

Other Voices

Alaskan Politics: Apathy Inaction

If apathy was a disease, we in Alaska would be suffering from a major outbreak, if not an actual epidemic.

It is not unusual for any given populace to suffer periods of apathy in regard to its involvement in the electoral process. However, it is unusual for this apathetic psychology to impact such a broad spectrum of both the ethnic and social stratas of our collective society. There are obviously many reasons for this lack of action on the part of much of our populace, but it is difficult to pinpoint any one major cause. It goes without saying that we must find the cause of our non-involvement and attempt to rectify it if we are to move forth as a political force.

Natives of Anchorage recently formed a local Political Action Committee. The committee has actively raised money for candidates and has worked door-to-door in support of those they feel comfortable with. The Anchorage Native Political Action Committee should only be the first group formed and this small start should become the first step in a long range political planning process that will eventually impact every Native community in our entire state. We have enough people to become a strong political force, but we will have no more strength than we do now if we do not start working as a statewide team in the identification of people we can support and in the raising of money and support staff to enhance their efforts. It is my suggestion that we look to the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention in Anchorage as the point to meet and develop some basic strategy for this year's General Election.

It appears that many do not vote simply because they cannot believe that their single vote will make a difference. Remember that Adolph Hitler came into power on the strength of one single vote. Rutherford B. Hayes became president of the United States on a mandate of one single vote, and we speak English instead of German in the United States because English was chosen as our national language by one vote. Just think how the world would have been altered if we had one Eskimo and one Indian living in Germany at the time of the election. Obviously, our people would not have been swayed by his rhetoric and he would have lost the election by one vote. Or, if we had been involved in the selection of our national language, it might have become either some dialect of Eskimo or the language of a tribe of Indians.

Making light of history does not change the fact that in many instances the direction of our entire country, and even the world, was changed by one vote. Every vote counts.

We could use an old cop-out and say that we don't have any Ernest Gruenings or Emil Nottis running this year, but that would only reflect a part of the truth. It is true that real statesmen like those two gentlemen are few and far between, but those running for office this year do offer us a broad range of choices.

We hear loud and prejudiced voices speaking against what we have worked to achieve and we hear soft and empathetic voices talk of how they would like to help us reach new levels of achievement. We hear intellectually apt candidates speak to us in language we can understand and inept ones try to speak over our heads in hopes of baffling us with bull manure. We believe some, and some we have learned never to believe again.

Yes, we have choices, but without taking the time to understand the candidates and then working on behalf of those we believe in, we will not elect those of our choice. Again, we will have lost our chance to have people in office we can trust and believe in, and in turn, we will have lost their support, had they won their races.

It is said that a politician tries to see both sides of an issue so that he can get around it. We must learn to see both sides of the politician so that we can elect around him.

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