

None of the above?

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We don't have a leadership problem in this country. We have a "followership" problem.

The validity of this observation was recently, and distressingly, made clear to me when a longtime acquaintance said that he couldn't vote for either Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. It was distressing because this is a person who believes that 12 years of a Republican Congress and seven years of a GOP presidency have been devastating to the welfare of our country. Now, with an alternative at hand, he asks: "Is this the best we can come up with?"

It was all I could do to refrain from asking him, "Who do you mean by 'we'?" For I am quite sure that he has not watched a single debate, attended a candidates night, contributed to a campaign, or spent much — if any — time reading the editorial section of his local newspaper. Yet he has no qualms about stating that Clinton is a conniving, self-serving opportunist, and that Obama is totally inexperienced.

Like too many Americans, my friend's vote will be determined by "the luxury of opinion without the benefit of thought."

This attitude is not merely cynical, it's perverse. It insults the ideal of true citizenship and, by extension, those who take seriously the responsibility of seeking the facts about those who want to represent us in government.

Without bothering to examine the credentials of the candidates or the policies they espouse, and relying solely on personal biases, my friend will go to the polls in November and vote to extend the tenure of the very political party he holds accountable for so much that is wrong with the country today.

And he'll be telling those who conscientiously participate in the political process that they're naive or misguided or wasting their time.

This is a person for whom I have great affection. My dismay with his cynicism will only be mitigated by the fact that George W. Bush won't be the Republican candidate.

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