



## Episode 1,751: Pence v. Harris: What Happened

Guest: Dan McCarthy

**WOODS:** You've got some big shoes to step into here, because with the exception of one episode with Tho Bishop, I've done episodes with Lew Rockwell on the debates since 2015, since we did GOP debates. And they're my most downloaded episodes. And I just felt like I have put this guy through so much. Do I really have the guts to ask him to sit through the vice presidential debate for an hour and a half? But I thought I do have the guts to ask Dan McCarthy. And you were going to watch it anyway, so I feel not quite so bad [laughing].

So let me start off with a couple of just my general impressions and then get your general impressions, and then we can talk about some specifics. First of all, I find both these people very unimpressive. I have to say that when Pence, when I first saw him speak to the country as part of the Coronavirus Task Force, I was actually very impressed. And I think a lot of Americans had never really heard him speak before, and they'd just heard that he was some theocratic nutjob, was the impression they got. But then you heard him and he's got this very steady and sure, kind of politician-y voice, and very reassuring. And I was actually very impressed with him at that time. Tonight, overall, he did land some blows, but he sounded to me very much like a Reagan Republican with a few modifications, but very much with his slogans and his prepared responses, and he could have hit some home runs that he didn't hit.

And Harris, I don't know, I guess I can't even give you my overall impression of her. We'll have to just give specifics there, because there's just too many things I want to say. It was just repetition of long-exploded myths that she would just repeat as if they were facts and so on and on.

Overall, my impression of this debate is that it really – my impression is that it won't – now, you and I have not compared notes yet on this. It won't really change minds. It will probably solidify people in their existing views. So I'm quite sure that the Harris people were cheering her the whole time, and the Pence people were cheering him. I just don't think there were enough fireworks or enough just clear, smashing home runs as to make somebody walk away really shaken in his opinion. So what are your overall impressions here?

**MCCARTHY:** Well I agree with your analysis there, but I actually draw a different conclusion from it. I think the fact that Mike Pence was kind of boring and calm and reassuring, but actually was pretty tenacious about holding on to Donald Trump's themes and talking about defending the president at every turn, not letting Harris get away with making up stuff about the president's supposed hatred of American troops and stuff like that – the fact that Pence was able to take much of the Trump message and communicate it in a way that seemed reassuring and normal, I think that actually would have won back a lot of Republicans who

might have been turned off, especially more mainstream kind of Republicans who might have watched the first presidential debate and were turned off and finally decided, hey, maybe some of these Never Trumpers are kind of right about President Trump.

I think also there are a certain sort of marginal number of voters who don't have their minds fully made up. They're not really left-wing or right-wing, and so that kind of drift a little bit. And tonight, they would have looked at Mike Pence and they would have said, okay, this guy is an adult. This guy sounds like he is a regular person for the most part, a politician to be sure, but someone who is a politician that is more or less normal. And I think they would have looked at Kamala Harris and they would have said, well, gosh if what she says is true, America is a total living nightmare right now. And since I don't think the America I live in is this horrible, nightmare scenario that she's painted, I think Mike Pence is therefore much more representative of the America that I actually live in. So hence, by being boring and by being sort of normie, I think he actually did very well with this debate. And the contrast it provides with the last debate does help the Trump team a little bit.

**WOODS:** All right, let's talk about some specifics. Now, I also thought of that perspective, that this is a guy who, despite his establishment credentials, is nevertheless faithfully reproducing the Trump message, but doing so in a not very Trumpian way and that that could be reassuring for some people. I just felt like there were too many times when he was asked a question and he spent too much time saying, *Thank you for asking me that question. That question really takes me back to* – and you just think, oh, come on. Why? This is so transparent. Can't you just get to the answer? I mean, it sounds like you're evading the question when you give that kind of politician, *I'm going to take three-quarters of my answer to not answer*, and then go on from there.

Now, they both evaded questions. Neither one of them answered the question about: have you had a discussion with the presidential figure on your ticket about the transition in case anything should happen? Neither one of them answered that. Harris definitely did not answer a couple of very important questions. The two questions I noticed that she clearly sidestepped were: would you impose more lockdowns and/or a nationwide mask mandate? Yes or no, would you do that? We don't get an answer to that. And we'll talk about that.

But secondly, the court packing thing. Here, Pence was at his best, because he was relentlessly asking her, if you don't get your way and if Barrett gets nominated, will you pack the court with people to make the court rule your way? If you don't get your way, will you pack the court? And she hemmed and hawed and had some cutesy little historical anecdotes, but he was saying, look, I just want an answer to my question. And of course, we never got it. Of course, we never got it. What was your thought about those?

**MCCARTHY:** No, I totally agree. I mean, the Biden-Harris campaign is predicated on two things. First of all, the myth that Donald Trump is personally responsible for every single one of the 200,000 COVID-19 deaths in the United States. And, of course, by implication that as soon as you elect Biden-Harris, you're going to have zero deaths, right? I mean, that's kind of where this whole thing is going. They seem to be saying that they are personally the vaccine that is required in order to stop the virus, which is obvious BS. And every voter who stops and thinks knows that, but everyone is so buffaloes by the mainstream media reinforcing this idea that Donald Trump is personally responsible for COVID-19 and all of its deaths. That allows the Democrats to get away with this kind of bizarre witch doctor messaging, this idea that

you're going to have some magical different result if you get Biden-Harris in office instead of Trump-Pence.

And of course, that was the very first question of the evening. Kamala Harris was asked, what are you going to do differently from what the Trump administration has been doing? And she didn't answer that. She said, well, we're going to have some contact tracing and we'll have a vaccine.

**WOODS:** [laughing]

**MCCARTHY:** Well, golly gee, that's so different from what I've been hearing from Pence and Trump.

**WOODS:** Yeah, right.

**MCCARTHY:** I mean, the reality here is that a novel disease like this is not — I mean, government is so terrible at solving any problem, the idea that government is going to have a solution to a novel disease like this is just far-fetched. So if it happened under Obama, it would be a massive scandal, he'd be hurt, Republicans would be attacking him for it. As it happens, it's occurred under Donald Trump, and therefore the Democrats are getting an enormous political windfall out of it. But the real substance of this is nobody has a plan. Nobody can do anything about it.

And I get really sick of — actually, while I was watching the debate, I was doing occasional spot commentary for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. And I mean, there are all these questions you get asked as a conservative commentator on television, where they just assume the sort of dominant media narrative, which is also the Democratic narrative. So they'll ask you, *Well, isn't it a shame that you've got all these deaths in America, whereas Canada doesn't have nearly as many deaths?* And I would point out that the European Union, which is roughly comparable to the US and population, has had I think 191,000 deaths instead of the 200,000 or so the US has, so a pretty small difference. And then Europe as a whole, which is a little larger than the EU, the death toll is over 220,000, so it's actually a bit more than the United States. When you compare apples to apples, you actually find that the US is not doing particularly badly. And the US also has 50 different jurisdictions where these questions are handled, much like the European Union is a compilation of different jurisdictions.

So I just get very — it seems to me that the what Trump is really running against is not just the Joe Biden campaign, but it's against this entire media narrative which has been firmly fixed and repeated to the point where I'm not sure if people are able to — you know, it just becomes second nature, it's become a reflex of the way they think, and I don't know what Trump or Pence could possibly do to break out of that.

**WOODS:** Yeah, okay, that's very, very good stuff there. Because I was thinking Pence is in almost an impossible situation in a debate like this with two-minute answers, because the American public believes so many things about this virus that are false, and there are so many things that are true that the American public does not know. And if the first they hear about them is through Pence — like if Pence says the PCR testing's a little too sensitive, they're going to say, *What kind of a freakish outlier is this Pence?* But *The New York Times* reported on this a month ago, but most Americans don't even know about some of these issues. So he's

somehow got to stay within the frame of reference that most Americans currently have about the virus, but that's a frame of reference that's not very favorable to the administration.

So then he's got to deal with the fact that she's saying we'll have some contact tracing now. Well, they've tried that, and the problem with contact tracing, number one, when a virus that this this level of spread, it's hopeless. I mean, contact tracing is a joke. And not to mention that when it's actually tried, at least in America, most people don't even return the calls of the contact tracing.

And by the way, one of the reasons they don't return the calls is not just that they're being difficult, it's that precisely because we now know — and particularly, we know in certain jurisdictions, in Arizona, in particular, also, we just found out — the PCR testing, the PCR cycles are so high, instead of being down at maybe 30, they're at 35, 37, 40, what they're generating are results that don't show you anything important, that don't show you an infectious person. And so if I'm contacted by a contact tracer, and I say, "Well, I saw my five friends," I know those people could be quarantined for absolutely no reason. They're not infectious, the test isn't telling us anything, and their lives are now on hold for two weeks. No, I'm not returning that person's call. And if that's their big plan, it's a big nothing.

**MCCARTHY:** Yeah. And wasn't it telling, as well, that Kamala Harris would say, *Well, you can't trust a vaccine coming from Donald Trump*. I was actually surprised that she said that. I thought Biden and Harris would be of the opinion that, oh, yeah, whenever you get a vaccine, everyone's got to have it. And in fact, there is this degree of political suspicion. They claim to be pro-science, but if the science agrees with Donald Trump, they're not going to go for it. So I thought that was an interesting sort of — it cut across perhaps expectations about vaccines and the attitudes people might have. One actually finds I think both on the left and on the right, there's a mix of attitudes and a suspicion that vaccines are going to be politicized in a way that will lead to a lot of concerns.

I mean, there was a vaccine, I think it was during the Ford administration, that was kind of rushed out and administered to a lot of people. And it turned out to create a lot of side effects, and it was really quite a disaster. So people are right to be cautious. But I thought it was interesting that even Kamala Harris, who says on the one hand that she's going to do whatever the scientists tell her to do, she then says that, well, but if Donald Trump is also saying it, then she's going to think twice about it.

**WOODS:** One of the side effects of the early numbers that were thrown around about possible deaths in the US — and the number that was thrown around was possibly 2.2 million people, and Pence cited that number tonight — the upside of that for the Trump people is that, yeah, I'm sure that was a wild overstatement, and I feel fairly certain and confident we could say that the reason that we had the outcome we had is not because they locked down for a while. I mean, I'm pretty convinced to that. But since that is the number that the left believed, 2.2 million — that's what they were telling everybody and the panickers were all saying 2.2 million — you're going to live by that figure, you're going to die by that figure. Because if that's the figure you're going with, then all Pence has to do in the debate to say, "Well, then according to you, we saved 2 million lives. Not a bad record."

**MCCARTHY:** Yeah, and one of the things that worries me about this whole soap opera, basically, about COVID-19, I mean, yeah, it's a very serious disease. You want to avoid getting it. But there's very little that politicians are able to do. And the fact that this question sort of

overhangs everything and dominates the discussion, it causes people to stop thinking about the long-term consequences of the actions that are being put in place right now in order to address COVID-19, including the massive spending that we have right now. And that's going to have tremendous consequences for the debt, for the sort of constraints on the growth of our economy as we try to get out of this. I really wish more time had been spent during this debate talking about what it looks like for an America that's recovering and that has to sort of reverse the damage that's been done by the counter-COVID policies that both this administration and the Democrats have been pursuing. And that question, of course, just goes unasked.

**WOODS:** Well, here's I think a major problem that Trump and Pence face. They've got only a month until the election, and it's only now — I mean, I don't remember exactly when Scott Atlas was brought on, but that was a good move. But it's only now — I guess, maybe you saw, Dan, the so-called Great Barrington declaration that just came out, by which three quite eminent scholars, epidemiologists and public health people — Martin Kulldorff of Harvard Medical School, Sunetra Gupta of Oxford, and then Jay Bhattacharya of Stanford, and then they got a whole bunch of other signers. Now they've got thousands and thousands of medical people signing it and probably close to 100,000 people in the general public already in just a matter of a couple of days, basically urging a different approach and saying that lockdowns are catastrophic in their consequences, and that it is outrageous that so-called public health officials would think that it's in the interest of public health to be monomaniacally dedicated to just one end, when public health is the synergistic interaction of many different needs and requirements, and it's not just eradicating one thing, especially when you can't eradicate it.

And so they now are on the offensive, saying we need a non-lockdown approach, we need to restore normal life, we even need to restore the arts, because as Professor Gupta of Oxford said, what are we alive for in the first place anyway if we're going to take all these things away? If Trump had six solid months to hammer away at this theme and get these three at press conferences day after day after day, maybe he could get through to enough of the undecided American public to have them say, *Hmm, maybe we should get our lives back*. But I think now it's really, really tough to make that case. But yet, I do at the same time feel like he has to somehow make the election a referendum on: do you want your life back or not? The question is, are there enough voters who want their lives back?

**MCCARTHY:** That's a really good question. And the fact that Donald Trump is back in the White House and going back to work, despite having announced having the virus last weekend, that sends a certain signal. And of course, he's being hammered and just slaughtered by the media for going back to work. But this is something that I would think that if Americans still have a degree of self-respect and they still believe that there's more to life than simply cowering in fear of this sort of tiny little virus that they can't see — I think Donald Trump has said some jokes about that — you know, there's more to life and you have to start taking these risks again.

You have to be willing to say, look, if you're healthy, if you don't have a lot of preexisting conditions, then chances are you can survive getting this virus. It doesn't mean you should be reckless. It doesn't mean that you should be indifferent to it, but it does mean that you ultimately have to balance the risks involved with the costs that come into play by shutting down the economy, by not seeking treatment for other diseases, and the enormous psychological toll. I mean, suicides and indications of despair have also gone up because of this lockdown, because of what we've done. And I mean, the lingering effects of this

shutdown are going to be with us for a lot longer than the virus itself, probably. I mean, who knows with the virus? But people are going to be psychologically changed from this now basically nine-month-long experience, and it's going to be enormously damaging.

And I agree that time is running out for Donald Trump to do anything about it. Even if he had more time, I think that it would be extremely difficult to get the message out, because the media is 1,000% in tune with the Democratic Party right now in terms of all of these issues. I mean, certainly COVID, but also the Donald Trump taxes thing, which first of all, is not really true, the whole \$750 thing. There are a lot of a lot of holes in that claim from that *New York Times* story. And yet, it is absolutely conventional wisdom not only in the US media, but as I say, I've been doing some media in other parts of the English-speaking world, and it's the same thing. I get asked the same thing by the host: *what about the \$750 tax liability that Donald Trump wound up with?*

The whole thing is full of holes, and tax lawyers can point out why this is not really legit, and Donald Trump has explicitly said that it's not correct. And yet the media has this simple talking point about \$750, and it's impossible to get around that. It's impossible to change the narrative once that's been embedded. So what we're really seeing here is, in some ways, a populist presidency like Donald Trump's cannot survive on its own without a real profound shake-up not only of our political system of the two parties, but also of the mainstream media and a lot of other institutions, which are fully behind sustaining the elite and the establishment in this country.

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. And the fact that somebody like a Harris would say, *And look at all the figures we have who support us*, and they're all establishment hacks, I just fear there aren't enough Americans who would correctly understand that, which you should understand that to mean: okay, these are therefore the last people in the world you would ever want to vote for. That should be the way you think about it. I don't think a lot of people do think of it that way.

Do you think Harris landed any serious blows tonight?

**MCCARTHY:** Well, she knows what she wants to say when she talks about Brianna Taylor and George Floyd. And again, there is an established narrative which says George Floyd is only dead because of the way he was restrained by the police, which is something really that's going to be determined by the jury process, as opposed to something that we can entirely know right now. And the way he was restrained is obviously not something that we'd like to see applied to anybody. It's something that is very disturbing to look at. But on the other hand, George Floyd also had a lot of things in his system that were pretty bad, and he was complaining that he couldn't breathe long before he was put on the ground. So it raises a lot of questions. And all of these questions of fact are just blown out of everyone's mind by a predominant media narrative, which basically just attaches to everyone's emotions and then stampedes them all off the cliff. But Harris is very effective at taking advantage of that, and she did so tonight.

**WOODS:** And now how about, where do you think other than the points we raised already like where she just wouldn't answer the question, where do you think Pence was most effective? I mean, I get his overall vibe is maybe what some people needed to hear, but were there particular points where you felt like, okay, he just nailed that?

**MCCARTHY:** Well, not as many as I would have liked. I think the general impression is stronger than any particular point that Mike Pence made. I know some people were very charged up by his discussion, as we mentioned earlier, on court packing. He did a good job of defending the orderly constitutional process of replacing a dead justice on the Supreme Court. So things like that, yeah, they're sort of B or B+ answers. In terms of anything that was a home run or that was really distinctive, I was disappointed.

I will say I was struck mostly by some of the bizarre cul-de-sacs that Kamala Harris went down. So if you were listening to what she said about foreign policy, for example, I mean, she sounded like Hillary Clinton. She was calling Trump and Pence isolationists. She was saying that — it was interesting. When she attacks them for getting out of the JCPOA, the Iran deal, she doesn't say that getting out of the deal was bad because it might lead us to war. Kamala Harris's argument is exactly the opposite. She said, well, now that we're out of that deal, Iran is getting a nuclear weapon and that's going to threaten us. She's basically laying the groundwork for the case for war.

And that should be eye-opening. I think libertarian listeners in particular should tune into that and give some thought to what that means. Whereas, Mike Pence, I mean, he's not where Donald Trump is in terms of being a restrainer or a relative noninterventionist, but he was not making the more hawkish case tonight. Kamala Harris, and of course Joe Biden, who voted for the Iraq War in the first place, these are very dangerous people to put in power, and they're going to get us into conflicts.

**WOODS:** Pence was trying to associate Harris in people's minds with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Bernie Sanders. Do you think that's accurate, or is that over the top?

**MCCARTHY:** Well, I just don't think it works. A lot of people don't know who Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is. I mean, she's high-profile if you're on the left or if you're on the right, but a lot of people in the middle are probably not moved by her name. And then Bernie Sanders, I mean, Sanders is the guy that Biden beat for the nomination. It's kind of like saying that you're getting George W. Bush or Jeb Bush if you vote for Donald Trump. I mean, there's some people who will follow that kind of logic, but most people who actually knew what happened are not going to be persuaded at all.

**WOODS:** Do you think next week's debate is going to be different? I mean, I really think — I don't think it's particularly original. I think that the reason for Trump's interruptions, which were far too many — it just didn't work. I don't think it reflected well on him. I think that was an attempt to try to rattle Biden, because I think he thought that he had a chance to do that on national television. It didn't happen. Instead of asking you to predict the future, if you were advising the president, how would you urge him to behave differently — not *behave* differently, but what would you ask him to do differently in this debate in terms of his message or his manner?

**MCCARTHY:** Let Biden ramble. That was Donald Trump's second biggest failing in the first debate. He would interrupt Joe Biden so often that Biden wouldn't have the opportunity to wander off into cul-de-sacs all on his own. Because if Biden is kind of left to talk about his policies or left to talk about anything unguided for more than a minute and a half, he winds up becoming incoherent and the verbs and the nouns no longer agree. And I think it would have been very embarrassing for Biden if he'd been able to go on. Whereas Donald Trump by interrupting him wound up saving him. And of course, the primary damage that Donald Trump

did by continually doing that was making himself look impatient, making himself look immature, and just really presenting a very bad sort of image of himself as a president. So it's conventional wisdom, but I would certainly tell President Trump, look, first of all, yes, lay off, don't be as interrupting as you were last time. But also, don't look at this as simply kind of having to police yourself, look at this as actually creating opportunities for Biden to go and stumble onto landmines, as he inevitably will if he's left and guided.

**WOODS:** Well, back to this debate, who won do you think?

**MCCARTHY:** Oh, Pence did. I think Pence, again, because he reassured a number of voters who would have been disturbed by last week's debate and because he generally was able to present something at least in the galaxy of what the Trump and Pence campaign stands for, was able to present that message in a way that I think was reassuring and accessible to people who are much more sort of middle of the road than you and I are. And that's important. You do have to have a voting coalition and an electoral coalition that's much broader than just the hardcore sort of people on your side. And so I think Pence made up some ground there. And Harris, I don't think she went over anyone who wasn't already a Biden-Harris voter. And so as marginal as the improvements that Pence might have brought out tonight may have been, they're still improvements and that still makes him the winner.

**WOODS:** Okay, that's interesting. I couldn't quite tell, to be honest. I mean, from my point of view, because I agree with Pence more than I agree with Harris, yeah, I guess I thought he was the winner because I agree with him more, but I still felt like he was weak in parts where he could have been stronger.

Climate change, just in the way they frame that, that's impossible for anybody to talk about rationally in two minutes. But one thing he could have said is that what Harris and Biden want us to do would cripple the US energy sector and the economy and make energy much more expensive for the average person and would accomplish nothing for climate change. Like even if that is your concern, if you do believe in it and you do think that it's manmade and all that — for the sake of argument we'll stipulate all that — it would accomplish nothing, because if China's still polluting and India's still polluting, no matter what we do in the US, the overall problem is roughly the same.

So in other words, you want to punish and impoverish us for no gain. I'd like to say that, something simple that the average American can get. If you try to get into issues of *the science* or whatever, well, then you're going to look like your Neanderthal who doesn't understand what the consensus is, blah, blah, blah. Don't even go there. Just do this. *Like, okay, but the problem is your plan is we should cripple ourselves for no result. That's your plan.*

**MCCARTHY:** And you wonder what was going on with debate preparation, right? So I mean, with Donald Trump, you kind of understand that he's going to do or not do as much debate preparation as he wants. Mike Pence, on the other hand, he's this professional, polished politician. He should have been briefed on all of this, and climate change is an absolutely obvious question. If he didn't come up with a very good answer there, it's not only a bad sign for his performance tonight, but it actually shows you the way in which sort of the Republican establishment is trending on this question, that they're increasingly unwilling to defend their own position on climate change, which means it's going to be defined for them by the left and they're eventually going to concede everything.

**WOODS:** Right. Right, right. And he gave some answer about conservation being important. It sounded like somebody talking from like 1913. It just sounded tone-deaf to me. It had nothing to do with what was going on. So at least he could have been briefed on that, but as you say, maybe that was deliberate because maybe that is a deliberate retreat on their part. I don't really know. I was actually surprised to learn – I don't remember who it was, who said that they were at the debate prep with the president. Frankly, I was surprised to learn he had debate prep.

**MCCARTHY:** [laughing] I think everyone was.

**WOODS:** Yeah, because I mean, for heaven's sake, the fact that he couldn't give an absolute home-run answer about critical race theory –

**MCCARTHY:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** What a missed opportunity. And he allowed Biden to interpret it as, *Well, we don't want to be insensitive and hurt people's feelings. I think we all agree on that.* As if that is anywhere in the ballpark of what critical race theory is.

**MCCARTHY:** Oh, it's absolutely insane. I mean, you've got this movement which is basically a kind of Stasi-like attempt to monitor and shape the opinions and discussions of what goes on in every government agency and every sort of HR department and then within every business, and yet Donald Trump in addressing this totalitarian menace, what did he have to say? It was incoherent. So that was extremely disappointing and demoralizing. And that had been such a recent issue, because his administration had done great work in getting this critical race theory garbage out of these government agencies. It was a tremendous change that he brought about. And yet there he was, it seemed as if he didn't even know what his own policy was. He wasn't prepared to defend it.

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah. And I don't get – this really makes me crazy, that you and I could come up with 25 awesome things he would say that would be absolute showstoppers, and doggone it, he won't say it, or his people prepping him don't think to prompt him with these things.

**MCCARTHY:** I will say this. Now, my – it's not a conspiracy theory, but my in-the-back-of-my-head theory about what happened at that first debate is that the President may have already been feeling quite bad because of COVID. So the diagnosis comes in two or three days later. I think probably at the time, he was already feeling under the weather, and when you're feeling under the weather, you tend to overcompensate and you do a lot of things that are just not –

**WOODS:** Yeah, that's possible.

**MCCARTHY:** – when you're feeling in your best condition. So I'm inclined to cut him a little bit of slack maybe on that possibility. But yeah, I mean, in terms of debate prep and in terms of having solid home-run answers to these easy questions, they need to really improve for next week, that's for sure.

**WOODS:** Yeah. Yeah, yeah. And one person who was actually very good at preparing from what I've heard was Ronald Reagan, because probably a couple years ago, I was talking to

David Stockman on the show. And Stockman, in 1980, he stood in and played the role of Jimmy Carter, in the mock debates they had with Reagan. And then he did such a good job, he did it again the next time. And I said, so how did that go? I mean, was he stumped by the questions? Like what was happening? He said, well, early in the week we would be pummeling him with all these points, and there would be times that he would just lean forward and say, "All right, what's the answer?" But by the end of the week, he had everything down. He had it all down. He knew exactly what to say with everything. And I just keep getting frustrated when there are people who on at least some things have really important things to say and don't quite know how to say it. Now, at the same time, I know there'll be people who will say to me you can't second-guess Donald Trump, because after all, he beat the whole establishment. And I understand that, but that doesn't make him infallible. Just because he did a very, very difficult thing doesn't mean he couldn't be better. And this time, given that for four years – I have never seen anything – by the way, now, did you see this thing in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that just came out?

**MCCARTHY:** No, what was it?

**WOODS:** Oh, it's a thing signed by 35 medical professionals. They don't mention Trump's name. It's obviously an article against him, saying that when you have incompetent politicians, they have to be removed.

**MCCARTHY:** I have seen that, yeah.

**WOODS:** Yeah. And it is a cult at this point.

**MCCARTHY:** Oh, yes. And *Scientific American* did the same thing.

**WOODS:** I think this is even worse.

**MCCARTHY:** Oh, it is, yeah, because these are real scientists, and *Scientific American's* just pop science. But I mean, it goes to show, again, that this is a complete establishment, and it exists to enforce an orthodoxy at every level of power within our society. In corporate America, in the academy, in the sciences, as well as in the humanities, in the government bureaucracies, and in the two major political parties, you're not supposed to deviate a certain number of degrees beyond the established opinion. And Donald Trump has done that time and time again. And as a result, the entire establishment is aligned – they're not consciously coordinated. It's not like they have Zoom phone calls where they all agree upon what their attack on Donald Trump's going to be. It's rather that, because they are all tuned into the same wavelength in terms of how they think and what their presuppositions are, as soon as something comes out – you know, it's the Donald Trump \$700 tax bill, or it's COVID-19, or it's politicians ignoring scientists – any of that is going to immediately propagate throughout the entire class of the establishment.

**WOODS:** I'm probably going to write my newsletter about this *New England Journal of Medicine* thing because it just makes me crazy, that they're all upset about incompetence and the disease control has been left to the states. Well, that is the American system. Okay, so in other words, you're asking – what are you asking for, the president to become a dictator? Is that what medicine demands now? It's irrationality.

And then, why don't they say things like, we're shocked that our fellow scientists didn't bother in their mathematical models to consider the non-COVID consequences of the things they're doing? Like for example, we're now hearing that 130 million people are now at risk of starvation because of the shutdowns of economies around the world. Like, that's a small, ancillary problem that's been created by this. How did the public health bureaucracy not even bother to take that into account?

Or not to mention the little petty tyrants everywhere acting not even remotely on the basis of science, like Gavin Newsome: *Oh, sorry, we can't open Disneyland until the numbers are stabilized*. Stabilized? The hospitalizations are at 3% and stable. 3% of capacity, and the numbers have to stabilize so we can open – Near me, up north of me in Gainesville, Florida, in that county, the county decided that a private business could have 1 person per 1,000 square feet. Now, how did they come up with that number? Was that through some scientific study? No, it was because a county commissioner said, well, we thought that would be easy math for everybody. So it's just voodoo, and there's no criticism of that.

**MCCARTHY:** And you have Gavin Newsome now saying that he wants people to put their masks back on after each bite when they are at a restaurant. I mean, there's no science behind that. This is just absolute sort of nannyism, control of people. It's an attempt to establish psychological precedence for getting people to do whatever you order them to do. And unfortunately, a lot of it seems to be working, although I tend to think that a lot of the overreach we're seeing right now – and it's all folded in with the presidential cycle and everything – I think there will be a tremendous backlash. If Donald Trump loses and you get a Biden-Harris administration and the establishment is popping the champagne bottles and throwing parties as a result of its kind of restoration of power, I think there'll be an enormous backlash in 2022 and probably in 2024, as well, where people are going to look at all of this and say, Wait a minute. You guys could bully us into believing certain things for four years when Trump was in office, but now that you're in power, we see that actually things have only gotten worse, or that there's quite enough of a mess as it is.

And I think people are going to have – basically, it was a warning to the establishment with Donald Trump in 2016 and with Sanders both in 2016 and in 2020. And the establishment, rather than kind of heeding these warnings and saying, *Wait a minute, people are starting to lose faith in what we do*, they now just want to go right back to business as usual and the status quo ante with Joe Biden. I think they're in for a very rude awakening. And they talk a lot of trash about how Donald Trump wants to reject the election or whatever. I think if you keep seeing an establishment that refuses to reform itself when they get these shocks and these signals from the public, you're going to actually wind up with a much more dangerous situation in the long run in 30 to 50 years.

And by the way, this whole question of science versus the Constitution and what our elected system actually permits and whose judgment it is that matters, whether it's voters and their elected representatives, or whether it's scientists and experts, this is a regime-level question. If our establishment really is of the view that you should never question the scientists, you should never question the people with credentials, they can't claim to believe in democracy. What they actually believe in is something much more like the administrative system of the old Soviet Union in terms of, well, the people who are Marxist who understand the supposed economic science of Marxism, they are the ones who have the correct opinions, which cannot be questioned on every aspect of our society, and ordinary people are just expected to live with it.

And for all the very great differences between our system today and Soviet communism, this same sort of intellectual hubris, which is very conventional on the left and something you've see socialists and Marxists and liberal Democrats, social Democrats, all of them wind up going down this route – it's going to have tremendously negative consequences and it's going to be very damaging to democracy and self-government, even in its already kind of shabby and damaged form in this country. It's going to get a lot worse if this is not corrected very soon.

**WOODS:** Well, even though this is almost a cliché of the right wing, it is true that you can see the left's view of – democracy is the last thing in the world I care about really, but in terms of these people who claim that it's their most sacred value, obviously, the way they handle the Supreme Court goes to show that that is obviously not what they believe in. Because when people were crying in the streets over the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, what are they crying about? I mean, okay, some of them admire her principles or whatever. But what upsets them is the prospect that maybe major issues of American social policy won't now be decided by a by a five-to-four majority of lawyers. That seems to be their big principle. *I'm going to go out in this crowd and hold a sign on behalf of the cause that our major issue should be decided by a five-to-four majority of lawyers.* That basically is what they're saying. Whether they realize it or not, that's what they're saying. That is a very strange principle to go out and protest for, but that is what they're protesting for.

**MCCARTHY:** That's what they're protesting for. And what they want is a kind of managed democracy, so they want elections just to be a confirmation of the decisions that have already been made by the elite. And really, what that is, is an oligarchy that is just receiving an image of a democratic imprimatur on top of it. I mean, it's what you see in all of these sort of shaky regimes out in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where some dictator has been in office for generations, and election after election confirms yes, 90% of the people want him to be in office.

And for all that you have these exploiters of democracy talk about how they hate what's going on with the leader of Belarus and all of these other characters out there, in fact, what they want is the same sort of thing here in America, only it's going to be done in a more subtle way. It's going to be done by, again, these media narratives, which are propagated to the point of being second nature. It's going to be done by destroying any kind of local self-government and making everything subject to kind of these – I mean, you have so little power within the larger sort of pseudo-democratic national numbers. I mean, if you're 1 vote out of 300 million or so, that's nothing, and all that's going to be controlled by these masters of the great institutional apparatus of our country.

The founding fathers would be up in arms about this. And I mean, I say "up in arms." I mean that literally with the founding fathers. I don't mean that literally with respect to our people today. But we need to understand that we're losing the self-government that defined America's sense of themselves for 200+ years, and we're losing it incrementally step by step here. And Donald Trump, for all that he may be distasteful to many people, he was a reaffirmation of the idea that the American public actually gets to break ranks with their betters. And now that that is being undone and that you've got this full court press trying to stop Donald Trump this November, Americans, some of them will get discouraged, but in the long run, I think the regime is going to lose even more legitimacy than it's already lost. And that's going to be dangerous for the people in charge of the regime, but it's also going to be very unstable for everyone.

**WOODS:** Well, certainly, if there's a Biden presidency, I mean, the right wing is I think very in disarray, but so is the left wing. But if there's a President Biden, there will be pushback. The trouble is that the right wing right now is older than the median American voter. It's older folks who watch Fox News. Even though a lot of them are watching — Fox News does very well — it's older folks. And one of the things that I discussed on a recent episode, somebody mentioned that it's disappointing to see how supine the young people have been through all this, that they're not nearly as rebellious as young people are cracked up to be. You know, *the teenage rebellion*. These teenagers, boy, they sure learned their lesson in school really well. Just do what authority tells you. Very disappointing. They should be leading the charge. They should be against the left.

And I keep saying the message to them should consistently be: don't ever forget who did this to you. I gave the example — it seems like a trivial example, but in Connecticut, where it's blue state, *we just do what the stupid governor tells us*, there was a huge demonstration in favor of letting the kids play high school football. All the high school football players, it was a huge demonstration. And they were chanting "Let us play," because for everybody's safety, of course, we can't have high school football, according to the science, right? And that to me was very encouraging. And my message to them would just be, because I get the feeling they probably have the — they don't they don't read scientific papers, but they know a rat when they smell one. And my message to them would be: just don't ever forget who used pseudoscience and voodoo to take away something that means something to you. I don't know if that message works.

**MCCARTHY:** Yeah, the young people have been inculcated with an incredible amount of passivity. And it's shocking. I mean, you don't see any of the kind of youthful rebellion against sort of an overweening establishment that you saw in the past. And not only that, by the way. It's not just passivity, but also, I think that there — and again, I don't want this to sound like a conspiracy theory. I'm not saying that this was cooked up by some sort of evil genius in a lab or something.

But if you look at what has been psychologically done to young people in terms of forcing them to kind of reject any kind of natural identity that they may have, whether it's sexual or otherwise, in terms of sort of inculcating in them this sense that of extreme sensitivity, basically what we're doing is we're taking all of these things that used to be seen as indicative of psychological sort of neuroses or pathologies and we're now making these the norms. And it's happening in schools. It's happening in popular culture. And I think what it's done is it's created these young people that feel such existential confusion and dread and fear that they are very susceptible to and easily molded by these controlling powers, by the media and by schools and by an administrative government.

And the other problem is that the people who reject that are often pathological in the opposite direction, where they are just sort of reacting with such kind of visceral antipathy towards anything that's coming from the controlling side, that they wind up being sort of rather unbalanced themselves. And I think that's what fuels the alt right and it's what fuels a lot of the craziness that we see. And you see that the incel movement is kind of a mirror image of what you see happening with the left's loss of sexual identity and so forth. All of this, I mean, it's this horrific psychological experiment that's been perpetrated on Americans of a younger generation.

Now, I will say, there is a sign of hope, however, because the young people I encounter who have not succumb to this are far tougher, far smarter, and I just have much more confidence in them than I had in any one of my own generation. So they may be a smaller remnant, a smaller minority than in the past, but they actually seem to be very well educated, very strong in character. And I actually think that if we'd had even a handful of these people 20 or 30 years ago in the days of Pat Buchanan and in the days of some of the controversies over George W. Bush and the Iraq War, that we would have gotten a lot farther than we did back then.

**WOODS:** Well, Dan, I appreciate your time talking to me on this. We're actually recording this, everybody, immediately following the debate, so we're just on the verge of hitting midnight after the debate. But since Dan and I are both night owls, we're really at our best right around this time. But I wish I had known this about poor Dan, because I've been having this poor guy record with me at like 9am, which is like for the two of us, like the middle of the night. It's not when we're at our top form. It's like Trump on COVID or something. But now it's a little bit better.

I of course want to urge people to check out [ModernAgeJournal.com](http://ModernAgeJournal.com). Dan is the editor of *Modern Age*. Just when I was a young kid, I just never imagined that someday. I would just know the editor of *Modern Age*. Like to me, *Modern Age* was like this amazing institution that I've read old issues and I just loved it. It was venerable and has this great pedigree. And now here it's Dan McCarthy talking to us about the debate. So thank you very much, Dan. I appreciate it.

**MCCARTHY:** Thanks, Tom. I really enjoyed it.