

The 1981 Idaho Legislature

Solons favor Sagebrush

Sun. Jan 4, 1981

(Editor's note: This is the 12th of a series of 16 articles giving the views of East Idaho legislators and the leadership on the salient issues shaping up for the coming session. This is on the Sagebrush Rebellion).

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Almost in a single voice East Idaho legislators and members of the leadership strongly favor the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion that would turn federal lands to state control.

The only one who expresses strong displeasure at the movement is Sen. Israel Merrill, D-Blackfoot, who comments "with the recent election results, I think we had better keep all we can of Alaska because I doubt there will be any public land for our children to fish, hunt and camp, unless they happen to be wealthy."

Rep. Linden B. Bateman, R-Idaho Falls, said he favored the movement, as long as the sale of public recreational lands to private interests is prohibited.

House Minority Leader Melvin Hammond, D-Rexburg, expressed apprehension about the movement after first leaning toward support. He

said he would need to study the matter further to make certain that this is not a plot of the vested interest to gain control of the lands for their own use and deprive the public of its recreational and other values.

A qualification was expressed by Rep. John O. Sessions, R-Driggs, who said he would favor Bureau of Land Management lands being transferred to state control on a gradual basis, thereby not imposing a large financial burden on the state at one time. However, he favors leaving forest lands under management of the federal government.

Rep. Elaine Kearnes, R-Idaho Falls, said she also favored the movement but like Sessions, doesn't want it to include forest land, just BLM. She pointed out that in the Eastern states the people have been deprived of many recreational facilities because of lack of federal lands.

Rep. Martin Trillhaase, R-Idaho Falls, also voiced approval but only if there is recreational access that can be assured and that it would not include forest lands.

But aside from these members of the Legislature, all others, including the leadership, give unequivocal support for the land transfer.