

A President Who Views His Party as His Employees



Tuesday on *Fox News*, commentator Neil Cavuto delivered a stiff monologue on the current state of the Trump administration, including what he believes will be the fate of our president's tax-reform initiative:

"Let me tax-cut to the chase. You can chase those tax-cuts goodbye. I know, Wall Street doesn't see it. Most Republicans on Capitol Hill deny it, and the president himself – well, he's still banking on it. But what if I told you it's the president himself who risks torpedoing it?"

Cavuto said that while some of Trump's ideas are sound, the president's continual erratic behavior – specifically his personal attacks on those whose support he needs to effectively govern – will keep him from having a successful presidency.

"You're running out of friends faster than you're running out of time," Cavuto warned the president, referring to Trump's

recent war of words with Republican senator, Bob Corker.

It was a good point. Trump can't afford to lose *any* Republican votes in congress if he hopes to get his tax-reform plans passed (including Corker's vote). But despite Chief of Staff John Kelly's best efforts to keep Trump focused on his job and agenda, the president has again become fixated on what he views as *insubordination* within his political party. Rejecting the high road in response to criticism from Corker, Trump has fallen back on his *counter-punch* instincts by taking to Twitter and skewering the senator for his perceived disloyalty.

Cavuto sees this repeating cycle as reliably self-defeating:

"Even assuming that some [Republican leaders] have gotten used to this, how long do you think they'll put up with this? Loyalty works both ways, Mr. President."

Cavuto is right, of course. Building a successful coalition (or even a successful operation) often requires more than just common interests. It also calls for mutual respect.

This was always going to be an area of difficulty for Trump. We saw during the campaign that he wasn't inclined to show a whole lot of respect to anyone – especially those within his party. When faced with scrutiny, he'd reflexively attack the person putting forth that scrutiny (often on a deeply personal level).

As president, Trump was supposed to change. At least that's what he and his media-supporters repeatedly insisted would happen. But nine months in, we still haven't seen that change (and likely never will). Instead, we've witnessed a president who expects unconditional loyalty and obedience from Republican leaders. And those who don't readily give it to him are perceived as foes who must be discredited and humiliated.

Sure, Corker (who used to be seen by some as a Trump enabler)

may have started this particular dust-up, but Trump is our president. There's dignity that comes with the office, and he doesn't have to escalate every negative remark directed his way. Rolling with punches can be a virtue, especially when it's in one's best interest to do so. But with Trump, personal ego trumps everything. And his misconception of the job of the presidency isn't helping matters.

Part of the problem is that Trump doesn't seem to fully grasp our country's constitutional separation of powers. The other part has to do with his instincts as a businessman. While he correctly views the Democrats as an opposition party, he treats fellow Republicans as if they are his employees. And in a company, when an employee has the gall to slight or defy the boss, her or she is subject to immediate reprimand.

It's not just the Republicans in congress who face this perception. It also happens to members of Trump's own administration, whom Cavuto later touched on:

"Military leaders whose wisdom you question as they serve their commander in chief without reservation. Cabinet members who sing your praises on cue as you bash them with abandon. How can you engender loyalty when each and all become social media pinatas? Frankly, I wonder what keeps them standing. "

While folks like Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson serve at the pleasure of the president, they're not really Trump's employees. They're congressionally-confirmed public servants who ultimately work for the American people. And though Trump can indeed dismiss these individuals, his public degradation of them in response to disagreements or insufficient lauding only ensures that – despite their love of country and dedication to serving it – a bond of loyalty and mutual respect will never truly be achieved.

This is not a good thing for the nation, and it certainly

isn't a good thing for the president's agenda. If Trump is insistent in equating his leadership role to that of an employer, he would be smart to foster a work environment in which those who answer to him, or work with him, would feel as though he values their contributions...and might even have their back.

Will that ever happen? It's highly doubtful.