

McGovern wants power of the presidency in 1972

WASHINGTON (AP)—Sen. George McGovern, impelled by what he calls the frustration of powerlessness in the Senate, will soon become the first man to declare for the presidency in 1972. But there may be political frustration ahead as McGovern begins an open campaign to overcome the lead he concedes Sen. Edmund S. Muskie holds over a crowded field of Democratic prospects.

When the South Dakota senator makes the official declaration next month, it will be but a formality. For more than a year he has waged an obvious if unannounced drive for the 1972 nomination.

"We've been working for over a year now, trying to see whether there was a basis for a candidacy," McGovern said in an interview. "I'm pretty well convinced there is."

It is a small one. One national poll ranks McGovern seventh on a list of eight potential candidates, the choice of two per cent of rank-and-file Democrats.

But the 48-year-old senator insists he can overcome the long odds. "I'm inclined to discount the polls at this point," he says. "All they do is give an indication of what your recognition factor is."

That indication can hardly be heartening.

But, McGovern says, once he declares for the nomination a nationwide cadre will rally to him.

"What I'm told is that if I'm serious about running, they'll be serious about supporting me."

He goes on: "My chances of getting the nomination depend on working on it over a long period of time. I don't think anyone is going to get it handed to him this time."

Compared to his most formidable prospective rivals—Muskie, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, Hubert H. Humphrey—McGovern is little known, and he concedes he has an educational job in front of him to make his views known to the country.

And, because of his small recognition factor, the presidential primaries loom particularly important to McGovern. He needs

a strong showing to prove he can win, and to attract support from the professional Democrats, now lining up with Muskie.

"I'm going into a number of primaries, but I haven't decided which ones," McGovern says. "If you can't do well in a number of primaries, you can't do well in the fall."

The first primary is in New Hampshire—solid Muskie territory. McGovern does not rule out a New Hampshire race, but says he would not expect to win there.

There is political peril in that, for if McGovern enters, Muskie would have someone to run against, and almost certainly someone to defeat. And that

would make New Hampshire a far more valuable prize.

With all of these factors a high wall against his chances why does he bother?

"I suppose the thing that impels me to be a candidate," he says, "is that I just can't take the frustration any longer of sitting there in the Senate where you can see the mistakes that our national leadership is making, but are powerless to do very much about it."

"I have no trouble at all understanding the sense of frustration and powerlessness that afflicts citizens across the country because I feel the same sense of it through these continuing policies that are weakening the nation, and I feel unable to do something about it."

"The chance to do something about it is in the presidency," McGovern says.

McGovern also claims he can do a better job than other prospective candidates in sharpening and defining the issues for the run against President Nixon.

For a decade, he says, he has been speaking "more accurately and more prophetically" about Southeast Asia than his rivals, as well as about the problems at home.

McGovern says the Vietnam war remains "the transcendent issue in American politics today."



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