



Episode 870: Am I “Fake News”?

Guest: Lew Rockwell

WOODS: What an interesting opportunity we have here —

ROCKWELL: [laughing]

WOODS: An interesting reason for you to be coming back. All right, I just kind of hinted at this a little bit, but my old alma mater has now released this — I'll link to it on the show notes page. It's a guide to so-called fake news propaganda, and in that guide they link to this very, very comprehensive, very, very long list of offending websites. And Lew, you and I are on there. Now, I will say I think I'm a notch above you because next to me it simply says "Unknown," which, I looked that up; what does unknown mean? It means they haven't bothered to actually see if it's fair that I'm on the list, but they're just going to throw me on anyway for now. So you're guilty until proven innocent, basically, in this particular court.

So there's LewRockwell.com, but what interests me is some of the other sites that are on there, Lew, and the one that stood out to me the most in that huge list of terrible websites you should avoid or be wary of is Wikileaks. Does that not sum up the American establishment, that Wikileaks would be fake news? Even though it's just documents. That's fake news you can't read, but ABC is A-Okay.

ROCKWELL: It's interesting the young professor, assistant professor at Merrimack College who compiled this list, she's asked, What media do you trust? What do you read so that you know that you're not getting fake news? And she said, Well, I read *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*.

WOODS: [laughing] Yeah.

ROCKWELL: And she went down the list, and she said she supplements that with some left-wing sites, as if those weren't left-wing enough. So as we know, ever since the Frank Church hearings of the 1970s when Senator Frank Church did a yeoman's work of talking about and showing about, among many other things, how the CIA basically ran the mainstream media — this was in the 1970s. He focused on in those days the very important Associated Press and United Press International, but also of course on *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe* and all these

newspapers that had people embedded in them, as we might say, who were running the — the CIA was running the mainstream media.

Certainly it's gotten no better, but the thing that has changed is, of course, alternative media like TomWoods.com. They aren't happy about this, so this is just part of their drive against us to label anybody who's not giving the CIA line like *The New York Times* or *The Washington Post* as being fake news.

I think this particular epithet has backfired on them, though, because I think — is it Trump? Is it some of the rest of us, as well? But of course it's been turned against them, so that the mainstream media is called the repository of fake news, I think quite appropriately. So it doesn't quite have the sting it used to, but I must say I was astounded to see that the Harvard University libraries was putting this up as a guide to students and scholars about, Beware, don't you look at these sites because they're propaganda and they're not telling you the truth, unlike *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, and so forth.

WOODS: Right. Right, right, right. And then it says, How can you know if you're maybe being taken in by a fake news site? And one of the factors is, Well, listen, if a news story makes you really angry, then you'd better look into it more. So in other words, if some site is forcing you to face reality and that's really bothering you, maybe you can crawl back into your fake little world by reading some comforting mainstream source. It's just ridiculous.

And also, what has been, in the history of the 20th century so far, the great story of media malfeasance if not the Iraq War and all that propaganda? Whatever offenses Tom Woods and Lew Rockwell may have committed, we never tried to whip people into a frenzy for an unjust war. We've never done that. We've never come anywhere near that, and yet we're the ones demonized — That's why the whole thing is so stupid. And there are a few sites on there — I'd better not mention them, Lew, because I don't want to be too controversial, but let's say there's a well-known mainstream libertarian think-tank that is on the site, and then gets the word "credible" listed next to it [laughing]. I wouldn't want to be listed as credible by those people because they think *The New York Times* is credible.

The New York Times sat on the warrantless surveillance story for 13 months. *The Drudge Report* got its start because the mainstream media would not break the Monica Lewinsky story. Meanwhile, *The Drudge Report* is also listed as fake news, but yet it's *The Drudge Report* that filled in the gap left by the mainstream media. The whole thing is so ridiculous; the only people who could fall for this are people who think the Russians are running everything in the U.S.

ROCKWELL: Well, I must say I don't know how effective this has been. It's certainly used as a club by MSNBC or *The New York Times* or places like that, but how many —

don't most Americans, as I think shown by the polls and in our own experience in dealing with people, they don't trust the mainstream media. And how right they are. They also don't like the mainstream media.

But you know, your point about the anger question is very, very interesting, because the establishment has always sought to make sure that people did not get stirred up because it could lead to populism, which would be a terrible disaster. It's why *The New York Times*, if you think back to the old days especially, was pretty boring, and the neoconservatives used to write about why it's important not to stir people up, why you don't want to get them upset, and it's why all their publications are at least slightly boring. So to be too interesting, Tom — you're guilty of this — is a sin against the regime. But again, this is not an effective strategy [laughing]. To the extent that it was ever an effective strategy, it's no longer one.

WOODS: And yet, we should point out there are some left-wing sites on this, so it's not just that they're demonizing libertarians and conservatives. The *Daily Kos* is listed on there. But I bet if I went and counted, it would be overwhelmingly right-of-center organizations and websites that are listed there. Yes, you find things like *Daily Kos*, but not that many, percentage-wise.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, and my guess is the *Daily Kos* is something to bug the lady who put this together, because the *Daily Kos* is entirely an establishment operation. Mr. Kos — that's not his full name — worked for the CIA at one point. There are some decent left-wing sites in this country that are not following the trumpet of the U.S. state, but that does not include the *Daily Kos*.

WOODS: Yeah, you mentioned some decent left-wing sites. Well, *CounterPunch* would be an example of that, and *CounterPunch* is also listed on the site. The neocons are also on there. There's a phony *National Review* that they were pointing out as fake, but I know *Weekly Standard* is on there. *The Washington Free Beacon* I think is on there. So they're on there too. So there are a lot of different — it actually kind of reminds me — the idea that you would be worried about establishment neocons as drumming up subversive ideas in the people reminds me of the enemies list that the Southern Poverty Law Center has. They list *World Net Daily*, totally mainstream conservative site, as an extremist site. I mean, everybody's an extremist; everybody's a hater.

ROCKWELL: And of course pro-war.

WOODS: Yeah, of course, right, but somehow that doesn't seem to bother them all that much. That's just a coincidence they put them on with that because they don't care about that. And that goes to show — that reminds me. Another site listed here for being fake news is AntiWar.com. AntiWar.com was the only source of real foreign policy news, has really been through all U.S. wars and all bombings since it got started

in the mid 1990s. And they're demonized as fake news? This is bizarre. Who with an IQ above 60 could credit any of this?

ROCKWELL: Well, of course, fake means non-governmental, not taking the official line. I must say there are oddities to this list too. How about an examination of the young professor who put this together? What were her motivations? What's her methodology? It seems to me very sloppy and just stupid. On the other hand, I don't think this at all hurts us. Any Harvard student who would think, Now, let me see. I'm going to go to the guide and see what I must not look at. But anybody who has that attitude, they're lost anyway. We're interested in the kids who want to look at the stuff they're not supposed to look at, who are told, "Don't listen to that, don't watch that, don't read that," and immediately want to do so. So I think there are plenty of good kids who have that attitude, and the ones who don't have it, well, one can always hope they'll change down the road.

WOODS: Yeah, yeah, well, what I don't get, of course — the whole thing is kind of nonsensical, but a lot of these are opinion websites and they don't purport to be anything else. I'm not claiming that my website is a news site, per se. It's a libertarian site. It says right there on the homepage. I'm not hiding anything. Like, oh, if I pretend to be ABC News, I can sneak libertarianism into people's brains. I come right out and tell them this. My podcast every single day says liberty, libertarian all over the place. So what is the point of pointing out, well, these websites might have a particular spin on things? Well, duh. Everybody has a spin on things. Everybody has some kind of ideological filter in his brain. So what is the point of listing them? Who actually needed to know that, that on a liberal site you might read a liberal slant and a conservative site there might be a conservative site. I mean, again, what are the IQs of these people?

ROCKWELL: You know, I don't know, and I don't think it's effective. They're copying, as you said, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and of course states have their own ways of keeping track of these things. Like I remember when LRC was not very old when somebody I knew who was a pretty high-ranking person in the Air Force told me that among the sites that the CIA was keeping an eye on at that early point in LRC's history was LewRockwell.com, that it was — she told me it's on the list and they pay attention to you. She thought that was a feather in my cap, and of course I do too. So I think it's — the state has its own list. I'd actually like to see the CIA's list of the sites you should worry about. That would be fun.

WOODS: Yeah, that really would be fun. I want a Freedom of Information Act thing or whatever. I don't know how to file that. But I want to read that, and I'm going to be disappointed because I fear —

ROCKWELL: You're on it, Tom.

WOODS: No, no, I'm afraid I won't be. That would be the only thing that would make me unhappy. I won't be. All right, let's continue this conversation after we thank our sponsor.

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All right, Lew, I'm going to just ask you straight out now — because if I have Lew Rockwell on, I don't have to walk on eggshells; I don't have to dance around on anything. I can be super direct. And I'm going to ask you: why do you think it is that LewRockwell.com appears on this list, but, let's say, I don't know, "PlainVanillaLibertarian.com" is not on this list?

ROCKWELL: Well, I think because PlainVanillaLibertarian.com is part of a vast network funded by the oligarchs, the alleged libertarian oligarchs, left-libertarian oligarchs certainly, the Koch brothers, and they're part of the regime just as much as George Soros or Hillary Clinton or any of these other people. So they're what Murray Rothbard dubbed big-government libertarians. They believe in the state. They believe in state action. They believe in state wars. They do want to have some changes made, changes that would benefit — I don't want to shock anybody — Koch Oil and all the various related companies. So I think that it's — You know, I'm going to — May I tell a story involving other countries about this?

WOODS: You tell any story you want on this show. This is TomWoods.com, after all. People come in and expect this, according to Harvard. Yeah, go ahead.

ROCKWELL: Well, I have a friend who was invited to take part in a program on liberty in the Arab world and took place in the Arab world, and it was funded and run by one of the Koch entities. And it was explained to everybody that they had to be for free markets. Well, they disagreed with that. But what were the specifics? They said you have to be for the Trans-Pacific trade deal, NAFTA, and all similar trade deals. But as they explained, liberty is a package. You can't just be for economics — by the way, that was the only economic thing mentioned, was, as Gary North points out, these fascist trade deals that are big government-big business combos. The people putting it together said liberty is a package. You have to be for other things besides free markets. You have to be for gay rights, you have to be for feminism, and you have to be for open borders. So these people are not exactly a threat to the regime. In fact, they're part of the regime. They play their roles, just as Soros plays his role with another hat on. But that's what's wrong with plain vanilla libertarianism.

Murray Rothbard always said that the key to understanding who were the good guys within the libertarian movement, he said it was not an anarchist-minarchist distinction; who was it that really dislikes the state? If you don't like the state, if you really have an animus towards the state and all its unbelievable list of crimes, of all the millions and millions of people it's killed — it's really mankind's greatest enemy on

earth, all the horrendous starvations, the mountains of corpses, destruction of civilization, destruction of the family, destruction of property, of businesses, all of the things that don't happen because of the state that would be so good for the flourishing of mankind — He said if you get along with the state, if you kind of like the state, if you think, Well, the state might need to be reformed a little bit but it's really a great operation — that is the plain vanilla libertarian position. Even the ones who claim to be anarchists have no problem with the state. They have no problem with central banking, for example. They all tend to like the Federal Reserve.

WOODS: It's just got to follow some particular rule that they developed.

ROCKWELL: Yeah, so that's what's wrong. They're not opposed to the state. In fact, they get along fine with the state. They spend all their time trying to have a cocktail party with Fed officials, for example. So it's absolutely true that there's tremendous economic error of course in Washington, but as Murray always said, it's not just economic error; they also set out to rip us off, they and the crony capitalists who are in cahoots with them.

So that's who plain vanilla libertarianism is all about. It's why it certainly doesn't threaten anything, and it's why you just would not expect that it'd be gone after in the same sense that sites that take an opposing view to the regime as a bunch of criminals and murderers and thieves — As Murray always defined the state, a gang of thieves are at large. That is not the view of plain vanilla libertarianism. In fact, right now they're pushing for a guaranteed national income for everyone. Big welfare for everybody in society, taxed away of course from the non-poor. That was also Milton Friedman's point, who unfortunately was a brilliant guy but on policy matters, a hack Republican. So that's the key.

That's why the plain vanilla libertarians not only don't threaten anybody in power; the people in power are perfectly happy to have them as a diversion to get people who are interested in the cause of liberty, who are interested in free markets for real, put them off in a corner, divert them off into a side street, make sure that they don't do anything to bug the people in control.

WOODS: It seems to me if the state is not sending a chill down your spine, then you're not really getting it. If you're thinking, "Well, I'm going to try and see if I can get these people in Washington to listen to reason because I've got this new policy paper I just wrote," you know, maybe in theory I've got something in common with you, but in practice, that kind of person in practice winds up being wrong on almost everything. They want to suppress discussion of certain topics. They think that the reason we don't have more women in libertarianism is that we're not nice enough and all this and that.

ROCKWELL: They're opposed to truth-telling history, for example.

WOODS: Totally. Totally.

ROCKWELL: Something that you've encountered.

WOODS: Areas of history that have to be kept away from, wars that have to be kept away from.

ROCKWELL: Yes.

WOODS: And I'm just so sick of arguing with people like this. This is why I've just gotten them out of my life. I've just gotten them out of my life, and I am a lot happier. I don't have to worry about, I have to please this or that person or this or that organization. It doesn't matter. They can all hate me, but I've got my fake news TomWoods.com that is supporting me just fine. So it's great. It's hugely liberating not to have to care about what these bootlickers think about anything, including about me. It doesn't matter. It must be glorious for you too. You don't care. What do you care?

ROCKWELL: And Tom, one of the great things you've done, imagine that here you are a scholar, having produced and continuing to produce a tremendous volume of scholarly work, but also able to communicate obviously with the rest of us as well, doing this outside the academic world. You would be so hamstrung if you were part of the academic establishment. You'd probably get the Charles Murray treatment every day, is probably what would happen to you if you were on campus.

WOODS: Yeah.

ROCKWELL: But you're able to do your scholarly work, you're able to tell the truth to people in so many areas about not only American history but many, many other subjects. You're a model of what's going to happen, I think, to higher education, because my guess is parents are going to become sicker and sicker of having to pay for the horror that is the modern university and the modern college. They're going to be looking for alternative educational forums. I think this is good for the Mises Institute too, TomWoods.com. I think these are the future, and needless to say, plain vanilla libertarians don't like that either. They want everything to go right in the banks of the stream that have been dug by their forebears — their forebears, not our forebears.

WOODS: You know, I just read an article the other day by Gary North, arguing that the one goal you should have in speaking on a college campus is to get shouted down. That should be your exclusive goal, because he says, Look, no one's going to remember anything you said three weeks from now. They're not going to remember a thing. They will remember you got shouted down, and that will teach them something about the kinds of people who manage to get their way on American universities. Plus — I'm not

sure if he said this, but it does elevate your own profile a bit, and that's pretty good. That's a lot more than you'd get out of droning on and on about some topic, some obscure topic. Hope you get shouted down. That should be your exclusive goal.

So if that's the case, I've been a complete failure as a public speaker over the years, total failure. Because I have been in environments where I felt like there were hostile people, but my instinct is always to just be super nice — I don't compromise on what I'm saying — but be self-deprecating or whatever, and I win them over. I'm done with that. I don't want to win these people over. I want to be right in their faces [laughing].

So yeah, this is going to be weird, though, going to my — I go to every reunion there is. I got to high school reunions. Tom DiLorenzo says reunions are for losers. This is the only thing I disagree with Tom on. Reunions are where the winners get to kind of show how they are, how things have gone for them. And in particular, it's not so much to show off, but there were people in school who gave you a hard time, and you know, now things are going well for you; that's not such a bad situation to be in. But bygones are bygones by the time you're 20 years out, and I like to go back and see old friends and stuff. But it's going to be weird to be on that campus knowing that in a very slight way, they're kind of explicitly at war with me [laughing]. It's kind of funny.

ROCKWELL: Maybe you should drop in at Widener Library, ask to see who put this up on their site, who's making these recommendations. You'd like to talk to her or him or it.

WOODS: Oh yeah, maybe I should bring a camera.

ROCKWELL: Well, yeah.

WOODS: Yeah. Oh, you're giving me some ideas, Lew Rockwell. Yeah, why didn't I think of that? Yeah, maybe I should make something of this.

ROCKWELL: Yeah [laughing].

WOODS: Yeah, because I probably will be in Massachusetts some time over the summer —

ROCKWELL: You'll get shouted down in the library. That'll be something new.

WOODS: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I want to know whose decision this was. And you're implicitly dragging my name through the mud by linking to this thing —

ROCKWELL: That's right.

WOODS: — and you have no grounds for doing that. Is that Harvard's typical practice? Oh, the thing writes itself [laughing]. Anyway, Lew, I had to — Look, as soon as you called to tell me, to alert me to this, my first thought was, "This is an episode." Well, your first thought was, "This is an email." I already did that. I did write an email as soon as you recommended that, and now here we have the episode. As I said, at TomWoods.com/870, people can read this Harvard guide for themselves and you can look through the list of people and websites and see what you think. But let's try in the next couple of weeks to come on and talk about something other than this, particularly this interesting stuff about the CIA and they can control your car — This is just [laughing] — If people would just listen to the fake news sites, they would have known this stuff five years ago [laughing].

ROCKWELL: Well, that's of course exactly correct.

WOODS: Yeah, it's totally crazy. Thanks a lot, Lew.

ROCKWELL: Tom, great to be with you as always.