Andrus sees economy as main issue

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Former Idaho Democratic Gov. Cecil Andrus is depending largely on the confidence he inspired while serving as governor in the six years from 1971-76 to win back his old seat.

Cecil D. Andrus

"It was during that time," he said, "that Idaho had high employment and there is no reason we can't return to that level. In fact, the unemployment was the lowest per capita during that time compared to any time in the state's history."

Andrus blames most of the present economic ills in Idaho to the economy and monetary situation on the national level. That includes the high value of the dollar, the growing national debt and persistent federal government budget deficits.

"It is important that we prepare Idaho to return to its former prosperity," he said. "Generally we must prepare the economy so that we will not have the hemorrhaging in our three basic industries — agriculture, timber and mining. We must have a utilization internally and externally."

Andrus outlined three main points that are necessary to revitalize Idaho's economy:

- Stabilize the economy.
- Provide necessary leadership for local existing business.
- Relieve the burden on local taxes.

Andrus pointed to his long record of proven leadership as reason enough for the people of Idaho to return him to the state's executive office.

Besides his six years as governor, he served six years in the State Senate, four years as U.S. Secretary of Interior under President Carter and since 1980 has directed a highly successful consulting firm in Boise.

He said he prefers to return to his first love, Idaho, rather than accept a number of lucrative offers in the nation's capital or another eastern metropolis.

Andrus was one of the most popular cabinet members in the Carter administration and was in great demand as a speaker or as a guest of honor at many social and business functions, which is an important part of the nation's capital political life. He preferred, however, to live at a lower profile, clinging to the traditional conservative Idaho values.

Andrus has considerable homespun charisma that appeals to voters, as well as the ability to make the right decision at the right time.

His prospects look bright in light of his winning every county except Lemhi when he defeat Lt. Gov. Jack Murphy in the election for his last term as governor.

While his administrative and business background have been extensive, at 54 years of age he still feels he is in the prime of life to take on new challenges.

His probable opponent is Lt. Gov. David Leroy, 38. Leroy has served in state government eight years. That includes four years as attorney general and the current four-year term as part-time lieutenant governor that he coupled with private practice in a Boise law firm.

Although Andrus has not officially announced, he admits he is winding down his present consulting business so that he can prepare for the coming gubernatorial campaign.

An organization, Citizens for Idaho, is for all practical purposes his campaign committee, but it will not convert fully to that purpose until Andrus officially enters the race. The committee is headed by Robert Montgomery, of Boise, and formerly of Pocatello. Its office activities are directed by Sal Celeski, veteran Boise TV newsman. It is presently engaged in polling and evaluating the coming campaign.

The latest poll, which encouraged Andrus and the Democrats, shows that Andrus holds a heavy margin of nearly 2-1 votes over Leroy.

Andrus laments the extra long campaign for 1986, blaming much of this to the early start of Republican candidates for the 2nd Congressional District and the highly charged senatorial contest between U.S. Sen. Steve Symms and Gov. John V. Evans.

"I'm traveling throughout Idaho and touching bases," said Andrus, who indicates he will not begin campaigning in earnest until early next year. "I believe people's eardrums are already tired of campaigners and the election is still a year away. The British have a better system of a campaign of only six weeks.

Andrus said he will not know the state financial picture because if he is elected he will not tackle the state fiscal problems until early 1987.

"We don't know now what will be the state budget problems, condition of the holdback, or any of the fiscal problems until then," he said.

Andrus said the Citizens for Idaho Committee has already raised over $150,000 and he suspects the campaign will cost him $1 million. He pointed out that Leroy also plans to spend close to $1 million, Symms likely $3 million, Evans $2 million, the congressional candidates another couple million, plus additional amounts for legislative and other races.

"That means we are getting to the obscene level of spending $10 million to $15 million in Idaho on the election campaign next year," he said.

Andrus said the economy will be the main issue in his campaign, adding he will hammer hard at the present national Republican administration for bringing on the present ills.

"The present bad economic conditions are caused by the horrendous deficits, which have brought high interest rates," he said. "It makes it impossible for our farmers to compete in the world's markets.

"You have to make a living and that living must be worthwhile in Idaho," he concluded.