Three Separate School Boards Sought

By CHARLES LAYTON

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - All three of Louisiana's higher education boards have reached a compromise agreement on a proposal to the constitutional convention, it was announced Tuesday at a special meeting of the Coordinating Council for Higher Education.

The proposal, said to be endorsed by both the state Board of Education and the LSU board of supervisors, would set up three separate boards to govern the state's public schools and state colleges and universities.

The board of education and the LSU board would be retained, virtually intact, and the coordinating council would be replaced by a somewhat stronger board of regents empowered to plan and coordinate all education.

ENDORSE PLAN

W. E. Whetstone of Monroe, a member of both the coordinating council and the state Board of Education, predicted the board of education would endorse the compromise plan at its meeting this week.

The plan was agreed upon in final form Monday night, at a meeting of representatives of all three boards.

The coordinating council also voted Tuesday to ask the Legislature, by resolution, to postpone establishment of a new superboard for higher education until after the voters have approved or rejected a new constitution next year.

The LSU board approved a similar motion on Saturday, and the board of education is expected to do likewise later this week, coordinating council member Joe C. Smith Jr., said.

The superboard concept, passed into law last year, is scheduled to be phased into operation gradually, beginning in January, 1974. It would replace the LSU board and the coordinating council, as well as assuming the higher education functions of the board of education.

Prior to the compromise agreement among the three boards this week, all three had gone before the constitutional convention's Higher Education Committee advocating different governing structures for higher education.

Representatives of the LSU system had recommended the new constitution establish three separate higher education boards, a central board of trustees, a board for the LSU system and another board to govern other state universities and colleges.

On the other hand, board of education Chairman Jesse Bankston had told the convention there ought to be a single board to govern all education. Bankston told a convention subcommittee less than three weeks ago that "the constitution should not include a great number of boards."

However, Bankston was present at the meeting at which the three-board compromise was reached this week, and agreed to it, council members said.

The coordinating council, after previous failures to reach a compromise with the other two boards, asked the convention to approve its own master plan for higher education, including the concept of a single board of regents, or superboard.

"This is not inconsistent with what we said a year ago in the master plan, council chairman Ewell Eagan said. But Carlos Spah of the LSU board said the new plan was basically the same as what the LSU board had proposed earlier.

Representatives of all three boards were scheduled to go back to the constitutional convention's higher education subcommittee on Wednesday to endorse the new compromise plan.

The plan provides for a 15-member board of regents appointed by the governor, with powers to approve, eliminate or revise degree programs, formulate a master plan for higher education and post-secondary vocational-technical education, oversee the budgets of the other boards, recommend construction priorities and exercise "only broad planning and coordinating functions over elementary or secondary education."

BUDGET PLANS

The regents would submit budget recommendations to the Legislature, but legislative appropriations would be administered by the other two boards.

The state Board of Education would be retained as an elected body, with supervisory powers over all state colleges and universities except the LSU system, as well as public schools and vocational-technical schools.

The LSU Board of Supervisors would be retained as a body appointed by the governor, with authority to "govern, direct, control, supervise and manage" the LSU system.

The membership of the Board of Education would be expanded from 11 to 15, serving six-year terms from single-member districts.

The board also would appoint the state superintendent of education to serve as its chief administrator.

The proposal contains a provision that nobody on either the Board of Education or the LSU board would lose his job as a result of the plan. All the present members would be allowed to serve out their present terms.