

Leroy stresses his youth, experience

By BEN J. PLASTINO

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A young, aggressive campaigner who will open new jobs and rejuvenate Idaho's economy is the way Lt. Gov. David H. Leroy describes himself as he tries to crack the 16-year Democratic stranglehold on the Idaho governorship next year.

Having just turned 38, Leroy exudes confidence in his quest for the state's highest executive office against his probable opponent, former Idaho Gov. Cecil D. Andrus, 54.

"The job is not one for retirement," he said, referring to Andrus's probable bid to returning to the governorship after serving six years as governor and four years as U.S. secretary of interior.

"Jobs, jobs, jobs is the number one issue in this campaign," said Leroy. "Andrus will talk about them in cliches and glittering generalities. In contrast, I'm talking directly and specifically to the issue."

He noted he is for right to work while Andrus is against it in deference to getting union labor support.

Leroy said he has three main targets in the quest for new jobs:

● People: to appoint the best and brightest to key government posts.

● Policies: adopt for the state and insist from the federal government policies that are pro-business and responsibly build the Idaho economy. As an example, he believes there is enough wilderness and that new jobs can be created from the timber and mining industry. Andrus wants more wilderness but does not say how much more, Leroy says.



David H. Leroy

● Products: to build values-added industry in Idaho that takes basic natural resources and upgrades them into finished projects before export. There is a need for more agricultural processing, more lumber finishing mills and the need for that kind of industry that adds values to Idaho's raw economy before exports.

Leroy is aware that only three lieutenant governors have been elected to the governorship and that was near the turn of the century, before 1920.

He said, however, that since he has held the No. 2 position it has grown in stature and helped groom him for the governorship.

"It is now a more significant job," he said.

He pointed out that in 1983, steps were taken to give more structure to the office. Six specific duties were added by order of the governor. They dealt with international trade, contact with the congressional delegation, working on the centennial commission, intergovernmental relations, reorganization, and engaging in activities with the recreational division and the Department of Correction.

"I have built the office and maintained voter identification," he commented.

He noted that in the last three years he has served as acting governor for 170 days, or an average of one day per week while the governor was out of the state.

Among the duties he has performed in that time has been appointment of six Republican members of the Idaho Legislature, three Republican county commissioners and signed many bills. One included rejection of bureaucratic regulations which were inconsistent with state statutes.

He also noted he has been involved in many emergency situa-

tions, such as possibility of calling out the National Guard in the Boise Fire Department strike crisis and the fear of the Mud Lake dam break.

He said before the governor leaves the state the two confer on what he should do in the interim.

"We have political differences but we work well together on mutual state problems," said Leroy.

Leroy said he doesn't know how much he has raised now but he expects that both he and Andrus will have a campaign fund of about \$1 million each. That compares with about \$650,000 that Gov. John V. Evans and Lt. Gov. Phil Batt each spent in the 1982 campaign.

He pointed out, however, that Batt had to spend \$200,000 in a contested primary, while he in all probability will be unopposed.

"The Republican Party has gotten behind my campaign and I will have more time to organize and avoid divisiveness," said Leroy. "We can concentrate on Republican issues and principles."

He noted that although he is only 38, that Andrus was 39 when he was first elected governor and served six years. Leroy said he will have served eight years in a statewide office, four years as attorney general and four years as lieutenant governor.

A Lewiston native, he attended the University of Idaho to garner a bachelor degree in business and later a law degree. He served as student body president in his sophomore year, the first time in history that has occurred.

He also was an intern when Sen. James A. McClure served in the U.S. House of Representatives.

He also served as chairman of the Western Lieutenant Governor's Conference and the Republican National Lieutenant Governor's Caucus.

He and his wife, Helen, have two

children, a daughter Jordan, 5, and a son, Adam, 3.

"I have youthful enthusiasm and aggressiveness," he said. "That and my experience will, I think, be an attractive combination."

"Idaho faces challenges and demanding times where there is need for a new team with new directions."

He pointed out that as presiding officer of the Senate, he worked closely with the Senate leadership in hammering out legislative proposals.

"When I agreed with them I told them so and when I didn't I told them," he said. "As governor I will do the same."

He said he believes the endorsement of Howard Ruff will help him immensely. The Howard Ruff firm has the largest subscription newsletter in the nation, and includes 3,000 in Idaho. The Ruff PAC spent \$4.2 million on conservative candidates in 1984, for example.

"After 15 years of the Andrus-Evans administration we're suffering through major declines and losses in the productive sector," he said. "In the last few years this dismemberment of Idaho's economy has reached catastrophic proportions. I want a private sector that brings growth to Idaho and productive and satisfying lives to our citizens. And I insist on a public sector which respects the concept of private ownership, and human initiative and creativity."

Leroy said it is too early to tell how the Legislature should treat the holdback when it convenes in January. There is a question of whether the shortfall will be \$14 million or as high as \$24 million. It must determine if the \$8 million in property tax must be borne by the school districts.

He said he foresees a budget that will not be much greater than the one this fiscal year and with no new programs.