

# PEACE IN OUR TIME (GREEN IN MONTANA)

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My vote's more important than yours. Sorry, but I got it coming to me. I wake up every day to a governor who calls herself "the lapdog of industry" and a U.S. Senator who calls Arabs "ragheads" and a state House that wants to abolish education—not just public education, I mean education—and a state Senate that still loves electricity dereg and a state AFL-CIO that toadies to Republicans and winters that really suck.

Plus, before Montana I gave ten years to Texas, where every vote left of the Birchers is compost. This country owes me.

It's not my fault I'm more important than you. It was the Framers who gave 900,000 Montanans and 34 million Californians two Senators a lick. You do the math.

As to the Framers' foresight, recall that the Golden State gave us Nixon and Reagan and wanted to give us Bob Dornan till we wised up and that Montana hasn't given us anyone who isn't safely behind bars or holed up in a really out-of-the-way cabin.

My civic burden is particularly great this year with our senior U.S. Senator, Max Baucus, a titular Democrat, up for review and the whole damned Senate, which means the whole damned U.S. government, which means the whole damned world, a twitch from being repo'd by the GOPihad.

You may think me biased against Republicans, but I'm ecumenical. I don't like Republicans of either party.

This is hard on my Democratic friends, especially those who live in places where you can get Indian food and who nonetheless envy us rubes every other November, when they tell me to cast my 38 votes for a Republican who hangs a "D" after his name. They just adore that I'm voting Green this fall.

I don't want more hate mail from the coast-though if you send it, perhaps you could include a passable chicken tikka masala--so believe me when I say I really wanted to vote for Senator Ex-Lax. I have always said Ex-Lax Max (what goes in him firm comes out

mushy) was unfairly nicknamed. He is a man of principle, the principle being his election. He got to the upper chamber in 1978 beating up on incumbent "Panama Paul" Hatfield (D) for giving away Mom and Apple Pie with the Canal. It's hard to top that kind of debut, but Ex-Lax has tried. Recently he's put the skids on ergonomic workstations and cleaner smokestacks. He's a sucker for any regressive tax that can be pawned off as growth. He's damned sure ranchers are being overcharged for grazing federal land at dimes an acre. His faith in NAFTA, WTO, IMF, and the World Bank are pure. For sport, he gut-shoots bills that would protect Montana's last wildernesses. True, he holds the marathon-racing record for the U.S. Senate, but have you seen Jesse Helms in shorts?

Fact is, I just couldn't resist our Green candidate, who, let me soothe you, is bats. He makes H. Ross Perot look stable, and he makes H's alzheimeric running mate, Admiral James Stockdale, sound like Chrysti the Wordsmith. He has held one office, delegate to our 1972 constitutional convention, where he submitted more proposals than any other delegate, all rejected. He's pro-gay but anti-choice. He wants a revitalized merchant marine. He wants mandatory voting. He wants custody of his toddler; what 78-year-old wouldn't? Best of all, he's from Butte--think Flint without curb appeal--which is indictable in most jurisdictions.

"But he's a lawyer," a supporter once pled, which reminded me of the legal seminar my wife took where two troglodytic Montana barristers asked a third if the topic, *Marbury v. Madison*, was "that cattle rustling case."

'Course, y'all already know Bob Kelleher from his 1976 Presidential race, when he stumped for parliamentary government with the promise to be the last U.S. President—not a bad idea really. Don't hold Bob against the Montana Greens. For one thing, they'd give him to your state for the asking. For another, if his politics were Right instead of Left, he'd be governor.

As for me, I love him. I don't love him because he's so deep-fried as to be fun and harmless. Just the op-

posite. I love him because seeing as how Ex-Lax's election may be close, Bob makes the message of a vote for him real clear. (Since some Democrats may still be reading, I'll spell it out: If folks like me will pull a lever for Bob, the Ds got a gully-washer in their cellar.)

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I know, I know protest votes are so twentieth century, especially now that King George is on the hobby horse. It's not the Ds got problems, it's me's got problems, my D advisers tell me. The advisers are all earnest and have good teeth and last held a minimum wage job in kindergarten and can get an endoscopy even if the HMO denies coverage and don't live near a clearcut or in a toxic waste dump or in sight of anything resembling Section 8, unless you count their federally subsidized mortgage, which would be as unfair as counting their federally subsidized college loans. The advisers can list the costs of losing the Senate like stocks in their favorite mutual. (Newsflash, dearies: a D-owned Senate confirmed Clarence Thomas.) And they agonize so about all the little policy concessions The Party has made in defense of civilization as we know it--a little welfare dropped here, a little estate tax axed there, a little über-war and Constitution-mulching which (shocking!) nary a leader of The Party will oppose, a little laxity with fuel economy that will melt Sweden, a little defense of marriage and of the Pledge and of any soft fascism guised as theism—you know the roll call. Funny so few of The Party's rightward staggers hit the padded classes loyal to It. Connection? Nah.

Anyhoo, what are the loyalists to do? The Party says there's a madman out there, variously a Jersey accountant or a Topeka soccer mom or an Orange County hardhat who gives a rat's rear for naught but who'll chuck more mental patients in the gutter so he can get \$10.30 off his 1040. Now, I say \*those cats\* got problems, but The Party says we can't try to change their minds with child care or health care or union protections (sooo FDR!), and we can't jujitsu the Rs' class warfare to mobilize the gazillions of nonvoting poor (sooo incompatible with pâté at \$1,000 a head), so we Ds gotta be more like 'em, gotta give a little more to the Rs each day--else real mayhem will break out. If the strategy sounds familiar, so might the name Neville Chamberlain. Don't mind us nutters if amid the applause for Munich we ask The Party in the only unmoneyed language It still understands to put up a fight before the Luftwaffe is at Fisherman's Wharf.