



Episode 593: South Carolina Debate: Who's Left Standing?

Guest: Lew Rockwell

WOODS: This was, uh —

ROCKWELL: Especially this time.

WOODS: Yeah, because I can't say this time that it was a bore or that it was a real chore to do.

ROCKWELL: (laughing)

WOODS: I actually found this quite interesting. Now, by now some people probably have read the news reports about it, but if I know my listeners, I know some of them studiously avoid all commentary on this, because they want to hear what we have to say, because they can't be bothered, and so we'll talk about it. But it was — you know, even before I read the article that you linked to at your *Political Theatre* blog, which of course we'll link to that on our show notes page, TomWoods.com/593. You really should read Lew Rockwell's *Political Theatre* blog regularly.

But even before I read that analysis, I already agreed with it. I was going to write this and I was going to say this on the show, that the audience was so obviously stacked with establishment people and donors that when they were so over-the-top cheering for Bush and Rubio and so over-the-top booing Trump and to a lesser extent Cruz, but mostly for Trump, they made it so obvious what was going on that they undercut themselves completely. And I thought, are these people really that dumb? Like, these are big dollar donors, and they have IQs of 60? Don't they understand that this obviously powers Trump's entire narrative, which is that I'm the guy who's unjustly put upon by the establishment? What's wrong with these people, Lew?

ROCKWELL: I thought it was interesting that even Rupert Murdoch had a tweet a day or so before the debate saying that the audience was going to be stacked against Trump, so expect a lot of booing.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: And my guess is he thought it was going to help against his people and to help Trump, and I think there's no question it did. Of course they booed him even

louder when he said you people are just a bunch of donors and lobbyists, and my favorite line, at one point he said, look, lobbyists, I'm just telling the truth. And so they boo, boo, boo, you know. So that was I think tremendously helpful for him, and you know, it sounded like the Roman Coliseum or something. It was over the top, it seems to me, even if you were a Bush or Rubio partisan, and of course it hurt them; it helped Trump. It was great. Once again just like the last time, the RNC steps on its own foot and messes up and helps Trump.

WOODS: It goes to show how little experience they have being in effect the underdog, being in a situation in which they can't control events. Apparently they don't really know how to control events. They're used to things just falling into their lap, that the coronation of the preferred candidate just occurs automatically, and they don't have to engage in any kind of special effort. But good for them, because they're terrible at it obviously.

ROCKWELL: (laughing) And I always like the Drudge poll, which I think reflects a lot about Republican primary voters, and I noticed this morning, and it's 712,000 people voting. Trump gets 52%; Cruz, 23% — 29 points behind. Rubio, 13; Kasich, 5.5%; Bush, a little bit over 3%, and poor Ben Carson, a little bit under 3%. I think that's an accurate analysis.

Politico always after every debate, they have what they call "the insiders," a bunch of anonymous party hacks from whatever state the debate took place, of course this case South Carolina, giving their view. And it was the unanimous view by these insiders that, as one guy put it, Trump has made a galactic-level error by criticizing in South Carolina George W. Bush and his Iraq War. Of course I think and certainly hope that was not an error. One of the great things that was ever said in a debate.

Really, Trump is the most anti-war candidate — Sam Stein this morning on *Morning Joe* was asked about this, and he said, well, you know they're all saying Trump — which is what they were discussing — Trump's temperament is wrong to be president. He said, here's a guy who says we shouldn't have gone into the Iraq War, we shouldn't have attacked Libya, shouldn't attack Syria. He says, that's the kind of temperament I want in a president.

WOODS: Yeah, that is — yeah.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, whereas these other guys are all ready to nuke on a moment's notice.

WOODS: And of course we know what — I can understand what people are saying about Trump's temperament, in that he fires back at people and he insults people and he has nasty tweets and so on, but if I had to choose between a nasty tweet and the war in Iraq, I think I know where I'd come down. Now again, Trump's problems also came through certainly in the debate. There's no question about that. But also on the war question, for him to say — now, I don't think he's got a profound grasp of the situation any more than anyone else on the stage does, but at least he gets that the

war did obviously destabilize the Middle East. I mean, what else could you possibly conclude from that? I loved his line against Jeb, where he said, look, after Jeb announced, he had to wait five days to decide whether he thought the Iraq War had been a good idea or a bad idea, and after five days, his handlers basically told him to say it was a bad idea. And we all know that's true. Is there anybody, including a Jeb supporter, who would deny that that is precisely what happened?

ROCKWELL: And why does that count as an insult? By the way, it's my experience in looking at all this stuff for all this time that Trump may insult people but only after they insult him. We've had other opponents say he's vulgar, he's a clown, and he's a circus performer, those sorts of things, and then he comes back. I'm not aware of him ever going after anybody in those terms who didn't go after him first.

WOODS: You know, when he talked in the debate about being a conservative and saying that I'm older and wiser now, so implicitly saying stop holding against me views that I had in the past, when he said that I'm a conservative but I think of myself as a common sense conservative because I don't agree with some of the ideas, I took that to mean things like I don't agree with, for example, people who say — they never mean it — but who say we have to really cut back on the welfare state. To some degree he wants to cut back on the welfare state I think, but in terms of social security and Medicare, he wants to shore those things up. And so this really does remind me of why it is so apt to apply the ideas of Sam Francis here. When Sam Francis was talking in the 1990s about the middle American radicals, he wasn't talking about people who were doctrinaire libertarians or doctrinaire conservatives, but he was talking about Americans who were against PC and who were generally against big government, so-called, but still just wanted to have a government that was in their interests and not in the interests of others.

ROCKWELL: Also against — also Sam would have pointed out right at the top against immigration, or at least the mass immigration of the sort we're seeing now.

WOODS: Right, right, so I think that is exactly the group of people Trump is trying to appeal to. He's not trying to appeal to people who want to abolish Medicare, all 18 of us. He's going for the general public who have a kind of common sense feel that something has gone wrong somewhere.

We should say something about Skalia, Skalia's death. I'm going to try to do an episode this week, if I can schedule Kevin Gutzman, on the legacy of Skalia, but that's obviously hovering over the debate and over really all the news over these number of days, because of course there's nothing constitutionally to stop Obama from nominating a successor. And I personally — you know, there are decisions that Skalia made that I don't like and I think on the drug war he was not reliable, let's say, but I think for people who are obsessed with criticizing Skalia, wait till you see his replacement, and you will be begging to have him back, is my personal feeling.

ROCKWELL: Well, I think that's right. I think he was a good man personally, a seriously religious man. I didn't like his stance on executive power —

WOODS: Yeah, that's true too.

ROCKWELL: But he was so smart, and it was just nice to see somebody in Washington who's brilliant. This is not a common occurrence, and his opinions on the court, especially his dissenting opinions, were just vivid, and they just popped off the page. And no wonder he had the influence he did. So I think there's no question that whoever it ends up being, whether the Republicans do it or the Democrats do it, it's going to be somebody far worse, and I think Republicans have to watch it when they all say, no, you can't; we're not going to let Obama do it. Well, as soon as Congress is out of session, Obama's going to appoint an interim person, Loretta Lynch or whoever he's talking about, who'll be there for some time, and there'll be all kinds of cases this person will vote on and will — how shall I say? She won't be voting like Scalia would.

WOODS: Yeah, exactly, and these are some pretty important cases coming up. And this of course goes to show, they're talking about this in the midst of a debate that centers around democratic elections, and the key topic of that debate or one of the key topics certainly was the issue of Scalia and his replacement. And they're all saying if this guy is replaced by some leftist, then you're not going to believe all the terrible things that are going to happen — which goes to show that the system really is a sham, that here we are on stage talking about which one of us you should vote for, but basically we're helpless to stop, at this point, somebody being appointed on the court who can make sweeping decisions about matters of tremendous importance, and there ain't nothing the people can do about that. Really there isn't anything they can do. There's nothing. They're just stuck with that situation.

ROCKWELL: I remember Joe Sobran being asked about, wasn't the British system as compared to the American system so terrible, really just a majority of Parliament, of the 600-odd members of Parliament could change the British constitution. And he said, that's right, unlike in America where five out of nine guys can change the American Constitution. Right, of course this is not what we were taught in school, and I can still remember when the impeach Earl Warren campaign started — I guess I don't remember when it started but when it was ongoing. The general view of the establishment was, how dare you question a Supreme Court justice? These people are way above us, they're concerned just with the common good, and they're not regular human beings, even. It was an unbelievable blasphemy and outrage to say a Supreme Court justice should be impeached. That was the view of the establishment at that point.

Thank goodness that's no longer the view. They are correctly seen as political operatives on behalf of one group or another. Of course Scalia was a better political operative than Elena Kagan or whomever else. But, however, he was again not a disinterested Mount Olympian god looking at the Constitution and deciding he had his own view of how you should decide the Constitution, and he had, I think, not — we'll see what Kevin Gutzman says, but I think — you know, he had his problems, but you're exactly right. Whoever replaces him, whether Mitch McConnell is deciding it or Barack Obama is deciding it, it's going to be much worse, because just look at all the other Republican appointees. How this guy ever snuck through under the Reagan administration when they gave us Anthony Kennedy, and of course Bush, David

Souter, and the Nixon appointees were horrific, the Eisenhower appointees were horrific. I don't think, by the way, this is a mistake. It's not that these guys didn't know what they're doing. They wanted these kind of state-expanding justices, and just by happenstance Skalia got in there and so we can be very grateful for that.

WOODS: Isn't it funny that in the debate Jeb said, when he was asked about this — and I thought the moderators actually asked some pretty good questions. They asked, a lot of conservatives have been very disappointed by the appointees of conservative or Republican presidents, and what do you think about that. And Jeb said, well, the trouble is we've been choosing people with no paper trail, thinking that will get them through. They'll be not too controversial and then that will get them through, and then we wind up being surprised. And I thought, yeah, surprised, sure. Surprised again and again and again. It's always a surprise that we appoint some mediocrity? What does it mean, by the way, to have no paper trail? Wouldn't that mean by definition that you're some kind of mediocrity who's never said anything worth saying?

ROCKWELL: Well, the idea that the American police state is saying, oh gosh, we can't actually look into this guy's real views, we can't look at what he's written, we can't look at phone calls, we can't look at subsequently his emails and so forth. We don't know what David Souter actually believed. He had no paper trail; therefore he's a blank slate. No, he wasn't a blank slate. They knew exactly what they were getting. Why they wanted somebody that stupid, you know, is maybe another question, but maybe they want stupid people as versus somebody as brilliant as Skalia.

WOODS: Maybe indeed they want stupid people. Maybe. I'm willing to consider it as a hypothesis. All right, let's pause to thank our sponsor, and we'll be right back.

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Lew, before we move on to other topics, I just want to point out I did an episode of the show a couple of weeks ago probably, and I looked at a proposal by Greg Abbott, who I guess is the governor of Texas, and I generally don't do that. I don't talk much about politicians. But he came up with a list of proposed constitutional amendments, and one of them was that two-thirds of the states ought to be able to overturn a Supreme Court decision, and I thought, well, you know, if there's another layer that exists to be able to overturn something, then I don't see why that would be bad. Maybe it wouldn't amount to anything, but that would certainly be good. But there's probably no chance we'd get that amendment, but something like that could help protect us against a post-Skalia world.

ROCKWELL: And obviously the entire power to determine whether something is constitutional or not by the Supreme Court is entirely usurped. It's not in the Constitution. This is evil John Marshall, who did so much to wreck the new U.S. government, and they have no more right to do that than the Congress or the people or the states. Properly interpreted, if you stick to the actual words of the Constitution, then they have very limited number of cases in which they have constitutional jurisdiction. Everything else is determined by Congress.

That's why Ron Paul always said let's take away all issues of abortion from all the federal courts, and that way return it to the states. The pro-life movement, which is just a line outpost of the Republican Party, always opposed that and was horrified by it. But had Bush and the Republicans actually wanted to make an improvement, go back to a decentralist view. But of course they laughed at Ron Paul over that, because they all like the way the system works. They're all part of the system. There's actually very little dissent in Washington over the American system, which means, as I think more and more Americans are believing, a wrecking ball taking to it.

WOODS: Let's see, what do I want to say here? I've jotted down something about Carson for some reason (laughing).

ROCKWELL: Oh yeah. No, I loved it when poor Carson gave his phony Stalin quote.

WOODS: Ugh.

ROCKWELL: It's one of those things that dates from I guess the '50s, when he said, well, as Stalin said, to undermine America all we need to do is hurt their spiritual life and their patriotism and —

WOODS: Yeah, it sounds like a fake quote.

ROCKWELL: — and abolish their morality. Well, you know it's a fake quote. It's like the Lenin one: if we can undermine America's religious views, it will fall like a rotten fruit into our hands. You know, I mean, these are just — these are all obviously made up. They're from the '50s. He said it so seriously that he obviously believes it, but why you can't, as you say, look at that and know it's phony, I don't know.

WOODS: Yeah, there was that, and apparently in his book he's got fake quotes from the Founding Fathers, and everybody falls for these. You know, the worst — if I may digress for a moment — the worst perpetrators of this are the Greenbackers. Even Bill Still, who is the biggest Greenbacker of them all, has a page on his website of fake quotations that he's sorry that he uttered, which is an unusual thing, for people to apologize for uttering fake quotations.

I still get these, even from well-meaning libertarians. There are ones where Woodrow Wilson is supposedly so sorry and he's crying tears that he started the Federal Reserve and I've sold out my country. He never said that. He did not regret founding the Federal Reserve. And for some reason, it's this craving on the part of people to believe there was some good president looking out for us, like whether it's John F. Kennedy, whom I've criticized on the show, and Woodrow Wilson or whatever it is. And then there's Thomas Jefferson, saying if we leave in the hands of private bankers the power to create money, then by inflation and then deflation we'll wake up and find ourselves dispossessed of the country our ancestors —

ROCKWELL: (laughing)

WOODS: That is a made up quote. The word "deflation" wasn't even used at that time. So these are phony. My rule of thumb is if a quotation sounds like it could have been written yesterday, it probably was. So anyway, getting back to this. All right, so I guess what I had written down about Carson was that I think he's out. I mean, it's pretty obvious from the poll numbers and everything that Carson is out.

And I'm sorry my thoughts are a little bit scattered. I do want to say one quick constitutional thing before we go on. One of my favorite passages from the early documentary history of the country comes from James Madison's Virginia Report, or it's sometimes called The Report of 1800, in which he says that the parties to the constitution, by which he means the states, in the last resort basically have to be able to protect themselves against usurpations from all three branches, that even the judicial branch can betray the Constitution, and in the last resort the states need to be able to protect themselves. Now, that is not a lesson that is drummed into the heads of many schoolchildren, but there it is sitting there in the Report of 1800. Maybe I'll – why not? Why don't I link to that? The Report of 1800, I'll link to my little commentary on that at TomWoods.com/593.

All right, let's go back to foreign policy, because there were some fun things said here. What impressed me about Trump's commentary on this was that he even went to the extreme – not extreme to you and me, but for a television audience – of saying they lied. He says they lied; they knew there were no weapons of mass destruction, but they told us there were. Now, that's not really being said by anybody else, to put it mildly.

ROCKWELL: I always like Paul Craig Roberts' point that for many months ahead of the invasion of Iraq by George W. Bush, there were vast stores of weapons, of ammunition, of missiles, of tanks, troops, hundreds of thousands of troops built up all in a central area of Kuwait. He says that alone proves they knew that Saddam didn't have weapons of mass destruction. If he had one, he could have just sent one over and killed everybody.

WOODS: Right, right.

ROCKWELL: If you thought the opponent had those kinds of weapons, you would never do that.

WOODS: Right.

ROCKWELL: So of course, it's – but there was the Special Office of Lies within the Pentagon designed to spread lies about WMDs and Saddam Hussein, he was about to take over the world and all the rest of that stuff. Of course they lied, but yes, it's great to hear somebody say that.

WOODS: He also said in Syria we're supporting troops, we don't even know who they are, which seems to be a fairly common thing. It seems to be like John McCain's favorite thing. Just go ahead, spin the roulette wheel and support whoever comes up.

So he did say that. He spoke out against executive orders. He said that instead what he would try to do is build consensus. And you think, build consensus? How could a guy like this build consensus? But his argument is that's what my whole career is; I make deals. And I think that's what Cruz was referring to in his closing statement when he said, do you want another Washington deal-maker? His words are always very carefully chosen.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, I think Cruz, by the way, did not have a good night. He didn't have a terrible night, but it was not that great a night for him. He must have great hopes for South Carolina with all the evangelicals there, but I think he didn't stand out, maybe because Trump was so dominant. And I guess Cruz — who was best, if that's the word, Cruz or Rubio? I don't know. But Cruz didn't do it. Unless of course Trump killed himself. That's what the insiders are saying. We'll see on Saturday in the vote. I don't think so, but you know, I wish I knew. On the other hand, it was great to hear him say the things he did.

And of course Bush was his usual whining, goofy self. How dare Trump say anything bad about my father, who was the greatest man alive? How dare he criticize my mother? I don't believe he's criticized his mother. In fact, when he talked about — Jeb said, I looked up at my mother — oh, right — and thought I just won the lottery in mothers, because she's the strongest mother there is, and Trump leans into the mic and said, "She should be running."

WOODS: (laughing) Yeah.

ROCKWELL: (laughing) So anyway, he's whining. It's just very, very funny. And also Trump's media brilliance. Here was Jeb bringing in his brother. He's going to be dominating, he hopes, the campaign over this last week because of his brother and South Carolina and all the veterans and the military industrial complex there and so forth. And all of that, and Trump has turned the whole thing, and you know darn well the first question George W. Bush is going to be asked is what do you think about what Trump said about you. Trump has made himself the center of media attention for this next week, so very smart move. He seems to have just a natural talent as a politician in that sense. He can put himself at the center of attention and knock the others out of the box.

WOODS: The South Carolina primary is February 20th, so just — wait, can that be right? Yeah, that's right. So that means — well, what does that mean? Does that mean that after that, Kasich drops out, or do you think he struggles along?

ROCKWELL: I don't think Kasich's got the money, and I don't think after this, and in fact his whole campaign in South Carolina, I don't think he's going to get the money. I mean, he has to be the most annoying candidate. First of all, he always goes way over the time limit. He's very boring. It's the same stuff about, look, I was head of the foreign policy committee for 18 years, and you know, that sort of thing. Also he's the most moral guy. Yes, let's have no negativity. By the way, this guy has a very negative record in politics in the past. Let's have no negativity. Let's just talk about what's good

for America, and let's talk about the fact that I'm the great moral leader, because I wanted to expand Medicaid and I wanted to expand welfare, and that means I'm a moral guy. And I noticed the moderator of the debate quoting Arthur Brooks, the evil neocon Arthur Brooks, as saying that Republicans must be warriors for the poor — meaning expand the welfare state. You could be a warrior for the poor, actually want to help the poor, get rid of the welfare state, get rid of all the things that hurt the poor, but of course neocons aren't talking about that.

WOODS: I was going to say, on —

ROCKWELL: But I think Kasich is gone, yes.

WOODS: Yeah, okay, he's got to be, and it seems to me Carson's got to be gone.

ROCKWELL: I don't know how much money he's got left.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: He apparently wants to stay in as long as he's got money, but his fundraising can't be going well.

WOODS: No.

ROCKWELL: He's got a notoriously very high-cost fundraising operation, sort of the opposite of Bernie Sanders, so my guess is he'll be in it as long as he's got money. If he's out of money after South Carolina then he's out.

WOODS: And it's incredible to me that this many debates in, he is still opening with the line about, oh, thanks for including me in the debate. Oh, I've already gotten two questions, ha, ha, ha.

ROCKWELL: (laughing)

WOODS: That is annoying. I mean, look, especially since he has been included in the debates. He just squanders every opportunity he gets to speak. That's not the fault of the moderators. But for him to keep harping on this. Okay, it might have been funny or clever or interesting or combative five debates ago, but at this point it's like Rubio talking about Obama knowing what he's doing. It's stupid.

ROCKWELL: (laughing) I know. And speaking of stupid, of course Rubio I guess had a better debate than the previous one.

WOODS: Yeah, he did.

ROCKWELL: He didn't seem like a robot, but I always like it when he talks about "we need a new American century." It reminds me of the Project for a New American

Century, the great neocon blueprint for world war and world conquest and world destruction.

WOODS: Right, so that's no accident.

ROCKWELL: And he's part of that. No, it's not an accident. That's part of it. And of course he also brought up Israel, which of course must always be mentioned. And I think Cruz did too. But how many people in South Carolina are focused on Israel right now? My guess is nobody.

WOODS: Well, on that note, Lew, we will call it a day. I'm going to link to — let's see, I'll find something to link to. That Report of 1800 thing, for instance, at the very least, and also to all your stuff, some of your books, link to the Mises Institute, LewRockwell.com, especially the *Political Theatre* blog, which I just don't know what I would do without. Again, I would struggle along somehow, but it would be a less happy, less fulfilled life if I did not have your very, very enjoyable, very informative *Political Theatre* blog. I can't even tell you how many times I check it, because I would be embarrassed to tell you. But anyway, I really appreciate your time, and I don't know when the next one is, but we'll be there.

ROCKWELL: Great to be with you on the greatest podcast on the air —

WOODS: (laughing) Thanks so much.

ROCKWELL: — *The Tom Woods Show*.