

The Tea Party Movement

PIPING HOT!

By: Christopher Williams

The spring of 2009 provided a concrete foundation for a new movement to spread like wildfire through the United States called the Tea Party movement. President Obama's decisions to approve a \$787 billion stimulus package bill to revive the abysmal economy and promote the overhaul of an exorbitant healthcare system helped to fuel the fire of people who aligned themselves with this group. Each decision was met with such opposition from the Republican fringe that the scurrilous rhetoric from Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck, and FOX News reached unparalleled levels. The healthcare system, in particular, was leaving 32 million people uninsured and costing the United States approximately 17 percent of our Gross Domestic Product. The Democratic Party since the days of Theodore Roosevelt pushed to reform the American healthcare system, but was repeatedly unsuccessful due to remonstrance from the Republican Party.

Last summer, once it became known to the masses that this sweeping regulation of healthcare reform was the next major task on the President's agenda, the Republican Party went to work by telling their constituents that this new healthcare reform was nothing more than death panels. Various representatives from Congress such as Chuck Grassley-R (Iowa), John Boehner-R (Ohio), Michele Bachmann-R (Minnesota), Eric Cantor-R (Virginia), and former Alaska governor Sarah Palin amongst others denounced this reform from the outset. This led to the formation of town hall meetings across the country by members of Congress to further explain what this healthcare reform package meant for American citizens.

Many were left baffled and addled by Congress and the President about what this meant for their everyday lives. Town hall meetings

presented an opportunity for the Tea Party to galvanize their own cause and in their own words 'stick it to the government.' Town hall meetings around the country were covered by all major media outlets, which provided the public with direct insight to these events. The archetypal Tea Party member arrived to these meetings with guns and signs crucifying President Obama by turning him into a socialist or racist caricature. Inside of these proceedings there was much yelling and some physical altercations by people of opposing political parties. Most people who came left without gaining the proper information regarding the healthcare reform bill.

Here in Virginia, I attended two local town hall meetings held in my hometown. One was held by Republican Congressman Robert Wittman and the other was held by Democratic Senator Mark Warner. Outside of the venue before the meetings began, many Tea Partiers were wearing gun stickers and holding up signs that other Tea Partiers from across the country made with the infamous quote from Thomas Jefferson "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." The anger in each room from Tea Partiers was palpable and they outnumbered their democratic counterparts. The yelling and the lies being spewed by them were combated by both governmental officials. At the event featuring Senator Mark Warner, two different sets of women got into altercations and had to be removed. I saw firsthand what lies and misinformation can do a group of people.

The modern Tea Party is a direct contrast from the American brethren they chose to steal their name from in the first place. The original Boston Tea Party movement in the 1770s was born from the Colonists resistance against the Tea Act, which had been passed by the British Parliament in

