



Media Bias Against Tax Day Tea Parties

Tax day 2009 has come and gone, and with it the spate of “Tea Parties” held in hundreds of towns and cities nationwide that attracted withering attention from the reliably pro-big-government media establishment.



Nowhere was the liberal bias of the so-called mainstream news media on display more blatantly than in Chicago, Illinois, where a young CNN reporter named Susan Roesgen did a hit piece on the Tea Party there. In a brief news clip that has become an Internet sensation, Roesgen confronts a peevish father carrying a two-year-old child. The father tries to clarify for CNN that the Tea Party movement is all about liberty and allowing people the right to enjoy the fruits of their own labors. “What does all this have to do with taxes?” a clearly-agitated Roesgen sputters, before informing the man that the “state of Lincoln gets \$50 billion out of the stimulus.”

Roesgen then turns away from the man, who is obviously frustrated at not being given a fair shake, and tells CNN that the sharp exchange illustrated the “general tenor” of a gathering that was “anti-government,” “anti-CNN,” “highly promoted by the right-wing conservative network Fox,” and “not really family viewing.” A sympathetic CNN anchor assures viewers that the Chicago event is typical in its virulence of Tea Parties across the nation.

Fortunately for those of us interested in the entire story, several bloggers present at the Chicago event documented the rest of the Tea Party, including other exchanges with Roesgen that CNN chose not to show.

Immediately after Roesgen walked away from the angry father, he rejoined that the “\$50 billion [in stimulus money] comes from my pocket.”

The CNN reporter then got into a spirited discussion with a woman who identified herself as a typical suburbanite who was there because she was “sick and tired of the government taking our money and spending it in ways we have no say in.” The woman accused Roesgen of deliberate distortion, of trying to put a partisan slant on the occasion, and of ignoring ordinary people like herself in favor of firebrands who would make more inflammatory copy.

Undeterred, Roesgen accused her of being “confrontational” and asked her what group she belonged to, and how she knew about the event if she wasn’t part of some organization. The lady explained to Roesgen that the event was “all over online. What do you think the Internet is for?” She also denied belonging to any special interest group.

As for the event’s allegedly family-unfriendly content, a longer video posted on Youtube showed an energetic but upbeat crowd singing the national anthem and carrying signs and placards with such “anti-government” messages as “Don’t mortgage my grandkids’ future,” “Stop spending our \$\$\$,” “No more bailouts — stop the swindle,” and “We the people are Fed up.”

The Roesgen hit piece, like so many the mainstream news media have directed against the so-called “right wing” in recent years, points out the deep-seated antagonism that every major news organ, except perhaps Fox, feels for those Americans hostile to the growth of government power, and the



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reflexive sympathy that such media elites feel for government. This is because, since World War I, the federal government has become extraordinarily proficient at using the news media to do what journalist and Establishment propagandist Walter Lippmann called “manufacturing consent” among the general public. Lippmann, in his book *Public Opinion*, called for the news media to use their power to aid and abet the federal government in whatever the latter deemed necessary for the greater good.

The media cartel that grew up in the twenties and thirties of the last century has been a reliable retailer of Establishment priorities ever since, parroting the Washington party line on foreign policy (interventionism without respite, rather than the neutrality the Founding Fathers recommended), economics (federal micromanagement and regulation of economic activity, instead of laissez-faire capitalism), and social policy (welfarism instead of benign neglect), as well as a range of other socialist, imperialist, and (most importantly) constitutionally illegitimate conceits.

The devil’s bargain that keeps the Big Media pliant and cooperative is a monopoly on access to government officials in exchange for keeping reporting within the bounds of what the power Establishment deems acceptable terms of debate. Topics like abolishing income taxes and the Federal Reserve, repudiating foreign interventionism, and restoring constitutional limits on the power of the federal government, violate the Establishment’s code of what constitutes “respectable” opinion.

In fairness to CNN, which has usually been as faithful an Establishment lap dog as any other large media organization, the network has helped to give Congressman Ron Paul a voice. During the latter’s presidential campaign, CNN reporter Wolf Blitzer conducted a number of fair and courteous interviews with the Texas congressman, and the network has repeatedly sought Congressman Paul’s perspective during the economic crisis. It is thus ironic that many of Congressman Paul’s supporters helped to organize the Tea Party movement demonized by CNN.

But, as the Roesgen report on the Chicago Tea Party showed, CNN is more likely to turn on patriotic Americans than raise a principled outcry over government abuse. After all, CNN, like the rest of the major news networks, is unlikely to bite the hand that feeds it.



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