

The national scene . . .

# Andrus, Church clash over reclamation act

By BEN J. PLASTINO

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Idaho's top Democrats, Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus and U.S. Sen. Frank Church, may be warm personal and political friends but they have clashed sharply on the proposed Reclamation Reform Act.

**In this struggle, Andrus, of course, is upholding the concept of the Carter Administration while Church is fighting for what he thinks is in the best interest of the Idaho people he represents.**

Church reports the bill has been held over for consideration by the Senate until after the August recess because of opposition from opponents and this includes Andrus — "who wants to gut the bill."

Church charges bitterly that opponents, primarily those who favor radical land redistribution and those from non-reclamation states in the East, are in his own words "intent upon defeating and crippling this legislation."

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**Andrus has now shortcircuited Church and is relying on Sen. Gaylord Nelson, D-Wis., to carry the ball for him.**

Each apparently has avoided a direct confrontation in the press — at least as far as Idaho is concerned — but they leave no doubt they sharply disagree on this measure which is one of the important pieces of reclamation legislation affecting the West this year.

Idaho's other senator, Republican James A. McClure, also on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and naturally sides with Church. It can be expected that both of Idaho's Republican congressmen, George V. Hansen and Steve Symms will support Church's bill.

Andrus has some pretty strong words against Church's bill, designated as Senate Bill 14.

"The bill," he said, "would effectively repeal the reclamation law as we have known it. What remains is a structure which endorses all of the present program aberrations, of large farms, absentee speculator owners and enforcement loopholes which cry out for reform."

Andrus charges flatly "Senate Bill 14 would reject the ideals of the Reclamation Act, and over time, abolish the program." This is strong language.

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**Primary features of the legislation** calls for scrapping the out-dated 160-acre limitation in favor of 1,280 acres; repeals residency requirement which requires beneficiaries live within 50 miles of the land; establish the concept of equivalency in the law which allows upward adjustments in acreage limitation for land of poorer productive value and also consideration in the growing season; and ends restrictions on waterusers once their share of project costs are repaid and those repayments to be accelerated.

Church contends his bill is a reasonable approach to reclamation reform and takes the middle ground between those who favor radical land redistributions and those who want no restrictions at all. It is a few which is hardly shared by Andrus.

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**The battle between Andrus and Church likely will flare into the open when Congress reconvenes after Labor Day.**

Andrus wrote a recent eight-page letter to Nelson outlining in detail his many objections to the bill.

Without going into the details it is safe to assume bulk of the Idahoans, particularly the small landowner, will be strongly on Church's side, rather than Andrus, whom they view as part of the disliked federal hierarchy.

Yet Andrus makes some strong points in presenting his arguments. Andrus and Church each has strong points.

**One of these points illustrates the differences.** Church wants to waive the 50-mile limit residency requirement, saying many farmers live in towns like Idaho Falls for example, but own farms in Ashton or Swan Valley.

Oh no, says Andrus, it would open the way for corporations to assume ownership.

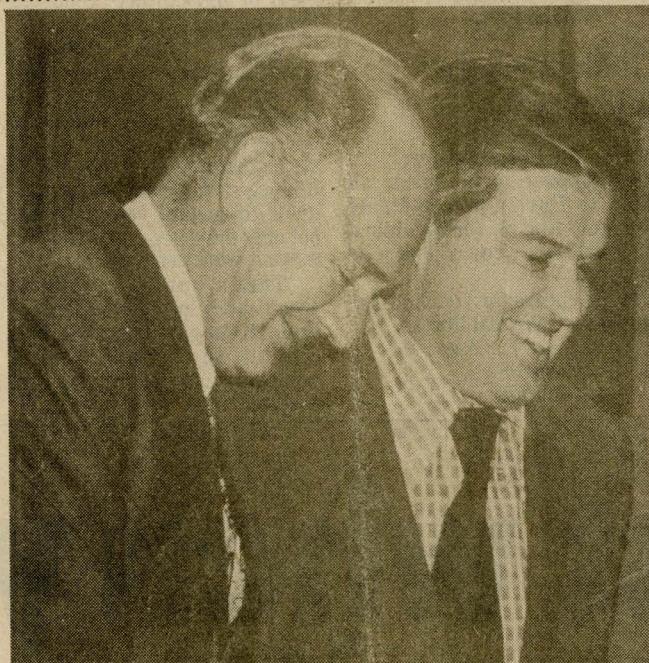
From this far distant Idaho view passage of the Reclamation Act appears dim unless there are many amendments that meet Andrus' approval.

As has been proved before, even if such a bill passed Congress, Andrus has enough influence to bring about a Carter veto.

**Hopefully then, compromises can be worked out for the best interest of Idaho, the West, and the nation.**

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Post-Register photo

## At loggerheads

**SECRETARY OF Interior and former Idaho governor, Cecil D. Andrus, left, and Sen. Frank Church, both Democrats, may be close political and personal friends, but they clash sharply over a proposed Reclamation Act reform under consideration in the Senate.**

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