

Democrats Pass Rules To Slow Controversy

By David S. Broder
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The Democratic National Committee yesterday approved rules designed to minimize unplanned controversy at the party's December mini-convention in Kansas City.

With National Chairman Robert S. Strauss preaching the virtues of unity, the committee's sometimes wrangling factions accepted with minimal dissent procedures that will restrict floor amendments to the proposed party charter and prevent the consideration of other policy resolutions.

According to the plans approved yesterday, the three-day meeting, mandated by the 1972 convention as the party's first mid-term conference, will open on Friday, Dec. 6, with a morning and afternoon of "issue seminars," likely to involve many of the Democrats' presidential hopefuls.

But the rules provide that no votes may be taken at these sessions, and an effort by Virginia National Committeeman George Rawlings Jr. to create a separate resolutions committee was shouted down by a voice vote.

That means the only business to come before the 2,061 delegates will be the draft charter designed to give the Democrats the first formal constitution in their almost-two-century history.

The rules adopted yesterday require the Democrats to consider the charter all day on Saturday, Dec. 7, with no adjournment motion permitted until the document has been completed. The Sunday, Dec. 8, session would be devoted to reports from the issue panels and speeches.

Two years of work by a charter commission headed by former North Carolina Gov. Terry Sanford has produced a draft acceptable in most respects to both the "reformers" who instigated the charter movement and the party "regulars."

But a final session of the Sanford commission, held in Kansas City in August, provoked angry debate and, finally, a walkout by black delegates and some white liberals over the "affirmative action" plank designed to guarantee participation in delegate se-



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lection and party affairs to minorities, women and others.

Strauss, who has been negotiating separately with the opposing factions since the Kansas City blow-up, has called a meeting of major factional leaders here two days after the election in hopes of negotiating a compromise on the affirmative-action section.

The rules accepted yesterday are designed to minimize the chance that the Pearl Harbor Day debate on adoption of the charter will produce any fresh explosions.

Under these terms, a 50-member committee on amendments and rules, made up of the executive committees of the Sanford commission and the Democratic National Committee, will screen all proposed charter amendments during the two days before the mini-convention opens.

The only amendments that can be considered on the floor are those supported by at least 20 members of the screening committee, or by a petition signed by at least 200 delegates drawn from at least five states.

Several efforts to increase the membership of the screening committee or reduce the barrier to floor amendments were rejected by the national committee yesterday.

During the course of the debate, Michael G. Griffin, an Alabama member, indicated that Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace may seek to offer a complete alternative to the

Sanford commission charter.

But Wallace is expected to have only 2 or 3 per cent of the delegates, and Strauss is known to believe that the Wallace charter poses no real threat to his efforts for compromise.

In addition to the grassroots delegates chosen in state primaries, caucuses and conventions this year, all Democratic governors, senators and representatives are automatically delegates to the Kansas City conference.

Yesterday, the national committee approved resolutions allowing 15 Democratic mayors to fill vacancies created by absentee governors, senators or representatives, and allowing other vacancies to be filled by Democrats elected to those offices in November.

The mini-convention rules outlined yesterday restrict press and television access to the floor, allowing each network two reporters and a camera and limiting the entire press contingent on the floor to fewer than 100 persons at a time. No floor interviews will be allowed during debate on the charter.

In other actions yesterday, the national committee formally elected Washington attorney Edward Bennett Williams as its new treasurer, heard a speech from House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.) and gave a plaque to Frank Wills, the guard who discovered the break-in at the party's former headquarters in the Watergate in 1972.

Party officials disclosed during the meeting that Los Angeles officials have made a "strong pitch" for the 1976 national convention, but that other cities are also expected to bid. A site selection committee headed by Pat Cunningham of New York was approved yesterday.

The national committee met at the Washington Hilton.