



**BEING THE CHANGE**

# FAITH IN DEMOCRACY?

## *The electoral process, tarred and feathered*

Let us stop fooling ourselves and get right to the point: the democratic process in Canada is a joke. In America it is a farce of that joke and in Mexico, a satire of the farce of the joke. North America has a severe democratic deficit, and back-room, anti-democratic partnerships like the Security and Prosperity Partnership (SPP) are only serving to make it worse. I'll get back to that in a bit.

While breaking his own "Set Date" election law, Stephen Harper is sending Canadians to vote on October 14. Here the citizenry will

websites are appearing, wherein you vote for a candidate in your riding that has a chance of beating the "more evil" candidate, and in exchange (honour system please) someone in a riding where your preferred party's candidate has the best chance will vote for your party (when they may not have otherwise).

This process, however, is flawed in a myriad of ways (too many to list) and does not solve the problem of not being able to vote with your heart due to an inherently undemocratic process. If you do end up voting with your heart, your vote could turn out to be quite

sustainable growth, sustainable economy, sustainable society and sustainable energy policies. Sustainability is not just centred on the environment; it is the realization that we must treat all our systems with precaution and respect. That there are undeniable ecological limits outside the realm of technological advances that direct the human life allowing layer of earth (the biosphere) we inhabit. Everything is connected; we are all a part of Atleo's Tsawalk.

The clean coal bipartisan orgy in the American election campaign mirrors the tar

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enjoy their one opportunity to participate in the government by stuffing their ballot in a box. It is not necessarily the vote that they want to cast — instead, in our backward system, they may be voting solely against a party they don't want to see in power.

With our archaic first past the post electoral system, majority governments may form with a minority of the votes, and huge groups of voters will be underrepresented in the House of Commons — that is, if they are represented at all.

Increasingly, what this means is that people are forced to vote against a party they do not support instead of voting for a party that does adequately represent them. This is in an effort to reflect the less-desired party from forming the government. Alternatively, vote trading

meaningless if your candidate does not win. Ontario had the chance to switch to a method of proportional representation in the last provincial election, but stupidity (ignorance, fear of change) prevailed.

Personally, I recognize the meaninglessness of my vote. It is more of a symbolic gesture that nets the party that currently has the sanest policies \$1.35. From my first vote at the age of 18, I knew that it meant nothing for I was supporting a candidate who would not win. That person's policies were too sane — they supported too much equality and equity.

As my understanding of the natural world evolved, so did my voting patterns, and now I support the one party that has sustainability as a base premise which encompasses the party's platform — sustainable development,

sands development love-in surrounding our Canadian popularity contest. Both issues are under-discussed and arise from a prehistoric academic understanding of climate change. Europe has had clean coal technologies for a while and since this only reduced the smog pollution without actually reducing the burning of coal, they experience the full effects of climate instability. The smog was actually reflecting solar radiation away from the earth, acting as a cooling blanket — we can't just clean it up, we have to stop using it. Also, ripping the tops off mountains to dig coal and spreading mercury contamination as a result is not clean. The process, as much as the product, is unsustainable.

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# PROCESS:

## *Is our system flawed?*

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What is happening in Canada is even worse. Under the anti-democratic harmonization agreement known as the SPP that the Liberal party entered and the Tories now fully support, we are to increase our tar sands development. That's right, the "energy security" working group of the SPP thinks that the tar sands — a development the size of Florida already using as much fresh clean water per day as the City of Calgary, not to mention the single largest point source emitter of greenhouse gases in the world — needs to increase production by a factor of five by 2012.

It is not bad enough that water withdrawal and poisoning means that the Athabasca River barely makes it to the Peace Delta, or that downstream First Nations communities cannot drink or eat from the river due to pollution, or that any water bird unfortunate enough to land in an open air effluent pond (which is placed precariously close to the river) die immediately, such as the 600 ducks that landed in toxic sludge last spring.

Particularly horrible is that under the SPP, with the complicity of the Conservative government, and Liberal, Bloc, and NDP opposition, this unsustainable attack on the Earth and indirect attack on First Nations will increase in scope. This will offset and dramatically dwarf any advances made in carbon sequestration, or the "greener" energies of wind, solar, and geo-thermal.

The SPP, being not at all part

of the "democratic" process in North America, serves as a negative multiplier of the democratic deficit — and not the math equation type of negative multiplier that would make the already negative situation a positive, it makes it much, much worse.

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To protest the futility in our voting system, some have decided to publicly eat their ballots (quite illegal), some have ass-stinked the ballot before putting it in the box, while others, whether inspired by Saramago or not, have simply cast blank ballots. Though these acts will not balance the democratic deficit, they do help to illuminate it.

When you go to vote in the upcoming election, please do so with a thought about sustainability, and knowledge of the recent histories' of the traditional ruling parties. Their preferences are not for social and environmental equity but for the in-kind friendship of big oil, big coal, and big money.

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*Editor's Note: Imprint does not condone ballot eating, and furthermore holds that the second example of protest only impacts those working as poll clerks — average citizens, students and elderly alike; there is no category in vote-taking for protest-specific ballots.*