

Gay group plans convention protest

GOP targeted at San Diego

By Joyce Price
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Various activist groups already are gearing up to protest the 1996 Republican National Convention in San Diego.

Keith Ramsey, co-founder of Queer Nation/San Diego, is organizing a group called Protest: GOP '96 to coordinate demonstrations at the convention.

"With the GOP's historical opposition to women's equality, lesbian and gay civil rights, and freedom of choice, and with the party's support for Proposition 187, insensitivity to environmental issues, and hawkish pro-war stances, the possibilities for expressing popular dissent against Republican policies are virtually endless," he said.

Mr. Ramsey said he anticipates large-scale protests when the Republicans come to his city in August 1996 to formulate a platform and choose a presidential nominee.

Protest: GOP '96 will provide

maps and timetables showing where and when other groups have planned events and serve as liaison with local police and other government agencies, he said.

"I'm trying to avoid having a repeat of Chicago in 1968," Mr. Ramsey said, referring to the Democratic convention that was marred by violent anti-war protests and numerous arrests.

Syndicated columnist Pat Buchanan, who lost a bid for the 1992 GOP nomination and who might try again in 1996, expressed surprise that activists are starting so early with protest plans.

Demonstrations are inevitable at political conventions, he said, adding that he does not "expect anything out of the ordinary" to occur when the Republicans convene in San Diego.

However, "you'll get demonstrations if the illegal immigration issue is dealt with at the convention," Mr. Buchanan said. "[In San Diego] you are right at the vortex of where illegal immigration is a big issue."

Many Republicans have embraced Proposition 187, a California initiative approved overwhelmingly by voters Nov. 8 that would deny most public services

to undocumented immigrants.

Because of GOP support for Proposition 187, Abe Ignacio, administrative assistant for the Oakland-based National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, said "there will be a large outcry from the Latino and Haitian-American communities" at the GOP convention.

Mr. Ignacio said his group is part of a national consortium of 30 advocacy groups for immigrant rights. He said those groups "will be organizing on a national level to protest at the [Republican] convention."

Republican National Committee Chairman Haley Barbour said his party is "not concerned" about the threat of widespread protests and civil disobedience at the convention. "Anyone has a right to express their views. . . . It's not a concern," he said yesterday.

Mr. Barbour declined to speculate as to whether the convention platform will include a national Proposition 187-type provision. "The convention will decide what the platform will be," he said. "It's not the party chairman's role to impose his views" or predict what the convention will do.

Keith Appell of Creative Re-

sponse Concepts, Republican consultants in Northern Virginia, said he does not think there will ever be another convention like the one in Chicago in 1968.

But even if a lot of "left-wing fringe groups" converge on San Diego, "their presence and the amount of coverage they receive will put more pressure on the Democrats to disavow them than on the Republicans, who already are a significant distance from them," he said.

Steve Michael, spokesman for ACT UP Washington, predicted: "Both '96 conventions [Republican and Democratic] are going to be like Chicago in 1968.

"The Democrats have had Congress for the entirety of the AIDS epidemic, and we're not letting them off the hook," Mr. Michael said, adding he is not prepared to start "bashing" Republicans until he has seen what they accomplish on the AIDS front in the first 100 days of the 104th Congress.

"We'll participate in the protests at the GOP convention, but right now I'm still focused on Bill Clinton," said Mr. Michael, who complains the president has not lived up to his campaign promises on AIDS.