

The Tea Party: What Do We Do Now?

[Leslie Carbone](#) | August 3, 2010 | [Comments \(4\)](#)

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"The Republican Party agenda has become the tea party agenda, and vice versa," Democratic National Committee chairman, and former Governor of Virginia, [Tim Kaine](#) said at a news conference last week.

I wish! If that were the case, I might still be a Republican.

But what does the Tea Party movement really stand for? What are its main ideas? What is its philosophy? Well, that can be hard to pinpoint. As Doug Bandow noted recently in the [Daily Caller](#), "The Tea Party movement incorporates several philosophical influences. Polls show adherents split between Sarah Palin and Ron Paul, suggesting philosophical confusion if not schizophrenia."

But despite this apparent split-personality disorder, it's clear that Tea Partiers are on to something. What the movement captures is the popular outrage that began to brew with former President George Bush XLIII's bail-outs and boiled over with President Barack Obama's government stimulus and health-care power grab. And its passion for justice is heartening.

But passion is not enough. Grasping that it's wrong to rob Peter to pay Paul is not enough. Having a feeling that something isn't right, like the Mama Grizzlies, is not enough.

Where the movement desperately needs growth is in understanding the philosophical influences that Mr. Bandow notes and in developing a well-considered philosophy of its own. The principles in favor of economic freedom are far richer than a two-year-old's cry of "Mine!" And Tea Partiers, as our movement turns two, need to continue learning to understand these principles in order to become truly effective. We need to be conversant with the factors that make the market economy work, factors like price signals, incentives, and comparative advantage. We need to study which kinds of taxes are the most and least damaging to prosperity, moral as well as economic. And most of all, we need communicate why economic freedom—not spreading the wealth around—is what makes things better for everybody.

In the last few days, a spate of opinion pieces has lamented the [woeful state of knowledge](#) in the modern conservative movement. This is a welcome thing. We are in the right, and our nascent movement grasps the obvious truths that generations of leftist intellectuals have sought to erase from our minds. Buttress that grasp with a robust understanding of history, philosophy, and economics, and we may just have a movement that can restore American freedom.

In the meantime, the liberals seem intent on driving folks away. Tying the Tea Party to the GOP, Gov. Kaine insists that Republicans would repeal President Obama's health-care takeover and the new financial regulations. "We're determined to make sure Americans understand this," he said. And if I were still a Republican, that would be very good news indeed.