



Episode 708: Ron Paul on His Hero, His Favorite Books, and More

Guest: Ron Paul

WOODS: Every time I have you on, since I feel like I have exhausted all the questions I could come up with for you over the years, I solicit questions from listeners because I don't want you to have to listen to the same thing over and over. So I'll tell you one thing, I'm not going to ask you about Trump or Clinton the whole time we're talking.

PAUL: Oh, that's good.

WOODS: It's going to be a breath of fresh air.

PAUL: Yeah, that's good. Everybody wants to push — when are you going to do this, and when are you going to do this? And they all have an idea of what I'm supposed to do.

WOODS: Well, I have to say, I feel like I can't not at least ask, though, because everyone wants to know, have you taken an official position on a particular — are you going to vote for Gary Johnson? I mean, people are curious about that. I do understand that.

PAUL: No, I haven't decided, and I've answered it on national television when they do ask me that. Do I have somebody that I will vote for? And at the moment, I don't have that individual. Still looking.

WOODS: Okay, all right. Well, maybe that's a segue into the first listener question. Somebody wants to know, who are your heroes? He said, "I want to know who my hero's heroes are."

PAUL: Well, I think when people talk about heroes, a lot of times they talk about generals and things like that. I think, since I've spent so much time trying to understand the freedom message and the nonaggression principle, the person that I looked up to the most, for various reasons — because he was very successful in doing the work; he knew how to do it, the tone that he used; and he was also quite capable of raising money — and that is Leonard Read, you know of the FEE foundation.

And I just think he was a great person. And he also permitted me to find materials. Today we all get spoiled: you just click, you know? You can either find something that

you want, or you can buy a book or whatever. But that was all — Leonard Read was before that. And I was on the board at one time at FEE and have been to the FEE foundation quite frequently, and I always liked it, because he was very supportive, but he also was one that really understood what I was doing, because he didn't think politics was the answer, that education was the answer. And of course, he influenced me in that direction, and I still think that is true, but obviously I still dabble in politics at times.

WOODS: Where do you stand on the subject of whether libertarians are being hypocritical if they accept various government benefits, like subsidized student loans or any of the whole laundry list of programs?

PAUL: Well, I think some people can make the argument and justify, well, they took this money from me and I'm taking it back. I think if it's confusing I let people make up their own mind. But it's one of those things — okay, for instance, I can sort of look at what I did and try to analyze in that light, that I was drafted into the military out of my medical education. And I ended up on active duty two and a half years, and on the Reserves two and a half years. So it was disruptive, and I took a pay for this. The part of the pay that came from other taxpayers would go into providing educational funds afterwards. And I took that, you know, and I don't lay around feeling like I did something horrible, because I'm not somebody that — right now I'm more for getting rid of a lot of our military than back then, but still, I was figuring that it's a legitimate function. You can get paid, and if I used it for education I wasn't going to go on a guilt trip for it.

WOODS: What about people who either work in government jobs or who work in industries that are very close to the government? They get government contracts. So I mean, I know you've said it's okay to do and you can be paid, but what about working for the military industrial complex? Is there a point where you say this just can't be done?

PAUL: Oh yes, I think morally speaking there is — it is a moral element. You know, I claimed I was able to take a legitimate pay in Congress, but I didn't feel that it was morally proper to take a boondoggle retirement fund, you know, which I thought was ripping off the taxpayer, and it was beyond what I thought was proper. But I think all war profiteering, I think that it's horrible. If they really — you know, it just should not participate in the argument. You might say, well, what's it like when a rip-roaring war's going on; you're going to take away all the profits? Well, no, you couldn't do that. You wouldn't have anybody doing it.

But I think especially when you have the military industrial complex living in an age like we have today, fighting constantly and lobbying for more aggressive activity and bombing and killing, and as soon as a bomb has blown up, oh, we've got to build more bombs — I think that's immoral, it's wrong, it's bad economic policy, and most of it's unconstitutional. And I believe that anybody who gets very wealthy over that system should be — you know, it should be eliminated. We shouldn't do that. And I join in with

those on the far Left as saying, you know, that 1%, they've earned their money in an immoral fashion.

But instead of being like a Sanders and just say, well, the rich are bad people and take it away, if you can, you should work very hard to make sure that if a person is producing a product, if they're making a computer for you and they haven't been working for the government and they're rich because the consumer voted them rich by buying the product, I think that's entirely different for them to be wealthy. So I have no objection to wealthy people if it's honestly earned, but I have a strong objection to it when they use the government or they get the bailouts from government.

And there's so much corruption in the financial system, with the World Bank, IMF, and our Federal Reserve. I mean, it's all part of a globalist control of financial interests. But the good news is it's all going to fall apart, and we'll have to start from scratch pretty soon. And hopefully we have more influence in how we rebuild this system.

WOODS: Let's take a quick moment to have you talk about the conference that's coming up for the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity, September 10th — this is 2016 as we're recording this — I guess in Virginia. Tell us about that, what's going to be discussed, and who will be there.

PAUL: That will be at the airport near Dulles so that people can come in and they don't have far to go. And our speakers are coming in — Lew is coming, and Hornberger will be there, and Brian McGlinchey is going to be there, as well as Colonel Larry Wilkerson. And these are all very important. We're going to have some more, as they commit to coming, other speakers too.

WOODS: Well, it's a great event. I mean, I'm glad to see the Ron Paul Institute doing things like this and having outreach like this. Can you tell us something about Larry Wilkerson, because I know he's a prominent figure, but I don't remember much about his bio.

PAUL: Okay, he was the right-hand man for the commander in chief during the Iraq War, the commander — and he was the right-hand man. And he's changed to become, you know, antiwar, but he has a total military background, and for that reason he's very significant.

WOODS: That's terrific, so I'm going to have a link to that. Obviously the conference is advertised at RonPaulInstitute.org. I'll have it up on today's show notes page, TomWoods.com/708.

I've got some more questions here. People want to know — I don't know about you, but I find it hard to come up with what my one favorite movie or my one favorite book is. It's too hard to narrow it down, so I won't ask you that. But what would you say are maybe a few favorite books that have meant a lot to you over the years?

PAUL: Hmm, well, probably the ones that I got more excited about were economic books, a lot of stuff that Murray wrote and Mises wrote, because I was struggling with trying to understand it, and I think that most people who are honestly looking for the truth have a pretty good understanding of how things should run. But I was not secure with knowing and thinking that I was, you know, on the right track, but it was such a delight to find people that I highly respected that were writing and explaining this stuff. So when I heard the explanation of the business cycle — I remember reading Murray Rothbard's book on the Great Depression. I was raised in a Republican home, and I was told, well, the whole problem was the Democrats in Congress were messing around with Hoover and made Hoover do bad things. And then you read Murray's book, and you find out there were bad ideas involved in monetary policy, and the policies that were initiated by Hoover were also the ones that FDR took on and continued them.

WOODS: I think, as a libertarian, I feel like as I grow through life I find myself confronted not with a whole lot of brand new objections that clever people have come up with, but it seems like the same arguments again and again and again, years and year, decades and decades. So somebody wants to know, is there one or two, are there maybe one or two particular pro-government arguments that really stick in your craw? As one of them said, "The kind of argument that actually makes Ron Paul utter a curse word. If he were to do that on your show, it would be astonishing. It would be amazing." I'm not encouraging you to do that, but I mean an argument that really just drives you so crazy you just lose your patience with it?

PAUL: Well, you know, sometimes — it doesn't bother me a whole lot, but it is a problem, and that is when the political correctness steps in and people say something and it sounds like he's a terrible bigot, you know, and then he gets punished for it through the system of political correctness, both legal and just pressure. I find that detestable. But I usually try to handle that by saying that the First Amendment wasn't produced for us so we could talk about the weather; it was there so that we could say controversial things and become patriots and criticize our government when they get out of hand. So they have just a twisted understanding of that.

But there's a lot of people, even today, you know, about First Amendment, that what you can say and do — they deal with First Amendment and they totally exclude property rights. I think most issues of the First Amendment can be dealt with with property, you know? And religious freedoms, it's property. You can do with it what you want, and you can have people in; you can talk about things and print and all these things. But the Left doesn't believe in the civil liberty of keeping what you earn or running your own life and spending your own money. They don't understand that, and many times they consider that a civil liberty according to their understanding rather than allowing the people to say what they want and do what they want and do controversial things.

And my position is, let them do whatever they want; assume the responsibility for what they're doing. If they have benefits, they can keep it; if they goof up, they have

to, you know, be responsible for themselves. And that I think is the important way to look at that, and the government should just stay out of it.

WOODS: I want to go back to books for a minute. I have sometimes advised people, if you have somebody who has an open mind and says I'm willing to listen to what you have to say, make them this offer: say, all right, I'm going to give you a book, and then you give me a book about your views, and we'll read them and we'll discuss them. And if they feel like you're reading what they have to say, they're more likely to read your book, and that may open some doors. So suppose you were in that position. You're faced with some young people — I think you have been in this position a few times. You've got some young people; they're curious to know, what would you have them read? It can't be *Human Action*, so what would it be?

PAUL: Yeah, it should be simpler and easy and making maybe one crystal-clear point, and that to me is *The Law* by Bastiat, because it is the principle of nonaggression. You and I can't do — we can't do harm to anybody else, and the government shouldn't be able to do it either. But so often there's this giant leap of faith: you and I can't do this, and we have to be regulated because we're bad people and the government has to protect us from ourselves — and the point being the government, the government can't do it either if we're not allowed to. But today the government's allowed to use force to do whatever they want.

WOODS: Let's take a quick moment to thank our sponsor and then come right back.

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All right, I've got this question: how about from your career as a physician, is there a particularly memorable episode or something that you're particularly — something that happened that you're fond of recalling? Like any story from that part of your life and career?

PAUL: No, I think it's just general, you know, the satisfaction that I got. Sometimes you would be very tired; if you had to get up at 2 in the morning and have only been in bed for two hours and thinking that you're going back to work, and you're very, very tired. But I think the experience of that — because we made the commitment and I decided to go into OB/GYN; nobody forced me to do it. But I think after you wake up and go and do your job, and you get a new life into the world, and the mother and father are delighted, and it avoids all the discussions of unwanted pregnancies and all the other tragedies in the world, that new life would still elicit a lot of positive things.

And I was always amazed — this is probably as an individual and as a parent and grandparent — noticing that if there's a newborn that comes home, just a small baby or a even a baby that's one or two or three months, if they have some sibling there that might be two or three or four years old, they're so attracted to it and they just have this natural instinct to be very positive. And I don't know if you have experienced it, but you certainly have had some experience with a few girls, so you may as well

experience this, or you saw the older siblings. And to me that was part of medicine, you know, that it was a joy.

And it's frequently said, and this is the positive thing about OB, is that when you get sick and you need help and you go and you have to have surgery and you hurt, and the best they can do is get you back to normal. But in OB, when things go well, which they generally do, they end up taking something home, and they give the doctor more credit than the doctor deserves (laughing). But the doctor gets identified with that, so most OB doctors, when they take good care of their patients, are really well received, not only by the patients but by the families as well.

And I still see this today when I go around town. Some people will want to stop and want to talk to me and say, "You know you delivered me?" And that was on the campaign trail. There was one story that, I think I was in Idaho or someplace, and the woman that ran the large facility for the gathering that we had — we had several thousand people, 3- or 4,000. But the woman that was running it said she wanted to talk to me afterwards, so I said okay, we'll do this. So in the back, she came over and she had something in her hands; she said, "I hope you'll sign this." And it was her birth certificate. I had signed it, you know, 25 years ago, and here she was running this thing. So I signed it again. I said, this is the only birth certificate that I've ever signed twice. So she was ecstatic about it. It was an interesting story and a break from some of the terrible things that happened in campaigning.

WOODS: Well, that even beats getting Greenspan's autograph on the old Ayn Rand newsletter (laughing).

PAUL: Yeah.

WOODS: That's fantastic. All right, who do you think is carrying the torch for libertarianism into the future, bringing your message into the future? And that could be political or non-political.

PAUL: Well, I think non-political or that does a lot of hard work and promotes the cause and does a lot of writing, and I think his name is Tom Woods. He does a fantastic job.

WOODS: (laughing) I appreciate that.

PAUL: Then we have a guy like Lew Rockwell. I've known him for a long, long time and wrote his first fundraising letter to get the Mises Institute started in the early 1980s. So he has done a whole lot in a non-conventional fashion. I mean, he just — not many people would have predicted back then that the Mises Institute would have a presence like it has now. But I think there's a lot of people like that. I think the neat thing is, it to me is like the remnant. You don't know where they are. I hear so many stories of people that got involved in our campaign when they were 16 years old in '08, and they're running things. You take Jeff Frazee, what he's done with Young Americans for

Liberty. He just got introduced in my office as an intern, and then went in our campaign in '08, and he reaches out to a lot of people.

And people ask, well, these important people, what do you tell me to do? I want to be one of those important people. And my answer is just sort of glib. I say, just do whatever you want. Everybody has to make a choice, and there's a bunch of them that make good choices, and they just have to have a desire. Everybody has a role to play, no matter where you think you are or what your understanding is. If it's a lack of understanding, and I felt like I experienced that in the '50s, that the college I attended didn't give me the answers, and especially throughout the '60s, along with studying medicine, it was when I became fascinated with Austrian economics and the predictions made.

And I came across Henry Hazlitt, an individual I know you are very much aware of. And in fact, I did something on our website this week about Henry Hazlitt predicting about the IMF. He said the IMF is a total failure and terrible, and he was absolutely right, and now we have an IMF that's totally out of control now, but under the gun because people are talking about, do we really need an IMF. Obviously we don't need it, and the world would be better off if we didn't have it.

WOODS: All right, one other thing. I just can't help asking. I won't mention the nominees' names so as to keep my pledge to you, but Bernie Sanders we know endorsed the Democratic nominee, which I knew he would, and I definitely knew he would when, several weeks ago, Paul Krugman predicted he wouldn't. Then I knew for a fact he would. So I guess my question is, what do you think happened there? Do you think it was just a matter of he thinks that's the best thing to do? Do you think there was some funny business behind the scenes? And was there anything like that with you? Were they trying to twist your arm in 2008 and '12?

PAUL: In '08 and '12, not really. I think they knew my answer. It was sort of like the lobbyists didn't come see me because I was too bullheaded. I wouldn't, you know, yield, so they didn't really bother me.

And for Bernie, I think he's more in a pragmatic world. His views on foreign policy, the things we agreed on weren't as firm. I think he had a pragmatic viewpoint. Utilitarianism and pragmatism allows a lot of degrees, and sometimes the decision is made for purely political reasons, and he went long and hard, longer and harder than most of these candidates will. And he had a tremendous following, but I hear that his followers think, well, we're not going to fade; we have to stay in our guns. But my guess is that he'd probably say, you know, this time I can't win; I'm not going to be the nominee, but I'm going to join, and I'll have a better chance on raising taxes and giving free stuff out if I'm part of the issue. But it will annoy the strong supporters, and I think the people who were most annoyed were the ones that were hoping that he wouldn't join for the military reasons, because he came across a lot better than Hillary on warmongering, and I think there was some disappointment there. But I think he's a pragmatist, and I think that's what most everybody in Washington are like.

WOODS: You should have seen his Facebook page, which I checked out the day of the endorsement. It was just thousands and thousands and thousands of people, just absolutely disillusioned and demoralized. They could not believe he had led them this far and started this movement and lit everything on fire and then walked away from it. They couldn't believe it. They were saying, "You have betrayed us." They just unloaded on him. It was unbelievable.

PAUL: Well, I'm not surprised, both that he did it because of what I just said, and I'm not surprised that these supporters took that attitude. And I sort of sympathize with the supporters, because I don't think — I think somebody has to give the most crisp understanding of what we in the opposition believe in. So if we believe in the gold standard, we have to know what gold standard. Should it be an honest gold standard? Should it be a gold coin standard? What's here to do it? Oh no, we'll have it modified when we have a gold reserve standard and the American people won't be allowed to own the gold and they go in. So no, we have to have people defending their position on principle. And they said, yeah, that's good for the academics, but not for the politicians. Well, they said you have to be pragmatic. You can't be one of these people that are so bullheaded that you won't even give in.

But I just disagree with that. My goal was different. I mean, I was offered a lot if I played their ballgame. And if my goal when I was elected in 1976 was to just stay there, work my way up through seniority, raise money for the party, voted the way they wanted me to, I could have been a committee chairman. Then I could have done those things I really want to do, which is always the saying. Well, if I'm there then I'll have a better position. But no, I had no interest in that whatsoever, to do it that way. I was trying to send a message about what these principles are all about.

WOODS: Well, I'm thrilled about your event that's coming up. I hope people will attend. It's 10 am to 3 pm, Saturday, September 10th, so it's not a huge commitment, but it's in I guess Northern Virginia with some some great guests. And I assume naturally you yourself will be speaking?

PAUL: I'll be there.

WOODS: All right, so how can people not go? I'll have all the details at TomWoods.com/708. And Ron Paul, thanks for being a good sport, answering sometimes off-the-wall but nevertheless interesting and penetrating questions.

PAUL: Okay, Tom, good to be with you.