

The Washington Times

www.washingtontimes.com

Spending for Tyranny

By Richard W. Rahn

Published February 23, 2011

Founders would decry the use of taxes to lobby for more taxes

To compel a man to subsidize with his taxes the propagation of ideas which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical.

-Thomas Jefferson

Serious people understand that the federal budget must be reduced, but there are groups that are using taxpayer dollars to lobby for more federal spending. If people disagree with a government spending priority - that is, if they think the government is spending too much or too little on a particular program, they have the basic right to advocate for more or less. What is corrupt is to use taxpayer dollars to lobby for more money for one's favorite program or self-interest.

If you have listened to National Public Radio (NPR) in recent weeks, you have probably heard the pleas for you to contact members of Congress and ask them to vote for taxpayer money for NPR. It has been recognized for decades that NPR has a left-wing agenda and much of its news programming is nothing more than an endless series of demands for more government spending or more regulation.

At NPR, cost-benefit analysis is an unspoken sin. Businesspeople and Republicans are normally treated as villains, and those in government and Democrats as self-sacrificing saints. The fact that government workers are much more highly paid than those in the private sector is not considered news anymore. NPR will claim that it is not using taxpayer dollars for lobbying, which may be illegal, but is using private donations for that purpose.

The simple fact of the matter is that money is fungible - it is put in and comes out of the same pot. In truth, NPR will not go away, unfortunately, if the direct taxpayer subsidy is stopped because it has a large endowment, a large

contributor base, and it accepts ads - which are called sponsor information. Thomas Jefferson and the other American Founders would not have approved of this use of taxpayer dollars.

Taxpayer dollars are also used to fund international organizations, which, in turn, lobby the U.S. Congress for not only more money for themselves, but also for higher taxes on the American people. In recent years, one of the most notorious examples has been the little known Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), based in France. The OECD has argued that Americans need to pay more in taxes; claims that tax-rate competition among nations is harmful, ignoring the fact that competition forces governments to prioritize better and be less wasteful; insists that Americans and others should give up their basic right of financial privacy; and supports programs that are driving needed foreign investment out of the United States. It is unlikely that Jefferson, Madison, Hamilton and the other Founders would have approved.

President Obama has just proposed adding 5,000 Internal Revenue Service (IRS) agents to the 100,000 we already have. As you ponder whether this is a good idea, think about the following: If a person pulled a gun on you and demanded your wallet, and then said: "I am going to use 50 percent of your money for good purposes, and I am going to waste and mismanage 30 percent, and the final 20 percent I am going to use for my own pleasure and to pay off my cronies who protect me," would you think the robber should be sent to jail or praised as a public servant? Feel free to alter the percentages in the above example based on your own impressions of how well the government spends your money, remembering that much of the stimulus money went to unions and political allies of Mr. Obama. And note that Jefferson also said, "The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not."

Unless the advocates of ever-more government spending are exposed for the self dealers and/or socialists they are, the economy and our liberties are doomed. Much of the establishment media has taken a pass on exposing what is going on, because too many of them are in bed with the politicians in one way or another. Those in the Tea Parties and taxpayer-advocacy groups are largely dependent on the free-market policy organizations for facts and arguments in their courageous stands against the statists.

The American Revolution was largely financed by those merchants and farmers who were willing to make financial contributions, buy the bonds of the states, accept the questionable new paper currency issued by the Continental Congress and donate weapons, blankets and other supplies. Robert Morris was the financier who devised many of the ways to support Washington's army, including contributing large amounts of his own funds. He was aided by many others, notably the Polish-born Jew and financier, Haym Salomon. Without their support,

Washington and the other better-known Founding Fathers could not have succeeded. Those who financed the American Revolution were the unsung heroes.

In these perilous times, there is a new group of unsung heroes who have been providing the financial support for the limited-government policy and advocacy organizations. The scholars, radio and TV commentators, and the pamphleteers who defend economic opportunity and individual liberty depend upon them. Those who foster tyranny depend on coerced funds; those who believe in and support liberty depend on what is voluntarily given.

Richard W. Rahn is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and chairman of the Institute for Global Economic Growth.

<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/feb/22/spending-for-tyranny/>

Copyright © 2011 News World Communications, Inc. All rights reserved.