

Fighting, Drinking, Women How Democrats, GOP Behave

By TIM RICHARD

Republicans pushed Age of Majority legislation, but a young person can advance faster in the Democratic Party, a veteran political observer says.

A typical suburban voter may tell you there's little difference between the political parties, and may believe it. And in the legislative halls of Lansing and Washington, our lawmakers split all over the place on important bills.

Yet in a day when the importance of political parties seems blurred, the behavioral differences between them are as big as ever. Republicans and Democrats differ in temperament, in occupations, in the ways they drink and cut their hair, in their attitudes toward women and the young.

This observer has 38 years of watching the parties at work. To those who guffaw and say, "You're not even 38 years old," he can reply: "True, but I've been watching BOTH parties, which is something the average politician can't claim, and if you wanted to throw in the Prohibitionists, the John Birch Society, the old Labor Youth League, the Socialist Workers and the shifting new liberal coalitions, I could claim 40 years of experience."

Does one get a bellyful after awhile? No, not yet. Politicians, while their ranks contain many self-seekers, bores and phonies, actually have fewer undesirable percentages, than the ordinary run of society. Give me a hard-working, committed party politician over an inactive, uninformed independent any day.

BUT ABOUT those differences between Democrats and Republicans:

Democrats like to boast that their district, county and state conventions are more interesting than Republicans' because they have more out-in-the-open fights. In a superficial sense that's true. But the gulf within the GOP is far deeper and more serious than anything on the Democratic side. There aren't five percentage points difference, on every issue...

reason is that they've had to. Democrats let their young folks advance into the "senior" party far faster.

DEMOCRATS make a great to-do over giving representation to females, and you'll find far more Democratic women using the liberationist "Ms." designation. At Democratic state conventions, women have formed their own caucus.

They need to. In very subtle but real ways, Republicans have given women more work and responsibility. You see it not only at the state organization level—recall the work of Chairman Elly Peterson—but at the local level. The Republican ladies don't have to caucus and shout to be heard.

Why? The chief reason seems to be the greater blue collar orientation of a Democratic Party. You never hear a Republican CPA referring to his wife as "the little woman" the way an auto worker does.

One year in Washtenaw County—where they have more strange people than in the rest of the state put together—a woman nominated for convention secretary declined the job, labeling the nominator a male chauvinist pig. To placate her, the man later nominated her for sergeant-at-arms, but the angry "miz" turned it down again.

IN ANOTHER WAY, however, this new coalition thinks like Republicans on the issue of leadership. While traditional Democrats tend to promote their presidential candidates for the first vacancy in the Holy Trinity, Republicans are quietly less awed by "leadership" (a favorite word, by the way, of John F. Kennedy and Sander Levin).

But about this new group in the Democratic Party: Their suspicion of strong leadership is almost Republican in its depth. They will be a fun group to watch.

FROM A REPORTER'S point of view, Republicans gripe more about the press, but what Vice President Agnew is hollering about

really is the New York Times, Washington Post and some of the more arrogant TV guys. In Lansing and Observerland, a newsman has no trouble getting information from, and making fast friends in, both parties.

Take a look at the New Democratic Coalition, a liberal element within the party: A Ford engineer. An accountant. A chemist. A civics teacher. Suburban housewives with college educations who are concerned with ghetto kids as their own Little Leaguers.

It is this group that is giving the Michigan Democratic Party its right now, that insisted on a reform convention in 1969, that supports McGovern and Lindsay. With their educational levels and solid middle class backgrounds, one would think them prime candidates for the GOP, but this new coalition, like traditional Democrats, insists on talking in bloc terms—"the old, the poor, the black."

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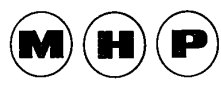
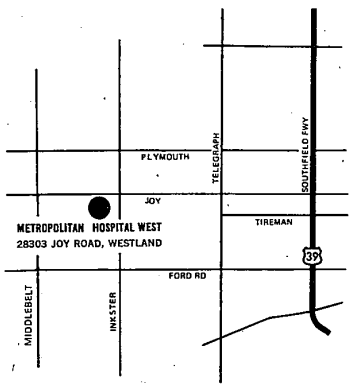
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