Carter affirms INEL support

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U.S. Sen. Frank Church, D-Idaho, Friday released to The Post-Register the full contents of the letter he received from President Jimmy Carter confirming the president's solid support for the Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Program.

Church said the president reponse came in reply to an earlier letter he had sent to the president which said that Congressman Steve Symms and Sen. James McClure, Idaho Republican, had accused him of secretly plotting to abandon the Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor right after the November elections.

Church said the two had based their charge on a staff memorandum they apparently obtained from a classified document which was entitled "Post-International Fuel Cycle Evaluation Implementation of the President's Non-Proliferatiion Policy."

Church said "Congressman Symms and Senator McClure have apparently attempted to twist the facts and build the issue into an election-eve controversy."

The letter Church received from Carter said "throughout my administration I have maintained consistent support for a health, vigorous research and develcpment program for the Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor. A strong LMFBR base program is an essential ingredient of our energy policy for the future.

"I am now committed and I will remain committed to a program which will press ahead with research and development on the LMFBR so that this country will have it available when it becomes economically competitive with other electricity generation technologies.

"Your support for this program in the Senate Energy Committee, and that of the many dedicated and talented people at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory have been crucial to keeping the LMFBR base program strong. I remain committed to providing this program with the resources required to maintain steady program.

"I also look forward to working with you on the decision scheduled to be made early next year on construction of a new breeder facility. As you know, the Department of Energy is continuing to work on a conceptual design study for a new facility and the administration will present its recommendations to the Congress next March.

"Your advise and counsel on this important decision will be especially valuable to me and to your colleagues in the Senate."

Church said he had written the president Thursday asking for Carter's reassurance, adding "I hope that you will confirm my suspicions that Mr. Symms is simplty crying wolf. Anyone who is familiar with my support of nuclear programs in general, and of my support for programs located at the INEL could not possibly suggest that I would agree to support, either publicly or secretly, or permit to occur, any effort to scuttle the program that I believe is essential to the energy security of our country.

"As I have publicly stated on many occasons, and as I have demonstrated in the Senate Energy Committee and on the floor of the Senate, I continue to be among the Senate's strongest supporters of the breeder program."

Bert Carp, assistance assistant to President Carter on domestuc affairs, had advised this writer Thursday of Carter's strong support for the breeder research and development at the INEL. He termed the Symms and McClure action as "election hijinks."