

## Taxpayers Get Really Tea-ed Off

By INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY | Posted Monday, April 13, 2009 4:20 PM PT

**Tax Revolt:** The Boston Tea Party helped free us from an oppressive king. This week's nationwide anti-stimulus tea party demonstrations have a tougher goal: ending the tyranny of big-spending politicians.

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"If you want to stimulate the economy, you just need to reduce the taxes and regulations," Kansas real estate agent John Todd told the Wichita Eagle, explaining in the clearest terms why he is organizing one of 500 anti-stimulus "tea parties" to take place in cities and towns across America on Wednesday, April 15, Tax Day.

If that is the message heard loud and clear from this unprecedented national movement against the liberal Democratic rule in Washington, and if Republicans endorse those tax-reducing principles, then this grass-roots uprising could succeed.

What the tea parties aim to accomplish is really a much taller order than gaining independence from a tyrannical monarch and far-away parliament two centuries ago.

They are trying to persuade Congress and the states to reject what comes perfectly naturally to them: the opportunity to fritter away a fortune in other people's money, and the idea that we should spend our way out of this economic downturn.

That is not the tried-and-true means of lifting ourselves out of distress. When America suffered the worst recession since the Great Depression at the beginning of Ronald Reagan's first term of office more than a quarter-century ago, the president spurred Congress to cut income taxes across the board.

The longest, strongest expansion in history soon began, extending well beyond Reagan's two terms in office.

And when our country, already suffering from a shaky economy, was in 2001 hit by the first attacks on domestic soil since Pearl Harbor, President George W. Bush similarly rallied Congress to cut the rates of everyone who paid income taxes, as well as investment taxes.

The result was the same: a recovery generating many millions of new jobs.

But the ideology now dominating Washington sees those successful steps as capitalistic greed. As such, it was not Reagan or John F. Kennedy or Bush 43 who had it right when they cut taxes. Rather, it was Franklin Roosevelt, who may well have extended a bad recession into a full-scale collapse by using it as the rationale for a massive expansion in the size and scope of the federal government.

Or so the statisticians on the left believe.

In the case of today, the notion that "we have nothing to fear but fear itself" as trillions of taxpayer dollars are about to be spent is not being accepted by one and all.

Standing on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade in February, CNBC commentator and former financial trader Rick Santelli told viewers the reality of what Congress was doing.

The government was rewarding bad behavior, having American taxpayers pay their neighbors' bad mortgages, he pointed out.

And it was Santelli who, as traders cheered him on, suggested a repeat of the famous Boston Tea Party in 1773, in which cases of British

tea on ships in Boston Harbor were dumped by colonists dressed as Indians in protest of new British taxes on the beverage.

Millions saw computer postings of the Santelli clip. The result is that Wednesday's protests will see armies of protesters from sea to shining sea wearing, burning or mailing tea bags to politicians in a 21st-century version of the colonial protest.

Can it work?

Howard Jarvis' Proposition 13 movement to cut California's property taxes started small, then expanded to other states in the Midwest and Northeast, and even helped inspire the Reagan tax cuts.

There is an opportunity here for Republicans to bring some fiscal integrity back to their tarnished brand.

GOP senators and House members can appear at their local tea parties and apologize for squandering more than a decade of control of Congress because they wouldn't resist the spending impulse any more than Democrats would. Or they can sit in their offices and hope the storm of anger passes them by.

If Republicans commit to becoming a new "Grand Tea Party," this week's demonstrations could be as consequential as the events in Boston that inspired them.

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