

Education Reform Bill Wins Assembly Approval

By EDWIN S. CAPPS
Capital News Service

SACRAMENTO — The assembly has given near-final passage to a bill said to be the biggest advance in California education since the Sputnik days of 1957, despite charges it might result in blood baths at local school board elections.

The bill, SB1 by Senator George Miller Jr. — (D-Martinez), to be known officially as the George Miller Jr. Act of 1968, would remove state requirements of courses to be taught in junior and senior high schools. The only exception would be physical education, where there is a requirement that high schools teach 400 minutes of PE each 10 school days and junior highs 200 minutes.

The measure, which Miller

has worked to pass for three years, would remove the state mandatory requirements for some two dozen courses. Instead, high schools and elementary schools would have the option to teach the courses they wish.

AS A CHECK, school boards would have to file schedules of curriculum with county boards of education. The high schools also would have to have schedules of minimum requirements for graduation.

The bill was presented in the assembly by Assemblyman John T. Knox, (D-Richmond), fellow Contra Costa County legislator of Miller's.

"This bill is judged by some as the most important bill on education in 25 years," Knox said. "It probably will

revolutionize education in California.

"The state has mandated so many things over the years that there are not enough hours in the school day to meet all the mandates," he said. "We have created a mish-mash in education."

THERE WAS no opposition in the assembly to SB1 and the vote for its passage was 66-0. Senator Miller said he expected the senate to approve the assembly changes in the bill, which included the requirement of minimum PE class time.

Assemblyman Winfield A. Shoemaker (D-Lompoc) said he would vote for the bill but considered it "not a bad bill but not a great bill." Shoemaker said the bill did not take into consideration the

student that moved from one district to another and noted that one student in four moved during the school year. He said the student would move from one type of curriculum to another.

But Shoemaker's chief objection to the bill was the authority it gave to local school boards and the problems this might cause.

"THIS COULD open the doors to a political blood bath for every school election," Shoemaker said. "We can plan on seeing some vicious fights from the right and left at the expense of the kids."

Assemblyman William M. Ketchum (R-Paso Robles) called it "local control at its very best." Senator Miller was not concerned about this

"What's wrong with blood baths?" Miller asked, following passage of his bill. "If we're for local control, let's do it."

Miller said one weakness of the bill was that many school boards still would not change their curriculum programs.

"THEY DON'T have to change, under this bill," Miller said. "But in the past they have said they couldn't change because the state had them strait-jacketed. Well, the state doesn't have them strait-jacketed any more."

"This bill eliminates the alibi of some school people who just don't want to do anything," he said.

Assemblyman Robert W. Crown (D-Alameda) said local

control of curriculum was a "noble experiment."

"I hope that 20 years from now our young adults will not have large posteriors and small heads from riding around in sports cars and a lack of self discipline," Crown said.

School to Host Jane Addams Alumnae Tea

The Jane Addams Alumnae Tea will be held Sunday from 3 to 5 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room of Narbonne High School.

Featured speaker will be Mayor Jim Cole of Lomita whose wife, the former Charlene Speight, is a Jane Addams alumna.

Circular Courts Set In San Pedro Facility

A new concept in courtroom design will be incorporated in the San Pedro County Building, now under construction, without any major increase in construction costs, according to Supervisor Burton W. Chace.

The Board of Supervisors Tuesday authorized additional work in the amount of \$8,653 on the courthouse.

"Through several studies and meetings with judges and the architect, we will be able to design and build the two trial courtrooms in a circular design."

ORIGINAL estimates had set the cost at \$90,000, but Chace found this additional cost unacceptable.

"The change in plans will cost only a fraction of a massive change, yet it will provide the same benefits," the supervisor said.

Under the circular — or Fresno Court — design, the courtroom principals face each other, rather than every one facing the judge. This results in improved courtroom efficiency, which saves court operation costs.

TWO TRIAL courtrooms and one master calendar courtroom are under construction as part of the court complex at 505 S. Cente St. in downtown San Pedro.

Building construction is estimated at \$1.2 million.

"With the inclusion of this modern design concept, which is supported by judges and attorneys, the San Pedro area is getting one of the nation's most streamlined courts," Chace said.

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