as to be negligible. The adoption of uniform text-books by the county makes possible a considerable amount of competition, since the size of the order makes it worth while for several book houses to be represented in the bidding. But of course the greatest possible competition is secured under State uniformity. At the present time there are several publishing houses which never are represented at the time county contracts are let in Iowa. These are the houses which do not have a full line of school books to present, and therefore have comparatively few agents who appear only in bidding for the very largest contracts. County uniformity does not offer these so-called smaller companies the prospects of sufficient returns to justify them in incurring the expense of competition. Under these circumstances, if the smaller houses have books of greater merit than those of the larger companies, as is often the case, county authorities in Iowa seldom have opportunity to examine them.

Before leaving the subject of the cost of text-books attention should be called to the fact that State printing of text-books has been advocated in several States as a method of securing relief from high prices. This plan is at present in operation in only one State in the Union, namely, in California. There is a law which will make State printing operative in Kansas, but at the present time no school books have been produced by the State. Investigations conducted by Superintendent Sabin in 1889 showed that there was nothing gained by State printing at that time. It has been impossible to secure from the State printer of California at present a statement concerning his method of finding the



cost of manufacturing text-books. Until such a statement can be secured attempts to draw helpful conclusions from the experience of California will prove fruitless.

The objections to State printing of text-books are many. In the first place, there is no exchange price given under State printing. Therefore as soon as a State publication goes into use in the public schools no compensation can be offered for the displacement of the books previously used by the pupils. In the second place, there is no limit in Kansas as to the length of time during which State published text-books shall remain in use. The chances are that they will remain in use indefinitely. Again it would appear that the aim of the Kansas law is not so much to produce a good book as to produce a cheap one. And finally, it is believed that the cost of administering the Kansas law will prove to be an excessive burden.

In conclusion, it is evident that State uniformity will not result in the securing of better books than those now in use. Neither will it lower the price of books without lowering their quality, from the standpoint of both mechanical makeup and content. Text-books to-day are cheaper than they ever have been in the past because they are better and more carefully written, are more profusely illustrated, have more pages, are printed on a higher grade of paper, and are better bound. In other words, publishers are producing cheaper text-books not so much by lowering the price as by increasing the quality of the books.



## VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The foregoing study suggests at least two conclusions concerning the best methods of dealing with the text-book problem:

*First.* In Iowa at present the conditions are such that county uniformity should be made compulsory if the benefits of competition are to be extended to nearly one-half of of the total population. Competition might not result in any material reduction of prices; but in the end it might lower prices, and no doubt would result in the securing of better text-books than are now in use in many instances.

*Second.* State uniformity has been thoroughly tried in other States and has failed to lower the prices of books or to raise the standard of the texts used in the schools. Moreover, this system is limited, with the exception of Indiana, to two groups of States: (1) the southern States, which are notably backward in the cause of education; and (2) the so-called plateau States, most of which are not densely populated.

On the basis of the experience of educators in Iowa and in other States the following suggestions relative to the provisions which should be included in a compulsory county uniformity law are:

*First.* The board authorized to adopt text-books for the schools of the county should be composed of not more than five members. The county superintendent should be the president of the board. The other members of the board



should be: a town or city superintendent or a principal of a grade school located within the county; a teacher in the rural schools of the county who has had three years experience in teaching in the rural schools of the State; and the presidents of two rural school boards. All these members, with the exception of the county superintendent, should be chosen by the presidents of the boards in the districts which are to use the county uniformity books. Such elections should take place at a meeting at the county seat called for such a purpose by the county superintendent not later than ninety days prior to the letting of the contract.

*Second.* No attempt should be made to fix the prices at which school boards may contract to purchase books. All such legislation has failed in practice, since it ignores the cost of producing a book of real merit. It has been shown that competition will lower the price by raising the quality of text-books.

*Third.* The contract period should not be longer than five years.

*Fourth.* All boards of education in school corporations not supplying free text-books should furnish books to pupils at cost. "Cost" should be defined as the price f. o. b. Chicago.

*Fifth.* Independent districts maintaining a high school course of two years or more should be exempted from using county uniform text-books unless the electors of such an independent district so decide at the annual spring election.

*Sixth.* Boards of education should be required to employ the most economical methods in the distribution of text-books.

*Seventh.* The adoption of the system of free text-books should remain optional with the electors of the various school corporations.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> *Russell Sage Foundation Bulletin*, No. 124, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, in a certain weekly periodical there appeared an article in which the author made the exaggerated claim that a certain method of regulation which he proposed would save the people of the State of Illinois one million dollars a year in the cost of school books. Clearly, if such a saving could be effected the legislature of Illinois would be remiss if it failed to enact such a plan into law. But the reason why no such sum of money could be saved to the people of any one State during a year is the fact that there are not more than two States in the Union which pay a million dollars a year for text-books. Even these States do not average a million dollars yearly over a five-year period.

<sup>3</sup> Concerning the importance of the text-book a prominent educator writes as follows:

"The text book is a teacher of teachers. If it is not a force which the teacher may substitute for himself, or as the text of an author stands for the great truth which the commentator interprets, it is at least a condition through which the teacher presents a subject to the class. . . . It also remains for the student a permanent treasure house, where he may refresh his own delinquent memory, and whence he may draw specific facts for his own use."—*The Nation*, Vol. X, p. 424.

<sup>4</sup> *Code of 1897*, Sec. 2829.

<sup>5</sup> *J. C. McNees et al. vs. School Township of East River*, 133 Iowa 120.

<sup>6</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1848–1849, p. 96.

<sup>7</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 343, 344.

<sup>8</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 344.

<sup>9</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 345.

<sup>10</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 345.

<sup>11</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 345, 346.

<sup>12</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 346.

<sup>13</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 346.

<sup>14</sup> *Journal of the Board of Education*, First Session, pp. 67, 68.

<sup>15</sup> *Journal of the Board of Education*, Second Session, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> *Journal of the Board of Education*, Second Session, pp. 55, 56.

<sup>17</sup> *Educational Laws of the State of Iowa passed by the Board of Education at its First and Second Sessions, and by the General Assembly, at its Eighth Regular Session*, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> *Revision of 1860*, Sec. 2028-7.



- <sup>19</sup> *Journal of the Board of Education*, Third Session, p. 63.
- <sup>20</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, p. 53, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1868, Vol. I.
- <sup>21</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 351.
- <sup>22</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1872 (General), p. 85.
- <sup>23</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, pp. 191, 203, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1872, Vol. I.
- <sup>24</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 352.
- <sup>25</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1880, pp. 79, 110, 113, 222, 263; *Journal of the Senate*, 1880, p. 345.
- <sup>26</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1880, p. 177.
- <sup>27</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1880, p. 341.
- <sup>28</sup> *Shambaugh's Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. V, p. 268.
- <sup>29</sup> *Aurner's History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 354, 355.
- <sup>30</sup> *Report of the Commissioner of Labor Statistics*, pp. 208, 209, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1886, Vol. IV.
- <sup>31</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, p. 52, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1886, Vol. V.
- <sup>32</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, pp. 52-87, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1886, Vol. V.
- <sup>33</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1886, index under heading of "Text Books".
- <sup>34</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, pp. 89-96, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1890, Vol. II.
- <sup>35</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1890, index; *Journal of the Senate*, 1890, index.
- <sup>36</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1890, pp. 325, 401, 414, 416, 520.
- <sup>37</sup> *The Iowa Normal Monthly*, Vol. XIII, p. 428.
- <sup>38</sup> *Journal of the Senate*, 1890, p. 700. A number of Senators also requested that explanations of their votes be spread upon the journal.
- <sup>39</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1890, pp. 36-39.
- <sup>40</sup> See below, p. 35.
- <sup>41</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1894, p. 45.
- <sup>42</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1894, p. 45.
- <sup>43</sup> *Laws of Iowa*, 1896, p. 43.
- <sup>44</sup> *Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*, pp. 65-87, in the *Iowa Legislative Documents*, 1898, Vol. II. The House resolution is printed in this Report, but seemingly does not appear in full in the *Journal of the House of Representatives*.
- <sup>45</sup> *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1898, p. 317.



<sup>46</sup> For a brief discussion of these bills see Aurner's *History of Education in Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 363, 364.

<sup>47</sup> J. C. McNees, et al. *vs.* School Township of East River, 133 Iowa 120.

<sup>48</sup> *Ries vs. Hemmer*, 127 Iowa 409, at 411, 412.

<sup>49</sup> *Iowa Educational Directory*, 1913-1914, p. 108.

<sup>50</sup> Letters received by the writer in response to a questionnaire.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of the provisions of this law see above, pp. 23, 24.

<sup>52</sup> Polk County was the first county to adopt text-books under the system of county uniformity. Eight publishing houses were represented in the bidding by thirty-two agents.—*The Iowa Normal Monthly*, Vol. XIX, p. 475.

<sup>53</sup> *Iowa Educational Directory*, 1913-1914, p. 108. The list here given would indicate that Clinton and Pottawattamie counties also have county uniformity, but this is an error.

<sup>54</sup> No plan will ever make it possible to secure books for less than wholesale prices, as is pointed out below.

<sup>55</sup> See a pamphlet published by the county superintendent of Buchanan County in 1912.

<sup>56</sup> Quoted from a printed list compiled from the reports made by teachers to the county superintendent of Buchanan County in 1912.

<sup>57</sup> House File No. 114. Another bill dealing with the subject of uniformity and proposing certain important changes in the present law was Senate File No. 530.

<sup>58</sup> These replies are in the possession of the writer.

<sup>59</sup> The free text-book system in Pennsylvania was established by an act of May 18, 1893.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from the Oklahoma Book Company to the writer, dated August 3, 1914.

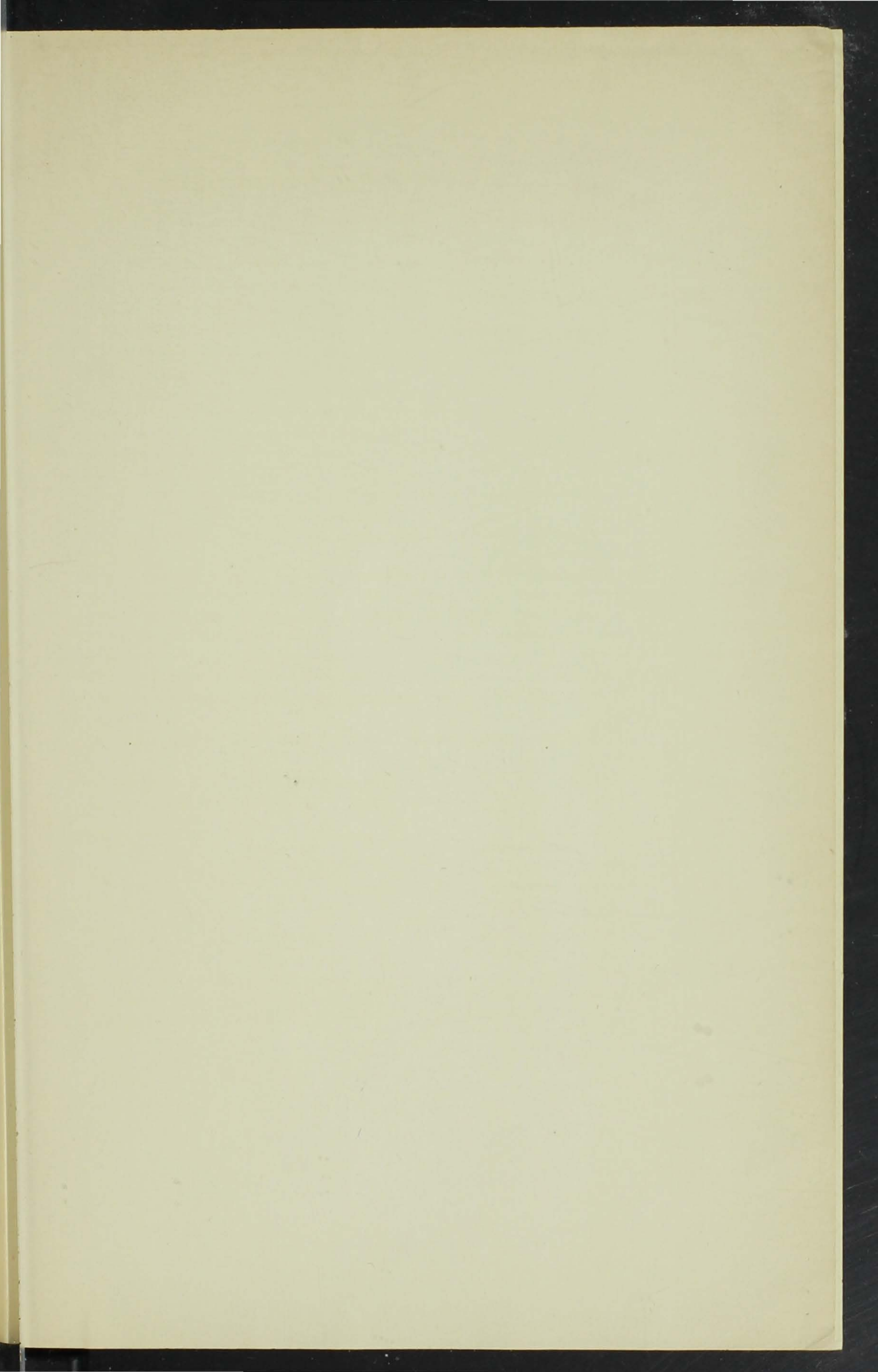
<sup>61</sup> *Iowa Educational Directory*, 1913-1914, p. 107.

<sup>62</sup> *School Laws of Indiana*, 1913.





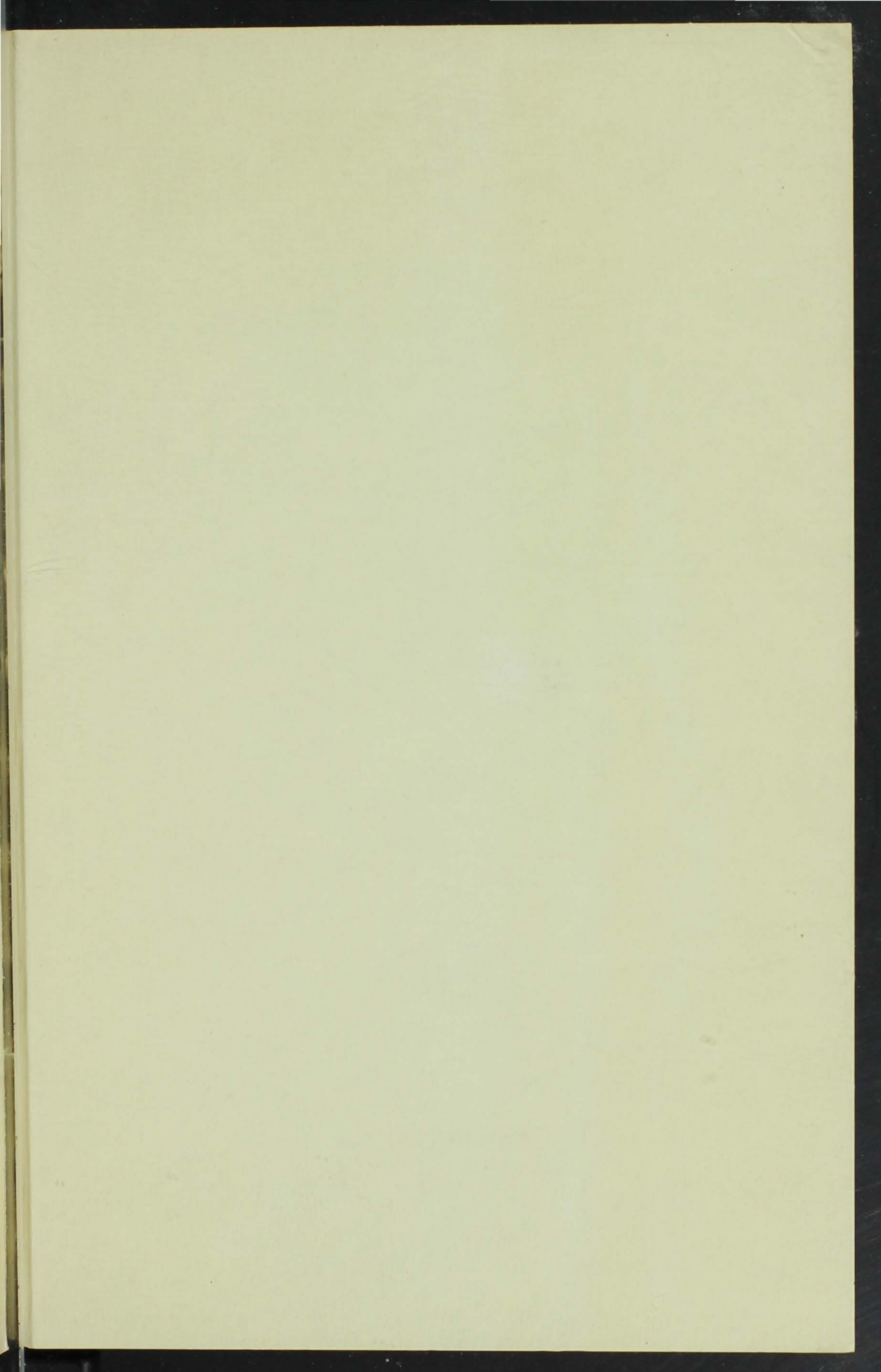






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