

Boise State Status Seen As Most Explosive Issue

By Ben J. Plastino
Post-Register Staff Writer

Potentially the most explosive issue and which already has brought ramifications before the Idaho Legislature's 40th session has even started is the size of funding for Boise State College.

Perhaps it may not reach a bitter open floor fight but already it has become an argumentative point which only has created sectionalism, rather than partisanship at the State Capitol.

* * *

The impending controversy was touched off last August when the Boise Chamber of Commerce directors, some of them Ada County legislators, recommended that the 1969 Legislature appropriate \$23 million for Boise State, \$17 million for Idaho State and \$12 million for the University of Idaho.

However, the State Board of Education has recommended \$23.1 million be appropriated to the U. of I., \$15.4 million to Idaho State and \$9.26 million to Boise State. This recommendation, incidentally, is largely endorsed by Gov. Donald W. Samuelson.

* * *

The startling demands of the Boise chamber shocked most Idaho legislators from other sections of the state. It brought a tacit unity, particularly between East and North Idaho legislators, irrespective of party affiliations.

What brought perhaps the most disillusionment was the vow in the last Legislature by the Ada lawmakers that if Boise State were placed on the higher education system they would make no undue demands for funds.

Going back to the 39th session, the Boise legislators also promised some East Idaho and North Idaho support for the two major universities in return for votes to place Boise State on the higher education system. They even got such legislators as State Sen. Thomas McAteer and State Rep. Darrell V. Manning, both of Pocatello, home of ISU, to vote for Boise State, amazing as this may sound.

* * *

Behind the scene, the Boise legislators played it smart. They concocted what many now know was a pseudo proposal for establishing a medical school in Boise. Then in supposed compromise, they agreed to drop their demands for this medical school in favor of getting Boise State on the higher education system.

Dec. 15 1968

Koch, of Boise, announced first his intention to seek the speaker of the House from State Rep. William Lanting, and if he could not get that, then the House majority leader slot.

He got neither.

In fact, all of the Boise legislators were denied any leadership spot but they were given some committee chairmanships.

Koch was retained as hold-over chairman for House State Affairs, State Rep. Jay L. Webb, Boise, heads the Insurance Banking and Public Utilities, and State Rep. Rudy Anderson, is chairman of Health and Welfare.

The most important chairmanships went to State Rep. R. Cobbs, R-Boise, in education and to State Sen. Fred Bagley, Boise, also Senate Education Committee. It's in these two committees where fireworks may occur.

The only other Boise legislators to win a chairmanship were State Sens. Wayne Kidwell, local government and taxation, and Dean Summers, Public Health and Welfare.

* * *

Ada County has only 10 representatives and five state senators of the 70 state representatives and only five of 35 state senators in the legislature. Their strength then hardly justified their flamboyant demands because many other Southwest Idaho lawmakers hardly see eye to eye with the Boiseans.

* * *

One East Idaho state representative, Ralph Litton, D-St. Anthony, has told friends he plans to introduce a bill to kick Boise State out of the higher education system. Most observers and veteran legislators don't believe it will succeed; yet, if tempers get hot, who knows what might happen.

It reflects graphically the mood of many legislators on this sensitive issue.

* * *

As result of this sectionalism battle, all the legislators of the so-called rural counties were winners in the leadership fight. They are loosely referred to as the "cowboys," "sirloin steak" legislators, or what have you.

In East Idaho, the two top plums went to State Rep. Terry L. Crapo, Idaho Falls, House majority leader; and State Sen. James Ellsworth, Leadore in Lemhi County, Senate president pro tem.

Also winning key chairmanships in the upper chamber were Sens. John Andreason,

Aden Hyde, Idaho Falls, printing and legislative expenses.

* * *

There were several byplays during the pre-legislative session.

The highly partisan one was over allowing members of the joint appropriation committee to tour state institutions before the session starts to get a first hand look in helping them to consider budgetary funding. It finally won 36-29 with a half dozen crossing party lines on each side of the aisle.

Democrats argued it set a dangerous precedence and was not necessary anyway, but Republicans contended it would save time during the regular session so that the law making machine would not be stymied with 22 legislators gone for several days.

* * *

There were several other sideshows during the pre-legislative session a week ago.

In one, state Rep. Helen McKinney, R-Salmon, in a House Republican caucus won almost unanimous consent (one dissented) to retain her three-term seniority but she was deprived of vice chairman of the powerful House Appropriations Committee.

She is the legislator who accomplished the rare feat of suffering a narrow defeat in the primaries then won on a write-in in the general against Piersa Piva.

Leaders say they have no vice chairman in other committees so why should she have one. The situation behind the scene is that she is accepted to full party stature but her influence among the party chieftains has waned.

Thus the preliminary skirmishes have been waged for the big one ahead.