FULL TRANSCRIPT

Jan Jekielek: Professor Richard Lindzen, such a pleasure to have you on American Thought Leaders.

Richard Lindzen: It's my pleasure as well.

Mr. Jekielek: Let's start with the basic question. We always hear that the science around climate change is settled. Is it indeed settled?

Mr. Lindzen: Of course not. The minute you hear that the science is settled, you know something is wrong, because science is never settled. When you claim it's settled, you want to shut off all disagreement, because you don't have much to present. Mr. Jekielek: You said that science is one of the few words that when you add the word, "the," in front of it, it means the exact opposite.

Mr. Lindzen: Sure. Science is a mode of inquiry. "The science," is science as authority. Political figures, people not in science, have often noticed that science has a certain authority with the public and they want to co-opt it, so they bring in the term, the science, which is how they view science. But that isn't what science is. Science is always open to questioning. Science depends on questions, and depends on being wrong. When you say science cannot be wrong, you've choked off science.

Mr. Jekielek: I want to explore this realm. Some of the people that are citing science really have no idea how science is supposed to work in the first place. I want to talk about the actual science around climate change and what the current state of that science is, as you understand it.

Mr. Lindzen: You're asking for a lot. Climate is a complex subject. We treat it in the press as though it's one number, and that's what climate is. But before this issue, climate science was primarily to understand the Earth's climate at present. The reason that is complicated is represented by something called the Köppen classification. We have dozens of climate regimes on the earth right now, not one, and they all behave somewhat differently. The notion that there is one number, a temperature of the earth that they all work in lockstep with, is absurd. But that number itself, people don't understand what it is. I could ask you, "What is the temperature of the earth?" How do you answer that?

Mr. Jekielek: My answer is that people are taking temperatures in different places around the world and pulling an average out of that.

Mr. Lindzen: You average Mount Everest and the Dead Sea, and what do you get? No, they don't do that. They realize that doesn't work. The first thing is they take what's called the temperature anomaly. At each station, they take a 30-year mean, roughly 1950 to 1980 let's say, and they then look at the deviation from that mean and they average the deviations at each station. You're getting the average temperature change and that's what you see in this graph.

You see this graph. It has been going up since 1800, and certainly by 1880, it's going up by one and a fraction degree, which isn't a heck of a lot. But there's something wrong with that diagram. What's wrong with that diagram is you don't see the data points. You should always see the data points. If you plot that and show the data points, this little thing going up a degree or so is surrounded by dense clouds of data that are ranging from minus 10 to 10, 20 degrees.

The mean anomaly on that looks like a horizontal line. Your first estimate is that it's constant. There's a couple of things to be said about that. You take away the data points and then you expand the scale so that one degree or two degrees occupies your whole graph. Now, it looks big. People don't look at the numbers, and they don't know the data. The data itself is saying that at any given point, almost as many stations are cooling as they are warming. That is saying that it's not telling you about any place, which is consistent with the fact that we have many climates. You're right. Then you smooth it out because you don't want to show the wiggles each year. But if you don't have the wiggles, you don't know what's called the variance, which is about 0.4 degrees, which means anytime the media bloviates about a 0.1 degree increase, they're talking about an insignificant increase. The whole issue at that level depends on a public that is utterly enumerate and cannot read a graph. Unfortunately, when it comes to most politicians, I think that's correct. I've occasionally watched a Senate hearing and somebody comes, Al Gore was often doing this when he was in the Senate, and shows a graph. I thought, "Maybe he's trying to point something out because the graph didn't look right."

No, he wasn't doing that at all. He was showing his colleagues he had a graph as if to say, "Don't screw around with me." It wasn't that this was information. Coupled with ad infinitum repetition, a la Goebbels, and coupled with the media repeating this, most people just can't deal with it. They assume this can't happen unless there's really something there, but there isn't.

Mr. Jekielek: There's a general understanding that there has been a temperature increase and there's a general understanding that humans have been involved to some extent. How much do we actually know around that?

Mr. Lindzen: It is true there is a greenhouse effect. It is due primarily to water vapor and clouds. CO2, methane, and nitrous oxide are minor, minor constituents. Roughly speaking, if all other things are kept constant and you double CO2, you would get a little under one degree of warming. Now, underlying that statement is some other material in a sense.

For instance, you said all things kept equal. There is something called Le Châtelier's principle, which says long-lasting natural systems will resist change, which is to say, feedback would be

negative. Now, in most models today, water vapor and clouds are positive feedback.

There's the underlying assumption that nature will take whatever we do and make it worse. That is kind of an odd assumption, and there's no basis for it, but it does give the models more than a little under a degree. It may even bring it to as high as three degrees.

The next point is that even three degrees isn't that much. We're dealing with changes for a doubling of CO2 on the order of between breakfast and lunch. The thought that people can't handle that is a little bit strange. Where does it come from that this is an existential threat?

Interestingly, it comes from no place except the propaganda. Even the UN's IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] scientific report doesn't speak about an existential threat. They speak about a reduction of GDP [Gross Domestic Product] by 3 percent by 2100, assuming the GDP has increased several times by then. That doesn't sound existential to most people. So, it's a little bit weird.

The other thing they point to is if we went to major changes in the past, the last glacial maximum when you had two kilometers of ice over Illinois or 50 million years ago when you had a warm period with alligator-like critters in Svalbard, north of Norway, the mean temperature change was only five degrees.

They said, "Three degrees could be something serious." The trouble is with the change in the warming of the last 150 years or so, there's no resemblance to the changes during the major change. What happened during the major changes was that the temperature difference between the tropics and the pole, in the case of the last glacial maximum, increased by 20 degrees centigrade. During the warm period, it decreased by 20 degrees. Today, it's about 40. It was 20 during the warm and was about 60 during the glacial period. Of course, that gave a large change in the mean.

During those periods, the tropics remained almost constant. On the other hand, the greenhouse change and the observed change since 1800 or 1880, it doesn't matter, almost all occurred in the tropics and there was no change in the tropics to pole, which is exactly different. Now, why is that important?

The tropics to pole temperature difference depends on the dynamics of the heat transport by motion. To some extent, the equator depends on the greenhouse effect. The change we are seeing could be due to CO2 about a degree, but it is not changing from the tropics to pole. Three degrees is not something amplified at the pole. It's three degrees or one degree or a half degree every place.

The thought that this is existential and requires massive changes is unreasonable. It's absurd. In a way, CO2 is the dream of a regulator. If you control CO2, you control breathing. If you control breathing, you control everything. This always is one temptation. The other temptation is the energy sector. No matter how much you clean fossil fuels, they will always produce water vapor and CO2. You have the whole energy sector that is one of the few sectors that is in the many trillions of dollars. There is a huge opportunity there, even though it makes no sense.

They forget that CO2 is essential. We're treating it as a poison. Most people believe the narrative, and they also believe CO2 is dangerous. For instance, the concentration of CO2 in your mouth is about 40,000 parts per million, as opposed to 400 outside. 5,000 is permitted on a space station.

It's hardly a poison, but worse than that, it's actually essential. If you could get rid of 60 percent of the CO2, we would all be dead. It is very strange to call it a pollutant. It's essential for plant life, and it's the basis for photosynthesis. Yet, because it is the inevitable product of fossil fuel burning and the energy sector, it is being attacked.

Mr. Jekielek: You mentioned the IPCC projections are saying that this increase in temperature will reduce the global GDP. However,

the types of policies that are being advocated all involve a reduction in the energy sector, which of course would mean a much greater reduction in GDP. That's what occurs to me. Mr. Lindzen: You're making an important point. The projections do not include the policies. In other words, they're just looking at if we continue "business as usual," then they get that projection. Now, you're introducing the element that we're having a great deal of policy change. We've already devoted trillions of dollars to windmills and solar panels, and God knows what else. It's interesting in that respect.

Of course, those are opportunities. But if you look at the impact of these, they have increased the cost of energy. They have increased poverty rates. In Europe, this is especially noticeable. They're attacking agriculture because of methane, using logic that makes no sense. For instance, CO2 already does very little, methane does vastly less. But each molecule of methane, because you have so little of it, has more impact.

The regulators say that we must control methane even though the amount of methane is not enough to do anything. Okay, what is the impact of that? You get rid of cattle, which makes no sense. You have ranchers, as well as cattle raisers in Ireland all going under. We're already seeing the malice of this.

Nitrogen is even less, but that is used to get rid of fertilizer, which has led to starvation in Sri Lanka. We're already seeing massive harm from the policies. Now, you could only impose this harm legitimately if it were an existential threat, but if you look at CO2 vs time, you can see that these policies have had no impact on CO2.

They have done nothing to prevent this alleged existential threat except to make people poorer and make society less stable and resilient. You can only account for that as either ignorance or sadism. Yet, people are told, as has often happened in the past, that sadism is virtuous. They want to be virtuous, but they are not told that it's sadistic. Mr. Jekielek: The third option is that people have a very set idea about how the world is going to look in the future, and they don't care what it takes to get there.

Mr. Lindzen: What is the view that you're speaking about? Mr. Jekielek: Essentially, it is that human beings are viewed as a plague on the earth. The effect of human beings on the earth is negative, and we need to reduce that impact at any cost. That's the vision, and whatever tools are needed to get there would be fine. That's a view that I've heard about, and it's not assumed to be a kind of sadism.

Mr. Lindzen: It's a view. It is the view of John Holdren, who was Obama's science advisor. It was a prominent view in the 1970s that we were suffering from overpopulation. Who often wondered about that? It's an interesting view. Malthus had it, of course. It's always proven wrong. At the time of gaining its independence, India's population was something on the order of 200 to 300 [million]. It's now about 1.2 billion. Back when it was [200 to 300 million], India suffered from famine. Now that it has 1.2 billion people, they are a food exporter. Mankind has a certain ingenuity and ability, and so far, we're managing very well. We're now facing a new danger. According to some economists, the population looks like it's going to stop going up, and there are implications for a decreasing population.

Look at the problem with social security. But more than that, it would be a problem if demand starts decreasing because there are fewer people. What do you do about interest rates and investment? We have a lot of thinking to do about population decrease. Worrying about an increase at this stage is probably a moot point.

But you're right, there are people who have that view. The view is malicious. It's insane. It's contrary to data. It makes no sense. It is not a benign view, and I don't think it is at present largely considered to be virtuous. There have to be other motives. Certainly, control is one, and power is another.

When I grew up in the '40s and '50s, something marvelous was going on in the U.S. and actually in much of Europe. Ordinary working people were able to buy homes and cars and have dignity. When I moved to Boston from Chicago, we bought our house from a janitor, and across the street was a carpenter. Today, those people cannot afford to live in that neighborhood. There seems to be a growing resentment of ordinary people living well, and certainly our climate policies and deindustrialization policies are killing that.

Mr. Jekielek: Let's talk about your background. You mentioned moving from Chicago to Boston. Please tell me about your career trajectory. What did you study and how does this intersect with these questions we are discussing?

Mr. Lindzen: I grew up in New York, went to the Bronx High School of Science, and continued on to college. I got a degree from Harvard in applied Math, and then a master's and doctorate at Harvard, so I stayed there for a while. I did postdoctoral work at the University of Washington, because Harvard didn't provide much in the way of observational work, but Washington did. I went to Norway for a year. There was a prominent meteorologist there, Arnt Eliassen, who I enjoyed working with. Then I went to work at a national lab, the National Center for Atmospheric Research. My area was atmospheric dynamics, but my thesis was the interaction of motion with chemistry and radiation.

I had reasonably productive years and solved a number of basic problems. One concerned the motion over the equator in the stratosphere. It's very peculiar. It goes from east to west for about a year and then turns around, and goes the other way for a year. The average period is 26 months.

We explained how that worked. There's an old problem in tides that we solved. I had a bit of a reputation and I got a tenure offer from the University of Chicago. We were there, and I liked Chicago, but my wife was already concerned with the safety issues there. After a few years, I got an offer for a chair at Harvard.

I accepted that, and we moved to Boston. I spent about 12 years as a professor at Harvard and was the Burden chair of atmospheric science. A close friend and colleague at MIT was a man named Jule Charney. Jule was considered the preeminent dynamic meteorologist of the post-war period. He died, his chair was offered to me, and I accepted it. In the meantime, I was elected to the National Academy '77.

I moved to MIT, and it was the usual, with lots of students and something on the order of 250 publications. That also is a bit strange in a way. Jule Charney had about 60 publications in his lifetime. We had Ed Lorenz on the faculty, who some would say is the very prominent father of chaos theories. Again, he had relatively few publications. During my career, people started publishing much more.

This was because grants became more important and harder to get, and journals were proliferating. I'm still a little bit concerned about that in science. When I started, if you published one or two papers a year, that was considered good and the papers were substantial. Compared to the old papers, I've noticed that now they are broken into 10 papers and published in parts, so they really don't add to progress.

Mr. Jekielek: You also developed something directly related to this question of global warming, which is the iris hypothesis.

Mr. Lindzen: Yes, there are a number of things I have done. There are two domains, the equator, and tropics to pole temperature difference, which depends on hydrodynamics and the tropical temperature, which depends on greenhouse processes. The models assume the feedbacks are positive. They all make things worse.

When I was consulting at NASA with two colleagues, we tried to look at what was happening to the water vapor and clouds. We noticed a very important greenhouse substance, where the upper level thin clouds, cirrus, often detrained from cumulonimbus towers, so you had these big convective towers. At the end, they detrained water vapor and it gave rise to thin clouds. We noticed that these thin clouds were extremely important greenhouse substances.

In particular, they responded to temperature. When it got warmer, they contracted. When it got colder, they expanded. They were acting against greenhouse warming and acting as negative feedback. It's interesting, and it's typical of this field.

I published this paper with the two co-authors in the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society. Ten years previous to that, I had already published a paper presenting some questions about global warming. Although this paper was reviewed and published, the editor was immediately fired for letting it through.

Mr. Jekielek: The editor of the whole journal?

Mr. Lindzen: Yes. The American Meteorological Society had gone along with this saying, "Yes, we're in favor of the narrative," and worked hard. Eventually, it became almost totally impossible to publish. You still could publish a little and get it through. But the editors were required to use referees, or at least include referees who were gatekeepers, who would be guaranteed to reject. Eventually, they said, "We will accept with major revisions," to keep the author busy for a year and then reject. Climate is one of the earliest examples of cancel culture. When the issue opened up in the early '90s, most media forecasters thought it was silly. The American Meteorological Society actually certifies weathermen, not researchers, but weathermen. They began saying they wouldn't certify anyone who questioned warming, and that they had to go for reeducation. Today, you don't hear anyone in the media who will question this. I don't think the public is guite aware of the pressures that were brought to bear to get rid of opposition to this.

I prepared a list of prominent people in my field who opposed this in the early '90s and up to the present. They were directors of major labs, heads of weather bureaus, and the head of the world meteorological organization. These are really prominent people—buried.

In the early '90s, especially under Clinton-Gore, but also somewhat under Bush, the funding for climate in total went up by about a factor of 15. They literally created a new community that knew that that community existed only because of the narrative. Mr. Jekielek: You're describing parallels to more recent scenarios, notably around Covid. Have you made that observation? Mr. Lindzen: Yes, and other people have observed it. It's amazing with Covid, because in a way, medical science is much bigger than climate science. I was very impressed, because you had the Great Barrington Declaration. You had 30,000 people agree to it, contradicting the narrative on Covid, and they were shut down. But yes, we were familiar with that. It's been going on for a while in my field.

Mr. Jekielek: You're arguing they are creating a bulletproof narrative that is based on entirely false pretenses.

Mr. Lindzen: Yes, but not entirely. There is a greenhouse effect. It depended on people not thinking that a degree was small. That's amazing to me. They see a graph which goes up one degree, but they don't look at the scale. They are told this is huge, and then people say, "It's huge." You have politicians saying, "If it goes up another half degree, we're all going to boil." You have people believing that, and never questioning if a half degree would bring anything to a boil. If it really can, can I patent it, please? Mr. Jekielek: You published a paper in Tablet a couple of years back, looking at the way that the Chinese Communist Party deals with climate and how the West deals with China in this respect. It exposes a certain kind of cynicism around this issue. You codified it so succinctly in this Tablet piece. Let's explore that.

Mr. Lindzen: Okay. That was a very brief piece that said no matter what we were doing in the EU or in the Anglosphere, it obviously was having no impact on the increase of CO2. One of the obvious reasons for this is that China and India and every place other than the EU and the Anglosphere are building coal-fired plants and using fossil fuels and ignoring the whole issue. They are now major emitters. There are people who are arguing there are natural reasons for this too. I'm no expert in that, but the anthropogenic sources are still there. We are having no impact. Today, it's pretty clear that if you buried the EU and the Anglosphere, sealed it closed, we're all dead, we're all gone, and there is no activity and impact, CO2 would continue to increase. The guestion is, "What's this all about then?" At the time, I noticed that a Chinese group was actually organizing meetings of American graduate students and offering prizes for the most alarming projections. There was an obvious cynicism in the process, but clearly, China and India and Southeast Asia are benefiting immensely. At the same time, Africa and much of South Asia is suffering from these policies.

Mr. Jekielek: Are they suffering from policies forced on them by these large institutions that prevent them from developing reliable energy sources?

Mr. Lindzen: Sure, these are people who don't have access to modern electricity are being told they should be frozen in that state. Over much of Africa, people are depending on burning dung for fuel, which is much more polluting. I was just shocked when the World Bank refused financing for a hospital in the Congo unless it used renewable energy. I was thinking, "Who of these idiots would want to be operated on in a hospital running on solar or wind?"

It's hard to describe. What's going on? The West is beginning to feel it in the high prices and the inflation. Hopefully, in England, people are waking up when they are told to get rid of their heating plant and put in a heat pump that's run on renewables.

Then we have the electric car, which is a typical political thing. Electric cars only make sense vis-a-vis pollution. They do make sense for urban pollution. A friend of mine who bought a Tesla put on a bumper sticker that said, "My car runs on coal."

Of course, people who think that electricity comes from the tap, cannot imagine that an electric car needing to charge a battery gets it from a power plant, as opposed to the tap. In much of the world and in much of the country, that power plant will use fossil fuel. Moreover, it will be fossil fuel that has been converted twice to reach mechanical energy. It will be less efficient in terms of emissions and other things than a gas powered car.

Mr. Jekielek: The largest Tesla fast charging station out there has a concealed diesel generator running it.

Mr. Lindzen: Yes, something has to generate the electricity. As I've pointed out, history will regard this as one of the silliest periods in human history. You had a world in which

industrialization and scientific developments were so important, which then fell apart due to ignorance and stupidity.

Mr. Jekielek: We believe a lot of things that are untrue today, and we're told that they're scientifically proven. It goes back to science vs. the science. We have to unravel this somehow.

Mr. Lindzen: Yes. I have neighbors here in Newton. They are educated people and they're not stupid. They have lawn signs saying, "We believe in science." Science isn't a belief structure. It isn't a cult, and it isn't a religion. But they have that sign and they're totally unaware of how stupid that sign is.

I have one fairly eccentric view, which is that I object to science education in elementary school, because it is usually just facts about science. It starts kids off with the wrong idea of what science is. You have to be ready for science. The scientific revolution was a revolution. It is the notion that you confirm things with data and you check things. The whole notion that a theory could have 100 correct predictions, but if it has one incorrect one, there is something wrong with the theory, goes against a lot of human thinking. That theory required a certain discipline. To treat it as something simple and obvious may be misleading. One of the international panels on climate change at the UN always has these lengthy reports with thousands of pages. Then they will have general summaries, summaries for policymakers, and finally, these iconic statements that summarize the 3,000 pages in one sentence.

Of course, only the science reports or the Working Group 1 Report are science. Everything else is written by government officials and they are dicey. But then there comes the iconic statement. The iconic statement at that time was that they're now almost certain that most of the climate change, the warming since 1960, was due to man. Now, if most it was, or even all of it, you are talking about a fraction of a degree.

If you looked at simple models of climate, the most consistent said that it was no problem at all. On the other hand, when Senators McCain and Lieberman heard this, what was their response? Their response was, "This is the smoking gun. We must do something." It didn't have any such implication. But certainly, as long as it was coupled with funding, the UN and the science community wasn't going to complain. You have this constant triangle of misinterpretation where scientists make an innocent statement, politicians misrepresent it as catastrophic, and then they provide more funding for science or for the field, like climate measures. The first group doesn't complain. Mr. Jekielek: None of this is academic and we're reorganizing our entire society around carbon credits. In Africa, these kinds of policies are not academic and they are increasing mortality significantly. People are dying because of these policies. Mr. Lindzen: Yes. In fact, I have an interview with the Kenyan TV station in a couple of days. They are being besieged by the propaganda that this is an existential threat, and that they must forgo development, which is horrifying. As I told you with the hospital in the Congo, the World Bank insisted that they run on renewables. Then the rare earths needed for these batteries are

often mined by children under extraordinarily unhealthy conditions. A few leaders in Africa are recognizing this may be worse than colonialism.

Mr. Jekielek: People that are making policy really don't even understand the basics of how science works, perhaps lending some credibility to your eccentric idea about education around science. Obviously, it is highly problematic that science is increasingly being cited as the bulletproof reason for everything. Mr. Lindzen: However you feel about Fauci, when he said, "I am the science," he should have been fired on the spot. Do you know the name C.P. Snow at all? He was a famous person 50, 60 years ago. He was a British physicist who was also a science advisor to Churchill during the war, and involved with radar.

But he was also an author, and he began pushing a theme called Two Cultures. He realized that well-educated people in the humanities were almost totally ignorant of science. He used the example of asking one of his colleagues outside of science, "What was the second law of thermodynamics?" The answer he got was a blank face. That was the equivalent of them saying, "I've never read Shakespeare."

Then he asked, "Can you define acceleration? They failed again, and that was the equivalent of them saying, "I don't know how to read." He was appalled at the degree of isolation from science that most educated people have. That's dangerous. I don't know how you solve it, but it opens society to this kind of fraudulence. Mr. Jekielek: And manipulation.

Mr. Lindzen: Yes, of course. Science is successful. Science has given us the smartphone. You should trust it. But of course, you should first ascertain whether the person asking you to trust it knew what he was talking about. Again, I never find anyone who checks anything.

For instance, when you are told that this is an existential threat and that all scientists agree on this, you can check it. You can look at the IPCC report online and actually see that it doesn't say that. But people don't check it, which is a problem. In my view, it's an insoluble problem. At some level, one requires integrity, and that has been in short supply.

Mr. Jekielek: There has been the rise of a technocratic, bureaucratic class that assumes they should be able to interpret those issues for the rest of society. They ask, "How can the rest of society know about these issues if they are not experts?" This elite class believes they should be doing the governance. Taking COVID as an example, we can see the abject failure of that model. We need to retool here in order to get at the truth. Mr. Lindzen: Yes, that's a big problem. This was the basis for the creation of the civil service in the U.S., because we needed objective experts who could provide guidance. It's not an implausible notion, but we have seen time and again how it can be abused. I wrote a piece some years ago comparing the climate change hysteria to the eugenics movement. There are close analogies to that movement as well.

You're bringing up something that's very difficult. How do you change this? In reality, science has been valuable. It has revolutionized the world. People do trust it, but the funding of science is a monopoly of the government, and the government occasionally feels motivated to use the authority of science. For people who don't know about it, eugenics was literally about controlling the breeding of people to produce superior or better types. It was started in the 1880s by the founders of modern statistics, but it never caught on. It was mathematical. But then when they rediscovered Mendelian genetics and someone could say that feeble mindedness was a single recessive gene, they went to town, and that was crucial. People have a need to understand. Even if they're given something that's wrong, but it's simple, there's a relief for the non-scientists, because now they think that they understand.

A similar thing was when Al Gore said, "Greenhouse gasses are like a blanket and they cause warming." He said, "Now, I

understand. This is simple enough for me." John Kerry carried it one step further. He gave a talk in Indonesia where he acknowledged that we all know chemistry and physics are very difficult, but climate science is so simple and any child can understand it.

You have to appeal to people's insecurity about science, and then make them feel like they understand it. The single gene theory was one, the blanket theory is another. America had an immigration issue at that time. There were statistics based on IQ tests given by the Army in the English language that immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were feeble-minded, so we needed restrictions to prevent an epidemic of feeblemindedness in the U.S.

As ridiculous as that sounds, Alexander Graham Bell, Margaret Sanger, Vincent Peale, and George Bernard Shaw all endorsed this. We've been through this kind of thing before. What Congress did in promoting the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924 and basing it on the science, was to pick its own scientist, a man called Laughlin, who endorsed this and ignored all the scientists who were rather quietly objecting.

Mr. Jekielek: With the whole concept of eugenics, the underlying assumption is that you have a right to engineer humanity.

Mr. Lindzen: That's a fair point. On the other hand, you had Supreme Court judges supporting it by saying two generations of idiots were enough.

Mr. Jekielek: In that wonderful piece on China and climate change that you wrote a couple of years back, you talk about how the correct social policy needs to be creating resilience to problems and disasters. That would be the correct approach.

Mr. Lindzen: Yes, this would be the issue of adaptation. With COVID, a lot of people complained, I think legitimately, about the emphasis of the treatment. It was just the vaccine or the ventilator. If you were rational and honest about your climate policies, you would see that your policies are having no impact on

what you're claiming is the cause of climate disruption. Of course, the decent, moral policy would be to prepare your society in such a manner that it was most resilient against whatever changes you thought were coming.

We know that is important. When a hurricane or an earthquake hits Haiti, you have many thousands dead. It's a poor country and it doesn't have resilience. The same earthquake hits Los Angeles, and you have less than a handful of deaths, because we're a richer society. We can build structures that are earthquake resistant.

We know that wealth helps resilience and poverty hurts it. If you were facing a situation where you're saying that climate change is due to CO2 and that it's existential, would you work to reduce the resilience of your society? But that is what we are doing. We've got a great many people who have been told that putting solar panels on their roof is a sign of virtue. For the educated middle class, there seems to be a desperation to be perceived as virtuous, and I'm not sure what underlies that. Maybe it's guilt about being prosperous, but it's certainly obvious in any wealthy suburb. Then what do you do?

Mr. Jekielek: Maybe we're not really being taught at the core about how important it is to be virtuous and how to be virtuous, and so it's being taught to us from a place where it has no business being taught.

Mr. Lindzen: That's a very serious question. There is a global organization starting up in the UK called the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship, which is really what you're talking about. It's obvious we don't have a good idea about that, because one part of virtue is to accept responsibility and to check what you're being virtuous about. Instead, we grab at anything somebody tells us is virtuous. We grab at something to proclaim our virtue. Putting up a poster that says you believe in science is pretty simple. Checking facts is harder, but it's not that hard. Virtue should ultimately involve some effort. Mr. Jekielek: It does. In the West, maybe we've reached this point where everything just has to be incredibly convenient. If it's too difficult, we'll pass on it. In almost every discipline that I'm exploring, these same kinds of questions keep coming up. Mr. Lindzen: Yes, these are ubiquitous questions. We're talking about something that specifically involves science, but there are also other issues. But Covid, climate change, eugenics, or the Soviet Union Lysenkoism were all issues where a government had a view about what they wanted science to say, and they successfully imposed it on the public. How shall I put it? My parents and my family fled Europe. Most of the family was killed during the war and Holocaust. But somehow, Hitler managed to convince a large part of his nation that it was virtuous to follow him.

That's how far it can go. The government always has the power to strongly influence how you view what is good. With the Soviet Union or national socialism, the power was with the army that could control through violence. Unfortunately, this is also a characteristic of banana republics, and one has to be wary of that. I think we're not sufficiently wary. We're not sufficiently wary when we're forced to be frightened. Almost any scam tries to frighten people so that they no longer respond rationally, and we're seeing that time and again.

Mr. Jekielek: Absolutely. As we finish up, I'm going to ask you a practical question. Let's say you have a young daughter. She's in school, she comes home, and she has just learned that because of global warming, we only have a few years left. She is incredibly distraught. You're a parent or a friend of the family. What do you say to her?

Mr. Lindzen: You have to tell her that this is nonsensical. But of course, children are taught to believe their teachers. If the parents feel up to it, they could try complaining to the teacher, but it's a difficult issue. Yes, I'm not the only person who suggests that teaching children this is child abuse.

The parents should understand that even the UN doesn't say anything like that. This is just designed to frighten the children, and frightening children is child abuse. This business of taking away hope from children is criminal.

Mr. Jekielek: Covid and the whole accelerated version of the way climate change has been dealt with over the last 40 years has exposed that just something isn't right. Information that we are being given with near absolute certainty just doesn't add up, and people are becoming more skeptical. Even the term, "Do your own research," was actually looked down on by the status quo. Mr. Lindzen: There are clues when somebody speaks of the science, speaks of the authority, and speaks about the science being settled. These should be red flags. There are certain things that are always dangerous signals; promotion of fear, promotion of hate, and the declaration of settled science. I've never seen them used benignly. Opening up discussion about these things and getting through on this is helpful. People have to start thinking about this, but it's just much easier to go with the flow.

At universities, for instance, how should I put it? Now, universities are dominated by administrators. They are more numerous than students in some places, and their main concern is raising money. If the government says, "We're going to give a lot of money for this," then that is what they're in favor of. It has always amazed me that universities are almost the first group to suck up to them on any such issue.

I'm biased in that in some respects by having a family background in Germany, where my father was a boot maker. When Hitler came to power in 1933, the universities, before he even asked them, got rid of all their Jews, including converts to Lutheranism, who had been born Jewish. Fritz Haber was a Nobel laureate and a German patriot who had converted. He was fired.

On the other hand, I looked at my father's papers. When he died, he had been an observant Jew. He had been admitted to the guild in 1936 after Hitler was in power. Somehow, boot makers seemed to have more integrity than academics in a sense, in that their value was concrete. You're a boot maker, and you make a good boot. Something is missing in academia today in that respect. Mr. Jekielek: Dr. Richard Lindzen, it's such a pleasure to have you on the show.

Mr. Lindzen: Good meeting you, Jan. Thank you.

Mr. Jekielek: Thank you all for joining Professor Richard Lindzen and me on this episode of American Thought Leaders. I'm your host, Jan Jekielek.

This interview was edited for clarity and brevity.