

Hansen holds on name change, office

Thurs May 7, 1981
BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen, R-Idaho, said Wednesday he is holding action for the proposed renaming of the Ririe Lake to Johnson Reservoir, and also for reopening his office at the Federal Building at Park Avenue and C Street.

In a telephone interview from his Washington office, Hansen indicated there will likely be no further action for renaming Ririe Lake unless there is widespread community support and this is not apparent at this time.

He also indicated that reopening of his office at the Federal Building is several months away, if it should happen.

Hansen had sponsored a bill which passed the House last year to change the name of Ririe Lake to "Oscar Johnson Lake" in honor of an area pioneer after receiving petitions signed by about 900, as well as 50 personal letters in support.

However, opposition later developed in the Ririe-Rigby area and petitions bearing about 1,000 names were filed against it.

As a result, the Idaho congressional delegation decided to take no further action unless field hearings were conducted. This was after the bill was referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee of which both Sens. Frank Church and James A. McClure were members.

The McClure office said it had been informed by Ruby Sharp, Iona, daughter of Mr. Johnson, that she was cool to an idea for such a hearing.

Hansen commented "I'm in a holding action" on the bill and indicated nothing more will be done unless there is renewed request but this appears remote at this time.

A rumor the Fish and Game Department had listed the lake as Johnson Lake is in error. This is applied to a lake in the southern corner of the state.

Hansen said regarding about re-establishing an of-

fice at the Federal Building also is in limbo until his dispute with the GSA is settled after new Reagan administration personnel takes over.

He closed the office in 1979 after a dispute with the General Service Administration over justification economically of installing an elevator, ramp and other remodeling to provide access for the handicapped.

Hansen said he thought his system of fieldman Jim Ostler in Idaho Falls and a local telephone number 523-5341, to his Pocatello office is working well.

After his protests, the GSA indefinitely postponed calling for new bids for the proposed \$300,000 remodeling project after the first bids were rejected as too high. Hansen further charged there were irregularities in the way the bids were called.

"I think we won the battle," Hansen said in referring to stopping the proposed remodeling.

At present, U.S. Sens. McClure and Steve Symms maintain offices at the building.

Legislative limelights . . .

Batt forges battle lines for campaign

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

The early entrance of Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt into the gubernatorial contest has for all practical purposes launched the 1982 election campaign.

He pulled no punches in his announcement April 27 when criticizing the governor on his policies and actions and repeated these charges while campaigning in Idaho Falls and eastern Idaho Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Batt's attack against Democrat Gov. John V. Evans centered on the theme that the governor operates on a technique of confrontation and thereby promotes such division.

In his own words he said the governor's "tendency to cheerlead for various recipients of state services makes it impossible to reach an appropriate solution. Instead of solving problems, he compounds them by encouraging factionalism."

* * *

Batt, who many consider a moderate although he questions this label, also placed himself squarely behind the Idaho Legislature's financial thrust in cutting budgets to the bone. He buttressed this statement by saying that even this early in the campaign he found that most people approved slashes in government spending.

Batt is considered in political circles as the most likeable Republican candidate in Boise, one who rivals Evans in empathy for the common people. He has a keen sense of humor as reflected in his weekly columns which he sends the press, and in his gossip with friends and colleagues.

Batt contends he should be elected governor because he can get warring factions together, as contrasted with Evans.

Batt claims he is a fiscal conservative, an assessment which is generally accurate, but he also is a moderate in the way he sometimes sees virtue for the more liberal views.

* * *

The complaisance of Batt is also one of his weaknesses. His middle ground approach alienates both the moderates on the left and the ultra-conservatives on the right. The far right faction has in the past shown no willingness to compromise, and the moderates, who now are on the

abject minority, are not exactly happy with excessive conservatism.

Mrs. Marie Hanzel, Burley, the new Democratic Party chairman, while in Idaho Falls Tuesday, wanted to know who the real Phil Batt is. She charged Batt presents himself as a moderate in Boise, but trots out a conservative image in other sections of the state. For example, she said, he hired Tonya Erickson, Rexburg, regional director of the Freemen Institute, which many charge is a radical right organization.

Batt defended Miss Erickson for her organizational ability and her knowledge of the people of the area, adding she is free to have her own political affiliation. He defends her conservative record, commenting he is running for office, not her.

Although likely personally the most popular state elective official in Boise, Batt is accused of not being as aggressive, as say, his predecessors. The Republican leadership, meaning specifically, Senate President Pro Tem Reed Budge, Soda Springs, Senate Majority Leader Jim Risch, Boise, and House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, Twin Falls, has not taken him into their confidence for the most part on top legislative policies. This is in contrast with Lt. Gov. Jack Murphy, who was viewed as the clearcut titular Republican leader when he held office in 1968-72.

Although Batt laments confrontation he may find himself maneuvered in this position when he faces Olmstead, his principal primary foe, in the primary. This he must do and come out fighting if he is to gain the confidence of voters.

* * *

Batt shows his moderacy when he questions the deep legislative cuts made in both public education and higher education funding, something Olmstead will not do. He also views with apprehension the lack of air quality management but hopes some steps will be taken on the federal or state level to remedy this. He feels water quality supervision is not that pressing because strong progress has been made in the last decade. In fact, he questioned the justification of the rapid growth of the Department of Water Resources and indicated approval of the cutbacks.