

If Right Doesn't Matter?
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In an impassioned conclusion to the Senate Impeachment Trial, Representative Adam Schiff, the lead prosecutor against President Trump, got the Senate's attention. "If right doesn't matter, we're lost." You know you can't trust the president will do what's right for this country," he said, "You can trust he will do what's right for Donald Trump. He'll do it now. He's done it before. He'll do it for the next several months., he'll do it in the election if he's allowed to. This is why if you find him guilty you must find that he should be removed. Because right matters."

In his appeal to our better angels, he made Senate Republicans wince. They knew he was right, but were fearful of the rage of our vindictive president and his ignorant base. Making them even more uncomfortable were the televised clips of some of these Republicans' public statements during the Clinton impeachment trial: ("Of course a trial needs witnesses and documents") and the hypocrisy of several of them when Trump was running against them as a candidate: "He is a con man." "Not a word comes out of his mouth that isn't a lie." They are now fawning and embarrassing toadies.

Can anyone blot out the image of the new President Trump at a table surrounded by his cabinet in which each was compelled to praise him as the best and most remarkable president they ever had the honor of serving? Can we forget the embarrassment of such distinguished men as Tillerson and Generals Mannis and Kelly, as they tried to wriggle around this obsequiousness?

Adam Schiff, in a cry from the heart reminiscent of fictional idealists Atticus Finch and Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, laid out a clear case of Trump's corruption. Corruption (using one's power for self-benefit) is the most important reason for impeachments established by the founding fathers. Corruption law is our heritage from British common law, rare in the world where leaders are not called to account when they use power to benefit and enrich themselves and their families. A corrupt judge who takes money from a guilty person to find him not guilty, a corrupt Congressman who hides his stash of graft money in his freezer, a corrupt magistrate who demands sex from a woman defendant, are regularly candidates for impeachment and removal, and for most, prison.

An Illinois governor was caught trying to extort money from candidates wanting to fill then Senator Obama's vacated seat. That governor is in prison, but sympathetic President Trump is considering pardoning him! Trump earlier shocked his cabinet by wanting the anti-corruption laws in dealing with foreign countries revoked. "What's wrong with bribing them if that is how business is done there?" he asked. Mr. Trump was truly perplexed.

The Founders wanted to protect us from a president, a person with enormous power, who might go rogue. A corrupt president could use his power to cheat in an election, for example. He could use his power to persecute rivals. Our democracy protects us from such an eventuality by empowering Congress (the People's body) to impeach (or indict) such a president, and the Senate (the more deliberative body) would hold a "trial." The senators would be jurors, the House of Commons Managers would be prosecutors, and the Supreme Court Chief Justice would preside as judge. Checks and balances.

Trials in western democracies are hedged with rules that strive to attain justice and fairness. Adam Schiff reminds us that not all trials around the world are like that. In authoritarian countries, such as Russia, judges phone the boss (the leader or dictator) to ask what the verdict should be. "How do you want me to decide, boss?" Our system is not that, Schiff told us. Our jurors take an oath to be just and unbiased, not receiving their marching orders from a Presidential phone call or tweet, don't they? Mitch McConnell made that phone call to the boss, violating his oath of impartiality.

However, this perversion of justice and acceptance of corruption is starting to crumble. Former cabinet members are speaking up, and justice might yet prevail.

685 words

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