

Trump Outfoxes the Democrats

Schumer and Pelosi won in the short term, but now they will need to budge genuinely and significantly on immigration.

by Conrad Black



There is room for rejoicing all round in the end of the shutdown. The window-rattling ululations of joy of the Democrats at their unimaginable humiliation of the president has been refreshingly excessive and sets them up well for the next round. But the president has just removed from the deck and shredded the best Democratic card, crinkled and greasy at the edges though it had become: the endless claim that he was a madman who would never retreat or compromise, a psychotic bull in the China shop of the world's nations, rampaging through American government, heedless of any sense of compromise or nuance.

They should have noted the finesse with which he played his role in the Kavanaugh affair – praising Christine Blasey Ford, and saying the right things about all the most sensitive gender issues. The Democrats were too overwrought by the

Kavanaugh nomination, even ditching the Clintons, and too overborne by their militant-feminist presidential aspirants saying that Ford should be believed automatically because she was a woman, to notice, but Trump worked deftly with Senator Grassley of the judiciary committee and majority leader McConnell, and they all walked on eggshells to keep Senator Flake in particular, a Never Trumper retiring from the Senate with nothing to lose, from breaking rank. As it was, he succumbed to militant feminists screaming at him in a Senate elevator and telling him to "look at me when I'm speaking to you," and he asked for a reopened FBI hearing. The slightest miscue from the president would have blown up the nomination.

On this occasion, Senator Schumer has been a trumpeter swan: "The president has learned his lesson," an orgy of crowing and gloating. But the Democrats made themselves hoarse throughout the shutdown promising that if government fully reopened, all things were possible on "border security," though Speaker Pelosi continued her robotic mantra on the evils of a wall. In this new phase, the shoe will be on the other foot. Border security won't really be enhanced by drones and cameras, if there are not obstacles or appropriately trained, equipped, and instructed personnel to detain illegal entrants and an adequate judicial and detention apparatus to end the longstanding and often tragic farce of simply releasing these people into the country to make their way, and clog the welfare and education facilities of America. The Democrats will have to deliver something believable on border security, and if they repair to the leftist house of debating cards, that there is no problem and therefore nothing need be done except a few humanitarian measures, they will be hammered. Pelosi and Schumer are tired components of the creaking and grunting pantomime horse of liberal Democratic medievalism, but they can't take that argument to the country.

The longstanding state of the southern border has been a scandal and an outrage. Historians of the future will wonder

what confederation of cynicism between Democratic politicians and Republican employers was allowed to subvert the interest of the entire American working and middle classes and to promote the passivity of the American state for decades as a total of apparently more than 20 million people poured into the country illegally. The presence of all this cheap labor did not assist American manufacturing to prosper, and it did drive organized labor heavily into the public sector, where there is no end of needless cost, inefficiency, and feather-bedding they can produce.

My friend Ann Coulter, a delightful person who even in private mobilizes her long limbs and locks and Eleanor Roosevelt voice for some fairly exotic notions, has got on the wrong bus on this latest development. Tweeting that the incumbent, whom Ann has very demonstratively supported, has displaced George Bush senior as the foremost wimp in the history of the American presidency is just nonsense, and it's also excessive toward Bush 41. He had his limitations and his obsequies were another occasion, fast on the heels of the week-long, transnational McCain rites, for the Democrats and their talking puppets in the media to proclaim their admiration for Republican presidential candidates they could defeat. It reminded those of us with memories how inexcusable it was to allow a charlatan like Ross Perot to steal 20 million mainly Republican votes in 1992 and inflict the Clintons on America. But Ann should not write such bile, which wrongs both President Bush and President Trump. Funding for a quarter of the government was all that the president could hang on to, and he couldn't hang on to it once airports became impassable, national parks and monuments couldn't be visited by people who had made holiday plans – the laid-off government employees weren't involved in the border-security debate and the country would naturally sympathize with the pawns and be angry about their own inconvenience.

The president seized what he could, held it as long as he

could without being tanked, and though reviled even more strenuously than usual by the neutral media, lost only a few points in the polls and elicited fairyland Democratic promises to take border security seriously if only the starving workers were brought back and their advancing suffering alleviated. February 15 already hovers over the contestants, and this time it will be easier to start building the border security that the experts recommend, and it will be hard to lay it all at the door of Trump's arbitrariness and grumpiness. The president will have an ironclad case to begin putting up the necessary barriers, leaving Ann Coulter (whose supposed veto over the president's conduct, which she never claimed, has been exposed as another Democratic talking point) speaking to herself with her customary panache.

The system has a chance to work, at last. The holy grail of "comprehensive immigration reform," a fatuous cliché to disguise partisan entrenchment and inflexibility for decades, may finally have a possibility of enactment. If not, Trump orders the construction of border security, and the Democrats and their minions on the federal bench will have the chance to bloviate and posture more stertorously than usual, but it won't fly, and it will have to go to the Supreme Court. We've been through all this before, and 60 percent of Americans recognize that illegal immigration is a crisis. With no offsetting problem such as the laid-off federal employees and declining essential services, the Democrats will have to compromise. A compromise is all that is needed for the country to win, Trump to fulfill his promise, and Ann Coulter to return to the fold. And the charge that Donald Trump is mad will be feebler than ever.

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