

The election eye

Good organization, money win elections

BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

San June 13, 1982

Winning nominees in the May 25 primary election almost in one voice attributed their successes to good campaign organization and wise expenditures of money.

In looking back, there were few exchanges in the featured races between Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt and House Speaker Ralph Olmstead for the Republican gubernatorial nomination; Jerome attorney Jim Jones and Ada County Prosecutor Jim Harris for Republican attorney general; and Ricks professor Richard Stallings and Filer businessman-farmer George Anthony for Democratic 2nd District congressman.

Of these contests' winners, Batt could be considered more moderate, Stallings was more conservative, and there appeared few philosophical differences between Jones and Harris.

The only other two state races were for Republican state auditor, between state Sen. Dean Van Engelen, Burley, and Nolan G. Young, Boise, and former longtime Idaho Falls CPA; and for Republican lieutenant governor between Attorney General David H. Leroy and Hayden Lake naturopath Ron Hoye. However, they didn't campaign or spend much.

Van Engelen, at the last count, held only a 168-vote lead and the winner will not be definitely known until the canvass is completed Thursday.

Leroy, a well-known political name, won a 7-1 overwhelming victory over his right radical neophyte opponent.

* * *

Batt touched the nub by attributing "excellent campaign organization" for his success. This same theme was sounded by Jones in his victory over Harris and by Stallings in his triumph over Anthony.

It is also noticeable the victors spent considerably more money than their opponents. Batt spent more than \$200,000 and Olmstead likely \$150,000, much of it his own money.

Jones said he spent about \$85,000 while Harris reached only half of this amount.

Stallings said he spent about \$7,000; Anthony estimated his modest campaign cost at only about \$4,000.

The winners point out that much of their primary campaign costs will apply for the general election ahead. For the losers, well, it was simply the agony of defeat — and at least temporary oblivion.

* * *

Candidates rely on their own campaign staffs to propel them to victory, not regular party organization. This was especially true in the primary where contestants of the same party were involved and obviously could not depend on the party structure. However, the party organizations will still take a secondary role to the candidate organizations in the general election campaign ahead.

The gubernatorial contest likely will be the costliest in Idaho history with Democrat Gov. John V. Evans expected to spend over a half million while Batt is figuring on \$300,000. This is in addition to the \$200,000 he expended in the primary, much of which will apply for the general in the form of campaign bumper stickers, posters and various literature.

What's significant is the fact Evans and Batt may spend close to a million dollars for a job that pays only \$55,000 starting next year, a boost from the \$40,000 at present.

The lieutenant governor salary was boosted from \$12,000 to \$14,000 while the other staff officials range between \$30,000 and \$42,000. U.S. senators and congressmen each get about \$60,000, plus many other benefits.

The candidates, of course, are not fighting for the salary, as is obvious. They and their supporters are seeking power to help shape the philosophical destinies of state and federal government.