

failed, whether the books have been manufactured, purchased, or selected by state authority."

Indiana and California tell the same story. Uniformity is not desirable, even were it possible. Every community should have the right to choose such text-books as are adapted to its needs. And the power to change text-books should also be carefully preserved and surrounded by every possible safeguard. Even the inert soil wants a change of manure and products.

Does the idea of economy or cheapness attract you? When were excellent school books ever so cheap as they are to-day? But on this question let us see what those who have tried it say of the plan:

In California, the state printer estimated that he could produce 500,000 text-books for \$89,000. Before he had published 187,000 volumes, he had expended \$357,000, and like Oliver Twist, was asking for more.

In Indiana, a few years ago, a law was passed, providing for the state publication of text-books. After the lapse of some time, a partial list was made, which extended only to the lower grades of pupils. The high school books, as before, were furnished by publishers. This list of books, which were to be published according to law, was first published by a syndicate, or school book company, as it was called, and after operating a year or two, the company sold out to the American Book Company, and the greater portion of the school book trade of the state of Indiana is now under the control of the last named company.

In Minnesota, the verdict of superintendents and other experts reads thus: "The books are inferior in manner of presenting subjects and in general make-up." "Nobody except the contractor and a few in his interest likes the books—and why should they not?" "They are more

expensive, because they do not satisfy the requirements." "It discourages competition; it favors monopoly; the law was conceived in corruption, and passed in the interest of the jobber, who needed a contract and got it." "The state books are shams, in matter and make." "There is no real saving to the people." "As to the cheapness of books, there has never been a time, since long before this law was contemplated, that superior books to those furnished by the contractor could not have been purchased at as good figures."

To sum up the whole question, this scheme of state uniformity in text-books has been a failure wherever tried. It has not, could not, and would not reduce the cost. School books now are the cheapest books published. It would be absolutely impossible for the state to make books as well as those furnished by the publishers, and each community should be considered able and competent to choose its own text-books. Remember text-books grow; they are not and cannot be made to order, and therefore it is ridiculous to suppose the wisest committee could at once originate improved books. This idea of uniformity bars all progress. Text-books produced under such a system are so poor that they prevent mental development. They stimulate teachers to violate law and get around the prescribed text-books, and even the most advisable and necessary changes cannot be made without the consent of the contractor.

In conclusion, have you considered what would be the effect of adopting any set of books, however good, on the children? Have you stopped to consider the cost to them, and the injury done to a whole generation in its education? If a set of books are adopted for a given number of years, would there, or could there be any improvement? If books *must* be bought.