

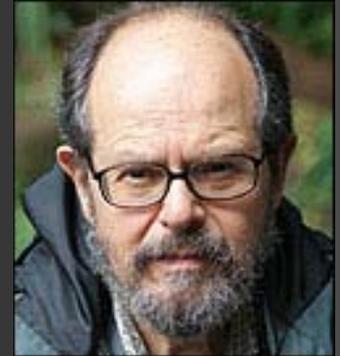
# RICHARD S. LINDZEN: BIOGRAPHY AND ASSERTIONS OF A CONTRARIAN



By Desiree Danielson

# Biographical Information

- Richard S. Lindzen was born on February 8, 1940 in Webster, Massachusetts.
- Grew up mainly in the Bronx, NY.
- Began his undergraduate Physics degree at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute but transferred and received his degree from Harvard. Also received an Applied Mathematics postgraduate and doctorate degree from Harvard.
- Has been a professor at MIT since 1983, but has also taught at Harvard, and other institutions.
- Has been a member of the National Academy of Science since age 37. He's also a member of the American Meteorological Society, the American Academy of Arts and Science, and many more.
- Has received many honors including: the AMS Meisinger Award, the Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, and membership to the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.
- Was a lead author of the 2001 IPCC report.
- Was a lifelong Democrat, but switched parties because of the climate change issue.
- He and wife Nadine have two sons.
- His other interests include amateur radio, photography, and oriental rugs.



## Notes Slides 1 & 2

- His father was a shoemaker, and both parents fled from Nazi Germany. When they arrived in America they originally went to Massachusetts but ended up in the Bronx, NY.
- When they first moved to the Bronx they were the only Jewish family in a Roman-Catholic neighborhood; I guess he's used to being the odd-man out.
- Clearly he's well educated.
- He even spent some time here at UW as a Research Associate in Meteorology from 1964-1965.
- He is a member of these scientific institutions: the American Meteorological Society, the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Science, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Geophysical Union, the European Geophysical Society, the World Institute of Sciences, the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.
- His list of honors goes on and on...: Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, the NCAR Outstanding Publication Award 1967, AMS Meisinger Award 1968, AGU Macelwane Award 1969, Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship 1970-1976, Vikram Amblal Sarabhai Professor at Physical Research Laboratory Ahmedabad India 1985, AMS Charney Award 1985, Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science Fellowship Dec. 1986-Jan. 1987, Membership in the National Academy of Sciences, Fellowship to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, Fellowship to the American Meteorological Society, Fellowship to the American Geophysical Union, Fellowship to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Sackler Visiting Professor Tel Aviv University January 1992, Landsdowne Lecturer University of Victoria March 1993, Membership to the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, the Bernhard Haurwitz Memorial Lecturer American Meteorological Society 1997, the Leo Prize of the Wallin Foundation (first recipient) 2006
  - My point is, professor Wallace is certainly correct in identifying him as a reputable contrarian.
- He did author a chapter of the IPCC report but was later upset because of how it was summarized by non-scientists, and worse, portrayed by the media.

### Sources:

- "Lindzen, Richard S.: Alfred P. Sloan Professor of Meteorology, Department of Earth, Atmospheric and Planetary Science," MIT Website Richard Lindzen Home Page, <http://www-eaps.mit.edu/faculty/lindzen.htm>
- "Curriculum Vitae," MIT Website Richard Lindzen Home Page, <http://www-eaps.mit.edu/faculty/lindzen/CV.pdf>
- Edwin Cartlidge, "Climate of Alarm: Interview with Richard Lindzen," *Physics World Magazine* Website, <http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/26945>
- Richard Lindzen, "Climate of Fear," *The Wall Street Journal* Website, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110008220>
- William K. Stevens, "Richard S. Lindzen: It's Getting Hotter; So What? A Skeptic Asks," *The New York Times Scientists At Work*, ed. Laura Chang (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000) 256-261.
- Slide 1 photo from *Outside Magazine* Online, Slide 2 photo from NPR Website

# Dissenting Opinion

- Lindzen calls the prevailing opinion on global warming, “baseless alarmism.”
- Agrees on the IPCC report’s figures for rise in temperature and concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the last century.
- He doesn’t agree with the extent of the predicted warming.
- He says “the public fails to grasp” that the IPCC figures above “neither constitute support for alarm nor establish man’s responsibility for the small amount of warming that has occurred.”
- Therefore, he doesn’t agree with the predicted sea-level rise or increased risk of floods and droughts.
- He also claims that even if these effects occurred, there’s nothing we can do to stop it.



### Notes Slide 3: Dissenting Opinion

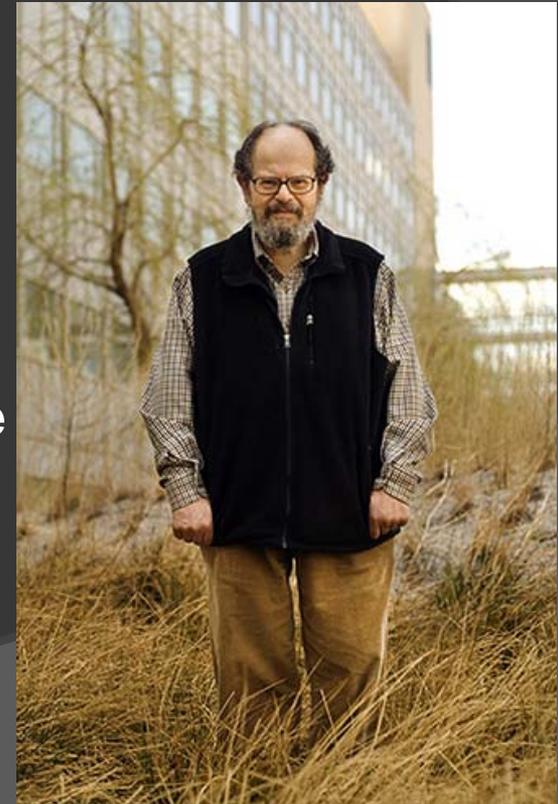
- He doesn't believe in the predicted warming because he maintains that CO<sub>2</sub> produces only a small amount of warming. He says that although CO<sub>2</sub> has risen by roughly 1/3, most of the effects of the warming has already been exacted on the earth.
- In the article/interview I read from *Physics World Magazine*, the interviewer, Edwin Cartlidge wrote that Lindzen agreed that much of the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> over the last century was caused by human activity. However, Lindzen, in his own op-ed piece for the *Wall Street Journal*, claimed that the rise in temperature and CO<sub>2</sub> concentration don't mean that humanity is responsible. There seems to be a discontinuity here.
- The *Physics World* article was written in 2007, while the op-ed piece was written in 2006. Being limited in my ability to do further research, I surmise that Lindzen recanted his position that the CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations were not in large part increased by humanity, or that he meant that humanity is not responsible for causing large scale global warming, because the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere cannot/will not have dangerous warming effects.
- It is certain that he doesn't believe that *all* the warming over the last century was due to human activity.

### Sources

- Edwin Cartlidge, "Climate of Alarm: Interview with Richard Lindzen," *Physics World Magazine* Website, <http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/26945>
- Richard Lindzen, "Climate of Fear," *The Wall Street Journal* Website, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110008220>
- William K. Stevens, "Richard S. Lindzen: It's Getting Hotter; So What? A Skeptic Asks," *The New York Times Scientists At Work*, ed. Laura Chang (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000) 256-261.
- Photo from *Seed Magazine* website

# Basis for Dissent

- Lindzen claims carbon dioxide doesn't produce that much warming because the warming effect of each CO<sub>2</sub> molecule decreases as more CO<sub>2</sub> is pumped into the atmosphere.
- He says climate models are too sensitive because they don't accurately replicate the feedbacks of the Earth's climate system. For example, they amplify warming by figuring in increased warming due to clouds and water vapor.
- Claims that clouds and water vapor actually provide negative feedbacks in the climate system through the "infrared iris effect."
- He asserts climate models are inaccurate because they don't have completely certain temperature measurements plugged into them.



## Notes Slide 4: Basis for Dissent

- According to Lindzen: not only does the warming effect decrease with increase of CO<sub>2</sub>, Methane and other greenhouse gases like CFCs aren't likely to rise in concentration in the atmosphere in the next century, so there will be little warming. He believes that the rise in temperature caused by 560ppm will only be about 0.3-0.4°C.
- He says ground and space observations show when ground level temperatures are higher, upper level clouds contract to counterbalance the effect of warming (they expand when ground level temperatures are lower, also). This is what he calls the infrared iris effect.

## Sources

- Edwin Cartlidge, "Climate of Alarm: Interview with Richard Lindzen," *Physics World Magazine Website*, <http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/26945>
- Richard Lindzen, "Climate of Fear," *The Wall Street Journal Website*, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110008220>
- William K. Stevens, "Richard S. Lindzen: It's Getting Hotter; So What? A Skeptic Asks," *The New York Times Scientists At Work*, ed. Laura Chang (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000) 256-261.
- Photo from flickr.com

# Moral Objection

- Lindzen feels alarm, rather than genuine scientific curiosity, is now the motivating factor in researching climate change.
- Feels there are many more contrarians who don't object because they don't want to lose prestige or funding.
- Implies his paper on the "Infrared Iris Effect" was discredited unjustly.
- Feels that scientists who are not climate specialists, shouldn't be speaking on the issue.
- Is upset about the shaping environmental organizations, industry and government did to the IPCC report.
- Is upset about how the media made the IPCC findings seem catastrophic.



## Notes Slide 5: Moral Objection

- Based on what I researched about Lindzen, I think he would agree with this political cartoon.
- He says he first became concerned about the reaction to climate change in 1989 when he was lecturing for Tufts University and many people walked out because he voiced contrarian views. He says he thought, “here was an issue that was running away, developing a reality that transcended science.”
- Lindzen says he receives phone-calls from many contrarians like himself who thank him for speaking out.
- He says he has heard many programme managers admit that funding for research depends upon the researcher’s concern that the earth is warming.
- He said this is what happened with his finding on the iris effect: “Normally, criticism of papers appears in the form of letters to the journal to which the original authors can respond *immediately*. However, in this case (and others) a flurry of hastily prepared papers appeared, claiming errors in our study, with *our responses delayed months and longer*. The *delay permitted our paper to be commonly referred to as ‘discredited.’* Indeed, there is a strange reluctance to actually find out how climate really behaves.” (emphasis, my own).
- He even declared there was a “special place in hell,” for scientists who were not climate-scientists who tried to get in on the issue; Lindzen seems to have a fiery personality.
- Lindzen’s motivation, it seems to me at least, is to react strongly against “alarmism.”

### Sources:

- Edwin Cartlidge, “Climate of Alarm: Interview with Richard Lindzen,” *Physics World Magazine Website*, <http://physicsworld.com/cws/article/print/26945>
- Richard Lindzen, “Climate of Fear,” *The Wall Street Journal Website*, <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110008220>
- William K. Stevens, “Richard S. Lindzen: It’s Getting Hotter; So What? A Skeptic Asks,” *The New York Times Scientists At Work*, ed. Laura Chang (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000) 256-261.
- Political cartoon by Henry Payne, from [HenryPayne.com](http://HenryPayne.com)