

Statehouse sidelights . . .

North Idaho Democrats harm political power

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North Idaho Democrats did neither themselves nor their party any favor when two or three of the more partisan ones announced they would boycott the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee in Eastern Idaho last week.

They apparently sought to curry public favor by charging the cost was unjustified because the committee only planned to have two or three hours of meeting and most of the three days would be spent in tours, including a one day jaunt to the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

Leading the attack against what they called a pleasure junket were Sens. Art Manley, Coeur d'Alene, and Mike Mitchell, Lewiston; and Reps. Marion Davidson, Bonners Ferry, and Joe Wagner, Lewiston.

They are four of only seven Democrats on the 20-member committee. Of the other three, Sen. Richard A. Egbert, Teton, was one of the members who urged the tour be held in Eastern Idaho; Sen. Chick E. Bilyeu, Pocatello, attended the first day at Idaho State University, and at INEL tour; and Rep. Emery E. Hedlund, St. Marie, is vacationing in his native Sweden.

Bilyeu skipped the final day of the tour in the Idaho Falls and Blackfoot area; Mitchel couldn't have come because of painful knee and facial injuries suffered in a fall a week earlier; and Manley had sent word earlier he would not come because of his busy summer realty business. Manley also failed to attend the Idaho Water Resources Board meeting in Idaho Falls a week earlier.

Three Republican members also failed to attend; Sens. David Little, Emmett, the co-chairman, whose wife was taken suddenly to the hospital; Ronald G. Carter, Boise attorney; and Rep. Dan Emery, Boise insurance salesman and rancher.

The committee barely had a quorum of majority of 11, so that it could officially transact business at its sessions.

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The Northern Idaho Democrats charged the INEL tour had nothing to do with the joint committee business. Yet, as Egbert and Rep. Doyle C. Miner, R-St. Anthony, the committee co-chairmen, pointed out, this committee has visited Northern Idaho private timber and mining interests and the Lewiston waterways, which also are not exactly businesses for state appropriation.

"Those Northern Idaho Democrats are always on hand when we visit such private facilities in Northern Idaho," said Miner, and other Republicans and Egbert echoed his sentiment.

Similarly, Egbert pointed out the INEL, with nearly 10,000 workers, is the largest work force in the state, outside of the 12,500 employed by the State of Idaho.

"I would guess the INEL furnishes 10 to 20 percent of state revenue to Idaho," said Egbert. "It is vital to know what they are doing. I helped lead this tour."

John C. Andreason, Boise director of the Legislative Fiscal Office, said the trip only cost about \$1,600, mostly one night's lodging in Pocatello and one in Idaho Falls and travel to Idaho Falls and Pocatello. The legislators were hosted at most meals and also were furnished free transportation in their area tours.

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The legislators spent much of the first day Wednesday in sub-committee meetings and touring ISU facilities. They met with Idaho Falls business and civic leaders at a dinner Thursday night when better relations were cemented and Eastern Idaho problems were discussed, then spent all the last day Friday on strictly state business.

This included some four hours in official business sessions, tour of the Eastern Idaho Vocational Technical School where some 4,000 attend, including 700 fulltime day students; the University of Idaho Center for Higher Education at Intersec, where 700 are studying for advanced masters and doctorate degrees; and the State Hospital South at Blackfoot.

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The Democrats are in a poor position to fight the majority party in seeking for more fund-

ing for state facilities, such as UI at Moscow, Lewis-Clark College at Lewiston, North Idaho College at Coeur d'Alene, and North Idaho Hospital at Orofino.

In fact, there was talk among some Republican members to consolidate Lewis-Clark with UI, or junk it altogether. This has been long considered.

More serious, the North Idahoans have alienated Eg-

bert, considered the most conservative Democrat in the Senate, and the more moderate Republicans who have often joined the Democrats to enact what they felt was progressive legislation and justified spending. These are Reps. Kitty Gurnsey, Boise; Tom Boyd, Genesee; Larry Kingge, Filer; and Mack Neibaur, Paul; and sometimes Carter, Miner, and Little.



Post-Register/Don Skitt

Fiscal funding

REP. LAWRENCE Knigge, R-Filer, left, a key member of the Joint Finance Appropriation Committee, discusses state funding prospects with Rep. Linden B. Bateman, R-Iona, during the committee's tour of East Idaho last week. Among its activities, the committee was hosted by the Greater Idaho Falls Chamber of Commerce at a dinner attended by East Idaho legislators and local public and civic leaders.