Divisive issue tests the limits of and commitment to democracy

Re: "Harper's attempt to put the lid on MPs debate on 'homosexual marriage'" by Sheila Pratt, Opinion, Feb. 20.

As the same-sex marriage battle intensi-fies, each side is trying to rule the other by using the same brush, that all-too-common, sweet-sounding word, "democracy." Shame!

If Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's attempt to curtail freedom of expression is undertaken, then surely so is Paul Martin's insistence on a "united Liberal yes vote.”

We can't have it both ways.

True democracy must never be used as a political tool of convenience and twisted into something it was never intended to be. A forced vote on such a controversial issue, be it positive or negative, is not representative of the will of the people.

It's time all Canadians were given a voice on this very controversial issue. True democracy demands a majority referendum.

Betty Tordoff, Sherwood Park

Fastening loose cannons

For Sheila Pratt to quote Harper's call for his MPs to vet their speeches through him with Martin's refusal to allow a free vote is a real stretch.

Harper has not tampered with the free vote but has, as leader, elected to avoid any loose cannons spewing forth innovative comments.

Liberals, Pratt included, would like nothing better than to have the opposition speaking out, focusing the situation and making good cannon fodder for the left.

Harper seeks to avoid, or at the very least minimize, vitriolic behavior while still allowing members a free vote.

When it comes to destroying democracy, the Liberals have written the book on this subject. Eighteen years of representatives to fairly represent their constituents is hardly democracy, yet Pratt says it's a word.

I find it difficult to understand why Journal of Light and Truth ink has no space to her myopic ranting.

Dennis Danforth, Sherwood Park

Canada's marital dispute

Exclusivity preserves the Marriage Club

Advocates of same-sex marriage would have us all believe that this issue is primarily one of "equal rights" and therefore irreconcilable.

What opponent could dare criticize it and hope to remain credible?

What's lost in the rhetoric is the fact that all Canadians already have equal rights relating to marriage. To apply the term to same-sex marriage is a subtle and intentionally misleading misnomer — a tactic we've grown used to seeing from the homosexual lobby.

It's not equal rights, but "special privileges" that are really at stake here, and whenever special privileges are sought by any group under the guise of "rights," it's generally at the expense of someone else — usually the taxpayer.

But in this case the taxpayer is spared since the cost to extend benefits to same-sex couples is likely small. Neither would religious groups be directly affected — marriage is in their lexicon — although one can understand that churches are raising the alarm at the sight of wolves gathering.

The group with the most to lose is currently an active club composed of a panel of people, each couple one male and one female, united in marriage in the eyes of the state, and generally in the eyes of God. If the Marriage Club cannot remain exclusive, then the club's founding premise is lost, its raison d'etre and its rights are eroded. The reason any exclusive club is formed is from the differentials (in-equalities) of one group from the rest of society. If the Marriage Club must accept homosexual couples, then the very difference that makes it exclusive becomes moot. The Supreme Court has effectively said that it does not recognize differentiations between individuals or groups, and organizing along these lines will not be tolerated. In other words, everyone who wants into the Marriage Club must accept homosexual couples for now, and perhaps others later. The situation reflects the frightening specter of Pierre Trudeau's "just society" (another misnomer), where everyone must be equal, whether they are or not, or whether they wish to be or not, and where exclusivity is not tolerated, even the natural wishes and desires of the sexes.

It's time to understand why our Liberal government feels it should tread on the rights of married couples to satisfy the homosexual lobby.

M.E. Jensen, Sherwood Park

And where do hermaphrodites fit in?

"Other's sexes need consideration too"

Most people tend to think that there are only two sexes: male and female. It should be remembered that one child in about every 2,000 births does not easily fit into either of these two categories.

This may be caused by differences in how the chromosomes divide or the timing of various developmental processes.

Most such infants, with the advice of physicians and perhaps surgery, are assigned a gender by their parents.

However, not all these assignments work out as the children mature.

Some "girls" feel more comfortable as "boys" and vice versa, and some individuals do not fit well in either category.

With Alberta's population at nearly three million, one out of 2,000 births equates to about 1,500 citizens who are not female or male, but some combination of the two. If we decided to test each couple contemplating marriage to determine if they are "truly" male and female, there would be some that would fail any such test.

The moral just decision, and the easiest, would allow any two consenting adults to marry.

Robert Holubek, Athabasca

The sanctity of marriage

The church says it is trying to protect the sanctity of marriage. The definition of sanctity is "the state of being very important and worthy of great respect."

Are television reality shows where someone compensates for marriage someone else's father protecting the sanctity of marriage? Is having movie stars marrying 10 times over and getting divorced protecting the sanctity of marriage?

The Conservation says the act of marriage is to produce children. If so, childless heterosexual marriages should be ceased.

Ken Staffeld, Edmonton

Pair-age

The word "marriage" has a history and a meaning that has been in existence for many years.

However, many people do see the need for homosexual couples to have the right to a committed recognized relationship, with all its legal rights.

Therefore, I propose simply giving these gay and lesbian relationship another term, namely "pair-age." All would know that pair-age is a loving commitment between a homosexual couple, and everyone who is heterosexual would continue to have their word "marriage." Why do our politicians want to put this common sense notion forward, fewer people would be so very far apart.

Charm Davies, Edmonton

Religious traditions and common law

Marriage in this country stems from Christian ideals contained in the Bible, which Christians believe to be the word of God. The Bible condemns the homosexual lifestyle. So, as I take a step back, I see gay couples fighting to be a part of a tradition, and a belief that does not approve of their relationship.

So why bother? Why do they want to take part in a tradition of a religion that they rebel against? It makes more sense to be recognized as a couple under the law, than try to be seen as a couple under God.

Keith Utterton, Sherwood Park

Get over it

The way some religious leaders in this province talk, you'd think this current debate was over decriminalizing homosexual conduct instead of recognizing full citizenship rights.

It's not 1969 anymore, people! Are we really talking about a morality and inherent evil are we really in the light of 25 years of true abiding citizenship by the vast majority of gays and lesbians in Canada.

Alan Schreiber, Edmonton

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