

Levin paints leftist image with rightist highlights

By TIM RICHARD

Carl Levin is careful to use the word "no" as often as "yes."

The Democratic U.S. Senate nominee talks like a conservative Republican when the topic is the growing power of the federal administration. But he's still a liberal on "real" tax reform, federal medical care and public works spending.

The 43-year-old attorney and eight-year veteran of the Detroit Common Council paused between speaking engagements last week to answer questions from Observer & Eccentric Newspapers editors. The questions had earlier been put to incumbent Republican Sen. Robert Griffin.

LEVIN INSISTED on turning a discussion about public transportation in southeast Michigan into a total transportation discussion covering the entire state.

"I'm for a complete statewide improvement of the transportation system," he said. "It must be comprehensive. It should benefit everybody."

Levin cited roads, bridges, ferries,

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—Carl Levin



CARL LEVIN
"No" on bureaucracy

buses and rapid transit. The original question had been only on rapid transit. The Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority is pondering alternative plans (some involving underground rail lines) with \$1 billion price tags. But SEMTA has only \$600

million in federal funds committed and will get only \$200 million more from state-local sources. Would Levin support the bill of Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.) to fund more transit? "I won't commit to any fixed amount in billions," Levin said, adding he would want to view transit funding in the total context of the federal budget.

THE ANSWER was yes on federal funding of K-12 schools. "It's a valid goal, a good goal," he said of a National Education Association proposal that the U.S. should

fund one-third of the cost of local K-12 schooling. At present, the federal share of local school budgets is in the 5-10 per cent range, mostly for special-education programs.

Federal funding, he said, "would take pressure off the property tax." Levin added he favors the Handley (Proposal E) tax limitation plan on the Nov. 7 ballot but opposes the Tsuchi cut (J) and the voucher plan (H).

Levin wasn't bothered, as Griffin had been, by the prospect of the federal government using public works money to build city halls and community buildings in the suburbs or anywhere else.

"Those were counter-cyclical projects," he said of the late 1976 public works grants. "The suburbs were hit by high unemployment, too. These projects were aimed at those areas."

"But that recent pork barrel bill was bad. President Carter was right to veto it."

LEVIN GETS most excited when the topic is the federal bureaucracy. He deplores "red tape and waste" in general and names names when asked to be specific.

• Housing and Urban Development—"a catastrophe." He cited HUD rules governing a system of mortgage loans in which HUD said it wouldn't implement the program until the national rate of defaults on mortgages hit a key "trigger point." Levin likened the HUD rule to "refusing to do anything about flooding in Boston

because until the rest of the East Coast is flooded too."

• HUD again—its insistence on combining low-income family housing with senior citizen housing. "There's nothing in the law that says one (senior citizen housing) can be held hostage to the other (low income)," Levin said. (Many suburban senior citizen housing projects are in limbo because of HUD's insistence that low-income family housing be added.)

• CETA, the Comprehensive Employment Training Act—"It's being used to destroy seniority." Levin cited Genesee County and the City of Detroit, both of which were told to hire new employees with CETA funds rather than recall experienced senior employees who had been laid off.

• Department of Transportation—requirement that any bridge for a federal highway be at least three lanes. This administrative ruling is upsetting Bay City because a three-lane bridge would require a longer span that would bypass business areas.

• Federal timetables—the City of Detroit needs a water treatment plant but was unable to file its application for federal funds because of a time limit. So Menominee went after and got federal funding for a city hall "which it didn't need as much as it needed a water works."

Levin's solution to all the problems is to have Congress approve—or at least have a chance to veto—all administrative rules and regulations. What's happening now, he said, is that "unaccountable bureaucrats are rewriting the laws of this country" and ignoring the intent of Congress.

WHILE LEVIN sounds much like Griffin on the bureaucracy issue, he would have voted differently on the Panama Canal treaties, both of which Griffin opposed.

"I would have voted yes. So would Griffin if (Republican Congress) Ford had been in the White House. Ford was for the canal treaties. But when Carter was for the treaties, Griffin changed his mind and became a floor leader against them," Levin said.

Levin is running such a strong anti-bureaucracy campaign that he doesn't want help from President Jimmy Carter. "The theme of my campaign is that the legislative branch must re-assess itself. I want to avoid the appearance of being in debt to the president," he said.

But he has no such problems about accepting help from Vice-President Walter Mondale, who made a South field speech for Levin last week, because "Mondale comes out of the legislative branch."

Gasoline tax hikes face bumpy road

By MIKE SCANLON

If you have been waiting to get in your two cents worth on potholes, mark Jan. 1 on the calendar.

That's when the state's nine-cent a gallon gasoline tax is due to be increased to 11 cents. The seven-cent a gallon diesel fuel tax is scheduled to go to nine cents.

However, the boost, approved when Lt. Gov. James J. Dammann broke a 19-19 state senate deadlock, has two roadblocks to clear first. The state Supreme Court is scheduled to deliver an advisory opinion on the constitutionality of Dammann's vote sometime next month, a court official said.

And if a petition drive spearheaded by state senators John Welborn (R-Kalamazoo) and Harry DeMaio (R-Battle Creek) successfully gathers a so far unknown number of petition signatures, the gas tax will take a back burner until voters make their choice in November 1980.

ORGANIZERS OF the petition drive have until March 31 to collect signatures from five per cent of the number of people who vote in this November's election. If the same number vote this year as in the last election for governor, the drive would need about 132,000 signatures.

If 132,000 can't be found, and if the Supreme Court decides Dammann broke no rules in his vote, state villages and municipalities will receive about 21 per cent more in state highway maintenance money next year than they received this year.

Together with license plate fees—which the new law would also increase—gasoline and diesel fuel

taxes are funneled to the state motor vehicle highway fund. Last year, the fund reached \$403 million.

FROM THE FUND, money goes to towns to keep up what the state calls major streets. Such streets are designated because they are supposed to be in use as a way in and out of subdivisions.

Municipalities are allowed to take no more than 25 per cent of the money from the major streets allowance for use on other streets. About a third of the total statewide highway fund is supplied by license tag fees, with the remainder coming from gas and diesel taxes, a state highway official said.

That means the more gasoline people buy in Michigan, the more the fund goes up. Traditionally, the fund increases six per cent a year, reflecting ever-increasing gasoline use. In the past four years—since the 1973 Arab oil embargo—the fund has averaged only a two and a half per cent annual increase, highway officials said.

"When gasoline went up in '74," said one suburban official, "the gas tax didn't go up. That's one reason the streets and highways have tended to slip—they haven't had a revenue source that goes up with inflation. Most taxes do—the gasoline tax doesn't."

The last gasoline tax increase came in 1972, but didn't apply to diesel fuel. A petition drive to stall that hike failed.

The new diesel tax hike is subject to "sunset law" review in October 1979, when the state senate will decide whether to end or continue it.

Hearing on state health plan

A public hearing on the proposed state health plan will be held at 1 p.m. Monday, Nov. 13 in the City-County Building, 13th floor auditorium, downtown.

Various state agencies, local health officials, and professional groups assisted the Statewide Health Coordinating Council and the Office of Health and Medical Affairs write the health plan.

The plan is being developed under the provisions of state and federal acts. The state law provides that the plan "shall serve as the principal guide for the development of state health programs and for the allocation

of resources to health activities in the state."

A copy of the proposed plan is available for public inspection and copying, from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday until Nov. 1 at the metropolitan area Health Systems Agency, 1249 Washington Blvd., Detroit, 48226, 961-6650.



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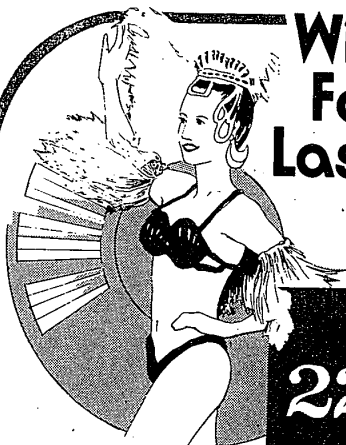
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