Battling for the Tea Party myth

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The Boston Tea Party Plan of the Bicentennial Commission was designed to address the "issue point of view, not a confrontation," as Bob Leonard, another organizer, put it. Their theme is "Imposing big business, too," and they feel that the bicentennial is an effective way of getting the American people to look at corporations, big business, and other ways in which the country has grown away from what the PBC sees as the true values of the Founding Fathers.

The Revolution, according to the Commission's view, represented a radical turn in thought; the colonists were not just throwing off the British monarchy, they were removing the rule of the rich. In the past and demonstrating the influence of big corporate interests (such as the East India Company, against which the original Tea Party was directed), the PBC is urging the breaking up of concentrated wealth.

Needless to say, the PBC sees many parallels between "then" and "now." "With the Commission, it's a question of whether the government is rooted into corporate interests," Howard told The Free Press. "The Tea Party here would be a great media event, and would really set the tone for the Bicentennial celebration. We wanted to have a hand in setting that tone."

Howard expects the "Second Boston Tea Party," as he refers to the PBC effort, to bring national publicity without alienating people. "We don't want to be branded "irresponsible" right off the bat," he said. "There are many different ways to involve people; as we move towards '76, we will get more and more into public demonstrations, and direct confrontations."

For now, the PBC is urging the punctual delivery of "tea" over a year ago: "We knew that events would be building up into a pressure-cooker atmosphere over the next four years, with '76 being the key year. Staging the Tea Party here would be a great media event, and would really set the tone for the Bicentennial celebration. We wanted to have a hand in setting that tone."

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The PBC did not surface just recently, according to Howard. "We began about two and a half years ago," he said. "Joining the planning of America's biggest event, the PBC was formed by people who were involved in the 1972 elections, the ERA campaign, sponsoring TV programs, and commercials, and producing products and giving them the right to associate themselves with the ARB and use its emblems. Additionally, it was, according to Howard, "a red,

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white and blue rip-off."

The White House "flat-tened" the original plans for the ARB, according to Howard. Congressional Hearings in the House Judiciary Committee Concerned the Commission for its schemes, and the Nixon Administration was badly embarrassed. But the expose had an almost immediate publicity without alienating people. "We don't want to be branded "irresponsible" right off the bat," he said. "There are many different ways to involve people; as we move towards '76, we will get more and more into public demonstrations, and direct confrontations."

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