

McClure breaks with Church in seeking funds for Symms

By BEN J. PLASTINO

Post-Register political editor

U.S. Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, made what can be considered an open break with his colleague, Democrat Sen. Frank Church, by sending 162,000 letters of campaign solicitation on behalf of Congressman Steve Symms.

It is the first time this writer can remember, in some 35 years on the political scene, that senator from Idaho has taken such an overt move against his senatorial colleague.

In past elections, senators have kept their support for opponents to the incumbent at a low key, mostly restricted strictly to party lines.

McClure did this when Church was challenged by Republicans Bob Smith and George Hansen and, Church lent low key backing when Bud Davis and Dwight Jensen opposed McClure. *

McClure's open break with Church will widen the gap between the two and could bring adverse impact to legislation that affects Idaho.

Relations between the two, although never warm, have been cordial and they have worked closely together on legislation that particularly affects Idaho.

Church, as a senior member of the majority Democratic

Party, holds significant influence in Washington, while the three minority Republicans, McClure, Symms and Hansen, are relegated to the roles of the loyal opposition but with little political punch.

Relations worsened when Church described McClure as the "Arab water boy" in promoting the oil interests, and as a member of the radical right. McClure countered that Church's liberal philosophy is not in keeping with the Idaho and the nation's conservative trend and that he must go.

Their latest break occurred last week over the Wilderness Bill when McClure wanted 35,000 acres in the West Panther

Creek area for Cobalt development and release language for some wilderness area. Church did not agree, and, Church influence prevailed.

The two-and-one-half page letter sent by McClure over his signature to his supporter gives glowing accounts of Symms' abilities, and by inference, downgrades Church

McClure underscores the theme that Symms shares his views to curb rampant inflation on energy; to increase domestic production of oil, minerals and nuclear power; strengthen the national defense; opposing the Panama Canal Treaty and for his agricultural efforts.

McClure then asks for contributions of \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100 and any other amount for Symms.

McClure states that with Symms in the Senate, "the 1980s can be the decade in which we put an end to those 'great society' policy failures of the 60s and 70s that have spent us so deeply into debt, threatened our national security, and left us incapable of dealing with the critical problems of 13 percent inflation, gas lines, increasing taxes and 15 percent interest rates.

"In Idaho we have a choice in 1980 — more of the same or doing our part to bring about the fundamental changes needed in

Washington and in the Senate," he added.

The mailing of the letter is handled by the Symms for Senate Committee, of which Jim Mertz is the chairman, explained Todd Neuswanger, McClure's press secretary.

McClure's break is a calculated risk and he knows of course that he could be subject to an increased challenge when his term expires in 1984.

McClure had only a token challenge on in 1978 when he was opposed by Democrat Jensen, who had little money, party backing and organization. He was a pathetic, lonely figure.

Right now, the nation's philosophical views are definitely on the right, but history shows this can and does change.

The Post-Register

The political pulse

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Idaho Falls, Idaho, Thursday, Dec. 13, 1979

Church will be difficult if not impossible for the future.

McClure also must realize he will lose many Democrats and independents who supported both him and Church.

He may feel a close working relationship with Symms is worth it.

It adds further interest to a senatorial race which already has gained national attention.