THE RENTAL TEXTBOOK LAW

This law was passed at the 1936 Session of the General Assembly and should be continued because it will be a big help to the poor people. Under this law the school pupils will be allowed to rent books for about one-third of their actual cost. A man with a large family, five or six children in school, is hardly able to buy books for all of them but he could possibly make arrangements to pay the rentals yearly on the books.

Section 2 of the Act provides the same is not obligatory and any parent who prefers to buy books if he thinks it will be cheaper on account of passing them down from one child to the next in a family, may still do so, and there is nothing in the Act that prohibits a parent from buying the books as heretofore. It just provides an optional method of which the parents can avail themselves if they so choose.

Section 2 of the Act also provides that any school district or county may have the right to set up its own rental system or a free textbook system if it so chooses, which allows great latitude to the school districts and counties.

The last paragraph of Section 2 of the Act provides that the Act shall not apply to any school district in which the Board of Trustees (or any County, if the County Board of Education) shall file before August 1, 1936, a written statement approved by the Senator and one-half of the Representatives to the effect that it does not elect to come under the provisions of the Act. This makes the Act entirely optional for any school district or county, and because of this it is not obligatory in any manner whatever. As stated aforesaid, even if the district or county adopted the rental...
system a child can still purchase his books rather than rent them if he prefers to do this.

Section 3 of the Act also provides for the use of a period of at least three years the school books adopted by the State Board of Education in 1934, certain contracts which were subsequently declared illegal. By ratifying and confirming those contracts the children will not be forced to change books in the next three years which might have been the case if this Act had not passed.

Section 6 of the Act authorized the Director of the rental textbook system to appoint five field workers, but in order to economize he has only appointed one, and I am informed is trying to save to the State every dollar possible under this new law.

The last Section of the Act, Section 12, provides that at the beginning of the fourth year of operation of the rental book bill, and earlier if funds be available, the school book commission is authorized and directed to waive rentals for grammar school grades, and at the beginning of the sixth year, and earlier if funds be available, to waive rentals for high school grades, to the end that free textbooks may be furnished the pupils in the public schools of the State at as early date as possible.

It is hard to see how anyone could oppose this rental textbook law as no additional obligation is placed on any parent or school child thereunder and it allows them the privilege of renting books rather than buying them if they so choose, and after four years the system is to provide free books for the grammar grades and after six years free books for the high school grades; therefore the rental textbook law is the first step toward free school books.