

Comparing Occupy And Tea Party

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The new Occupy Movement has some things in common with the Tea Party but the differences between the two are fundamental. That's what author Chris Hedges said in a recent interview.

Hedges was a noted war correspondent overseas but he came home to America several years ago and was shocked to find the country had been taken over by what he calls a "corporate coup". Since then his writing has concentrated on the struggle between ordinary people and those who want to own everything.

This recent interview was perhaps the first chance Hedges had to share his views on the new Occupy Movement with a large audience. It was on TV on the Charlie Rose Show on October 24.

Charlie Rose asked Hedges if the Occupy protesters are against capitalism. He answered there are different kinds of capitalism. He said the new movement only opposes big scale international corporate capitalism, which he called a "mafia" system that is "hollowing out" our country along with every other country. He said the Occupy protesters are suspicious of government too because it sells out to money interests so often.

On the other hand, he said the Tea Party opposes government for a different reason, because big corporations want government to be weaker. That way they can do whatever they want without being regulated. By this he implied that the Tea Party is in the pocket of the corporations.

Furthermore, Hedges said the Tea Party "speaks a language of violence. Their people have a right to feel rage because they've been betrayed – but the Tea Party directs that rage at vulnerable people, at Muslims, immigrants, homosexuals and intellectuals. I think the groundswell of anger in the Tea Party is genuine, but they're channeling that anger toward scapegoats and it frightens me. That's radically different from the Occupy Movement."

In contrast, Hedges praised the open democratic meetings where Occupy participants make all their big decisions. He said that anyone who wants to speak gets heard. "I think it's a return to sanity. I think it's a demand for justice."

That spirit of inclusive openness does coincide with our own observations on the local level. It does certainly seem that if you show up at an Occupy Worcester

meeting, wait your turn and then speak politely, you can speak your mind freely. And you'll get a respectful hearing too no matter what your opinions are, be they anarchist or socialist or capitalist, either liberal or conservative or in between.

Things seem to be similar too if you drop by the Occupy Worcester camp in Lake Park. It's a busy park and many people stop to talk about the problems we all have these days. We've never seen people leave without a serious and friendly thoughtful chat except when there's too many visitors for the small encampment to handle.

Perhaps it is also this spirit of openness that appears in something else. The Occupy Worcester camp is less than two weeks old but they're already sending volunteers to work with the Worcester Anti-Foreclosure Team and sending garbage clean up squads to the blighted Main South neighborhood. I don't remember seeing that at Tea Party rallies.

But of course this article should include a Tea Party viewpoint too. I don't hear Occupy participants (beyond Mr. Hedges) mention the Tea Party much at all, but maybe Tea Party folk make the comparisons. If they do, what differences or similarities do they see? I went on the web, seeking editorials on this subject at several of their major websites. I found a pretty consistent line of thought.

The most clearly written piece, in my opinion, was on the Tea Party Patriots website, on the top of the front page. It was not signed so I don't know who the author is. I think these excerpts catch the drift of it:

"Tea partiers ... believe in time-honored American values, principles and systems including the freedom to innovate and employ people ... They don't believe corporations are inherently evil, nor should bankers be beheaded. They do not believe this country should be divided by class, but united in a return to the principles that undergird our nation's success.

"In fact, they want more of what made America great: more Constitutional restraint on government so that the people have more freedom to achieve the good things the country offers.

"Tea party rallies have always been safe and clean. ... We can find no reports of tea partiers being arrested ... They are not lawbreakers, they don't hate the police, they don't even litter. A quick glance at the TV reveals the sharp contrast posed by the Wall Street occupiers.

"Yet the Leftist media cheers for a group of lawbreaking troublemakers who occupied a park in New York, blocked the Brooklyn Bridge, were arrested by the hundreds and treated law enforcement with disrespect and disdain all while trying to tear down the foundations of the greatest nation on earth."

So says the Tea Party Patriots website.

I will only suggest that you look into the subject and form your own opinion.

Web Resources

This document: www.stoneriley.com/MYOC/CompOccupyTeaParty.pdf

All my journalism stuff: www.stoneriley.com/Myoc_GO.html

My home website: www.stoneriley.com

Chris Hedges on Charlie Rose: <http://www.charlierose.com/view/interview/11961>

Tea Party Patriots: <http://www.teapartypatriots.org/>