



DrumBeat: April 23, 2008

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 23, 2008 - 9:08am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Arctic ice melting at alarming rate](#)

Barber isn't alone in wondering whether this winter signals the climatic tipping point that many scientists have been anticipating. That's the moment in time when sea ice in the Arctic becomes so thin and vulnerable that the ice produced each winter can no longer keep up with the spring and summer melts.

Many scientists now believe that when this happens, the world will enter a new era of global change -- one that no one really understands, but that will likely have an enormous impact on the climate of the rest of the world.

..."Theoretically, we could see an Arctic that is ice-free in summer months a lot sooner than most people previously thought. Some people think that it could happen in five or six years."

Putting that into perspective, Barber notes that the Arctic hasn't been seasonally ice-free for at least the past 1.1 million years.

"Let that sink in for a moment," he suggests. "The medieval warm period occurred about 1,000 years ago; the Egyptian civilization peaked about 4,000 years ago; the last ice age was 18,000 years ago; heck, there have been several ice ages within this 1.1-million-year period, and we have always had sea ice in the northern hemisphere in summer."

['Flammable ice' could be mined for fuel](#)

They call it flammable ice, and it could be the world's last great source of carbon-based fuel - assuming we can mine methane hydrates, crystal lattices of ice that trap methane beneath ocean beds and permafrost.

One problem with extracting this methane is that you have to melt the ice to bring the gas to the surface. In 2002, a team of geologists from Canada and Japan tried injecting hot water into the ice beneath the delta of the McKenzie river in northern Canada. While this released some hydrates, it used a lot of energy.

Now the same group has extracted methane much more efficiently, and without hot water, by pumping air out of drill holes in the frozen structures. This reduced the

pressure, and so raised the melting temperature of the ice so the methane could be removed.

[There is No Gas Shortage, Part 2](#)

Columnist Ed Wallace argues that nothing in the real world justifies oil's current pricing —except the push for higher profits.

[Not Guzzling Quite So Much Gas](#)

As the pump price climbs ever higher and the population ages, U.S. road traffic is falling —and so is fuel consumption.

[Canada: High fuels costs squeezing region's trucking industry](#)

MONCTON - Soaring diesel fuel costs and tightening credit are putting the squeeze on the province's trucking industry.

The head of the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association says the doubling of diesel fuel costs in the past two years has become the industry's No. 1 worry, surpassing the shortage of long-haul drivers and border-crossing problems.

[Local food pantries busy](#)

ROCHESTER — Battling hunger is no longer a war waged by humanitarian groups overseas.

It's a local struggle being fought in area communities as gas prices stretch for \$3.50 a gallon, staple grocery prices have jumped 40 percent and an across-the-board increase in the cost of scraping by.

[Transport energy now 'No. 1 issue' facing U.S.](#)

DETROIT - Energy, specifically transportation energy, is now "the No. 1 issue" facing the United States and its economy, the World Congress of the 103-year-old SAE International heard last week.

John Mizrock, principal deputy assistant secretary to the U.S. Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy told a panel discussion in Detroit, the U.S. will shortly be spending "more than the rest of the world combined in developing alternative fuels."

[Fuel, food costs impact relief work](#)

The same rising food and fuel costs delivering an economic punch to U.S. households, are threatening the lives of the world's neediest families.

Spiking energy prices, widespread droughts and an increasing global food shortage are impacting impoverished communities in desperate need of aid, and the global relief agencies charged with providing help.

[Americans hoard food as industry seeks regs](#)

Farmers and food executives appealed fruitlessly to federal officials yesterday for regulatory steps to limit speculative buying that is helping to drive food prices higher. Meanwhile, some Americans are stocking up on staples such as rice, flour and oil in anticipation of high prices and shortages spreading from overseas.

[Scrap The Guzzlers](#)

One way to bring down the soaring price of gasoline is to decrease demand. We can do that fairly painlessly by taking older, less fuel-efficient cars off the road.

In the 1990s, California launched a voluntary vehicle retirement program. In some air quality management districts, owners of older, gross-polluting cars are paid cash to scrap them.

[Yemen's Khat Addiction Risks Water Crisis, Exodus From Capital](#)

The Middle Eastern nation's addiction to khat is sucking up scarce water resources. Cultivation of the mild stimulant has increased 13-fold in three decades and now uses 30 percent of the nation's water, according to the World Bank.

...To irrigate khat, farmers have dug tube wells powered by state-subsidized fuel.

The government of President Ali Abdullah Saleh is in a bind. While cheap fuel encourages the over-use of water, reducing the subsidies would make it too expensive for farmers to irrigate their fields, said Mohammed Ibrahim al-Hamdi, deputy minister of water and environment.

[Russia's gas giant eyes US market](#)

Russia's state-controlled natural gas giant aims to become a significant supplier in the United States, expanding beyond the European market that it already dominates, the head of the company's export arm said Wednesday.

OAO Gazprom is, at the same time, undertaking billions of dollars in investments to bring new fields into operation while its old fields approach the end of their usefulness.

[Gazprom: We Want Rosneft's West Kamchatka Offshore Licence](#)

OAO Gazprom has asked the Russian government not to renew OJSC Rosneft and K.K. Korea Kamchatka Co's licence to explore the West Kamchatka hydrocarbon block in the Sea of Okhotsk, and for the government to give it to the state-owned natural gas giant, an unnamed Russian official told Interfax.

The current licence, held by the two companies' Kamchatneftegaz joint venture, is due to expire on August 1, the Russian news agency said.

[We regret to inform you...](#)

When climate change and peak oil thinkers run out of other things to worry about, there's always the endless, inevitable debates about whether we are facing a "fast crash" or a "slow grind." And I admit, I'm worried about my fellow environmentalists - because I think they are about to lose their favorite distraction. When no one was looking, we got an answer. Fast crash wins. And we're in it now.

[The high price of going 'organic'](#)

The push for 'green' products may have peaked - due in part to the fact that they're so much more expensive than mass-market alternatives.

[We've been here before](#)

There is a nagging suspicion in the marketplace that history could repeat itself. While 2008 looks a fair bit like 1980, will 2014 offer a replay of 1986? Will the forces driving the current boom in renewable energy and demand-reduction prove as fleeting as they were a generation ago?

[Future in Earth-friendly jobs?](#)

WOODLAND HILLS - With each day that passes inside Richard Killman's air-conditioning and refrigerator-mechanics class, the students' collars are transforming

from blue to green.

Those who pack Killman's class each day might not know it, but by learning to work on Freon-free technologies, to understand all the variables of how best to cool an environmentally sound home, to tune up old systems that use less energy, makes them leaders in the booming green-jobs sector.

[Mexico imports more gasoline as oil production drops](#)

LOS ANGELES -- Mexico's gasoline imports rose to 360,700 b/d in March, the highest level since November 2007. This coincided with a 7.8% decline in the country's oil production in this year's first quarter to 2.91 million b/d, largely due to declining output from traditional oil fields.

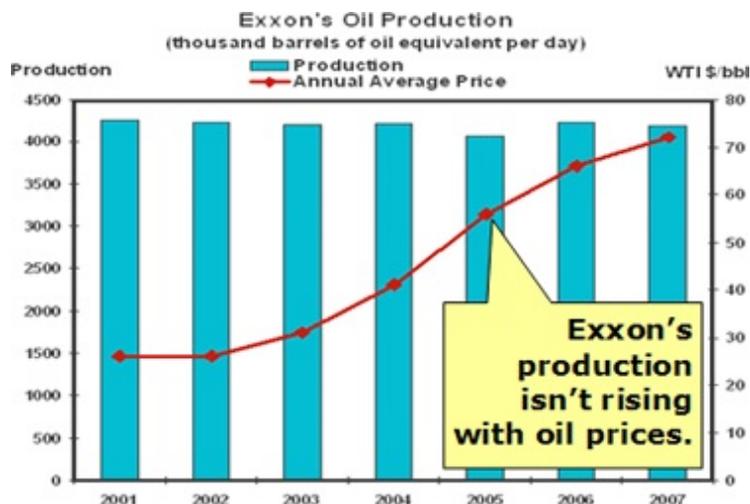
State-owned Petroleos Mexicanos said March gasoline imports were up 6.5% compared with February, largely due to increasing numbers of cars in the country that consume some 41% of total supply.

Gasoline imports are projected to increase by 58% to 489,000 b/d by 2015 unless new refining capacity comes online, according to a recent report by the energy ministry. It said Pemex has not built a refinery since 1979.

[Calderon says Mexican Congress seizure ridiculous](#)

NEW ORLEANS (Reuters) - President Felipe Calderon accused leftist Mexican lawmakers on Tuesday of making a laughing stock of themselves by blocking Congress to protest against an energy reform plan.

[Oil Tops \\$119! What's Next ...](#)



Sure, Exxon is the most profitable company in the history of the world, earning a record

\$40.6 billion last year on sales of \$404 billion. And yet, its production is not rising. Don't you think it would want to sell more product if it could?

In fact, looking at its longer-term plans, Exxon isn't planning on producing more oil this year ... or next year. In fact, the company's oil production won't even keep pace with its own projections of worldwide oil demand growth of 1.3% a year.

[Petrol firms accused of profiteering from motorists' fears of an oil strike](#)

Petrol firms have been accused of profiteering by exploiting fears that an oil refinery strike will see pumps run dry later this week.

Motoring organisations said they have seen the first signs drivers are panic buying leading to filling stations "cashing in" by raising prices.

[Diesel Shortage Slams China's Deep South Yet Again](#)

The Pearl River Delta seems to be a comfy birthplace for oil crunches. Since last weekend, the "No Diesel Now" signs have once again been hung out in front of gas stations in the Baiyun, Haizhu and Panyu districts of Guangzhou City. Other stations which still have supplies are crowded with all types of vehicles. Some stations say that they can now only sell to companies that have a long-term supply contract with them. The rest of China is wondering whether it's all going to spread.

[Yemen: Aden lives in severe diesel crisis](#)

Informed sources in the Aden Refinery said that Aden is suffering a severe shortage of diesel fuel as the quantity specialized for market supply has run out.

The source said the Refinery cannot provide stations with diesel fuel as it is currently lacking for crude materials being imported from some countries. It told NY the crisis started a week ago after the Refinery had to keep a part of diesel quantity for the General Electricity Corporation "to avoid any electricity lack in such hot season."

[Africa's food shortage knows no bounds](#)

"Tanzania" and "food crisis" are rarely mentioned in the same sentence; the country is thought to have sufficient production and distribution capability to keep its population fed. Mr. Yussuf's suggests this analysis may be wrong. Tanzania is already suffering, he says.

This is a letter he recently sent to me, presented here with only minor editing changes.

Note his second paragraph, which mentions farmers too financially stretched to plant extra crops in spite of the higher prices their products can fetch, and, farther down, the looming biofuels disaster...

[Fusion of Rail & Road Makes Bulk Transport More Efficient](#)

Railmate as its termed, uses custom fitted trailers that are designed to ride the rails.

[Study says ethanol saves money](#)

JEFFERSON CITY - Ethanol proponents yesterday celebrated the results of a study that says Missouri's mandate requiring gas stations to sell ethanol-blended fuel is saving drivers at the pump.

At the same time, however, some lawmakers are pushing to repeal the 2006 law, which requires most Missouri gas to be blended with 10 percent ethanol whenever it is cheaper than regular gas. The law went into effect Jan. 1.

[Eradicate Capitalism to Save the Planet, Says Evo Morales](#)

Bolivian President Evo Morales told the Seventh UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on Monday that the first step in saving the planet is to eradicate the capitalist model and force the wealthy industrialized countries to pay their environmental debt.

[Clean energy is unavoidable, expert says](#)

On Earth Day, with gas prices at record highs, an expert on the dwindling supply of world oil told a crowd at Bristol Community College that a shift away from fossil fuels is "necessary for planetary survival."

Richard Heinberg, considered a leading expert on peak oil — the point at which world oil supplies are expected to begin a continual decline — said during a 45-minute presentation that a transition to clean energy "cannot be avoided." The only choice, he said, is to be proactive or be forced into changes.

[Earth Day fossil fuels message: 'The party is over'](#)

DARTMOUTH — Call it coincidence or irony, but crude oil prices hit a record high of almost \$120 a barrel on Earth Day 2008 and an expert on fossil fuels and energy came to SouthCoast to proclaim "the party is over."

Richard Heinberg, senior fellow at the Post Carbon Institute in California, told a gathering at the UMass Dartmouth library that with oil, natural gas and coal being consumed faster than new supplies can be found and developed, the era of fossil fuels has begun to wind down.

[Where the Oil Rally Goes: Facts and Speculation](#)

A few months ago, as the oil price was butting up against \$100 and then finally going through it and then dropping back down below it, most respected oil analysts whom I read believed that the near term would see lower oil prices. Most thought early 2008 would see a retracement into the low \$80s. That expectation is one reason the recent strong and consistent rally to just under \$120 as of now is so dramatic.

But what comes next? How much of the last \$20 is speculation and how much is fundamental? And of these fundamental factors, how temporary or how long lasting are they?

[Oil Prices will stop rising, but until then](#)

“The demand is close to supply, so you should stock more” claims IEA. It is really hard to understand this logic.

[Oil prices are not going to fall much, ever](#)

I'm not actually talking about oil running out. This isn't directly an argument in favour of the "Peak Oil" theory, the idea that we will in the next few years begin an irrevocable fall in oil output.

Peak oil may be true, but is harder to prove. What is happening right now is more to do with the cost of accessing oil and bringing it to market, not whether it's available under the ground.

[There is plenty of Oil](#)

Doom-laden forecasts that world oil supplies are poised to fall off the edge of a cliff are wide of the mark, according to leading oil industry experts who gave warning that human factors, not geology, drive the oil market.

A landmark study of more than 800 oilfields by Cambridge Energy Research Associates (Cera) has concluded that rates of decline are only 4.5 per cent a year, almost half the rate previously believed, leading the consultancy to conclude that oil output will continue to rise over the next decade.

[Surging energy costs take a big toll on U.S. airline earnings](#)

CHICAGO: The parent company of United Airlines, the UAL Corporation, reported a \$537 million loss in the first quarter on Tuesday, bigger than expected, as a 51 percent increase in fuel costs overwhelmed furious efforts to raise fares at the country's second-largest carrier.

UAL shares closed down \$7.88, to \$13.55.

Unless oil prices unexpectedly retreat, there is no relief in sight for airlines, and nearly the entire industry is expected to lose money this year.

[Soaring energy prices fuelling a domestic crisis across the UK](#)

There may be panic at the petrol pumps, but the increasing price of oil means that gas and electricity bills have also seen inflation-busting rises – and there's worse to come.

[Oil producing countries fear bio-fuels competition](#)

Saudi Arabia admitted that petroleum producing countries are concerned with the competition of alternative fuels, such as bio-fuels and with the determination of many countries to ensure their “energy independence”.

[Deflation In A Fiat Regime?](#)

A weak dollar is masking deflation! Right now what we have is deflation with a weak dollar. That weak dollar, in conjunction with peak oil, has caught nearly everyone off guard to the point they are screaming about oil prices and bond bubbles, while missing the far more important deflationary forces of foreclosures, bankruptcies, and massive writedowns in credit.

[Why More Food Is Not the Answer](#)

The world wants more food - a lot more food - but the planet will not be able to provide it. For this reason alone, more food is not the answer - it cannot be the answer.

[Where are the economists?](#)

There is no precise answer but it is clear that already the current generation will have to

adapt to an oil-constrained world. Given all this, wouldn't you expect to see the best and brightest of the economics profession out there where menacing winds blow on the hectic frontline of general human interest, fending for our civilization; analyzing, passionately arguing, advising national governments and international organizations, never letting the sense of urgency recede from public consciousness?

If you entertained such expectations you would be speechless upon looking at the Table of Contents of top journals in economics.

[Why oil could hit \\$180 a barrel](#)

Just when crude is becoming more costly to extract and process, producers in three key countries are short of cash. And without that money, recent finds won't do much good.

[Peak Oil? Saudis Squeeze the Stone Even Harder](#)

As oil reserves get harder and more expensive to suck out of the ground, one big question looms: Is Saudi Arabia facing "practical peak oil" or the real thing?

[China down to 12 days worth of coal - report](#)

CHINA only has enough coal for 12 days of consumption, three days less than a month ago, state media reported Wednesday, sounding the alarm bells over the nation's most important source of energy.

In certain parts of China, such as densely populated Hebei province in the north, reserves are down to less than a week, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the China Electricity Regulatory Commission.

[UK: Energy firms to target aid at poorest customers](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Retail energy suppliers have agreed a package of measures aimed at increasing help available to customers most affected by rising power and gas costs, energy regulator Ofgem said on Wednesday.

Measures to help combat the rise in fuel poverty -- where consumers spend more than a tenth of their income on energy -- were agreed at a summit led by Ofgem on Wednesday and will be incorporated into an action programme in early May.

[Chavez says food prices "massacre" of world's poor](#)

CARACAS (Reuters) - Soaring food prices are a "massacre" of the world's poor and are creating a global nutritional crisis, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said on Tuesday, calling it a sign that capitalism is in decline.

[Assessing the global food crisis](#)

"A silent tsunami which knows no borders sweeping the world".

That is how the head of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) summed up the global food shortages.

[UK: Schools struggling to keep healthy meals on menu as ingredient costs soar](#)

Double-digit increases in the cost of foodstuffs such as bread, eggs and cooking oil have left local authorities struggling to maintain high-quality subsidised dinners. Dining hall managers have given warning that, if they pass on the rising costs of presenting healthy meals, parents may tell their children to eat less healthy food outside schools.

They fear that, if the take-up of meals drops, the purchasing power of local councils will fall, raising costs further and causing canteens to disappear from schools completely.

[Era of cheap food ends as prices surge](#)

Families have been warned that the prices of basic foods will rise steeply again because of acute shortages in commodity markets.

Experts told *The Times* yesterday that prices of rice, wheat and vegetable oil would rise further. They also forecast that high prices and shortages — which have caused riots in developing countries such as Bangladesh and Haiti — were here to stay, and that the days of cheap produce would not return. Food-price inflation has already pushed up a typical family's weekly shopping bill by 15 per cent in a year.

[Water - the under-reported resource crisis](#)

Food riots in Haiti, strikes over rice shortages in Bangladesh, tortilla trouble in Mexico and bread wars in Egypt.

Soaring food prices are causing more misery round the world than the credit crunch. But what is the cause?

Biofuels are part of it, clearly. A quarter of US corn is now put into tanks rather than stomachs. And oil price rises are feeding in, via the cost of fertiliser and transport.

But here is something nobody has yet mentioned. Water.

[Russian Oil Has 'Peaked,' Billionaire Vekselberg Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil output in Russia, the world's biggest supplier after Saudi Arabia, has "peaked" and may decline in the coming years, said billionaire Viktor Vekselberg, an owner of BP Plc's venture TNK-BP.

Russian companies need tax breaks to spur exploration and development of new fields to revive growth, Vekselberg told an American Chamber of Commerce conference in Moscow today.

[Pentagon worried about spiking oil prices](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) - After spending 15 billion dollars on oil in 2007, the Pentagon said Tuesday it was concerned over rising prices, since for every dollar oil goes up in price, an extra 130 million has to be added to its budget.

...The spiraling cost of oil is especially troublesome for the Pentagon since the "DoD (Department of Defense) is the largest consumer of oil in the United States," David Trachtenberg, former deputy assistant secretary of defense for international security policy, said in his presentation.

[Shell to axe 180 jobs in Scotland](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Royal Dutch Shell Plc said on Wednesday it is to cut 180 jobs in Aberdeen and review practices regarding contractors, as it sells oilfields in the North Sea.

The world's second-largest private oil company by market value said in a statement the cuts in office-based positions, representing 7 percent of its workforce in the Scottish city, were needed to keep its UK operations competitive in the face of rapidly rising industry costs.

[Poll: Food costs a major worry for consumers](#)

WASHINGTON — Rising food prices are a significant worry for Americans, with 73% of consumers in a new USA TODAY/Gallup Poll citing higher grocery bills as a concern, and nearly half saying food inflation has caused a hardship for their households.

According to the April 18-20 poll of 1,016 adults, food prices rank just below record-high

gasoline prices in consumer angst. Eighty percent of those polled also noted energy prices as a concern.

[Delta reports \\$6.4 billion loss in first quarter](#)

ATLANTA (AP) — Delta Air Lines, the nation's third-largest carrier, says its loss widened in the first quarter to a whopping \$6.39 billion due to soaring fuel prices and the steep decline in the company's market value.

The results badly missed Wall Street expectations, despite a 12% increase in sales.

[UK: Rationing use of cars may be only way to cut emissions](#)

The only way to meet targets on cutting Yorkshire's carbon emissions would be to ration journeys and introduce congestion charging, new research reveals.

Even if a whole raft of measures was introduced – including car sharing, some road charging, workplace travel plans, more public transport and increased home working – on an unlimited budget and as soon as possible, carbon emissions from transport in 2020 will only remain similar to present levels.

[Europeans switching back to coal](#)

The fast-expanding developing economies of India and China, where coal remains a major fuel source for more than two billion people, have long been regarded as one of the biggest challenges to reducing carbon emissions.

But the return now to coal even in eco-conscious Europe is sowing real alarm among environmentalists who warn that it is setting the world on a disastrous trajectory that will make controlling global warming impossible. They are aghast at the renaissance of coal, a fuel more commonly associated with a sooty Dickens novel and which was on its way out just a decade ago.

[Japan, EU leaders call for 'highly ambitious' climate goals](#)

TOKYO (AFP) - Leaders of Japan and the European Union called Wednesday for "highly ambitious and binding" global targets to fight climate change, seeking a breakthrough at July's Group of Eight summit.

In an annual meeting, the two sides also called for urgent action to cope with rising global food prices, warning that they could worsen poverty in developing countries and

drag down the world economy.

[Response to climate security threats 'slow and inadequate'](#)

LONDON (AFP) - The international response to security threats posed by climate change has been "slow and inadequate", according to a report published Wednesday.

According to the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), a British security think tank, a failure to adequately prepare for this is on a par with neglecting the risks of nuclear weapons proliferation or terrorism.

[Stop waiting for 'leaders' to act on global warming](#)

The success of the environmental movement in calling attention to the dangers of global warming has led to an ironic outcome: It's become easier for the public to adopt a passive approach as we wait on world leaders to sign emissions treaties or huge corporations to "go green." This Earth Day, stop waiting! There are new ways for you to fight climate change in your own backyard.



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