Idahoans agreed energy bills dead

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus, U.S. Sens. Frank Church and James A. McClure and U.S. Rep. George V. Hansen agreed in separate interviews with this writer in their offices that President Jimmy Carter will have rough sledding with his energy proposals.

Andrus, a former Idaho governor but now a cabinet member, is bound to follow the Carter proposals, but the three lawmakers pretty well follow an independent course.

Andrus again repeated the Federal Water Plan will have no impact on state water rights.

He noted Idaho is less affected because of its huge water resources, such as its aquifer and reservoirs, but other states, such as Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona face a far different problem because of lack of water.

He pointed out Carter is sympathetic to the Western Drought plight and recently was instrumental in allocating $844 million to the Western States. He also observed Carter has backed disaster aid since taking office to the victims of the Teton flood.

Enforce laws

By law, said Andrus, he is obligated to enforce the 160-acre limit for a single farmer and 320 acres for a husband and wife under the 1902 Reclamation Act, but he foresees changes for increased ownership.

He noted it is a complex question, dependent on residency, value of land and other factors.

"The federal court has issued regulations, but I don't agree that's good," said Andrus.

Andrus, under the law, raised grazing fees from the present $1.87 per animal monthly unit to $2.09 for those on U.S. Bureau of Land Management land and $2.19 on Forest Service land.

Senators on committee

Both McClure and Church have been busy in conference committees working out legislation relating to energy and other matters.

Church said the 160-acre limitation was satisfactory when the 1902 Reclamation Act was passed, but conditions have changed since and larger family farms are now required.

"This limitation," said Church, "is no longer realistic."

Church said he has introduced a bill that would adjust these limitation on basis of fertility, soil, elevation and other factors in a formula.

For example, he said, the acreage in the Upper Snake River Valley should be doubled from 320 acres, but increases would vary throughout the nation.

Church said he generally agreed with President Carter's energy package as relating to conservation of fuel.

He said he disagreed, however, to Carter's proposal to impose a wellhead tax on oil production in the country.

He said he also disagreed on imposing higher taxes on autos as practices show this does not reduce gasoline consumption and add to inflation.

In other matters, Church said he is weighing merits of the Panama Canal Treaty to determine how he will vote; that he is confident Thomas McGinnis, 26-year-old Idaho Falls man, will be released from Bolivian jail on drug charges following his writing to President Carter in McGinnis' behalf.

He added that he is working on an authorization bill to restore funds for nuclear, geothermal and solar research, including the Idaho Falls lowhead bulb turbine, but not including the Clinch River Breeder Reactor. These funds were eliminated after Carter vetoed the bill, specifically for the Clinch River Breeder Reactor.

Church expressed confidence the new authorization bill without the Clinch River Breeder funding will pass without difficulty.

Energy bills

McClure said his committee is working on five different energy bills, relating to (1) energy, natural resources and conservation; (2) coal conservation; (3) natural gas; (4) utility rate structure; and (5) tax package.

He noted the Senate and House have different versions which must be resolved in joint conferences. He observed the House bill wants federal natural gas regulations, but the Senate is opposed.

The Senate, said McClure, wants something to enhance oil production by making it financially attractive to continue oil exploration.

He and Church both warmly back nuclear research and power production.

Both Church and McClure agreed there are not enough Senate votes to override Carter's veto on the nuclear funding.

Spent fuels

McClure also strongly objected to a proposal that would make the United States a depository for spent nuclear fuels in the world.

He repeated his strong opposition to the present Panama Canal treaties. He said some amendments would be necessary in the matter of security, revenue and control to make it acceptable to the American people.

McClure also expressed doubt that adding 50-foot height to present Palisades Dam or the proposed new Lynn Crandall Dam downriver from Palisades would be acceptable to Wyoming.

"If there is sentiment for such proposals, I would support them," he said, "but I haven't got this feeling yet.

Not productive

Hansen said he did not believe the present Congress session has been productive.

He expressed delight that a number of proposed legislative measures, such as voter registration, the common situs bill which would have allowed secondary picketing, and the Carter energy package have been defeated.

He also expressed opposition to higher gas price; massive social security tax; that he is pressing lawsuit against what he called illegal spending of funds for the International Women's Year; renewed opposition to the Panama Canal Treaty; and opposition to a law that would permit seven more years for the states to ratify ERA.