

MAKING DIFFICULT CHOICES

by Vic Berecz

Almost six years ago, when writing about the upcoming presidential election, I was “torn between the self-righteous arrogance of one side and detail-less plans of the other.” I disliked both Bush and Kerry for throwing exaggerations and out-of-context quotations at each other. I felt we could have done better than either of them ... and I named then as preferable alternatives “John McCain, Joe Lieberman or even Howard Dean or Orrin Hatch.” Well, times have changed and maybe those four wouldn’t be on today’s list of good alternatives. But, that’s not my point. Alternatives were not among our choices. We had a difficult choice: Bush or Kerry. [Read that *period* aloud.]

I have been criticized for being without party affiliation ... I call it being an *independent*. My critics tell me that I have no right to complain about the choices if I don’t participate in the nomination process ... primaries, caucuses, etc. In the state where I vote, Florida, primaries are closed ... i.e. only party members can vote. I think that’s as it should be, even though it leaves me out of the nomination process. But still, I choose not to associate myself with either the Democrats and Republicans for a variety of reasons, not least of which is that they expect allegiance and some aspects of both their platforms are wrong for me. I’ve flirted with the idea of a narrow-tent party like the Libertarians, but concluded that they focus too much on theory, and too little on the pragmatism needed to get things done. Most so-called *third parties* have those characteristics. So, I guess my critics are right, and I’m doomed to independence and the resulting difficult choices. Unless ...

Another potential solution to this dilemma has been bandied about by some in the Tea Party movement. They advocate always having “none of the above” as an option for every office. In the case that “none of the above” wins a plurality, the election is null and void. That’s an interesting thought, and certainly ensures that the electorate has a mechanism at their disposal for saying “a pox on both their houses.” But, unfortunately, we must again get pragmatic and focus on the real-world. If “none of the above” wins, who gets the job? There are two possibilities: (1) the incumbent stays in office until a successor is chosen; or (2) the office is declared vacant until a successor is chosen. Neither of these is a pretty alternative. Incumbency is part of the problem (I’m a fan of term limits), and I suspect any representation is better than no representation at all. That moves us back to the situation of making difficult choices, which

... often results in choosing between the lesser of evils.

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