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## 65,000 Pupil Loss Should Speed Upgrading

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Fear Not"**Daily Journal**

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## 65,000 Pupil Loss Should Speed Upgrading

The need for increased school expenditures is such a perennial problem that the Mississippi legislature no doubt at times gets tired of hearing such requests.

But as long as there are children and the world continues to increase in complexity, the need for annual boosts in school expenditures will be with us.

Hence, the basic task for the current legislature, as for others which will follow, is not so much determining whether school appropriations will be increased but where the additional funds can best be used.

And it seems to us that this year's program submitted by the Mississippi Education Association is better rounded and more finely attuned to the actual needs of our state's young people than some have been in the past.

For rather than merely asking a raise in teacher pay—which the cost of living alone would justify—the MEA is seeking funds to upgrade Mississippi education in some of its weakest points so that all children of all ages will benefit.

And since current estimates are that to initiate the MEA school improvement program would take little more than ten million dollars of the big surplus the state boasts of possessing, it is difficult to see how the legislature can turn its back on any major part of the MEA recommendations.

Features of the MEA program whose value we believe most thoughtful persons will recognize and which for the first time we are able to afford in Mississippi include:

1. Inauguration of a public kindergarten program.
2. Providing supervisors of instruction to upgrade the competency of classroom teaching, which in some areas is still below what our state has reason to expect.
3. Provision of additional supplies and equipment under the so-called minimum foundation program of state school finance.
4. A boost in minimum foundation support for school maintenance and operation.
5. An increase in the overall schedule of teacher pay in Mississippi, including an increase somewhat above that required to offset the rise in living costs.

Some legislators have questioned whether the state could—or should—adopt these recommendations.

They have seen a chance to pick up votes by reducing the income tax or other levy rather than boost school appropriations.

But we believe our legislators should put the children of Mississippi ahead of their own political futures—if they actually are on such shaky ground with their constituents that only a tax cut could save

them from defeat.

This is particularly true because of the fact that the heavy outward movement of public school pupils into private institutions has greatly reduced the size of the appropriation increase needed to put the MEA proposals into effect.

As recently as four to six months ago it was believed that it would cost something like \$15 million to finance the MEA program.

But education leaders now estimate that average daily attendance in Mississippi schools next year will drop below the 500,000 mark for the first time in years.

Close to 40,000 pupils dropped out of public schools at midterm last year when the first impact of massive integration was felt. And latest estimates prepared for the legislature indicate that another 25,000 have dropped out of public schools in recent months.

This means that the state next year will need a thousand fewer regular classroom teachers than are currently being employed.

And this reduction will save so much in classroom costs that the improvements recommended in the MEA program would boost school outlays only ten million dollars above current Budget Commission recommendations.

Any legislature which can give serious thought to cutting the income tax of big corporations which now are reported to have their lobby working full steam around the capital can afford to provide an additional ten million dollars for across-the-board improvements in our state's public school system.

And the Mississippi legislature, more than any other, has reason to increase its support for education.

For one of the best ways to retain some degree of state and local control over Mississippi schools is to increase the support of these two levels of government faster than federal expenditures on education in our state are raised.

And in the last year Mississippi is one of the few states—perhaps the only one—in which the federal government has increased expenditures for education faster than either the state or local governments have done.

This, we feel, would not be good under any circumstances.

And in a state whose leaders pretend to take pride in handling our own problems, it is unthinkable that our legislature will back off from such needed school improvements as the MEA recommends, leaving the task to Washington if it is done at all.

Only Today Tomorrow! and More!



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r! Look!



FLORIDA FREEZE—Robert Mentelos walks through his nursery of exotic tropical plants which are covered with ice as the temperature dipped in Miami Wednesday. —UPI Telephoto

# Cold Wave Moves To Southern Florida

By United Press International Sun-seekers in south Florida awakened Wednesday to foot-long icicles, ice-encrusted bird baths and bone-chilling winds.

Thousands of New Yorkers flooded city offices with complaints of lack of heat. New Englanders bundled up against temperatures far below zero.

Record low temperatures were recorded from Portland, Maine, to Key West, Fla., as an arctic air mass hovered over the East and South.

The West, in contrast, was unseasonably mild. While tourists in Miami shivered in a record, 35-degree chill and a bitter wind, early morning readings in Montana were in the 40s and Thermal, Calif., had a balmy 63.

Temperatures in central Florida's citrus belt dipped below freezing for five to six hours, but a low humidity and high wind that prevented frost from forming apparently averted major crop damage.

Frozen bird baths were common throughout Florida. Foot-long icicles were seen at a playground in Fort Lauderdale. One Palm Beach County school canceled classes because an overworked boiler broke down.

The mercury slipped to a frigid 17 at Tallahassee, Fla. Key West, the nation's southernmost city, broke a 92-year

record with a low of 49. Tampa also set a new low for the date with a 28.

Temperatures plunged below freezing from central Florida across the Gulf Coast to southern Texas. In New England it was a record 27 below at Concord, N.H., 34 below at Old Town, Maine, 29 below at St. Johnsbury, Vt., 21 below at Portland, Maine.

On New York transportation lines, frozen signals, ice-jammed switches and balky doors spelled 15 to 20 minute delays for many rush-hour commuters. Two persons were found dead of apparent exposure Tuesday in Colonie, an Albany suburb.

Four persons were killed and six injured in East Chicago, Ind., when they were overcome by fumes from a defective furnace in a residence hotel in near-zero weather.

Coast Guard icebreakers went to work in Great South Bay, a salt water inlet on Long Island that has frozen over only twice in recent years.

In the Pacific Northwest, cooler temperatures and a let-up in rain gave Oregon rivers an opportunity to recede and forecasters said they foresaw no major flooding. The swollen Willamette River was expected to crest below flood stage.