

McClure anguishes ove

By BEN J. PLASTINO
Post-Register political editor

Idaho's senior senator, soft-spoken James A. McClure, faces the possibility of becoming the leader of the Senate in 1984, but he's not entirely sure he wants it.

The situation developed after Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker announced last month he would not seek re-election in 1984.

"I have mixed emotions about it," said McClure in a Post-Register interview. "It is obvious my primary concern is in doing what I can for the people of Idaho."

McClure said that as chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and a senior member of the Senate Appropriation Committee, he is in position to help in legislation benefiting Idaho.

"However," he said, "I'm seriously considering the possibility (of becoming Senate majority leader). I must balance the considerations. I think my colleagues also must be considered in my making such an effort."

His status as majority leader would shift more of the burden of seeing to Idaho's needs to other members of the state's congressional delegation.

"It would take more of my time to become majority leader," he said. "This is a job of mostly in administering and leading in floor action in the Senate. You must also relate to the non-Senate world. There are lots of demands on your time."

McClure is the Senate majority caucus or conference chairman, the No. 3 position after the majority leader and assistant majority leader.

Another contender for Senate majority leader is Alaska's Ted Stevens, who holds the assistant majority or party whip post.

Others mentioned as leading contenders are Sens. Pete Domenici, New Mexico, chairman of the budget committee; Richard G. Lugar, Indiana, newly elected conference policy chairman; Paul Laxalt, Nevada, also part-time national party chairman; and Robert Dole, Kansas, finance committee chairman.

McClure said Dole, for example, is happier with his power base as Senate Finance Committee chairman. This also may be the case for other chairmen of the more important Senate committees. McClure said Dole has indicated for that reason he possibly would not seek the majority position.

Backs Reagan policies

McClure still clings strongly to the president's economic programs, which could be a major issue of the 1984 campaign.

"I have mixed emotions about it."

McClure, 58, has had a distinguished and varied public career. He is a native of Payette, a law graduate of the University of Idaho, and practiced law in Payette where he was both city and county prosecuting attorney.

He served three terms in the Idaho Senate, advancing to Senate assistant majority leader.

He was elected to the U.S. House in 1966, and to the U.S. Senate in 1972. That was after a bitter primary fight against four opponents, including Rep. George Hansen, and a tight general election battle against Bud Davis, then the Idaho State University president. Davis soon after left to become president of the University of New Mexico and is now chancellor at the University of Oregon.

Last month, McClure was re-elected to a second term as chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. He is also chairman of the appropriations subcommittee on interior and related agencies.

McClure says Republicans aren't defecting from Reagan's policies but only differ with some of his specific programs.

He said he differed with Reagan and his colleague, Sen. Steve Symms, on the nickel-a-gallon federal gas tax hike but this should not be interpreted as meaning he is abandoning the administration.

McClure said the real blame for the nation's economic ills rest with a Congress that refuses to cut spending.

McClure said he opposes the \$169 million plan promoted by Reagan to save the beleaguered Social Security plan and has not made up his mind on the present Social Security reform because he feels it will be drastically revised.

"A good many people have paid in good faith into that program, and that's a promise that must be kept," he said.

Notes progress

McClure asserted spiralling inflation has been checked and interest rates are coming down, but Reaganomics hasn't even gone into action yet.

He insisted there is optimism that the recession is coming to an end but acknowledged the federal deficit could strangle it.

On defense, McClure said he feels all branches of the military should pay enough to attract personnel, thus indicating opposition to Selective Service.

McClure said he still expects Reagan to run for re-election in 1984.

McClure also reiterated strong support for getting the \$4 billion dollar New Production Reactor located at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory.

"The opportunity to provide additional jobs and add to the state's economy is a sufficient reason to try to get that reactor located in Idaho," he said.

McClure has accumulated a long list of achievements since he began serving in the Senate, particularly as chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

Some of his major legislative efforts and accomplishments in the 97th Congress include the landmark Reclamation Reform Act, increasing ownership limitation for irrigation from federal water, Standby Petroleum Allocation Act to provide a mechanism to allocate fuel supplies during emergencies, National Nuclear Waste Policy Act for permanent storage of radioactive waste, Payment-in-lieu-Taxes legislation to retain federal funding for local governments, and Strategic Minerals Production Incentives to encourage production of certain strategic materials.

Other achievements

Others topping the list include legislation for public land sales to specify what lands are to be sold; Reclamation Emergency Fund Act extending the coverage of the emergency fund to all federal reclamation projects; Oil and Gas Conservation for an extension of the Interstate Compact to conserve oil and gas; Lacey Act Amendments for reasonable protection of endangered species; law and order protection to help control crime; and Reconciliation Act on federal spending.

Also of major import are the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to reduce the nation's vulnerability by requiring the government to make plans to cope for disruption in its oil supply; hydroelectric power for development of additional generating capacity at Palisades, Minidoka and Anderson Ranch dams; power pricing study to increasing charges for power from federal dams; authorizing several placer creek projects; eliminating requirement of bilingual education; and killing proposed federal land users fee.

Others include student financial aid programs, Health and Human Services regulations on laboratory personnel, Amtrak revenue diversification program, balanced budget amendment, killing Federal Trade Commission proposed used car rule which

The Post-Register The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Sunday, February 13, 1983

A-7

r majority leadership

would have added to cost on used cars, and leading the movement for televising proceedings of the U.S. Senate.

Other projects include Johnny Sack Cabin in Island Park established as a historic landmark, Safety of Dam Acts to repair several Idaho dams, guaranteeing completion and final testing of the Raft River geothermal power generating project, transferring

45,000 acres of summer rangeland to the Idaho Sheep Experiment Station at Dubois, continuing LOFT testing through April 1983; approval of additional Trade Adjustment Assistance for jobless workers at Bunker Hill Mine, provide \$3 million for improving Highway 93 near Marsing, and helping enact an Interior appropriations bill.



Post-Register/Robert Brower

Changing of the guard?

SENATE MAJORITY Leader Howard Baker, R-Tenn., left, is shown with Sen. James A. McClure, R-Idaho, now the Senate majority caucus chairman, during an Idaho

Falls press conference in 1981. McClure is now prominently mentioned to replace Baker, who recently announced he would not seek re-election.