

# Chester: Transition Town?

Cheryl Buxton-Sait

*A Transition Town is a community that aims to respond to the twin pressures of Peak Oil and Climate Change, a town which aims to take an integrated and inclusive approach to reduce its carbon footprint and increase its ability to withstand the fundamental shift that will accompany Peak Oil.*



Picture by Olga Solabarrieta

Climate Change is well documented and I doubt needs any further explanation to WPJF newsletter readers, but Peak Oil may still be under the radar for some people so I'll offer a quick overview. Peak Oil is not about running out of oil; it is about the end of cheap and plentiful oil and the impacts this will have on our industrial way of life. Once we have extracted around half of the recoverable oil (which many scientists believe we already have) the oil becomes more expensive both in cash and energy terms to extract. At this point oil supply plateaus and then declines with massive ramifications for industrialised societies.

To face the likely disruptions that Peak Oil will bring, a Transition Town aims to be self-reliant for the greatest possible number of its needs and will be infinitely better prepared than existing communities with their total dependence on heavily globalised systems for food, energy, transportation, health and housing.

Chester is taking its first steps on the Transition Town road and about 35 people got together in early January for an Open Space Gathering to look at the possibilities for creating sustainable living in Chester. Sub-groups talked about many ideas including food, energy, transport, building communities and health, to list just a few.

Towns such as Totnes which are further down the Transition road, have set up projects as diverse as planting nut trees (Totnes is the Nut Tree Capital of Britain), seed-swap days, local currencies, solar heating water

challenges, and garden swaps - connecting people who are not able to work their garden with people who don't have a garden but want to work in one.

For me, one of the greatest attractions of the idea of the transition movement is the positive opportunities it affords. If we collectively plan and act early enough, there is every likelihood that we can create a way of living that is significantly more connected, more vibrant and more in touch with our environment than the oil-addicted treadmill that we find ourselves on today.

In Chester, our first event was a film evening to build awareness of the idea of Peak Oil. On March 26th we showed *The End Of Suburbia* at Alexander's in Chester. This film provides a shocking insight into just how dependent on oil we are and the challenges that await us.

To find out more, visit:

[www.transitiontowns.org](http://www.transitiontowns.org)

and:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/transitionchester/>

or call: 07763 881 036.



Transition Town Planning in Chester

## The End of Suburbia



From [www.endofsuburbia.com](http://www.endofsuburbia.com)

*Since World War II North Americans have invested much of their newfound wealth in suburbia. It has promised a sense of space, affordability, family life and upward mobility. As the population of suburban sprawl has exploded in the past 50 years, so too has the suburban way of life become embedded in the American consciousness.*

*Suburbia, and all it promises, has become the American Dream.*

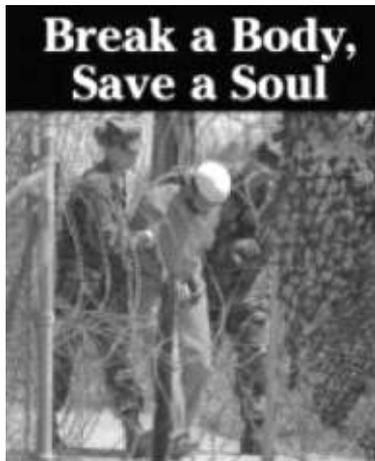
*But as we enter the 21st century, serious questions are beginning to emerge about the sustainability of this way of life. With brutal honesty and a touch of irony, *The End of Suburbia* explores the American Way of Life and its prospects as the planet approaches a critical era, as global demand for fossil fuels begins to outstrip supply. World Oil Peak and the inevitable decline of fossil fuels are upon us now, some scientists and policy makers argue in this documentary.*

*The consequences of inaction in the face of this global crisis are enormous. What does Oil Peak mean for North America? As energy prices skyrocket in the coming years, how will the populations of suburbia react to the collapse of their dream? Are today's suburbs destined to become the slums of tomorrow? And what can be done NOW, individually and collectively, to avoid *The End of Suburbia* ?*

## Break a Body - Save a Soul

Christians and Torture in the  
world after 9/11

Roy Jenkins, 2006



Roy Jenkins: 'Christians are not always the good guys, those on the receiving end of torture. Christian believers practise torture, order torture, collude in torture, condone torture, justify torture, remain wilfully blind to the use of torture...'

The book is a passionate appeal for Christians to face up to their own involvement in the worldwide evil of torture, to recognise it as a spiritual issue, and to take action which can make a difference.

Roy Jenkins, Chairman of the SWBC Management Committee, is a Baptist minister and broadcaster and has been involved in Christians Against Torture since it began in 1981.

*Break a Body, Save a Soul* is based on the 2006 Edwin Stephen Griffiths Lectures at the South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff. The volume includes an address on torture and international law delivered at the Christians Against Torture national conference for Wales in 2006 by Professor Malcolm Evans, Dean of Social Sciences and Law at the University of Bristol.

Available at £3.50 plus 50p postage from Christians Against Torture, 60 Ty Wern Road, Rhiwbina, Cardiff CF14 4SF.

*Christians Against Torture/  
Cristnogion yn Erbyn Poenydio*

# Foul Practices

Michael Still

*What can a concerned citizen do to reduce torture?*

I think:

- (1) Let our Government know that you want no advantage from the use of torture, however indirect.
- (2) Find which aspects of the evil you could most effectively address.

You could search for sound information on who authorises torture, where it is done and by whom. You could encourage responsible reporting of torture.

You could:

- Wrestle with laws, national and international so as to see what can and cannot be done through them
- Explore the use, and abuse, of psychology to manage and manipulate prisoners
- Challenge euphemisms (such as 'enhanced', 'robust' or 'advanced' interrogation). Changing the name does not change the nature of the activity.
- Support organisations listed at the end of this article.

### The Government's Position

Our Government 'unreservedly condemns the use of torture as a matter of fundamental principle and works hard with its international partners to eradicate this abhorrent practice worldwide.' (*Letter from Maria Eagle, MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Justice*).

Evidence found to have been obtained as a result of torture would not be admissible in criminal or civil proceedings in the UK apart from the circumstances set out in Article 15 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Article 15 allows the use of evidence obtained by torture for the arraignment of the torturers.

The Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) 'should consider whether it was established by such enquiry as it was practicable to carry out and on the balance of probabilities

that the information relied upon was obtained by torture. If satisfied that it was so obtained, SIAC should decline to admit the material, but if doubtful it should be admitted' (*ibid. quoting Lords Hope, Rodger, Carswell and Simon in a case they heard*).

So there are rules prohibiting the use of torture-induced 'information' for judicial purposes in the UK, but what about non-judicial purposes? Following the revelations by Craig Murray, formerly UK ambassador to Uzbekistan, that US intelligence officers share information with their UK counterparts, I want to find if our officials make **any** use of torture-induced 'information'. Not only is such 'information' tainted by methods of extraction, it is likely to be unreliable. Who would not say under torture whatever they guessed would get the pain to stop?

If we can reduce the 'market' for torture-induced 'information', it might reduce the motives for torture.

### Some organisations and their contact details:

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture  
111 Isledon Road,  
Islington,  
London N7 7JW  
[www.torturecare.org.uk](http://www.torturecare.org.uk)

Amnesty International UK  
The Human Rights Action Centre,  
17-25 New Inn Yard,  
London EC2A 3EA  
[www.amnesty.org.uk](http://www.amnesty.org.uk)

Reprieve  
PO Box 52742,  
London EC4P 4WS  
[www.reprieve.org.uk](http://www.reprieve.org.uk)

Helen Bamber Foundation  
5 Museum House,  
25 Museum Street,  
London WC1A 1JT  
[www.helenbamber.org](http://www.helenbamber.org)

Christians Against Torture  
60 Ty Wern Road, Rhiwbina,  
Cardiff CF14 4SF