

The election eye . . .

Idaho Democrats take key convention role

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The Idaho Democratic delegation to the national convention at New York City only contains 17 votes of the nearly 2,000 but it could play a key role.

That's because one of its members, State Senate Minority Leader Cy C. Chase, St. Maries, is a member of the all important convention rules committee which has first crack on recommending whether there will be an open convention.

Chase is the Idaho leader for Sen. Ted Kennedy's forces, but more important he was selected for the national rules committee by the Idaho convention in the final hours at Pocatello June 14. It was a spot that was expected to go to the majority Carter delegate.

In a story appearing elsewhere on this page, Chase expresses confidence the open convention issue will come on the convention floors.

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The importance of Chase to the national rules committee is the fact that he became the 39th Kennedy delegate to that committee, the minimum needed to ensure that the open convention issue will come to the convention floor for action.

The Kennedy strategy hinges on defeating a proposed rule which would bind delegates to their original candidates. If this is done, then the 39 delegates Kennedy could force the entire issue on the convention floor where they feel they have a chance. Kennedy supporters, in any event, have the minimum number to submit a minority report which would have to be acted on by the full convention.

The Kennedy movement at the Pocatello convention was led by Chase and John Greenfield, Boise attorney and former state party chairman.

They did extremely well in winning some planks favored by the liberal Kennedy and in electing the four uncommitted candidates they say lean to Kennedy. This may be overly optimistic because one of them, Joan Cartan, the 19-year-old delegate from Idaho Falls, emphasizes she is truly uncommitted but acknowledges she does favor an open convention. It is her feeling that the uncommitted voters favored neither Carter nor Kennedy and would prefer someone else.

The Post-Register The political pulse

Idaho Falls, Idaho, Sunday, Aug. 10, 1980

C-15

Why the Kennedy forces in Idaho are putting up such a struggle is rather puzzling in view of the May presidential results. Carter received 31,983 votes, or 62 percent; Kennedy only 11,148, or 22 percent; and undecided 5,824, or 12 percent. In a general election, there is little question the more conservative Carter would receive even a greater majority over the liberal Kennedy. Election records would indicate Republican Ronald Reagan will win the state easily, possibly as much as 2-1 over Carter and it would be even greater over Kennedy.

If the delegates follow the wishes of the Idaho Democratic electorate, all four committed delegates should go to Carter. That would give Carter 12 votes, or 77 percent, which compares with the 62 percent he received in the primary. Kennedy would settle at 23 percent, which is about even with the 22 percent he received. Or at the minimum, Carter should get at least three of the four uncommitted, giving Carter 11 and Kennedy 6, making the percentage 63 for Carter and 37 for Kennedy.

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Democrats, looking at the polls, feel they can't win with Carter. Some of the House members are leading a movement for an open convention, which means releasing delegates pledged to Carter, and for that matter, Kennedy. Yet, the other alternates, such as Sen. Henry Jackson, Secretary of State Ed Muskie, and Vice President

Walter Mondale have hurriedly said they aren't interested. Muskie and Mondale, of course, are loyal Carter lieutenants.

The Democrats may be more pessimistic than appears on the surface. Carter holds the office, he is a formidable campaigner, and the economic situation shows signs of an upswing that could sweep him into the presidency.

The polls of today mean little.

Only when Carter and Reagan come face to face in nationwide debates and campaigning will the battle be joined. The situation then can and likely will change drastically, just as they did for Harry Truman in 1948.

Carter won the convention delegates in a fair, open fight. The sore Democratic losers, especially Kennedy, should play by the rules and not seek to change them.