Leroy extends varied marks to Legislature

Thurs Mar 19 1981

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BOISE — Attorney General David Leroy, openly nursing gubernatorial aspirations, said Wednesday that he gives both high and low marks to the 1981 Idaho Legislature.

"In my assessment I give them high marks because the threat that the Legislative sessions would be conducted on a government as usual basis with increased taxes did not develop," he said. "Also they have handled difficult financial circumstances and also a number of emotional issues."

He identified the emotional issues as the Northwest Water Power Council Bill that challenges the right of Democratic Gov. John V. Evans to appoint two Democrats to the council, Right-to-Work bill which was killed by the Senate, and the challenge to the election of Sen. John Peavey, D-Carey, which was rejected unanimously because no alleged election violations were uncovered.

"I give the Legislature low marks from a legal adviser point of view," he said. "There were very few bills in which their constitionality were questioned but the legislators wasted time in various stages before moving."

He mentioned one of this as the measure involving the Twin Falls Canal Co. which proposed legislative increase of compensation for condemned property.

"I also question some of the political strategy employed intentionally or unintentially, such as the state employee salaries."

Leroy explained the public employee salary actions of the Legislature brought "a potential alienation of union laborers who voted Republican."

He also pointed to possible political drawbacks in threatening to close Lewis-Clark State College, and other state institutions.

"The fact is," he said, "on all of those issues a strident stance was taken. If by turn of economic conditions it is shown that the tough financial policy was not necessary, then Republican fortunes may be damaged to some extent.

"To the extent that individual legislators took hard stands on basis of principles and on basis of the best information they had available then those votes are commendable. To the extent any imposition is unnecessarily inflexible in the face of unknown future conditions, that is often politically hazardous."

He said the budget coverage was unusually intensive this year because of its importance in view of the tight financing. He said the news N edia made a greater effort to supply more information on this to satisfy the readers.

Leroy, 34, insisted he is not vacillating on his gubernatorial intentions. He said he is "going to make serious evaluation of the potential for success in placing my name for governor.

"I will be calculating and objective in this. I have not attempted to raise any money yet and we have held up solicitation of major contributions."

He did say, however, "I probably will not run for re-election," adding he also is looking at the lieutenant governor's race.

Leroy said he is backing a bill to allow prosecutors to subpoena evidence from persons, businesses and newsrooms for crime investigation. He explained he saw an opportunity to work with the news media in a voluntary effort to improve the justice procedure along this line.

"I see some chance to work out an agreement."

The bill is under House consideration but has attracted the objection of several segments of the presss in hearings before the House Judiciary Committee.