

Our Local Future

Volume 1, Number 1

Thursday, October 13, 2005

Free

The End of Suburbia Reaches Wayland

"The End of Suburbia" comes to Wayland. The documentary movie "The End of Suburbia: Oil Depletion and the Collapse of the American Dream" will make its West Michigan premiere at the Wayland Union High School auditorium, for one showing only, on Thursday, October 13, 2005 at 7:00 p.m. This is a free viewing.

"The End of Suburbia" focuses on the history and future of oil and gasoline in the United States. The suburbs have long been an American dream: country living with the conveniences of the city. People drive ten, twenty, or more minutes to work and live miles from the nearest store. In an eye opening documentary, "The End of Suburbia" details how this era is coming to a close.

The film features interviews with several of leading thinkers who are leading the campaign to educate the public on the issue of oil depletion. Featured are Richard Heinberg, the author of "Party's Over" and "Power Down"; James Kunstler, author of "The Long Emergency"; Matthew Simmons, energy consultant and former advisor on Vice President Cheney's energy task force; and Michael Ruppert, editor of the "From the Wilderness" web site.

The film highlights the unreported story about oil depletion and the impact on the suburbs. Discussion on the impact on local economies, housing prices, and unemployment will immediately follow the free screening.

The premiere is organized by Aaron Wissner. Wissner, a teacher for Wayland Union Schools, and his wife, Kimberly Sager, traveled on September 25 to Yellow Springs, Ohio to participate in the "U.S. Conference for Peak Oil and Community Solutions." In attendance were over 450 people from across the nation and Canada. The film "The End of Suburbia" was the talk of the conference.

"Something is going on, and no one is telling us about it," says Wissner. "After over a decade of level gasoline prices, suddenly, two years ago, oil prices began to climb and now gasoline prices have doubled. The most likely situation is that global demand for oil is increasing, while global oil production is remaining stagnant, or possibly, decreasing. After the hurricanes this summer, it is clear that U.S. oil demand could quickly exceed supply."

"Unfortunately, the only way to decrease demand seems to be by increasing prices. That's why we're seeing three dollars or more at the pump. Four and five dollars are not far off. The President has already mentioned several times that the U.S. must decrease demand. Last winter, the U.S. nearly ran out of home heating oil. Now the President is warning us to prepare for a steep rise in heating oil costs. This could be a very cold winter for many people. People across the nation will really feel the pinch in the pocketbook, and this is just the tip of the iceberg."

For more information on the film, visit: endofsuburbia.com

Are Our Troops Dying for Cheap Oil?

A free screening of "The Oil Factor: Behind the War on Terror" will occur at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 18th at the Hastings Community Education and Recreation Center, 520 W. South Street, in Hastings. Discussion will follow the free viewing

After spending three months in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Free-Will Production's Gerard Ungerman and Audrey Brohy assess the results of the U.S. attacks on the people of the Middle East. They expose the humans cost and examine the bigger geo-strategic picture of these invasions that may lead the world toward the next global conflict.

"The Oil Factor" is filled with solid facts and figures, clear illustrative maps, original footage shot in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as interviews with such personalities as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Noam Chomsky, They Project for the New American Century Director Gary Schmitt, best-seller "Taliban" author Ahmed Rashid and the Pentagon's Karen Kwiatkowski.

Drive into Hastings on M-37, M-43 or M-222. Turn right immediately after the K-Mart plaza onto Market Street. Go straight 10 blocks south to the end of Market Street. The Community Education Center is attached to the west side of the high school.

For more information, visit theoilfactor.com

The "Local First" Solution

"Local First" is a movement with great promise for the future. By choosing to first try to buy all goods and services locally, money stays and multiplies in the local economy.

Attorney and economist Michael Shuman will deliver a talk entitled "The Small-Mart Revolution" on Friday, November 4 at 7:30 p.m. at the Aquinas College Donnelly Center in Grand Rapids.

Shuman is the author of the book "Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in the Global Age". For more information, visit localfirst.com

Local Food, Local Prosperity

Farms Without Harm is sponsoring a free film screening of the documentary "As We Sow" on Wednesday November 2 at 7:00 p.m. at the Wealthy Theater at 1130 Wealthy St. SE in Grand Rapids.

The award-winning documentary by Jan Weber details the dramatic and rapid transformation of rural America from a landscape of small farms to factory farms.

A panel discussion will follow with special guests including: William Weida, Director of Global Resource Action Center for the Environment (GRACE), and Ann Woiwode, director of the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club.

Weida will deliver his talk; "The Hidden Cost of the Food We Eat" on Thursday November 3, at 7:00 p.m. in Aquinas College Donnelly Center at 1670 Robinson Rd. Weida will discuss the impact of factory farms on local economies. The talk is co-sponsored by Aquinas College's Sustainable Business Program.

For more information, contact fwh@ameritech.com

Web Sites Related to Oil Depletion

www.wolfatthedoor.org.uk

www.communitysolution.com

www.survivingpeakoil.com

www.peakoilaction.org

www.peakoil.net

www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net

www.drydipstick.com

Our Local Future

Volume 1, Number 1

Thursday, October 13, 2005

Free

Q & A on Peak Oil

Why are gasoline prices so high? In mid-August, I started thinking about that and how high-priced gasoline would affect lower-income families. I started researching on the internet, trying to figure out why gasoline prices were rising. I came across something called "**peak oil**".

What is peak oil? "Peak oil" is the shorthand way of saying "**maximum global oil extraction**": in other words, the day when more oil is extracted from the earth than any other day... ever. (Currently, we extract about 65 million barrels of oil per day from the earth.)

Why this day is important? Because after that, there will be less and less oil available. Since demand for \$60/barrel oil keeps going up every year... after "peak oil" (maximum extraction), **oil prices will have to rise** to lower demand... (There's less demand for \$100/barrel oil than \$60/barrel oil.) That means, lots of price increases including gasoline, heating oil, electricity, and etc.

How does that affect overall prices? As oil prices increase, so do **all** costs for transportation. So, the **costs of production** of all goods will increase. This includes goods from overseas and even ones from within North America. In addition, oil is used in **every aspect** of agriculture. Growing food means: planting with oil fueled machines, spraying with oil created pesticides & fertilizers, harvesting with other oil fueled machines, and moving it to market in trucks.

How will this affect you? As costs go up, you'll find yourself paying **more** for gasoline, **more** for food, **more** for other goods at the corporate chain stores, **more** for electricity & heating oil, which means you'll have **less money** for things like entertainment, new cars, trips, new homes & additions, etc. Oddly, there may be a drop in price in certain of these types of these luxury items, as the retailers try to move them out of their stores. (Otherwise the retailers could take huge losses.)

When will this "peak oil" thing happen? I wish I knew. The people who seem most reliable to listen to... retired oil geologists... suggest it could be anytime from around this thanksgiving, up to 5 years from now. The most unreliable people, like corporate executives and economists, are saying it could be 10 to 20 years or longer. After charting the data on gasoline prices over the past ten years, and noticing that prices have suddenly begun increasing since 2003, it wouldn't surprise me if "peak oil" has already happened.

How is this going to affect your job? Well, consider the prices that are going to rise, and how that is going to affect our fixed school budget. Also imagine how the state is going to respond when many of the prices rise. Also consider how this could affect Michigan's top industries of auto manufacturing, tourism, and food production.

How does this affect the economy? In the US, recessions and inflation have been the usual results of higher oil prices. In other countries, stagflation, deflation, and depression seem to be the most common results.

Why am I telling you this? Because the media doesn't seem to be publicizing this at all, and I like to share things that others don't seem to be sharing. That's also why I'm trying to spread the word.

What is the government doing about it? It appears to me that the government is attempting to guarantee that the US is affected by "peak oil" last... i.e. after all the other nations have had to deal with it. The way the government appears to be doing that is by "securing" oil reserves in the oil rich regions of the world. According to the Carter Doctrine of 1979, the oil fields of the world are "strategic national interests" of the US. This administration also appears to be trying to decrease regulations and open areas for exploration. These things could have a huge negative impact on the air, water, and our planet as a whole; but temporarily lower prices may result. The President has also been calling on conservation activities, mainly in the area of gasoline use and home heating.

What is the solution? The solution lies in each person individually decreasing their use of oil. Ultimately, this means buying (or growing) more food and other goods locally, living closer to work, focusing on high efficiency devices, decreasing overall energy use. This requires a focus on building capacity within communities to take care of most of their own needs.

What are you doing about this? I'm spreading the word, doing more research, trying to make our home as energy efficient as possible including putting up drapes, using compact fluorescent bulbs, lowering the thermostat. I'm also combining car trips, making sure our pantry is full of food, and paying off all loans as quickly as possible. Finally, I'm looking into passive solar heating (using a sun-room) and solar electric PV panels for home electricity, plus prepping for a nice big garden next year and learning to can and store food.

Why do all this if the time is so uncertain? I do the same thing when I know my in-laws are coming for a visit. They always will say, "We'll be there at noon", but in reality, they show up anytime from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.!!! So, we make sure to clean up the night before. I apply the same thinking to "peak oil". I'd rather be prepared, and not have it happen for a few years, then NOT be prepared, and risk being sorry later this winter.

What do you think will most interest people? Imagine that the economy goes into permanent recession, coupled with a "correction" in the stock market -- one which never recovers, and a nation wide "reorganization" movement within businesses (layoffs). Also imagine how your retirement plans could be affected by such a change in the economy. Social security, 401-K, IRA, health care costs, etc. --- All are impacted by the economy and **dependant** on the cheap, readily available oil.

I think all those things are very likely to happen within the next 5 years, and I'm making plans to "adjust my portfolio", so to speak, by "investing" in things that are not so dependant on the US economy.

Of all the issues I've learned about in the past 20 years, this issue of oil depletion is the one that has caused me the most concern, and the most personal, ongoing change... because it will affect everyone: home, family, work, community, nation and world.

Contact Information

Aaron Wissner
11355 Rita Drive
Middleville, MI 49333
269-795-4311
aaronwissner@yahoo.com

ABOUT Aaron Wissner – Wissner has taught for fourteen years in Michigan public schools, over a decade for the Wayland community. Wissner became aware of the issue of oil depletion after doing Internet research to determine the ultimate cause of the rising gasoline prices. Since then, he has spent hundreds of hours researching the issue. He is now leading a campaign to educate the local community to the issue and solutions.