

The election eye . . .

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Symms' views on issues to spark controversies

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Glib, forceful Republican Rep. Steve Symms leaves no question where he stands on any question, and in his own eyes makes a case.

His appearance in East Idaho last week to speak and shake hands at the annual fishermen's Breakfast at St. Anthony and then talk to some hand-picked East Idaho conservative Republicans at a dinner in Idaho Falls can in all practicality be viewed as his preliminary foray for the coming senatorial battle with Democrat Sen. Frank Church.

His statement that he is more likely to run for the Senate than seek re-election to the House also can be seen almost as a senatorial announcement. He leaves the door for withdrawal slightly ajar, but just barely.

Symms is a personable, office holder, and even though many may dislike or even despise his ultraconservative views, they can't help but like him personally.

He must be admired for taking on the risky job of challenging a senator who sits high in the nation's council and in the international field.

On nearly every issue, Symms and Church stand diametrically opposed which should give people a clear choice. It means that the vast forces in the middle will decide the issue, just as they have in most close elections.

For Church, it will be one of the sternest tests of his career which covers nearly a quarter of a century. He just this year attained the pre-eminence of the coveted chairmanship of the blue ribbon Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a dream he has visualized when he was a smooth-faced urchin and admirer of Sen. William E. Borah, the famous "Lion of Idaho." He wanted so badly to emulate him and now he has achieved his goal.

Some of Symms' remarks in a Post-Register interview on the leading issues of the day are eye-openers and undoubtedly will come under stress in the campaign ahead.

Symms favors oil decontrol but strongly opposes gasoline rationing, SALT II, and the Panama Canal Treaty, and wants only a minimum acreage for wilderness area, not more than 3.5 million acres, total in the state, including only 1.4 million for the River of No Return.

With the possible exception of favoring oil decontrol, all of these issues superficially are popular in Idaho, but whether they can stand the test of rigorous debate remains to be seen.

Church opposes decontrol, favors SALT II and the Panama Canal Treaty, a standby gas rationing system if it is equitable, particularly in affecting Idaho, and his wilderness stand is not firm, pending a study, but it likely would set at compromises between industry and wilderness.

Symms likes to use such colorful phrases as "separating Church from state," meaning the ouster of the senior senator, and "a SALT-free diet," as op-

osing SALT II.

'Symms' condemnations of the Panama Canal and SALT II need further analysis but on the face they smack of irresponsibility.

The Panama treaty was approved by two-thirds of the senators, including Church. The outcries by Symms and his Idaho colleague, Rep. George Hansen, are intended to repudiate such a pact. It is the Senate, not the House, which ratifies treaties and such actions by Symms and Hansen are intended to circumvent the U.S. Constitution which they have sworn to uphold.

Symms remarks that the USSR can't be trusted to carry semblance of truth, but certainly every effort should be made to tread the path of peace. Otherwise, the alternative is a nuclear holocaust.

Symms virtually advocates a wide-open nuclear arms race which he says this nation can win but the billions he talks about paying for Panama treaty costs would be minuscule compared to such a pricetag, not to mention the possible macabre after-effects.

Gasoline rationing is repugnant to Americans, but an emergency and equitable standby system should be created if the situation gets worse, and indeed it will.

Rationing, however difficult to administer, is the fairest system. Symms says to let the free enterprise, or "profit-and-loss" system operate, but this hardly applies if the gasoline is far short of demand. It would mean in Church's own words, "violence at the pumps."

These then are some of the emotional issues to be argued in the 1980 campaign.