

Happy days here again?

Dems build their platform for '92

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — Democrats needed 17 days in 1860 and nine in 1920 to pick a presidential candidate. This year they knew weeks that Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton had the nomination sewed up. Why five days of activities?

"A convention touches only the superficial role of the delegates," said Birmingham attorney Don Tucker, attending his sixth consecutive.

"The delegate selection process is a part of the realignment of power every four years. That's the principal reason people are here," said Tucker, a Paul Tsongas supporter.

"The reforms of the McGovern Commission (after the brokered 1968 convention) leaves us no meaningful choice. The important thing is that this delegation gets together, sits down and talks about how we're going to structure the campaign."

"There's a renaissance of relationships with people around the country. It (convention) rebuilds communication and strength within the party. There is much other work — even planning for the transition from the Bush Administration to the Clinton-Gore Administration."

Tucker spoke Monday over coffee in the second floor caucus room of the Michigan delegation in the UN Plaza Hotel. It was old home day for U.S. Rep. Dan Glickman, a Kansas whose wife Rhoda is from Detroit.

"I went to Mumford High School with his wife," said Zina Kramer, Birmingham publicist and at-large Clinton delegate.

Said U.S. Sen. Carl Levin, who followed Glickman, "With Michigan connections like that, why the hell did he settle in Kansas?"

By the numbers

Michigan has 169 delegates (73 for Clinton, 35 for Jerry Brown, 20 for Paul Tsongas and 28 unpledged) and 22 alternates (17 Clinton, three Brown, two Tsongas).

Among the workers at this year's convention is Megan Tucker, Don's 17-year-old daughter, a senior at Kingwood High in Bloomfield Hills. She checked credentials at the Garden gate as part of the security staff.

"I'm supposed to write an article for the school newspaper when I get back," she said.

Bell lobbyist

"Basically we're lobbying," said Steve Economy, Farmington Hills resident and assistant to the president of Michigan Bell Telephone Co. "With the economic climate of the country, we're looking ahead, building bridges."

Economy, a 1988 Democratic candidate for State Board of Education, has no political plans this year and has much to do considering the top management shuffle in his own company.

"In Michigan we've got our Telecommunications Act through," he said. National Ameritech lobbyists, however, are working on bills to give their regional "Baby Bell" operating companies the right to get into manufacturing equipment and long-distance services. "We buy our products, and some manufacturers don't make their products in the United States," Economy said.

First timer

"I spent a lot of time wandering around Manhattan. The subways are air-conditioned and clean," said Mickey Meltzer, who used to do PR for the old Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority and has a

taste for public transit. "They got rid of many old (subway) cars with graffiti."

A Clinton delegate, Meltzer did much press contact work for the Arkansas governor's Michigan primary and was rewarded with a delegate spot from the 18th Congressional District. Meltzer also did service as a party legislative candidate in a rock-ribbed Republican area.

Daughter Carol is a New York City resident and is showing him around. "We're having a blast at meetings and caucuses" he said. "We're going to hear speakers and discuss issues."

"There's tremendous enthusiasm for Clinton and the selection of (Sen. Albert) Gore. It's the opposite of the earlier stages of the primary, when Clinton was a punching bag. He's like Robo Cop — just keeps rolling along," said the first-time delegate.

Vindicated!

"I didn't come to the convention four years ago because I was a Gore supporter," said Mary Ryan Tarns, Birmingham teacher and Michigan Education Association official.

See DEMOCRATS, 11A



Under the banner: State Democratic Party chairman Gary Corbin, left, and Arriette Evans of Southfield view convention proceedings from Michigan's place of honor.

Gay ex-residents say state delegates won't meet with them

BY TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

NEW YORK — Two self-styled "transplanted queer Michiganders" had little success approaching the Michigan delegation to the Democratic National Convention for changes back home.

"There are no openly gay Democratic delegates from Michigan," said Bill Dobbs, who lived in Birmingham in the '70s and is a law

graduate from the University of Michigan.

"Queers are trash in this country," Dobbs said in literature he distributed to Michigan delegates.

"Just as Eric (a friend from Birmingham who died in New York City of AIDS) couldn't be frank about his life with his own family, America ... can't seem to talk about or deal with AIDS or queers. How many more have to die?"

Dobbs and Jon Nalley, a former Grand Haven and East Lansing resident, tried to hop a bus ride with Michigan delegates from the UN Plaza Hotel to a Sunday night reception at the American Museum of the Moving Image. Lacking delegate or press credentials, they were asked to leave.

"Our being thrown off the bus is a metaphor for how Michigan treats gays," Dobbs said.

They managed to beat the bus to the museum and were passing out literature when five New York police officers stopped them. After five minutes conversation, the police backed away, and the pair went off to work.

"A classic gambit by the NYPD," Dobbs said later. "I have a Corrections pass, and I'm a lawyer." The reception they got from Michigan delegates varied from warm to hostile.

tile.

In contrast to their native state, Dobbs said, Texas has 11 gay delegates, California "a couple dozen" New York has some. In his view, political meetings shouldn't be conducted without representation from women, gays and ethnic groups. "They (gays) were frozen out," he said after contacting a Michigan gay lesbian group.

Nalley listed 12 friends from

Michigan State University who died of AIDS.

He is 32. And his literature listed "A Queer Dozen" things Michigan Democrats should do back home, including:

- A state law prohibiting non-hiring of gays, as Cracker Barrel announced it would do.

- Repeat of Michigan's sodomy law which police in Adrian used in a parking operation.

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