Dipsticks

By Rick Carter, Editor-in-Chief

Too bad all this talk about oil prices and shortages isn't just another 1970s nostalgia program. It might be funny if the characters got mixed up in that decade's "oil embargo" politics. Or if they did something funny while waiting in a long line for gasoline. Then, by next week, the program would be on to a new topic, and the whole gas-shortage thing would be gone. Whew!

In reality, that show already played, and now the joke is on us. We had the shortage, experienced the gas lines and made a weak attempt to cut our oil dependence. Then we got a 30-year reprieve, forgot about shortages, and went right back to doing everything wrong. So here we are in 2005 staring down a slippery slope from the top of what experts call Peak Oil.

If you're unfamiliar with that term, it refers to the point where all the relatively easy-to-get oil in the world has been gotten, represented by the top of a bell curve. The curve's descent suggests a period where finding and using the planet's remaining oil becomes far more costly and difficult.

Except for a few quacks who believe oil continues to be created underground, most people probably realize oil will run out. What they may not understand is that as it does, oil's growing scarcity is likely to create unforeseen hardships here and around the world. And while alternative energy sources may now be on the rescue fast track, many say we've wasted too much time already to ever expect any alternative or combination of alternatives to match the energy demands that oil currently fulfills.

Some in this camp are behind many of the articles and papers available that envision a crippling post-Peak world. (Try www.lifeaftertheoilcrash.net, for one.) Most suggest that even if we immediately began to rein in our oil use, we'd be in for a rough ride because there's nothing to take oil's place. And if we don't reign in our oil use, many say we'll see the last of life as we know it over the next few years.

But things can be done. While the long-term answer is unknown, short-term prospects can be improved if we make every effort to use less oil and fewer oil-related products. Manufacturers can have an enormous impact in this regard. Most importantly: Cut energy use in production, and work with suppliers and distributors to ensure supplies and products are moved in the most energy-efficient manner possible. Find alternatives.

Today, virtually everything involves oil in some way, but this was not always the case. Every little step that moves us away from oil will help. But the step must be taken, and it must be followed by many others.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/02/2014 - 2:57pm*):
http://www.impomag.com/blogs/2005/04/dipsticks?qt-recent_content=1