

Budge takes lumps in stride

Sun Mar 6, 1983

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

The ousted president pro tem of the Idaho Senate, Sen. Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, who served in the post for four years, said he is no longer bitter but does have mixed feelings over the current session.

A large, stocky, rough and ready personality who epitomizes the rigid, conservative views of the typical, rural Idahoan, he said, "I feel relaxed now for the first time but it's no fun now. Up to couple weeks ago I was personally hurt."

Budge was deposed as the Senate's leader at the start of the session and replaced by his first lieutenant, Senate Majority Leader Jim Risch, Boise attorney.

The entire leadership was shaken up, with Sens. Mark G. Ricks, Rexburg, named Senate majority leader; Ted Sverdsten, Cataldo, picked as assistant majority leader, and J. Marsden Williams, Idaho Falls, chosen majority caucus chairman. Only Risch was held over from the past leadership.

Many senators, rather than objecting to Budge's conservative philosophy, accused him of being too rigid to work with Democrats and more moderate Republicans.

The defeat came as a shock to Budge, who said he felt he was running the upper chamber in an efficient manner.

Reports indicate the final vote to oust him was not as close as was unofficially reported earlier. Risch won a 14-7 margin in the secret balloting; an earlier report placed the vote at 12-9.

Of the past leadership, J. Wilson Steen, Glens Ferry, assistant majority leader, did not seek re-election; and Sen. Walter Yarbrough, Grand View, opted to decline re-election as majority caucus chairman.

"You know," said Budge, "I guess it was the Sunshine law that did away with the fun part. Before, we knew everybody. We would go down to the Boise Hotel Lamplighter and talk about our experiences.



Sen. Reed Budge

We would let our hair down. I'm glad I had the opportunity to serve during those good years.

"You remember, we used to have the north Idaho fish fry and the south Idaho beef feed. We don't have those things any more."

Budge said he remembers it used to cost him only \$1,200 to \$1,500 to run for the Legislature, and he paid for it.

"It's not that way anymore," he said after some meditation. "I now spend between \$8,000 and \$9,000."

He said the Legislature used to meet every two years. Now it meets every year and frequently special sessions are called.

Budge is serving his ninth two-year term representing District 32, a sprawling area embracing the southeastern quarter of Bannock County and Bear Lake, Caribou and Franklin counties in the extreme southeastern section of the state.

"My legislative duties now take 25 percent of my time," he said.

Budge won some consolation in being named as chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee to replace Sen. Dean Abraham, Nampa, who did not seek re-election.

Budge still wields an influential hand as a senior member in the upper chamber and his views accurately reflect those of staunch conservatives of Idaho.

He said he was accused of being vindictive in voting for the expense pay raise and against confirmation of Conley Ward to serve again on the Public Utilities Commission but he averred this was not the case.

"I feel the legislators should be paid more or else only the wealthy can afford to serve," he said. "I think the legislators are entitled to more money."

He said unless expenses and pay are increased many senators won't be able to afford to serve much longer, estimating as many as 10 percent will quit.

"There are a few who are independently wealthy but most of them are not," he said.

He said the cost of living has increased 44 percent in the last four years.

He said his vote against Ward for confirmation is in keeping with his past record. He was joined by Williams for the only votes against confirmation.