

Why Are Corporate Groups Funding the Tea Party?

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Rank and file Tea Partiers are, politically speaking, lost at sea in the dead of night, looking for the light of common principles. On land, those manning right-wing lighthouses are broadcasting ideas loaded with hidden motives into this ocean of conservative public opinion. What the Tea Party will become is presently unknown; but those with an agenda will do their best to steer lost boats at sea in their direction, with potentially dangerous consequences.

Only recently have some tea party groups spotted land, organizing themselves under the new body National Tea Party Federation. One would expect such an organization to release a detailed statement about its members' shared political positions, beliefs, goals, etc.

Instead, only three unifying concepts were announced: fiscal responsibility, constitutionally limited government, and free markets — all vague terms overused by any corporate Republican. It seems, then, that there is still much work to be done in organizing and channeling the national Tea Party "movement."

Because the three unifying ideas are so vague, special interests will fill in the blanks when needed. For example, does a "constitutionally limited government" allow the economy to be dominated by giant corporations? Does "fiscal responsibility" mean that the U.S. should spend hundreds of billions of dollars annually on foreign wars? Does "free markets" mean that Wall Street should be allowed to do whatever it wants, whenever it wants? The answers to these questions, according to the National Tea Party Federation, will all be YES!

How can we be sure? The website announcing the new federation lists a number of Tea Party "allies" and "support groups." Many of these groups are corporate-dominated front groups such as Freedom Works and Americans for Prosperity — two groups who've relentlessly promoted the Tea Party movement with massive resources. Not listed as an "ally" is the super-rich Koch family, which has also poured giant resources towards boosting the Tea Partiers. Fox News and other corporate media outlets, too, are non-official Tea Party "support groups."

What are the goals of these corporate groups? Profits for corporations, at whatever the cost to the rest of us. And because they all subscribe to corporate ideology, the investments in the Tea Party come with strings attached. So what do the corporations and super-rich want from the Tea Party in return? Glenn Beck gives the most specific answers to this question.

Beck is a right-wing populist who supports the Tea Party via his television show on Fox News. At the same time, he dedicates much of his time to "educate" his supporters as to who their enemies are. In no particular order: Obama, labor unions, working class organizations like ACORN, "progressives," "social justice" advocates, and "socialists" and

“Marxists.” For Beck, all of these constituencies are the same and equally involved in an absurdly complicated conspiracy to “destroy America.”(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJDDvyAQO6s&feature=related>)

The fact that this fanatic rant is being broadcast internationally is very telling, hinting that Beck’s corporate sponsors have crossed the political Rubicon onto territory dominated by the extreme right wing.

Beck, along with his other right-wing colleagues, are reviving the putrid American tradition of Communist witch hunts and McCarthy-style red-baiting. Such tactics are used in times of social unrest, where the corporate elite needs both distraction and excuses for persecuting anyone who challenges corporate rule.

Beck’s attempt to denounce labor unions — especially the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) — and other working-class organizations as “Marxists” and “extremists” is not an accident. Some sections of the U.S. corporate elite view these groups as having too much power, especially in the context of the still-continuing Great Recession.

For example, U.S. corporations are intent on continuing — and even expanding — foreign wars, low taxes for the wealthy, and when needed, further bank/corporate bailouts. These policies are incompatible with the current expenditures on social services, education, and Social Security and Medicare — thus the gigantic and expanding U.S. deficit.

There has been enormous talk in the corporate media about dealing with this problem by cutting back Medicare and Social Security (Obama’s health care bill reduces Medicare by \$500 billion). Likewise, Obama’s education plan, Race to the Top, is designed as a massive attack on public education. Social services in general are also being targeted.

The strongest defenders of these social programs are the groups that Beck routinely denounces. Unions and progressive groups are viewed by the corporate elite as obstacles, which need to be weakened or removed so that a solidly corporate agenda can be pursued. Beck is preparing public opinion to accept any harm that may come to labor and progressive groups — by individuals or the government — by routinely condemning them as America’s enemies.

Beck’s preaching can be referred to as a form of “fascist ideology.” The most defining element of fascist movements and governments is their destruction of working-class organizations: both Mussolini and Hitler outlawed and smashed the labor unions and Left organizations, allowing their own corporate sponsors a conflict-free environment to make profits.

Fascism becomes a social force when society is ridden with class conflict, when income inequality soars, and when corporations and the working class and the unemployed cannot find a stable equilibrium during prolonged economic crisis. Fascism comes onto the scene to aid the very wealthy with brute force, while creating new organizations and political parties to pursue a radically right-wing path outside of the existing political structures (tea partiers seem split between forming a new party or attempting to further radicalize the Republicans).

One way that Beck helps the super-rich is by confusing the word “property” and “wealth redistribution.” Beck never ceases to explain that progressives and socialists want to

“redistribute wealth,” while always ignoring the fact that there are two types of wealth: the corporate wealth of the very rich and the insignificant/non-existent wealth of the majority of Americans. Many Americans would agree that the “property” of the giant corporations and Wall Street could be “re-distributed” to the working class, or better yet, run as public utilities for social need, not for private profit. Such confusion is only one way that Beck mis-educates and sows confusion and fear for his corporate donors.

Fortunately, labor activists and some union leaders are starting to catch on to the danger that Beck and the corporate sponsors of the Tea Party represent. For starters, labor unions and progressive groups are organizing a tax day protest — not in opposition to the corporate media-advertised Tea Party tax day protests, but above it.

For example, the Tea Party anti-tax protests are simply “against taxes.” Instead, unions are demanding that we “tax Wall Street.” Labor’s message is superior; it takes sides, whereas the Tea Party’s vagueness is its weakness.

This weakness must be further exploited. A tax day protest against Wall Street is a positive message, but it’s not enough. A campaign must be waged by labor and community groups to demand massive job creation, to be paid for by the rich and corporations. If specific demands like these are raised in mass demonstrations, the Tea Party’s blathering against “government” in general will seem far less inspiring.

Also, labor taking the streets with its own demands will compel the Labor Movement into opposition to the Obama administration and its own corporate backers — something some labor leaders resist like the plague. But such a break is necessary if organized labor is to receive mass support from working people in general, since right-wingers like Beck earn populist points by pointing out Obama’s corporate-friendly policies like bank bailouts and corporate health care.

The sooner that labor becomes an independent force in national politics, the more difficult the Tea Party will find in gathering popular support. The extreme right is only in its infantile stage of development. This growth will be stunted if labor wages a strong campaign in the streets for jobs at the expense of the rich and corporations. Waging a half-hearted campaign will have the exact opposite effect.

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