

19th District Puts Together A Unity Slate

GRAND RAPIDS -- Avoiding the pitfalls of party disunity sometimes only by an eyelash 19th District Democrats meeting here for the Democratic state convention passed a measure of unity lacking in the district for a number of years.

Although the strains beneath the surface were visible, particularly in the continuing dispute between Livonia's Ron Mardiros and the district leadership, most votes held in the district's caucus were decided by fairly wide margins.

The only exception came in the 66-55 vote which elected Charles Deamond of Redford secretary of the delegation over a strong challenge from Livonia's Frank Blackford, supported by the Mardiros forces.

Aldo Vagnozzi of Farmington, present 19th district chairman, was elected chairman of the delegation, defeating Blackford by a wide margin.

Co vice-chairmen were elected in a unity move, Marie Miller of Livonia, in effect an establishment candidate, and Jim Davis of Pontiac, nominated by the Mardiros forces.

WILLIS BREWER, of Sylvan Lake, regarded as the father of 19th District Democrats, was picked to be district Presidential Elector over the challenge of Father James Meyer of Waterford, fresh from his arrest during a demonstration in Chicago at the national convention.

On recommendation from Vagnozzi, the caucus selected Otto Lawrence of Pontiac to serve on the credentials committee, Bill Hungerford of Farmington as a member of the resolutions committee, and Blackford for the committee on rules and permanent organization. Observers regarded this slate as another unity pick.

The key moves in the session, however, took place before the formal caucus opened. Speculation had been that the convention would be a real test of strength between district leadership and the Mardiros forces, augmented by the pre-cited delegates elected in the August primary and who supported Senator McCarthy's campaign for the presidential nomination.

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caucus, during which the leadership offered to discuss representation for the dissidents after the election of chairman.

"The Mardiros group wanted the chairmanship, but they didn't have the votes," Vagnozzi said.

"I told them I was going to run, whether or not they wanted to put up someone against me. But I said that once the vote was over, we could talk about representation for them in other spots in the delegation."

Mardiros argued that it had been the custom of the 19th District to alternate chairmen between Wayne and Oakland Counties, and that this custom dictated that Vagnozzi, from Oakland County, should step down in favor of a Wayne delegate.

"We met before the caucus, and they wanted to hold their own caucus, a sort of 'write-in' caucus," Vagnozzi said. "They said if I would give them some slots, we wouldn't buy that, so we put up Blackford," Mardiros explained.

AFTER THE 60-40 vote electing Vagnozzi, he appointed a meeting for a committee made up of Wayne 19th District chairman Jerry Raymond and Mardiros of Farmington and two men picked by Mardiros to negotiate about representation for all groups in the remaining officers.

"We have strong minorities in this delegation," Vagnozzi said, "and we want to give fair representation for all."

Mardiros declined to select his representatives, and the caucus agreed to continue voting. During this process, however, it was obvious that Vagnozzi was doing all he could to keep a balanced representation and bring unity to the district.

After the caucus, Mardiros declined to comment on the results, except to say that he didn't want to say anything which would disturb the unity worked out at the caucus.

OBSERVERS NOTED that the 19th District is torn by three separate issues:

- Wayne County delegates versus Oakland County, with the Oakland end of the district having a 20-vote majority, leading some Wayne County delegates to feel that the northern end of the district is too powerful.
- A complex situation in the Wayne County end of the district, in which a number of leaders of blocks of votes are involved in a power struggle.
- Observers further noted that these three conflicts cross-cut on individual delegates, making it difficult to predict just where the working majorities lie on any given issue.

HOWEVER, VAGNOZZI estimated that the Mardiros forces had about 50 votes, out of a total of 120 in the district.

After the caucus closed, Raymond said, "It was a very good caucus, and there was real evidence of a genuine attempt to heal the wounds. Both sides wanted unity, and they set aside their personal feelings—at least until after November. We want to win, and I think we can."

Paul Kadish, head of the Livonia Democratic Club, noted that "for the first time in two years, we have a unified party going into an election. There weren't very many close votes. Blackford didn't represent any real faction, he's well respected. That's why the vote on him was so close."

A strong group of supporters of Senator McCarthy's presidential bid have moved into the party and joined forces with Mardiros, at least in the Wayne end. Party regulars, who generally supported Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, are hostile to this group and in some cases question their loyalty to the Democratic party and its nominee.

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ALDO VAGNOZZI, 19th District chairman, takes a poll of his delegation on the floor of the Democratic State Convention in Grand Rapids.

public affairs

Canfield Labels Fight Meaningless

GRAND RAPIDS -- Michigan Democrats killed off the unit rule in the state convention in a row attacked by Dearborn Heights Mayor John L. Canfield as meaningless.

Canfield, chairman of the 15th district which includes Westland and Garden City, said: "I'm madder than hell, I couldn't care less about the issue. It's useless to fight. We could be here for three weeks on a thing already settled at the national level."

Canfield delivered his votes, 123 to 0 from the 15th district, as the state convention passed a motion to kill the unit rule, 2,031 to 173 1/2.

level in 1972 and requiring national delegates to be elected in the same year they served.

The roll-call vote did lack teeth, however, because Canfield's own delegation, which included Westland and Garden City, was in a fighting mood.

Anti-war demonstrators brought a roar from the delegates as they paraded down the aisle and toward the front of the hall, carrying signs reading "McCarthy Lives" and "No More Vietnam."

Upon a shouted motion from the floor, Chairman Kenneth Hyton ordered the sergeant at arms to remove the demonstrators. They gathered around the area of the 15th District.

"These people are disrupting the work of the 15th district on the floor," Canfield shouted, "I want them removed from the hall."

THE DEMONSTRATORS -- mostly neatly dressed, bearded -- paraded through the hall to a roaring applause of cheers and boos, with a large group of delegates raised their hands in a V for victory sign, the latest symbol of the dissenters.

In another incident, Secretary of State James M. Tate was booed as he was introduced at the time in the history of veteran observers that a state official has been attacked in a state convention.

Presidential election from this area will be Republican J. Pettipiece, of Wayne, and the 15th district, Willis Brewer of Sylvan Lake for the 15th and Mrs. Furman for the 2nd.



CONGRESSMAN PHILIP BURTON (left) of California was keynote at last weekend's Michigan Democratic State Convention in Grand Rapids, and here gives some advice to 19th District congressional hopeful Gary Frink.

2nd District Dems Condemn Chicago Police

Second Congressional District delegates to the State Democratic convention split on key issues over the weekend.

A convention resolution condemning the Chicago police department passed in the 2nd District delegation, 74-32 but a similar, one criticizing Mayor Richard J. Daley and the conduct of the convention itself failed by slim 54-52 vote in the district. The total convention passed the first, dumped the second.

The 2nd, which includes Plymouth and all of Washington, Lenawee, Monroe and Livingston counties, met in caucus at 7:30 p.m. Friday night and over the loud objections of some McCarthy delegates nominated Raymond C. Kehres, state representative from the city of Monroe, as chairman of the delegation for the duration of the convention.

HAVING ROTZAN, of Plymouth, was named to the resolutions committee. Other offices were to representatives from the other counties, following a long standing informal agreement among the county chairmen.

Congressional candidate Weston Vivian appeared briefly before the group, then returned home for campaign work.

The caucus heard candidates for the various offices speak, then went about adjournment when a youth asked to make an announcement about a peace demonstration the next day.

Chairman Kehres first allowed him to speak, but then turned him down when a delegate challenged the youth's right to speak. The unidentified young man was not a delegate and was not allowed to speak, angering some pro McCarthy delegates.

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It was impossible to tell how the 2nd District delegation voted, but it was clear they did split, as they did on the anti-Chicago police resolution.

Plymouth delegates to the convention included party chairman Robert Dwyer, who left Chicago and arrived in Grand Rapids just in time for the Friday night caucus; Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Shepard, Ervin Nichols, Mr. and Mrs. Irving Rotzan, Orville Tumbago, Doug Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Don Bidwell and Thomas Healy.

Ford Thinks HHH Strong Candidate; Looks To Unity

GRAND RAPIDS -- Rep. William B. Ford said Democrats can still rise and shine in 1968 despite the violence.

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er, of Oakland County -- but aside from cuts and bruises and one broken arm, there were few major injuries.

FORD SAID he doubts that any changes will be made in the manner in which the Democratic contest national conventions as the result of the Chicago episode.

"I don't see anything wrong in the convention system," he said. "We have troubles now and we have inflammatory issues, mainly Vietnam."

In contrast to Democrats, he said, Republicans are giving about "the whole Nixon," his approach to domestic as well as foreign problems.

Blackford Lays Plans To Win Raymond Post

By DON HOENSHLE

GRAND RAPIDS -- Insurance man Frank Blackford will return to the Michigan Democratic caucus to campaign to unseat Attorney General Jerry Raymond of Livonia as chairman of the Democratic Wayne-19th Congressional District.

He said the organization has been "run like a fraternal club."

Blackford will parlay 12 years' career in the rough-and-tumble of state politics and a former which made him a controversial figure in the state party in his fight for control of the Wayne-19th.

He said he will wait until after the Nov. 5 election though he laid the groundwork in the Democratic State Convention here last weekend.

Blackford, 49-year-old private consultant, for insurance companies, has lived at 3443 Grove Dr., Livonia, for three years but has been inactive in district politics until this year.

"I went to the spring district convention," he said. "They (Raymond) ran it like a fraternal club. I thought I was attending a Republican convention."

"I was incensed, I had never seen Ron Mardiros before, but I went to his office and asked for a petition to run for precinct delegate. I did and I'm here."

MARDIROIS, FORMER Livonia chairman ousted as Secretary of State branch manager, emerged as a pro-McCarthy spokesman in the district and was the primary election loser to Gary Frink in the race for the Democratic nomination for Congress.

"Mardiros has been a burr under the saddle of a lot of people," Blackford said. "But at least he works. He works hard."

Raymond headed off the split at the state convention by declining a row. The full district delegation moved to a larger room and there was a chance that the Mardiros group would rebel during the move.

Blackford was the Mardiros' group candidate for district chairman and then for secretary at the convention. He was defeated by Aldo Vagnozzi, chairman of the Oakland 19th and of the combined district, for chairman, and by Charles Deamond of Redford for secretary.

Blackford came out of the Ohio coal mining country as a child and went with his family to Detroit.

In 1951, then Gov. Williams plucked Blackford off the Michigan State University campus as an executive office staffer.

LATER, BLACKFORD was chairman of the Liquor Control Commission, executive director of the State Employees Retirement system and state insurance commissioner.

He has been a private consultant in the insurance field of the caucus.

Priest's Loyalty To Party Probed

GRAND RAPIDS -- Having come through a brush with the police in Chicago, the Rev. James Meyer of Pontiac had to confront party regulars at the Democratic State Convention here.

Meyer, whose beard and clerical garb have created a recent stir in 19th District Democratic circles and who worked for Senator McCarthy, had to face questions about his party loyalty in connection with his candidacy for presidential elector from the 19th District.

Meyer, assistant pastor of St. Benedict Catholic Parish in Waterford Township, went into the caucus with the backing of the Wayne County party of the 19th District. But he lost.

A total of 12 electors is picked in Michigan, one from each of the 10 congressional districts and two at-large. Their duty, as specified by the U.S. Constitution, is to cast votes in the Electoral College to formally elect the President for the following November vote.

CUSTOM REQUIRES that Democratic electors, if elected in the fall election, cast their votes for the Democratic presidential nominee.

At the Democratic national convention, where Meyer had appeared as an observer and had been picked up and threatened by Chicago police during a demonstration, rumors had circulated that if Meyer were made an elector, he would be unwilling to vote for the Democratic nominee, Hubert H. Humphrey.

He was nominated for elector at the 19th district caucus, at which Willis Brewer, veteran Democrat of Sylvan Lake, suddenly, the challenge hit. "I must insist on getting a pledge that electors will support the Democratic nominee," urged the sergeant-at-arms for the caucus.

Caucus Chairman Aldo Vagnozzi of Farmington interjected that it was not absolutely necessary for each candidate to respond, but Brewer promptly pledged himself to vote for the Democratic nominee.

Meyer stood and, choosing his words carefully, said "I will fulfill the responsibilities of an elector."

JERRY RAYMOND, chairman of the Wayne County end of the district, leaped to his feet. "He didn't answer the question," Vagnozzi interrupted to suggest that in the opinion of the chair, Meyer had fulfilled his duty.

Shouts of "He's disloyal" and "Get out of the party" rang out from back of the hall.

Later, after his defeat, Meyer explained his position. "I have never run for office and I do not have a clear idea of exactly what the responsibilities of the office of elector are," he said, quite clearly, "I am willing to fulfill the responsibilities of the office."

"But I can't be good," he said, "because I have no idea about the responsibilities of the office of elector, as the question demanded, and I have no idea about exactly what these responsibilities are."

"I FEEL the elector is not wholly his own man. By conscience, regardless of what that might be, is not the same thing as the responsibilities of the public office."

"I can't, however, say exactly what these public responsibilities are until I study them carefully. But people wanted me to commit myself in advance."

"I resent having my loyalty challenged," Meyer said.

In the end, he lost to Brewer, so the issue was dropped.

Bar Soviets From Olympics-M'Donald

Rep. Jack McDonald, R-19th District, has suggested the International Olympic Committee "seriously consider" expulsion of the Soviet Union because of the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The naked aggression committed by Russia against Czechoslovakia makes Russian participation in the Olympics impossible, he said.

McDonald recalled that South Africa had been barred from the 1968 Summer Olympics in Mexico because of its racial policies.

McDonald noted when South Africa was barred last April, he had called for similar action against Russia because of its persecution of the Jews.

"I note that South Africa is still barred -- and South Africa hasn't invaded anybody," he said.

"I noted at the time that political considerations should not play a part in athletics, but that if action were taken against one country because of its politics, the same rule should apply to others," McDonald said.

"Is the world expected to look on and cheer as representatives of a brutal nation compete in this international event of sportsmanship so soon after their brothers have participated in the suppression of Czech liberty?"

"I cannot believe that this sort of accommodation with tyranny is either necessary or desirable."



FLOOR CONFERENCE was held by 15th District Congressman William Ford and Mayor John Canfield of Dearborn Heights at last weekend's Democratic State Convention in Grand Rapids.

More than 500 were arrested, including some delegates -- among them Father James Meyer.

AS HE SPOKE, Senator Philip A. Hart was stating many of the same things to the state convention.

"I feel more delight than dismay," he said. "We have disunity, but we keep it within the Democratic party."

Ford said Democrats are closing ranks behind Humphrey. They disagreed, he said, on candidates and favored Senator Eugene F. McCarthy's approach to Vietnam.

"But now -- despite some black armbands and the McCarthy buttons on lapels -- the party agrees that Humphrey will make a good president."

Ford said Humphrey "has a good base" in the national convention for "becoming his own man," for a willingness to change with the changing moods of the nation.

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