

Episode 169: George Will on “American Happiness and Discontents” with Don Boudreaux and John Tamny

Speaker 1 ([00:00:04](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show, featuring conversations with leaders, entrepreneurs, artists, and thinkers. Fresh perspectives on money, culture, politics, and human flourishing. Interesting people, interesting things.

Bill Walton ([00:00:25](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton. Today we're talking with George F. Will about his latest collection of essays, *American Happiness and Discontents: The Unruly Torrent, 2008-2020*, and also about his Magnum Opus: *The Conservative Sensibility*. George Will has been one of America's leading columnists since 1974, earning the Pulitzer prize for commentary. The Wall Street Journal has called him perhaps the most powerful journalist in America.

Bill Walton ([00:01:01](#)):

Joining me in the conversation are two of my frequent guests and longtime followers, and fans of George's work, John Tamny, Vice President of FreedomWorks, editor of RealClearMarkets, and author of *When Politicians Panicked*, and Don Boudreaux, Professor Don Boudreaux, Professor of Economics at George Mason University, and research scholar at Mercatus Center, who runs the go-to blog for free market economic thinking, Cafe Hayek. George, we don't want to gang up on you, but we are.

George Will ([00:01:33](#)):

Go ahead.

Bill Walton ([00:01:33](#)):

In a friendly way. We have a lot of questions about what you think is going on today in America. I guess I'll take the first question. You write extensively and wonderfully about liberty, and the American constitution, and the founding principles. Of course, one of the most essential one is liberty. We have lost an awful lot of liberty in the last two years, well, because of the pandemic and also the government's overreaction to the pandemic. When does this end?

George Will ([00:02:08](#)):

It ends when the people spontaneously... To use a word of which we're all fond, the spontaneous order of a free society. It ends when the people spontaneously do what they're now in the early process of doing, I think, which is withdrawing consent from government by dictates. There's a sense in politics.... There are occasions when worse is better, that it dramatizes certain pathologies of government.

George Will ([00:02:36](#)):

The German communists, when it became clear that Hitler was coming to power, said, "[foreign 00:02:39], we come after Hitler." They were good Marxists. They believed that Hitler would simply deepen the contradictions of capitalism, et cetera, et cetera, and they'd come next. I don't want to associate with the German communists, but after the pandemic, libertarians are going to have a good day because people have had a taste of what it looks like when government, in the name of an

emergency, exercises powers which it is predictable they will not want to relinquish after the so-called emergency,

John Tamny ([00:03:13](#)):

Which brings up the question that I've asked Don, I've asked Bill, and I've asked so many libertarians, why do you think so many libertarians sat this out completely? I've never seen such quietude on the part of many libertarians about this. They said nothing. I would love to know what you think.

George Will ([00:03:37](#)):

I think they said nothing at the beginning because we were all on a fog of uncertainty about the nature of the virus, at which point it seemed reckless to object. Then people began to think, and thinking usually helps libertarians. What people began to think was is, there's something disproportionate and indiscriminate. I think all errors and ethics and politics are at bottom disproportionate measures.

George Will ([00:04:12](#)):

They began to say, "Okay, what do we know?" And we began to learn things. We learned who is most threatened by the virus, what age cohorts, what comorbidities exacerbate this. And we began to make distinctions. That's what thinking is. As the distinctions got made, it became clear that the government wasn't making them and probably not making them for a reason, that government had an incentive. With Don here, I will now swoop into public choice theory.

Don Boudreaux ([00:04:47](#)):

Good.

George Will ([00:04:47](#)):

That public choice theory says simply that people in public life are not different than people in the private sector. In the private sector, people try to maximize profits. In government, they try to maximize power. And that's what's been going on here from the start.

Don Boudreaux ([00:05:06](#)):

I think I can infer from what you just said, the answer, but I'm going to ask it anyway, and I'm not going to ask it in a rhetorical way. Were you surprised by what governments did in response to the pandemic?

George Will ([00:05:17](#)):

No, because the CDC, to begin with, was not as competent as we would like. John here has often made the point, that if the people in government were as smart as they think they are, they'd be in the private sector making more money. And so, if you assume that we don't have the cream of the crop in government, you can be sure that, A, they're going to make mistakes, and that they're in it for the psychological rewards of bossing people around.

George Will ([00:05:50](#)):

Descartes said, "I think, therefore, I am." These people say I boss people around, therefore, I am. It gives them a sense of life and identity.

Bill Walton ([00:05:59](#)):

Well, that makes total choice theory even worse than because you're not only getting the... Essentially, you're saying that you end up in the bureaucracies the least in the dimmest, rather than the best and the brightest. I even won an argument with... Not an argument, but a debate with my doctor yesterday. He was very progressive, lockdown, got to [inaudible 00:06:23] government [inaudible 00:06:23]. I said, "Look, you went to medical school." "Yeah." "You graduated near the top of your class." "Yeah." "Where did the guy go who graduated near the bottom of the class?" "Oh, that's right. He went to the Maryland Department of Health. And so, you get this selection of people, and your point about risk taking and...

George Will ([00:06:47](#)):

I would suggest, there's a codicil or an exemption to John's theory. I think, for example, judges could make more money, a lot of them, in the private sector. But judging's really a different vocation.

Bill Walton ([00:06:59](#)):

It's a calling more.

George Will ([00:07:00](#)):

It is a calling. And therefore, you get judges are, I think, on balance better. They're at the far end of the bell curve.

Don Boudreaux ([00:07:13](#)):

I do think there's some things that public choice can't quite explain in this pandemic. And it's a good thing. My sense is that the teachers' unions, for example, are way overplaying their hands. I think a silver lining around this pandemic might be that parents are now seeing what government schooling is about. And if they do, they're going to push back against it, and hopefully that'll drain a lot of power and influence from the K through 12 public school bureaucracy, including the teachers' unions.

George Will ([00:07:41](#)):

The head of the teacher's union in the Los Angeles Unified School District said, "A, you can recall a governor, but you can't recall me. And B, you say your children haven't been learning the multiplication tables, but they've learned the meaning of the word resistance and rebellion." Well, parents are not fools. They hear this and they say, "I think I'd rather they learn the multiplication tables."

Don Boudreaux ([00:08:03](#)):

Well, that's what I mean by overplaying their hand. It's an astonishing thing to [inaudible 00:08:11] publicly.

George Will ([00:08:13](#)):

The worse is better.

Don Boudreaux ([00:08:14](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

John Tamny ([00:08:16](#)):

About halfway through American Happiness, there's just a lot of good statistics. 37% of American deaths in 1900 came from infectious diseases, and that number's down at 2%.

George Will ([00:08:30](#)):

Pre pandemic.

John Tamny ([00:08:32](#)):

You make the point that lifestyle nowadays is the primary killer. It struck me that you're making a broader point in this curation, and maybe I'm thinking my own thoughts, but that economic growth is the biggest enemy of death and disease that the world has ever known. And then, I go to Conservative Sensibility. You point out in that, that in the 1950s, bed linens were the biggest line item in hospitals. And nowadays, there's all these advances. It just raises my obvious question. Witnessing the lockdowns, I'm assuming your thought was, what an odd way to fight a virus.

George Will ([00:09:14](#)):

Exactly. Unquestionably, economic growth is a cure for poverty, and poverty is a public health threat. People don't eat well. They don't acquire information. A middle-class information acquiring society is apt to be a healthier society. When I went to college, matriculated in 1958 at Trinity College, the first thing that happened was there's a knock on my door as I'm unpacking. This is [inaudible 00:09:43] months after my 17th birthday.

George Will ([00:09:46](#)):

There was an upperclassmen paid by the tobacco companies to hand up little five packs of cigarettes, on the sound assumption that you could get addicted, which I promptly did because cigarettes smoking then was considered the opposite of what it is now, *declassé*. It was sophistication. One of the greatest achievements of government, more bang for the buck, is the dissemination of public health information, smoking, seatbelt use, things of this sort. It's cheap and it's effective.

Don Boudreaux ([00:10:22](#)):

Some of the people that I've been following, I just learned about since the pandemic began, or some public health experts, and their concern is that the overreaction to COVID has done enormous damage to the public health establishments. Dramatically reduced its stature. And they were very worried about that.

George Will ([00:10:43](#)):

Well, what stature should they have? They should have their earned stature.

Don Boudreaux ([00:10:48](#)):

Yeah.

George Will ([00:10:49](#)):

What we're learning, in fact, is that some of these people haven't earned it.

Don Boudreaux ([00:10:52](#)):

Right. Right. But you were referring to, I assume, the fact-

Bill Walton ([00:10:56](#)):

I think that a word I'd use is trust.

Don Boudreaux ([00:10:59](#)):

Trust. Yeah, yeah.

George Will ([00:10:59](#)):

Exactly.

Don Boudreaux ([00:11:00](#)):

Yeah, yeah. I remember as a child, the anti-smoking campaign in the United States and it worked very well. My own 24 year old son, when I tell him that I can remember people smoking in an airplane, he thinks I'm lying. It just can't be. No one ever smoked in an airplane. Yeah, they did.

John Tamny ([00:11:15](#)):

That was beautiful.

George Will ([00:11:15](#)):

When I got to college, half the American adults woke up in the morning and lit a cigarette.

Don Boudreaux ([00:11:22](#)):

Yeah.

George Will ([00:11:22](#)):

Now, a quarter still do. I mean think about that.

Don Boudreaux ([00:11:26](#)):

But still a dramatic... No one smokes in public anymore.

George Will ([00:11:28](#)):

Of course. It's astonishing.

Don Boudreaux ([00:11:29](#)):

This is a result, as you point out, I think, of public health push that had enormous success. And so, whatever that establishment is.

George Will ([00:11:39](#)):

I'm not celebrating the withdrawal of trust. I think Frank Fukuyama's right that a prosperous and free society depends on trust.

Don Boudreaux ([00:11:47](#)):

I agree.

George Will ([00:11:47](#)):

Capitalism depends on trust. Contracts, promise-keeping, honesty, as opposed fraud and advertising and all the rest. So I'm not celebrating that. I am saying that there are times when you need to recalibrate the trust in particular segments of society. I think that the Centers for Disease Control has earned scrutiny.

Don Boudreaux ([00:12:09](#)):

Oh, absolutely.

George Will ([00:12:10](#)):

And it's not going to survive it in one piece.

Don Boudreaux ([00:12:12](#)):

Absolutely. That's what these public health experts that I've been speaking to, the ones who I now admire, that's what they regret. They regret the fact that the CDC has acted in a way that lost trust, that they caused people to strip trust from it.

John Tamny ([00:12:29](#)):

One more question about this because, some of your stuff on Vietnam in this one is just spectacular. In American Happiness-

Bill Walton ([00:12:37](#)):

This one meaning the most recent book, which is the collection of essays.

George Will ([00:12:39](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

John Tamny ([00:12:40](#)):

Yeah, just the Vietnam stuff is so amazing and sad. You make the point that pre Vietnam, 1964, trust in the US and government pulling data, 80%. It's never come close to that.

Bill Walton ([00:12:54](#)):

Trust to do the right thing most of the time is the question.

John Tamny ([00:12:57](#)):

Yeah, this belief in it. What's your sense of the result of all this, the last two years? Is this another Vietnam for government? Where do you think this comes out?

George Will ([00:13:08](#)):

That's a good question. The lesson of government, most of the time, is the deficit we have in epistemic humility. What Hayek taught us all this time is you don't know as much as you think you know, that knowledge is dispersed, the market's aggregated, governments can't, et cetera, et cetera. Vietnam was a lesson in epistemic humility. We knew next to nothing about a society that we plunged into and [inaudible 00:13:36] to remake.

George Will ([00:13:38](#)):

The Vietnam syndrome lasted for a while. It was an inoculation, if you will, against epistemic humility. Then the vaccination wore off when we went to Iraq. Nothing lasts, not even vaccinations, as we're now learning. But more and more, if you view the world through the prism of epistemic humility, you'll see that so many of our problems go back to assuming we know things we don't, and can't know.

Bill Walton ([00:14:07](#)):

This is the Bill Walton Show. We're talking with George Will. His most recent book is American Happiness and Discontents, with Don Boudreaux and John Tamny. I think the topic at hand is public trust, public trust in the health establishment. But let me morph a little bit towards all institutions, because you write so well about the battle between the progressive left. Woodrow Wilson was probably, what do you call it, the Wilsonian versus the Madisonian views of the world?

Bill Walton ([00:14:36](#)):

It seems like all the institutions have been captured by the progressives. The Wilsonian seem to be ascendent. Then they're ascendent in a public health establishment. And so, if you had a more libertarian view, people who had that view in those institutions, we would've had a different outcome, I think, in terms of-

George Will ([00:14:53](#)):

Progressivism's long march through the institutions has been fast.

Bill Walton ([00:14:57](#)):

Right. Yeah.

George Will ([00:14:58](#)):

Century long, but still, that's fast, and amazingly successful. It's partly amazing because the progressives have been so forthright about what they want. Woodrow Wilson was the first true progressive president. Again, the first American president to criticize the American founding, which he did not do peripherally. He did it root and branch. He said, "The constitutional structure is all wrong."

George Will ([00:15:21](#)):

The separation of powers was a luxury we could afford back when there were four million of us living within... 80% of us within 20 miles of Atlantic Tidewater. But now we're a continental nation, complicated. This is the great progressive non sequitur, is that the more complicated society gets, the more ambitious government must be in its interventions. Of course, it's exactly the reverse. The more complicated society gets, the more government ought to flinch from messing with it because the government can't understand that government is like a Calder mobile. It touches something here and way over there things start to jiggle, hence the law of unintended consequences.

Don Boudreaux ([00:15:59](#)):

I fully agree. One of my favorite essays by Hayek, who's been mentioned here, was a 1976 essay called The New Confusion About Planning, which addressed this very issue. The new confusion is that, well, as society gets more complex, we're more in need of planning. Hayek said, "No, so you can have it backwards. The more complex society becomes, the less ability there is to plan."

George Will ([00:16:19](#)):

Precisely.

Bill Walton ([00:16:19](#)):

It seems though that we need to reverse... We need to stop the lockdowns. We need to regain our freedom. We need to get back to regular lives and owning our own selves. But how do we reverse the takeover, if it's possible, of all the institutions? I'm afraid your most current book's very optimistic about a lot of things. The Conservative Sensibility is less optimistic.

George Will ([00:16:45](#)):

Well, looking on the bright side, as I am disinclined to do-

Bill Walton ([00:16:49](#)):

So am I, I think.

George Will ([00:16:51](#)):

Margaret Thatcher said, "First you win the argument, then you win the vote."

Bill Walton ([00:16:54](#)):

Yeah.

George Will ([00:16:55](#)):

Elections matter. They really do, even with the deep state and even with the entrenchment of progressivism at the point of levels of government. Win the argument, and the argument's winnable. That's the point. [crosstalk 00:17:12]-

John Tamny ([00:17:12](#)):

Is there a bullish quality to all this? Fred Smith, the founder of FedEx, did not choose academia. He chose to change the world. Progressives choose academia. Is there something to that, that some of our best people chose to avoid this altogether? You chose a life of business, and thank goodness you did.

George Will ([00:17:35](#)):

Fred Smith was told by the academics around him, that his idea was nuts, that FedEx wouldn't work.

Bill Walton ([00:17:41](#)):

Did he get a C minus on his paper?

George Will ([00:17:44](#)):

Yes. Well, again, the market is working, to this extent, with academia. The prestige of academia is gone. When I came to Washington in the 1970s, at the end of the 1960s, the 1960s had been academia's moment in Washington. Schlesinger, Galbraith, the [inaudible 00:18:09] brothers, the Bundy brothers. It was considered an ornament to a society to have big name professors come into your administration. Not anymore.

George Will ([00:18:21](#)):

I think that academia has, by its ridiculousness... Again, there are just occasions when worse is better. When the secretary of Health and Human Services, goaded by a Republican senator in a public hearing, will not say the word mother, who insists on saying no birthing people, that's good. That's fine. Give him more time. Give him another five minutes to be foolish like that.

Bill Walton ([00:18:52](#)):

From what we're talking about, the march the institutions, from my world, woke corporations? Thoughts?

George Will ([00:19:03](#)):

They are facilitating a multi-billion-dollar industry. If you think I'm exaggerating, the chief diversity officer at the University of Michigan, a public university, is paid more than \$450,000 plus benefits per year. So this is a multi-billion-dollar industry, and it's painless for corporations. All their HR people, all the human resources people, who are not there because they know how to add value, they're there to satisfy various federal laws and various constituencies, they make their money by pandering to this.

George Will ([00:19:40](#)):

They spent billions of dollars. It didn't come out of their own pockets, and they have seminars about privilege without endangering any of their privileges. So it's a pain-free for them, pain-free, cost-free virtue signaling. Again, I hate to sound optimistic, but-

John Tamny ([00:20:03](#)):

But you should be.

Bill Walton ([00:20:04](#)):

We count on John for that. [crosstalk 00:20:06] very welcome-

George Will ([00:20:08](#)):

There's a wonderful human capacity for boredom, and this is excruciatingly boring, all this stuff about... The Babylon Bee, that wonderful satirical [inaudible 00:20:21], said, "We are running out of things to call racist." We just are. When we reach the end of this, the boredom will set in.

Bill Walton ([00:20:32](#)):

Well, I'm already there, at that. What do you think?

Don Boudreaux ([00:20:34](#)):

Well, George's earlier remark, it's the best reason I've had to feel optimistic in two years, the notion that the hand has been overplayed and people are just seeing the absurdity for what it is, absurdity.

John Tamny ([00:20:49](#)):

Well, what about also just changes in the world we live in. I thought one of the happiest stories in American Happiness began horribly... It's about that book, America 1908, that you wrote about. There was a mass lynching in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908. It was just tragic, the way you described it. But then

you point out, in 2007, so nearly a hundred years later, a Black man, Barack Obama, announces his run for presidency in that same city.

John Tamny ([00:21:22](#)):

I took it as your way of saying things do get better. We are a society of people... We just can't help but improve. And look at how the US has changed in a hundred years.

George Will ([00:21:33](#)):

Look at a South Eastern Conference football game. That's as close to an established religion as we have in the United States. If you go to Mississippi, Alabama football game, the head referee is apt to be an African-American. He's bossing everyone around. He's penalizing them. And no one thinks a thing about it. The amazing progress in this country is so astonishing that this is why the Black Lives Matter and its attendant satellite groups, have to be so shrill because they are denying what is obvious to everybody.

John Tamny ([00:22:09](#)):

I think that's right.

Bill Walton ([00:22:14](#)):

One of the things that you write in your book, and I guess it's Conservative Sensibility, is the family. There's a movement, and this is a larger question here about the progressive left versus the... I don't know what we would call the... The Oren Cass right.

John Tamny ([00:22:34](#)):

The National Economic Conservatives.

Bill Walton ([00:22:36](#)):

National Economic Conservatives. You had a question about that. I mean, which is worse?

Don Boudreaux ([00:22:43](#)):

Yeah, which is worse? Today we have the progressive left, the Elizabeth Warrens, the ALCs. On the other side, we have people like Oren Cass, Henry Olsen, who writes for the Washington Post, the national conservatives. They both seem pretty threatening to me. Do you have an assessment of which is worse?

George Will ([00:23:00](#)):

Yeah. The progressives because the national conservatives are progressivism light, and it's just a low calorie version, which ultimately won't be very satisfying, any more than light beer is. I tend to think that the American people learn by fits and starts and slowly, but they learn. They don't learn fast because they're not watching television, and they're not reading... Most Americans don't read newspapers. Most people who read newspapers don't read the op-ed pages where people like me appear.

George Will ([00:23:42](#)):

There are 331 million people in this country, and at any moment, 320 million, 25 million of them are not watching cable television, not listening to talk radio, listening to this podcast, I presume. But the American people are busy raising children and fixing the screen door and getting on with life. And that's the sign of a healthy society.

John Tamny ([00:24:05](#)):

Well, along those lines of the national conservatism, I loved the statistic in American Happiness about Pittsburgh, that a hundred years ago, it was the ninth largest city in the US in terms of population, and it's not anymore. I think you say it's 63rd now. The town has left Pittsburgh. Maybe it's coming back. I saw-

George Will ([00:24:30](#)):

It's different kind of talent.

John Tamny ([00:24:32](#)):

Different kind of talent, but I took it as something I wanted to see, is that Pittsburgh is a repudiation of national conservatism, this idea that we need to preserve the past economically. Pittsburgh is a bright shining bit of evidence that when you preserve the past, you drive away the talent that attracts the investment.

George Will ([00:24:51](#)):

When I was a child in the early fifties, we would drive from central Illinois where I lived, to visit my grandfather who was a Lutheran minister in Donora, Pennsylvania, in the Monongahela Valley, which is ground zero for the obliteration of the American steel industry. We'd drive into Pittsburgh, which was then known as Hell With The Lid Off. We'd drive in and it was glowing at night from the molten slag poured there. Well, that's gone.

George Will ([00:25:22](#)):

Today, the largest employer in Pittsburgh, as in Cleveland, as in Houston, is healthcare, in Pittsburgh, largely because of the University of Pittsburgh's medical center. Nothing wrong with that. These cities have reinvented themselves precisely because they're not listening to the national conservatives who in some demented way, believe that Donora, Pennsylvania's coming back as a steel town. It's not, and the people at Donora know it. Just try and-

Don Boudreaux ([00:25:54](#)):

And they're glad it's not.

George Will ([00:25:55](#)):

Precisely.

John Tamny ([00:25:55](#)):

They desperately do not want it to come back.

George Will ([00:25:58](#)):

Exactly.

Bill Walton ([00:25:59](#)):

This is the Bill Walton Show. We have George Will, and John Tamny, and Don Boudreaux. We're going after our favorite topic, national conservatives and why we think they're probably heading in the wrong

direction. One of my favorite national conservative was when Oren, one of his people wrote a long essay about how private equity adds no value. I spent a little time in a private equity business, and I remember we bought these companies, and yeah, they were a mess and they didn't always work, but we spent an awful lot of time developing new products, new markets, new services, all sorts of things. I thought we were adding value, but then I'm informed that we were not.

George Will ([00:26:43](#)):

If private equity exists, it has value.

Bill Walton ([00:26:45](#)):

Exactly. Exactly.

George Will ([00:26:46](#)):

Because if it wasn't, wouldn't exist. I mean, this is really simple stuff.

Bill Walton ([00:26:51](#)):

Well, one thing that they are concerned about, we're concerned about, and you're concerned about, is family disintegration. I mean, that's gotten worse and worse and worse. It just seems like the family is the bedrock for libertarian free constitutionally limited governance society. I mean, how do we do this without families?

George Will ([00:27:12](#)):

There is abundant social science demonstrating that the family, as usual, and as always, is the primary transmitter of social capital, by which I mean the attitudes, values, assumptions that make it possible to take advantage of the opportunities of a free society. We know that when you have 69% of African-American children born to unmarried women, we know that when we have as today, 40% of all first births out of wedlock, we know that when as today, a majority of women, of mothers under 30 are not living with the fathers of their children, think about that, a majority, we know that you have have a crisis.

George Will ([00:27:58](#)):

When my dear friend, Pat Moynihan wrote the famous Moynihan Report, he was a 38 year old social scientist in Lyndon Johnson's labor department. He said, "We have a crisis in America because 23.7% of African-American children are born out of wedlock." And he said, with typical Moynihanian flair, he said, "The lesson of history is clear, from the wild Irish slums of the East Coast in the 19th century, to south Los Angeles today, when you have a large cohort of inadequately parented, that is not fathers in the home, adolescent males, you have chaos."

George Will ([00:28:35](#)):

I've raised three male children. I know that the whole point of civilization is to civilize adolescent males. That's what it comes down to. And when that doesn't happen, you have chaotic neighborhoods and schools so busy trying to maintain discipline they cannot teach.

Don Boudreaux ([00:28:54](#)):

Well, to push back and then on your optimism of a moment ago, how do we stop that? Because it seems these statistics are getting worse.

George Will ([00:29:00](#)):

No one has the slightest idea because we don't know what caused it.

Don Boudreaux ([00:29:05](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

George Will ([00:29:05](#)):

It's that simple. In 1950, the out of wedlock birth rate for Whites and Blacks was approximately the same. We don't know what caused it. And anyone who says they do is mistaken.

Bill Walton ([00:29:19](#)):

We all believe that incentives matter.

George Will ([00:29:21](#)):

Sure.

Bill Walton ([00:29:22](#)):

I mean, we've built a lot of disincentives into the federal entitlement system, starting with the great society.

George Will ([00:29:28](#)):

When I say no one knows, I would put an asterisk because Charles Murray has a lot of ideas about this.

Bill Walton ([00:29:33](#)):

Yeah. Charles has been here. Yeah.

George Will ([00:29:34](#)):

Sure. When he wrote the book *Losing Ground*, he said, "Look, when you have a stunning correlation, the great society welfare programs, the increase in out-of-wedlock births, it's sensible to look for causation."

John Tamny ([00:29:52](#)):

Do you think that economic growth could ever be the solution? Would it cause people-

Don Boudreaux ([00:29:59](#)):

To this problem?

John Tamny ([00:29:59](#)):

Yeah. Would it cause people to make better decisions? Because there is an incentive based on the opportunity there, to do the right thing?

George Will ([00:30:08](#)):

It would help. But this is-

John Tamny ([00:30:09](#)):

This beyond?

George Will ([00:30:10](#)):

This is culture. This is why what happened in the 1960s was so shattering to the confidence of American social policymakers. They said economic growth will cure our problems. That's why when Sargent Shriver was put in charge of Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, was asked by a congressional committee, "How long will it take end poverty in the country?" He said, "10 years. 10 years." Why? Because he could project economic growth.

George Will ([00:30:40](#)):

What happened was Moynihan Scissors, which I write about in The Conservative Sensibility, when you had this divergence rise, declining adult male minority unemployment, and rising welfare cases, that was not supposed to be possible and it happened.

Bill Walton ([00:31:00](#)):

Well. Now we have a cabinet that... I think Steve Moore was here. He reminded me that of all the people in the Biden administration cabinet, the total number of years worked in the private sector totals two.

Don Boudreaux ([00:31:18](#)):

I'm surprised it's the whole number.

Bill Walton ([00:31:19](#)):

But I think that's Buttigieg at McKinsey, and McKinsey doesn't count as private sector.

George Will ([00:31:25](#)):

I think Raimondo at commerce worked in the private sector somewhat, in finance.

Bill Walton ([00:31:31](#)):

Okay. Well, it's a good story. I don't know, Biden-

Don Boudreaux ([00:31:33](#)):

It's small. That's the point.

Bill Walton ([00:31:34](#)):

We may have to check these people. When we have everybody coming out of academia and political activism going into government, how do we reverse what... You point out we've got a national political culture that really base rewards rent-seeking from government. You've been very optimistic today, so I'm enjoying your...

George Will ([00:31:56](#)):

I'll try and correct for that in our remaining time now.

Bill Walton ([00:32:00](#)):

How do we reverse this deep state, whatever this corruption is, that we're seeing here in DC?

George Will ([00:32:10](#)):

Well, I would begin by saying the following, Elizabeth Warren has a firm grip on half a point. She looks at the Washington area and she says there's something wrong with the fact that Washington, which has no natural resources, that doesn't manufacture anything but trouble, laws and regulations, that Washington has in its metropolitan area, five of the 10 by per capita income richest counties in the country. Why?

George Will ([00:32:39](#)):

Well as some fellow, I can't remember his name right now, at Cato said, "When you set out a picnic, you expect to get ants." The federal budget's the biggest picnic in the world. You draw lobbyists, that as you draw people who have decided that entrepreneurship is a hard way to make money, the good way to make money is with rent seeking. What you get then is a politics that is increasingly embittered by distributional conflicts, which is what we have today.

George Will ([00:33:11](#)):

You try to tell the American people, "If you're unhappy with the tone of American public life, understand that this is why, because the stakes are unhealthily high of our politics, that if you want to get the amount of money out of politics, get the amount of politics out of money, out of the distribution of wealth and opportunity. Lower the stakes, you'll lower the temperature." And I think that's an argument we can make.

Don Boudreaux ([00:33:38](#)):

You've made the argument a lot, and I agree with you, the John McCain approach to curing politics with the campaign finance reform is completely futile. I assume you still believe that.

George Will ([00:33:52](#)):

It's not only futile, it's... The word McCain-Feingold's the worst law passed in my 50 years in Washington.

Don Boudreaux ([00:33:58](#)):

Real?

George Will ([00:33:59](#)):

Yes, because it said, "We elected officials of Congress have a right to limit the quantity and regulate the quantity, content, and timing of speech about elected officials in Congress," and they got away with it. Now the Supreme Court slowly has chipped away at that. Different technologies have changed the role of money in politics substantially. And we've demonstrated the steeply declining utility of the political dollars.

George Will ([00:34:33](#)):

I mean, when you have 78,000 literally political campaign heads in places like Hamilton county, Columbus, Ohio, Clark county, Nevada, it's just audible wallpaper. No one pays any attention to it.

John Tamny ([00:34:48](#)):

On page 57, this is just a right out, Soviet military brass told Gorbachev they could defend the USSR's northern sector without... They could only do it if they tripled spending. And then, in your quotes, "Thus did the cold war end." And so, here's an example of growing government that seemed to have a positive impact. Or do you think that eventually the Soviet Union was going to die of its own contradictions? Did we need the big buildup there, militarily, or where do you come out on that?

George Will ([00:35:20](#)):

Well, I'm not a big believer in historical inevitability, so I don't want to... Which is the language of Marxism. So I don't want to assault the Marxists with their own categories. I do believe that when Reagan said, "Well, we'll just see if you can compete with us," and try the strategic defense initiative. And by the way, we're going to talk with our friends, the Saudis, and they're going to turn on the oil spigots, and we're going to drive down the cost of oil, price of oil worldwide.

George Will ([00:35:54](#)):

The Soviet Union had then, as Russia has today, a hunter gatherer economy. They extract eggs from sturgeon and stuff from the ground, and that's it. I mean, name a consumer good from the Soviet Union or Russia, anyone would want to buy. Can't. Yes, it was positive, big government that did it. Well, government's supposed to look after our national security. We don't want to privatize the Marine Corps. I'm not that severe libertarian.

Bill Walton ([00:36:26](#)):

Privatize the Marine Corps. Well, that would... I agree. We could get the Swiss Guard or something like that, I suppose. They'd be happy to get back. Right now in Washington, the Democrats are pushing the John Lewis Act to federalize election laws. This seems to be going in exactly the wrong direction. You'd put all the United States election apparatus into the civil rights division of the justice department, which of course was staffed originally by Barrack Obama's people. Now it's worse.

George Will ([00:37:03](#)):

One of the arguments for federalism is, if states are making decisions as opposed to the federal government, you don't make a continental mistake every time you act. If you assume, which is safe to do, that most of what government does, it shouldn't do, or it's going to do it wrong, the argument for federalism is to minimize the continent-wide mistakes, bringing this to voting rights, which are clearly under the constitution state responsibilities.

George Will ([00:37:33](#)):

You have to observe that never in human history, never in American history has it been easier to vote. [crosstalk 00:37:40] in this country now.

Bill Walton ([00:37:41](#)):

We had a higher turnout in the last presidential election I think-

George Will ([00:37:45](#)):

Exactly.

Bill Walton ([00:37:45](#)):

... than ever. Maybe 1992 was another one.

George Will ([00:37:49](#)):

If what these people are worried about is voter suppression, it's really failing because the voters are coming out in droves. It's a non-crisis.

Don Boudreaux ([00:37:59](#)):

But it's treated as a crisis in the mainstream media. They don't hear what you're saying.

Bill Walton ([00:38:05](#)):

Let me pick up on that. I want to get into what you think about what's happening with the social media companies, because none of us particularly think antitrust is a very good way to go with that. But on the other hand, you do have this incredible lock on speech, and the whole debate about the virus, the lockdowns, there's so many things you're not allowed to talk about or you lose your Twitter account. A lot of the conversation we're having here, you can't see on the six o'clock news. You can't see it on any of the mainstream outlets.

George Will ([00:38:36](#)):

But that's not the folder social media.

Bill Walton ([00:38:38](#)):

Okay. Well, let's dig into that, because I want to figure out what we do I do about that.

George Will ([00:38:42](#)):

I'm not the best person to talk about this, because I've never tweeted. I don't know how to tweet. I'm told I have a Facebook page, but I've never seen it. I'm just not interested. I don't understand the people who say they can't live without it. I'm also puzzled by this. The Roman empire's gone. Carolingian empire didn't last, Ottoman empire, Habsburg empire, British empire, Soviet empire. Facebook's forever? I don't think so.

George Will ([00:39:12](#)):

What was it? Just the other day, maybe this morning, for all I know, Toyota passes GM as the largest maker of automobiles in the United States. I remember when John Kenneth Galbraith in *The Affluent Society*, and elsewhere, *The New Industrial State*, were saying, "Absolutely General Motors is unassailable. It had 48% market share.

Bill Walton ([00:39:35](#)):

Today is what, 17%.

George Will ([00:39:37](#)):

Nothing lasts. That's the first premise of my kind of conservatism. Nothing lasts.

Don Boudreaux ([00:39:44](#)):

Well, you remember the Microsoft antitrust suit of, what, 20, 25 years ago where... What's their browsers? It's the Windows-

John Tamny ([00:39:54](#)):

They had the temerity to put Internet Explorer for free-

Don Boudreaux ([00:39:57](#)):

Explorer. Yeah.

John Tamny ([00:39:57](#)):

How'd that work out?

Don Boudreaux ([00:39:59](#)):

Yeah. This was going to cement them as the biggest consumer electronics company.

George Will ([00:40:03](#)):

In the 1970s, the justice department of the federal government was worried about IBM's monopoly on office typewriters. Remember what a typewriter was?

Don Boudreaux ([00:40:15](#)):

I've literally had a student see a picture of a typewriter and didn't know what it was.

George Will ([00:40:19](#)):

In the mid to late 1930s, there was something like... I've forgotten how many, 18,000 A&P stores, grocery stores.

Don Boudreaux ([00:40:29](#)):

Enormous number.

George Will ([00:40:30](#)):

Something like one for every 9,000 Americans. They got big because they started downtown, which is where people went to shop. Then Piggly Wiggly says, "[inaudible 00:40:41] going outside. Let's go where the parking is." Suddenly Piggly Wiggly took over them. Now Amazon is delivering our detergents. I mean, nothing lasts.

Bill Walton ([00:40:56](#)):

This is the Bill Walton Show and we're just having the best time with an optimistic George Will. It's great. And Don Boudreaux and John Tamny. The issues I have with social media companies, he assures me they're going to disappear into the sands of time, as have all the other monopolies like A&P and, I guess, AT&T was one of them.

George Will ([00:41:16](#)):

Going to give you one other example. One other example.

Bill Walton ([00:41:18](#)):

Come on. [crosstalk 00:41:19]-

George Will ([00:41:19](#)):

I think it's November 2007, the cover story in Forbes magazine was, "The Cell Phone King, One Billion Customers. Can anyone Challenge It?" They were talking about Nokia. Five months earlier, something called an iPhone had been introduced. Nothing lasts.

Don Boudreaux ([00:41:40](#)):

I think history is pretty strong on this.

John Tamny ([00:41:42](#)):

Can we just talk about the year 2000? GE was the most valuable company in the world, 585 billion. Where is it? Enron was the best managed company in the world. Tyco was on the cover of Barron's as the next GE. The two most dominant internet companies, AOL and Yahoo, where are they today? Remember, AOL and Time Warner, the merger was held up for over a year because the combination was going to be unassailable, once again. High net worth-

Bill Walton ([00:42:17](#)):

If that was 2000, also Chief Financial Officer magazine had the three highest value added chief financial officers in the world. And the three companies they were chief financial officers of was WorldCom, Enron, and Tyco.

George Will ([00:42:37](#)):

I want to respond to the smear that I'm an optimist.

Bill Walton ([00:42:44](#)):

I'm trying to be a little provocative.

George Will ([00:42:46](#)):

I want to tell you grounds for deep pessimism. I'm an optimist in the sense that the evidence is pouring in on the side of the arguments the four of us make about society. The other side doesn't have arguments. They have control of the media. They have censorship. They have cancellations. But they can't argue. Our side has the mental sinews that have developed over the years and are very strong.

George Will ([00:43:18](#)):

Here's what's alarming. In a reasonably educated, temperate, prosperous middle-class country, 70% of one of the self-identified members of one of our two major parties believes a preposterous lie about the last election, 70%. This is the Madisonian grounds for pessimism. Madison said, "The majorities are going to rule. You better take a lot of care to make sure that public opinion of these majorities is moderated, and refined, and filtered, and slowed through representative institutions."

George Will ([00:44:02](#)):

The rise of populism, which is everything conservatism isn't, the rise of populism, which is anti-Madisonian, is alarming. And I'm not saying irreversible, but it is frightening.

Bill Walton ([00:44:17](#)):

Populism on the left, or populism on the right, or both?

George Will ([00:44:20](#)):

Both. Both.

John Tamny ([00:44:21](#)):

But even there, earlier, you pointed out that Americans just don't bother. They're fixing the screen door. They're focused on other stuff. So how deep is that? 70% number? I just don't think Americans are political. I don't think they've ever been.

George Will ([00:44:37](#)):

Well, I think the political system is a exquisitely sensitive market mechanism in our country. If this were a frivolous, shallow, easily evanescent phenomenon, the 70%, you wouldn't have the Republican Party governed by stark terror of its constituents. It's amazing to have a political party... These two political parties have framed our competition since 1856. And now, one of our two political parties is terrified of its voters. Not all of them. Of course, they're terrified of the intense, compact minority, maybe 30% of true believers in the 45th president. But history is made by intense compact minorities.

Don Boudreaux ([00:45:31](#)):

Well, that is depressing.

George Will ([00:45:33](#)):

Good. I'm depressing you now.

Bill Walton ([00:45:34](#)):

We succeed. We got into deep despair here. Not actually, but-

John Tamny ([00:45:39](#)):

No.

Bill Walton ([00:45:42](#)):

The constitution, George, you've written about so well, that what's conservatism, it's returning to the founders' constitution and their view of human nature and the essential unchanging aspects of human nature. They put up safeguards to protect people from gaining too much power. The progressives have really done the most to break all those barriers down, electoral college, the direct election of senators. All those things they've done in the last hundred years have broken all that down.

Bill Walton ([00:46:14](#)):

Now I don't know whether the populism on the right is really that focused on changing the institutional structures as the progressives were.

George Will ([00:46:25](#)):

No, the progressives are more serious about government. And-

Bill Walton ([00:46:29](#)):

That's their business?

George Will ([00:46:30](#)):

That's their business. That's their vocation, their calling. Yes. The biggest change I've made in my thinking, in my 50 years in Washington, is my thoughts about the judiciary. When I arrived in 1970, I was filled with, as most conservatives then were, the rhetoric of judicial restraint, judicial deference to majoritarian institutions. I believed in what was then called the counter-majoritarian difficulty. Judicial review was inherently suspect because it struck down what majorities did.

George Will ([00:47:03](#)):

I have since had an epiphany. I grew up in central Illinois, Lincoln Country, and according to local lore, Lincoln was in the Champaign County courthouse when he heard that the Kansas-Nebraska Act had been passed in 1854. Lincoln at that time was a prosperous traveling railroad lawyer. The Kansas-Nebraska Act was the effort by Illinois Senator, Stephen Douglas, to solve the question of, should slavery be allowed to expand into the territories? Could slaves be taken there? What state laws protect them? And all of that.

George Will ([00:47:43](#)):

Douglas said, "Simple answer to that is majority rule, popular sovereignty in the territories." Vote slavery up, vote it down. It's a matter of moral indifference. The morally important point in America is majority rule. Lincoln's ascent to greatness began with his recoil against that. He said, "No, America's not about a process majority rule. It's about a condition liberty. That's where we divide today.

George Will ([00:48:10](#)):

The progressives rightly, from their point of view, took over the language of judicial deference. They're with Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said, "If the American people want to go to hell, I will help them. It's my job." That was his understanding. That's an exact quote. It's his understanding that the judicial function was to get out of the way of majorities. I think the judicial function is to stand in the way of majorities often.

Don Boudreaux ([00:48:36](#)):

Why did so many conservatives in the mid 20th century, come to have the position that you once held in favor of severe judicial restraint?

George Will ([00:48:46](#)):

The Warren Court, basically.

Don Boudreaux ([00:48:48](#)):

An overreaction to it?

George Will ([00:48:49](#)):

Yes, it was an overreaction to the somewhat freewill in discovery, not of natural rights, but of rights as progressives understand it, as spaces of autonomy granted by majorities through the government.

John Tamny ([00:49:04](#)):

In *The Conservative Sensibility*, you write about *Lochner* versus the state of New York. I will butcher it, but it's the idea the Supreme Court stepped in and said people have an individual right to contract, that the state of New York cannot limit their right to work a certain number of hours per week, I think. And so, my question is, I asked a lot of libertarians during the lockdowns, is there a right to contract here? Can government limit the ability of people to go to work and limit the right of businesses to open? Do you have an opinion on that? Was-

George Will ([00:49:40](#)):

Yeah, it depends on the nature of the so-called emergency. That's why, at the beginning, it was rational to be sensitive to the problem of a pandemic, because the pandemic is a classic example of another regarding act, to use John Stuart Mill's language from *On Liberty*. There's self-regarding and other regarding acts. If you have a highly contagious, easily transmitted virus, then going to work can be another regarding act, and a dangerous one. So you had to get some information. You had to sort it out.

George Will ([00:50:16](#)):

That's when we began to learn that this was not that easily transmissible. It's a particular threat to the elderly, not to the young, happily... It's a benevolent pandemic, if you will. So we had to think it through. It was in the second stage when we began to get information, and the information worked against the impulse of the government to expand its control and the government resisted the information. That's when this became a tutorial in political life.

John Tamny ([00:50:52](#)):

But wasn't the information, the people acting freely? I mean, didn't that speak to how dangerous it was to limit freedom at all?

George Will ([00:51:00](#)):

Yes. There should have been a presumption. There always should be a presumption against the government limiting freedom. It seems to me, people say, "Will, are you a libertarian?" I say, "I'm a libertarian-ish, and so are you." Because what a libertarian's going in premise is, before the government limits the freedom of the individual or two or more individuals contracting together, it ought to have a good reason and it ought to say what it is. That's it. That's it. That way, everyone's a libertarian. And it puts the burden on the government, which is where it belongs.

Don Boudreaux ([00:51:36](#)):

I think you overstate the case. I don't think everyone's a libertarian. I think a lot of these progressives-

George Will ([00:51:40](#)):

You're right. I did overstate that.

Don Boudreaux ([00:51:41](#)):

Yeah. The-

George Will ([00:51:43](#)):

The progressives, again, "I boss people around, therefore I am." This is their life.

Don Boudreaux ([00:51:48](#)):

Yeah. That's the presumption.

Bill Walton ([00:51:49](#)):

They're improvers. They want to make [crosstalk 00:51:50] better.

Don Boudreaux ([00:51:50](#)):

Yeah. You might be able to make a case for freedom, but the burden is on you to make a case for freedom, as opposed to the burden being on the proponent of government action to make a case for the government action.

George Will ([00:52:00](#)):

To a progressive, the case for freedom is defeated by one of the consequences of freedom, which is inequality.

Don Boudreaux ([00:52:08](#)):

Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Bill Walton ([00:52:11](#)):

Well, the Europe dissertation was beyond the reach of majorities, closed questions in an open society. So it sounds like you figured that out 50 years ago.

George Will ([00:52:23](#)):

I did. That's a phrase from the West Virginia, B. Barnett. In 1939, the Supreme Court, with war clouds lowering over Europe and the opinion written by a Jewish refugee from Vienna, Felix Frankfurter, affirmed the right of the state of Pennsylvania to require Jehovah's Witnesses' children, in the name of national unity, to salute the flag, which they consider blasphemous.

George Will ([00:52:51](#)):

Just four years later, during war time, the Supreme Court, to its great credit, struck down a similar law affecting similar children in West Virginia saying, "The very purpose of a bill of rights is to play certain things beyond the reach of majorities, above the vicissitudes of politics." That was written by Justice Robert Jackson, who previously was attorney general and later led our delegation at the Nuremberg war crimes trials.

Bill Walton ([00:53:22](#)):

Well, the bill of rights, what we've seen in the last two years is most of the pieces of the bill of rights seem to be badly eroded. I mean, movement, speech, assembly. I guess I'm coming back to where we

started, that... When you talk about protecting minorities, which I totally agree with, what are the institutional frameworks that allow us to do that if we don't look at the constitution as our guide?

George Will ([00:53:54](#)):

Well, all of this is downstream from culture. In *American Happiness and Discontents*, I tried to put together some thoughts I had on how we began to produce children who when they get to college, don't say, "Whoopie, let's exercise free speech." They say, "No, let's find a safe space where we can cower and hunker down while the bias response teams from the administration sweep the campus for offensive speech." How'd this happen?

George Will ([00:54:28](#)):

Now, I think, again, understanding that politics is downstream from culture, that it has to do with the way we parent nowadays, the way we raise children. We have produced, consciously, fragile people, people luxuriating in their fragility, saying, "I'm so exquisitely sensitive that I must be protected from the sharp edges of reality."

Bill Walton ([00:54:52](#)):

Well, we have a gardener, a lovely, lovely young woman. With this whole pandemic happening, when we leave the property, she'd say to us, "Be safe." And I have other plans. I mean, really, if you run your whole life just on being safe, which seems to be the default mode for where we're going, our tolerance for risk is approaching zero. And when that happens, everything shuts down.

John Tamny ([00:55:22](#)):

Can we-

Don Boudreaux ([00:55:22](#)):

It's the dysfunctional consequence of the enormous wealth that we have. We get this impression that we can have at all. Life seems so easy. Life today seems so safe.

George Will ([00:55:33](#)):

One of the reasons this pandemic has had such a traumatic effect is the same reason the AIDS epidemic did. When the AIDS epidemic happened, a generation of Americans who came after the Salk vaccine said, "Oh, well, the Salk vaccine shows how you make great improvements in public health. It's with the technological silver bullet." Not true, but they thought that. I mean, tuberculosis is a much more telling example. About 2% of the cure of tuberculosis was a medicine. 98% was economic growth, economic progress, better hygiene, better housing, better food handling, et cetera, et cetera.

George Will ([00:56:14](#)):

Well, the AIDS epidemic shocked people. They said, "We thought we'd got beyond infectious diseases." Well, it took us four years to identify virus and HIV. Took us, what, six weeks this time around with the COVID-19. Just imagine if it had taken us four years to identify the COVID 19 virus. [crosstalk 00:56:40]-

Bill Walton ([00:56:40](#)):

One last topic and then we've got to get out of here. It's becoming martini hour at our house. China. Is China going to go the way of the tech monopolies? Have they peaked now, or they've overplayed their hand?

George Will ([00:57:02](#)):

I think they have overplayed their hand. And some small platoons around the world are showing the big platoons how to act. The Women's Tennis Association in the United States has shown the NBA, "You want to collaborate with these people, stand up and say it." Lithuania-

Bill Walton ([00:57:20](#)):

Lithuania. Exactly. Yeah.

George Will ([00:57:22](#)):

... has said, "Taiwan, come on in." But I think what makes China particularly dangerous right now is it's in decline.

Bill Walton ([00:57:32](#)):

I agree.

George Will ([00:57:33](#)):

The demographics are destiny for China. They're going to grow gray before they grow rich. They're going to fall into the middle income trap. They're no longer cheap labor. A lot of the things that fuel their growth are going away. They're going to see closing windows of opportunity, say, with regard to Taiwan. And they're going to find that however much they clamp down on the internet, the modern world is porous to ideas in a way that they simply can't control. Autarchy was easier than the 1930s, intellectual as well as economic autarchy.

Bill Walton ([00:58:17](#)):

Well, and I think John's point, they're cracking down on the private tech companies and they're really acting like they're instruments of the state. They're going to lose whatever entrepreneurial dynamism they had.

Don Boudreaux ([00:58:31](#)):

In addition to the demographics, President Xi is moving away from the liberalism that helped China to grow, which is only going to speed up the decline.

John Tamny ([00:58:40](#)):

But the demographics don't factor as much when a world was connected like this. I mean, I just-

Don Boudreaux ([00:58:45](#)):

But China's [crosstalk 00:58:46] itself.

Bill Walton ([00:58:47](#)):

Are you going to immigrate into China?

John Tamny ([00:58:49](#)):

It's fascinating to visit Shanghai and see all the kids.

Bill Walton ([00:58:54](#)):

It's not exactly an open society

John Tamny ([00:58:54](#)):

Oh yeah. But to visit Shanghai and go to VC meetings there, all the young people with US accents that are over there. And to see Shanghai as to see a place that... The state did not plan this. The ability of people to innovate is staggering. I think we're going to be surprised.

Don Boudreaux ([00:59:13](#)):

But isn't the heavy-handed Beijing coming down on Shanghai? It's coming down on Hong Kong.

John Tamny ([00:59:17](#)):

I think if it were, you'd see US stock market's crashing, because what's the biggest market? Apple sells a fifth of its iPhones in China. GM sells more cars in China than North America. 4,200 Starbucks in China on the way to tens of thousands.

Bill Walton ([00:59:33](#)):

Well, it's not just the US.

John Tamny ([00:59:34](#)):

If they crack down, we're going to know it here, which makes me think we're overstating the crackdown. To look at it economically, to visit the cities there, is to be staggered by the progress.

George Will ([00:59:45](#)):

But let me rebanish my pessimistic credentials here. China is first, last, and always a Leninist state. In a Leninist state, the power of the party is everything. If it requires them to sacrifice prosperity, they'll sacrifice prosperity.

Bill Walton ([01:00:06](#)):

That's exactly what they're doing now.

George Will ([01:00:08](#)):

Yes.

Bill Walton ([01:00:08](#)):

That's exactly what Xi's decided. Well, finally, we got to a pessimistic conclusion here.

Don Boudreaux ([01:00:18](#)):

Your reputation stands.

Bill Walton ([01:00:18](#)):

George, you're wonderful. I mean, it's just fun to go from this, to this, to this. I really thank you for joining us. You guys, last question here?

John Tamny ([01:00:27](#)):

We didn't even get to do sports, though. Yeah.

Bill Walton ([01:00:28](#)):

Comments?

George Will ([01:00:29](#)):

Yeah. Well, I'll come back in the baseball season, if there is the baseball season.

Bill Walton ([01:00:33](#)):

Don, anything else you want to add?

Don Boudreaux ([01:00:35](#)):

No, it's just been an honor to be with George Will. As you know, I very much admire your work. And I think you're probably the single-most prominent voice for sanity in the English speaking world today.

George Will ([01:00:47](#)):

Well, my first stop every morning as at Cafe Hayek.

Don Boudreaux ([01:00:51](#)):

That only further enhances the truth of what I just said. Thank you.

John Tamny ([01:00:58](#)):

Thank you very much. What a treat this was. Just a spectacular [crosstalk 01:01:01]-

George Will ([01:01:01](#)):

Thank you, guys.

Bill Walton ([01:01:01](#)):

Good. Will, thank you.

George Will ([01:01:02](#)):

We'll do it again.

Don Boudreaux ([01:01:03](#)):

Thanks, Bill.

Bill Walton ([01:01:03](#)):

Author of [inaudible 01:01:03] book. Yeah, let's continue this conversation because we've, as usual, touched upon just a piece of what we ought to be talking about. So thanks for joining us in the Bill

Walton Show. Been here with George Will, Don Boudreaux, and John Tamny, and we're all hoping to come back and continue the conversation. Hope you enjoyed it.

Bill Walton ([01:01:19](#)):

You can find us on all the major podcast platforms, YouTube and Rumble. I think we've finally got a show that's not going to be pulled from YouTube. So this is a very good thing, although we did predict their demise. Thank you for joining, and we'll talk with you again real soon. Thanks.

Bill Walton ([01:01:40](#)):

I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Want more? Click the subscribe button or head over to the billwaltonshow.com to choose from over a hundred episodes. You can also learn more about our guest on our Interesting People page. Send us your comments. We read every one and your thoughts help us guide the show. If it's easier for you to listen, check out our podcast page and subscribe there. In return, we'll keep you informed about what's true, what's right, and what's next. Thanks for joining.