

Targeting the Tea Parties

By WAYNE LUTTON

Just months after Barak Obama swept into office on a campaign promise of “Change You Can Believe In,” the emergence of grass-roots opposition to his agenda in the form of Tea Parties has the far-left distraught. Pro-Obama reporters have depicted the Tea Party gatherings as angry mobs and have accused participants of hurling racial epithets at black members of Congress. In the forefront of the drive to create a false sense of hysteria is the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).

In their report, “Rage on the Right: The Year in Hate and Extremism,” *Intelligence Report*, Spring 2010, asserts that the Tea Party movement is “shot through with rich veins of radical ideas, conspiracy theories and racism.” They quote radical scribe Chip Berlet, who breathlessly charges, “We are in the midst of one of the most significant right-wing populist rebellions in United States history.” The SPLC goes on to complain that only 25 percent of respondents to a recent NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll think the federal government can be trusted. And, according to the SPLC, another dangerous sign of the times is the introduction in 37 state legislatures of “Tenth Amendment Resolutions,” based on the constitutional provision keeping all powers not explicitly given to the federal government with the states.

As anyone who has participates in a Tea Party can attest, the rallies are polite and peaceful, most often resembling family picnics on the Fourth of July. They are attended by mainstream Americans who are protesting, not hating. These Americans are just fed up with out-of-control government spending, the bail-outs of failed banks, car companies, and mortgage brokers who, the public was repeatedly told, are “too big to fail.” And note how defense of the Constitution is, in the eyes of the SPLC and their allies, an extreme position.

The SPLC, in their Summer 2010 *Intelligence Report*, castigates “The Enablers,” namely, “mainstream

figures in politics and the media” who, they claim, are abetting “the resurgent antigovernment ‘Patriot’ movement...” According to the SPLC, the chief “Enablers” are:

- U.S. Rep. Michele Bachmann (R-MN), who they charge with “spreading fear of a menacing federal government infested with anti-American elements” and who has “used her office as a megaphone for outrageous claims and conspiracy theories.”



Oh, to hell with *that!* Can't you see I've got really pressing terrorist issues on my mind?

- U.S. Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA), who the SPLC dubs the “Doctor of Demonization.” They complain that Broun, a M.D. by profession, publicly attacked the Obama Administration’s health care “reform.” He is also “guilty” of defending the Second Amendment. These smear merchants complain that he called Nancy Pelosi “a domestic enemy of the Constitution.”

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- U.S. Rep. Ron Paul, “Dr. No” as he is popularly known. The SPLC states that Rep. Paul “represents an accessible brand of patriot politics that helps validate and stoke fears of an overreaching government on the far right.”
- Glenn Beck, the popular Fox News Channel host, is “The Ringmaster” of the Tea Party movement, according to SPLC.
- Judge Andrew Napolitano, called “Fox Pox” by SPLC, is censured for speaking to pro-liberty activists who want to “cut the size and scope of government by about two-thirds or more.”

Without perceived “threats” the SPLC is out of business. Its business model is to issue “reports” charging anyone to their right is “a growing threat.” They embellish these absurd claims with bogus percentage increases of decried activity from one year to the next.

Over the years SPLC:

- warned of the “growing threat” of skinheads in 1989.

“epidemic of hatred” was “a deliberate hoax,” as Michael Fumento detailed in articles in *The Wall Street Journal* and *The American Spectator*. In fact, there was a dramatic drop in the number of church arsons, with no evidence that black churches were being targeted. In the wake of this inflammatory campaign, the SPLC should have been thoroughly discredited;

- In 1998 the SPLC warned that the Internet was responsible for “the biggest surge in hate in America in years;”
- The following year the SPLC warned that internet-based hate groups increased 60 percent;
- In 2002 the SPLC charged that post-September 11 hate groups were on the rise;
- In 2004 the SPLC once again charged that skinhead groups had doubled from the previous year;
- In 2008 the SPLC warned that “hate groups” increased 48 percent since 2000.

As civil rights and anti-death penalty attorney Stephen B. Bright wrote,

Morris Dees is a con man and a fraud. He has raised millions upon millions of dollars with various schemes, never mentioning that he does not need the money because he has \$175 million and two “poverty palace” buildings in Montgomery. He has taken advantage of naïve, well-meaning people “some of moderate or low

incomes” who believe his pitches and give to his \$175-million operation. He has spent most of what they have sent him to raise still more millions, pay high salaries, and promote himself. [“The Southern Poverty Business Model,” by Ken Silverstein, *Harper’s*, November 2, 2007.]

Concerned citizens should ask: Who is really fanning the flames of fear? ■

- In 1992 claimed, without evidence that “white supremacist groups” grew by 27 percent from the year before;
- In 1995 the SPLC created a nation-wide sense of hysteria over the false claim that black churches were being set on fire by racists. The SPLC charged that the FBI was unaware that “black church fires have risen dramatically.” But after careful investigation, it turned out that this

