

The national scene . . .

Oh my—Church raps, McClure praises Carter energy program

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A somewhat humorous twist took place last week when Democratic Sen. Frank Church sharply criticized and Republican Sen. James A. McClure generally praised President Carter's energy program.

It's the reverse of what one would expect, but at least it shows that Idaho's two senators are independent.

The views of the two Idaho senators cannot be taken lightly by the Carter Administration as each have tremendous influence.

Both sit on the Senate Natural Resources Committee, which will have the first crack at this legislation. Church is a power among the liberals and moderates, while McClure is influential among the growing conservatives.

McClure, whatever his reasons may be, has been far more realistic than Church in the oil energy situation. McClure has leaned toward the Arabs who, after all, are the big suppliers of this nation's crude oil.

Church's record shows him favoring the Israelis, who have nothing to offer in materialistic sense and receive much of this nation's financial help with little given in return.

Church is particularly angry at the president's decision to lift price controls on domestic oil as another bonanza for the big oil conglomerates to be paid for by the working people. In this respect he is more right than McClure.

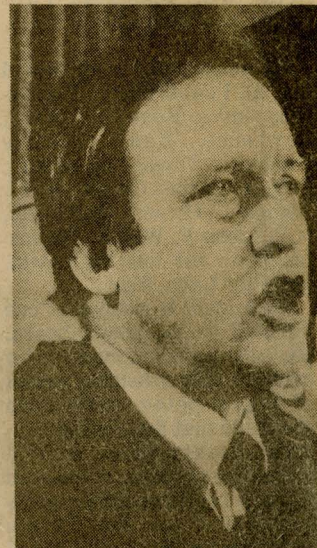
He charges in 1981 when all controls have ended, the oil companies will be earning an extra \$10 billion a year to produce an additional 40,000 barrels of oil a day. This amounts to about \$70 a barrel or \$1.65 per gallon.

McClure sharply disagrees, saying that Carter is moving in the right direction, even though it a small step. He highly praises the action towards decontrol, preferring that it move even faster than Carter proposes.

McClure also commended Carter's call to step up the nearly stagnated development of energy resources from public lands, especially coal and oil.

Church isn't nearly as charitable in the overall Carter program. He said the proposed 50 percent windfall profits tax would recoup only half the windfall, but added the oil lobby influence is so strong, he is doubtful the tax will be approved.

And just to reflect his contempt, he says, "It's just more fudge from the fudge factory," meaning the Department of



AP Laserphotos

Idaho senators

IDAHO'S TWO U.S. senators, Democrat Frank Church, left, and Republican James A. McClure, reversed their usual positions when Church bitterly criticized and McClure highly lauded President Carter's energy program.

Energy.

Both have alternative or supportive legislation.

Church said that for example, this nation would save twice as much fuel as decontrol simply by requiring the oil companies to mix 10 percent alcohol into the gasoline supply, meaning gasohol. Yet, he complains, the president's plan goes no further than calling on federal agencies to purchase gasohol whenever it is available.

"This is doing next to nothing," he said. "If the Department of Energy is depended upon to solve our energy problems, we will wait from now until the next ice age."

Considering the Department of Energy's performance under James Schlesinger so far, he could be right, indeed.

McClure, of course, also warmly supports gasohol.

In answer to Church's complaint about windfall profits

by the oil companies, he suggests it be plowed back into domestic energy production, or heavily taxed. This is highly laudable.

The McClure legislation would tax excess oil company profits at a rate of 90 percent, unless the profits are used for energy production. Excess profits would be those that are higher than the average rate of profit for all other industries.

McClure noted he introduced the same legislation in 1975 and 1977, so it's nothing new for him.

When Rep. Larry P. McDonald, D-Ga., the far right congressman, was in Idaho Falls last Saturday, he also bitterly attacked the Carter program.

He charged Carter's program would only create another layer of bureaucracy of 20,000 to administer it at an eventual cost of \$10 billion.

Sure, he said, oil companies are more interested in oil imports where the rate is \$15 per barrel as compared with \$5 per barrel for domestic supply. He blames this wide discrepancy on the strangling governmental regulations.

Better, he said, to have private industry meet the challenge, rather than the government step in with its vast portfolio of restrictive and confusing regulations.

This then poses the question of whether industry will do this to help the energy program or mainly line its pockets with huge profits.