

Predict speedy vote on Nazi march laws

By ROBERT FEDER
Staff Writer

SKOKIE - Two area legislators this week predicted an easy victory in the state senate but a tougher battle in the house for two bills designed to block a Nazi demonstration in Skokie.

The senate judiciary committee Tuesday, May 2, approved unanimously and sent to the full senate the bills, which are being rushed through in time to prevent the Nazi march set for June 25. Passage by both houses could come within three weeks.

State Sen. John Nimrod (R-4th), chief sponsor of one of the bills, and State Rep. Alan Greiman (D-15th) said in separate telephone interviews Tuesday that the bills may be Skokie's last hope to stall the Nazis, if court appeals fail. But they acknowledged that strong opposition on constitutional grounds from some house members may mean trouble after the bills pass the senate.

One bill, sponsored by State Sen. Howard Carroll (D-15th) and co-sponsored by four other senators, including Nimrod and Arthur Berman (D-11th), would block the Nazis by reviving an old law prohibiting the defamation of any group which results in a breach of the peace.

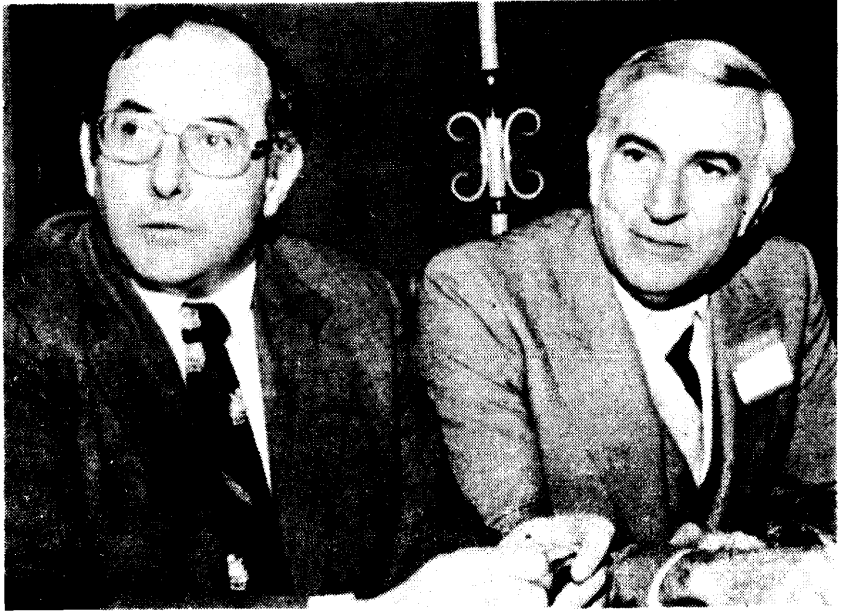
THE OTHER, sponsored by Nimrod and also co-sponsored by four other senators, including Carroll and Berman, would outlaw demonstrations likely to result in physical violence and ban symbols and uniforms having "historical associations" with violence (such as the Nazi swastika).

The Nimrod bill also takes into consideration the "racial and ethnic characteristics" of the community, in determining whether violence will occur.

A third bill designed to prevent a Nazi march - also sponsored by Nimrod - was not approved by the judiciary committee for senate consideration. The bill would have given local officials the power to deny a parade permit in cases where marchers are conspiring to violate the civil rights of others.

The third bill was blocked by the committee, because some members were concerned about its legality, Nimrod said.

Both of the Nimrod-sponsored bills were identical to bills introduced in the



STATE REP. ALAN Greiman (D-15th) (left) and State Sen. John Nimrod (R-4th): "Great rush on" to prevent a Nazi demonstration in Skokie.

house last month by State Rep. Calvin Skinner (R-33d).

GREIMAN EXPLAINED that the house failed to act on Skinner's original versions of the bills, because they were blocked by the house rules committee. Greiman, a member of the committee, said he moved to pass the bills along, but he was unsuccessful.

Asked about the two latest bills Tuesday, Greiman said, "I think they'll pass the senate, but it won't be easy in the house. I think they'll have problems the way they're written now."

Although legislators from most districts have expressed only mild concern, if any, for the Nazi march in Skokie, Greiman said he and those from this area "feel there is a great rush on" now.

"I'm under pressure as a Jew who's concerned about a Nazi march in Skokie. I'm concerned because I live in Skokie. And I'm torn apart by the emotional and intellectual pressures to consider," he added.

NIMROD STRESSED the urgency of the two bills passed Tuesday by the judiciary committee. "What we've got to do is keep giving the village (Skokie) the tools to work with to prevent this march and avoid confrontation," he said.

Slightly more optimistic about the bills' chances in the house, Nimrod said many legislators who also are attorneys have trouble with the constitutionality of bills like his. "These attorneys might concur and be sympathetic, but so many have been involved in the ACLU (American, Civil Liberties union), they find a conflict in stopping a march."

The ACLU is providing legal counsel to the National Socialist (Nazi) Party of America, which has been battling Skokie for a parade permit.

LAWMAKERS' POSITIONS on the Nazi issue, Nimrod said, are not related to political party. "This has nothing to do with party. Some (legislators) are concerned; some are not. But if they're at all serious about providing Skokie another alternative and avoiding confrontation, both houses will pass both bills," he said.

Among those testifying on behalf of the senate bills before the judiciary committee Tuesday were: Skokie Trustee Morris Topol; Rabbi Harold Smith of the Hebrew Theological college in Skokie; Erna Gans and Sol Goldstein of Skokie; Prof. Philip Kurland of the University of Chicago law school; and Joel Sprayregen of the Jewish United fund.