



Episode 1,459: Lew Rockwell on So-Called Moderates Against Leftists in July Dem Debate

Guest: Lew Rockwell

WOODS: I forgot to tell you, and I'm going to tell you as everyone is hearing it, that on this year's Contra Cruise, which as you know, Bob Murphy and I have been hosting for the past four years —

ROCKWELL: Yes.

WOODS: — we did what we've done every year, which is we play a *Family Feud*-style game except with libertarian questions, and it's just a blast. And as in the real *Family Feud* game, I really do survey 100 people, and we put the top answers on the board. And one of the questions, which we've done two out of the three years, was name your favorite guest on *The Tom Woods Show*. And for the first two years that we did it, last year and then the first year, the number-one answer was Michael Malice. This year, Michael Malice has been dethroned. He came in at number two, and the number-one favorite guest on *The Tom Woods Show* is now Lew Rockwell.

ROCKWELL: Well, that's exciting.

WOODS: How about that?

ROCKWELL: All hail your listeners, Tom.

WOODS: Yeah, that's right. That's right. They have discriminating tastes. So I thought I would tell you that excellent news. So the wise guy who guessed Michael Malice, thinking he'd get the number-one answer, was sadly mistaken this year [laughing]. Anyway, all right, let's talk about the debate last night. This is the second series of the Democratic debates, because it's carried out over the course of two nights. And as I'm doing this time, I'll be talking to Tho Bishop tomorrow, because, you know, Lew, we did a lot of Republican debates together, but never did I ask you to do two nights in a row, two hours at a time. I just don't have the heart to do that. So you and I will talk about this first one, that did not include Sleepy Joe Biden, but did include Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren. So it's still major people in this one. How about starting with overall impressions?

ROCKWELL: Well, I think it was Yang who said he felt he'd just watched the most boring football game in history. It was not very interesting, but I think there were some things to learn from it. And I always like the Drudge poll, which I think there are a lot of Democrats who participate in it, because this is the only big-time poll that you can participate in that's

available to people and that it's on a significant site and so forth. So Marianne Williamson comes massively in first.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah.

ROCKWELL: And indeed, on Google, she was by far the most searched candidate in 49 states. And I think maybe she was actually the most race conscious of all of them, and she's the one who famously holds seminars where white people get up and join hands and apologize for all the evil things they've done to black people. And she made I guess what people thought was a very moving claim for massive reparations for descendants of former slaves, and I would say she got the most applause of anybody for that.

And I think it shows also about the fact that she's in first, and Tom Delaney came in second on Drudge; Warren, third; Bernie, fourth. And I know I'm prejudiced, but I was struck by just how unpleasant Warren and Sanders are, waving their arms, shouting at people, and of course advocating evil. So I actually think they both — we'll see what the standard polls show, and I don't know how much we can trust the standard polls, but I look forward to seeing what they show. But I thought both of them were taken down a notch.

And the questioners, who clearly represents sort of the establishment of the Democratic Party, the CNN questioners, wanted to know, was it really a good idea to tell 180 million Americans that you're going to take away their health insurance whether they want it or not? And this was denounced as a Republican question, but of course, it's actually a question that applies to what's going to happen in the election. And Bernie absolutely — and Elizabeth Warren, too — that this was necessary, it was great, and everybody's going to be happy. And Bernie alone was honest enough to say people were going to pay more taxes, but really, they were going to be much happier. He knew they'd all be much happier. So that was interesting.

The people who were, let's say, slightly less crazy — although all these people, even the so-called moderates are far leftists. They all are for some people kind of Green New Deal, maybe not the craziest form, but some form. They're all for, say, outlawing fossil fuels, which are actually not fossil fuels; they're produced in the earth continuously. But they're not the remnants of dinosaurs and fern plants and all the things we were taught in school. But I thought these people all — I think Trump had to be happy at this last night, because even though they kept denouncing him, I think that — also Buttigieg or whatever his name is, he also said that the key thing was to immediately address all racism of all sorts, and that the government eradicated this. This was the most important thing, sort of a French Revolutionary kind of thing.

So I thought these people were, by and large, terrible, although the some of the so-called moderates, just as compared to the communists on stage, seemed better. I think Marianne Williamson, she's done very well in both these debates, and because of the kind of business she has, where she has all these seminars, I'm sure she's going to get enough donors to be in the next debate. But I'm sure they would love to get rid of her at the Democratic Party. So anyway, I thought it was interesting. It was boring. It was terrible. But I think Bernie and Warren really hurt themselves. In fact, one of the so-called moderates said to Bernie, he said, "You don't have to shout."

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, Congressman Ryan. Yeah, he said, "You don't have to yell," because the entire night, Bernie didn't smile once.

ROCKWELL: No, he was very unpleasant.

WOODS: And I understand he can say, "Well, you know, I'm fighting against injustice, and there's nothing to smile about that." But come on now. You cannot be charismatic at all? It's all just hectoring and pointing his finger and frowning.

ROCKWELL: Yeah.

WOODS: And Elizabeth Warren is more or less the same way.

ROCKWELL: She said to the audience, "This is not funny. Don't laugh."

WOODS: Right, yeah, exactly. Yeah, that's it. And the thing is, Lew, I mean, as libertarians, in a way, we're actually angrier than they are.

ROCKWELL: You're darn right.

WOODS: There are far, far more injustices that we perceive than they do. And yet if I get up in front of the country, I would be humorous and charming and charismatic. I wouldn't be spending my time pointing my finger at the camera, just hectoring everybody. That's just a dumb strategy just strategically.

You're right about the question about and the whole topic of healthcare, and would you basically say to 150, 160 million people: you have to get rid of a health care plan that you like? Congressman Delaney, who's one of the so-called moderates — which, as you say, ha ha — he did make the point that if when we got Social Security going, if we had told people we're going to abolish private pensions, however, we never would have gotten out of the starting gate. There's no reason we have to be this extreme. But here's the problem, though —

ROCKWELL: I wish he'd been an FDR advisor.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, I know it. I know. Now, the thing is, here's the problem that the so-called moderates — and again, we use this this term almost laughingly — but the so-called moderates are facing in the Democratic Party. And here we're talking about Delaney, maybe Hickenlooper to some degree, maybe Bullock to some degree. What they face is their approach to policy and the economy seems to be based on more or less the idea that — I mean, they wouldn't put it this way, but this is the logic of what they're saying — that you can just keep imposing burdens on the private sector, really, painlessly. Like, there really isn't anything we need to worry about. What matters is what we desire.

So for instance, with the minimum wage, we think it should be \$15 an hour. There's no particular reason it should be 15, as opposed to four \$14.80 or 15.21. We just picked 15 because it sounds nice to us. So I mean, that's the kind of mentality you have there, that it's all basically arbitrary, based on feelings, based on needs, as opposed to the way the world works. And it is wish-list economics, as one of them said. But the trouble is, once you latch on to at least some part of that, which is what they all sort of believe, how do you put the brakes on it? How do you say, this far, but no farther? When the most consistent Democrats will say, well, look, as long as we're making demands of the private sector, let's demand the whole thing. It becomes very hard for a moderate to defend himself.

ROCKWELL: And of course, the Green New Deal involves massive impositions on what will be the shrinking private sector. And they all think that's great. It's fine. It's wonderful. And I don't know, but I really do think that it's interesting that they were a little bit more antiwar than the last time.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: Just slightly. And I liked it when Elizabeth Warren said that the US ought to say we'll never be the first to use atomic weapons. Of course, I noticed nobody was saying, hey, Elizabeth, the US was already the first to use atomic weapons. But of course, nobody talks about that sort of thing.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: But I was glad she said that, and I noticed CNN had a big editorial today about how that was a very dangerous proposal, and we shouldn't say that. Oh, okay. And there were some others who talked about all they ever said was we shouldn't have endless wars. Well, I mean, at least that's correct.

WOODS: Yeah, I mean, even a neocon would say that. No neocon's going to say, yes, I want an endless war.

ROCKWELL: [laughing]

WOODS: The neocon will say, No, we want to crush these SOB's and win the war. I mean, even they'll say that. Now, Hickenlooper says he'd like to keep some troops in Afghanistan, which is the signal to the world out there that nothing's going to change under him. It's just going to be Obama, part two. So we've got that, because we can't leave Afghanistan now. Yeah, because that be —

ROCKWELL: Because that'd be betraying the women.

WOODS: Yeah, 18 years later.

ROCKWELL: Because we've done so much good, brought about so much progress, we have to forever be killing people in Afghanistan for reasons of feminism.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah. So with regard to some of the specifics of policy, I want to do two things here. First, I did an episode on the Green New Deal with Patrick Moore, formerly a Greenpeace director, who is now reformed and done penance and is just appalled at what's going on in the world. And I did an episode on the Green New Deal, And right off the bat, he said, well, if it were really implemented the way it's described and on the timetable in which it's described, it would lead to mass death. And he lays out exactly why. So on the show notes page, TomWoods.com/1459, I'll link to my interview with Patrick Moore.

But the other thing is I just released — you know, Lew, I put out free eBooks. It's an open secret. And I put out a free eBook just recently, called *AOC is Wrong*, and the subtitle is *The Upside Down World of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez*. And it goes through the Green New Deal and free college and affordable housing and health care and all these sorts of things, where you

know she's wrong, but you've got loud-mouth friends at work who make you feel guilty for not supporting these things. And it just smashes them to pieces. So for the details of the policy disagreements we have with these people, I recommend that eBook. People can get it — Lew, can you believe I actually bought the domain AOCIsWrong.com? I own that. That's where you get this free eBook, AOCIsWrong.com. I mean, just type that into your browser for the pure satisfaction of typing in AOCIsWrong.com.

All right, let's get back to the actual debate. I mean, I thought it was interesting that Bernie says — because he's talking about he doesn't like this employer-provided health care. He's going to have his single-payer policy. And he says, now, look, now that companies won't be the ones basically funneling the health care money, he says, instead of putting money into health care, they can now pay higher wages. And I thought, whoa, that's a huge admission from Bernie. So wait a minute. You mean if you just pile on so-called fringe benefits that are required to be paid by private employers, that this might actually reduce wages? That there might be a tradeoff involved? I don't think he's ever acknowledged that before.

ROCKWELL: No, you're right, and of course, it's needless to say nobody was willing to make a point of making that point on the stage, because they're all such far leftists. And it's quite extraordinary, and I noticed them all saying, look, we can't really care about the people who mine coal or workers or whatever; they're just going to have to take it, because we're going to get rid of all those so-called fossil fuels and get rid of all the automobiles. And of course, their Green New Deal also requires getting rid of airplanes that are flying around because of fossil fuels. So I guess, what is this, going to be electric airplanes, airplanes that are — what are they even talking about? Of course, they will allow airplanes for a government use, military and civic government use.

WOODS: What a surprise, yes. And now, Hickenlooper said — again, here's the problem with the so-called moderates: they're basically okay with 70% of that Green New Deal.

ROCKWELL: That's right.

WOODS: The problem is, well, you're, you're combining the environmental aspect of it with too many extraneous issues, like guaranteed government jobs and income equality and stuff like that, that are beside the point. We have to really focus on the environment. And so Hickenlooper, instead of saying, well, obviously, we would destroy everyone's standard of living and we would have precisely zero effect on climate, because if China's not going to do anything, we can impoverish ourselves all we want, it's not going to make any real difference — but Hickenlooper says he was unhappy about every American basically being guaranteed a government job. Now, first of all, good luck trying to alarm Democrats about that.

ROCKWELL: [laughing]

WOODS: They cannot imagine for a second why that would be a problem. But that's what he's reduced to, because he can't criticize the fundamentals of the Green New Deal. He can't criticize the stuff that leads to mass death. So he says, "That's a disaster at the ballot box," making a pledge like that. He says, "You might as well FedEx the election to Donald Trump." Okay, I kind of like that line, I have to admit. But as I say, that's the problem that is facing the moderates.

Now, on the other hand, the moderates, I think they do get some direct hits on, for example, Governor Bullock of Montana was asked the following: "About two thirds of Democratic voters and many of your rivals here for the nomination support giving health insurance to undocumented immigrants. You haven't gone that far. Why not?" And he says what I think will resonate with normal people. He says, "Look, I think this is the part of the discussion that shows how often these debates are detached from people's lives. We've got 100,000 people showing up at the border right now." He says, "If we decriminalize entry, if we give health care to everyone, we'll have multiples of that. Don't take my word. That was President Obama's Homeland Security Secretary who said that. "

And then this Congressman Ryan, who's an awful neocon, who had that exchange with Tulsi Gabbard last time, said, "Now, in this discussion already tonight, we've talked about taking private health insurance away from union members in the industrial Midwest, we've talked about decriminalizing the border, and we've talked about giving free health care to undocumented workers when so many Americans are struggling to pay for their health care. I quite frankly don't think that's an agenda we can move forward on and win." Now, I'm not totally sure about that, Lew, because the voters have definitely moved left. But maybe that group of Independent voters, maybe they will stop short of: yeah, anybody who just stops in gets free health care. Maybe they will. I don't know. What do you think?

ROCKWELL: Well, I was not impressed when Bernie said, look, it's a human right, health care, and therefore you can't deny it to anybody who comes and asks for it. So of course, nobody is willing to say: well, exactly how many people should we admit to the US to get free health care and welfare and free education and so forth, free college and your college loans abolished that they all are advocating? A million? 10 million? 100 million? A billion? According to the UN, there are a billion people who would like to come to Europe and to the US, and that's just now. I mean, who knows what is the case in the future? But nobody is — of course, they're all pro-immigration. They're all for decriminalizing border crossing. As bad as Trump is on so many things, it's hard for me to see him losing. I think these people are crazy, and I think the Republicans are going to be able to have the kind of advertising campaign and in his debates with the Marianne Williamson or whoever is the Democratic nominee, I think he's going to easily smash them. We'll see.

WOODS: Where I live, Lew — and by the way, no one's allowed to say what I'm about to say, even though everyone knows it's true. It just astonishes me that we live in a country where everybody knows something is true and you cannot say. And this is true, by the way, in the libertarian world. There are things that, I mean, unless these people are comatose, my fellow libertarians also know these things are true. But if you say them, you're a terrible person. Look, I'm not a terrible person, all right? I'm a very, very lovely, wonderful person everybody likes. Every normal person likes me.

ROCKWELL: That's right.

WOODS: But I see with my own two eyes — and everybody involved knows what's going on — that there are a ton of illegals — and yes, I'm going to use that terrible, forbidden word — who use the emergency room as their primary care doctor. And that means that my child, whom I'm actually going to pay for — I'm going to pay the full amount — my child sits there for seven to eight hours waiting to get in when there's an emergency, because everybody else is clogging it up to use it for their primary care doctor. Now, I know I should be sitting there saying, "How wonderful it is that their human rights are being fulfilled."

ROCKWELL: [laughing]

WOODS: But you know, that's really not how I feel when I have an emergency with my child. Now, why is it — I know it's evil and racist and hateful to want your child to get emergency care. But okay, then whatever. Say these stupid names that do not constitute an argument in any way. That does not show me why I'm wrong. To call me that name does not actually constitute a refutation of what I just said. And there are a ton of people who are forced to live this way now, because basically, hospitals are obligated to give free care in those conditions. And if you use the emergency room as your primary care doctor, there's no way they can stop it. And they're obviously overwhelmed, and meanwhile, people who are — you know, I know we hear about how honest and hardworking all the immigrants are? Well, some of them are, but not the people sitting in that room. In many cases, it's, *I'm going to get free health care here*. And meanwhile, people who actually work their tails off so they can provide for their families are sitting there waiting impossibly long to the point where you give up and go home. And whatever's wrong with your kid, you just hope it goes away. That's a reality for a lot of Americans. That is a reality.

ROCKWELL: Well, certainly it's true all along the border, hospitals, you can't get in.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: And even the even some of the women who come across to have their baby in the US so that they're citizens and so forth end up having a very tough time getting into the hospital. And of course paying people, as you say, you're a racist if you think you ought to get in.

WOODS: It's insane. I mean, really, how deranged would you have to be to say that it's racist to have this obvious common sense? How far gone would you have to be? I mean, really.

ROCKWELL: It's definitely not libertarianism, is it?

WOODS: Yeah, it absolutely boggles my mind, these people. And then meanwhile, we get this from, I guess it was Don Lemon? I think so. "Senator Klobuchar, what do you say to those Trump voters who prioritize the economy over the President's bigotry?" [laughing] Well, there's an impartial question from the moderator.

ROCKWELL: [laughing] I know, Tucker Carlson always calls him Don Limón.

WOODS: [laughing] Oh, gosh. Then I got Mayor Pete, so-called, Pete Buttigieg saying, "So-called conservative Christian senators right now in the Senate are blocking a bill to raise the minimum wage, when Scripture says that whoever oppresses the poor taunts their maker." All right, he loves doing this. He loves to say, look, I'm religious too, so I can say that my crazy policies are justified by the Bible. Okay, notice Scripture does not say anything about a minimum wage. There's nothing in there. Oppressing the poor. Okay, well, what does that mean?

ROCKWELL: And it's talking about individuals, of course. It's talking about the state.

WOODS: Right, of course it is. And, also, I mean, we don't need to go through all the consequences, but you have a \$15 minimum wage. First of all, that's going to draw people into the labor market who weren't in it in the first place. So you're going to have way more people looking for jobs. And secondly, the supply, I mean, I wouldn't hire as many people if I had to hire my \$15 an hour. So we get all that. You've got the fact that minimum wage, basically, nobody earns it for any length of time. I mean, basically, you can round it off to zero. Almost nobody earns it for any length of time. And of the people who do earn it, almost none of them, a very modest percentage are actually heads of households. It's almost all teenagers, who if they have any responsibility whatsoever, won't be earning it one year from now. And so the ideas on which it's based are all wrong. They think that wages rise because governments force wages to rise, but if that were true, everybody in America would be earning the minimum wage. Why doesn't everybody earn the minimum wage? if employers could just arbitrarily set wages? Why would they set them one cent above the legal minimum? So there are a million reasons that this is a bad idea.

But it obviously will mean fewer people will be employed. I mean, how could that be — surely there's somebody whose labor is not worth \$15 an hour. There must be one solitary person in America whose labor is not worth \$15 an hour at this moment. Maybe someday it will be, but not right now. Why is that not a form of oppressing the poor? And if \$15 an hour works, why isn't that oppressing the poor when the poor could just as easily have \$55 an hour? Apparently, if it's just arbitrary, why not \$85 an hour. Why isn't \$15 an hour oppressing the poor?

ROCKWELL: \$100 an hour. We can all be rich.

WOODS: Yeah. Right. The beautiful thing about libertarianism is, because we just say to hell with everything, we don't have to wind up figuring out why it should be 15 and not 21.32, and we don't get in these interminable arguments that are impossible to resolve because there is no answer.

ROCKWELL: Who was the candidate who pointed out that Medicare reimburses hospitals 80% of their costs?

WOODS: I think it was Delaney.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, and that private insurance pays 120%. And he talked to all the small hospitals in his areas, said what would happen if everything were Medicare? And they all said we'd be all out of business.

WOODS: Yeah, he said that directly to Bernie. He said, what would happen if the hospitals were all reimbursed at the Medicare rate, with 80%?

ROCKWELL: Bernie said, they wouldn't have to go through all this paperwork that's so expensive.

WOODS: Yeah, like that was the best he could up with. Because I'm sure the government paperwork will be no problem at all.

ROCKWELL: [laughing] What paperwork? They'll just give them money.

WOODS: Yeah, exactly. It'd be one half a form, and then that'll be the end of it. So yeah, that I thought was actually an interesting point, that we everybody, every doctor, every hospital knows about the Medicare reimbursement rates. They know it's a loser. So you save Medicare for All, and so you're going to wind up with — obviously, all marginal hospitals just simply go under at that point. And then what happens?

ROCKWELL: Well, this is of course the way they fund it, because of course, there'll be much less care.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah.

ROCKWELL: Despite Bernie saying, and old people are going to have free hearing aids and free dental and free —

WOODS: Free eye glasses, yeah.

ROCKWELL: And so forth, yeah. Just like in the National Health Service or in Canada, where it's very difficult to get any of these things. Nobody, of course, on that stage would point that out.

WOODS: Yeah, none of them are going to say anything critical about any other country's policy, because they know that's part of their talking points, these other countries have these great systems. Now, given your view that Bernie and Warren came off as just hectoring and very, very uncharismatic and unlikable, but yet, at the same time — I mean, we didn't have Harris, we didn't have Biden in this debate, so we'll have to see how they do. But it doesn't seem as if any of the second or third tier candidates are getting any traction at all.

ROCKWELL: No.

WOODS: So are there any winners from this debate? We see maybe who a couple of losers might be, but are there any winners, as far as you can see?

ROCKWELL: Well, I think Marianne Williamson was a winner.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: And it's good for her business. And poor Amy Klobuchar and the rest of these people, of course, just sort of fell down a hole. And so maybe Williamson, maybe she'll end up being the vice presidential candidate. Who knows? She's certainly got the right racial views.

WOODS: You know, this could just be my bias coming through, because I know Tulsi Gabbard has a million problems. I mean, believe me. But the fact that she speaks the way she does, she speaks about foreign policy in a way —

ROCKWELL: No, she's great, yeah.

WOODS: — that nobody else does. And she wasn't in last night's debate. But for some reason, she just comes across to me — I could be wrong — as a genuinely pleasant person, as politicians go.

ROCKWELL: I think that's true.

WOODS: Because you know that behind closed doors, they're all horrible people. I think she might be actually genuine. Whereas Amy Klobuchar comes across as —

ROCKWELL: Ugh.

WOODS: — you hear her and you think, yep, those rumors about how she abuses her staff are all true.

ROCKWELL: [laughing] Just her hair and the way she dresses would stimulate that kind of view, it seems to me.

WOODS: Yeah, I was watching the debates with a friend over Skype last night, and I mentioned this about Amy Klobuchar being known, and this friend and I both agreed, yeah, those rumors are true [laughing], just looking at her.

ROCKWELL: No, of course, yeah. And of course, Bernie is famously a very nasty guy.

WOODS: Oh, could you imagine him being pleasant? That's impossible to imagine.

ROCKWELL: And Elizabeth Warren, of course, nobody brings up the whole Indian business. But certainly Trump, if she's the nominee or the vice presidential nominee, will bring that up. And she talked about how she was able to get ahead because she went to a cheap, small college, and that really set her off on her great path to glory. But of course, it was because she claimed to be a Cherokee is what got her all the special benefits that she ended up getting. And she doesn't want to talk about that, of course, but somebody is going to talk about if she is a nominee or the vice presidential nominee.

WOODS: Well, I think that'll do it for our discussion of this. TomWoods.com/1459 is the show notes page. Going to talk tomorrow to Tho Bishop of the Mises Institute about the second round. And Lew, let's hope that by the next debate, it'll be just one. I mean, I now suddenly favor tightening the requirements for my own sanity. So I hope that that happens soon. But thank you. I mean, look, let me just say: thank you for your service, Lew. You sat there and watched this for the sake of our listening audience here, and we all appreciate it. Thanks a lot, Lew.

ROCKWELL: Thank you, Tom.