I!S. to the NEWS

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ELECTORAL COLLEGE CHANGES

Jimmy Carter's election as President becomes official on January 6 when Vice President Nelson Rockefeller, before a joint session of Congress, opens the certificates proving that Carter has won a majority of votes in the Electoral College.

Some people charge that the Electoral College is to the body politic what the appendix is to the human body -- a'ft,.anachronism that no longer performs any useful function, but exposes the body to the danger of a dire emergency. Since the November election, there has been a plethora of commentaries urging the abolition of the Electoral College and its replacement with direct popular election of our Presidents.

One of the arguments used against the Electoral College is that we run the risk of electing a President who did not receive a majority of the popular vote. This has happened three times in our history.

What is now only an occasional risk would become standard operating procedure if we switched to direct popular election of our Presidents. Because of the presence of minor parties in the field, no candidate would ever receive a majority.

We would be forced to resort to one of three alternatives: content ourselves with a President who received only a plurality of about 40 percent, go to the trouble and expense of a national run-off election, or throw the decision into Congress every four years, which would effectively shift us into the:European parliamentary system.

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The only real defect 1n our present system is that all.the· electoral votes of each ,;;itate go to one candidate o:n a w:i.nn r-take-all basis. When Jimmy C;,,:rter carried New York by 52 percent, he re-cetved all New York's ltl electorttl votes. When Ge.t·.1ld f-'ord carried California by 51 percent, he got all California's 11-5 electoral votes. rrhus ne&rly half the voters in each state were effectively di"sfr,an..... ohised in the final tally.

This peculiarity was not intended by the Founding f'athers or authorized in the Constitution, and it badly-distorts the wishes of the A.merioat'li peoJJle.

1'h11:l1i'oundtng Fathers iritm.ufod that tbe Electoral College lie firmly g:r.m.m.d.ed in the same grand compromise that produced the Congress, namely, one person elected from each Congressional dietrl t, and two electecl at large from each state. r1bis ifil the workable l>lem'K iroig of power, geogniphy, and (H>natitue.nci<rrnt that has ian.ableO. our government to adapt to new problems and survive.

It was the 1.ntent CLf the Founding Fathers that our Presiclents l.H? chosen by electors who would devote their energies to selecting the best man for the job, and that the electors, in turn, woultl be peopl*1 of judgment and responsibility, elected within their districts by the people who know them best.

I would. bet th.at, if' the brother of the newly-elected President f appearing 011 the ballot with the prestigtous name of Carter, were to :run at large in axiy state or nationally; he could lJe elected to almost any off ice. Hut when tHmmy Carter's brothe::r ran for Mayor of Pl,iins, Georgia, where everyone knew him personally, he couldn't get elected..

rrhis illustrat'es the importance of electing electors by district where people personally know whom they are voting for, rather than at large where candidates are known only by name.

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