

Anti-Tax Protests across America

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On tax day, April 15th, “Anti-tax” protests were held all over the nation, with some success. Thousands of people showed up in certain cities to vent their frustration with what was supposed to be a protest against taxation in general. The outcome was quite different.

If one looked at the signs that were carried by the majority of the participants, messages were being sent that were impossible to disagree with: tax money should not be given to banks and corporations. Of course. Ordinary people should not have their taxes raised through higher sales taxes, and additional taxes on alcohol, cigarettes, property, or gas. Right on.

Since the protests had the hidden hand of the right wing pushing them along (Fox News and others), the mainstream liberals felt the need to respond. It was pitiful. Instead of addressing the above concerns of average people, the Democrats tried to explain all the good that government does with our tax money, such as provide social services, build roads, put out fires, etc. Although true, this avoidance of the essence of the debate was a sad attempt to bolster Obama’s popularity, along with the corporate controlled Democratic Party in general.

The right-wing is promoting the protests for three reasons: 1) Criticizing Obama’s Wall Street bailouts gives them a lot of political credibility, which they are sorely lacking at the moment. 2) As the population in general becomes radicalized by the ever-worsening economy, the right-wing is attempting to channel this energy by appearing to be the “radical” alternative to the corporate two-party system. 3) the right-wing’s puppet masters, the super rich, are angry that Obama is reversing the Bush tax cuts and want to make sure that they are not taxed any further — they are thus quietly hiding behind and benefiting from the anti-taxation “movement.”

There is only one way to stop the right-wing from gaining momentum from such populist campaigns. As the recession deepens, sensible solutions need to be proposed that benefit specifically working people, who are having their services cut because of budget deficits, etc., while having their taxes increased to fill some of the gaps.

Demanding that ONLY banks, corporations, and the super wealthy pay for this crisis with increased taxes and that ZERO future bailouts take place is a solid foundation for a working-class movement — it would instantly deflate any right-wing attempt at populism.

This debate with the right-wing cannot be won with an “all taxes are good” argument. This is the surest road to defeat. The right-wing strengthens itself by glossing over class differences in these types of debates; it is up to working people and the labor movement to

be boldly specific about the issue: we want the colossally rich to pay for the crisis. After all, they were the chief beneficiaries of the financial bubble that is now crippling the economy. Labor can lead the way in mobilizing people in massive public actions that would assure this result.

This means, at the very least, returning to the pre-Regan tax code, which taxed the top income bracket (the super rich) at 70% versus 15% today (the rate at which capital gains and stock dividends are taxed). It also means demanding that state tax laws be drastically changed in the same direction.

Finally, if people would like to attend a protest that is not vague about its motives nor heavily promoted by the right wing, international workers day is on May 1st, and demonstrations are being planned throughout the country. Somebody will inevitably have to pay for the economic crisis, and if we are quiet and unorganized it will be us.

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