

The Votes of a Dual Citizen

By Prof. Stephen Scheinberg

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As a dual citizen of the United States and Canada I must decide how I will vote in two elections. My primary loyalty is as a citizen of the country I am voting in, to choose the best candidates for the general welfare of my two nations. I care about Israel, but I am voting for members of my parliament and my congress rather than members of the Knesset.

My primary concern is at this moment, as it is for many of you as well, for the economy and providing good management in a time of economic uncertainty. I will certainly not trust in those who brought us to this state of affairs, those who have offered phony arguments for deregulated markets. Nor will I vote for those who would just bail out the wealthy speculators at public expense. One critic of the Bush handouts has pointed out that the United States has now socialized losses and privatized profits, meaning that the risk has been taken out of speculative capitalism and placed on the backs of the tax payers. I recognize that the situation may be better in Canada, but Paul Martin's long fight against deficits is now in jeopardy, as ill-advised corporate tax cuts have threatened our economic position and ability to respond to the growing crisis, with the government spending we will need.

Secondly, I am vitally concerned about the environment, which is an immediate issue and cannot be postponed until 2020 as conservatives on both sides of the border might have it. Republicans in the United States and Conservatives in Canada now seem to have shifted from climate change deniers, and I specifically mean Bush and Harper, to environmental sluggards who would postpone all actions until they are safely out of office. I am not necessarily an advocate of either the carbon tax or of a cap and trade system, but we must surely act now and opt for tough measures, even if they impact on Mr. Harper's beloved Alberta Tar Sands. Climate change is already, according to the conservative *Economist* magazine, now threatening the lives of many in the developing world. But I am also concerned about my own children and grandchildren and will not vote to delay meaningful action on the environment. A leading environmental group has awarded four of our parties with a B grade or better, but gave the Conservatives a much deserved F+.

My third concern is for the foreign policy of my two countries. The Iraq War has cost the United States

dearly, undermining its financial health, damaging its relations around the world and constraining the ability of its armed forces to respond to new crises. One should recall that while most of our political parties in Canada opposed going into that war, Stephen Harper was all for it. That brings me to the issue of Israel in this election. There is no doubt in my mind that Israel is less secure today than before the Iraq War, and those who urged it and supported it were not good friends of Israel. Unlike his father, Dubya was not mindful of the balance of power in the Middle East. When he destroyed Iraq, he made Iran the dominant player in that part of the world, threatening Israel's security. He committed America's strength not to the battle against terrorism but to the battle for oil. Ask yourselves the question: is Israel better off today, more secure under the leadership of Bush, Cheney and their ilk, than it was under a Clinton administration which pursued peace between Israel and her enemies?

Israel, as an issue, has entered both campaigns in ugly ways. In Canada, so-called non-partisan organizations, with charitable tax-free status, have tried to influence the Jewish electorate. They have urged their employees and members to get out a Conservative vote. They may have turned over their mailing lists to the Conservative Party for Mr. Harper's infamous Rosh Hashanah cards. Both B'nai Brith and the Canadian Jewish Congress uncharacteristically excused the Conservative election call even though it fell on a Jewish holiday. They accepted the thin excuse that Mr. Harper had to attend a major international conference, when it was clear that what he really wanted to do was to stop four by-elections which might have resulted in Tory losses, get the election over with before a financial crisis struck, and avoid a Canadian ballot after an Obama victory. In the United States, Jewish Republicans organized so-called "push polls" in which Florida Jews were fed scurrilous lies about Obama by what purported to be a legitimate polling organization. It is more difficult to ascertain the origins of all those horrible e-mails about Barack *Hussain* Obama being (God forbid!) a Muslim, but we can guess who is behind them.

You will understand that I will have little difficulty in casting my American ballot. I do not have a case of Obamamania but consider Obama and Biden best prepared to meet America's challenges, even while I have reservations about some of their policies. As one who had a very minor role in America's civil rights struggle I rejoice in the prospect of an Obama victory. In Canada I will cast a strategic vote to defeat or at least prevent a majority for the Conservatives. I am not reassured by sleeveless sweaters or softer tones. Canada must not be doomed to four years of no action on the environment, corporate rule with little or no regulation, and friendship not for Israel but for the right-wing Likud and its Greater Israel policies. ♦

Ill-advised tax cuts have threatened our ability to respond to the growing crisis.

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