Hansen shuns debate due to personal barbs

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BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

U.S. Rep. George Hansen, R-Idaho, said in a Post-Register interview he feared a debate between himself and his Democratic challenger, Diane Bilyeu, would only provide a forum "for some kind of a personal attack on myself."

Hansen said he would like a debate on issues, but he took exception to Mrs. Bilyeu's issue chairman, Lloyd Walker, Twin Falls, asking about his personal campaign fund.

Hansen, who appears highly confident and unworried about re-election, also said his itinerary is so crammed now that he finds it difficult to schedule a debate. The appearance of Rep. Jack Kemp at a Symms rally at Pocatello Thursday night forced cancellation of the debate. Hansen said he also will speak to the Idaho Falls Kiwanis Club Thursday noon.

Hansen also responded to Mrs. Bilyeu's attack on what she called his negative agricultural and senior citizens record.

He contended he can be of immense value to Idaho farmers by virtue of his recent appointment to the House Agriculture Committee to replace Congressman Steve Symms, who resigned the post to give Hansen seniority.

Hansen pointed out he is the only committee member who was a high ranking executive in the Department of Agriculture. He was formerly in charge of county operations while a USDA executive.

Hansen said he has backed many farm bills of help to Idaho farmers and as a House member helped in getting funds for the Teton flood victims, and also has supported considerable legislation of benefit to senior citizens.

Hansen said he felt his best contributions for senior citizens was to vote against spending bills that sparked inflation and against deficit budgets.

He also said the Alliance of Senior Citizens gave him 100 percent voting record.

He also replied to Sen. Henry Jackson's charge that the House is delaying the proposed Pacific Northwest Power Bill. Hansen said both he and Symms support the measure but it is delayed because of a squabble among the Oregon and Washington state congressmen.

Hansen explained those congressmen wanted to delay a vote on this measure because it night hurt their re-election chances until the "lame duck" session after the Nov. 4 election.

"This was a fight among the House Democratic leadership, not with the Republicans," said Hansen.

Hansen was in Idaho Falls to help greet to Ronald Reagan to the city Tuesday.

Hansen spoke to government class students of Bonneville and Skyline high schools Monday, terming their questions as penetrating.

Hansen said it is "essential that we change directions," referring to the escalating inflation.

He told the students that 24 years ago when Sen. Frank Church took office, the buying power of the dollar was 100 cents but now it has declined to 36 cents. He showed the size of a $1 bill than as compared to one now which is only a third size.

Other figures he disclosed were that that the price of a loaf bread during the Democratic Congress increased from 22 cents in 1968 to 70 cents now, gallon of gasoline from 33 cents to $1.25, gallon of milk from $1.08 to $1.50-$2, pound of hamburger from 56 cents to $1.75 and an average home construction from $22,000 to $75,000.

He also said the prime interest rate in 1955 was only $0.4 per cent but now it is 12.4 cents and has reached as high as 20 cents, while the prime rate increased from 2.2 percent in 1955 to 13.5 cents.

"It is my belief that the cost of these things have a serious impact because of defict spending and policies," said Hansen.

Hansen said the national debt now has topped $900 billion.

Hansen said bankers who are members of his banking committee are concerned over the economic policies of the nation.

About the Church-Symms race, Hansen said it looks like "40-40," meaning about 40 per cent of the voters on each side are firmly convinced.

He said that leaves it to about 20 percent of less to decide the election.

Hansen lamented the long senatorial campaign which has been underway for more than a year.

He said the election hinges on the ability of a well entrenched incumbent to withstand the challenge of a conservative.

He said if Church wins it will be because of his power of incumbency.

Hansen said the Reagan visit "is bound to have an impact. Reagan is different from most other candidates. He has an appeal and this will have a coattail effect."

Hansen said "Church also issued a hunting license on himself when he said that Senator McClure was part of an extremist group trying to illegally take over control in the Senate and that he was a watering boy for the Arabs."

"This gave McClure the opportunity to break the cliquish understanding among senators and he came out strong against Church."