

Some get the tea, others get the bag

by Debra_J_Saunders

In December 1773, Bostonians held a Tea Party in Boston Harbor to protest excessive British taxes. "No taxation without representation" was their message. On Wednesday, April 15, Americans will hold rallies across the country to protest onerous taxes. Organizers have a motto for their Tea Day â€” "taxed enough already."

Big problem: There is a world of difference between 1773 and 2009. Two hundred-plus years ago, Americans risked life and limb protesting a distant and oligarchic system of government that did not represent the good people of Massachusetts.

In 2009, the federal government is dysfunctional because, if anything, Washington is too representative of the American voter, who has come to expect both more government and lower taxes.

The Tea Day agenda â€” www.teapartyday.com â€” is a call to arms to Americans who are fed up with a president and Congress who "are spending trillions of borrowed dollars, leaving a debt our great-grandchildren will be paying" and expanding the size and scope of the federal government. It plays to the anger felt by taxpayers who resent the runaway growth of government â€” for good reason. Too bad it is inconsistent to complain about the deficit and taxes.

No doubt many who showed up at the Tea Day rallies will argue that they didn't vote for Obama and should not have to pay for his programs. I have news for you folks: Conservatives lost. American voters elected a big spender and, one way or another, Americans will have to pay for his agenda. The Obama tax hikes on Americans earning more than \$250,000 have yet to materialize â€” but when they do, they'll be taxation with representation, a campaign pledge made good.

Do I like it? Absolutely not. I believe that Obama's soak-the-rich approach will be bad for the economy. And so apparently does Obamaland, it seems, as the administration has decided to postpone Obama's promised tax increases until the Bush tax cuts expire.

Sorry, folks, but the Democrats have co-opted the anti-tax cause. The result isn't lower taxes or smaller government. The result is that Democrats use the power of the White House and Congress to push for bigger government, which Democratic constituents don't bankroll. Thanks to Obama's "Making Work Pay," about half of American households will pay no federal income tax at all. Those families have every incentive to support bigger government, secure in the knowledge that only others will pony up.

Folks who weren't likely to show up at the April 15 protests have benefited most from anti-tax fever.

Former GOP House Speaker Newt Gingrich has hit the airwaves to advocate for the Tea Party. When charlatans like Gingrich climb on the bandwagon, you should always check the wheels.

This is the same guy who, along with Speaker Nancy Pelosi, appeared in global-warming ads, and told Americans, "If enough of us demand action from our leaders, we can spark the innovation we need." Now he's leading a protest against proposed carbon taxes. He ping-pongs from one side to the other like the American voter "€" for a cause, until it bears difficult consequences.

Tea Day organizers are telling supporters to send tea bags to Washington. You can sponsor a tea bag for \$1. On the one hand, it's great that citizens want to participate and let their views be known "€" as long as conservatives don't equate their protest with that of patriots who risked it all for their revolutionary beliefs in pursuit of democratic representation.

The Tea Day's list of woes includes the government wanting "to take your wealth and redistribute it." Good, I just wish the list included tenets that call for some sacrifice or responsibility on the right. But the list does not call, as former Bush spokesman Ari Fleischer did in the Wall Street Journal on Monday, for Congress to reject Obama's pledge to decrease taxes for 95 percent of the country, out of the conviction that every American should pay income taxes.

I don't like the new Obama programs either, but political leaders must recognize that someone is going to have to pay for them, and patriots can't tout an agenda with no sacrifice.

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