



DrumBeat: December 8, 2007

Posted by [Leanan](#) on December 8, 2007 - 10:14am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Michael T. Klare: Iraq and Climate Change](#)

When our grandchildren and more distant descendants assemble in such classrooms as may be available and ask their teachers, “Why did our ancestors not take effective action to prevent the catastrophic effects of climate change?” one of the answers will surely be, “The war in Iraq.”

[Peak Oil And The Vision In The Mirror](#)

If you don't know what peak oil is, then, first of all, you are not alone. Most people don't seem to have a clue about it. And, even some that do, don't seem to get the full implications. Let me lay it out for you as succinctly as I can...

Money is nothing. Energy is everything.

[An Oil Story](#)

The story of oil has been the story of America since the Second World War. Cheap fuel and the availability of the automobile has transformed America into a land of sprawling suburbs, large homes, and long commutes. Oil has literally powered American lifestyles and culture in a way that no other single factor has.

The cost of oil has nearly doubled since last year.

Oil production world wide has been essentially flat since January 2005, hovering between 83 and 85 million barrels a day.

[Iran's pragmatic energy policy](#)

In the previous crises, the oil-producing countries were blamed as the major cause of the rise, but this time they were not criticized very much.

[Why the New 35-MPG Fuel Economy Standard Is a Bad Idea](#)

The problem is that gasoline is too cheap, and it always has been. Diesel, too. I know, that might sound preposterous to someone who's just dropped the best part of a day's pay to fill up the pickup, but hear me out. Really.

The profit margin on one big luxury car or truck is high enough to allow Detroit to sell a half-dozen little econoboxes for little or no profit. The people who buy these huge gas guzzlers haven't hit the point where the cost of fuel overpowers their need to drive a car big enough and heavy enough that it needs its own zip code. Classic economics theory calls this an elastic marketplace, and it just hasn't been stretched tight enough—yet.

[Alaska: Momentum builds behind energy report](#)

Griffith said Alaska is “like a Third World Country” when it comes to energy consumption.

The state's rural communities face serious energy related problems and have no easy solutions. Moreover, high energy costs are forcing rural residents to flee the Bush in favor of Alaska's urban areas, he said.

[Texas fortunate to find the silver lining in clouds of high energy costs](#)

The Texas economy has been tied to oil prices since the 1880s, and especially after the "Spindletop" gusher more than a century ago. Historically, the Lone Star State actually faced economic losses with low oil prices and economic benefits with high oil prices. The price of oil had a tremendous impact on the economy in the 1970s and early 1980s when Texas' economy quickly expanded, adding both employment and income growth as the national outlook sputtered. (The "Energy Crisis" in the rest of the U.S. was an "Oil Boom" in Texas.)

[A vision of parking and transportation](#)

The future of parking downtown could take some unforeseen U-turns. We are on the cusp of the new era of Peak Oil, when consumption quickly outstrips any demonstrated capacity to pump and refine new petroleum sources. Yes, there is the possibility of refining plentiful oil shale, but not very easily nor inexpensively.

[A Colorado Solution to the energy Crisis](#)

Colorado's investments in wind, solar, biomass, and other renewable resources have

created thousands of jobs and returned millions of dollars in new revenue. By diversifying our energy portfolio, we are saving money, reducing the demand for water, cutting carbon emissions, promoting public health, and protecting our national security.

[International unions gather in Mexico to fight state-owned oil company's 'corrupt' union](#)

Labor advocates and union organizers from the Americas vowed Friday to transform Mexican state-owned oil company Petroleos Mexicanos' allegedly corrupt and repressive union and replace it with an organization that better represents workers.

[UK: Homing In On Domestic Energy Use](#)

Although the HEAT (Home Energy And Technology) Conference focussed on products that could, potentially, reduce the amount of energy used in the home, it was Jeremy Nicholson of the Energy Intensive Users Group (EIUG) who outlined the key problem facing the UK energy industry. According to Nicholson, nearly a third (20 Gigawatts) of the of the UK's electricity generating capacity is being retired during the next 10 years and it is, in his view, unlikely that the current renewable technologies are going to fill the gap. He sees peak oil as being less of a problem than the stranglehold Iran and Russia could exert on the gas supply industry.

[Bangladeshi Dipal Barua receives 'Alternate Nobel'](#)

Dipal Barua from Bangladesh and Christopher Weeramantry from Sri Lanka were among the peace and environment activists from four countries honoured with the annual 'Alternate Nobel prize'.

The Right Livelihood awards were given to the activists Friday for their contribution in the fields of renewable energy, peace and fair market practices.

[How to rebuild a reactor](#)

Gutting and rebuilding nuclear reactors is a mix of heavy lifting and cutting-edge robotics. Qualified workers are at a premium. and the OECD's Nuclear Energy Agency recently warned of a looming shortage of qualified people to keep nuclear reactors operating, or build new ones. Bruce Power has set up its own training centre for the rebuilding work. Currently, 1,800 people are working on the first phase – rebuilding Bruce A reactors 1 and 2 – of the \$5.2 billion renovation project.

[Offshore wind key to Euro renewable target](#)

If Europe wants to meet its 20 percent binding target for renewable energy by 2020, it

must increase its use of offshore wind, delegates heard at the opening of the Offshore Wind Conference in Berlin, Germany.

[Bush Spins Iran's Centrifuges](#)

Back in 1976—with Gerald Ford president, Dick Cheney his chief of staff, Donald Rumsfeld secretary of defense—the Ford administration bought the Shah's argument that Iran needed a nuclear program to meet its future energy requirements.

That argument, of course, is even more valid today, with the price that can be obtained for oil and the specter of Peak Oil.

[Real Action on Climate Change](#)

When I was in Japan last month, I saw real action in action. After a day of meetings at the Foreign Ministry, a young diplomat escorted me to the entrance just after 5:00. We walked through a darkened hallway; I assumed that we were in a part of the building under renovation. Not so – my guide explained to me that all non-essential lights were turned off “to save energy and the environment.” We came to the elevator bank, where 5-6 people were waiting in front of an elevator even though the elevator next to it was there and empty. I gestured toward it, and my guide again explained that after 5:00 only one elevator ran – the others were blocked.

[Whither Nigeria on climate change?](#)

As a result of the energy crisis, nearly every business and individual generate own electricity. Consequent on this, hundreds of thousands of generating sets, burning any of kerosene, diesel or petrol are imported annually. The power problem is so bad that many companies do not operate on public electricity at all, instead purchasing many generators and use them to power their operations in shifts, just like workers.

[World War III is closer than you think](#) (review of *Tom Clancy's Endwar* video game)

The story is set in the year 2020 and is focused on three factions. The three factions consist of the United States, Europe, and a newly empowered Russia. However, there are tensions between the United States and its European allies across the waters. Apparently there is a conflict between the two about the United States militarizing space by launching a space station called the Freedom Star. With this newly established space station, the United States can deploy troops anywhere in the world within 90 minutes. So where is Russia within all this? Well, they are laying back and reaping the rewards from the oil supply and gas supply since the rest of the world is in an energy crisis. With this new profit, they are able to re militarize themselves and become a superpower once again.

[Frontlines: Fuel of War](#)

With Frontlines, we wanted to do something close to what people know like the peak oil - you've got \$100 barrels of oil now - it drops but then it goes up to a hundred again. So we began to research it like hell, asking what the possibilities were if the supply ran out, or came close to running out. In our research we found a lot of scary things; you get all these hypothetical theories that come out and basically a lot of them are very realistic.

[What a fossil-fuel free agriculture might look like](#)

So we can envision each NYC-type city being surrounded by 8 million times 6,000 square feet, or 48 billion square feet of farmland, or 1,722 square miles, in other words: about 6 times the area of the 300 square miles of the city. So only about 2 percent of the land area of the continental U.S., theoretically, could feed and house the American population.

[The garden of the future?](#)

Imagine a garden that needs no weeding, watering, digging or feeding and can be left to look after itself for weeks, even months, on end. Go further: it's organic, wildlife-friendly, disease resistant, reduces your weekly food bill and brings fashionable foraging to your doorstep.

It might sound too good to be true, but this garden can be a reality for anyone with some outdoor space, whether it's the backyard of an inner-city terrace or the grounds of a country vicarage.

[Food Prices: Cheap no more](#)

ONE of the odder features of last weekend's vote in Venezuela was that staple foods were in short supply. Something similar happened in Russia before its parliamentary election. Governments in both oil-rich countries had imposed controls on food prices, with the usual consequences. Such controls have been surprisingly widespread — a knee-jerk response to one of the most remarkable changes that food markets, indeed any markets, have seen for years: the end of cheap food.

[We would be fools to banish global business from the great climate battle](#)

One could go further, arguing that it is not just excessive consumerism but capitalism's very nature that makes it incompatible with the survival of our planet. For capitalism requires constant economic growth, yet the Earth's resources are finite. Capitalist logic says we must buy, sell and consume more and more each year. Nature's logic says we

can't.

[Carbon-taxing the rich](#)

Countries generating emissions must pay the cost, and the fairest and simplest way of forcing them to do so is through tax.

[Peak Oil And Global Warming: Inextricably Linked](#)

If we're running out of oil and natural gas, why should we worry about the global warming triggered by burning these rapidly depleting fuels? Won't atmospheric carbon dioxide and hence global warming diminish as the fuels themselves dwindle?

Regrettably, things are not that simple. Peak oil doesn't in and of itself guarantee a sufficiently rapid decline in human carbon dioxide generation, for several reasons.

[Solar Energy's Red Queen](#)

It's tempting to imagine that one day soon prices will drop to the point that economic considerations alone allow photovoltaic panels rapidly to displace much of today's fossil-fuel-fired electric-power generation. But the true situation is more complicated. It turns out that the predominant type of solar panel being produced today cannot solve the world's energy problems anytime soon—simply because the device takes too much energy to manufacture. Fortunately, alternative strategies exist for making photovoltaic cells using much less energy, and one promising example is now beginning to be made in significant quantities.

[Costa Rica, China to explore for oil](#)

Costa Rica and China announced Friday they have agreed to jointly explore for oil and natural gas in the Central American country.

It wasn't clear if the proposed exploration would be on land or offshore.

[Nuclear energy not sustainable yet, says Dutch Minister](#)

The Dutch government believes that nuclear energy is not sustainable as of now; hence it has not included nuclear energy in its clean energy policy.

[Commission calls for \\$357 billion in passenger rail investment](#)

- A federal transportation policy commission is recommending a \$357.2 billion investment - or \$8.1 billion a year - to significantly expand intercity passenger rail service by 2050.

[Developing world must be able to lift emissions: Nobel winner](#)

Developing nations must be allowed to boost carbon emissions to lift millions out of poverty, says the head of the Nobel prize-winning climate change panel slated to formally get the award on Monday.

"If you have the case of India, a half a billion people who do not even have electricity, what mitigation (of carbon emissions) can you carry out?" said Rajendra K. Pachauri, who shared the prize with former US vice-president Al Gore

[Peak Oil Passnotes: Where Will Crude Oil Be at Christmas Time?](#)

We might not make it to \$66.60. It is true. Do you remember our prediction of the price of crude oil on the Nymex on Christmas Day? Unlike last year where we were on the money with our prediction for Christmas Eve to within a few cents - something we said at the time was very lucky indeed - this year we are unlikely to reach our ordained target of the devils price.

So look, we have gone through all the things we think are distorting the market. The regular readers of this column know what they are, market distortion, markets and ... well ... the market. Markets do not reflect reality; they reflect the reality of power.

[Iran drops dollar from oil deals](#)

Major crude producer Iran has completely stopped carrying out its oil transactions in dollars, Oil Minister Gholam Hossein Nozari said on Saturday, labelling the greenback an "unreliable" currency.

"At the moment, selling oil in dollars has been completely halted, in line with the policy of selling crude in non-dollar currencies," Nozari was quoted as saying by the ISNA news agency.

[Bleak future for Iraqi oil law](#)

Iraq's Oil Minister Hussain Al Shahrastani has said 'irreconcilable' differences between various groups in the country's parliament will scupper any chance of the much delayed oil law being passed in the near future, reported Reuters.

[Spotlight on cutting oil](#)

THE possibility of Edinburgh becoming one of the first UK cities to actively reduce its dependency on oil will be discussed at a meeting in the Capital tomorrow.

[Shortage prompts delay in medical tests](#)

Thousands of patients are facing delays in crucial medical tests because of a shortage of a radioactive substance used in those examinations — all because of the shutdown of one nuclear reactor in Canada.

[Europe knows US can mine coal, but can it deliver?](#)

A potential boom in U.S. coal exports to Europe could slow if bottlenecks at U.S. railroads and ports hinder deliveries, sources on both sides of the Atlantic said this week.

"Everybody's talking some very big numbers for U.S. coal exports, but there seem to be real problems with the logistics - rail and port capacity," said one European trader. "I think it remains to be seen how much can actually find its way to the European market next year."

[South Korea's worst oil spill blackens coast](#)

South Korean workers using skimmers and containment fences battled on Saturday to clean up the worst oil spill in the country's history, as the slick washed ashore near a nature preserve on the west coast.

[American bummer in Bali](#)

There are signs that the White House's intractable position doesn't represent the American people's. The Bush-Cheney oilmen may be as committed as Saudi Arabia to milking fossil fuels for as long as possible, but delegates are aware that when the new climate treaties get hammered out in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2009, a new team will be running the White House. The rest of the world is getting the message that change is on the horizon.

[Australia says poor nations must help stop climate change](#)

Both rich and poor nations must commit to slashing greenhouse gas emissions if the

world wants to solve global warming, Australia's trade minister said Saturday at a landmark climate change summit.



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