



Episode 441: Ron Paul on His New Antiwar Book

Guest: Ron Paul

WOODS: Well, what a delight it is to be able to talk to you about a brand new book that you have that's forthcoming, and I'm going to be linking to it on today's show notes page. Believe it or not, I'm on Episode 441, so TomWoods.com/441 is where to go to find out about this book, *Swords into Plowshares* — I just told people the full title. Fantastic. Why now? It seems like now we're not involved in a major war like Iraq; we've got all these little hotspots here and there. What led you to write a book on war at this particular moment?

PAUL: Well, our government tells us we're in war for a long time; we're in perpetual war; they want perpetual peace. They say we have a war against terrorism forever, and they don't define it, so therefore they can do whatever they want. So yes, there is a war going on. But if you look at our history, it's just filled with the history of war. And the book more or less outlines my personal memories and experience with war.

But I think you make an important point. Yes, right now — and I might even mention that in the book — World War I isn't going on; World War II isn't going on, but there's still a lot of people in this country that are paying for wars, a lot of people still dying. The atmosphere is that we are the policemen of the world. There are still some silly notions that war will end the recession or depression.

And those are the kind of things — so I don't think that the history is going to be reversed. I don't think we're going to reverse history under current thinking. Of course, one of my goals in the book is to try to get people to think differently, that we don't have to have perpetual war, that maybe mankind can progress. And it's a wild stab, maybe some wishful thinking, but I actually believe it, that there's a possibility that we can advance as a society and as humanity. But we have a long way to go.

WOODS: I want to make sure people understand what the structure of this book is. It is deeply personal, much of it. You talk about your childhood; you talk about your own experiences observing war; you talk about your career in Congress. You talk about your decision to go into medicine, because it was the opposite of war. You were saving life instead of taking people's lives. I mean, this is all intensely personal testimony, but you have a lot of very good arguments against war: moral arguments, economic arguments. It is a one-stop shop, really, this book.

And I would like to start, if I may, with your background. I was very surprised to read that a 10-year old Ron Paul cheered when he learned of the death of Franklin Roosevelt. And your father explained that you shouldn't have done that.

PAUL: Yes, and I guess it had an impact on me, because I was expecting one reaction. And like I said in the book, it must have been obvious our family was very, very Republican, and that they weren't such supporters of Roosevelt. But I stepped over the line, and I can remember my dad not getting upset or anything like that, but just pointing out that we don't do that. You don't cheer the death of a president. And I remember that very clearly. Now, if he would have responded differently, that might have had an effect on me too, but I remember it very clearly that you have to be careful on what you advocate when it comes to violence. But that was an interesting little thing that just stuck in my memory as I went and sorted some of these things out.

WOODS: As I read this, I was reminded of the speech you gave at the Rally for the Republic all the way back in 2008, in which you reflected on that song, "Universal Soldier," which you had asked Aimee Allen to sing. And you reflected on your own conduct as a flight surgeon in the military in the 1960s, and you said, you know, I was the universal soldier. I was the person who helped perpetuate the system by going along instead of resisting. And we all — I was sitting with Norm Singleton — and we all looked at each other and thought, here's this guy who was a medical doctor, and he's still rebuking himself for not doing enough. And then right here in the book, Chapter One, one of your sections is "I Was No Hero in the Air Force." Do you care to elaborate on that?

PAUL: Well, you know, it is annoying, because I still get that. All you have to do is say, "I'm a veteran." "Well, thank you for your service." And there was a time when I was rather neutral on it, when I was drafted and put in there, that I had to do it. It was the law of the land, and I wasn't going to prison; I wasn't going to give up my professional career, you know, by taking ground.

I wasn't as strong as Muhammad Ali — just think of what he gave up. I think I mentioned it there, at least some place I mentioned it: that's his greatest fight ever, is the fact that he was willing to take the government on and refused to serve. So, no, I think it's wrong to glorify military people and glorify the so-called heroes. I got into a lot of trouble when Chris Kyle got killed, and I didn't show enough sympathy for that and didn't recognize his greatness as far as defending America. So I got a lot of grief, even from the people in the audience I thought were more libertarian. So I think you just can't be flip-flopping; you have to know what you believe in and where you stand.

And if these wars are not justified, you know, it's just not reasonable to endorse them. And we need people to stand up against these unnecessary, unconstitutional, worthless wars that are going on, and that of course is one of the goals of the book, is to try to get people to recognize that you can still be a conservative, a libertarian, an American, and say that I don't support these wars. And they say, well, you don't support America? No, we don't support our leaders making dumb decisions. And too

often, that I reveal from personal experience, too many dumb decisions were made over these many, many years, that I had to sort of suffer the consequence form.

WOODS: Not long ago I had gentlemen on the show that Daniel McAdams recommended to me, Bill Galvin, who deals with conscientious objectors. And he was telling me — and this is to your point in your book about the peaceful nature of mankind — I'm still sort of skeptical of that, but you were giving some evidence that actually people have to be trained to want to kill people. And what Bill pointed out was that they find time and again that maybe 70% of the time, the soldiers are not actually shooting to kill. They're shooting deliberately to miss people, and it's a minority of them who are shooting to kill, so that maybe there is something to what you're saying.

PAUL: I think that is true. I think it was much more true in World War I than any other time. The war, you know, we got in at the end of that war, and even though they had all the hoopla and that patriotism and the songs and the sending off of the troops to save Europe and all, I think a lot of the young men that we sent over there weren't that excited about just shooting people that they don't even know.

But after that, they recognized that; there were some studies made that they weren't shooting to kill, and our military has become much more involved in training. And this is why they have to work much harder at creating the devil, the monster, and there always has to be a Hitler, you know? In order for the people to go along with the invasion of Iraq as early as 1990 when George Bush, Sr. went in, we had to prove that Saddam Hussein was a monster. And then of course when George Bush, Jr. went in, it was continuous. They have to have an enemy, and they have to build up the hatred. And the people are more likely to shoot. But they found out that if they did the training where they literally used the rifle and had images up of a person that they might increase the number of people who are doing the real shooting.

But no, I think this is all what human nature is about. There's a good side of human nature, and a bad side, and I guess if you get propagandized and you get opt believing that scores of people who want to benefit from the war, people will go along. And of course, that's the story of the universal soldier. And too often we all got influenced by it.

And I just think that the universal soldier, I wanted to refute her conclusion. She says, "And that's the way it will always be." The young people will always go. So I'm appealing — the dedication is to the younger generation, to say it doesn't have to always be that we go. If we can't get the right people in government, we have to stand up against the government. We should refuse the money and refuse the support and be a Mohammad Ali, and refuse to be drafted to go fight a war that has nothing to do with our national security.

WOODS: Ron, do you think that with technology and the Internet, and now that we have the ability to communicate with people and interact on Twitter and Facebook with people all over the world — we can get YouTubes and see what life is like in

countries that are being demonized in our media; we can get a sense of, well frankly, the whole human community — that this may actually be the thing that makes it more and more difficult for the war makers to get people to consent to the wars?

PAUL: Well, let's hope so, and let's hope we know how to make good use of this. But the question is, will technology always prevent us from having it taken away from by our government? You know, they're already hounding us to death, and if you say the wrong word on your Internet or whatever, they're at your doorstep or on your telephone or anything. So yes, they've buckled down, and it's going to be a tough fight. But no, I lean toward optimism there, that technology is what will protect us, and our ability to share this information.

I remember during that period of time with Tiananmen Square, which was about '89 I think. They were using fax machines. Remember the pictures they were showing? And they were passing out information, which they were never able to do that before. Tiananmen Square wasn't exactly the greatest victory, but in my book I argue the case that the tank man probably had a greater victory and influence in changing China than the guy that was running the tank. I know there's far from protection in China, but like I said, you know, at least we're not killing each other like we were when I was in high school.

One of my teachers went off, after having been in World War II, he went off to Korea, and I never saw him again. He didn't come back. He was one of our coaches. And this just didn't make any sense at all.

So I would hope that the ideas are positive, and that we can win. I see the Internet as being very, very positive, but I'm also encouraged by the person that influenced me a whole lot — that was Leonard Read. He says it's not a numbers game. Don't get depressed because you don't have 51%, even though you need a majority of support to go along. But what really counts is that 7, 8, or 9% of people who are thought leaders, who will put the issues out there and have them be attracted by the young people.

And I think that's what's happening, because we see so often some young people doing bizarre things, but I also see what happens when you get somebody like Jeff Frazee with YAL going to the campuses, and I'm sure you must be visiting campuses too. We see a lot of nice, young people. If you go to see the YAL rally, one day I was kidding Amanda — that's Jeff's wife — I said, you know, they are so clean cut and nice-looking polite kids; I said it almost looks like they have a dress code, because they're dressed so well. It's exactly the opposite of what people would like to paint our college kids. And she says, well, he does have a dress code.

WOODS: (laughing) Good for Jeff.

PAUL: They are; they have ties and coats on, and they're clean cut, and I'm glad to know that I don't have to get 51% of the people to fund YAL. We just need a few more in YAL, and we need that along with the work that you have done and along with the

work that Mises Institute does — all this work that you've done now, with the curriculum. So this is going to evolve and continue to build.

One thing that amazes me now is running into people around the country. Someone called me the other day, and he was involved in politics, which some people question, but he had made great strides — oh, I think it was a young man that won a state senate seat up in Maine and was doing good and had some laws passed. And it was one person all by himself, but he was energized. And you know they used to ask me, what should I do know? I said, just find something. Do what you want.

WOODS: Yeah.

PAUL: There's a job for you out there.

WOODS: Well, there's so much in what you just said. Two things: first of all, YAL for the three people listening who may not know what that is, that's Young Americans for Liberty. And what I love about that is that they have their annual convention coming up at the end of this month and into August, and this'll be the second year that I've spoken at that — and they limit it to 350 activists in the audience. They have to cut it off. Now, Ron, you know years ago, we wouldn't have had a problem limiting it at 350; we would have been overjoyed if we could get 350. So that's the first thing.

The second thing is you mentioned the curriculum; we're talking about your homeschool program. As you say, I've been creating courses for that; it's RonPaulHomeschool.com, and I noticed that you mentioned in the book that homeschoolers have a better chance of finding out the real truth about American wars than somebody sitting in a typical classroom.

PAUL: Well that's for sure, and now the big stink over how anybody who even says anything Southern or that you shouldn't abolish the use of a flag, I mean, that is all based on hatred. Now, if you're a homeschooler, you might have a different view of the Civil War.

I remember being on one of the liberal talk shows and that subject came up, and it was one person on there — he happened to have been black — he was very upset with me for saying well, we shouldn't have fought the Civil War; we should have just bought the slaves and released them. Other countries got rid of slavery without it. And he didn't like that.

A year later, I was on his show again; he says, you know, I've been thinking about that. I think that has some merit. Of course, I stole that idea from some other person who probably writes for Lew Rockwell.

But this is the whole thing: homeschoolers have a much better chance of understanding history and all the way back to Jefferson with Hamilton — those debates. And others have come up to me, one of our friends that has worked for me is Norm Singleton. You know, of all the things that we do and all the things that he has done

politically and he works for Campaign for Liberty, he said to me that he thinks it's *the* important thing that we're doing right now.

And it's not like that tomorrow everybody's going to make a lot of money off it. But if we're interested in changing people's minds 5 or 10 or 15 years from now, we may be well rewarded in the sense of satisfaction that we have changed people's minds and changed their attitudes.

Maybe some of these so-called naive ideas I have that we can have a more peaceful world than we've ever had in the past — see my point in the book is that there was a tremendous advancement scientifically before the Industrial Revolution. And I go back when my dad at the beginning of the 20th century, and he knew people that were born all through the 19th century, and the technology that they experienced in spite of government, the prosperity skyrocketed. Just think how well off people are and the benefits.

But so much of that technology went into war machines and learning how to kill people. So we had all of this technology, and we used it for bombing and killing people — nuclear weapons and all this. Why can't the human race advance socially in the same manner if the knowledge is there? So we use that scientific knowledge to do some good things and improve the living standard, but we also unfortunately used it to advance the position of war and the cause of war. So that's what I'd like to end, is stop using that technology for war; start using our brain for saying yes.

And that is why we have a book called *Swords into Plowshares*, and that of course has been around a bit, that idea. And even though people say the Bible says there'll be "wars and rumors of war," if you read carefully, there are suggestions in the Bible that said there's no reason why you can't think about and work toward taking the swords and melting them down and turning them into peaceful efforts.

WOODS: You know, that is such a wonderful note on which to end, but I refuse to let you end on that, because before I let you go I want to ask you just one thing, please. If you cast your mind back about eight years to the Republican debate in which you had the confrontation with Giuliani, I wonder if you could just take a moment and share with us what was going through your mind as you said those things about American foreign policy, about blowback, about the attacks of 9/11 being a response to U.S. involvement in the Middle East, and so on and so forth.

We sometimes look at you as this titan, who is absolutely fearless — and no doubt you are. But you're also a human being, and right there you had a national television audience; you had an audience in person that was not sympathetic to what you were saying. Can you recreate for us what was going through your mind during those moments?

PAUL: Well, not a whole lot as far as contemplating what the meaning of what I'm going to say will do to the campaign. Never crossed my mind. I was doing what comes naturally, what I am enthusiastic about. And I had talked about that — if you look

back, I started opposing that war in 1998, saying that Iraq liberation is going to lead to war. And so I really worked hard, and I thought my job coming back into Congress was to stop this war. Of course I didn't; it was a disaster.

So all I did was repeat something I considered very, very spontaneous. And I didn't really, for the rest of the debate, I didn't give it a whole lot of thought. Of course I knew that Giuliani got a little bit annoyed, but that didn't bother me too much. But immediately afterwards, you know, the press hounded me, hounded me. "Are you dropping out? Are you going to do this?" And all this stuff. I said, what are you talking about? Because that didn't cross my mind either. But then there was a neat little thing that did happen, and you remember, I'm sure, Kent Snyder, the campaign manager —

WOODS: Yeah.

PAUL: And Kent was such a delightful person, unfortunately no longer with us. And as the media was hounding me and hounding me, Kent came up in his very, very quiet manner, and tapped me on the shoulder. He says, "Ron," he says, "You're winning like crazy on the post-debate polls."

WOODS: Yeah.

PAUL: So that was rather — but the best part about the ending of this story is — who gets the last laugh is the best off. So that went on, and instead of that ending, everything I was going to say, the credibility kept building, which just dumbfounded me. I didn't know exactly, where is this coming from? But so I would say it was the beginning of having some type of a chance to reach a lot of people. But it was actually at the time of reversal — even though that was early in the campaign for Giuliani — and I can remember very clearly as we had a couple more primaries, there was a headline in the *Los Angeles Times*; it said, "Ron Paul Beats Giuliani for the Second Time."

WOODS: (laughing)

PAUL: I don't know where we were; sometimes I came in first or second, and then they didn't put my name down. But anyway, they recognized that I beat Giuliani twice, and that's about the time he thought, oh, I can't take this any longer.

WOODS: Yeah, that's right. And there's no Rudy Giuliani Institute and nobody's going to be reading Rudy Giuliani's books even a week from now, much less in the years to come. But I am certain that people will be reading this book, which is *Swords into Plowshares: A Life in Wartime and a Future of Peace and Prosperity*. I wish you the absolute best of luck with this extremely important book, and thanks so much for being with us today, Ron.

PAUL: Thank you, Tom. Nice to be with you.