

# The Post-Register

## The political pulse

E-4

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Wednesday, March 4, 1981

### Legislative limelights

# Pressure swayed vote on right-to-work end

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Defeat of the right-to-work legislation last week was a mild surprise but the margin by which it was clobbered was even more of an eyebrow raiser.

The measure which had vaulted the House by a thumping 49-21 margin the day before was scuttled by a 20-15 votes Thursday. The surprise of this was the swing of eight Republicans to join a solid bloc of 12 Democrats to nail the coffin on an issue which has reared its head in the Legislature for most of the last 30 years.

The measure was beaten on a technical maneuver of a motion to table, one that precludes debate, which is just as well.

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There is little question the fine hands of U.S. Sen. James A. McClure and Idaho Republican Party Chairman Dennis M. Olsen who urged that the highly emotional issue not be passed, was a strong factor in the bill's defeat. Both McClure and Olsen rightfully feared the proposal would unite labor to bring defeat to Republican candidates. The Idaho Republican Party Central Committee had taken a stand against right to work just five days before the Thursday vote.

Even Robert Kinghorn, the AFL-CIO director, could only figure on 15 certain votes against the measure, three short of the majority of 18 needed, a few days before the election. This included all 12 Democrats and Republican Sens. Edith Klein, and Vern Brassey, Boise, and John Barker, Buhl. He had hoped to sway three others but instead a surprising five gave support.

Perhaps the most startling surprise was the switch of Sen. Walter Yarbrough, R-Grand View, caucus chairman and considered one of the leading conservatives in the Senate. In addition, however, joining the bandwagon, was another Republican leader, Assistant Majority Leader Sen.

J. Wilson Steen, Glenns Ferry, who is a former union trainman, and three conservative freshmen, Sens. Laird Noh, Kimberly; Roger Fairchild, Fruitland, and Terry Sverdsten, Cataldo.

It must be remembered, Right to Work is not strictly a partisan issue, although most Democrat leaders are for it and most Republicans against. In the House, it took considerable courage or bad judgment — depending how one looks at it — for the lone Democrat and the House minority leader at that, Rep. Melvin Hammond, Rexburg, to desert his party and join 48 Republicans. Here again, eight moderate Republicans joined Democrats in opposition.

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The bill's sponsor, Rep. John Brooks, R-Gooding, was miffed at the way the bill was tabled rather than defeated on motion. He vows now to bring it up again next session but he had better save his breathe. It likely will have less chance in 1982 when there is a general election and the legislators are more sensitive on political issues, especially right to work.

It might be observed Brooks forecast for victory of between 43 and 48 in the House was good (there were 49) but the 20 for the Senate (there were only 15) was a disaster for him.

McClure, Olsen and Republican leaders remember 1952 when the proposal was submitted to the people and it was voted down narrowly, 120,077 against to 115,765 in favor.

Just as important, however, many Republican legislative candidates were beaten. Shortly after that, the Democrats gained control of the House — in 1959 — the last time they have done so.

Not going into the merits of the proposal, most business leaders agree relations between business and low key union labor has been excellent in Idaho through the years. Most of these leaders apparently felt to stir this controversial issue would bring more harm than good.