

GOP won new kind of party victory in state

By TIM RICHARD

Michigan voters Tuesday saw a political phenomenon of the sort witnessed only once or twice in a generation. It wasn't a "Reagan landslide" or a "Moral Majority victory."

It was a new-fangled kind of political party victory. Gone are the days when a Richard Nixon absorbed Republican money for a presidential campaign. Gone are the days when William G. Milliken expanded his gubernatorial victory margins and let GOP congressmen and legislators go down the tube.

THE LAST party campaign Michigan voters saw was in the mid-1950s. The Democratic Party purchased billboards to display the youthful grin of then-Gov. G. Mennen Williams, his green bow tie with the polka dots and the low-key caption: "Vote straight Democratic." The voters obeyed, after electing Eisenhower president.

After winning the governor's chair in 1962 and surviving the "Goldwater debacle" of 1964, George W. Romney ran in 1966 with the "Romney Action Team." The tactic enabled the GOP to

analysis

take back six congressional districts and made Romney, for awhile, a leading presidential contender. Then came the Nixon and Milliken eras. Democrats chipped away five congressional seats and built up majorities in both houses of the Michigan Legislature.

RATHER THAN seek a total party victory, however, Republicans in 1980 adopted the triage strategy of the military hospital. It holds that the wounded fall into three groups: those who will survive with or without care, those who will die no matter what is done for them, and those to whom medical care will mean the difference between life and death. They concentrated on the third group.

National Chairman William Brock, a former senator from Tennessee, took the GOP reins with that strategy. Reagan activists were persuaded not to

"Playing possum" is based on real animal behavior. When threatened, the Virginia possum, for example, may sink into a nervous paralysis — curled body, open eyes, grisly grin and lax tail. The state can last just a few minutes or several hours

dump Brock, although traditionally the presidential nominee picks the national chairman.

In Michigan, Republican delegates sent Milliken a message in 1977 when they almost dumped his hand-picked chairman. In 1979, Mel Larsen was elected GOP state chairman with the express promise of targeting and winning elections at the middle and bottom of the ticket.

THE CONGRESSIONAL strategy was successful elsewhere in the U.S., though less so in Michigan. GOP targets were: the 3rd District, where Democrat Howard Wolpe won a second term by 10,000 votes; the 6th, where Republican Jim Dunn edged a three-term incumbent by fewer than 4,000; the 10th, where Democrat Donald Albosta hung on by 15,000; and the 14th, where Dennis Hertel kept retiring Lucien Nedzi's seat in the Democratic column by 12,000 votes.

In contrast, the Republicans failed even to run a candidate in the 7th District; they put so little effort into the 15th and 17th districts that they were embarrassed by their own nominees; and they hardly extended themselves in the 18th District, where they lost 2-1 although a Republican had held the district as late as 1972.

THE STATE strategy was a little

more successful, particularly in Oakland County. Republicans won seven seats in the state House of Representatives and lost one for a net gain of six.

Republicans Kirby Holmes won back his old 26th District seat (Macomb), Mat Dunaskiss unseated a one-term in the 61st (Oakland), Jean Willoughby stunned everyone in the 62nd (Oakland), Doug Cruce made it on second try in the 71st (Oakland and Macomb), among others.

In other spots, there was no Republican team effort. One would never have suspected that Chief Justice Mary Coleman and attorney Michael Hagaray were nominated by the same party, so separate were their campaigns. Coleman won and Hagaray hit the bottom of the dust.

Deane Baker and David Laro, the Republican nominees, went their separate advertising ways running for the University of Michigan Board of Regents. Baker survived.

What voters can expect to see, if Republicans keep it up and Democrats adopt the same strategy, is that Michigan districts will be divided into three clumps: Safely Democratic, where the GOP will offer token opposition or none, safely Republican, and a few in the middle, where the campaigns will be tough, scientifically run and very, very expensive.



G. Mennen Williams, with his polka-dot bow tie, was elected governor in Michigan's last great party campaign.

Accounting women to meet

Economic development corporations will be the topic when the American Society of Women Accountants holds a dinner meeting at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 18 in Bloomfield Canopy, Orchard Lake.

Eugene W. Kutny, manager in the Detroit office of Ernst & Whinney, will speak on EDCs as "Conduits for Issuance of Corporate Tax-Exempt Debt."

Kutny is vice-chair of the board of the Oakland County EDC. In 1970-74 he was on the county planning commission. By background he is a lawyer.

Women interested in the accounting field may attend. Dinner reservations and information may be obtained from Sharon Sledzik at 354-6000.

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