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Hansen says Democrats use desperate moves

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

U.S. Rep. George Hansen, R-Idaho, considered by observers as one of the staunchest conservative Republicans in the nation, Friday said the switch of Texas Rep. Phil Gramm from Democrat to Republican was caused "by the desperation efforts of House Speaker Tip O'Neill."

"The Tip O'Neill faction in the House apparently is desperately trying to regain some semblance of party unity" said Hansen in a telephone interview to The Post-Register. "These Democrats are so desperate they would pursue punishing members of their own party."

Gramm resigned from Congress Wednesday to run as a Republican in a special election Feb. 12 after he was stripped of a choice House Budget Committee membership.

"It has long been known there are three parties in House — the two Democratic parties split between the conservatives and the moderates, and the Republicans. Of these, the Republicans are the largest cohesive group," said Hansen.

"Because of issues that are divisive, the O'Neill people are desperate in trying to deal with Reagan and to get all of the Democrats into line. To me it seems it has the elements of backfiring on them."

Hansen acknowledged that stripping Gramm of a choice House committee membership due to his championing of Reagan's economic programs will have a tendency to dissuade others of the more conservative Democrats from solidly backing Reagan.

"They (conservative Democrats) will not be so

free to go to the White House," said Hansen, "but most of these guys still represent areas that are conservative. They still vote for Reagan economic bills, maybe not on all issues, but on some."

"Reagan is a past master of going to the people and I believe it will be the undoing of Tip O'Neill."

Hansen said a working coalition in Congress among the Republicans and conservative Democrats is still possible, but on a reduced level of the past two sessions.

He said Democrats gained 26 seats but not many of those were the "boll weevils," referring to the ultra-conservative southern Democrats who frequently have voted for Reagan economic programs. He said the losses were mostly on what he labeled "gypsy moths", meaning those Republicans who "did a flipflop" on many of Reagan programs.

Hansen reiterated his strong support for Reaganomics, pointing to lowering of interest rates and inflation.

He acknowledged the unemployment rate is high, adding "when people are hurting it is hard to be patient. In looking back, however, the Reagan program has accomplished many things."

Hansen said under reorganization he retains his membership on the House agriculture and banking committees. He said he is third ranking on the banking committee and sixth in seniority on the large agriculture committee. He also is the senior ranking minority member of the domestic subcommittee on banking, second on the subcommittee on financial institutions and senior member of the forestry subcommittee.

Evans shuns query on Senate race

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By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Gov. John V. Evans deftly sidestepped a question of whether he is considering opposing Republican U.S. Sen. Steve Symms in 1986 at the end of his present term.

He did say in a Post-Register telephone interview that he is not ruling out any possibilities at this time, except he will not seek re-election to a third gubernatorial term.

"I don't have any plans" he replied to a question of what he will do after 1986. "I'm dedicated in terms of the next four years to go ahead with state government."



Gov. John V. Evans

Political observers have felt there is a strong possibility that Evans is the logical Democratic candidate to oppose Symms four years hence when both their terms expire. Evans said he is primarily interested in the emphasis on high technology development.

"Idaho Falls is a good example of this," said Evans. "There is a high technology at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory and its related industry to help develop those programs."

"I don't think it is time to think of politics when we are caught in this recession. We must all work together to move ahead."

Asked who he considered his probable successor for the governorship, Evans said some of the leading Democrats are former governor and U.S. secretary of interior Cecil D. Andrus, now a Boise industrial consultant; former Senate Minority Leader Ron Twilegar, Boise attorney; present Senate

Minority Leader Kermit Kiebert, Hope contractor; and Sen. John Peavey, Carey rancher.

Among the Republicans he named Lt. Gov. David H. Leroy, who has indicated strongly he would be a contender; his 1982 opponent, former Lt. Gov. Phil Batt, Wilder onion grower; House Speaker Tom W. Stivers, Twin Falls insurance executive; Sens. Mark G. Ricks, Rexburg farmer, and Dane Watkins, Idaho Falls businessman. He hastened to add "there could be many late bloomers" in the present Legislature who also could be candidates.

Evans acknowledged that with no plans for seeking re-election, it may make it easier politically to work with the Republican leadership in the next four legislative sessions.

He repeatedly underscored his aspirations to serve as governor for the best interests of Idaho, regardless of political consideration.