

Ticket-Splitters Add to 1972 Puzzle

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POLITICIANS puzzled by all of the confusion about the 1972 election rules in Texas can find another worry in the trend toward vote switching. It's described in a new book co-authored by a former Dallasite, V. Lance Tarrance. (The Ticket-Splitter: A New Force in American Politics; Walter DeVries and V. Lance Tarrance. W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. \$4.95; Paperback, \$2.45.)



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"Independents are growing in numbers at the expense of both parties, rivaling the Republicans in size and creeping up on the Democrats," David S. Broder of the Washington Post says in a foreword. This statement is documented by the author.

Texas figures prominently in their studies as does Michigan. Tarrance is a young Republican party stalwart who worked for the GOP in Austin, moved up to the national headquarters in Washington and now is special assistant to George Brown, director of the U.S. Census Bureau. DeVries did extensive analyses of Michigan voting.

Some critics have questioned whether the authors have drawn too many

broad conclusions from a narrow statistical base.

One of many Texas examples cited to document the ticket-splitting is that Republican John Tower received a plurality of 198,600 votes in the 1966 senatorial race, while Democratic Gov. John Connally amassed a plurality of 669,500 votes.

The authors say that until World War II more than 80 per cent of all Americans going to the polls voted a straight ticket. In the 1950s, 60 to 70 per cent voted straight tickets. In 1968 pollster George Gallup found only 43 per cent voting straight.

Calling attention to the greater ticket-splitting among young people, the book foresees a continuation of this trend in the 1970s. As the first national election year in this decade, 1972 should prove a significant test of their theorizing.

DeVries' research in the 1960s suggested that ticket-splitters came largely from the Republicans; this book concludes that now both parties are infiltrated with the tribe.

In Texas, the voting age population is estimated in 1972 at 7,589,000. Of these 678,000 (5.8 per cent) are between the ages of 18 to 20 and 805,000 (5.9 per cent) are 21 to 24. With youth largely concentrated in urban areas, it is no wonder that the politicians are so busy wooing voters on campuses and in other metropolitan centers.

Differences in ways voters classify themselves and how they vote are shown in one of the more interesting

charts in the book. The authors found that 45 per cent of the voters who classified themselves as Republicans, and 47 per cent of the self-styled Democrats, split their tickets. Even more surprising, it seems to us, is that 25 per cent of the "independents" voted a straight ticket for one party or the other.

This book doesn't pretend to answer many of the questions about what happens when the rulers of America take their consciences with them into the privacy of the polling place. Most of us probably can recall having cast ballots in that solemn moment that even surprised us, not to mention how they would have shocked the husband, wife or neighbor who had solicited our vote.

While any set of statistics as to Americans' voting may be suspect, we recommend this new publication to newspapermen, politicians and others interested in how democracy functions.

The book has had much more attention in the East than in the Southwest, which probably is to be expected. Perhaps as good an evaluation of it as any is that of reviewer William Chapman of the Washington Post: "It will take a lot more research to determine whether Tarrance and DeVries are as accurate as they contend, but they are off to an interesting start."

The Texas half of the writing team already had established himself as an able political analyst through his rise in the Republican party and his book, "Texas Precinct Votes, '68," published by the SMU Press in 1970. His newest effort will add to that reputation.