The Post-Register

The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Thursday, November 5, 1981 Section I

The city scene . . .

Vote results affirm administration force

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Results in Tuesday's municipal elections indicate, as has generally been the case, strong support for the current city administration.

It was probably one of the most lack lustre campaigns in the city's history because of no opposition whatsoever for the mayor and little more than token competition to the three incumbent city councilmen.

This was reflected in the vote of only 5,918, or only 27.4 percent of the 21,550 registered voters. This is well below the 7,861, or 39.4 percent of the 19,800 registered in 1979, and the all-time record of 11,218, or about 57 percent of the 20,000 registered in 1977. In fact, it was the smallest vote dating back to 1967 when there was no mayoral election and only four, including two incumbents, competed for the City Council. At that time, only 5,460 cast ballots, the least in more than 30 years.

Mayor Thomas V. Cambell marked up a new record because there was no organized oopposition, not even an announced write-in candidate. As a result, he rolled up 4,972 votes. Only a scattering of write-ins were recored, led by Tal Worley, a frequent city critic, with 10 votes, and Bob Bybee and Kent Just, who had been metioned earlier as possible city candidates, with 6 each.

However, it is significent that of the 5,918 turning out, about 1,000 did not cast ballots for the mayor. This indicates some didn't vote because either they were opposed to him or because he had no competitiion. It does indicate the belief that an announced write-in would have gleaned the 1,000 votes.

Mayor S.Eddie Pedersen had no filed candidate against him in 1965 and 1969 but there were two announced write-ins, and each polled about 1,000 votes.

Going back to recent election records it shows that even during the popular heydays of Mayor Pederson there are some 2,000 anti-administration votes, which is only about 10 percent of the registered voters.

This speaks well for the city when compared with the bitter controveries that frequently rage in other of the larger cities of the state.

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There were no great surprises in the election results but if there were, the only ones that be classified as mild, is the slightly lower turnout that forecast and the fact that Councilman Ralpgh M. Wood topped the council ticket.

Councilman Wood led with 4,355, followed by Councilmen Melvin L. Erickson with 4,224 and Councilmen Paul L. Hovey with 4,009. Shunted from the winner's circle were the two challengers, Jan Brown, with 2,421 and William C.Lattin with only 1,399. In the past, Erickson has usually led but Wood tied with Erickson when he first entered in 1973. Wood finished only a strong third in 1977, primarily because of criticism of his high council meeting absenteeism at that time, a situation which has since been remedied.

Wood mounted by far the most extensive campaign of any of the council candidates with 500 yard signs, and intensive newspaper and radio advertising—and it showed up in the election results.

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This writer had predicted that Erickson, Wood, and Hovey would finish rather close in about that order for re-election, with Miss Brown a fair fourth but out of the money, and Lattin trailing. This is what happened except Wood and Erickson exhanged positions, a finish that was not entirely unexpected.

This writer also predicted a turnout of about 30 percent, or between 7,000 and 8,000 votes, but it fell slightly short of this, mainly because the challengers never could generate enough interests on issues.

Ellen Bingham, election judge, estimatled 40 percent would cast ballots, or some 8,640, but she was apparently misled by the unusually high registration and frequent inquiries about the election.

The voter approval of the way the city administrations have been conducting their affairs was generally reflected in other cities of east Idaho. All incumbent mayors and most councilmen won re-election except in Rigby when a councilman, Claude Tremeling, ousted Mayor Ralph Peterson, in a close race. Also in Blackfoot, it was forecast that the appointed mayor, Howard Packham, might be ousted, and he was handily, by former Mayor Delwin Daniels, handily.

It's apparent city citizens recognized their elected officials are struggling ith finances occasion by the slumping economy and the restrictive 1 percent tax initiative. It only emphasize the need of the rural dominated Idaho Legislature to give cities freeer reins of their own affairs. Cities have proved repeatedly they do a far better job than does the reactionary Legislature.