



DrumBeat: July 28, 2007

Posted by [Leanan](#) on July 28, 2007 - 9:21am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Hydrogen Hype: Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Are No Panacea](#)

I'm going to make a prediction today: you will never drive a hydrogen fueled car.

Although hydrogen does indeed have some benefits in certain applications, it's my task today to separate the reality of useful fuel cells from the hydrogen hype.

That may seem like a bold statement to you now, but by the end of this article, you'll understand why.

[Juicing down for global warming](#)

As it is, utilities can't keep up with rising demand. One projection shows a 19 percent rise in peak-time electricity usage over the next decade while only a 6 percent growth in power capacity.

Something's got to give. And it may be consumer lifestyles.

A three-year experiment in California with 2,500 customers showed they reduced their average electricity demand by 13 percent during peak summer hours when they had to pay five times the normal cost. Users with the kind of "smart" thermostats that adjust appliance use cut back by 27 percent.

[Oil Profits Show Signs of Aging](#)

Exxon Mobil Corp.'s disappointing second-quarter results highlight a new reality for the oil business: Increasing profitability amid today's high prices is increasingly difficult.

[A federal energy policy: can it happen here?](#)

What makes the United States singularly incapable of producing a coherent energy policy aimed at cutting energy consumption and using low-carbon alternatives to fossil fuels? I believe there are three factors explaining this lamentable state of affairs. The first is that your average American citizen has the energy IQ of beach sand, and, in this

regard, your average Member of Congress is the mirror image of his or her constituents. For proof, I would direct your attention to Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, who regularly appears on news programs to suggest that gasoline is overpriced at \$3.00 per gallon and that motorists are being fleeced by dastardly oil companies.

[ExxonMobil Loses Alaska Pipeline Case](#)

A federal appeals court on Friday rejected an effort by Exxon Mobil Corp. to overturn rules governing access to a potential multibillion-dollar pipeline that would transport natural gas from Alaska to the Lower 48 states.

[Climate change escalates Darfur crisis](#)

Less rainfall on the fringes of the Sahara Desert is putting more of a strain on resources than ever before.

[Mexican insurgents try out new tactics](#)

A successful bomb attack by a resurgent revolutionary army has forced the Calderon administration into a dual-front battle to maintain security and, maybe, economic well being.

[Did Guerrillas Strike at the Heart of Mexico's Oil Industry?](#)

Although the Mexican government refrained from using the T-word, it was definitely in the air. "EPR ALLIANCE WITH AL QAEDA!" whooped the headlines on newspapers hanging from the kiosks. Indeed, a purported Al Qaeda document emerged in 2006 encouraging attacks against U.S. allies that supply Washington with oil - Mexico exports 1.6 million barrels of petroleum to the U.S. daily, without which George Bush would be hard pressed to wage war in Iraq.

[Energy Diplomacy and the Crossroads in South American Unification](#)

It's possible to postulate that these days the integration of the countries of South America finds itself at a crossroads. Different strategies have converged to the point where the large trade blocs find themselves at a standstill and turn into political forums. The new attempts are centered on energy, and from there new proposals arise. Brazil has sought to lead by consensus but has not been willing to pay the economic and political price of this position, while Venezuela is exploring another avenue by sharing energy projects and resources with other countries.

[Venezuela Takes Over Two Maersk Rig Contracts](#)

Venezuelan state-owned oil company Petroleos de Venezuela, or PdVSA, has taken over two contracts this month to operate drilling rigs from Danish oil services firm Maersk Oil & Gas.

[Should Canadian farmers cash in on biofuel boom?](#)

Soybeans supply 40 per cent of Brazil's biodiesel -- and NASA observers have linked an increase in their market price with the destruction of the Amazon rainforest.

Brazil is also the largest producer of sugarcane in the world -- it makes 60 per cent of the globe's total sugar ethanol, and uses 13 per cent of its total herbicide load growing the crop.

"Brazil has a huge ethanol industry," Holt-Giménez said. "The environmental costs are tremendous, and the returns so paltry."

[Feeding Billions, A Grain at a Time](#)

As development and climate change imperil rice yields, scientists seek new Green Revolution

[The corn gamble: It's the crop of the year -- but will it make it?](#)

The corn soars head-high on Ripp's Dairy Valley here north of Madison.

Green leaves flutter in the breeze as dairyman Chuck Ripp surveys his fields on a humid July morning.

But looks don't tell the story. A lack of significant rain this month -- Thursday and Friday's was spotty -- has farmers worrying.

"The corn is really tall but that's kind of deceiving," said Ripp. "We're getting into a real critical time."

[Analysis: Oil part of large Iraq conundrum](#)

Iraq's government is in the eye of a storm of deadlines and benchmarks and pressure from within and abroad. At some level, it's all about the oil.

[Gas stations have generators now, but will they have gas after a Big One?](#)

Jim Smith, president of the Florida Petroleum Marketers & Convenience Store Association, said state and local officials have worked with the industry to help station owners comply. But, he said, he's not sure it will solve the fuel shortage problem Florida often sees after hurricanes because there still may not be gas to pump.

"Most inventories are going to be depleted during evacuation," Smith said. "There will not be an opportunity to get resupply into those retail facilities, so a lot of them that have capabilities with transfer switches won't have the availability of petroleum to pump, so it's not going to change a whole lot."

[India: Coal supply woes threaten NALCO's Angul unit](#)

A shortage of coal is threatening power supplies to the only aluminium smelter run by National Aluminium Co. Ltd. (NALCO), a company source told Reuters on Friday.

[Ghana: LPG gas shortage grounds commercial cars](#)

Most commercial drivers in Tema have for the past 10 days parked their vehicles because of the shortage of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) in the system.

The situation has compelled domestic users of gas to resort to charcoal and its price has suddenly increased from GH¢8 to GH¢ 12 per maxi bag.

[Hydrogen can replace gasoline, scientist contends](#)

Stanford Ovshinsky, founder and chief scientist of Energy Conversion Devices Inc. in Rochester Hills, told the Flint Rotary Club on Friday that the world has to convert to alternative forms of energy.

He said the scientific community predicts that if we do nothing, the planet's climate will be irreversibly changed in 20 to 25 years.

Ovshinsky said hydrogen can be used in place of other fuels.

"Anything that burns can be replaced by hydrogen now," he said.

"If you only have 20 more years to save the planet, you've got to do it now."

And with hydrogen, he said, "There's no war over oil."

[Sprott's Peak Oil Watch](#)

While browsing the web this morning, I came across a very interesting [section on Peak Oil](#) on [Sprott Asset Management's website](#) (best viewed with Explorer). Sprott Asset Management is a Toronto-based boutique investment management company that I consider, for lack of a better term, pretty cool. They have taken some relatively unorthodox commodities bets in the past and have often won them. For instance, they spotted the bull market in uranium very early on and [did well as a result](#) (PDF document).

[Albania: Energy crisis cuts working hours](#)

The Albanian cabinet has decided to cut the working hours of public employees amid a national energy shortage.

Beginning 30 July, government offices will be open only five hours a day “because of the energy crisis that the country is facing,” government spokesman Grid Rroji said Friday.

[Finally, we get the message on fuel economy](#)

Droughts in the Southwest and Mid-Atlantic United States. Floods in Texas, Southern England, China, Pakistan, Colombia and, of all places, Sudan. Watch global weather reports and, to paraphrase Bob Dylan, you don't need a weatherman to know which way global warming is blowing. It's blowing your way, and fast.

[Energy conservation is key](#)

When Barack Obama came to Detroit in May 2007, he proceeded to tell the experienced auto manufacturers how to make cars so that we can all “escape the tyranny of oil.” He got up that morning like you and I, probably brushed his teeth with a toothbrush made out of petroleum products, put on his clothes made out of petroleum products, traveled to the Detroit Economic Club function in his car made out of petroleum products, and walked up to the podium on a rug made out of petroleum products, only to give his questionable advice to a group of experts and deface a commodity that put the clothes on his back.

Does he realize that we all need this precious commodity with or without high-cost subsidized alternate fuels?

[Airlines struggle to contain costs](#)

U.S. airline stocks dropped Thursday as carriers continued to struggle with high fuel prices and maintenance, though AirTran Holdings Inc. increased second-quarter profits by cutting costs in other areas.

[Current Japanese car craze is tiny](#)

After first pioneering the gas-sipping compact, then subcompact, the country's auto companies are scoring again with another downsizing -- the so-called "minicar."

Tiny, cheap and super fuel-efficient, minicars are essentially motorcycle-sized engines on four wheels. But demand for these runty runabouts is anything but petite. Last year, minicars racked record sales in Japan and now account for more than a third of all new cars sold annually here.

[The most dangerous metaphor](#)

Metaphorically speaking, the end of Moore's Law would be quite a shock. Moore's Law inspires the kind of techno-utopianism that believes, almost as an act of faith, that humanity can innovate itself out of the messes it creates by sheer cleverness. Peak oil? Don't worry about it - once Moore's Law starts working its magic on solar power, we'll have all the energy we need. World hunger in an era of drought and devastating climate change? No problem. Moore's Law applied to biotechnology tells us that we will keep redesigning plants to deliver ever greater yields under ever more drastic conditions.

[China oil thieves sentenced to death](#)

Two men were sentenced to death for masterminding a plan to steal oil from an underwater pipeline, a botched plot that caused tens of millions of dollars in damages, China's state news agency reported Saturday.

[Canada to face oil pipeline shortage: regulator](#)

Canada's crude-oil pipelines may have to ration space as early as this autumn because of a surge of new oil production from the Alberta oil sands, the country's energy regulator said on Friday.

The National Energy Board said the pipeline industry may face a capacity crunch as oil output this year rises to 2.9 million barrels a day, 9 percent more than in 2006.

[Europeans reluctant to give up cars despite environmental concerns](#)

A majority of citizens believe that the use of less polluting vehicles and public transport should be promoted, but one in five would refuse to use their car less in exchange for better public transport, according to an EU opinion poll.

[Tiny Tuvalu Fights for Its Literal Survival](#)

The second smallest nation on Earth hopes to turn itself into an example of sustainable development that others can emulate.

But the South Pacific island nation of Tuvalu and its 10,500 people may only have 50 years or less to set that example before it is swept away by rising sea levels due to climate change.



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