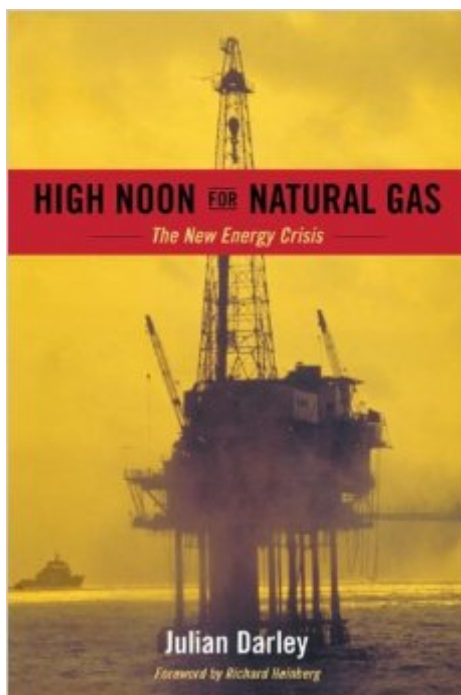


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High Noon For Natural Gas: The New Energy Crisis



Synopsis

Blackouts, rising gas prices, changes to the Clean Air Act, proposals to open wilderness and protected offshore areas to gas drilling, and increasing dependence on natural gas for electricity generation. What do all these developments have in common, and why should we care? In this timely expose, author Julian Darley takes a hard-hitting look at natural gas as an energy source that rapidly went from nuisance to crutch. Darley outlines the implications of our increased dependence on this energy source and why it has the potential to cause serious environmental, political, and economic consequences. In *High Noon for Natural Gas* readers can expect to find a critical analysis of government policy on energy, as well as a meticulously researched warning about our next potentially catastrophic energy crisis. Did you know that: Natural Gas (NG) is the second most important energy source after oil; In the U.S. alone, NG is used to supply 20% of all electricity and 60% of all home heating; NG is absolutely critical to the manufacture of agricultural fertilizers; In the U.S. the NG supply is at critically low levels, and early in 2003 we came within days of blackouts and heating shutdowns; Matt Simmons, the world's foremost private energy banker, is now warning that economic growth in the U.S. is under threat due to the looming NG crisis?

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Customer Reviews

High Noon For Natural Gas, The New Energy Crisis by Julian Darley, Chelsea Green Publishing Company, Vermont, ISBN 1-931498-53-9, 266 p. Like the topical focus on the age of peak oil

production, Julian Darley's analysis seeks to educate the reader with regard to a declining natural gas supply. However, as the reader will note very quickly in the preface, the shortage of natural gas being highlighted is currently being experienced in North America, although a broad global shortage is also suggested in the next decade or so. While the book's discussion of world gas reserves supports Julian Darley's thesis, the underlying implication of declining gas production is not one that I would care to support. Darley suggests that because a global peak in oil discovery occurred in the 1960s and the oil production peak is likely to occur in the current decade; a similar peak in gas discovery was evident around 1965-70 and will result in an imminent peak in world gas production. In my mind, the evidence for a unique worldwide gas discovery peak in the mid to late 1960s is debatable; in North America it may have been evident. One reason I suggest for this difference is that not all parts of the world have been equally explored compared to North America, much less so for gas than for their oil potential. Unlike oil, which has been highly traded around the globe, gas has not been a highly traded commodity, not until recent decades at least. Hence the commercial incentive for gas development has been slower to develop, slower and longer term than the incentives for oil development and production. Even now, a major spot market for LNG has yet to develop on a global scale, unlike oil.

I don't normally write these kind of reviews, but I felt it necessary to do so here, to counteract a book that I see not just as misleading, but as dangerous. Julian Darley has tried, in this book, to link a purported imminent decline in global natural gas production to the better-publicised issue of peak oil. Unfortunately the book has several fundamental weaknesses. Firstly, he fails to present any really convincing evidence for the shortage of gas. He points out the stagnation in North American gas production, and generalises this to the whole world, using one small graph of annual discoveries from Laherrere (it's noticeable that all these peak oil theorists endlessly cross-reference each other's work but don't quote that of researchers with other views). He suggests that global gas production is going to begin declining in 1 or 2 decades, while even his graph seems to show that production could grow for at least 30-40 years, and other writers see scope for increases in global gas production out to 2070. Secondly, the whole thesis of the book is contradictory. We are running out of gas, he suggests. Then he suggests we shouldn't even use the gas we have due to the need to reduce energy use to protect the environment. If we really do have to decrease energy use now, then surely the amount of gas we have left doesn't matter. It seems to me that he's just using the argument of peak gas to argue against big investments in a natural gas economy, which would further postpone his vision of a low energy world. The great danger of this is that he may put people

off using natural gas, in which case they may well continue to rely on much more environmentally damaging fuels such as coal and oil. Thirdly, the book contains numerous errors of fact which undermine his arguments.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in peak oil and gas. I've read many books on "peak oil", but this is the first one I've seen about "peak natural gas." It is very informative, understandable, well written, and well researched with copious endnotes. One of this book's strengths is that it takes a global perspective on gas supply. Although Darley's warnings are directed primarily to the United States and Canada, he goes into global supply and demand, country by country and region by region, in a way that few other books do. If any Republicans who still like Bush read this book, they may be turned off by Darley's politics. Some Bush loyalists might even call Darley anti-American for being strongly critical of the Bush regime, its foreign policies, and its energy policy. But to right-wingers who say, "America, love it or leave it," remember, this author is not American, he's British! Bush is not his president, so he has no obligation to support Bush, his policies, or the policies of other American administrations. I think this is an advantage, because it gives Darley the independence to speak freely about America from an outsider's perspective, the way the world sees us, as few Americans are able to do. My main criticism of this book concerns its suggested solutions to the problem of peak oil and gas. I once criticized a peak oil book by a different author for putting too much emphasis on coal and nuclear power as the solution, ignoring solar and wind, but this book goes too far in the opposite direction! Darley simply writes off coal as too dirty to use and nuclear as too dangerous to use, devoting only about a page to each one.

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