

Infanger to use 'rifle approach'

BY BEN J. PLASTINO

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State Rep. Ray E. Infanger, the drawling soft-spoken state representative from Salmon, finds himself in a key and somewhat controversial position these days — and it's no fault of his own.

Infanger was propelled to the powerful position of chairman of the all important House Appropriation Committee, with the resignation of Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, who accepted a position of executive secretary with the State Board of Pharmacy based at Boise.

Only last week, House Speaker Ralph Olmstead announced Infanger's appointment as Miner's replacement. However, this apparently is just for this year, although it is assumed he will win the slot next session if re-elected and if Olmstead is again selected speaker. This appears probable in both cases, but not certain.

Asked how he felt about news stories questioning his ability, he answered in carefully chosen words: "I guess any politician can expect this sort of thing. It goes with the job."

Infanger said he has definite ideas on what he will do as chairman.

"I intend to have a rifle rather than a shotgun approach," he said, explaining he intends to give committee members specific assignments rather than having all 10 members act on all of the issues.

"There are many members who have served on the committee who have outstanding talents," he said. "I'm hopeful they will enjoy more responsibility on

the committee as we assign them to areas they would like to labor in."

In the legislative halls, Infanger is considered one of a tight band of some 20 ultra-conservatives who are noted for negative voting. Infanger insists his image is somewhat distorted. For example, he points out with considerable justification that he is generous in backing appropriations for education, particularly vocational education. But he does follow a hardline on what he considers frivolous appropriations in the field of health and welfare, social services, highways and many other state government functions.

Infanger is fond of quoting the Bible and using other famous sayings, including poems, to put over his points, something which is greeted with a mixture of amusement and sometimes awe by fellow legislators.

Stories emanating recently from the Associated Press and other news sources cast some doubt on his ability, because of his often halting speech and slow responses in debates on the House floor and the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee.

This can be deceiving because Infanger, a genial person, is nobody's fool. This writer has often questioned some of his votes but never his sincerity and knowledge.

Actually, Infanger has a good educational background. He graduated from Pocatello High School and attend junior college at San Diego for two years. He also served apprenticeships and took training for tool and dye-

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maker crafts.

He is proud that he has sent five of his children to college. One of his children, now a senior at Salmon High School also plans to attend Brigham Young University. Two are presently attending BYU, two others live in Twin Falls, one is at Boise and another lives also in Salmon. Four of them are married.

Born and reared in Pocatello, Infanger has lived in Salmon since 1959, engaging in the contracting business. He says "I'm always a little behind" in his contracting business but his son gives him a hand.

How and why did he enter politics?

Infanger said he served on the Salmon Zoning Board and when it felt State Rep. Helen McKinney was voting too liberal he was entered in the Republican primary in 1972. Much to the surprise of many and to the shock of Mrs. McKinney, he won. He has been re-elected handily since against some tough opposition.

"I always run scared," he said, adding he expects a brisk contest against young Doug Holm, Roberts farmer, his Democratic opponent in the coming race.

But Infanger is more concerned with the state's gloomy financial picture.

"We have problems," he said. "We are short of revenue, and the costs incurred with the state prison riot, delayed Medicaid payments, Mount St. Helens volcano ash fallout and general inflation increases have not helped."

Infanger said state agencies are now attempting to cope with a 3.85 percent holdback ordered by Gov. John V. Evans and the State Board of Examiners.

Infanger said both sales tax and income tax revenue for July and August is running behind a year ago, the sales tax at about \$1.1 million and income tax at \$460,000. The corporation tax is up only \$15,000.

Infanger said the state general fund revenue totaled \$356 million last year and was placed



Holds purse strings

REP. RAY E. INFANGER, R-Salmon, holds a break in a session of the 1980 Idaho Legislature. Infanger is chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and is considered one of the most powerful in the Legislature.

uch' as key House chairman

at \$401 million this year. The 3.85 percent holdback will brings a cut of about \$21 million, placing the budget at \$380 million, he noted.

He said a 6.65 percent increase in revenue is needed this year, but it now is running 2.31 percent behind. This means an 8.06 percent hike is needed. Infanger said the extra cost for housing state prisoners out of state is about \$180,000 a month, the ash fallout cost may reach nearly a million, and the Medicaid cost is well over \$4 million.

The Salmon legislator said a committee meeting has been called at Boise Sept. 18-19 when the dreary financial situation will come under review, together with future direction of the committee.

"I've always enjoyed my work in the appropriation committee and I welcome taking over as chairman," he said.

He said he opposes statewide public television, pointing out when it was first inaugurated it was considered a training class for students going into this field. Such has not been

the case, he asserted.

The State Board of Education not hiring statewide public television administrators was a move that met Infanger's hearty approval.

About the Department of Health and Welfare, he said "I don't think it's fair to say I'm unfriendly to the program. I think all of us feel there are those who need help but I feel some of them are taking advantage of the welfare program."

Infanger said he remembers a case a year ago when one woman with a large hospital bill was refused payments because her husband was working. She called the next day to say her husband had left her, and the DHW was forced to pay the bill, after all, even though there was doubt the couple had separated.

"I don't like the state to get clipped like this," he said.

"The main thing is for the welfare people to help themselves. For example, those in a wheelchair likely can be employed in work involving telephone calls. This would alleviate the costs and give the wheelchair patient a sense of doing something."

Infanger said he had to close his interviews with a poem:

"I gave a beggar from store of wealth some gold

He spent the shining ore and returned again and again, still

cold and hungry as before

I next gave a thought and with this thought of mine, he finds himself the man supreme divine

and now he begs no more."

The thought, he explained "it is better to teach a man to fish than to give him fish."



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...sits at his desk during the Legislature. He is now on the Appropriations Committee, considering the budget.