

THE SCHOOL BOOK QUESTION.

Editor Deseret News:

Dear Sir—Some time ago I took occasion to make a few remarks upon the introduction of new school books, wherein, after giving some statistical details, I expressed an opinion that arrangements could be made with publishing houses whereby a very large amount could be saved to the people of this Territory. Since which I have seen and conversed with several gentlemen, representing large publishing houses, both East and West, and having carefully investigated the matter, I am now in possession of sufficient data in regard to the large per centage generally allowed on the sale of school books, and particularly in the introduction of any new series, to show that the several counties and school districts in the Territory can receive their books at from thirty-five to thirty-eight per cent. lower than the published retail rates, before referred to, all expenses paid, delivered in this city in quantities at wholesale, as the schools may require.

Since the publication of my article I have had free and full conversations with Mr. Soaper, the representative of the Cornell geographies published by D. Appleton & Co., of New York; Mr. C. J. Barnes, of the firm of A. S. Barnes & Co., of New York and Chicago, who represents the National series of readers and spellers, the Independent series, Monteith's Geographies, and other works, maps, &c.; and Mr. D. Libby, representative of A. S. Bancroft & Co., of San Francisco, Cal., who represents the Pacific Coast Readers and Spellers, all of whom have made certain propositions in relation to the sale of their several works.

It is not pleasant to criticize the action of a convention convened in pursuance of law; but there are circumstances in which it would be much more honorable for legislative bodies, whether Territorial, State, or national, to revise, change or repeal obnoxious enactments, than to permit them to remain on their statute books. The Congress of the United States, at its last session and before, resigned what is generally known as the salary grab; all men are liable to mistakes, and I as a member of the late legislature think that the school acts might be considerably modified and improved. I think the same of the acts of the late school convention, and whilst I would not wish to impugn the motives of that convention, as a body, most of whom I consider acted in good faith, in the interests of the community, I cannot but think that its action was hasty in making such sweeping and expensive changes without a more thorough investigation of the merits of the question.

I stated in my former article, to which I beg leave to refer, that "the percentage on books, or discount allowed to purchasers, is very heavy, not less than thirty-three and a third per cent., generally forty, and in some instances, in the introduction of new books, as high as fifty and sixty per cent. Now forty per cent. on \$250,000 would be \$100,000. This, in the present arrangement, would go into the hands of the buyer and seller. Would it not be much better in the hands of the people?" I further stated, "This, of course, would not all be required at once; but in two or three years all of these books, or more, would be required;" and again, "The law does not compel us to purchase from the school board or their agents, nor authorize them to do our trading."

In regard to the terms to be obtained, as in the percentage, etc., as specified above, the following statement will fully sustain me. There is one statement made that I now wish to correct. I stated, "This is the law, and this law can be enforced under the penalty of the withdrawal of territorial appropriations from those who refuse." In examining it carefully I find no such power in the law, and, in conversing with many legal and other gentlemen, I do not find one of the opinion that there is any clause therein, or power given, authorizing such withdrawal.

It was with extreme delicacy that I entered upon the investigation of this subject; but when we consider that there is nearly, if not quite, twice as much appropriated and provided for schools by the late Legislature, independent of this book question, as for all other interests and territorial purposes combined, it becomes a matter of grave

importance how these things are manipulated, and it is so considered by all right-thinking men here, as everywhere in the United States. Not wishing to use my judgment alone, I have conversed freely and had the views of some twelve or fifteen members of the late Legislature of both houses, six or seven of the Twelve, several Regents of the University, five or six County Superintendents of schools, and a number of other prominent and intelligent men in our midst, who feel generally to sanction and approve of the views set forth in this article.

One of the principal objects alleged for the passage of the new school law, was the necessity of a uniformity in the text books. Another was to prevent the incessant bleeding of the people by the introduction of new series of books, thus putting the community to expense, simply to give percentage to those manipulators.

During the sitting of the convention a number of offers were made by publishers, in the interests of their several houses, in regard to readers, spellers, geographies and other books. One of the most reasonable apparently as to introduction of readers and spellers was that of Bancroft & Co., of San Francisco, who proposed giving a free exchange of new for old books. This upon the face of it looked very plausible and was no doubt the principal cause of their adoption by the convention; but upon investigation it was found that the books were very inferior as compared with eastern books, both in paper, cuts and binding, and especially in the binding; and although parties with whom I conferred on the subject before referred to, as well as myself, felt disposed, as much as possible, to carry out the views of the convention, they found that they could not do it without sacrificing the interests of the people; as it was the generally expressed opinion that they would not last more than half as long as the others. But there was another question after the introduction for five years to come—the retail prices, as published, would have been from 35 to 38 per cent. higher than they can now be obtained for wholesale in this city. It is only justice to say that Mr. Libby, agent of Bancroft & Co., San Francisco, offered terms within 5 per cent. of an eastern offer, and that the shorter carriage would have reduced that difference, and he also offered to make the binding as good as the Independents or Nationals; but then it was stipulated that we were to take "the stock already manufactured in making exchanges." It was thought that we could not consistently comply with this condition, not knowing but that there might be enough of this class to supply the whole Territory.

It is only justice to the convention to say that the low offers afterwards made by some of the publishing houses, were not made to the convention, and there was no house, as I am informed, in a condition to make them but Bancroft & Co., of San Francisco, and they did not in the after sales, only in the exchange.

I understand that there is a publishers' Union, or "Board of Trade," organized in the East for the purpose of protecting the publishing interests. I am informed that Bancroft & Co. are not in this, and consequently could offer introductory inducements which others could not, the others being bound by their rules; but these offers having been made by one outside, the members of the board were at liberty to compete and hence the after propositions. I have been asked, "Is it honorable to offer or to receive terms after first propositions?" To this I answer that neither I nor the people of this Territory assume the guardianship of other people's honor; but if it is honorable for publishers, dealers and sellers, to unite together and form a monopoly and sell as high as they can, it would seem equally as honorable for buyers to unite together to purchase as low as possible, especially in a question of as great public importance as that of our school books. With us it is simply a question of price, and without being too pragmatical we must leave these gentlemen to adjust their own differences according to their own code.

As there seems to be among the friends of education quite a leaning towards Barnes' series, I give the following proposals from C. J. Barnes, of the firm of A. S. Barnes & Co., of New York and Chicago—

"SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, April 26, 1876.

"Dear Sir—Should the school authorities of your Territory decide to retain for use in the public schools the National Readers and Monteith's Geographies, one or both, we will supply the Z. C. M. I. said books in such quantities as they may need, from time to time, at a discount of forty per cent., and ten per cent from the published retail prices of same, and will for the purpose of securing uniformity in editions, &c., supply all books required to make such uniformity at half retail prices, delivered freight paid, and will pay the salary and expense of an agent, whose duty it shall be to attend to all the introductions made toward the uniformity.

"Should the Independent Readers be chosen as better to substitute for the National Readers, we will supply them where the Nationals are used at half retail price, delivered; and will also make same rates of discount on purchases of Independent Readers made by the Z. C. M. I.

"So soon as this can be settled, as per the foregoing, we will allow the said Z. C. M. I. a credit of ten per cent. on such of our stock as they have on hand at the time.

"Very respectfully yours,
"A. S. BARNES & Co."

Mr. Barnes was then written to, to know if he could offer a free exchange for all readers, other than the National. He expressed a willingness to do so if permitted by the publishers of said books. The following was afterwards received—

"CHICAGO OFFICE,
"June 27th, 1876.

"Dear Sir—I regret that I am compelled to write you we cannot exchange out the books now in use, as Messrs. Harper Bros. refuse to allow us to take up Wilson's Readers. Below I give you an outline of what we can do—

"1st. If the National Readers are retained, we will supply all other schools using other than the Nationals with these books at half retail price, freight paid.

"2nd. Should the Independents be preferred to the Nationals, we will supply the former to all schools using the latter at even exchange, book for book, as follows—An Independent 1st Reader for a National Primer, Independent 2nd for a National 1st Reader, Independent 3rd for National 2nd Reader, Independent 4th for National 3d, Independent 5th for National 4th Reader, Independent 6th Reader for National 5th Reader, Independent Speller for National Speller.

"3rd. Should uniformity be sought, we will supply the Independent Readers for all other Readers than the National at one half retail price.

"4th—Should Monteith's Geographies be retained, we will supply an edition with map of Utah, and two or three pages of additional matter, at no extra cost, and will supply each pupil now holding a geography with the extra map and additional matter free of cost, that is, will send to each school a sufficient number of the extra pages, for each pupil to have a set, which can be placed or pasted in the back of the book.

"For all other geographies now used, we will supply Monteith's at half retail price, freight paid.

"You can readily see that this plan of making readers and geographies uniform, will be very light indeed on the people, the cost will be so gradual and the prices so low that money will be saved in the end, for you will remember we claim that our books are so much better bound than others, that we guarantee them to last twice as long.

"We can and will make very liberal arrangements with the Z. C. M. I., so they can send books over the Territory at a low price, and we will appoint an agent from among your own people, at a fair salary, to undertake for us our duty in supplying the books as we agree.

"Yours very truly,
"C. J. BARNES."

Mr. Barnes was then written to in regard to uniformity of geographies, as there have been some complaints about Monteith's being dissimilar. The following is the reply—

"Chicago Office,
"July 8, 1876.

"Dear Sir—In the matter of geographies, we believe that the books principally used are Monteith's First Lessons, No. 1; Monteith's Introduction, No. 2; Monteith's

Manual, No. 3. Now in the first two books, there has never been any change of editions, so that pupils using them are not troubled.

"In the third one, there has been a few changes necessary on account of geographical changes of boundary lines, &c., and we will gladly supply each pupil having the old edition, with the new edition at fifty cents per copy, and this would be a very light tax from the fact that all pupils who have purchased the manual within the past two years have the revised edition, and those who have the old edition must have used them so that they are nearly worn out at this time, and instead of having to buy a book at the stores at full retail price, \$1.10, we offer to put one into their hands for fifty cents.

"Such a course would make the three books named uniform, so far as used at present, and they are probably used in nine-tenths of the schools. In any case where other geographies are used, and the teacher would take Monteith's they should have them at half retail prices.

"My own opinion, however, regarding geographies is, the plan I proposed to the convention, would, in the end, be the most satisfactory of all.

"It is this—

"Let the primary classes continue the use of Monteith's first lessons, which they already have, and in which there has been no change.

"Then let the next grade of pupils take Monteith's Elementary Geography, which is an entire new book, and very complete for an intermediate grade; we would put it into the hands of the pupils at 40 cents per copy, and continue that price to each school for a period of three months from the time the school begins to take the books, that is to say, if the school chose to take the books now, they should have them at 40 cents per copy in that school for three months, and any other school near by, same town, city, or district, or anywhere else in the Territory, not wishing to take the books at same time, could take them wherever they saw fit, be it one, two, three, six or twelve months from that date the other school or schools took them, and should have them at the same rate, that is, 40 cents for three months.

"Then for the next or higher grades, let them take Monteith's Comprehensive Geography, also entirely new, and containing many new features not found in any other geographies.

"This book has Descriptive and Physical Geography sufficient for any common school, and would not necessitate a pupil purchasing a Physical Geography separate, at a cost of \$1.60, which would be the cost were Cornell's books to be taken.

"In naming it 'Comprehensive,' we intend it to cover all that is necessary, including PHYSICAL Geography for common schools.

"This book we would put into the hands of the pupils at 80 cents per copy, same length of time and conditions as given above for the elementary geography. It is very plain, putting these two books into schools GRADUALLY, as herein provided, and giving pupils benefit of the low prices whenever they get ready to make the change, would result in a very much less expenditure of money, than to take all three of the Cornell books; for if the latter are taken, the money spent will be as follows—Cornell's Primary, retail 90 cents, half price for introduction, 45 cents; Cornell's Intermediate, retail \$1.50, half price for introduction, 75 cents; Cornell's Physical Geography, retail \$1.60, half price for introduction, 80 cents; cost to adopt Cornell's, \$2.00.

"Now to take Monteith, as I propose, the prices compare as follows: Monteith's Primary, retail 35 cents, being already used, does not count in; Monteith's Elementary, retail 80c, half price for introduction, 40 cents; Monteith's Comprehensive, retail \$1.60, half price introduction, 80 cents; total \$1.20, or 80 cents in favor of the plan of putting in these two books.

"We would prepare for the Elementary 2 pp., and for the Comprehensive 4 pp. of matter for Utah, including full page map.

"Yours truly,
"C. J. BARNES."

As it seemed necessary to have a more definite understanding, and to know whether the same percentages would be allowed on all the books required from this house,

they were again written to and the following answer returned—

"Chicago Office, July 18, 1876.

"My Dear Sir—As you requested me to give more definite terms on all the books we send into Utah, I will state that the terms quoted to you as being a special discount to the Z. C. M. I. on Readers and Geographies, apply also to all others of our publications, including Histories, Spellers, Arithmetic, &c., &c., and should there be any reduction in our prices at any time, of course your people shall have benefit of same as soon as any one else.

"The prices which the people will pay after the introduction is made must be regulated by the merchants out there, who have the books for sale, for, as we shall supply mostly all sent into the Z. C. M. I., we cannot control the prices the merchants are to ask for them after the books are in the hands of Mr. Clawson.

"Yours very truly,
"J. C. BARNES,
of A. S. Barnes & Co."

In view of the above, Mr. Clawson has agreed to the following terms—

"Zion's Co-operative Mercantile Institution,

"Salt Lake City, June 7, 1876.

"SCHOOL BOOKS.

"Will order books from the publishers in quantities for 5 per cent. commission on cost and freight.

"Payment to be made on delivery of the books in Salt Lake City.

"This arrangement applies to all school books purchased of A. S. Barnes & Co.

"H. B. CLAWSON, Supt."

The following are the prices of the National Readers—

National Primer, retail,	\$0.25
National First Reader, retail	33
National Second Reader, retail	63
National Third Reader, retail	1.00
National Fourth Reader, retail	1.50
	\$3.76
National Fifth Reader, when used	1.88
Elementary Speller	25

The above four Readers and Primer contain more pages than either Bancroft's five readers or Barnes' Independent; the Fifth National, it is said, being calculated for more advanced pupils.

The price of the Independent is as follows—

Independent First Reader retail	\$0.25
Independent Second Reader, retail	0.65
Independent Third Reader, retail	0.75
Independent Fourth Reader, retail	1.00
Independent Fifth Reader, retail	1.25
	\$3.75

The Independent series are printed in clear type, on first class paper, and are very well bound, and seem to be a general favorite.

The Monteith's Geographies are at present, it is stated, used in four-fifths of the schools, and with the improvements proposed, the prices for introduction where not used are quite reasonable, and would seem to preclude the necessity of the introduction of Cornell's or any other. It is true that Cornell's are proposed for half price; but this would necessitate the introduction of an entirely new set to be purchased throughout the Territory, which at half price would be \$2.00 each set, and when introduced the sales afterwards would be \$4.00 per set, whereas Monteith's have four-fifths in use, leaving only one-fifth to be purchased at half price, and after the introduction they would be from 35 to 38 per cent. less than retail prices.

It ought not to require much argument in this case.

The retail prices are as follows—

Monteith's First Lesson	\$0.35
" Introduction	0.63
" Manual of Geography	1.10
	\$2.08

and a Monteith's Physical and Political Geography, for advanced scholars, \$1.88

Should the suggestion of Mr. Barnes, as given above, be adopted in regard to introducing gradually