



Poverty of Vision

Posted by [Euan Mearns](#) on October 5, 2007 - 10:00am in [The Oil Drum: Europe](#)

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During the final panel debate at [ASPO 6 in Cork](#), former Minister of State for the Environment, Privy Counsellor and UK Member of Parliament [Michael Meacher](#) gave a rousing reply to a question from the floor.



The other thing which I think is very important is vested interests. Who wants to keep the world the way it is?

The oil industry; the chemical industry; the food industry; the car industry; the airline industry. These are very powerful. Who rules Britain? Not parliament.

Read the full text below the fold. Or download the 1 Mb wma audio file [here](#). Thanks to Richard O'Rourke (ASPO Ireland) for sending me the audio file for this segment.

The question from the floor....

Michael, you know you're very eloquent, passionate and informed on this, you sat around the cabinet table in Downing Street and they supported the American invasion of Iraq to go after the oil. Why weren't more ministers around that table more convinced by what you had to say because you certainly had enough time to say it to them.

I'm not sure this provides full context, but its well worth reading how Mr Meacher replied.

Well why other people were not convinced is I suppose something that you'd have to ask them. But I think the answer to the question as to why politicians are unwilling to be courageous over this issue, not that I think it requires a great deal of courage, I think this is an up-coming issue which millions of people out there are increasingly responding to, and the extraordinary thing is that the politicians can't see it. There is a large constituency out there which is actually going to carry them forward at election time, but they don't see it.

I think there are three reasons. I agree, one is the centralisation of power, and I'm thinking in Britain that's happened with spades. The fact is the cabinet is marginalised,

parliament is not seriously listened to, the party is nowhere and the electorate, when it comes to the war over Iraq, 2 million people march and they were just ignored.

So it's a very serious issue. I think the breakdown of accountability. The destruction of the mechanisms for holding to account of our leaders I think is a very, very big political issue in our country.

Can I just say very quickly two other points.

I think it's a poverty of vision. I really do. I'm afraid I think we live far too much in the last two decades. We're fighting issues about the role of the private market in public services. Of course, that's an important issue. But far, far bigger issues are now permeating the landscape. And it's as though the politicians have their heads down and just do not see the realities. The poverty of vision.

The other thing which I think is very important is vested interests. I mean who wants to keep the world the way it is?

The oil industry; the chemical industry; the food industry; the car industry; the airline industry; these are very powerful. Who rules Britain? Not parliament!

I'll tell you who rules Britain. It is the Prime Minister with a small cabal around him of unelected advisors, not including members of the cabinet, meeting regularly with leaders of business, leaders of finance and I have to say with Mr Murdoch and leaders of the media, and taking the decisions over our heads which are then imposed upon us.

That's the actual situation we face. It is a very serious breakdown of democracy. And until we deal with that, and until we regard that as an issue that is central to solving all our issues, including the environment and climate change, we're not going to get very far.

There are maybe no big surprises here, but it puts into sharp focus how our democracy **seems** totally broken.

My emphasis on *seems* is because we are at the same time ruled more by referendum and poll than ever before. And our New Labour government is riding high in the polls.

Can democracy and the market economy address the momentous issues that Peak Oil, Energy Decline and Climate Change present?



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