

The senatorial scene . . .

Church, Symms begin sparring for contest

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Appearances of Democratic Sen. Frank Church and Republican Rep. Steve Symms on East Idaho's crucial political turf the past week indicates the two are preparing early for their gloves-off prospective senatorial battle.

Church covered a wide range of activities, appearing for the baccalaureate address at Idaho Falls High School, commencement talk at Salmon High School, the River of No Return hearings at Salmon and the new Development Workshop dedication in Idaho Falls.

Symms took a more modest approach by appearing at the Fisherman's Breakfast at St. Anthony, the first time he has ever done so, and furnishing another sign that he is moving closer to the senatorial race plunge. Symms also called on party leaders during his stay here Friday.

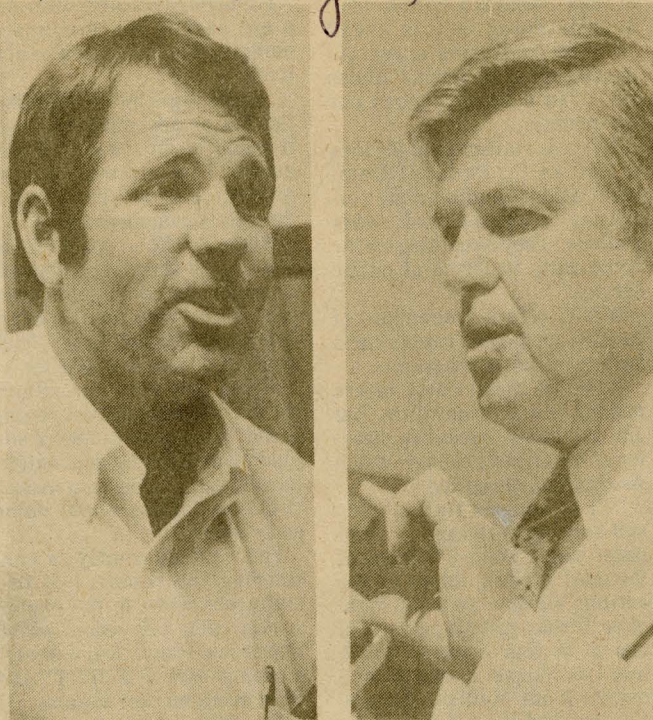
The titanic struggle between the two may be one of the costliest ever waged on the Idaho political scene. It likely will incur expenditures of close to \$1 million each, or total \$2 million. Considering the senator's pay is only \$57,500 yearly, this indicates the importance supporters lay on a Senate seat.

The Church-Symms struggle will furnish a clear choice for voters. Symms is strongly on the conservative right; Church is viewed generally as a moderate and in some cases, a liberal. Factions from each end then will supply money and effort for each.

Church and Symms have been consistent in their voting records. Each takes an independent course which often makes them part company with their president. Symms did this frequently with Nixon and Ford; Church has done it on many occasions with President Lyndon B. Johnson and now with Carter. He was considered part of the palace guard in the John Kennedy reign and seldom took an adverse position at that time.

Church now ranks No. 8 in seniority in the Senate, holds the influential chairmanship of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Church and Symms are both members of the Senate Finance



Post-Register photos

The antagonists

DEMOCRAT Sen Frank Church, right, and Republican Rep. Steve Symms, left, of the First Congressional District, move closer for a U.S. senatorial contest in the 1980 general elections. Both were in Idaho Falls the past week to further their as yet unannounced candidacies.

way and thus lacks the political influence of most lawmakers who believe in teamwork, such as Sen. James A. McClure, for example.

Already forces are moving against Church, such as the newly-formed Committee for Positive Action, headed by Helen Chenoweth, Boise, a former Symms aide at his Boise office who was dismissed.

The steering committee's membership is made up of staunch conservatives who in most cases, but not all, border on the radical right and significantly omit moderate and even the more independent conservative Republicans. Thirty-six were announced on this committee and those from this area included only Sen. J. Marsden Williams and Bill Turnbull, Idaho Falls; Joe Treasure, Rigby, and Darwin Young, Blackfoot.

Then there is the ABC Committee promoted by Don Todd, a former Attorney General Wayne L. Kidwell public relations aide and Allan Larsen's campaign manager in 1978. The

"Anybody But Church" and Todd has reportedly been sending out letters asking for contributions to use against Church.

Then there is the almost forgotten move by Joel Vance Miller, Idaho Falls, who circulated petitions in 1978-77 asking for Church's resignation, an offer Church graciously rejected. Miller claimed 6,000 signatures had been received and that he intended to renew the drive at "the right psychological moment," whatever that means. Miller said the petitions were circulated because he voted for transfer of the Panama Canal.

The National Conservative Political Action Committee also has targeted Church for oblivion, along with Democratic Sens. George McGovern, S.D.; Alan Cranston, Calif.; Birch Bayh, Indiana, and John Culver, Iowa.

These many-pronged attacks against Church, of course, can backfire, as they did when a similar recall petition was launched against him several

Mrs. Chenoweth said that was the reason she named the Committee for Positive Action to escape a negative connotation, but with that sort of name it appears to carry little identity.

In the case of Church and Symms, most voters have strong opinions for and against each candidate. As such, supporters will be willing to contribute and work hard for their champion.

Both Church and Symms have kept in close touch with their constituents, and in this case Church has the advantage. His constituents are the entire state; Symms has represented only the First District which embraces the Boise area and North Idaho and has little identification in the remainder of South Idaho which makes up the Second District. At that, he likely is better known than most other potential Republican candidates.

Both, of course, will depend heavily on out-of-state contributions because Idahoans don't have that kind of campaign money to contribute. Thus, out-of-state interests may play a key role in the Idaho campaign.

Church is expected to attract the liberal and moderate vote, plus the senior citizens and those under federal programs. Symms will rely primarily on the dominant conservative faction.