

The election eye...

Chairman Brock prime factor in GOP gains

Nov 26, 1980

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Of the many so-called outsiders who came to Idaho Falls and East Idaho to lend their voice in the bristling U.S. Senate race, there was one who stood out for issuing down-to-earth statements, devoid of the usual political rhetorics. It was National Republican Chairman William Brock who would be expected to give the exaggerated political predictions of smashing victories but didn't.

On the contrary, Brock's claims were much more modest than what actually transpired on election day Nov. 4, a tribute to one who underrated his own abilities.

* * *

In his press interview in Idaho Falls Oct. 24, Brock came by himself, without the hovering shadow of Rep. Steve Symms or Sen. James A. McClure and thus was able to speak on a more realistic basis. He was met by State Party Chairman Dennis M. Olsen, Idaho Falls; U.S. Rep. George Hansen; John Scoresby, Bonneville party chairman, and most of the area Republican legislators and legislative candidates.

Actually Brock's appearance in Idaho Falls was primarily to help the legislative candidates but he also boosted other party nominees. Whether he had much to do with this, the Republicans scored a grand slam in winning the senatorial and congressional races and substantially increasing their margins in the Idaho Legislature which already was heavily Republican controlled.

Brock is a former Tennessee senator and congressman and is dedicated to building up the Republican party slowly from the debacle of Watergate.

* * *

In light of what happened in the Nov. 4 election, Brock looks not only modest but very good indeed.

He said then that if the election were held that day (Oct. 24) there was little question Reagan would win but there was still 11 days left and perhaps Carter could change it around. As it developed, Carter continued to skid.

The unassuming Brock said there could be two decisive factors that could affect the election—

release of the hostages in Iran and the Carter-Reagan nationwide television debate four days away. Of course, the hostages are still in captivity and it is doubtful if the debates were decisive one way or another.

Brock's predictions for Republican control were indeed modest, estimating four to seven seats in the Senate and at least 15 in the House but that it could go as high as 25-30. The election gave the Republicans Senate control with a shift of 13 seats and they won 33 House seats.

Upset that Church would say that his voting record on energy, agricultural and water conservation followed Reagan more closely than that of Symms, (which actually was a fact) Brock nevertheless insisted that Symms' voting pattern followed the Reagan conservative philosophies.

* * *

Brock proudly and justifiably pointed out the Republicans have been making tremendous strides from the ashes of Watergate. At the time he was elected national party chairman, the Republicans had control of only 17 of 99 state legislature chambers (Nebraska is unicameral and non-partisan). He predicted an increase to 30 for this year and perhaps 40 and 50 in two and four years. He pointed out their is little chance of cracking the Southern States Democratic Legislature dominance.

The latest figures show Republicans are in complete control of 14 legislatures, up from 12 in 1978. The Democrats control in both Houses in 28 legislatures, down from 30 in 1979. The two parties split the legislatures in seven states.

That means the Republicans control 35 legislatures — 28 in the 14 states and seven in seven other states. The Democrats control the other 64.

The Brock claims were modest because he figured the Republicans couldn't be expected to win all of the close races. For the most part, however, they did, including the Senate race in Idaho.

In retrospect, the utterings of Brock during the election campaign were a refreshing contrast with some exaggerated and even ridiculous statements issued by many other leading political figures in the campaign.



William Brock