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The political pulse

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The election eye

Comic book becomes prime election issue

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When such weighty matters at the state financial affairs, right-to-work, the sluggish economy and taxation should be the foremost Idaho election campaign issues, the so-called comic book disseminated by a mysterious organization, Brimstone, shares the spotlight.

The 16-page booklet drawn by Dick Hafer lampoons Gov. Evans primarily for taking $6,000 from labor unions, that he did nothing to prevent closure of the Bunker Hill mines, vetoed the Idaho Little Davis-Bacon Act, reversed his stand and signed the job credit this election year, signed the reveue industrial bond bill, vetoed the land-use planning bill, vetoed a bill to require registration on school bond elections, that he is paying 1982 bills with 1983 money, appointed a commission that would cost $750,000 for a 10-year study on "where the jack rabbits come fron," and that his big contributions come from labor unions.

The pamphlet, as can be expected, presented distortions and fails to give by omissions the reasons for many of the governor's actions.

The booklet frankly degrades the process by insulting one participant. It is beneath the dignity of a system that can't afford those type of losses.

This booklet was distributed Tuesday as an insert in The Post-Register. The Post-Register is the second largest paper in the state and the copies went to some 27,000 hones. It previously was distributed by The Twin Falls Time-News and now in the South Idaho Press in Burley.

Brimstone, which the leaders say stands for nothing in particular, is based at the little hamlet at Huston, near Caldwell, in Canyon County.

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Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt has repeatedly disavowed any connection with the pamphlet but in the euphoria of a Republican "Go to Batt for Governor" banquet in Idaho Falls last week, he said "I am beginning to believe there are lots of truths" in the publication.

Idaho Republican Chairman Dennis M. Olsen also says the Republican Party has nothing to do with the publication but apparently comes to its support when he challenges the goveror to comment on its accuracies.

Evans, in response to the Olsen request, said he would not comment on "this type of sleazy campaign tactics."

Evans further charges that Brimstone is financed fron out-of-state interests, much as the Right-to-Work, and connects the two as pursuing the same goals.

He also lambastes Batt for what he calls his lack of leadership in not controlling his supporters and preventing distribution of the publication.

Both Batt and Olsen apparently want to realize the benefits, if any, of the publication, yet disavow the onus of responsibility.

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Political effects of the publication are hard to assess but they have pluses and minuses. They likely will not change anyone who was going to vote for Evans or Batt, anyway, but what will be the reaction among the crucial swing vote of those who have no close political ties?.

The publications were disseminated in the Idaho Falls and Twin Falls areas where Brimstone and its supporters apparently believe it will have the most acceptance among the more conservative voters of the state. It pointedly avoids the large union backers and more moderate electors in the Boise, Pocatello and north Idaho areas.

This writer had warned voters earlier to expect some gimmicks later in the campaign and this publications certainly comes under that heading.

Most voters, fortunately, can see through the maze of false rhetorics of charges and counter charges that are exchanged in the closing days of this campaign.

Records show that in the past, Idaho voters generally remain calm and vote their convictions but whatever the outcome the majority vote for the winners must be respected.