

WHEN WE CRY ABOUT COMPROMISE

There has been considerable press comment lately on political "compromise." In Ottawa the "creditists" are ridiculed for supporting austerity in office, while on the other hand PC's and then Liberals in turn are belabored for co-operating with "debt-free money" men.

Provincially, "free-enterprise" parties steal the platforms from under the "socialists" by calling for nationalized power. And a watered-down NDP platform is so mild that there is speculation of merger with the Liberals.

Abroad, Britain "compromises" principle in negotiating with the ECM; "pacifist" India is at war. And Mr. Khrushchev is under fire from Mr. Tse-tung for compromising in Cuba.

The last illustration demonstrates the inconsistency in our *per se* condemnation of compromise.

We misplace our critique when we assume that policies must be inflexible "on principle." For, after all, most of us are quite relieved and quite approving when "the enemy" yields, as Khrushchev did recently. Yet we sometimes seem to feel that our own political policies—national, party, or personal—are somehow divinely inspired and therefore unimpeachable. We sometimes try to convince ourselves that only the other fellow makes mistakes, while our decisions must be immutable.

Such is not the nature of politics, nor of life. Right answers simply aren't so clearly defined nor so securely tacked down under any particular party label.

We may be inclined to pacifism, but it is

pretty hard to condemn Nehru's decision to fight.

We may be partial to national independence, but it is equally difficult to ignore Britain's economic exigencies.

We may not agree with Social Credit's A+B's, but it is easy enough to understand that in a parliament split four ways there must be co-operation of some sort or we'll see very little productive legislation.

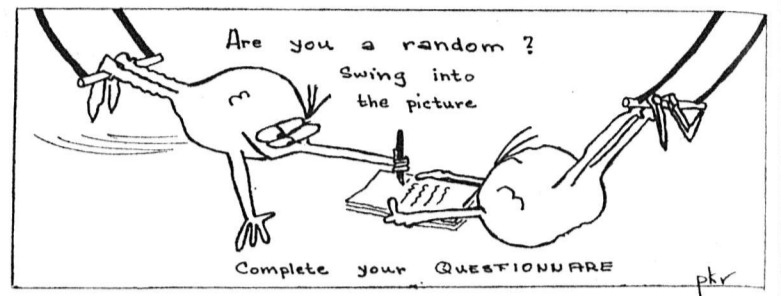
There is nothing wrong with compromise on any particular decision. There is nothing wrong with admitting mistakes, or merely partial solutions. Rigidity, after all, is a closed door to improvement. Certainly there is nothing wrong with co-operation between persons or parties or nations of differing philosophies.

There are a few things than ought not to be compromised. One of these is honesty: that simple expedient of admitting the truth about one's own abilities and weaknesses, and about public affairs.

Another universal that need not be compromised is responsibility: a sense of devotion to one's work, to quality, and to the people in whose name one speaks.

Dignity and decency, kindness, rationality, and a sense of humor: these need not be sacrificed to expediency. There are a few general principles which may be summed up in the word HUMANITY. Our politicians can afford to take a firm stand for these.

But unfortunately these are not the sort of ideals we generally have in mind when we cry about compromise.



FORUM

Value And Philosophy

First, I would like to make it clear that the views I am expressing are not officially those of the Campus Liberal Club. They are my own views on the resolution passed by the Alberta Liberal Association favouring public ownership of electric power. The Campus Liberal Club will discuss this issue on its merits next week and reserves the right to agree or disagree with the senior branch of the party.

In assessing the value of any policy it must be justifiable both in terms of: (1) basic philosophy; and (2) practical value.

(1) Philosophically, the Liberal Party is still a party of free enterprise. However, there is nothing incompatible between free enterprise and public ownership of power. For free enterprise is predicated on the premise that there exists a state of competition which results in increased efficiency and lower prices to consumers. But the generation of electrical power is necessarily a monopoly industry. There is no quarrel with the monopoly situation since it would be wastefully uneconomic to duplicate electricity distribution facilities in a single area.

But, as a monopoly there can be no issue of free enterprise here. Presently six provinces, five of them staunchly free enterprise, have public ownership. It was a Conservative government which established public power in Ontario in 1908. Today 90% of Canadian consumers are served by public systems.

Those who scream that public ownership of power means socialism must adopt as a premise that these other provinces are socialist; obviously incorrect.

(2) Similarly, in practical terms, there is a very strong case in favour of public ownership.

\$3 MILLION SAVING
Financially, it would result in a great saving to the people of Alberta. The most significant item would be a \$3 million saving on federal corporation taxes since this is paid by private corporations but not by publicly owned utilities.

Dr. David Winch, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Alberta, has calculated savings not only on taxation but also on capital costs, personnel and advertising.

He calculates that even with the most generous of estimates of compensation, and excluding the interest advantage to the province taking over current debt obligations of the corporations rather than refunding at higher rates, there would be a net saving to the province of \$3.3 million per annum.

ALTERNATIVE BENEFITS
This would benefit Albertans by resulting in either; (1) lower costs of power; or (2) adding to provincial revenues, thereby relieving tax strain in other areas.

Benefits would also accrue in terms of extra-provincial relations. Not only would a single power authority be able to consolidate all power generation and thereby operate on a larger scale and at lower cost than the private corporations, but it would be in a far stronger position in the joint development of hydro electric power on rivers which cross provincial boundaries and in the negotiations with the Dominion government which must precede the establishment of a national power grid.

There are those who contend that public power would be less efficient. This is refuted by the fine example of Ontario Hydro and also by considering that power companies in Alberta are allowed a high percentage return on their investment by the Alberta Power Commission and hence have less incentive to economize.

Much of the opposition to public ownership is identified with the arbitrary and authoritarian manner in which the Social Credit government of British Columbia expropriated the B.C. Electric Corp. Under the Liberal proposal, in case of disagreement over compensation between the company and the government, the matter would be handed over to the courts to determine a fair price. In B.C., the Social Credit government denied shareholders access to the courts.

I would emphasize that this is not the first step on the road to socialism.

Neither I nor the Liberal Party in Alberta would go beyond the specific monopoly situation of electric power in advocating public ownership. We are still a party of free enterprise; but only insofar as free enterprise condition (and not monopoly) exist.

Campus Liberal President
Sheldon Chumir

Guest Editorial

WHEN WE CRY FOR A CHARTER

by Mary-Lee Magee
Western Regional President
NFCUS

The Students' Councils of Canada are presently considering a document that theoretically will turn us into a nation of sheep. The "Charter" was designed in good faith by a group of dreamers within our National Federation. Dreamers are essential to society—but can undermine its basis if they run wild.

The avowed purpose of the twelve-page brief is to proclaim a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities which will be a "solemn agreement among us and a moral guide for all other persons." Whether the charter is workable or not is immaterial. What must be considered is the advisability of limiting our rights by defending them; of designating our responsibilities to the detriment of our freedom.

The essence of the student lies in his opportunity to be different. He is allowed—even expected—to be a rebel. A Birchist or a Ban-the Bomber, an anarchist or a bureaucrat—or all four! The student is what he is, and not what Canada tells him to be.

Why must we "observe the highest moral standards and maintain the principles of democracy?" Because the Student Council thinks it is a good idea?

Must we commit ourselves to a group-identity because the Charter says that this is the way "the student may most effectually uphold and enrich the value of society?" Come, come, gentlemen: you must have absorbed enough history to realize that it is the individual who molds society, not the conformist.

And whence comes the responsibility to support the "Student Association and the national and international students' movements in which it represents us?" Surely one of the most basic rights of the individual is to be apathetic. Surely it is not intended that he be responsible for leading a cheer everytime he sees Student Council.

The section of the Charter dealing with the rights and responsibilities of the student are as unnecessary as they are inadequate. Even if it were possible to enumerate these, is it going to make any significant change in our status? Rights have to be fought for and responsibilities must be freely accepted.

No one can bring a right such as the freedom of speech into existence by including it in a charter. It must be an integral part of the tradition of a society; it cannot be imposed by an external force. And if it is accepted as a social form there is no need to write it down.

The Students' Councils of Canada are perfectly justified in proclaiming the rights and duties of established organizations such as the Students' Union and NFCUS. But they must exercise great discretion in extending their authority to the formulation of little rules governing the personal life of the student.

By all means, gentlemen—investigate and define our relations with the administration and determine the responsibilities you have to the students who elected you. But please, don't tell us how to think!

RANZNY

