



**WOODS:** Now, this is a provocative book and title. And I think with a title like that, you have to justify yourself. What is it about the left that means they deserve particular treatment, when it could be argued that we have enemies all around?

**ROCKWELL:** Well, of course it's true, and there are things wrong with the right, as well. But I would say that there's no question that the left is the preeminent danger and despicable evil of our time. And really, ever since Karl Marx, ever since really the French Revolution, the left has been the enemy. And so I think it's important to recognize that, and I think it's all around us. And in this book – and it's not a long book, it's just 157 pages, with a wonderful introduction by Hans Hoppe – I try to talk about you know why this is something that we need to worry about, and these are people who want to destroy our society. They want to destroy the family. They want to promote policies like egalitarianism and so-called civil rights, immigration, environmentalism, egalitarianism. And then in our own little movement, we have the left-libertarians, who are not anywhere near as dangerous as the left itself, but they do damage to the libertarian movement. So I think these are all worth considering, and I think and hope this book makes the case that these are people that we need to worry about and to oppose.

**WOODS:** I've given this a lot of thought myself as somebody who has written against pretty much everybody.

**ROCKWELL:** [laughing]

**WOODS:** You know, for a long time, for almost the whole Obama administration, I think I was only attacking the neocons, because I thought, how boring to attack this basically establishment, center-left president. Just boring. Everybody's attacking him. I want to go after the neocons. So I did that, and then the left just got to be so gross. I'd forgotten how bad the left was after going after neocons for so long.

**ROCKWELL:** Aren't the neocons also on the left?

**WOODS:** Right, you could even make that argument, sure, as I've tried to do. But the real left that actually proudly describes itself as the left, I thought, oh, geez, they're worse than I thought, so I've been spending a lot of time on them. But for me, the key thing that differentiates left and right – now, I'm talking about authentic left and authentic right – that makes me want to focus more on the left is that the left will take some abstract principle like equality – a word they'll never really define, which is great for them, because then it gives them all the wiggle room they need to do whatever they want – and they will impose it in such a way as to try to bring about the revolutionary transformation of society, all up and down its institutions.

Whereas the right, you just don't see that kind of grandiose desire to remake society. A genuine conservative basically wants to maintain his own household, his own little neighborhood, his own little plot of land, his own little postage stamp of ground, as Bill Kauffman puts it, and he's satisfied with that. He does not have this far-flung desire to remake all of society. And you see this even in things like the Department of Education. You don't have a lot of right-wingers hoping to make their careers there, because it just wouldn't occur to them. You know, maybe they want to work at their local school or something. It just

wouldn't occur to them to do this. But it's this imperial, revolutionary transformation instinct and impulse that makes people on the left want to insinuate their way into all these institutions. I don't see that threat from the right.

**ROCKWELL:** No, I think that's right. And again, whether we look at their attack on the family, which has certainly been ongoing since — well, I guess we could say since Plato, but certainly since the French Revolution, since Karl Marx. They hate the family; they'd like to destroy the family. And I think the current-day left is absolutely on board with that. They would like to destroy the family. So in this book, moving from Mises and Rothbard, also Hoppe, I try to show that this war on the family is maybe the most dangerous thing we face. Certainly, it's a tremendous danger. And I think that Mises was right, Rothbard was right, that the traditional family is the centerpiece of a free society and of our civilization, and the attempt to destroy the family is despicable and horrific and just extremely dangerous. I mean that can actually destroy our civilization.

**WOODS:** There's a lot of stuff in here — like you've got chapters on the family, on so-called civil rights, on, well, environmentalism too, but also immigration. There's a lot of controversial stuff, stuff that has divided libertarians on which you're taking a very firm position. You also have a chapter on economic egalitarianism, and that's something that hasn't really changed. I mean, some of the cultural stuff is really of recent vintage, because as I've said a number of times with Paul Gottfried on the show, the communists of the 1950s and '40s were not looking to spread personal liberation of various kinds. This would have been viewed by them as a bourgeois deviation. So that's relatively new, but economic egalitarianism is not new. I would say just right now the intensity of the push for it is greater than it's been probably, well, as long as I can remember. Do you have any thoughts on what's pushing them? It could be people say, well, it's because capitalism has created inequality and everybody's upset about it. What do you think's going on here?

**ROCKWELL:** Well, first of all, I'd argue as both Mises and Rothbard and Hoppe, I'll say there's something wrong with egalitarianism. There's something wrong with equality. It's a disastrous notion. And yes, they absolutely are stepping it up, but it's always been a disastrous notion even in the ancient world. Certainly again, in the French Revolution, Karl Marx, all the communists, they hold this up as it was a great thing to get rid of inequality and bring about egalitarianism, bring about equality. And I think it's extremely dangerous.

And Mises makes the point that the key aspect of human beings is our radical inequality. It's not that we're equal; we're radically unequal. And thank goodness, he says, because of course, then if we weren't unequal, then we wouldn't be able to have a civilization. We wouldn't be able to have — all the things that make a free society possible are wrapped up in inequality. And so the leftists are so vicious about wanting to bring about equality, and they are — Murray Rothbard of course writes about this beautifully, and it's very, very dangerous. And I think and then hope that if people read this book, they'll agree that it's something that is horrifically dangerous to our civilization and to our society.

**WOODS:** I want to read a passage from the book, if I may. This is from the economic egalitarianism chapter, showing that this chapter goes beyond economics, per se. And the passage runs as follows, and it's a little bit lengthy, but I think it's worth the time.

"Robert Nisbet, the Columbia University sociologist openly wondered if Rawls" — and that's of course John Rawls, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century American political philosopher — "would be honest enough to admit that his system, if followed to its logical conclusion, had to lead to the abolition of the family."

And here's what Nisbet says: "'I have always found treatment of the family to be an excellent indicator of the degree of zeal and authoritarianism, overt or latent, in a moral philosopher or political theorist.' And then Nisbet goes on to identify two traditions of thought in Western history. One he traced from Plato to Rousseau that identified the family as a wicked barrier to the realization of true virtue and justice; the other, which viewed the family as a central

ingredient in both liberty and order, he followed from Aristotle through Burke and Tocqueville."

And then just continuing on: "Rawls himself appeared to admit that the logic of his argument tended in the direction of the Plato/Rousseau strain of thought, though he ultimately and unpersuasively drew back."

And these are Rawls' words: "'It seems that when fair opportunity is satisfied, the family will lead to unequal chances between individuals. Is the family to be abolished then? Taken by itself and given a certain primacy, the idea of equal opportunity inclines in this direction. But within the context of the theory of justice as a whole, there is much less urgency to take this course.'

"Well, Nisbet took little comfort in Rawls' pathetic assurances. Can Rawls, wondered Nisbet, long neglect the family given its demonstrable relation to any quality? Rousseau was bold and consistent where Rawls is diffident. If the young are to be brought up in the bosom of equality, early accustomed to regard their own individuality only in its relation to the body of the state, to be aware, so to speak, of their own existence merely as part of that of the state, then they must be saved from what Rousseau refers to as 'the intelligence and prejudices of fathers.'"

Now, that is astonishing. Rawls is maybe the best-known, most-celebrated 20th-century American political philosopher, and he can barely bring himself to grudgingly concede that the family might be all right.

**ROCKWELL:** [laughing] Well, and my guess is he didn't actually believe that. I think, as Nisbet hints, he didn't dare go there. He found it was too scary a position for him to take in terms of his own career and his own standing. So by the way, Robert Nisbet of course was a great man. I've often wondered how the neocons managed to put up with him, because there was a time when he was being promoted by the neocons, even though of course he himself was no neocon. And they were promoting him. Now of course, they've forgotten him now that he's gone, but he's absolutely so worth reading, and what a tremendous intellect and just a tremendous man.

**WOODS:** And it's even more of a mystery, Lew, because he was so good on war, and he was saying that if you are a conservative, what could be more disruptive to your society than war and the military frame of mind and wanting a huge military establishment? So it is a mystery to me. I mean, it could just be he was the only sociologist with any common sense, and so it was slim pickings. I don't know.

**ROCKWELL:** Yeah, it's very interesting, and everybody should read some Robert Nisbet. He's just such a great writer and such a great thinker, and, unfortunately, not remembered as much today as he ought to be. And you've done a great job in making sure that people read him, and I'd like to join in with your efforts in that regard.

**WOODS:** Well, of course, people should start by reading your book *Against the Left*. They'll read Nisbet kind of in context; they'll see why he's important just in the passages that that you say. Now, Rawls himself of course is an egalitarian, and David Gordon, who's of course our good friend from the Mises Institute, senior fellow there, has said that he theorizes that the reason — I don't know; we can't prove this, but Rawls does believe in egalitarianism to the point where he can tolerate non-egalitarianism, he can tolerate unequal outcomes, as long as this makes the poor better off. So in other words, let's say we say that doctors get paid more than non-doctors. Well, that leads to a non-egalitarian outcome. But at the same time, it makes the poor better off because more people are likely to become doctors under those conditions, and so we can allow that kind of inequality. But inequality has to be judged by its effects on the poor.

Well, okay. Well, why would that stop at national borders, however? Like why wouldn't this mean that all the third-world countries shouldn't be brought up to first-world level, or first-

world countries brought down to the third-world level? It would seem that that would require that. And Rawls is very unpersuasive as to why it wouldn't require that, and David Gordon's theory is he feels like he's going to lose the faculty lounges. Because the professors will talk about inequality, but doggone it, they want their wine and cheese receptions [laughing]. So I don't know, right?

**ROCKWELL:** [laughing] No, David is of course tremendous, and I think the great expert on Rawls and why he's dangerous, why he's evil and why he's been so persuasive, unfortunately, especially on the left. I mean, he's had a bad effect like all the left-wing political philosophers since Plato.

**WOODS:** Let's talk about the left-libertarian problem for a minute, because that's a term that gets thrown around, and some people are dubious about it, or they think it's trying to find conflict where none exists. But I think it's important to talk about this. Now, there are a couple of ways you can define left-libertarian, right? There's this technical definition that refers to people who have certain economic views, like they think that in a purely free market, companies would tend to be smaller. You might have more worker-owned businesses than you have, things like that. But generally, colloquially, we use the term left-libertarian often to refer to libertarians who are eager, let's say, to follow the lead of the left culturally. Like whatever the left's demand is 15 minutes ago, they're on board. Whatever it is that we're being commanded to do, they're going to do, and when the left says that people who don't go along with this should be demonized, these people are prepared to hop on board and demonize those people. How do you approach this in terms of explaining to, let's say, a total newbie to the libertarian movement, who doesn't know the personalities and doesn't know the history, but just wants to know what does this term left-libertarian refers to?

**ROCKWELL:** Well, it refers to people who are leftist, as well as they claim also to be libertarians, but they're basically leftists. And this is a very unfortunate thing. They've had some influence, I think not a tremendous amount of influence, but some influence, and it's been deleterious influence. And I think these are people who promote, first of all, egalitarianism. They promote just every sort of thing the left promotes and all kinds of crazy stuff, like you wouldn't have companies owned by rich people, that all the employees would own the company and that sort of thing. So it's various left-wing aspects that go into making a left-libertarian. But they hate the guts of the right-libertarians, Hans Hoppe preeminently, but all the rest of us, and they are determined to try to crush us. That's not happened. I don't believe it will happen, but that's what they want. They're there feminists. They're for every kind of left-wing thing that you can think of. And are they really there for libertarians? I don't think so. But that's maybe something to be discussed in another book.

**WOODS:** Yeah, indeed, indeed. You know, I've found — this is not absolutely true. It doesn't hold in every case. But if we think about, in particular, people in the DC orbit of libertarianism who are especially eager to satisfy the left and to make sure they try and purge all the dissident voices in their ranks and to make sure that *The New York Times* understands we're not associated with those; we just want to talk about how the tariffs are bad — we don't want to talk about anything else, just tariffs are bad and price controls are bad, like we're living in 1873 or something like, like this is still what they think is the most important issue of the day.

But what I also find — like for example, I know that the Libertarian Party is not at the forefront of your concerns, Lew, but it is interesting to me that a lot of these Washington folks who are so eager to, let's say, demonize a guy like me, when it comes time to choose somebody for the Libertarian Party nomination, I always want the radical guy. Like I'm supposed to be the right-wing stuffed shirt. I always want the most radical libertarian I can find. Whereas they want to choose the stuffiest shirt they can find. It is the weirdest thing. These are the ones who, they're so chic and with it and culturally with it, and they're totally

on board with whatever the latest fashion is. But then they want the stuffiest shirt they can find, and I want the big radical.

And likewise, in the same way, it's like they have a certain soft spot for the regime, for the establishment. And like you can see that in, they want to deny that there's a deep state or we're all crazy for speculating about that, and well, they just favor the rule of law and protecting whistleblowers. I mean, oh, come on. Get off your high horse. It's like they love the regime. It's weird.

**ROCKWELL:** Well, part of it is of course they they're funded by certain billionaires. Soros and the Kochs are cooperating in funding on an alleged pro-peace organization, although it's not actually of course that. So these people are all funded by these types, and that has to do with their position. So I think it's absolutely true, that they love Bill Weld, and they weren't at all upset when he ended up endorsing Hillary Clinton the last time. So I'm sure they're going to promote something similar this time with the Libertarian Party, and you're right, I'm not that much concerned with the party, but I'd still like to see it do the right thing. I'd like to see it be a Rothbardian Libertarian Party, as it was originally. But whether that happens or not, Tom, unless you run for office, I think that's not going to happen.

**WOODS:** Well, speaking of things that aren't going to happen —

**ROCKWELL:** No, I'm kidding you.

**WOODS:** [laughing] Yeah, that's right.

**ROCKWELL:** I don't want to wish that on you, believe me.

**WOODS:** No, no, no, I get it. I get it. You know, I want to see everybody become libertarian, so I don't care where people start out as long as they wind up in the right place. But at least the people in my audience, I would say probably two-thirds of them come from the right, and then maybe of the remainder, half of them were always libertarians. They were just born libertarians. And then the other half would be coming from the left. I mean, I do attract some people who come from the left, and I'm not even really aiming my rhetoric at them, but one way or another, they do come over here.

So we have people who come from all different backgrounds. And I get people saying to me that it's easier to convert people on the left, or it's easier to convert people from the right to libertarianism. In my experience has been easier to convert people on the right, but that may be because that's where I came from, and I know their errors really well, and I know the way they think, and I know the way they talk. So that works for me. And people who come from the left, well, they can reach out to those people somewhat more effectively.

But I've had it said to me that, well, you can more — I've heard this — you can more easily teach the left economics than you can teach the right peace. And the thing is, I think they're underestimating how hard it is to teach the left economics. The right is actually — there are parts of it that may be — now, as soon as the next war is declared, they'll get their tiny American flags back out from storage, and it'll be like nothing ever happened. But at least at the moment, you can get some of them to kind of think about it and admit it. And that's been the one thing that I do, is I just say: think about your conservative principles, and this foreign policy doesn't match up with them. And actually, I am able to get them over. Whereas now, the Democrats who — I realize they're not the hard left by any means, although they increasingly are becoming that. But the Democrats are not even good on that one thing now anymore, so you would get bad economics and war.

**ROCKWELL:** Ayn Rand held that the best objectivists came from the left. I'm not a big fan of objectivism, so that doesn't bother me. I trust that she knew what she was talking about. But I think certainly libertarians — and she hated libertarians, of course — the best libertarians come from the right. I don't think there's any question. But do we welcome people who are from the left? Of course. We welcome anybody who has any views whatsoever. If they're

interested in libertarianism, we welcome them with open arms. But I think the peace question, Ron Paul did such a tremendous job in making sure that young people all over the world knew that it was okay to be for peace, and you didn't have to be a communist to be for peace, not that the communists ever were for peace, of course. But I think Ron Paul has done it, you've done it, and I think I see a real change has taking place. And of course, this is one of the key components of libertarianism, is the cause of peace. And I think that I see a big change that's taking place, and you and Ron and others have brought that about.

**WOODS:** Well, I appreciate that. I mean, Ron was just — that's the thing he deserves to be remembered for the most, even more than the Fed and everything else. It's just not backing down on that. And then I'm sure being told by people close to him, *Ron, maybe tone down this war thing. Like we get it. Now it's time to talk about cutting spend.*

**ROCKWELL:** [laughing] You're right. He was being told that.

**WOODS:** Yeah, I'm sure. I mean, why wouldn't he be? I could imagine advisors telling him that. And then, *Maybe you've got to talk about cutting spending.* And I imagine the conversation going something like, Okay, I'll talk about cutting spending. And the next time he's out in public, it's, *We've got to cut defense spending*, you know [laughing]? So he winds up doing it anyway.

All right, so as I say, there's plenty of stuff in here that's been controversial among libertarians. And I remember a thing Ann Coulter said some time ago, and she said a word that I don't want to say on the podcast, because actually I've gotten — I actually get people emailing me thanking me for keeping the podcast clean, so that they can play it with their kids in the car. And once in a while, Lew, I want to say a bad word. Believe me, it's really tempting. But I want people to be able to drive around with their five-year-old, and not all day long the five-year-old is repeating some terrible word Woods said.

Anyway, leaving that aside, I don't want to say the word that Ann Coulter said, but it's a word that starts with P. And it's five letters long, all right? And she was saying that libertarians basically are those things, because, yeah, sure they want to talk all about legalizing pot, because who doesn't, right? That's very popular. But they don't want to talk about anti-discrimination law, because that would be extremely unpopular with everybody who matters.

And I thought that was actually a good point. People were all upset at her. Lew, I thought that was a very reasonable point for her to make, that as libertarians, we have to realize that we do say a lot of things that a lot of good, honorable, decent people will agree with, like we're antiwar, we're anti-surveillance, we're anti-police abuse, we're anti-asset forfeiture, we're all these sorts of good things that a lot of people would sympathize with. We're for free speech and all that. But what comes with that also is, yeah, sometimes we have to stand up and say: yep, at the same time, we are going to say things that are going to shock and scandalize you, but if you think them through, you'll see where we're coming from. And I think the issue of anti-discrimination laws certainly is one of those.

**ROCKWELL:** Well, of course, it's a very important issue, and it's something that libertarians, left-libertarians, of course, entirely reject it, but I would argue that all real libertarians, of course, understand that anti-discrimination law is horrific in a number of ways, and it's something that is not consistent with a free society.

**WOODS:** And the issue is not so much that we want people to put signs in front of their establishment saying none of this such and such group can come in. Basically nobody wants that. I mean, come on. Other than hysterics who think that Americans are just one step away from wanting to ban this or that group from this or that place, nobody really thinks that. I mean, nobody wants that. Nobody expects that to happen. It's more a question of, let's say there's shoplifting going on in my store, and I throw people out. But it turns out, I didn't throw people out in the precise ratio or the precise percentage that they are in the population. Then I could get the attorney general looking into my store, as if I would have an interest in

kicking people — especially a retail store today. They're desperate for money. They're not going to kick people out for no reason.

**ROCKWELL:** No, it's interesting that in California, in San Francisco and Los Angeles, in Boston and New York, they've recently passed laws saying that shoplifting or just theft, period, is fine as long as it doesn't go over \$1,000.

**WOODS:** What?

**ROCKWELL:** Yes, this is true. And so there was this recent incident, and *The New York Times* wrote about this, this poor lady who was being so terrible that she was being singled out, she was stealing people's Amazon packages from their porches, and so the article went on and talked about how this was terrible discrimination against her and so forth. And they never mentioned this fact that it was now not illegal to steal things worth less than \$1,000.

**WOODS:** That just can't be.

**ROCKWELL:** It is. No, it's true in New York and Boston, in Los Angeles.

**WOODS:** Oh, Dollar Stores are in big trouble. I could take a truckload of stuff out of the Dollar Store [laughing].

**ROCKWELL:** Yeah, and of course, you're not allowed to defend your store. And, we know what happened to the bakery in Ohio, where the left-wing college tried to put them out of business because there were black students who had stolen wine from the store, and the store didn't like it and they went after them. And of course, this is discrimination, it's vicious, it's horrible. And this is the left.

So again, what they want, what they're wanting, what they're planning makes everything that exists today seem like heaven. So there are terrible things they're planning, terrible things they're doing. It gets very little attention. And of course, Seattle also has these laws, where people can go to the bathroom on the sidewalk and that's fine, and all these cities have these laws, and you're a vicious racist if you disagree.

So it's so important that we stick to our guns as far as private property, as far as all the things that go along in a private property society of the sort that Hans Hoppe talks about. Even though people are going to denounce us, we have to be willing to stand up for private property and for all the issues that make a civilized society. And our civilized society is very much under attack. It's mostly coming from the left and again, the neocons, although I would argue the neocons are from the left and not from the right, although they pretend to sometimes be from the right. But they are leftists too. These are horrific people. And of course, the surveillance state is basically a left-wing operation, although obviously there are right-wingers who support it, and these are people who have to be persuaded or just kicked out of civilized society if they promote these kinds of things.

So really, we have our work cut out for us, but I think there's no question we have the truth on our side. We have the correct positions on our side, and we just have to work harder and try to spread libertarianism, the right sort of libertarianism, which I know Hans Hoppe feels is right-libertarianism. My own position, and I know Walter Block wrote me, and he said, "Lew, your next book needs to be *Against the Right*." And I said, "No, Walter, it doesn't have to be because I think that the left is the problem." The left is the basic problem, and yes, we should criticize the right when they're wrong, absolutely, and try to persuade them, but I think the left is the people who would like to kill us. They'd like to put us in concentration camps. They have no end to their ambitions for a totalitarian society, and so it's up to us to fight them.

And the Republicans are of course, by and large, no good. Democrats are, by and large, entirely evil, but we have to stick to our guns. We have to understand the basic principles of libertarianism. We have to understand the great people who are our ancestors, whether it's Mises and Rothbard, especially, but Nisbet and many other great men and women too. And everything good is at stake, so I think we need to work very hard. And you're preeminent in

this, in what you do, and I would say we all should try to be Woodsians to the extent it's possible for us.

**WOODS:** That's very kind of you to say, Lew, although we should be Lew Rockwellians first and foremost, let's say. Well, before I let you go, one last thing. Let me see if I can pick your brain on this a little bit. I think there is a difference between a committed ideological leftist and somebody who, by default, goes on the left because they're raised in a kind of left-wing milieu, and they think that being on the left just means you care about the downtrodden. And now, the ideological leftist is very, very, very hard to reach, but the second kind is reachable, and plenty of those people have become libertarians. Is there a way that you can speak to them, even as somebody who might identify himself as a right-libertarian, that you can speak to them that might make them think differently?

**ROCKWELL:** Well, I think it is possible, and of course, if one is concerned about, as you said, the downtrodden, we have to look at who's trotting them down. It's the state, and if the statists get their way, poor people get doubly downtrodden. So I think that yes, we can talk about free market society making everybody better off. So I think that those are important points to make too. So yes, absolutely, we can do that.

**WOODS:** Well, the book is called *Against the Left: A Rothbardian Libertarianism*. I'm linking to it on the show notes page, which is [TomWoods.com/1529](http://TomWoods.com/1529). And of course, you should be checking out [LewRockwell.com](http://LewRockwell.com) every day, as I do and as Ron Paul does, [LewRockwell.com](http://LewRockwell.com), which has been our flagship site for going on 20 years. Is it over 20 years, Lew?

**ROCKWELL:** It's almost 20 years, yes.

**WOODS:** Wow. Do you remember the exact month or when it was?

**ROCKWELL:** It was in November 1999.

**WOODS:** Okay, so at most, it's days away. 20 years of LRC. That's amazing. I'm sure the libertarian institutes that we find around the country will be having a big celebration to commemorate that [laughing].

**ROCKWELL:** [laughing] And a party too.

**WOODS:** Yes, of course, of course. Indeed, indeed. Well, look, on behalf of all the good libertarians out there, I'll say a big thank you to you, Lew, for all the great work you've done over the years, including this book. Thanks so much.

**ROCKWELL:** Thank you, Tom.