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Evan Barrett

Montana Tech of the University of Montana

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Erratic Trump Needs Some Naysayers, Not More “Yes” People

A Newspaper Column by Evan Barrett

April 7, 2019

As much a problem as he is, and as much as I oppose him, I am not politically fixated on Donald Trump. I seldom write about him. But I am becoming increasingly worried about the impact of his totally erratic operating style.

Just after President Trump’s Inauguration, I wrote a [column](#) in which I lamented that the President had surrounded himself with enablers, not counselors. In the first days of his presidency it looked like the worst instincts of President Trump were erupting to the surface and there appeared to be no one around him who could stop the Mount Trump eruptions.

I noted that while good elected officials welcome internal discussion and debate and seek the best advice from a broad range of responsible parties while leading up to and making decisions, President Trump did not appear open to having such people around him. It seemed like we were entering a “reality show” Presidency where reality show surprises would have real world consequences.

I am sorry to say my thoughts of January 31, 2017 have proven to be prescient. Because of our President’s *modus operandi*, America seems to be careening from pillar to post as the President operates on a whim and no one around him seems able or willing to slow him down and make him think before he acts.

A recent example: on Friday, March 29, Trump announced he would “[close the \[southern\] border](#)” with Mexico the first week in April, based upon immigration concerns. Only four days later he said he hadn’t made his a decision yet, that he’d “[see what happens over the next few days](#),” followed on Thursday by a statement that “[I don’t think we’ll ever have to close the border](#),” and that we’d likely use tariffs to battle immigration and drugs. And then on Friday he said “[We’re gonna give them \[Mexico\] a one-year warning, and if the drugs don’t stop, or largely stop, we’re going to put tariffs on Mexico and products, in particular cars](#).” I challenge you to make policy sense of all that.

Now the point here isn’t that particular issue. There are dozens of similar examples – over and over again. The issue is the erratic reality show operation of our government and articulation of our policies and strategies. Trump acts before he thinks, leaps before he looks, and has no sense of, nor does he seem to care, how his erratic approach affects our citizens, our businesses, our allies, or our global reputation as a sound and sensible world-leading country. Americans are almost suffering vertigo from Trump’s erratic, rapid-paced, and ill-thought-out pronouncements and shifts of position.

This behavioral pattern has not gotten better in the past two years, it has gotten worse. This has been made more possible by the manner in which Trump has removed from

his sphere any who might have had the strength of character and sense of duty and responsibility to try to slow him down – to say “no” once in a while. He has shed himself of those who would to try to make him think and consider the implications of his decisions, words and actions before he pronounces policy in a 4:00 A.M. 140-character Twitter blast.

And Trump has demanded total loyalty from all around him. Those who tried to stand their ground in an attempt to make him a better President by more carefully considering his policy decisions and his words have been drummed out of the corps. He has an administration that is full of “yes” men, and the Republican Party in Congress has, with few exceptions, assumed the same supine role.

Unless Trump changes his ways (what are the chances of that?), I fear for our country. At the Presidential level, “reality show” approaches can very quickly collide with actual reality, resulting in serious consequences for the nation and the world. If we aren’t on Mr. Toad’s Wild Ride, it seems like it and, unfortunately, the consequences can be dire.

Pray that somehow no disasters befall our nation or the world as a result of Trump’s whiplash, erratic approach to governing. The only answer may be the ballot box.

Evan Barrett, who lives in historic Uptown Butte, just retired after 47 years at the top level of Montana economic development, government, politics and education. He is an award-winning producer of Montana history films who continues to write columns and commentaries and occasionally teaches Montana history.

(690 words in the body)