



DrumBeat: January 31, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on January 31, 2009 - 10:37am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Oil price slump a challenge to Obama: Alternative energy looking less viable](#)

A slide in oil prices may be good for consumers battered by the U. S. economic slowdown, but it could pose a challenge for President Barack Obama's ambitious plan to revolutionize America's energy use.

..."Low oil prices are a very real danger because they do make alternative energy less commercially viable," said Peter Beutel, president of Cameron Hanover.

"We need the government to subsidize solar, wind, ethanol, etc. to make them commercially viable enough to survive this price environment."

The slowing economy has already started to take a toll on alternative energy projects that looked promising in 2008 when oil costs were soaring.

[Doing the Recovery Right](#)

The transformation of our fossil fuel driven economy into a clean energy economy will be the work of a generation, engaging a huge range of people and activities. But focusing on essentials, there are only three interrelated projects that will drive the entire enterprise: dramatically increasing energy efficiency; equally dramatically lowering the cost of supplying energy from such renewable sources as solar, wind and geothermal power; and mandating limits and raising prices on the burning of oil, coal and natural gas.

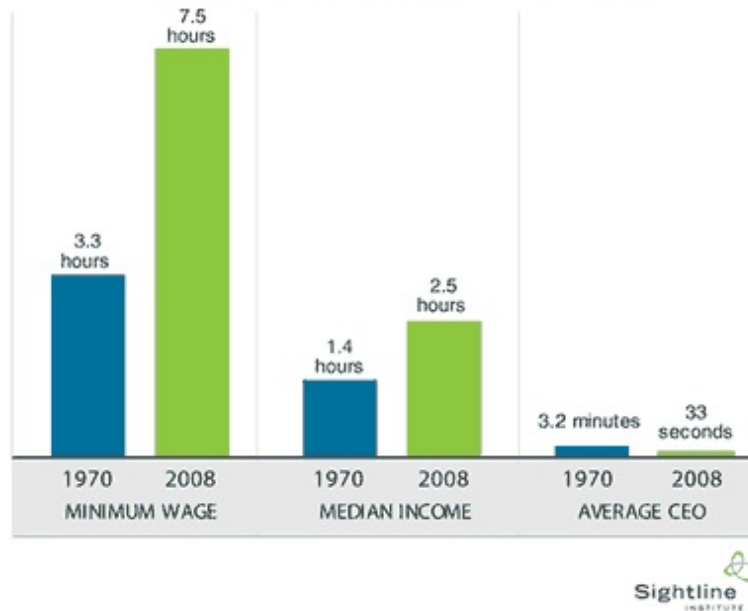
[Can We Transform the Auto-Industrial Society?](#)

The relative decline of public transport has been attributed to the very long-term preferences of Americans for being alone in cars, or for being free to go anywhere and at any time, or for living without other people in close proximity; to investments in the interstate highway system; and to the enduring patterns of American zoning and land use. But 80 percent of the US population still lives in metropolitan areas, and some 30 percent in the densely populated city centers. The pattern of land use in the expanding cities of the South and West—which have had the most rapid population growth, with very few people per square kilometer—was itself established over the period that has

elapsed since the energy crisis of the 1970s. It is a consequence of prices as well as preferences, and of the changing distribution of public expenditure, or public partiality.

[We're Working Longer Than Ever to Pay for Fossil Fuels](#)

Oil addiction has never been more expensive . . . for most of us.
HOURS WE WORK TO PAY FOR 15 GALLONS OF GASOLINE



Americans are falling behind -- most of us anyway. We're working longer than ever before to maintain a standard of living that once we took for granted. With respect to gas prices, average Americans are much worse off than they were in 1970.

The working poor, in particular, are getting absolutely crushed. Their economic standing has deteriorated even faster than the middle class. At average prices in 2008, a full day's work at the federal minimum wage would scarcely pay for a single tank of gas. In a car-dependent nation, that means that even basic transportation is quickly getting out of reach for low-income families.

[Russia's Drive for Global Economic Power: A Challenge for the Obama Administration](#)

Until the recent global financial crisis, Russia's economic revival during the presidency of Vladimir Putin had helped to restore the country's standing as a major player in the world arena. Yet, prosperity has come with some unintended consequences. Russia's invasion of Georgia was fueled by Russia's economic growth and newfound wealth.

This economic comeback is largely the result of Russia's oil and natural gas exports, coupled with the high prices that other Russian commodities have enjoyed in world markets. With the seventh-largest oil reserves and the largest gas reserves in the world, and as the leading exporter of oil and gas, the Kremlin is using its energy exports, revenue from arms and metals sales, and investments abroad in the mining and energy

sectors to extend Russia's influence worldwide.

[Oil production peaked in July 2008](#)

There are numerous indications that world oil production peaked in July 2008. So says Professor of Physics Kjell Aleklett. According to him, the theory that oil production is on a downward path is gaining more and more supporters. Uppsala Physics Professor Kjell Aleklett has long been convinced that the world's oil production will turn downwards in the near future. And the turn maybe has already happened.

"There are numerous indicators that world oil production peaked in July 2008 at around 87 million barrels per day", he says.

[Are The Planned Eco Towns A Good Idea?](#)

Eco towns might sound uncontroversial, but they've provoked bitter argument. In the first of a new series, two experts debate the issue.

[Iter: Flagship fusion reactor could cost twice as much as budgeted](#)

The international project, which aims to produce cheap green power by recreating the conditions inside the sun, already absorbs half Britain's energy research budget.

[Total in Fresh Talks with Venezuela on Expanding Ops](#)

Total SA Chairman Thierry Desmarest said Friday the French oil giant is in fresh talks with the Venezuela government about expanding its operations in the South American nation.

"We are just at the beginning" of discussions, the chairman of the French oil giant said in an interview on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum here. "If Venezuela wants to offer opportunities on reasonable terms, of course we will look to those possibilities," he said, declining to provide further details.

[Politics, oil declines ignite Venezuela elections](#)

With petrodollars fading, Chavez is once again looking to hold onto power.

[Mexico shuts Dos Bocas oil port on weather forecast](#)

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Mexico shut the Dos Bocas oil exporting port in the Gulf of Mexico on Friday as a cold front moved into the region and threatened bad weather, a port official said.

[U.K. Calls in Acas After Series of Strikes Over Foreign Labor](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The U.K. government has asked the conciliation and arbitration organization Acas to look into a series of unofficial strikes across the country this week over the use of foreign workers.

[Pepco facing fuel shortage of 10,000 tonnes a day](#)

LAHORE, Pakistan Electric Power Company (Pepco) is under enormous miseries, facing a shortage of 10,000 tones a day supply of fuel oil to its power producing units as the consignments of Pakistan State Oil (PSO) remained stuck up at the port.

[Top Chinese team to help Nepal overcome energy crisis: report](#)

Kathmandu - A top Chinese delegation is in Nepal to help the Himalayan nation overcome its energy crisis as the nation prepares to face unprecedented load-shedding.

[India - Steel rerolling mills should adopt biomass fuel: Official](#)

Puducherry - Steel rerolling mills should adopt biomass fuel in their units to save energy and for efficient utilisation, a top official in the Union Steel Ministry today said.

[Zimbabwe's starving millions face halving of rations as UN cash dries up](#)

The United Nations is to halve the food ration to millions of Zimbabweans, bringing it below what will keep an adult alive, as the numbers of people dependent on aid rises sharply and donations from foreign governments fall well short of demand.

The World Food Programme is to cut the core maize ration in February from 10kg to 5kg a month – or just 600 calories a day – for 7 million Zimbabweans, about 70% of the people left in the country. The recommended ration is 12kg a month.

[Saving Money In a Tough Economy: Tips For Saving electric](#)

Portage County, OH - We've all heard often enough that it's time to start thinking and

saving electricity. We're depleting the Earth's resources in record amounts, and it's becoming more and more clear that we need to start thinking in terms of protecting and preserving the Earth and her resources when we build.

Heating, air conditioning, lighting, cooking and refrigeration were the first elements easily identified as major power burners in private dwellings, and as such received a great deal of attention. Subsequent regulation has been directed toward building and insulation standards for climate control and hot water systems, especially for homes built to Energy Star and other efficiency and green building standards. However, there are many other sources of energy waste.

[Less tasty -- and not as good for you](#)

He points to another study in which researchers planted low- and high-yielding varieties of broccoli and grain side-by-side. The high-yielding varieties showed less protein and minerals.

The principle seems to be that when plants are nudged to produce as much as possible - - whether through lots of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides or through selective breeding -- they deliver fewer nutrients. It evidently isn't just the flavor that's become diluted in those bland supermarket tomatoes.

[Greenwash: Gulf's green claims awash in a desert of deception](#)

The attempted green makeover by the Gulf states is beyond irony: with spiralling emissions, desert ski slopes and refrigerated beaches, can they be serious?

[Efficient market hypothesis is dead - for now](#)

I have to report the sad passing of the efficient market hypothesis. The theory was officially declared dead yesterday at the World Economic Forum in Davos. There were no mourners.

The announcement was made at a brainstorming session that involved many of the world's top economists, politicians and business leaders ... together with a few bankers wearing dark glasses and false beards.

[Atlantic crude spreads may change for good](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - North Sea Brent crude oil may never again trade at a long-term deep discount below U.S. light crude futures, even after the recession has passed and U.S. oil inventories have been drained to more normal levels.

Environmental and financial pressures are leading to a long-lasting decline in demand for gasoline, particularly in the United States, just as use of ethanol, diesel, aircraft fuel and light heating oil is increasing, and this is changing the type of crude oil that oil refineries need to buy.

Light sweet crudes such as West Texas Intermediate, the benchmark on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX), are slowly going out of favor, while heavier grades such as Brent, traded in London, are increasingly in demand.

[Refiner strike fears, outages boost gasoline](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Gasoline led U.S. oil product gains on Friday as fears of a refinery workers' strike added to worries that supply may dwindle as plants undergo maintenance or undertake economic run cuts, traders said.

A possible strike by 30,000 U.S. refinery workers threatens to shutter more than half of the nation's refining capacity, although a top union negotiator expressed optimism a deal could be reached before Sunday's deadline. [ID:nN29306850]

"Gasoline is up a lot ... it's the threat of strike, I guess," a gasoline trader in the New York Harbor said.

[Venezuela oil output may slide on cash woes](#)

CARACAS (Reuters) - Venezuela faces a growing risk of falling crude production in the coming months as oil service companies show signs they may halt key activities over a huge buildup in unpaid bills sparked by tumbling crude prices.

A major oil sector slowdown would devastate the OPEC nation's economy and force cuts in billions of dollars in social programs that keep leftist President Hugo Chavez popular among Venezuela's poor majority.

Some service providers have idled operations as they await payment while local firms are struggling to keep workers paid, foreshadowing a slowdown in critical oil field services required to maintain output.

[UK - Oil refinery strikes: Union leaders warn against far right hijacking protests](#)

Union leaders have condemned attempts by the far right to hijack the 'British jobs for British workers' protests for their own anti-immigrant agenda.

[Qatar cuts Asia oil supplies](#)

(MENAFN - The Peninsula) Meanwhile, Qatar has told Asian customers it will cut supplies of its main crude oil grade even further in March, while increasing shipments of its smaller stream, trade sources said yesterday.

Qatar, which pumps less than any OPEC member except for Ecuador, has notified at least six Asian term buyers it will cut supplies of medium-heavy Qatar Marine crude by 15 percent from contracted volumes in March.

[Brazil's Petrobras says no oil delays in 2009](#)

DAVOS, Switzerland (Reuters) - The head of Brazil's state-run energy company Petrobras (PETR4.SA) said there would be no project delays in 2009, bucking a wider trend, and that production was about 2.4 million barrels per day.

But he said the bulk of the oil would be used by Brazil, which aspires to be an exporter of refined products, rather than of crude and cannot join in with the OPEC effort to bolster prices by curbing output.

[Why the Santa Barbara oil deal collapsed](#)

A lack of disclosure by the company and environmentalists helped lead a state panel to kill the offshore drilling deal.

[Raymond J. Learsy: "Exxon Profit Down 33% in the Fourth Quarter". Please Pity Poor Exxon!](#)

Yes, that's the headline on CNBC.com. "Exxon Profit Down 33% in the Fourth Quarter". That is the kind of preferred phrasing that might well have been cleared by that great partisan and advertiser of oil themed beneficence, the American Petroleum Institute.

You see, the real headline would have been inelegant in this day and age of economic hurt, job losses, and spiraling recession, namely:

- "Exxon Mobil Reports Record \$45.2 Billion Profit" -

[Economist: Irish Graduates Should Emigrate to Australia or Canada](#)

For students in Ireland who are leaving college soon he advised them to leave the country as the economy is in a very serious condition and there are very few employment opportunities. He recommended going to Canada or Australia as they are likely to have opportunities in renewable energy technologies as the world emerges from a global recession.

He said, "If I was coming out of college today I would carve out a career in energy."

Mr Hobbs said that he believed in the theory of peak oil. He explained that as oil rich countries develop they are more likely to consume the oil they produce rather than sell it to other countries due to the growing demand of their own citizens. This means the price of oil will go up for oil importers. This will spark further investment and research in renewable energy technologies as countries try to become energy independent.

[Thinking Wrong, Doing Right](#)

I reached a certain point in my career about ten years ago. It wasn't that I had reached the top, but I could see the top and it wasn't a peak worth climbing. I made a conscious shift in where I was trying to go and it wasn't just about a successful career in graphic design but something that, for me, was more meaningful.

We're at multiple global tipping points where the future is going to be radically different than the past—global climate change, the backside of peak oil and fossil fuel, water issues, population growth in third world countries and the rise of the middle class there, the financial collapse. Everything is linked now. You have the Internet and nobody really knows yet what that means. You can either be pessimistic about the future or you can be optimistic. For me, an optimistic alternative includes ingenuity and creativity, and I package that under the big D: Design Thinking and how that can shape the future.

[Why environmentalists should be conservatives \(and vice versa\).](#)

Most articles arguing that conservatives would be better able to protect the environment base their claim on the belief that market forces would do the job of protecting the environment better than government. I don't believe this to be that case and yet do believe that environmentalists and conservatives have more in common than either side is willing to believe. At root, I believe that they share the same principles. The environmental movement today is based around two main tenets: sustainability, and localization. If I ask which political philosophy more closely embodies those two principles I am led to the inevitable conclusion that (paleo) conservatives embody them far more than liberals.

[Seed center on Kauai goes solar](#)

DuPont yesterday brought online a 1,500-panel photovoltaic system at its Pioneer Hi-Bred Waimea Research Center on Kaua'i.

The one-acre array can generate up to 85 percent of the research center's needs and is expected to generate enough power annually to power the equivalent of 75 homes. The facility will help avoid carbon dioxide emissions of about 100 cars each year, saving Pioneer an estimated \$200,000 per year in avoided purchased electricity costs.

[Climate Change's Impact On Invasive Plants In Western US May Create Restoration Opportunities](#)

ScienceDaily — A new study by researchers at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs has found that global climate change may lead to the retreat of some invasive plant species in the western United States, which could create unprecedented ecological restoration opportunities across millions of acres throughout America. At the same time, global warming may enable other invasive plants to spread more widely.

[The Next Step on Warming](#)

It seemed that every chance he got, President Bush ignored or flat out refused to address the problem of climate change. So we were greatly encouraged by President Obama's swift announcement that he is likely to approve California's request to regulate greenhouse gases from vehicles — a request the Bush administration denied.

The logical next step would be for Mr. Obama to quickly address the Supreme Court's 2007 decision ordering the Environmental Protection Agency to examine the effects of greenhouse gases and to regulate them if necessary. Mr. Bush dodged that one, too.

[Try to meet the Carter standard](#)

It turns out that Obama keeps the Oval Office at near-tropical heat levels. The New York Times reports that he doesn't wear a suit jacket at his desk because he has "cranked up the thermostat."

Explained adviser David Axelrod: "He's from Hawaii, OK? He likes it warm. You could grow orchids in there."

So would the rest of us, if we could afford it.

[Obama raises hopes for climate deal](#)

Denmark's Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen called on rich and poor countries alike to commit to big cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, as the election of US President Barack Obama raised hopes for an agreement at key talks on a new climate treaty in Copenhagen later in the year.

[Canada - The brown budget: Or how King Coal wins again](#)

Much is being made of the contrast between Flaherty's "brown" budget – which gives the environment short shrift and continues the notion that it's in mortal combat with the economy – and U.S. President Barack Obama's "green" stimulus package.

But carbon capture can be found in the bowels of that plan, too. The version passed Wednesday by the House of Representatives includes \$2.4 billion (U.S.) under the guise of clean-coal technology. The Senate is expected to boost that figure to \$4.6 billion and to also make the technology eligible for a share of the proposed \$50 billion in loan guarantees to the nuclear industry.



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