

Even bad candidates have a positive impact on democracy



VICTOR VARGAS

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The great thing about democracy is that you don't have to win an election to achieve your goals. Just by running for office, you can influence political policy, make a statement, start a movement, get a book deal, form a cult—even get sympathy sex. Just so long as you can get the token requirements needed to launch a campaign, the journey towards total defeat can be a blessing in itself.

Take our own federal NDP for example. They couldn't form a majority in parliament without the use of a mind control raygun, but they've managed to have an exceptional impact on Canadian history. Every year, the NDP reminds Canadians of the existence of homeless people, that spilling oil everywhere is bad for the environment, and that unions are actually important—and sometimes these reminders prove to be popular enough that the Liberals will steal them and incorporate them into their own platform.

Some parties even manage to change Canadian politics by simply existing. Though the Bloc Québécois can never mathematically become a majority, the constant threat of separation has scared past governments into funnelling money into Quebec for decades. And despite the assured

defeat of Alberta's Wildrose Alliance, you can bet your \$400 tax rebate that the Conservatives are going to make sure the farmers are all happy campers for years to come.

But there are other reasons to run outside of actual political gains. Running a doomed candidacy can cement your legacy and provide a shining example for generations to follow. And no man on Earth illustrates that better than Gary Kasparov.

Kasparov knew that under Russia's "Sovereign Democracy," he'd be lucky if Vladimir Putin allowed him to campaign without being either threatened or jailed, but he chose to run anyways. Still, there's no way that the majority Russians are going to hear his message with the current media embargo, and any real success would almost guarantee his mysterious disappearance, but by continuing to challenge Putin democratically, he's established himself in history as a man that Russians can be proud of. His actions will be a future rallying point that people will look back on and say, "This was a Russian that stood up for the people and who wasn't a murdering, drunken sociopath."

But achieving what Kasparov has managed to do is difficult. Plenty of people wish that they could be like

him, but most candidates don't quite know how to go about it. Some politicians seem to think that by going on CNN, losing three consecutive presidential bids, and spoiling their legacy of consumer advocacy will somehow make them a martyr. But unfortunately for people like Ralph Nader, you can't be a martyr for the people unless you have an oppressive government that does more than shove the odd person into Guantanamo Bay. You need a regime with no free elections and a mass gulag in Alaska. It's a cold reality, but it's true.

Then there are those people that run to make us appreciate our democratic system—like our very own Bobby Samuel. Having been censured by Students' Council and reprimanded by DIE board, his odds of winning are so low that I would eat a copy of this article if he won. So thank you for running, Mr Samuel; it's people like you that keep the apathy monster in check.

No matter what the outcome is, every person that runs in an election will make an impact. They may win ribbon after participation ribbon, but if they manage to change the life of one person—even if that person is themselves—they only serve to strengthen the democratic process.

Wake me up when the elections are over



JAKE PRINS

need to speak up. In reading the interviews with the latest batch of University students looking to add to their resumé, I was recently visited by none other than my good friend General Apathy, who asked me why I even bother as the current crop of candidates leaves something to be desired.

I don't really understand what the SU does, and even though there is one candidate who seems aware of that, he also doesn't think that tuition has gone up recently.

I'm going to be honest with you, presidential candidates: any time that I see the word "advocacy," I stop reading. I'm a simpleton, and I don't like buzzwords. Try something more concrete, like "I will find money for Bearscat," and that would probably get my vote. I don't really understand what the SU does, and even though there's one candidate who seems aware of that, he also doesn't think that tuition has gone up recently.

But candidates have been pitching advocacy as a campaign point for at least the five years I've been here, and that hasn't prevented the three staples

of the Gateway publishing year from being the Purity Test, the joke issue, and the headline "Board votes to raise tuition by maximum of 5.9 per cent."

I think the most telling indication of the current slate of hopefuls can be seen in their recent interviews in this newspaper, which typically poses a theoretically humorous question. But apart from a few Lister "jokes" ("I'd give the zombies STDs. Ha ha!"), most of the candidates seem to have the same general idea: rattle up as many people and weapons as possible, hole up somewhere, and fight for as long as possible.

Now, I'm not a zombie-movie aficionado—although I did spend the majority of an afternoon last year playing *Stubbs the Zombie* instead of preparing for an exam—but when does fighting or confronting zombies like that ever work? Anyone who tries to fight zombies gets their brains eaten, and anyone who bunters down is eventually going to run out of food and ammo while hordes of zombies, for lack of a better term, fuck their shit up.

So basically, as a candidate, you're telling me that your plan for dealing with a zombie invasion is to use the same plan that's been tried multiple times in the past and hasn't really worked yet? Why does that sound so familiar?

Maybe General Apathy's got it right after all. I've voted the last three years at this school, but with displays like this, the next time I vote might be five, ten, or 15 years in the future.

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