

Statehouse sidelights . . .

East Idaho lacks fair board representation

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For as long as can be remembered, East Idaho has been poorly represented on the various state boards, commissions, councils and other entities and the condition does not appear to be improving.

The 10 East Idaho counties represent about a fifth of the state population now estimated at about 880,000 but the representation for the last 20 years, and perhaps longer, has been far below the 20 percent.

A perusal of the 1978 Idaho Blue Book which gives a listing of all the 140 state boards, commissions, councils and other panels show there are about 1,125 appointments that are made by the governor. A fifth of this would indicate East Idaho should be entitled to more than 200 but an actual count shows there are only 94, or less than a tenth.

Although this oversight has been called to the attention of recent governors, John V. Evans, Cecil D. Andrus, Don Samuelson and Robert E. Smylie, there has never been an effort to correct the discrepancies.

Over representations continues to be given to Boise, Pocatello, Lewiston and Coeur d'Alene.

Most of the boards are of minor consequences but among the major boards, the East Idahoans also get slim pickings.

About half of the boards — believe it or not — don't have an East Idaho name. For example the seven-member Beef Council, Agricultural Labor, Alfalfa Seed, Code Commission, Board of Corrections Health Education, Judicial Council Library, Medicine, Mexican-American Affairs Council, Motor Vehicle Board, Nurse Advisory Council and Board, Pardons and Parole, Personnel, Tax Commission and Uniform State Laws are among those lacking East Idaho representations.

Of the major appointments, the only ones from East Idaho are held by J. Clint Hoopes, Teton, on the State Board of Education, Richard Schwartz, Idaho Falls, on the Fish and Game Commission, Fred J. Hahn, Idaho Falls, on the Bar Commission, Vincent Mullin, Idaho Falls, on the Building Authority, Pamela J. Bowen, Rexburg, Health and Welfare Board, Ray Rigby, Rexburg, Legislative Compensation Committee, Gila Phillips, Arco, Law Enforcement and Planning Commission, and Roy Stroschein, Sterling, the Transportation Board.

A few years ago, there was a tacit understanding in the legal profession that a Supreme Court justice would come from each section of the state.

Charles R. Donaldson, Boise, ignored this concept and because of the larger Boise population beat Boyd R. Thomas, Idaho Falls, now district judge. Since then there has been no East Idaho representation on the high court.

When Cecil D. Andrus was governor he had an opportunity to appoint an East Idaho jurist to a vacancy but instead named a North Idahoan, Stephen Bistline, Sandpoint. He rejected the application of an outstanding Idaho Falls attorney, Art Smith.

Andrus, also for political purposes, named Stroschein, rather than Rexburg Mayor John Porter to the important Transport - Board, a step that has done East Idaho little good.

Andrus felt that Bingham County needed the representation on the board to replace the vacancy created by the death of John Fanning, Idaho Falls, a couple a years ago. Actually, Stroschein couldn't even get re-elected to the State Legislature after he served a term.

The latest faux pas took place recently in the 34-member Idaho Commission of Women's Programs.

The only two Idaho Falls representatives were Christy Strange, considered ultra

liberal, and Anne Voileque, a knowledgeable liberal. Many felt the region should also have representation of the conservative women's viewpoint.

Also on the commission from East Idaho are Marcia Porter, Arco, and Barbara Reynolds, Moore.

Instead of appointing a conservative Idaho Falls woman to replace Ms. Strange, a Pocatello woman was named, leaving only one Idaho Falls woman to represent the Upper Snake River Valley. Betsy Park, who directs this commission, said

The Boise chairman needed more supportive staff members from the Boise area but actually there is little for the board to do which meets only quarterly.

Several East Idaho women were recommended for the position, including Nancy Hart, Betsy Albinson and Janet Benson, Idaho Falls, and Mrs. Ray Rigby, Rexburg, plus many other qualified women.

Perhaps the remarks on lack of representation from East Idaho smacks of provincialism but it's about time this gross disparity be corrected.