Group targets Murphy recall

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successful this time, "because people will know that their vote will count." In the election, people felt their pool in the target of a recall because bonding the 1500 million solid on the 1500 millio

THE ISSUE of fuscal responsibility is very much at the core of the missioner Donald W. Jenson, R-Birmeall, who claims Murphy and other than the claim of the people before a tax like of the people before a tax like of the people before a tax like of that size can be imposed.

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Proposed: 200 days of school

Michigan students might be in school 200 days a year under a proposal by the state superintendent of public instruction.

"Drill and practice do make a difference. Drill and practice do make a difference," said Donald L. Bemis, who heads the state Department of Education.

Eco a generalize the state has a constant of the state period to the sta

Education.

For a generation, the state has required 180 days of class a year. In earlier years, Bemis said, some districts offered 190 days or more. But the 180-days law had the effect of making that the maximum.

BEMIS, IN a year-end interview, billed his 200-days proposal as a method of making Michigan competitive in an international economy. Japanese students have 241 days in a school year, South Korean, 220. Israeli, 215, Scots, 200. Michigan panks with Mexico and

Israell, 215, Scots, 200.
Michigan ranks with Mexico and Sweden in requiring only 180 days.
"It's the way we have to go," agreed Dorothy Beardmore, a Republican member of the state Board of Education from Rochester. "It may not be 200 class days; there may be some staff development time."

time."

A spokesman for the Michigan
State Chamber of Commerce, a sup-porter of quality improvements in
public schools, said that business
group was not inclined to support the
idea at this point.

A LONGER school year would cost more money, and Bemis has a way to finance it.

'We've been increasing K-12 school funding percent a year. We would allow 4 percent for inflation. That leaves 3 percent. With 3 percent, we could fund five more days a

- Donald L. Bemis state superintendent

We could do it five days at a time

we could do it live abys at a time over four years, he said. "We've been increasing K-12 school funding 7 percent a year. We would allow 4, percent for inflation. That leaves 3 percent. With 3 per-cent, we could fund five more days a

cent, we could fund five more days a year."
Under his plan, the state would provide monetary incentives to schools willing to extend the length of the school year.
Benist figures make two unspoken assumptions. Inflation would be held to 4 percent, and school employees would accept pay inceases limited to the rate of inflation.
In recent years, the annual increase in the consumer price index has been 4 to 6-plus percent.

BEMIS LAUNCHED his idea in an Oct. 5 speech in Flint on the "state of education" and at first got little at-

tention.

His 200-days proposal was added at the last minute and wasn't in the original speech text. A departmental news release buried the Idea in the 13th paragraph. There has been virtually no public discussion of it since then. Neither Democratic Gov. James Blanchard nor John Engler, his successful Hepublican challenger, discussed in the public schools. Bernis was appointed to the state post in January of 1888 built support from Blanchard. In mid-1930 Republicans on the State Board of Education tried to give him an unsatisfactory performance evaluation. But with a 4-t partisan split, the board was unable to dump him. Under a ruling by attorney general Frank Kelley, Bernis has 24 years [46] on his contract.

Bernis plant to stay around that

ANOTHER MAJOR idea in Bemis' speech was to raise the mandatory school attendance age from 16 to 18 and to prohibit those under, 18 from holding full-time jobs until they have reached "essential skills standards."

standards."

Beardmore liked that idea. "A kid who can drop out at 16 is not employable," she said.

The student wouldn't necessarily

have to be in class until age 18. He

have to be in class until age 18. He or she might engage in "job shadowing, apprenticeships, mentor kinds of things that give handson experi-ence," she said. The idea of raising the mandatory school attendance age to 18 was picked up by Gov. Blanchard in his 1990 "state of the state" message, but it fell flat in the Legislature. Lawrnakers saw it as forcing kids to stay in school who might be disci-pline problems and failed to enact it.

OTHER BEMIS proposals, some of which have been incorporated into the State Board of Education's new goals:

goals:

• Reduce school dropouts by 16 percent and achieve a 90 percent high school graduation rate by the year 2000.

Conduct a statewide literacy assessment as part of the 1990 na-tional adult literacy survey.

In 1991, begin testing all new teachers to ensure competency in basic skills. "In 1992 we will begin testing their subject knowledge as well."

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