



Episode 414: Woods/Petersen Clash on Minarchism, Anarchism, and More

Guest: Austin Petersen

WOODS: You have become rather a controversial figure in libertarian circles. I guess I first got to know you when you were the producer of *Freedom Watch*, the show we all loved with the great Judge Andrew Napolitano. And then of course, he doesn't have that show anymore, but you more than bounced back from that. You've had quite a bit of success, and you have this website that's fairly heavily trafficked -- *The Libertarian Republic*, I was just telling people about. Let's just start there. Tell me what *The Libertarian Republic* is all about.

PETERSEN: Right, it's sort of a cultural play. I always thought that libertarian ideas deserved to sort of a stand up to the marketplace that we all like to discuss. And certainly there are some for-profit models that exist, such as yourself: libertarians who are putting their ideas to the test of the marketplace. I've always read *Reason* magazine, and I really enjoyed it, but I always thought that there's a big bureaucracy behind this, and they're a non-profit, which sort of shields them from the marketplace. I wondered if there wasn't room in the market for a cultural libertarian website that had a focus on issues that have a libertarian base to them, but that would appeal to a mainstream audience. Because what I learned, Tom, by working at Fox was that the best way to get your message out was to tap into the zeitgeist of what people are already talking about, and not try and force your message down people's throats directly, but to try to find the things that are already interesting to them. Find the libertarian theme in the story, and then sort of widen people's knowledge by talking about what they want to talk about. But by inserting the libertarian narrative in it, so that, when national news is breaking, we actually have a voice in the debate, and that people, instead of being siphoned off into something like the Brookings Institution or maybe some other left-wing thing tank, that there would be an institution that exists to siphon people off to your website, for example. We recently featured you as having one of the top ten best libertarian websites. And so I wanted something to exist that was sort of funneling people who are already interested in certain topics towards our ideas and giving them introductions, primers to our ideas, so that more people can be interested in it. And so far, it's been fairly successful.

WOODS: Well, no doubt about that, and as you know, it is hard to start a new website in 2014/15, because people's habits are already formed online. They've already got their dozen websites that they check, and now you're asking them to look at a

different one, which usually means they have to drop one of the ones they're looking at already. You've got an impressive Alexa rank; you've somehow done it, and you've made it look easy. But it is not easy. I can testify, that is not easy to do.

PETERSEN: (laughing) It's not; it certainly isn't, Tom. I've faced a lot of challenges; there's been a lot of ups and downs. But if you actually look at my Alexa rank over the last three years, you'll see there was like a cavernous drop when Facebook changed their algorithms, so we sort of dropped off --

WOODS: Oh, don't get me started on that Facebook algorithm.

PETERSEN: Yeah, it was horrifying. I spent the last part last year thinking, "I'm ruined; it's over. I tried to run a business; I've failed." Until this January, when I finally said to myself, "Listen, if you always do what you always did, you'll always get what you always got. It's time to change strategy and get more aggressive and find ways to spread our message in ways that are even more entertaining to people." And that's how people like Glenn Beck got successful. They found ways to talk about the news that people already cared about, and they inserted their own narrative in it. And so I think that now I've sort of proven that there is a sort of pop culture niche that can be served. And, yeah, I think that some of my competitors and things like that offer similar products, but what *The Libertarian Republic* offers is a diverse spectrum of libertarian thought. It's not paleoconservative, although there are some paleocons. It's not atheist-skeptics like myself; we have a Faith & Freedom section. Actually one of my writers right now is sitting across from me; she's writing an article about the most libertarian quotes from Jesus. And I wanted to create a place where people could come in from all the different spectrum of libertarian thoughts, because libertarians have such a diverse variety of beliefs, as you well know, and I'm sure we're going to discuss here. But I wanted to sort of have a place where everybody could come in and discuss the issues of the day and find what we're all libertarian about, and see if we couldn't find common ground in order to strengthen and solidify the movement. Now, that sometimes means that you talk about divisive things or that you disagree strongly, but if our ideas are good and strong and true and right, then they deserve to stand up to scrutiny and even to sometimes be called into question in order for us to harden our arguments for when we go up against our real enemies: the neocons, the social democrats, the big government statist, the ones who really want to fight us and stop our momentum. Then we need to have good, strong arguments in order to take the fight to them in a much more efficient manner.

WOODS: Now, if you're going to say that it's perfectly all right for libertarians to argue among themselves to thereby hone their arguments, you're not going to get any argument from me. You'll get no stronger supporter than I am, because I do that too. There are times when I feel compelled to respond strongly to something that another libertarian has said. It's not something that I do all the time. It's not even something I do even part of the time. I do it once in a great while. But when I do it, I do it with gusto, because if I've been forced into doing it, it must be something that's really egregious.

PETERSEN: Right, right.

WOODS: However, let me point out something that I read on *The Libertarian Republic* -- and I realize that, as the editor, you are not strictly responsible for or necessarily in agreement with every single word that's on the site. And of course, you couldn't be, based on the way you just described the site. But at the same time, how helpful is it in encouraging the exchange of ideas or the honing of ideas to say something like, "Anarcho-capitalism is stupid, delusional, crypto-leftist garbage." Is that the kind of culture you're trying to foster?

PETERSEN: Yeah, I think it's important that those who see libertarianism as a religion are strongly questioned. And I think that sometimes in doing so, the only way to do that is to follow the tactics that I've learned from one of our biggest enemies, which is Saul Alinsky. And I read *Rules for Radicals*, and I actually agree very vehemently with Saul Alinsky's strategies, that the quickest way to get an opponent's attention is to infuriate them. And that happens very easily with libertarians. They seem to be very easily angered. And I myself am actually not very easily angered, and so I think that one of the big problems we have is with hotheads in our movement. And, yeah, so sometimes I poke the bear. So yeah, I think that's perfectly a legitimate strategy, to poke at people who are too dogmatic, or perhaps too religious with their views. And so, while I didn't write that piece, I tend to agree with it. I think that anarcho-capitalism is kind of stupid, Tom. And I'd say that happily to anyone to their face and see if they could challenge me to a debate on this, and I'm more than happy to discuss that with you. But you know, these guys' arguments are the same. If you look at the Founding Fathers, for example, when they were having debates with one another, they certainly weren't as civil as a lot of people like to think. Didn't Thomas Jefferson call John Adams something like, "bald, fat, stupid"? And in turn, he was called like an "adulterous lech". So it's not as if this is unprecedented whatsoever or that it isn't effective, because negative attack ads certainly are effective, Tom, and to me, it's not necessarily the type of attack that's important as much as it is the ideology behind it.

WOODS: Related to anarcho-capitalism very strongly is the idea of the non-aggression principle. And it's been increasingly -- well, I don't mean to disparage the movement by calling it fashionable, but let's face it, it has become increasingly fashionable among some libertarian philosophers to claim that they want to dispense with the non-aggression principle: "This is not a helpful way of thinking about things"; they want to think about things differently. I find that the non-aggression principle is extremely helpful, because it helps clarify exactly what rights we have. It makes the idea of rights easier to pinpoint, so that we're not fuzzy. One thing I can't stand is fuzzy thinking. I want precise thinking. If we're going to talk about rights, I want to know exactly what they are, and the non-aggression principle helps me to clarify exactly what rights people have and what rights they don't have. Now what is your objection to it? Why do you think it's obscuring the search for truth here?

PETERSEN: I just think it's childish, Tom. The idea that you can have clarity in rights theory, I think flies in the face of reality. When you look at the Constitution and the

issues that the Founding Fathers fought over -- the 9th and 10th Amendments -- they knew that there was no way that they could possibly -- that the rights of man were innumerable, and if you wanted clarity in those rights, why not write them down? So if you think that you could have clarity in those rights, then certainly there must be some way to codify them. But if not, then those rights tend to be a bit fuzzy. And I think that the non-aggression principle, on its face, is childish and wrong, and it's totally wrong to center libertarian philosophy on it, because who gets to define what is aggression? And, of course, if you look at what most anarchists would say, if someone points a gun at you, for example, you can shoot them before they shoot you - - that's aggression. But if North Korea points a nuclear weapon at Los Angeles, oh, all of a sudden we have to wait until it seems like it's a credible threat. And so I think that if you really want clarity of thought, Tom, you must abandon the non-aggression principle as a centerpiece of libertarian thought, because it does not provide a consistent theory. If you want consistency, the non-aggression principle will not provide it to you, because no one can agree on what constitutes aggression, and so it gets muddy. Just like, if you took someone up in a hot air balloon, and you're both in it, and you own the hot air balloon, and you wanted to get that person out of your private property, would you have a right to just kick him out of the balloon? Well, yeah, maybe you would, if you had a full, hardcore anarcho-capitalism view of things. But I might see that as aggression. So I think that, unfortunately, the world is not consistent, Tom, and so we have to look at things as they lie, not as we want them to be. And yes, that does mean that things tend to be fuzzy, but the world is fuzzy. And I think we have to sort of accept that sometimes, and try and find the things where we can agree, where we can solidify things. But by adopting some sort of non-aggression principle, I think it muddies the water too much. It's wide open and open to interpretation. It's not the clarification that you say that you want.

WOODS: All right, well I think this conversation should be -- let's make this more of a conversation than an interview. That's usually how I do the show. I don't have some canned questions, and then the person answers, and then I ask another question. I would much rather just have a conversation, so I hope you don't mind if I spend a little time spinning this out, and then you give your response, and so on and so forth.

PETERSEN: Sure.

WOODS: All right, well, first the idea of being in a balloon or being in an airplane -- you know, like, I take you up in my plane. I mean, Austin, do you think if I took you up in my plane, at 30,000 feet, I would say, "Austin, all right, I've got you right where I want you. It's my plane. Here's the trap door." I mean, do you really feel like I would be a consistent libertarian if I were doing that? The idea is that, if I'm the one who puts you in a vulnerable position, then I have then taken on some responsibility for you. I'm the one who did this to you. I can't then say, "Oh, by the way, you have to get off my property." So the balloon and airplane thing has more or less been taken care of. Now, just because people don't agree -- there is a huge diversity of opinion out there, with regard to rights. There are all different kinds of rights theories. There are all different theories of justice out there. The Marxists have a theory of justice; as perverse as it is, they have one. A criminal has a theory of justice, which is that, "I

should have your stuff, and you shouldn't." Everybody has at least an implicit theory of justice. But the mere diversity of these theories doesn't mean that there can't be a correct theory. And even though we happen to think ours is correct, and we happen to be very much a small minority, I don't think I'm just being pigheaded by insisting that my particular one happens to be correct.

PETERSEN: Well, I don't think you're pigheaded enough, to be quite honest, Tom, because I think that in reality if you believe that the non-aggression principle should be the centerpiece of libertarianism, then those ideas should be enforced. I think the problem that I have with anarchists is that they don't believe that their ideas of property rights should be enforced -- in other words, that there is no central definition of private property. I am for a single, central, unified, top-down definition of private property; that my justly acquired private property is my justly acquired private property, and yours is yours. And there should be no other accepted definition of private property and natural rights. I mean, you should definitely be pigheaded about that kind of a thing. But my problem is that in an anarcho-capitalist utopia, there is no way to enforce contracts, and that the way of contract enforcement that anarchists describe is to me insufficient for actually proscribing those beliefs that you claim to believe in. In other words, if these rights are right, then they should be enforced.

WOODS: All right, well I have no problem with saying that they should be enforced. But in the same way, you say that in anarcho-capitalism, you can't have enforcement because there isn't a single institution doing the enforcing, because there is no monopoly institution?

PETERSEN: Well, not necessarily. I think a monopoly institution is often plagued with bureaucratic problems, as you and I see. But the idea is that whatever institutions would enforce private contracts, whether there'd be one or where there'd be many -- and as you know, there actually are multiple states; there are hundreds of states in the world that have competing systems -- it just so happens that we live in the United States, and there are 50 competing states in there, so we do have a bit of a laboratory there for competition -- but that we do have a sort of single definition for a First Amendment right, for example. And I think that codification of some of these principles is absolutely correct, and that, in order for us to enforce these natural rights that you and I believe in, that there does need to be a monopoly authority on such things. And here's my question: Look at something, for example, like Ron Paul's speech to Congress after the 9/11 attacks. Surely you're familiar, when he called for letters of marque and reprisal.

WOODS: Yeah.

PETERSEN: Well, even such letters of marque and reprisal were to be done by, what? The monopoly of the state, the government. Ron Paul was calling for letters of marque and reprisal that the government would hire mercenaries to go after Osama bin Laden. Now, certainly, I would have thought that was a much better solution, and it would have been Constitutional, but it's still statist, Tom, because it relied on the monopoly of force of the government through the taxation process, for us to be taxed in order to

provide for our national security. So I mean, do you disagree with Congressman Ron Paul's approach of marque and reprisal, and using the monopoly on force in order to tax us, in order to go after Osama bin Laden, or would you rather have had some sort of competing private agency do it?

WOODS: I happen to think it would have been fairly easy to put a bounty on his head and have him killed very quickly. I don't think that would have been hard at all. I think they could easily have done that.

PETERSEN: But who pays?

WOODS: But hold on, wait a minute. I want to talk about rights. I want to stick to one issue, because otherwise, we'll be all over the place.

PETERSEN: Sure.

WOODS: You have a piece that you wrote -- I'll link to it on the show notes page today, which will be TomWoods.com/414 -- I think it's called, "5 Reasons I Am Not an Anarchist." And you say that you used to be an anarchist; you used to be an anarcho-capitalist, but then you thought about it further, and you came to these conclusions. Now, the conclusions you've drawn are ones that are addressed in the literature, so I don't know why they convinced you at one point and didn't convince you later, but you're perfectly at liberty to change your mind. But one of the points you make is that people have a natural right to be legally represented in court. And my question about that is not whether it's desirable for people to be represented in court. But what you said in the article is that, for the sake of a society based on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we need people to have a right like that.

PETERSEN: That's correct.

WOODS: But given that that right, so called, does involve forcing other people to do things -- what if I'm the only lawyer in society? I would be obligated to defend you, even if I don't want to? My view is all you have are negative rights; you have no positive rights. That is to say, you don't really have a right to life; you have a right not to be killed. Like, you don't have a right to a kidney dialysis machine. How could you? How could that be a natural right? There weren't kidney dialysis machines 500 years ago, and on a desert island with two people, how would I enforce my right to a kidney dialysis machine, if not by enslaving the other person? So that can't be a natural right. So it's easy for me, in my system, to know what rights are. Whereas, given that you are willing to admit the possibility that people can in fact enforce a right that would involve forcing other people to do things for them, because you say this fosters a society based on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, that's so vague and so imprecise, that, why wouldn't there be a right to food? Isn't a right to food much more important than a right to a defense attorney?

PETERSEN: No, and let me use another intangible example of a right. So what do you think about the right to be safe from double jeopardy, for example? Double jeopardy is

the type of thing that is a right that doesn't require any sort of -- it's not a food right; it's not an actual substantive right. You don't have to pull anything out of anywhere or take resources from anyone. But the right to be secure from double jeopardy is a right that is sort of in the mushy middle between a negative right and a positive right. So if we have competing legal systems, and we live in an anarcho-capitalism utopia, there's no force or counter-balance that would stop someone from putting me in a situation where they could just use their private defense firm or their private court to sue me out of existence. And while we're there, there's nothing to demand that the person who is suing me out of existence provides me with some form of representation if I'm not able to afford it, and certainly that representation -- even if there was a requirement that he provided it, well, you take the king's coin, you sing the king's song. So that person, if that lawyer were even to be demanded -- or let's say it was offered voluntarily, you wouldn't want that lawyer. You wouldn't want to have that person working for you who was not working on your behalf. So I think that there is a problem that some of these rights are hazy, and you are correct, that it is not as precise as we would like it to be. But like I say, the world is imprecise, and unfortunately, we have to deal with things as they lie. So when it comes to the world of negative rights and positive rights, I think there certainly are some positive rights, and I know that that's exactly what makes me not an anarchist. And some of those positive rights include the right to have some form of representation if you are accused of a crime. And so the only way that we could provide that would be to have some sort of central authority on it. It doesn't have to be a monopolistic, "one size fits all" authority. But the problem with anarchism is that it does not provide for civil rights. It does not provide for the type of liberties that we as Americans enjoy under our Constitutional system.

WOODS: All right, let me jump in here, because the kind of argument you're making is the kind of argument that the Left will then turn around and use against our whole system. Because they'll say, if you are conceding that it is not even conceivable to you how in a voluntary society this problem might be resolved, well we can't conceive how food, which is far more fundamental, could possibly be delivered without a central authority. So they would say that under minarchism, we can't guarantee that people are going to have food, and that's a terrible thing. I mean, without food, you don't have anything to worry about with lawyers or no lawyers, because you'll be dead. So we need to have a central authority distributing food. And yes, there are some positive rights, like the right to food. On what grounds can you stand up to them and tell them they're wrong?

PETERSEN: Oh, absolutely. Here's the thing: I actually do believe there is a positive right to food, and that positive right exists for children. My flirtations with anarchism ended the day that I read Murray Rothbard's article about the rights of children, and that children do not have a right to be fed or to be cared for. But my disagreement with Rothbard, of course, is that by having a child, you are in effect agreeing to an unwritten contract. And this is why I get angry with anarchists, and I think the philosophy is stupid, because they say, "Well, I didn't sign the social contract of the Constitution." Yeah, well, I didn't agree to the non-aggression principle. But when it comes to the rights of children -- this is the perfect story: The number one biggest,

most popular article in *The Libertarian Republic's* history was a little known story called "Baby Nearly Starved to Death by Lazy Parents." And the anarchists jumped in saying that the parents had absolutely zero obligation to provide that child with subsistence or to take care of them whatsoever. And then of course we got to the prom night dumpster argument, and I found myself in shock that anarchists would actually be arguing that a parent has a right to leave a child in a dumpster, and that that is not an act of aggression. It's stupid; it's wrong, and I think it's actually fairly evil, Tom. So yes, I do think there are some minimal positive rights, and those obligations should be held out for children who cannot fend for themselves, and that is our obligation as a society.

WOODS: Okay, okay, I want to jump in on the children thing, because I agree with you on that. I don't agree with the Rothbard analysis of that, and there has been --

PETERSEN: Uh oh, uh oh, Tom, you're in trouble!

WOODS: No, but I'm not, because I mean, my listeners are not cultists. I think this is a real libel on libertarians and on anarcho-capitalists. Because I read a lot of this literature; I watch a lot of YouTubes, and I know that people call each other names, and we lose our temper over stuff like this. I lose my temper over some things; not this, because I feel like, if we ever got to a point in society where we really were faced with the choice between private police and government monopoly police, I would be so deliriously happy, I don't think I'd even care any more. So I don't get that worked up about this --

PETERSEN: So is there a positive right of children, of babies to be fed and cared for?

WOODS: Only in this sense. I don't think in this -- I don't like the term "positive rights" -

PETERSEN: But then it falls apart, Tom.

WOODS: But it's the same thinking as putting you up in a balloon. If I sent you up in my airplane or something, I'm the one who put you in the vulnerable position. There's no contract; there's no nothing. If I've put you in a vulnerable position, then I have a responsibility for you, because you are in my hands. And the same thing is true of a child or anybody. If you happen to be passing through -- Let's say you got lost, and I let you sleep in my house. The fact that you're in my house doesn't mean I can start harvesting your organs. You are in my care, and because you're in my care -- and again, with a child, I *put* you in the vulnerable position -- you don't have to be a minarchist to say, therefore, there is a moral obligation that comes from putting somebody in a position of vulnerability. Now, hold on a minute because I don't want to get completely sidetracked. I do want you to know that there are people, though, who have written on the issue of children. For example, there's a debate that's gone on for years, because Walter Block never lets a debate end, ever. He's going to finish that debate till he drops dead. So if you write a reply to Walter, he is going to publish a reply to your reply, and it goes on forever. But my friend Jacob Wisniewski in London

has written some very, very good material on children and the obligations that parents have toward children. And he is an anarchist. So if that's your only reason, then that's not a good enough reason. But I know that's not your only reason. My point is, leave aside the special case of children, because that's not primarily what progressives are talking about. They're talking about all human beings. If all human beings have a natural right to have the government expropriate somebody to give them legal representation, well, again, why wouldn't they have the same right to get free food? And if they have a right to free food, why not medical care? I mean, you're going to let these people die? You're going to let these people die, because you have no guarantee in your system that everybody's going to get medical care. You can't guarantee that, in the same way that I allegedly can't guarantee that contracts will be enforced.

PETERSEN: Right, right, so the question here is who pays, obviously, like who pays for that legal representation? I mean, listen. There are some people who really would prefer this anarchist system, simply for the fact that they could destroy their enemies and they wouldn't be required in any sense to provide them with the ability to defend themselves. I'm not trying to say that warlords are going to take over here. But when you're talking about violating other people's natural rights, I do happen to believe that you have a right to be neutrally represented, if accused of a crime. So I guess my question to you, Tom, is what rights does anyone have to be safe and secure? To have their natural rights secured from others? I understand the mechanisms that anarchists have described, but are you telling me seriously that you think someone should be able to just be endlessly accused of crimes by their neighbors, and that a tyrannical majority in their hometown could --

WOODS: No --

PETERSEN: Okay, so then, what sort of mechanisms of defense does an individual have against any larger corporation, whether that be government or whether that be private? What sort of defense does any individual have against that sort of tyranny? Because there would be tyranny in anarchy. I guarantee you, Tom; there would be tyranny.

WOODS: Okay, first of all, there's no denying that there's no system that yields you no problems. There can't be --

PETERSEN: Right.

WOODS: But the question is, how can we minimize the problems? How can we try to put a boundary around the problems to the greatest extent possible? Now these legal protections that you're talking about, a lot of them evolved very gradually over time in a system that was highly decentralized. A lot of the legal principles that we take absolutely for granted emerged in the highly decentralized common law system. It did not emerge --

PETERSEN: But it's the law, Tom. It's the law --

WOODS: But I'm not opposed to law. Why would I be opposed to law? The point is these principles evolved not top-down. They evolved one case at a time, and eventually principles bubble up from this gradual process. We're surrounded all the time by a system -- at least we can sort of approximate what things would be like by the fact that, in the United States, there is a tremendously flourishing and successful industry of private arbitration. Now, why would people want to go to private arbitration? Isn't there a possibility that in private arbitration they would be able to be harassed for the rest of their lives and they would get unjust decisions and it would take 15 years? Oh wait, that doesn't happen. And in fact, in terms of a case taking 15 years, I'd say it's the monopoly system that bankrupts you; it takes forever; your case never gets heard; the celebrity gets off; the poor guy goes to jail. That's the system you say would originate under anarchy, but that's the system we have now.

PETERSEN: Well, sort of, but here's the thing, Tom. Minarchists don't ban competing systems. The minarchist simply says that whatever mechanisms of enforcement would arise would necessarily be called a government. I mean, to me, the problem with anarchism is that it replaces government with governments that you don't call government. So the idea behind minarchism is simply that there will be some mechanism of enforcement, and that that mechanism of enforcement, whatever it should be, should be solely to protecting the natural rights of individuals. So again, it's a bit of a red herring to assume that I'm demanding monopoly control on the legal system, when simply, a legal system should exist that provides for these natural rights. And then if people desire to go outside of it -- to secede from that system, even -- then they should have a right to do so. In a sense, we do sort of have that in the United States. You can secede; you can leave from one state to another. If you don't like the laws in California, you can go to Maine, or what have you. So there is a sort of beautiful federalist system here. I guess what I'd like to ask you, Tom, and what I'd really love for your audience is -- because it's very common to hear from anarcho-capitalists; they pose the Lysander Spooner meme, that the social contract I didn't sign the four-letter word. So I guess my question to you is, does every contract that someone has to agree to be signed? And if so, what does that imply? What does that mean?

WOODS: Well, not everything has to be signed, because not everything -- for example, Bob Murphy gives the common example of you go into a restaurant, you sit down -- everybody understands that everything you order has got to be paid for. You don't sign a contract when you walk in there, but we all understand -- and that it's customary to leave a tip for good service. It would be absurd to feel that you need to do that for something so trivial. But when you get to something that is of the greatest significance -- in our society, when you buy a car or a house or you engage in any major purchase, you are signing contracts that -- you don't even know what you're signing half the time. You're signing so many contracts, and you're filing them in triplicate, and there are all these rules for what to do. This alleged social contract says that simply because I'm standing in some particular standing room, I have consented to have at least one-third of my income taken from me in perpetuity, that I have consented to have my physical body called into service for the state's war, that I have consented to a whole raft of rules. But there's no attempt to actually get my consent? There's no actual -- so yeah,

in that case, that is ludicrous. There is no defending the social contract. That is leftism, pure and simple. If you want to defend government, defend it on some other grounds. But the social contract is the worst argument you have.

PETERSEN: I'm not, I'm not. But the problem is that the non-aggression principle is one of those sort of unsigned agreements that you have. I won't call it a contract, because certainly anarchists --

WOODS: No, because it doesn't obligate you to provide anything for anybody.

PETERSEN: And that's why it falls apart. And that's why we should abandon it, because it places absolutely zero obligations on any of us to abide by it. Now here's --

WOODS: No, no, no, it places --

PETERSEN: Hold on --

WOODS: All right, go ahead, go ahead.

PETERSEN: One of the things that anarchists like to say is that, "Oh, you just want a state, because you can't control your impulses." And they say, "Well, yeah, I won't kill someone, but maybe you will." They like to say, "You just want the state, so they can hold you back from doing violence." And in a sense, I used to say, "Oh no, I don't want to hurt anybody; I don't want to break the law," and stuff like that. But then I realized that that was actually incorrect. I actually do want to break the law, and I actually do want to kill someone. There's one person that I would love to kill, and his name is Robert Courtney, and he's a pharmacist in Kansas City who was diluting chemotherapy drugs in the early '90s. Unfortunately, my mother passed away, because she was the victim of this pharmacist. Now, do I believe in the death penalty? No, I don't believe that the state should have that power. Do I believe in self defense? Yes. Do I think that the government should keep people like myself from enacting vigilante justice against people like Robert Courtney? Absolutely. So I do think that there would be, without some form of restraint in civil society, that there would be people who would enact vigilante justice. I think that anarchists revel and delight in the idea of vigilante justice. There's nothing they would love more than to see the mob, the outraged mob go and kill maybe George W. Bush or any other person that they seem to feel is the dictator of the month -- maybe myself, included. I've certainly been violently threatened by a lot of people who called themselves anarcho-capitalists. But --

WOODS: Wait, you have?

PETERSEN: Oh, absolutely. I've actually had --

WOODS: Who?

PETERSEN: Well, a perfect example would have been when I gave a speech at PorcFest. I like to debunk things like 9/11 conspiracies and chem trails and vaccines as

a matter of course. But I was almost physically assaulted when I walked off the stage, because someone was so offended at this anarchist gathering. And that person had to be physically restrained from attacking me. And I get these kinds of threats regular, Tom, because -- and that just shows me that I really must be on to something, because if you can't stand your ideas up to scrutiny without being emotional, then I think that there's probably something wrong with your beliefs. And so --

WOODS: Okay, but look, there are crazy people everywhere, and it's not --

PETERSEN: Fine, fine, and I totally accept that, and I'm not going to try to paint with a broad brush here. I have lots of anarcho-capitalists who I take great inspiration from, and certainly you are one of them; Bob Murphy is one of them. But again, I'm more inspired by the Nozickian state. I happen to think that the problem with anarchism is that it doesn't account for the evil nature of man, that there is --

WOODS: All right, all right, hold on, now wait. I have to get some time here, not because I need to dominate the guest or anything, but I do have a point of view to represent here. My normal, friendly posture is to let the guest talk forever, but in this case, I do need to jump in.

PETERSEN: All right, go ahead.

WOODS: I jotted down so many things, and each one of them is like a whole episode here. All right, so you're talking about how we need the government to enforce individual rights. Okay, I can at least understand that point of view. I just feel like when I look at the system of the United States right now, I don't feel like the system of law enforcement and courts is primarily aimed at the enforcement of individual rights. I think it's aimed at putting people in cages for victimless crimes. It's aimed at punishing people for not paying enough taxes. It's aimed at trying to get more revenue for the government. When I look at the corruption of the police -- the total ineffectiveness of the police, by the way. How many murders do they actually solve and then put the guy away? What is it, 3%? If anarchy were that bad, that would be an argument against anarchy. I can't imagine private enforcers possibly being as bad as this. And by the way, I still let you get away with the, "Why isn't there a natural right to food?" I still feel like I haven't gotten a good answer to that. But put that in the back of your mind. In terms of mobs, I don't know any anarcho-capitalist who favors that. The state is the one that eggs on the mobs to get what it wants. The state wants mob rule, because guess who gets to come in and restore order. Well, it's the state. In terms of the non-aggression principle being just like a social contract, it's not in this sense: The social contract is an agreement in which I allegedly consented. To add insult to injury, they claim that I consented to have my property taken away, to be drafted into the wars, and whatever, because I haven't left. What kind of principle is that? There's no other part of our lives in which we would ever vindicate a principle like that: "Because you happen to be standing there, and you haven't left," -- Now, if you're standing on private property, that's one thing. You do abide by their rules.

PETERSEN: There we go; that's what I was going to say --

WOODS: But does the government own the entire country? That's a tyrannical principle. So that's where --

PETERSEN: They do have eminent domain, and so --

WOODS: Okay, but that's just a matter of positive fact. Is that justifiable?

PETERSEN: Um --

WOODS: Eminent domain comes from the monarchical view that the king owns the whole realm, and he's just letting you use it. Is that a principle we want to adopt?

PETERSEN: No, not the federal government, but I think that if we adopted a more decentralized approach to eminent domain, like maybe certain states --

WOODS: So a more decentralized approach to me saying, "We have more numbers than you, and we think we can put your property to better use than you are." You're okay with that?

PETERSEN: No, there should be -- again, we need checks on democracy. This is why the Founders created this adversarial system, so I would say that, if you were to allow the states to decide, that some states would do it, and some states wouldn't, just like --

WOODS: I would rather have the states decide, yes, because then there'd be greater chance of some freer states.

PETERSEN: That's correct. And so, again, I would like to give the states the opportunity to experiment with that, and some states would do it, and some states wouldn't. But no, I don't think that a "one size fits all" eminent domain of the federal government across everything is probably in our best interest. But I do think that the federal government needs to have supremacy in certain items, not in all items. The Supremacy Clause, to me, denotes that the federal government has supremacy only in those powers which are specifically delineated to the federal government, and then all other rights belong to the states, and then to the people. But I think it's a beautiful system, Tom. Now, of course, it doesn't work, but again, just like you said, there isn't going to be any "one size fits all" system. And to be honest, I mean, come on, Tom, you know that we both agree on maybe 90% of the issues --

WOODS: We do, and I was going to talk about Bernie Sanders, because I can't stand him, but we got onto this. But where do you stand on the roads question?

PETERSEN: Oh, I'm for decentralization, again --

WOODS: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. Fair enough, but I don't want to let you get away with "decentralization," because I've used that as a cop out sometimes, too. I want to

know, what is your preferred system? I mean, do you favor a system that involves any coercive taxation whatsoever for the funding of roads?

PETERSEN: No, and here's why --

WOODS: Okay, okay. But then, why couldn't the leftists come back at you and say, "Well, look, Austin Petersen, you're all worried about what would happen without government involvement in the legal system -- that people wouldn't have representation and they would be screwed. Well, without government involvement in roads, people would build roads around people's houses, and they wouldn't give them access rights to the roads, and they'd be stuck in their house forever. We could oppress people by just building roads, and so we need government for roads." Do you see how when you give them an inch, they're going to take a mile?

PETERSEN: Oh, totally. But it's the same with anarchists. If you give anarchists an inch, they're going to take a mile too. But here's the thing: There's a market function for roads. There's no market function for a laser space asteroid defense system. There are certain things for which the market does well, and there are certain things which the market doesn't do well. There's no reason --

WOODS: But who's going to decide that? Austin Petersen?

PETERSEN: Uh, yeah, theoretically. Listen, I'd love to crowd fund a space cannon to destroy asteroids. I don't know how much people would want to invest in it. Maybe they would like to invest in it --

WOODS: Maybe they would. I mean, every single thing I hear, where it's said that only the government can fund it, because it would be too expensive, there are always examples of private industry funding -- every single thing. Or only the government can help people overseas when there are natural disasters. But the public --

PETERSEN: Only the government can enforce a monopoly on the definition of private property. And I truly do believe that. It doesn't matter if the government is the government down the street or the federal government itself, but there should be one, single, unified definition of private property, and there should be one, single, unified definition of certain natural rights that should be codified. I mean, if you --

WOODS: But we don't have that now. We don't have that now --

PETERSEN: Do you think that the anti-Federalists were wrong in writing the Bill of Rights, in codifying it, in working within the system, in saying if we were going to have -- Minarchists understand that the government is inevitable. I'd love to see the anarchists cry out for anarchy, so that we can have people like George W. Bush and Hilary Clinton having private nuclear weapons. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Wouldn't we all love to see the neocons passing around our beautiful libertarian women back and forth, because they don't believe in the non-aggression principle?

WOODS: So in other words, you really think that on the market, it is impossible to provide security services? That without government, there would be rapists everywhere. I mean, I don't understand why you have such confidence in the market in 99% of things, but not here.

PETERSEN: There are rapists everywhere. There are people who, like you saw in Baltimore, are just simply waiting for their opportunity to destroy private property. And of course, there were the biker gangs down there in Texas, who needed some killing right away, because they were destroying other people's private property, and they were violating the non-aggression principle. So would I like to see more private citizens taking up their self-defense in their hometowns? Absolutely. Do I think that if you incentivize them to do so and give them the ability to protect themselves, that they'll do so? But rights -- and this is the quote that really pissed everybody off -- rights are guarantees. Something that must be provided. And that is not a quote from me, Tom, and your anarchist followers really need to check themselves before they wreck themselves. Because that was a direct quote from one Mister Señor Judge Andrew Napolitano. That was his direct quote. And that was the number one thing that was disagreed with me; they said, "How dare you say rights are guarantees?" Absolutely. If you say something is a right, it is a guarantee. It's something that must be provided --

WOODS: Okay, I can understand a sense in which that phrase could make sense. If we're talking about, from the point of view of the government -- if the government has, for example, the First Amendment, that is supposed to be a guarantee to you that the government won't interfere with it. But, of course, just simply articulating rights can't possibly be a physical guarantee that they won't be interfered with by other parties.

PETERSEN: Right, right.

WOODS: And I think that's what people were objecting to.

PETERSEN: Sure. Oh, absolutely, Tom. But again, it comes down to a misunderstanding. And I think that maybe there is a belief that perhaps I'm being malicious. And a lot of times I do play devil's advocate, simply because I'd like to test our ideas up to public scrutiny. I mean, libertarians think -- you were talking about national defense and security, and do I think there's a market for security? Absolutely. Would I like to see more private security? Absolutely. And here's a problem that we have in our movement, Tom, when it comes to national security, and I'll just tell the story very briefly: I was speaking to a group of YALers -- the Young Americans for Liberty group -- talking about the Boston bombing, back when we thought it was foreign nationals who had attacked us. And I said, "Pop quiz, anarcho hotshots. The Boston bombers just blew up your marathon. Which would you rather have, by a show of hands? You can send in SEAL Team Six, these are the professional forces. Or you can hire Blackwater mercenaries." And it was a nearly even split of those young libertarians who thought that the market solution, the Blackwater solution, would have been superior, and the other half would have rather trusted the state security

forces to handle what was believed to be a state problem. Now, Bill Buckley, I don't agree with his argument during the Cold War, that we needed to create an enormous leviathan superstate in order to fight an enormous leviathan superstate. But you need options, Tom, when it comes to national security. Another example is North Korea, if they were to point a nuke at California. I had an anarchist say that we have to wait until that nuke comes off the launchpad --

WOODS: Okay, but I could say that I've had minarchists say crazy things too.

PETERSEN: Okay, sure, but again, there's no real defense in the non-aggression principle. There's no real allocation for defense, because there's no definition of what is aggression. And so unfortunately, it behooves us to sit down and say, "What is aggression, and what is the best way to handle it?" And sometimes I think that that might be a state solution, and sometimes it might not be a state solution. I would prefer to go with the non-state solution always as a matter of default. But if natural rights are being destroyed, then we do have an obligation in society to defend life, liberty, and property.

WOODS: Okay, all right. So many things to do. There's no definition of aggression. Now by the way, we blasted past that timeframe that I mentioned earlier. I don't know what your plans are for today, but I'm just going to keep --

PETERSEN: I think people thought I was going to be a dope. I think people thought I was some dope, that I was just some idiot producer or something like that, but I actually do my homework, guys.

WOODS: No, no, no, I have not said any disparaging things about Austin Petersen. But okay, let me review a few things at once, and then you can take them one at a time. First of all, I agree that it would be helpful to have a definition of aggression that's accepted by everybody. Of course. But whether or not you have a government, that problem still exists, because today I don't think the U.S. government has a correct understanding of what aggression is. I don't think the U.S. government has a correct understanding of what rights are, obviously. Obviously. I mean, the drug war makes that obvious. The way they police makes that obvious. The way they spy on people makes that obvious. The way they take people's property makes that obvious. They have no idea of what rights are, so the idea that, "Well, government will solve this problem, because it will give us a single standard that we can all agree to," is just faulty in practice. Why wouldn't they have an interest in defining these things in a way that benefits themselves? What possible reason would they have for giving us a sensible definition of any of these things? They've never given us a good definition of those. That'd be the first thing.

PETERSEN: They don't; they don't, and that's why we have to take it over, which is why I want to ask you, do you support Rand Paul?

WOODS: All right, well look, I already talked about Rand Paul in another episode. If we talk about Rand Paul, I have two more interviews today, and I should cancel them

both, and I've had to kill to get these interviews. So if you want to talk about Rand Paul, maybe we could do an episode on that.

PETERSEN: All right, all right.

WOODS: But for the time being, I just want to stick to this. So first of all, what you're saying that the state ought to do or needs to do, it isn't doing. It has never done. Secondly -- and just the whole, "Let's elect somebody, and then we'll be able to cut through all the layers of vested interest and bureaucracy that exist, whose lives depend on nothing changing, whose livelihoods depend on nothing changing," is absolutely a fantasy beyond any wild speculation of any anarchist who ever lived.

PETERSEN: You're so full of it on this one, Tom, and I'll tell you why.

WOODS: (laughing) Let's hear it.

PETERSEN: Because guess who's running for president: Adam Kokesh. And guess what Adam Kokesh's idea of how things should be done is: Adam Kokesh wants to run for president for the single purpose of abolishing the federal government by fiat. He wants to be an anarchist dictator. And so what you have just described, you said that no one wants to do it; you need to read Adam Kokesh's latest book.

WOODS: Okay, that's true; that's true. But I'm sure Adam would be the first to admit that he's a rather small minority, and that ---

PETERSEN: Okay, but that doesn't change anything --

WOODS: All of the universe is stacked against him. So if your answer to me is Adam Kokesh, I will concede to you that point. But I still feel like the strength of my argument is quite powerful. Secondly, I'm not totally sure I accept the Rummel estimates for deaths in the 20th century -- you know, the R.J. Rummel death by government estimates of how many people died. I've heard some experts say that he vastly overstates the number of people killed in China and other places. But okay, we know it's still a huge number of people killed in the 20th century. It's at least 100 million, and that's what he estimates even abstracting from the wars. Now this was all carried out by government. This is an institution that we're told, "But, well, gosh, we need this thing for security; we need it to define private property; we need this and that." I don't see how anarcho-capitalism could possibly, possibly be any worse than a system like that that has never -- I mean, give me an example of a lasting regime that gave you minarchism and that didn't give you this. To say that, "Well, you're proposing this untested system" -- maybe mine is somewhat untested. Yours is totally tested and totally, totally a disaster.

PETERSEN: No, not really. We actually do have natural rights protected in some sense in this country. We are the only one that has a constitution that protects our free speech rights. Of course, there were many systems in the past. There was Carolinian law, the European superstate, the Holy Roman Empire, which is not perfectly

libertarian, but it was somewhat minarchist, and it did practice a sort of noninterventionist foreign policy. Excuse me, they were not noninterventionist -- they were very interventionist in foreign policy, but when it came to domestic policy, they were very laissez-faire. And so if you think about it, that's actually the belief of many modern neocons. And it was working at Fox News and getting up front and personal in the faces of people like Donald Rumsfeld and John Bolton, who call themselves libertarians, that I was actually forced to reconsider some of my understandings. Because if some people who call themselves neoconservatives identify as libertarians, I had to wonder for myself, then in what way do they define it as such? And these are people who take somewhat of a realist view of foreign policy, meaning that, whether it's space invaders or the government of China, that we may be facing external threats. But the government at home should be one of laissez-faire in protecting individual liberties. And sometimes that does mean displaying some form of aggression overseas or outside of the sphere of planet Earth if we were to ever be attacked in such a way. And that, unfortunately, it would require a marshaling of resources for us to provide for that common defense. Any citizen who could do so individually, make a contract with other individuals in order to form a group, a nation state, in order to marshal those resources for the defense of life, liberty, and property. And so, when you say, "Has there been any state that has done it?" Yes, I would say there have been better examples of others. There was the hoplite farmers from Greek history. They paid no taxes. They did, of course, have a bit of a foreign policy that was not libertarian. But again, nothing's going to be perfect, just like you say. The Icelandic godord, was another good example of very decentralized power. There were warlords, but there was a lot of individual sovereignty. So, yes, I could pull out lots of examples for you of minarchist systems that worked better than most, but the one that I think that has been the best at protecting individual rights has been the American government, despite the fact that it has destroyed many of our liberties that were instilled since our founding that we should be fighting to restore as much as we can, such as the abolition of the income tax, the pro-democracy 17th Amendment. I've read your books, Tom; I've read all your books, so I know what issues you care about here. And I do think that the United States government, while it certainly is a great evil in the world, it is not the greatest evil, and that if you actually read our enemies -- read John Bolton; read Donald Rumsfeld. You know, Donald Rumsfeld was buddies with Milton Friedman. He believes in limited government at home, but that limited government at home can only be protected by muscular defense abroad. I think it creeps into militarism, and that's when it becomes a problem, and of course, when these people do take power, that they become corrupted, because as Lord Acton said, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." Our job, Tom, should be to limit their ambitions, and the only way that we can limit these neocons' ambitions is by creating a system where their unbridled ambitions are bridled, so that we don't allow the private ownership of nuclear weapons for people such as Hilary Clinton.

WOODS: Okay, there's an awful lot we can talk about about that. The nuclear weapons thing is -- I'll admit, that is a tricky one. I've heard the way it's been dealt with by some people who are anarchists, and I have to say, I'm not totally satisfied with it. I'll be honest with you about that. And incidentally, I lean in this direction. I identify myself as being a Rothbardian, but I don't claim that I have all the answers, and part

of that is the humility that comes from believing in society and the market. If I could anticipate what every single entrepreneur would do, then my life would be a lot more prosperous than it is now. So I can't know all the answers. But of course, I think some anarchists think that's a really satisfying reply, but to anybody other than a really committed, knowledgeable libertarian, that is the most deeply unsatisfying reply that you could possibly give. "Well, I don't know how it would all work out, but somehow things would be taken care of," is not a good answer. Ultimately, in a way, you do have to fall back on that in the sense that you and I couldn't have anticipated how the industry of consumer credit would have worked itself out without seeing it happen. But still, it's very unsatisfying to say to people, "Well, somehow consumer credit will emerge." It would be nice to at least try to theorize about where it would come from. All right, two more things I want to ask you: The first is, do you believe that a group of people getting together can authorize an institution to exercise powers that they themselves individually would not be allowed to exercise, morally or legally? And secondly, I want to talk about briefly the subject of secession. So I'll form that question after you deal with the first one.

PETERSEN: Sure, so can a group of people -- Yes, as long as they consent to it, meaning that if they form a group, and they all agree to those rules -- let's call it a contract and say that they all agreed to it. Then, yes, we can say, "Okay, I'm going to give up voluntarily a portion of my liberty to act in such a manner and to perhaps enact vigilante justice on my neighbor if their pond is leaking onto my property. And I will give power to a representative of myself, whom I have elected to speak for me, to adjudicate these matters." So yes, I think people can do that. They can give up power voluntarily, and we do that every day. And so yes, I do think that a collection of individuals can do that, as long as they are fully informed of the processes through which those matters will be adjudicated.

WOODS: All right, let me ask you -- of course, I could say that, can they decide for everybody in the society, even if the other people aren't on board for it? But that's a --

PETERSEN: Yes, yes, yes. To an extent, absolutely.

WOODS: All right, so that's part of your -- all right. Now, somewhat related to that -- I mean, we still need to say something about taxation, because if the idea of government --

PETERSEN: Oh, please, why are we not talking about this? This is the number one thing. I have an article on TheLibertarianRepublic.com, and I keep trying to point these anarchists to it, and when I talk about my minarchist utopia, there are ways to fund public services that don't require coercion.

WOODS: Okay, good, good. All right, when we get off, email me the link, and I'll put it on the show notes page. And remember everybody, TomWoods.com/414. I'll link to anything Austin wants, and of course, anything I want. It's my show. But I'll link to anything you want on there of yours. Go ahead.

PETERSEN: Okay, sure, so the best example, I think -- the best way to get revenue out of these people is to have a lottery. The Founding Fathers used a lottery. George Washington signed lots of lottery tickets, and that was a great way for them to fund public infrastructure --

WOODS: All right, what else?

PETERSEN: I'm trying to pull it up right now, so I can remember all the different ways. A sales tax --

WOODS: Okay, actually, hold on, hold on. I mean, this would be, if you were one of my traditional guests, we would lovingly describe all the different ways that these things could be done without -- but you're not a traditional guest, okay? So instead of that, let's focus on areas of disagreement. You obviously do think that, at root, the government does have some right of taxation.

PETERSEN: Sure.

WOODS: Okay. So let me ask you, how do you deal -- and maybe you could concede that this is at least a difficulty for your position, if you're saying that one of the values of having a centralized system that will deal with resolving disputes and defining property and defining aggression and all that, is that you have this common definition, and everybody can organize his life according to it, and we can adjudicate disputes according to it. Well, two problems come from this: Number one, how do they define property in such a way that property is yours as long as the government doesn't want it in the form of eminent domain or taxation? How is that not a completely non-arbitrary definition of property? And then secondly, once you grant them this, what other than what they think can get away with, could possibly limit the amount they're going to tax? And don't tell me that Rand Paul is running for president, because I will bet you right now, Rand Paul or no Rand Paul, 20 years from now, that the tax rates will be pretty much where they are now. I will absolutely guarantee you that. I'll shake your hand on that right now. We're recording this -- what is it today? May 28, 2015. In 2035, if one of us is isn't dead, let's revisit this and see where the tax rates are. It's not going to change.

PETERSEN: Maybe I'm just optimistic, because I'm still young and beautiful, Tom, so I have to look forward to the future --

WOODS: Well, young, anyway. All right.

PETERSEN: So I just feel like there is a chance in the future that we could build a more libertarian republic. The idea is that we could have a lower tax rate. People thought that --

WOODS: But why would they want to do it?

PETERSEN: Well, why did Ronald Reagan want to cut taxes as soon as he got into office?

WOODS: But on net, did he really?

PETERSEN: No, no, of course not. But --

WOODS: So in other words, the guy who most articulated libertarian principles in the second half of the 20th century, even he failed at it.

PETERSEN: Yep.

WOODS: And now you have an even bigger entitlement problem. You have all these other reasons to tax. You've got an unending war. What possible way are they ever going to do it? They're going to read books that we write? What possible reason -- so, will you at least concede that this monopoly institution has a monopoly on determining what the tax rates are, that that could be a problem? Will you concede that to me?

PETERSEN: Sure, totally. Yes, absolutely, it's a problem. But again, there are problems in an anarchist utopia. But the idea is that --

WOODS: Wait, hold on a minute, hold on a minute. I have to stop you there. I personally have never said that in the absence of a state, you'd have utopia. And I know you've never said that with minarchy there would be utopia. So let's throw the word utopia out of here.

PETERSEN: Because, utopia defined literally actually means "no place". And so when you were talking about taxes -- you had two questions there. One was about tax rates, and I forget the first one, but -- Six ways to fund public services in a libertarian republic: Of course, there are voluntary taxes. People could donate to a pool. There certainly were voluntary associations; before we had the income tax, people pooled their resources in order to pay for things like fire and police services. So that could be reinstated, if people were incentivized to do that. But of course, they're not incentivized in the current system, which you and I see, I think rightfully ask --

WOODS: Look, I'm going to agree with everything that you're saying. For things that we need in common, especially now with the Internet and all different ways to get people all over the country contributing to something, or in your town. It could be amazing.

PETERSEN: Right, well, here's the problem -- this is the time when I have to praise the one person that I despise the most, having read *Hamilton's Curse*, but Alexander Hamilton -- the mercantilist idea was that in order for us to have free trade, there had to be some form of coercion to protect us from negative actors. I mean, have you ever had anything, Tom, where you were having a nice day, you were having a nice party, and then somebody has to come in and screw it up? I sure have. And so, in order for us to engage in mutual, free trade, there does need to be some sort of a protection. I would prefer private protection firms to engage in the type of coercion that's

necessary. Say, in the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian belligerents would just love to stem the flow of oil and stem the flow of free trade. And while I don't consider myself a Hamiltonian mercantilist, it's very hard to argue with the neoconservatives on this point about whether or not the corporations, who already are being coerced to pay taxes for this military, should not benefit from it through the right of protection through these dangerous straits in the world, where people do not respect the individual, natural rights of man. So again, I'm not a Hamiltonian mercantilist, but these are the arguments that neoconservatives make, and we have to have better arguments for addressing them other than saying, "Oh yeah, just put a few guys and uzis on the back of the oil companies. Let them pay for their private security. Okay, yeah, that's great." And that does sound good in theory and something that I'd definitely advocate for, but again, it doesn't seem to match with the long march of history and the state of war and nations. I mean, somebody always comes in and screws up your nice little free trade zone. It's just how it is. So you have to have a system that accounts for bad actors, and the problem with anarchy is that it allows everyone to just be a bad actor, screwing up everyone else's day. And for example --

WOODS: But I feel like minarchy doesn't account for bad actors, because the bad actors are naturally attracted to a system like this.

PETERSEN: Agreed.

WOODS: And they exercise -- I mean, look, I'm not telling you anything you don't already know. Not only do they have a monopoly on force, but they have a monopoly on -- and here's the key thing -- legitimacy in the eyes of the public. If I'm just some guy, some schmoe, running around town causing problems, nobody in his right mind is going to be persuaded if I suddenly tell everybody, "Oh, by the way, you all owe me a third of your income." But if they spend 12 years in a government indoctrination factory being told that being expropriated is for their own good, and wise public servants are going to put that money to the common good, protecting trade routes and providing playgrounds, they're going to go for it. And that's the problem that the minarchist faces.

PETERSEN: Well, I used to think that -- and here's the thing -- this is actually Christopher Hitchens' quote. I think it's actually possible to hold the belief that, while no one knows how to live your life better for you than you do, that it's simultaneously impossible to bring about a society based on that idea, because of the bad idea. So the idea is, yes, obviously bad people in the world go into minarchist state -- and here's an example that I love to discuss, and this is how this all started, because in the show *Game of Thrones*, I don't know if you're a follower --

WOODS: I don't actually watch it.

PETERSEN: Your listeners probably do, and they're probably familiar with the Night's Watch, which is to me, an allegory of the night watch of the state. And all of the different kingdoms in Westeros, which are at war with one another, all give voluntarily members of their society to go and stand on the Wall. And the Wall is where all the

dangerous things try and come over and destroy the kingdoms of man. And the purpose of the Night's Watch is to stand on the wall and play the role of night watchmen. And the problem is that there are power struggles. There are would-be tyrants and warlords, but the idea is that they actually take an oath saying that they will stay out of the politics of man. But in reality, all of the kingdoms of man are still at war with one another. We are at war with one another. John Nash, who unfortunately passed away -- his understandings of game theory, I think, are correct, that we are sort of playing against one another and trying to maximize our potential. That's sort of how the economy works. And he called his game theory, "F--- You Buddy", right? So the idea is that it makes sense always to betray. And knowing this, knowing that it makes sense always to betray our fellow man, that there are people like the sociopaths that you discussed, the ones that want to work in government, who are always trying to use this game theory negatively against each other. It's not people like you and me who are engaging in free market capitalism, who are trying to exchange mutual benefits. That's a relatively new phenomenon in the world, Tom. And we all benefit from the largesse that capitalism gives us. But that the night watchmen state -- their goal is to provide us protection against the wildlings and the White Walkers. That the evil of man should never be allowed to come near the Wall, and that we all must either voluntarily or otherwise provide some sort of a subsistence to that defense of our natural rights.

WOODS: Well, Austin, I think in light of how long we've gone, I think I am actually going to call it quits for today, just given -- I do believe this is a record. Now, last week I had an episode where it was just me talking -- but I'm allowed to talk as long as I want -- that was slightly longer than this. I was actually reproducing -- I was talking about classical liberalism in my kid's school. The 11th grade has a Great Ideas class, and every year, they invite me for the unit on classical liberalism to explain what classical liberalism is, and who the main thinkers were, and I always enjoy that. And people are saying, "You dolt, why don't you record that and use it on your show?" So I thought, "Yeah, I'm kind of lazy; I'd like to get a free episode out of this." So I did that. I think that one might be slightly longer, but basically other than that, I think we've set the record. So let me see, what I'm going to do on the show notes page -- TomWoods.com/414 -- is after we finish talking, I'm going to have you send me links to anything you'd like me to put up there. I'll put up your "five anarchists reasons thing". I'm going to put up Larken Rose's response; he has a video response to you. And then any other articles that you would like to go up there. Of course, we'll have a generic link to TheLibertarianRepublic.com. And it's not "LibertarianRepublic.com"; it's TheLibertarianRepublic.com. And then I'm going to put a few related episodes up here. I'll put episodes I did with Bob Murphy on private defense and private law for people who are interested. Well, Austin, I told you 20 - 25 minutes. You can't trust me. Maybe we need some central authority that will define time better than I obviously am able to do.

PETERSEN: Tom, I'm a great fan of yours, and I was honored to be invited on the show today. You've been inspiring me for years. Please continue doing what you do.

WOODS: Well, you're very kind to say that, and you're a good sport to be on with me for so long, and to take -- I really wasn't even planning to have the conversation go in

this particular direction. I had other controversial issues I wanted to bring up with you, but maybe that'll be an excuse to talk again in the future.

PETERSEN: Sounds good, Tom; call me anytime. Have a great day, and keep fighting the good fight.