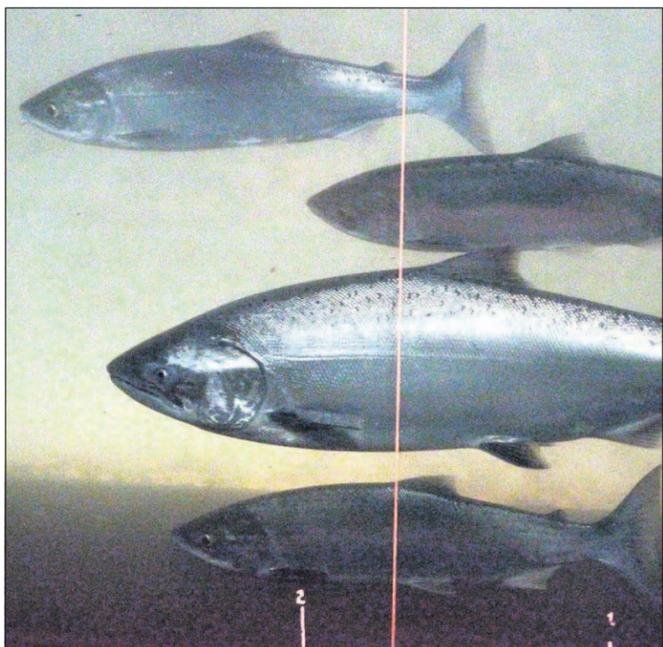


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AP Photo/Rick Bowmer
 Two sockeye salmon swim in the Columbia River with a Chinook salmon, middle, at the Bonneville Dam fish-counting window near North Bonneville.

Feds are running out of half measures

New judge rebukes NOAA and Army Corps on salmon recovery

During the decade that U.S. District Court Judge James Redden rejected Pacific Northwest salmon-restoration plans, detractors quietly pushed the view that he had become an “activist” judge, blinded by personal opinions.

Last week, a judge new to the case — Michael H. Simon of Portland — ruled on the U.S. government’s latest Northwest salmon plan. If anything, Simon was even less impressed with arguments by NOAA Fisheries, the Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation, which claim they are doing enough to stave off extinction for 13 iconic endangered and threatened salmon and steelhead runs.

Fishing groups and conservation organizations say the government is contorting the plain meaning of the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, doing all they can to avoid confronting the “original sin” of erecting four major dams across the Snake River, the major tributary of the Columbia.

The agencies have undertaken valuable habitat-restoration projects here in the Columbia estuary and upriver — basically trying to do all they can for salmon, short of major modifications to the hydro system. The Columbia is healthier thanks to the agencies, taxpayers and electric ratepayers. Restoring and protecting tidal wetlands, controlling pollution, dramatically increasing research and the level of monitoring of river conditions, controlling predation and other steps are all worthwhile.

These efforts, sometimes coupled with favorable ocean conditions, have pro-

duced some decent salmon runs in recent years. But a run considered excellent in these times would have been viewed as disastrous in the pre-dam era. This year’s predicted dismal coho returns demonstrate the fragility of any recovery in current salmon populations.

Taking out the Snake River dams — or lesser actions like bypassing one or more, or drastically increasing the quantity of water spilled from them to mimic natural-flow conditions — is politically difficult. Even environmentally minded Democratic politicians are loath to offend powerful economic interests lined up to defend dams. But the judge is right to suggest dam breaching as perhaps the only way to actually obey the clear mandates of the Endangered Species Act.

Salmon face mounting existential challenges. The judge ruled the agencies’ plan fails to acknowledge catastrophic impacts they may face from climate change. Officials are on thin ice legally when they assert salmon are “trending toward recovery” when actual salmon returns fail to show a sustainable recovery, the judge said.

Simon’s ruling — though stopping short of imposing an action plan — is one more in a long series of repudiations of half-measures. Federal agencies and Congress are fast-approaching a time of reckoning when it comes to ensuring salmon survival.

The earthquake and the aftermath

By CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

Washington Post Writers Group

WASHINGTON — What lies behind Donald Trump’s nomination victory?

Received wisdom among conservatives is that he, the outsider, sensed, marshaled and came to represent a massive revolt of the Republican rank and file against the “establishment.”

This is the narrative: GOP political leaders made promises of all kinds and received in return, during President Obama’s years, major electoral victories that gave them the House, the Senate, 12 new governorships and 30 state houses. Yet they didn’t deliver. Exit polls consistently showed that a majority of GOP primary voters (60 percent in some states) feel “betrayed” by their leaders.

Not just let down or disappointed. Betrayed. By RINOs who, corrupted by donors and lobbyists, sold out. Did they repeal Obamacare? No. Did they defund Planned Parenthood? No. Did they stop President Obama’s tax-and-spend hyperliberalism? No. Whether from incompetence or venality, they let Obama walk all over them.

But then comes the paradox. If insufficient resistance to Obama’s liberalism created this sense of betrayal, why in a field of 17 did Republican voters choose the least conservative candidate? A man who until yesterday was himself a liberal. Who donated money to those very same Democrats to whom the GOP establishment is said to have caved, including Chuck Schumer, Harry Reid and Hillary Clinton.

Trump has expressed sympathy for a single-payer system of socialized medicine, far to the left of Obamacare. Trump lists health care as one of the federal government’s three main responsibilities (after national security); Republicans adamantly oppose federal intervention in health care. He also lists education, which Republicans believe should instead be left to the states.

As for Planned Parenthood, the very same conservatives who railed



Charles Krauthammer



AP Photo/Steve Helber
 Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump puts on a miners hard hat during a rally in Charleston, W.Va., Thursday.

against the Republican establishment for failing to defund it now rally around a candidate who sings the praises of its good works (save for the provision of abortion).

More fundamentally, Trump has no affinity whatsoever for the central thrust of modern conservatism — a return to less and smaller government. If the establishment has insufficiently resisted Obama’s Big Government policies, the beneficiary should logically have been the most consistent, indeed most radical, anti-government conservative of the bunch, Ted Cruz.

Cruz’s entire career has consisted of promoting tea-party constitutionalism in revolt against party leaders who had joined “the Washington cartel.” Yet when Cruz got to his one-on-one with Trump at the Indiana OK Corral, Republicans chose Trump and his nonconservative, idiosyncratic populism.

Which makes Indiana a truly historic inflection point. It marks the most radical transformation of the political philosophy of a major political party in our lifetime. The Democrats continue their trajectory of ever-expansive liberalism from the New Deal through the Great Society through Obama and Clinton today. While the GOP, the nation’s conservative party, its ideology refined and crystallized by Ronald Reagan, has just gone populist.

It’s an ideological earthquake. How radical a reorientation? Said Trump last week: “Folks, I’m a conservative. But at this point, who cares?”

Who cares? Wasn’t caring about conservatism the very essence of the talk radio, tea party, grass-roots revolt against the so-called establishment?

They cheered Cruz when he led the government shutdown in the name of conservative principles. Yet when the race came down to Cruz and Trump, these opinion-shaping conservatives who once doted on Cruz affected a studied Trump-leaning neutrality.

Trump won. True, the charismatically challenged Cruz was up against a prepackaged celebrity, an already famous showman.

True, Trump appealed to the economic anxiety of a squeezed middle class and the status anxiety of a formerly dominant white working class. But the prevailing conservative narrative — of anti-establishment fury — was different and is now exposed as a convenient fable. If Trump is a great big middle finger aimed at a Republican establishment that has abandoned its principles, isn’t it curious that the party has chosen a man without any?

Trump doesn’t even pretend to have any, conservative or otherwise. He lauds his own “flexibility,” his freedom from political or philosophical consistency. And he elevates unpredictability to a foreign policy doctrine.

The ideological realignment is stark. On major issues — such as the central question of retaining America’s global pre-eminence as leader of the free world, sustainer of Western alliances and protector of the post-World War II order — the GOP candidate stands decidedly to the left of the Democrat.

And who knows on what else. On entitlements? On health care? On taxes? We will soon find out. But as Trump himself says of being a conservative — at this point, who cares?

As of Tuesday night, certainly not the GOP.

‘At this point, who cares?’

Caitlyn Jenner’s calling is to tell her story

By NICHOLAS KRISTOF

New York Times News Service

When Caitlyn Jenner was first emerging from the shell of gold medalist Bruce Jenner, Americans were riveted, voyeuristic — and surprisingly accepting. So much has changed since then.

Hesitant acceptance of transgender people has dissolved into a national furor over bathroom laws. And among liberals, initial enthusiasm for Jenner faded with the discovery that she is a Republican who admired Ted Cruz!

I accompanied Jenner as she visited a Brooklyn school, the Academy for Young Writers, that is in a gritty, working-class neighborhood and that has been a leader in making LGBT students feel welcome. The meeting was a collision of sorts: a wealthy transgender celebrity encountering a group of low-income LGBT teenagers of color, coming from different worlds but sharing anxieties and pain.

The students challenged Jenner, and some had earlier pulled down a photo of Jenner from a wall because they felt she wasn’t doing enough for LGBT people. Jenner spoke with the students for hours, winning them over by airing differences (and taking selfies with them) while also bonding over common concerns — like the North Carolina bathroom law.

“It’s a total misunderstanding of the issue,” Jenner said, arguing that there are already laws to deal with predators and that there have been no reported case of a trans woman ever entering a women’s restroom and abusing anyone.

“There are three Republicans who have been arrested in men’s bathrooms for lewd behavior,” Jenner noted. “So, you know, maybe we should kind of ban the Republicans from going in there!”

The real people to worry about,



Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP
 Caitlyn Jenner, top, poses for photos with audience members during the 27th Annual GLAAD Media Awards at the Beverly Hilton in April, in Beverly Hills, Calif.

she said, are trans kids who are struggling with bullying and ostracism. One national study found that 41 percent of trans people surveyed had attempted suicide, 57 percent had experienced family rejection and almost one-fifth had endured homelessness.

“And now the state joins in the bullying and the harassment,” Jenner added. “You will lose lives because of it in our community.”

Some of the students in the room have faced just these challenges. Spencer Washington, a black 17-year-old who was assumed female at birth but has felt male since he was a toddler, once attempted suicide (fortunately, he couldn’t manage a hangman’s knot and cried himself to sleep).

“Let people pee in peace,” Spencer pleaded.

Jenner said she was working “behind the scenes” to address the North Carolina law and criticized Republicans on that issue. But she was unapologetic about being a Republican, saying that she was conservative on economic issues. (For my part, I believe in being accepting not just of transgender people but also of Republicans!)

Less than 1 percent of the population — one rough estimate is perhaps

one-third of 1 percent — is transgender, a far smaller share than is gay. Jenner thus puts a face on a category of people prone to be vilified, a group that may be among the most marginalized in America.

“Maybe this is the reason God put me on this earth, to tell my story, to try to make a difference in the world,” Jenner said. “Because this story and this issue — trans, gender identity, nonconforming, whatever it may be — is bigger than what I did back in ’76 and winning the Games. It’s bigger than breaking world records and doing all that kind of stuff. This is about life. This is about life and death. People destroy their lives over what we all kind of deal with.”

Jenner says that the hardest thing about coming out as a woman was the criticisms from the transgender community, and she acknowledges she had a lot to learn: Until a year ago, she had never met a transgender person. But she says she finally feels authentic about her identity.

“For so many years, little Caitlyn has lived inside,” she said. “And Bruce kind of took over the world, and did his thing. It was time to put him inside and let’s let her live, OK?”

I became interested in these issues after coming across homeless kids struggling with school, drugs, police, sexual abuse and suicide — and disproportionately they were transgender kids who had been rejected by family and society.

That’s what I think the public doesn’t get: Sure, there are complicated issues of which sports team a child should be on, or which shower to use, but those are secondary. The primary concern should be to keep kids safe and alive — and not in crisis each time their bladders fill.

So remember, this isn’t about Jenner, who can look after herself. It’s about the thousands of kids across the country who, on top of all the craziness of adolescence, are also realizing, often to their horror, that their bodies and souls do not align, and that as a result they may face a lifetime as pariahs. We can do better than that.

Let’s listen to Spencer, who says, “I just want to be loved for who I am.”

This is about life and death.