

Trump Brands Media ‘Destroyers’

Pai responds to tweet storm, but Dems mostly unassuaged

BY JOHN EGGERTON

PRESIDENT Donald Trump arguably took his hardest shot at the mainstream media last week, even as FCC chairman Ajit Pai finally broke his silence on the President’s attack on broadcast licensees.

A week after tweeting that news outlet licenses should be challenged and if necessary revoked, the President, under the guise of a campaign funding e-mail, but one whose invective came between the salutation “friend” and the name “Donald J. Trump,” leveled both barrels at the “enemies of the people.”

The Trump-Pence campaign committee, in concert with the Republican National Committee, issued the latest in its series of media “accountability” surveys.

This one left no doubt that the President has a disdain for news outlets not seen since Richard Nixon — a comparison being invoked by Democrats last week — though Nixon’s threats were generally reserved for private conversations not meant for public consumption.

“The Mainstream Media is out



President Donald Trump said he thinks the mainstream media is out to bring down his administration.

to bring down my administration,” he wrote. “It’s a 24/7 barrage of hit jobs, fake stories, and absolute hatred for everything we stand for as a movement.”

Calling mainstream media — he was particularly miffed at NBC News — the “fake News machine,” he said they don’t care about the truth, or “what’s right,” but only about propping up the liberal Democrats he said they “worship.” Oh, and “destroying anyone who wants to put America first.”

Adding to the news media angst was Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ refusal to commit to not

throwing journalists in jail for doing their jobs — Trump has made it clear he wants to ferret out leakers, who appear to abound in his administration.

Sessions was asked for that assurance at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), who cited the President’s tweets about revoking broadcast licenses.

Sessions said the President “did not know that he could make a blanket commitment to that effect,” and didn’t make such a commitment. He did say that the Justice Department had not taken any “aggressive action against the media at this point,” but added that there were matters “that involve the most serious national security issues that put our country at risk [the President has made no secret he wants to go after leakers] and we will utilize the authorities that we have legally and constitutionally if we have to.”

Klobuchar said at the hearing that Pai had provided a “posi-

tive” answer about whether the FCC would revoke broadcast licenses over news content, as the President had suggested. Pai said last week, when pressed during a seminar appearance, that the FCC did not have that authority.

Klobuchar’s statement notwithstanding, Hill Democrats who had called for chairman Pai to break the silence seemed to want a stronger repudiation of the President’s tweets.

Rep. Frank Pallone (D-N.J.), ranking member of the House Energy & Commerce Committee, suggested focusing simply on whether or not the FCC can yank a license misses the point.

“At any given time broadcasters have any number of matters in front of the FCC. I am concerned that the agency could potentially use these matters against the companies, and take action outside the view of the public,” he said in Perspectives in this week’s *B&C* (page 33).

Pallone and others on the committee will get a chance to press their point at an FCC oversight hearing Oct. 25 at which Pai and the other commissioners are scheduled to testify. ■

CHARTER, VIACOM SETTLE SQUABBLE

CHARTER COMMUNICATIONS and Viacom managed to hammer out a carriage deal last week that, despite the hype leading to the agreement, appears to have satisfied both parties’ biggest concerns.

Viacom and Charter said Oct. 18 that they had an “agreement in principle,” which averted a possible blackout of the channel to Charter’s 16.6 million customers across the country.

At press time the deal had not yet been finalized, but sources familiar with the agreement confirmed reports that Charter will carry eight Viacom networks on its most popular tier — five of the programmer’s core channels — and likely at a lower rate. Charter will carry Viacom’s 15 other channels in more expensive packages.

For Viacom, it was able to maintain customer levels for five of its six core

outlets — MTV, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central, BET and The Paramount Network (Nick Jr., will be on a pricier tier) — as well as for VH1, TV Land and CMT.

In addition, the deal will not preclude Viacom from being part of a separate over-the-top offering later. Charter reportedly tried to prevent Viacom from offering its own OTT package (possible with Discovery and A+E Networks), a product of which Viacom CEO Bob Bakish has been a big backer. But as negotiations continued, Charter reportedly softened that position. — Mike Farrell

Ron Sachs/SIPA/Newscom

FATES AND FORTUNES
EXEC MOVES OF THE WEEK

■ **(1) TIM MESSNER** will replace R. Stanton Dodge as Dish Network general counsel. Messner, who had been senior VP, will start in his new position Oct. 23. Dodge is exiting the company to be chief legal officer for DraftKings. ■ **(2) JED KAPSOS** has been tapped as chief financial officer at Pop. Kapsos was previously senior VP of finance for CBS Television Network in New York. Pop is a joint venture of CBS and Lionsgate. ■ **THOMAS JOHNSON JR.** has been appointed general counsel of the FCC. Johnson, who was most recently deputy solicitor general for West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, will join the FCC this week. ■ **ROY PRICE** has stepped down as head of Amazon Studios following charges of sexual harassment. Price joined Amazon in 2004.




STAT OF THE WEEK
8,800
Registered attendees for CTE•ISBE's Cable-Tec Expo in Denver last week.

THEY SAID IT

"I need to see people like me in the hallways."

— Lisa Torres, president of multicultural for Publicis Media, addressing the need for the industry's workforce to better reflect the multicultural population it's serving. Her comments came during her opening keynote at the Hispanic TV Summit Oct. 19.



THE WATCHMAN

Deputy editor Michael Malone's weekly look at the programming scene

Amy Sedaris Goes 'Home', Tom Petty and the Heartbreak

At Home with Amy Sedaris starts on truTV October 24, with Sedaris showing off her cooking, crafting and humor skills. Sedaris said the show is an homage to — or perhaps a satire of — the local hospitality shows she watched growing up in North Carolina.

"I am a cook and I am a crafter," she said. "I wanted to play that part."

Sedaris mentions several of the homespun shows, including *At Home With Peggy Mann*, which you can find on YouTube. They were not slick productions. She recalled often seeing a wire strung from the hostess to the cameraman, and hostesses she described as looking like a cross between "Zira from *Planet of the Apes* and Michael Dukakis."

Sedaris also mentioned the shocking level of boredom that

would bubble up in her from watching the shows as a girl. "I'm always amazed by boring stuff," she admitted.

Never boring, the *At Home* hostess shows viewers everything from gutting a fish to giving yourself a massage to making raisin necklaces. Guests include Jane Krakowski, Paul Giamatti, Rachel Dratch and Stephen Colbert, the latter playing "turtle-sitter" for Sedaris' pets, Poppy and Curly.

At Home With Amy Sedaris is also an extension of Sedaris'



truTV's *At Home with Amy Sedaris*

love of playing house with her brother, humorist and author David Sedaris, when they were kids. They'd play alcoholics, her venting about the problems she was having with her layabout husband.

Also informing the series are Sedaris' books, *I Like You: Hospitality Under the Influence* and *Simple Times: Crafts for Poor People*.

"We were all big crafters," she said of her childhood.

Sedaris has been unwinding by taking in the documentary *Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers: Runnin' Down a Dream* on Netflix, remarking on the bandleader's ability to be such a regular guy and a rock 'n roll icon at the same time.

While *The Watchman* typically dwells on new shows, or at least new seasons, we do want to echo Sedaris' enthusiasm for the 2007 film, which is directed by Peter Bogdanovich. The four-hour movie is terrifically done. Some of the



Petty

quotes in the last 10 minutes of the picture hit that much harder after Petty's death earlier this month.

"I'm sure that Tom will carry on writing songs and lyrics that will move me right until when I'm getting older and in a wheelchair," said Dave Stewart. "They're one of those iconic bands — they'll be around forever."

Petty's drummer, Steve Ferrone, said he hoped to be a Heartbreaker forever. "The day Tom turns around and says this is over," he said, "I'll be heartbroken."

Us too.