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Freedom Works, the Tea Party and the Next 'Civil' War

By: Michael Terron - November 22, 2013

A specter is haunting the United States. It's a composite ghost of all who, in the 19th century, were willing to destroy the country rather than promote freedom & justice for all. Abolitionist John Brown is turning over in his grave.

In July of 2004, two organizations - Citizens for a Sound Economy and Empower America - merged to form Freedom Works. Former Housing and Urban Development Secretary, Dick Arme, and former White House Counsel, C. Boyden Gray and former Congressman, Jack Kemp, co-chaired the new group. Matt Kibbe became its first president and CEO. Launched at the height of an election year, Freedom Works announced that its mission was to "educate voters and to get them to the polls," focusing primarily on the Congressional races. Kibbe was more precise. He stated that the organization was to be "a powerful answer to the challenge presented by the Left". On its official website, it says that Freedom Works' mission is to "go toe-to-toe with the unions, extreme 'enviros' and the MoveOn.orgs of the world."

"Although Freedom Works does not disclose its corporate funders, Media Matters for America claims that it has received funding from Verizon, SBC (now AT&T) and the Phillip Morris Foundation. In 2006, the Washington Post revealed that, from 2001 to 2006, Freedom Works engaged in a hidden deal with insurance brokers whereby the brokers would sell high-deductible insurance policies and tax-free medical savings plans to individuals at a group discount, and those who purchased the plans would automatically be added to Freedom Works' membership list."

"Customers were unaware of the membership arrangements, for which they were charged extra fees. Membership was a condition of getting the discounted insurance plan. The arrangement was credited with helping increase the number of 'members' Freedom Works could claim belonged to the organization. About 16,000 people 'joined' the group in this manner, causing \$638,040 to flow into Freedom Works' coffers over five and a half years, in the form of monthly checks for 'association' fees collected by the Medical Savings Insurance Company; forwarded to Freedom Works."

There are about eight key issues that Freedom Works spends most of its time, money and energy on. For each one of these, the organization's position can be summed-up very succinctly, e.g.:

Fundamental Tax Reform - *scrap the code to make taxes simple, low, flat and honest*; Sound Money - *allow citizens to use anything they want as money*; Medicare, Social Security - *unchecked growth of these entitlement programs threatens to bankrupt the U.S. government*; Workplace Freedom - *unions are aggressively pushing for costly new laws to increase their power at the expense of workers and businesses* Then, there is Freedom Works' unequivocal opposition to Obamacare; legislation they characterize as a *socialistic takeover* of the American health care system.

"It's the same group of American's - the 20 to 25% of the public - who are essentially Bush dead-enders. Ideologically speaking, I describe the Tea Partiers as packaging old wine into new bottles. On one level there is an extremely strong overlap between the Tea Party and the traditional religious right that emerged in the 1980s; on a second level, the Tea Party is representative of the same extreme economic right that has long supported deregulation and an assault on the social welfare state."

Anthony DiMaggio (author of, *The Rise of the Tea Party*) Monthly Review Press interview - 2/20/13.

The origins of the phenomena known as the Tea Party is attributed to an address given by CNBC financial commentator, Rick Santelli, on February 19, 2009, at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Santelli, ranted, against the Obama administration's policies to help 'underwater' mortgage holders. By assisting these "losers", as Santelli described them, the government was "rewarding" bad behavior. He went on to invite the business people gathered there to a "Chicago-style Tea Party" to protest this "objectionable" government intervention. Invoking the American Revolutionary War, i.e., the Boston Tea Party, he called for "authentic Americans" to rally against both the Obama administration and the "freeloaders." However, Atlantic Magazine's business blogger, Megan McArdle, claims that Freedom Works official, Brendan Steinhauser, got the idea for the Tea Party from Michelle Malkin's blog.

Whatever its origin, it is clear that the Tea Party was not created by 'official' GOP organizations. Apparently, no elected Republican Party officers control the various Tea Party affiliated groups. This political tendency, for all intents and purposes, is an insurgent force of Republican voters. It has been estimated that by the spring of 2011 - based on the websites of more than 800 active groups in all fifty states - the Tea Party was concentrated in state capitals and in the southern states where Republicans are especially strong.

What is of particular significance is that many Tea Party leaders are closely connected to *free market, pro-capitalist conservatism*, e.g., the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, and the Koch brothers, sons of Fred Koch, a founding member of the John Birch Society. By the midterm elections of 2010, the Tea Party was able to generate large regional and national protests, drawing the attention of major commercial media. They intervened dramatically in many GOP primaries that year, resulting in the defeat of several Democratic incumbents in the Senate, a majority of gubernatorial ships and re-gaining control of the House of Representatives.

"Opposition to 'birthright citizenship' extends throughout the Tea Party movement, and is often linked to an explicit fear of the demographic transformation underway in the United States, in which white people are projected to become one minority in a country of minorities during the next several decades." Frank Schaeffer, who, with his late father, Francis Schaeffer, Sr., helped shape the social and religious conservatism that currently dominates much of American politics, writes: "They can't reconcile their idea of themselves with the fact that white men don't run the country any more - and never will again. To them, the black president is leading a column of the 'other' into their promised land. *Gays, immigrants, progressives, even a female Hispanic appointed to the Supreme Court, for them, is the Apocalypse.* Now, all the Republican gurus have left is what the defeated Germans of WW2 had: a

scorched earth policy. If they can't win, then everyone must go down. Obama *must* fail. The country must fail."

New York Times columnist, Frank Rich, writes: "The oil magnates are the *driving force* behind the Tea Party movement. Using information from historian Kim Phillips-Feins's book, *Invisible Hands*, Rich notes that the Kochs are the latest in a long line of behind-the-scenes corporate manipulators "who have financed the far-right . . . You can draw a straight line from the Liberty League's crusade against the New Deal's 'socialism' of Social Security, the Securities and Exchange Commission and child labor laws; to the John Birch Society-Barry Goldwater assault on the Kennedy administration and Medicare; to the Koch-Murdoch-backed juggernaut against our 'socialist' president." Democratic political strategist, Rob Stein, who has studied conservative movements' finances, says the Koch's are "at the epicenter of the anti-Obama movement. But it's not just about Obama. They would do the same with Hillary Clinton. They did the same with Bill Clinton. They are out to destroy progressivism."