

He helped sell Detroit to GOP

By MICHAEL MATUSZEWSKI

The Republican National Convention was in the bag, said Arthur W. Gimson, transplanted Englishman and general manager of the Northfield Hilton in Troy.

"I was confident. I didn't even bet on this outcome because I wouldn't want to steal anybody's money," he said after the GOP decided to bring its delegates to Cobo Hall.

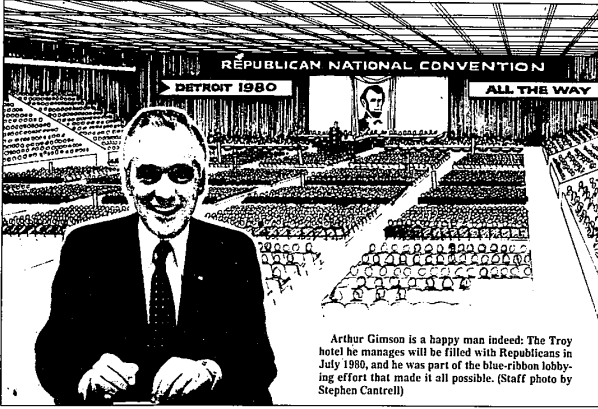
"The weakest odds I thought we had were 60-40," said Gimson, who lives in Rochester.

Gimson had been involved in the efforts to bring the Republicans to Detroit since mid-1978. As secretary-treasurer of the Metropolitan Detroit Hotel Association and chairman of the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau hotel and motel committee, he had traveled to Washington several months ago with 39 state and local governmental, business and labor leaders to lobby the GOP site selection committee.

As general manager of one of Oakland County's largest hotels, Gimson was ecstatic over the GOP's decision. It means the no-vacancy sign will be flashing at the Northfield Hilton and most southeastern Michigan hotels during the middle of July 1980. The Northfield Hilton is already 80 per cent booked for the week-long convention, as are many other Oakland inns.

WHILE THE prospect of attracting 20,000 free-spending delegates and news media personnel would make any businessman sing Detroit's praises, Gimson does it naturally. "Coming from other cities and England," Gimson said, with his accent becoming noticeably more British, "the one thing that disturbs me is that many metropolitan Detroiters really don't know Detroit."

"The bad images are gone. They started to dissipate in the early



Arthur Gimson is a happy man indeed: The Troy hotel he manages will be filled with Republicans in July 1980, and he was part of the blue-ribbon lobbying effort that made it all possible. (Staff photo by Stephen Cantrell)

1970s. The bad images were slowly being put to bed with the announcement of the Renaissance Center and the Joe Louis Sports Arena," he said.

For Gimson, a London native and one-time Detroit resident, Detroit is at the top of his list of American cities. Since being transferred by the Hilton hotel chain from London to Washington in 1965, he has managed hotels in St. Paul, Kansas City and St. Louis.

"St. Paul is beautiful if you can stand six months of winter," he said. As for Kansas City and St. Louis, he said, "That's when I started calling Missouri 'Misery.'"

THOUGH GIMSON had a hand in bringing the convention to the riverfront, he said, much of the credit

goes to local political leaders and the Detroit convention bureau.

The convention bureau did the homework in the presentation (to the site selection committee). In being so confident, I was operating under the assumption that if we had a good presentation and a good product the sale would be made," he said.

"The one thing that many people don't realize," he continued, "is that Detroit is a convention city."

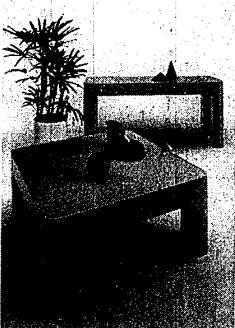
Detroit has everything anybody would ever want for a convention," he said. There have been larger conventions in Detroit, Gimson pointed out. Last year's Shriners convention brought 32,000 persons to Detroit, and some industry conventions have exceeded that figure.

Gimson said the exhibits for the American Mining Convention filled Cobo Hall's exhibit space and Ford Auditorium. "Some exhibits were so big, they had to be displayed out on the riverfront," he said.

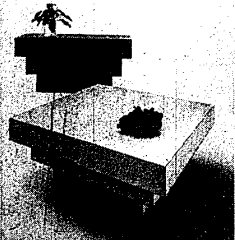
DETROIT MAY be a convention city, but it doesn't rank as one of America's top 10. Local business leaders hope the Republican convention and possibly the Democratic National Convention will be enough to propel Detroit into the big time.

They want to see the Republicans do for Detroit what they did for Kansas City in 1976. Until the Republicans staged their '76 convention there, Kansas City ranked 17th in convention business. After the convention, it jumped to 10th.

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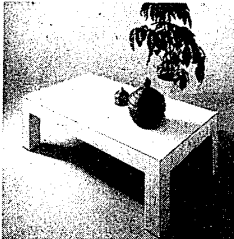


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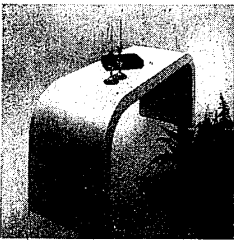


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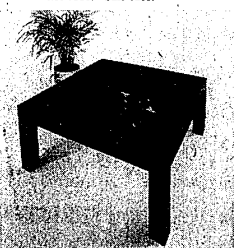
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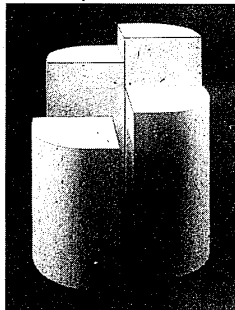
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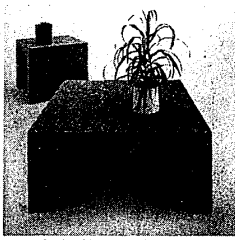
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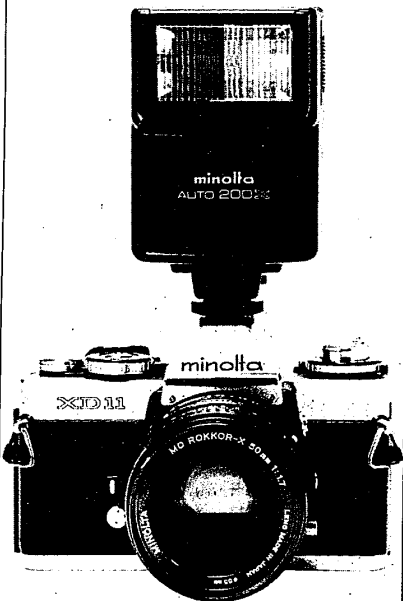
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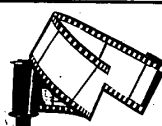


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