

What Tea Party and Occupy Have in Common

Dr. Lon Jones, DO

Published: January 23, 2014

The Tea Party sees a major problem in the size of government and its incursion, influence, and control into more aspects of our lives than is warranted by the Constitution; they want a smaller less intrusive government. On the other hand those protesting in Wall Street see a problem in the financial sector and the 1% of our population that gains what they see as largely undue rewards from the 99% by its incursion, influence, and manipulation into the majority's finances. This sector, like the government, permeates our society and both have acted to fulfill the purposes of their respective existence as commonly seen; industry to survive, as defined mostly by profits and growth, and government to protect our nation and insure domestic tranquility.

Like siblings, government and industry, and the financial industry as well, have grown and competed together as they have sought ways to constrain the other as the one focuses on growth and the other on order. But now, thanks to the Supreme Court granting personhood and political donating rights to corporations the two are in bed together. We need to look to biology for what happens in cases of such inbreeding. Inbreeding is a way to refine desirable characteristics. We breed quarter horses, often mother to son or daughter to father, for speed in a quarter mile. Frequently we find that speed comes at the expense of stamina so the horse is fast, but gives out before the race is over. Similarly purebred dogs generally have some weaknesses that are associated with the breed. In much the same way our financial institutions have inbred to become larger, more efficient, and more profitable; those are the measures we accept as standard for corporations in this sector.

Similarly the standard we accept for government is defending us and maintaining order, and government has grown, largely again by inbreeding, to accomplish those tasks. As the examples from biology demonstrate inbreeding does have consequences in weaknesses that hurt. In the natural world there is no intended inbreeding; traits are selected by natural selection because they tend to increase the survival of the those having them. The process is wiser than when humans breed bulldogs to have broad enough shoulders that they have to be delivered by Caesarian, or when banks combine to profit from worthless mortgages. We can also learn from nature that it is not the size or the survivability of an agent that determines the health of the system, but its diversity. Similarly it is not the size or the growth of our economy or our GDP that determines the health of our economy, but the variety of the players.

Recognizing these parallels also shows the way to cope with our inbred weaknesses: 1. Recognize inbreeding wherever it is for what it is—incest—and treat it so. 2. Recognize that diversity is just as important as survival so the emphasis turns more towards community and cooperation; Garrett Hardin's 'tragedy of the commons' that is based on the agent's survival adaptations, can become Lin Ostrum's co-op. 3. For those in government we offer support to Ron Paul—any overt attempt to control any adaptive system (individual, group, corporation, or state) leads to resistance, gaming the system, and hostility in those being controlled. Altering the environment and allowing choice and adaptation is far better than constraining.