

SNG-Tea Party

Tea Party percolates in Princeton

By Jim Nowlan

In the wake of the recent stunning defeat of U.S. House leader Eric Cantor by an anti-Establishment conservative, interest in the Tea Party has been revived.

I report here on my recent visit with a small, amiable yet determined group of Tea Party activists in Princeton, Illinois, one of about 70 such local groups in the state. I promised to let them define themselves, without my editorial observations.

As readers may know, the Tea Party is not a political party, but instead a loosely knit network of conservatives who espouse, as their literature says, “Constitutionally limited government, fiscal responsibility and free markets.”

Robert Baker, a retired high school math teacher, is a leader of the group. “We meet twice a month, once for a committee meeting to which anyone is welcome, then again for a speaker.”

Robert says they have been attracting 60-70 for meetings on topics such as the Common Core educational reform and Agenda 21, a voluntary United Nations sustainable action plan.

“The Common Core is frightening,” says Joyce Bickett, a retired small business owner. “We want D.C. out of our schools. We should abolish the Department of Education.”

“Agenda 21 is creeping into our local communities,” declares Gary Forrestal, a farmer and mechanic. “They don’t want anyone to live in a house. They’re for stack-and-pack.”

The overarching concern of these Princeton residents is for the future of the nation.

“I don’t think our nation can continue down this path for much longer,” laments Rich Borys, a gunsmith and small businessman.

“Once we lose this great country, it won’t come back,” adds Baker.

“Things are going downhill but we can’t give up, as the liberals hope we will,” chimes in Forrestal.

President Obama is the primary object of the group’s scorn. Baker deplores “Obama and his hatred of America and his contempt of our constitution. He’s gutting our military, acting like a dictator and breaking our laws intentionally.”

Kenneth Perrin, a retired electrical engineer, believes there is enough evidence to impeach Obama and thinks such might be possible if the Republicans win a landslide election in Congress in November.

I ask about hot button issues. Perrin’s big concern is with “progressive liberals,” whom he depicts as “an outgrowth of the old Communist Party. Their goal has been to take over education, the media and the Democratic Party, and they have done all three.”

Forrestal has no problem with people who need food stamps, but he has been told that our government has put ads in Mexican newspapers on how to come across the border to get food assistance. Others in the group doubt this is the case.

Joyce Bickett is outraged that, “Kids are not allowed to pray in school. There is no law against prayer in school.”

“We’re not against the government,” avers Forrestal, “We love the U.S., but our constitutional rights are being eroded. We need smaller government.”

Baker resents that Tea Party folks are often called racists and bigots. “They call me a racist because I want to protect our borders,” he says.

Baker then displays a book titled “One Nation” by Dr. Ben Carson, a conservative African-American retired neurosurgeon, “whose philosophy is exactly what I believe.”

The group agrees that Carson should be given a shot at the presidency in 2016, but they doubt the Establishment will let that happen.

The small group in Princeton listens to a lot of talk radio—Joe Walsh, Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck, Mark Levin.

None of this small group had been active in politics before the Tea Party came along. Two even voted for Jimmy Carter for president.

Now Borys and Baker are GOP precinct committeemen (“Though I have problems with the GOP as well,” say Baker), and Perrin works hard at elections for his favored candidates.

“We’re going big time for Rauner (Republican candidate for governor in Illinois),” says Perrin.

“Most people don’t have a clue about government,” laments Baker, “and that the Constitution gives power to the people. We need a caring, knowledgeable electorate.”

This one small Tea Party gathering came across as deeply concerned about where the country is headed, and they plan to do what they can to turn it around.