

# Trump Rallies the Faithful



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He did it again. Just when millions of Americans hoped we were seeing a more presidential Trump after his late February address to Congress, “The Donald” reverted to form last Saturday night in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. His performance was more Elmer Gantry than Abe Lincoln.

Ostensibly, he was reporting on his first 100 days in office. But, the talk was billed as a rally and that’s exactly what it was. It had all the trimmings of a campaign stop or a political convention minus the balloons. Trump came onto the stage beaming and waving, accompanied by a loud (and repetitious) music track and lusty cheers from the faithful. He milked the applause for several minutes. The staging of the entire event would have made the Oscar producers proud.

The twenty or so audience members constantly seen behind him were right out of central casting: several women and little girls holding up Trump posters and switching posters as if on cue. For example, the Drain the Swamp posters suddenly appeared behind the president as he got to the “Drain the Swamp” line in his speech. One very small girl had to endure an hour of oratory sitting on her mother’s lap. There was one little boy and two people of color (one man and one woman, of course) seen in the behind-the-president stage audience along with more than a few people in working class attire.

Trump clearly basked in the adulation of his audience, not only smiling and waving but also leading chants of "USA, USA." But, apparently not everyone there was to his liking. There were echoes of his rowdy campaign rallies when he pointed to a section of the arena and ordered, "get 'em out of here." Apparently, police or security officials did eject the people Trump found objectionable because he then launched into praise for people who enforce the law.

For anyone concerned about President Trump's behaving like a demagogue, this was a troubling event.

He boasted of many accomplishments in his first 100 days, saying he had put coal miners back to work, protected America's steel and aluminum workers, and eliminated job-killing regulations. There was no back-up for any of these claims and no mention of the failures such as the promised Obamacare repeal and tax reform. He must be wondering why, in light of all he feels he's accomplished, his approval rating hovers around 40%.

Oops, I forgot. It's the Washington media, "incompetent, dishonest people" in his words, who don't convey to the world the glory of his achievements. And, it's the obstructive and leaderless Democrats, especially Chuck Schumer who is "a bad leader who is weak on crime and wants to raise your taxes."

Trump used the word "love" a lot, telling the audience he loves them, Pennsylvania, law enforcement officers, miners, and the United States. But, the speech actually conveyed very little love and a lot of frustration, ego-stroking, and assaults on perceived enemies.

If you're inclined to be scared, there were a lot of scare tactics to feast on in this talk: gangs running rampant, murderous immigrants, growing drug cartels, and job-stealing countries.

This talk was a lost opportunity. Instead of uniting the

country and making an eloquent plea for people to encourage their members of Congress to support his programs, it was all resentment and bravado. The faithful loved it. But, it did nothing to help him get his programs through Congress. And, unless he can rack up major legislative achievements, he is likely to go down as a failed one-term president.

***About the Author:** Often referred to as “The Dean of Media Trainers,” Virgil is considered one of the world’s foremost communication experts. In a 30-year career that has covered 26 countries on five continents, he has provided coaching and counsel to heads of some of the world’s largest corporations and government leaders. Virgil is a prolific writer and speaker. His book, *World Class Communication: how great CEOs win with the public, shareholders, employees, and the media*, written with his son Ken, was named one of the 25 best business books of 2012. His column, *In the C-Suite*, appears in every quarterly issue of the *Public Relations Strategist* and is read by leaders of major public relations agencies and global heads of public relations of large companies. He has written or been featured in articles that have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *Reuters*, *Investors Business Daily*, and numerous professional publications. Two of his speeches have been reprinted in the prestigious *Vital Speeches of the Day*. Prior to founding *Virgil Scudder & Associates* in 1990, Virgil headed the media training units of two of the world’s largest public relations firms, *Hill & Knowlton* and *Carl Byoir & Associates*. Earlier, he was an award-winning news broadcaster at major radio and television networks and stations in New York City. He was a first-night Broadway drama critic for six years during that period, broadcasting reviews on NBC’s all-news radio network and all-news WINS radio.*