

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed without amendment a Concurrent Resolution of the House of the following title:

H. Con. Res. 349. Concurrent Resolution authorizing the use of the Capitol Grounds for the Greater Washington Soap Box Derby.

The message also announced that the Senate has passed a bill and a Concurrent Resolution of the following titles in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1003. An act to amend the Act of December 22, 1974, and for other purposes.

S. Con. Res. 91. Concurrent resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the President should posthumously award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige.

PEAK OIL

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. FOXX). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. BARTLETT) is recognized for half of the time remaining before midnight.

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Madam Speaker, I have here in my hands two pretty big reports that were paid for by our government and have for reasons that it is difficult for me to understand been pretty much ignored apparently by the organizations that paid for them.

The first of these is a big report paid for by the Department of Energy called *The Peaking of World Oil Production: Impacts, Mitigation and Risk Management*. This is generally known as the Hirsch Report, because the project leader was Dr. Robert Hirsch from SAIC, a very prestigious scientific and engineering organization. This report is dated February, 2005.

For reasons that we are trying to find, this was bottled up, apparently, inside the Department of Energy, because it didn't become publicly available until several months after that.

The second report I have here is the report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This obviously is paid for by the Army. It is dated September of 2005, and it was just about 2 months ago that it finally got out of the Pentagon into the public. This one is called *Energy Trends and Their Implications For U.S. Army Installations*. I would submit that wherever they mention "Army," you could substitute "the United States" and it would be completely appropriate.

What I would like to do for the first few minutes is to look at some of the comments and recommendations in these two reports; and I would like to keep asking the question, why have these two government agencies which paid for these reports done essentially nothing to promulgate this information across the country? Rather, it would seem that there was an intent to keep this information from the public, because the Hirsch Report was bottled

up inside the Department of Energy for several months, and the Army Corps of Engineers report is dated September of 2005, and it says on the cover here, "Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited." But there was essentially no distribution of that until just about 2 months ago.

As you will see, Madam Speaker, if the content of these two reports is correct, if their observations and recommendations are correct, you would have expected these two government agencies to be using every vehicle at their disposal to get this information out to the public.

Let's look first at a few quotes from the Hirsch Report. The first here says, "The peaking of world oil production presents the United States and the world with an unprecedented risk management problem. As peaking is approached, liquid fuel prices and price volatility will increase dramatically," oil was almost \$75 a barrel today, "and without timely mitigation, the economic, social and political costs will be unprecedented."

"Viable mitigation options exist on both the supply and demand sides, but to have substantial impact they must be initiated more than a decade in advance of peaking."

A little later we will talk more about this. I am not sure that this is exactly the way that I would have articulated our challenge. We will talk about that a little later.

"Dealing with world oil production peaking will be extremely complex, involve literally trillions of dollars and require many years of intense effort."

Now another quote from this Hirsch Report. "We cannot conceive of any affordable government-sponsored crash program to accelerate normal replacement schedules so as to incorporate higher energy efficiency technologies into the privately owned transportation sector. Significant improvements in energy efficiency will thus be inherently time-consuming, of the order of a decade or more."

If we are talking about transportation, Madam Speaker, that is indeed true. Because the average automobile and small truck is in the fleet about 17-18 years and the average 18-wheeler about 28 years. So any improvements that we ever make, we are making in energy efficiency in automobiles and trucks, is going to take quite some time to show any meaningful effect because of how long they are in the fleet.

Now a third quote from the Hirsch Report. Madam Speaker, I would like us to keep in our mind the question, if this is true and we have two reports, as you will see, that have reached essentially the same conclusion, we have no reason to believe there was any collusion between them. Indeed, their dates of publication are quite different, February to September. And if these observations and recommendations in these reports are in fact correct, then one might wonder why haven't these agencies been using every vehicle at their

disposal to get this information out to the American public and to initiate programs to deal with these problems?

"World oil peaking is going to happen. World production of conventional oil will reach a maximum and decline thereafter. That maximum is called the peak. A number of competent forecasters project peaking within a decade. Others contend it will occur later. Prediction of the peaking is extremely difficult because of geological complexities, measurement problems, pricing variations, demand elasticity and political influences. Peaking will happen, but the timing is uncertain."

Then this, Madam Speaker, a very significant statement. "Oil peaking presents a unique challenge," they say, and then this statement. "The world has never faced a problem like this. Without massive mitigation more than a decade before the fact, the problem will be pervasive and will not be temporary. Previous energy transitions, wood to coal and coal to oil, were gradual and evolutionary. Oil peaking will be abrupt and revolutionary."

Now I would like to read a few of the quotes and recommendations from the Corps of Engineers study just out about 2 months ago, although the date was September of last year.

"Historically, no other energy source equals oil's intrinsic qualities of extractability, transportability, versatility and cost. The qualities that enabled oil to take over from coal as the frontline energy source for the industrialized world in the middle of the 20th century are as relevant today as they were then. Oil's many advantages provide 1-1/3 to 2-1/2 times more economic value per million BTUs than coal. Currently, there is no viable substitute for petroleum."

Madam Speaker, that is a startling statement. If in fact the world is peaking in oil production and there is no viable substitute for petroleum, wouldn't you think that the agencies paying for these studies would have used every vehicle available to them to get this word out to the American public and to articulate a rational program for dealing with this emergency?

"Oil prices may go significantly higher," they say, "and some have predicted prices ranging up to \$180 a barrel in a few years." Just under \$75 today, \$180 a barrel in a few years.

"In general, all non-renewable resources follow a natural supply curve: Production increases rapidly, slows, reaches a peak and then declines at a rapid pace, similar to its initial increase. The major question for petroleum is not whether production will peak, but when. There are many estimates of recoverable petroleum reserves, giving rise to many estimates of when peak oil will occur and how high the peak will be. A careful review of all of the estimates leads to the conclusion that world oil production may peak within a few short years, after which it will decline." Campbell and Deffeyes, several references here.