



Technology to the rescue - er, only perhaps.

Posted by [Heading Out](#) on October 5, 2005 - 12:36am

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

Tags: [aspo](#), [oil](#), [peak oil](#) [[list all tags](#)]

One of the recurring answers when people discuss peak oil has been the refrain that "technology will get us out of this." It is an excuse that has been heard at all levels across the board - even in local conversations over coffee. And, as I have mentioned earlier, by some of our technical staff who are aware of a fair bit of what is going on. As Prof G has mentioned this is the irrational denial of reality.

This month's [ASPO newsletter](#)

(well worth a read in its own right) has a quote from Matt Simmons on the decline in production from the North Sea.

Subsequent actual production statistics show that the UK reached a secondary peak in 1997/98 at just above 2.6 Mb/d and now struggles to stay above 1.6 Mb/d. All the optimists about the role of technology were totally wrong. But the same folks still believe the same hype. They have merely moved the goal posts.

The development of technology requires a number of coincident factors. Firstly there has to be some interest and need to drive the development (there is a lot of truth in "necessity being the mother of invention"). And we are in a time where that is prevalent. Secondly there has to be a basis of technical knowledge. This is where we start to fall short, and the recent problems in the Gulf will likely make this worse. And thirdly we have to have the interest of the financially able to be able to support the development.

I have written in earlier posts about the acute international shortage of qualified petroleum engineers, and those in related disciplines. Lots of those currently expert are getting long in the tooth, and the supply has not been replenished for years. (One does note that a part of the currently proposed National Energy Supply Diversification and Disruption Prevention Act does include a step in the right direction in that regard). But I noted that the mayor of New Orleans was laying off personnel, because of lack of funds, and the thought came that those on the rigs and platforms that were lost have also, possibly, lost jobs in the short term, although there is a broad need for qualified people, and this may cause but a small ripple in the tide. There are, for example, growing numbers of rigs onshore as [the OGJ reports](#).

But in terms of developing technology there are not that many folk available with useful knowledge (TV and print ads notwithstanding) to develop new technology, nor has there been huge sums available for such development in the recent past. With the need to concentrate on repairing rigs and platforms it is unlikely that we will see much of a real (as opposed to paper) effort by either the Government or industry to fund or develop new technologies in the near future. Their immediate needs demand [large amounts of cash](#), so forward thinking will not carry

The world's biggest oil and gas companies are facing a \$7.5billion (£4.3billion) bill from the hurricanes that lashed the Gulf of Mexico.

Although

However, the \$700m figure is likely barely to make a dent in BP's forecast pre-tax profits of \$31billion, more than twice last year's \$15billion. BP added it would incur costs of \$100m to secure and repair its massive Thunder Horse platform in the Gulf of Mexico, which was badly damaged by Hurricane Dennis in July.

Which means that it is likely that ten years from now, Matt Simmons or his equivalent will likely be able to make the same observation.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/us/).