



Reviews of the Bartlett Energy Conference

Posted by [Prof. Goose](#) on September 26, 2005 - 9:37pm

Topic: [Site news](#)

Update [2005-9-27 10:59:52 by Super G]: Rep. Roscoe Barlett (R-MD) held a [conference on peak oil](#) last weekend. Excerpts from the conference were aired on C-SPAN last night. We were fortunate to have some TODers in attendance. Donal was nice enough to compile his observations in to a review, which you can check out below the fold (review compiled from comments [here](#)).

JLA, we are still waiting for you! Email your review to **support at theoil Drum dot com**.

Original Post: The footage from Bartlett's conference this past weekend is on tonight at 6:31am EDT on CSPAN2...it is 1:14 minutes long.

here's the schedule (thanks fatbear for the catch...): <http://inside.c-spanarchives.org:8080/cspan/schedule.csp>

Review by Donal

I attended Rep. Roscoe Bartlett's 2005 Energy Conference Monday morning, which was taped for later broadcast on [C-Span](#). As the Federal News Service will provide a transcript in about a day, I will try to be descriptive rather than narrative.

We had three Peak Oil Awareness meetup members there, Phil from DC, Kevin from Chantilly and me from Frederick. I noticed quite a few men with grey ponytails. As JLA noted, there was a range from business suits to casual to decidedly earth-crunch granola.

As one of the first 200 attendees, I got a chit to take an [Oil Age poster](#) after the conference. Rep. Bartlett said posters were available to teachers and professors for free.

Rep. Bartlett appeared very intelligent and well-informed about the subject of Peak Oil, comfortably rattling off facts and figures. In a short Powerpoint intro, he noted that even before the peak there will be a periods where demand exceeds supply. Bartlett claimed that Hubbert had predicted the US peak dead-on for 1970, but I thought that Hubbert offered a multi-year window for the peak. He likened our situation to that of the Apollo XIII mission in that we have to do everything right, very quickly.

Ken Deffeyes showed up with a cold and a box of tissues. He's a bit obese, with ruffled white hair, ruffled white shirt and suspenders. As JLA noted, Deffeyes' presentation offered little new information for those of us who have followed The Oil Drum, Energy Bulletin, etc., but he spoke very well and knows his laugh lines, such as presenting this list of industries to be hurt by costly energy:

- Agriculture

- Automotive
- Aviation
- ...
- Zymurgy

Deffeyes told us to expect some sort of rationing, whether by Price (high price limits use), by Inconvenience (fixed price but low availability) or by Gov't Coupons. He mentioned DME, DiMethyl Ether, made from coal, now used as a safer propellant in aerosol sprays. Dimethyl ether is a clean-burning alternative to various fossil fuels and can be made from natural gas, coal, or biomass.

Matt Simmons is a fairly short man with a very ruddy face. Looking a bit tired, he wore a nondescript navy jacket, blue shirt and red tie. He mentioned that he was coauthoring an OpEd piece with Stewart Udall called 50 Years of Energy Mistakes. Simmons described having recently been on a panel with Dr Sadad al-Husseini. Instead of attacking the Saudis, Simmons talked about rig damage while Dr. Sadad gamely presented a best-case scenario for 25 MBD in 2025 (!). Simmons thought that Dr. Sadad offered about as much subtle warning of peak oil as he could, given that he wanted to continue living in Saudi Arabia.

Simmons said that we are in serious trouble right now because, "we are out of drilling rigs." He noted that Rita was still Cat 5 when she hit the GoMex platforms. We have been getting bad info, like using 3D seismic to "prove" reserves, and making bad decisions like drawing down our reserves in expectation of J.I.T. (just-in-time) oil deliveries. Simmons recommended that we demand a full accounting of Energy Data and go to an Energy War Footing.

Richard Heinberg was comparatively natty in a tan suit, dark blue shirt and brown/purple tie. He noted that the Hirsch report was "not being discussed" in official circles. He thinks Katrina and Rita have catapulted us into a bumpy plateau instead of a clear peak. He favors adoption of the Oil Depletion Protocol to control volatile prices and head off conflicts. While Heinberg was discussing the ODP, Simmons and Deffeyes were whispering, smiling ruefully and shaking their heads. They could have been talking about anything, but I wondered if they thought the ODP was a just a pipe dream.

Rep. Bartlett ended the first session by thanking local politicians Shank, Bartlett (his son), Krebs, Cooper, etc., for attending. He noted that one barrel of oil was the equivalent of 12 men working for a year, but that gas was still cheaper than bottled water.

In the second session, Donald Wulfinghoff, PE, of Wheaton MD, began by gesturing for someone to bring him a copy of this large "Energy Efficiency Manual" that he kept perched on the leading corner of the panelist table. He quickly noted that the book was for sale at www.EnergyBooks.com (whoa, for \$200!). He rushed through parts of a powerpoint presentation that was probably meant for a full hour or more.

Wulfinghoff first spoke about creating more efficiency in Transportation, noting that no new technology is needed. In order of importance (to him):

1. Minimize Transportation - IOW live near work, go out less, live in small walkable communities, like Europe, and switch away from truck freight.
2. Improve Vehicle Fuel Economy - He knows of 300 mpg prototypes; he thinks we should be able to get 100 mpg in safe, comfortable cars, but minimizing transportation is more important.
3. Shift from Petroleum Fuels - He recommends that we use electric cars for short range

commutes and Coal-to-Liquids fuels for emergencies, but thinks that minimizing transportation and achieving better fuel economy are more important.

He advises that we not be distracted by:

- Mass Transit - a social program, not efficient transportation.
- Hybrid Cars - a political solution.
- Hydrogen Economy - a fantasy
- Coal-derived fuels (why did he mention it above?)
- Ethanol - not enough land to grow it
- Telecommuting (was on his screen)

Dismissing Mass Transit got Wulfinghoff the second biggest boos of the conference. He moved on to discuss Buildings, which he logically divided into Houses and Non-residential buildings.

He claimed that new buildings offer the greatest opportunity to reduce energy use; once the concrete is set, it is hard to make improvements. Again, he said that no new technology is needed. He advised intelligent use of insulation, but made the strange claim that we usually put 3.5" in the walls and 24" in the attic (In this region, builders actually put only about 10" (R-30) of insulation in residential attics). He prefers 12" thick insulation in the walls both for better efficiency and to avoid dewpoint problems. (Any water vapor escaping a warm building will liquefy at a certain temperature, called the dewpoint. If that temperature occurs within the insulation layer, the insulation will gather moisture, and likely be ruined.) Besides the greater insulation, thicker walls will allow for earthquake-proof and hurricane-proof connections between walls and floors and walls and roofs.

He claimed that non-residential buildings are less efficient now than ever, largely due to large expanses of glass (I don't disagree). He advocated smaller, shaded windows. He wants to go back to task lighting, and institute room by room monitoring of energy use. He claims that energy-efficiency need not affect the interior layout and use of modern buildings. (But look at building layouts before cheap energy - they are all about natural light and ventilation for every important room.)

He is very much against modifying buildings to generate their own energy. He feels Pepco (Potomac Electric Power) knows far more about generating electricity efficiently than he does. He noted that building design professionals are not being taught energy-conscious design (At my school, many profs dismissed active solar as mere plumbing).

Wulfinghoff urged that we adopt these measures, "to maintain our standard of living." (Can we maintain our standard of living?) He said that except for the last fifty years, American life was characterized by "Thrift" and that we should return to that value. (\$200 for a book?)

John Spears, CEM, of Gaithersburg MD, spoke of three oil problems: Running out of it, polluting ourselves with it, and that it is controlled by the few. He asked us to imagine the lecture hall as our universe. In one scenario we added lights, heat, etc., all powered by the infinite oil just outside the door. The we choked on the carbon monoxide. In the second scenario, we used more daylighting, natural ventilation, etc, and less oil.

In contrast to Wulfinghoff's reliance on Pepco, Spears recommends Grid-Tied Photovoltaic (PV) systems or Battery Backup PV systems providing the megawatts needed to power his passive solar designs. (Spears has architectural training, but his buildings look engineered rather than architecturally-designed.)

Spears thinks hydrogen will be a useful, trouble-free fuel. I assume that Wulfinghoff and Spears are accustomed to speaking to the energy-ignorant. They seemed genuinely surprised to hear opposition in the crowd. They wore standard dark business suits with red power ties, and were very well-groomed. Either of them could have been going to a client presentation.

In his khaki shirt and rust tie, short beard and glasses, soft-spoken John Howe sported the rumpled professor look. Unfortunately, he rambled all over the place, once smiling and admitting, "I tend to jump around here." As JLA noted, it was painful. I was afraid that people would laugh, and I don't think Howe deserves laughter.

Howe is giving away a book, *The End of Fossil Energy*, which you can get by emailing **Howe at megalink dot net**. He spoke of current delusions such as the Hydrogen Hype, because 97% of our hydrogen comes from NG, and Fuel Cells, which got a laugh. He was the only presenter to remind us of Jevon's Paradox, which says that being energy efficient only increases consumption of energy.

Howe said we needed a real leader like Shackleton leading his men to Elephant Island, that rationing will be necessary to protect the poor, who can sell their stamps to the rich on the black market, and that we have to invest in solar and wind while we still can. He described his self-made solar NEV, an old golf cart with a range of 100 miles and a top speed of 15 mph. Originally a farmer, he also has a solar tractor, which charges itself enough to "work" about an hour or so per day.

In the Q&A, Bartlett was asked if Bush knew about this problem. He responded that the President was quite aware of peak oil, but that the urgent often overrides the important. Bartlett was also asked why the President sponsored such a useless Energy Bill, and responded simply that he had voted against it.

Asked about wasting investment in refineries, Simmons answered that they must be replaced because of their age - one that was built for Spindletop in 1906 is still running.

Asked about wasting investment in nuclear power instead of renewables, Bartlett held up some uranium pellets and said that he was getting mixed responses as to how much uranium was available. Deffeyes said that he had been involved in studies and that a lot had been discovered since then. The greatest booring was reserved for disagreements over nuclear power.

In response to question about population control, Rep. Bartlett recommended that folks watch Albert Bartlett's presentation on exponents to learn about the population problem. Someone said that industrial countries had controlled their populations and that education was the answer. Someone mentioned China's mess of a solution. John Howe suggested that, instead of discussing abortion, contraception, etc. and putting birth control on women, all men should be snipped after fathering their first child.

In answer to a question on Alaskan oil, Rep. Bartlett said he was opposed to drilling in ANWR (Simmons looked glum when he said that) because, "Why use up what we still have as quickly as we can?"

Afterwards, Kevin and I had a quick chat with Rep. Bartlett; we thanked him for getting the message out. I never got a chance to speak to Spears or Wulfinghoff.

Overall, the message of Rep. Bartlett and the first panel is very clear. We must prepare for change. As evidenced by the second panel, though, there is no clear agreement as to how to

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respond. Some believe the hydrogen hype, though most don't. Some expect a return to localized lifestyles; others think we can maintain our standard of living.

We'll see.



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