Despite slumping economy, Symms says good times ahead

The Post-Register
The political pulse
Idaho Falls, Idaho, Thursday, June 24, 1982 B-7

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

WASHINGTON — Sen. Steve D. Symms, R-Idaho, who last fall flatly predicted the upturn in economy early this spring, insisted in a weekly report Wednesday that President Reagan is on the right track.

He acknowledges he has received many letters from Idahoans asking when Congress will "reduce the federal deficit, cut interest rates and eventually get the nation's economy moving again."

Symms said the good news is that "despite the current economic difficulties we have come a considerable distance in these last months toward reversing 40 years of economic irresponsibility.

"The bad news is that our economy is still suffering from a long history of counter-productive fiscal and monetary policies, and much still remains to be accomplished."

In his interview last September with this writer Symms forecast the economic upturn by April 1 but the situation in many respects is even worse now than at that time, according to virtually all news dispatches.

Even Symms' fellow senator, James A. McClure, was not that optimistic but has insisted that Reagan's economic programs are headed in the right direction. Idaho's two Republican congressmen, George Hansen and Larry Craig, echo these views.

Symms, a member of the Senate Budget Committee, said the committee has been seeking to write a budget that will help solve the present problems.

"The projected deficits, which have a drastic impact on interest rates and jobs, needed to be cut substantially, if not entirely eliminated," he said.

He insisted that must be done by further cutting in government spending, not increased taxes.

Symms then blamed the Democrats who he said "sought to restore high levels of spending and taxation. Some even called for reversal of the individual income tax break which will provide American families with the first real tax relief in decades."

Symms said he refused to go along with proposals to raise taxes and spending, but that he was in the minority.

"The committee's final product was far from perfect, in my view," he said. "It was a compromise, with too much spending, too large a deficit and some unnecessary tax increases."

He said it "was the best the committee could muster, given its diverse membership and the politics of 1982."

He added the Republican leadership prevailed and a budget was drafted with $358 billion in projected spending cuts over the next three years.