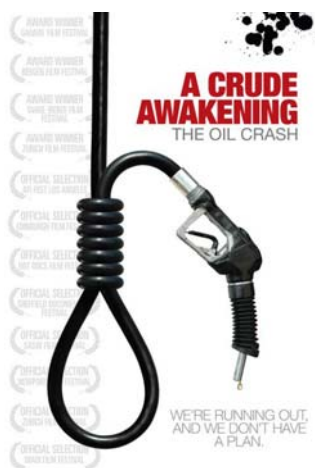


A Crude Awakening



The 2006 feature length documentary, “ACrudeAwakening”, establishes its theme immediately with the film tagline “We’re running out and we don’t have a plan” as it tells the story of our society’s addiction to oil. The objective of the film is to shock people into the realisation that our accustomed

way of life, a life entirely dependent on oil, has a fast approaching expiration date. The startling reality is that our civilization, built on cheap and bountiful crude oil supplies, must be completely re-imagined and overhauled.

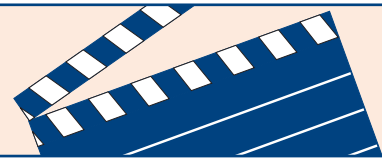
Supported by a powerful combination of archival footage and interviews with leading scientific and oil industry authorities, “A Crude Awakening” argues that it is likely that the world’s oil reserves have been exaggerated, particularly by OPEC and we are quickly approaching ‘peak oil’. A common misconception is that the term ‘Peak Oil’ means ‘running out of oil’, but in actual fact it refers to ‘running out of cheap and plentiful oil’. ‘Peak Oil’ is the date when the peak of the world’s crude oil production rate is reached and subsequently the date when the rate of production will enter decline, supply will be unable to meet demand, and prices will be severely impacted.

The film explores the ways in which inexpensive oil supports our entire way of life. It is crucial for our transportation, food production, economy and basically everything that we use on a daily basis, from plastics and pharmaceuticals, to fertiliser and cosmetics. Yet the premise of the film is that as reserves of crude oil are dwindling, our demand for oil based products is simultaneously

escalating. This demand for oil has been evident in the nations of the developing world for some time, and globally will only increase as India and China, the world’s fastest growing economies and most populous nations, increase their demand for oil and oil based products. However, despite this, oil is still extraordinarily undervalued, both in terms of price and voracity of consumption.

The history of the OPEC nations and their proven and claimed oil reserves is an important element of the film. The OPEC production quotas are in part dependent on their proved reserves, a system that gives these countries a large incentive to exaggerate supply. The film examines a number of scientific scenarios and surmises that OPEC claims of oil reserves should be doubted under the weight of evidence. They argue that world oil production appears to have reached a plateau since late 2004 and since then, despite strenuous efforts, the major international oil companies have been unable to increase production. Recently, Petroleum Intelligence Weekly obtained internal Kuwaiti documents indicating their true reserves were less than half the claimed value. Two thirds of the world’s claimed remaining reserves are located in OPEC countries, and all scenarios that propose peak oil is more than ten years away also assume that OPEC can substantially increase production from present levels.

The geopolitical conflicts of the major oil production regions are also crucial to the discussion of ‘Peak Oil’ and subsequently examined in the film. Evidence of control of oil as a motivation for war, particularly in reference to the current situation in the Middle East, is examined and arguments supported by leading scientific and oil industry authorities. Furthermore, issues such as the tension over Iran, suicide attacks on Saudi oil facilities, Nigerian rebels and the Iraqi resistance, are presented as having the potential for direct impacts on oil production and supply. Given the already tight oil market, any significant event



A Crude Awakening (continued)

or general worsening of the situation is likely to create a serious oil shock with potential to facilitate a major demand destruction extending over a number of years.

The focus of the film is on our society's insatiable demand for oil and the crisis we will face when the consequences of 'Peak Oil' are realised. It predominately focuses on the expected economic and social impacts of oil production reaching peak value, but interestingly makes little mention of the environmental impacts of our voracious oil consumption in terms of climate change. Whilst the film does make some mention of the environmental degradation that has occurred due to oil production and the consequence for the supply of extreme climatic events such as hurricanes, discussions of environmental consequences are unfortunately limited.

"A Crude Awakening" is highly effective in its approach to presenting the realities for, not only a future without oil, but without a viable substitute for oil. Any alternative technologies discussed in the film such as biomass, ethanol, biodiesel, nuclear, wind, solar are deemed inadequate as an oil replacement and the only real solution offered is humankind's ingenuity, adaptability and creativity. The future is grim unless we all can make changes to the way in which we live our lives in order to deal with the 'most perplexing and important economic, environmental and public policy issue of our time'. If the academic and industry leaders presented in the film are correct, we have limited time to implement the enormous required actions to bring about positive behavioural change in our industrialised society. We have been warned.

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Depleted Azeri oilfield.
Picture courtesy of <http://www.oilcrashmovie.com>