



Petrocollapse Roundup: Kunstler

Posted by [Glenn](#) on October 6, 2005 - 1:47pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

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Of all the presentations of the day, [Kunstler's](#) was the one that probably stuck in people's minds the most. He spoke with the rhythm and passion of a preacher who knows how to hit just the right notes to satisfy the converted and cast enough doubt in everyone else. However he did not present much in the way of data to support many of his claims. Instead he deftly challenged people's preconceived ideas of how they should view certain types of so-called "progress" that we have experienced in the 20th Century.

As a speaker and writer I admire his pugnacious attitude, but as a front person for the movement, I have to say that he's a bit too strident in his rhetoric. Basically there are only so many people (mostly liberal/progressives) that like to be publicly and continuously insulted for just living their lives as they do. Still he serves a good role in making some people re-examine their lives.

UPDATED: Link to the text of his [speech](#)

The key modern American cultural theme he hammered at as the cause for our current predicament was the centrality of the Consumer in the way we view ourselves and how we interact with each other. He said that just the word "Consumer" should be a negative term when you think about it and yet we carry with a sense of entitlement and pride: "I'm the Customer, therefore I'm right". He compared that to earlier periods in history when people were valued for their contributions to the community, instead of their ability to consume ever greater quantities of stuff or as Kunstler put it "cheese doodles".

He went on to say that the Consumer mindset has influenced the whole way that we view the world, entering into a self deluded fantasy world where you get things by complaining instead of producing it yourself - never accepting any sacrifice, always demanding more and more without respect for how exactly we produce ever greater quantities to consume. Politicians can only ignore this Consumer mindset at their own peril, thus they run ever greater deficits, never able to make the tough decisions because they have to give the Consumer what they want. Rather what Kunstler argues for is a brutal "reality based" world where people are not able to escape the realities of the impact they have on the world due to their consumption patterns.

All and all a pretty good critique of one of the many ways that our current culture is simply not prepared to deal with the stark realities of peak oil and one of the many ways in which we can learn from our own past, before we were corrupted by the Consumer mentality.

One of his best lines in the Q & A when he was asked about his comment on the fanatics (right wing was implied by the question) that would be elected in the post-peak-oil world. Kunstler gave a very good retort in my opinion - "I would be just as worried about so-called Progressive fanatics as much as right-wing fanatics".



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