

Dear Ester Editor,

Recently I attended a conference entitled: “Local Solutions to the Energy Dilemma”. Perhaps you didn’t know we have an energy dilemma. But now, I certainly do. It is rare I am so moved by what I experience at a conference. This particular one focused on the future that many interested observers and watchdogs of the global scene believe is in store for us as the phenomenon of Peak Oil unfolds.

A few riveting presentations stood out. One was by a Russian émigré, Dimitry Orlov, who contrasted the collapse of the former Soviet Union with what may happen to the United States. Here’s a paragraph from his treatise on this topic (three chapters which can be found on the www.fromthewilderness.com website):

“The United States is now facing a current account deficit that cannot be sustained, a falling currency, and an energy crisis, all at once. It is now the world's largest debtor nation, and most people do not see how it can avoid defaulting on its debt. According to a lot of analysts, it is technically bankrupt, and is being propped up by foreign reserve banks, which hold a lot of dollar-denominated assets, and, for the time being, want to protect the value of their reserves. This game can only go on for so long. Thus, while the Soviet Union deserves honorable mention for going bankrupt first, the gold in this category (pun intended) will undoubtedly go to the United States, for the largest default ever.”

Along the same lines was a presentation by the sophisticated and brilliant Catherine Austin Fitts, a former HUD (US Housing and Urban Development) officer who has become one of the foremost critics of the global economy. She has a website which further elaborates her work www.solari.com. I bought an audio CD of her presentation “Where Would Jesus Bank?” Her prime directive is this: “We will never change anything important until we change how money works”. And does she ever make it clear what she means in her presentations. Her best analogy is that the world capitalist money system is akin to a tapeworm, which although it doesn’t kill you, is a parasite which causes you to act in its interest while it sucks away all your nutrients and food and makes you poorer. Not a bad image I’d say.

Finally there were superb presentations on the concept of Permaculture. This is an agricultural/ecological approach to feeding ourselves which does so without ruining the soil, sapping our natural capital, and without employing (petro) chemical fertilizers and huge energy inputs.

There is much to learn, to grasp, and cope with. But this knowledge is liberating and a challenge to us all for a future of cooperation and community-building. I’m your neighbor, and you need to love me as yourself. It was a challenge 2000 years ago, and it still is. We can’t wait any longer to try it though. The time is now.

Your solar hero and seeker of truth,
Rich Seifert