



Drumbeat: May 7, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on May 7, 2009 - 9:36am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Coal-fired power plants: The writing on the wall](#) - *Only green compromises will allow them to survive*

At least the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA), in a complete reversal from its role under the Bush administration, is doing its best for the cause. On April 27th it withdrew an air-quality permit it had issued for a 1,500mw pulverised coal-fired power plant, called Desert Rock, which was to be built on Navajo Nation land in New Mexico. In effect, this pulled the plug on the enterprise. That ruling was the first public consequence of an EPA mandate, issued on April 17th, that the most harmful heat-trapping greenhouse gases were a threat to public health and welfare and a cause of global warming. The mandate gives Barack Obama *carte blanche* to regulate the power industry.

Among the utility companies feeling the heat is NV Energy, which is postponing plans for a \$5 billion, 1,500mw coal plant in eastern Nevada. Instead, it will harvest the state's plentiful solar and other renewable resources. Farther north, Southern Montana Electric Generation and Transmission Co-operative says "regulatory uncertainties" have forced it to defer plans for its 250mw Highwood coal plant near Great Falls. It proposes to build a smaller, cleaner-burning, natural-gas power station, as well as a previously announced 9mw wind farm. And several power companies are planning to convert older coal-burning plants to run on biomass, such as woody forest waste.

[Chevron's O'Reilly Says Lawmakers Trade 'False Hopes' on Carbon](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Chevron Corp. Chief Executive Officer David O'Reilly said U.S. lawmakers "vastly overstate" how quickly reductions in carbon emissions can be made and would risk an economic collapse by imposing unrealistic cuts.

"Seeking those reductions without any realistic plan to replace that energy is a straight path back to a pre-industrial economy and a standard of living to match it," O'Reilly said in prepared remarks for a speech he's giving today in Boston.

[Natural Gas Industry Slow to Apply Brakes](#)

Natural gas prices are about a third of what they were last summer, and oil and gas companies are cutting their capital spending to the bone. But it's hard to turn off the spigots in the enormous shale fields that have been developed from Pennsylvania to Texas over the last few years.

[Independence could bump output](#)

US independent Anadarko Petroleum said today the huge Independence Hub natural gas production platform in the US Gulf produced an average of 900 million cubic feet per day of natural gas in the first quarter, with additional capacity possible.

[Chevron's Cash Hoard Returns Less Than a Penny on the Dollar](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Chevron Corp., which last week posted its lowest quarterly profit in half a decade, earned less than a cent on the dollar from a \$9 billion cash hoard amassed during last year's record surge in oil prices.

[Energy Department plans to award \\$10B in auto retooling loans in '09](#)

Washington -- The Obama administration plans to award \$10.1 billion in advanced technology retooling loans to the auto industry this year.

President Barack Obama's budget proposal, released today, also boosts vehicle research spending, but cuts hydrogen fuel cell research funds.

[Goodbye to shop 'til you drop: Even when the economy recovers, retail experts don't expect consumers to go on a spree](#)

"Our retail culture is in a major transition. Conspicuous consumption is now bad manners," he said. "Too many of us have spread ourselves far beyond our means. We can't do this anymore."

"Our closets are full, are houses are too big, we have too many cars," he said. "It's time to make some very wrenching changes."

Post-recession consumers will spend very carefully. Buying previously owned products, for instance, will lose its stigma.

[Insuring climate change still possible - Munich Re](#)

Reuters - Insuring the effects of climate change is still possible anywhere in the world

"at the right price" despite increasing natural catastrophes such as hurricanes, reinsurance group Munich Re said on Wednesday.

Natural catastrophes resulting in insurance losses of more than \$500 million more than doubled in 2008 from 1980, the group said. Most of these can be wholly or partly attributed to the effects of climate change.

In 2008, it is estimated that Hurricane Ike in the U.S. state of Florida resulted in \$11.5 billion of insurance losses.

"So far, nowhere in the world is uninsurable," said Georg Daschner, member of the board of management at Munich Re. "It is a question of getting the right price and whether people are prepared to pay that price."

[Obama gives DOE \\$406 mln hike, cuts oil tax breaks](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The U.S. Energy Department would see its funding increase \$406 million, or 1.6 percent, for the 2010 spending year, under the Obama administration's proposed government budget released on Thursday.

The administration also proposed ending "unjustified tax loopholes" for oil and gas companies that would raise \$26 billion over the next 10 years.

[Budget Appears to Back Off on Gulf Drilling Tax](#)

WASHINGTON -- The Obama administration appears to have dropped a plan to raise \$5 billion via a new excise tax on oil-and-gas production in the Gulf of Mexico, a sign it may be retreating on one front in its fight with the industry.

The decision, revealed in a detailed fiscal 2010 budget plan released Thursday, comes as the White House is sticking with other plans to eliminate \$26 billion in tax breaks for oil-and-gas companies. Half of that would come from eliminating a tax break for domestic oil-and-gas production. Companies say the tax measure keeps jobs in the U.S.

[Free Trade, Green Trade](#)

PRESIDENT OBAMA and the other leaders at the Group of 20 meeting last month vowed to both pursue a "green" economic recovery, and not turn inward. They can fight protectionism and climate change at the same time by unilaterally eliminating tariffs on clean technology products.

The United States should call on each of the major economies to choose any of the products from the World Bank's list of 43 climate-friendly technologies — for example, solar and wind energy equipment — and end tariffs on them. The only requirement

would be that each country reduce the tariffs collected on these 43 products in total by at least 20 percent.

[OPEC Unlikely to Announce New Output Cut in May, Barclays Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, supplier of about 40 percent of the world's oil, is unlikely to announce a further output cut at its next meeting as prices "stabilize," according to Barclays Capital.

OPEC will probably keep production targets unchanged as long as crude prices remain around current levels and inventory growth continues to slow, according to Barclays's head of commodities research, Paul Horsnell. The group meets on May 28 in Vienna.

[ConocoPhillips Said to Plan Full Shutdown of Irish Oil Refinery](#)

(Bloomberg) -- ConocoPhillips plans to shut Ireland's only crude oil refinery in the third quarter for maintenance and inspections, three people with knowledge of the work said.

The halt is likely to occur in August and last about a month, two of the people said, declining to be identified because the information is confidential. Bill Stephens, a ConocoPhillips spokesman based at company headquarters in Houston, wouldn't confirm or deny the plans, citing a policy not to discuss refinery operations that are subject to change.

[TransCanada to build \\$320 million pipeline in Mexico](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - TransCanada Corp said on Thursday it won a bid to build and own a \$320 million natural gas pipeline on Mexico's Pacific coast, expanding its operations in the country.

The proposed pipeline will run 310 km (193 miles) to Guadalajara from a liquefied natural gas terminal being built near Manzanillo, the biggest Canadian pipeline operator said.

[Bike lanes inspire love from cyclists, grousing from neighbors](#)

Last fall, Williamsburg businesses and drivers flipped out when the city removed 340 parking spaces along Kent Avenue to make way for a 1.5-mile bike route.

The city created a "no standing" zone on both sides of the busy street that stripped 30 manufacturers of their loading docks. It also stoked tensions between biking hipsters

and the Hasidim, many who drive.

"You can't uproot people because of a bike route," said Simon Weisser, a community board member who represents the Hassidism. "How can you live in such a place where you can't stop your car?"

[Shell Plans to Increase Spending on Biofuels in Coming Years](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc, Europe's largest oil company, will boost spending on biofuels this year and next to create a "commercial-size" renewables business.

"We expect to grow our spending in 2009 and 2010 in next- generation biofuels and biofuels technologies," Chief Executive Officer Jeroen van der Veer said today at the Shell Eco-marathon Europe event in Lausitz, Germany.

[Japan, waking up to peak oil?](#)

Japan has a 49% dependence on oil for its primary energy supply and an 80% dependence on fossil fuels (which includes oil, natural gas and coal). From an energy security perspective, Japan's economy, the second largest in the world, is increasingly vulnerable as peak oil approaches.

So what is the Japanese government doing to prepare for the reality of peak oil?

More peak oil articles from this UN think tank [here](#).

[Chesapeake CEO: Dramatic Natural Gas Price Rebound Expected](#)

Current low natural gas prices are setting the stage for a dramatic price rebound that should begin this fall or winter, Chesapeake Energy Corp.'s chief executive officer told analysts Tuesday.

"Today's gas prices are clearly not strong enough to support a North American rig count that is high enough to prevent a very severe and unprecedented decline in North American gas production," Aubrey K. McClendon said.

"This will set the stage for a dramatic reversal of natural gas prices sometime this fall or winter," he said.

[Natural Gas Discoveries are bad news for those looking for growth of railroad coal traffic](#)

Recent discoveries of new natural gas reserves have sent well-head prices to levels not

seen since late 2002, and supplies are now estimated to be sufficient for 100 years at current rates of usage. Just last year, supplies were thought to be limited and it looked like the natural gas industry was going to be as reliant on foreign imports of LNG as the gasoline industry was on the import of foreign crude oil. Now price, supply, and LNG imports are no longer obstacles to increasing the use of natural gas to make electricity and to power highway. Since coal has been the reserve fuel for those utilities which thought natural gas supplies were limited, the prospects for the former fuel have declined as those for natural gas have risen.

[Oil-Services Providers Ponder How to Survive Energy Bust](#)

When oil-service providers met at the Offshore Technology Conference in Houston during the recent boom in energy, they were used to calling the shots. Now, caught between high operating costs and clients bent on reducing their own expenses, they're exploring strategies to survive the current economic crunch.

"All of us are starting to see an impact," said Thierry Pilenko, chief executive of oil-services provider Technip, citing a downturn in services dedicated to petrochemical projects, onshore drilling and even deepwater activities.

[Venezuelan Oil-Services Law to Affect Some Foreign Companies](#)

New nationalization legislation now in the hands of Venezuelan lawmakers will impact the operations of some oil-services companies but will leave out rig firms and large well-service firms.

[GM loses another \\$6 billion](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- General Motors' financial woes continue as the automaker teetering on the edge of bankruptcy reported a \$6 billion loss during the first three months of the year Thursday.

GM burned through \$10.2 billion in cash in the quarter, leaving it with only \$11.6 billion in cash on hand at the end of the period. The company says it needs between \$11 billion and \$14 billion on hand to continue normal operations.

[Demand for boat slips in Marina del Rey is drying up](#)

Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of an empty slip.

Or in the case of Marina del Rey, more than 200 of them.

In good times, there was a two-year waiting list for spaces and small boaters complained

that they were being pushed out by bigger boats. But as of February, Los Angeles County officials said, the number of boat slip vacancies at Marina del Rey had nearly doubled to 259, compared with 133 a year earlier.

[Teams cope with schedule cutback and rain](#)

INDIANAPOLIS — What once was billed the Thirty Days of May is now down to a half-dozen, maybe fewer if the rain continues.

The traditional monthlong Indianapolis 500 schedule, first trimmed amid fears of a gas shortage in the 1970s and then adjusted and readjusted several times over the years, has taken another hit because of the state of the economy.

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway has laid off employees to save money, closed the Brickyard Crossing Inn, a hotel just outside the track's second turn, and lopped two days off the practice time leading up to the May 24 race.

[Study: Corn-based Biofuel Costs 50 Gallons of Water per Mile](#)

Federal requirements to increase the production of ethanol has developed into a “drink-or-drive issue” in the Midwest as a result of biofuel production’s impact on water supplies and water quality, says an environmental engineering researcher at Missouri University of Science and Technology in the latest issue of the journal Environmental Science & Technology.

In an analysis of the water required to produce ethanol from various crops, Joel G. Burken, Ph.D., a professor of environmental engineering at Missouri S&T, and colleagues from Rice University and Clarkson University find that ethanol could become a costly proposition in terms of “gallons per mile” and other water quality issues. They describe the Midwest’s water needs and impacts as the “water footprint.”

The researchers report that ethanol derived from corn grown in Nebraska, for example, would require 50 gallons of water per mile driven, when all the water needed in irrigation of crops and processing into ethanol is considered. Fuel derived from irrigated sorghum grown in that state would require even more water to produce – as much as 115 gallons per mile.

[House Ag Chair's Embarrassing Biofuels Hissy Fit](#)

WASHINGTON - The chairman of the House Agriculture Committee reportedly declared at a hearing today that he “will not support any kind of climate change bill” because he is “upset” that proposed EPA biofuels rules require all global warming pollution resulting from biofuels production to be taken into account.

[EPA view on biofuel worries industry](#)

Washington, D.C. - The government and the biodiesel industry are at odds over the impact of the soy-based fuel's failure to meet standards for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

[Japan's Itochu takes fuel oil storage in Singapore](#)

SINGAPORE - Itochu Petroleum has expanded its presence in Asia's fuel oil market, by taking 100,000-120,000 cubic metres (cu m) of storage space at joint-venture partner Chemoil's Helios terminal, industry sources said on Wednesday.

[India buys more Iran, less Saudi crude oil in '08/09](#)

NEW DELHI (Reuters) - India raised crude imports from Iran, Venezuela and Kuwait in fiscal 2008/09, but Saudi supplies dipped as the top oil exporter reduced output and as key customer Reliance Industries cut refinery runs on low demand.

Crude processing by Indian refiners rose 3.0 percent in the 2008/09 financial year that ended in March, the slowest pace in three years, while Reliance Industries reduced production at its export-oriented plants by 3.5 percent.

[Total eyes other oil sands assets to fill 'gaps'](#)

Total SA may make acquisitions in Canada and elsewhere to fill "gaps" in its business after failing to buy UTS Energy Corp., a Canadian oil-sands developer, in a \$830-million hostile takeover bid.

[Saudi Aramco CEO defends massive expansion plans](#)

The president and CEO of Aramco, Khalid Al-Falih, has defended the company's massive expansion plans and spoken of its commitment and sense of responsibility at being the world's largest energy supplier.

[Baker report adds perspective to Mexico's energy reform, deepwater strategy](#)

HOUSTON -- To understand the dynamics of Mexico's state oil company Pemex, it must be compared to international standards, George Baker, consultant and principal of Energia.com, said today at an OTC press conference. "Their methods of holding themselves to international standards are weak," he said.

Pemex's lack of attendance at international gatherings such as OTC, where ideas are shared, is one example, Baker said. He also pointed to the company's organizational structure, which he said is flawed, citing its lack of an easily identifiable exploration management team. "Pemex's exploration challenges are not a matter of technology, but a matter of the organizational structure of the company," he said.

[Transocean May Build Rigs in Brazil as Petrobras Expands Search](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Transocean Ltd., the world's largest offshore driller, may build rigs in Brazil as energy producers including state-controlled Petroleo Brasileiro SA seek to tap the Western Hemisphere's largest discoveries in three decades.

Geneva-based Transocean may hire shipyards in the South American nation to construct drilling vessels to satisfy Petroleo Brasileiro's requirement for domestically built equipment, Chief Executive Officer Robert Long said today during a conference call with investors and analysts.

[EU Offers Russia's Neighbors Perks for Energy](#)

The European Union will offer better trade ties and easier visa rules to six of Russia's neighbors on Thursday as it seeks their support for oil and gas pipelines bypassing Russia.

The Eastern Partnership — as the EU plan to build closer ties with the six countries is known — kicks off with an inaugural meeting in Prague on Thursday, followed the next day by a separate event focusing on Nabucco, the planned gas pipeline to bypass Russia.

"It's a sort of challenge to Russia," said Boris Shmelyov, director of the Center for Comparative Political Research at the Russian Academy of Sciences. "If it wants to keep these countries in its orbit, it has to come up with a good neighborhood policy of its own."

[Asia Fuel Oil-India exports resume after 2-mth halt](#)

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Indian Oil Corp (IOC) is offering 380-cst fuel oil for June lifting, after selling a mid-May cargo, while Essar Oil sold two May parcels, marking the resumption of India's exports of residual fuels after a two-month hiatus.

Traders said Indian refineries were resuming fuel oil sales, in line with the start of the monsoon season between May and July. Exports had halted since late March, as refineries cut runs and switched to production of bitumen to meet rising demand from domestic infrastructure projects.

[Total boosts fuel oil purchases to 580,000T](#)

Total, global oil and gas company and chemicals manufacturer, has bought 90,000 tonnes of cracked 380-cst fuel oil from Saudi Aramco, taking its total to at least 580,000 tonnes since late March.

The French oil major's recent physical fuel oil purchases -- which come after a number of years of inactivity -- could signal a push into higher margin physical trades, traders said.

[Exxon Mobil, Aramco's China refinery starts up - source](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - Sinopec Corp's expanded 240,000-barrel-per-day (bpd) Fujian refinery, a joint venture with Saudi Aramco and Exxon Mobil Corp, started pumping crude into its new facility late last month, an industry source told Reuters on Thursday.

[We must cut dependence on oil to stop kowtowing to despicable Saudi regime](#)

If you ever wonder why you need to drive an electric Dinky toy car and use wind to power your kettle, forget global warming and think of Frank Gardner.

Frank's the journalist who was left paralysed after six al-Qaeda bullets were shot through him five years ago in Saudi Arabia, and he now sits wheelchair-bound in a BBC studio.

He's not just an exceptionally brave man but bereft of self-pity, which is why he refuses to blame the Muslim world for his plight.

Yet even this knowledgeable, forgiving, pro-Arab journalist has one word to describe the treatment afforded him by Saudi Arabia. Despicable.

[Environment challenges facing Arab countries on the rise, warns report](#)

Abu Dhabi: The Arab Environment Future Challenges Report, presented by the Arab Forum for Environmental Development (AFED) in a ceremony on Thursday, warned that the challenges facing Arab countries, especially fresh water scarcity, desertification, air quality and marine pollution, will grow because of climate change.

[Saudi to commission \\$15 mln solar plant](#)

Saudi Arabia will commission the \$15 million two-megawatt solar power plant at the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in July, a senior company executive working on the project said on Thursday.

The plant will generate enough power for about 500 homes, said Abdulhadi al-Mureeh, a business development director with National Solar Systems.

[Monbiot: How much fossil fuel can we burn?](#)

Governments need to cap the amount of coal, gas and oil we extract if they are serious about fighting global warming.

[The wrong direction](#)

Agriculture has been another major contributor to Canada's greenhouse gases, accounting for seven percentage points of the overall increase since 1990. Environment Canada blames the growing market for meat, and the increase in the use of synthetic nitrogen fertilizer.

And then there are the tar sands. Mining, fossil-fuel production and electricity production were all major contributors to the increase in emissions since 1990. Even "fugitive releases" (pipeline leaks, etc) increased by 22 megatonnes between 1990 and 2007.

[New "Green Cities" Report Assesses How Key Cities in America are Combating Climate Change](#)

A new report released today called Green Cities is one of the first assessments of exactly how 40 of the country's largest cities are trying to limit their carbon footprints and take the steps needed to raise these efforts to the next level. The report was initiated and conducted by Living Cities, a long-standing collaboration of 21 of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions.

Based on conversations with the leading thinkers and practitioners in the field, the report is an effort to showcase and support the innovative ways in which cities are creating an equitable green economy - one that connects low-income people and under-invested urban communities to the economic mainstream. According to the featured survey included, it is here where cities have generally fallen short.

[Collapsing Towers](#)

In the heady days of high finance, cheap credit and expensive oil, there was so much money sloshing around the world that it was difficult to find ways to spend it.

Many developers, especially in the oil-enriched nations of the Middle East, drafted plans to build super skyscrapers, the likes of which the world had never seen. Had these plans

come to fruition--by 2020, barely a decade from now--the tallest finished building in the world today, the 1,670 foot Taipei 101, would have been the 20th.

So much for all that. A crashing global economy put an end to those dreams, at least for now, especially in the Middle East.

[Saudi industrial plans seek extra help](#)

THE PROJECT OF steering a vast desert kingdom towards ultra-modernity and diverse, export-led industrialization gathers pace. In an era of sparse international credit, it is even more important but much more difficult to maintain the speed.

[Consumer behaviour has undergone 'climate change'](#)

Former Procter & Gamble global marketing officer Peter Stengel said retailers face a "climate change" as shopper behaviour undergoes a fundamental and irreversible shift.

Stengel, who is chief executive of his eponymous think tank and consultancy, said that there was a "fundamental shift" in consumer spending patterns, which will have long-term repercussions for retailers long after the recession ends.

"It is not a weather change, it is a climate change," he said at today's World Retail Congress session on the new global consumer.

[The Peak Oil Crisis: Bankruptcy](#)

A few years back peak oil all seemed so simple.

Worldwide oil production was going to stop growing; shortages were going to develop; prices would go higher and higher; demand would drop; prices would fall; demand would increase; and the cycle would repeat itself. Each repetition would send prices higher than the one before as more and more people would be forced out of the oil age.

Last summer, it looked as if this scenario were happening. Oil prices, which had been rising slowly for several years, suddenly shot up to \$147 a barrel causing all sorts of economic havoc. Weak airlines dropped like flies! New car sales plummeted! Politicians postured! The Saudis opened the oil tap a bit! Exactly why this price spike was happening became a matter of national debate.

[Oil Rises Above \\$58 on Speculation That Bank Crisis Is Ending](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Crude oil rose above \$58 a barrel for the first time this year on

speculation that the banking crisis and worldwide recession are ending, stoking demand for energy.

Oil traded at the highest price since November as equities rose in anticipation of a “reassuring” report later today from U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner on banks’ ability to bear economic stress. Crude extended yesterday’s gains on reports showing that the U.S. companies cut fewer jobs in April and China’s economy performed better than estimated.

[Russian Ruble Jumps as Oil Rises to Six-Month High, Stocks Gain](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Russia’s ruble climbed against its target currency basket for a fourth day as oil prices surged and the Micex stock index jumped to its highest level since October.

[Saudi Arabia, Bahrain to Keep Currency Pegs to Dollar](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Bahrain officials said today that they see no need to change their more than two-decade-old fixed-exchange rates to the U.S. dollar.

“We are committed to the peg because it serves us well,” Saudi central bank Governor Mohammed al-Jasser said today at an Islamic Financial Services Board conference held in Singapore. The dollar still remains the “dominant” global currency, he said.

[Kuwait suspends oil exports due to high winds](#)

KUWAIT - OPEC member Kuwait halted exports of crude oil and products on Thursday due to bad weather, a spokesman for state refiner Kuwait National Petroleum Co said.

“We have stopped all exports, crude and oil products, due to high wind and dusty weather,” a KNPC spokesman told Reuters, adding that exports would remain halted until the weather improved.

[Kuwait to invest \\$11 bln to boost neutral zone output](#)

KUWAIT (Reuters) - Kuwait Gulf Oil Co (KGOC) plans to invest around \$11 billion in the next 20 years to boost oil output capacity to 900,000 barrels per day from a divided zone it shares with Saudi Arabia, a top oil official said.

KGOC also plans to spend billions of dollars to develop the massive Dorra gas field with Saudi Arabia, said Bader al-Khashti, chairman of the state-run firm, which operates on the Kuwaiti side of the shared Neutral Zone with Saudi.

"The plan is to spend around \$11 billion over the next 20 years...This includes all the projects that we have in mind for the development, expansion and drilling," Khashti told Reuters in an interview.

[Shell's chief executive on the oil industry, the Arctic, Russia, CO2 controls and the company's future](#)

Q: How deep is the hole that the industry is in right now?

A: Oil prices came down very sharply, I think at the speed that hardly anybody expected. Secondly, there was a loss of demand as well, especially in the US and Europe and less so in the Far East. And thirdly, usually people don't notice it so much but we have quite acquired some volatility in currencies as well. So you have to live with that and, of course, you have to look at your customers: whether they still have the cash to pay for their supplies.

[Stimulus weatherization aid favors cold regions](#)

A huge boost in federal funds to help low-income families weatherize their homes provides more than \$3 on average in the coldest states for every \$1 given to warm-weather states, an analysis of the aid program shows — even though exposure to extreme heat and cold are both health risks.

"People think weatherization is only for cold weather," says James Miller, spokesman for the Florida Department of Community Affairs. "The heat is just as dangerous as the cold."

[Making Natural Gas Transportation a Reality](#)

So, what now? For those of us who believe a natural gas centric energy policy should be an urgent and critical priority for America's future prosperity, how can we make it happen?

[GM Faces Exile From Dow as It Mulls 60 Billion Shares](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The Dow Jones Industrial Average may lose its lowest-priced stock with General Motors Corp. facing a bankruptcy or reorganization, said John Prestbo, the editor and executive director of Dow Jones Indexes.

GM costs the least among the 30 companies in the Dow, representing 0.2 percent of the price-weighted measure, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. International Business Machines Corp., priced the highest, has a 9.8 percent weighting.

[Nissan plans electric car to challenge Chevrolet Volt](#)

Nissan says it could beat General Motors' highly publicized Chevrolet Volt to market, selling an electric car as soon as fall 2010 with an eye-popping fuel-economy rating equivalent to 367 miles per gallon and a range of 100 miles on a charge.

The electric car does not use petroleum fuel directly. The mpg equivalent is calculated using a federal formula that takes into account the fuel an electric utility would use to charge the car.

Ford said Wednesday that it will begin producing a battery-power version of the next-generation Focus compact sedan at a converted Michigan truck factory in 2011. An early prototype gets 357 mpg, using the federal math.

[Ford invests \\$550M to bring new Focus to market](#)

WAYNE, Mich. – Ford Motor Co. stripped "truck" from the name of one its Detroit-area plants Wednesday as it announced plans to build its next-generation Focus here, including a battery-electric version Ford expects will run up to 100 miles without using gas or emitting greenhouse gas.

While Chrysler LLC sells assets in a New York bankruptcy court, and General Motors Corp. works around the clock on ways to cut labor costs and debt before a government imposed deadline, Chairman Bill Ford Jr. and CEO Alan Mulally announced plans to invest \$550 million to retool the Michigan Truck plant so it can make small cars it will sell worldwide.

[Something fishy about forest biomass claims](#)

RISI, the leading information provider for the global forest products industry, states in its October 2008 Wood Biomass Market Report that "the perceived overabundance of 'waste wood' in the nation's forests is simply not there."

What this means is — even counting on the current unsustainable rate of short-rotation toxic clear-cutting on private forestlands — there's not enough wood to feed proposed biomass plants, such as Seneca Sawmill Co.'s.

So why are there more and more proposed biomass plants across the United States?

[New Zealand: Harbour barrier could control sea, create power](#)

A Barrier should be built across Otago Harbour to protect Dunedin from sea-level rise and help generate electricity, Dunedin city councillors were told yesterday.

[Clean energy firms still offer good returns: investors](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Renewable energy companies could still provide substantial returns for private equity investors this year as those with real growth potential are surviving the economic slowdown, investors said at a conference on Wednesday.

Shares in clean energy companies under performed other stocks in 2008 because of their dependence on growth, technology advances and high oil prices. More expensive debt since the financial crisis has curbed installation of clean energy projects, for example in wind and solar power.

[Some Americans clamor to try wind power at home](#)

CHICAGO (Reuters) - The idea of wind turbines churning out free electricity alongside every home and office building has appeal, judging by the throngs around "community wind" purveyors at a Chicago wind power convention this week.

Darrin Russell of Southwest Windpower was inundated with questions during the Windpower 2009 convention where he explained the economics of the company's workhorse 2.4 kilowatt Skystream turbine, which plugs into the local electrical grid.

[Cert energy-saving bulb scheme not saving power](#)

Ofgem will soon publish figures for the first year of the Cert scheme, under which energy companies help householders install energy-saving items. It will say that no less than 152m CFL bulbs have been given out to British homes – about six per household.

[Review: Prosperity Without Growth?](#)

In response to these concerns, this book cites the studies of Peter Victor, a Canadian economist, who has run computer models of how the Canadian economy would react to the end of growth with differences in macroeconomic variables such as the savings rate, the rates of public and private investment, and the length of the work week. Results are dramatically different with different values for these variables. In one run, the end of growth brings economic instability, high unemployment, and rising poverty. In another run, the end of growth brings economic stability, cuts both the unemployment and poverty rates in half, and reduces the ratio of debt to GDP by 75%. In part, the difference comes because the second scenario has a higher savings rate, a lower rate of private investment, and a higher rate of public investment. In addition "unemployment is avoided ... by reducing both the total and the average number of working hours.

Reducing the working week is the simplest and most often cited structural solution to the challenge of maintaining full employment with non-increasing output."

[Peak-Oil Prophet James Howard Kunstler on Food, Fuel and Why He Became a Vegan](#)

Kunstler dishes on the collapse of our institutions, why "recovery" may never come and how to survive the fall of farming as we know it.

[Profile: Stephen Kronstein promotes peak oil](#)

Point Grey's Green Party MLA candidate, Stephen Kronstein, is aware he will not win on May 12. Hence, he is freely toting throughout Point Grey one issue: peak oil.

[U.N. CO2 scheme needs energy efficiency focus: developer](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - A bigger role must be found for improving energy efficiency in any new U.N. deal aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, a leading China-based project developer said on Thursday.

[Climate Experts Warn That Short-Term Snapshots Of Temperature Data Can Be Misleading: Focus Instead On The Bigger Picture](#)

ScienceDaily — In the hotly debated arena of global climate change, using short-term trends that show little temperature change or even slight cooling to refute global warming is misleading, write two climate experts in a paper recently published by the American Geophysical Union — especially as the long-term pattern clearly shows human activities are causing the earth's climate to heat up.

[Energy industry adjusts to politics of global warming](#)

Whether or not oil and gas players have abandoned years of skepticism about the human role in climate change, the industry appears to have accepted the likelihood of pending game-changing legislation.

The change goes beyond the environmentally friendly ad campaigns from companies like Shell, BP and Chevron in recent years. Exxon Mobil made several mentions of projects with "lower greenhouse gas emissions" during its earnings calls last week. Companies in all parts of the business have started including climate change laws in their risk warnings to investors.

[Cut Carbon And Stay Competitive: \\$10 Billion?](#)

As Congress debates how to regulate carbon emissions, business is up in arms over costs they say will leave them handicapped in the face of growing global competition.

But an estimate out today says the U.S. government will give away just \$10 billion per year in carbon allowances to keep many domestic industries competitive under a federal cap and trade climate scheme--petty cash in the current bailout era.

[Peak phosphorus: the sequel to peak oil ?](#)

Phosphorus isn't quite at the top of the list of fashionable causes, but perhaps it should be. Dana Cordell warns of a looming problem, we've become addicted to it and, like oil, it's believed it will run out.

Phosphorus has been used extensively for over 100 years as a fertiliser in modern industrial agriculture. The widespread use has lifted crop yields and helped feed the world's growing population, but what happens when production reaches a peak?



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