Dems Back Levin For Suburban Look

Michigan Democrats, who want to gain strength in suburbia, are lining up behind a suburbanite for state chairman.

He is State Sen. Sander Levin, a resident of Berkley who has a law office in Ferndale and is a former Oakland County Democratic chairman.

Observerland members of the Democratic State Central Committee plan to vote for Levin when that body meets Dec. 17 to elect a replacement for Zolton Ferency.

JERRY RAYMOND, Livonia attorney and chairman of the 19th District--Wayne organization, found in a telephone poll that all members of his executive board are warmly endorsing Levin.

"And so are our State Central members -- they're both enthusiastic and they both vote," said Raymond. The 19th--Wayne members are Paul Kadesh and Mrs. Carolyn Maggio.

Oakland County Democratic leaders, through Chairman

SEN. SANDER LEVIN

George Googasian, announced their endorsement of Levin early last week.

Among the signers was 19th--Oakland Chairman Aldo Vagnozzi, of Farmington.

Raymond confessed there was only one hitch in the telephone poll he made. One board member said: "I don't know whether we have the right to wish this very difficult job on such a nice guy."

* * *

IF ELECTED--and there seems little doubt that he has the support--Levin would be the first suburbanite in the Democratic state chairmanship in many years.

Ferency grew up in southwest Detroit and later moved to the Lansing area. John J. Collins, chairman during the governorship of John Swainson (1961-62), was a Jackson resident. Neil Staebler, chairman during the Williams era, is an Ann Arbor resident.

Levin was born 36 years ago in Detroit; attended Central High School; earned a bachelor's degree at the University of Chicago, a master's at Columbia and a law degree at Harvard; and rose meteorically in politics after he settled in Berkley in the late 1950s.

He was precinct worker beginning in 1959, city Democratic Club chairman in 1960-61, county chairman in 1962-64. Elected to the first of two terms in the State Senate in 1964, Levin was voted "most effective freshman senator" by the state capital press corps.

A movement to dump Ferency--not only for his attacks on President Johnson's Viet war policy but because of his management of the party--had been under way for a year. The man most often talked about to succeed him in that year was Sander Levin.

* * *

LEVIN ANNOUNCED his intention of seeking the chairmanship at a press conference last week--presumably after he was certain he had the votes to win it.

"In the past week, I have consulted with many Democrats at all levels of the party about the needs of the Democratic Party of Michigan and my possible candidacy for State Chairman," Levin said in a prepared statement.

"As a result, I have decided to seek the chairmanship of the party."

* * *

REFERRING TO the sharp internal debates which have plagued the party in the past year, Levin noted that "the Michigan Democratic Party today faces a significant and pressing challenge.

"Can we both build and debate?

"I strongly feel that we can," Levin concluded.

* * *

WHEN ASKED about his attitude toward the re-nomination of President Johnson, now challenged by Sen. Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, Levin replied that "events point clearly to the re-nomination of the President.

"I personally favor the President's re-nomination within the framework of the fullest and most open discussion of the issues of our time. This must include a fair opportunity for any challenger to use the democratic processes of the primaries and the state and national conventions.

"I do not consider the function of the State Chairman to be the imposition of his views on the Party, but to foster a thorough and fair discussion of the issues and any and all potential candidates. If elected, I will dedicate myself to this goal," Levin remarked.

* * *

LEVIN acknowledged with thanks the support of two present party vice-chairmen, Mrs. Patti Knox and Kenneth Hylton. Both had withdrawn from the race for chairman before Levin made his formal announcement.

The Berkley State Senator also noted that he had received "expressions of support" from the Fourth, 17th, 18th and 19th democratic district organizations.

Levin was asked if he intended to be a caretaker chairman, stepping aside after brief service to let another man take over.

"I don't intend to be a caretaker at all," he replied.

"The party needs forceful effort coupled with the widest possible consultation between groups for a long time. I'm going to try to provide this, if I'm elected."

* * *

LEVIN SAID THAT he had received indications that he would be supported by a broad spectrum of leaders in the state party, including Detroit Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, Secretary of State James M. Hare, and Attorney General Frank Kelley.

Obviously speaking to members of the Concerned Democrats, a break-away organization of party members at odds with President Johnson's policies in Vietnam, Levin said, "I want to make it clear that we need the widest possible discussion in the party, on all issues.

"This discussion must be constructive. It must come with toleration of many points of view, and it must lead toward building of the entire party. I don't think that constructive discussion will burn any bridges between people in the party."

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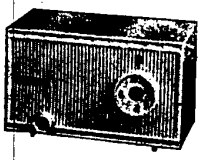

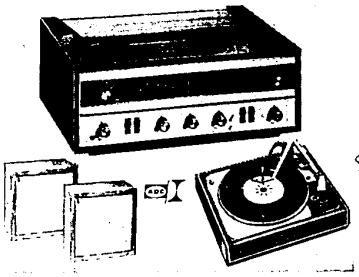

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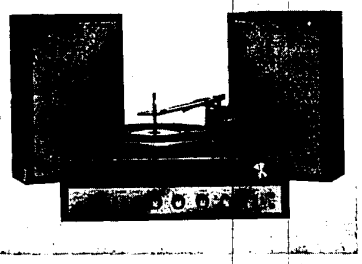

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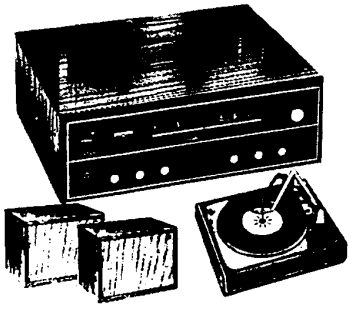

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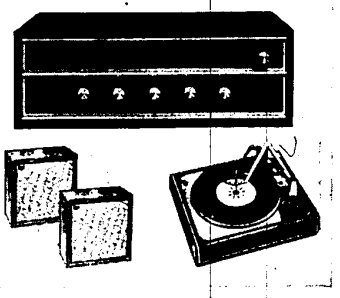

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