



Tom's Message Board

Politically Correct

I know that talking religion and politics can be risky but this month I felt compelled to exercise my right of free speech. So, [gulp!] following is an [abridged] article by Thomas Friedman that struck such a chord with me that I felt compelled to share it.

The Tea Kettle Movement by Thomas L. Friedman
Published: September 28, 2010, NY Times.

There are actually two Tea Party movements in America today: one we've read about that could aptly be called "The Tea Kettle Movement" – because all it's doing is letting off steam. And one you've not read about that could become really important if the right politician understood how to tap into it. The Tea Kettle movement can't have a positive impact on the country because it has both misdiagnosed America's main problem and hasn't offered a credible solution for the problem it has identified. How can you take a movement seriously that says it wants to cut government spending by billions of dollars but won't identify the specific defense programs, Social Security, Medicare or other services it's ready to cut? And how can you take seriously a movement that sat largely silent while the Bush administration launched two wars and a new entitlement, Medicare prescription drugs — while cutting taxes — but is now, suddenly, mad as hell about the deficit and won't take it anymore from President Obama?

The issues that upset the Tea Kettle movement — debt and bloated government — are actually symptoms of our real problem, not causes. They are symptoms of a country in a state of incremental decline and losing its competitive edge, because our politics have become just another form of sports entertainment, our Congress a forum for legalized bribery and our main lawmaking institutions divided by toxic partisanship to the point of paralysis. The important Tea Party movement understands this and is looking for a leader that is first, a patriot: more interested in fighting for his country than his party. Second, one who persuades Americans that he or she actually has a plan not just to cut taxes or pump stimulus, but to do something much larger — to make America successful, thriving and respected again. And third, someone with the ability to lead in the face of uncertainty and not simply whine about how tough things are.

To me, the plan starts by asking: what is America's core competency and strategic advantage, and how do we nurture it? Answer: It is our ability to attract, develop and unleash creative talent. That means men and women who invent, build and sell more goods and services that make people's lives more productive, healthy, comfortable, secure and entertained than any other country.

Leadership today is about how the U.S. government attracts and educates more of that talent and then enacts the laws, regulations and budgets that empower that talent to take its products and services to scale, sell them around the world, and create good jobs here in the process. Without that, we can't afford the health care or defense we need.

To implement the real Tea Party plan it would require us to actually raise some taxes — on, say, gasoline — and cut others — like payroll and corporate taxes. It would require us to overhaul our immigration laws to better control our borders, let in more knowledge workers, and retain those skilled foreigners in college here. And it would require us to reduce some services — like Social Security — while expanding others, like education and research for a 21st-century economy. In other words, it will require a very smart, subtle and focused plan to use our now diminishing resources in the most efficient way possible to get back to our core competency. That is, to grow our way out of debt with American workers who are more empowered and educated to compete.

Any Tea Party that says the simple answer is just shrinking government and slashing taxes might be able to tip the midterm elections in its direction. But it can't tip America in the right direction. (for the full article go to <http://nytimes.com>).

My comment – I completely agree with Mr. Friedman's viewpoint; and while I have no particular issue with the Tea Party Movement as a voice, I am extremely dismayed with the posturing and negativity of politics these days.

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President