

Strauss to Press Changes in

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Democratic National Chairman Robert S. Strauss said yesterday he has decided to ask for substantial changes in the party's new delegate-selection reforms and the expansion of the committee that is supposed to enforce them.

Strauss said he had determined to take on the fight at the meeting of the Democratic National Committee and its executive committee Thursday and Friday "even if I take some scars."

The main business of the two-day meeting is to act on the recommended rules changes agreed to last December by a committee headed by Baltimore City Councilwoman Barbara Mikulski.

The dispute is a carryover from the bitter "quotas" battle at the 1972 Democratic convention. The Mikulski commission, appointed in 1973, scrapped "quota" requirements for blacks, youths and women, and substituted an "affirmative action plan" procedure for state parties to seek out participation by those and other groups.

It also recommended creation of a 17-member compliance committee to ensure that the affirmative actions plans are actually carried out.

Reform elements of the party have been pressing for adoption of the Mikulski recommendations intact.

But Strauss said he had concluded after a canvass of party leaders, including representatives of the leading 1976 presidential hopefuls, that "the idea that to touch this docu-

ment is to destroy it won't sell."

In an interview, the party chairman said he would recommend expansion of the compliance committee from 17 to 23 or 25 members and dilution of some of its enforcement powers.

He also said there was a "serious division" of opinion on the proportional representation requirements in the new delegate selection process and said he had gotten "un-shirted hell" from state party chairmen on some other sections of the proposed rules as well.

What it adds up to is the prospect of another pair of stormy sessions—in the executive committee on Thursday and the full national committee on Friday. But Strauss said, "I believe we can show people we can vote on opposite sides and disagree and still walk out with a common thrust."

How serious the fighting will be may be influenced by the outcome of a meeting Strauss has scheduled for Wednesday with Ms. Mikulski and the two vice chairmen of her commission, Gary, Ind., Mayor Richard G. Hatcher and Chicago attorney Alex Seith.

He hopes to convince Ms. Mikulski and the others that "tampering with their product is not an effort to destroy the reforms, but to improve them."

Strauss made the same pitch last Friday to representatives of such potential 1976 contenders as Ohio Gov. John J. Gilligan and Sens. Henry M. Jack-



ROBERT S. STRAUSS
... expects "scars"

son, Edward M. Kennedy, Edmund S. Muskie, Walter F. Mondale, George McGovern and Lloyd Bentsen.

Party sources who disclosed the Friday meeting said that representatives of the five senators and Gilligan had not endorsed Strauss's proposals but had indicated general sympathy with the idea of revising the Mikulski commission draft.

At an earlier meeting with a representative of Alabama's Gov. George C. Wallace, Strauss was given Wallace's recommendations for changes in the proposed rules.

One major focus of criticism from state party officials is the proposed 17-person compliance committee.

Under the proposed rules, Ms. Mikulski and Strauss would each make five appointments to the compliance com-

mittee, with the other seven slots filled by Ms. Mikulski, Hatcher, Seith and one representative each of Democratic governors, senators, representatives and state party chairmen.

Strauss said he would urge that the committee be expanded to 23 or 25 members in order to "give security to various constituencies in the party that their interests will be protected."

Blacks, chicanos, elements of organized labor and state officials have complained publicly about Ms. Mikulski's appointees, and William France, a Wallace leader from Florida, said yesterday that Wallacites would oppose any scheme that would "let nine appointed people act as king-makers." (The "nine people" refers to a majority of the 17-member committee.)

Strauss said in the interview that he knew some reform elements would view any proposal to expand the committee as an effort by him "to take it over," but he denied that was his motivation.

"If I just wanted control," he said, "I could get it now. I could have a hell of a lot more control with a 17-member committee than with 23 or 25."

The party chairman said that, rather than simply propose an increase in the committee's size, he would give the executive committee names of specific people he thought should be asked to serve on the expanded compliance body. He declined to make public his choices, saying he was still seeking agreement on the slate.

Reforms

In addition to expanding the size of the compliance committee, Strauss said he would propose several important changes in the description of its powers, in response to complaints from state officials and some of the 1976 presidential hopefuls.

One basic change would restrict the mandate of the committee, by changing language that now says it should "administer and enforce affirmative action requirements" to read that it should simply "administer" those requirements.

Another set of changes would shift the burden of proof of alleged shortcomings in the affirmative action plans from the state party organizations to the challenging group.

A third major revision would eliminate the authority of the party executive committee to "form a delegation" from a state whose own convention delegation is judged to violate the party rules.

Strauss said these changes were designed to meet complaints from state party chairmen that they would be "in perpetual jeopardy" of chal-

lenges for a full two years before the national convention, and to meet the fears of some presidential candidates that the compliance committee, if controlled by a rival contender, could deprive them of delegates they have won in state conventions or primaries.

Presidential politics has also entered the dispute over proportional representation. The Mikulski commission recommended that states using caucus-convention systems of selecting national convention delegates be required to apply proportional representation down to the precinct level for any candidate who is supported by at least 10 per cent of those in attendance.

Wallace backers favor proportional representation, with an even lower 5 per cent cutoff, but supporters of several other candidates want to restrict it to congressional district conventions and raise the cutoff point to 25 or even 35 per cent.

Strauss said in the interview that he thought a possible compromise might be reached on a 15 per cent cutoff and an application of the rule to the next level below that at which national convention delegates are chosen in each state.

Since most of the non-primary states use a three-tier system, that would mean that proportional representation would not be used at the lowest level of delegate selection.

National committee aides said that even if Strauss's proposed revisions are made, enormous changes would be required in the rules and legislation governing most state Democratic parties. Six of the proposed delegate-selection rules would require alteration of the rules or laws of more than two-thirds of the states, and two rules would require changes in every state.