

Mild words mask split in state GOP

By TIM RICHARD

If you wanted to hear politicians argue politics, you could have skipped the Republican State Convention in Detroit.

It's not that Republicans don't care about issues. They just didn't want to talk about them much.

For example, only one speaker — from the western side of the state — had anything to say about a resolution calling for repeal of the two cents a gallon gasoline tax increase and like license fees passed by the Michigan Legislature last fall. He was for repeal, contending the money would be wasted on a Detroit subway.

Yet it was apparent that, despite the lack of discussion, party regulars were deeply divided. They voted down the repeal question by a relatively close 779-548.

That meant Gov. William G. Milliken's "balanced transportation package" of money for roads, bridges, airports, shipping ports and public transportation was supported by only 59 percent from within his own party.

Most suburban districts tended to oppose repeal of those taxes. An exception was the 18th Congressional District (including part of Troy), which favored repeal 40-21.

NOT A WORD was said for or against the question of amending the U.S. Constitution to require a balanced federal budget.

Republican delegates in Cobo Hall quietly voted in favor of it, 979-313. Only the 2nd Congressional District — consisting of Livonia, Plymouth, Northville, eastern Washtenaw County and Monroe county — opposed it among suburban districts. The vote was 44-37 against in the 2nd but 69-8 in favor in the 12th District (Rochester and Macomb County) and 71-31 in the 19th (western Oakland).

All suburban districts strongly opposed a question on banning "all contributions for state and local public office other than those made directly by individuals."

State Rep. James Defebaugh (R-Birmingham) argued "it will hurt our party

fair worse than the other party." The convention agreed, 1,092-231.

Much literature was distributed asking a "human life amendment" (anti-abortion) to the U.S. Constitution. It was voted down, 845-403.

The only proposal raised by the issues committee which got convention support called for support of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency and opposed "government constraints being imposed on those agencies." It passed 846-310 without debate.

BY TWO-THIRDS voice votes or more, the convention declined to take up five other issues proposed by individual delegates.

One was the pet of James F. O'Neill, of Livonia. The former State Board of Education member proposed an amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving voters the right to initiate and enact federal laws and constitutional amendments.

Voters have that right in the Michigan Constitution, but only elected officials may pass judgment on federal legislation. And Michigan Republicans didn't want to discuss a change.

Other issues the convention declined to take up called for support of "neighborhood schools" (an anti-bussing ques-

analysis

tion), prohibiting "political gerrymandering" by constitutional amendment, strong lobbying disclosure legislation and a "sunset law" to study dropping state programs.

In decades past, the GOP used to adopt a platform. To avoid long arguments, party leaders dropped that procedure in favor of polling delegates on what it considered significant questions.

Most delegates, however, scoffed at the questions as being simplistic. One example: "Shall Michigan Republicans support the use and construction of nuclear power plants in Michigan?"



State Rep. James Defebaugh (R-Birmingham) took the floor microphone at the GOP state convention to argue against public funding of election campaigns. (Staff photo)

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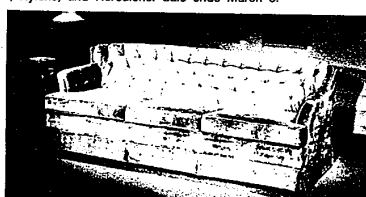
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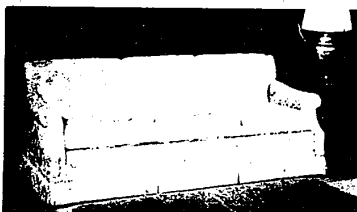
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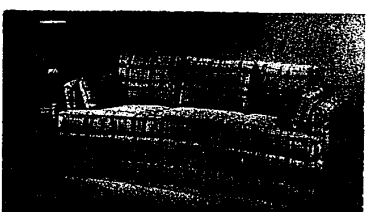
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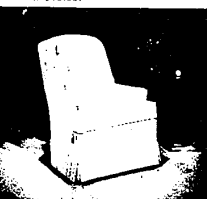


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