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An uninformed electorate blights American politics

From Mr Alan Rohrbach.

Sir, While the obvious significant disconnect in American politics is the inability of the left and right to find common ground, it actually goes well beyond that.

There is a poorly informed electorate owing to decades of nothing but sound-bite electioneering. The result is a highly partisan culture voting on ideology instead of practical considerations.

To understand the extent of the partisan “spin” one need look no further than Edward Luce’s excellent dissection (“The GOP shows no sign of breaking before the cliff”, September 17) of bipartisan bailout efforts the Grand Old Party now lays at Barack Obama’s feet. While possibly a bit too charitable toward the Obama administration, he is on target that the Republican animus is both misinformed and politically counterproductive.

Yet even that misses a major overarching theme that neither he nor any other commentator I know of has bothered to explore: the degree to which the big electoral bases are striving mightily against their own enlightened self-interest. There is the middle class on one hand, and upper-middle and upper class on the other. While there are quite a few exceptions, these can still be loosely boiled down to “labour” and “capital” factions.

A brief exploration of who has done well and who has struggled under the Obama regime will illustrate the point. The bottom line is that labour has suffered for the past four years.

Increases in US workers’ productivity mean that they have worked harder without any increase in compensation. All of which is amplified by a weak jobs market.

If they weren’t so indoctrinated in the “99 per cent” ideology, it would be reasonable for them to send Mr Obama packing in November. At the very least they should be hounding him to create more incentives for business to invest in the US, and increase its hiring here. And yet, they are striving mightily to get him re-elected.

On the other hand, capital has done very well under Mr Obama. Yet, their fear of the implications of his ideology and ever-evolving programmes leads them towards nothing less than full-blown disdain. Allowing that the full extension of his agenda may indeed weigh upon future economic

activity, they ignore the excellent performance of the stock market.

The stock market has risen by more than 75 per cent since Mr Obama took office. Yet the right is working hard and applying huge amounts of capital to turf him out and possibly get rid of Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke as well.

It is not just the inability of the right and left to compromise that plagues American politics. It is the degree to which uninformed electoral factions have little ability to appreciate their positions, much less understand the subtleties expressed by Mr Luce.

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