

Report shows legislators back 'no growth' concept for Idaho

BY BEN J. PLASTINO *Thurs.*

Post-Register political editor

A survey concludes some elected officials, especially legislators, discourage business from coming to Idaho, giving it a reputation as a "no growth state," Alex D. Creek, member of the Division of Economic and Community Services Advisory board, said Wednesday.

Creek said the board studied the report by the Marcept Consulting and Research Corp. of Boise in a recent meeting.

Creek reported the Business Development Program Design survey had been in preparation several months before presented to the board.

The project was funded by a grant from the Idaho Division of Economic and Community Services and the Pacific Northwestern Regional Commission. The project was to give the division an effective system to promote Idaho among businesses that would be desirable to have in the state, Creek explained.

Creek said the survey revealed that Utah and Nevada "have aggressive promotional programs." Nevada has \$50,000 budgeted for journal advertising; Louisiana currently spends \$700,000 per year; Tennessee spends \$250,000, and with a staff of 15 people; Minnesota \$700,000, and North Dakota \$315,000.

"Most states have some kind of advertising but now Idaho is with zero," Creek said, referring to the Legislature cutting funds to the division.

The survey interviews indicated that the Pacific Northwest and Idaho in particular are not areas that readily come to mind when alternative site decisions are made, Creek said.

Rather, they tend to think first of California, Southwest states and the Southern states, especially Texas.

"Site decision-makers have low awareness of Idaho and few impressions about its features or suitability as a site alternative," said Creek. "Predominant impressions of Idaho are that it lacks a sufficiently large educated or trained labor pool to meet business needs and that the weather and living conditions are extreme."

"Decision-makers report they need detailed comparative data in order to make site locations. Such data includes wage rates, taxes, transportation, labor availability, union activity, schools, crime rates, business incentives, zoning restrictions, property availability, cost of living and quality of life measures."

Creek said "the poor judgment of the Legislature not to fund the division (DECA) which was in process of putting the requirements together statewide will have a definite adverse effect on any future industrial development."

The survey said "community leaders generally believe that business development will be critically important to the future well being of their communities, that local economic growth is currently too slow; that most future growth will have to come from outside rather than local businesses, and that local residents favor the influx of new business."

Community leader survey reported that communities are generally making satisfactory efforts to respond to inquiring firms but that communities could be helped by DECA.

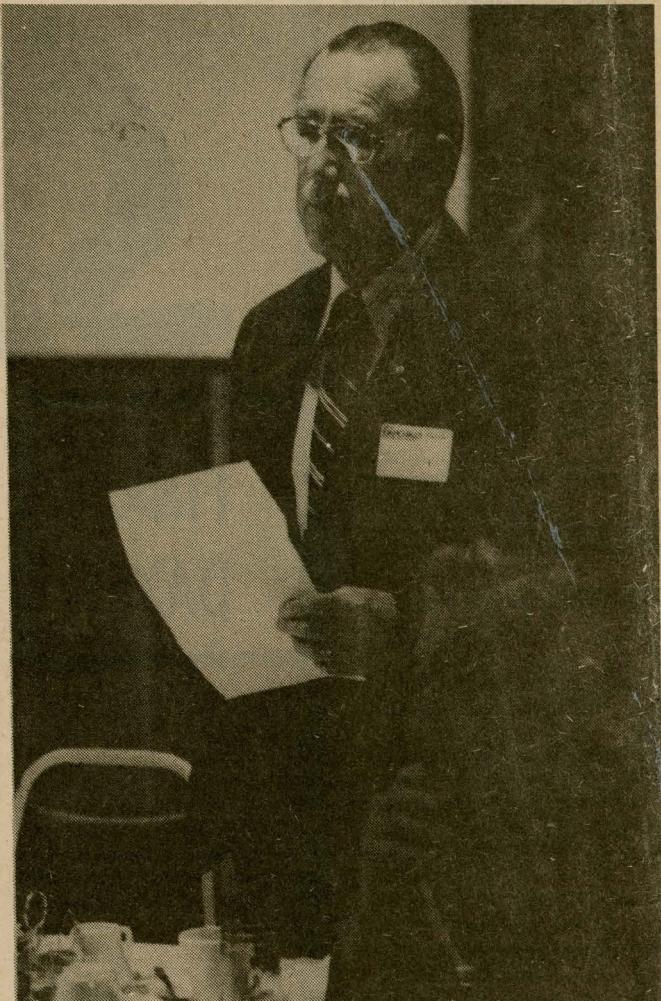
On the whole, the survey noted community leaders believe DECA should be engaged in continued developing advertising, collecting and disseminating information to both businesses and communities, coordinating information, drafting economic legislation and assisting communities to develop promotional programs.

"Idaho legislator interviews showed them more cautious than community leaders in observing 'selective or natural growth,'" said Creek.

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Section B



Creek on offense

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ALEX D. CREEK, standing, a member of the advisory board of the Division of Economic and Community Affairs, speaks at a recent meeting of the legislators. Sitting at his left is Sen. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls, chairman of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee.