

'Open' primary law snags Dems

By TIM RICHARD

A court battle over the Michigan Democratic Party's plan to boycott the May 20 presidential primary could have been avoided if Gov. William Milliken and the Democratic-controlled Legislature had passed a closed primary law, according to a veteran suburban Democratic leader.

Alto Vagnozzi said Michigan and Wisconsin are the only two states with presidential primaries which don't require voters to register by party affiliation.

"People come here from the east and can't understand why we have this tradition of open primaries," said Vagnozzi, a Farmington Hills labor leader and recording secretary of the 17th Congressional District Democratic organization.

In Michigan's open primary, a voter may vote in either party's presidential primary without declaring his/her affiliation. National Democratic Party rules will prevent seating of delegates at the national convention whose election may have been influenced by Republicans. A closed primary would require a voter to register by party affiliation.

THE WAY Michigan Democrats plan to pick their delegates is due to be challenged by Zoltan Ferency, former party chairman now on the faculty of Michigan State University.

To get around the open primary, Democrats plan to boycott the May 20 presidential primary. Delegates will be elected instead at district caucuses beginning at 11 a.m. April 26.

Eligible to attend the caucuses are persons who were elected precinct delegates in 1978, persons who were paid-up (\$10) party members in 1979 and persons who buy 1980 Democratic Party

...as GOP rejects cross-over forecast

Republican leaders are "concerned" but not fearful at the prospect of Democrats crossing over to vote in the GOP presidential preference primary May 20.

Denzil Hammond, state GOP treasurer, and Edward Haroutunian, Wayne County Republican chairman, realize no Democratic candidates will enter that party's primary, and that there's nothing to prevent a crossover.

"Bill Marshall (state AFL-CIO president) has said Reagan would be the easiest Republican to defeat," said Hammond. "But the average thinking Democrat will think twice before crossing over to vote for Reagan if it increases the chance Reagan will become president."

HAROUTUNIAN had another reason for doubting Democrats would cross over.

"To have a cross-over, you have to have strong voter feelings," he said, citing the 1972 election in the mid-

west of the school busing controversy. With President Nixon a shoe-in for renomination, voters had an incentive to jump into the Democratic primary to vote for George Wallace.

Haroutunian sees no strong emotional reason for Democrats to crossover into the May 20 Republican primary. And there's the big question of whom the cross-overs would support in the large field.

The Wayne County chairman said the Republican State Central Committee would likely discuss the situation at its Feb. 1-2 meeting.

"I wish Democratic leaders would go with the will of Democratic voters," said Hammond.

IS THERE any chance Republicans will join Zoltan Ferency's lawsuit to block the caucus system of selecting Democratic national convention delegates?

"I don't know," Hammond said. "I know of people talking about a suit to force Democratic candidates onto the ballot."

in the Republican primary and thus take part twice in the presidential winning process.

VAGNOZZI said he plans to vote in the May 20 primary in order to keep his participation record perfect, but he intends to cast a blank ballot rather than vote for one of the Republican candidates.

"But there's going to be a temptation

to vote in the Republican primary," he said. "The 1972 primary was what soured Democrats on the presidential primary."

That year, Republicans crossed over in droves to give Alabama's George Wallace more than half of the Democratic primary vote. It was a major embarrassment to Michigan's Democratic Party, considered pro-labor, programmatic and liberal in national circles.

Democrats have crossed over and tried the same trick on Republicans, though not on so massive a scale or with the same repercussions. In 1970 there was a crossover in the Republican U.S. Senate primary, and in 1976 a crossover gave Ronald Reagan one-third of the vote in President Gerald Ford's home state.

Normal conservative strength among Michigan Republicans is less than 20 percent, based on state convention voting patterns.

"CARTER HAS pulled out of the presidential primary," Vagnozzi said, "and the state party is urging Kennedy and Brown to pull out, which would mean a blank ballot."

Secretary of State Richard Austin is empowered to designate which candidates are genuine ballot contenders, based on media coverage.

Austin sends each recognized candidate a form which he must either 1) sign to be on the ballot or 2) disqualify himself. Thus, if the three contenders cooperate, none will be on the ballot.

There's also a method for a candidate to get on the ballot by the petition process, Vagnozzi said, but it's cumbersome and unlikely to be used.

If the boycott plan works, Democrats will have picked their national convention delegates two to three weeks prior to the presidential primary.

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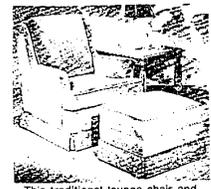
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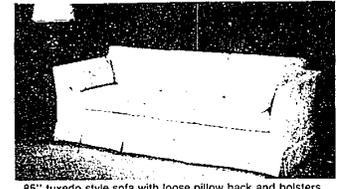
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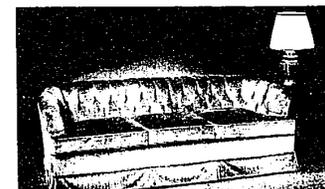
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