

Will McCall run again?

Former Gov. Tom McCall says he may be "forced" to seek office again if his successor in the governor's chair doesn't improve his performance.

During his two terms as governor, McCall delighted in torturing Sens. Bob Packwood and Mark Hatfield by threatening to run against them.

The potential of a McCall challenge was somewhat more significant for Hatfield and Packwood than it is to Gov. Bob Straub. That's because Straub is a Democrat and the other three are Republicans.

Republicans were reluctant to move too quickly to support Hatfield and Packwood as long as McCall was a possible contender. That complicated campaign organizing and fund raising within the party for the two Republicans.

Straub doesn't have that problem. As a Democrat, Straub knows he'll get opposition from some Republican if he decides to seek re-election in 1978. At least he wouldn't have to speculate on what kind of campaign his opponent would be running. After two defeats at McCall's hands, even Straub ought to be able to figure out what he'd be up against.

At this point, however, I wouldn't be surprised if Straub decided not to seek re-election. I concede that McCall's administration would have been a tough act for anyone to follow. But Straub has not even come close in two years to getting his act together. He is presiding over the poorest administration in my memory, and there is no indication it's going to improve in the next two years.

The Straub operation is so fumbling, bumbling and inept that it has become a joke in many quarters. Before Straub



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was elected governor, I thought he was a bright guy with lots of drive and a closet full of programs to help guide Oregon through the last half of the '70s.

He may be bright. But if he is, he's done a superb job of disguising his intellect. In public appearances, his responses to questions and his comments are so clumsy it's embarrassing to realize that he's Oregon's chief executive. And his drive seems to be limited to traveling around the state holding "town hall" meetings to discuss issues, many of which he obviously doesn't understand.

The saddest aspect of the Straub administration is that he has brought some very good people into state government. But Straub has undermined their potential effectiveness by his lack of organization, poor communications with key people, including members of his own staff, and his failure or inability to articulate a coherent approach to state government.

I don't know if McCall is serious about a run for the statehouse. And I don't know if he'd succeed if he decided to bid for his old job. But his prodding of Straub can't do any harm, and it might convince Straub to try harder to disprove this joke that's been making the rounds of state offices:

"Straub is a 40-watt governor in a 100-watt state with nightlights for assistants."

Overstated?

It is, certainly, as it applies to Ed Sullivan, the governor's legal adviser, and a few others. But there's enough truth in it to make Straub look — at midway in his term — as the easiest figure in Oregon politics to put in the unemployment line in 1978.

FORMER OREGON Secretary of State Howell Appling Jr. is chairman of a group calling itself the Oregonians Against the Ban on Nuclear Energy. The organization was created by business and labor to oppose Ballot Measure No. 9, the proposed nuclear "safeguards" law that will be on the Nov. 2 general election ballot.

I've known Appling for a lot of years and we share a tendency to state our views rather bluntly, a characteristic that is an offense to many.

As chief shill of the pro-nuclear power folk, Appling is ideal. He does not speak softly while hiding a big stick behind his back. He speaks very loudly and swings his verbal clubs with all his might.

Appling says Measure 9 really is a ban on nuclear power disguised as a safety law. He says, for example, that the measure would require a two-thirds vote of the legislature guaranteeing that no radioactive material would escape into the environment from nuclear waste storage facilities as a result of war or an act of God.

No one, says Appling, can guarantee against an act of God, "not even the Oregon Legislature."

Perhaps not, Mr. Appling, but they built the Capitol Wings, didn't they?

Tom the teaser *W.M.*

As Henry Willis wrote in his column Sunday, Tom McCall is still holding out the idea that he might run for governor in 1978. The Constitution forced him to quit after two terms, but, after one term out of office, he could run again. This is not the sort of possibility that does Gov. Bob Straub's stomach any good.

The former governor has refused to come out in support of President Ford and has praised Jimmy Carter's position on the environment. That is not likely to endear him to Republicans in a primary against a loyal party member like Sen. Victor Atiyeh.

That leaves the option of running as an independent. An independent made it in 1930, but under conditions quite unlike anything we're likely to see in 1978.

Another possibility exists: Tom is having fun. He has at various times scared the daylights out of Wayne Morse, Mark Hatfield and Bob Packwood by threatening to run for the Senate. Why spare Bob Straub?