

GOP, Dems outline different strategies for 1992

By Pat Murphy
staff writer

After addressing Oakland County Republicans Thursday, the national GOP chairman, Clayton Yeutter, told newsmen about his wish. He'd like to see Tom Harkin, the populist senator from Iowa, emerge as the Democratic challenger to George Bush in the 1992 presidential election.

That wish may come true, according to Harkin, who was also in Oakland County, last week.

"There are rumors that I'm going to be running for president," Harkin told a luncheon crowd Friday at the Seventh Annual Soapy Williams Golf Classic. "Those rumors are true."

HARKIN DIDN'T formally announce his candidacy; that's coming Sept. 15. But Harkin clearly pointed

to his battle plan for confronting Bush, if, indeed, he makes it through the next year's primaries to win the Democratic nomination.

Bush, however, has a strategy of his own, according to Yeutter, who on Thursday spoke at the Oakland GOP's 15th Annual Garden Party fund-raiser at a private residence in Orchard Lake.

Yeutter, who served as the president's Secretary of Agriculture prior to being elected Republican chairman in January, promised a campaign different from the one Bush ran as a challenger in 1988.

Yeutter said Bush would conduct an issue-oriented campaign based on his performance as president, instead of one designed to show his opponent's shortcomings.

Asked if that means no more Willie Horton ads, Yeutter said, "The psychology is completely different."

George Bush will run a campaign based upon his performance as president.

James M. Alexander, Oakland GOP chairman, explained the strategy change this way. "In 1988, Democrats tried to define George Bush as a wimp, so we ran a campaign to define Mike Dukakis... and show that he was soft on crime."

"THIS TIME we're running a campaign that focuses on who George Bush is and what he has accomplished."

Yeutter said he expects New York Gov. Mario Cuomo to eventually be the Democrats' presidential candidate.

On a personal note, however, Yeutter said he'd like to see Harkin as the Democratic challenger, presumably because as a self-proclaimed liberal, the Iowa Senator

would be vulnerable.

The Democratic platform would be "the worn out Great Society programs," Yeutter said, the same programs Republicans have successfully attacked.

In his talks to the party faithful, however, Harkin said their only chance of winning the presidency is a return to basics — and acting like Democrats.

"I've had it up to here with Democrats running as Republicans," he said, referring to those within the party who say in the party must become less liberal and more moderate.

REPUBLICAN POLICIES — particularly domestic policies — have

failed, Harkin insisted. "Supply-side economics and the trickle down theory should be put on the scrap heap of history along with that other failed system... communism."

"Communism failed because it was good to a few. Republican policies must fail because they're too good for a very few. Democrats must be for Main Street, not Wall Street."

Harkin promised to raise a question asked by Ronald Reagan in his first presidential campaign. "I'm going to ask voters if they're better off," he said. Do they have better jobs? Do they have better schools? Is health care better? Are roads better?

... no 'bull----'

He didn't use the term "bull----." But that was an oversight.

"I used it last night (talking to Democrats in Wayne and Macomb counties)," said U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin. "I just didn't use it today."

The plain-speaking Iowa Democrat was referring to the expletive he frequently uses to describe politics... especially as practiced by Republicans.

THE FORMER VIETNAM War pilot shied away from the expletive that has come to be something of a trademark Friday when talking to Oakland Democrats. But he enhanced his image as a folksy man of the people with quotes from and stories about other straight-talkers. To wit:

• From Mark Twain, for example, Harkin paraphrased a response to a highly favorable introduction from Democratic county chairman Donald Tucker. "You may go to heaven for your generosity, providing you don't go somewhere else for your exaggeration."

• On Soapy Williams and his bow ties, Harkin cited a 1958 story saying the former Michigan governor switched after dunking his regular tie in the mushroom soup during a formal dinner with Frank Murphy, another former Michigan governor.

• From Franklin Roosevelt, he borrowed this item and said it applies to the basic core of Republican policies. "We know that greed is bad

morally," Harkin quoted Roosevelt as saying. "Now we know it's also bad economics."

And what did those in the audience say about Harkin?

"He's talking about basic Democratic values," said Gerry McNabb of West Bloomfield. "And he's talking about carrying them into the 1990s."

JEAN PROKOPOW, another West Bloomfield resident, said Harkin pinpointed the key to future Democratic success when he said the party must reach out to the 50 percent of Americans who did not vote for president in 1988. "They've given up hope," she said.

Barry L. Howard, who was an active Democrat before becoming a nonpartisan Oakland Circuit Judge, described Harkin as a "Democratic Ronald Reagan."

"He charges up the faithful, he has a definite message and he stresses traditional values," he said.

Republican Les Greenwald said he was impressed by Harkin the speaker. "But his politics scare me. Government doesn't have a pill for every social ill."

Greenwald was master of ceremonies the night before in Orchard Lake when GOP national chairman Clayton Yeutter spoke at a Republican fund-raiser. Among other things, Yeutter said he'd like Harkin to challenge President Bush next year.

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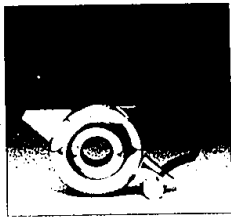
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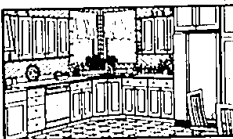
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