

1986 election important to Demos; 'dream ticket' ready to make move

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register columnist

The trio on the so-called Democrat "dream ticket" left little doubt it is taking aim for the 1986 campaign when it appeared at the Bonneville County Democrats' annual Truman Day Banquet last week.

Gov. John Evans, 2nd District Congressman Richard Stallings and former governor and U.S. secretary of interior, Cecil Andrus, were indeed pleased as they received repeated tumultuous ovations from the more than 300 party faithfuls in attendance.

In informal remarks at the banquet and interviews afterward, the three indicated they are ready to step into the political arena, giving Democrats one of the strongest tickets in years. It appears their announcements are only a formality.

Evans will seek to oust U.S. Sen. Steve Symms, Stallings will attempt to retain his hard-won congressional seat, and Andrus will face the task of returning to the governor's chair.

They face tough campaigns, but leave no question about their readiness to wage what could be one of the most thrilling elections in years.

The three probably will not make formal announcements until fall. The same can be said for Republicans Lt. Gov. David H. Leroy, who intends to seek the governorship, and for Symms, who not doubt will attempt re-election after serving one six-year term.

The situation is different for the Republican 2nd District congressional race where no less than eight have professed some interest.

Among the leading ones are the former congressman, George V. Hansen; and if he doesn't run, then his wife, Connie; and Don Adamson, the Jerome attorney who was narrowly beaten by Hansen in the 1984 primary.

The others mentioned are outside chances at the best and it would appear from this corner they actually will not enter.

They include Attorney General Jim Jones, who actually appears to like his present post and likely will seek re-election.

Then there are a trio of Idaho Falls legislators, State Sens. Dane Watkins and Ann Rydlach, and Rep. Linden B. Bateman; and also House assistant majority leader, Robert Geddes, Preston.

One or two of these could announced as early as summer, such as Adamson.

From this long distant view, it would appear that Andrus, perhaps the most popular governor who has ever served in Idaho, would be a favorite to continue the 16-year Democratic stranglehold on the governor's chair over Leroy.

Stallings might be viewed as a thin favorite to retain his seat, regardless who's his opponent, while Evans face odds in his apparent senatorial contest against Symms.

Andrus' record as governor for 10

years, from 1970 to 1980, was almost impeccable. In the 1978 race, he swept every Idaho county except Lemhi against his opponent, Republican Lt. Gov. Jack Murphy.

"I'm not running for money," he said. "I like the job. I feel it is time to vote for people and bring a better balance to our political structure."

Stallings so far appears to have grown in stature. On two major issues, he apparently took a popular stand for majority of the people, voting for legislation to aid farmers, and against the MX missile. As he is barely starting out, it will depend on how he votes and performs in the future before a more accurate assessment can be made on his chances in the 1986 elections.

It must be remembered that Reagan is a lame duck president who will not appear on the 1986 ticket. Already farmers and many people are disillusioned over his farm and social services programs. This trend undoubtedly will swell, rather than diminish.

"I don't care who is my opponent," said Stallings. "I know it will be tough and I know I am a target, but I'm ready. I look forward to the race."

Evans already has formed an exploratory committee. In fact, he has set up a little-publicized campaign headquarters office in Boise, adjacent to the Statehouse.

He feels he has built a broad base of support while serving as governor. He is concerned with raising a large

enough war chest to match the huge contributions Symms is certain to receive.

Blake Hall, the new state Republican chairman and an Idaho Falls attorney, and some other young Republican leaders are inclined to belittle the Democratic ticket.

They may find themselves in for a rude shock because the tremendous Republican tide of 1984 may have ebbed next year. Many of the slogans of last year may be outmoded for the coming campaign, make no mistake about that.

Hall's statement that Evans engaged in deficit spending is perplexing because this certainly has not been the case. For one thing the Legislature approves the final budget, not the governor. In fact, the Republican-controlled Legislature this year earmarked a budget \$2 million higher than expected in anticipated revenue. Republican legislative leaders hope for some \$2 million in surplus funds Treasurer Marjorie Ruth Moon said is expected, but this is by no means certain. If is not realized, the governor will need to order a holdback.

Whether the controversial right-to-work issue will have much bearing on the election at top of the ticket is moot. After looking at the pros and cons, it would appear this issue will have little effect to candidates of either party.

This much is certain — the Idaho elections will be one of the most important in the nation next year.