

EDITORIAL

A Preference for Peccadilloes

Political cartoonists pick their favorite politicians not on the basis of skill and ability, but rather on their own skill and ability to draw the politician's flaws and foibles most comically. So they often choose the lesser of two candidates just for the "fun" of it. Equally guilty of setting us all up for failure are the late night comedians such as Jay Leno and Conan O'Brien, who prefer the candidate with the most peccadilloes to poke at. This group, of course, adored Bill Clinton.

And if these politicians aren't the best leaders, well, that's the fault of the serious voters. Cartoonists and comedians, after all, have a job to do.

Though the campaigns (which seem to begin as soon as the ink is dry on the inauguration signature) may try to re-label personality and character traits to suit their candidate, in the long run, we all know pretty much what we're getting.

After the revelations of Goldschmidt's sex scandal, former Gov. Vic Atiyeh tells of a conversation he had with his wife Dolores. She was commenting on how three politicians, Jack Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and Neil Goldschmidt, were all renowned for being exceptionally "charismatic." Atiyeh says his wife thought for a moment and then said, so *that's* what "charisma" means.

So do voters sense a candidate's underlying character in advance? Or can they be completely fooled?

Sometimes the public is well aware of their choice but still charges full speed ahead, as with the reelection of Bill Clinton, who faced impeachment shortly after his second term began. Sometimes the public is shielded from the truth by the media. Such was probably the case with Jack Kennedy, whose philandering while in office (immoral, but not illegal) went unreported by the press corps in an era of greater personal privacy for public figures.

But times have changed. If a candidate has dirty laundry, deviant leanings, or is simply ill-suited for leadership, the truth will come out. So in today's political climate what is harder to explain and impossible to ignore is the complicity of party insiders and their media cohorts. Why do they stand by and allow flawed candidates to rise to top leadership positions, only to watch them crash from their pedestals in disgrace?

Leaving aside time-honored disputes over politics and performance, our current governor and our current president both possess the character and the ability to lead. Both are capable of mistakes, but neither came into office fundamentally flawed. Neither is typically described as charismatic, and for that we can all breathe a sigh of relief. Disagreements about their performance will be just that—about performance, not about the integrity or security of the state or nation. This is about the best that the loyal opposition should expect in a democracy.

But there is a political race here in Oregon that voters may look back at and ask why political insiders or the media didn't tell them what sort of person they were really voting for. That race is the election for Portland's mayor.

One candidate, Tom Potter, has a record of walking away from jobs and leadership positions before the work is complete. Leaders are typically compelled *toward* conflict, because—right or wrong—they believe in their own skill and judgment to make decisions and see them through. Intellectually and emotionally Tom Potter is able to pull up stakes and walk away from conflict with apparent ease.

Potter retired at an age when most political leaders are hitting their strongest stride. He came out of retirement for? Well, that's a good question. Potter speaks in generalities and presents no passionate reason for wanting to lead, at least no particular cause or issue that would keep him on task.

There is not one single reason to believe he would stick with the job.

His candidacy, his campaign and his character are odd.

Now there's nothing wrong with being a bit odd, but odd is not a leadership qualification. Those who should know—media, party insiders—*do know* that Potter is a poor candidate and a probable *disaster* for the city of Portland. Four years in office (if he lasts that long) with vague, passionless, extreme leftist officiating by Potter could be the final nail in the coffin for Portland's business climate, Portland's tax base, and Portland's dream of being a special West Coast city.

Why should non-Portlanders care? Because the city's economic effect on the state is enormous. There are outsiders licking their chops at the final fall of a Potter Portland and its utopian urbanites they despise. They know Potter spells disaster but they're not going to tell anyone. The whispers are "the sooner the city crashes and burns, the sooner it can finally be repaired."

That explains why they're not saying anything about Potter's obvious unsuitability for office, but what explanation do Democrats have for their silence? Probably the same explanation that they have for keeping silent about Goldschmidt for 30 years—not a very good one.