

The Democratic Sentinel.

VOLUME XII.

RENSSELAER JASPER COUNTY, INDIANA. FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 1888

NUMBER 33

THE DEMOCRATIC SENTINEL

DEMOCRATIC NEWSPAPER.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY,

BY

JAS. W. McEWEEN

RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION.

One year, in advance, \$1.50
Six months, in advance, .75
Three months, in advance, .50

Advertising Rates.

One column, per line, 10 cts.
Half column, per line, 5 cts.
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SYNOPSIS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICES

—OF—

HON
V. ZIMMERMAN,

CANDIDATE FOR REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE 10TH CONGRESSIONAL
DISTRICT.

[From last week concluded.]

TEXT BOOKS.

Mr. Zimmerman, presented the following resolution to the Indiana Senate at the session of 1887 in connection with a bill providing for the publishing and distributing text books for our common schools at cost:

Whereas, Under the copyright laws of the United States the text books used in the public schools have been copyrighted, and the publication and sale thereof to the people has been monopolized by a few publishing houses, thereby greatly enhancing the price and cost of said books to the people, be it

Resolved, By the Senate, the House concurring therein, that our Senators and Representatives in Congress are requested to secure the passage of a law repealing all copyright law, so far as the same may apply to the text books used in the common schools.

Resolved, That the Governor of this state be and he is hereby requested to furnish each of our Senators and Representatives in Congress with a copy of this resolution. [See Senate Journal of 1887.]

In support of the report of this bill Mr. Zimmerman spoke as follows:

Mr. President—Next to the General Appropriation bill and the necessary measures looking to the welfare of the various State institutions, the bill now under consideration is of more vital interest to the masses of the people of this great Commonwealth than any other measure now pending before this Legislature. This bill is being discussed at every fireside throughout the State and if it were left to a popular vote by the people it would carry by an overwhelming majority.

A two-fold object is to be attained by the passage of this bill. 1. A uniform series of school text books throughout the State. 2. Economy, or in other words, a material reduction in the price of these books.

The salutary effects of this bill will reach the homes of the well-to-do as well as the poor. More especially, however, will it be a blessing to the poor man, for it is he who raises the largest family, and consequently needs the most school books; it is the poor laboring man who is compelled to move from one locality to another in search of work, and thus very often he finds the school books already bought for his children useless property, and is subjected to the hardship of buying new books.

The great injustice which our present text-book system inflicts upon that class of people is incalculable. After the laboring man provides for the necessities of life, such as food, raiment, shelter and medicine, there is precious little left for school books. And when we consider the extortionate high prices exacted by the school-book monopolies of this country, and the irregular system in our State of permitting a different series of text-books in the various counties and cities, is it not timely for this Legislature to come to the immediate relief of that class of people for whom we profess so much love and sympathy?

Two years ago I had the pleasure of casting my votes for several acts which were intended to protect and dignify labor. I am proud to-day of the position I took then, and at the convening of the present session I resolved in my heart not to relax in my efforts to further the amelioration of the con-

dition of the laboring men and women of Indiana. In my opinion of all the so called labor bills passed and still pending before the Legislature, the bill under discussion is of greatest significance to the thousands of wage-workers and poor people in general of this State. And no Senator on this floor can afford to ignore that fact.

The cardinal qualifications of good citizenship is intelligence and knowledge, which can be best obtained through the channels of our public schools. Ignorance breeds vice and crime. Then is it not the duty of a State to educate her children at the expense of the State and properly prepare and fit them for the competent discharge of the duties and responsibilities of citizenship? In this State everything is furnished pupils except books. In the States of Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, California and Maine, text books are furnished free to the children. Wisconsin, too, has a similar law. I assert right here that if I possessed the power I would inaugurate a like system in this State, and place in the hands of every child, rich and poor alike, text books free. Then, and not until then, will our public schools be free schools not only in name but in fact.

But, thinking that free text books would be considered a step too radical by a portion of the people, I am contented with the next best thing—that is, to furnish text books for the children of the State at the mere cost of printing and binding. Such a law is now in force in the State of Minnesota. A first reader, for instance, the retail price of which is from 20 to 35 cents in Indiana, is furnished to the children of Minnesota at 10 cents, and other text books at correspondingly low prices. So long as the state of Indiana will permit herself to be the willing slave of grasping school book monopolies, so long will our public schools be only a partial success. The unreasonably high prices now charged for text books are a serious obstruction in the progressive march of education, and this odious practice puts a fine, as it were, upon the fertile intellects of the youths of the state, and the intended and much-desired usefulness of our public schools is greatly impaired thereby.

I have before me the report of Hon. John W. Holcombe, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, for the years 1885 and 1886. I am no little surprised at his opposition to the system provided for in this bill. Mr. Holcombe must have anticipated legislation on this subject, and to shape public sentiment in advance against the theory embodied in the bill before us now, he took great pains in accumulating and publishing in his report, the opinions of certain state superintendents who are hostile to uniformity of text books and the publishing of them by the state. Among them appeared the opinions of the state superintendent of Minnesota, one given in the year 1880 and another in the year 1884. It must not be forgotten here that the text book law of Minnesota was a new venture from '80 to '84, and that since the law has been amended and shorn of its imperfections and objectionable features—a fact which Mr. Holcombe treats with silence. But in order to give weight and credence to state testimonials of superintendents from other states, men who are strangers to us, and whose motives we may or may not question: Mr. Holcombe adds his opinion to theirs, and thus arrays himself squarely on the side of school-book monopolies as against the people. Now, the best evidence to me that the Minnesota law meets with the approval of the people of that state is the significant fact that its Legislature dare not attempt to repeal the law.

But in spite of the boasted progress of our public schools; in spite of a school fund reaching the enormous sum of \$10,000,000; in spite of the 10,000 school houses costing over \$13,000,000, and in

which are employed 14,000 teachers; in spite of all these advantages a most alarming feature presents itself to our thoughtful attention in the careful perusal of Mr. Holcombe's report. I find that the total number of school children in the state between the ages of six and twenty-one years, for the year 1886, is 744,998. Out of that number 506,126 were admitted into the public schools.

The average daily attendance was but 349,575, or, in other words, 159,551 did not attend school regularly. But this is not the worst feature of this important subject. In addition to the 159,551 who do not attend school regularly there are 238,872 between the ages of six and twenty-one years who were not admitted to the public schools at all, making a grand total of 398,423. Supposing now that 50,000 of these attend private schools and academies, and supposing further that 150,000 between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one years already possess a limited or superior education, still the unpleasant and indisputable fact remains that 200,000 children, in round numbers, are to be either partially or wholly deprived of the blessings of our public schools, and thus thousands grow up in ignorance. State Superintendent Holcombe in his report gives the number of children between the ages of ten and twenty-one years who cannot read or write, 2,665.

A very small per cent. of illiteracy, considering that 200,000 children do not attend public school at all.

Not wishing to reflect adversely upon the educational status of my own state, in my judgment the number of children between the ages of ten and twenty-one years who cannot read or write in this state, is far beyond the statistical figures referred to.

What is presumably the cause of this state of affairs? Whose children are these 200,000 who are shut out of the public schools? The answer is obvious. They are the offspring of the poor. Last Sunday I visited for the first time the Reform School for boys at Plainfield. I was highly pleased with the management of that institution, yet the very cause which brought the 508 boys there left a sad impression on my mind. Among other things I was informed that nine-tenths of the boys were of poor parentage, and as a rule but few could read or write when received at the institution. Why should we wonder any longer then that poverty and ignorance, and at last crime, go hand in hand, when our present contemptible text book system prevents the poor man and the poor widow from sending their children to school for the simple reason that the price of text books is far beyond their ability to purchase. Upon us as Legislators of a great state rests the grave responsibility of completely purging forever the public schools of Indiana from this present pernicious system.

Mr. President I had intended to call the attention of the Senate to the corrupt influences brought to bear upon school superintendents and school trustees by the wily agents of school books and other school supply corporations under our present system, but believing that every senator is fully informed on the existing evil, I will pass this unpleasant subject without further comment.

The bill before us is plain and easily understood. Its comprehensive provisions are free from any temptations to those who preside over our public schools. So plain and simple are its provisions that the most shrewd and cunning can not misconstrue them. There is not the slightest room for jobbery or bribery.

The work of compiling the books is left to the State Board of Education—the highest educational authority in the state. The high character and reputation of the men who compose that body is sufficient guarantee to us that the work will be accomplished honest-

ly and faithfully.

But, said superintendent Holcombe, in his report: "It would be the work of years to provide a series that would compare favorably with the many excellent text books now issued by educational publishers." Admitting such to be true, are the people of Indiana forever to be dependent upon, and forever to be the helpless victims of heartless school book monopolies? Are we not possessed of the courage and ability to make an honest effort in that direction—the sooner the better—and thus gradually cut loose from these corporations? I have unbounded confidence in our State Board of Education, individually and collectively.

I believe that they are fully competent to compile text books which will not only compare favorably with the present standard works, but which will be a great improvement over them in many respects. First and foremost, the children of Indiana should be enlightened upon affairs and things pertaining to their own state. It is of paramount interest that the children of Indiana should be made familiar with the history, geography, commerce, resources and government of their own state. They should know more of the glorious past of the state; about its patriots, heroes and statesmen, about its population, its industries, its streams and lakes, its boundaries, and its soil, and the productiveness of the same. The authors of the several standard text books, being non-residents, residing principally in the eastern states, do not give us this desired information. Hence, the authorship of text books by home genius, so to speak, by men who have spent a lifetime in the educational fields of Indiana, is to be much preferred over that of non-resident authors, for the reason that they are more competent to compile books especially adapted to the children of this state.

Admitting again, for argument's sake, the incompetency of our State Board of Education to compile text books of such high order as to compare favorably with the already recognized standard works, I call the attention of the senate to the fact that the bill is carefully guarded for an emergency of that kind. Section 2 provides that the State Board of Education may purchase of the author or proprietor of any one or more works of the first order of excellence, the exclusive right to publish and sell said work or works in the state of Indiana. So there need be no danger should the State Board of Education be incompetent or unwilling to compile said books. It is left to their judgment and discretion to compile or cause to be compiled or purchase any one or more of the series of text books enumerated in Section 1.

It is furthermore left to their discretion to introduce but two books of the new series in any one year into the public schools, thus avoiding a sudden change. No hardship will be imposed upon the public and in the course of several years the new series will gradually find its way into our public schools without inflicting serious loss upon any one.

The printing and binding, as provided in section 5, is to be advertised and let to the lowest responsible bidder by the Commissioners of Public Printing in a manner as now provided for by law.

The distribution of books is to be conducted in a business-like method. The trustees of the various school corporations of each county are to certify to the county superintendent the number and kind of books wanted. The county superintendent makes a requisition on the state superintendent, and the latter on the text book contractor.

Section 10 provides for an appropriation of \$20,000 for compiling or causing to be compiled this series of books by the State Board of Education.

[Concluded on 4th page.]