

Exon cites experience in quest for Senate

By Jeff Goodwin

Despite President Reagan's popularity in Nebraska, U.S. Sen. J. James Exon does not think that popularity will have any effect on the senatorial contest.

"That's what they (the Republicans) say and that's what they hope," Exon said. "But the voters have had their chance to express their opinion on James Exon a lot more than they've had to express their opinion of Ronald Reagan. I've done well with them. I think the coat tails effect will be negligible."

Exon, who was elected in 1978 after serving two terms as governor said his experience as governor and senator give him an insight on problems that none of his Republican opponents can match.

"I have the seniority, the experience, and the background to represent Nebraska in the U.S. Senate," he said. "I don't think the people of Nebraska want someone who will be a rubber stamp for the president. I think they know that I represent Nebraska's interests first."

Exon said he is concerned about the administration's policy in Central America.

"I'm worried about it," he said. "I don't think we

have clearly defined our goals there. I think covert operations, such as the mining of Nicaragua's ports, don't make any significant contribution to the problems of that region. The problems are basically the results of poverty and military dictatorships that a succession of presidents, both Republican and Democratic, have backed."

Exon said he favored economic aid for some of the countries in the region, including El Salvador. He also said he favors making that aid conditional on an improvement in human rights in El Salvador.

"I don't think there's any question that if they're going to accept our aid, they should do away with their death squads," he said.

Exon also cautioned against a military solution to the problem.

"If we think we can bring our will to bear there by a massive influx of arms, we're going to be proven wrong," he said.

Exon stopped short of predicting U.S. military intervention in Central America.

"I just say that we have the beginnings of an American expeditionary force in Honduras today."

Exon defended the president when he responded

to a charge Sen. Edward Kennedy, leveled at Reagan last week, charging that Reagan had violated the War Powers Act.

"I don't believe the president has violated the War Powers Act," Exon said. "I believe he's within his rights."

Exon said he supports the idea of a constitutional amendment to balance the budget, as well as a line item veto for the president, but he said these are not cures for the problem.

"A balanced budget through a constitutional amendment isn't going to be the solution," he said. "We still have to have a sound economic policy."

Exon said he was opposed to the nuclear freeze.

"I think it's well-intentioned, but I think passage of a nuclear freeze would be interpreted by the Soviet Union as a sign of weakness," Exon said.

Exon, who has no opposition in the Democratic primary, will face the winner of the Republican primary in the fall election.

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