

points of view

A delegate's choice will be no bad vice

LET THE delegates do it, George. There will be 2,277 delegates to the Republican National Convention in New Orleans Aug. 15-18. In the old days, they actually picked candidates, and the nation did well. Delegates will give up a week's vacation. Michiganians will pay \$600 a couple for plane fare and \$225 for a mandatory five nights in the posh Fairmont Hotel, Huey Long's favorite, plus taxes. That's \$1,600 before anyone has taken a bite of jambalaya or a snort of Napoleon brandy.

For what? To anoint two pre-selected candidates?

THE DELEGATES are our neighbors, people we know and trust.

One who lives near me is Dan Pierocchi, 2nd District-Wayne chairman. I know Dan. I know some of the other delegates and alternates, like Harry Greenleaf, Brooks Patterson, Ed Haroutunian, Donn Wolf, Bob Fredericks, Al May, U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell, Sen. Doug Cruce and Larry Dickerson.

These folks have worked in the political trenches and won support from other party workers.

Who is Robert Kimmitt, the "Washington attorney" reportedly doing background checks on Bush's short list? Is he a straight guy, or will he turn out to be like Bert Lance or John Mitchell?

PIEROCCHI THINKS mine is "a



Tim Richard

great idea — splendid. The delegates have a better handle on it than a few top advisers. Collectively, they could make a good choice.

He's right. Local politicians frequently know the kind of dirt that big shots don't.

Recall 1972 when George McGovern handpicked Tom Eagleton as his running mate. If the convention

had been consulted, the Missouri delegates would have quietly passed the word that Eagleton had some nervous problems and might be an embarrassing choice.

In 1988 the Maryland delegates might have whispered that some of Gov. Spiro Agnew's contract dealings were suspect, and in 1984 the Queens politicians might have known that Geraldine Ferraro's family closet had some skeletons.

The loyal Michigan Democrats in Atlanta praised Lloyd Bentsen, as I reported. What I couldn't put in the news columns were their hesitations and their curled noses. Given a chance, they would have nominated somebody better.

It's OK for a president to appoint cabinet officers and ambassadors, but the vice president is a constitutional officer who ought to be picked by a democratic process.

REPUBLICANS worry their convention will be as dull as the Democrats'. More and more TV watchers are turning off the endless parade of repetitious orators and hoopla.

Well, Bush can make it lively by giving the delegates some honest work.

Let Bush supply everyone his "short list" of three to five favorites, eliminating anyone he truly objectionable to him, and let the delegates decide from there.

Adlai Stevenson let the delegates

do it in 1956. We got a dandy cliffhanger between Sens. Estes Kefauver and John Kennedy. It was America's introduction to Kennedy, so the honest tussle did a lot of good.

PSYCHOLOGICALLY, politicians like fights. They need fights.

I've covered 50 or 60 state conventions of three parties and five national, and it's a fact that if politicians don't have something to fight about, they'll invent something, like screwball platform amendments.

Besides, there will be 12,000 to 15,000 of us media people there. We need a good story.

Footnote: All the pundits are overlooking Sen. Pete Wilson of California.

Look behind percentages and behind voter turnouts

This column is designed for those whose attention spans have been shortened by incessant "Vote for Me" campaigning.

There seems to be a rule that reporters work with words so they don't have to understand numbers. This week, for instance, it was reported that Missouri voters will decide if the prize money for the state lottery will be increased from 45 percent to 50 percent of the total take. That, the reporter informed us, will be a 5 percent increase.

Wrong.

It is really an increase of more than 11 percent. To say otherwise is to say that increasing the state sales tax from 4 to 6 cents on the dollar is only a 2 percent increase. That's obviously nonsense. It is an increase of 2 percentage points, but that's not a very important figure. The increase to you, the consumer, is 50 percent.

If you didn't vote Tuesday, shame on you. What's your excuse? It was too hot? You were too tired after a long commute home? Poor baby.

In Haiti people are shot dead if they try to vote. With absentee ballots, it's hard to find a good reason to go to the polls. But even though primary elections decide the races in



Rich Perlberg

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most cases, the turnout Tuesday was dismally low.

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You've got to band it to the folks at the state Department of Transportation, they keep their collective sense of humor. The highway folks say they are going to well publicize the next two years worth of construction on I-696 so that motor-

ists can find alternate routes.

Those kidders. There are no alternate routes.

Gov. James Blanchard may be a bit too excited about the Michigan Education Trust, the prepaid college tuition plan. In Redford Township Monday, Blanchard said twice that the state's general fund would guarantee the tuition for those infants and children who are entered into the plan this year. That's not correct.

If the trust fund proves to be a bust, the assets would be returned to investors but there is no obligation on the general fund and there is no guarantee that those assets would cover tuition costs. State Treasurer Robert Bowman said Blanchard meant to say that the tuition was virtually guaranteed for two reasons:

- 1) Assumptions on tuition increases and fund investments are so conservative as to practically assure success; and
 - 2) In the unlikely event the fund fell short, pragmatic politics dictates that legislators would have to ball it out to appease the many taxpayers who count on the fund for tuition.
- Besides, Bowman says, the fund will be strictly audited every year. Still, Blanchard is wrong to say the tuition is guaranteed.

NOW keeping fire burning to guarantee equal rights

IT'S TIME to pull out that old, rusty ERA pin.

Mine is attached to an outdated and frayed macrame plant holder, jangling on a nail in the basement. I wore that Equal Rights Amendment pin proudly after returning from a feminist conference in Bowling Green in 1974.

Gone is the red T-shirt with a power fist — my first sign of awakening to women's rights and humanist movement. But I still have the pin, which reads "ERA Now" despite the rust. The oxidation is certainly a sign of times passed, but perhaps it symbolizes more.

The movement toward human rights for everyone seems to be getting a bit rusty.

It's time we polished both the pin and our approach.

For those that don't recall: the ERA was a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It was approved by only 35 of the needed 38 states before a 10-year time limit expired in 1982. It was a political hot potato.

SIX YEARS later, I'm glad to see the National Organization for Women and other groups trying again for an amendment to constitutionally



Casey Hans

guarantee equal rights for all.

"We must keep the fire burning and keep those who perpetuate inequality uncomfortable," former NOW president Eleanor Smeal said at the group's annual convention this summer. Leaders at the convention put the ERA back on the agenda this year.

But it's going to take a little work to rebuild that fire. Everyone let it die during the past few years and became content to stoke the burning embers. Apparently, the NOW leadership waited until the end of eight years of conservative, Ronald Reagan rule before making a second attempt to fuel the fire.

NOW polls show as many as 75 percent of American voters support such an amendment. But activists are taking one more giant step this time.

In this major political year,

groups like NOW are realizing it takes more than popular support for passage of an ERA amendment or any other politically sensitive legislation.

IT TAKES the power of political office, and realizing the importance of putting the right people in elected jobs. It means organizing and motivating the non-actives to vote for candidates who truly represent what they want. It requires getting involved and seizing the moment — and this is the year for involvement.

"The time has come to express our anger and to no longer accept the status quo," said an angry Molly Yard, the current NOW president. Feminist or not, we can all take heed of her words.

The first step was already taken this week, when a minority of registered voters chose to cast ballots in the primary election. And what of the rest?

Hopefully, they're gearing up for the general election Nov. 8, gaining a sense of pride, and understanding that their opinions count, their feelings matter, and their votes will make a difference — equally.

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- Live Entertainment
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- 2:30-4 p.m. National Frog Jumping Championships
- 4-5 p.m. Wayne State University Jazz Band
- 5:45-6:45 p.m. Ursula Walker & Buddy Budson

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