Happy 4th 2011!! WaPo's EJ Dionne Challenges Tea Party Beliefs About The Declaration Of Independence.

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Happy 4th!! ***"Please click "Read More . . ."***

E.J. Dionne's column today, What our Declaration really said, addresses two major beliefs of Tea Party political fundamentalists. Below is an excerpt from a column that's well worth reading in full.

Whether they intend it or not, their name suggests they believe that the current elected government in Washington is as illegitimate as was a distant, unelected monarchy. It implies something fundamentally wrong with taxes themselves or, at the least, that current levels of taxation (the lowest in decades) are dangerously oppressive. And it hints that methods outside the normal political channels are justified in confronting such oppression.

We need to recognize the deep flaws in this vision of our present and our past. A reading of the Declaration of Independence makes clear that our forebears were not revolting against taxes as such — and most certainly not against government as such.

In the long list of "abuses and usurpations" the Declaration documents, taxes don't come up until the 17th item, and that item is neither a complaint about tax rates nor an objection to the idea of taxation. Our Founders remonstrated against the British crown "for imposing taxes on us without our consent." They were concerned about "consent," i.e. popular rule, not taxes.

The very first item on their list condemned the king because he "refused his assent to laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good." Note that the signers

wanted to pass laws, not repeal them, and they began by speaking of "the public good," not about individuals or "the private sector." They knew that it takes public action — including effective and responsive government — to secure "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Their second grievance reinforced the first, accusing the king of having "forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate and pressing importance." Again, our forebears wanted to enact laws; they were not anti-government zealots.

Abuses three through nine also referred in some way to how laws were passed or justice was administered. The document doesn't really get to anything that looks like Big Government oppression ("He has erected a multitude of new offices, and sent hither swarms of officers to harrass our people, and eat out their substance") until grievance No. 10.