Even 'true liberals' may vote for Tower

By BARBARA BEASLY OLSOEN

Bob Easton's article, entitled "Even 'true liberals' should vote Demo, for Carr," (which appeared in last week's Thresher —ed.) warrants a reply.

The reason for this second "installment" to the Tower-Carr controversy is not to proclaim the opposite view—that a true liberal is morally obligated to vote for Tower—but rather to voice the belief that "even a 'true liberal'" can vote for Tower for perfectly legitimate reasons and not necessarily because he happens to be mean and vindictive.

The main issue is not whether Carr's election will embarrass Connally, LBJ, or God Himself, but whose election will benefit the liberals most (or hurt them least, anyway).

Dire Consequences

Mr. Easton's argument seems to revolve around two main points: the dire punishments which would befal liberals for supporting Tower and the benefits which liberals could gain by making a deal with Carr.

The first of these points is fallacious, the second dubious.

In the first place, we should examine the dire consequences of liberal support for Tower which Mr. Easton foresees. He states that a liberal bolt for Tower could easily lead to the expulsion of liberals from the Democratic party. This is the sort of remote possibility that should not keep anyone awake nights.

How can anyone be expelled from an organization whose criteria of membership are as nebulous as those of the Democratic Party in Texas? Actually, there are no "members" in any real sense of the word to drum out. Voters cannot be thrown out of the party because they cannot be prevented from voting in the party primary.

Tory Dems

Liberals who are elected officials might be another problem since it is conceivable that they could be stripped of their party posts or not be allowed to run on the Democratic ticket. In crossing party lines, however, they would simply be following in the hallowed tradition of Tory Democrats such as former Gov. Shivers, whose fests the liberals probably will never match.

It should be clear that any general party rules to prevent the liberal defection would be much more restrictive to conservative Democrats. At any rate, even if there were the remotest likelihood that liberal leaders who hold office might be stripped of their positions, there is no need to worry about it since liberal office-holders who are not actually supporting Carr are at least saying that they will vote the straight Democratic ticket.

"Get NAACP"

Now we proceed to Easton's second point—that liberals should try to make a deal with Carr and support him in exchange for specific legislative goals. Perhaps unfortunately, the liberal experience with Carr bodes ill for any such deal.

Many liberals remember too well the first time they helped Waggoner Carr get elected to an office (speaker of the Texas House) in hopes of at least getting some moderate legislation. Well, they were rewarded all right—with such gems of legislative wisdom as the get-the-NAACP bill.

Let us assume that Texas liberals were willing to risk making the same mistake twice and that Carr agreed to such a proposition—what reason do we have for believing that Carr could actually deliver the goods?

No Legislative Power

Of course, he could always deliver one vote in the U.S. Senate (which vote Lyndon would probably be more successful in securing than any coalition of liberals), but what about the Texas legislature? Carr, as U.S. senator, would not be without influence in Texas politics, but he would have no direct power link with the legislature.

It seems unrealistic to assume that he could guarantee the passage of any specific piece of legislation. Liberals certainly have no concrete reason for believing that he could. If we are considering "selling ourselves" or our vote to Waggoner Carr, we ought to be damn sure of what we will get out of such a deal.

Liberals also have no reason to believe that Carr would become a "national" Democrat. It is true that Carr will be under considerable pressure to support the administration and will probably vote with the national Democrats on more issues than Tower will.

But Johnson will be President for a maximum of six more years, while Carr might be senator for another thirty. Who will keep Carr "in line" then? What is to keep Carr from becoming just another southern Democrat? Easton does not concern himself with this problem, but seems more worried that Tower may become entrenched since, as he says, the Republicans may be about to become a "real political party" in Texas.

It would appear that liberals have little to lose by supporting Tower and little to gain by supporting Carr. Liberals would, however, have a great deal to lose in the event of a Carr victory—Ralph Yarbrough. His powers of patronage and influence within the party would surely be lessened by Carr's election. This and other reasons liberals give for opposing Carr are touched upon by Mr. Easton in his other article last week's Thresher.

Two-Party System

But either way the election goes, it would seem that Texas liberals are not likely to gain or lose a great deal in the short run. Thus we should perhaps turn our attention to more long-range goals. It just might be that in the long run a Tower victory would prove to be another step in the development of a real two-party system in Texas.

Such a course of events would only work to the advantage of liberal Democrats whose fate, and that of the Republicans, appear to be inextricably linked. Liberals will rise to dominance in the Democratic party only when there is a Republican party which can successfully challenge the Democrats at the polls on virtually all levels of government.

Republican Support

And aside from power considerations, a healthy two-party system could well be beneficial to all the people of Texas who are interested in good and honest government.

At any rate it's worth a try.