

Foreword by Colin Campbell

Thank you for sending me the 5th Edition, forwarded by Fintan O'Connell. I think you are entirely right. The prime chapter of the Oil Age spans little more than two lifespans as you illustrate on the cover. The First Half saw the rapid and excessive expansion of everything, including human population, fuelled by easy and cheap energy. But the Second Half which dawns will see a corresponding contraction. The transition through which we are living is a time of great tension as indeed already witnessed with many demonstrations, riots and revolutions around the world. People become resentful of soaring food prices and falling employment. They blame their governments, not realising that the situation is imposed by Nature. The turmoil in the Middle East, North Africa is interesting because they are rich oil countries, but that delivered massive immigration and an excessively wealthy and powerful elite. Their populations far exceed the carrying capacity of the barren lands, and the pressures mount. The countries are artificial constructions with most frontiers drawn by Britain and France in the First World War but now there is a reversion to tribalism, with some of the revolutionaries exploiting religious differences. The State of Israel is a further tension probably because of its close ties with the financial world. Nigeria too is interesting as Arabs from the deserts of Libya now march south as part of the Boko Haram movement, evidently casting their eyes on the green forests. They probably don't realise that the country uses its oil revenue to import about one-third of its food. Its conventional oil peaked in 2005 and its deepwater oil will do so around 2017, so food imports will soon dry up and the population shrivel.

I think the solution is a reversion to regionalism as people again have to learn to live on whatever their area can support, growing their own food, which implies a radical fall in population. There are signs of this in Europe. The Scots are close to leaving the so-called United Kingdom, and there are similar moves elsewhere especially in Spain and Italy. The European Union is under pressure to break up, and there are growing moves to restrict immigration. I expect there will be a similar response in the United States. It is a financial empire built indeed largely on the global expansion of trade and industry during the First Half of the Oil Age. I am sure that the

people of Maine could look forward to happy and successful lives once they break their ties with Wall Street and turn to your solar tractor.

I was born in 1931, one year after the First Lifespan illustrated on the excellent cover of your paper opened, and am spared the Second, which will be much more difficult. My grandson who lives in Norway may find himself having to catch fish from an open boat in mid winter as did earlier generations there. Its oil production peaked in 2001 at 3.2 Mb/d but has since fallen to 1.5 Mb/d and is set to continue to decline at about 4% a year. But it is a large country blessed by a relatively small population of 5 million with a density of 16 per km², albeit living close to the Polar Circle.

The Oil Age is in fact a brief span of time in an historical context. It is indeed a fascinating subject to study and observe. Congratulations on your splendid work.