

Legislative limelights . . .

IEA demands facing Legislature rejected

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One of the surest ways to rejection is to threaten the Idaho Legislature on proposed legislation.

This has been graphically illustrated over the years. But it appears the lesson is often lost among governors, individuals, and various pressure groups who want certain bills enacted and threaten dire consequences unless the legislation is passed.

It's thus with some surprise that the Idaho Education Association at its delegate assembly adopted a resolution asking for a 13.2 percent budget increase for public schools, coupled with an ultimatum that unless this is done, the more than 8,000 school teachers would close the schools.

Donald L. Roillie, Boise, the present executive director of the IEA, is an old hand in seeking beneficial education legislation. He should know by now that threaten such action is going to be counter-productive.

It also was no surprise to hear House Speaker Ralph Olmstead R-Twin Falls, remark recently that he "could not keep from bristling" when he heard of the size of increase and the ultimatum.

He expressed what likely are the feelings of the vast majority of the 105 people who were elected to the Legislature to help guide the ship of state.

Olmstead pointed out the state's economy is geared closely to the growth of Idaho's business and industry. He added state agencies must realize that they will have to get along on what the current tax structure provides, since additional taxes to be authorized by the 1980 Legislature will be limited at best, and quite possibly nonexistent.

Olmstead pointed out he expects no sales tax increase.

The House speaker justifiably pointed out the Legislature has treated education favorably from a funding standpoint for several years adding it is probable that this priority will not be lowered.

Last year, public schools were given preferential treatment and received the largest increase (6 percent) of any other segment of state government. Yet the schools are not adequately taken care of when one considers their needs and funding levels. Idaho schools are not keeping up.

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Records show the casualties of IEA secretaries have been inordinately high, leaving their positions after a few years. It's often not their fault because many of the more militant teachers insist on whopping increases and fringe benefits the state is not prepared to pay.



Post-Register photo

The education issue

BOISE — Rep. Kurt L. Johnson, R-Idaho Falls, chairman of the Idaho House of Representatives Education Committee, sits at his committee table. How to fund public school education in Idaho appears one of the top issues for the 1980 session.

Rollie has served in his present position for two years and at the end of the 1979 session expressed satisfaction over the amount of funding given public education in view of the restrictive 1 Percent Tax Initiative.

The 1979 Idaho Legislature reduced the property tax by 11 mills, but the Idaho Legislature made a generous general fund appropriation of \$29,970,000. In doing so it increased the state funding for public schools from 66 to 75 percent. This is a remarkable achievement in view of the restrictive financial structure.

Idaho patrons generally have been supportive of public school education, voting override levies, plant facility funds and bonds when they felt they were necessary.

Thomas Vopat, Boise, chief of the Bureau of Finance of the Department of Education, reports 48 of the 115 school districts voted \$7.8 million in override this year. In addition, school patrons have voted \$14.7 million in school bonds and \$9 million in plant facility funds. Last year, 39 school districts voted \$5.8 million in override levies.

William Sullivan, IEA president, released the IEA demands recently in a press conference at Boise, pointing out it was action taken by the delegate assembly last April.

The 13.2 percent budget increase would require an extra \$32 million. Sullivan suggested boosting the state sales tax to make up for loss of local tax revenue under the 1 percent property tax limit.

His quoted remarks that the reaction of some of the legislators is not one of great hope, is, to say the least, an understatement.

The IEA threat may be only sabre-rattling but certainly not smart politics. Idaho legislators are conservative, even anti-labor.

The history of the Legislature is freely marked with the failures of governors to get bills enacted under dictums of threats and ultimatums.

The Legislators are jealous over the governors' powers and

Republican governors have fared no better — in fact, often worse, than Democrats with the Republican dominated Legislature. The records of Republican Govs. Robert E. Smylie and Don Samuelson in this regard were worse than those of Democrat Govs. Cecil D. Andrus and John V. Evans who, have been more careful in handling the law-making body.

One wag remarked the Legislature resembles a bunch of ants floating on a log down a stream who think they are doing the steering.