

Olmstead warmly backs INEL projects

*San May 23
1982*
BY BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

House Speaker Ralph Olmstead, Twin Falls, taking a final swing into east Idaho for his final bid for votes, warmly endorsed the nuclear activities at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

"I warmly back the INEL and all the research and development it is undertaking," he said. "I have visited the site on many occasions and I am very much impressed by what is going on."

Olmstead said he is disappointed federal legislation for settling the radioactive waste disposal problem has not progressed faster. This legislation has passed the Senate but a similar bill is languishing in the House.

He said the sluggish economy continues to concern most Idahoans.

He said he does see some bright signs, such as the restart of a lumber mill at Moyie Springs in north Idaho, the highest livestock prices in years, and good potato prices.

He said Madison County has an unemployment of 1.2 percent, an encouraging sign.

Olmstead avoided criticism of Gov. John V. Evans for the action he took in trying to meet a state fiscal shortfall, saying that if he had been governor he likely would have done the same, except he would have conferred with the state department people first.

Olmstead said that two years ago legislation was passed exempting the judicial and legislature branches from gubernatorial action.

Olmstead said the governor had only two options open. The first was to take the strong action he did, and the next was an across-the-board holdback. Olmstead said legislation permitting this was passed.

In other matters, Olmstead said people have an alternative to choose a conservative such as himself, rather than rely on Lt. Gov. Philip Batt or Evans whose moderate policies are much alike.

He said he is concerned the state shortfall will continue into next year and adversely affect public schools and higher education. This would mean a cutback in state school funds and would likely raise property taxes, he said.

Olmstead expressed confidence in a primary victory, asserting his home base in the Twin Falls area will give him large majorities. He expects to run strongly in conservative areas of east and north Idaho, and perhaps almost even in the Boise area.

Olmstead cited endorsements from Assistant House Majority Leader Jack Kennevick, Boise, and six legislative and community leaders, Reps. Kitty Gunersey, Peggy Bunting, and Jim Golder, all of Boise; Donna Shepard, Boise school trustee, and Pete Eliopoulos and Maurice Clements, Nampa farmers and businessmen.

He has received backing from five north Idaho mining executives and Rep. Bill Lytle, R-Pinehurst.