



DrumBeat: January 6, 2008

Posted by [Leanan](#) on January 6, 2008 - 9:55am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[50 people who could save the planet](#)

Stranded polar bears, melting glaciers, dried-out rivers and flooding on a horrific scale - these were the iconic images of 2007. So who is most able to stop this destruction to our world? A Guardian panel, taking nominations from key environmental figures, met to compile a list of our ultimate green heroes

[The Forecast in the Streets](#)

The physical impacts of the global warming forecast can be bracketed with some degree of statistical confidence. Biological effects are more difficult to gauge, except in special cases such as the likely demise of polar bears that would result from the demise of Arctic sea ice. The societal effects, however, are nearly uncharted territory, at least to me. Perhaps the topic of global warming suffers from the same sort of cultural divide as university faculties, between the techies and the touchies; that is the sciences and the humanities. A [new report \(pdf\)](#) called *The Age of Consequences*, just released by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for a New American Security, tries to bring the social sciences, in particular history, geography, and political science, into the forecast of climate change in the coming century. It makes for fascinating if frightening reading.

[Who Will Control Your Thermostat?](#)

What should be controversial in the proposed revisions to Title 24 is the requirement for what is called a "programmable communicating thermostat" or PCT. Every new home and every change to existing homes' central heating and air conditioning systems will required to be fitted with a PCT beginning next year following the issuance of the revision. Each PCT will be fitted with a "non-removable" FM receiver that will allow the power authorities to increase your air conditioning temperature setpoint or decrease your heater temperature setpoint to any value they chose. During "price events" those changes are limited to +/- four degrees F and you would be able to manually override the changes. During "emergency events" the new setpoints can be whatever the power authority desires and you would not be able to alter them.

In other words, the temperature of your home will no longer be yours to control. Your

desires and needs can and will be overridden by the state of California through its public and private utility organizations. All this is for the common good, of course.

[Soaring price oils wheels for green power](#)

Sarah Hall's novel *The Carhullan Army*, which won this year's John Llewellyn Rhys prize for literature, paints a bleak portrait of a world where the oil has almost run out. Set in the not-too-distant future, the Orwellian novel describes a Britain run by a dictatorship called the Authority, where electricity is rationed, the miserable population subsists on tinned food and mountain-dwelling outlaws revert to subsistence living.

Last week, in the real world, the price of oil finally went through the \$100 a barrel mark, and was a whisker away from breaking the all-time record price of \$101.70. While Britain is not about to turn its back on oil and become a dictatorship as a result, it makes investing in clean energy a better bet.

[Oil price fuels fresh look at coal](#)

VAST coal reserves in Asia are gaining attention as major energy consumers such as China and India grapple with the reality of oil prices around \$US100 a barrel and the risks they pose to their economies.

Multibillion-dollar facilities that convert coal to oil are being studied across Asia, while utilities are shelving plans to build power plants that use natural gas or fuel oil because prices of those fuels track the cost of crude.

[A "Fame-Hungry" Speculator in New York Raises Oil Prices to over \\$100 a Barrel](#)

Is there enough oil to cover this increasing demand for energy, especially with the spread of the "peak oil" theory in western states, which doubt the reserve figures of OPEC countries? The problem with this new-old theory, which finds listeners whenever oil prices rise and spreads fear and anxiety among some analysts, is that its viewpoint cannot be defended in realistic terms. The proponents of this theory cast doubt and lies without any convincing material evidence. Holding fast to this theory means ignoring the world's realities as we live them today; more important is the question of how we will live these realities tomorrow.

[U.S. Considers New Covert Push Within Pakistan](#)

President Bush's senior national security advisers are debating whether to expand the authority of the Central Intelligence Agency and the military to conduct far more aggressive covert operations in the tribal areas of Pakistan.

The debate is a response to intelligence reports that Al Qaeda and the Taliban are intensifying efforts there to destabilize the Pakistani government, several senior administration officials said.

[Pakistan power shortage hits steel, textile mills](#)

Pakistan has shut all steel melting units across the country for two weeks and ordered hundreds of textile mills to reduce operations to cope with an acute power shortage, a government official said on Saturday.

All business and shopping centres have also been told to close early.

[How to stay afloat amid soaring gas prices](#)

Fly-fishing guide Josh Nugent recognizes US\$100 oil means fuel prices will soar this summer, so he is taking action now to keep his tiny, six-year-old outfitting company afloat.

The 26-year-old entrepreneur, with a little help from his brother, a mechanical engineer, has converted the diesel engine in his fuel-guzzling Suburban to burn vegetable oil.

[The Philippines: Oil firms extend holiday discounts](#)

Holiday price discounts have been extended for another week, or until January 15, to partly ease consumers' burden over rising oil prices.

Eastern Petroleum Corporation advised that its P1.88 per liter diesel discount to public utility vehicles will be in place until January 15, along with the cut-backs of P1.00 per liter for gasoline and P0.50 per liter for its regular diesel customers.

[Kenya: The Day Business Ground to a Standstill](#)

Worst of all was the petroleum shortage. It not only affected transport but also trading activities by hindering the movement of goods from place to place. Unlike the 1990/91 or 1994 clashes, this was the first time generalised violence was hitting major urban centres. The sobering fact that did not escape notice was the sheer economic gridlock this caused in about four days.

[Malaysia Rations Cooking Oil, Stokes Inflation Fears](#)

Malaysia has limited the amount of cooking oil consumers can purchase to overcome a shortage caused by panic buying, local media reported on Sunday, a move that could add to inflationary pressures.

Beginning Monday, consumers can purchase up to 5 kg (11 lbs) of cooking oil, which is sold by weight, newspapers reported. The authorities have blamed the shortage on hoarding and panic buying caused by rumours of an impending price hike.

[The News-Record's annual coal report](#)

Wet spring weather and weakened demand from electric utilities during the first half of the year appear to have contributed to more modest production gains for northeast Wyoming's coal mines in 2007 — a big change from 2006 when the area's producers saw tonnage rocket up 10 percent.

Early estimates by The News-Record show the Southern Powder River Basin's 14 active mines produced about 437 million tons in 2007, a 1.4 percent increase over the previous year when 430.8 million tons were produced.

[Gaza back to blackout due to Israel-imposed fuel supplies cut, say energy officials](#)

Gaza Strip has begun to suffer a renewed blackout as power outages still go on due to shortage of fuel supplies after Israel has ruled large reduction of the fuel it provides Gaza with on daily basis.

[Private Cash Sets Agenda for Urban Infrastructure](#)

Philanthropic spending adds mainly to the nation's stock of hospitals, libraries, museums, parks, university buildings, theaters and concert halls. Public infrastructure — highways, bridges, rail systems, water works, public schools, port facilities, sewers, airports, energy grids, tunnels, dams and levees — depends mostly on tax dollars. It is hugely expensive and the money available, while still substantial, has shrunk as a share of the national economy.

The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates that government should be spending \$320 billion a year over the next five years — double the current outlay — just to bring up to par what already exists.

[Promoting all-green power for county](#)

Marin Supervisor Charles McGlashan wants to become a power broker.

McGlashan wants to form a countywide power authority that could plug thousands of local homes and businesses into electricity that is 100 percent renewable.

[Facing New Mileage Rules, Porsche Preps a Hybrid S.U.V.](#)

IT is hard to imagine a less likely candidate for the hybrid treatment: the Porsche Cayenne, a 5,000-pound S.U.V. that ranks among the fastest, most powerful trucks ever built.

But Porsche insists that its deep-pocketed clientele — whose concerns have involved acceleration, not conservation — will still appreciate a Cayenne that uses less fuel.

[Think diesel](#)

Diesel vehicles typically use 20 percent less fuel than comparable gasoline vehicles. That means a diesel car emits less pollution and greenhouse gas than a gasoline car. And by using less fuel, diesels could cut U.S. dependence on oil.

[A Split On Global Warming](#)

The contrast could not be more striking: Every Democratic candidate for president has put forward an aggressive package of policies and statements on global warming and has made it a cornerstone of his or her campaign.

Of the Republicans, just one, John McCain, comes close to matching the Democrats' fervor for the issue. The GOP contenders focus instead on policies aimed at achieving energy independence — a goal that dates to the energy crisis of the 1970s.

[Yergin: \\$100 oil 'tells a lot of what's going on in the world'](#)

The \$100 is really part of a trend and imbedded in it is how rapidly costs have risen. ... We created this thing that's called the IHS/CERA upstream capital cost index, and the newest one shows that costs continue to go up dramatically. Basically, since 2000, costs have doubled and most of that doubling has been in the past three years. Among other things, what that has done is lead to delays and postponements and scaling back and re-prioritizing projects, so all of that means that there is a noticeable lag in responding to this, what is really a global commodity boom.

[Saudi 2009 oil capacity plan on track - official](#)

State oil giant Saudi Aramco is on track to hit its oil production capacity target of 12 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2009, an Aramco official said on Sunday.

...He did not explain why Khursaniyah and Moneefa were delayed.

[How \\$100 oil will change your life](#)

Some observers fear the energy crisis will go beyond high prices into outright shortages. David Strahan, author of *The Last Oil Shock: A Survival Guide to the Imminent Extinction of Petroleum Man*, is one.

"We are extremely poorly prepared," he said. "People will have difficulty paying to keep their house warm, to fill their car's tank, to go on holiday. We saw in 2000 with the petrol protests just how fast things get tricky. People go into hoarding mode . . . and then the whole system unravels very quickly."

[Market determines oil prices: Saudi Arabia](#)

Saudi Oil Minister Ali al-Naimi said on Sunday that the rise in oil prices to a record high had been determined by market forces.

"The market fixes the price of oil," Naimi told reporters at an energy conference in Riyadh when asked to comment on oil's surge to a record above \$100 last week.

[\\$100 oil will hurt at more than the pump](#)

If oil prices stay up, Americans also may see higher prices for a host of other petroleum-derived products, from light bulbs and paint to golf balls and deodorant.

"There's oil in everything around us," said Edward Morse, chief energy economist at Lehman Bros. in New York. So it's impossible not to be touched by \$100 oil.

[Oil Increases Hit More than Gasoline Prices](#)

Once again, oil prices are "surging," and once again the primary discussion focuses on the cost of gasoline. While the price of gasoline is the most direct visible aspect for individuals, it is certainly not the only one. Increasing fuel costs are a concern, but there are other costs and related crises that erode people's ability to survive. These are largely "indirect" costs only because they are media-framed as such.

[3-digit oil price is here to stay](#)

However, for the rest of the year it looks certain that oil prices will break further psychological barriers and may increase by \$2 or \$5 and may be by even \$10 a barrel before the end of this year. The oil producing countries will have to be prepared to utilize the surplus oil revenues which are growing by billions of dollars. In absence of any surplus production capacity globally, it will be a real test for these countries to show their productions cards, if any. Emptying the wells of oil producing countries will also depend on the behavior and the growth rate of the two Asian giants — China and India — and depends on their further appetite for liquid black gold. Oil prices have broken the three-digit barrier and it is hard to go back to double digit prices. The year of 1860 will not return when oil prices went down from \$10 a barrel to 10 cents by the end of the year. This era is different and there are more oil consumers now than 147 years ago. So, prepare yourselves and cut down your oil consumptions whenever you can.

[Experts are less bullish on \\$100 oil](#)

Addison Armstrong, director of market research for Tradition Energy, an energy procurement and analysis firm in Stamford, Conn., said he expects oil to fall to \$75 a barrel the first quarter.

That's a time of seasonally lower demand that could be exacerbated by a slowdown and prompt speculators to sell off rather than further test economic resiliency to high prices.

[China could be winner in Alaska oil war](#)

Under a cloud of bribery and corruption scandals, Alaska is hitting back against the oil industry. Even the Republicans who now run the state are in revolt at the favourable treatment the oil industry has enjoyed from Alaska over the years. For many of the 670,000 people who live there, resentment against the industry has been growing for years, but it reached new levels of intensity after BP's oil spill at Prudhoe Bay in 2006.

[Farmers, energy interests clash over pipeline plan](#)

A Canadian oil company may seek eminent domain power to buy rural land along a 170-mile route to a southern Illinois terminal.

[OPEC pressured in face of \\$100 oil](#)

The oil producing cartel OPEC will face enormous pressure to help calm the febrile crude market at its next meeting in February after prices struck the symbolic \$100 level, analysts said. "It (the 100-dollar record) will be a psychological trigger for consumer

countries," said global head of commodities at investment bank Societe Generale Frederic Lasserre. "We will see governments putting pressure on OPEC, saying 'we need you to do something for us'. In the end though, they (governments) probably share the view that adding a few barrels will not change the market.

[Taiwan's CPC Gas Oil Unit Hit by Fire; Oil Supply Unaffected](#)

The explosion, caused by a leaking pipe, may cut about 5 percent of CPC's oil supply, and its two other refineries will increase production to fill the gap.

If need be, CPC doesn't rule out the possibility of buying oil from Singapore's spot market, the Taipei-based Economic Daily News reported today, citing an unidentified CPC executive.

[Crude oil barrel at \\$100 'not necessarily very high': OPEC president](#)

The price of 100 dollars for a barrel of crude oil is "not necessarily very high" given the high demand of oil and higher production costs, the president of OPEC said Sunday.

[Montana: Big plans in pipeline for little Great Falls refinery](#)

The future of an oil refinery established in Great Falls almost 80 years ago lies some 650 miles north in the oil sands of Alberta.

The future of one of the smallest players tapping into that large reserve, second only to those in Saudi Arabia, depends on the Great Falls refining company on the north shore of the Missouri River, one of the smallest in North America.

[Faltering economy primary focus](#)

Maybe the US of 2008 won't be as bad as columnist James Howard Kunstler predicted last Friday -- "a whole continent full of bankrupt, re-poed, and idle former WalMart shoppers, many of them with half of their skin tattooed and many of that bunch all revved up to 'roll heavy and gun up' against the folks who screwed them" -- but it is unlikely to be the country Obama has found so easy to inspire with his heartfelt but vague notions of folks getting along better.

[Catching up from eight lost years](#)

If we can make it through the next 379 days without getting into nuclear war, historians writing 100 years from now will begin their assessment of George W. Bush, not at all

kindly, by identifying him as the United States president who caused the world to lose eight years in getting started with serious efforts to save the planet and the inhabitants thereof from the deadly consequences of global warming.



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