



Peak Oil Interview: Misconceptions, Replacing Oil, and False Solutions

Posted by [Robert Rapier](#) on October 5, 2010 - 12:08am

Topic: [Alternative energy](#)

Back in June, I gave a presentation on Peak Oil at the Global Footprint Conference in Siena, Italy. (More on the event [here](#)). Following my presentation, I was asked to do a pair of interviews. One was for an upcoming documentary called [Critical Mass](#). The second was for the conference itself, and that interview has just been made available and is embedded below.

Peak Oil Interview for the Global Footprint Conference

Some of the ground covered in the interview includes:

- The misconception that Peak Oil means we are running out of oil
- The idea that oil will be very difficult to replace, and impossible to replace solely with biomass
- The danger posed by false solutions (which I denoted the [‘fake fire brigade’](#) in my presentation)
- The difficulty the developing world will have in attaining a [‘First World’](#) standard of living
- What will happen if oil peaks soon and declines rapidly
- The reasons for the rise in oil prices over the past decade
- That we are now comfortable with \$80 oil – and why that is dangerous
- The fact that some “renewable energy” is mostly embedded fossil energy
- The reason I prefer thermochemical technologies over biochemical technologies

- The types of projects that my company is working on; primarily energy projects that can be operated on low fossil fuel inputs and ideally off the grid (i.e., projects that could provide meaningful energy in a world in which oil supplies are declining)

The venue for the interview was not in fact a prison cell, although it was in the basement of a very old building. Yes, I am squinting and frowning a lot, because the sun was coming through the window in my face. And yes, I do smile, although you may think I have no sense of humor based on this interview.

I have watched the clip a couple of times, and there are times that I misspoke, and times that I should have paused for some clarification around a point. For instance, I said that it would be impossible to replace oil with the solutions proposed thus far. I am mainly thinking of biomass; in fact it would be possible to replace many uses of oil in theory with nuclear or solar power provided certain technological challenges are conquered. I covered this idea previously in a thought experiment called [Replacing Gasoline with Solar Power](#).

I also said that China could never attain a Western standard of living because there isn't enough oil to allow their citizens to motorize in large numbers. Again, I am thinking in terms of the way the Western world is motorized; one could envision a high degree of mobility with small electric cars (for instance). So the point is not that it is impossible for them to motorize, but that they can't do it as we did it because there isn't enough oil to allow it.

The presentation itself was also filmed, and ultimately that is supposed to be available. When it is, I will post that as well.



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