



Quick Update from NYC Local Solutions Conference

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Well after 12 hours of steady information from the Local Solutions Conference in NYC - I have a full legal pad of notes, and a full head of ideas. Blogging those ideas will take more than a night, but I wanted to give a quick long update for those that were interested in the conference, but were unable to attend.

Leonard Rothberg kicked off the conference, telling us with his initial brush with peak oil and a 1976 interview with King Hubbert, and an article called "Bottom of the Barrel Published in the village voice. Even back then Leonard was pushing for southern wall space solar H₂O heating and PV panels, garbage conversion to energy and more recently the use of NYC's 584 mi of coastline for wind power generation.

Michael Klare was up next. He is the author of - *Blood and Oil: The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum*. He believed that we are at the "hump" of peak oil and that alt energies will only cause a stretching out of the hump over a period of several decades. This will bring us an increased risk of further conflict, and opportunity for environmental disaster. He feels that the US has already made the decision to start a conflict in IRAN, and bombs will fall prior to the Nov elections. (An interesting fact that Dr. Klare brought up was that the subsidies that the US govt provides to oil companies are mainly for offsetting the cost of exploration and development for deep water drilling in the Gulf of Mexico.) His suggestion for solutions to the diminishing amount of cheap oil is that the American Public needs to be persuaded that addiction to oil is unpatriotic and immoral. He states that the people that read TOD and attend the peak oil conferences can be convinced of peak oil's existence through logic and science, but the vast majority of the public must be reached through morality and conscience.

Michael Brownlee spoke on the relocalization movement. He believes that community is what the only form of sustainable life, and that it is what we yearn for, what is missing in our lives - "the most threatened commodity on the planet." Some other notable quotes: "we're the first modern based citizen group demanding less not more", "not a political movement but a human movement", and pressed audience members to start internally, change ourselves, then do anything that you can to involve friends, family, and neighbors to get them to meetings and groups to share what you've learned. He believes that globalization is a direct risk to our personal freedom, and breaking the dependence on the global economy can increase our freedom.

I have to admit that I missed most of *Elizabeth Carola's* lecture, but she was clearly on the "act" side of "activism". She told how she was involved in the temporary forming of an ecovillage to house activists in Great Britain for protesting the G8 summit in Scotland - and how that setting up quickly for 8,000 people made her feel some hope for society's future, as we face a breakdown.

Her message was that along with personal preparation, that we should be voicing our disapproval with the corporations that are devastating the environment and our future. She worries about the encroachment on our civil rights, including the right of public assembly.

Steve Andrews provided insight to who M. King Hubbert was, and the history behind his peak oil

predictions. He worries about misguided rhetoric of the public and our politicians and feels the misplaced rage is distracting us from important issues. (hmm sounds like a press release I just read somewhere...) I won't retype his history of King Hubbert here, there are other websites out there to do that. I highly recommend reading up on this geophysicist's life and theories that were years ahead of their time. Mr. Andrews believes personally that there is nothing on the "supply" side of the equation in the pipeline that will replace oil in the quantity or flexibility that petroleum provides. He believes that any solution must decrease focus on the supply side and increase public awareness in reducing demand. "We need massive incentives for increased efficiency, then look at the smorgasbord of alternatives."

John Howe had some sobering words for the assembly, speaking next on "The Triple Threat" that the world faces, not just peak oil alone. He believed initially that peak oil could be mediated by a 5% reduction in world energy use each year, but then realized this would not solve our problems. Mr. Howe spoke of the rising population "bomb", the peaking of not just petroleum, but world energy production, and the ecological devastation that the earth has endured all culminating in "The Last Chance For Survival" (The latest edition of his book.) He warned of ethanol and biodiesel being put forward as solutions to the problem, and compared it to a declining civilization cutting down the last of the trees in the region and sealing their doom. According to Mr. Howe, replacing 5% of our diesel use with biodiesel would take 30 million acres of soybean crops annually - an unsustainable prospect indeed. He preached making drastic changes at the national, community, and personal level as the only way to lessen the blow of the triple threat. I look forward to reading the latest edition of his book, and will be revisiting his lecture and book at a future date in a review at groovygren.com so stop over there in a bit to follow up.

My last review of the evening will be on "Economic Realities" by John Ikerd. Economics, boring? long winded? **hardly!** Mr. Ikerd provided a rousing speech on the economic implications of our current lifestyle and capitalist society in the face of peak oil. I was almost driven to stand up and shout "Amen!" as he worked into a fever pitch on the wrong road our society has taken, and the loss of our ability to make social and more decisions to the corporations. He discussed sustainability as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the future." He defined entropy and relayed how in capitalism it makes no sense to use part of our energy to store energy for future needs. He contrasted this with the need for society to take on a "living systems paradigm" echoing that of nature - capturing solar energy, practicing self-regulation, to combat entropy, and renew and prepare for future generations. His example was: having children. "It makes no sense financially to have children" - we spend vast amounts of time, energy, and money to raise children to get little in return financially. But we strive as humans to give a part of ourselves to the future, and continue the human race. He believes that we need an economy and society that reflects that same desire to preserve for the future, "we must restore 'humanness' to society." His message was positive and empowering. I took video of his closing remarks, and once I figure out YouTube and download my camera pics, I'll get it up online.

Sheesh, all that typing and I only got through 1/2 of the day! Perhaps some of the other people who attended could provide more insight to the afternoon block of speakers, and to the authors that I reviewed above.

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[FYI, in case you were wondering my last name is Hungarian and the Americanized pronunciation is Beh-**low**.]



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