



Could Iowa Signal the Tipping Point Against Rapid 'Change'?

by Herbert I. London
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Here in the heart of the heartland in Sioux City, Iowa a "pitchfork mentality" is emerging. In a town that has stockyards and a meatpacking company that yields what locals call "aroma alley," the Republican base, which has been in retreat since the presidential election, is energized and the Democratic majority is growing angry at its own leaders.

Two issues have emerged as critical: a government plan to prevent the deductibility of state taxes on the federal tax form and a state Supreme Court decision to mandate homosexual marriages.

If subject to a vote, these proposals would lose 85 to 15% according to recent polls. Yet the state court is seemingly oblivious to public sentiment and is intent on making the law rather than interpreting it. And the Democrat majority in the legislature anticipates a revenue windfall if the tax proposal passes, a windfall it cannot resist.

These two issues are the front burner matters in a state that voted for Barack Obama in the presidential election. But this support for the president is evaporating quickly. In Sioux City even the Democrats at a recent rally contend "he is moving too fast and too far." Iowans believe America is sliding into a command economy that imperils freedom. Despite the claims by hard-core leftists like Janine Garofalo that these cross-country tea parties are nothing more than discontent with the president's race, I couldn't find a scintilla of evidence to support this claim.

The concern is real and deeply felt uniting most Republicans and many Democrats. These are rumblings in the heartland that President Obama should heed, although that doesn't appear to be the case. Iowa farmers don't know John Maynard Keynes, but they do know a power grab when they see one. Fiercely individualistic Iowans are resistant to a Washington bureaucracy that wants to tell them how to live and work. Priming the pump is seemingly acceptable as a method for kicking the economy into gear until the decisions affect personal behavior.

I don't know if Americans are yet ready for a second American Revolution as some bloggers are suggesting, but I do know that in a state conservative in outlook and disposition, anger is building that may be unprecedented. The "I'm angry and won't take it any more" refrain at

rallies is often bipartisan with some Democrats saying if we only knew "this is the change we've been waiting for," they might have kept on waiting.

Admittedly, the Iowa caucus launched the Obama campaign for president about which some Iowans are quite proud. Many state Democrats argue it is still too early to assess the president's performance. That may be true, but the policy directions established with the Stimulus Bill, the Appropriations Bill and the budget proposal indicate an enormous transfer of capital from the private to the public sector and an accompanying transfer of power as well. This change cannot be overlooked even for those inclined to support the president.

It is possible that if there is an uptick in the economy, the public mood may change. However, it will soon be obvious blame cannot be leveled against former President Bush for the problems Obama inherited. Both the proposals and the state of the economy will soon belong to President Obama and his team. Therefore excuses and rationalizations are not likely to fly.

As I see it, the tea parties are a genuine *cri de coeur*. They arise as a plaintive eruption from the grass roots. Where this will lead is anyone's guess, since these events are dispersed across the country. At the moment, no one to my knowledge has attempted to translate the evident frustration into a political movement. But that could happen.

President Obama has chosen to ignore or dismiss these actions. That is a major error. He would be far wiser to address the concerns directly. The longer the anger festers, the more it becomes an impediment to his political fortunes. 2010 isn't far off for a congressional realignment and 2012 isn't far either for a Republican in the White House. These tea parties may augur a change as formidable as the one America once experienced in Boston Harbor.

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