

Theodore Roosevelt McKeldin is an ambitious man whose ambitions are no longer taken lightly.

In an election year in which he is, by law, out of any declared race for office, his movements are being watched with hawk-eyed interest and awe. And for good reason. Once again, McKeldin is planning a big move.

As always, McKeldin planning is long range planning. Back in the early forties, it was his "Sunday-go-to-meeting" tours of the Eastern Shore and tucked-away places that created the groundswell that rode him up and out of Baltimore's City Hall to the Governor's Mansion. It was his early elbowing to be in close to the Eisenhower promoters that won him the nominating spot in Chicago in 1952 and gave him brief national glory.

Not all the best-laid plans of McKeldin and his men have blossomed in what seemed fertile soil. The White House door, opened just a crack for the big McKeldin shoe, slammed full shut on the McKeldin kneecap. The high federal post, so passionately desired, was coldly rejected. For a breathless month or two, it appeared as if the Ike-Mac romance was ended.

The so-sweet switch for the Senate seat of Glenn Beall, so avidly pursued, was so flatly rejected that wide cracks began to develop within the Republican ranks. The blow hit hard and still hurts.

But Theodore Roosevelt has come a long way, the hard way. These discouragements are but a spur to greater and more tactful efforts.

At the moment, these efforts are being exerted to nominate the hero of the piece to the Vice-Presidency of the United States.

McKeldin has had this grand thought before. During the 1956 adventure in San Francisco there were a few fantastic hours when McKeldin for Vice-President buttons were not laughed at. McKeldin admirers were swept up in a heady fling, during which they freely threatened to submit their man in nomination should the anti-Nixon tide surge forward. This small traveling tent show soon folded. There was nothing left of it when proceedings got underway at the Cow Palace. But the name McKeldin and the title, Vice President, had been rubbed together. To Teddy McKeldin, they seemed to rub smoothly and well.

No one has ever used the old adage, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em. . ." to greater advantage than Governor McKeldin. Realizing that he could never really beat the Democratic Party in Maryland, McKeldin joined them. He retained the label and the registration of the opposition, managed to win himself two cushy terms as Chief Executive.

Having failed to defeat Senator Beall in a bid to gain a Senate seat, McKeldin joined in promoting him for another round.

Having failed in a weak pass at the Nixon stronghold, McKeldin has now joined the Nixon ranks. His agents, have for some time, been quietly peddling the McKeldin virtues to the Nixon campaign managers. They have some solid political virtues to sell.

Their man is an orator. This skill is nationally known. It led orator McKeldin to becoming author McKeldin, imparting his golden voiced secrets to others less gifted. At home, some of the old stories may wear thin and the startling style may not startle jaded ears. On the road the combination is still devastating.

McKeldin is the winner of national acclaim and award for his service to racial and religious minority groups whose support and money would be essential to the Nixon campaign.

His stewardship as a border state Governor has been marked by rare freedom from racial tension during a delicate period. This gives him a rare advantage over other politicians, well-scarred by the integration wars.

His Republicanism has been modern enough to be fashion-

able but not so extreme as to alienate the entire right (rear) guard. His local record of Democratic appointments, while involving him in some bitter, inter-party feuds in Maryland, would be considered an asset to a national campaign, dependent on wooing Democratic voters to gain a victory.

His natural talent for campaigning, his boyish enthusiasm, would attract him to Nixon people looking for a topflight showman to peddle a product that doesn't have the shine and the luster it did in '52 and '56.

His Eastern seaboard position complements the West Coast background of Dick Nixon.

All this has been said before, again and again in every Nixon strategy session, at every opportunity. What's more, the strategists are listening. They like much of what they hear. They have not committed themselves. It's much too early for that. But they are not turning the McKeldin advance men away from their door.

There are a few doors to open between here and Washington and McKeldin has yet to find all the keys. He must maneuver through the upcoming state-wide elections without any damaging entanglements. He must ease himself back into City Hall without touching off a potential political powderkeg, centering around President of the City Council. He must be ever ready when the golden trumpet sounds the call to the Glory Road.

—GREG HALPIN