

Is voting for another party really so wrong?

If you want your vote to count, make it for a PC candidate



CHRIS CONNELLY

point

I have no real ethical conscience when it comes to partisan politics. The fact is that the only real opposition to the Kleinist regime has been from members of the Progressive Conservative caucus itself. Liberal and NDP leaders Kevin Taft and Brian Mason are left to discuss PC policy outside of the Legislature because the house is rarely in session (we haven't seen any political action in the Leg' since 31 August). Meanwhile, the Klein gang is free to make political announcements at its whim—sometimes without even consulting the government ministry in question—and avoid the Capital region altogether with what can only be described as conceited arrogance.

I'm not a Progressive Conservative. I was one of the many cringing-yet-vaguely-optimistic students wary of Harper's election in 2004. I refer to Premier Klein by his more monarchical title, and with more than a hint of resentment in my voice. The democratic deficit in this province is appalling. What's worse is the absence of any real response to dissension in the direction of the current government: the best we've seen so far came at the mercy of an innocent schoolgirl, who was hit with a 78-page Liberal handbook on health care thrown by Klein himself. Even more shocking are some of the suggestions brought forth by those seeking succession to Ralph's throne: Ted Morton would have this fictitious chair surrounded by the palatial confines of an official premier's residence. Hold the phone, Ted: I think you need to invade Kuwait before you get a palace.

Since I see no legal possibility of putting a swift end to this "oppressive" force through the democratic process of general elections, I will gladly sell my soul to the Progressive Conservative party for \$5. Despite the fact that I will now be receiving endless mail-outs concerning the party's many upcoming events and decisions in the works (all of which will be asking for money in some way, shape, or form), I am willing to

sacrifice the junk-mail annoyance for a chance at a real say in Alberta politics. The thought that the near-tyrannical behaviour of the Klein regime could have a second-coming is enough to make me drive down to the nearest polling station, despite my alternate political ideology.

Unscrupulous? Yes. Unprincipled? Not a chance. This decision is based upon one of the few real principles we have left in this world: the democratic process. The fact is that we already knew democracy came with a price tag. I'm going to pitch in a crinkled up representation of Wilf Laurier while I have the chance to make an important political decision—and you all should too. Be you anarcho-syndicalists, yuppies, neo-Nazis, or just plain old rednecks, you all have the relatively inexpensive option of exercising your franchise.

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You can vote for someone who may actually change the party for the better (paying attention to postsecondary education, health care and the environment), someone who will ensure you get another round of prosperity cheques (these ones actually can go to beer and popcorn), or someone so terrible that they couldn't possibly be re-elected as premier. No matter which way you go, you're going home happy. So buy one less \$5 highball while cruising down Whyte this weekend, and buy a PC membership instead. Five dollars for truly direct democracy is money well spent—even if you have to leave your ethics at home.

Buying into another party means selling your political soul



ADAM GAUMONT

counterpoint

The rationale for buying a PC membership even if you don't support the party goes something like this: you may not be capital-C Conservative, but if you want to have a say in who will be the leader of this province, then realistically you should just vote for the party leader, because we all know that the PCs will be in power. But while Klein and co may well rule the roost for years to come, the rest of the argument just doesn't hold water.

If you don't align yourself politically with that party, then just stay away and let them do their thing. Or, if you happen to find one or more of the candidates particularly appealing (Lyle Oberg is kind of dreamy, you have to admit), then perhaps you should reconsider your position on the political gamut.

While could get into the specifics of how every PC candidate sucks (Ted Morton, for example, is decidedly *not* the man), that's not the point. If you don't align yourself politically with that party, then just stay away and let them do their thing. Or, if you happen to find one or more of the candidates particularly appealing (Lyle Oberg is kind of dreamy, you have to admit), then perhaps you should reconsider your position on the political gamut.

Call me a young, libertarian idealist, but this is simply a matter of principle. I believe that one simply ought not to vote for something that one does not believe in. To argue that voting for

the PC leadership is in fact more pragmatic and democratic than "merely" voting in what is perceived as a mock election actually does more to undermine democratic principles than it does to uphold them.

I suppose one could become a card-carrying PC member to have a say in that party's leadership, then turn around and vote for another party in the next provincial election. Indeed, there have even been a few successful political turncoats in this province (Nancy Macbeth comes to mind). But that brings us back to that whole "principles" thing again.

There's a difference between realism and cynicism, and voting for something that you don't believe in begins a slippery slide into outright apathy. That is, you might soon find yourself not caring about—or voting on—the political leadership in our province at all. Resigning to the fact that a certain party will always win and giving up one's faith in the opposition is quite disturbing, if you think about it, and plays right into the ruling party's hands. Far from enfranchising oneself politically, doing so simply strips away the voice of dissent.

Finally, it's not necessarily the case that the PCs will always be in power. True, they have been since 1971 (and under only three leaders at that), and that trend looks to continue for as long as our economic prosperity makes all other political points moot. But not quite two thirds of all Albertans voted for the PCs in the last election, and while this is fairly decisive, it's by no means a whopping majority. What would happen if you took away from that number all the cynics like Mr Connelly here? The I'm-conservative-alright-but-I-can't-stand-Ralph-Klein faction's ranks are swelling as well—present them with a reasonable alternative to their less-than-beloved leader before he disappears and they forget all their troubles, and who knows what could happen?

But calling for political change in our province, as hackneyed as it sounds, is not the point either. The point is that, regardless of who's in power, you should stick to your principles and vote for the party you believe in. After all, minor personal platforms aside, the ideological differences between candidates within the any party is negligible. The slide from realism to cynicism and finally to apathy, however, is much more noticeable.

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