



Episode 522: Lew Rockwell and Tom Dissect the Third GOP Debate, 2015

Guest: Lew Rockwell

WOODS: This is always fun, isn't it? And I said at that Dallas Mises event just a few weeks ago that I have a lot of people who tell me they're not interested in politics and blah, blah, blah, but the download numbers don't lie, and when you come on here to talk about these debates with me, I get some of the best download numbers ever, so somebody's lying to us. (laughing) Somebody out there agrees with us that, yeah, we wish the whole spectacle didn't have to exist, but as long as it's there, we can't look away.

ROCKWELL: No, and at least we can laugh at it, right?

WOODS: Yeah, I mean, you've got to get something. At least we get something. And you know, what was funny is there was a little bit of a trend on Twitter yesterday of people saying thank goodness I don't have to watch the debate, because Tom and Lew will watch it for me. And in fact Justin Raimondo tweeted out, "Can you believe I have to watch another one of these debates?" And another person said, "No, you don't, because Tom's going to watch it."

ROCKWELL: (laughing)

WOODS: (laughing) Okay. All right, we had 10 people on the debate stage last night. I didn't watch the undercard debate. I assume you didn't?

ROCKWELL: I did not.

WOODS: Okay, okay. So I wasn't going to give you an extra credit assignment. I thought it was enough just to watch this. But I wrote down some notes as usual. What's your overall impression? Again, we're not saying so-and-so is a good guy or a bad guy, just in terms of whose fortunes may have risen and whose may have fallen as a result of the debate.

ROCKWELL: Well first of all, I think the CNBC's fortunes have fallen, and the whole cable news business has probably taken a hit from this. And of course, building on what Megyn Kelly did and the others, this is, at least among Republicans, Republicans all hate the media, and that was certainly stoked last night. Bush of course is a loser. Rand's a loser. I thought that Carson was probably the guy who dropped the most. I

noticed on the Drudge poll he's down below Rubio and below Rand. He's not number two anymore. Cruz is number two on the Drudge poll. I think Cruz will like Trump as the main victor in this. Kasich of course, who is like the door-to-door encyclopedia salesman from hell who puts his shoe in and prevents you from closing and keeps talking to you about things you couldn't care less about. Fiorina lost. The more people see of her, the more they don't like her, and it probably doesn't help, as a lady wrote to me last night, she said her hair wouldn't be moving if Hurricane Patricia were going through town.

WOODS: (laughing)

ROCKWELL: And so if you look at her – and so I looked at a clip, and of course it's true. It's like it's frozen. Very funny.

WOODS: (laughing) I didn't have that in my notes actually, but now that you mention it.

ROCKWELL: So I think Christie of course was a loser, but he was already a loser. Huckabee's a loser; he was already a loser. But Bush really dropped. Bush is down to half a percent, whereas Trump is at – this is 250,000 votes on Drudge – Trump is at more than 50% and Cruz 22%, so he's really gone up. The others, all the rest of them are losers, and if the losers aren't out of the next debate formally, I think clearly last night they were out of it. And I don't care how much they pump up Rubio, the neocons were saying this morning in *The Weekly Standard*, wow, Rubio, he's got the same kind of natural political ability Bill Clinton has. Well first of all, Bill Clinton was very smart, and of course he was a brilliant politician. Rubio's a dope, and I think the more people get to know him, the more that comes through. He just doesn't – he's not smart.

WOODS: He's a good memorizer.

ROCKWELL: He can memorize things. So they, for example, said Hillary must be shaking in her boots when she heard him say things like I'm against anything that hurts my mother. Well, you know this is a memorized line. This is not something he came up with at the spur of the moment. Whereas Cruz – I'm not a Cruz fan – but Cruz was able to take what happened in the debate and formulate a great statement on it.

WOODS: He was extremely effective, and I have not been a Cruz fan from the start; I thought it was a mistake to endorse him, especially when in the Texas Senate race, Glenn Addison was a Ron Paulian and should have been endorsed instead if you had to endorse anybody –

ROCKWELL: Horrible, horrible.

WOODS: And so now the whole Cruz endorsement is absolutely coming back to bite Rand in the you know where. So I tried telling them. I mean, I did try. I even talked to Rand about this on The Peter Schiff Show. Why didn't you endorse Glenn Addison? But anyway, that's water under the bridge at this point. But you're right; Cruz is extremely

effective, and that line he had, that little, they called it a rant in the news media of course, where he just ran down all the different types of questions that were being asked, it was so effective. And not only was it effective because he was mostly correct about it, but he knows that connects with the audience so well. So definitely Cruz; I wrote that down for sure, and I just wrote down, "Cruz extremely effective." I will dissent from you on one particular. I thought Christie's line about fantasy football was very effective, because it showed the difference between Bush and anybody you might want to support, because there's Bush saying, you know, maybe we do need to regulate fantasy football, which is a thing he admits he himself does, and then he's standing around saying, well, you know, maybe we do need to regulate it. And Christie says what in the world are you talking about. Of all the things in the world to worry about, you're going to talk about fantasy football? I actually liked that line.

ROCKWELL: Well, Christie I thought was just looking at it out of context. He did a very good job last night. He was clear; he was well spoken; he looked at the camera; he gave intelligible and intelligent statements. He's got half a percent in the Drudge poll, and he's going nowhere. He's a total zero as far as the election is concerned. He's a smart guy; he said funny things about even by New Jersey standards you're being rude.

WOODS: Yeah, that was funny.

ROCKWELL: Funny comments, but it doesn't do him any good.

WOODS: Right.

ROCKWELL: He can just go home, go back on the George Washington Bridge or whatever. He's out of there.

WOODS: Let's say something about Rubio. Rubio had a confrontation with Jeb over the number of votes he's missed because he's been on the campaign trail, and Jeb was suggesting that maybe he might consider resigning, given that he can't devote himself to the job he was elected to do. And Rubio came back and hit him with not only, look, all these other people missed a lot of votes – John McCain missed a lot of votes; you didn't criticize him, and this one missed a lot of votes and so on and on – and the line that was effective was the only reason you're attacking me is that somebody told you it would benefit you to attack me. That was an effective line because it leaves people with the idea that Bush is a puppet. And so that was effective. But otherwise I didn't see – I can't get into the heads of a lot of GOP voters – I didn't see why people would roar with approval as he's going on ticking off all the other people who've missed a lot of votes. I think it made him look kind of stupid.

ROCKWELL: Well as a number of other people pointed out, the key thing is Bush was not able to answer Rubio.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: I mean, he could have said something like, "So you're comparing yourself to Obama and John Kerry as a vote-misser? Oh, well, thanks a lot, but you know what, I wasn't their constituent. You're betraying the people of Florida by not doing your job, so I say again to you, either do your job or resign."

WOODS: Yeah, now that would have been great, but basically Bush —

ROCKWELL: He's not capable.

WOODS: No, and he's not capable of thinking on his feet either, because he'd been given the line to say about Rubio, but he hadn't been given any follow up. As long as Rubio says nothing you'll be fine.

ROCKWELL: Well you know, it had always been said that he was the smart guy in the Bush family —

WOODS: Oh my gosh.

ROCKWELL: — but I think that turns out not to be true. I'm not a fan of W., but W. had political smarts.

WOODS: Yeah, and I think he would have fought back. I think he would have shot back.

ROCKWELL: Rubio only looked good because — nothing. And of course on the fantasy football thing, I wish somebody had made the point, as if; that this is only an issue because Sheldon Adelson doesn't like the fact that it's cutting into his casinos and that he's paying off people like you, Marco, who get big donations from Sheldon, in order to try and attack fantasy football. Let us have our game. Let the American people have their game.

WOODS: Okay, the only person who could remotely have said that would have been Trump, and he just stayed out of it.

ROCKWELL: (laughing) No. Yeah, he obviously made the decision — and I must say it makes it less fun, but it's his life and his decision — to tone it down a little bit, to dial it back a little bit, but he came across I think as the adult. And he was very effective, and all the online polls show him massively the winner. *Time* magazine and all of them.

WOODS: Yeah, I mean, the one person he really did go after was Kasich.

ROCKWELL: But Kasich of course attacked him first.

WOODS: Oh, that is true. That is true.

ROCKWELL: He says he doesn't go after anybody unless they attack him first.

WOODS: Yeah, okay. Yeah, you're right. I stand corrected. But his attack on Kasich was so funny, because he said, and then when he started to go down in the polls, and by the way, that's why he's so far out on the end, because of how low he is. Then he got nasty. And so Trump brought up, he said that Ohio's doing well because of fracking. Now, I don't know if that's true or not. Maybe.

ROCKWELL: The fracking industry. I don't know either, but —

WOODS: But it was funny. And then he brought up the Lehman Brothers connection. Now, Kasich was not as high up as maybe Trump was indicating, but he was at Lehman Brothers. It's not an entirely unfair shot.

ROCKWELL: Well I heard somebody, an ex-Wall Street guy say yeah, that was unfair, because he wasn't actually running Lehman Brothers. Of course he wasn't running Lehman Brothers, but he had that title, even though he was just a bond salesman or whatever, so he has to accept — he can't say, oh, I was really the janitor, even though they called me the vice president.

WOODS: What if Lehman Brothers had said —

ROCKWELL: So for him to answer, you know, I was a banker, and I'm proud of it, has to be one of the stupidest things ever said. All Americans hate bankers and especially now.

WOODS: Absolutely, and in fact, of course, if Lehman Brothers had done extremely well during those years, what, is Kasich not going to boast about that? So if it goes down, of course he's going to pretend this, what are you talk about —

ROCKWELL: Boo hoo. Yeah, yeah, Who Brothers? Yeah.

WOODS: Yeah, exactly. All right, there was a lot of talk about tax reform last night, and tax reform, if it doesn't make chills go down your spine, then you haven't been paying attention. It never means anything other than they're going to try to get more money from you but in a slightly different way. That's what it always means. It doesn't mean a lower tax take. Now maybe, it is possible — I haven't looked at the details of it enough; maybe you have, Lew — but it's possible that Trump's plan could in fact lead to lower revenue. But I don't think anybody else's is really going to lead to lower revenue. They're all trying to be revenue neutral.

ROCKWELL: The rest of them aim for revenue neutrality, and I wish Trump, when they say oh, you know, 10 trillion; it's too much, I wish he could say, "So 10 trillion over 10 years is too much for the producers, for the American people who make everything happen? Ben Bernanke in one year spent 12 trillion dollars to bail out the bankers, the big banks in Europe. So you're okay with that of course, John, but you don't want the American people getting any money?"

WOODS: Yeah, see? Ah, Lew, the people who could do a good job on that debate stage are legion, but they aren't getting anywhere near it unfortunately. All right, well, I did listen to – now, I haven't looked into the –

ROCKWELL: Also by the way, I know Rand has been running away from libertarianism his whole career, but I kept thinking, imagine if rather than these impenetrable answers that he was giving –

WOODS: Ugh, horrible.

ROCKWELL: – and I had trouble understanding; no doubt everybody else tuned out. If he just said, look, we have to have taxes, because we have to have national defense or whatever excuse he would give, but let's stop and think; let's not talk in the abstract. This is the government coming to you with a gun and saying I'm deciding how much of your earnings I'm taking for what I want to do, and if you don't pay it I'm putting you in jail and maybe I'll kill you. So don't we have more than enough of that kind of conduct in society? Isn't it morally imperative that we cut taxes? Yes, it's economically necessary. Yes, it's politically a very good idea. But this present tax system – also by the way, the U.S. government is the biggest, richest, most powerful government in the history of the world. They can take a cut. It's the American, the working people of this country who can't stand a cut.

WOODS: Yeah, there you go. There you go.

ROCKWELL: But he would never say anything like that. Might remind people of his dad. There was a funny incident last night, and of course Cruz is tending to needle Rand –

WOODS: Yeah, I was just going to mention this. Go ahead.

ROCKWELL: And he mentioned gold and being connected to money, which I thought was a great thing. I haven't heard anybody do that since Ron. And of course we know that Cruz – and I don't like Cruz; he's a neocon, but he's a very smart guy.

WOODS: Oh yeah.

ROCKWELL: He's attempting to gather up the Rand and Ron people and put them in his camp, and one of the things he said was, and I was proud to be an original cosponsor of Ron Paul's Audit the Fed Bill.

WOODS: So he mentioned the name of Ron – the person who mentioned Ron Paul's name in the debate was Ted Cruz.

ROCKWELL: And positively. And then Rand, in a peevish way said, well, Ted, yeah thank you very much for being an original cosponsor of *my* Audit the Fed Bill.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: Now, it's true that Ron's bill, which was the original bill, was in the House. Rand was the original guy to do it in the Senate, but it wasn't his idea; it was his dad's idea. But he was upset at — you can't help yourself by being upset that your dad is being praised. You just can't.

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah.

ROCKWELL: So I don't know whether anybody was paying attention to that, whether anybody watched it. I found it shocking.

WOODS: I — let's say something about Rand, because obviously we have to do that. At this point, I think a lot of people owe a lot of people an apology, because early on we were told look, you know, Ron's a sweet guy and everything, but how many bills did he get passed. Like, they started adopting the very language the neocons used against him.

ROCKWELL: Yeah.

WOODS: You know, how effective was he, and this time we're going to have to keep an eye on the grassroots, which never materialized because they're tired of being treated like garbage, and this time we're going to be a little bit more mature and respectable. And if this isn't the greatest evidence of what a floparoo strategy that was — I'm sorry to toot my own horn; I'm not always right; I don't always correctly predict the future, but on this one, I exactly predicted what was going to happen. He inspires zero enthusiasm. Zero. None.

And people will say, when Ron would win all the online polls, oh, you know, Ron's people just sit at the computer, and they take polls. No, Ron's people would go around the street; they were in the editorial pages; they were reading books; they were doing all kinds of interesting things. Whereas people can't even be bothered to click a little circle on a Drudge poll for Rand. Now, why is that? And of course the answer will be, well, because you libertarians need absolute purity and so on and so forth. The problem with — well, there are many problems, but one of them obviously is he's extremely unlikeable. He won't ever smile. He has zero warmth. He shows no desire to be doing any of this, so maybe he shouldn't be, if he doesn't want to. He shouldn't do it out of a grim sense of duty. Well, whatever the reason is, he shows no enthusiasm.

And then when you ask him questions — he knows he's only going to get a few responses — he gives the dullest responses of the night by far. And then when he has his closing statement — so finally, you know you're going to get a closing statement; this one you can knock out of the park — he gives a statement that any one of those candidates could have given. Government is too big, and I want it to be small. I took that closing statement to mean, "I give up. I'm not interested in doing this anymore."

ROCKWELL: Well, and he talked about he's going to do another one of these phony filibusters today. As Mitch McConnell pointed out on Politico this morning, it's not a filibuster. He's not going to allow a filibuster, but people can talk about it for a day or

two if they want, but then we're going to have the vote. So it wasn't good. You know, they made fun of Ron. Ron, despite having delegates stolen from him, despite having many things stolen from him, had no trouble having the volunteers and the money to stay in till the end. If Rand is forced out, it's going to be because he's forced out, because he doesn't have the money and doesn't have the support. And of course he's concerned, as he ought to be concerned, about staying as a senator in Kentucky.

WOODS: Right.

ROCKWELL: So you're exactly right. I hope nobody puts down Ron Paul. Ron Paul is still the shining light in terms of principle and in terms of the way he conducted his political career. So there's only one Ron Paul.

WOODS: And also, it looks to me, every single Rand Paul talking point on the campaign trail or in the debates comes right out of the Tea Party, and I mean the boring, boring Tea Party, not the one that you might slightly, you know, that you might connect to Ron in the early days, December 2007. But you know, the establishment, boring Tea Party that doesn't really want to cut anything and that is as militaristic as can be. I mean, it's just boring, boring – here's my tax plan, which is, again, shuffling things around and boring. And here's my foreign policy, which is different from yours, but when push comes to shove, yeah, we need to do this, and yeah, we need to do that. You can't make head or tail of what is being said here, and if I want a Tea Party guy, I've got Cruz; I've got Huckabee; I mean, I have a huge variety of people to choose from. Why would I choose from this scowling guy who gives dull, wonkish answers, who seems outraged by nothing? And yes, if you're being debate coached by Randy Barnett, who is a smart guy and in the old days did right some really good Rothbardian stuff – if you're being coached by him, you are going to be a bore. You are going to sound like a law professor, which is about the last thing anybody watching wants to hear.

ROCKWELL: No, it's true, and by the way, on the whole tax question, nobody is going to get upset with Trump at a guy like John Harwood, who's a very creepy guy in a number of senses, who's saying economic advisors to the last two presidents have said your tax plan is no good and will end up costing the government money. Oh. Can't give the people a tax cut, because it's going to cost the government money. I mean, talk about boring, wonkish, inside-the-Beltway baloney. People are sick of all that. They're sick of it. So it's, um –

WOODS: Well, is there anything to –

ROCKWELL: There were some enlightening, enlightening things last night.

WOODS: Is there anything to Cruz' tax plan? I haven't looked at the details, but the way he described it last night was you pay nothing on the first 36,000 and you pay 10% after that, and that sounded like his personal income tax plan. If that's his whole plan, then maybe that's even better than Trump's.

ROCKWELL: Well, maybe. Just because – you always have to remember that Cruz' wife is the vice president of Goldman Sachs.

WOODS: Oh yeah, believe me.

ROCKWELL: And he comes out of that sort of milieu. So he's very smart. I was told by somebody who saw him debate at Princeton that he was the finest collegiate debater he'd ever seen in his life. He was praised at Harvard Law School as being one of the smartest students ever at Harvard Law.

WOODS: Yeah, I think even Alan Dershowitz praised him for that.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, yeah, that's right. But of course he's got horrendous, warmongering foreign policy, and I must say I will always hold it against Cruz – and I can remember this so well; of course it was all staged – there was a group of persecuted Christians from the Middle East: bishops, priests, regular people.

WOODS: Oh, yeah.

ROCKWELL: They were meeting in Washington, and he comes in and denounces them and all their fellow Christians for not being pro-Israel enough.

WOODS: Yeah, it was the worst political thing I have ever seen, basically.

ROCKWELL: Ugh. And of course, I wanted to, if I'd been able to ask him, say, say, have you ever denounced any Israelis for not being pro-Christian enough? I mean, come on.

WOODS: Yeah, crickets.

ROCKWELL: Well, and to take persecuted people who have suffered for their faith – of course, the ones who have been martyred for their faith were not present – and to denounce them, who kept to their faith and to their church under the most horrendous circumstances, I thought it was just sickening, and I will never have any respect or liking for Cruz on a fundamental basis.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: But still, I admire his abilities.

WOODS: And also, he attacked the Fed. I mean, he attacked Fed policy.

ROCKWELL: Well, he was smart enough to mention gold.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: He wanted money connected to gold.

WOODS: Whereas, my sense of things and I don't think I can be contradicted on this, is that Rand's approach has been to try and talk about auditing the Fed, try and focus on the fiscal side of things, but really not criticize the Fed fundamentally, because that will make him look kooky. But the funny thing is in trying to awkwardly seem establishment, he's also made himself look kooky.

ROCKWELL: Well, I talked to an economist I won't name who was at a dinner with Rand where monetary policy was being discussed, and Rand shut him up and said I don't want to hear about the gold standard; I'm not interested in the gold standard. I'm interested in the monetary reforms we can make, make things better, while leaving the Fed at the center of the system.

WOODS: Yeah, well, there you go.

ROCKWELL: That's Rand.

WOODS: And I'm convinced that even though –

ROCKWELL: He can't be Mitch McConnell's guy and not like the Fed.

WOODS: Well, indeed. And I'll say, because a minute ago I was telling you that I did predict something that came true, well, I'm also – I can be very bad at this, and one thing that I did even on your blog, Lew – or maybe it was on your blog that I confessed it. I don't know if I committed it on your blog, but I said that Ron shouldn't be talking so much about the Fed and monetary policy, because it's too complicated for most people, and they're not going to get it. I mean, that's like the record producer who told the Beatles that groups with guitars are on their way out. (laughing) Like, talk about a ridiculous mistake, right?

ROCKWELL: (laughing)

WOODS: So I will admit I was wrong about that. And in fact, I was so wrong that I later said that I'm actually convinced that a lot of the reason Ron raised as much money as he did was that he covered the Fed issue, because people could hardly believe there was a politician who brought the subject up. I think it was the key to a lot of his fundraising success. I think – oh, let me say one other thing about Rand before we – I want to talk about Trump and some things he said that I didn't like. But here's a question Rand was fed. They were talking about the budget, and they said, now look, Paul Ryan has a strong reputation for fiscal discipline; he's on board. Why not challenge that? You say that's a myth. Yeah, by your standards he has a reputation for fiscal discipline, but by your standards so did Stalin. Like, what difference does that make? He's been terrible. You look at his budgets; they're all gimmicks. We talked about this; Episode 5 of our new podcast, Contra Krugman, was all about Paul Ryan, because that was Krugman's column. And Ryan's a fake. I mean, any money that he so-called saves, he immediately blows twice that on the military.

ROCKWELL: He's a neocon, Paul Ryan.

WOODS: Yeah, how about that?

ROCKWELL: So he's for an aggressive, permanent war foreign policy. He's for more spending on the military. Of course, Rand's for more spending on the military too, tragically.

WOODS: You can't take – you can't accept the premise of the question being fed to you in a case like that. Or when everybody's talking about Medicare and then they turn to Rand and say, *Do these solutions sound like they'll work?* and his answer is, *Well, you've got to do something.* No. That is not your answer, because then you sound exactly like the rest of them. But of course, he's too afraid to say, well, there's something fundamentally wrong with the program. Ron had no problem saying there was something fundamentally wrong with the program. None whatsoever, because, well, that's what I need to say.

ROCKWELL: Well, Ron would have said, you know, well, Ronald Reagan was right about that: Medicare is socialism. That's why I opposed it at the time; it's why we've had such tremendous trouble with it; it's why we need dramatic reform.

WOODS: And of course it can't possibly be paid off, given the numbers we're talking about. But it can't be done, so don't tell me that you're being more humanitarian than I am by making promises that can't possibly be kept. What's humanitarian about that?

ROCKWELL: And Ron always said older people who need it, I'm not for taking it away. But all younger people ought to be able to opt out in return for paying no more Medicare taxes or, for that matter, Social Security taxes. They opt out of the system; they don't get anything from it.

WOODS: Exactly.

ROCKWELL: That would be a huge, magnificent reform, but of course nobody can allow it; nobody can discuss it, because it would reduce the size of the state, and you're never allowed to do that. In fact, none of those guys are actually for reducing the state.

WOODS: Well, it sounded like Carson was slightly tiptoeing toward that, that he would have an opt-out option, but even if that was his opinion, by the time he got elected and it was explained to him what was what, we would never hear that proposal again.

ROCKWELL: Well also, his previous proposal was to abolish Medicare and Medicaid.

WOODS: (laughing) I know.

ROCKWELL: So he's already backed down from that. Somebody said, oh, this is going to hurt you in Iowa or whatever was the reason. He said he's reexamined that, and so, you know.

WOODS: Yeah, in the last five minutes I've reexamined one of my fundamental positions. Yeah.

ROCKWELL: (laughing) Yeah, of course.

WOODS: All right, I want to get back to Trump. Now, Trump said some things that are really, I think, pretty bad. One of them was, well, how are you going to deal with entitlements, and his answer was, well, when I bring all the jobs back from China and Mexico, we'll have such a robust economy that we'll grow our way out. I mean, that's classic neocon.

ROCKWELL: No, and it's just —

WOODS: I mean, the protectionism part isn't, but the whole thing about we can grow our way out of problems.

ROCKWELL: That's just the Republican line on anything.

WOODS: Yeah, that's true.

ROCKWELL: That's why nothing has to be cut. So yeah, he's wrong, but of course, again, how's that different from Ryan or Boehner or Bush or Rubio or —

WOODS: Oh, it's true, but the point is I expect Trump to be different from those people.

ROCKWELL: I agree. He wasn't, though.

WOODS: And secondly, at the end when he was giving his closing statement, and he's talking about ways that America doesn't win anymore, and he called the Iran deal a catastrophe, which he had not said earlier.

ROCKWELL: Oh, yeah. Terrible.

WOODS: Yeah. So that's definitely no good.

ROCKWELL: Terrible, terrible. And in fact, was that the only remark on foreign policy the whole night?

WOODS: Yeah, it probably was, because it was a debate on the economy, and yet, you know —

ROCKWELL: I thought he was going to talk about the Trans-Pacific agreement, which is a horrendous thing.

WOODS: Yeah, that's what I thought he meant. That's what I thought he was leading up to when he said "the worst agreement I've ever seen." I thought it was going to be that.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, horrible.

WOODS: Yeah, and the funny thing is even though this was billed as a debate on the economy, again, with Ron in there, he would have said, well, sorry, but if you're going to try and treat these issues like they're hermetically sealed compartments, like *the economy* and *foreign policy*. I mean, it is draining us to have this philosophy of just ongoing war, war, war, and then when intervention leads to problems, we have more war to fix the problem caused by the first one. This is an ingredient here, and we know that in his interviews he went out of his way to do this, and this frustrated a lot of his campaign team, which of course wanted him to shut up about foreign policy, but meanwhile we were all cheering, "Let Ron be Ron."

ROCKWELL: Well, he was – in talking about the entitlement programs, he'd say, first of all, you bring all the troops home.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: Get rid of the empire. You stop trying to run the world and worry about our own people, our own problems; then we can decide what to do about our domestic problems.

WOODS: Yeah. Yeah, exactly right.

ROCKWELL: And then there would of course be a vast amount of either – I would hope – cutting government spending or at least reallocation. But anything's better than murdering masses of people all around the world every day, like the U.S. government does now and it seems like forever they've done it.

WOODS: Let me ask you one more thing before we wrap up. The people in the undercard debate who are polling at basically 1% or lower – as far as I can see, they're all at that level –

ROCKWELL: Yes.

WOODS: What's the reason that they're in there? I mean, I understand some people run for president just because they know that this means it elevates their profile, it gives them free publicity, their speaking fees will go up, and whatever. But when you're basically relegated to this undercard debate, and you look like a fool, what possible benefit are you getting?

ROCKWELL: Well, they all have of course giant egos, and I guess they consider it better than nothing. But one other thing we have to remember, the structure of these debates – the undercard business, how many are on stage, who the moderators are,

who's running the debate, and so forth – it's all decided by the Republican National Committee. And I hate to agree with Ed Meese, but Ed Meese said today, really you have to blame the RNC for everything that was wrong with this debate. They're the ones who set this up. It's not CNBC's decision to have the undercard debate. I was so glad, by the way, I didn't see it, because I heard all the CNBC people saying, well, Lindsey Graham won that one. Boy, he hit it out of the park; he was great. (laughing) Horrible. But anyway, this is Reince Preibus. We need to ask him that question. These things are – of course, first of all, they're not debates. They're forums. But why is it Megyn Kellys and Becky Quick and people like that asking the questions – or the horrible John Harwood? Why are these the questions? So I think the RNC's at fault for this among many, many other things.

WOODS: Right. Right. But then today they're pretending that, oh my goodness, CNBC really stuck it to us.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, we were blindsided. Yeah.

WOODS: Right, how could we have known? Murray Sabrin sent out a note last night that I thought was absolutely right on. He said – and you probably got this too – he says again, "Ten candidates on the debate stage is an awful format. There should be no more than five candidates in a one-hour debate. And the questions for the most part were awful as well. I don't care what current governors have done and what former governors did. They're running for president. Stick to federal issues. I have been in three campaigns where debates focused on the issues. Why can't supposedly seasoned journalists do the same?"

And here's what he recommends. He says, "The CNBC crew should have asked all the candidates the following and cut them off when they do not answer the question: What should be done to the tax code? What government programs would you abolish or downsize? Why should the Federal Reserve manipulate short-term interest rates? What regulations would you abolish? Just those four questions. Then after they answer the questions, the moderator should ask the candidates to critique each other. That's how a debate with ten candidates should have been conducted."

I agree with that completely. That would have been a much more interesting debate.

ROCKWELL: Of course it would have been terrific, but of course, you can't ask those kinds of questions. You can't imply that anything should be cut in the federal government. That's a no-no. That's a no-no for the Republican Party as well as the Democrats, for the media as well as the candidates. But he's exactly right. These things are just horrendous. On the other hand, I think it is culling the field. I mean, all these guys, Pataki and all the rest of them, maybe in the next debate – which I think is in about two weeks, Tom – but we know who the serious people are. We know who the key people are, and it's not – there's plenty of undercard people in the overcard, and maybe we'll see some of them do us all a favor. Maybe Chris Christie will go home to New Jersey, although I must say he's an entertaining rogue, so he does bring that.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: Can't say the rest of these guys – maybe Trump is an exception to this, but the rest of these are not entertaining people. And in fact, after the debate, Bush was being interviewed, and he said, well, I'm not a performer. If you want a performer, you need to elect Trump or something.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: Of course, a politician has to be a performer, because if you're going to appeal to the public en masse – it doesn't mean you're a phony. Ron Paul was a great performer. He was great at meeting people, great at convincing people, just loved meeting people, loved – would stand for hours taking photos with thousands of kids. He loved that stuff. That's why he was a great politician. So if you don't have those qualities, things are tough for you. These guys are all – who wants John Kasich to come over and have a cup of coffee?

WOODS: Yeah, stay the heck away. Yeah, exactly. I know it; I know it. Well, I'm going to make sure and link on – well, the show notes for today will be at TomWoods.com/522, and there I will link to Lew Rockwell's Political Theatre – of course, LewRockwell.com, I mentioned at the beginning of the show, but Lew Rockwell's Political Theatre is, of your two blogs, the one you run entirely on your own and that deals with issues like this, what's going on in the race, day after day. I love it. I mean, I visit it multiple times a day. I do that – it's absolutely true – every day. I love this thing. So you can get it through TomWoods.com/522 if you're on the road or something, or you can just go to LewRockwell.com and look for "Political Theatre" and click on it, and you're just going to love what you see. Well, Lew, you get two weeks of peace I guess, and then we're back to the grind again.

ROCKWELL: I can't wait, Tom; it's a lot of fun.

WOODS: Thanks a lot.