

'Blood and Oil' author speaks

By **John Bliss**/ Special To The Tab
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The first of the Green Decade's 2006 Environmental Speakers, Michael Klare, Five College Professor of Peace and World Security Studies, gave a talk entitled, "Global Petro-Politics: The US, China and the Struggle Over the World's Oil", on Monday, January 23. His main message was that the world is entering a permanent energy crisis that dwarfs the temporary shortages of the 1970's caused by the Middle Eastern oil embargoes.

Speaking to a large audience at the Newton Library, Klare pointed out that all nations are affected by high oil prices, currently approaching \$70/barrel, and that no sufficiently large new oil sources are available to relieve the crisis over the next twenty-five years. He was similarly pessimistic about the prospects for new gas supplies. He noted that the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Information Agency (EIA) had raised last year's estimate of baseline oil prices out to 2025 from \$35/barrel to \$60/barrel.



Michael Klare signing his book, "Blood and Oil" for GDC Board Member Rohna Shoul as Severn Bruyn and other Green Decade Coalition members look on.

Massive new demands for energy are coming from China, India, and many other developing countries. Klare predicted intensified competition among nations to secure the existing fossil fuel sources for themselves, which will greatly increase the chances for armed conflicts. He said that war with Iran is now more likely than not.

Klare stated that in order to satisfy the EIA's fifty-seven percent projected increase in world demand for oil and gas over the next twenty-five years, Middle Eastern output would have to triple, the Gulf of Mexico would have to remain free of large hurricanes, and nations such as Russia, Kazakhstan and Nigeria would need to remain politically stable. He noted that the problem of supply is exacerbated by the decline in oil production in Alaska and the North Sea.

Klare described the “securitization” of oil supplies by the United States over the past twenty-five years and by China more recently. He noted that the U.S. military is our nation's largest single oil consumer and the primary reason that the U.S. is involved in protecting diverse sources of supply around the world. The U.S. has intervened in Latin America and the Middle East numerous times to protect the world oil markets. China is now seeking to form alliances with Nigeria, Sudan and countries around the Caspian Sea to secure new oil sources, and this, too, raises the risk of armed conflict.

In a positive observation, Klare characterized the high baseline price of oil as “revolutionary” and believes it will stimulate investment in alternative sources of energy in ways not seen before. Although he is concerned about the environmental consequences of increased use of traditional fossil fuels, he sees only a limited role for certain alternative sources, such as the Canadian “tar sands,” and coal gasification, or “clean coal”. He noted that extracting such fuels often has negative environmental impact or requires too much energy.

Following the talk, Klare answered many questions about energy supply, international competition and conflict, and alternative energy sources and then he signed copies of his latest book, “Blood and Oil”, which were available for sale.

John Bliss is a member of the Green Decade Coalition/Newton and serves on the Newton Citizens Commission on Energy.

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