



Episode 1,199: Dave Smith on Russia Hysteria

Guest: Dave Smith

WOODS: A couple things going on in the news. First thing, far more important than the Trump and Russia rapprochement is Dave Smith and I joining the LP [laughing].

SMITH: Yeah, that's right.

WOODS: I mean, certainly that's at least up there.

SMITH: The number-one news story.

WOODS: Yeah. So some people listening to this probably don't even know this, because it was really announced only on Twitter, but the long and the short of it is, not that I in any way want to relitigate this whole thing, but there was this conflict I wound up getting into against my will with the current chairman of the Libertarian National Committee, and it happened after I or somebody else posted a talk called "What I Learned From Murray Rothbard" that I had given. And that talk was mostly like things I learned about how to live, the fact that Rothbard had such intellectual curiosity that he could learn from anyone. He could collaborate with anyone. He would go to some obscure academic conference, come home with a copy of every paper that was delivered, and pore through them to see if there were any gems he might find. Just things like that that kind of inspired me.

And instead of listening to what I said, the chairman of the LNC came back with this nasty tweet, saying, "That moment when all you learn from Rothbard was the worst political strategy ever." Now, okay, first of all, coming from the LP that's kind of —

SMITH: [laughing] Right.

WOODS: — [laughing] an interesting position to be in, to say something like that. But of course nothing I said had anything to do with politics when I was talking about Rothbard. Nothing. So this was not in any way a critique of anything I had said. He had no idea what I had said. He just took a shot at me and Rothbard for no reason. Why the chairman of the Libertarian Party would be spending his time going after Tom Woods and Murray Rothbard is just crazy. And then this just spiraled out of control. It became this vicious back-and-forth battle on Twitter.

Well, the point of this is, in recent — I don't know, it must have been in the past month? I don't know. Three weeks ago? Somebody was at it with this chairman and saying, you know, maybe Tom Woods should do X or Y in the party. And the chairman said, look, I don't have any

evidence that Woods is or has ever been a member of the party, and you need to be a member in order to do any of these things. And so I retweeted that with the comment, "Thank you for the invitation. I've just taken you up on it." Because I thought, you know what? Let's call the bluff of these people once in a while. So I did that, and I thought that alone is worth the 25 smackers.

SMITH: [laughing]

WOODS: But I also — I want to bring you in in a minute, but I just want to set the stage here. That was kind of the background. And not because I'm not — the last thing in the world I want is to be fighting with people, honestly. Even though I sometimes have this belligerent public persona, it's generally because other people start it and I've just been taught that when people start something, you finish it.

SMITH: Right.

WOODS: But I don't want to be still fighting, but I am interested in the LP, and I do think — and we'll talk a little bit about this, but Dave and I are going to be doing an episode with Marc Clair and Jason Stapleton. We're going to have a roundtable discussion of this —

SMITH: And I believe Mance Rayder is going to be on that one, as well.

WOODS: Oh, he is too? Oh great, okay. So yeah, so we're all going to talk about this because we've all joined the party in the past few weeks and we're going to talk about what our motivations were and everything. But it seemed weird to have Dave on and not mention this, so rather than having me continue to talk — I'm talking way too much — let me throw it over to you to get your thoughts on why you did it.

SMITH: Well, can I just say about the whole little thing that went on last year between you and this gentleman at the LP, and I jumped into that as well, it's quite amazing, because it's like, look, if you want to criticize Murray Rothbard's political strategy or any of our political strategy, for that matter, like, okay, fine. Yes, we live in this gigantic state and we're all opposed to it, so I will be the first to acknowledge we're not winning against this thing.

WOODS: Yeah, right, sure.

SMITH: But I'll take that from the Republicans or the Democrats, but for the LP, who's been around for decades and it's like, well, what have you done? Why don't you compare what you've done to the track record of Murray Rothbard and Tom Woods and all these other people? Really, all the LP would be good for is spreading the ideas of libertarianism anyway. It's not like, oh, we're the LP and we've been winning offices and reducing spending and eliminating programs. You're not doing any of that. We're just in the business of spreading the message, and we're doing it far better than you are. So that was just insane to me, and I had to jump in and get involved in that too.

But in terms of joining the LP, to me — and of course, like you said, we'll get more into this when we do a full episode on it, but I just really for a while now, I've really missed the days of the Ron Paul movement and actually having somebody out there in the political arena

making the arguments that we all believe in. And I really liked what Michael Heiss and all those guys from the Mises Caucus were doing, and when they organized that Human Action event, and they had people like you and Scott Horton. And if there is any little movement that's representing what I see as like the true libertarians and the people who I want other people to see, primarily being people like you and Scott Horton. And then when you were like, okay, I'm going to join the party, I was like, all right, well, then I'm in. I mean, if this is what we're doing, then this is what we're doing. Let's do something.

WOODS: Right. Right, right. Let me backtrack for just a minute just to add for anybody who wasn't aware: when that whole argument was going on between me and that fellow, it wasn't just that we were having a dispute about Rothbard's strategy. I mean, whatever.

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: It was the insinuation that I more or less wink at, of all things, fascism —

SMITH: Right.

WOODS: — because I wouldn't sign some stupid, self-important, pompous thing that they had. And it was just so ridiculous. Of all possible things to say about me, it was just ridiculous to say. And that was the thing. The nastiness, that you would sink to the level of — I mean, I expect that the left accuses everybody of fascism.

SMITH: Right.

WOODS: But for the head of the LP, that's just wrong. That is profoundly wrong.

SMITH: No, absolutely, and it's a weird thing where they play into this game. They play the left game. Like it's like they want to be like, oh, well, if you believe — if you're like a Mises guy, then you're a racist or something, you're a fascist. And it's like, meanwhile, the left's just going to look at you and say, because you oppose Obamacare, you want kids to die, or something like that. So it's not like you're winning any points off this.

WOODS: Right.

SMITH: And there is something that — this always really infuriates me, but they set up this dynamic where like if you're a Rothbardian, if you support the Mises Institute, then you've got to apologize for any little thing that might have ever been said that was offensive or wrong or something like that —

WOODS: Right, right.

SMITH: — whereas, say like if I just said I was like a Friedmanite, I don't have to apologize for him supporting the withholding tax or supporting the war in Iraq or these disastrous policies.

WOODS: Right, right, you would be accused, if you said those things, of applying a purity test.

SMITH: Right, right.

WOODS: But that works only one way. Exactly right. So with the LP, as I say, we'll get back — obviously if you listen to the show, I'm not saying you have to go join the LP or anything like that. You make your own decision. But look, it is — I have not been able to get out of people a good answer to the question: if libertarians are not represented in the political discussion, how do we get the word out? Yes, I know we have podcasts and whatever, but look at the example of Ron Paul. He has a podcast. But it's listened to by maybe, if he's lucky, 1% of the people who used to listen to him.

SMITH: That's right.

WOODS: So I don't get how the idea that, if we just stand on the sideline, somehow people will flock to us. They won't even know we're there.

SMITH: No, they had to see — and what did Ron Paul do? Because by the way, also even in politics, Ron Paul was Ron Paul for a long time before he became 2008 Ron Paul. And what you almost had to see was him stand next to Rudy Giuliani, next to this guy — who, at the time, people forget was polling number one in the race — and just dismantle him. And then you almost have to see it up against what mainstream politics is and see that we offer something that's better than what they have.

WOODS: Right. And I have no sympathy whatsoever for the so-called Pragmatist Caucus of the Libertarian Party, which really sucks all the life out of the Libertarian Party. I mean, it sucks all the life out of the very idea of it. I much more am sympathetic to Tim Moen out of the Libertarian Party of Canada, who just comes right out and says our role is to stand there and tell the truth regardless of what happens. The outcome, obviously it's better to win than not to win, but it's even better to tell people that we exist and that this way of thinking exists; otherwise, you are going to end up Republican Light, you know? And that inspires nobody. It's just — ugh. And it accomplishes nothing, because no one remembers it. People remember Harry Browne. Michael Boldin, who started the Tenth Amendment Center, was converted from hard leftism by Harry Browne. So in other words, Harry Browne indirectly created the Tenth Amendment Center. Whereas who, years later, will say I created some foundation because I was inspired by Bob Barr?

SMITH: Yeah, that's not happening.

WOODS: So you don't realize how far-reaching the consequences of a hardcore, principled guy can be? All right, let's move on, given that we are going to be doing an episode of that with our friends, to a topic that you did a video about just a matter of days ago. And that is this whole matter of Russia and Trump and treason and all this crazy stuff. And I want to start by reading — I have a somewhat lengthy passage from an article by David Stockman, who is an occasional guest on this show. Stockman was the Office of Management and Budget director under Ronald Reagan, and he has gotten — I mean, he was pretty good in those days, but he's like really, really darn good now.

SMITH: [laughing] Yeah.

WOODS: He's darn good. So here's what he wrote — and I'm going to preface this by saying I know there will be some people listening who are going to disagree with me on this

profoundly to the point where they may never listen to me again, but you know, okay, it's been fun.

SMITH: [laughing]

WOODS: But I've got to be me. I actually think this moment in Helsinki — it shows how out of step I am with the establishment. I think this may be the best thing I've ever seen a president do in my entire lifetime.

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: The most courageous thing I've ever seen him do, and everyone's calling it treason. [laughing] Okay, I must be a weirdo. Or we live among a bunch of sociopaths. I'm inclining toward the second.

SMITH: [laughing]

WOODS: All right, so here's Stockman. He says:

The Vlad and Donald show in Helsinki [yesterday] was simply brilliant and breathtaking - we'd say even a beautiful thing to behold.

Between them, they left CNN's nattering nabobs of neocon nonsense sounding like the shrieking monkeys they actually are.

By the way, I've started using "shrieking monkeys."

SMITH: That's pretty good.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah.

And that's to say nothing of the fools they made out of the newly minted liberal and progressive warmongers on the Dem side of the aisle in Washington or the so-called journalists who fill 90% of the space in the so-called mainstream media with endless pro-war propaganda.

But most of all it was the single greatest blow to the War Party since it turned Imperial Washington into a colossal menace bent on global hegemony when the Soviet Union slithered off the pages of history in 1991.

We have said all along that Putin and Russia have been demonized because the Warfare State desperately needs an 'enemy' to justify its \$800 billion annual mugging of America's taxpayers. Yet today's spontaneous chorus by the two leaders in behalf of détente, dialogue and diplomacy puts the kibosh on that Big Lie more completely than could 100 Ted Talks or a year's worth of pro-peace op eds in the Washington Post.

So Flyover America will have no trouble seeing the good of the Helsinki Summit. Trump and Putin just killed it on every topic where the War Party and its shills in the press wanted to drive a wedge.

That is to say, cooperation on Syria, arms control, terrorism, North Korea, Ukraine; friendly competition on supplying natural gas to Europe; an invitation to Mueller to send his legal sleuths to Russia to participate in the interrogation of the 12 GRU ham sandwiches named in the indictment; and best of all, a reciprocal notion that Russian prosecutors come here to question Deep State operatives about how they helped one of the greatest scoundrels of modern times, Bill Browder, abscond from Russia with almost \$1.5 billion skimmed from its people and on which he and his posse paid zero taxes either there or here.

Indeed, the debunking of the false mainstream narrative about Russia's nefarious intentions and doings was so complete that the Deep State apparatchiks were reduced to sputtering hysterically. For instance, here is the bile issued by the central architect of the Russian collusion lie, former CIA director John Brennan:

Donald Trump's press conference performance in Helsinki rises to & exceeds the threshold of "high crimes & misdemeanors." It was nothing short of treasonous. Not only were Trump's comments imbecilic, he is wholly in the pocket of Putin. Republican Patriots: Where are you???

Then again, when you actually read the transcript of the joint press conference, you will find the very words, phrases and tonalities that harken back to the courageous efforts of liberal democrats like Senators George McGovern and Frank Church and even President Jimmy Carter to promote diplomacy and détente during the height of the Cold War confrontation when each side had 9,000 nuclear warheads on hair-trigger alert.

And exactly what was John Brennan doing circa 1976?

Why, he voted for the communist candidate for President, Gus Hall, because he thought Jimmy Carter was too much of a cold warrior!

In other words, the guy is a demented partisan hack who arose to power during a 25-year career in the CIA that began in 1980, and during which he sold his soul to the Warfare State in pursuit of position, power and pelf.

But beyond our joy in hearing the gaskets popping all over the Imperial City we can say this: In the course of that press conference the Donald threw down the gauntlet to the Deep State in a manner so explicit and unequivocal that there is now no turning back.

SMITH: Oof.

WOODS: Now, if we lived in a free country, everyone would be talking like that.

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: All right, what did you say in your video?

SMITH: Well, God, David Stockman's such a boss.

WOODS: [laughing] He is.

SMITH: I just love it. And by the way, if anyone hasn't seen those videos of him on Fox Business where he just goes and destroys Maria Bartiromo and like all those people, he's just unbelievable.

WOODS: Ugh, yeah, yeah.

SMITH: Well, I mean, what I was saying in the video — and can I just say, on the Brennan stuff, man, it's not even — I think it's a fair point to make that he was a commie back in the '70s. Like yeah, that's absolutely a fair point. It's amazing like, right — and this is stuff that we've talked about in the past, but you know, let's say — not you, but say someone you knew like sat in on a meeting of, say, a Southern secessionist group or something like that. That you can never move past. But if you were like a full-fledged communist, that's just like, oh, whatever, you know [laughing].

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah, whatever.

SMITH: Oh, now you can come into the fold, no problem. Rothbard wrote about that too. And also, by the way, it doesn't even really matter. If you're a Democrat, you can be like a former Klansman too and then you can come be Hillary Clinton's best friend. No one cares.

But anyway, forget him even being a commie in the '70s. I mean, you want to talk about treason. How about arming ISIS? How about siding with the radical Sunnis who actually attacked America? I mean, just from your traditional, "I'm an American," forget anarcholibertarian, any of that stuff. Just like the group that attacked America you are now siding with. We're living in a cartoon.

But the thing about Trump that I find really interesting, and the best quality to me of the Trump moment, is that Trump is able to aggravate everybody so much that they end up exposing themselves. It's not like Trump really exposes anything. It's not like Trump's doing what Ron Paul did, where Ron Paul would be like — he exposed people. Ron Paul said, hey, there's this Federal Reserve. This is the way the system's really working. There's this military industrial complex. This is the way it's working. Trump is just Trump, and this pisses everybody else off so much that they end up exposing themselves.

And the media, which is coming out — it's not just that you realize that this media that would not give him a fraction of the scrutiny if he were to, say, bomb another country as they will if he goes and talks to another country, a nuclear-armed country at that. But the real — if you listen to the mainstream media, the real offense here is that Trump criticized the deep state. He had the nerve, it's treason that he did not take as a given that what the CIA says is the truth. Now, who who knows anything about the history of the CIA would think that you should just take what they say as a given? Like, they would never lie to the American people.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, exactly. They don't even think about it. It happens all the time to the point where it doesn't even occur to them that it's a problem.

SMITH: Right? It's really unbelievable. And I don't know how anybody — I mean, this is what I said in the video. I just don't understand how anybody who isn't a bloodthirsty war hawk would not be happy that this happened. And it's the most controversial thing Donald Trump's done — or not even controversial. It's just the most outright despised — it's treason according to these people. As Trump said, the two countries represent 905 of the nuclear weapons in the world. You're telling me they shouldn't be talking? And if they're getting along, that's a bad thing?

WOODS: Yeah, and especially, Caitlin Johnstone made this point, that even just the possibility of an accident occurring because some of the equipment is aging, the possibility of that is not zero. And not to mention — and here's a point that gets completely lost because it does not fit in the narrative at all. Johnstone, who's a leftist, who does not like Trump at all, but she says: look, cooperating to try to make sure that the two major nuclear powers are not going to go to war with each other or have a nuclear accident occur is the most important issue for mankind. And if you are in any way creating some kind of obstacle in the way of that or making that less likely, then your hatred of Donald Trump, which she herself shares, has made you so demented that you've lost some of what makes you human, is what she said.

SMITH: Yes.

WOODS: But her point is: actually, instead of this whole narrative of Trump is in Putin's pocket, he's like on his leash or whatever, ha ha ha ha — oh yeah? Have you actually looked at Trump's Russia policy? It's bellicose.

SMITH: Right.

WOODS: Whether it's facilitating the arming of Ukraine or his policy in Syria or the nuclear posture review that took on a more anti-Russian tone or sanctions or expelling diplomats or whatever —

SMITH: The Iran deal, even. I mean, all of it. None of this is what you would get out of a Putin puppet.

WOODS: Exactly. So what actually has happened is that, because Trump has actually been bellicose, that's why we all the more need this meeting: to ramp it down. It's not that Trump hasn't done enough against Russia. I mean, there are foreign policy experts who know better than that. The average American has no idea about this. So on Facebook, I've been going up against people who've been saying this about Trump. *Oh, yeah, yeah, he's in Putin's pocket.* I say, oh yeah? Let me list a bunch of policies and you tell me how any one of these represents that. And of course they all go running away because they've never heard of any of this.

SMITH: That's right, and partially because it goes completely unreported in the mainstream media, but something is going on big with the Russian-U.S. relationship moving toward confrontation. And it's like, if you look at Hillary Clinton and Marco Rubio, who are basically the same person, who were the Republicans' kind of pick after Jeb Bush imploded and the

Democrats' pick to be president, they were both running on a no-fly-zone where Russian planes are flying in Syria. They were both saying we're going to shoot down Russian planes. And you had high-level people in the military who were like, they're talking about going to war with Russia.

And this is something that — what's going on I think since the Soviet Union collapsed and George H.W. Bush, we had the CIA man in the Oval Office, and instead of doing what like Bill Buckley and all these guys promised us this whole Cold War was about — like, well, we're really free-market people, but we just need this giant bureaucracy to keep the Soviet Union at bay. Well, when the Soviet Union collapsed, we went right ahead with the war machine, and this is what drove out a lot of people. I mean, I know this is what turned yourself off. Pat Buchanan and Russell Kirk and all these people were very upset about that.

And we went in, and a lot of them would even talk about how the people, like the neocons back then would be like, Russia didn't do anything. We went right into Iraq, and it looks like there we can now kind of exert our influence over the Middle East, and we've been doing that quite a bit for decades since then. And it looks like in Syria, this was the moment where Russia was like, no, we're going to fight back on this one. So it's a very strange position now, where — and I'm sure that they had some sense of the politics of it all. They were like, well, America's getting more and more into debt, the people in America are not supporting these wars anymore, and also, they see the nature of them losing every ally that they have in the Middle East while we just prop up all the governments that we want.

So now you've got Russia in Syria; we're in Syria; this is a very dangerous situation. On the list of stuff that you were talking about with Trump, there were like a couple hundred Russian mercenaries who were killed in Syria. This is like a very, very dangerous situation, where we're very close to war. Two nuclear-armed powers close to war. This is insanity. So if they get together and talk and it's like, well, Trump didn't call him out for this, this, and this human rights abuse. Okay, did Putin call Trump out for our human rights abuses? I mean, I'm not saying we're exactly equal, but like why do only we get to call other countries out for their human rights abuses, you know? Do they get to sit there and say, "You know, you guys really have built up the biggest spying apparatus in the history of humanity. That's a little messed up. You guys have the biggest prison population in the world. That's a little messed up." Like, I don't know, why don't we let them handle their business and we'll handle ours and let's not go to war?

WOODS: Yeah, no kidding. No kidding.

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And you know, I forgot to mention the issue of Montenegro going into NATO. Now, my understanding was that Trump initially favored that, and now I saw him interviewed by Tucker Carlson and he seems to be backing away, because he's saying, what kind of ridiculous idea is it that we would go to war and that we would basically be saying to the people in Montenegro that, go ahead and be as unreasonable as you want because we've got your back? That makes no sense. And he said something like, *Look, I've only been around for about 18 months*, so it was kind of his way of saying, if I took a different position on Montenegro, it's a rookie mistake.

SMITH: Right.

WOODS: So that was something, because — and that actually leads into Rand Paul, who's been great on this thing, but he's also been great specifically talking about NATO. He was on Tucker Carlson the other day, and Carlson — another hero. Absolutely amazing.

SMITH: Yep.

WOODS: Amazing. He was not always this good, Carlson. He's gotten — he's absolutely amazing. And he had Rand on, and Rand was saying, he's talking about the absurdity of extending NATO. He says there are people we have in the foreign policy establishment who want former Soviet satellites to be in NATO and who even are willing to say any country in the world that qualifies. So they use the language "any aspirant" can be a member of NATO. And Rand said, now, I introduced an amendment that would have taken out the words "any aspirant," and my amendment was voted down 20 to 1. The entire Foreign Relations Committee — I guess it's the Foreign Relations Committee?

SMITH: Mm hmm.

WOODS: — voted it down 20 to 1. And he said that — this is crazy. And Tucker said, "Yeah, that's totally insane." He used the word "insane." Now, I don't think Fox News would have said insane five, ten years ago, but now we have a guy on there who is much, much better and more reliable than anybody on Fox, who will look at a policy like that and not treat it like, well, why don't we debate this? He'll just say that's crazy. That is absolutely — So in other words, the United States is going to be committed to the defense of 50 or 60 places in the world? 50 or 60 that they would have to go to war to defend if anything came up, and World War III would break out, and everybody thinks that's normal? Every shrieking monkey thinks that's normal.

SMITH: It's unbelievable. And yeah, Tucker Carlson's a really interesting case, because he was like a big supporter of the war in Iraq initially and changed his mind on that. And I look at him a lot, like I think he's one of these, like the Pat Buchanan types, who actually believed the establishment conservative lies and then is really pissed off at them because he believed this stuff. And now it's like he's scorned. It's like, okay, he's going to embarrass Max Boot and all these people because they convinced him that he should like march along with some of these policies. And eventually I think Tucker really is a nationalist, really does love America and really does care about his country and his people, and he sees that this is just destroying us and that this is insane. And it's great. Now at this point he's the best like big name in cable news.

WOODS: And he could be doing this just to carve out a niche for himself, but I doubt it, because he is risking a lot. He is rolling the dice here. I think it is because he really feels this way.

SMITH: And I remember this interesting thing about Tucker Carlson. So he was at the Ron Paul, the counter-convention —

WOODS: The Rally for the Republic —

SMITH: — the Rally for the Republic —

WOODS: He introduced me when I came up to speak, yeah.

SMITH: That's right. He was there, and he talked about this, and he talked about how something like Jesse Ventura said something about 9/11 being an inside job and this really turned him off of the liberty movement and he was like, this is just too far for me, this is too crazy. And then cut to like a year ago or so, he's on Alex Jones' show.

WOODS: [laughing] Well, wait a minute.

SMITH: And I'm thinking to myself, I'm like, wait a minute, so what's going on here? So I think what Tucker Carlson realized — and this I'm just kind of speculating, but I think at a certain point he realized, well, all right, maybe there is this kind of wing of the conspiracy guys who I think are a little bit nutty, but I think he realized what's even crazier than that is Max Boot, is John McCain, are these guys who just want to fight wars left and right. They want every single war. If you talk to John McCain or Lindsey Graham, you have to say, "What country do you not want us to bomb?"

WOODS: Yeah.

SMITH: It's insane. And I think he realized at this point, that he's like, well, I'd rather go talk to Alex Jones than these people.

WOODS: I remember recently reading I guess in McCain's memoir or something like that that he does come clean in regard to the Iraq War, that he says that was a mistake and I bear a good portion of the blame for that. But to me, what's more valuable than 15 years after the fact saying what everybody obviously knows would be: tell me during those 15 years which possible war that you might have supported, it could be wars that never happened but that you wanted to see, which one did you stop and say, "Now, wait a minute. I've been had before in these wars and I've really made mistakes. I'd better just not favor this?" Of course there would be no example of that. So I don't care about these people, who, years later, tell me how sorry they are when I see no change in their behavior.

SMITH: Well, that's right. And I know you've made this point before too, but the example is like Walter Jones or someone like that, where you go, okay, wonderful, welcome to our side. Like, this is a guy who you can tell this is a devout Christian who has trouble sleeping at night because he supported this war.

WOODS: Yeah, he's done every possible thing he can to make up for it.

SMITH: Yes. And if there's somebody like that, I have no problem forgiving them and saying, "Thank you for joining our side."

WOODS: Because I feel like, on a much smaller scale, that's kind of like me. I mean, I'm not a congressman so I can't do the things he's doing, but I've done everything I can to get people thinking differently about foreign policy and I did that book with Murray Polner. I did what a layman can do. And you know, look, I think a lot of people go through that phase when they're growing up.

SMITH: Sure.

WOODS: They just — why wouldn't you trust the TV when you turn it on?

SMITH: Yeah.

WOODS: And everybody's cheering and tying yellow ribbons on trees. That was a big thing in the First Gulf War. You're too young to remember this, but all over town you'd drive around, there were yellow ribbons on trees to support the troops in the Middle East. And geez, that's some rough stuff.

But let me ask you, on a happy note, your podcast, *Part of the Problem*, is doing really well.

SMITH: Yes, yes.

WOODS: And I have a lot of folks who listen to me who say, I'm interested in libertarianism, I'm interested in a lot of things you do, but I'm also interested in the more meta question of podcasting in general. What do you attribute your success to other than it's a quality show? I mean, in the long run you can try all kinds of gimmicks to get listeners, but if the content's no good, it's not going to last. But what do you attribute it to other than just the obvious: it's a good show? I mean, there are a lot of good shows out there that probably have ten listeners.

SMITH: But I think that it may not be so obvious to everyone. I think people get way too concerned early on with how do I grow this or how do I make money off this, and it's like, make sure whatever you're doing is something you're really passionate about, you really enjoy, and that is the most important first step. And for me, a big part of it was just sticking with it, because I did the show for years before it really had a big audience. I did a show regularly once a week; for the first three years of it, I didn't have a very big audience. There were like a couple thousand people who were listening to it.

WOODS: And you just stuck with it.

SMITH: And I just kept doing it, kept doing it. And as my comedy career grew and I got more opportunities that way and I'd come on shows like your show, I got on Joe Rogan's show, like all these different shows, and then my audience kind of built up from that. But I really do say you make it the highest quality you possibly can and then you stick with it and just do everything you can to kind of spread the word. And the truth is, what I've found in my experience is doing other podcasts are the best way to grow my own. That's at least for me. And what it is is that you're speaking directly to people who listen to podcasts.

WOODS: Right.

SMITH: So that's the best kind of way to get — and when I talk to people, most people — I don't know about most, but a large portion of people who listen to podcasts have either a period in their life where this is what I like to do to unwind, or some of them can listen at work. Some of them have jobs where it's like, well, I can't sit down and watch something, but I can put a headphone in and listen. And usually in that case, they're looking for more. They're looking for more content. And so there's never a person who's kind of like — it's not like if you were like, I'm going to put out two more episodes of *The Tom Woods Show*, anyone would be like, *Nah, we've got our five. We're good.* Like, they just want as much as humanly possible from you.

WOODS: Right, right, yeah, yeah. That's true. That's true. I get asked about this a lot: hey, I'm a libertarian; I want to start a podcast. And my first instinct is always to ask them: what's your angle going to be? Because there are a lot of libertarian podcasts now. But I've seen some where they have — I personally think one good way to find a niche, whether it's as a blogger or a podcaster or whatever, is to combine two niches. So libertarianism plus — and it could be, like there are a couple of guys who do movie reviews from a libertarian perspective. So libertarianism and movies, so moviegoers and movie lovers who are also libertarian, there's a nice niche. There's no one else doing that. That's your unique thing. Liberty plus X. Like, I just — there's a guy with a website, the Culinary Libertarian, so libertarianism and food.

SMITH: Yeah, that's great.

WOODS: And of course there's some content there that's purely culinary, but then there's stuff that could be both, because there are obviously libertarian dimensions to food. And then Eric Peters, who does automobiles at EricPetersAutos.com. So he's got some just reviews of cars, just plain old cars, but then he's got plenty of libertarian stuff about cars. So that's another way to think about how to position yourself. If you feel like I'm not sure I have a big enough name to stand out in a crowded podcast world, well, then make your weirdo niche be the thing that makes you stand out.

SMITH: Right, and that's your niche and product differentiation and figuring out — because if you're just kind of doing the same thing without a name, that's going to be a tougher competition.

WOODS: Yeah, my nonaggression principle podcast, that's not — I just — I don't know, I feel like that's kind of saturated. All right, I think we're just about done. I mean, we could just keep talking forever, but we should get back to the Mises University program since you flew all the way here —

SMITH: Yes, this is my first time here, and it's such an unbelievable event, man. I know all of you guys — like, I've benefitted so much from the Mises Institute, and I always hear everybody like you and Judge Napolitano and all these people say Mises University is just like the best week out there, and it really is. It's great to be here. Loving it.

WOODS: Yeah, I couldn't agree more, and you weren't here on the first night, so I'll just say that I opened up by saying it is my favorite week of the year on land, because of course, you know what's an even better week in some ways is the Contra Cruise at ContraCruise.com. But that's only because —

SMITH: I'll back that up also. The Contra Cruise is unbelievable.

WOODS: Just, I don't know, there's something weird about the Contra Cruise and what makes it amazing [laughing]. But anyway, I mean, look, we're lucky that we get to do stuff like this. I mean, come on. Between here and the hotel, you can drive by people who have to put roofs on houses in 110-degree heat, and you and I get to sit around listening to geniuses talk all day.

SMITH: It's our libertarian privilege, Tom.

WOODS: Yeah, that's exactly what it is. All right, thanks a lot, Dave. So remember, GasDigitalNetwork.com is where to find Dave, and you should – why don't we follow you on Twitter?

SMITH: Oh yeah, @ComicDaveSmith.

WOODS: @ComicDaveSmith, yeah, absolutely. All right, thanks, Dave.

SMITH: Thank you, Dave.