



Andrew Klavan

The Little Red Wagon That Can

What I saw at the Tea Party

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I'm not sure—I'm no prophet—but I think I just saw something genuinely profound, genuinely amazing, and cool that could be the tidal wave of the future.

Here's the setup. It was Tax Day. Thousands of self-organized protesters had gathered around the nation to protest the irresponsible, incredibly rapid expansion of government under the current administration. The Democratic Party and the elite media had done everything in their power to first ignore, then discourage, ridicule, and belittle this grassroots movement. Theoretically respectable journalists were reduced to making double-entendre sexual **jokes** about tea bags. These are the same people who rushed en masse to cover Cindy Sheehan and a dozen or so antiwar protesters in Crawford, Texas, rechristening that sad, emotionally unpredictable woman with two of the most cherished words in the English language: Peace Mom. But what was their attitude when thousands of ordinary people gathered in defense of their rights all over the country? "Just move on, folks, nothing to see here."

Ah well, they're nervous, and I don't blame them. Because despite their claims that the Tea Party movement is without ideas, it was the people at those protests who represented the beliefs of our Founding Fathers. And it's the government and the press that have betrayed them.

James Madison, in the famous *Federalist* #10, said it was the "first object of government" to protect those "diverse faculties of men, from which the rights of property originate," and from which also originate "the possession of different degrees and kinds of property." He warned that these faculties and these rights were in danger when what the Founders called "a majority faction" took over government. The Constitution, Madison said, was intended to help prevent such majority factions from working for "a rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project."

"The apportionment of taxes on the various descriptions of property is an act which seems to require the most exact impartiality," Madison warned; "yet there is, perhaps, no legislative act in which greater opportunity and temptation are given to a predominant party to trample on the rules of justice."

It is that voice—Madison's voice, and the Constitution's—with which the protestors spoke on Tax Day, and which the Democrats and the mainstream press have dismissed with such contempt.

So that's the setup. Here's what I saw at the Tea Party. I went to voice my opinions in an interview with Bill Whittle on the website Pajamas TV, where I do my "**Klavan on the Culture**" video commentaries. I walked into the modest studio in a skyscraper out near LAX. And it was wonderful.

There was a makeshift newsroom there like no other I had ever seen. Extra laptops and big-screen monitors were slung up everywhere, volunteer citizen journalists called in reports from the protests around the country on their cellphones, bloggers like Instapundit's Glenn Reynolds Skyped in live commentary, Tweeters sent in field observations. It was a People's Media that seemed to have risen up out of the ground like Cadmus's army of old to spread the word about a movement that had likewise risen up in spite of, and in defiance of, the powers that be.

Do you know what it reminded me of? Remember the film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*? Remember how the lone righteous senator, played by Jimmy Stewart, takes on the entrenched interests in a filibuster but the powerful media, in league with the government, does everything it can to shut him up and shut him down? Unable to get the word out, Mr. Smith calls on the little kids who love him to print up newspapers on their toy printing presses and distribute them in their little red wagons. And they do it—little kids telling the story that a corrupt media is no longer willing to tell.

And do you remember what Mr. Smith says at his darkest hour, when they silence him, when they cut off every means he has of communicating with the American people?

He says: "You all think I'm licked. But I'm not licked."

And then he brings those scoundrels down.

Andrew Klavan is a City Journal contributing editor and the author of such best-selling novels as True Crime, Don't Say a Word, and Empire of Lies. His latest book is The Last Thing I Remember.