

State Senate GOP Revolts And Picks a New Leader

By Mike Layton
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OLYMPIA — Senate Republicans yesterday revolted and threw out their top leader, Sen. Jim Matson, Selah, and replaced him with Sen. Jeanette Hayner, Walla Walla.

Also deposed in a long - rumored but still surprising move was Sen. Charles Newschwander, Tacoma, who was replaced as caucus chairman by Sen. George Scott, Seattle.

A third leader in a new position as

“executive chairman will be Sen. Bob Lewis of Spokane.

“This is the kickoff of the 1980 (election) campaign,” said Hayner, 59, a tough, conservative lawyer who becomes the first woman in state history to hold a top legislative leadership post.

She and Scott and Lewis said they will emphasize a “team approach” to Republican affairs in the Senate.

Although they all refused to criticize Matson or Newschwander, Hayner said Senate Republicans want

“better communication with the House Republicans.”

And Scott said that although House Republicans gained from a minority position with House Democrats in the last election, “We (Senate Republicans) dropped one member.”

Hayner rejected a suggestion that she might be called “the Margaret Thatcher of Washington.”

“She’s unique,” Hayner said with a laugh. Margaret Thatcher is the first

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JEANNETTE HAYNER



GEORGE SCOTT



R.H. LEWIS

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woman prime minister of England.

Hayner said Republicans, now outnumbered 30-19 by Democrats in the Senate, intend to take over in the 1980 election when 25 senators — eight Republicans and 17 Democrats — are up for re-election.

"The climate is most favorable for a change of leadership, so Republicans will be a majority," Hayner said. "People are looking for leaders with fiscal responsibility responsibility."

They want to contain their government."

Matson and Newschwander left the Senate shortly after the caucus meeting at which a majority of the 19 Republicans voted to oust them. Neither attended a caucus press conference shortly afterward to announce the changes.

Matson, obviously hard-hit by his sudden unseating, had no comment. "I'll be around tomorrow" was all he would say as he left the Senate floor.

Asked why the change came yesterday, with the end of the session near, Hayner said:

"Many people are very anxious to get out of here."

Senate Majority Leader Gordon Walgren, D-Bremerton, who listened to the press conference at the caucus door, said "the timing is very unfortunate."

Some of the most influential lobbyists from the state's biggest industries and companies were hovering around the Republican leadership offices after the revolt.

"I'm sorry to see that happen to anybody," said Walgren, "Particularly when they're good friends as Charley Newschwander and Jim Matson are."

In response to the Hayner challenge in 1980, Walgren said, "We intend to keep our majority."

Among the hints of dissatisfaction with Matson's leadership was Scott's comment that the new leadership "is agreed that decisions for the caucus not be made by one person or two people independently."

Instead, he said, Republicans will operate under a "team management" system.

Hayner said Newschwander is probably leaving the Senate at any rate. He has been mentioned as a possible appointee to the Republican slot on the state Board of Tax Appeals.

Matson also has told a number of friends that he does not intend to run again. However, legislators frequently say that during the frustrations of a long session and then change their minds.

Newschwander is a dentist in Tacoma. Matson is a Yakima Valley fruit grower.

Lewis and Hayner said the overthrow of Matson and Newschwander did not reflect any philosophical differences. Matson is considered as conservative as any of the three. Neither did it reflect problems on any single bill, Hayner said.

However, Matson has recently been counseling House Republicans to give the Democrats a vote for passage of a budget so the session could end.