Lehman Blasts 'Boss' Steamroller

By OLIVER PILAT

Former Sen. Lehman, who has been attending Democratic national conventions as a delegate since 1924, will go to next month’s Los Angeles convention merely “as a Democrat and a member of the National Democratic Advisory Council.”

His steamrollered State Committee rejection as a delegate, Lehman said today, was “just another reflection of the short-sightedness of the bosses.”

The bosses he had in mind, he made clear, were National Committeeman DeSapio, who sat impassively through an unprecedentedly turbulent 3½ hour organization meeting of the State Committee last night at the Biltmore, and State Chairman Prendergast, who presided, politely at first, and then in a rage against reformers.

Prendergast resorted to such phrases as “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”

The state committeemen had no doubt that DeSapio was the man who had made the major decisions, with Prendergast acting as “front man.”

Rep. Buckley, Bronx boss emerged with increased stature. He was able to win the woman’s post of state vice chairman for one of his followers.

Sen. Lehman said:

“The bosses obviously were afraid for me to have any voice in the decisions of the New York delegation at the convention. They had the power to deny me. Now it is their responsibility to justify it to the Democrats of the state and the nation.”

One who spoke up for Lehman was William Van den Heuvel, the party’s candidate for Congress from the 17th (Silk Stocking) C.D. He said the state committee’s action was “a grave disservice to the Democratic Party and indicates a selfish disregard for the overwhelming sentiments of the voters they represent.”

“The failure to send New York’s No. 1 Democrat to the Los Angeles convention further contributes to the kind of factionalism which the party can hardly afford in the coming election,” he said.

As a leader of the reform group, the 82-year-old Lehman took to the stump during the June 7 primary campaign to denounce “bossism” in general and DeSapio and Prendergast in particular. The reform victories in Manhattan cut heavily into DeSapio’s influence and led to public demands for his resignation as Tammany chief and that of Prendergast as state leader.

Lehman helped organize the reform movement after DeSapio in 1958 forced through the nomination of District Attorney Hogan for the U.S. Senate over the wishes of then Gov. Harriman and others.

In leaving Lehman off the organization slate of 54 delegates-at-large, the state leaders ignored a last-minute appeal by Mayor Wagner.

Member after member of the reform group within Tammany charged that DeSapio had promised he would accept one delegate-at-large in each of the five Congressional Districts in Manhattan who won approval of the district leaders.

Millard Midonick won this approval in the 17th C.D., Edward Costikyan in the 18th, Mrs. Catherine Hemenway in the 20th and Mrs. Shirley S. Kaye in the 21st. All four are district leaders.

At the last minute, DeSapio substituted Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., who has been living in Washington, D.C., for Midonick; James J. Farley, whose 8th A.D. Assembly candidate was beaten by a reformer last week, for Costikyan; Mortimer Feuer, a member of Rep. Tele- ler’s 5th A.D. club, for Mrs. Hemenway; and District Attorney Hogan for Mrs. Kaye.

After the turbulent meeting, most of those attending went on to Gracie Mansion for a reception Wagner gave for Sen. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

Kennedy speaks today at DeSapio’s invitation at the National Democratic Club, 233 Madison Av.