

Little Idaho to carry weighty national clout

(Ben J. Plastino, Post-Register staff writer, is at Boise most of the week covering the Idaho Legislature, particularly as it affects East Idaho.)

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register staff writer

BOISE — As the powers of the state government shifted from Cecil D. Andrus to John V. Evans, Monday afternoon, it brings into sharp focus the big clout Idaho will wield on the national scene.

It's with a touch of sadness to see Andrus surrender the Idaho governorship which he so ably performed six years but his talents and ability will now center on the more important national affairs.

It's to President Jimmy Carter's credit that he recognized Andrus' administrative record to such an extent that he said Andrus was the only one he ever considered for the U.S. secretary of interior post. This prompted a reply later by Andrus' press secretary Chris Carlson, to say "I wish he had let us know about that."

As observed previously Evans will be able to take care of state government, much better than most Idahoans suspect. This can be assessed in two years when his record will be established and he will be forced to put it on the line in the 1978 general election.

Andrus embarks on a frightening job in a department which is the largest of any (60 thousand fulltime employes and some 25 thousand others seasonally) but if anyone can handle it, it will be the past Idaho governor.

On one end will be the powerful industrial and business groups which want intensive development of America's national resources and on the other is the influential environmental groups, such as the Sierra Club and Ralph Nader.

Andrus record indicates a fairly even handed policy between the two extremist, although he likely will lean more towards the environmental concept.

With Andrus at helm of the nation's largest department and Idaho's U.S. Sens.

Frank Church and James A. McClure holding key positions on the Senate Interior committee and within their own party, it would appear the Gem State's star will glow brightly for the next four years.

Church is the ranking Democrat on the interior committee next to U.S. Sen. Henry Jackson, of Washington State, chairman of the subcommittee on power and water resources, and also the Committee on Aging.

He is also ranking majority member of the prestigious Foreign Relations Committee and in line to ascend to the chairmanship when the ailing and aging Alabama Sen. John Sparkman is expected to retire in 1978.

On the Republican side, McClure is one of the conservative leaders, mentioned frequently in the national press as of presidential timber for the conservative faction. McClure, of course, will have nothing to do with a conservative third party, wisely preferring instead to work within the framework of the Republican Party to keep it on a less liberal path.

McClure also is a member of the interior committee and he and Church have worked well together in this important field in behalf of Idaho. In view of the situation, they likely will work even closer and carry powerful voices with a fellow Idahoan guiding interior affairs.

Perhaps this should be the time that Idaho's conservative congressmen, Republican Steve Symms and George V. Hansen, should take a more positive approach.

Relations between Church and McClure on one hand and Hansen on the other hand are not good to say the least. Those between Church and Symms, who often is mentioned as a possible 1978 opponent for Church in 1978, are not much better. McClure and Symms get along well, however.

The coming two years, regardless, will give Idaho influence far beyond its population on the national scale.