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## Drat Those 'Ron Paul–Lew Rockwell Libertarians'

by **Thomas E. Woods, Jr.**

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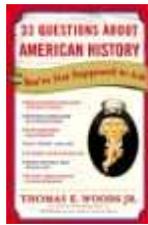


Most people, myself included, don't really care about what this libertarian said about that one, who has been excommunicated by whom, etc. The whole thing is a stupid waste of time. But when Professor Tyler Cowen chastises "Ron Paul–Lew Rockwell Libertarianism" at a Cato Institute function, it's too potentially instructive to pass over.



Cowen said, "I think the libertarian movement is about to split into a right wing libertarian movement that has decided to cast its lot with hard right Republicans and a movement more liberal, more secular, more historically minded, more socially tolerant, less keyed in to the political right."

"I am so glad I wasn't there," says NYU economics professor Mario Rizzo of the Cato forum at which these comments were made.



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It doesn't matter to me if you're a Tyler Cowen groupie, if you think Cowen is a sellout, or if you have no idea who Cowen is. The point is that his remarks are straight out of Bizarro World.

When talking about cozying up to "hard right Republicans," is Cowen speaking of Planet Earth's Ron Paul, the guy the GOP has treated like garbage? The guy everyone notes has cross-partisan and cross-ideological appeal? I could insert a bunch of URLs here, but what's the point? Everyone knows this.

To say such things about Lew Rockwell, though, is if anything even funnier. Go ahead and search this very site for Lew Rockwell's name, along with "GOP" or "Republicans." Unless Lew is trying to use a particularly odd form of reverse psychology, I don't think he is ingratiating himself into the party's favor.

And remind me – which party has Cato's major donor been helping to fund over the years? Just wondering.

Ron Paul and Lew Rockwell leading a movement toward the war-mongering political Right? Cowen's no dummy, so we can assume we're not dealing with ignorance on the kind of Guinness Book scale that such a statement would require. What we *are* dealing with I leave the reader to decide.

As for a "split" among libertarians, well, it already exists. But it's kind of quaint that in the midst of the biggest wave of libertarian growth we've ever seen, thanks to Ron Paul, Tyler Cowen thinks anyone will care or notice that 17 people are splitting off. (It reminds me of Homer Simpson, in the "Flaming Homer/Flaming Moe" episode, indignantly yelling to Moe that he's just lost a customer, namely Homer himself, but Moe can't hear him over the huge crowd ordering drinks.)



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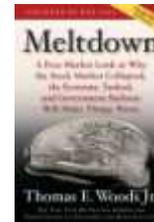
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On the Cato question, just a few words. I've cited some of their work in my own writing, on the grounds that if someone writes something worthwhile, and helps me understand some area better, I'll acknowledge it and learn from it. They, on the other hand, would not cite a Mises Institute publication if it were the last thing on earth. Yet we are the ones accused of being religious cultists who brook no dissent, etc. (Yep, that's us!)

The Ron Paul phenomenon has been a difficult one for Cato to deal with. For one thing, attacks on Lew Rockwell and LRC are very common in Cato circles. Yet here's Ron Paul, with gazillions of young supporters,

and who is Lew's longtime friend. LRC, says Ron Paul, is the first site he reads every morning. So what are they going to do? Alienate all these young people by saying Ron is a scoundrel for being associated with Lew? But if they say Ron is a good guy, then how bad can Lew be? It's an impossible situation.

Add to this that Lew and Ron get thunderous standing ovations wherever they go – not exactly a phenomenon most D.C. think-tankers encounter on a regular basis. Huge throngs of young kids love these men, the heroic work they've done, and what they stand for. If you keep smearing them, you are implicitly smearing all these young kids, who anyone with any sense knows are the future of the movement.



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Initially Cato was cold toward Ron Paul, and – unbelievably – ran a column called "FREDeralism!" in support of Fred Thompson's proposals for renewed federalism, the 4522nd time a Republican politician has made such promises (and the 4522nd time D.C. think-tanks have fallen for them). They danced on his grave a bit after the New Hampshire primary. Then, once it became obvious that his supporters still loved him and would crawl over broken glass for him, they ate some crow and actually invited him to speak.

Let me repeat: I have no interest whatsoever in talking about things like this or in perpetuating feuds of any kind. But since so many people are coming to our ideas for the first time, once in a while it is necessary to clear the air with regard to institutional matters.

December 3, 2009

*Thomas E. Woods, Jr. [visit his website; send him mail] is the author of nine books, including two New York Times bestsellers: [Meltdown: A Free-Market Look at Why the Stock Market Collapsed, the Economy Tanked, and Government Bailouts Will Make Things Worse](#) and [The](#)*

[Politically Incorrect Guide to American History](#). *Read Congressman Ron Paul's foreword* to Meltdown.

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