

"Now you see it - now you don't"

Jim Tunnell 2/24/75

Jerome Watson

Singer suits up for big game

ALD. WILLIAM S. SINGER (43d) is running for mayor, and close associates say he will announce his candidacy before the year ends.

He will run in the Democratic primary in February, 1975, a month before the mayoral election, challenging Mayor Daley or the mayor's would-be regular organization successor.

Singer, a leader of the group that caused Daley's forces to be kicked out of last year's Democratic National Convention, will not run as a North Side liberal. Rather, like Gov. Walker, he will mount a broad-gauge campaign responding to concerns of voters throughout the city.

Singer already has taken a series of positions signaling that he is not to be type-set as a traditional liberal. No such candidate could be elected in heavily ethnic Chicago.

Singer's decision to launch his campaign unofficially two years before the mayoral election reflects his awareness of the difficulties in taking on the Daley organization.

THE MAGNITUDE of the undertaking also explains his decision, reported by friends, to officially kick off his campaign this year, perhaps 18 months before election time.

This will give Singer time to collect funds and support, make himself known and possibly pre-empt other candidacies. (More than one serious antimachine candidacy probably would doom Singer.) His early start also means that, if Daley does not run again, Singer will have a head start over organization Democrats hoping to succeed the mayor and who will have to low-key their own ambitions, pending a decision by Daley on a sixth term.

Singer, who has begun raising funds, will need about \$1 million for the primary fight. Such a war chest would give him the resources to woo those normally Democratic blacks and white ethnics who tend not to vote in primaries. The blacks are clearly a foundation stone if Singer is to beat the organization, which until last year succeeded in rolling up huge black-district majorities. Thus, if Singer can achieve a coalition with blacks, he stimu-

lates further disintegration of that important machine power base.

IF SINGER MAKES solid inroads on the black and ethnic communities, the additional support of the independent political organizations would make him a potent contender, especially given the decline of vote fraud.

Should Singer win the primary, he would be a strong favorite to win the general election.

To undercut Singer, the organization might try fielding a "straw man" black candidate, to drain off some of Singer's needed support among blacks. Under such circumstances, the best bona fide machine candidate might be, not Daley, but someone such as Lt. Gov. Neil Hartigan, who has Latin support and does not have some of Daley's liabilities in the black areas.

Crucial to Singer's chances is the role of Gov. Walker. Singer was an early supporter of Walker and would need at least indirect Walker help. The governor can, if he chooses, apply heavy leverage to the state and La Salle Street powers to funnel funds to Singer. Singer as mayor could help Walker nail down Illinois if the governor runs for President in 1976.

SINGER'S PREPARATIONS include lengthy study of the city budget. The Singer camp also is researching each of the 50 wards in depth, and developing background papers. Singer also meets regularly with a campaign brain trust.

Key Singer positions so far include support for two-man police squad cars and a police contract; opposition to an increased motor vehicle tax and budget waste; backing for more control by parents, teachers and principals in running schools; insistence on more city action to create jobs; a call for local control of zoning and more attention to improving streets, curbs and gutters in the neighborhoods, and support for more city involvement in construction of needed housing.

The quality of the post-Daley transition, whether it comes in 1975, or before or after that date, is crucial to the future of the city. Thus does the candidacy of Singer merit close attention, even at this early date. Great are the stakes.