

Shutting Down the Shutdown

A winning endgame appears for President Trump.

by Conrad Black



The logjam is finally starting to loosen in Washington. Readers may recall that last week I took it upon myself to urge the president to launch a four-pronged attack on the border-security/partial-government-shutdown impasse. I presumed to recommend that he offer the endlessly bandied-about “comprehensive immigration reform,” which has always meant doing nothing, but make it real this time, including DACA, deportation of serious offenders, and a path to naturalization for established residents with unblemished conduct. I urged that he declare a national emergency, start building border security, and declare in advance that judgments resulting from Democrats’ forum-shopping among flaky leftist district judges would be ignored until the issue got to the Supremes (presided over by a chief justice who claims

that all judges lose their political prejudices on arrival on the sacred bench). I suggested that he also present a measure offering 60 percent relief to unpaid federal workers, and that he send three brigades of Army troops to the border to back up ICE officials and ensure that the present border is finally leakproof, though with rules of engagement to avoid live fire against illegal migrants.

The fact that he has taken an important step toward the first of these has been enough to shake up the ghastly Democratic morality play, with its promise that if the president just brings everyone back to work in the federal government, they will sit down with him in a spirit of compromise but will not give more than one dollar for any sort of wall or barrier. This won't fly. The Democrats seem to have gained about three points in the polls so far, but that is a very modest return from the president's televised utterance that he would be "proud to own" the shutdown. It isn't enough to spook the president's followers in Congress. And now he can apply the pressure. Obviously, the Democratic proposal that if he surrenders and humbly reopens the unpaid sections of government, they will graciously meet with him and waste everyone's time again, as has happened with administrations and congresses of both parties for 30 years, is nonsense.

Let them stick to their guns, and then the president can raise the pressure with one or more of the other alternatives; but fairly soon, some sort of special relief to alleviate extreme financial shortages for unpaid federal employees should be provided. The Democrats could not vote against it, and once it was in place, the absurdity of the state of the government would fall entirely on them, shorn of their ability continue their tear-jerking sniveling about the Bob Cratchit desperation of the government workers. Discussions with the serious Democrats will start soon, and the president's task is to add the ingredients of amelioration of the lot of the unpaid federal employees and increased border security by

executive order until the Democratic morality play ends. It will end, either because the audience has effectively mounted the stage in hot pursuit of the actors in this inane farce, or because the discussions will enable the Democrats to take what is on offer and claim victory because they always wanted border security.

It is indicative of the supreme insolence of the Democrats – not just the leadership, but their whole congressional delegation – that they thought Speaker Pelosi, House Intelligence Committee chairman Adam Schiff, and the rest could disinvite the president from the State of the Union address in the Capitol and then embark on a week's official tourism and nuisance-affliction on the American forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. This was the same contagion of impertinence that caused all 238 Democratic members of the House of Representatives to ignore a presidential invitation to lunch at the White House. The idea that the House speaker imagined that this was the time for her to go on a congressional junket to the Middle East must fill a great many reasonably nonpartisan Americans with the disturbing notion that the unofficial leader of the Democratic party, and second in line after the vice president to be president, is completely foolish and totally unqualified for high national office.

It is puzzling to consider what the source is of the Democratic leadership's mad egotism. They were certain Hillary Clinton would be elected president. They appeared to believe that this president would be impeached and convicted and removed, largely on the basis of "evidence" furnished by a work of malicious fiction commissioned and paid for by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee. They imagine that they can perpetuate the regime of hundreds of thousands of illiterate peasants pouring illegally into the United States annually, along with a Mississippi River of lethal drugs and many violent gang member-outlaws; that the

great cities of the country will all order their police forces to ignore federal immigration laws; and that federal census-takers carrying out their constitutional duty to establish the number of Americans in each state to determine their congressional and Electoral College delegations can be prohibited from asking the nationality of American residents. A reasonable person, who recognizes the historical attainments of the Democratic party and has often been a Democratic supporter, must ask what unutterable lunacy of cynicism, appetite, rabid partisanship, sclerosis, and good old-fashioned donkey stupidity must be informing the antics of that party's leaders now.

It was 67 years ago that Dwight Eisenhower, moving for the first time into partisan affairs, said (privately) of the Democrats: "Extremes of the right and of the left with political chicanery and corruption shot through the whole business." In fact, he was speaking of a party that had delivered outstanding presidential leadership for five terms under Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, and distinguished congressional leadership, especially under Sam Rayburn, Alben Barkley, and Lyndon Johnson, who continued through Eisenhower's terms. General Eisenhower and his youthful successor (27 years younger), John F. Kennedy, provided the last decade of 30 years of high presidential leadership, surpassing anything the country had or has known. His strictures were harsh, though not unfounded: The Southern Democrats so influential in the Congress were in some respects corrupt and racist reactionaries, and many of the Democratic liberals were flaky leftists who did not have both oars in the water. But what could any accomplished person, no matter how appalled by crass wealth and bombast, and the whole Trump schtick, say of the Democrats now?

President Trump is the repository of several unfortunate traits. But he is the president, and a very successful one. Most of his Democratic opponents are harpies, hacks, and

borderline subversives. He must win this battle to reestablish a border for the United States, as he has moved to reduce American dependence on foreign oil, eliminate the exploitation of the United States by foreign exporters, reassert nuclear nonproliferation, recalibrate the alliance system, and withdraw from self-punitive climate agreements and overexposed foreign commitments. The American people, not typecasting studios, choose the president of the United States. This president must win this battle with congressional Democrats over the border security of the United States. The implications of a Pelosi-Schumer victory do not bear thinking about.

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