

Boise State

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It Has Proven Detrimental

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The silly argument centering on officially designating the University of Idaho at Moscow as a senior institution — which it is anyway in fact as well as in name — only underscores the folly of the Idaho Legislature placing Boise State College in the higher education system some eight years ago.

This writer had forecast the step was one of the most detrimental ever taken by the legislators and would precipitate an increasingly bitter fight on higher education funding. The present argument on senior status is only one small chapter of a volume of acrimonious squabbling to follow.

This is casting no opprobrium on BSC, except that the U of I. and Idaho State University were long established four-year state institutions long before BSC came on the scene.

As has been repeatedly proven, Idaho with its present population can only support two institutions of higher learning, not three.

The only remedy, perhaps, is when Idaho's population exceeds a million and when its tax base correspondingly expands.

Perhaps the U of I should have been located at Boise in the 1890's but it wasn't and those millions of dollars of buildings can't be moved from Moscow.

Boise's politicians at that time decided to pick the Idaho State Prison instead of the state university, a grievous mistake that Boiseans must now suffer.

BSC's educational quality now suffers because of lack of funds and adequate buildings. The Boise legislators, despite representing the largest population center in the state, face the combined opposition

of most of the remainder of the state in attempting to promote its college and other Boise-oriented ventures. East and North Idaho join up in opposition frequently in these petty regional jealousies.

Every neighboring state has only two major state universities, all of them of much larger size than Idaho except Montana, which is about the same size, and Wyoming, which has only one state university.

In many cases, the large state universities are not located in the large population center. In Oregon, the major universities are located at the comparatively small communities at Salem and Corvallis, not Portland; in Washington State, WSU is situated at Pullman, only nine miles from Moscow; in Colorado, at Ft. Collins and Boulder, not Denver; in Wyoming, at Laramie, not Cheyenne.

The plan proposed by Milton Small, director of Higher Education, would designate the U of I as the primary research center among the four institutions of higher learning. On the face of it, it would place U of I at top, with ISU and BSC in the second level, and the fourth institution, Lewis-Clark State College at Lewiston, at a third level. His plan is commendable and based on historical and factual realities.

ISU President Dr. William E. (Bud) Davis objects to the plan, as can be expected; likely Dr. John Barnes, President of BSC, has the same feeling.

Even Gov. Cecil D. Andrus jumps into this sensitive area and indicates opposition, terming the Small proposal "as one man's plan." He describes the plan as one smacking of a one university (chancellor) system which he opposes.

Yet, such states as California and Texas, two of the largest and most

progressive, have this system. Under such, the institutions would be named as the University of Idaho at Moscow, University of Idaho at Pocatello and University Of Idaho at Boise — and it may come to pass some day.

There were a few legislative votes from east Idaho that helped to get BSC on the higher education system, such as former State Sen. Orval Hansen, R-Idaho Falls, now a congressman and a U of I graduate; and former State Reps. Pat K. Harwood, R-Rigby, now a J.R. Simplot executive at Caldwell and who is eying the lieutenant governorship.

Even Dr. Ernest Hartung, U of I president, offered no objection, saying at that time a financial formula had been devised that would assure the U of I with adequate funding.

His naive assessment has caused him since to change his mind. The Boise legislators said they only wanted BSC to be on the higher education system, that funds would not be needed immediately. Many of the legislators bought this foolish pledge.

Of course, the Boise legislators asked for substantial state funds the following session and have been clamoring for increased appropriation even since, as can be expected.

Both ISU and BSC fear the senior status for the U of I will limit their growth and place them in a secondary status. ISU is really the innocent sufferer.

Such is the dilemma brought about by BSC's early admittance and the entire state is now suffering. In fact, BSC is primarily a Boise Valley college, drawing comparatively few students from other sections of the state. Yet the remainder of the state helps support it, thanks to the short-sighted legislature of eight years ago.