

# Bill Kaplan: Trump and Walker are grifters

Posted on Monday, Jul 2, 2018

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“Among the many ways in which Trump stands out in the lineup of modern American presidents is his aversion to using his bully pulpit to unify (our) diverse nation.... Rather, he stokes cultural divisions and cultivates tribalism under his slogan, ‘Make America Great Again’ ”(Washington Post). He tweets venom against immigrants, legal or not. Racism becomes a lightning rod for cultural and economic anxieties and fears. Trump even uses children as a political bargaining chip, separating families at the border. Why?

Trump never expanded his base. To counter Democratic enthusiasm and turnout, Trump bets that his manipulation of immigration issues revs up his supporters. And, Wisconsin GOP Governor Scott Walker, supposedly “unintimidated”, is unwilling to stand up to Trump. Walker’s ever evolving stances on immigration, hitched to his presidential fantasies, left him “mum” (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel). However, many Wisconsinites and other Americans found their voices over the weekend in protests against detaining children.

No, Trump and Walker are not making our nation great again. The U.S. was already great before them. However, Trump has declared a trade war (tariffs) against Canada and Mexico, Wisconsin’s top markets for state exports. And, as if that was not enough, Trump has done the same to the European Union and China. Trump said: “trade wars are good and easy to win”. But there’s no real strategy, just chaos and confusion. Moreover, our trading partners are retaliating and raising tariffs which will hurt Wisconsin: cheese, cranberries, ginseng, Harley-Davidson, lawn mowers, toilet paper and more. Walker raised a muffled protest, while Wisconsin businesses and manufacturers howled.

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Harley-Davidson said it would shift production of some motorcycles sold to Europe, to outside of the U.S., avoiding European retaliatory tariffs. Trump threatened Harley-Davidson, while Walker hoped that the Foxconn groundbreaking would change the narrative. However, reality intruded. Although Trump called the Foxconn factory the “eighth wonder of the world”, while Walker talked about “Wisconsin Valley”, there was big trouble. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel headline said: “Foxconn scales back plans for its first factory in Mount Pleasant”. What other shoes will drop? Trump and Walker are grifters.

“Trump’s angry insistence that Harley’s products should be made in the United States is at odds with his own record as a businessman. His branded products – clothing, vodka, home goods and hotel amenities – were manufactured in at least 12 countries outside the United States, including China, Mexico and Indonesia ...” (Washington Post). Worse, Walker’s spending binge on Foxconn will blow a hole in Wisconsin’s future. Over \$4 billion of state aid (much of it in direct cash payments) and other state-local spending will haunt Wisconsin. How will education and roads be funded after the Foxconn giveaways?

Former Delaware Democratic Governor Jack Markell has proposed one way to stop states from racing to the bottom: “Congress should institute a federal tax of 100 percent on every dollar a business receives in state or local incentives that are directed specifically to that company.” All Wisconsin members of Congress should support this fiscally prudent and fair proposal.

— Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C. for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 – 2009.