

Democrats Approve New Rules To Select Convention Delegates

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 1—The Democratic National Committee adopted today, over the muffled objections of the party's state chairmen, a new set of rules governing the selection of delegates to the Presidential nominating convention in 1976.

The main purpose of the new rules is to broaden participation in the choice of the next Democratic national ticket while burying the angry debate about "quotas" for blacks, women and youth that were in effect for the 1972 convention.

The principal innovation is a requirement of proportional representation at every level of the delegate selection process.

All winner-take-all primaries, like California's in 1972, have been banned. And in states that choose their delegates through caucuses and conventions, all significant shares of support for the competing Presidential candidates must be recognized in the apportionment of delegates.

The national committee voted to make 15 per cent—instead of 10 per cent—the threshold of significant strength and the cut-off point for fringe shares. That is, a Presidential candidate in 1976 must win at least 15 per cent of the votes at a precinct caucus to send delegates to a county convention; he must win 15 per cent of the delegates at a state convention to send delegates to the national convention.

Rules Group Expanded

Robert S. Strauss, the party chairman, won the national committee's unanimous approval today for his plan to add eight men and women to what will now be a 24-member panel to enforce the new rules.

For the most part, however, the national committee was approving without major change the new delegate selection rules as drafted last fall by a party commission headed by Barbara Mikulski, a member of the Baltimore City Council.

On another matter, Mr. Strauss announced today that the party had reached agreement in principle on a \$775,000 settlement with the Republican National Committee on the damage suit that grew from the Watergate raid on Democratic headquarters in June, 1972.

Beyond the ban on "quotas" and the insistence on proportional representation, major provisions of the Mikulski commission's new rules include an "affirmative action" requirement on state parties to involve all minorities in Democratic affairs; a ban on the designation of "official" slates of organization delegates; and a plan to resolve disputes about delegate credentials, long before the 1976 convention opens, through the new Compliance Review Commission.

Expansion of the commission from the 17 members originally proposed was one of the more controversial items on the agenda yesterday and today. But it was accomplished without the rancor that some had predicted, and the political meaning of the change was widely considered to be negligible.

Miss Mikulski and her fellow "reformers" fought in vain to keep the commission at 17 members and to keep her commission report intact. Mr. Strauss campaigned to make the commission "more representative" at 25.

Before and after the change, however, both sides agreed that the panel was weighted, if at all, slightly in favor of liberals and reformers but essentially controlled by party moderates.

Robert F. Wagner, former Mayor of New York, was named a member of the expanded commission and is expected to be elected chairman of it.

In numerous drawn-out votes today, the national committee decided not to tamper with the work of the Mikulski commission. It voted, for example, to leave the burden of proof on state parties to show, when challenged, that they met the standard of "affirmative action."

State party chairmen protested that application of the new rules to "all party affairs"—not just to delegate selection procedures—raised a host of complications for obscure town and precinct operations.

The chairmen asked for a six-month stay in making the new rules effective. By a 2-to-1 vote, however, the party adopted the rules immediately but left the meaning of the phrase "all party affairs" to be interpreted later.