

POINTS OF VIEW

GOP gives state bigger play at convention

Houston — You asked me, or I might not have written this piece. A member of a Rotary Club audience wanted to know how a Republican National Convention differs from a Democratic conclave. A state Senate GOP staff member asked the same question.

• Michiganians are more prominent at the Astrodome podium — Gov. John Engler, Max Fisher, Detroit Councilman Keith Butler, outgoing Rep. Guy Vanderjagt, Mary Fisher, young Michael Flory of Benton Township, Frank Stolla, ex-President Gerald Ford. Democrats had no one from Michigan on the podium. Photographer Doug Ashley, at his eighth series of conventions, is working far harder in Houston than in New York.

• The top of the Republican ticket is giving Michigan consideration. The Clinton-Gore ticket didn't put Michigan on its initial bus tour. President Bush will be in Canton Township Tuesday afternoon; Vice President Quayle will be at the GOP state convention Friday evening in Grand Rapids.

• Gov. Engler is being given far more serious attention by the national leadership and the national media and more applause from his delegation than Democratic Gov. James Blanchard ever got in 1984 and 1988. That struck me as extremely odd because Blanchard had had more prominence as a congressman working on the Chrysler bailout and more exposure to the New York Times and Washington Post than Engler had had as a state legislator.

Already Engler is being gossiped about as national ticket material in a way that Blanchard never was considered. And yet Blanchard had better paper credentials and, in my view, more accomplishments than either Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis or Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, the last two Democratic presidential nominees.

• Michigan Republicans are hearing a higher level of speakers in their caucus than Michigan Democrats had in theirs. The GOP has heard Quayle, trade negotiator Carla Hills, chairman Michael Boskin of the President's Council of Economic Advisors, and



TIM RICHARD

House whip Newt Gingrich. Democrats heard Sen. Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia and a Nebraska congressman married to a Michigan woman; the name escapes me.

• Republicans are more tired. They have more organized functions that run later. Their roll call Wednesday ran into the wee hours. They have a 40-minute bus ride from their airport hotel at the extreme north end of town to the Astrodome at the south end, the equivalent of commuting from Brighton or Howell to Detroit on I-96. (Texas roads, however, are in much better shape because of Michigan's pathological

aversion to raising the fuel tax.) Democrats had a 20-minute ride to the Garden but through heavy traffic.

• Republicans have no place to walk. Democrats had New York City: many were smart enough to take in the live theater.

• Democrats had the joy of seeing their candidate open up a 17-point lead in the polls after their convention; it later topped 30 points. Thursday morning Spencer Abraham, the former GOP state chair rising to national party prominence, said the gap has narrowed to single digits because "This convention has done its job."

• Democrats treat their delegates dreadfully, packing them in like sardines both in caucus and on the convention floor. Any corporation treating its factory workers like that would be hounded instantly by OSHA inspectors. GOP accommodations are more spacious, their delegates more accessible to each other and to reporters.

I respect both parties. They are ninetenths volunteers who will never get a penny of patronage. They intend to be civic improvers, just like the Garden

Club and Lions. Among big-time columnists, mine is distinctly a minority view.

My dad taught me that. "If you're not a Republican or a Democrat, you're nothing," he said.

Despite the apparent glamor, national conventions are nowhere near as much fun as state conventions.

State conclaves last only a day and a half. Results aren't a foregone conclusion weeks in advance. They actually make decisions, nominating candidates for the Michigan Supreme Court, state Board of Education and university board.

You don't need to beg for credentials to attend next weekend's GOP convention at the Amway Grand in Grand Rapids or the Democratic gathering in the Cobo in Detroit.

Pay attention. You may see a real floor fight or two like the Hollywood movies. Your friends and neighbors who are delegates may actually make a difference.

Tim Richard reports regularly on the local implications of state and regional events.

LETTERS

Pseudo-expert wrong

For some time now, I have been watching the advice column of Myrna Partrich, and have held my tongue. However, one of her most recent articles concerning vitamin supplementation for a person partaking in heavy training for marathons and triathlons, was the final straw. The short, three column answer was so fraught with misinformation and inaccuracies that Ms. Partrich should be embarrassed to put her name behind such misinformation when she represents the President's

Council on Physical Fitness & Sports. Mr. John Butterfield, the executive director of the President's Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, who is a friend of mine, I'm sure would be embarrassed by her comments.

For example, she states that endurance sports may cause a need for more sodium, potassium, iron and zinc. This is not true and any possibility of potassium loss could be easily remedied by orange juice. In the very next statement she advocates a well balanced meal plan, including meat, eggs and dairy products. Thus, she recommends high fat foods as part of a well balanced plan, and this dietary direction went out the window 15 years ago.

Next, she says that high activity puts you at risk for vitamin B-12 deficiency. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that this is even a possibility. Then, she says, "You might need a few vitamin and mineral supplements. It is not a big deal." Once again, Ms. Partrich is ignorant of some of the real harm that can be done by excessive vitamin intake. For example, high vitamin C has been shown to cause anemia, reduction in immune response and rebound scurvy in babies born from mothers taking high vitamin C.

As medical director of the Meadowbrook Health Enhancement Institute at Oakland University, I find the lack of quality control by the media (radio, TV, newspapers) in health matters such as this to be a continuing disturbance. Newspaper columns and the talk show circuit produce more misinformation than truth. The major cause for this problem is all of the pseudo-experts expounding on a small knowledge base and having no credentials.

Dr. Joseph Arends, Troy

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