The Trend Toward Quota Systems--a Reactionary Development

BY ROBERT J. DONOVAN

CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—The trend toward quota systems in industrial hiring, in selecting university faculties and in other areas, including the seating of delegates at political conventions, is a reactionary development in the opinion of Seymour Martin Lipset of Harvard, who has studied the subject.

"In effect," he said in an interview, "the quota system says that the government should treat people of certain ancestral stock differently from those of other backgrounds.

"While this is designed to help the underprivileged, it still legitimates the principle of hereditary discrimination. Those who advocate it, like Kenneth Galbraith, argue that it is only a temporary expedient which will be dropped once certain under-privileged groups acquire a measure of economic equality. But from what we know of the behavior of groups, no one ever voluntarily gives up a right once won."

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The issue is rapidly coming to the fore, as evidenced in Miami Beach last Wednesday night when President Nixon and Vice President Agnew attacked quotas in their acceptance speeches. For months before that it had been simmering along as an issue that was semi-hidden but gaining a good deal of political voltage nevertheless.

Thus the apparent defection of many Jewish voters from George McGovern may be due to a considerable extent, as Lipset and other authorities believe, to their fear of the quota system, with which McGovern is rather identified. He played a major part in initiating the reforms in the Democratic Party that provided quotas for the young, the black and women at the recent Democratic National Convention. He also has favored in his campaign appointing persons to government jobs by ethnic backgrounds.

For generations Jews had to contend with quotas, seen and unseen, in Europe and America. In this country at least they have moved a long way toward overcoming them, and they do not want to be forced back into quotas. In schools and the civil service, where quotas are being pressed, particularly hard, Jews are present far beyond their proportion—3%—of the total population. If quota systems were established, many Jews might gradually be squeezed out by blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and Indians.

Quotas are becoming an increasingly sensitive issue on the campuses. Because the universities are heavily involved in contracts with the government, they are subject to the federal affirmative action programs establishing specific recruitment goals and timetables to assure immediate increase in the percentages of women and minority faculty members and staff employes.

Critics sharing Lipset's view grant the fairness of hiring more women and minority members, but fear that academic standards will fall if the universities are forced to pass over highly qualified white male teachers for less qualified, or even poorly qualified, members of minorities. The question of fairness to highly qualified white males is also at issue.

Lipset, who went to Harvard from Berkeley seven years ago, and who is going to spend the next academic year at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Behaviorial Sciences at Palo Alto, fears that the quota system instead of ending discrimination will have the effect of excluding persons from rights to jobs, admissions, advancement and so forth.

"Quota systems," he said, "introduce into American life an acceptance on the level of government policy of distribution of opportunities among Americans on the basis of their ancestral background. This is an old European reactionary principle.

"In reality no country, including the United States, has ever come close to equalizing opportunity.

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"But in the United States the whole emphasis has been on the individual, enabling him to rise through his own effort and merit. In Europe many nations tried to enforce the notion that individuals from minorities, both religious and ethnic, should not be allowed to have jobs or other opportunities, such as entrance to the universities, in larger proportion than they were in the population.

"This was especially enforced against Jews in Czarist Russia and other countries since Jews have historically had a special propensity for education and for seeking out positions made possible by educational achievement. Currently the Soviet Union is trying to revive in practice the same principle that was once fostered by the Czarist regime.

"Generally speaking, if you assign a certain number of places to people who are regarded as under-privileged because of sex or age and because of their ancestry, or race, you discriminate against the under-privileged who don't have these biological or ancestral traits.

"The poor aged as a group, for example, are far more under-privileged than college students yet the quota system at the Democratic convention, which was designed to help the under-privileged, increased the number of college students and college graduates while neglecting the representation of the aged poor.

"By singling out certain groups as under-privileged and giving them special claim to representation the party reduced sharply the possibilities of under-privileged people who do not have such traits.

"Thus if you are a poor Jew or a poor Italian or a poor old person, your chances of being a delegate were sharply reduced. There were no special rights for you. And in fact studies of the background of delegates to the Democratic convention made by an MIT group indicated that the vast majority were *extremely* privileged whites. The proportion of labor representatives at this convention was much lower than at previous Democratic conventions.

"What the Democratic Party has done is to introduce the principle of proportional representation for the first time on a major scale in American life: not proportional representation by political views but by certain defined groups—defined by biological or ancestral group characteristics.

"Assigning quotas to some under-privileged and not to others reduces the opportunities of the under-privileged who have not been included.

"Most of the people living in poverty in America are not blacks, Chicanos or Indians. They are of other backgrounds. Among the people of New York living below the poverty line, the third largest ethnic group after the blacks and Puerto Ricans are the Jews. There are hundreds of thousands of poor Jews in New York, as well of course as of poor Protestants and Catholics. The deprived position of these poor is ignored by these quota policies."

Lipset, who received a Ph.D. in sociology at Columbia, but who describes his own field as political sociology, has written a number of books on politics and the social structure. He agrees that there has *been* discrimination against *women*, blacks and other minorities.

He thinks women should be guaranteed equality of access to jobs and advancement. In the case of racial minorities he favors a large shift of government resources to them through measures such as housing subsidies, scatter-site housing and financial inducements to attract the best teachers to inner-city schools.

In short, a variety of measures but not the quota system.

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"As a matter of fact," he said, "it may be argued that assigning positions on the basis of ancestry rather than ability to handle the job is demoralizing for the group receiving the advantage. If under-qualified people are admitted to jobs and institutions, there is little incentive for them to work hard. Achievement is linked to their background rather than to their abilities.

"The major problem with the quota system is that it introduces a principle into American life that in the past has only existed in Europe as a means of excluding groups. It in effect defines rights by blood background or sex or age rather than by individual ability, or lack of ability. The general assumption has always been that the United States should try to assure equality of opportunity for individuals."

Union of Western Europe Will Always Be Illusion

BY HORST MENDERSHAUSEN

Few political ideas of our time have proven as resistant to contrary evidence as the notion that the West European states are on the way to forming a political union, a West European Power. Over the last 20 years, the recovery of these states, their stubborn depen- power, and each, not only France, exercises it. This European concert is flexible. It can live with different philosophies of government, Gaullism in France, social democracy in Germany, perhaps some day with an Italian government including a Communist minister or two. It performs as a grand orchestra with Russians, Americans or Japanese joining in as circumstances warrant it, or as a chamber orchestra of three, with room for soloists. It also [illegible]

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Nixon's Formidable Strategy for a 'New Majority'

BY MAX LERNER

Despite all the media complaints about the boredom of the Republican convention, I don't see how anyone can deny that it achieved what a convention is supposed to achieve: It positioned the party for the election campaign.

J. Kenneth Galbraith said it reached the "Mt. Everest of boredom," which is amusing enough, but surely it is only the conventional wisdom of the pious media platitudes. You may not like the positions and strategies the Republicans adopted—and some of the true Republican liberals have made it clear enough to me that they groan at some of the positions, and especially at the conversion of Spiro Agnew from an alliteration spewer to a power figure for 1976. But if the test of a convention is how we[illegible] it marshals its party[illegible] but that was not its purpose. Of the two candidates, Spiro Agnew had the better speechwriter, and Agnew's speech even achieved a kind of verbal grace in the passage on the nature and ordeals [illegible] Vice Pres[illegible]idency. Mr. Nixon[illegible] kind of simmerin[illegible] he had thrown [illegible] his past utter[illegible] exhausted bit [illegible] hope has se[illegible] chewed use[illegible]

But for [illegible] an exercis[illegible] artillery [illegible] gathers [illegible] guns. [illegible] forei[illegible] "p[illegible] C[illegible]

by his stress on equal access on the basis of merit, Mr. Nixon aims to get at these groups while blurring and playing down their group identity.

Unless I miss my guess it will [illegible]ve formidable strategy. Spiro Ag[illegible] [illegible] acceptance speech was in [illegible]measure devoted to it. The [illegible] that Agnew will probably be [illegible] campaign to stre[illegible] [illegible] together [illegible]

Stone Age. The New Stone Age, one gathers, will be different.

When I speak of the element of hope in the Nixon strategy, I mea[illegible] of course, his ambi[illegible] vert his current [illegible] a longer-range [illegible] parties. The [illegible] publicans [illegible] to help [illegible]

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