

Bill Kaplan: Trump flails, McConnell blockades

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In 2018, Trump praised Chinese President Xi: "He's now president for life. ... he's great. ... Maybe we'll have to give that a shot someday." Jaw-dropping! And, acting like a tin-pot dictator, the mercurial Trump is taking the U.S. economy down. Trump said: "Trade wars are good, and easy to win." The unhinged Trump has escalated his trade war with China. Predictably, the Dow Jones plunged 623 points. More than a whiff of recession in the air.

"Domestically, the manufacturing sector contracted for the first time in a decade. Sales of U.S. exports have decreased at the fastest pace since August 2009" (Washington Post). And the Wall Street Journal headlined: "China Deals 'Body Blow' to Struggling U.S. Farm Belt" (more than 1,600 Wisconsin dairy farms gone under Trump). Our enfant terrible (Trump) looking for a scapegoat said: "My only question is, who is our bigger enemy (Federal Reserve Chair) Jay Powell or (Chinese President) Xi?" The U.S. is becoming a banana republic.

An out-of-control Trump "ordered" all U.S. companies to leave China. Then this weekend Trump said he had "second thoughts" about escalating the trade war. He backed away from his bombast and claimed he was making progress with China. Later Trump backpedaled and said he was "misinterpreted" and "regrets not raising the tariffs higher" (Washington Post). Not a "stable genius". Alarming.

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Meanwhile, the GOP-led Senate refused to act as a check and balance on a dangerous White House. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and GOP senators

are running from microphones. McConnell craves power and will do anything to remain Majority Leader. Having held up Obama Supreme Court nominee Judge Merrick Garland until after the 2016 presidential election, McConnell no longer claims that he was “letting the people’s voice be heard”. If a U.S. Supreme Court justice were to die in 2020, McConnell said: “Uh, we’d fill it.” No shame.

Worse, McConnell has enforced a blockade on bread-and-butter and other legislation passed by the Democratic-led House. Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin said: “Generally, Senator McConnell has not shown himself likely to schedule legislation for consideration on the floor unless he personally supports it and unless he get signals from (Trump) that the (White House) supports it. Sadly, that makes the prospects low that we’ll get a chance to have a vote.” Examples abound.

House Democrats strengthened the Affordable Care Act (ACA): blocked the sale of useless bare bones “junk” health insurance, restored funding for ACA advertising and outreach and lowered drug prices. And, the House passed an historic \$15 minimum wage, helping 27.3 million Americans, including 829,000 Wisconsinites. Finally, Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi led in passing a bipartisan pension protection bill (Butch Lewis Act), helping over 1 million Americans, including 25,000 Wisconsinites. McConnell is not allowing the Senate to vote on these bills. Time to end the GOP blockade.

The late Arizona GOP Senator John McCain implored the Senate: “Stop listening to the bombastic loudmouths... . They don’t want anything done for the public good.” Unlike Trump or McConnell, always a hero.

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