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The election eye

The party platforms: What do they mean?

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One of the most perplexing but humorous happenings at the state political convention is to witness delegates arguing over platform planks and resolutions as if the very destinies of the state and nation depend on them.

Yet, except for a few proposals that might attract the eye, such as some emotional issues, they are readily forgotten by most of the candidates, not to even mention the citizenry.

The party conventions at Coeur d'Alene last week were about as dull as any in recent years. There were no nationally known speakers, the Democrats didn't even elect, and the Republicans re-elected without any opposition.

Most of them had a good time socially to compare notes, meet old friends, and gird for the campaign ahead — and this was probably the best purpose for the conventions. In the past, Democrats have been more relaxed and have had more fun. The Republicans are more grim and levity is rare. Each had their top political leaders on hand.

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The platforms or resolutions of both parties were alike in most respects but differed on a few major issues.

The Republicans feel they scored points by adopting a resolution calling for a a constitutional amendment on a balanced budget while the Democrats, although not taking an official stand against it, chose to kill one offered by their Senate leader, Ron Twilegar, Boise.

This was done despite the strong backing of such an amendment by Richard Stallings, Rexburg, the 2nd District congressional nominee. He has indicated he will continue for its support.

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Convention delegates say constantly they want to adopt a short, concise plank and few resolutions but it has never happened. The Democrats agreed on that again this year but they came up with a voluminous 17-page document. The Republicans vowed their platform and resolutions would be much shorter. What happened? Their package came out to 22 legal size pages.

One of the issues which could attract a large vote is the Right-to-Work proposal which the Republicans favored. The Democrats didn't mention it by name but indicated opposition by a plank which said it supports the right of the workers to contract with their employers for wages and conditions without government restrictions.

The Republicans favored voluntary prayers in schools but the Democrats tabled such a resolution.

On other emotional issues, Republicans opposed abortion while Democrats didn't even mention it. Conversely, the Democrats indicate support for the Equal Rights Amendment by a plank which supports a constitutional amendment for equal rights for women and men, while the Republicans ignored any reference.

Both parties avoided supporting the Residential Tax Initiative which appears almost certain of passage.

The Republicans called for full nuclear energy development; the Democrats limited their stance to backing nuclear development and research.

The Republicans endorsed the Sagebrush Rebellion to give more state rights to control of public lands while the Democrats said public land should remain in public ownership and opposes public land sales. This may be one of the key issues to be argued in the coming campaign.