

## The Oil Drum: Campfire

### Discussions about Energy and Our Future

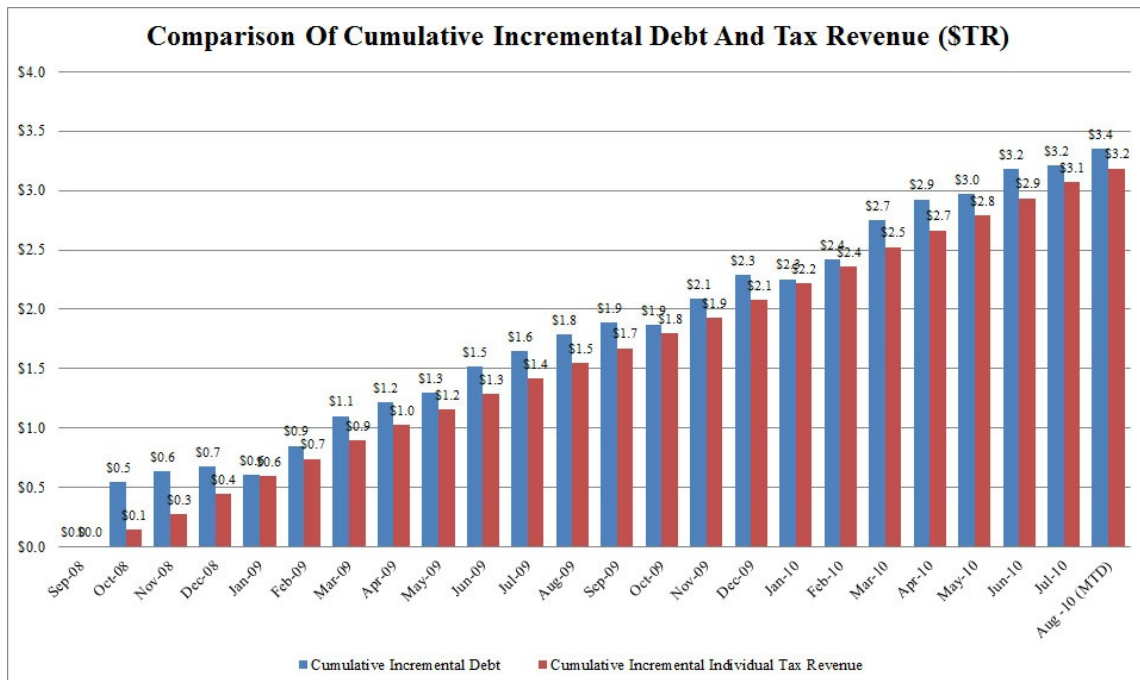
## Campfire Open Thread - What I Learned This Week

Posted by [Nate Hagens](#) on August 29, 2010 - 10:43am in [The Oil Drum: Campfire](#)  
 Topic: [Environment/Sustainability](#)

This has been a busy week. I had started a longer Campfire piece on Democracy and Gresham's Law but didn't finish. Instead, lets share 3 things that we learned this week. How about '2 facts and an insight'?

### WHAT I LEARNED THIS WEEK

1. I was hiking Tue-Fri in the [Porcupine Mountains](#). I learned that Lake Superior contains over 10% of the worlds fresh water supply (and the [Great Lakes](#) in total over 21%). Thats pretty amazing if you think about it. The average depth of Lake Superior is 600 feet and the deepest is only 1000 feet.
2. I learned, via [ZeroHedge](#), that US tax receipts are being matched, and then some by an increase in foreign borrowing and Fed balance sheet expansion. I am well aware we are in debt overshoot zone and that financial reset is the first likely bottleneck ahead, but this graph opened my eyes, yet again, to the role increasing government debt plays in maintaining our current situation.



3. Now an insight. This thought has been swirling around in my head for some time,

waiting to peek its ugly head above the grey surface. It struck me this week after having some discussions with some Wash DC inner beltway types, someone at the IEA, and someone at the Fed, that *there exists no institution that is going to take a leadership role addressing our current problems*. The tea leaves are too disparate and threatening to the status quo. There also is no individual or natural demographic of individuals that on their own can reframe our value systems going forward. At a minimum, it's going to take a) education b) a 'hitting the bottom' moment and c) hard work and sacrifice from people that have the skills and passion to effect change. But most of the people that are effecting change now are not thinking about the Federal Reserve death spiral in the coming 5 years, and what that implies for social stability and the future of global energy supplies and interconnected trade relationships.

My insight, in a nutshell, is that shouting to the world about the problems, isn't not working because people are afraid, or ignorant, or feckless, *but because they don't know what to do*. And this especially includes institutions. As such, my insight this week is that neither individuals, policymakers (current) or institutions are going to mitigate the energy/economic/environmental tsunami coming our way. There have to be new institutions, flexible and with urgency, formed to address

- a) How to get through the financial bottleneck, and
- b) How to move forward with different value systems other than growth/debt based models.

WHERE ARE THOSE INSTITUTIONS??

What did you learn this week? Try to be pithy, educational and keep your 3 items broadly related to energy/natural resources.

*P.S. Next week's Campfire will be 'On Democracy, the Internet, and Greshams Law', which I didn't finish for tonight. Note: I have learned long ago that in order to short circuit my steep discount rated playboy mentality, I need to formalize a social contract. Its not ironclad but it helps. So next week then...*



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