



LIVING WITHOUT OIL

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This is what it all boils down to, isn't it? Irreplaceable oil.

Taking the rest of the world's oil by gunpoint, after we've wantonly wasted our own.

Based on Vietnam and Iraq, I don't think it can be done. Even if possible, the price will be bloody high – and highly bloody. Higher, and bloodier, than anyone is willing to pay. It's time to get smart. Time to change. To change a culture on steroids to one based on wisdom and joy.

I bumped into a draft of a book the other day I'd put together in 1975, after working on energy research in Gov. Tom McCall's office. There it was - M. King Hubbert's bell curve of world petroleum production. He hit it on the nose. Peaking about the year 2005, downhill rapidly thereafter. And all the subtleties of how it fueled massive growth and centralization. How net energy, energy slaves, energy quality, the work of natural systems, and embodied energy affect things. Net-energy based inflation. Unrecoverable reserves. The difficulty of debt repayment with fewer resources. And now, we've wasted our own, have to import 75% of our oil, and can't afford to pay for it.

There was also the good news. How easy massive efficiency improvements are when our starting point is absurdly wasteful. How to make a smooth transition off fossil fuels. Yep, and even how to get a better quality of life in the process. Feels weird - I'm still saying the same things I was saying 30 years ago. The tools are better, we've learned a lot of what will work, examples are in place. People won't listen then. Many still won't. Industry-owned government has no intention to listen. But we're there now.

And we dig the hole deeper, and make the odds worse. For everyone in the world. For us, for everyone.

"Peak oil" means a shift from a cost-determined to a supply-constrained market. More people, all wanting more of what there's less of. Billions of people in India and China wanting to drive cars like us. Less, and more expensive, oil. Bidding up the price. Energy-based inflation. Bad time to be oil-dependent.

Things are going to shift, and fast, and soon. We're at that point. But things get rough when things shift too quickly. At best, everybody wanting more efficient things – NOW. Think the waiting time for getting a hybrid car is long now? \$6/gallon gas on a minimum wage? A six month wait to get a wood stove installed even now. Windmill production is already sold out. That's just a sample. Worse is war-caused supply interruptions.

We have the opportunity, right now, to make things way easier on ourselves way into the future. Some we can do ourselves, some it will be easier and more fun doing together. Some we need to stand up and insist that our local and state, and federal jurisdictions add to their already overwhelming "to do" lists. And help them find the resources and gumption.

We have to start by seeing things differently. More on that next time. But it's all the nuts and bolts, too. Cutting energy use in our homes and cars in half. Living near our work, to eliminate a lot of driving. Sharing. Unplugging the phone and taking a vacation at home, instead of spending money and gas driving or flying.

Yes, a small town *can* make a huge difference. Two of them - Gaviotas in Venezuela and Curitiba in Brazil, - have done amazing things with a hundredth of the resources we have. Read the book *Gaviotas*, and the section on Curitiba in *Natural Capitalism* at the library. And *everything* - from values to how we live, work, and eat – is absolutely different in a sustainable culture. Not just different, but better.

The real changes aren't technological. They're changes in our hearts, our dreams, how we dance and sing and play together to be energized by what we do. It's amazing. I'm already having way more fun, and laughs, and hugs than I'm supposed to. And more good things seem to get accomplished at the same time. I've learned more amazing things in the last five years than I ever believed existed in school. And most wonderful to me, I'm learning how incredible the world and life actually feels that we're moving into. It would be a bargain even if we had to pay more for it. To find it comes with a way cheaper price tag is unbelievably magic!