

I'm Voting Against The Other Guy

By Bob Banov and Roger Ohlsen
January 31, 2012

During a recent interview on MSNBC's "The Last Word" with Lawrence O'Donnell, Newsweek's Andy Newman asked Lawrence whether back in his school days he'd been one of the kids who ran for student council, and Lawrence said "no." But he said he remembered those kids. The two were discussing stalemates in our Congress and what they are really all about, and their discussion brought the rant that follows to mind.

It is worth our asking ask ourselves, were the kids who were always running for office in our school days actually doing it so they could *be in charge*? Watching the current circus in our nation's capitol, where the real public mindset is so regularly discounted, a truism applies. "Information" as they say, rarely leaks up as far as the top boss, and it's difficult not to wonder if all we're really seeing in Washington is some of those difficult kids now become career ideologues: "lady and gentleman" peddlers of influence in action, and suffering the results.

Whatever the case, whoever they are, they're duking it out and making a ton of money at the expense of the rest of us. And that being the case, we're letting them do it in nearly the same way we did in school.

One viable, if not inevitable solution may be for those of us who care about people and not just ourselves, to organize to *educate more* locally and internationally. We must have our message go viral and not leave it to the next guy to be responsible for our futures, eventually making it possible for more capable intelligent people to get in there and legislate.

It's more than obvious that for a very long time, much of public apathy and voter dissatisfaction that leads to apathy derives from a sense of powerlessness. When people start feeling that they can't really change things or can't make a difference, they can end up saying *what the heck* or *what's the difference?*, and soon they drop into a position that

renders them incapable of making informed decisions, and in turn, leaves everyone's future up for grabs. Those kids from back in our school days, now adults, are the grabbers.

When we step into the voting booth, we need to be able to consider who the people we get to choose from actually represent, because some of them are going to be responsible for safeguarding our future happiness.

When they tell us what they stand for and what against, they are not very liable to list for us the qualities they lack, so that's up to us to recognize. But our knowing who they represent or will represent is indispensable and makes a very great difference.

The thing is that in business, there's always the understanding that words are words and promises are promises; that only results are proof of success, and when someone slanders you, you can sue them. But a candidate can't sue a super PAC, at least not in time to influence an election campaign, and if he or she did during an election cycle, there's the very real question, would everybody even get to hear about, or would it really matter? Doesn't our current, scandalous political system, encouraged as it is so strongly by the media, interfere with our decision-making and encourage the "what's the difference" citizen from taking an interest in politics if he was ever going to do so?

In addition, people actually believe that polls of less than twenty-five thousand mean something—and those in charge are quick to tell you that polls of multimillions are not in anyone's best interest. Is that because they're terrified of the actual results, even though they're very easy to obtain with the Internet? So much for our learning as much about other people's opinions as we do about PAC propaganda.

Lastly, for all the above, consider what it would be like if you were on vacation for six months and unable to watch television. When you got back and turned on the news, would it at all surprise you to find it appeared that nothing had really changed while you were gone?

"Things are more like they are now than they have ever been," Gerald Ford was quoted as saying. Whatever the context in which he made the comment, it seems frighteningly much like the obvious irony implicit in the public mindset that you can't quite avoid noticing this year. There has got to be a better answer than our taking our comedians

seriously, when they ask our politicians *“Are you kidding?”* and the state of our union stays the same, no matter what the people need.

Perhaps, there’s some point in someone starting another new grassroots campaign, one dedicated to making it known to both the Democratic and Republican parties that there’s a tremendous number of citizens who are tired of voting for a candidate only to help ensure the other guy won’t get elected and gain influence, and that the public insists on them proposing candidates that sound a new note, so everyone benefits because they can bring things together and make an actual difference. Sometimes that happens. But very rarely. So, we if we choose to, we can look at it this way: if maturity and compromise are essential to a democracy as we were taught in school, then as the old Chinese Proverb has it, *“If we don’t change our direction we’re likely to end up where we’re headed.”* And doesn’t that sound a lot like Gerald Ford.