



## DrumBeat: March 18, 2007

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 18, 2007 - 9:22am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Europeans Do It Better](#)

If fears of population implosion result in paid parental leave, improved childcare and more support for mothers' careers, it won't be the first time a government has done the right thing for the wrong reason. But isn't it weird to promote population growth while we wring our hands over global warming, environmental damage, species loss and suburban sprawl? The United Nations projects that in 2050 the world's population will reach 9.2 billion! When we think of overpopulation the usual image is of some teeming Third World slum, and indeed most population growth will come in the developing world. But actually it's the developed world that's doing the earth in. Every American uses as much energy as forty-eight Bangladeshis, and as many resources as an African village. Europeans and Japanese aren't far behind. What feels right for a nation or an ethnicity--we need more Russians! more Italians! more Scots!--might be wrong for the human race, to say nothing of polar bears.

### [Army Foresees Natural Gas Crisis](#)

The Pentagon has been talking recently about going oil-free by 2050, a fairly radical initiative given the hidebound nature of the institution and the complexity of the technologies it employs.

But oil apparently is among the least of the Army's energy problems.

According to this newly-minted memorandum , the Army's assistant chief of staff for installation management is more worried that the worldwide supply of natural gas will dry up within 25 years. Says the memo:

*"Current Army assumption is that natural gas may cease to be a viable fuel for the Army within the next 25 years based on price volatility and affordable supply availability."*

If the Army's assumptions are correct, the situation may "threaten the Army's ability to house, train and deploy soldiers," adds the memo.

### [Nigerian pipeline spill could impact U.S. gasoline supplies](#)

A pipeline spill in the Niger Delta region has cut production by 187,000 barrels per day. There is no known cause for the leak and no timeline for repairs. This may prove important for the U.S. as Nigerian crude is light and sweet, which makes it ideal for producing gasoline. As the United States heads toward the summer driving season, these grades are more sought after.

### [Countries oil reserves may cause upheaval](#)

Simmons' conclusions indicate that the Saudis are using super aggressive methods to pump more oil at a faster pace from these wells. Simmons contends that this is a system that drillers use to squeeze the last bit of oil from drying wells.

Simmons adds that such expensive horizontal drilling technology used by the Saudis would not come into play if their vertical wells were producing without substantial problems.

### [Ambassador Denies that Brazil Has Ethanol Slaves](#)

The ambassador of Brazil in Great Britain, José Maurício Bustani, in a letter published this Saturday in the British newspaper The Guardian, refutes a story that appeared in the publication on March 9 charging that Brazil is using slaves in its sugar cane plantations.

### [Oil Profiteers Will Earn Our Outrage](#)

Washington needs to investigate speculation in crude oil to find out who is profiteering from the rise in energy prices. The oil companies, of course, are making a fortune. But they don't seem to be the catalysts in driving prices higher.

### [High costs put on hold new refinery projects](#)

Refinery project cancellations have accelerated in recent weeks as escalating costs raise more questions over the future profitability of new units making key transport fuels.

### [Russia bolsters Gulf energy strategy](#)

President Putin's high-profile tour to the Gulf follows on from the visit of King Abdullah, then Crown Prince, to Moscow in 2003, the highest ranking Saudi official visit to Russia since 1926. Significantly an agreement was reached to co-ordinate energy policies. A momentum now seems to be building up following this.

### [Political fears scare oil investors in Southern Sudan](#)

The 2005 peace agreement, which ended two decades of civil war in Southern Sudan, not only brings the opportunity for millions of people to return home and begin new lives but also gives investors an opening in a needy country with large oil reserves.

### [Wall Street drools over prospect of capturing Iraq oil wealth](#)

The Iraqi cabinet's adoption last week of a law creating the legal framework for turning over the country's oil wealth to American corporations has touched off a chorus of salutes from the Bush administration, congressional Democrats and the corporate-controlled American media.

### [Russian atomic energy industry to become self supporting by 2015](#)

The Russian atomic energy industry will become self-supporting and build new units with its own funds by 2015, First Vice-Premier Sergei Ivanov said here on Friday.

### [Global oil glut hidden by rig dearth makes drillers good bet](#)

The professionals most familiar with the so-called oil shortage know there is an estimated 3tn barrels under land and sea. That is why they are making their biggest bets in drilling rigs where the scarcity is no illusion.

### [Global warming is a 'weapon of mass destruction' - Climate experts hit back after being accused of overstating the problem](#)

Sir John Houghton, former director-general of the Meteorological Office and chairman of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, entered the debate over the seriousness of climate change after two meteorologists were reported as saying that "some scientists have been guilty of overplaying the available evidence". He said he agreed with the Government's chief scientist, Professor Sir David King, that it posed a greater threat than terrorism.

### [Arctic could have iceless summers by 2100](#)

Climate models show a complete melting down to open ocean in warmer weather, maybe as early as 2040.

### [Ski industry goes green to fight warming](#)

The ski industry is going green to help offset the pollution that feeds global warming — a phenomenon that challenges the resorts' very existence with the threat of later snowfalls and earlier snow melts.

### [Open Letter from Brian O'Leary to Al Gore](#)

You have asked the public to address the important question: "How can we reverse global climate change?" I agree that taking on that task is critical for our collective survival. You have also stated that we must freeze and drastically reduce our carbon emissions. I totally agree.

The most promising answer to your question is surprisingly simple and can be summed up in two words: new energy. My experience finds that serious discussion of new energy is still politically incorrect in mainstream circles, which is appalling. Delays in implementing life-saving innovation will be at our collective risk and peril. The urgency for action in these times is unprecedented in human history. Quantum leaps in energy innovation, which some of us in the scientific community are aware of, can provide the needed solution, hopefully in time to avert global disaster.

### [British Columbia Aligns With California to Create a Green Bloc Along Pacific](#)

The premier of British Columbia wanted to bring coal-burning plants and offshore oil rigs to this lush province, so environmental groups were ready for a fight as he prepared his government's annual policy speech last month.

They were stunned when Premier Gordon Campbell delivered a list of green promises that surpassed their most ambitious dreams.

### [Houston's role in energy may not end — just evolve](#)

Halliburton's plan to move its top office to Dubai has touched a nerve in Houston.

True, just one chief executive is leaving the oil-field services firm's hometown. But it raises an unsettling question: Can Houston remain a global energy hub if much of the industry's growth is taking place on the other side of the world?

### [Oil Boom Runs Out of Gas](#)

Energy prices appear to have leveled off. They're likely to stay flat for a time. At least that's the prediction of Charles Ober, the prescient manager of T. Rowe Price New Era.

### [Troops search for kidnappers in Nigeria](#)

Nigerian troops raided several villages on the outskirts of the country's main oil center of Port Harcourt Saturday in search of gunmen suspected in a spate of kidnappings targeting foreign oil workers, a military spokesman said.

### [Mitsubishi Heavy to borrow money using CO2 credits](#)

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. plans to finance a Bulgarian wind farm by using the resulting greenhouse gas emission rights as collateral, the first such financing plan in the world, a report said Saturday.

### [Can farmers farm the sun?](#)

...Photosynthesis crops used to convert solar energy into biomass is very inefficient: only a tiny fraction of the sunlight is converted to biomass. Even less can later be converted into ethanol.

If farmers really want to harness sunlight for energy, the best process is not ethanol but solar electricity. Farmers should cover their fields with solar-electric panels which directly convert sunlight into electricity. In effect, farmers will farm the sun.

### [Thailand: Importing palm oil for bio-diesel production under consideration](#)

The government may allow imports of palm oil to produce bio-diesel due to a shortage of palm oil in Thailand, said Energy Minister Piyasvasti Amranand.

### [Urenco profits soar as uranium goes nuclear](#)

Urenco, the nuclear fuel company, is set to reveal record profits this week on the back of soaring uranium prices. The company, which enriches uranium for power stations, is expected to confirm a burgeoning order book when it announces its annual results on Tuesday.

### [Diet for a smaller planet](#) - review of *Bill McKibben's Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*

He begins with a short chapter reviewing the last few centuries of economic strategies that have operated under the assumption the human condition will improve by growing the pie. McKibben reminds us of growth's darker side, diminishing our well-being as economies consume unsustainable quantities of fossil fuels, minerals, water and other resources, pollute the air and transform the atmosphere to one untenable for human

survival, and create more inequality than prosperity.

### [Six protesters die in Indian land clashes](#)

India's attempt to imitate the Chinese economic boom by handing farmland to big business turned violent yesterday as police and villagers fought pitched battles in the paddy fields of West Bengal, leaving at least six dead and dozens injured.

...The state's Communist government has ordered some 22,000 acres (9,000 hectares) to be turned over to a special economic zone for an Indonesian-owned petrochemical complex.

### [Lester Brown: The Coming Decline of Oil](#)

Oil has shaped our twenty-first century civilization, affecting every facet of the economy from the mechanization of agriculture to jet air travel. When production turns downward, it will be a seismic economic event, creating a world unlike any we have known during our lifetimes. Indeed, when historians write about this period in history, they may well distinguish between before peak oil (BPO) and after peak oil (APO).

### [India: Forest land diverted for wind energy projects](#)

Adivasis in Dhule district, Maharashtra, are protesting the diversion of forest land for wind power projects. About 340 hectares of forest land has been diverted for wind energy projects in Sakri taluka of Dhule district, promoted by Suzlon Energy Limited.

### [A Realistic Path to Hydrogen and Fuel Cells](#)

The auto industry is coming to the view that the motor vehicle, as currently configured, has a limited upside. Hiroyuki Watanabe, senior managing director of Toyota Motor Corp., has said his company hopes there will be 3.4 billion vehicles on the roads by 2050, a four- or five-fold increase, though the human population is expected to grow only by 50 percent. Restraining this market growth are smog, global warming, and fuel supply concerns. Toyota's analysis is that hybrids and improved conventional engines will buy time, but only fuel cells will power the low-impact products that enable this market expansion.

### [ChevronTexaco - Hydrogen: Where Do We Go from Here?](#)

Substantial hurdles remain before hydrogen can become a widely accepted fuel. Among the items on the industry's to-do list: lower costs system-wide; develop rigorous codes and standards; solve storage and distribution issues; and educate consumers about the

benefits and safe use of this potentially new fuel. Over the next five years, we are planning to lead a team in a U.S. Department of Energy program to gather data, demonstrate applications in real-world settings, and determine the most viable route to a hydrogen future. In this pre-commercial stage of development, public-private collaborations are key to advancing hydrogen technology.

### [Solar suspense](#)

"(The world's) peak oil production is five to eight years away," Borrello said. "Everything after that, we will produce less oil, so we've got to seriously find some alternative energy."

Some scientists estimate the world's oil supply could peter out in 80 to 100 years, Borrello said, and rising gasoline prices could force consumers to revert to different energy resources even sooner than that.

### [Texas plant powers state's electric grid using only biodiesel](#)

Chicken fat and a \$3.5 million investment are behind a breakthrough in the way Texans heat, cool and light their homes and offices.

### [Edison develops wind power plan](#)

Southern California Edison will upgrade and expand transmission lines throughout the San Gabriel Valley and Inland Empire as part of a \$1.7 billion project to deliver wind power from Tehachapi, company officials said.

### [Sioux Falls man hoping duplex sets an example](#)

Jon Hart says they called his plans "ridiculous" and "overkill."

But there it stands anyway, his new duplex in southeast Sioux Falls. It's being built with the most energy-efficient features he could find despite discouraging words from a few contractors.

Hart - who writes poetry as well as supervises construction of his home - has an ideal in mind for his new home: "heat with a candle, cool with an ice cube, irrigate with spit, mow with scissors."

..."I think all houses that aren't built this way will be obsolete in five years," he said. "It's well worth it if they just do the math."



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