CHAPTER 11

Leadership and Politics, How Will We Get There?

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Regardless of their form of government, the great civilizations of the past, like Mesopotamia, Mycenaean Greece, the Roman Empire, and the Chacoan Society in our own desert southwest; grew and ultimately fell because of the tension between population, climate, and dependency on sporadic, daily solar-energy input. Even slaves, who were the preferred source of work for the affluent before the industrial age, required food/energy input. The underlying need for energy is universal for every successful species. Humans are no exception. **Yet, we take for granted the easy life we've enjoyed in the industrial age because we learned how to enslave millions of years of concentrated ancient sunlight-energy in the form of conveniently-stored, finite, fossil fuels.** Read the 2012 title that eloquently addresses this subject; *The Energy of Slaves: Oil and the New Servitude* by A. Nikiforuk.

In America we are governed by the constitutional framework of a Democratic Republic. We elect our lawmakers and leaders for a system of laws, checks, and balances. We have a federalist concept of shared rights between states and centralized government. This arrangement, despite the difficulty of long-distance travel, worked admirably well for two-hundred years. **Our population was sparse and expanded into a land of seemingly unlimited natural resources.** A second resource bonanza, this time of pre-stored and nearly-free energy, fueled a booster shot for continued unfettered growth. This unprecedented surge of easy energy made possible a high-technology lifestyle, surplus food, freedom from drudgery, and magical travel. Capital investment, based on the promise (premise) of never-ending growth, and return of investment plus additional profit, provided the financial backbone to "capitalize" on the fossil fuels. **A common citizen could now live as a king in pre-industrial times with the "Energy of Slaves" at his/her beck and call.** Despite the setbacks of two world wars and one great depression, economic and population growth expanded in unison.

Then, just after the dawn of the twenty-first century, the abundant fossil-energy foundation for this unprecedented prosperity began to level off onto a bumpy

plateau. By mid-2005, conventional crude oil, by far the best and only fuel for modern transportation and easy agriculture, quantitatively peaked in world production at just over 75 million barrels per day. As this is written ten years later, that "peak" is still being traversed, but not exceeded. These are unarguable, historical facts per the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) regardless of political or media obfuscation. The resultant, inexorable tension between growing demand and constrained supply led to a sharp increase in the cost of energy and a monumental recession. The inevitable correction began in a housing market dependent on easy lending; both directly dependent on continued, extrapolated perpetual growth.

By summer of 2014, Americans were spending over one billion dollars per day of their dwindling income just for gasoline. Most of this to drive vehicles too big and too fast (see Chapters 1 and 7). This does not include fuel oil, diesel, and jet fuel.

The increasing bite into the family budget left less for mortgages, local and national discretionary spending, and especially food, which is directly tied to the cost of energy and therefore also becoming more expensive. A steady destruction of demand, beginning with gasoline in 2005, finally caught up with the production of all liquid fuels. The result led to a sudden over-supply of oil and the collapse of price going into 2015. The normal reaction in time of glut has been to store as much liquid fuel as possible. Since it is difficult to store energy, five-hundred million barrels in storage sounds like a great deal but is only twenty-five days of U.S. consumption. The numbers only serve to convince the public that we have copious energy for future use and any talk of "peak oil", rationing, or a terminal oil-age falls on deaf ears.

A tale of two freedoms

With that background, we can better understand much of the divisiveness that has invaded our two-party political system. Liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all are fundamental tenants of our original constitution. **When he was president, FDR's second Bill of Rights taught "Four Freedoms": freedom from want and fear** in addition to speech and religion. A conflict between the first two of these basic expectations and personal liberty now comes into sharper focus because the increasing scarcity of cheap ubiquitous **energy can no longer provide freedom from want for everyone.** Finite, natural limits cannot supply enough food and fuel for an ever-increasing population. This dilemma is already the norm in the third world and is steadily creeping up the income ladder in our industrialized societies. This fact underlies why we have gross wealth disparity with a very few rising above a shrinking middle class, in turn, absorbed by a rising tide of the poor.

As energy becomes less available and more expensive, should wealthy individuals have unfettered "liberty" to access fuel, food, and all other energy-dependant needs, even if it increases "fear and want" for others? This dichotomy must be addressed. It is becoming physically and mathematically impossible, even in the U.S., to feed, keep warm, and maintain mobility for the present population while inexpensive oil supplies are stretched to the limit and nearing the point of permanent decline. This concept may be difficult to accept, but it is very real for the 80% of the population, who have only 20% of the remaining wealth. **Without cheap energy we can no longer all be hyper-consuming Americans.** Those who still have the financial means can outbid those who do not. The wealthy naturally resist policies intended to share this wealth. **At the same time, the total number of consumers continues to increase while job growth has stagnated. The result is a soaring nineteen-trillion dollar national debt and no chance of satisfying entitlements without economic growth.**

The growing, underlying conflict between the "freedom of liberty" and "freedom from want" has directly infiltrated our politics and exacerbates tension between the right and left. **Long-term growth, jobs, prosperity, leisure pursuits, and all things dependent on plentiful energy can no longer continue for everyone**. There may be temporary remissions because of the temporary oil glut, improved energy-use efficiency, new extraction technologies, and continued borrowing of wealth from the future. But true long-term economic growth, in excess of inflation, can not be sustained without the underlying foundation and promise of plentiful, inexpensive fossil energy.

So far, neither political party will admit to permanent energy contraction. The conservative right promises renewed growth through decreased taxation on business, new innovation, and new investment. The liberal left promotes redistribution of waning wealth to the steadily-increasing masses, including immigrants, who are moving closer to missing the basic necessities. **Both sides advocate increased exploration, efficiency of use, and technical progress. Both sides ignore the geo-physical limitations of the short fossil energy age.** The right promises renewed growth from fossil fuels previously off-limits in parks, federal lands or off-shore preserves. The left defers to reduced consumption, infrastructure repair, and renewable alternatives as the answers. Either direction leads to the conflict between a stalled-out economy dependent on continued growth, and a growing populace, all needing employment, food, social services, and long-term entitlements.

Neither side can provide "freedom from want" to the majority. Our democratic system swings back and forth in each voting cycle from the incumbent party, which

did not deliver, to the other side promising to do better, and a return to "the good old days." Reagan, Clinton, and George W. Bush were lucky to take charge when oil was resurgent and cheap. Carter became unpopular after one term when he was confronted with peaking U.S. oil and world oil price turmoil. Obama appears to be suffering the same growing discontent as Carter because his term coincides with a time-zone in history of maximum world oil production regardless if the oil comes from friendly or unfriendly sources. Yet, in the past year he is not credited with lower gasoline costs.

This brings us to the question of **which party or basic system of government can best handle the realities of contracting energy and expanding-population.** Is a democracy of the people, for the people, and by the people still viable or will anarchy rule? In a free election will an individual vote for personal gain and survival, or will he/she lean toward the common good of the populace? **On a personal micro-basis, would an empathetic human (or any species for that matter) go hungry and starve if necessary to feed as many as possible of his neighbors, if only for just a few more days … after which they will all starve together?** These are questions and choices we must confront. Lack of awareness and/or continued inaction only diminishes our chances of, at least mitigating the same fate of previous crashed civilizations which did not respect the inevitable clash between increasing consumers and finite and/or contracting energy resources.

Deferring to Plato (427–347 B.C.)

Our struggle to find direction for a challenging future is not unique. As regional societies crashed as nature and numbers played out their conflict, at least one great mind pondered the subject of leadership for the benefit of future generations. In my opinion, the best model is found in the dialogue for an ideal state. Typical of Plato's search for the ideal general form, in "*The Republic,*" we hear him conversing with Glaucon as he suggests the ideal "philosopher-king":

> *Until Philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the spirit and power of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures who pursue either to the exclusion of the other are compelled to stand aside, cities will never have rest from their evils,–no, nor the human race, as I believe,–and then only will this our state have a possibility of life and behold the light of day.*

It sounds like Plato is speaking directly to us. Now we face the most serious challenge ever for our survival, for our country, and all of civilization. An elected leader dares not mention the two clashing elephants in the room, growing population vs.

declining resources, without fear of "political suicide." We can argue about which subject: population, energy, or environmental degradation, is most serious. All must be considered together as a "triple crisis." The response for all three is common and urgent. Returning to the need for profound leadership:

Shakleton, Churchill, Autocracies

There have been isolated exceptions of profound leadership when certain disaster loomed. A great example is the true story of Ernest Shakleton who saved all his crew after their ship, *Endurance,* was trapped and crushed in the ice of the Antarctic Ocean. Another is the leadership of Winston Churchill throughout the critical days of World War II. These are examples of when, in times of undeniable crisis, only profound and "wise" individual leadership, most often insisting on extreme sacrifice (like rationing), could suffice.

Another related example is the one-party political system of China. However unpopular, at least decisions are made regarding population control, alternative energy investment, and resource acquisition. This type of authoritarian leadership is better than uncontrolled, genetic human nature which, in times of stress, automatically defaults to a Darwinian survival mode of "take everything you can get and run." This "me vs. we" genetic drive combined with continued reproduction, by as many as can survive, is obviously more successful for long-term species survival regardless of the trauma it entails. Excellent references for these subjects are: *The Selfish Gene*, by R. Dawkins and, J.Bligh's *The Fatal Inheritance*.

My hope for a drastic course-correction, at this late date in the oil age, will require a grass-roots movement which, in turn, supports "wise philosopher-kings"; leaders who clearly understand the growing tension in an economic system based on continued growth and declining energy. **There still may be hope for perpetuation of a vastly downsized modern lifestyle, but only if we admit to the seriousness of our terminal illness and not be lulled by bogus panaceas and/or political promises necessary for election.** We are clearly at a tipping point. In the last eighty years (one lifetime) we have consumed approximately one-half of the world's original endowment of conventional and non-conventional oil. In the same period we have used a large percentage of high-energy coal, natural gas, and high-concentration, fissionable uranium. Together, these finite sources provide over 90% of today's world energy with the U.S. (with 5% of the world's population) consuming about 25% of the total.

In the process, we in the industrialized world have destroyed much of our environment, possibly beyond the point of no return. The next human lifetime, starting now, will be extremely challenging. The world economy is like a giant bus

stalling on a hill. Experts are scurrying around trying to get the engine running again just as many more passengers climb aboard. Very few want to check the fuel tank. We're running low.

Nowhere in this chapter or book is there a suggestion of dictates, edicts, or mandates from the leadership. The only hope is that the "wise" leadership will educate the public so well that constituents will understand and demand the changes we must all make together. This mass movement would lead to legislation (like gasoline rationing) by a majority in congress. It is unlikely that birth control laws would ever be proposed (or enforced!), but the public should clearly understand the choice between suffering, competition, and starvation by many or, the alternative: an acceptable long life for fewer. There is a large percentage of Americans that avoid involvement by deferring to faith or higher power. This path circumvents the laws and logic of numbers and physics, and absolves believers from participating in urgent corrective actions mutually beneficial to all.

MORE RECENT PUBLICATIONS

There is a flurry of publications that wade directly into the growing contrast between demand and supply. Unfortunately, most authors perpetuate the prevailing myth that a "replacement" fertility rate of 2 CPF (child per female) will do the job. The subtitles speak for themselves:

Full Planet, Empty Plates: The New Geopolitics of Food Scarcity, Brown (Norton, 2012). This is the most recent of a long series by the now retired leader of Earth Policy Institute. Like the others before it, the focus is on climate change, but by segueing into "food scarcity" the underlying context of population vs. energy is no longer on the back burner.

Winner Take All: China's Race for Resources and What it Means to the World, Moyo (Basic Books, 2012). Dambisa Moyo is an economist and freelance writer with a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard and a Masters from Harvard. Her new book moved to number thirteen on the New York Times best sellers list and speaks quantitatively about resource shortfalls and China's drive to corner what's left through both monopolies and monopsonies (meaning cornering the markets by underpricing sales and overpricing buying throughout the world). Typical of her thesis, from page 174: "When it comes to food, water, energy, and materials, for example, there are clear signals today that these resources will not be enough to go around in the near future. As we witness the groundswell of the global population and as wealth and

prosperity expand, global supply is struggling to keep up, but investment lags behind and nature has its limits."

Scarcity: Humanity's Final Chapter?, Clugston (self-published, 2012). Order through Chris Clugston's website: nnrscarcity.com. With a prophetic forward by William Catton, author of *Bottleneck* (2009) and *Overshoot* (1982), this amazing effort lists, in quantitative detail, the remaining quantities of **all NNR's** (Non-Renewable Natural Resources). If we don't run short of oil first, virtually every other essential component of our modern industrialized civilization will soon follow. Needless to say, Clugston does not hold out much hope for the future.

The Race for What's Left: The Global Scramble For The World's Last Resources, Klare (Metropolitan Books, 2012). Michael Klare is the author of fourteen books dealing directly with resource depletion and related geopolitics. His books define the ultimate clash between decreasing oil and increasing demand.

The Crash of 2016, Hartmann, (Hachette Book Group, 2013). More ominous words from the prolific writer who also wrote *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight.*

Any Way You Slice It: The Past Present and Future of Rationing, Cox (The New Press, 2013). A comprehensive treatise on the need for rationing when critical resources run short. Going into 2015 the "R" word is moving into the mainstream conversation as water becomes critical in California, another example of climate change being blamed when population and consumption push regional carrying capacity to the limit.

The Limits of Growth Revisited, Bardi (Springer Books in Energy, 2011). This is one of a flurry of recent publications updating the original *Limits of Growth* predictions. Ugo Bardi is an expert on energy and natural resources. He is also President of the Italian Section of ASPO. **His analysis is a complete, contemporary validation of the original forty-year old computer modeling and system dynamics** by Dennis and Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers, and William Behrens III. It's amazing how accurate these original predictions were with regard to resources, population and pollution. For further reading, the 1976 book, *Strategy for Survival*: *an Exploration of the Limits to Further Population and Industrial Growth*, Boughey. (W.A. Benjamin, 1976) is an early and extremely comprehensive analysis of the "limits of Growth" work as well as other similar studies from that time.

Going Dark, McPherson (Publish America, 2013). For the extremists who argue that anthropogenic-caused climate change will be our demise, This author predicts "the near-term exit of *Homo sapiens* from this planet..by the2030's"

Debunking Economics: The Naked Emperor Dethroned, Keen, (Zed Books, 2012). This is a 450 page book by a professor of economics that delves into every dark corner and fallacy of conventional economics.

Supply Shock: Economic Growth at the Crossroads and the Steady State Solution, Czech, Steadystate.org (New Society Publishers, 2013).

Energy: Overdevelopment and the Delusion of Endless Growth, Butler, (Watershed Media, 2012).

Immoderate Greatness: Why Civilizations Fail, Ophuls (Createspace, 2012).

Technofix: Why Technology Won't Save Us or the Environment, Huesemann,(New Society Publishers, 2011).

Afterburn: Society Beyond Fossil Fuels, Heinburg, New Society Publishers, 2015. The latest by U.S.'s leading author and proponent regarding Peak Oil and the end of Growth. Page 104.

Not the Future we Ordered: The psychology of Peak Oil and the Myth of Internal Progress, Greer (Karnac Books 2013). This most prolific author has recently published a flurry of related books. Others are: *Collapse Now and Avoid the Rush, After Oil2; The Years of Crisis,* and *Decline and Fall: The End of Empire and the Future of Democracy.* All reinforce my personal thoughts in a much better writing style.

The Five Stages of Collapse: Survivors Toolkit, Orlov, (New Society Publishers 2013).

Too Much Magic: Wishful Thinking, Technology and the Fate of the Nation, Kuntsler (Atlantic Monthly Press 2012). From one of our earliest and best authors about peak oil and the aftermath.

Peeking at Peak Oil, Aleklett (Springer Science + Business Media 2012). A complete, in-depth look at all aspects of peak oil by a professor of physics at Uppsala University of Sweden. Kjell, Aleklett was a co-founder, with Colin Campbell, of the original international ASPO.

Dark Peak, Fehling (Founders House 2015). This is one of the best of a flurry of scary novels describing life after the oil age.

Peak Oil: Apocalyptic Environmentalism and Libertarian Political Culture, Snyder-Mayerson (University of Chicago Press 2015). This new title is an amazing, comprehensive review of the erratic uncoordinated peak oil movement. The author includes copious endnotes and results of his own questionaires.

Myths of the Oil Boom: American National Security in a Global Energy Market, Yetiv (Oxford University Press 2015). An in-depth review of the fallacies of resurgent American oil extraction.

The Energy World is Flat: Opportunities from the End of Peak Oil, Lacalle and Parrilla (Wiley 2015). This is a bonnanza for peak oil debunkers. To quote page 66: "The end of the oil age will not happen because we ran out of oil. And it will not be a sudden and terrible shock that will bring economic hardship to people. The end of the oil era will be gradual, cyclical, and will open a new and more prosperous era for humans." I could not disagree more.

Tumbling Tide: Population, Petroleum, and Systemic Collapse, Goodchild (Insomniac Press, Canada 2013). This is the other extreme from *The Energy World is Flat*. A doomer's delight.

American Theocracy: The Perils and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century, Phillips (Viking 2006). A comprehensive study of the history and synergisim between oil, religion, and finance in the U.S. today.

Lifeblood: Oil, Freedom, and the Forces of Capitalism, Huber (University of Minnesota 2013). An excellent textbook for all the subjects in the subtitle.

The Oil Age: Understanding the Past, Exploring the Future. This is a new journal published four times a year by the Petroleum Analysis Centre, Stabil Hill, Ballydehob, Co. Cork, Ireland.

Presidential election 2012

The Romney Energy Plan promised "An Achievable Goal: Energy Independence by 2020." This will be possible from "surging energy production, combined with the resources of America's neighbors, …". The results: "The emergence of an Energy Superpower." **Quantitatively, for "oil independence" in eight years, the Romney agenda would have magically jumped U.S. oil production two-fold from the present eight million barrels per day (down from ten at the peak of U.S. extraction in 1970) to the present U.S. consumption of over sixteen million barrels per day.** Plus, we are not told that "other liquids" like natural gas liquids and bio fuels have been added to the mix to reach the present U.S. consumption of nineteen million barrels per day. Romney continued that "we must return to the glory days

of Ronald Reagan" with no mention that Reagan's era coincided with the last world remission of cheap oil.

The happy right-wing promise of renewed and everlasting abundance is perpetuated by several other new books. Two that are getting much media coverage are: Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, and Forbes, *Freedom Manifesto: Why Free Markets Are Moral And Big Government Is Not*. Both of these authors hammer away at the same traditional economist themes:

- Government causes scarcity.
- A free market with unfettered technology and human ingenuity will always find new substitutes for any commodity in short supply.
- Government discourages entrepreneurs by taxing the risk-takers and redistributing the wealth to unnecessary civil employees, regulators, and unemployed "slackers." Therefore government is the impediment to progress. Steadily increasing population-demand and physical limits of supply (or the laws of physics) are totally ignored.

The Obama alternatives are increased fuel efficiency, "guarded" (environmentally sound) exploitation of remaining fossil fuels, and a transition to lower energy, renewable sources. A more recent White House initiative is: "How We Shift America Off Oil" (whitehouse.gov.energy).

The "Energy Security Trust" proposed spending ten billion dollars in the next ten years for lighter natural gas-vehicle fuel tanks, advanced batteries, cleaner biofuels, and hydrogen fuel cells. What is meant by "cleaner biofuels"? I thought the "Hydrogen Future" fairy tale had long-since been forgotten. All infer scientific "breakthroughs" that will solve our problems and negate the urgency for our nation to ration gasoline. Typically, neither left nor right political party dares to mention geological resource limits or the taboo subject of population.

Presidential election 2016

As we move into the hotly contested presidential election year, not a single candidate on either side seems to understand or dares discuss the overwhelming impact, facts, and future of the imminent end of the oil age. It would be amazing if a recipient of my 5th edition book could propel the urgency of our energy predicament far up the political ladder to someone (those) with a voice or position to make a difference. In 2005 Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R Maryland) assumed that role of leadership. He held a Peak Oil conference in Frederick, Maryland where I presented. He personally gave a copy of my 2nd edition book to every congressperson. Now he is retired and a critical ten years have been lost.

The politics of population

Since the dawn of history, leaders have often been confronted by population growth that exceeded regional carrying capacity, especially when times were good. Increased numbers were often encouraged to swell the leader's kingdom and provide "boots on the ground" to ensure success, power, and defense. But in more recent times, several U.S. presidents openly promoted family planning after their terms in office, Eisenhower and Truman became honorary co-chairmen of the Planned Parenthood Federation. John F. Kennedy the first Catholic president, was instrumental in the allocation of millions of dollars to distribute contraceptives throughout the world. George H.W. Bush was nicknamed "Rubbers" during his term as a Republican Representative from Texas.

Now, going into 2016, as we continue on the trajectory of over-population, and already on the downhill side of per capita oil, any mention of the human-numbers problem is conspicuous by its absence. **It may well be that a democracy is not the best form of government in times (most often the case throughout history) of over-stressed carrying capacity. The plurality of numbers necessary to elect leaders are counterproductive to the hard leadership decisions and sacrifices necessary for survival.** Certainly, Ernest Shakleton, when his ship was trapped in the antarctic ice, did not defer to a voting majority or socialistic group-think. **He led and his men survived. We now desperately need this type of leadership to clearly explain to the public how dire the situation is and what drastic measures must be shared by everyone to reduce population, conserve oil, and nurture the earth's eco-systems.**

What next?

As argued many times in the preceding chapters, the only way to wind down and supercede our oil-based lifestyle is to **simultaneously** reduce oil consumption to ten percent of our current U.S. rate, **and begin the longer task of reversing population by reducing the average fertility rate to not more than one child per female**.

Obviously, no realistic person would expect this thinking to be promulgated or implemented, especially on a world-wide basis. However, it is idealistically possible that the U.S., which has significant oil reserves left and the most lifestyle to lose, might respect numerical facts, close its borders to the import-export of resources and people, and begin a modicum of survival in a post-oil world. All of this must happen in the next several decades to avoid the pending world-wide crash of modern civilization. **Half of the Americans alive today, including all new children from now on, will participate in this short epoch. This story must be broadcast far**

and wide, The remaining window of time is narrowing every day. Are we up to the task? We will soon know.

A prognosis

In my opinion, we will see the climax of high-energy civilization and our familiar comfortable lifestyles begin to unravel in the next five to ten years. This is the time frame for the most likely U.S. oil-depletion scenarios in Figure 2 to coinside with decreasing global net exports (GNE as explained in Chapter 4). This "Double whammy" will be impossible to ignore and begin to drastically change our lives. **Without some form of rationing, a return to high oil prices and a National Debt soaring past twenty trillion dollars will combine to destroy our economic stability.** Business as usual will end despite temporary remissions in the stock market and soaring dollar value with respect to other world currencies which are leading the way to economic collapse.

World-wide calamities will grow as terrorism reflects Mid-east unrest spreading from Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and into Africa, South America and Asia. **Throughout the world, more and more countries can no longer rely on cheap oil and/or oil exports to appease their growing generations of "oil babies" (children born throughout the world whose personal energy was rendered superfluous by ubiquitous, cheap oil).** Western nations will no longer be able to rely on oil-based-energy growth to continue the extrapolation of past prosperity. This, just as the Baby-boomers will be expecting their happy retirement years to be supported by entitlements, which in the past were paid for by ever-increasing growth in numbers from younger generations.

Conflict is certain at every level from the wealthy trying to preserve their assets and lifestyle, on down to increasing numbers of disenfranchised hungry protesters in the streets. Fuel for travel, farming, and heating will become prohibitively expensive for the growing majority who can only find menial work, or are dependent on shrinking economic safety nets. Continued lower-priced commodities will still be too costly for the number one consumer bloc: poor Americans, staggering under growing consumer debt. Civil and regional wars, exacerbated by religious or ethnic backgrounds will increase between nations that can no longer appease their own people and neighbors. **This is not a happy prognosis but is similar to predicting how many miles you can drive on a partial tank of gasoline before you walk.**