

Tea Party System

By INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY | Posted Thursday, April 16, 2009 4:20 PM PT

Politics: The hundreds of tea parties thrown Wednesday were part of one of the most extraordinary grass-roots uprisings in our history. And they spell a golden opportunity for freedom-loving politicians.

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Less than three months after a landmark election, throngs of demonstrators everywhere gathered to object to the revolution that our new president is steamrolling into law. It was a landmark protest in the history of the republic.

But how can the voices of tens if not hundreds of thousands of angry taxpayers be turned into concrete political action?

Investor's Business Daily attended one of these historic events, the Fishkill Tea Party in upstate New York, just east of the Hudson River. The original Fishkill Tea Party took place Aug. 26, 1776, when 100 women forced a storekeeper named Abram Brinckerhoff to sell them tea at the lawful price of 6 shillings per pound. This year's Fishkill Tea Party nearly filled Dutchess Stadium, the county's minor-league ballpark.

In a region of liberal New York state where Democrats have been consolidating their power during the last two elections, thousands traveled long distances to support pretty much the classic Reagan political agenda — and not just on taxes and spending.

Banners and placards sported slogans that included "Don't Spread My Wealth. Spread My Work Ethic," "Who'll Bail Me Out?" "Atlas Will Shrug," "Tea Today. No Kool-Aid," and "Acorn Didn't Have To Bus Us Here," referring to the left-wing activist group that specializes in voter registration drives benefiting liberal Democrats.

The crowds responded with thunderous applause to the various local activists' rallying cries, ranging from "How about those Navy Seals!" referring to the recent rescue of Americans from Somali pirates, to attacks on Hollywood for its role in moving America away from traditional Judeo-Christian values.

The audience roared when resentment was expressed toward illegal aliens who eat away the social welfare resources funded by taxpayers. When unemployed information technology manager Troy Johnson took the podium, he elicited an ovation with the quip:

"Just to prove how radical I am, I believe we should all be speaking English!"

The throng cheered calls for term limits to curb the power of elitist career politicians; applauded taunts that the establishment media would proceed to underestimate and misreport the size of the turnout; shouted in approval for blocking the president's planned federal intrusion into health care; and rose from its seats for a speaker who called Washington's march toward socialism "a slap in the face to those who have served in the military."

It was quite clear, however, that the tea partiers feel betrayed by Republicans, not just the Democrats now in power in both the executive and legislative branches in Washington.

One youthful speaker described the cause of the financial crisis as an "assault on our free market system paired with corporate bailouts." The Bush White House late last year lobbied skeptical congressional Republicans hard on a \$14 billion auto industry bailout.

Johnson pointed out that "we know that they know that nobody can read 1,000 pages overnight," referring to the rush to get a stimulus bill passed and to the lawmakers who signed it without knowing much of what was in it.

The crowd may not have been aware that apart from liberal Republican Sens. Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe and Arlen Specter, the GOP in Congress formed a united front against the Democrats' tax-and-spend behemoth. But the Republican brand is blemished.

During 12 years of dominance in Congress and eight years in the White House, the GOP failed to kick its addiction to pork and make tough decisions on controlling entitlement spending. It found it too politically risky to secure the U.S. borders — even in the post-9/11 years when homeland security trumped all other concerns.

It's almost as if Republicans were daring the kind of people who attended this week's events to go the dead-end route of starting their own third political party.

The tea party movement proves that even in the left-leaning Northeast, a huge natural constituency exists for these bread-and-butter American issues — lower taxes, less government, a strong military that's allowed to win, tough measures to end illegal immigration, term limits and family values.

It's all there, waiting to be tapped into — if only a few smart politicians would grasp the opportunity.

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