

Mayor Turns Down Job As D. C. Executive

By Adam Spiegel

Mayor McKeldin today confirmed rumors from Washington that President Johnson offered him the job of chief commissioner of the reorganized District of Columbia government and that he turned it down.

The 67-year-old Republican said he preferred not to give details of the offer, but indicated that he was queried about the post two days ago.

"I am 67 years old and that's a little too much for that job," the Mayor said. "If I were a younger man it would be a wonderful opportunity for me."

He said he has virtually reached a decision on his career after leaving office in December and will almost certainly remain in Baltimore. He declined to elaborate.

The post offered Mr. McKeldin is the sole executive position in a proposed District government that includes a nine-member city council appointed by the President and subject to confirmation by the Senate.

His powers would be comparable to those of a big city mayor.

Under the plan, the single commissioner would have authority to veto actions of the council with which he disagrees.

Acts As City Council

Congress, which now acts as city council for the capital, would continue to exercise most of its present powers.

The Mayor acknowledged that his success thus far in piloting Baltimore to a summer without racial violence undoubtedly was a factor in getting the offer.

He said he believed several other mayors had been contacted but refused to divulge their names.

Mr. McKeldin is known to be a close friend of President Johnson and has received repeated job feelers in the past for posts in Washington.

In each case he turned them down, explaining that his desire is to remain in Baltimore.

Endorsed Johnson

The Mayor was one of the handful of Republicans to openly endorse President Johnson in the 1964 presidential election.

He has journeyed to the White House on numerous occasions

since then to confer and meet with President Johnson on various matters.

Mr. McKeldin said he rejected the latest offer after weighing the situation and concluding that he would be more effective here than in Washington.

Washington's Negro population is presently estimated at well over 50 per cent, compared to Baltimore's estimated Negro population of 40 per cent.

The Republican chief executive has been vigorous in efforts to secure more jobs for unemployed poverty dwellers here.

1,000 Jobs

More than 1,000 jobs have been opened for city residents in the past two months.

Mr. McKeldin is concluding his second term as Mayor, having served from 1946 to 1950.

He declined to run again on grounds that his tax program and strong advocacy of civil rights had alienated important voter support, making reelection extremely difficult.