



From The Wilderness

A Nonpartisan Non-sectarian MAP for the Here That Is, Into the Tomorrow of Our Own Making

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ASPO-USA Conference, November 10-11, 2005

PEAK OIL – CENTER STAGE

Behaving as if a Major Crisis Looms



- Business, Government, Academic Leaders Recognize Peak Imminence, Reveal Wide Range of Contingency Planning – Local Governments Pursuing Crash Mitigation Strategies
- Federal Government Out to Long Lunch
- Consensus: Depletion to Run Between 5-8% – 53 Nations Now in Decline; Peak May Be Occurring – Simmons Steps Up Rhetoric
- Rep. Roscoe Bartlett Says Give Up on Crash Program for Alternative Energies, Drilling; Urges Demand Reduction & Conservation
- Winter Trap Waiting to Spring – Gulf Pipelines Still Shut In From Hurricanes, Damage Extent Unknown – Why the Markets Mislead

by
Michael C. Ruppert

(cont'd on page 5)

From the Wilderness

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[Democracy Now and The Nation have purposefully chosen to omit critical facts about Jerome Hauer and BioPort in Jeremy Scahill's coverage of the ongoing controversy surrounding the Bush Administration and its public health policies – especially as they relate to the stockpiling of vaccines.

These publications made a conscious choice to portray Jerome Hauer as a martyr targeted by the Bush administration while ignoring the fact that Hauer now sits on the Board of one of the most controversial pharmaceutical corporations on the planet, BioPort. This company produces an anthrax vaccine that has a proven track record of being deadly and injurious. BioPort is linked to the Bin Laden Family and may be owned in part by The Carlyle Group.

Let's take a look at the real story. – FTW]

JEROME HAUER NOW ON BIOPORT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

***Democracy Now & The Nation Completely
Blow the REAL Story***

by
Michael Kane



Photo of Jerome Hauer from

<http://www.cphp.pitt.edu/upcphp/images/Jerome%20Hauer.jpg>

December 15, 2005 1500 PST (FTW): **W**hen FTW published [TOTAL HEALTH TYRANNY](#) on November 2, 2005, one of the story's bullet points read, "Jerome Hauer leaves HHS: where, oh where will he turn up?" Hauer was named as a "person of interest" in the crimes of 9/11 by Michael Ruppert in [Crossing the Rubicon](#).

On November 3, 2005, a Google-news search pulled up a POGO blog entry that stated the following:

Jerome Hauer, the former head of HHS's [Health and Human Services] biodefense program, **is now on the Board of Emergent Biosolutions, Bioport's parent company.** [emphasis added]¹

Bioport is an extremely controversial pharmaceutical company that manufactures a despicable anthrax vaccine linked to deaths and injuries in the U.S. military. After years of litigation, the vaccine can no longer be administered to soldiers on a mandatory basis. Recent legislation – referred to as Bioshield 2 or [BARDA](#) – is attempting to grant complete liability bail-outs to specific pharmaceuticals labeled “countermeasures.” BioPort is positioning itself to gain immunity from litigation if its anthrax vaccine is massively deployed for emergency mandatory vaccination of civilians.

That November 3 POGO post links to this post from October 13:

Especially critical of Simonson [the current head of the Department of Health and Human Services' biodefense program] has been Jerome M. Hauer, who previously held Simonson's position and is now a consultant for several biodefense firms (Hauer is yet another administration official who has passed through the revolving door. Hauer now sits on the board of directors of Emergent Biosolutions, the parent company of Bioport, the primary manufacturer of the Defense Department's anthrax vaccine. Bioport did not get the primary Bioshield anthrax vaccine contract for the Strategic National Stockpile, instead an upstart competitor, VaxGen, won. Bioport has been critical of Bioshield and of VaxGen.) [emphasis added]²

This is extremely significant. Hauer is critical of Secretary Simonson for not filling the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) with millions of vaccines in short order. Hauer then leaves HHS to take a very clear stance in support of BioPort's discredited anthrax vaccine, in apparent opposition to VaxGen's “next generation” anthrax vaccine.

VaxGen has recently announced delays in the production of their anthrax vaccine. They will deliver 75 million doses to the U.S. Government's SNS later than expected – by the fourth quarter of 2006. Right when this is announced Hauer jumps to VaxGen's competitor BioPort. Hauer is supporting a vaccine that is [certain to cause injury and even death](#) if deployed to tens of millions of people.

The controversial nature of BioPort's anthrax vaccine was surely a key factor in their loss of a \$280 million government contract to VaxGen. The safety and efficacy of the VaxGen vaccine is not yet publicly known.

According to *Insight Magazine*, the CEO of BioPort, Fuad El-Hibri, is friends with the Bin Laden family.³ The Carlyle Group has never disclosed whether or not they own a stake in BioPort.⁴ Both before and after 9/11, the Bin Laden family owned a stake in Carlyle.

On the morning of September 11, 2001, Shafiq bin Laden – Osama bin Laden's brother – was meeting with George Herbert Walker Bush in Washington D.C.'s Ritz Carlton Hotel on official Carlyle business.⁵

DEMOCRACY NOW, THE NATION, AND JEREMY SCAHILL
On November 9, 2005, *The Nation* published an article by Jeremy Scahill titled “Germ Boys and Yes Men.” The report is very strange in what it says and what it doesn't.

Scahill shows that Dick Cheney's office – especially his former chief of staff Lewis “Scooter” Libby, whose nickname is “germ boy” – was obsessed with preemptively vaccinating the entire country for smallpox. When Hauer was at HHS he opposed this, stating that a focus on smallpox alone was causing officials to lose sight of the totality of threats.

But on November 10, when Scahill was interviewed by Amy Goodman on *Democracy Now* (a show he co-produces), he said a deal was reached between Cheney's office and Hauer where the smallpox vaccine would be offered to half a million soldiers and 50,000 first responders. So there was no safety and efficacy dispute between Hauer and Cheney's office; the only area of contention was about the number of people who were to be inoculated for smallpox.

What is astonishingly, and inexplicably, left out of Scahill's report is that *Jerome Hauer is now on the Board of Directors of BioPort* and that their anthrax vaccine is deadly and injurious. But the following exchange between he and Amy Goodman shows it is damn near impossible that Scahill is unaware of these facts:

AMY GOODMAN: And very quickly, who has been the beneficiary, the corporation, of dealing right now?

JEREMY SCAHILL: Well, Amy, that perhaps is something that doctors who have been working on this can address directly, because it's interesting how -- **there's one company called Bioport, which manufactured anthrax vaccine, that literally made a killing off of these vaccines.** And there are a number of companies that have profited directly. But this is -- the political story here is about Scooter Libby coming up against a guy who is truly a public health professional, the Vice President's office coming up against a guy who was truly a public health professional, and then apparently targeting him because he had dared to stand up against them. [emphasis added]

Here Scahill reveals to us that he is aware of the BioPort anthrax vaccine and its track record of death and injury. But rather than explain what “literally made a killing off of these vaccines” specifically means to the large listening and viewing audience tuned into *Democracy Now* on November 10, 2005, he glosses right over it as if it was somehow unimportant. Anyone who is not familiar with the history of BioPort's despicable anthrax vaccine would have no clue what Scahill was referring to.

So why does he skirt this issue in both his report and the interview?

JEREMY SCAHILL: -- the political story here is about Scooter Libby coming up against a guy who is truly a public health professional [Jerome Hauer], the Vice President's office coming up against a guy who was truly a public health professional, and then apparently targeting him because he had dared to stand up against them. [emphasis added]

It's politics.

As is par for the course on both the left and the right, the truth dies in politics. Medical investigator Liam Scheff pointed out to this reporter that *Democracy Now* has a political agenda against Bush and Cheney, and if Jerome Hauer (a Democrat) can be used to further that agenda, then so be it.

Unfortunately it is actually Scahill and *Democracy Now* who are being used. It would be nice to say [The Nation](#) is being used as well, but their track record does not allow *FTW* to be so kind [see [Crossing the Rubicon](#), chapter 17]. BioPort is never mentioned in *The Nation* report – not once.

Scahill ends his report by trashing VaxGen, BioPort's primary competitor:

...more than 80 percent of the nearly \$1 billion allocated under the program has gone to a scandal-plagued company that has never successfully produced an FDA-licensed vaccine. In November 2004 California-based VaxGen was handed one of the largest government vaccine contracts in history. The company is largely known for its failed AIDS vaccine, and just a few months before VaxGen won the Bioshield contract, the Nasdaq took the unusual step of delisting it from trading because of financial irregularities. So why did it get the contract? "I have no idea why VaxGen was selected," admits Henderson, who remains chair of the influential Secretary's Advisory Council at HHS. "It's not for me to decide whether it's a good idea or not." But it was for Simonson and his staff. And as with many Bush Administration contracts, several signs point to cronyism as the deciding factor--among them: VaxGen CEO Lance Gordon is a longtime associate of one of Simonson's top deputies on Bioshield, Dr. Phil Russell, former chief of Army medical research.

All of this information is basically correct, but Scahill exposing the dirty laundry of VaxGen yet not their competitor. Why? The fact that BioPort is never mentioned properly throughout Scahill's report or in the *Democracy Now* interview, while Jerome Hauer is repeatedly praised, effectively makes this a great piece of PR for BioPort.

In absolutely no way does *FTW* support BioPort or VaxGen. We recognize that the BioPort vaccine has a proven track record of injury and death that must never be overlooked for any reason. It should also be noted that we reported on VaxGen's sordid past back in March of 2004.[6](#)

Scahill continually references the fact that the Bush administration was lying about Iraq having the capability to attack the U.S. with weaponized smallpox, yet he leaves out the fact that **immediately after 9/11 Jerome Hauer was making the exact same claims, helping to propel Bush's call to war** [see [Crossing the Rubicon](#), page 426, referencing *Newsday*, September 22, 2001, article by Laurie Garrett].

Scahill details widely circulating claims that Stewart Simonson, who recently took over Hauer's position as head of the biodefense department at HHS, is "the next Michael Brown." Formerly a lawyer for Amtrak, Simonson has no experience in public health whatsoever. Judith Miller is mentioned in Scahill's report for her close relationship with Cheney's office. She participated in a bio-terror drill titled "Dark Winter," which simulated a smallpox attack on American soil. Cheney and Libby took special interest in this exercise, and Libby was interviewed by Miller in her epic book, "Germs," where she reported his view of weaponized smallpox at length. Those are some of the points Scahill makes in the proper context.

Jeremy Scahill's report for *The Nation* can be read here: <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20051128/scahill>

The Democracy Now transcript quoted above can be read here: <http://www.democracynow.org/article.pl?sid=05/11/10/1527211>

WHO IS JEROME HAUER?

Jerome Hauer is a Bio-Warfare expert who is well known in New York City for having created former mayor Rudolph Giuliani's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) in World Trade Center 7 – the building that inexplicably imploded in a freefall on September 11, 2001, without having been hit by an airplane. Hauer's corporate affiliations include SAIC, Batelle, CSC-DynCorp, Hollis-Eden, and one of the nation's most powerful private investigative and security firms Kroll Inc., among others. Now BioPort has been added to his resume.

On the eve of 9/11, in NYC, Hauer was having drinks with his close friend, the recently retired FBI Agent and "Osama-Chaser," John O'Neil. At that time O'Neil was the head of security at the World Trade Center complex, a position Hauer had helped him to get. O'Neil died in the World Trade Center on 9/11, and it was Hauer who identified his body.

Hauer was quoted by *Newsday* staff writer Laurie Garrett on her personal blog as saying, "John O'Neill was head of the FBI's counterterrorism branch in Washington. He led every important investigation you can name — the USS Cole, Tanzania, Kenya bombings. He retired three weeks ago. I helped him get the job as head of security for the World Trade Center. And the irony is, the guy he chased for most of his career killed him."

See [Crossing the Rubicon](#), chapter 23, pages 421-426 for references and more information on Hauer.

[1](#) POGO Blog, November 3, 2005 http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2005/11/of_drugs_and_do.html Referencing Homeland Defense Journal Online, "Jerome M. Hauer Named to Board of Directors of Emergent." http://www.homelanddefensejournal.com/scoop_faces_hauer.htm

[2](#) POGO Blog, October 13, 2005. http://pogoblog.typepad.com/pogo/2005/10/the_mike_brown_.html

[3](#) "Did the FBI Make Rush to Judgment?" by Timothy W. Maier, *Insight Magazine*, Originally published here: <http://www.insightmag.com/main.cfm?include=detail&storyid=403833> This report appears to have been taken down. It is cached here: <http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:L5izWdqPFtsJ:www.insightmag.com/main.cfm%3Finclude%3Ddetail%26storyid%3D403833+Insight+Magazine+BioPort+bin+Laden&hl=en>

[4](#) "Combining Biological and Economic Warfare," by Michael C. Rupert and Wayne Madsen, *FromTheWilderness.com*, May 9, 2003. http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/050903_SARS.html

[5](#) "An Axis of Junkies," Washington dispatch, *The Guardian*, August 6, 2003. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/elsewhere/journalist/story/0,7792,1013484,00.html>

"Conspiracy Theories, The Saudi Connections," *CBC The Fifth Estate*, Originally Broadcast on October 29, 2003. <http://www.cbc.ca/fifth/conspiracytheories/saudi.html>

[6](#) "VACCINE EPIDEMIC," by Michael Kane, *FromTheWilderness.com*, March 16, 2004. http://www.fromthewilderness.com/free/ww3/031604_vaccine_epidemic.html

(“Peak Oil—Center Stage” cont’d from page 1)

[ASPO-USA is an affiliate of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil founded by Colin Campbell in 2001. With the exception of the first ASPO conference in Uppsala, Sweden FTW has covered every ASPO event from Paris, to Berlin, to Lisbon, to Edinburgh. A look at each story in succession shows a gradually awakening and expanding community that might be, in the words of President Lincoln, “the last, best hope of Earth.” The United States certainly isn’t. –JAH]

This is a paradigm shift. The culture of growth is being replaced by the culture of sustainability... Peter Drucker pointed out that about every 500 years human civilization has to completely rethink itself. 500 years ago civilization embarked on the industrial era. That era is coming to an end. – Dick Lamm, former three-term Colorado Governor.

Our taboo in the US has been about energy and depletion. We’re not supposed to talk about it. The Sioux had an energy ethic. Bison were their source of energy and they sought a balance with their supply... In the US we could soon have headlines reading, ‘Power Outage at Mall – 30 Stranded on Escalator’... Peak Oil is an intelligence test. If you pass you survive. If you fail you starve. – Randy Udall

With the onset of winter our suppliers, whether British oil companies or Saudi wellheads, or Nigerian platforms, or Venezuelan tankers, will find it next to impossible to meet global demand. The ticking clock’s alarm is set to ring with the first cold snaps and the collective click of thermostats that will soon remind us all of our mortality. In the meantime, as I predicted almost three months ago, a Bush presidency hobbled by scandal will conveniently provide cover for the real problem: Peak Oil and Natural Gas.

— Mike Ruppert, October 27, 2005

In my humble opinion, we should now have reached 'Peak Oil'. So, it is high time to close this critical chapter in the history of the international oil industry and bid the mighty 'Peak' farewell.

At present, global oil output fluctuates around 82 mb/d as some institutions try vainly to push 2005 statistics towards 83 and 84 mb/d (as they always do). But they will be obliged to backtrack as 'actual' oil supplies fail to follow their 'paper' ones.

So that, in the 'Peak Oil' aftermath, we are about to enter what I call 'Transition One' [T1] -- a rather bizarre phase akin to a vague no-man's-land between still adequate oil supplies and the clear realization that demand has definitely left supply behind. I see the tragic '2004 Tsunami' and the heart-breaking '2005 Katrina and Rita' as the precursor signs to 'T1'. This fresh phase might come to burst on the global stage during the coming winter 2005/6, maybe taking large swaths of the public by surprise.

– Ali Samsam Bakhtiari, Senior Advisor to the National Iranian Oil Company, (reportedly under house arrest in Iran and forbidden to leave the country).

November 17, 2005 1400 PST (FTW), DENVER — **S**ometimes you have to watch what people do more than what they say. After more than four years and a dozen Peak Oil conferences in four countries, it is much less of a story for FTW to report on “whose numbers say what” than it is to see what kind of attitudes, foci and consensuses are emerging as we approach the winter. Therein lies the real story of what happened in Denver and why the first conference of the Association for the Study of Peak Oil-USA was a watershed moment. That moment happened in large part because of the brilliant organizational efforts of ASPO-USA, their chosen list of speakers, Beth Conover of the Denver Mayor’s Office, Randy Udall, and the brilliant, thoughtful and diplomatic leadership of ASPO co-founder Steve Andrews. It also happened because we were ready for it to happen.



Steve Andrews running a tight ship with a great crew.

Sure, a very few of the speakers were “politically-correct, balanced” presenters who offered really dumb solutions like growing crops for fuel and using plant waste to make gasoline instead of composting or mulching it to restore our depleted and ever-disappearing topsoil. At the ASPO-USA conference, these were tolerated costs rather than main courses, and with each successive conference both their numbers and credibility are decreasing.

What’s important now is not the exact date when Peak might occur or an exact knowledge of how many barrels are left where. Even debate about the now increasingly disreputable reports provided by Daniel Yergin’s Cambridge Energy Research is moot and losing steam. What’s growing in people’s consciousness is the awareness of all of the truly [bizarre assumptions](#) that such rosy predictions are based upon.

It may not want to, but the Peak Oil movement is destined to become the premier forum for the now-essential debate on the holistic future of mankind. Every part of human civilization will rightly be on that table sooner or later, and under a microscope. The sooner the movement accepts that daunting mandate, the sooner will we all see more edible and nutritious produce from its table. With Denver, that process has clearly begun.

Former Colorado governor Dick Lamm's piercing observation helped me to understand one of my deepest frustrations. Denver was no exception to my long-held observation that any "expert" who presents at one of these conferences is useless if he/she presents within only one discipline, whether it be economics, geology, engineering or business. These are the only disciplines I have seen represented at any such conference and they are the now-useless calling cards of the passing paradigm. Peak Oil is perhaps the only event that touches every dimension of human endeavor and it must be addressed that way – multi-dimensionally.

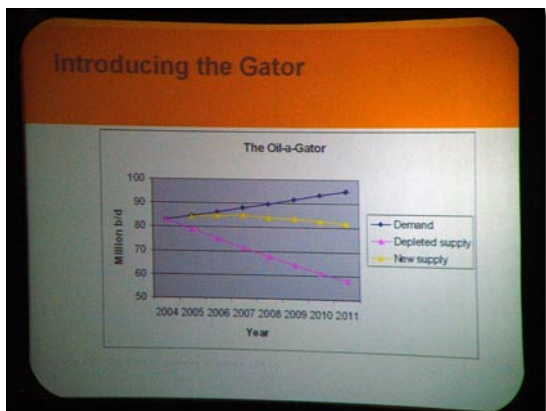
A geologist who gives us answers only as a geologist, an economist who thinks only in terms of money, a financial/market analyst who can only do charts and then asks us to believe that he has answered the problem misses the mark. It is not enough to have several people from different disciplines speak solely within their own areas. No, the task of integrating all the challenges is daunting enough for the layman. We respond to leaders who publicly reveal their own anguished process of seeing the world whole so that we might also see it whole. This is a conceptual view that is as alien to most Americans as is thinking in a foreign language.

Linear thinking within a single discipline has been both the province and the luxury of the industrial era where exorbitant amounts of cheap energy could be used to conveniently eliminate, ignore, and/or suppress all the other human equations that have refused to yield neat answers from the last application of Industrial Age thought. Only when we integrate all aspects of life with the world around us do we produce a product that is nutritious (or even digestible) for the almost seven billion souls now inhabiting this planet. This, I think, is what Randy Udall was getting at. Otherwise the fragmentation that grows daily in the world is mirrored and reinforced within each of us as an individual. No wonder real progress seems so problematic. A conceptual shift is occurring, and none too soon.

Fact: Infinite growth is not possible.

Fact: The term "sustainable growth" is an oxymoron.

Fact: The current monetary system demands infinite growth because it is based upon borrowing and compound interest. Therefore the monetary system needs to be addressed first. When Catherine Austin Fitts is asked to attend a Peak Oil conference and begin teaching how capital gains can be completely divorced from increased consumption; when Peak Oilists start demanding a disengagement from major banks and financial markets as part of an integrated solution; then other real solutions will be liberated. Until you change the way money works, you change nothing.



Depletion

Fact: Peak Oil conferences will start to become more useful when somebody has the guts to ask something like, "What if global

warming creates bigger hurricanes next year and they destroy more of our energy infrastructure?"; or "How can this guy propose using inedible crop waste for fuel instead of returning it to badly depleted topsoil which is yielding less and less food each year?"; or "Gee what are the African Americans, Chicanos and Latinos in the inner cities, what are India, China and every other country, going to say when we tell them, "Sorry, your shot at the great consumer paradise is gone? We've used everything up, including your share. How do we plan for that?"

The blessing of what happened in Denver was that some experts have begun leaving their disciplines because they recognize the inadequacy of single-discipline solutions. Matt Simmons talked of faith. "It's time that we leave the term 'I believe' — with respect to reserve numbers — in church." Simmons also repeated, with new urgency, the near universal demand for data reform so that real contingency planning might begin. Keynote speaker Representative Roscoe Bartlett (a scientist) talked of sustainability, monetary reform, ending growth, demand reduction, and awareness that global theories have little value when dropped like a wet blanket onto local problems. "I'm a conservative Republican, but I try not to be an idiot."

Aside from a huge standing ovation for Bartlett, the biggest ovation of the two-day event was given to Professor Albert Bartlett (no relation), a physicist, who is widely regarded as the Godfather of the sustainability movement. He is a man who has crossed many disciplines and in so doing, acknowledged and embraced his own (and our) humanity.



Professor Albert Bartlett the "Godfather of Sustainability" receives an award.

Now – and only now – can I go back into the discipline of journalism and within that discipline report on some of the events that occurred at this conference with confidence that when you have finished this story you will have a picture of what actually happened there.

For those interested in accurate and complete records of the entire proceedings I encourage you to visit the following web sites:

- [ASPO-USA](#)
- [The Oil Drum](#)
- [The Post Carbon Institute](#)

For additional analysis I recommend stories by Tom Whipple of the [Falls Church News Press](#) who has emerged as one of the most cogent analysts of Peak Oil on the world scene. Whipple, *FTW* has recently learned, is a retired CIA analyst who likely spent many years looking at energy issues.

The Association for the Study of Peak Oil (and Gas) – USA broke

new ground on many fronts last week in a two-day conference featuring energy experts, academics, political figures and financial analysts. A large number of private citizens from all over the country (including many *FTW* subscribers), actively involved in local awareness groups attended. Exceeding expectations, an estimated 500 people (counting a large press contingent) filled Denver's Sherman Events Center in the shadow of the state capital. Included among event sponsors was the City of Denver itself, one of several US cities taking serious (if under-publicized) steps to prepare for coming energy shortages. In contrast to prior European conferences and a number of US events attended by this writer, ASPO-USA showed that Peak Oil has recently begun moving onto center stage with respect to open acknowledgment of the problem, local public policy agendas, and business response. Key participants included Congressman Roscoe Bartlett (R) MD, investment banker Matthew Simmons, Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper and oil industry analyst Henry Groppe.

Perhaps most importantly, ASPO-USA unearthed a rapidly evolving if not universally shared consensus on five points: The actual peak of global oil production is now occurring or has just occurred; any attempts to mitigate or offset rapidly increasing decline rates through additional drilling or crash development programs for renewables will have little impact; demand reduction and conservation alternatives are of critical importance; and depletion of existing fields may run at between 5-8% per annum which would equate to a net loss of between 19 and 29 million barrels per day (Mbpd) in a few short years. Chris Skrebowski of the Oil Depletion Analysis Centre in Britain dropped a bombshell by revealing that oil services giant Schlumberger has now projected 8% annual decline rates. These actual business investment projections belie Saudi Arabia's recent claims that they expect to (soon) discover another 250 billion barrels of oil or their other claims that after having produced enormous quantities of oil for five decades, their reserves are still as large as they were 50 years ago. Schlumberger sells Saudi Aramco most of their hardware.

Matt Simmons also used the 8% decline figure and added, "That means we would have to add 6.4 Mbpd per year to stay flat."



Matt Simmons on fire.

As real life is making a mockery of the rosy projections offered by many, or the long-debunked, fantasy-dwelling advocates of infinite "abiotic oil", Matt Simmons, author of the best-selling *Twilight in the Desert* stepped up his rhetoric by demanding that oil companies, market analysts and government agencies start producing some "digital oil fields" to deliver some of the "conceptual reserves" that are being thrown out as fact by increasingly desperate media pundits and ever-less-credible government agencies.

The first day of the conference saw a number of presentations on previously hoped-for remedies indicating that efforts to increase supply are essentially futile or even counterproductive in the near-term and that the only way to achieve balance with the least economic and social disruption is to address demand. On the conference's second day Roscoe Bartlett showed his evolution as he pointed out that drilling the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve now would amount to only a drop in the bucket and encourage increased short-term consumption, thereby making the inevitable crash more painful.

As one observer noted, "They're trying to stretch the two ends to meet and they just can't do it." Further presentations only underscored this truth. Canadian tar sands received much attention and the outcome was summed up by one observation: "It took them 38 years and billions in investment to get to 1 Mbpd in production. It's going to take them quite a while to get to 3 million barrels but so what? The US alone is using more than 21 million a day and that doesn't factor in global decline or increased demand. Besides, tar sands oil needs a different kind of refinery than we have down here anyway."

Even some members of the camp previously espousing the idea that technology would somehow produce more oil are now saying that technology's only real role is to increase the efficiency of energy usage. I find it hard to believe that increased efficiency, achieved through engineering and manufacturing of new products, is going to magically replace the high-density energy that's being lost to depletion. It will only partially offset what's being wasted.

MATT SIMMONS AND PAST-DUE HURRICANE BILLS

Energy investment banker Matthew Simmons, author of the hot-selling and controversial *Twilight in the Desert: The Coming Saudi Oil Shock and the World Economy*, offered *FTW* some telling insights into why the price of oil continues to fall in spite of widespread unrepaired damage from Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. Of particular concern was a lack of reports on damage done to pipelines from rig to shore in the Gulf of Mexico.

"Short term markets are driven by sentiment. And when you go from there being 50,000 oil contracts long and 10,000 short the price might be slightly lower. But if oil prices are going up, the analysts say that it's speculation instead of supply. On the other hand, if prices are coming down, it's because of milder weather, [and] reduced demand in the off-driving season, and a five-minute trend becomes projected as the future." Simmons acknowledged that imports of refined gasoline, soon-to-end subsidies from IEA countries, and a healthy drain on the Strategic Petroleum Reserve weren't even being considered in the markets as they should be.

When I asked Simmons how badly we were setting ourselves up for a major crisis this winter he didn't hesitate. "Terribly! Because we needed to keep prices high to send out some signals that we needed to watch how we use energy. These signals are only encouraging people to use more." Then I asked the single most important question I had brought to the conference. "We know about the hurricane damage to refineries, to the terminals, and that we have lost 108 rigs in the Gulf. But what about the pipelines from rig to shore? If those are down, nothing else matters."

As usual, Simmons showed no hesitation. "You know why you haven't heard anything? Because they don't have any idea. It's hard to make a report when you don't know anything. Unfortunately, there are some reports that say that the pipelines aren't leaking. But so what? They're not on. Nobody's turned them on because they don't know how extensive the damage is and they don't know whether they're going to start pumping oil and gas directly into the water."

If Simmons is correct then that means that *all* US oil and natural gas production from the Gulf (except for the small portion transported by tanker) is still shut in and whether rigs are standing and refineries are working, as touted in the press, is irrelevant if there's no way to get the product ashore.

Upon hearing what Simmons had told me, a retired production manager from the Gulf who spoke on condition of anonymity said, "He's right but I can tell you that the pipeline damage is catastrophic and it's going to take years to fix."

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

Everybody agreed that US and Canadian natural gas production was in serious decline and that natural gas might pose a more lethal problem this winter than heating oil shortages.

Henry Groppe of Groppe, Long & Little, regarded by many as dean of energy analysts, pulled few punches. "Attention must be shifted to the consumption side," he observed, before announcing that "total crude oil production may have peaked this year". He drew widespread laughter by noting "We have run out of \$2 oil, and \$5 oil, and \$10 oil, even \$40 oil. We may soon be running low on \$60 oil but we'll never run out of oil altogether." To his credit, he warned that options must be improved for low income workers and that inner city environments must be enhanced to start encouraging people to move closer to where they work.

Roger Bezdek, co-author of the now-legendary SAIC "Hirsch Report" on mitigation strategies commissioned by the Department of Energy, delivered a chilling summary of that document. *PEAKING OF WORLD OIL PRODUCTION: IMPACTS, MITIGATION, & RISK MANAGEMENT* (February, 2005) was not a report on whether oil would peak but on the consequences of delay in preparing for the peak. He left no doubt that the world had chosen the worst possible course by doing nothing until the crisis was at hand. He observed that "previous price spike recessions may pale in comparison with what is coming."

Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper, a former exploration geologist, revealed that his city has been on something of a crash program in preparation for energy shortages for some time. He stated that, "over the next 10-20 years Peak Oil will play an increasing role in how we formulate government policy. Oil is Denver's single-largest budget item and we are looking at the ways it affects our operations. This year our fuel tab increased by \$1.9 billion dollars."

Strong conservation measures have been imposed in Denver and zoning regulations are being changed to permit more high-density development close to rail lines. The city's fleet has been reduced by 7%. All Denver school busses and diesel-powered vehicles are running on biodiesel produced by Colorado's Blue Sun Corporation. Almost all of the city's street lights have been replaced with ultra-low energy LED lights. The list goes on.

During the question and answer session I asked Hickenlooper if cities were networking regarding Peak Oil. He answered with a resounding yes and listed Denver, Portland and Chicago as three of many cities on a crash program to share information through the US Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities. This confirmed my suspicions that the vacuum created by an impotent federal government is being filled, but below the radar screens of corporate-owned news reports (*FTW* will be devoting a lot of energy to finding out what's going on around the country). After Hickenlooper finished, Randy Udall observed, "The federal government's not going to do anything. They're out for a long lunch."

Professor Charles Hall delivered a much-needed and succinct lesson on EROEI (Energy Return on Energy Invested) to help those new to the subject of sustainability. The EROEI on the first oil wells

was over 100. So how can ethanol enthusiasts claim victory when they can prove a positive EROEI of .1? Corn is a food, not an energy source.

One of the biggest attractions was a film shown on the first night of the conference produced by Pat Murphy and Megan Quinn who had traveled extensively to Cuba to study how the Cubans had survived their near-total loss of energy after the fall of the Soviet Union. ([FTW has reported on this](#)). This film was a real crowd pleaser for the many *FTW* subscribers and local activists who are taking matters into their own hands by preparing their local communities. One person who viewed the film told me, "You know what Castro did? He dropped all the 'isms', capitalism, communism, socialism. He just got out of the way, turned the money system on its head and put everything in the hands of people where they lived and it worked." For many of the private attendees, this film alone was worth the cost of the trip.

Julian Darley of The Post Carbon Institute and author of *High Noon for Natural Gas* delivered a chilling assessment of North America's natural gas situation. As reported on the excellent website [The Oil Drum](#):

Julian Darley... warned us that he was going to say some unpopular things, and he did. He said them very articulately though: Big energy is the problem: it is destroying the planet. Climate change is coming faster and sooner than even the worst case scenarios. Growth is not sustainable - sustainable development is an oxymoron. Natural gas is going down fast and there is not much time to make big changes. We are agreed that communism is a bad system - it collapsed and good riddance. However, what if capitalism, the other great system of materialism, what if that is a bad system with no future too? He believes we need to move to relocalization and implement the depletion protocol - reduce economic activity inline with energy depletion.

On Saturday, before flying back (one of the last times ever) to Los Angeles I attended an organizational breakout session where ASPO-USA was trying to figure out what to do next. As various options were being discussed I thought to myself, "Better not spend too much time on incorporation, structure and funding. I can guarantee that maybe 200 individual Americans are already on their way home with ideas they will start to implement without waiting for an organization to help them. The best thing ASPO-USA can do is raise money and facilitate and network with what the people are already doing. For all of America's great faults, for all of its excess baggage, and in spite of the criminality that now pervades the federal government — ingenuity and individual action are still the truest and most valuable traits of this culture. They are not dead. They've just been paying credit card bills instead of figuring out how to live on a deeply troubled planet. Fortunately, that all seems to be changing now.

Nobody could tell exactly when it began and nobody could predict when it would end. At the outset, they didn't even call it a depression. At worst it was a recession, a brief slump, a correction in the market, a glitch in the rising curve of prosperity. Only when the full import of those heartbreaking years sank in did it become the Great Depression.

— *The Great Depression* by Pierre Berton

[Editorial Note: Just before lunch on the second day of the conference I was stricken with a severe attack of intestinal influenza which knocked me out for more than 24 hours. I would like to offer my special thanks to Milton Ariail of the Post Carbon Institute for getting me an audio of Roscoe Bartlett's presentation, and also to the staff of his Washington, D.C. office for sending me a copy of his PowerPoint presentation. --MCR]

[9/11, the War on Iraq, the War on Terror – everywhere you look there's a desperately maintained smokescreen. What's behind it is the obscene fact that our behavior in the past century and a half is destroying the future of the human species. Classical economics is a disaster: wealth comes from the Earth, not from the bank or the public or the hereditary plutocracy. We live on a beautiful little rock with limited resources, and there is nowhere else to go. The pro-growth position sounds more and more like flat-Earth creationism, a brittle fantasy that rages at the facts when it cannot ignore them.

The smokescreen is clearing. From Capitol Hill to Denver, from Caltech to Australia, high-profile discussions of Peak Oil and Gas are happening almost too fast for FTW to cover them. Here Michael Kane reports back from the House of Representatives in its first hearing designed to explain Peak to Members who are new to the issue. Audio of the hearing is available [online](#). – FTW]

“Peak Oil Is Not A Theory”

Congressional Hearing Explains Peak Oil

By
Michael Kane
with
Jamey Hecht

“Peak Oil is not a theory.”

Dr. Robert L. Hirsch, author of the [Hirsch Report](#)

“Peak Oil is not a theory.”

Professor Kjell Aleklett, Ph.D.



Photo by Lisa Lyons Wright

December 8, 2005 2030 PST (FTW): **T**he House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality held the first full-scale Congressional hearing Peak Oil on December 7, 2005. The audience of fifty was sizeable for the small conference room, with all eyes fixed on the speakers for two and a quarter hours of bracing information. The reactions from Representatives were widely varied, ranging from disbelief to acceptance.

Several Members brought out the old saw, that catastrophic depletion of fossil fuels has been predicted in the past yet supplies have always continued to flow. Others understood that it doesn't matter exactly when world oil production peaks; the important thing is to start mitigating the inevitable shortages as soon as possible.

The hearing began with Representatives Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), John Shimkus (R-IL), and Gene Green (D-TX) in attendance. Before the day was over, Joe Barton (R-TX), John Sullivan (R-OK), Rick Boucher (D-VA), Michael Burgess (R-TX), Hilda L. Solis (D-CA), Heather Wilson (R-NM) and Tom Allen (D-MA) had made it to the hearing. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Hall.

Representatives Roscoe Bartlett (R-MD) and Tom Udall (D-NM), who co-chair the newly formed House Peak Oil Caucus, presented testimony to their colleagues. This was followed by testimony from Dr. Robert L. Hirsch, Senior Energy Program Advisor, SAIC, and author of the [Hirsch Report](#); Robert Esser, Senior Consultant and Director, Global Oil and Gas Resources, Cambridge Energy Research Associates; and Professor Kjell Aleklett, Ph.D., of the Department of Radiation Sciences at Uppsala University in Sweden. Aleklett is a founding member of ASPO and President of that Association.

After Mr. Udall read his written testimony, Mr. Bartlett gave a brilliant presentation of Peak Oil – the data, the curves, the 1962 peak of discovery and the current peak of production, the inexorable rise of demand, and the total dependence of our society on cheap and abundant oil and natural gas – not only for transportation and electricity, but for food itself.

Congressman Bartlett explained why he now opposes drilling in ANWR (the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska) with an incisive rhetorical question: how it is in our national security interest to consume the last oil reserves we have as quickly as possible? If you've got money in the bank earning good interest, you don't take it out and squander it.

Synthetic fuels from coal are being widely discussed since we have an estimated 250 years' worth of recoverable coal reserves in this country. But that figure assumes zero demand growth! According to Bartlett, if you increase the consumption rate by 2%, and calculate in the energy loss for converting coal to liquid fuel, you're down to only 50 years of coal reserves – not to speak of the prodigious environmental impact of increased mining. He described the Canadian tar sands project as a net energy loser, in which vast natural gas reserves are being wasted in the production of poor quality petroleum in meager amounts. Nuclear power plants dedicated entirely to the production of oil from shale are now being considered.

Bartlett did say that nuclear energy could and probably should grow, since it would be “preferable to shivering in the dark.” FTW does not share this opinion. Perhaps it would be preferable to chop wood for the stove and be asleep by sundown.

[ASPO](#) and its allies were compared to “the boy who cried wolf” by Rep. Gene Green, but Bartlett noted that, “In the parable the [wolf](#) did eventually come, and he ate all the sheep and the people.” He quoted [Matt Savinar](#) at the end of his testimony. Savinar, who operates one of the best Peak Oil and resource scarcity websites on the net – [www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net](#) – has said he learned about Peak Oil from FTW.

Rep. Hall, who chaired the hearing, said his mother had once told him it's better to keep your mouth shut and be thought a fool than to open your mouth and prove it. He asked no questions. He praised Bartlett for his many professional accomplishments and said he looked forward to re-reading Bartlett's written testimony.

Rep. Hilda Solis stated she felt the topic was interesting and important especially as it relates to finding alternative sources of energy. She had no questions.

The only question for Bartlett came from Rep. Shimkus, addressing hydrogen and synthetic fuel from coal. Shimkus believes the market is capable of taking care of the situation. "We seem to deify the market," Bartlett responded. "The marketplace will work if there are infinite resources. There are not infinite resources here. [We should've started 20 years ago if we wanted to make sure we weren't going to have any dislocations in this transfer.](#)"

Bartlett urged everyone to think of fuel cells as batteries: they are not an energy source. The issue of coal and synthetic fuels was adequately addressed in Bartlett's original presentation but he reiterated the information to Shimkus.

Following Bartlett's testimony to the Committee, he joined them for the questioning of a second panel of witnesses. In that capacity he came very close to talking about the unsustainable nature of our current lifestyle when he said, "We need massive conservation efforts."

After the hearing I asked Congressman Bartlett when he thought the unsustainable nature of the "American way of life" would be brought to public debate. Bartlett said, "My hope is that we will be able to talk about that before it is a reality... but I anticipate that we won't do anything about it until there's a crisis, and it's going to be a real rough ride."

The night before this hearing, at a Christmas party, Bartlett was praised by President Bush for his leadership in the area of Peak Oil. Given that we know Dick Cheney [was aware](#) of Peak Oil (without using the term) at least as early as 1999 based on his own public statements, is it possible Bush was unaware of this issue until Bartlett recently met with him to privately discuss the matter?

"We have in our government a really good application for the tyranny of the urgent," said Bartlett. "I think the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of Energy understand Peak Oil, but that is not the most urgent thing on their plate. Iraq, Social Security, upcoming elections... the urgent frequently sweeps the important off the table and I think that is what happened."

When asked if he thought the Iraq War might have been a failed attempt to mitigate Peak Oil, Bartlett responded, "I have no idea. I can't get inside of their heads. That is maybe a more justifiable reason for having gone there than what was originally stated." I asked the Congressman about a [recent cornucopian statement](#) from Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA):

"You know, what-- what makes our economy grow is energy. And, and Americans are used to going to the gas tank [sic], and when they put that hose in their, uh, tank, and when I do it, I wanna get gas out of it. And when I turn the light switch on, I want the lights to go on, and I don't want somebody to tell me I gotta change my way of living to satisfy them. Be-

cause this is America, and this is something we've worked our way into, and the American people are [entitled](#) to it, and if we're going improve (sic) our standard of living, you have to consume more energy."

"Well," Mr. Bartlett replied, "he may *want* that to happen, but I'm about to be 80 years old, and I *want* to be 60. There is about as much chance of that happening as what he wants to see happen. It's not reality."

Bartlett, who has had successful careers as a scientist, inventor, professor, and farmer, has taken a leadership role in educating Congress by forming a Peak Oil Caucus in the House of Representatives and pushing for hearings such as this one. It was absolutely exhilarating to hear what *FTW* has been writing about for four years being presented before Congress. *CNN* had a camera crew filming for a January report on Peak Oil.

The rest of the witnesses presenting testimony agreed almost entirely on the facts surrounding Peak Oil, with the sole exception of Robert Esser, a colleague of Daniel Yergin at Cambridge Energy Research Associates, who felt that Peak will not occur any earlier than 2020 and likely much later. Esser also stressed that he did not believe there was going to be a peak followed by a sharp decline, but rather an "undulating plateau." As CERA members have stated repeatedly in myriad publications, they regard "technology" and "unconventional oil" as the major bulwarks against shortage. They generally ignore the fact that improved recovery techniques only accelerate depletion, and that Canadian tar sands are an environmental disaster that wastes natural gas and freshwater on a vast scale. They also [mislead the public by confusing Peak with "running out."](#) the same mistake made in 1970 when the U.S. peaked, and economists mocked Hubbert by saying "look - we're producing more than ever!" The U.S. was indeed producing more than ever before, *and more than ever again*: that is Peak Oil, exactly what and when Hubbert had predicted.

Rep. Tom Allen countered that whether there is a plateau or a peak with a sharp decline, in a market economy of exponential growth, there must still be a substantial energy deficit. Esser agreed with this, saying the "undulating plateau" was not a good thing.

The American Way of Life

Changing the gluttonous lifestyle Americans are now accustomed to only came up once during the hearing. Rep. Michael Burgess was suggesting that new technology is creating opportunities to get at new oil capacity. Professor Aleklett said this new technology that Burgess is so proud of has made the problem worse by diminishing reserves faster. When asked if biodiesel would make a difference, Aleklett said it hardly would, and Dr. Hirsch agreed with him. Burgess was now frustrated that no solutions (quick fixes) were being suggested, to which Aleklett suggested one solution would be for Americans to save oil by not consuming so excessively.

He pointed out that Europe consumes half of what we do yet maintains a high standard of living. Dr. Hirsch jumped to Professor Aleklett's defense, saying that biofuels will only provide to a sliver of energy and that there needs to be a "worldwide will" to address this problem, with governments helping the private sector to do things that haven't been done before. Burgess then said, "I have a lot more faith in the private sector than in One World Government."

At this point the acting chair presiding over the hearing jumped in and explained how suburban sprawl in America requires that we travel further than is required in Europe. No one mentioned that sprawl might be the problem.

Robert Hirsch outlined his epochal [Report](#) with characteristic brilliance. If we initiate a crash program 20 years before Peak occurs, we have the possibility (not the guarantee) of significantly mitigating the problem.

One of the most important aspects of Hirsch's testimony was his analogy with natural gas. In 1999, the EIA (Energy Information Agency) and NPC (National Petroleum Council) projected there was plenty of natural gas in North America for years to come. Six years later we see they were wrong. Now they see adequate oil supplies for years into the future. Did they get it right this time?

For this reason, a crash plan has to be implemented now, while we (at least some people, at least in public) hope Peak is still twenty years away. Add massive conservation efforts beyond what most Americans are willing to tolerate, and the crisis might become manageable.

"If you dig into Peak Oil it will probably be one of the most depressing subjects that any of you will ever have to worry about or think about," said Hirsch. For some time after the Peak there will be plenty of oil, but it won't be cheap – and cheap oil is the lifeblood of our economy.

Frustrating Assumptions

Some Congress Members were frustrated to hear the problem described with such frightful gravity while the solutions remained elusive. Anything they thought was a solution turned out not to be. Hydrogen was completely dismissed by Hirsch, as it was by [James Woolsey recently at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing](#) on November 16 of this year. The energy bill recently passed made some effort to implement alternative energy sources but, according to Hirsch, "It wasn't created with Peak Oil in mind."

The competing studies of world oil reserves are shaped by the assumptions they encode. Two studies can use the exact same data and arrive at completely divergent conclusions if (for example) each study assumes a different depletion rate for the array of mature oilfields under analysis. Peak Oil is an issue of terrific complexity with immense consequences. The testimony presented to this committee was a cold shower for all who dared to listen.

After the hearing, Roscoe Bartlett, Robert L. Hirsch, Kjell Aleklett and John Darnell (Bartlett's energy advisor) lingered briefly in conference room 2232 on the third floor of the Rayburn House Office Building. Everyone had a look of deep concern imprinted on his face, wondering if this first hearing-level effort to explain Peak Oil to a Subcommittee of Congress had made an impact.

**Hear the entire hearing on Real Player:*
<http://energycommerce.house.gov/108/Hearings/12072005hearing1733/hearing.htm>

Witness List

Panel 1

[The Honorable Roscoe G. Bartlett](#)

Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

[The Honorable Tom Udall](#)

Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Panel 2

[Mr. Kjell Aleklett Ph.D.](#)

Professor
Department of Radiation Sciences, Uppsala University
Uppsala, Sweden

[Dr. Robert L. Hirsch](#)

Senior Energy Program Advisor
SAIC
Alexandria, VA

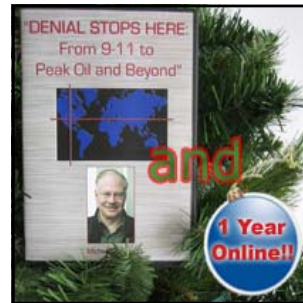
[Mr. Robert Esser](#)

Senior Consultant and Director, Global Oil and Gas Resources
Cambridge Energy Research Associates
Huntington, NY

[Mr. Murray Smith](#)

Minister-Counselor Government
Canadian Embassy

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Deffeyes at Caltech:

**“I’m not so worried about the next 15 to 20 years.
I’m very scared about the next five.”**

By
Jamey Hecht

December 7, 2005 0800 PST (FTW) -- **A**t 8 p.m. on December 1st, Kenneth Deffeyes gave this year’s Lauritsen Memorial Lecture to a packed house at Beckman Auditorium on the California Institute of Technology campus. Just over 800 people heard the thesis and supporting arguments of his most recent book, *Beyond Oil*. It’s a brief, graceful book whose two strengths are a new non-technical presentation of M. King Hubbert’s work aimed at laypeople (without the use of logarithmic curves), and a survey of the various non-conventional sources of hydrocarbon energy (including coal gasification, tar sands, methane hydrates, and others). The venue was ideal, as the [press release](#) explained: “Though he is not affiliated with Caltech, Deffeyes’ work is of keen interest to the Caltech community, in part because the Institute’s vice provost, David Goodstein, is also an authority on the coming production peak of oil.”

The slides were bracing. One showed the *NY Times* headline indicating that Saudi Arabia could no longer increase production; the next noted the recently-announced “exhaustion” of the world’s second largest oil field, [Burgan](#) in Kuwait; followed by Chevron’s advertised admission that we’re burning three barrels of oil for each barrel we find. The last year when we found more oil than we burned was in the mid-1980’s. Shell Oil has announced that they are now, in effect, Shell Gas, having essentially given up on the prospect of significant new oil discovery.

The oilfields that we have now found probably contain 94% of the existing oil. Deffeyes assured us that there’s a lot of oil still to be produced by exploring already-discovered but long-neglected fields. These are not mature fields being squeezed dry with secondary and tertiary recovery; they are forgotten fields whose viability had been prematurely discounted and never reconsidered. Deffeyes’ colleague Robert Sneider has made a fortune revisiting such fields. They help account for the four-decade lag between world petroleum discovery, which peaked in [1962](#), and the peak of world petroleum production, which Deffeyes’ calculations place at 2005. In a now-famous gesture of exquisite symbolism, he proffered to the world an artificially specific date for Peak Oil: Thanksgiving Day of this year. At *FTW*, we capitalize “Peak Oil” to indicate that it’s an event, like D-Day or the Storming of the Bastille. And like those events, it has come and gone.

Deffeyes also acknowledged the institutionalized dissent of Daniel Yergin, dean of the cornucopians, and showed that his claims are based on a high stack of unrealistic assumptions and unrealized miracles. What’s most troublesome about Yergin’s argument is not its strength, Deffeyes explained, but its effect on public perceptions. Unfortunately, editorial fairness seems to require the inclusion of the cornucopian voice as if it were half of a complete picture. As Matt Simmons observed at [ASPO’s Lisbon conference](#), news editors faced with conflicting experts tend to assume that “the truth must be somewhere in between.” While petroleum data are notoriously ambiguous, and geology is a discipline in which reasonable people can disagree, it’s clear that one

trillion barrels have been depleted and that not much more than another trillion remains. Two plus two does not equal five: even if I claim it does, while you insist it’s four, the answer does not lie “somewhere in between” at four and a half.

After a strong but familiar treatment of the daunting connection between natural gas and the food supply, Deffeyes turned to transportation:

The greatest thing on the horizon for the automobile are these high efficiency diesels being marketed in Europe – they get more than 100 miles to the gallon, far more miles than a gasoline-electric hybrid will get you, but they’re not being marketed in the United States and I don’t know why. [But] in the case of aviation, they don’t have any alternatives. They’re hooked on JP4 jet fuel, and hooked very tightly. Aircraft manufacturers, passenger airlines, air freight, everything – is going to be in a squeeze; half the airline carriers in the U.S. are now in bankruptcy.

Consumers will have to lower their expectations. “There will be [rationing](#). Whether it’s by price or inconvenience or coupons or something else, we don’t know.” As for mitigation,

There are things that we can do right now, like turning off the lights, like opening the windows at night when it’s cool so that we don’t need air conditioning in the daytime. In the next category, there are things that we know how to do, where the engineering is already done and we just need to start building: wind, nuclear, high efficiency diesel, etc. Then there’s a need for R & D, a kind of Manhattan Project or Apollo project that may or may not work.

In that last category, he referred to “the most technological of the dreams,” [the work of the late Richard Smalley](#) involving nanotechnology for high efficiency DC electric transmission with local storage.

This reporter was somewhat surprised by Deffeyes’ enthusiasm for coal gasification. It’s a promising technology being brought to market in coal rich states like [Pennsylvania](#), [Montana](#), and [Illinois](#). But it will mean enormous amounts of carbon liberated from its current sequestration underground. Deffeyes showed that there is currently a robust market for CO₂, since oil companies inject it into tired wells as a way to bring up the deeper oil (this is part of “secondary recovery”). The speaker himself had recently visited a coal gasification plant in North Dakota that sells its waste CO₂ to the Canadian petroleum industry. Still, it’s not easy to believe that a scaled-up coal gasification infrastructure could power even a scaled-down American economy without leaking so much carbon as to trigger accelerated climate change.

After a look at agriculture, transportation, and electrical power generation, enough tiles were in place for a look at the whole mosaic. The picture is not pretty:

Part of the debate is, do we have a hard landing or a soft landing? For a soft landing, you need to get in place enough new nuclear power capacity, wind generation, efficiency in housing and automobile transportation – in place by last Thursday – to have a seamless transition. But it’s very likely – the longer we go, and [given] the fact that we didn’t listen to Jimmy Carter – that it’s going to be a

hard landing. The least vicious of the hard landings is a global recession possibly worse than 1930. To picture the harder hard landing, I've borrowed from the book of Revelation, where the four horses are traditionally known as War, Famine, Pestilence, and Death.

In the Q&A period, he said this: "A number of people have told me that until something sufficiently ghastly happens, to convince everyone that, yes, there's a real problem – nothing's going to be done, nationally or internationally. To me that means the World Trade Center disaster wasn't bad enough. Well, the next question, is there going to be [something very much worse](#) than the World Trade Center, that finally says, yes, Peak is here, we're going to deal with it?"

PEAK OIL CAUCUS FORMED IN U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

A NEW BEGINNING AS THE CLOCK RUNS DOWN

**By
Jamey Hecht**

November 23, 2005 1300 PST (FTW): **T**he House of Representatives now has a Peak Oil caucus. That means there is a conscious minority within that body who have recognized the crisis. Some of them probably understand it better than others, and perceive that no combination of alternative energy sources will ever allow what Dick Cheney calls "the American way of life" to continue. But they will educate each other and, we can hope, the rest of the House.

The Caucus was founded by Roscoe Bartlett, whose leadership on the Peak Oil issue is unparalleled across the entire government today.

Representative Bartlett is in command of the most daunting reaches of the problem. He knows that "There is no such thing, ultimately, as sustainable growth." Hear his presentation at the Denver ASPO-USA Conference here: <http://www.globalpublicmedia.com/events/564> (for the frank admission about "sustainable growth," go to 18:56). He knows that "our whole monetary system is based on the premise that we will always have growth." And he knows that those two insights add up to a new world of sacrifice and transformation.

But isn't this politically toxic? Not anymore, it seems. Some or all of the Caucus members surely regard oil and gas depletion as so important, its consequences so epochal, that re-election pales by comparison. But perhaps they have also judged that the crisis will be so serious so soon that an early, visible acceptance of the facts will increase an incumbent's chances for further electoral victories. All the caucus members are to be congratulated and supported, though their task is just beginning. *FTW* wishes to thank these members, and to invite the public to hold them to their initial commitment:

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At the same moment, there has appeared a "sense of the House" resolution on Peak Oil. Though it has no immediate legislative consequences, it's a landmark document.

Henceforth it will be much harder to pretend that fossil fuel scarcity is merely the result of market forces, Islamic extremism, corporate price gouging, international hoarding, technological limitations, or regulatory red tape. Those factors affect pricing, but geology trumps them all. Of course the beast in the Oval Office and his allies in the Congress will keep on pretending, just as the Soviets kept up the fantasy that "dialectics" would guarantee an eventual triumph of world communism, or as the Chinese during the "Boxer Rebellion" convinced themselves that martial arts could outface the machine gun. The distractions and deceptions will continue, but now there is a critical mass of thinking persons inside the government who can speak the truth about the energy crisis. Not a lone visionary, vulnerable to dirty tricks or a convenient plane crash – this is a group of eight legislators of both parties from Massachusetts to New Mexico. The game has changed.

Here is House Resolution 507:

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States, in collaboration with other international allies, should establish an energy project with the magnitude, creativity, and sense of urgency that was incorporated in the 'Man on the Moon' project to address the inevitable challenges of 'Peak Oil'.

As Roscoe Bartlett made clear in his ASPO-USA presentation, the real analogy is not to Apollo 11, but Apollo 13. In a two-part story here at *FTW*, Tom Wayburn has demonstrated that "An Apollo Project For Energy Can Succeed, But Not In A Market Economy" (See [parts 1](#) and [2](#)). The existing corporate "[Apollo Alliance](#)" pushes for a boom in renewables that will power urban sprawl and the car culture using non-fossil fuels. That is a road to nowhere; it is thermodynamically impossible and it would do little to avert the ecological collapse of which climate change is only the most dramatic sign. The pursuit of endless economic growth, no matter what its physical basis, leads to a dead lunar landscape. The Apollo 13 mission, by contrast, was (to borrow a phrase from Megan Quinn) an effort to get [home](#) from such a voyage, in a damaged ship with a perilously narrow mathematical window of opportunity for safe re-entry. That window is [power-down](#).

The wording of House Resolution 507 is bold and robust compared to the environmental lip service of the neoliberals; it is sober and insightful compared to the insanity and greed of the neo-conservatives. But it is also shrewd and diplomatic and ambiguous: the reader can't tell whether H.R. 507 advocates a utopian leap beyond the limits (Apollo 11) or an urgent round of problem solving for sheer survival (Apollo 13). In the ancient world Apollo was, after all, the god of both healing and plague. That name keeps coming up because of President Kennedy's spiritual summons to a new era of human striving. But for most Americans, the moon landing was a glorious spectacle on a t.v. screen. Power-down, by contrast, is about shared sacrifice for collective hope. This time, we're all in the busted spaceship, and [the journey home](#) requires the utmost cooperation, cool headed resolve, and abundant good luck. "Houston, we have a problem."

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

October 24, 2005

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland (for himself, Mr. UDALL of New Mexico, Mr. GOODE, Mr. GRIJALVA, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. TANCREDO, Mr. GINGREY, Mr. KUHL of New York, Mr. ISRAEL, Mr. BUTTERFIELD, Mr. UDALL of Colorado, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. GILCHREST, and Mr. WYNN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that the United States, in collaboration with other international allies, should establish an energy project with the magnitude, creativity, and sense of urgency that was incorporated in the 'Man on the Moon' project to address the inevitable challenges of 'Peak Oil'.

Whereas the United States has only 2 percent of the world's oil reserves;

Whereas the United States produces 8 percent of the world's oil and consumes 25 percent of the world's oil, of which nearly 60 percent is imported from foreign countries;

Whereas developing countries around the world are increasing their demand for oil consumption at rapid rates; for example, the average consumption increase, by percentage, from 2003 to 2004 for the countries of Belarus, Kuwait, China, and Singapore was 15.9 percent;

Whereas the United States consumed more than 937,000,000 tonnes of oil in 2004, and that figure could rise in 2005 given previous projection trends;

Whereas, as fossil energy resources become depleted, new, highly efficient technologies will be required in order to sustainably tap replenishable resources;

Whereas the Shell Oil scientist M. King Hubbert accurately pre-

dicted that United States domestic production would peak in 1970, and a growing number of petroleum experts believe that the peak in the world's oil production (Peak Oil) is likely to occur in the next decade while demand continues to rise;

Whereas North American natural gas production has also peaked;

Whereas the United States is now the world's largest importer of both petroleum and natural gas;

Whereas the population of the United States is increasing by nearly 30,000,000 persons every decade;

Whereas the energy density in one barrel of oil is the equivalent of eight people working full time for one year;

Whereas affordable supplies of petroleum and natural gas are critical to national security and energy prosperity; and

Whereas the United States has approximately 250 years of coal at current consumption rates, but if that consumption rate is increased by 2 percent per year, coal reserves are reduced to 75 years: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That it is the sense of the House of Representatives that--

(1) in order to keep energy costs affordable, curb our environmental impact, and safeguard economic prosperity, including our trade deficit, the United States must move rapidly to increase the productivity with which it uses fossil fuel, and to accelerate the transition to renewable fuels and a sustainable, clean energy economy; and

(2) the United States, in collaboration with other international allies, should establish an energy project with the magnitude, creativity, and sense of urgency of the 'Man on the Moon' project to develop a comprehensive plan to address the challenges presented by Peak Oil.

Co-sponsors

Tom Udall
Virgil Goode
Raul Grijalva
Walter Jones
Tom Tancredo
Phil Gingrey
Randy Kuhl
Steve Israel
G.K. Butterfield
Mark Udall
Chris Van Hollen
Wayne Gilchrest
Al Wynn
John McHugh
Jim Moran
Dennis Moore

EATING LOCALLY IS HARDER THAN YOU THINK

A Sonoma County Exercise Provides Valuable Planning Lessons – This Isn't as Easy as We Might Hope

“I Hate Peak Oil” Cookies

By
Wendy Talaro

[It's one thing to acknowledge that food production might revert to local in the face of Peak Oil. It is another thing altogether to attempt to eat locally, as this graduate student finishing a Master's Degree in Ecological Agriculture at New College demonstrates. Not only is the prospect a daunting one, even for an agriculturally-blessed region like Sonoma County, California; the task of eating only food produced within a 100 mile radius for one week raises much more fundamental questions about our society. By way of full disclosure I should tell you that Wendy Talaro is my fiancée and that you'll be hearing more from her. I'm a lucky guy in many ways. Even if they weren't produced locally, "I Hate Peak Oil" cookies are great. – MCR]

November 21, 2005 1100 PST (FTW): -- **T**hough I engaged in this two-week exercise as a specific homework assignment for a graduate school level Ecological Agriculture course, I would not hesitate to recommend that absolutely everyone living in industrialized countries participate in their own local food sourcing experiment. Where is your food grown and harvested? Not just some of it — this is a query about each and every component of your current diet, whether you're eating junk food for pleasure and solace, or enjoying mindful dining for nutritional health. Restrict your food purchases to items grown within a specific mileage radius and write out the rationale for the distance of the boundary. Find out as best you can about the farm sources of the produce, dairy, eggs and meat that you eat and ask grocers for this information if a food item's origin is not clearly labeled. If components of your standard diet are not locally available and readily accessible within the radius, make notes of all the food items that would otherwise be missing if not for global commerce and far-flung food transport. It is an eye-opening, if disturbing, exercise. Food security vulnerabilities are ordinarily easy to overlook until the veneer of plenty is ripped away. The vulnerabilities of Sonoma County's local food system were exposed through this assignment, as were the shortfalls for meeting the caloric, let alone nutritional, needs of the county's 478,400 residents.¹

To delineate and clearly see my self-imposed boundary, I obtained a California State Automobile Association map of the state and drew in a circle with a compass. Any source within the boundary was fair game as “local.” In my palette of culinary creations, there was no single dish that could be prepared exclusively with locally grown items. The longer the ingredient list for the recipe, the harder it was to source every ingredient within the boundary. The success of finding or creating meals of entirely local ingredients was a complex function of available money, creativity, research, time spent in shopping and alchemical effort spent in the kitchen. Eating fresh food locally implicitly entails eating seasonally, but merely surviving

by meeting caloric requirements alone entails some deprivation and self-denial of tastes and preferences, many of which have been shaped for decades by cheap fossil fuel driven imports and exports of unprocessed food and value-added manufactured foodstuffs.

Food shopping at locally-owned Oliver's Market in Cotati, CA was my best option, given its business hours and location. A 6-mile round trip on surface streets is arguably not the most efficient use of gasoline, but a special, longer round trip to a farmers' market under the same surface street travel conditions would've been even less efficient. I restricted my purchases as much as I could tolerate and afford, to (1) locally grown and (2) organic. Budgetary limitations required me to deviate from my self-selected geographic rule while the idealistic desire to give the assignment an honest effort cost me about 3-4 times as much in two weeks as food usually costs me in a single month. If I thought the cost was prohibitive, it was nothing compared to the time I spent fulfilling the requirements of the assignment. Food became a preoccupation to an exaggerated degree, not for want of more of it but due to the time sink of online recipe and food preparation research. Nor had I accounted for preparation and cooking efforts that needed to be completely reconfigured to accommodate foods that usually were not part of my diet, and in greater quantities than I was used to cooking with — pumpkins, dairy and potatoes, for example.

Fortunately, eating organic food no longer presents the same narrow range of choices and accessibility difficulties it once did; there has been explosive growth of this multi-million dollar marketplace. I had the distinct advantage of a beautifully organized and comprehensive manual, *The Organic Guide to Sonoma, Napa & Mendocino Counties, 5th edition*, produced and distributed by Community Action Publications in Sebastopol, CA. Although the flavor, health and environmental benefits reflected in organic food pricing make this food competitive with cheaper, conventionally produced food (whose pricing reflects neither true long-term health detriments or environmental costs), the limits of the consumer's personal food budget can drive short-term choices to garner the most “bang for the buck” at the grocery store.

So far, the benefits of eating locally and organically are restricted to those who have the financial means and the education to understand the consequences of their own eating habits. Even those who recognize the benefits may not have the means to consistently purchase organic, let alone locally produced organic, food under current economic conditions, which are structured in favor of cheap, fossil fuel subsidized imports and processing. *Local food can be maddeningly close, yet simultaneously inaccessible.* Compared to many other counties, even within California, Sonoma County is blessed with good soils, local freshwater sources and a mild climate well suited for almost year-round agriculture. Yet for all the substantial land area that could be oriented to sustaining the needs of this and neighboring counties' residents, land and water resources are primarily allocated to foods for upscale specialty markets, both for local consumption and export.

As a full-time graduate student, I found rearranging my entire life to fit farmers' markets hours of operation was neither practical nor affordable in immediate out-of-pocket terms. The reality of most busy working adults is such that weekends and evenings are regularly subsumed into the black hole of errands of consumption and maintenance chores. For those on fixed schedules, I can anticipate a mismatch between sellers' and buyers' schedules — resulting in unintended barriers to the proliferation of local food.

Short and deliberate trips to Oliver's Market stretched into indeterminate searches, a distorted mockery of wild food foraging. My first foray resulted in a jumble — Clover Stornetta (Petaluma, CA) organic butter, non-rBST light sour cream, organic mild cheddar and organic milk, Straus Creamery (Marshall, CA) organic half and half, and organic pumpkins from Muelrath Ranches (Santa Rosa, CA).

Not-so-local foods that had more familiar uses were organic eggplant and green onions from Madera, CA and Mori-Nu tofu from organic soybeans packaged, but not grown, in Torrance, CA. Although a good selection of organic and free-range meats are locally raised, meat was off-limits due to house rules set by a vegan landlord. Like going to a farmers' market, it was impossible to go with a prepared shopping list, particularly on my first trip. While it was easy to circumvent the aisles of packaged, highly processed foods, I was left to browse the outer aisles of produce and dairy (for the record, I happen to be somewhat lactose intolerant). As with farmers' markets shopping, I made the rounds before making my selections. It is one thing to shop with a definite list, which is only possible with year-round food availability powered by fossil fuels, and quite another to shop based on the criteria of locally grown only to bring home an odd hodge-podge of seasonally available foods picked from the selection of what Oliver's Market made available to their customers. Though they're a locally owned market, the majority of their produce was not locally grown.

Harder still was concocting something that would be edible, let alone nourishing, out of the findings. The challenge of figuring what to make of the mismatched assortment was a new and unanticipated time sink. With unfamiliar ingredients came the need for extensive research into recipes, which in turn prompted more shopping to augment missing ingredients. For every recipe that called for a local ingredient, there were always a few more ingredients required that were extremely difficult to obtain locally or just couldn't be locally sourced. Food preparation time stretched interminably day after day as I struggled with untried recipes, which sometimes called for ingredients that required soaking or precooking, as was the case with the pumpkins and some frozen plums previously harvested from a tree growing on the rental property where I currently live. Time was spent in perusal of websites to verify or discover geographic origins, locate local sources for specific items, and to find recipes and cooking instructions. To compensate for extra cooking and preparation time, I found myself doubling recipes that not only attempted to make use of huge surpluses of some ingredients that were difficult to procure in smaller quantities but also provided me with several servings, the better to maximize the amount of food prepared relative to the time spent cooking everything from scratch.

Another level of burdensome complexity is added if one has to accommodate special foods due to health vulnerabilities. Though I am fortunate enough to not suffer from Celiac's disease (gluten intolerance), leaky gut syndrome, rheumatoid arthritis, or lupus (autoimmune diseases), I can only imagine how much more challenging the local food assignment would have been if I did have severe food allergies or sharp restrictions on my diet.

I decided at the outset that chocolate was not up for negotiation in the face of my assignment. In a fit of pique over the lack of a coherent group of ingredients from my first shopping trip at Oliver's Market that would lend themselves to easily prepared meals, I created a batch of "I Hate Peak Oil" vegan chocolate chip cookies. The moniker for the cookies derives from the simple fact that most of the ingredients will become harder to come by as Peak Oil makes its effects felt. The wheat was grown in the upper Midwest though milled in Vermont; the vanilla came from Tahitian vanilla beans grown in Madagascar; the walnuts came from California's central valley; and the chocolate in the chips was probably from Ivory Coast or Ghana. The sweetener was not sugar but brown rice syrup produced by Lundberg Rice Farms in Richvale, CA — the sole ingredient from within the 100-mile limit. As for the fat that nearly all cookie and cake recipes calls for, I used non-GMO expeller pressed Earth Balance® spread which itself is a complex amalgam of soybean, palm fruit, canola seed and olive oils flavored by a corn extract, soy protein, soy lecithin, and non-dairy lactic acid derived from sugar beets and colorant from an unspecified natural source. The irony is both delicious and absurd — in the effort to create a treat that would

be palatable to vegans and omnivores alike, I had to resort to one of the most heavily processed, complex, non-local food ingredients I have ever used in cooking.

A short Google search yielded the following data for Sonoma County: (Source: [Sonoma County Farm Bureau](#))

Value of agricultural production, 1999: \$483 million (state ranking: 16th)

Top five crops by value, 2000:

Wine Grapes	\$389 million
Milk	\$79.8 million
Livestock	\$40.05 million
Cattle	\$12.4 million
Vegetables	\$6.6 million

Most productive acreage is dedicated to non-staple food production and it remains to be seen whether effort will be marshaled to redirect the focus of agricultural land use only when and if market signals indicate a transition would be highly profitable. Given the popularity of Atkins-type diets that restrict carbohydrate intake, it's impossible to secure staple food carbs locally in Sonoma County in sufficient quantity relative to population size: though each person on such a diet consumes fewer carbohydrates, one consequence has been a drop in their marketability and hence their supply. I had great difficulty locating a retail source for locally grown and milled grains and I considered collecting acorns, not only to add a unique dimension to my local food experience but to also supplement my food collection and preparation skills.

Wild food gathering can be financially easier to manage if one is willing to forego money spent in exchange for time, assuming that the wild food sources are close and clustered. However the whereabouts of extant stands of oaks with access unhindered by property boundaries or collection prohibitions is not common knowledge. Food gathering on public land, which constitutes disturbance or destruction of natural scenery, plants and animal life, is expressly prohibited by the California State Parks. The National Park Service and other federal agencies only allow subsistence gathering, which is inconsistently regulated by permits — some agencies require them and others do not. Moreover, pesticides are used freely on public and private land. If finding and collecting a wild staple food was not enough to test the skills and patience of the willing forager, clearly starvation would be at our doorsteps if great numbers of Sonoma County residents were suddenly forced to rely on locally harvestable wild food supplies. 2005 was a lean year for acorn foraging compared to 2004. Foraging itself would become a fossil fuel-intensive pursuit due to extensive driving along Sonoma, Marin and Napa County backroads and major highways in search of oaks, bulbs and berries. Complicating the task of collecting wild food is the lack of widespread culinary skills for such food. If not for fossil fuel driven industrial mass production and distribution of food, the population densities and numbers humans have attained would clearly not be possible. As Richard Heinberg notes, "Food is energy. And it takes energy to get food. These two facts, taken together, have always established the biological limits to the human population and always will."²

Finding bread made locally is not difficult but finding bread, noodles, pasta or any other carbohydrate staple food made locally *from locally grown ingredients* demands a time commitment to locate sources for the grains and the firm resolution to make the food from scratch. In order to obtain this flour at its nearest location, I would have had to drive almost 26 miles southbound one way in the midst of morning commute traffic. As with all farmers' markets, it is recommended to shop early for best selection. The difficulty of acquiring local whole-wheat flour was compounded by the lack of sufficient cold storage space for more than five pounds, even if budgetary

constraints did not limit the quantity I could buy for long-term usage.

The oil in wheat berries goes rancid faster once the grain has been milled. Lack of storage space would force me to use more flour than I would ordinarily, or I would have to sell or barter or give away the surplus. If I became a regular consumer of Full Belly Farm's flour, frequent trips to restock would compel me to shop for other food-stuffs in San Rafael or contrive other SF Bay Area combined errands to justify my long trips. In essence, obtaining "local" whole-wheat flour would necessitate at least an hour and a half of round trip driving, a 52-mile round trip, to say nothing of the gasoline and patience burned in the process. I began to wonder how well I would fare eating nothing but pumpkins, Sebastopol apples and dairy products for two weeks if I opted to omit grain carbohydrates. I concluded that the aggravation of assembling ingredients for whole-wheat bread was something that I could do without, though bread itself was harder to give up and I yielded to my non-local bagel cravings.

This quest mounted for a single staple food item - milled flour - brought up the extrapolated question of how much time would be spent on a weekly or monthly basis if this were no mere exercise but a regular necessity driven by the constraints of Peak Oil. What local foods would be available for purchase in scattershot fashion and in what quantities, particularly for lack of access to a place to grow or store most of my own? What would happen if a disaster disrupted food transport along major arteries? Would I even be able to afford to eat in Sonoma County if local food remained mostly the province of upscale farmers' markets and specialty food stores? Add to the food wish list items that have been selected for pleasure or as an acquired taste and the recipe and menu palette shrinks further - chocolate, table salt, most spices, condiments and herbs, and even exotic drinks like tea and coffee disappear altogether. Money mediates the relationship to food access and divides the haves from the have-nots. Food security, defined as "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life" (World Bank, 1986)³ is not possible given our current catabolic and degenerative economic paradigm.

Like conventional agriculture, commercial organic agriculture as currently practiced can only be sustained when powered by relatively cheap and readily accessible fossil fuels. If 6 lbs of soil are lost for every pound of conventional food produced,⁴ then 3 to 5 1/2 pounds of soil are lost for every pound of organic food produced, with soil depletion occurring "17 to 70 times faster than nature builds it."⁵ Soil losses are indirect since the importation of fertilizers means losses of organic matter and mineral from soils elsewhere (50-84% fertilizer importation x 6 lbs = 3 to 5 1/2 pounds of soil lost).⁶ Merely seeking to inflict less harm rather than stop or repair damage done is unconscionable at this late date, when the toll of environmental damage accrues daily and evidence mounts more quickly than it can be humanly absorbed. Considering the inevitable loss of the fossil fuel inputs upon which our food security is precariously based, the appearance of plenty is indeed an illusion. The sudden loss of food availability does not tally with our perception of the food system and our Achilles' heel, the secret hidden in plain sight: the omnipresence of international transport of food commodities and value-added food products. When countries import and export similar quantities of the selfsame food products, the global food system exhibits puzzling redundancy that upon closer examination demonstrates collective insanity.

If market indicators are the sole measure and inducement for change, the changes that might be implemented will be too little, too late. Conventional economics — which fails to value environmental services and yet simultaneously relies heavily on nature as material source and pollution sink — does not anticipate the drastic environmental changes driven by large and ill-perceived feedback cycles with substantial anthropogenic inputs. Human attention is disproportionately directed towards short-term problems and their immediate

solutions; these incur myriad problems on an even larger scale. Conventional economics and the vagaries of the marketplace are the frames through which humans view their biosphere. But the timing of natural cycles is asynchronous with the timing of the marketplace — human frames of perception are too small to view the state of the planet *in toto*; mega-decline data is discarded because it does not fit our modern industrial mindset wherein this planet is permanently stable and all-forgiving.

The negative consequences for environmental neglect or deliberate disregard are rarely reaped by those who inflict the damage. By the time the overlapping environmental stresses compound and accelerate decline, the market's response will be too late to avoid reaping the whirlwind. Anticipatory preparation will give way to mitigation, tantamount to doing a lot of running to stay in one place, the reactive default action for having done little to nothing beforehand. Mitigation is very time consuming, financially draining, and energetically costly compared to prevention or even preparation.

If the population of Sonoma County waits until food imports dissipate and fail to be restocked on grocery shelves before growing most of their own food for local consumption, it will be too late to avoid starvation since the environmental service of growing food crops is not performed on demand but on nature's cyclical timing. Likewise with water usage: if Sonoma County residents continue to overdraw underground aquifers and Russian River water to meet immediate short-term demand, groundwater pumping will be more expensive and energy intensive and aquifer recharge will take much longer. Entire ecosystems and economically valuable species populations will be more susceptible to collapse for lack of water. Not only will ever-increasing human demands for water not be met by supply, but less water will be available for growing local food, let alone meeting the needs of the non-human remainder of the biosphere. The infrastructure for graywater usage, water catchments, and waterless human waste processing / composting will need to be built hurriedly, often without reading the patterns of the landscape for the most effective use of precious water resources and nutrient cycling. Astronomically expensive and rapidly diminishing fossil fuel availability translates to loss of jobs, economic instability, cutbacks in public services, and rationing for the general public.

Capital-intensive infrastructure wear and tear maintenance and repairs that had been long postponed by cash-strapped municipalities and other government entities will lead to breakdowns, some of them catastrophic and irreparable. Due to the nature of global interdependence, ecological, energetic and economic breakdowns will not be contained or subject to quarantine. Collapse in one part of the world will eventually make its effects felt in the rest of the world community. Larger economic powerhouses are likely to suffer more precipitous declines in proportion to their dependence on imported fossil fuel energy. What little time there is to prepare will be wasted if the overall pattern of multiple ecosystemic declines is not accurately perceived and responded to with local actions bearing regional and global implications.

¹ http://www.sonoma-county.org/cao/citizens_guide/sonoma_county_population.htm

² Richard Heinberg, Museletter Number 159, July 2005, "Threats of Peak Oil to the Global Food Supply", paper presented at the FEASTA Conference, "What Will We Eat as the Oil Runs Out?", June 23-25, 2005, Dublin Ireland.

³ Lauren Sacks and Cynthia Rosenzwei "Climate Change and Food Security." <http://www.climate.org/topics/agricul/index.shtml>

⁴ John Jeavons, *How to Grow More Vegetables*, 6th edition revised, Ten Speed Press 2002, p. ix. Figure developed from US Department of Agriculture statistics.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. ix.

⁶ John Jeavons, personal communication

ESCAPE FROM CANCUN

Lessons About Human Reactions to Peak Oil and the Desperation to Conceal It

Psychosis in the Media and the Masses

by
Michael C. Ruppert

[Everything that you are about to read is a near-perfect analogue to the way the human race is responding to Peak Oil, only compressed in time and with consequences far less severe than what is approaching with the winter of 2005-6. Explain that to the estimated 40,000 tourists who – for the most part – stranded themselves in Cancun during Hurricane Wilma. The warnings were there. They had a chance to prepare and leave but most of them chose not to. Their reasons for not paying attention may have varied; but for all who were stranded the results were the same. They paid the price for their choices. They just couldn't believe that something bad might happen to them. It was not in their experience.]

Here in the "safe" world, there are also signs of a near-contagious delusion, even among so-called experts, that does not augur well for large-scale adaptivity and survival in the face of Peak Oil. This story shows how easy it is to fool oneself. – MCR]

Nov 8, 2005 0800 PST (FTW), CANCUN / XTAPA – I was hoping for a break and some rest in Cancun, but it was not to be. I was scheduled to arrive on October 18th and depart for another conference in Xtapa where I was to give a lecture on the 22nd. Human plans are frequently nature's entertainment and once again I lived up to a nickname I was given two decades ago when I was with the LAPD: "S--- Magnet."

Having watched the earliest beginnings of Hurricane Wilma I was apprehensive even as I left Los Angeles on Tuesday October 18th but it was a necessary trip. I was to speak about a new product called *Armorware* which offered an elegant and bulletproof solution for millions of people searching for internet privacy and confidence. The Canadian company Armor Technologies, Inc. was just about to go public in a way that would allow millions of people who needed such a solution to get it.

For about eight months I had been involved in the marketing strategy for this new software platform. Some of my recommendations for its functionality had actually been incorporated into the final product. As *Armorware* was nearing its public launch and IPO, I was called on to act as spokesman for the product at a conference for mid-range independent Canadian investors. The conference was being held at the Moon Palace resort in Cancun and my tickets, as well as the presentation itself, had been arranged almost at the last minute.

Why me? I had written extensively about PROMIS software in *FTW* and *Crossing the Rubicon*. I had made friends with most of the principals of Armor Technologies at other conferences over the last three years. We shared similar political and economic views. Though not a techie by any stretch, I did understand the

needs of individual computer users. While there was nothing out there that could stop Total Information Awareness (under its myriad names and incarnations) from accessing corporate, commercial and government data bases, there was – at last – something that absolutely guaranteed the sanctity of one's own PC, personal files, and even e-mail correspondence and online transactions. And it was transportable and could be easily used from almost any computer, anywhere in the world. It was the right product at the right time.

I was never to make that presentation in Cancun. Instead, I was to receive a perfectly compressed, first-hand look at how the human race is responding to Peak Oil and maybe just a little understanding as to why the resistance has been so fierce, even nasty, for all these years.

By late Tuesday night it was beginning to look like Wilma was becoming dangerous. Once I hooked up to the net in the room of Armor's CEO, Mark Seaton and visited the web sites for the National Hurricane Center and NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) it only took about an hour to see that Wilma would indeed threaten Cancun. Watching Katrina and Rita evolve, strike, and do their thing in Louisiana and Texas had proved to be great schooling on hurricanes.

Once I decided that Wilma would at least brush by Cancun, and after looking out the 75 yards from my hotel room to the unprotected beach, I faced the problem of trying to alert people. I started at around 10 PM Tuesday. Wilma was still way out at sea, hundreds of miles away. But it had blown through Cat 3 like a dragster and was well on its way to Category 5. The first person I needed to convince was Seaton, a long-time friend and Armor's General Manager and Acting CEO. The first time I warned him of the projections from the National Hurricane Center it didn't click. Mark had a lot on his mind, like finishing the presentation I was to deliver the next morning. His assistant Patti, however, started paying attention right away. The second time, Mark stopped over my computer and looked at the image on my screen.

"Holy shit."

"Yeah, Holy Shit. And it's getting bigger. It could be a Cat 5 by tomorrow and the probabilities look good that it's headed in this direction," I responded.

"Keep me posted."

That, I did.

Just after midnight it became clear that Wilma had zeroed in on the Yucatan peninsula. I downloaded a nine-minute-old teletype from a C-130 hurricane chaser stating that it had just recorded the lowest barometric pressure of any hurricane in the western hemisphere -- ever. Wilma's course had swung westward and, measuring the width of the storm, it was clear that Cancun and Cozumel would be hit hard. At minimum, the eye wall would pass just a hundred or so miles offshore.

When I laid out the probabilities, the strength, size and course for Mark he wasted no time. There was no hesitation. Even though it was not his conference he had resources and he knew something had to be done. Quickly I Googled around and found out that Merida was the closest major city and that there was only one road out of Cancun. Remembering New Orleans, I wondered how big the road was and how well it would hold up under a mass

evacuation. The road was only four lanes wide but there was no other option. I figured that the airport would be overflowing by morning. I was wrong.

Time, however, was critical.

By 1 AM Mark and I were in the lobby talking to management at the Moon Palace. Mark arranged for buses to evacuate about a hundred and forty Canadians and also made sure that they had hotel rooms in Merida when they got there. His wallet and his heart were open and I was glad he was there.

Back up in the rooms, Patti was making calls and getting information on how to upgrade a chartered Lear 25 to a larger size jet for the next stop on our trip, another conference in Xtapa. Mark had planned for us to fly to Xtapa on Saturday. There were also children at the hotel and Mark was going to make sure that he got as many of his people out as possible.

The hotel staff thought we were crazy and they told us so. "We've had hurricanes here before. It's no problem" they said. Don't worry. "We're not worried about it. We'll tell you in plenty of time if there's a problem." I told them of the NHC reports but nothing registered. Deaf ears, polite smiles. Nothing was being done.

The organizer of the conference and some of the attendees joined us in the quiet lobby. Mark had made a deposit on the buses and reservations were being made at a large hotel in Merida. At four hours away by road it might get a good tropical storm but it wouldn't face a hurricane. Still, some of the attendees didn't quite grasp the danger. It's hard to worry when it's a beautiful night and there's a fresh margarita in your hand.

One woman observed, "I don't want to leave until I know about the money I paid for my room. Will I get that back?"

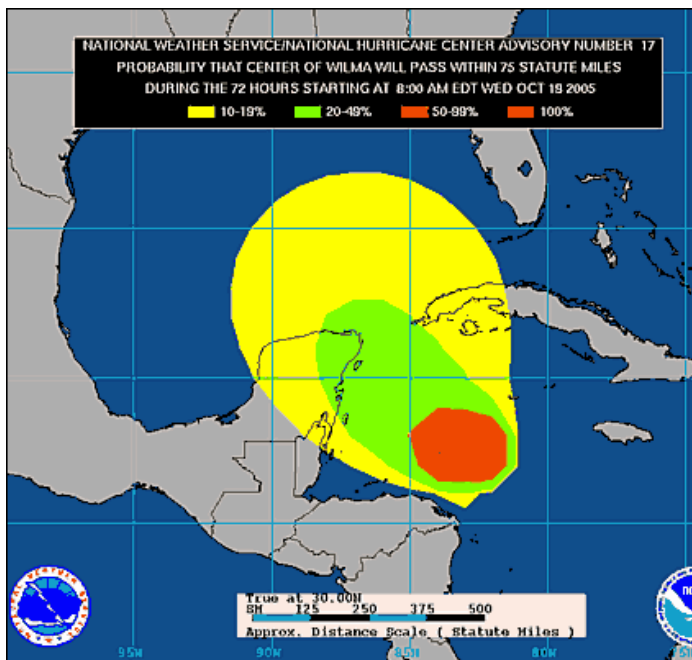
Three other people just ignored us and walked away. One man nearly panicked. The important thing was that the conference organizer had been convinced (I was later to hear second-hand that the organizer would receive all the credit for Seaton's decisive actions; no surprise there). The Canadians would leave the next afternoon. Mark and I went back to the room and I resolved to start saving computer images from NOAA. Patti told us that a larger Sabliner 80 had been arranged and could pick up nine of us on Wednesday at 2 PM for the evacuation flight to Xtapa.

We all went to bed around 2:30 and were up by 7. Surprisingly, having made both a plan and a decision, we slept like babies. It surprised all of us.

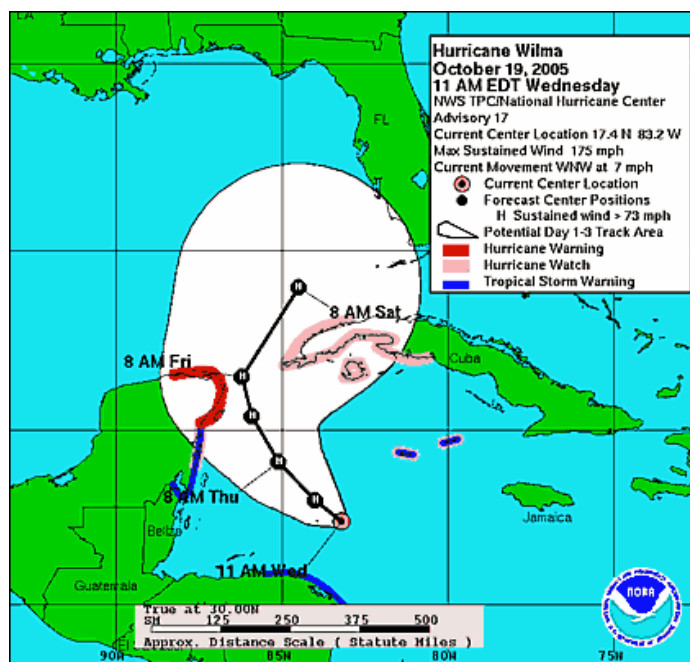
The next morning our fears had proved to be justified. There was no doubt that Cancun was going to take a big hit. I saved an NOAA image which was timed using Eastern Daylight time (one hour later than Cancun).

Those of us who were leaving on the chartered flight at 2 PM had been packed by about 9AM. Mark Seaton held discussions with many of the Canadians and their conference organizers. He had not hesitated to scrub our planned presentation on Armorware. "There are times", he observed "when making money or selling things doesn't matter."

Wondering what the mood was like among several thousand hotel guests I began touring the enormous resort sitting on that vul-



nerable beach. I took time out to return to my computer and check for updates. By 11, it had become clear that Cancun was going to take a *direct* hit.



What were the tourists doing?

Most were busy about the task of being tourists even though from my rough polling it was clear that most had heard a storm was "out there." Many tourists were actually booking tours to swim with the dolphins. I figured that the dolphins were smarter than that and had left on an Aero Mexico flight the night before. Even at noon, the pool was crowded and the swim-up bar well populated. There wasn't a cloud in the sky. The wind was blowing but that was not unusual for Cancun and it was hard for many to reconcile news reports of the now Category-5 hurricane with their senses. It was much easier to sunbathe, drink and relax. There was always mañana.



Instead, I opted to just quietly approach several groups of people and soberly talk to them. The first group I approached was two women and three men from the Midwest.

"Excuse me, my name is Mike and I'm a journalist getting ready to leave the hotel. Are you guys aware that a Category-5 hurricane is heading right this way and that the eye is expected to hit Cancun? It's the most powerful hurricane in recorded history." I offered the latest updates from NOAA.

One woman in the group started sobbing. She had been watching the news. She turned to her husband. "I want to get out of here now. I'm scared. This isn't right. We've got to leave." The men looked at each other and quietly agreed. "Yeah," said one, I'll bet the airport's going to be packed. We'd better get there soon and see if we can get out."

After a few minutes of quiet talk I wished the group well and next approached a group of three men and three women, all in their twenties. They had obviously been drinking for a while.

"Aw, it's not that big a deal" they said. "We asked some other folks here and they said they weren't going to do anything. It's just a little wind and rain. The storm's going to hit Cuba anyway." They all laughed when one of them wryly commented, "It's just that much more tequila for us."

No point in arguing.

Next I approached a middle-aged couple reclining by the pool.

"Oh stop being a hysterical pussy," the man said loud enough for about twenty people to hear. "Go bother somebody else."

I went back to the lobby to check on our group. We were all packed and assembled. Seaton was helping coordinate the buses for Merida that would be leaving shortly. There was still very little indication in the sky of anything unusual. Only a few bands of frail clouds could be seen, albeit in the easily recognizable pattern of the outer bands of a storm which was now almost 400 miles across.

I was a bit optimistic for a moment when a group of people gathered right by the main entrance. It looked like people were taking notice. But then half of them left to get on a tour bus for Mayan ruins, fishing, and dolphin swimming. By now it was a virtual certainty that Cancun would take a direct hit from the eye wall which had just turned westward again.

I put my journalist hat on and approached a public relations manager at the Moon Palace named Nancy Guillen. In my broken Spanish and her pretty good English I learned that hotel management wasn't the least concerned about Wilma. Guillen told me that every hotel had shelters in the city (all at sea level or just a few feet above) capable of housing several hundred people on cots. They had blankets (hardly necessary) and lots of fresh water (no mention of food, which turned out to be the biggest problem). Besides, Guillen told me that the hotel would not issue warnings to its guests until the government of the Mexican State of Quintana Roo told them to. Guillen was open, professional and calm. That was reassuring even if I thought she was mistaken. I wondered how many shelter beds there were in the city and if there truly were enough.

By 1:20 there was a little more activity as taxi cabs and shuttle



Having had some bitter experiences with Peak Oil I guessed at the best way to broach the subject. While a part of me wanted to stand on a bridge joining two large pools and just start yelling that a Cat 5 storm was coming, I realized that that would make me look hysterical and minimize any positive impact I might have.

buses were taking maybe ten per cent of the guests to the airport. The rest were still taking people out on excursions. I asked a few who were leaving if they had called the airlines first and most said no, they were just going and willing to take their chances. A quick dash back out to the pool showed that very little had changed. It was party time and the day was young.

The nine of us who were to leave on the chartered Sabliner boarded our van and headed for the airport. There were signs of relief on everyone's faces as we pulled out. Two-year-old Gray Putnam, son of David and Heather Putnam of Toronto, was a bit cranky at having been awakened from a nap but that was it. I marveled at the contrast in attitudes between our van and the pool bar. The clouds only hinted at Wilma's imminent arrival.

We arrived at Cancun's private Fixed Base Operator (FBO) where the Sabliner was waiting. Mark Seaton posed for a picture with the pilot and the plane. I had visited Cancun three times previously and, curiously, there was no rush at the airport. Planes full of arriving tourists were still coming in.



We filled the Sabliner to the gills. Luggage was stacked everywhere, blocking access to the restroom. It didn't matter. Urinating into Tupperware was no inconvenience at all. A week later I was to see a photograph of the terminal we had departed from. It had been completely destroyed.



As we took off, the ominous advance clouds of Wilma's leading edges were clearly visible. Someone told us that the airport would be closed by 10 or 11 PM that night. So much for all the people who decided they would wait to see how things looked tomorrow and then try to get out. They were going to be sorely disappointed (and stuck, too). Simple math revealed the truth as it always has with Peak Oil. There were an estimated

50,000 tourists in Cancun. The airport had a capacity (under the best of conditions) of flying out maybe 7,500 per day.

After Wilma had parked herself over Cancun and nearby Cozumel for 48 hours and a day of hurried repairs, the capacity for evacuation flights from the Cancun airport would be reduced to between 5,500 and 6,000 people per day. It was clear that a whole lot of people were going to be very unhappy for a long time.

Recalling that the US Congress had passed weather control / modification acts in 1970 and 1976 (another bill was introduced after Katrina and Rita) I thought of a recent and very surprising program on the Discovery Science Channel aptly titled "Weather Modification." I had been amazed at how much was actually revealed about how technologies like HAARP could be used to steer hurricanes. [The big hurricanes were not created by the US government, but I have no doubt that their courses were shifted by a few degrees so that they would impact less-expensive real estate.] I thought to myself that if I was the US government I would see to it that Wilma parked directly over the Yucatan for a couple of days before heading to Florida. Hurricanes weaken over land and Cancun was the only land available for that purpose. Florida was, after all, Jeb Bush's state.

Of course, that's exactly what was to happen.



Once airborne, the mood in our little jet turned cheerful. We had dodged a bullet. On the way to Xtapa for the next conference the skies cleared and we enjoyed the post-adrenal high that always accompanies a close call.



When we landed at Xtapa airport – after hurriedly running to the baños – we all looked at the cloudless sky and smiled. I thought to myself, "That's the way it is with Peak Oil. If even for a moment we can fill up our gas tanks and convince ourselves there's no storm coming, we can think that somehow we are immune. We can go back to business as usual. We can pretend there is nothing to worry about."

I thought of the callous, willful and even criminal dishonesty with which the media continues to reassure us after Katrina and Rita that everything is OK because gasoline prices are falling and crude oil prices are slipping. They, and the American government, neglect to tell us that this is only because we are in the merciful season when both air conditioners and heaters are turned off; when driving vacations have ended. They neglect to tell us that

prices are low because the US is tapping a now impossible-to-refill strategic petroleum reserve of only 700 million barrels and receiving 800,000 barrels a day of mostly refined gasoline from the 22 member countries of the International Energy Agency (IEA). They aren't telling us that our refining capacity is still heavily damaged and our production capacity is hobbled. They neglect to tell us that 108 offshore rigs and a still undisclosed number of pipelines constituting about 75% of American natural gas production and sixty per cent of our domestic oil production are shut in for between six months and three years (under the best of circumstances). They neglect to tell us that IEA energy "loans" will end forever with the first cold snaps of winter.

But still the evidence is there, just as clear as it was for me and others in Cancun that a much bigger, deadlier storm is approaching and that escape from it will not be easy.



Almost 40,000 tourists, mostly American, were trapped in Cancun for up to eight days. They slept on floors without mattresses and had no showers. They had fresh water but some went two and three days without food. They

were humbled and they were evacuated only as air service slowly returned to normal. As for Cancun itself, it was pretty well trashed. The problems there are the same as with New Orleans.

While most of the luxury hotels have announced they will be rebuilt within six months, they fail to discuss the fact that the homes of most of their employees may never be rebuilt at all.



Collapse of complex civilizations tends to be much easier to start than to stop. There are a hundred, maybe a thousand things that can go wrong and will go wrong.

Cancun was a lesson for all of us. Humankind's biggest lesson of all time begins this winter.



Postscript: In scouring the web I was able to find some pictures of the damage done by Wilma to Cancun and Cozumel. I found pictures of stranded tourists and one picture that looked a little like the guy who called me a hysterical pussy. I



recalled the old line, "Been there, done that. Got the t-shirt."

I hope it was worth it, buddy.

The warning signs of Peak Oil are, in fact, much more well-defined and numerous than they were even for Wilma. A few people are getting it and taking action. Most are not.



But the part that makes me bitterly angry is the degree to which the government,



corporate media, and the financial markets are maliciously and deliberately deceiving most of the public.

Should these folks ever ask for absolution I'm afraid I will not be the one to give it.

INCOMING!

Murtha fires the first shot in Bush's Dien Bien Phu

By

Stan Goff

November 21, 2005 0900 PST (FTW): Anyone who knows me knows that I am about as evangelical as a coyote; but sometimes I find it irresistible to quote scripture. A southern thing, perhaps. "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." The Bush administration has not only surrounded itself with venal whisperers to fill its ear with comforting delusions, it has embraced the most fatal of all delusions -- that of its own invincibility.

The rage of Bush and Cheney and Congressional Republicans now lashing themselves to this sinking ship no longer can create even the impression of strength. The volume of this attack is not power but panic. That rage is directed against Pennsylvania Representative John Murtha, who once and enthusiastically supported the war in Southwest Asia. Their rage is against his immunity as a Marine combat veteran. Their rage is against the breach he has created in the wall of Democratic Party cowardice on the war. Their rage is directed at the public voice he has given to the majority of Americans who now believe the US armed forces must leave Iraq, and the sooner the better. But even more basically, this rage is the rage of the pampered child who has never before not gotten his way.

Representative Duncan Hunter, who has just secured his position in history as a sycophant of the most mediocre president since Millard Fillmore, tried to build reality with his Congressional resolution to call the question that Murtha fired into our public discourse like a surprise attack from a 155mm howitzer, igniting such acrimony in Congress that they looked for a moment for all the world like they would come to blows. The Republicans offered a resolution to bring the troops home now as a stunt, and they caught the Democrats with their pants down. Only Republican Ron Paul and Democrat Cynthia McKinney have publicly said that people should have voted for it. Once again, the only people cowardly and stupid enough to be caught flat-footed by cynical Republican elected officials... were Democratic elected officials. Any Democrat or Republican who refused to vote for withdrawal should be punished. Especially Democrats! They were offered an opportunity to slap the Republicans down in an historic vote, and end an illegal and immoral war, and instead they whined about timing.

"Reprehensible!" said Cheney, still in charge at the Oval Office. "Coward!" was the call. In reply, and this is the pathetic downside of all this, Bush's frat brother John Kerry 'defended' Murtha by exposing himself once again -- the dick measuring seems to be irresistible to these guys -- by

saying that Murtha is a vet ("and me, John Kerry, I'm a vet, too"), and Cheney received multiple deferments.

"What we need," said Kerry, who is obviously thinking of trying another run at the Oval Office for himself, "is more of a commander in chief and less of a campaigner in chief." That's just the kind of blistering critique that helped this New England hound dog snatch defeat from the jaws of victory last time, when he single handedly took the most urgent issue in the United States, the war in Iraq, off the table as a campaign issue.

With friends like these... may John Kerry rot in hell.

Murtha, on the other hand, was not engaging in these DLC antics, nor did he trot out his military 201-file to demonstrate his military masculinity. For whatever reason, he just said what needed to be said in Congress, where people are deathly allergic to saying what could be the most important words in the world for both politics and personal relationships: I fucked up. I'm sorry.

I know that there is not a single thing in Murtha's political career that I am likely to have agreed with. I know that he was supportive of the vicious covert operations against Latin Americans, that he was a cheerleader for the 1991 aggression against Iraq, and that he has supported jingo idiocies like an anti-flag-burning amendment. So it's extremely unlikely that my opposition to the war is based on the same criteria as Murtha's. I don't care. And it's not his status as a purple heart awardee or a combat veteran that makes him credible with me, though I recognize that this is a huge contradiction for an administration who has cultivated a macho warrior image for their little prep school prick as part of a vast perception management conspiracy. I still don't care. I am someone who has to believe in redemption. What I care about is that this member of Congress said, "The US cannot accomplish anything further in Iraq militarily. It's time to bring the troops home... They have become the enemy."

Out now.

Poll numbers tumbling... indictments rolling in... more revelations each day about torture camps and US Iraqi allies acting more like Salvadoran death squads than anyone wants to admit... it seems someone has sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind. I can only hope that more Democrats as well as Republicans will do what they have to do to save face and join Murtha's call for an end to this slaughter. If they can't find their moral compasses, perhaps we can rely on plain self-preservation. Bush's minions are trapped in their fortified valley, and Murtha's shot was the first of many from the surrounding hills. History is leveling their lies, and a movement is entrenching its way toward their perimeter. 2006 is coming fast, and this will be a terrible place to be trapped.

And we should trap them there. I suggest here that we organize sit-ins in every local Congressional office in the country where the elected official voted against the resolution to get out or for additional money to continue the war, and that we refuse to leave until arrested or until we get a change of heart. Occupations to end the occupation! We can carry Murtha's picture with us.