

**Episode 2,404: Anti-Marx, Anti-War, with Michael Rectenwald**

**Guest: Michael Rectenwald**

**WOODS:**  Obviously, we have plenty to talk about in terms of what's going on current events wise in today's climate and all that, but I want to start off with some material about your background, because your whole life is interesting.

But first of all, I don't even know where you're originally from or what your family life was like or anything like that. So, fill me in.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, I mean, I grew up on the Upper North Side of Pittsburgh. And it was a very decent, but very working-class background. So, my father was in home remodeling, actually.

And I come from a large German-American family. I have eight siblings, nine children all together in the family, and I was seventh out of nine. And I was a little bit of a black sheep in my family, frankly, largely because I was an intellectual, actually.

And so, I've talked about this in *Springtime For Snowflakes*. There's, like, two obstacles that face one in such a background. One is the family itself, that doesn't quite get you. And then there's, of course, the external world.

Which the hurdle to become, like, an academic or something like that, is pretty high coming from that kind of background. But I was, as I said, seventh of nine. In high school, I actually went away to a Catholic seminary for two years.

And I lived, effectively, joined to a Capuchin monastery. And I spent two years in the seminary, then left there and went and graduated from North Catholic High School. And I was the cameraman for the football team.

And my father, of course, wanted me to play football, but I didn't want to. I was a tennis player by this point. So, interestingly, I went to undergrad for two years as a pre-med student. And I did very well, but halfway through that, I decided I didn't want to be a doctor.

And interestingly, I actually went to Boulder, Colorado to Naropa Institute, and I studied as an apprentice with the poet Allen Ginsberg when I was 20. So, that was quite an exposure to left-Bohemianism, if you will, and to the world of letters, at least that segment of them.

So, that's very interesting. And then I finished my undergraduate degree at the University of Pittsburgh in English. And then I went into advertising for nine years, I was an ad salesman. And I worked in grunt jobs at radio stations until I found a job at a radio and television network and sold advertising for them.

And I felt burned out by that career by 8 or 9 years. I went back to graduate school at Case Western Reserve University, first for a master's in English, and then I continued on at Carnegie Mellon for a PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies.

And went on the job market, and first landed a job at North Carolina Central University in Durham. It was HBCU, actually a historically black university. And then I got a job at Duke, which was a neighboring school, but very different, if you will.

And then finally at NYU and you know the history from there.

**WOODS:** All right. Well, let me ask you this. Nobody's a Marxist and an ad man. Like, you had to come to that later.

**RECTENWALD:** Yes, I came to it in graduate school. When I went back to grad school (as I said in my book, *Springtime for Snowflakes*) there was a huge shift. All I wanted to do was become an English professor. I had been writing, and I published a book of poetry during the ad man years.

And I wanted to go back and become an English professor, but I had no idea what had transpired in the universities (in particular, in English and other humanities fields) in the interim between my undergrad and graduate career.

And that was that it had been invaded by what's called "theory". And what they mean by that is Marxist, neo-Marxist, postmodern, feminist theory. And so, everything was treated through those lenses.

And they just kept feeding these books and texts to us, and there's really no coming up for air. And before you knew it, I was essentially having to choose, like, a leftist perspective, or else there's no job for you.

So, Marxism made the most sense. And I think Thomas Sowell has pointed this out. For many people, especially in Europe, but even in the United States, it was deemed the only respectable intellectual position there was.

And that becomes very, if not explicitly stated, very implicitly stated through the university system and the academic world. So, I mean, like it appealed to me ethically. It appealed to me on other grounds. I'd been in corporate America and I knew what it was like.

And I thought: *Yeah, maybe it was exploitative. That maybe people were being exploited at the point of production and that the whole profit system is a rigged game against the working class and all that.*

And having a working-class background and some chips on my shoulder from that, it sort of played right into that sort of ethos that I had.

**WOODS:** Well, I've covered with you the unfortunate episode at NYU that ultimately concluded with your departure there, although you ended up wringing some concessions out of them, which was nice.

But what was the moment, or what was the issue that was able to crack through the ideology that you had, to make you say: *Maybe this isn't quite right?*

And was it one thing, and then that led to another thing and that led to another thing? Or did you just reject the whole system at once? Or what exactly happened?

**RECTENWALD:** Well, it started with, I guess, what I would call sort of social justice issues in the university, and the hiring policies, and what's really more than affirmative action. It's like virtual, straight up discrimination against certain classes of people, especially straight white males.

And I was on a hiring committee – and was actually the chair of this committee at NYU. And I was objecting to the hiring of a particular candidate based strictly on identity and not credentials or ability. Because they couldn't write a sentence and they were being hired to be a professor of journalism, but couldn't write a coherent sentence.

And that started it. And then a lot of the trans issues that were being foisted on me, essentially forcing me to deny my own senses, my own eyes and ears, and state outrageous things and claim them as true. That bothered me quite a bit.

I got some flak for some Facebook posts that I put up, and the hatred was just unbelievable. When I posted an article about this student at – I think it was Michigan – who, when asked for his pronouns, input "His Majesty".

And I posted that article. I thought it was hilarious. That caused an uproar, including my colleagues who were Facebook friends at the time. And then, when, in the fall of 2016, I was asked to put on my syllabus the phone number and email address for what was called a "bias reporting hotline".

I thought, these people are authoritarians. They want us to turn the university into, like, a Stasi state, where people are basically in a network of spies, spying on each other and reporting each other to the administration.

And then I started @AntiPCNYUprof, the Twitter account, started tweeting criticisms of all this, and you know the rest. I was contacted by a student newspaper reporter.

And then the hatred and vitriol that came from this group – effectively, I said: *These people are so outrageously horrible people. I don't care what they're espoused ideology is. I want nothing to do with these people at all.*

And I renounced the whole left at once, and on political grounds, really. They were wannabe totalitarians, and I didn't want anything to do with them. And then I started the intellectual journey into libertarianism, in particular.

So, then I was basically a civil libertarian at this point. And shortly thereafter, after reading Mises and Rothbard and so on (and eventually Hoppe), I became an economic libertarian in short order.

And I had to admit the errors of my ways. I have atoned, I think, for this by trying to be the best champion of liberty that I can be.

And to be an anti-communist and anti-totalitarian and anti-fascist, all of that. And I have written, I think, five books from this perspective now.

**WOODS:** Did you go out and see your colleagues socially before the blow up? Were you friends with them outside of the university?

**RECTENWALD:** Oh yeah, we would do things like readings at different clubs. And one of them was at a Marxist-named club where I'd read short stories for this group. Colleagues would put on these readings, and I did these things.

And we hung out at clubs, and I went to lunch and dinners with colleagues. I had a good deal of friends. And there were some people that were nasty to me even early on, largely because I was very ambitious, and I think that put people off.

I was extremely ambitious about publishing, and I was extremely ambitious about bringing big conferences into the university through our department. And there's always this sort of petty resentment and jealousy type thing. I think that was part of it.

**WOODS:** So, it's not just a professional relationship. You had friendships there.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** And then this all happens. Where did you go for friends at that point?

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, that was tough. It became national news. So, I was getting all these emails from people, and in support of me, like, from all over the place. So, that was very heartening. And then it started to become podcast news, if you will.

And you're among those early podcasters that picked up my story and had me on. But there was a lot of others, and I started learning about other disaffected professors as well. I learned about Jordan Peterson, for example, and Gad Saad, and others.

And they became friends. I had a whole new group of people coming on to support me, virtually and otherwise. Yeah, I lost friends over this. I lost a great deal of friends.

And I lost (as you said) a sure sinecure, if you will. I mean, basically guaranteed job with, I think, really light workload. Because, you know, I taught two days a week for nine months a year. That's it.

**WOODS:** Yeah. Not too bad. This is the last question I'll ask on this line, then we'll get into other topics. But how did you know what to read next? I mean, some people who say: *Well, maybe I ought to look into libertarian literature*, might have started with material less hardcore than what you went for.

So, was anybody guiding you?

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah. I mean, people were giving me advice and saying: You've got to read this. You've got to read that. And Mises was brought up early. And I wanted to read the really difficult – but not for the sake of difficulty – but the real rigorous take-downs of socialism.

And at the root – which, I was looking for getting at the root of the matter. And that was really where Mises came in, because he gets to the root of it and routs it out from there. And that's what I needed.

I couldn't bear with just, like, some pablum about some sort of Milton Friedman type denunciation of market interference.

I wanted to know what was wrong with these things and why I should reject them.

**WOODS:**  Yeah. Okay. So, now let's talk a little bit about some of the themes. You just wrote an article on "The Two Nations". And that article appeared in *Chronicles* magazine, which is where my very first article was published 30 years ago.

And I think still, probably, most people listening have never heard of *Chronicles* magazine. Which is an outrageous injustice, but we'll rectify it here. What are these "two nations"?

**RECTENWALD:** Well, I think there's two forces – and likewise, trying to establish two different kinds of nations. And it's not Trump versus the left. I think it's more apt to put it in terms of globalism versus localism. That the people that are running the state (especially at present) are globalists.

And what does that mean? Well, globalism (as I see it) is a simultaneous expansion of the state's reach and penetration, and at the same time, the erosion of the nation state as such, its sovereignty and constitution and the rights of its citizens in the process, to impose a kind of global order.

And I think that's what we're dealing with. So, localism versus globalism, that's the two nations. It's not Trump nation versus Biden nation or something like that. I think the more fundamental dichotomy here, or opposition, is globalism versus localism.

**WOODS:** Well, what's an example of that?

**RECTENWALD:** Well, we can see the globalist policies being driven home through various means. You might look at the – and this is a thorny topic, but I can tackle it – the unfettered immigration in the United States, which is being promoted through open borders and the prospect of social welfare.

And you also see it in the climate change legislation. It's not really legislation, it's actually executive orders coming through the Biden administration, the attempt to impose these climate dicta on us.

And one of the other things is – libertarians have always talked about over-policing, but I think we're in a very different condition right now.

And speaking of *Chronicles* magazine, Sam Francis put it best when he called it "anarcho-tyranny". And that is the kind of simultaneous crackdown on what we call law-abiding, decent people trying to live their lives, make a living and raise their families, taxing them to death, regulating them to death.

And then terrorizing them, in effect, with lawlessness, and then criminalizing self-protection. I think that's part of it, too. So, there's this kind of sense that we don't have any protection, either from our Constitution or from so-called police, or even from the judicial system.

**WOODS:** I agree with you completely in terms of what the real dichotomy is here. It does seem, though, that the trouble is people are so divided in whether they're for Trump or they're not for Trump, or whether they're Democrat or Republican. I mean, probably back in 2012, whether you were for Barack Obama or Mitt Romney was hardly grounds for strangling each other.

But now the divide has widened to a quite significant degree, so it does seem like the prospects for people cooperating with each other across party lines and saying: *Here's a local issue where we don't want the federal government getting involved.* Or: *They don't understand how we live.* Or something like that.

It just seems more remote because people's first instinct is to ask: *Are you for Trump or are you against him?* And then you can't even have a conversation.

**RECTENWALD:** I think that this localism would be people that agree, for the most part. They don't need to form some sort of unity with people that are accepting globalist premises and conclusions and policies and plans.

They don't need to agree with these people. The idea is to break off from this whole thing. It's, if not literal secession, a spirit of secession in which people who agree with each other, like in local communities.

And this is happening in New Hampshire and Iowa and Washington state, and other places like that. They're forming kind of communities. They're even eschewing national politics altogether.

**WOODS:** If only we could have more of that. Now, by the way, as I was making that point, I was thinking about the possibility that the candidacy of Robert F Kennedy Jr might indicate the possibility that there may be some Americans who are willing to say: *Look, the elites have failed us, no matter which allegiance we have, pro or anti-Trump or any of that other stuff. T*

*he elites have failed us inside and outside of government, and we need to be willing to talk to each other as human beings, leave these parochial-isms aside, and see if, as people of goodwill, we can manage to live together in peace.*

I think that's been the message of RFK. And then what happened was the other day, this attack in Gaza. And then every American politician felt the need to indicate that the American special relationship with Israel, of course, will continue.

And we'll send them everything they need, and this, that, and the other thing. And RFK issued a statement exactly like everybody else's. It could have been written by George W Bush. It sounded exactly like everybody else's.

And if you look in the comments, the comments are just dominated by people saying: *We thought you were a maverick, that you wouldn't necessarily just mindlessly go along with everybody on something like this. And that's it. I'm repudiating my support.*

You know as well as I do, Twitter is not real life. But I still feel like that's something.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, I think so. I think there's a lot of things that I agree with him on, like Ukraine, and the arming and funding of Ukraine, and how that's exacerbating and escalating and prolonging that conflict. And his Covid policies were right on.

I think his treatment of collusion between the state and corporations is right, at least in terms of the effects. I don't think he gets the causes right, but he's right about the effects of it. And the kind of attempt to dissociate these two entities is correct.

And then he comes out with this. But there were other things that I couldn't agree with anyway, like his plan to have the federal government back 3% mortgages for people, basically expanding the state and distorting the market, increasing the debt and so forth.

I just thought that was pure welfare-statism. But then he comes out with this. And I think he just basically threw his hat right back into the establishment altogether. And it's shocking really.

I thought that he would have at least a more nuanced stand, but his position was even more strenuous than some others. Like, he said: *They're going to be in a prolonged war, and the United States needs to support this war in the long haul.*

I don't have the exact words in front of me, but the implication was: *Arms and funds should go to Israel to aid our ally against these terrorists.* Now, I do think these are terrorists, and I do think Israel was assaulted, but I don't think that position is viable.

And I think it's also just straight-up establishment politics.

**WOODS:** Well, I think this is going to make life a bit more difficult. I mean, maybe it's a moot point anyway because Trump seems to be running away with the Republican nomination, but I think it becomes slightly harder to be Vivek Ramaswamy right now, because he was at least partially trying to be America First.

And they were ribbing him a little bit because he had a somewhat nuanced view on Israel. I haven't followed up to see what his opinion is at the moment, but how are you going to have a nuanced opinion on this right now?

So, you either just have to go all in, or you have to say: *There are a lot of tragedies around the world, and we cannot possibly be involved in them all. And in trying to be involved in them all, we have made for ourselves enemies that we did not have before, and we would not have had.*

*We have squandered goodwill around the world by doing things like this. So, we wish everybody on earth the best, but since I believe in America first* – you remember that that's our slogan? Remember that?

*The thing that comes first is my country, and not getting it dragged into another conflict, as this could very easily do*.

But is there a constituency among the Republican base for that, when so many of them believe in the rapture and all this eschatological stuff from the 1830s? And I'll just say, Michael – I mean, I don't want to alienate my Protestant followers, but I will say Luther didn't believe in any of that rapture stuff.

And Calvin didn't think that it was an obligation of the Christian world, to help bring about a state of Israel to usher in the end times. This is not on the table. This is a complete novelty, theologically.

But unfortunately, because most Protestants, I think, undervalue tradition, it shouldn't strictly bother them that this is a novelty from the 1830s. Maybe it took 1830 years to figure this out. So, that's not particularly helping.

So, I don't know what you do when that's the base you're trying to appeal to. And you're dealing with people who think that they're helping to bring in the end of this great story by having this all happen. I could get sidetracked on this theological stuff all day.

**RECTENWALD:** That's okay. I like theology, I've studied it.

**WOODS:** But don't know how you do that. Like, is there a constituency for that in the Republican Party? Like, just when you think they've become more critical thinkers and they won't just get swept up in what the television tells them, and they'll have independent opinions, then Israel has an attack like this and it's right back to herd mentality.

Not one of them can think in a way that: *Well, yes, this is a terrible, terrible thing that's happened. But there are all kinds of terrible things that have happened. And you can't do this forever. For a million reasons, you cannot do this.*

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah. I mean, it's interesting how there was this – it looked hopeful, I think. There was this new antiwar right, especially with reference to Ukraine. And then earlier than that, with reference to the Iraq War.

But this is like a past-tense political antiwar right, apparently, because they don't have any principles with reference to this. Their positions with reference to Ukraine and Israel are distinct, and they don't see a contradiction there. I do.

But they say: *Well, this is different.* That's always the refrain: *This is different. This is different.* *This time, it's real war, and this time we need to do it.*

And it's a holy war in effect. So, that's an interesting development that now the antiwar right has basically abdicated entirely now because of Israel. So, it's kind of deflating, actually.

**WOODS:** Yeah. And it might have been Michael Malice who said – I can't remember now who said it. That now with Israel the right has its Ukraine.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, that's right.

**WOODS:** It has its thing that it's going to pour money into. And I might say, parenthetically, that again, I bear no ill will to anybody in the world. But the question is, our country is tapped out.

**RECTENWALD:** Totally.

**WOODS:** So, it's not going to help anybody in the world for the US to go bankrupt. Actually, it might. It might help some countries in the world not to get bombed anymore if the US went bankrupt. So, I'll take that back.

But the claim about Israel being a great ally of the US, you can't question that or that means you "hate Jews". Now, if I don't like the policy of the Armenian government, that doesn't mean I hate Armenians. What kind of a psycho would you have to be to draw that conclusion from that statement?

But the people who say things like this don't actually believe them. They're just trying to ruin your good name. But in terms of Israel being a great ally of the US, I don't understand. What has it done for us?

I know what we've done for them. But what has it done for us other than attract enemies that we did not have before? The United States did not have this level of animosity in the Arab world before the special relationship.

Even into the 1960s, did not have this level of animosity. So, okay, maybe we get something in return that's even better than that is bad. But if we have gotten it, I just don't see what it is.

**RECTENWALD:** I don't see what it is either. And they've been the beneficiaries of our actions, though, quite a bit. Not only in $3.8 billion worth of aid every year, military aid. I think they were the beneficiaries of the Iraqi war. We certainly weren't.

And yeah, so what's in it for us, is a very good question.

**WOODS:** Yeah, well, that'll shock and horrify some people watching. But, you know, I gotta be me, right?

**RECTENWALD:** Me too.

**WOODS:** I gotta be me. If you want people to be sound on a lot of things and then suddenly become completely conformist when it comes to this issue, you can go read *Breitbart* or the *Daily Wire* or something like that. But that's not what you get here.

So, I just talked to Keith Knight. I think you know him.

**RECTENWALD:** Yes.

**WOODS:** We were talking about Thomas Sowell's latest book. Thomas Sowell, apparently, is 93, and he just released another book.

**RECTENWALD:** It's amazing.

**WOODS:** The guy has earned some rest, and yet he refuses to take it. So, we talked to a lot of specifics in that episode. I mean, it was just relentless statistics. And they say this, but this is the truth. And they say this about this racial group and this about that one.

But you've looked at this subject also from a bigger picture perspective, as somebody who knows some of the underlying ideas that gave rise to the social justice movement, like so-called postmodernism and stuff like that. I think words like "postmodernism" are just words to most Americans.

Like, even people like conservatives and libertarians who know that they should be wary of things like this, if you were to quiz them, they wouldn't really know exactly what any of these terms mean. But you do, Michael Rectenwald.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, unfortunately, I guess. So, yeah, that's a great book. I've been reading it. The *Social Justice Fallacy*, the latest Thomas Sowell book. And yeah, he's right about everything. But I was thinking some other things that are also true about this.

One of them is, like, this radical egalitarianism, I think, is underneath this idea that men can become women and women men. This brings into play, also, some postmodern themes and ideas. That truth is established by the individual.

And there's a kind of epistemological solipsism, really, that reigns there. And so, in a sense, you can't beat them with arguments like Sowell's, unfortunately.

Because what they'll say is: *That's their truth. And my narrative is true. It doesn't matter what the statistics say. It doesn't matter what the numbers are, or what the facts are in terms of whether unequal outcomes or disparate outcomes* (as they call them) *are based on racism or not. There's my lived experience.*

And this really comes out of postmodern theory. The idea that there's no truth, that truth is relative to the subject, it's a subjectivism. And that there is no objective criteria that can test my individual lived experience.

I think it's like what Mises called "polylogism" in the extreme. That's what we're dealing with.

**WOODS:** But if that's the case, if their view is that: *You can take your empirical data and shove it, because I have my lived experience*. Then – I know people overuse the word "literally".

But in this case, it's absolutely accurate. There is literally no point in arguing.

**RECTENWALD:** None.

**WOODS:** Because you can't ever reach a conclusion or a consensus with them.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, there's no point in arguing with them in a way. Except that I think showing them, in fact, what the rhetoric, what the arguments amount to. And effectively showing them that they're abdicating their ground at the same time as they're making their points.

So, if there's no truth, and your truth is totally subjective and relates only to your experience, and nobody else can know this truth, so we're left in an epistemological nightmare solipsism. And there's no way out of that.

So, what you're saying is there's no point in talking to you, and likewise, there's no point listening to you either.

**WOODS:**  Now let's get on to some real current events that involve Michael Rectenwald himself. So, you are running for the nomination for president of the United States under the Libertarian Party ticket.

I've considered it myself over the years, and then thought that would just be a miserable process I would hate every minute of, I'm sorry to say. So, tell me, what is that actually like?

**RECTENWALD:** Well, funny thing is, I had already written out, like, a prospectus for my next book the day before I got this phone call. So, I was planning on something else for my future. And then I got a phone call from somebody in the Mises Caucus.

That's the caucus that effectively took over the Libertarian Party over the course of the last year and three quarters, roughly. And they said: *What do you think about running for president as a libertarian?* I was like: *Are you sure you called the right number here?*

I mean, what makes you think that I would be a viable candidate? And frankly, it wasn't because I don't think I have the qualifications. It's that I have never showed any interest in being a political candidate.

I particularly wasn't interested in being an employee of the state, because I really have no special affection for the state as such. But they laid out this plan, and they laid out the reasons for this. And it really goes back to what we were talking about earlier, is, what is the viable solution?

And I've been fighting against these totalitarian globalists for some time, as you know. And this was a plan to actually put my money where my mouth was, and that is to actually do something about it. And so, I took it on.

And it's been an interesting ride already. I should say, I could write a book about this, at this point already. Because there were some things that I didn't expect. Since this Mises Caucus had taken over the party, I didn't expect the kind of divisiveness that still subsisted within the party, and some of the attacks that I would receive from other libertarians.

It was pretty interesting, I should say. Now, I've been trying to stay out of this type of mudslinging altogether. But at first – as you know, when you're trolled, it is very difficult to resist responding to these people.

Because the things they're saying, you don't want to let them stand because they are outrageous. So, as you're very well aware, it's tough not to bite. And I bit at first.

And some of the things that were said – I don't know if you want to know about this.

**WOODS:** Yeah, why not?

**RECTENWALD:** I mean, one of the things is that what we've talked about is: Well, you were a Marxist, so why should a Marxist be a Libertarian candidate for president? And I tried to go over this.

Listen, I'm not the first Marxist who's turned into an arch anti-communist. Thomas Sowell is one of them. He's another one. Whittaker Chambers, I'm sure you could mention probably a whole list of people that have been staunchly Marxist and then came to their senses.

And they've become some of the strongest opponents to it. So, that was one. There's others that are less distasteful. But the basic idea is there came a whole legion of trolls after me. And I tried to fend them off, but then I effectively gave up and I just started making my own statements.

**WOODS:** I just find this so surprising. I feel like if you're reasonably well informed in the libertarian world, you should know who Michael Rectenwald is. I mean, it might surprise you that he's a candidate, but you wouldn't say: *Well, that's wildly unexpected!* Or: *That's wildly inappropriate and I should be against it.*

If you don't know who Michael Rectenwald is, then that means you're not listening to any of the major podcasters. You're not on the Mises website. You're not with Ron Paul. So, then what are you plugged into if you don't know who Michael Rectenwald is?

**RECTENWALD:** And this is another thing I think you'll relate to, is, people that have no skin in the game, and that they haven't done anything appreciable that I can see for liberty.

Well, I think I've been fighting for liberty now for seven straight years, very rigorously, with five books and numerous dozens and dozens of essays and podcasts. And you're right, if you don't know who I am, then maybe you're uninformed.

And I did find there's a difference between the Libertarian Party, per se, and the libertarian movement as a whole.

**WOODS:** Huge, huge difference. Because if you go to any reasonable libertarian gathering (or me), we get huge cheers. Everybody wants to come see us. So, I don't even know who these people even are.

Although I will say, I gave a breakfast talk there at the convention this past time, and that room was packed. And the bad guys tried to undermine me by having Edward Snowden being beamed in in another room.

First they tried to get me removed from the event, and then when they couldn't accomplish that, they put Snowden up against me, and I still sold out the room.

**RECTENWALD:** Wow.

**WOODS:** I mean, so look, don't mess with Woods, okay? Woods has earned his place at the table.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, absolutely. You know, I never had this sort of treatment in the libertarian movement, per se. Like, at *Mises Institute* events or other events with other cognate institutions and groups, never had I encountered such treatment or attempts to derail and undermine and backbite and – you know the whole story how this is.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**RECTENWALD:** So, that was surprising. And I've had nothing but great treatment from libertarians per se, the broader libertarian movement. And nobody really has questioned the veracity of my conversion before.

**WOODS:** Oh yeah. No question about that. I mean, that thought never occurred to me, having known you and talked to you. If you're not truly converted, then you are the best actor in the history of the world. You deserve an Oscar.

I mean, could you imagine fake converting to something and in the course of it, writing five books on that thing and not hating every second of your life? Like, imagine as a libertarian having to write a pro Marxism book, and then doing that again and again.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah, yeah. Or giving up a cushy job at a university for speaking the truth, being run out of the whole left.

**WOODS:** Yeah. I mean, the easiest thing in the world for you would have been just continue to be what you were.

**RECTENWALD:** Exactly. But couldn't do it because I had to tell the truth. And that's what my campaign is based on. I'll tell the truth about everything as I see it, including myself, everything about my history.

And I'll explain it all to people who are acting and asking in good faith.

**WOODS:** Well, let's think about a guy like Trump. He had, like, three issues or four issues that he just hammered away at. But if you asked him about some other issue, he'd answer you. But he was talking about trade and the wall, stuff like that.

Do you have a few things that you would want to hammer away at, even though they're not the only things you believe in?

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah. That's true. Yeah. I mean, I think most pressing issues right now, of course, are war again. So, that's number one just in terms of the exigency of it. It's a very pressing, dangerous proposition that we're entering into. And that has to be opposed.

And so, I'm going to be a consistent spokesperson about that. And then, of course, the localism or decentralization. That's the only movement, I think, that's capable of thwarting this centralized globalist enterprise that we're facing.

And I have the standard talking points that, I think, they've become almost virtue signaling at this point. Like: *End the Fed*. Of course, I want to end the Fed. I want private commercial banking with competitive currencies.

And that would solve so many problems, but we're not going to get there right away. We need to, first, I think, erode the power of the state by effectively seceding. If not literally, but then at least spiritually, I guess.

**WOODS:** Well, that is where I am at this point. And yet, even I, Michael, even I – as jaded as I am, even I sometimes get caught up in – especially when I'm interacting with friends on Twitter.

And I have a feeling that there seems like there's so many people out there who support me, I think: *Well, maybe we could still go for the whole ball of wax after all.*

But then you walk down to the shopping mall, and you have a feeling that most people aren't following your Twitter feed. And that maybe they would be horrified if they knew what your opinions on everything was.

So, we'll see. So, do you have a website?

**RECTENWALD:** Yes. My campaign slogan is "Rec the regime." So, it's RecTheRegime.com. That's the campaign website.

**WOODS:** Did you come up with that?

**RECTENWALD:** Yes I did.

**WOODS:** Whoa, that's pretty good!

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah. Rec the regime.

**WOODS:** Well, especially because you had that podcast at the *Mises Institute,* "Wrect", again, building on your last name. You have a much cooler last name than I think you realized.

**RECTENWALD:** Yeah. So, speaking of the Mises Institute podcast. It's suspended, but I plan on picking it up elsewhere for the time being and going back to it after the campaign. The *Mises Institute*, as you know, is a nonprofit that can't even give the appearance of supporting a candidate.

So, while I'll continue to write for the *Mises Institute* – and they're fine with me writing for them. But just having a podcast is a little bit too promotional-looking to them. So, I understand that, so I've given that up too. That was income. That was pretty decent income, frankly.

So, if anybody thinks I'm a grifter, it's quite the opposite. I'm actually a reverse grifter.

**WOODS:** [both laughing] Yeah. Well, I wish you all the best. RecTheRegime.com is the website. I'll link to it in the description of the video, and also at TomWoods.com/2404, which is our episode number and show notes page.

So, Michael, best of luck to you. I didn't expect that when I first got to know you that this would be where life would take you. But life is full of surprises. That's what makes it so much fun. So, best of luck to you and thanks a lot.

**RECTENWALD:** Thanks so much, Tom.