

State to suggest that schools close

By Gary Benson
Of The Courier

Public schools may be closed for two weeks in January to save fuel if forthcoming recommendations from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) are accepted by local school boards.

OSPI will suggest in the next three or four days that school districts use the five "snow days" built into most school calendars plus five additional days to close schools for a semester break, an OSPI spokesman said.

Schools in Illinois would then be expected to extend the school year one week into the summer, an OSPI spokesman said.

OSPI, however, cannot require school districts to comply with

this recommendation. The decision to comply rests with local school boards.

Urbana Supt. of Schools Eugene Howard said today he "can't say anything at this point" about a possible closing except the district would consider the OSPI request.

"The main problem is the contract with the UEA (Urbana Education Association)," Howard said. "The teachers would have to be a part of any decision to change the calendar."

In Champaign Superintendent Marshall Berner said he would wait until OSPI formally announces the recommendation before responding.

The main problem, Berner said, is school districts will have to pay salaries to teachers for five additional days if the calendar is extended.

Even though teachers would be given five days off in the winter, state law still requires they be paid additional money if the calendar is extended.

From the teachers point of view, extending the school year might cause "a whole bunch of problems," according to Charles DesEnfants, executive director of the Champaign-Urbana teachers organizations.

DesEnfants said many things

would need to be considered, such as prior commitments this summer by both teachers and parents.

The OSPI spokesman said closing all schools for a 16-day period, which includes three weekends, could save up to 10 per cent of the fuel needs of Illinois public schools this winter.

"We're asking that teachers and schools recognize that we have a crisis situation," the OSPI spokesman said. "And we're going to especially need cooperation from teachers who may have to compromise on changes in their present contracts."

The OSPI recommendation to close schools will be accompanied by an extensive list of guidelines outlining other steps to save energy.

However, the OSPI spokesman said those had not been compiled yet.

The OSPI office will also send a request to the Illinois General Assembly. It will ask that Superintendent Michael Bakalis be given the power to waive penalties for schools who fall short of the required number of school days because of energy shortages.

Closing schools called absurd crisis solution

Suggestions that schools be closed this winter to conserve energy shows that this nation has no sense of priorities, the head of the Illinois Education Association charged Wednesday.

Curtis Plott, executive secretary of IEA, said in a news release the conservation of education should be placed first while we cut down our fuel consumption elsewhere.

"It is absurd for those who are concerned about the nation's welfare to discuss closing schools before non-essential businesses such as bowling alleys and theaters," bowling alleys and theaters," Plott said.

"What are the priorities of this country if the first buildings closed in a fuel shortage are our schools?"

Plott also said it was "absurd" to think closing schools will conserve energy.

"If the energy consumed by millions of television sets and lights used by children without schools was calculated, it would probably double the energy required to keep the schools open," he said.

board members later ss the problem.

Rosenfeld, Urbana Library Director, told the board with library boards are ed in serving the black nity but they don't feel reasonable for the park to be asking us to pay for the same size room, d above the cost of oper-

ver, a Champaign Park officials said today that scussion of library re-ent is premature, be- the entire project is still ormative stage.

re has been nothing de- n it yet," she said, "But ry is definitely being con- l."

lass Center was built in ter a massive community ising drive raised \$35 for dding.

p soon

," she replied, "but the as a stake in the funding pensions."

man continued to ask possible IRS action, dig himself next to Victor a law professor who was

Johnson weighs assembly race

Urbana Alderman Timothy incumbents John Hirschfeld Johnson, 6th Ward, today said and Charles Clabaugh.

he has petitions of candidacy "I have them (the petitions) ready but I don't know yet what I'll do," Johnson commented.

for a Republican nomination for "I guess it'll depend on what they (Clabaugh and Hirschfeld) do."

state representative from the 52nd District. Sources close to Clabaugh say he will not seek a 17th term. He was not available for comment today.

Champaign Mayor Virgil Winkoff already is circulating. Like Hirschfeld, mentioned as a possible candidate for the U.S. Senate race, Clabaugh is expected to make an announcement concerning his possible candidacy this week.

Both are awaiting the final decisions of the two Republican **JAMES FINK NAMED TO HEAD LIBRARY GROUP** The Champaign Library Board Wednesday named a citizens committee head to give assistance and support to the proposed new Champaign Library. James A. Fink of Tyler-Fletcher-Fink insurance, was named to head the library citizen's committee and to give ad-

DOCTORS, NURSE TO SPEAK TONIGHT

A panel discussion by two physicians and a nurse will be featured at tonight's meeting of

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