

Campaign rhetorics near for primary election

Sun. Apr 18, 1982

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

Strenuous campaigning is near at hand for the May 25 primary election, topped by the Republican gubernatorial struggle between Lt. Gov. Philip E. Batt and House Speaker Ralph Olmstead.

However, there are a few interesting contests for other state offices — Congress, judiciary, legislative and primary — but the main event will not take place until the Nov. 2 general election.

As has generally been the case in recent years, the Republicans offer the most interesting contest and consequently attract three times the vote as their Democratic adversaries.

* * *

Batt and Olmstead already have trod on the east Idaho turf several times and likely will call many times more in their quest for the gubernatorial nomination. They know this area is the crucial one that generally decides elections in close contests and this likely is true for this one.

Private polls show Batt comfortably ahead at this time but these should be taken with considerable reservation, in the light of inaccuracies in the 1980 polls.

A recent private poll conducted by one of the candidates indicated Democratic Gov. John V. Evans ahead of Batt 37-31 and leading Olmstead 42-26. It did not give the sampling on a head-to-head Batt-Olmstead contest.

Batt has had the most viable campaign so far but Olmstead is now coming out of the wings and getting more exposures. The talk in Boise heavily favors Batt but it is east Idaho which generally tips the scales.

Although Batt can be considered a favorite at this time, there is the sobering thought the Republicans have never nominated a moderate gubernatorial candidate since Gov. Robert E. Smylie 20 years ago. Olmstead is well aware of this and is attempting to portray himself as the true conservative while trying to pin the moderate label on Batt.

* * *

Primary contests for the other state offices are scanty and may generate little interest. The one of particular interest in Idaho Falls pairs Nolan Young, longtime former CPA in Idaho Falls but now of Boise, against State Sen. Dean Van Engelen, R-Burley. Van Engelen has received more publicity because of leading the legislative budget-slashing forces but at the same time he also has attracted wide opposition. The campaign each conducts could determine the outcome but Van

Engelen at this time must be considered the slight favorite.

In the 2nd Congressional District, Richard H. Stallings, Ricks College instructor, shouldn't have much trouble winning the Democratic nomination over George Anthony, Buhl, to oppose Republican U.S. Rep. George Hansen in November. Anthony appears to have little campaign organization.

The 1st Congressional Democratic nomination contest is in doubt because a late filer, Louis Hatheway, Grangeville, is charged with not having the minimum 500 bona fide signatures to qualify. A hearing is scheduled on this matter, according to the secretary of state office. In any event, Larry LaRocco, aide to former U.S. Sen. Frank Church, must be considered a top-heavy choice to win and oppose Republican Rep. Larry Craig in November.

Another unexpected contest developed when Ronald R. Hove, a Hayden Lake naturopath filed to oppose Attorney General David H. Leroy for the Republican lieutenant governor nomination.

These are the headliners for the state and congressional offices but interest will be heightened by some interesting tussles on the judiciary, legislative and county levels. These will be analyzed later.