

Never Trust These Vichy Republicans Again

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If something good can come out of Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy in the United States, let it be separating sincere Republicans from pretenders who are willing to sell out every conservative principle they have professed to hold dear for the sake of ratings, sales or their career.

Trump is not a conservative. Many serious rightwingers have said so: from the rabble-rousing Glenn Beck and radio host Erick Erickson on the far right to more establishmentarian thinkers like George Will, the writers at *National Review* and at the neoconservative *The Weekly Standard* to members of the pro-business Club for Growth and the libertarian Cato Institute.

Nor is Trump a Republican. Serious Republicans have said that as well. Mitt Romney, the party’s presidential nominee four years ago, has called the Manhattan businessman, who supported the Democrats and then a third party before figuring out that he was a Republican, a “phony” and a “fraud” who is “playing the American public for suckers.”

“If we Republicans choose Donald Trump as our nominee, the prospects for a safe and prosperous future are greatly diminished,” the former Massachusetts governor warned last week.

Romney is right. But that hasn’t stopped some on the right from supporting a man who lacks any and all qualities a serious presidential candidate — or any serious person for that matter — ought to have.

Twitter calls them Vichy Republicans. Here are the worst of them.

Chris Christie

The New Jersey governor’s endorsement of Trump must go down as one of the most perfidious — and puzzling — turnabouts in the history of American conservatism.

Many serious rightwingers were pinning their hopes on the likes of Christie, who seemed like a no-nonsense conservative, to appeal to voters in the middle. He bested the teachers unions in his state to enact the sort of education reforms conservatives had advocated for years. He was alone among presidential contenders this year to talk plainly about the need for entitlement reform: by

far the country's biggest fiscal challenge and an issue that will affect tens of millions of Americans.

How could the man who vowed to “tell it like it is” support a candidate who will disavow the Ku Klux Klan one day and refuse to the next? A candidate who promises to “take care of everybody” and not cut Medicaid, Medicare or Social Security? Maybe one day we'll find out.

Sarah Palin

There she was again! The woman who just wouldn't go away after contributing so much to John McCain's 2008 election defeat found a reason to reappear on the national stage last month: to endorse Trump.

Why? Who knows? The speech that was meant to explain her choice was even less coherent than what the one-time Alaska governor is usually able to produce. “He is perfectly positioned to let you make America great again,” she said. Well.

Palin threw out all the tropes that she made a career out of spouting: eight years of Barack Obama have destroyed America; the establishment is keeping real conservatives down; politicians can't be trusted; Donald Trump will make America great again through the sheer force of his personality.

What Trump really did was give Sarah Palin a chance to feel important again. She would endorse a moose if it gave her national coverage.

Mike Huckabee

The former governor of Arkansas hasn't *quite* endorsed Trump yet, but he has appeared at events together with the former television star; his daughter is a Trump campaign advisor; and Huckabee himself went on Fox News last week to urge fellow Republicans to stop resisting Trump's takeover of the Republican Party, which he said is a good thing.

“The establishment Republicans are all bed-wetting over this,” he said.

Channeling his inner Bernie Sanders, Huckabee alleged, “The donor class runs the political environment in this country and people are waking up to that and they are tired of it.”

That's right, the man who has been selling a cinnamon-based “natural” cure to diabetes that no physician will support is accusing the party that has refused to nominate him for president twice now of fooling ordinary Americans. And his solution? Nominating a man who will boast of attempting to bribe politicians!

Newt Gingrich

Another man who's been making his living on the conservative speaking circuit and is ready to jump on the Trump bandwagon if it will give him airtime: former House speaker New Gingrich, who hasn't held elected office in nearly two decades, called Romney's speech "nasty" and "vitriolic" on Monday — without ever taking umbrage at the filth that comes out of Donald Trump's mouth, mind you.

Earlier this month, Gingrich praised Trump in a tweet for shifting to a "Reagan-like inclusiveness". Which would almost be funny if it weren't so sad. Gingrich was something of a conservative visionary once. Now he has reduced himself to polishing apples for a bully who has no idea what the Reagan Revolution was about.

Jan Brewer

Of course the former governor who thought it was perfectly all right for police to stop "random" (wink wink) people on the street and demand proof of citizenship would support a candidate who wants to build a wall to keep Mexicans out.

"For years I pleaded with the federal government to do their job and secure our border. Today, we can elect a president who will do just that — Donald J. Trump," Brewer said in a statement last month.

Jeff Sessions

The Alabama senator, who has been in office for two decades, has a similar gripe with the Washington establishment. Trump, he said, will secure the border and stop illegal immigration, something "politicians have promised for thirty years to fix."

Sure, the man who, *The New York Times* reports, turned down hundreds of job applications from Americans to hire guest workers from Romania instead; who, *The Washington Post* reports, has hired workers from Latin America to build one of his newest hotels; and the man who now infamously hired undocumented Polish workers to erect the Trump Tower in New York is more likely to stop illegal immigration than "the politicians".

Perhaps Sessions didn't take time to look into Trump's past before making his endorsement. But he had surely heard Trump say nice things about Russian president Vladimir Putin when the senator has taken a hard line on Russia since it annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. All that went out of the window apparently when Trump said some nasty things about Mexicans. Got to set priorities!

Sean Hannity

Sure, the author, radio and television host who has made millions indulging right-wing grievances hasn't outright supported Trump yet. But nor has he uttered a word of criticism when the man is perverting every conservative cause Sean Hannity claims to have devoted his life to.

“I’m not taking sides in this,” he said earlier this month — before praising Trump’s “presidential” news conference after winning a series of state contests on Super Tuesday.

Yet Hannity has criticized Trump’s opponents for standing in his way, dismissing Florida senator Marco Rubio, for example, as a “hired gun” when he ridiculed the businessman. “Maybe it’s my conspiratorial mind,” he said. “I think this is orchestrated, well-funded and well-organized.”

Well-funded and well-organized are the likes of Hannity rather who, as Ross Douthat argued in *The New York Times* recently, “just want conservative politics to go on as before and don’t see why a Trump nomination needs to get in the way of their continued profits from Conservatism Inc.”

Ann Coulter

Say Conservative Inc. and you say Ann Coulter. At least she was there before it got popular.

In a radio interview last summer, the right-wing commentator praised Trump as “different”.

“We have been lied to for thirty years about immigration,” she said. “That’s why Trump is striking this chord. He’s attractive. He’s tall. He’s hilariously funny.”

Yes, *hilarious*. A crypto-fascist who is pitting Americans against each other and destroying the Republican Party; who praises Putin but insults the pope, doesn’t know what the nuclear triad is but says he is not “afraid” to use atomic weapons and still thinks he can be president definitively sounds like a joke.

Thanks in no small part to the people listed here, though, he isn’t.