

Vengeful political game torpedoes INEC budget

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BOISE — The Senate leadership is not the only one that indulges in political games that serve no good purpose.

It was this same kind of tactics Wednesday afternoon which brought the shocking defeat to the Idaho Falls-based Idaho Nuclear Energy Commission by the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee. It promises to bring further reverberations.

This committee scrapped the entire INEC budget of \$183,000 by a 10-5 vote after it had first questioned the INEC's membership dues to the Western Interstate Nuclear Board amounting to \$15 thousand.

What led to the INEC defeat would be somewhat ludicrous if it wasn't so tragic.

The two star players in the drama are State Sens. John T. Peavey, R-Rupert, the architect of the Sunshine Initiative and considered a leading environmental spokesman; and J. Marsden Williams, R-Idaho Falls, chairman of the Senate Resources and Environment Committee, who is well-known among his colleagues as a staunch conservative and not exactly over sympathetic to some environmental matters.

Their conflicting views have placed them as antagonists even though both are Republicans. Both are members of the Resources and Environment Committee and also the Senate Finance Committee.

Peavey indicated he and other members of the committee, some of them Democrats, were less than satisfied in the way Williams conducted his committee. They charged he had hampered full hearing and consideration on many environmental matters, citing the siting of the proposed Idaho Power Co. coal-fired power plant as one issue. Williams favors the proposal; Peavey and some of the Democrats are opposed to some phases.

Feeling they were slighted in the committee hearings, Peavey and the Democratic Bloc thought they could embarrass Williams by voting to cut the INEC funding. They

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managed to draw support from economy minded committee members to join them in the move.

The vote came at a time when Sen. Richard A. Egbert, D-Tetonia, and State Rep. Doyle Miner, R-St. Anthony, and three others were absent attending other committee meetings.

Egbert, who was attending a joint Senate-House Transportation Committee at the time, was perfectly furious, particularly at Democrats who would vote against an agency located in the county he represents.

Most of the committee members voting against the INEC were from North Idaho and the Boise area, except for State Rep. Beverly Bisdine, D-Pocatello. She can be accused of voting against an INEC which has research programs with Idaho State University, located in her home town.

What could happen would open a can of worms.

In retribution, Egbert and others could join a conservative Republican coalition to vote against funding at ISU, BSU and UI.

The two respected co-chairmen of the committee, State Sen. Richard High, R-Twin Falls, and William Roberts, R-Buhl, likely will stop this farcical comedy, with the help of leadership.

These cooler heads said after they have considered the remaining budgets, they will reopen the INEC budget early in the week but under the legislative rules it will require a two-thirds majority.

In the meantime, some projects dear to the hearts of those who voted against the INEC funding could come in for a hard look.

Williams and Roberts are

confident the INEC budget will be funded.

Williams contends he has been fair with environmental bills. This latest move could influence him to take a harder or easier line, whatever suits his fancy.

It's another illustration of the cute games played in the legislature.