



## **When it comes to trade with China, President Trump has some strange bedfellows**

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Perhaps you're wondering why you haven't seen Richard Gere in many movies lately.

The answer has much to do with the current fight the Trump administration is having with the government of China over trade barriers.

It seems that the Chinese government does not like what Gere has been saying about Tibet, that mountainous nation that was taken over by an oppressive Chinese government that controls every aspect of life there.

In retaliation, the Chinese government has banned Gere and his movies from entering China. That in turn means Hollywood executives won't cast Gere in any major movies for fear of upsetting the Chinese.

Gere has also been banned from being a presenter at the Oscar ceremonies because of remarks he made about Tibet during one show. That caused Gere's fellow actor, New Jersey's own Susan Sarandon, to utter this comment on Hollywood's hypocrisy:

"It doesn't matter if you're outspoken about Trump, because Hollywood hates Trump," she said. "But it was brave of Richard to say what he said."

Something's a bit amiss when an American actor is expected to kowtow to the Communist government of a faraway land. And that something is at the heart of President Trump's current dispute with China over trade rules.

The world will survive without Richard Gere movies. But that attitude carries over into the trade policies of the Chinese government that are now in dispute.

As it happens, Trump's first major supporter among New Jersey Republicans is an expert in such matters. State Sen. Mike Doherty of Warren County is a patent attorney in real life. He has many clients who deal with Chinese policies that hamper U.S. companies.

One example was the logo that one of his clients created, Doherty said. When company officials tried to register that logo in China, they found that a Chinese corporation had already registered it as theirs.

"The Chinese authorities let them rip it off," he said. "Then the party that stole it from us said, 'Pay us \$300,000 and we'll let you use it.'"

In another instance, a New Jersey firm had come up with a design for a home electronics device. They contracted with a Chinese firm to manufacture it. The contract had a proviso banning the manufacturer from selling copies.

“It turned out that the company that is only supposed to make it for my client is making it for others and then selling it out the back door,” he said.

In both cases the American government turned a blind eye to the Chinese violations of trade agreements, he said.

And when it comes to trade barriers, China has tariffs more than double those imposed by the U.S., according to the World Trade Organization. So why shouldn't Trump raise our tariffs?

Interestingly enough, this is a rare debate where the usual Republican-Democrat and liberal-conservative divisions don't apply.

CNBC recently did a survey of Democratic presidential contenders on the question of our relations with China. Most of the contenders who replied said they support some sort of protectionism for American firms and workers. And some sounded like they wanted to outdo The Donald. (Check this interview with mystic author Marianne Williamson who's running for the nomination. She terms Trump “absolutely right” in his hardball stance against China.)

U.S. Rep. John Delaney of Maryland commented that “China has acted like pirates, stealing intellectual property, building illegal islands, and not playing by the rules.”

Meanwhile the conservative National Review has been a leading advocate for ending the trade war with China. A recent piece by Michael Tanner of the free-market Cato Institute highlighted the effect higher tariffs would have on poor and middle class people who buy lots of Chinese-made gadgets.

“Consider that among the companies that have announced they will be most impacted by the China tariffs are Walmart, Target, and Costco, none of which are known as the store of choice for global elites,” Tanner wrote. “Studies show that the lower your income is, the harder you'll be hit by tariffs.”

Well, you can't have it both ways. Tax revenue has to come from somewhere. And if you oppose raising taxes on the wealthy – as both I and the National Review crowd do - then it has to come from those lower on the scale.

And I suspect that higher tariffs would not do all that much damage to those who shop at those stores.

At the moment, Walmart will sell you a 65-inch widescreen TV for \$600. If Trump slaps a permanent 25 percent tariff on Chinese goods, you can always make do with a 49-incher, which would sell for a mere \$450 even after the tariff.

Either way, you can watch all the Richard Gere DVDs you want. The Chinese government hasn't figured out a way to ban their sale on this side of the Pacific.

Yet.