

Democrats Jettison '72 'Quota' System

By David S. Broder

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The Democratic Party buried its biggest bone of controversy yesterday when its Delegate Selection Commission unanimously approved new rules for picking the men and women who will choose the 1976 presidential nominee.

A unanimous vote of the commission's party regulars and representatives of labor, liberal and minority-group constituencies scrapped the implied "quota" system that caused such bitter disputes in 1972, and approved compromise reforms hammered out two weeks ago by a liberal-dominated drafting committee.

The late-afternoon action cut short what had been expected to be two days of hard parliamentary battling, and set off a celebration of party unity by the surprised commission members.

"Damn, that's good news," said national Chairman Robert S. Strauss when informed of the action. "It's another constructive step forward."

Strauss predicted that the new guidelines would be ratified by the Democratic National Committee at its next meeting, and promised to work for an accord on the one major item of controversy left — the question of proportional representation of candidates' strength.

The rules approved yesterday call for "fair reflection" of the candidate preferences of participants in the delegate-selection process at all levels from the precinct up — with a cutoff of minority candidates who receive less than 10 per cent of the vote.

Strauss warned in a

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speech last month that "proportional representation carried through to the most minute levels of party organization can only result in fractured party structure and hopelessly divided national conventions."

The chairman said last night he still preferred to allow winner-take-all voting in primaries on caucuses of units smaller than a congressional district. "I would hope the executive committee (of the Democratic National Committee) would make that change," he said, "but I don't feel strongly enough to want to cause a big fight over it. I would hope we could have an accord on that."

The new rules are designed to end the controversy over "quotas" for demographic groups that flared last year. The rules state explicitly that the goal of "full participation by all Democrats, with particular concern for minority groups, native groups, women and youth ... shall not be accomplished either directly or indirectly by the party's imposition of mandatory quotas ..."

Instead, state parties are required to set up affirmative action programs to "encourage" the participation of those groups "as indicated by their presence in the Democratic electorate."

In an effort to avoid the flood of credentials challenges that marked the 1972 convention, the new rules require the states to have their affirmative action plans filed by Dec. 15, 1974.

A compliance review committee — most of whose members will be appointed by Strauss and Barbara Mikulski, the head of the Delegate Selection Commission



ROBERT S. STRAUSS
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— will enforce the rules. Once a state has its affirmative action plan approved, its convention delegation will be subject to challenge only on a very narrow range of issues.

Strauss announced Friday that he would recommend former New York City Mayor Robert F. Wagner as head of the compliance committee.

The new rules also eliminate the ban on slate-making that led to the ouster of Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley and his delegation from the 1972 convention. Under the new rules, slate-making is permitted, but no slate may have an official designation or a preferred ballot position.

The new reforms also bar winner-take-all primaries — the issue that led to the challenge of Sen. George McGovern's California delegation and provoked another major 1972 convention battle.

The stage was set for yesterday's compromise when the Democratic National

Committee on Friday voted itself clear authority to review and revise the Mikulski commission's recommendations.

"Reform" elements that held a majority on the commission had previously disputed that review authority, but Ms. Mikulski, a Baltimore city council member, indicated she would accept the review if the drafting committee language were not challenged this week-end.

Representatives of AFL-CIO unions, who had lost most of their early battles with "reformers" on the commission, agreed to withhold the amendments they had filed as long as they could be considered later by the national committee.

Ohio Gov. John J. Gilligan began drafting a resolution that put the commission on record in favor of the drafting committee rules, without shutting the door on the labor-backed amendments.

Remarking that "I feel like I'm carrying around a jar of nitroglycerine," Gilligan added a phrase here, then scratched out several words there, and won approval from the spokesmen for labor, the black caucus, the women's caucus and the "reformer."

The resolution, endorsing the drafting committee language and forwarding the labor-backed alternatives to the national committee as part of "the legislative history undergirding these rules," was shouted through with resounding cheers.

Then the committee members went off to Ms. Mikulski's suite at the Mayflower to celebrate an agreement few of them thought they could reach when they began their work, six months ago.