

## Anyone for Tea?

This past week, on tax return day, there were parties all over America organized to protest taxes. More specifically they were protests against federal taxation and the extent to which the government in Washington D.C. influences the lives of American citizens. The protests took the form of "tea parties" referencing the storied civil disobedience that occurred at Boston harbor in 1773, prior to the Revolution.

It is at least a tad ironic that folks protesting taxes were so willing to have tax revenues support their day in the park raging against the evil of taxes. A lot of the tea bag protests were held in municipal parks, parks funded by the federal government. That is, funded by your tax dollars. All of the rallies had police and fire protection both of which are heavily subsidized by the federal government, your tax dollars. The protestors were guaranteed their free speech by the Justice Department, a branch of the federal government. Many veterans and pensioners were in attendance, their monthly income paid by the federal government. Many out of work citizens on unemployment and disability insurance were in attendance most of whom had recently cashed a check from their state governments, backed by the federal government. I love America. There are numerous countries on the planet where such ironic behavior is rewarded with prison, or worse.

There was an honest message of the day. Taxation is surely a legitimate subject for debate. Unfortunately for that message there were also a lot of wing nuts and half deckers (as in not playing with a full deck) in attendance all around the country. There were Nazis and Neo-Nazis, Nativists and Klansmen. There were folks who carried signs making some paranoid connection between Obama and Hitler. There were placards that drew analogies between American taxpayers and Jews going to the ovens of the Holocaust. There were racists who held caricatures of the president; these pictures showing Obama with huge lips and eyes (as in Buckwheat and Stymie)... real classy.

It seems that the Right Side of the Republican Party lost so many votes in the past couple of elections that they are willing to accept any number of dubious characters as long as they support the approved message du jour. Dubious heck, a lot of these protestors went directly back under a rock when the party was over, back to the swell little clubhouse in mom's basement where they will make more signs for their next really awesome appearance at a totally cool rally. Dude!

I think I got the title for this column wrong. Instead of "Anyone for Tea?" it should be, "ANYONE for Tea?" As in, please, we're in such bad shape members wise, that our party welcomes ANYONE, fools and frauds, bigots and bullies included.

I noticed folks at the rallies who had suffered serious damage by listening to too much talk radio. If you look closely you can see the telltale signs of a Limbaughomy. There's the slightly confused stare when facts are presented. There's the angry reaction to the use of big words. There's the minimum volume (very loud) at which all statements must be made. There's the fact that so many of them carry a photo in their wallet of Joe the Plumber.

Again, I love America. I love it here precisely because our tax dollars insure the rights of the near insane and terminally uninformed to speak their minds. It is not a crime in America to be utterly wrong. It is a right. That is a good thing. Many countries around the world have prisons that are filled with citizens who express similar anger and accusations toward their government. We are lucky here. We pay taxes, in part, to insure our freedom to be outspoken. Heck, the Governor of Texas smiles and waves the U.S. flag while talking about seceding from that same Union. Huh?

So why do so many Americans consider themselves victims of an oppressive state? How can a guy stand in plain view, in the middle of a federally funded green space, and accuse his host of trampling on his personal freedoms? It's all relative I guess. One citizen's generous government is another's oppressor. I guess it all comes down to why one has a tea party in the first place.

Is it to sit with friends and discuss the finer points of life or just another venue to shout inanities? Is it a party with manners and napkins like my grand daughter would have or the latest version of what used to be called a Bund Meeting? I know one thing. The next time I'm invited to a tea party I'll check out the guest list first.