

The election eye . . .

# SALT II offers Idaho top Senate race issue

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

The SALT II treaty, which could determine what course this nation might take for years to come, furnishes another clear-cut division between Democrat U.S. Sen. Frank Church and his probable Republican adversary, U.S. Rep. Steve Symms.

Symms, even before the treaty was signed, took a strong opposition view that the Russians couldn't be trusted and we could beat them in any arms race, anyway.

Church expressed himself as provisionally in approval, if it is even handed in preserving this nation's strategic position, and if it is verifiable, meaning that the USSR is complying with terms of the treaty.

The two other Republican members of the Idaho congressional delegation also have taken an opposition stand, mainly because they think it gives the Soviets an edge in larger missiles and in a Backfire bomber, both of which they say, could hit American targets.

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Church, as chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, can wield a tremendous influence in acting toward Senate ratification.

Church strikes a responsive note when he says that President Carter "made it clear the survival of our civilization depends upon bringing this insane nuclear arms race under control." Church added that if the even balance and verifiable clauses meet the tests, "it would clearly enhance the security of the United States and (the treaty) should be ratified."

McClure contends the treaty permits Russia to expand its strategic capacity more than the United States.

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There will be millions of word written and spoken on SALT II enough to boggle the mind, in the months to come.

It will be up to citizens to get the true facts on merits of the treaty, and not be swayed by emotional utterances.

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Of central importance to effective strategic arms control is the ability of the United States and Russia to independently monitor each other's compliance with the provision of negotiated agreements. Adequate verification procedures are essential to enhance confidence in the limitations on advanced weapons systems and to guard against the incremental violations of an accord which could alter the prevailing military balance.

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Idaho Republican congressmen took a popular stance in Idaho in opposing the Panama Canal, but this may not be the case in SALT II. Much, of course, will depend on what comes out of the Senate hearings and whether the United States is getting a fair treaty.

Americans must push aside the distortions and propaganda from both sides and determine for themselves what is right.

Perhaps the SALT II may fall short of its goal. In any event, all must agree it is a step in the right direction if a nuclear holocaust is to be avoided.

Church stood virtually alone when he strongly opposed the Vietnam War. As forecast by this writer in the early days of the war—he would be proven right—and he was.

The position he takes after the hearings are completed will determine whether the treaty is hostile to U.S. interests. If it is, the Senate must reject ratification.

Right now, polls show Americans overwhelmingly favor SALT II, if it is fair. Time will tell, if the treaty says what its proponents aver.

The latest ABC-Harris survey shows support for the SALT II agreement increased from 59-11 percent in December, 1975, to 74-16 percent last January, and is still rising.

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John G. Behuncik, congressional fellow of the National Security Affairs, comes up with some interesting conclusions after an exhaustive SALT II treaty study.

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Some of the salient points he stresses follow:

(1) Under certain conditions and given the absence of mutual trust between the superpowers, obscure treaty language can be counter-productive to expectations of reciprocal compliance. The Soviet Union has repeatedly demonstrated its willingness to exploit loopholes consistent with its perceived strategic interests.

(2) United States security interests demand that the terms of critical provisions relating to the development, testing and deployment of advanced weapons systems be spelled out with precision.

(3) When the lead-time factor is taken into account, the conceivable margin of disparity between Russia and the United States may be even more pronounced in favor of Russia if SALT II is rejected.

(4) The United States must bend efforts to ensure against degradation of existing verification practices, since the Soviets are resolutely opposed to on-site inspection.

(5) A realistic evaluation of the verification issue must transcend legalistic wrangling over those Soviet activities which have been detected and cited as violations of the treaty.