

An Historical Perspective on Today's Tea Parties



In recent months, Tea (**T**axed **E**nough **A**lready) Parties have come under unrelenting criticism from the national media and several national organizations. (Significantly, Liberals and Progressives are the most fixated on discrediting Tea Parties.)

Yet, I find that the Tea Parties represent a welcome addition to the national political scene and public policy debate. I especially appreciate the fact that they focus more on principles than policies – that so many of their meetings are dedicated to learning more about the Constitution, American Exceptionalism, and the principles of limited government.

But like any new movement, they have made mistakes; and they have said things they did not understand that the national media would misportray; but that's understandable. The members of the Tea Parties are largely citizens who have been previously uninvolved in the political process and are therefore largely inexperienced with its lurking snares.



Is there an historical perspective on this "new" movement? I was asked by a newspaper to do an op-ed piece on that question. In case you're interested, I've enclosed that article below (which can also be [downloaded](#)). Enjoy!

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Tea Parties – Same Song, Second Verse

America's first Tea Party in 1773 was not an act of wanton lawlessness but rather a deliberate protest against heavy-handed government and excessive taxation. Its leaders took great care to ensure that nothing but tea was thrown overboard – no other items were damaged. The "Indians" even swept the decks of the ships before they left.

Tea Parties occurred not only in Boston but also in numerous other locales. And those who participated were just ordinary citizens expressing their frustration over a government that had refused to listen to them for almost a decade. Their reasonable requests had fallen on deaf ears. Of course, the out-of-touch British claimed that the Tea Parties were lawless and violent, but such was not the case.

Interestingly, in many ways, today's Tea Parties parallel those of long ago. But rather than protesting a tax on tea, today they are protesting dozens of taxes represented by what they call the Porkulus/Generational Theft Act of 2009 (officially called the "American Economic Recovery and Reinvestment Act"). For Tea Party members (and for most Americans), that act and the way it was passed epitomizes a broken system whose arrogant leaders often scorn the concerns of the citizens they purport to represent.

Tea Party folks agree with the economic logic of our Founders.

- "To contract new debts is not the way to pay off old ones." "Avoid occasions of expense...and avoid likewise the accumulation of debt not only by shunning occasions of expense but by vigorous exertions...to discharge the debts." George Washington

- "Nothing can more [affect] national credit and prosperity than a constant and systematic attention to...extinguish the present debt and to avoid as much as possible the incurring of any new debt." Alexander Hamilton
- "The maxim of buying nothing but what we have money in our pockets to pay for lays the broadest foundation for happiness." "The principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale." Thomas Jefferson

These are not radical positions – nor are the others set forth in the Tea Party platform – that Congress should: (1) provide the constitutional basis for the bills it passes; (2) reduce intrusive government regulations; (3) balance the budget; (4) limit the increase of government spending to the rate of population growth; (5) and eliminate earmarks unless approved by 2/3rds of Congress. Are these positions dangerous or extreme? Certainly not. In fact, polling shows that while Americans differ on the way they view the Tea Parties, they support these Tea Party goals by a margin of two-to-one.

Citizens are angry about the current direction of government. As John Zubly, a member of the Continental Congress in 1775, reminded the British: "My Lord, the Americans are no idiots, and they appear determined not to be slaves. Oppression will make wise men mad." But does that anger automatically equate to violence? Of course not. It does equate to action, however; but instead of throwing tea overboard, modern Tea Parties are throwing out-of-touch politicians from both parties overboard.

The Tea Parties represent much of what is right in America – citizens reacquainting themselves with the Constitution and holding their elected officials accountable to its standards. Two centuries ago, Daniel Webster could have been talking to today's Tea Party rallies when he said: "Hold on, my friends, to the Constitution and to the Republic for which it stands. Miracles do not cluster and what has happened once in 6,000 years may not happen again. Hold on to the Constitution!"

God Bless!



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