

Area delegates say Clinton benefits from Perot pullout

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — They're happy Ross Perot quit, but most Michigan Democrats would have been happier if the wealthy Texan had stayed in the presidential race longer in order to do more damage to incumbent George Bush.

"Mr. Perot spoke out forcefully for change, and a number of people listened, but Bill Clinton stands for change as well," state party chairman Gary Corbin said just hours before the Arkansas governor made his acceptance speech Thursday.

"We put out the welcome mat (for Perot supporters). His withdrawal will help Democrats, ultimately. In a three-way race, the incumbent has the advantage. It's up to the Democrats and Clinton to earn the support of Perot people."

Most area delegates were optimistic Democrats would benefit, on balance, from Perot's exit.

"He basically said the Democrats got our act together," said Ron Thayer, development vice president of Channel 56 and long-time Democratic operative. "I wish he'd stayed in longer."

Terry Awhal of Livonia had a different perspective. The spokesman for area Arabs and a Clinton de-

legate thought the entire campaign was a Perot ego trip, not a serious run for the White House.

"Perot wants the limelight. Look at Iran (his rescue of hostages). Look at GM (where he criticized management style after selling his date company to the automaker). Ross Perot is going to be a VIP forever."

"It's gonna help us," said state party treasurer Larry Daitch, Birmingham lawyer and convention visitor. "Now there are two clear choices. People who want change will be with us."

Shopping center developer A. Alfred Taubman, sitting with the delegation on an "honored guest" pass, saw Perot's dropout cutting two ways.

"First, conservative voters who are disenchanted will go for Bush. Second, women's rights voters — those interested in choice — will go to Clinton."

Taubman's response was interrupted by a shoulder-slapping U.S. Sen. Carl Levin. "Welcome home," he told Taubman. "One of my greatest supporters. Welcome home."

"My guess," said Birmingham marketer Zina Kramer, "is a fair number of those interested in Ross

Perot are not strongly committed (to others). I'm not sure whether they'll wind up helping Bush or Clinton. I ran into someone, who called a Las Vegas bookmaker a month ago to bet on Ross Perot, and they wouldn't take the bet."

"Very helpful," said Mickey Melton of the Perot withdrawal. A Birmingham Clinton campaigner, Melton said, "An election is a referendum on the incumbent. Until Perot dropped out, there was division on where (dissatisfied) people would go. We could get 'em with our candidate and program, but now it's easier and clearer."

"I'm concerned because now the Bush camp will do everything to attack Clinton — negative and derogatory," said Stella Evangelista, a Bloomfield Hills pediatrician and Clintonite. "But Clinton supporters — I don't think they'll vote for Bush. They want change. They will go to Clinton."

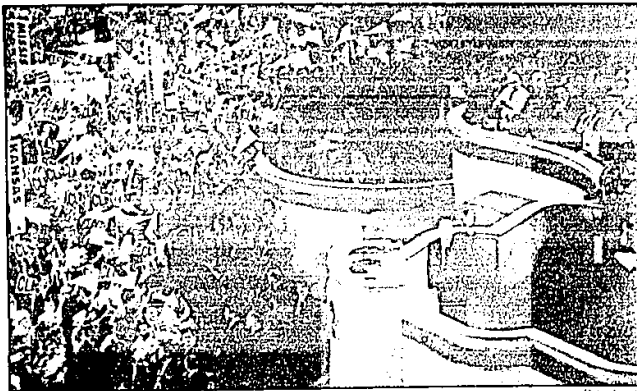
"It's a little hard right now to read it," said state Rep. Maxine Berman of Southfield. A Paul Tsongas delegate until released to vote for Clinton, she said, "Right now my instinct is it will help us or be a wash. Republican women who intended to vote for Perot on choice will either sit home or vote for Clinton."

"This changes the logistics of how much time they (Clinton and Bush) will spend in a state. I wish he (Perot) had waited another month" before quitting, Berman said.

"Great," said Darlene Berent, manager of the party office in Ferndale and a Jerry Brown delegate.

"Perot got out at the right time 'cause he saw a revitalized Democratic Party. Oakland County's gonna be real happy."

"Perot in the race was more helpful to Clinton than harmful," disagreed Mary Ryan Taras, Bir-



Bill Clinton: The Democratic nominee waves to supporters after delivering his acceptance speech last Thursday at the Democratic National Convention.

mingham teacher, state teachers union official and Clinton delegate. "I would prefer he stayed in. I expected he would fade and drop out. Ultimately it will be helpful."

One poll, published mid-Thursday by the New York Daily News in an old-fashioned "extra" edition, showed Clinton benefiting by 4.4 percent and Bush by 2.8 percent.

In a three-way race, Clinton drew 40.6 percent in a two-way race, 45 percent.

In a three-way race, Bush drew 30.2 in a two-way, 33 percent. Undecideds were 10.2 percent in a three-way race, 18 percent in a two-way race, indicating there's plenty of room for shifting by election day.



Conventioners: State Democratic Party Treasurer Larry Daitch of Birmingham, daughter Leslie, a Seaholm freshman, and Zina Kramer of Birmingham enjoyed last week's show in the Big Apple.

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