



Current Events: Cantor and Bergdahl

Guest: Justin Raimondo

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WOODS: Two things to talk about. I thought we were going to talk just about the Bergdahl, Guantanamo swap, which we still need to talk about. I haven't covered that on the show. I think it hit just as I was leaving for vacation, and I had recorded a lot of shows in advance; I couldn't have known what was going to come in the future. But better late than never. So I've got you here, but then all of a sudden something else popped up basically overnight that was a surprise to everyone: the defeat of Eric Cantor in the Republican primary. What is your reaction to this?

RAIMONDO: My reaction is hallelujah!

WOODS: Yeah! (laughs)

RAIMONDO: Because apparently Dave Brat is one of us. He campaigned against crony capitalism. He campaigned against Eric Cantor being in league with pro-government bankers, and he especially attacked him over taking something out of the STOCK Act, which was a bill to crack down on insider trading, and that bill was watered down by Cantor in early 2012 who took out provisions that would have forced Wall Street political intelligence firms to register as traditional lobbyists, and it also removed a section of the bill to empower prosecutors to go after public officials who illegally trade on insider knowledge—that is, you know, knowledge of what new bills are coming up and how these activities might be regulated. So he played a leading role in blocking this while he was deeply invested in mortgage banks.

It's a great victory. Cantor was caught completely unaware. People are screaming, oh, this is about immigration. It's not about immigration. That was one of the issues, but it wasn't the only issue. In fact, Brat was talking about the NSA. He made this a major part of his campaign. On his website he talked about the unconstitutional spying of the NSA and said that no government agency, including the NSA and the IRS, has the right to spy on us. Whereas Cantor, on the other hand, was very pro-NSA. And he was very vocal about it. So he was defeated, and we won (laughs) for once.

WOODS: I am going to have to check out of more Brat's work as an economist. I am curious to know what kind of work he did. Maybe it's all technical stuff that has no public policy relevance, but I tend to doubt that.

RAIMONDO: No, no, no. Actually, I am in the middle right now of reading one of his papers, and he is quoting Milton Friedman, Mises—his campaign he said is all about the free market, and that's what he campaigned on. He says that he is libertarian, and I am willing to take him at his word. (laughs)

WOODS: Now, what's funny is, just as you and I were sitting down to talk, somebody emailed me a link to a Yahoo news story talking about David Brat's campaign manager. I guess it's a Zachary Werrell, who if you look at his Facebook page, apparently he reads LewRockwell.com. He reads Mises.org. He linked to an article on the Mises Institute website talking about prescription drugs, and his commentary was "Abolish the FDA!" and so he links to Mises. He links to Lew. He says, "Should sections of states be allowed to secede from a state if they feel they are underrepresented in the state government?" He says, "I say yes. I derive that opinion from our first foundational document—the Declaration of Independence." So that's not quite secession of the states from the Union, but that's dangerous enough for Yahoo News to pounce on. You're not allowed to have that opinion. The political boundaries drawn in the United States were drawn by God himself and are to be challenged by no one.

RAIMONDO: Yeah, well, I am looking right now at his Campaign for Liberty questionnaire which he filled out. He answered yes on everything. "Will you co-sponsor and support efforts for roll call votes on audit the Fed? Will you support legislation removing capital gains and sales taxes on gold and silver?" He is good on guns. He is good on ending foreign aid. He is opposed to the debt limit increase. He would be willing to vote for an across-the-board income tax cut, capital gains cut, business tax cut, estate tax cut. "Will you support efforts to end the NSA's unconstitutional domestic spying program?" Answer: yes. So he is a libertarian across the board, including when it comes to foreign policy.

WOODS: I was just going to ask you that. If you're from Antiwar.com, we've got to talk about that.

RAIMONDO: Right. "Will you oppose using military action without a declaration of war?"

WOODS: Well, I need a little bit more than that. There will always be some excuse. I would like to see that he's got a well-thought-out understanding of nonintervention. I realize that's a lot to ask because nonintervention is still very much a minority position in American politics, to put it mildly, but his instincts are pretty good.

RAIMONDO: Well, actually it's not a minority position. If you're talking about politicians, well, yeah, you're talking about the American people.

WOODS: Yeah, that's what I am talking about.

RAIMONDO: Oh, okay, well, look, he is an unknown known (laughs) as Rumsfeld would put it.

WOODS: I just want to make sure he's not going to turn out to be another Ted Cruz, where on paper he's good on some things, but when the chips are down on foreign policy, he's like the worst of the worst.

RAIMONDO: Well, when the chips are down, lots of libertarians also take to the hills.

WOODS: Yeah, I know. That's true. That is true.

RAIMONDO: I remember *Reason* magazine thought the Iraq war was debatable. So they had a debate. (laughs) They weren't against it. They were, well, let's just have both sides up here. So—

WOODS: Well, let me just say it's funny in some wings of the movement what things they consider up for debate and what things they don't.

RAIMONDO: Right, right. Legalized methamphetamine? *Reason* magazine says yes. The Iraq War? Killing hundreds of thousands of people? Well, we don't know. Let's be agnostic on this question.

WOODS: (laughs) All right, so this is a very unexpected, and I agree with you, exciting development. How can anybody be unhappy today with Eric Cantor out? I mean, sitting there saying, well, I am upset because of immigration? Do you--? Hello? Are you not--? If you are a libertarian, you've got to be filled with outrage and anger at the political establishment, and to see one of them unexpectedly go down should—if that's not thrilling you, I think there's some kind of synapses not firing properly or something?

RAIMONDO: Well, it's location, location, location. As in real estate, so in reality. Where do all these people live who scream about--? Well, they live in Washington, D.C. or New York City, okay, the two centers of evil in the world (laughs). So the rest of us are free to celebrate, but those guys, not so much.

WOODS: All right, let's talk now about this whole Bergdahl situation, and I particularly want to read to you a statement from John McCain. It's almost not fair, right? This is too easy. I am giving you a fat one right over the plate here. But he's saying we had five released Guantanamo detainees who were "hardcore military jihadists who are responsible for 9/11," and then he goes on to say, "I wouldn't release these men, not these men. They were evaluated and judged as too great a risk to release." Now there is absolutely—you tell me: how much truth is there in that statement?

RAIMONDO: Zero, absolutely zero. Al Qaeda is not the Taliban, so number one, that's just wrong. These guys—well, let's just see who they are one by one. We can go down—Mohammed Nabi Omari was actually working for the CIA when he was arrested and shipped to Guantanamo. Why was he arrested? Well, because the U.S. government was handing out lots of cash in exchange for "intelligence," and you can put that intelligence in scare quotes. And he

had been turning in a lot of people, and they got back at him by turning him in. So this looks like another case of the U.S. government crossed signals. So that's one of them. The other one—his name is, you know, I can't even pronounce this. But he was the former Taliban governor of Herat. And as soon as the Americans invaded, he called up Karzai and said you know what? I want to join the new government. I am on your side. But they arrested him anyway. Three of these guys were actually working for the CIA. One of them was a military commander of some significance. He's the only one that is going to be at all dangerous. Three of these guys are probably going to get the Bergdahl treatment from their hardliners when they go back to Afghanistan because they were working for the CIA! So this is another fact-free controversy. The people who are saying this just don't know the specifics, and it's quite a complicated story. I would urge your listeners to go to Antiwar.com and read my article on this. It's called "Taliban Prisoner Swap: A Fact-Free Controversy," and in fact, these guys are not responsible for 9/11—al Qaeda was, and that's just a fact.

WOODS: Well, we'll make sure and link to this article over at tomwoodsradio.com connected to this episode so people can also visit Antiwar.com directly through that link. What about Bergdahl himself? People are saying that he was a deserter, that he had a change of heart about the war, or that he even became pro-Taliban. He's saying that he's been treated very well, and he could play badminton there, and so on and so forth. What is your response to that?

RAIMONDO: Well, again, there are no facts to back any of this up. We don't know what the circumstances were of his disappearance. If you look at a WikiLeaks cable, which is a U.S. government cable, military cable, apparently the government, our government, had intercepted the Taliban which was celebrating the fact that they had captured Bergdahl, and what they said was that he was in a latrine on the perimeter of his base and in the course of an attack on that base by the Taliban, he was captured. So do any of these people here talk about this? Of course not. These are the facts. So I don't think that the Taliban would be saying this if it wasn't true. Why would they lie to each other in their intercepted communications? So they don't know how he was captured or why he was captured. They don't know what he had to go through in his five years of imprisonment. And I think that nobody has the moral right to judge anybody's behavior when a gun is pointed at their head. That's crazy! How would they react if they were captured by the Taliban? Who knows?

WOODS: Now, this version of the story, though, feeds into the Fox News, Obama's a Muslim who's secretly trying to undermine American security. He's the only Muslim in world history who believes in gay marriage and social liberalism, but he is nevertheless a Muslim who is secretly trying to undermine everything. This feeds into that, and so the whole thing, the irrationality of the whole thing just preys on itself.

RAIMONDO: Right, this kind of propaganda is for people who don't know the facts and aren't interested in finding out the facts. But once you look into it, it's pretty clear that we don't really

know anything of that—all these bloviators on Fox News don't know what they are talking about. They have no facts at their disposal, and they are making it up as they go along.

WOODS: So they are fitting it more or less into the template that they already have in their minds for how the world works.

RAIMONDO: They are doing what they do best. They are lying. (laughs)

WOODS: Now what about Guantanamo in general? I think a lot of people don't know anything about Guantanamo. They just assume that what's going on here is some dangerous people there who were plotting against America or who, in one way or another, were captured doing nefarious things, and the only thing we can do is confine them in Guantanamo and only ACLU, civil libertarians, could possibly give two you-know-whats about these people. What's really going on with Guantanamo? What is the problem there? Is there a problem?

RAIMONDO: Well, yeah, there's a big problem, and that is the fact that Guantanamo is a typical U.S. government operation. What happened is, remember Rumsfeld going on about metrics? Metrics—this is how we measure our success, metrics. Well, yeah, so they went in, and they scooped up a lot of people, and they were handing out cash, saying, is this guy al Qaeda? Is this guy? And, of course, you're an Afghan peasant. Your yearly income is \$0.25, and suddenly they have bundles of cash, and they are saying, do you know any al Qaeda? I'll give you money. And, oh, sure I do. See that guy over there? And so what they did was they went in, and they scooped up people, and they had quotas probably of how many guys did you get today? And they put them all in Bagram prison and in other prisons across Afghanistan, and then they shipped them off to Guantanamo. As it turns out, more than half of the people left in Guantanamo are totally innocent. They are just people who were wandering around, and they were there. They were visible, and we grabbed them. And this is acknowledged by the U.S. government, by the way. They are acknowledging this, but they claim that they can't send them anywhere because nobody will take them. So that's the problem. The other half—none of these people have been brought to trial. Where is the evidence? No evidence! So just the whole idea of Guantanamo is really, the whole idea of government. It underscores the inherent inefficiency of any government operation. Let's get the terrorists. Right, but three quarters of those people weren't terrorists.

WOODS: Well, as soon as you said metrics, I knew exactly where you were going. That's how they measure how they are doing in the Great Society programs. Look at how many people we signed up for assistance. It's that number. I remember Yuri Maltsev telling me about a regulation in the Soviet Union to try to cut down on the number of people dying in the hospitals. It makes the hospital look bad. They are not saving lives. So they would kick people out of the hospital so that they would go die at home. (laughs) Then the numbers would come down. Meanwhile, the numbers don't mean anything. They are just there to tell a story that the government wants told. That's what you're telling me is fundamentally what's going on in the Guantanamo story?

RAIMONDO: Exactly. These people think that numbers are science and that science is a god. (laughs) And numbers are not science, and science is not a god. But nobody has told them that yet. But the Guantanamo thing is a moral obscenity. Yeah, there are some dangerous people in the world, but we can put them in U.S. prisons. The ones who are dangerous, put them in an American prison. What's the problem with that? Why do we have to put them in Guantanamo and not have any trials? And spy on their lawyers, by the way. The NSA was spying on their lawyers, actually. That actually came out. So that's American justice for you.

WOODS: Well, Justin, I appreciate your time today. It's been interesting talking about these two items that have been in the news, getting a different take on them than you're liable to get really from, frankly, any of the networks. I was glad to see, by the way, that Alan Colmes had you on his show to talk about this issue. Can you just tell us as we wrap up, how did that go?

RAIMONDO: It went very, very well. In fact, you should check it out. I'll send you a link, but yeah, it was great. Alan told me that liberals hate him because he's on Fox News (laughs) which, I mean, I don't like Fox News either, but that's taking it a bit far.

WOODS: Well, Pat Buchanan was on MSNBC for years, but I didn't suddenly decide to hate him because he was on MSNBC. I thought, well, that's good! At least there's somebody on MSNBC. Yeah, poor Alan Colmes. I always felt like he's got a tough row to hoe there on Fox News. I was only on with him—I was on in the old days when he was opposite Sean Hannity, and then I went and did his radio show in studio, and during the commercials we were chatting it up, having a great time, talking about war and government propaganda, and how does he stay sane working at Fox. He was a very, very approachable guy. Whereas I found Hannity to be like the ice man. No chit chat, no banter. Whereas, Colmes sat down and said, "Hello, Professor Woods. Your book looks very interesting. Glad to have you." Sean was just very much: I am here to do my job and go back and play golf or whatever it is he does.