

The election eye . . .

Church, Symms discard gloves for campaign

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The two Idaho U.S. senatorial contenders, Democrat Sen. Frank Church, and Republican Steve Symms already have exchanged sharp blows and the general election is still more than 10 months away.

Church hasn't even announced for re-election although he is expected to formally jump into the race not later than next month. In the meantime he keeps his status technically as a U.S. senator, not as a candidate. Symms, a U.S. congressman of the First District, announced formally a month ago.

Church was in Idaho Falls Wednesday afternoon and Symms was at Arco Wednesday night and at Rexburg Thursday to further heighten their bids. Their remarks indicate the campaign will be fought along philosophical lines and whether they have been effective legislators, two factors that were long anticipated.

Symms started the fireworks at the time of his announcement when he accused Church of voting and speaking differently in Washington than in Idaho. He also belittled Church's 23 years seniority as one that led this nation and state toward ruin.

This writer earlier observed that Symms in his eight years of service in the House sponsored no legislation of his own that has been enacted.

Symms, in a lengthy statement replying to these observations, reiterated his charges and then listed some legislation which he said he had not only sponsored but even led.

Church, however, produced records Wednesday which he said bolstered his contentions that Symms "is a do-nothing congressman," adding "Idaho couldn't afford a do-nothing senator."

Congressional records showed that Symms has never written and introduced any legislation of his own that has passed Congress. He has tacked on amendments and joined as a co-sponsor but has not had a successful original bill.

In fact, for some of the legislation that Symms claimed he led in floor debate, such as in lieu taxes, records showed he didn't even speak.

Symms, possibly with some justification, charged the state's largest newspapers may be pro-Church in their comment but that's not to say that Symms will not be given fair press coverage.

Symms charges the largest papers in Boise, Idaho Falls, Lewiston, Twin Falls and Pocatello likely will favor his opponent, although he had no basis for making such a statement. Only the Boise and Lewiston paper are located in his own First District. Those in Idaho Falls, Twin Falls and Pocatello in the Second District have had little occasion for contact with Symms but have dealt with Church for the 23 years he has served in the Senate. The Post-Register does not endorse candidates.

It is now up to Symms to try to make up for lost time but he knew when he entered the race that his lack of identity in the Second District would be a stumbling block.

From efforts made so far,

however, Symms has done extremely well in getting himself acquainted with voters of the Second District. It was the same trouble Rep. George V. Hansen faced when he ran against Church in 1968 — to acquaint himself in the First District. As a result he lost rather decisively.

The latest exchange does not alter the fact the senatorial race in Idaho will be one of the most expensive and hardest fought in Idaho history. Each is expected to spend a million dollars for a seat that pays about \$60,000 a year, or little

more than a third of a million for the full six-year term. That is outlandish.

In Church's favor is his long seniority, his national and international influence and the fact that considerable beneficial Idaho legislation carries his name.

A definite right wing wave is working in behalf of Symms. This trend appears nationwide but particularly so in such a conservative state as Idaho.

Most polls give Church a slight edge but these mean nothing until later this fall when the battle will be decided.