Even 'true liberals' should vote Demo, for Carr

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"This car not for Carr ... Sometimes party loyalty asks too much"—so read the bumper stickers now being circulated by Rebuilding Committees, an Austin-based group of prominent liberal Democrats. In Corpus Christi disillusioned liberals have formed "Democrats for Tower" committee.

Reasoning that the liberal cause in Texas can best be served by defeating Democrat Waggoner Carr, liberals all over the state have decided that politics really does make strange bedfellows, and have begun to publicly organize in in support of arch-conservative John Tower.

Carr's position as the darling of the oppressive conservative majority coupled with his unimpressive record as a state legislator, Speaker of the Texas House and Attorney General made him a prime target for liberal resentment even before he was nominated.

After the unfair treatment which they received at conservative-controlled state and county conventions, many liberals have decided that it is about time for them to show their strength in the Democratic Party by defeating Waggoner Carr. They reason that Tower is no more conservative than Carr, a minority member of the Senate, no rival to liberal Senator Ralph Yarbrough, and easily removed any time he has a liberal Democratic opponent anyway.

It seems that these "Loyalists" have let their indignation cloud their political thinking. They fear that as a conservative, Waggoner Carr once elected would become entrenched in a Senate seat, which is a very definite possibility.

However, with good candidates like Jim Collins in Dallas, and George Bush and Henry Grover in Houston the Republicans may be about to become a real political party in Texas. And with two terms to his credit, even as a Republican Tower could also become "entrenched."

In addition, even though at the moment there is little basic political difference between Tower and Carr, as Senator, Carr would become a "national" Democrat in a basically liberal national Democratic party, and he would be under very much pressure to conform to national Democratic platforms and principles. As a Senator from Texas in Johnson's own party he would have to support the President in his own programs.

Most liberals will admit this, and then contend that as a symbol of conservative control of the Texas party, Carr's defeat at the hands of the liberals would strengthen their position within the Democratic party. Beating Carr would "punish" Connally and his supporters for their unfairness and "highhandedness" and force conservative recognition of liberal strength.

This also seems erroneous reasoning. At the moment Carr seems a slim favorite to win his race. To be able to beat Carr and, more importantly, take credit for it, liberals are going to have to organize very strongly against him. This would entail active participation in the Tower campaign by most liberal leaders, especially those within the Democratic party.

Such activity may or may not be sufficient to elect Tower. With Tower sure of only about 30 per cent of the electorate, and statewide liberal strength estimated at only about 15 per cent, a conservative "backlash" from such a liberal power play could offset any gains for Tower.

And whatever the outcome of the election, any liberal party official who openly supports Tower will be in bad trouble in 1968. The party loyalty issue, which in the past has elected so many liberals, could wipe out any present liberal strength within Democratic officialdom.

An organized and active liberal campaign for Tower could easily lead to their expulsion from the Democratic Party. A wierd coalition with the Republicans would then be a possibility, but only a faint one.

A specific minimum wage plank in the platform of the recent Republican state convention would have been strong bait for many liberals. Its glaring absence indicates that the Republicans are still controlled by uncompromising conservatives, so a liberal-Republican coalition does not appear likely.

Life outside the Democratic Party seems a foolish price for liberals to pay to avenge themselves on John Connally. Despite their minimal representation within the electorate, liberals have been very successful in party affairs in the metropolitan areas of the state, in addition to having elected a liberal Senator. Party affairs have perhaps even distracted liberals from more legitimate political goals.

A "true liberal" should be basically interested in good legislation; and, since the majority of Texas's voters don't share the liberal definition of good legislation, the liberals have turned to the Democratic Party as an instrument for the partial fulfillment of their legislative goals. And as long as they don't represent a majority opinion they are going to have to make compromises.

For instance, months before the primary Waggoner Carr was assured of the nomination. Instead of complaining about Carr's right-wing political views, liberal leaders should have bargained for support for specific legislation, in exchange for organized support for Carr. Connally's possible embarrassment at Carr's improbable defeat will not force one single piece of progressive legislation in either the Texas House or the U. S. Senate.

No matter what liberals do this year, in 1968 most Democratic candidates will again be conservatives. Since liberal candidates will again be scarce, liberals should be thinking about specific legislation for 1968. The stronger the liberal position, the more legislation they will be able to demand. And liberal strength can come only from within the party.

So the liberals have to stay within the party, and they have to be in a position to force certain concessions from the conservative majority in 1968. If they bolt the party in the Carr race, they may demonstrate their strength, but in 1968 they won't be in the party to exercise it.

So the liberals should grin and bear it again this year, voting for Carr, and even supporting him to solidify their strength in the next election.

After the events of the past few weeks it has become obvious that many liberals are willing to admit that party loyalty has no ultimate precedence. Now is the time for them to act on this principle, frankly trading votes for Carr in exchange for specified support either a tenable and even desirable course of action. But not now.

Then in 1968 the lines will be drawn before the election, and if the conservatives don't deliver, or liberal strength does not prove itself, leaving the party could be a tenable and even desirable course of action. But not now.