

GOP chairman stalks big gain

By TIM RICHARD

"I'm asking county chairmen to list goals. Then we're going after targeted areas."

That is how Republican State Chairman Mel Larsen is starting in his ambition to win a GOP majority by the end of the 1980s.

The state has voted Republican for governor in five straight elections and for president three times in a row. But in the same period the Republican 12-7 congressional majority has flip-flopped into a 13-6 Democratic majority, and the GOP has lost control of both houses of the state legislature.

Larsen, a former three-term state representative from northern Oakland County, told a Livonia Republican Club audience last week how he's going to reverse the tide.

"WE'RE A service organization," Larsen said of the state party setup in Lansing. "You tell us how we can help you."

Among the services will be voter identification, telephone center setups, candidate recruitment and candidate training.

"We're going to put some money into house seats and (State) Supreme Court seats," he said. "It's not the most important thing in the world to elect one person. The most important thing is to elect a team."

That was a new message in a party that has spent big dollars to elect the top of the ticket and left congressional and legislative candidates to fend for themselves.

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SPEAKING OF dollars, Larsen said he was going after businesspeople's contributions.

"Business made a decision 15 years ago to desert the Republican Party," he said, thinking of Lyndon Johnson's landslide victory over Barry Goldwater in 1964.

"Labor made a decision 30 years ago to support the Democratic Party. Today we're paying the price," Larsen said, pointing to the state's high workers compensation costs.

A liberal who supported Gov. William G. Milliken's pet proposals when other legislators shied away, Larsen said the state is too diverse for the GOP to be "of a single mind and purpose." He said candidates must be hand-picked to suit their districts if there are to be takeovers of Democratic districts.

Larsen himself won in a district that was considered 60 percent Democratic when he carried it in 1972. It went Democratic again after he left.

And to anyone who says a Republican can't win in an urban area, Larsen points to U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell, R-Plymouth, who won 2-1 in a district that was designed to be Democratic.

A MAJOR change Larsen has made since taking over in February from William McLaughlin, who is now commerce director in the Milliken Administration, is publication of a monthly tabloid with the ambitious name of

"Republican Majority News."

A second is the hiring, after a nationwide search and 25 applications, of an executive director. Dick Adams, previously executive director in Maryland and a staff member of the Republican National Committee, moves here July 5.

Although the mainstream of Michigan Republicanism is decidedly more liberal than the national party, Larsen's tabloid plays no ideological favorites. A June article is a profile on presidential aspirant John Connally. Another June article reports that James Damman, former Troy councilman and state representative who was

Thursday, July 5, 1979

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MEL LARSEN
Toward a majority

dumped by Milliken as lieutenant governor, is seeking to pay off campaign debts incurred in his aborted run for the U.S. Senate nomination. A \$100 per

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