

Tea Parties and PETA twits

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commentary

Dogs and tea parties remind us that we are more likely to fight for something we believe in if we can snatch a few moments of personal publicity from the effort.

People who attend meetings of the Tea Party movement are determined to turn their country in a better direction, but they also love standing up in a crowd of their fellow agitators and orating like geriatric Patrick Henrys. Defeating incumbents is invigorating but lapping up the limelight is intoxicating.

"Look, Ma, I'm on the TV!"

The Tea Partiers are about 90 percent like me. They are the same lovely pale pasty white that I am. They are opinionated as all get out, just like me. And they are way past puberty - by 50 or more years.

But there is something surprisingly different this time about my fellow geezers. They are not usually so demonstrative, so showy and so brassy in their utterances. Americans my age - especially in the West - are normally poker-faced and emotionally controlled, whether they are joyful or furious. They don't wear their emotions on their sleeves.

When they are joyful, they may smile ever so slightly.

When they are furious, their old brows display tiny frowns, but only for a discreet instant.

As a matter of fact, older westerners like me and the Tea Party types have never cared much for the kind of showboat political demonstrations common to younger people involved in radical movements.

In fact, the Vietnam War probably lasted a couple of years longer than it otherwise would have if the anti-war movement hadn't gone so far overboard into costumes and hairdos and, most of all, the fundamental conceit of shouting down opposing viewpoints. That tended to turn others off to what they were saying. But sometimes all they were saying was, "Look, Ma, I'm on the TV."

Just the other day, I bristled again when protestors from PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) invaded the crowning of Sadie, that bouncy little Scottie, at the Westminster Dog Show (probably hurting her feelings). Typical of such protestors, you could tell they were getting high on the personal attention as much as being motivated by their movement's aims.

"Look, Lassie, I'm on the TV."

I happen to agree with the message PETA was pitching that night - that obsessive purebred puppy production helps create an overpopulation and causes the extermination of excess "ordinary dogs." But there's a time and a place for making your point.

The crowning of a nice little Fido like Sadie isn't the place. Every time I see PETA pulling one of its nasty stunts, I wish those little twits wouldn't help so much. Sometimes I think too much tofu makes people mean.

I suspect the Tea Partiers almost all agree with me that people like the Vietnam War opponents and the PETA protestors go overboard in seeking attention and especially in posing as so superior to the rest of us.

But the really odd thing is that the Tea Partiers are following the same hyperventilating script this year as the radicals on the left. I didn't know elders liked tofu but they seem to be overdosing on the stuff, given how absolutely certain they are about everything.

Actually, as one who has lived among the Tea Party types my whole life, I would speculate that it isn't actually tofu that makes them so vain and mean; more likely it is their standard fare (their equivalent of the tofu that fuels many on the left) - lime Jell-O with grated carrots in it or green-bean-and-mushroom-soup casseroles.

But in fairness to my fellow geezers, I doubt even they would interrupt a grand moment like the crowning of a nice little canine queen like Sadie.

Meanwhile, as I was contemplating the PETA and Tea Party grandstanders, a surreal dog development intruded. An Idaho legislator was expressing fear that western wolves will start eating us if we don't reduce their number. What scares me is that, according to various Internet sources, North American wolves virtually never kill humans, but pet dogs like some of Sadie's kin kill numerous people in this country every year.

We need a new movement of eager grandstanders to do something about that. Thus I declare - with the television cameras fully on me - that we must eradicate dogs in this country or we will soon be terrorized by pit bulls, famished cocker spaniels and maybe even rampaging packs of Scotties.

"Look, Ma, I'm dog food on the TV!"

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