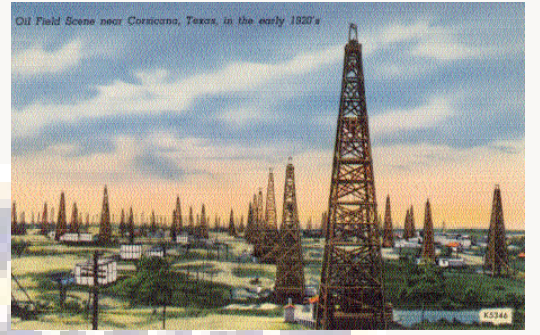


Cycling Scotland Conference - Edinburgh 16th November 2006

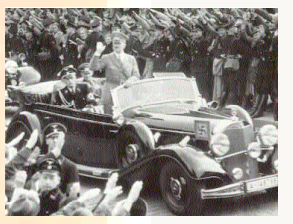
# A Seminal Century

Human Ambition and Ingenuity Wreak Havoc, but the Bicycle Prevails.



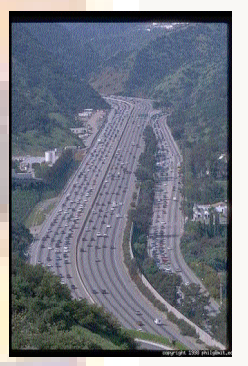
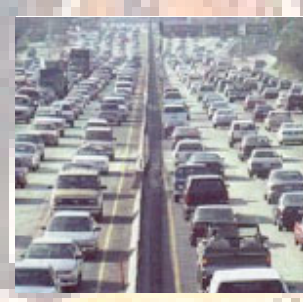
Up to a couple of lifetimes ago transport meant the horse or foot. Then came the bicycle and the start of an explosion in mobility. Cycling effort was soon overtaken by the lure of mechanically powered vehicles as human inventiveness exploited the energy latent in the earth's accumulated hydro-carbons.

Big fast roads (autobahns) for big fast cars (Mercedes, BMWs, Audis, Porches) were mainly the product of German engineering skill and ingenuity. A certain Herr Hitler also introduced small cars for the masses (VWs). This was all part of his ambition for world domination. The world objected. However it took an unprecedented common purpose, considerable sacrifice and a massive united effort to prevail.

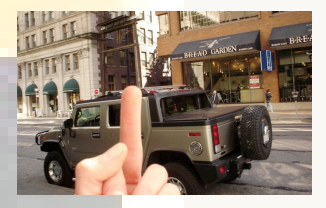


The bicycle again showed its worth during recovery. The UK bike industry had a renaissance but fell victim to ambition for cars and motorways. In other countries of Europe (including Germany), Scandinavia and Asia cycling established itself more healthily as a civilised part of transport. Popular motor vehicles (2CVs, Minis Cinquecentos) were mostly quite modest for a while.

Americans too are ambitious, and they like to do things bigger. Taking and burning vast amounts of oil, they built enormous road systems (Freeways, Turnpikes) and revelled in large automobiles (Cadillacs, SUVs), along with unfettered air travel. A certain Henry Ford also mass produced automobiles for all (model Ts). Even if the US has not set out for world domination their actions and influences have been pervasive and widely copied. Now the planet is objecting. Again a war footing mentality is needed, with a massive united endeavour and many relinquishments. This time the enemy is far more elusive. Everyday expectations and ambitions will have to be re-ordered. Bold, stringent legislation, fiscal controls and innovative design solutions are all essential for our survival and must be pursued without delay.



The bicycle continues to offer eco-friendly mobility. Cycling can become a key part of an earth rescue package. While all governments, institutions and individuals address new philosophical, ethical and practical dilemmas and other transport machines are re-jigged with less polluting propulsion, the bicycle is already in place. It is a super efficient technology, which has endured and improves. Cycling offers an economic, inclusive and effective element, available now, as a core ingredient for transport, health and leisure in whatever the world's future social environment turns out to be.



**WE SHOULD WORK URGENTLY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS.**



Peter Hayman  
Convenor GoBike Strathclyde Cycle Campaign