Van Engelen scans state auditor race

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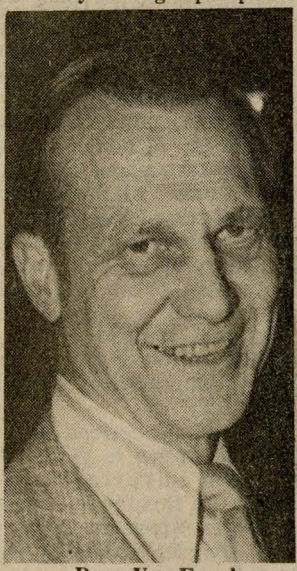
State Sen. Dean Van Engelen, R-Burley, while in east Idaho touring with the Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee the forepart of this week, said he is definitely looking at prospects for entering the state auditor's contest.

"I'm definitely interested in making the race" Van Engelen said. "I may change my mind later but right now I lean towards seeking the office."



Dean Van Engelen

Van Engelen was with the JFAC which toured Harriman State Park at St.Anthony Sunday; Youth Service Center at St. Anthony, Eastern Idaho Vocational Technical School in Idaho Falls and Idaho State Hospital at Blackfoot Monday; and at ISU, Soda Springs and Bear Lake Tuesday and Wednesday.

Van Engelen, a furniture store owner in Burley, is serving his third term in the Legislature. He ousted Democrat Sen. Robert Saxvik in 1966 to gain his position.

Van Engelen is considered the leading legislative spokesman for cuts in state government agencies and programs.

As such he took the lead in the so-called "dirty dozen" on the JFAC which played a dominant role in slashing state government appropriations.

The 12 generally voted as a bloc to reject many of the governor's requests for general fund budgeting. As such, they outvoted the eight other members of the committee in many key appropriation bills. The minority eight was made up of moderate Republicans and Democrats.

The JFAC slashed the governor's budget requests from $440 million to $420 million, a figure which was eventually approved by the Republican controlled Legislature.

The incumbent, Democrat State Auditor Joe Williams, is expected to seek re-election. He has served the longest of any state official, taking office in 1959 or completing his 24th year at the end of his current term next year.