

more active than in the decade just now closing. You, among the elders, are qualified to judge of the correctness of this statement. This seems a proper place for me to say also that there has never been, at any time, or in any quarter, any agreement or understanding among publishers which has in the least degree even tended to restrict any house or firm in putting such prices upon the books of its production as the demands of free competition have dictated. Isay this in the interest of truth, and to clear up an existing misapprehension, and every publisher will indorse this statement.

When you can invent a method of cornering the market of brains, you can then set up a monopoly of intellect; and when this is done, you can establish a monopoly in school-book publishing, but not until then.

This topic leads directly to another cognate subject which is based upon the recognition of the existence of the competition described—the evils of the commercial side of publishing. That such evils exist it would be folly to deny, but that they have been very greatly exaggerated and too widely advertised is equally true. Questionable practices in the adoption of text-books require the consent of two parties; the school side no less than the publishing side is involved, and it is equally for the interest of both that whatever evils do exist should be eliminated, or at least, to the greatest possible extent minimized. Let us meet the question squarely and fairly.

I beg you to recognize that school-book publishing, as a business, has to fit itself to the environment of to-day, which surrounds the carrying on of all other kinds of trade. It is not, in this respect, a thing apart, and cannot possibly be made so. The laws governing it have not been made by fiat or choice; they are the laws of

its development by evolution, and have to be accepted as such.

There is a widespread popular notion that schoolbooks are changed oftener than the best interests of the schools require, and that the publishers are responsible. Most states have restrictive laws, prescribing periods of adoption of from three to six years, which are in the interest of a wise conservatism. But while these laws are a useful barrier against individual cases of excessive changes, it is still true that, on an average, books remain in use two or three times as long as any of the laws prescribe, and that the life of a good book lasts from ten to twenty years. Publishers are criticised for publishing too many new books, for revising their books too often, all merely to make changes in books necessary; they are equally criticised for continuing the publication of too many old books and forcing their continued use, and for not keeping them thoroughly revised, so blocking the way to improvements. Thus by the inconsiderate they are condemned if they do, and they are condemned if they don't; and it is a trying position to hold the scale even. As between most extreme views, the truth lies in a middle ground.

With one almost continuous session of Congress, and the frequent and prolonged sessions of the legislatures of forty-five states, we are blessed or cursed with many laws, and with constant changes of laws. This threatens the simplicity of a republican form of government with becoming a labyrinthian complexity of laws which even judges cannot unravel and interpret. This plague of over-legislation has not omitted the schools, and especially the adoption and supply of text-books. The politician attacks this subject with a courage born of ignorance. Uniformity and cheapness are apparently the things chiefly considered, under the guise of state uniformity,