P.S. to the NEWS
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SINGLE-ISSUE VOTERS

Are you a single-candidate voter, a single-party voter, a single-issue voter, or a no-voter? Those appear to be the four categories into which the American electorate divides as we gear up for the 1980 elections.

The current fashion is to decry or ridicule the latter two types. The essence of democracy, however, is not only that each citizen can vote, but that he can vote for "none of the above," and that he can choose his own reasons for casting or not casting that vote.

In the George Wallace heyday, the no-voters proclaimed that there's not a dime's worth of difference between the two major parties. It is more likely today that the no-voter is considerably more disillusioned. He thinks that no matter who is elected, no matter what promises the candidates make, after election they all join the "tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect" club.

The single-issue voters are those all revved up by a single issue. They determine their support or nonsupport of each candidate based on his position on that issue. Among the single issues that have fired the emotions of those willing to work for or against candidates are abortion, gun control, tax limitation, and the Panama Canal.

Several major conservative groups recently served notice that support or opposition to the SALT II Treaty will be the single issue on which conservative money and volunteer help will be determined. One commentator belittled this tactic by labelling it "the 2-by-4 or mule-training school of educational psychology." That was a derogatory reference to the old story about how to train a mule: first of all you have to use a 2-by-4 to get his attention.

So what's wrong with that? Those who honestly believe that SALT II will disable the United States in its ability to defend its freedom and independence against Soviet expansionism and nuclear blackmail should put their money and volunteer work

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where their mouth is and translate their strong beliefs into action at the polls. It's much better to give the Senators fair warning beforehand.

The Panama Canal Treaties provide a good object lessons to Senators pondering SALT II. Of the 15 Senators who ran for reelection after voting for the Panama Treaties, 8 were defeated and only 7 were reelected. Of the 9 Senators who voted against the Panama Treaties and ran for reelection, all but one were successful.

Those who try to put down the single-issue voters would leave the politicking to the single-candidate and single-party voters. There is no persuasive evidence that those voting blocs are any more socially or political responsible than the single-issue variety of voters.

The single-party voters are those who would vote for a candidate wearing their party's label even if he is a yellow dog, in preference to any good guy on the opposition ticket. The rationale behind this, to the extent that there is any, is that it is more effective and more efficient to hold the party accountable rather than the individual officeholder. In any event, single-party voting blocs have been standing at Zero Population Growth for years.

The single-candidate voters are those who usually say, "I vote for the man, not the party," or who piously proclaim that they are "independent" voters. In reality, their criterion for candidate selection is simply personality, rather than issues.

Previous candidates whose personality preempted the political spectrum, quite apart from issues or party, were Franklin D. Roosevelt and Dwight Eisenhower. The current single-candidate voters are primarily those who belong to the cult of Kennedy worshipers; they will vote for a Kennedy, even though he lied about a young woman's death in his car on Chappaquidick Island.

The single-candidate voters also include that large bloc of voters who belong to the cult of incumbency: they support any candidate who is an incumbent against anyone who has the gall to challenge whoever is already in office.

Each of us can make our own choice as to which kind of voter we choose to be. As for me, I think the single-issue voter has the most intellectual consistency, political savvy, and clout at the polls. 1980 will be an interesting year.

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