

McClure ready for interior committee chairmanship

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U.S. Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, embued by the sweeping Republican election victories that catapulted him into an important committee chairmanship, cautioned Tuesday on any immediate changes.

In a Post-Register telephone interview from his Washington office, he said a number of discussions had been held that assures him chairmanship of the important Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. He also opted to take over as chairman of the subcommittee on appropriations which he said he believes is more important for Idaho than the energy, research and development subcommittee which Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, led.

He said the appropriations subcommittee has a key hand in determining the funding of many projects, including that at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

McClure said as committee chairman he also is ex-officio member of all of the committee's subcommittees.

McClure scotched rumors that Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., might prefer the interior committee chairmanship to that of appropriation.

McClure predicted an upswing in nuclear power development, now that Ronald Reagan assumes the presidency. He said President Carter had consistently opposed the liquid breeder reactor, a program Reagan has warmly endorsed.

The Post-Register The political pulse

A-12

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Wednesday, Nov. 26, 1980

McClure said committee assignments of his newly-elected colleague, Steve Symms, is undecided so far, although efforts are underway to get him spots on the finance and agricultural committees.

McClure said there were 16 new Republican senators elected and there will be a need for discussion on committee assignments. These will depend in large part to committee assignments from the older Republican senators who have the seniority.

"There will be considerable shifting and negotiations on committees among the Republicans and also with the Democrats," said McClure. "The proportion of Republicans and Democrats will be generally followed but it could add a seat or two on some committees for the Republicans but not on others. This has got to be settled."

McClure said he is elated by the election of Symms and feels the two can work closely together on national policies. He said he

and Church cooperated on most state issues but differed widely on national and international matters.

McClure said he likely will go along with Reagan's proposal for abolishing the Department of Education.

McClure said he voted for creation of the department but became disillusioned when it attempted to interfere in local control, such as seeking bilingual programs.

"If Governor Reagan pushes for abolishing of the education department I might well go along," said McClure.

Regarding Reagan's plans for axing the Department of Energy, McClure said he has to reserve judgment.

McClure pointed out the department is now saddled with the many tasks of price regulations and administering many other statutes relating to energy.

"It is my guess this (DOE abolishment) will not come quickly," said McClure. "It is required to administer these programs."

Asked what would happen if it were abolished, McClure said some of the DOE's present responsibilities would need to be parceled out to other departments and federal agencies.

McClure said he voted for the new Synthetics Fuels Corp., and that Reagan will now have a choice to pick new members.

He noted Secretary of Interior Cecil D. Andrus chose not to resign his present position to become a board member but that it is unlikely he will be considered for the position under a Reagan administration.

McClure explained the corporation likely will continue to operate as it is unlikely the Senate and House would take action to abolish the corporation.

In other matters, McClure said he favors an immediate across-the-board tax cut and is desirous but pessimistic it will take place in the current lame duck session; that he will take a key hand in endorsing a number of political appointments within the state and at Washington; and that he feels the election victories will give a new direction for the nation to follow.

McClure said Bonneville County Sheriff Blaine Skinner, who was defeated for re-election, has applied for the position of U.S. marshal for Idaho, and that he is considering it, along with a number of others.

He said the U.S. marshal and U.S. district attorney positions are the two more lucrative ones in Idaho, but there are others, such as federal agency directors.

McClure said there are likely 3,000 political appointments to be filled, from those of cabinet levels on down.

McClure will spend the Thanksgiving holidays with his family in Washington.