

Public Domain

by Steve Krulick, Senior Civics Columnist

A Time for Serious People

I don't know Tim Pain. He may be a very nice man, or not, but that doesn't matter. I had hoped to find out from him what IDEAS and IDEALS motivate him, and what specific CONCERNS move him to action, and what specific ACTIONS he would take to address those concerns, and to what extent they conform to his ideals and principles. This is particularly so if he plans to write a regular column for the Journal on the subjects of politics, public involvement in government, and how to address pressing social problems, whether local, national, or global. I don't really want to dwell on personalities, or even the style as opposed to the substance of his writing. But when there is NO substance, but merely banalities and platitudes without gravitas ("He had a smile on his face and a glint in his eye"), invocations and evocations without focus, well, then it's hard to deal with anything BUT the thin gruel that there is.

Tim Pain is NOT Tom Paine; there is nothing I read in his column to make me think, reflect, or act, but, rather, an attempt to envelop me in a warm, fuzzy glow of Reader's Digest bathos and lump-in-throat, flag-waving, non-critical, non-thinking. This isn't conservatism as a political philosophy with principles and positions, but a knee-jerk angst at nothing specific, an uneasiness and sense of loss, but not of anything in particular. Is Tim sincere? Who knows. He presents unsupported claims as facts (such as his blatant assertion, in spite of more qualified estimates, that there WERE 600,000 persons attending the Beck rally) and repeats them over and over, as if repeating them MAKES them facts. This may be a naive supposition, or a disingenuous attempt to mislead, but it sets the tone that already has made me suspect of Teabagger hype and posturing.

Is Tim not aware that HE is being duped? Glenn (with TWO "n"s; doesn't Tim know how to spell his Pied Piper's name?) Beck is a self-declared "rodeo clown," a former drunk and addict and attempted suicide, whose meteoric rise as a stooge for Rupert Murdoch's Fox Noise was already an old story when Andy Griffith played him as Larry 'Lonesome' Rhodes in 1957's *A Face in the Crowd*, and Peter Finch played him as Howard Beale in 1976's *Network*. The whole Tea Party "movement" has already been revealed as an astro-turf fraud financed in large part by the Koch (pronounced "coke") Brothers, Charles and David, as a way to keep their own taxes reduced, and gain even more obscene wealth and power. Political stooges, such as Dick Armey, and media stooges, such as Beck, merely are the more visible figureheads, but the billionaires behind the scenes are calling the shots for THEIR purposes, NOT for "the little guy's." But even that story was old when Edward Arnold played the Koch role as D.B. Norton in Frank Capra's *Meet John Doe* (1941), where he sets up the "John Doe Clubs" around unsuspecting Gary Cooper, as John Doe, to mobilize the "ordinary John Does of the US" into a political force that would sweep him into the White House, and make sure the other well-heeled power-brokers got their share of the pie.

Tim's non-specific description of the "quality and determination" of the attendees could have been applied to a rally at Nuremberg in 1934, or St. Petersburg in 1917, or Pyongyang under Kim Jong-il. Large crowds (and 87,000, as realistically estimated, is hardly world-shattering!) and emotionalism don't necessarily impress me; WHY are they gathering and what comes next... that is what I want to know. And why were these concerned and indignant people

"smiling" so much anyway? Brainwashed zombies in a hypnotic trance, perhaps? The video of this and other Teabagger rallies tells much... there was little diversity, so far as race, age, or class could be determined. Mostly white, older, middle class whiners who want the government to "keep their hands off my Social Security," and many, as noted by Tim and others (and apparent from many of the signs) who just seem to resent a "halfro-american Muslim from Kenya" in the White House. Folks, this is not the stuff of revolution, or even reform, but a nervous Sheepie, easily manipulated to the will and whim of certifiables like Beck or Palin, at the behest of the even-more corrupt power-hungry pols like Armey and Gingrich, working, ultimately, for the insatiable and plutocratic Murdochs and Kochs.

Were these people, "extremely unhappy with the performance of the Federal Government" (yet smiling, it seems), unhappy enough to have come out and protested when Bush/Cheney spat on the Constitution repeatedly, illegally began several wars of choice and subsequent occupations, violated the Geneva Conventions, turned surpluses into deficits as far as the eye could see, squandered the US Treasury to help their rich friends, destroyed the middle class and helped send hundreds of thousands of jobs overseas or made them disappear? Look, I'm no fan of Obama, and warned everyone in my last Journal column before the election in 2008 that he would be not much different from McCain, or Bush before him, and he has pretty much been a disappointment for those who really voted FOR change from that previous criminal cabal. But any objective observer with no emotional bias against or toward Obama would concede that he walked INTO a major swamp of doo-doo the day he took office, and even a magician couldn't turn around years of ruination and unraveling overnight. The shame is that Obama has taken ownership of some of the worst of Bush/Cheneyism, from expanding the overseas adventurism, to failing to really fix the CAUSES of the economic mess or punish the criminals responsible for it.

As for the religious overtones and undertones at the rally (and Beck doesn't have the moral or intellectual credentials to polish Martin Luther King's shoes, much less those of Madison, Jefferson, or Washington)... it's clear that IF you are AMONG the chosen "elect" that Beck is pandering to, well, YOU might just feel that this was "non-confrontational" and "pulling Americans together," but if you found yourself NOT in synch with such exclusionary terminology or beliefs, well, one might feel a bit second-class. But, then, "those people" likely weren't AT the rally, so Tim might not have noticed any non-smiling, not-being-restored persons in attendance. Just calling folks "patriots" because they attended, as if those who didn't were any less so, or that there were 600,000 because of suspect math, doesn't make it so, nor makes a convincing argument.

The times and conditions are ripe for "corn-pone Nazis," as James Howard Kunstler opines, to take advantage of the malaise and anger around us to stir up the masses into a scapegoating frenzy, leading to a familiar series of pogroms (Muslims instead of Jews or Japanese this time), repressions (body scanners, checkpoints), mobilizations against bogus external threats (Iran, anyone?), and even false-flag (that is, OUR own secret rogue elements of OUR government) "terrorism" to make us swallow any lies and exhortations needed to make us even more willing to give up OUR power and sovereignty to those who would make us THEIR stooges and slaves.

As Michael Douglas says as President Andrew Shepherd in Rob Reiner's 1995, *An American President*, "This is a time for serious people." Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin (and now, Sharron Angle and Christine O'Donnell) are not serious people; I await evidence that Tim Pain might be, for I have not seen it yet.