Legislative limelights . . .

# Batt forges battle lines for campaign

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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."

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**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.

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**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 compromises, 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.**

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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 progresss 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.