

TBWS 2 16 21 Tucker and Magness

Speaker 1 ([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 ([00:23](#)):

Welcome to the Bill Walton Show. I'm Bill Walton, and feeling a bit today like Captain Ahab after the white whale. In my case, the white whale would be the truth about what's happening with COVID and lockdowns, and what's real, what's not real. We're hearing a lot that I think is inaccurate, and hopefully today we'll get to the bottom. Last week I had Jeffrey Tucker on, who's the Editorial Director at the American Institute for Economic Research. I think one of the best boutiques going, studying these kinds of phenomena. And we thought it'd be useful together, we talked afterwards about bringing his colleague Senior Research Fellow Phillip Magness on the show because Phillip's done a lot of work on the scientific research, the statistical models, and so forth surrounding the pandemic. So Jeffrey, Phillip, Phil, welcome.

Phil Magness ([01:20](#)):

Thanks for having us.

Jeffrey Tucker ([01:20](#)):

Thanks, yeah.

Bill Walton ([01:22](#)):

Phil, let's start with you. We all got into this last year with the computer models. Imperial College told us we were all going to die and great percentages of our population. The government's locked down taking that as science. What about those models, and where are we now?

Phil Magness ([01:47](#)):

Well, if everyone remembers back to almost a year ago on March 16th, that's when Imperial College of London and a team led by this statistical modeler, he's actually a physicist by the name of Neil Ferguson, released these catastrophic projections of 2.2 million people in the United States were going to die of COVID-19. And this is the turning point of the scientific discussion around COVID in both the United States and the UK because he had a similar catastrophic model where half a million people would die in the UK. And this release from Imperial College swayed both governments to basically flip on what they were going to do in terms of their COVID policy and urge the adoption of lockdown. So this is probably the biggest turning point in the entire pandemic in terms of the policy response. It moved two major Western governments, supposedly liberal democracies, away from a mitigation strategy and towards the suppression strategy built around lockdowns.

Bill Walton ([02:53](#)):

There were a lot of us skeptical about that model almost immediately after it came out, but we didn't know a lot then. What do we know now that we didn't know then about the actual outcomes?

Phil Magness ([03:04](#)):

Well I think first and foremost, the Imperial College model has failed catastrophically in its predictions. It's always been too high, and that's even compared to some of the other models. There was a study that came out in November that compared Imperial's strategy for modeling the pandemic against six other models that had run, and it's the clear outlier. It's the one that always runs hot, and it runs hot by a significant amount. So the further out you get in time, the more it overshoots the death projections.

Bill Walton ([03:36](#)):

Well, Jeffrey, you talked last time, I think it'd be worth expanding on it, the notion that the models really ignored human behavior. Same issues we have with all econometric models. I think I pronounced that right.

Jeffrey Tucker ([03:50](#)):

Yeah, no. Human behavior is not even part of the model. It's entirely an agent based model. I was watching last night there was a summit, or yesterday, last week sometime, a summit on zero COVID. These are people who believe you can suppress SARS-CoV-2, wipe it out by driving down the [inaudible 00:04:10] through extreme isolation, all this kind of stuff. And a guy was presenting, he was a computer scientist, and he was presenting the relationship between infections and add mitigation strategies, non-pharmacologic interventions, and it was purely a computer model.

Jeffrey Tucker ([04:24](#)):

He said, "Well, let's see what happens. So the pathogen comes, we shut schools, sporting events, and businesses. And now all the case drop, drop drop, but then we might be tempted to open them again. But then the cases will go up again. So what we really need to do," and he reruns the model, he says, "We need to close schools, businesses, sporting events, churches, and have lockdown orders. And now look what happens." And you're watching this and thinking, this man is a psychopath. To actually believe you can model a society without any regard for human rights, or dreams, or aspirations, or the law, or anything.

Phil Magness ([05:11](#)):

They basically treat a human society like a giant computer game. And I mean that literally. If you go back to some of the interviews with some of these people, they all liken their computer models and the ideas behind what they're doing with COVID to, if you remember, if you grew up in the 1990s, there was this computer game called Sim City 2000.

Bill Walton ([05:30](#)):

I loved Sim City.

Phil Magness ([05:31](#)):

Exactly, exactly. There's all these derivatives. There's the Sims, there's all these games that came out of it. And they're about how these little fake computerized human beings interact in a city. And you have

several epidemiologists said that we use that as our model for figuring out how COVID would spread through society. It's just basically treating it like a computer game.

Bill Walton ([05:53](#)):

There's similarity to that, because it's probably change with all the differences in games in the last 20 years, but when I was playing the way you could win for sure was you got rid of that monster that came in every 20 minutes and destroyed everything.

Phil Magness ([06:11](#)):

So COVID's the monster that flies in.

Bill Walton ([06:13](#)):

Right. So we brought back, you flash forward 20 years, the COVID sort of seems like that monster, which leads me to the question, how lethal is this? To back up the pandemic in 1918, what 30 million people died. There was a way lethality rate in the mid-teens or something like that. And there are other SARS and some other examples of pandemics, which really are scary. And you really do need to ...

Jeffrey Tucker ([06:44](#)):

Sure, but it's funny, ever since from the beginning, we keep asking this question, how bad is it? And we want to know, is this bad?

Bill Walton ([06:52](#)):

We want to know. We want to know.

Jeffrey Tucker ([06:53](#)):

Is it bad? Is 1918? Or is it more like a normal endemic equilibrium flu. And it's funny, even the CDC has graded scales, mild, a little serious, really severe, and catastrophic. And they color code it and you're supposed to adopt these disease mitigation strategies based on how serious it is. The problem is that you don't really know, certainly at the outset of something or even in the middle of something, what the waves are going to look like, who is most effected. You can maybe kind of get a sense, but there's a lot of fog of war associated with every pandemic. And the problem through the models is they always presume you know. The pathogen comes, and it's got a name, and it comes tagged and color coded. I'm SARS-CoV-2 and I'm really red.

Jeffrey Tucker ([07:52](#)):

And so one of the confusions we've had about this all along is we don't really know how to talk about it. The problem is there are very, very severe outcomes under some cases of SARS-CoV-2. Very severe outcomes even for people under the age of 60, given certain health conditions or immuno deficiencies. And there are always anecdotes of terrible, terrible things that happened. But ...

Bill Walton ([08:19](#)):

But they're just that, they're anecdotes.

Jeffrey Tucker ([08:22](#)):

Yeah, they're anecdotes [crosstalk 00:08:23].

Bill Walton (08:24):

I had a very scary meeting with a Congressman 15 years ago, 20. I had just come to Washington, I was running a public company, and I wanted to understand how Congress thinks. And I'm in talking with this guy and he says, well, we're going to do this law because this happened. And I said, "Wait a second. You're going to write a law that's going to affect millions of businesses and tens of millions of people based on this anecdote, because of this bad thing that happened to this woman at this point in time." We're supposed to change all our behavior based on that. It seems like that's a lot what we're looking at here.

Jeffrey Tucker (08:59):

Yeah, even the New York Times this morning ran a huge article about, did you see that headline? It was about, oh, lots of children's suffering from longterm ailments and death from SARS-CoV-2. But then you read it and there were three stories. There were three stories and no information about how common this is, or even its relationship to the virus [inaudible 00:09:22] as versus other comorbidities. There's a lot of press fear-mongering. They love it.

Bill Walton (09:28):

Well, we've talked about this before, if we really believed that this was, that the lethality rate were 10% or something like that, we would have one view. We don't think that based on the science that we've looked at and the statistics we've looked at. And I took a lot of statistic classes as a kid, but we really can't find out what's true. And that brings me to the fact, and Jeffrey, you and I talked about this as the most political of all pandemics. The most political of all health crises. And then if you're leaning on the left, you got one view, you're wearing three masks. And if you're on the right, you think the masks are ridiculous, and why don't you let us go back to our sporting events? Do you have some theories about that? Phil, why don't you give it a shot?

Phil Magness (10:15):

It's a thoroughly politicized pandemic. And unfortunately it's become that way very quickly since the outbreak of the first wave back in January and February. The political battle lines were drawn and it became associated with Trump. It didn't help there's a major election overlaying it. But to bring us back to the data, one of the things that has really stood out about this is we've talked about anecdotes. You read the New York Times stories, and they'll focus on the one young person that had a really severe case. They'll focus on some really sad stories, but they're kind of outlier events. At the same time, they're suppressing clear information that we've known since the spring about nursing homes. We've had this massive scandal that just broke in the last week in New York State with Governor Cuomo, where he was readmitting COVID positive patients into nursing homes. This is something we've known about since like last March. And it's just now breaking out into the public discussion.

Bill Walton (11:21):

Maybe there is justice. A scandal happening to Governor Andrew Cuomo, oh ...

Phil Magness (11:28):

Exactly. The supposed hero of the pandemic. He wrote a book talking about how wonderful he was. Anthony Fauci as recent as December was saying that Cuomo and New York State were the model on how to respond to the coronavirus.

Bill Walton ([11:44](#)):

Well, aren't the stats at something like 40% of all COVID deaths have occurred in nursing homes.

Jeffrey Tucker ([11:52](#)):

Depending on the state. Maybe that's overall nationwide. And the severe outcomes associated with states is very much connected to the demographics of the nursing home population. This is one of the reasons South Dakota has, I think [crosstalk 00:12:08].

Phil Magness ([12:08](#)):

It's higher percentage [crosstalk 00:12:10].

Jeffrey Tucker ([12:10](#)):

Than for example Vermont, or somebody like that. It's demographics and also living conditions. So nursing homes, and when did the nursing home information come out? That was like in February, right?

Phil Magness ([12:22](#)):

Yeah, the very first outbreak. If you remember back in Washington State, when the first COVID cases arrived in the US, this is after the cruise ships, but the notice was it's arrived in Seattle. The first outbreak was a nursing home. And we knew the virus rampages its way through these closed facilities. Nursing homes are places where you can actually get a fatality rate of like 10% of the population. And that's basically what it's been in Massachusetts, which has some of the best stats on it. We found out like one in 10 pre-COVID nursing home patients has died from this disease simply from it flowing through the nursing home.

Bill Walton ([13:00](#)):

And I think less than 1% of the population lives in a nursing home.

Phil Magness ([13:04](#)):

Exactly.

Bill Walton ([13:05](#)):

So it sort of leads you, if you're a public policy person, a state or local authority, maybe you ought to focus on that and not so much on everybody else.

Jeffrey Tucker ([13:14](#)):

Isn't it so interesting that we all pretend we're doing science here. The very first US had a really severe case was-

Phil Magness ([13:21](#)):

A nursing home.

Jeffrey Tucker ([13:22](#)):

A nursing home. And instead of saying, wow, we might have a nursing home problem. We said, lockdown the whole country.

Phil Magness ([13:29](#)):

So focus on everything but the one area where we know this is a severe, serious problem.

Bill Walton ([13:36](#)):

Phil, you're an economic historian. You've written, I want to get you back on to talk about the 1619 Project at some point, but let's focus on the other. Economic historian, is there any precedent in history of this kind of response to this kind of virus or bug or flu, or whatever we want to call it?

Phil Magness ([13:59](#)):

You could go back to the middle ages and find like this medieval style quarantines of closing off a city. And that's really the only precedent that we have. Of course, none of that's a nationwide or worldwide. And actually what you find in the evidence is prior to about, oh, March 2020, most epidemiologists considered this lockdown approach to be kind of a fringe dangerous theory that should not be undertaken. And I went through mounds of epidemiological literature going back decades, and it was report after report after report, as recently as the Fall of 2019, Johns Hopkins University wrote a report for the CDC on pandemic influenza. And they said, the one thing you should not do is lockdown society. They said, this is going to have severe harms and very little in the way of benefits. This goes all the way back.

Bill Walton ([14:55](#)):

I want to make sure everybody goes to the American Institute for Economic Research website because you've got a treasure trove there of information about this and a lot of other useful whatever. And you guys sponsored the Great Barrington statement. And I guess you're based in Barrington, right?

Jeffrey Tucker ([15:16](#)):

We should be clear about language because people have accused us of having sponsored. We hosted the event [crosstalk 00:15:21].

Bill Walton ([15:21](#)):

Okay, well, let's clarify, you hosted. And there were a lot of very smart people there. I think, was a fellow from Stanford there, Dr. Jay ...

Phil Magness ([15:32](#)):

Bhattacharya.

Bill Walton ([15:33](#)):

Yeah. And I think, was Scott Atlas there yet or was he already working in the Trump White House?

Jeffrey Tucker ([15:38](#)):

He was already in the White House, yes.

Bill Walton ([15:39](#)):

So what was the gist of that? If people who are of our point of view, more libertarian, are looking for science, I think that's about as good as summation as the sciences we've got.

Jeffrey Tucker ([15:51](#)):

It was never intended to be as some sort of radical statement. It really is a plain statement of cell biology and public health. And a plea that we focus on the problem rather than pursue strategies that will have adverse consequences longterm. And urged people in non-vulnerable populations, which is almost everybody to live life normally. And in anticipation that we will obtain, as we often do with these kinds of particular sort of viruses, herd immunity, which is an evolutionary strategy. It's a phrase to describe an empirical result we've seen again and again and again.

Bill Walton ([16:36](#)):

Quick sidebar, herd immunity. It's been demonized, yet it's exactly the way these viruses play out. Could you give me a brief description of what herd immunity is?

Phil Magness ([16:46](#)):

Herd immunity is basically a biological fact. And in the epidemiology literature before COVID, it's like one of the standard things that appears in the first chapter of the textbook on how the immune system works. We can think of it as a herd immunity is the cumulative effect, now that we have a vaccine, of people that have naturally acquired immunity by getting the disease and recovering, plus those that have been vaccinated. So these are two components that work hand in hand. Unfortunately, the media has completely distorted this and presented them as if they're adversarial or as if natural herd immunity is this dangerous strategy. It's not a strategy at all, it's a biological fact similar to like gravity is a physical fact.

Bill Walton ([17:31](#)):

So when we got, backing up to when this all started, we ended up with the state and local officials playing God. And then they decided what was essential and what wasn't essential. You were an essential worker, you weren't, you're going to close this business, that business. They left Walmart open, but they closed the corner store. You all are both exceptionally well trained economist, explain why that's a catastrophic concept, essential versus non-essential.

Phil Magness ([18:02](#)):

It's the essence of central planning. And we not only saw that between which stores got to stay open and which stores closed. In some states, like in Michigan, if you remember the videos where they had tape around the gardening section, and the toy section, and the electronic section. So you could even walk into a Walmart and certain products they were selling were deemed essential by the decree of the governor, and yet just across the state line in Ohio, those same sections were open. So it made no sense whatsoever beyond an arbitrary decree of some bureaucrat in an office somewhere decided these are the products that people need and these are the products that they can do without for a few months. So it's complete political decision.

Phil Magness ([18:42](#)):

What it does is it defies the ability of the consumer to actually express their own preferences of what they want and what they need. You know better than anyone else what you need for a safe and comfortable life for the next week. You know what you want to consume when you go into the grocery store. A bureaucrat in some state office or some federal office does not know that.

Jeffrey Tucker ([19:05](#)):

And what did any of this have to do with disease mitigation?

Phil Magness ([19:08](#)):

Exactly.

Jeffrey Tucker ([19:09](#)):

That's the thing that upsets me the most. They're pretending as if they're controlling the virus. They're only controlling people and ruining lives.

Bill Walton ([19:20](#)):

And they don't seem to care. One of the things that has troubled me though is the way Americans just sort of much knuckled under this. I think a lot about what are my central values, and I think a lot in terms of freedom sort of drives a lot of what I think ought to be. But the notion of freedom is not being taught in schools the way it was taught earlier on. And I think there's more emphasis on equality of outcomes. And I think that whole psychology has played into people's reaction to this. I can't imagine Americans letting themselves be locked down 25 years ago, 30 years ago. Thoughts?

Phil Magness ([20:01](#)):

That goes all the way back to this Neil Ferguson fellow in the Spring. And he gave a really revealing interview back in December, where he's recounting on how they implemented the lockdowns, how they sold the model. And he says that his aha moment was when he saw that Italy had copied communist China. And he said, previously to this event occurring the discussion among his team of epidemiologists was well, China's an authoritarian communist state, and they were able to execute the lockdown, but we just can't do that in the political system we have in the West. Then they saw Italy do it. They saw the population of Italy accept it. And they're like, aha, the floodgates are open. We can actually copy this approach and strategy, and extrapolate it and apply it to the world.

Phil Magness ([20:44](#)):

Really, I think what they're playing on though, is another theme the modelers have been really atrocious on, and that is the alarmism. That is the panic. That is the over projection of deaths. These catastrophic models that say millions of people will die. That breeds fear into the public's mind. And when you see an expert on TV saying, well, I've run the epidemiology models. I'm the top scientist in the world, and millions of people are going to die unless you do this right now, people who otherwise would speak out against these intrusions on their freedom are covered into fear.

Bill Walton ([21:20](#)):

Yeah.

Jeffrey Tucker ([21:21](#)):

Fear really had a lot to do. It was the driving force. And we've seen this throughout history, right? What happens when the pathogen comes along is people first in denial. Then they get afraid. And then they cry out to the government to do something. Then government uses that as a way of getting more power. And then it's hard to get their hands off the power once they've done it.

Bill Walton ([21:41](#)):

Well, there's been an interesting study that the pandemic, the fear factor here has been much worse, I think, than we've ever experienced in history. And a lot of that's driven by social media and a lot of it's driven 24/7 news cycle. And there's a study, and I'm looking around in my papers and I can't quite find it right now, but the study came out that there's a correlation between how central government is and how you're getting information from all of one sources it becomes self reinforcing. Oh yeah, it's called something that negative information spread through enough mass and digital media can create a mass hysteria that exacerbates and is self reinforcing.

Bill Walton ([22:28](#)):

And what happens is you get negative information from authoritative sources, media are politicized, and social networks make the negative information omnipresent. It sounds like that's what's been happening. Those of us who are fighting back to get ideas out through social media are finding it a hard time. In fact, above the show, if you look at it on YouTube, I'm sure they're going to have this show contains information about COVID-19, and be warned that the authoritative source for COVID-19 is the CDC. So the centralizing, the totalitarian aspect of the way this is being managed and manipulating is really scary.

Jeffrey Tucker ([23:13](#)):

It's a little devastating to me personally. I've spent a long time, Bill, many years writing about social media and celebrating information technology, and a new age of instant access to everything. Surely I always assumed this would give truth a greater chance of getting out there, and we would have become ever smarter, and evermore free in light of this. [crosstalk 00:23:37].

Bill Walton ([23:36](#)):

I'm with you. I thought the internet would be the greatest thing on earth because we'd have information from everywhere and knowledge instantly. We'd all have a level playing field about what was true and wasn't true.

Jeffrey Tucker ([23:50](#)):

Yeah. Something went wrong. We've got a lot to unpack. I think the problem ultimately is that technology cannot fix problems of human nature. We are still kind of a deeply ignorant people. There's a reason why freedom and human rights are the rare thing in history. They're hard to get, hard to keep. It's very easy to lose all that stuff and default back to our lizard brains, and disease fears, and panics. I didn't know how likely it was that we could ever, I never have experienced anything remotely like this in my whole life. I think it's shifted. Probably for you, and I think we were talking about this last night, this kind of changed my perception of the social order and the fragility of civilization, and the intelligence of the average person. A lot of things are coming under question these days.

Bill Walton ([24:48](#)):

I want to do some work on the social cost of this because I think the psychological impact of people being masked, being six feet, social distancing. I'm getting a little tired of stepping up to somebody to talk with them and have them back away like I've got the plague and that's happening all over. You go into a supermarket now, and if you go the wrong way down the one way aisle you're a criminal. You're terrible. We're paying a big social price and I think the inability to communicate because we're wearing these masks, I think that has real longterm consequences, but [crosstalk 00:25:29] well the Times now,

New York Times, who used to post the COVID statistics every day on its front page. Now I think it stopped doing it.

Bill Walton ([25:40](#)):

The Times ran a piece day before yesterday about how psychologists in Europe are now saying that the pathologies among young people are extraordinary. And a number of people thinking about are actually committing suicide, so on and so forth. The despair that's afflicted these people, the young people in particular, even the Times now is writing about the huge cost. Jeffrey, I mentioned that to you and you said, "Well, they're not writing about that here in the United States." Or are they?

Jeffrey Tucker ([26:15](#)):

Well, they [crosstalk 00:26:16] oh, look at these stupid Europeans. Look at the terrible things that are happening in Europe. So they'll get to the US eventually. I feel like for about the last three months, two months, that the Times is gradually walking back its lockdown propaganda for the last year [crosstalk 00:26:31].

Phil Magness ([26:32](#)):

If we go back to a year ago, back in last February and March, the Times was ground zero for alarmism or promotion of these million death, multimillion death statistics. For putting Neil Ferguson up as this world class expert, even though he had been wrong on every previous pandemic he had modeled and attempt to predict, like catastrophically wrong. Yeah, they've changed their tune.

Bill Walton ([26:58](#)):

Well, I thought Joe Biden getting elected President, if he was elected, but I'm not going to get into that one today, was a very bad thing. Except for one thing, it does seem to feel that if they can link the pandemic to Trump, I think they would have tried to bring that into the impeachment if they could have. Trump is gone, now they've got Biden. And so they've got to get on with it. And I think Biden came out and said, he said something a couple of weeks ago, there's nothing we can do to change the trajectory of the pandemic in the next several months. I think he could have made that, there's nothing to do to change the trajectory of the pandemic period. But they're starting to say that they want to get out of the way, which leads me to the path out of this, which everybody's locking onto the vaccines. Do the vaccines work? And are they the key to the promised land?

Phil Magness ([28:00](#)):

I think the evidence is coming out of countries that have really high vaccination rates, yeah, it's pushing them toward that herd immunity threshold, that plus the naturally acquired immunity is the basic science behind it. Are vaccines the end all to the pandemic? Probably not in the sense that this is a disease that's going to become endemic. It's going to persist as just a part of human society for time indefinite. It's going to become more like the common cold, just a regular seasonal strain. Vaccines do get us closer to that point, but it's not something that is like, we all take the vaccine and it magically disappears.

Jeffrey Tucker ([28:45](#)):

One good thing about the vaccines is that it takes people who are in a state of fear and panic who have been living cramped inside their apartments afraid of the virus and gives them the sense of freedom and confidence so they can interact with others. Now it's true the placebo could do the same thing, but I'm

grateful for the vaccine just for that reason. It's emancipated people from their own debilitating psychological terror that they've experienced for the last 12 months.

Bill Walton ([29:14](#)):

Do you worry that now that the political classes recognize they can bring about lockdowns and enforce social behavior they'll use those same strategies with the next big thing that happens or the next scary virus? Or it could be used for the environment.

Phil Magness ([29:36](#)):

Absolutely. As I said, the floodgates are open now that they discovered they can get away with us. And one theme I've really picked up on that hasn't been given a lot of attention is the policy mechanisms used to implement these. They were all executive orders under emergency powers. They were governors, and mayors, and presidents, and authority figures invoking powers that are outside the normal deliberative legislative norms. We never had a Congress meet and debate over the COVID lockdown bill. Rather it's a governor or a president or someone stepping in and saying, well, our bureaucratic advisers at the CDC or our public health authority has said you need to lockdown now. Therefore I'm issuing an emergency edict that'll cover the next two weeks. Then two weeks becomes two months, two months becomes a year. So I say perpetual extension of this emergency state through emergency powers with basically no legislative checks and very minimal judicial checks on it.

Jeffrey Tucker ([30:39](#)):

But one thing that could prevent that is if there are severe outcomes for the political class from what they've done for last year.

Phil Magness ([30:45](#)):

Right.

Jeffrey Tucker ([30:47](#)):

And the latest data on, basically our children have lost a year's worth of education. It's very tragic. The people have been denied in-person education. They're not getting an education. It's really tragic. The missed cancer screenings. The health effects and the consequences, psychological and otherwise. It could actually lead to a kind of public backlash. And I'm actually encouraged. Cuomo's under severe investigation. He's been denounced even by CNN. Newsom's about to be recalled. Donald McNeil at New York Times was fired. A lot of lockdowners are going down. You're starting to see this trend. The biggest lockdown people are actually experiencing right now political and professional meltdowns. And I think that's a very good sign. And then on the other side, you've got Ron DeSantis as a hero to the multitudes as is Kristi Noem of South Dakota, the two most open advocates of openness in their states.

Bill Walton ([31:43](#)):

Well, you're right. I think there's going to be a tremendous backlash against the teachers unions.

Jeffrey Tucker ([31:49](#)):

Yeah.

Bill Walton ([31:52](#)):

This has always been their agenda, but now it's naked.

Phil Magness ([31:55](#)):

Yeah. And it's anti-science. You even have people that are pro-lockdown are saying that, well, this is not a disease that places students, school aged students at high risk. All the science says that we should reopen our schools. And yet you have teachers unions and education bureaucrats that are politically invested in basically living the easy life are resisting even to the point that governors like Gavin Newsom, who's about as pro-lockdown as you can get, is now in a battle with his teachers unions because he knows they're costing him his political career.

Jeffrey Tucker ([32:32](#)):

Yeah, isn't it incredible? The closing the schools is one of the most, I still cannot figure out how it really happened. Bill, you said, "This was always the agenda of the teachers unions." I'm not sure I understood the goal of the teachers unions was not to teach. Was to sit at home [crosstalk 00:32:51].

Bill Walton ([32:51](#)):

Is to get paid. The goal was to get paid. I owned a couple of education businesses, K-12 education businesses that contracted our services to public schools. And I got to know them pretty well. And they're not that interested in, I mean, the interesting thing about that experience was there are lots of people who are dedicated teachers. Lots of people who love the craft and care, but that's not the union. And the union is basically doing a work rule thing, trying to keep people out of that. And we had a program that taught kids Spanish and French, and we were looking for teachers who'd been in the school systems to teach it. And for every one teacher in the school system, there were 10 others who had been in it who hated it, who wanted to be a teacher, who wanted to be helping kids. So they're out there. The impulse to teach and to run schools is terrific, but find it among the unions. Where do we go from here? Are we going to end up with national vaccine cards in order to travel on planes? Are we-

Jeffrey Tucker ([34:03](#)):

I don't believe that's going to happen. I think put the polls are actually too lopsided on this question. I think half the people are not getting, if they have the choice, will not get the vaccine. I don't know how you have a mandate under those conditions. What do you think?

Phil Magness ([34:19](#)):

Well, the whole thing with the vaccination, people are talking about mandates. We're so far away from that point of it even being an issue. Right now, the problem with vaccines is there simply aren't enough of them and the governments of several states around the country are completely botching the rollout. There are people that want to get vaccinated that would volunteer, and possibly even pay money to get vaccinated if they could, but they're barred because of bureaucratic rules and inept, incompetent rollout.

Bill Walton ([34:47](#)):

Have you gone onto the websites to try to sign up for a vaccine?

Phil Magness ([34:50](#)):

It's atrocious. It makes the Obamacare website look like-

Bill Walton ([34:53](#)):

Exactly. Obamacare was a brilliant website by comparison.

Phil Magness ([35:01](#)):

I've looked on some of the websites locally in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and they'll say there are vaccine doses available at the local Walgreens or the local CVS, but you don't qualify for it unless you meet these 10 different conditions that you have to go through and check all these horrific boxes, and fill out layers and layers of forms. And it turns out that, okay, some of the conditions make sense. They want to prioritize the elderly, but then all these other stipulations or categories like, well, if you work for the government or you work in certain preferred, or I guess they call, essential industries, you get preference for it. But it turns out there's not enough people in these industries to actually to meet the doses that are available in some of these locations. So what do you have is a mismatch between the supply for the vaccine and the demand for the vaccine, and also the access to the vaccine.

Bill Walton ([35:53](#)):

Which is why we don't like the top down solution. We like the free market voluntary exchange solution. We got a minute or two left. What about some final thoughts? What should we be telling people about how they ought to be thinking about this, and what we ought to be encouraging them to tell their friends? By this, I mean the lockdowns and where we go from here.

Phil Magness ([36:17](#)):

Yes, quit listening to the panic mongers of the epidemiology modelers. These people are pseudo scientists. They are living in a fantasy world. And they have a track record that's played out not only in previous pandemics, but this pandemic of being wrong over and over and over again. Not one word of the advice that's come out of the lockdown scientists has proven true over the course of this pandemic. It's time to reinvestigate rigorous social science, rigorous hard sciences, and return to what epidemiology knew to be true prior to March 2020. And that is this top down society wide approach of confining people into their homes simply does not work. It has high social costs and no efficacy in changing the course of this pandemic. It's time to do something else.

Jeffrey Tucker ([37:07](#)):

And then the future let's remember that infectious disease and the new pathogens, that's a medical problem with a medical solution, or a medical means of mitigating it. Using the state or political apparatus, and the bureaucrats, and the police to try to beat back a virus is sheer folly. I hope that's the lesson we've learned in 2020 and we'll never repeat anything like this again. I hope. At least not for another a hundred years [crosstalk 00:37:37].

Bill Walton ([37:39](#)):

Well, thank you guys. Jeffrey Tucker, Editorial Director of Research at American Institute for Economic Research, and Phillip Magness, Senior Research Fellow at AIER. I really thank you guys for joining. And again, I encourage everybody to go onto your website and maybe even more than that support, support the work you're doing. Thanks for setting us straight. And I'll be talking with you all soon. Thanks for listening.

Phil Magness ([38:05](#)):

Thanks.

Bill Walton ([38:07](#)):

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 guests on our interesting people page. And send us your comments. We read everyone 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.
(silence)