



Episode 685: Roundtable: The Libertarian Party, Its Present and Future

Guest: Mary Ruwart, Tom Mullen, Jason Rink, and Jeff Deist

WOODS: All right, I'd like to welcome everybody on our little panel here, and let's jump right in with an initial — I haven't planned this out. I always give the example of the Beatles' movie *Magical Mystery Tour*. They didn't plan it out; they just rode a bus around England just to record what would happen, and unfortunately for them nothing did happen. I think this event will be a little bit more lively than that. But I thought, let's have some spontaneity here. I think what I'd like to do is just have everybody one at a time — I'll call on you — just take a few minutes to give listeners a sense of where you're coming from. Let's not talk about Johnson-Weld right now, although that will probably be implied in your answer, but let's talk about what do you think the Libertarian Party should be and what should it be doing. Let's start right there, and let's start with Mary; because, Mary, of course you actually sought the Libertarian Party presidential nomination, I'd like to begin with you.

RUWART: Well, you know, I think our candidates should be advertisements for our philosophy, because the thing we do best is to rollback big government without electing anyone. We've rolled back taxes, eminent domain, so even though I think it's great to run candidates and it's great to win, I think our true focus should be on rolling back big government without electing anyone.

WOODS: All right, let's go now to Tom Mullen. Tom, just give us your initial thoughts before we get into the specifics.

MULLEN: I agree largely with what Mary Ruwart said. I also would add the two caveats that, one, if you're going to go into politics at all you're already compromising libertarianism as I see it because we want to get rid of the government completely, and if you do compromise there, you've got to do it with some kind of reasonable chance of success, and I think that's where a lot of my position comes from, especially this year.

WOODS: All right, Jason, let's hear from you.

RINK: I think this year — and I like to narrow it to sort of what's going on right now, because I think it's a unique moment to reflect on, but I think specifically the Libertarian Party should be viewed as sort of the broad opening of a sales funnel through which people can be introduced to libertarianism in a broad fashion, people

who do not consider themselves libertarian or don't even really know what it is, and that as people work through that process they can refine those ideas by being exposed to other things, and that the party itself shouldn't be the tip of the spear of hardcore libertarianism; it should be a broader funnel that people can be introduced to.

WOODS: Okay, and finally Jeff.

DEIST: Tom, if I had to say, it might be too late, but I think the LP should be a state and local party. I think it should have been a state and local part from the outset, because it's far easier to get 20 or 30,000 votes for an important local election than it is to get 30 or 40 million in a presidential election. That said, I think, given the current reality, since Gary Johnson is the horse, that the party should strive to be an issue party. In other words, it should seek consensus and apply issue libertarianism rather than movement libertarianism to everything it does, because as Tom Mullen suggests, if you're going to engage in politics, you're already in a compromised position in a certain sense, so why not go with softballs down the middle; in other words, populist messages, issue libertarianism rather than trying to sell movement libertarianism.

WOODS: All right, I think I'd probably like to follow up on that, but I think now that we've done that, we should feel free to just have this as a free-flowing discussion. You don't have to raise your hand. I can't see you anyway. I don't even know if you're raising your hand. So you know, with reasonable deference to others, feel free to jump in. Here's the thing that — I mean, I've made my own opinion clear certainly on the current candidates, and I've done that in a couple of episodes and implicitly in a speech I gave at the convention this year to a luncheon crowd, much of which I think already agreed with me, unfortunately. I agree with Mary about what our candidates should be like, and people say that I'm just being a perfectionist in my criticisms of Gary Johnson. It's not that I'm a perfectionist. I'd take somebody who just is a good communicator of the message, and I found him very much a lightweight. I find him like he's in over his head on so many issues, and he shows no curiosity about them to become better, to learn more, to say what he's reading. He can't even tell me the book he read that made him become a libertarian. I don't think I'm asking a whole lot when I say that, when I say that I want him to be a consistent libertarian who can articulate the message effectively.

But on the other hand, here's what I want people to talk about: when people say, look, he's polling — now, these early polling numbers don't mean anything, but if he were polling at 11 or 12% in October of this year, that would be significant. That would get a lot of attention for the Libertarian Party, and certainly we wouldn't have gotten that with any of the other candidates. I think that's fair to say. So isn't that at least something? Isn't there something to Jason's point, that even if Johnson doesn't fully sell you on 100 octane libertarianism, you'd get into it through him and then you mingle with the Libertarian Party and you start discovering other things and you read Mary Ruwart, you read Murray Rothbard, and before you know it you're a goner. There is something to that that I find it hard to shake. At the same time, what concerns me is that what kind of Libertarian Party are people going to find once they join it through

Gary Johnson. I'm afraid they're going to find a bunch of Bill Weld people, which is not that inspiring.

RINK: Tom, I think you make a great point there, and I just want to say I'm honored to be on this panel. I feel like I'm — these are great thinkers that are sitting around here that I'm talking to right now, and I feel like I have a real outsider's perspective in a lot of ways, just because I came into this thing through the Ron Paul movement, so I'm one of the younger libertarians probably sitting at this table. And I think that one point we should consider is that I don't think the Libertarian Party was ready for this moment that was present to them. Number one, Wayne Allyn Root was a VP candidate in 2008, and he's like the most vocal proponent of Trump right now on the Internet. And the candidates that were presented were Austin Petersen, John McAfee, and Gary Johnson, and I think Austin Petersen — I know there are some other ones as well, but as far as, like, broad appeal, Johnson is the only one that I think was able to make a blip on the radar of what is going on in this election cycle from the Libertarian Party, other than those other candidates. I don't think you would see anything happening if Austin Petersen or John McAfee were chosen that appeal to anyone outside of already libertarians. So I think he was the best choice of what was presented to accomplish what goal, expanding the audience of potential libertarians. I do think Bill Weld is a problem. I don't understand that choice at all, so I'll go on the record for that.

WOODS: Oh, and by the way, I do understand the choice. I understand that it's an open secret that it's because they think he can raise money. That's what it boils down to. All right, who else wants to jump in on this, because I really would like to get everybody's opinion. Doesn't it mean something that he can get these kind of poll numbers? Wouldn't that on balance be good in some way?

MULLEN: Tom, let me say this. I agree with all your comments about Gary Johnson that you just made, the ones you made on your earlier show at greater length, but as opposed to "I'm worried that that's what the Libertarian Party becomes," I think Gary Johnson is the best candidate for all those reasons. And here's where I come from, maybe that I didn't mention in my earlier article: the Libertarian Party has been at this for 40 years, and I believe the kind of people who are open to the real message are already here, those 1 to 2 million people who would vote for a Ron Paul or who would vote for a real libertarian are already converted. And I think we have to be realistic about the electorate we're dealing with and how ingrained the statist (for lack of a better word) philosophy is in them.

And I can just tell you from talking to friends of mine who are all very smart people, at least as smart as me, probably smarter, business owners, computer coders, people who are my closest friends, that they come right out and say that the kinds of things we're looking for is what turns them off. My one friend got my last book and said I'll read this book until the Founding Fathers are mentioned and then I'm going to stop reading. You guys have to stop talking about the Founding Fathers. I don't agree with that, but this is — everything that we love about libertarianism, the hardcore message kind of turns off the populous. I think we've got to get them in with something a little less hardcore and then work on them once they're here.

RUWART: You know, I'm not so sure we turn them off with the message. That at least hasn't been my experience. When I go in front of a classroom, I start off by asking the students, "If you could choose your government, which would you have? Would you have the majority ruling the minority? The minority ruling the majority? Or having everyone rule themselves as long as they don't initiate force, fraud, or theft against another?" At this point, when I ask them to vote they do not know, unless they've heard of it before, what the libertarian philosophy is. And yet, I would say 90 to 100% vote for the libertarian philosophy. Then I ask them, "What do you think your government does today? Which one of these most closely matches how the U.S. government operates?" And none of them pick the libertarian philosophy on that question.

So I think there's definitely an identification with the nonaggression principle. This is really what we've been taught as children, and I think if it's presented properly, people get all excited. Of course, then when they hear the implications of it, they get confused, because you know, they've been taught something else. And so I think we need to present things in a way that go back to this appeal to what people have actually learned as children and practiced in their one-to-one relationships with people, and I think it's doable. But I do understand that there's been a lot of propaganda out there, and people are more — how can I say it? I've been out in the classroom for 20-some years, and it's true that people are more brainwashed than they ever have been before towards statism. So it is a challenge.

And one of things I am concerned about in the way Gary presents is that he doesn't talk about the nonaggression principle really at all, and in his last run where he got more votes than we've ever gotten before, the party did not grow at all. And this is unusual. Usually when we have a presidential election, we have a big blip in membership. And so you notice this time he talked about growing the party. I don't know how he's going to do that. I never heard him say how he intended to do that. But you know, this is a problem I think with candidates that head up our ticket that don't express the principle, because the principle is what gets people all excited. That's how Ron Paul got people excited, and I think if we don't pay attention to the nonaggression principle and bring it to the fore, I think we're going to miss out.

DEIST: Tom, from my perspective, look, he can be as impure as he wants. This isn't about purity. Nobody's asking him for purity. If he just came out and said, look, across the board, all departments, all agencies, all levels, I'm going to cut government by 10%, actual nominal funding by 10%, any libertarian, Murray Rothbard could say, well, okay, fine, I'll take that. It might not be inspiring, but 10% nominally across the board — he never does that. He picks and chooses what he talks about. He's magically pure on immigration and marijuana and gay marriage, but then you start talking to him about war or central banking, and he becomes this mealy mouthed, mushy guy. And there are huge opportunities for him to make inroads in areas that are popular. "Populism" and "popular" are the same thing. In other words, get out of the Middle East. Maybe we can't end the Fed, but if you vote for me, we're going to shine a really bright light on it for the first time, because it's hard to understand, but you know what, it enriches a bunch of unworthy people at your expense.

I mean, the idea that populism and purity are at odds with electoral success is just false. I fear that Gary Johnson is going to get nowhere. I'm all for voting for Gary Johnson if you're voting for the party. In other words, you're saying, let's upset the apple cart a little bit, these two parties that are killing us, literally and figuratively, but let's disabuse ourselves of this myth that the LP has this golden opportunity. Trump and Hillary are in no universe any worse than Obama or Bush. This is not some crisis time for America relative to four years ago or eight years ago. Trump and Hillary are just more of the same. They're not necessarily better or worse; it depends on the issue. So to say that, well, we have to water things down because we've been given this historic opportunity, really the only difference is that social media has intensified over four years ago and the number of online media outlets have intensified. That's the real opportunity, is that there are fewer gatekeepers and more voices. But I absolutely disagree that we're the bad guys because we're calling for purity, and gee whiz, he has to go in there and actually win some votes. I think the milquetoast approach wins you fewer votes. I really do.

WOODS: All right, but what about this. If you had somebody who was ideologically pure, then that person would be peppered with questions like, so — and by the way, any one of these answers is defensible, but in front of an American public, 95% of which was educated in the government's own schools, one of these is deadly — more than one makes you just completely laughable and a joke. If somebody said, okay, let's see, Mr. Libertarian; you're trying to be so populist and you're trying to be against war and stuff. Let's get to your real views. I mean, you're against public schooling. You think roads should be built privately. You think we should have private armies and anarchocapitalism, and you don't think the U.S. should have been in World War II. So aren't you just some crazy freak? Jeff, isn't that what would happen with somebody who had any common sense? He would be flooded with questions that are indeed answerable, but they're not answerable to people who watch TV all day and just trust what their seventh grade textbook taught them, and that's the American public, I'm sorry to say.

DEIST: Well, that's probably true, and that's probably why even a milquetoast libertarian is not going to win a national election at this point with this populous, but —

MULLEN: Let me say something — I'm sorry, go ahead, Jeff.

DEIST: I mean, Ron Paul was more or less that way, and an awful lot of people listened to him.

MULLEN: Let me say something about Ron Paul and also the opportunity. I mean, I think we should face the fact that Ron Paul, while probably the best deliverer of the message in my lifetime, he attracted a lot of people for a lot of different reasons, and they're not around on the liberty train anymore either. A lot of them are voting for Trump; a lot of them went back to the Left, because they only liked Ron's antiwar message. So the battle is uphill.

But let me just say two things that Gary Johnson, I would criticize him for, everybody on this call would criticize him for. Number one, he was criticized at the convention because he was wishy-washy on the bake-the-cake issue, that he would enforce civil rights-based legislation that would force somebody to work for somebody else. Any candidate who goes the other way on that is going to be dismissed just on that answer. And you might as well — why run a campaign, then? If you want to preach the message, open a think-tank. So it's actually better that he doesn't give the right answer there, because he does give a lot of other right answers, and at least we get people to hear that.

Now, as to the opportunity, no, it's not that Trump and Hillary are any worse than Obama or Bush; I agree with that, but they are more disliked, and they are more disliked even by people within their own parties, and I think either one could end up being somebody who could have a lot of cast-outs, like LBJ did in the '60s, and I think we have an opportunity to grab those people and just get them in the corral, get them in the stadium. We can help them find their seats once they're in, but breaking that idea that it's got to be a Democrat or a Republican, that's the number one thing. And then after that, other things can follow.

WOODS: Yeah, I guess maybe the concern is that Johnson might inspire you enough to go, you know, put an X in the box, but he's not enough to inspire you to say, you know what, I'm going to drop my favorite hobby and instead spend time working in the innards of the LP. And that goes to Mary's comment that he didn't grow the party at all last time. People might have voted for him, but nobody's going to say, "Gary Johnson changed my life." In fact, the past four years, we've heard nothing from Gary Johnson. I mean, no one has said — you don't hear anybody sitting around saying, "What's Gary Johnson's view on such and such issue?" He disappeared. No one cared. And I'm afraid that would happen here too. Other people jump in.

RINK: Yeah, I want to just say, you know, look, we'd all prefer if Ron Paul would have gotten the LP nomination — well, let me speak for myself. I'd have preferred it. I'd have preferred it if Rand Paul would be in there rather than Gary Johnson. I'm looking at the situation saying, who is actually running for the seat of president of LP, and that's why I say the LP wasn't ready for this moment. There wasn't a — the hardcore ideological person that might have been running had no marketability to anybody outside of the libertarians who were already there.

And I think the Libertarian Party and libertarian overall is facing a marketing challenge more than anything. I wish that Gary Johnson had a solid core philosophy. I think that's what was appealing about Ron Paul. Like, he had a core philosophy that backed up what he believed about things, and I don't think Johnson has that. But I also think we need to recognize the voting public is not consistent in their thinking about how they believe and embrace issues. They don't think that way. And so the fact that the public thinks that this is an emergency situation with Hillary and Trump and think that they're far worse than anybody who's ever existed, that may not be true from a consistency standpoint; I agree, but that's not how people think.

And so what we need to ask ourselves is how do we seize on this moment from a marketing standpoint, by which we can get people to start drinking from the libertarian trough. And I liken something to this: if I were talking to somebody who had never had a beer before, and I was like, oh, let's drink a beer, I'm going to go get a Dogfish Head 90 Minute IPA for you to drink, they would possibly never drink beer again, even though I think that's the finer of the beer than a watered down lager. I may introduce them to a watered down lager to get them to understand what beer is like, then start to open them up to some other options within the beer-drinking community and say, you know, that lager is a beer technically, but here's where the real beers are. Let's try some stouts and let's try some IPAs and those sorts of things.

And so I think from a marketing standpoint and from an introductory standpoint, I don't think having somebody less than ideal is a bad thing. I do want to say I think not having a core philosophy at the center of what you believe is what the problem is that I think Johnson has that I have trouble with, but compared to the candidates that actually had the chance to get the nomination, I think he was the best one to choose from the marketing standpoint.

WOODS: Yeah, let me jump in on that one, because I'd really like to get Mary's view. Mary, if you're comfortable talking about this, I'd be curious to know what you thought of any of the other candidates, because it probably is true that if any of them had been chosen, there would be no attention paid to the Libertarian Party, whereas under Johnson there is a lot of attention paid. Now, at the same time, it's true that, I mean, Johnson was giving away a book — what is it? Something like, "Seven Principles of Good Government"? And I thought, gosh, how tone-deaf can the guy be? That's his book he's going to give away at the libertarian convention? He's talking about "good government"? What's the matter with this guy? And it's always very, "Well, you know, government solutions, sometimes they don't work," sort of thing. And yet, at the same time I know that probably appeals to people more than, "The government is a bunch of bloodsuckers who care about nothing other than themselves." That's a separate question. Mary, what's the — I know that — I don't want to say, "I know." I suspect you were disappointed when they chose Gary Johnson, but what would you have had them do?

RUWART: Well, actually, in a way I sort of agree with Jason. I mean, philosophically there were other candidates that I would have preferred, but as far as the top runners, I think maybe Gary was the best of them, and I say that wishing there had been a better choice. I mean, we didn't have what I would consider the kinds of choices we've had in the past. I think we've had some better choices in the past. Gary isn't a horrible candidate; it's just, as Jason I think put very well, that he doesn't seem to have a core philosophy — at least, if he does, he doesn't refer to it.

And that's the problem, because people look at the Libertarian Party the way they look at the other parties, which means that the positions won't always be the same, because they're not really based on a philosophy. And I think the difference that the libertarians bring to the political sector, if you will, is that we have a philosophy, and it has a consistency, and this does appeal to a lot of people. And so I think it's

important that we bring that, because the type of people that are pulled in by Gary Johnson will be like Gary Johnson.

And if you think about this for a moment, if he is successful in bringing people in that are like himself, then we've moved kind of a step away from our philosophical roots, a step towards losing our soul, if you wish, as a party. And if you — if we win, even if we won the presidency, if we don't win with people who understood the philosophy, I think it's very easy in the political system and the political influence to be moved in the wrong direction. And so I think it's very important for whoever does eventually get elected as a libertarian to be pretty solid, and so that's why I wonder.

And of course you know, Tom, I'm a scientist, so for me I'm trying to say, okay, I'm going to look at this as an experiment; let's see what happens. And it will be very interesting to see what happens, because my suspicion is that Gary may not bring in so many people. There has been a big influx before the convention, and hopefully these are people who are philosophically based, but I'm wondering how many people we actually bring in because of his run.

WOODS: Yeah, and of course people are saying he'll get a lot of votes, and he may. That's possible. Maybe he'll get more votes than anybody ever got, and I think there are people who will think that proves their point. But that doesn't really prove a point, because I could get — you know, if they ran Howard Stern and he wanted to run as a libertarian — I think maybe he did run as a libertarian in New York at one point. If we ran Howard Stern we'd get an awful lot of votes, but what would that prove? Would I have proved something that way? It depends on what the LP wants to do. If it wants to just get a lot of votes, it could nominate Penn Jillette if it wanted to do that.

RUWART: They could nominate a mainstream candidate too, but what would that do for us?

WOODS: That's what I meant to say. Instead of — I shouldn't have said Penn Jillette. Yeah, we could nominate Mitt Romney. Mitt Romney would get a lot of — and compared to a lot of the dictators in world history, Mitt Romney's very libertarian. And as a matter of fact, Mitt Romney really likes Bill Weld and thinks he might vote for the LP this time around. If anybody on this call were running, I don't think Mitt Romney would be as comfortable voting for the LP this time around. All right, other people just jump in. Just say what you want to say. Get it off your chest.

DEIST: Tom, I want to add this about Bill Weld. This idea that he's going to raise all this money, I'm not sure that that's why he was chosen. I remember when the Weld announcement was being rumored, I was thinking, gosh, he's another older white guy and a former governor. It seems odd; it seems like you'd want to bring in a younger, more energetic person into the picture. But then I realized that I think that there was a lot of behind the scenes machinations. I think in part it was outreach towards the Koch organization and a desire to have sort of an adult in the room watching over these crazy libertarians.

If he was going to raise all this money for Gary Johnson, I just wonder why that money didn't earlier flow to Rand. What do Gary Johnson and Weld offer that Rand didn't? And plus, Rand had the beauty of easy ballot access and a gigantic party behind him, so I'm not sure that their message is more libertarian ideologically than Rand's. It might be less, especially on Weld, in terms of Weld's foreign policy views. So I'm just not sure that they're going to raise, let's say \$50 million, which would at least allow them to have boots on the ground operations, offices, phone banks, mailers. You know, you can't use PAC money for any of the day-to-day travel and organization and salaries of the campaign; you need actual FCC campaign donations. So this idea that Weld is going to bring a bunch of money, I just wonder why Rand didn't raise a bunch of money earlier.

WOODS: Yeah, good question. Jason, I think you — I beg your pardon; Tom, I think you wanted — or one of you wanted to speak before.

MULLEN: Yeah, I wanted to say to your point about — well, both yours and Mary's — I think we've got to, again, be realistic. Nobody votes on the basis of philosophy. I mean, yes, we do, and a small group of hardcore conservatives do and a very small part of hardcore liberals. But the vast majority of voters, in my opinion, say, if he wants to do these five things, I like three of them; I'm voting for him, because the other one wants to do these five other things and I don't like four of them and I'm not going to vote for her. I mean, that's the way people make decisions, and not only that, they get the things that people want to do wrong. And I remind people of back in 2008 when we had high hopes for Ron Paul in New Hampshire to maybe contest for that primary, and they were doing exit interviews and people were saying they thought John McCain was against the Iraq War. I mean, you have to realize what you're dealing with here and how easily these people are swayed by attacks. Like I said, bake the cake, here come the racists from both party. "You're a racist; you're a racist; you're a racist." Done. Campaign over. So in the realm of politics only, I think you've got to get somebody who can just — to break the idea that I'm going to vote for a Republican or a Democrat, just that would be an accomplishment, and —

DEIST: But Tom, if that's true, voters are that clueless, then it seems to me you need to have the strongest personality you can find, not Gary Johnson. Have McAfee. If they're really that clueless, just find the most likable, strongest personality.

MULLEN: I do think that there's a big hit on his presentation, his — I don't know, somebody, one of the other candidates said he's uncomfortable in his own skin, and that really hit home with me, so I think you've got some room to argue there that he just doesn't appeal as that strong person that appeals to their sense of leadership.

WOODS: Yeah, and let me jump in on this, because I have not been anti-Gary Johnson, so if anybody's going to say, well, Woods is just a perfectionist and he's never reasonable and you can't — none of that's true, and I've been favorable to Gary Johnson, and I've said — I've been critical but mostly favorable. I mean, the fact that he came to a Nullify Now event and used the word "nullify" in a speech is more than almost anybody else would do. I don't think he would do it now, but he did it then and

I gave him credit for it then. I got upset this year, because I thought, for heaven's sake, we've had four years and this is still the best we can do? Whereas I do think there are more eyes on the LP this year. This is the best we can do? And in four years, I don't at all get the sense that Gary Johnson is now more well read, he's more impressive, he's a bank of knowledge so that if he gets criticized on some really controversial questions he'll be ready with some really good information. I don't get that impression at all. I have no feeling of excitement or I have a responsibility toward this great tradition of ideas that I represent. I get no vibe like that at all, which is why I just lost my patience with him this year.

RINK: Can I jump in real quick? I just want to say —

WOODS: Yeah, please.

RINK: I want to say something that I think — I went to Ron Paul's Rally for the Republic in 2008, and I remember that the message coming out of that campaign, like after the campaign was over, we were going to take the GOP back to its roots. And I remember at that time thinking that I thought that was a flawed strategy, because I didn't understand which roots we thought we could get the GOP back to. And I think over the last eight years, and I think with what's happened with Rand, what's happened with this election, what's happened with Ron, as much headway as was made, I concur with, like, Jeffrey Tucker wrote an article about how basically the Republicans have said we don't want this. We don't want libertarianism, really, and I think it's true. I think on a local level, maybe some of these things, taking back the GOP, I think the LP at the local level is a better idea, all these type of things are true, but I don't think the Republican Party wants libertarianism. And I think we need to just say, look, that is a flawed strategy. I don't think we're going to take the GOP back to some libertarian roots and the GOP is going to be the grand party of freedom.

I think the LP could potentially be that, and what needs to happen is it needs to gain legitimacy. It needs to have people think, yes, this is a viable third party, and then there needs to be a battle royal within the LP for the soul of the LP and the future of the LP, and that begins this year. And I'm saying I think getting it to a point of credibility and viability so that it's got a place at the adults' table — and yes, maybe the Johnson campaign's going to blow it, but if you don't have a seat at the table, nobody gets to hear your philosophy anyway. And so I think we need to say, how can we get a seat at the table that is dead-set against letting us be there, and then figure out now how do we get the best representative to the table. So I see it as a two-stage: get a seat at the table — this is the best opportunity to that, in my opinion — and then afterwards we're going to continue to fight for that ideology, the right speaker, the right delivery mechanism. But the LP hasn't really mattered for a long, long time, and I'm sorry if that hurts anybody's feelings, but most people don't care.

WOODS: All right, I want to say one quick thing, and then I'll give you all a chance to wrap up. But I want to ask Mary, because I assume that you're not involved with the LP any longer, and if that's the case, I myself after speaking at the convention became slightly, even though Johnson was nominated, I became slightly interested in maybe

getting a little bit more involved, and I want to know if that's a good idea. And secondly, what would have to happen to get Mary Ruwart back involved in the LP?

RUWART: Well, I am involved in the LP, but at a very low level right now, Tom, because I've been for the last couple years trying to get the fourth edition of *Healing Our World* out and the first edition of this book I'm writing on the FDA, *Death by Regulation*. So that's where I've focused my attention. I'm not out of the LP; I just haven't been as active as I used to be.

WOODS: Okay, good. I thought maybe it was — I mean, I guess I never asked you. I didn't know if maybe it was you were upset about Bob Barr and you said to heck with these people. I didn't know exactly why you weren't — like, I don't think you were at the convention this year, right?

RUWART: That's right, because my book is so far behind, and I figured that Johnson was going to get the nomination unless he really, really blew it. And actually, after 2008 — at the 2008 convention, in fact, after I lost my bid for the nomination, I did get elected to the LNC and was on the LNC for two terms. And part of the reason that I ran for LNC was to show my supporters that, hey, I'm still active; I'm still doing stuff, and don't leave. Unfortunately, we did lose a lot of radicals. They walked out, a lot of them, after that. They were so disappointed with Bob Barr after his run, and after he estranged Ron Paul even more walked out. So that's unfortunate, because as Jason was talking about, we're going to have this fight for the soul of the LP; I think we will, and unfortunately a lot of the people who I think would be big supporters of the nonaggression principle have left. So that's definitely an issue.

WOODS: All right, I'll give each of you an opportunity if you want to to make a prediction about this fall. And it can be, you know, how well the LP candidate, you know, Johnson, how well they'll do in terms of votes, but it could be a long-term prediction about what's going to happen to the Libertarian Party. Any prediction that you think is plausible I'd be interested in hearing, and if you also have any parting comments I'd be interested in hearing that. Let's go in reverse order. Let's start with Jeff.

DEIST: Well, we shouldn't forget that Ross Perot got 19 million votes in 1992. It was something like 20% of the electorate. And then the country went back to its two parties after that, so you know, I think the LP should cease all state and local activity and throw every ounce of energy, every man-hour, and every dollar in just trying to get Gary Johnson the most votes and the most visibility it can. So my prediction would be that he does better obviously than 2012. I'm going to say he gets 3 to 5 million votes.

WOODS: Wow, that's actually a pretty good showing, 3 to 5 million votes. Okay, Jason.

RINK: I think Hillary Clinton is going to become president, so that I think is going to happen. And I think Gary Johnson will elevate the libertarian brand and grow the party in the long run. I think we'll look back and see that this did have an impact on growing

libertarianism. I do not think it's going to be as impactful as Ron Paul's run was. And I think I concur with Jeff, actually. I think that's probably an accurate statement. I think there's going to be more people voting. It's going to be significant, but it's not going to be a Ross Perot kind of significant voting block.

WOODS: Okay, Tom.

MULLEN: Okay, so I think that Gary Johnson has the potential to get 3 to 5 million votes, maybe even more, but I predict that this argument that we're having amongst people that could be supporting him 1,000% is going to chip away at that, or maybe even undermine that, and I think that's tragic. I think Hillary will win the presidency. I just wanted to make one quick comment to Jason's comment. I agree with him about the Republican Party. Its roots are Lincoln, and its philosophical roots are Hamilton. So it was never — it was always a protectionist party. It was always a party of big government. The libertarian angle is relatively recent and has never really found a home there. I think it's time we walk away from that.

RINK: Yeah, no, agreed. That's awesome.

WOODS: Okay, Mary, finally you get the last word.

RUWART: Okay, well, I'm going to predict — I'm I guess a little more pessimistic. I'm going to predict that Gary Johnson gets somewhere under 2 million votes. I think he'll get more than he got last time, but I do think his campaign does represent one opportunity for us, and that is he's committed to getting 15% in the polls and then demanding a place at the debates. I don't think he'll get it, because I think they'll change the rules at the last minute like they did with Ron Paul. But I think there could be — I think the party could use that to really show the American public that their choices are being manipulated, and I think that could be our big breakthrough. So I'm hoping that he's able to do that. If he's able to do that as the nominee, I think that would be the most significant thing he could do for us.

WOODS: All right, and with that we'll wrap it up. I'm very grateful for the insights and input of Mary Ruwart, Tom Mullen, Jason Rink, and Jeff Deist. Thanks so much for your time today. We'll just see what unfolds. I appreciate very much what you had to say.

RUWART: And thank you, Tom.