

Olsen impressed by Reagan cabinet

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Idaho Republican Chairman Dennis M. Olsen said Friday "he is much impressed" with President-elect Ronald Reagan's cabinet selection, particularly of Alexander Haig as secretary of state.

"This is quite a contrast with some of President Carter's appointments of four years ago," said Olsen. "All of the people Reagan selected have both the training and experience to do the jobs they are called on to do.

"I think he has done a good job of balancing his cabinet, that we will have a good group of people with well-rounded activities who have a proven track record to do the work. I see them as a group of people, although with strong philosophical ideas, who are also pragmatic. They will not take radical actions that could be self defeating."

Olsen said he did not know many of them personally but he is especially pleased to see General Alexander Haig as secretary of state. He recalled Haig was the featured speaker in the annual East Idaho Republican Barbecue at Tautphaus Park two years ago and he got to know him rather well.

"He demonstrated to me a great depth of knowledge and comprehension of world affairs," said Olsen.

Olsen said Haig has wide experience in the diplomatic field, stationed at various times in different bases in the world and familiar with the Middle East, Red

China, with NATO, and chief of staff during the Nixon Administration.

"I was very much impressed with his vast knowledge, yet he is very unassuming," said Olsen.

Olsen said he was pleased with the new secretary of interior, James Watt, the Colorado attorney whom he has worked with in the past.

"I find him to be a capable administrator who understands the public lands and the environmental movement," said Olsen. "He also understands the necessity of development of natural resources but again I see him as a pragmatic administrator to achieve certain programs that will not be self defeating. He will not be pushed around."

Olsen said he expects to see a streamlining in procedures in the Department of Interior which will remove long delays in the decision-making process, but also sees him coming down on the side of development and multiple use, with less emphasis on lockup approach of the wilderness.

"The best recommendations for Mr. Watt is the fact that some of the rabid environmentalists opposed him," said Olsen, "but I think reasonable environmentalists will have nothing to fear from him."

In another matter, Olsen said he has been urging appointments of some Idahoans to high government positions.

One that has been mentioned in the press is Ralph Wickberg, Boise, the pres-

ent Idaho Public Utilities Commission member, to head the Bonneville Power Administration.

Olsen said an Idaho screening committee has been formed, made up of the Idaho congressional delegation, himself as the state chairman, National Committeeman David Little, Emmett, and National Committeewoman Leora Day, Boise, to review recommendations for governmental appointments, both at Washington and in Idaho.

Olsen said three have applied for U.S. attorney and some 25-30 for U.S. marshal, including Bonneville Sheriff Blaine Skinner, Idaho Falls, who was defeated for re-election.

Olsen said he also is interested in the assertion of Joe McCarter that he won't resign as Idaho director of the Farmers Home Administration.

Olsen observed this may serve as a test case on the right of a new administration to replace appointees of a previous administration.

Olsen said there are a number of high level jobs in Washington he hopes that Idahoans can be appointed to but he declined to name any applicants at this time on the grounds it would harm their chances and cause them embarrassment if they did not win appointment—and most of them won't.

Olsen said he plans to attend the inauguration of Reagan Jan. 16, along with his wife, Shelia. At that time he will take occasion to confer with the Idaho con-

gressional delegation on governmental appointments and other party matters.

He also announced he likely will be a candidate as chairman for a western regional policy committee which is part of a nationwide regional organization that Reagan is considering in his administration.

After the inauguration, Olsen said he and his wife plan to spend a vacation at Yucatan in Mexico for a few days.

He also plans to go to Boise Friday for a meeting of the Idaho Republican Executive Committee to plan for the biennial budget and discuss legislation of interest to the party.

Olsen said he feels strongly the party conventions should become more important, favoring convention endorsements for congressional and gubernatorial candidates.

The state chairman said he feels the presidential primary "is a waste of time and money" and should be eliminated.

Olsen said he also favored the convention should select more of the national delegations. He said in 1980, the primary election selected 80 percent of the delegates while only 20 percent were chosen by the convention.

"I think by these changes it will make party conventions more meaningful," said Carter.

Olsen also reiterated he is not interested in any high government paying position but is content to serve as the state chairman.