



Petrocollapse roundup: Ruppert

Posted by [Yankee](#) on October 5, 2005 - 9:28pm in [The Oil Drum: Local](#)

Topic: [Policy/Politics](#)

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

As Stuart did for the Community Solutions conference, peakguy and I will be writing a series of posts over the next couple of days about the [Petrocollapse conference](#) that was held in New York City today. There were many interesting speakers, and we'll get to all of them, but I wanted to start with Mike Ruppert. Now, I know Ruppert is a controversial figure, and [he's been discussed](#) (not necessarily positively) on TOD before. Before seeing him speak today, I hadn't really read much of the [From the Wilderness](#) publications, but when I came home I scanned the website, and on the recommendation of JLA's comment in the above linked story, I read [the Nation](#) article about him. When it comes to 9/11, he seems pretty nutty. And with respect to peak oil, he's firmly in the apocalyptic camp. Still, he's a dynamic speaker, and I can see people being easily convinced by his message, at least as it was delivered today. Many of you will no doubt be worried by that.

Ruppert firmly believes that the government certainly knows about peak oil and has started preparing for it, although their solutions are not what the American people will want to see. He started off his speech by mentioning a comment made by Dutch economist Maarten van Mourik at the 2003 ASPO conference. As repeated on [Kunstler's website](#), van Mourik reported to the ASPO attendees that "deep water drilling would not add significantly to the world's oil reserve, that it did not make sense economically, and ultimately could only produce five billion barrels. Van Mourik also made the interesting observation that, 'it may not be profitable to slow decline.'" With this in mind, Ruppert proclaimed that "until we change the way money works, we won't do anything to fix peak oil."

Ruppert reminded the crowd about the [Hirsch report](#) (I forget—was it ever re-released or not?), which said that if we only initiate action when the peak occurs, there will be a liquid fuel shortfall of 2 decades. Since Ruppert believes the peak is already upon us, he takes this to mean that there will only be a shortfall because after 2 decades, there will have been enough of a die-off to go back to a lifestyle where the populations may be able to use liquid fuels again.

Ruppert then outlined several steps that the government will take in the face of the energy crisis. If Ruppert is right about the timing of the peak, then we should see this as a set of predictions that will soon be verified or debunked.

- **Rationing.** Ruppert believes that because of [treaties that have been signed with the IEA](#), they can come into the US and impose rationing on the American people without making the federal government look bad. [*I think rationing is possible in the near future, but we'll have to wait to see whether or not Ruppert was right about blaming it on the IEA*]
- **Coal.** [Brian Schweitzer](#) of Montana thinks we can fuel US transportation for a long time using Fischer-Tropsch.
- **Critical infrastructure.** The government will do whatever it must to protect military, police, fire, internet, electrical power generation, pipelines, airports, water supplies, food processing, highways, ports. [*This doesn't sound so terrible to me, except that they might do it by [increased domestic military powers](#)—which was actually another one of his predictions.*]

- **Strengthening FEMA.** Ruppert warns us that FEMA's primary job is to protect critical infrastructure, not human lives. [*I'm not predisposed to believe this, but the handling of Katrina didn't do much to instill confidence.*]
- **Suspend minimum wage laws and change and tighten bankruptcy laws.** The second has already been done, and the president has set a bad precedent regarding the former in New Orleans, where [he suspended the Davis Bacon act](#), which requires federal contractors to pay prevailing wage.
- **Allow and facilitate population reduction through famine and disease.** [*Yes, the message got increasingly hysterical. I think there was some mention of the bird flu here*]

In the second half of his talk, Ruppert detailed a timeline demonstrating when the government first knew about peak oil, and specific government acts that support the idea that their only goal is to protect businesses and the elite. Much of this involved quoting Dick Cheney's various comments about oil depletion when he was CEO of Halliburton. He also thinks that [Saudi Arabia's recent doubling](#) of their reserves is laughable. I won't go into this in further detail, but I'm sure you can find it somewhere on From the Wilderness. Ruppert ended with 5 rules for "survival" of the coming collapse. Actually, they weren't so much rules about how to survive as they were apocalyptic observations, but here you go:

1. No combination of alternative energy can replace petroleum [*to maintain our current lifestyles, I think he meant*]
2. Even if it could, we'd need 30 years to develop a plan. PO is here now, and the current infrastructure simply cannot be maintained.
3. No government will be able to do anything (federal or state).
4. Until we change the way money works, we change nothing.
5. All real solutions will be local and will originate at a grassroots level.

Please, dear readers, don't shoot the messenger. Many of you think that Ruppert is nutty, but still, I think his talk may prompt an interesting and worthwhile discussion here. Many of the speakers at the conference stressed that the society that will be formed post-peak will be a very local one. Even if the fall isn't hard, there are a lot of benefits to local production (especially with respect to food), since the centralized and global nature of supply chains is a large part of why so much of our fuel usage goes to the transportation sector. If nothing else, I think this is a valid point.

As an addendum, since I know you're all interested: the participants were about 80% business professional, middle class white American types. I was surprised at how few gray ponytails there were (no offense intended, of course).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).