



Episode 1,235: Mises Institute Chairman Lew Rockwell Takes Your Questions - September

Guest: Lew Rockwell

WOODS: Got some questions for you from the old Supporting Listeners group. First one actually comes from me, although I note, all of a sudden, I do see somebody else did think of this, too. And that is, yesterday I did an episode with Phil Geraldo on —

ROCKWELL: What a great episode, by the way.

WOODS: Oh, thanks.

ROCKWELL: I can recommend it — to everybody who didn't hear it, Listen to that episode. It's really a very important one and just riveting.

TW Oh, thank you very much. Yeah, Phil was great, and I was just full of shock and outrage, because that piece in *The New York Times* — what we're talking about, for anybody who might have missed yesterday's episode, is an episode on that anonymous op-ed that appeared in *The New York Times* from somebody described as a senior official in the White House, who says he's part of a network trying to undermine the president, basically, in what they call his worst instincts, which of course, are his best instincts.

ROCKWELL: [laughing]

WOODS: They're there fine with some of the worst stuff, but the good stuff that all the good people are cheering they're trying to undermine. And it shocked even me, but I'm just curious about your opinion about that subject.

ROCKWELL: Well, you know, there was one interesting thing that struck me. I noticed that the author of this said that Trump paid no attention to great conservative ideals, like free minds and free markets. Now, first of all, that's the Reason Foundation or *Reason* magazine's slogan, so I'm not going to be shocked if this turns out to be somebody who came from the Koch empire into the Trump administration. But with that, I must say, that's always bugged me, because by "free minds," they mean atheism. So the idea that atheism — because of course, if you're religious, your mind is enslaved, is the view, so if you're an atheist, you have a free mind. The idea that this is a conservative view is obviously nonsensical.

WOODS: [laughing] Right, Thomas Paine was not the conservative between him and Edmund Burke. Whatever else you may say about the merits of Thomas Paine, if you called him a conservative, he would have smacked you in the head. Yeah, so of course, we can't at this point know for sure who it is. I've heard it argued, and Phil said the same thing, that Pence

may have done it. But I wonder if you share my view that Pence is too not-bright to be the real mastermind here. Do you have any instinct about it?

ROCKWELL: Well, I know somebody who was a colleague of Pence's in the Congress, and this is somebody who typically doesn't criticize people personally, but he said that there's no question that Mike Pence is extremely stupid. I mean, just he was stupid, even in the Congress. As a congressman, he just was a boob. But of course, he wouldn't have written this. It would have been staff people that would have written it. Maybe staff people, as Phil pointed out yesterday, connected to the so-called intelligence community – by the way, notice anything called a "community" in Washington is evil.

WOODS: Yeah, that's true.

ROCKWELL: So I don't – it's possible it's Pence. My guess is it's somebody lower ranking. I mean, why would Pence take the chance? He might very well have some of these views or is told to have some of these views, but I can't see that it's Pence. It's an interesting speculation. But we know there are people from, I mentioned, again, the Koch empire who came into the Trump administration. Could be one of them. And also, as was pointed out yesterday by somebody else, *The New York Times* has a record of, whenever they have an anonymous guy they're citing in the administration or any administration, they tend to make him seem a higher-level guy than he really is. So maybe this is not – maybe this is the Undersecretary to the Assistant Secretary of the Commerce Department.

WOODS: [laughing] Right, right. Yeah, indeed. Who knows? Let's switch gears completely and, instead of talking about something creepy and frightening, try and talk about something upbeat and optimistic. And it's funny that when I read your blog, particularly the Political Theatre blog – which I urge people to do at LewRockwell.com. There are two blogs there, and I prefer the one where it's just Lew. I mean, I love the community also, but I like just reading what you are reading and what you have to say. And a lot of times, I read those links and I feel despair. But yet, when I talk to you and when you give public speeches, you always hit a tone of optimism. So I'm going to ask you to put that optimism hat on right now, and I'm going to throw at you another question from my group, which is: where do you see us succeeding? There are a lot of areas where it seems like we're not making any progress, but where do you see successes? What kind of successes, if any, do you see?

ROCKWELL: Well, this may surprise people. I see a lot of successes among young people. I think that – and not just the people that I'm in contact with because of the Mises Institute, but otherwise too. Young people are much more interested in capitalism. Now, of course we have the commies. I'm not addressing them. But the good young people, much more interested in economics, in opposing communism. They're interested in traditional values. So I think we have that burgeoning, as well as, of course, the other side burgeoning. But this has always been a struggle. I mean, this has been a struggle between the good guys and the bad guys, as long as human beings have been on the earth. And Cain was going after Abel. I mean, this has always been the case, so that it'll always be a struggle until the end of the earth.

But I do think that we have reason to be optimistic about young people and just by, the scholars interested in our ideas are burgeoning. When I started the Mises Institute, there were very few scholars who were interested in Austrian economics, for example. There are vastly more today. We still are a minority, obviously, but a vastly larger minority than we were. So you know, I think also that hope is a virtue, and it's a matter of the will. So I think it's

important to be hopeful, to look for reasons to hope. But I think there are many reasons to hope. And I think also, you know, the people who are on the other side really are a nasty bunch. I mean, they really are an evil bunch, and evil doesn't win in the end. So I think that's why I'm optimistic.

WOODS: You know, Lew, when some people are asking questions in this group, sometimes other people are proposing possible answers to the questions even before they hear your answer. So somebody – this is not a joke. Somebody posted the question: what does he eat for breakfast? And somebody gave the answer: leftists.

ROCKWELL: [laughing]

WOODS: [laughing] So you know, these are good folks I got in my group, no question about that. Well, let's do a little Lew Rockwell history, because Lew Rockwell history is libertarian history. And I've got people wondering how it came to be that you became Ron Paul's chief of staff. How did you guys get to know each other? And then how did you get into that position?

ROCKWELL: Well, there are actually a couple of things. I had met Ron at a conference in 1976 in Miami, a libertarian conference that we were both speaking at. But it was because Leonard Read the founder of FEE and the president of FEE, called Ron and recommended that he hire me, that he thought that I would be a useful guy on his staff. I don't think he probably said chief of staff. That was Ron's decision. But Leonard recommended that he hire me, which of course I've always been very grateful to Leonard that he did that. And we had known each other for a long time. Bob Anderson of FEE told me that I was the only person who ever got Leonard to write a column or any outside articles, for that matter, when I was in editor of a magazine called *Private Practice*, a journal of socioeconomic medicine that was protesting against working against all the things that have subsequently happened in the medical industry. And he wrote a monthly column for that magazine, and Bob said he was astounded that Leonard did it, because he'd never done that before. So we had a great relationship, and I was of course a strong admirer of his. And that's how.

WOODS: So you're chief of staff for a U.S. congressman. That must mean you had to deal with offices of a lot of other congressmen, and I would tend to think almost the only – was Barry Goldwater in Congress at that time?

ROCKWELL: No, he was not.

WOODS: Okay, because I was about to say there'd be none of them you'd be able to stand. What was it like interacting with the staffs of congressmen who were normal congressmen, who were there for the graft and to, you know, move resources around to non-producers? What was it like?

ROCKWELL: Well, first of all, I would say the office of David Stockman was the only people who were interesting and good guys.

WOODS: Oh, yeah.

ROCKWELL: We didn't agree on everything. He and Ron were strong opponents of draft registration, and that was the initial link. But of course Stockman, very smart, very smart

staff, and they were a pleasure to deal with. The other congressmen, as you might imagine, were not a pleasure to deal with, but frankly, we didn't have much to do with them, because, of course, Ron did not have the typical view of the congressmen of: you scratch my back; I'll scratch yours. And people initially couldn't understand, if they were going to offer to do him a favor, why he wouldn't do them a favor, meaning of course voting for some horrible bill that they were proposing. So at least when I was chief of staff, we really didn't have a lot to do with other congressional offices, except with people like up the Stockman people, and there were a few others, but mostly just say, "Hi," in the corridor as you went to work.

WOODS: That's funny. Now, I don't know how any of this stuff works. I'm completely naive when it comes to this. But I suppose there must be lobbyists literally visiting congressional offices? Is that how it happens? They just walk in?

ROCKWELL: Yes.

WOODS: And so what happened in Ron's case when people would come in there?

ROCKWELL: Well, Ron, if somebody was a local lobbyist, he was always glad to talk to them, but of course he never agreed with them. I mean, so he was always polite to people who had a connection to his district. Most of the others didn't have a connection to his district, and he had staffers talk to them and listen to them. But of course, they were all advocating evil. I shouldn't say them all. Some were advocating opposition to gun control and that sort of thing. So of course, the one thing that Ron was interested in were young people. If young people came into his office, he was always delighted to spend just a very long time answering questions, and I never saw anybody who had a better connection to young people than Ron Paul. But the lobbyists were just a pain in the neck, for the most part, and they soon learned that his office wasn't worth visiting because they couldn't twist his arm. They couldn't convince him. Didn't matter what contributions they promised. Anything like that that moved a normal congressman had no effect on him.

WOODS: I've heard a lot of congressmen these days — now, maybe things are different in 2018 than they were back in the, I guess, early '80s that we're talking about. But I hear congressmen — not senators, so much, who have six-year terms. But I hear that congressmen are just exhausted all the time, because when they're not in D.C., they have to be back in the district, basically, implicitly campaigning for the next time around, and it's just a nonstop hamster wheel. Did you get the impression that that's how Ron was, that he was just exhausted from all the demands on him and then he had to implicitly campaign? How did he manage all that?

ROCKWELL: Ron Paul loves campaigning. I mean, it's quite extraordinary. In the early days, he would wear out several pairs of shoes, walking precincts. I mean, he just loved walking up and meeting people in their homes, saying hello, talking to them if they wanted to talk to him. He just loved people, meeting people. People loved him. But he was already home every weekend. His wife, Carol, and his children were in Lake Jackson, Texas, and he insisted on being home every weekend every time the Congress was not in session. And he was happy to go to chamber of commerce meetings or whatever similar kinds of things while he was there. He wasn't formally campaigning except during the time when he was actually running. But the rest of the time he was staying in touch with people. A lot of times, he would present medals to high school students who had save somebody's life, that sort of thing. These were — we call

them congressional medals. They weren't; they weren't actually government medals. But he just loved to honor people who'd done great things.

And he just loved it, so he was never — And he also was a tremendously vigorous guy. I mean, just what a great athlete. And I think to the extent he got along well with the other congressmen, it was what happened in the White House gym. I mean, he would swim every day. I don't know how many laps; I mean, a huge amount of laps. And the other guys respected him for that. Just tremendous amount of energy, had no problem working morning till night. And he's just an amazing guy. He still is that way, by the way. This is maybe seven or eight years ago, when he was taking his kids out on a boat in the river that was near his vacation home on a river. And he wasn't wearing a shirt, and I thought, you know, wouldn't you know, I don't have a camera or my phone with me. I mean, the guy is just, he's a tremendous physical specimen, even in his 70s at that point. So he's heroic in every single way you can think of, and, of course, raised a wonderful family.

And if you had a chance to meet him, we're going to be having a Mises Circle in Lake Jackson, Texas, and look up on the Mises.org site, and you'll see the information about that. And it's a chance to meet with Ron, get a picture with him and so forth. He really is quite something unique and unusual, fun, funny, extraordinary.

WOODS: As long as we're at it, why don't we also mention, coming up very soon, the supporters summit starting on September 27th, 2018, where it's another opportunity to meet Ron Paul? If that's been on your so-called bucket list, that's a great time to cross that off, because he'll be there, you'll be there, I'll be there. Quite a star-studded group of our folks will be in Auburn at the Mises Institute for that event. So Mises.org/Events is where you should go to check out the details on all this stuff.

Now, I want to ask you something that I've just been curious about for a long time. I never had the guts to ask you. And it's this, it's this. Now there's a rule of thumb, I think. There are some rules of thumb about, when you get attacked, whether you should respond or not. And most of the time — let's take Pat Buchanan. There's a guy who gets attacked a lot. He doesn't really defend himself all that much. He just ignores people. He just continues to publish bestselling books and write his column, and that's the best revenge anyone can ask for. But once in a while, you know, if it's like Victor Davis Hanson or somebody with a really high profile, he will hit back really hard, because that guy has a huge audience and that guy needs to be smacked down, and Pat will do it. But he doesn't devote a lot of time to it.

I devote a little more time to it, because to me, it's just fun. I enjoy doing it, and I have a lot of dopey people who are against me, so it just makes it easy. But it's fun. It rallies my troops, and it corrects not just misconceptions, but outright falsehoods about me, and I just feel compelled to do it sometimes. I generally try to only shoot up, but I can't say I've always abided by that principle.

But in your case, I would have to say I cannot in all the years I've known you recall ever reading you defending yourself against — and you have every libertarian pygmy in the world attacking you who, if that person had 87 lifetimes, wouldn't have contributed as much as you have. And yet you never say that or point that out or defend yourself. You just carry on carry on. And I'm wondering: is there a strategy behind that, or is that just your temperament? What's going on there?

ROCKWELL: I guess that's my temperament, although it probably stems from when I first started the institute. And one of the things I initially did was to ask all the people who I knew who were interested in Austrian economics and were scholars if they wanted to be adjunct scholars of this new organization. And everybody that I talked to said yes, they'd love to. And then about two weeks later, all the ones who are connected to the Koch apparatus resigned, and they didn't just resign, but typically sent very nasty letters. This included people who had been old friends of mine.

And what had happened was I had also sent people who I thought were potential financial sources letters about this new institute, and one of the people I sent it to was the head of the Koch Foundation, who had been an old friend of mine. And he called me up, just wild. I mean, just furious, screaming at me: "How dare you do this? Don't you realize all the money and time we've spent trying to make Hayek the major figure in Austrian economics and to push Mises off to the side? After all, nobody liked Mises. Even Milton Friedman didn't like Mises." At which point, I said, "Well, that's of course a medal on Mises' chest."

WOODS: [laughing]

ROCKWELL: And he said, "You will not start this institute." And I said, "You're trying to give me an order that I'm not going to start the institute?" He said yes. I said — I was tempted to say certain things, but I just said, "I'm not paying any attention to you," and I said, "This is just more of an incentive for me to do it."

So after that had happened, all these people who were connected to the Koch apparatus and sent very nasty, critical letters, and I guess they had to copy Wichita. And I realized at that point that there are people in the world who will hate your guts because they're ordered to do so or they're maybe in effect like Communist Party members and the party line changes, and then they change, regardless of what they might otherwise think.

I mean, it's true I have a lot of people are critical of me, but if somebody is saying you're a racist, you're a homophobe, you're a sexist, you're a lookist, a sayist, and all the rest of these commie terms, what do you say? "I'm not a racist." Well, okay. That's right. But I'm not interested in writing a long article about that, and I don't think these people can be persuaded. But it's also my temperament. I just prefer to plow ahead, just like I did when the Koch people called me. Pay no attention and just go right straight ahead and hope that I'm able to do the things I wanted to do. And I think I have been able to do at least some of the things I planned to do. And if I had spent time — of course, first of all, you have to read these people —

WOODS: Oh, yeah. Yeah, that's a waste of your time. It's just a bad use of your time. And I really should be to some degree rebuked for this, because I've — the problem is — and I understand why they're doing it, and they just want to help me. I know that. But I get tagged in certain Facebook discussion, so I will sometimes look and, well, what am I being tagged for? And it's because somebody saying some ridiculous thing or whatever it is, and then, ugh, so now what? Now you dragged me into this. I really — but then I go there, and, you know, half the people are already defending me, saying, of all possible people to attack, why would you pick Tom Woods [laughing], you know, he's just basically like a mild-mannered academic type, and you make it sound like he's the mastermind of some giant thing.

ROCKWELL: Little do they know, Tom.

WOODS: Yeah, that's right. I'm a mastermind of a different kind of thing. But I'm not part of some horrible — I mean, it's just so funny, because I'll sometimes actually share these things with Regina, the oldest of my daughters who's 15. And I'll say, "Look what this person just said about me." And she'll say, "Yep, that's you to a tee, Dad." You know, we just get a laugh out of it. It's just ridiculous.

I want to ask you something that's completely unrelated to politics, but that I did have a couple people wondering your opinion. Do you have any opinions on the crisis and the scandals going on in the Catholic Church these days? I did an episode of the show with Roger McCaffrey and another fellow, Steve Skojec, about a week or two ago, talking about that. And you know, I know that you've followed these Church politics to some degree over the years as well.

ROCKWELL: Well, I must say, I was thrilled by Archbishop Viganò's letter. Even though one wishes these things weren't true, I think they are true, so I think to bring it out is excellent. If we'd had a pope who could have cleaned house, had the guts and the willingness to clean house, maybe this wouldn't have had to happen. But I think it's excellent that it has happened. I noticed that the Legatus Group, which is a group of Catholic CEOs, has always made \$1 million a year donation to the Vatican. They're putting this in escrow this year.

WOODS: I didn't know that. I've spoken at Legatus events many times, so I'm glad to hear they're taking that stand.

ROCKWELL: And I think a lot of people individually are making a similar decision. They're not going to give to Peter's pence and so forth. And I think part of the money that the American dioceses have is a problem. It enables them to be sort of separate from the laity. So to the extent that they don't have that money anymore, that's probably a good thing. These dioceses in America are, as somebody pointed out just recently, they're gigantic. I mean, why is there one bishop for New York City? Dioceses should be much smaller, much closer to the people. They shouldn't be so wealthy. And so I think some of the things that are happening are going to help bring that about.

This is maybe a great time of reform for the Church. Every once in a while, every 500 years or so, it seems there's a crisis and there needs to be a reform. I'm not referring to the Protestant Reformation, by the way; I'm talking about things that the Church itself does reform itself. And, you know, I hope it's not going to be, I guess, the present pope, but if there's a good pope the next time, he might be in a position to help lead this. But we can't just depend on the pope. We can't just depend on the hierarchy. Lay people have to do this. We have to become more active. We have to concentrate on our own parishes, and to the extent that we look at anybody higher up, the bishop.

But there are those who feel — and I'm afraid they may be right — that while it's only a small percentage of Catholic priests who've been involved in these kinds of activities, the number of bishops who at least have been covering up for it, if not involve themselves, is much, much higher. 40, 60, 80% some people think in the United States. I'd like to think that it's not anything like that, but it's no question, there's a large number of them. They need to go. They need to be retired, maybe some of them even need to be reduced to the lay state. But there's much to do. Of course, everybody has to pray and fast and do things of that sort.

But being actively involved, men and women, in this tremendous battle for the future of the Church is I think a duty. And I must say, I find this fight to be fun, because we've all known this stuff has been going on. Now it's out in the open. I must say, I didn't realize there were all these Cardinals and so forth, but I guess I should have known. And there's no excuse for anybody now not to know. And the pope can say that silence is the proper response, but of course, it's not the proper response. So we just have to see and pray and hope that things go the way that they ought to go. It's not going to happen overnight, but this could be a new, bright day for the Catholic Church, and, please God, that's the case.

WOODS: Lew, one last thing. Let's bring it back home to the Mises Institute. Last year, there was a 35th anniversary event, commemorating 35 years of the Mises Institute. It's still going strong. What's your assessment, looking back over all those years? And specifically, if you were to be starting the Mises Institute today, what if anything would you do differently?

ROCKWELL: Well, if I were starting it in the same way I started it then, which was pretty much a typewriter and my kitchen table, maybe it'd be nice to have an angel give you lots of money, although sometimes I think in the case of some of these wealthy people, it's not actually good to be under their thumb. So the Mises Institute has always had many, many different, smaller donors, and that was sort of — that's the way it had to be in the beginning, and I think it's a good thing that that has been the case — not that we're worried about getting big donors, but if you start out, as sometimes happens, with one person making a very large donation, they feel they own the organization, and maybe they're the kind of person who knows about nonprofits and knows about how to be successful and maybe they're not.

So I think I would have tried to keep Murray Rothbard alive. I would have had him go to a doctor and that sort of thing. But really, we were blessed all of us from the beginning to have Margit von Mises, Ludwig von Mises' widow — whom Murray correctly referred to as a one-woman Mises industry after his death — be our chairman. Then then Burt Blumert, a great, great businessman in California, who was the second chairman and just an extraordinary guy and a man of just tremendous wisdom. I always thought that if we lived in the in the right kind of society, Burt could have been a private judge, where people on both sides would pay him to get a judgment, and the both sides would trust him. I mean that kind of man.

So we had wonderful — you know, and again, Murray Rothbard. To have Murray Rothbard until 1995 was, of course, one of the great blessings in my life, and just a tremendous inspiration to everybody connected to the Institute. He continues to be an inspiration. And more and more people are reading him, and this is just essential that this happened, because he's such an extraordinary writer. Tom Woods, if anybody knows about good writing, it's you, and Murray, of course, was a tremendous writer. If you read some of his monographs on the state, on war, they are life-changing, and let alone is more significant works, *Man, Economy, and State* and all the many books and thousands of articles that he wrote. And we were just so blessed to have him around, and we're blessed to have him as a presence even now.

And, you know, I think, given the circumstances, that it was a very small operation for a long time, I'm not sure what I would do differently. I don't question I made mistakes. I hired some people I shouldn't have hired and that sort of thing. But did that really have that much of a bad effect? I don't know. But certainly, there are people I hired, I wouldn't have hired, decisions I made that I shouldn't have made. But I think, by and large, really, given that we were a very skinny operation financially, still are, I think we did okay.

I notice with each anniversary – you mentioned our 35th anniversary. With each anniversary, people began to have more faith in the institute. And really, with the 10th anniversary, I noticed that people started to put us in their will, which has been a very, very important source of funding. And with each anniversary, more and more people would do that. Because, of course, they figure, well, they're going to be around for a while, and they might like the idea in the early years, but they wonder, well, is this organization going to exist in the long term? So once they were sure that we were going to exist in the long term, then they started to bless us by the great gift of adding us to their wills.

So I have one of our board members that keeps telling me I've got to write a book about all of this and about the various good things and bad things and so forth that happened. I do have a new book coming out. Can I mention that?

WOODS: Of course.

ROCKWELL: It's called *Against the Left*. The index is being written right now, and it talks about I think the great enemies of mankind, certainly the temporal enemies, are the left ever since the French Revolution. And of course, we have the left running part of the libertarian movement, as well, which I talk about in the book. So it's not a big book; it's just 150 pages. But it just talks about, that everything bad, whether it's, you know, the French Revolution, Marx, Trotsky, Lenin, Hitler, everything evil politically has come pretty much from the left, overwhelmingly. And so I think it's important we know about it, we learn about them, we learn how to oppose them, and we fight against them.

WOODS: Wow, I did not know about that, so that's a great announcement. And so of course, you'll have to come back on; we'll talk about that book when it's ready. In the meantime, people should of course be visiting LewRockwell.com on a daily basis, as I do, as well as Mises.org. Those websites will blow your mind and keep you occupied from now until the end of time. Lew, thanks so much for the chat today and for answering all these great questions.

ROCKWELL: Tom, it's an honor to be on your show, as always.