



DrumBeat: May 29, 2009

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Wind Energy--Too Much of a Good Thing](#)

A surfeit of wind energy is pushing down the price of all electricity. The real time price of electricity in West Texas, where almost all generation is wind, was negative for 23% of April 2009. The negative prices spilled over to the rest of Texas for about 1% of the month. This may be the future of the electric industry, with negative prices for a substantial amount of time each month.

[Brazil to open up vast offshore fields](#)

International oil companies will be invited to bid for concessions in Brazil's enormous "pre-salt" oil fields as early as next year, Edson Lobão, mines and energy minister, has told the Financial Times.

[World's largest fusion facility today celebrates long, difficult road to official opening](#)

The challenging pursuit of fusion is nothing new to Lawrence Livermore Laboratory scientists. In the lab's early days in the 1950s, weapons designers successfully developed the fearsome hydrogen — or fusion — bomb, many times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in World War II. In 1952, the lab joined a program called Project Sherwood that attempted to control the force of fusion to create a virtually unlimited source of electrical energy.

Today, the lab enters the newest chapter in its fusion quest with the official opening of the multipurpose National Ignition Facility, 15 contentious years after the project's approval. The massive, dark building on the eastern edge of Livermore — not far from hillsides dotted with grazing cows — covers the footprint of three football stadiums. With 192 lasers, it ranks as the world's largest laser fusion facility.

[Slovakia says it may relaunch old nuke plant in crisis](#)

(PRAGUE) - Slovakia said Friday an energy crisis may force it to relaunch an outdated

Soviet-type reactor shut down as part of the deal that saw the country join the European Union in 2004.

"I cannot rule it out. If there was such a threat in Slovakia, it is more important to have light and warmth than dark and cold," Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said after the European Nuclear Energy Forum in Prague.

[Panarchy: the Science of Cycles](#)

Human civilizations, as Holling learned, also follow the same course as other natural systems, an awareness that has solidified his global reputation as a theorist and helped to coalesce his ideas into a multinational scientific community of thinkers called the Resilience Alliance. This makes panarchy theory particularly relevant and timely because it joins a growing body of thought from climatologists, ecologists, anthropologists, philosophers and others who are examining our modern civilization from the broad perspective of history and are recognizing the same worrisome trends that have occurred in collapsed civilizations of the past. To understand more clearly this basis for worry, we must understand panarchy theory and Holling's insights about the natural cycles of forests.

[Byron King: Gold and the Cap-and-Trade Revolution](#)

This is a critical matter and here's the takeaway point: *We're about to see an UTTER TRANSFORMATION of the U.S. economy.*

Your life will be regulated — directly and surely indirectly — by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), mostly through its powers under the Clean Air Act (CAA). And the parts of your life not regulated by EPA will fall under the jurisdiction of your friendly state or provincial environmental authorities. Many of the policy details will be rounded out via litigation in state and federal courts, mostly initiated by the likes of the Sierra Club and other environmental organizations.

[New fuel standards aren't as tough as they look](#)

Good news for Americans with large families or who need to transport substantial amounts of gear: President Obama's new vehicle emissions standards are not as tough as they seem. But this is bad news for environmentalists, who want to lower the use of gasoline.

[Hurricane Center Tracks First Storm of '09 Atlantic Hurricane Season](#)

Days before the official start of the Atlantic Hurricane season on June 1, the National Hurricane Center reported that it is currently tracking its first storm -- an unnamed

tropical depression -- for 2009.

[Hurricane season sparks anxieties](#)

CHAUVIN, La. — Terri Broussard knows when it's hurricane season: Calls for refills of nerve-calming meds start piling up at the doctor's office where she works in this bayou community.

[Detroit community groups work for city's new glory days](#)

DETROIT — Despair shows on the faces of many people at soup kitchens and in unemployment lines here. And desperation is evident in Craigslist posts from a single mom who needs \$950 for medical bills and a man who can afford to pay just \$650 for a used car he needs to job hunt.

There is something else, though, in this shrinking city beset by chronic poverty and the unraveling of the industry that once made it great: hope.

[A Job and No Mortgage for All in a Spanish Town](#)

“They all thought that the market was God, who made everything work with his invisible hand,” Mr. Sánchez said on a recent morning, seated in his office below a portrait of Che Guevara. “Before, it was a mortal sin to talk about the government having a role in the economy. Now, we see we have to put the economy at the service of man.”

While the rest of Spain gorged on cheap credit to buy overpriced houses, the people of Marinaleda were building their own, mortgage-free, under a municipal program, he said. If a resident loses his job, the cooperative hires him, he said, so nobody wants for work — a bold claim in a region with 21 percent unemployment.

[For Personal-Injury Lawyer, Michael Pollan's Book Is Worth Fighting For](#)

Among the things that Bill Marler feels passionately about are Washington State University (his alma mater), food safety and negotiation. So after he heard about a dustup on campus over the cancellation of a program requiring all freshmen to read the same book — Michael Pollan's double-fisted examination of agribusiness, “The Omnivore's Dilemma” — he stepped in to resolve it.

[Organic Dairies Watch the Good Times Turn Bad](#)

For those farmers, the promises of going organic — a steady paycheck and salvation for small family farms — have collapsed in the last six months. As the trend toward organic food consumption slows after years of explosive growth, no sector is in direr shape than the \$1.3 billion organic milk industry. Farmers nationwide have been told to cut milk production by as much as 20 percent, and many are talking of shutting down.

“I probably wouldn’t have gone organic if I knew it would end this way,” said Mr. Preston, 53.

[Survey: Arctic may hold twice the oil previously found there](#)

(CNN) -- Continental shelves beneath the retreating polar ice caps of the Arctic may hold almost double the amount of oil previously found in the region, scientists say.

In new findings, the U.S. Geological Survey estimates the Arctic may be home to 30 percent of the planet's undiscovered natural gas reserves and 13 percent of its undiscovered oil.

[Natural gas in the Arctic is mostly Russian](#)

WASHINGTON – Nearly one-third of the natural gas yet to be discovered in the world is north of the Arctic Circle and most of it is in Russian territory, according to a new analysis led by researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey.

"These findings suggest that in the future the ... pre-eminence of Russian strategic control of gas resources in particular is likely to be accentuated and extended," said Donald L. Gautier, lead author of the study published in Friday's edition of the journal Science.

[Energy reserves north of Arctic Circle mapped in detail for first time](#)

Russia could benefit from increasing its existing gas reserves, currently the biggest in the world. But the oil estimate is small, compared with known reserves in major petroleum-exporting countries, and is unlikely to shift trade patterns greatly, the researchers say.

[Oil Heads for Biggest Monthly Gain Since 1999 as Asia Rebounds](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil headed for its biggest monthly gain in a decade as economic indicators from Asia and shrinking crude inventories in the U.S. pointed to a global recovery.

Oil rose to a six-month high above \$66 a barrel after India's economy grew more than expected in the last quarter, while Japan said today that its industrial output climbed the most in at least six years in April. The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries predicted stronger demand as it decided yesterday to keep output quotas unchanged.

[Rising oil may test U.S. economy's green shoots](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Swiftly rising oil prices threaten to sap the buying power of U.S. consumers who are essential to ending the longest recession since the Great Depression.

Oil has been on a tear in the last five weeks, rising 48 percent since April 21 to hit a 2009 intraday peak above \$65 per barrel on Thursday. Part of that reflects hopes that the global economy is inching out of a deep slump, but it may also have something to do with investors seeking an inflation shield as the U.S. dollar weakens and government spending grows.

[Petrol prices soar despite recession](#)

The spectre of £1 a litre petrol is returning to haunt hard-pressed motorists at UK forecourts.

At many motorway service stations and in rural areas, the price is already a common sight – and average prices across the country as a whole are closing in on the level, according to the AA.

[Ruble Heads for Biggest Monthly Jump Since 1995; Stocks Climb](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The ruble rose, heading for its biggest monthly advance against the dollar since 1995, as oil extended gains in its best month in a decade. Stocks rallied to the highest level since September.

[Nippon Oil sees June crude refining down 4 pct y/y](#)

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's biggest refiner, Nippon Oil Corp, plans to refine 4 percent less crude in June from a year ago, a company executive said on Friday, as domestic demand for oil products remains sluggish. Oil sales in Japan, the world's third-biggest oil consuming nation, are down as the population ages, homeowners, business and drivers shifts towards greener energy, and the economy wallows in its worst recession since World War Two.

[Oil Rally Driven by Sentiment, Not Demand, OPEC Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil's rally is driven by improving sentiment about the global economy and isn't supported by crude demand, OPEC Secretary-General Abdalla El-Badri said a day after the group decided to leave production targets unchanged.

Global crude stockpiles remain very high, El-Badri told reporters at a briefing in Vienna. Still, prices may reach \$70 to \$75 a barrel by the end of the year, partly because speculators are returning to commodity markets, he said.

[Total aims for new fields in North Sea](#)

ABERDEEN (Reuters) - French oil major Total aims to shave a fifth off the cost base of its North Sea operations this year while looking to prolong the life of existing wells there and open new ones.

The firm's 2009 exploration and production budget in what is a declining oil and gas reserve area is 1.2 billion pounds, said Roland Fester, Total's head of E&P in Britain.

At around \$30 per barrel on average, extraction costs in the North Sea are relative high, due mainly to a lack of competition between service providers and high pay packages.

[Obama to discuss oil prices with Saudis](#)

US President Barack Obama said he would discuss oil costs when he meets with Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah next week and plans to say that big price rises are not in Riyadh's interests.

"I don't think it's in Saudi Arabia's interests to have a situation in which our economy is dependent -- or disrupted constantly -- by huge spike in energy prices," Obama said when asked by a reporter what his message would be during his June 3 visit to Saudi Arabia.

[Indonesia on track despite Cepu delays'](#)

Oil production from Indonesia's huge Cepu field faces delays, but the country should still meet its oil production target this year, Energy Minister Purnomo Yusgiantoro said today.

Indonesia, which has turned into a net importer of crude oil in recent years after a slump in production, should achieve a target of 960,000 barrels per day of crude and condensate production this year, the minister said in an interview with Reuters.

[Allotting of Iraqi Oil Rights May Stoke Hostility](#)

The sheik is one of thousands of Kurds who have moved to Kirkuk, an unstable oil town in northern Iraq, since the 2003 United States-led invasion and claimed plots of land not theirs to build houses. Some of the homes, illegal facts on the ground aimed at furthering Kurdish claims to Kirkuk, sit a mere half mile from towering flames of natural gas among the oil fields.

Their presence is one of many pressure points converging at a critical time in Kirkuk, as rights to those fields are scheduled to be awarded to the highest bidding international oil company next month as part of Iraq's larger effort to bolster its slumping economy by nearly tripling oil production over the next six years.

[Battling Big Oil Means Taking a Page Out of Their Playbook](#)

"Big oil has successfully communicated their messages regardless of facts," said Joanna Schroeder, Principal of 4R Communications. "For many years, they have lobbied against the renewable energy industry and today they are beginning to position themselves to take it over. In order to dethrone big oil, the renewable energy arena needs to consider adopting similar tactics."

[World Bank to bolster sustainable energy role](#)

BERGEN, Norway (Reuters) - The World Bank seeks to play a bigger role in sustainable energy projects around the globe including experimental carbon capture and storage (CCS) research, Vice President Katherine Sierra said on Thursday.

[Car-driven society poses health risk for Americans](#)

Driving is a way of life for Americans but researchers say the national habit of driving everywhere is bad for health.

The more you drive, the less you walk. Walking provides exercise without really trying.

[NGOs sketch path to sustainable consumption](#)

The EEB's blueprint is about shifting from "peak everything [peak oil, peak water, peak food etc.]" and reaching Earth's limits to the notion of contraction and simplification, Fedrigo explained. Meanwhile, the transition needs to be embraced "in an intelligent and planned way to avoid chaos," she underlined.

Arnold Tukker, one of the report's authors, called for limits to be placed on the use of natural resources. Emission and resource-use caps, standard setting, charges and energy-performance targets can be powerful policy measures, as can limitations on advertising and shifting taxes from labour to resources, he argued.

[The 100 mile economy](#)

What might our lives be like if oil prices surge back up, and go beyond, say, \$200 a barrel?

What could the world economy - and our local economy - look like if we get to a point where fuel is not affordable?

[Speaking Volumes book club: Why Your World is About to Get a Whole Lot Smaller](#)

Sorry, but Rubin is persuasive only in the sense that all the other pessimists over all the other decades have been persuasive while wrong. The U.S. Geological Survey in 1920 estimated the world's total endowment of oil at 60 billion barrels. By 1950, the estimate rose 10-fold, to 600-billion and now it's about three trillion. Last year, the Geological Survey estimated over four billion barrels of technically recoverable oil in North Dakota and Montana's Bakken Formation alone — that's 25 times the estimate of a decade earlier.

The only clear trend I see is up. Over the last two decades of unprecedented globalization, oil reserves grew in the Americas, in Europe and Eurasia, in Africa, in the Middle East, even in the Asia Pacific region that includes voracious China and India. All told, world oil reserves increased by a staggering 36%, and that doesn't include the 152 billion barrels in proven oil reserves obtainable from Canada's tar sands. Never before in human history has energy been accessible in greater abundance in every major region of the world; never before has mankind faced a brighter energy future.

[EU states seen backing duties on U.S. biodiesel](#)

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Most European Union member states indicated on Thursday they would support a European Commission plan to extend anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties on imports of biodiesel from the United States, EU sources said.

[Sharing the rooftop garden secret](#)

"The most important thing to realize is we need to localize our food supply," said Gretchen Mead, head of the Milwaukee chapter of the Victory Garden Initiative, which promotes urban gardening wherever possible. Ever the advocate, Mead helped move

compost at Future Green May 4 while her 7-month-old son Otto, in his blue PJs, was strapped to her chest in a sling.

“We’re not always going to have access to cheap, abundant fossil fuels” to transport food across the country, she said, launching into a constellation of criticisms of food that comes “1,500-miles-per-bite,” maligning the nutritional defects of “food on steroids,” and criticizing the industrial agricultural practices that she said contribute to disease mutations, the need for antibiotics, and global health crises like the swine flu epidemic.

[Gardeners to form Saturday market downtown](#)

“We don’t have a lot of farmers in the Blaine area but we do have a lot of gardeners,” said Blaine resident Ron Snyder, who, with his wife, Cathy grows about a quarter of their food on their Sweet Road farm and plans to do more. “The community sharing resources is a step toward a more viable downtown, and it’s a fun thing to do, a great way to meet and share with neighbors, a good community builder,” he said.

[EPA: Recession Won't Stop Clean Energy Revolution](#)

PARIS — The top U.S. environment official says it's time for the United States to shed its energy-wasting image and lead the world race for cleaner power sources instead.

After several years with a relatively low profile under President George W. Bush, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "is back on the job," EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson told The Associated Press on Thursday during a trip to Paris.

[UW scientists say new online tool aims to take world's temperature](#)

How much warmer could Washington's summers be in 100 years?

Will June rainfall in Australia change by midcentury?

Climate experts today will unveil an online tool that shows how global warming could affect the entire world, including changes within cities, states and countries.

[Forests and the Planet](#)

A major shortcoming of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol on climate change was its failure to address the huge amounts of greenhouse gas emissions caused by the destruction of the world’s rain forests. A proposal that rich nations be allowed to offset some of their emissions by paying poorer counties to leave their rain forests intact was shot down after European environmental groups objected. They argued that it would allow rich

countries to buy their way out of their own obligations. The planet has been paying for that colossal blunder ever since.

[Oil firms and loggers 'push indigenous people to brink of extinction'](#)

Five "uncontacted" tribes are at imminent risk of extinction as oil companies, colonists and loggers invade their territories. The semi-nomadic groups, who live deep in the forests of Peru, Brazil and Paraguay, are vulnerable to common western diseases such as flu and measles but also risk being killed by armed gangs, according to a report by Survival International, which identifies the five groups as the most threatened on Earth.

Sixty members of the Awá tribe are said to be fleeing from gangs of loggers and ranchers on their land near Maranhão, Brazil. "Logging roads have been bulldozed through a part of their territory, where the uncontacted groups are living. The ranchers want land to graze cattle for beef. The loggers regularly block roads to prevent government teams from entering the area to investigate," says David Hill, a Survival researcher and co-author of the report.

[Maryland pollutes more than 150 countries](#)

Maryland emitted more cumulative global warming pollution between 1960 and 2005 than more than 150 other nations surveyed, according to a report released this week by Greenpeace. And that makes it one of the least-polluting states on a per-person basis.

[Climate 'catastrophe' killing 300,000 each year](#)

LONDON, England (CNN) -- The first comprehensive report into the human cost of climate change warns the world is in the throes of a "silent crisis" that is killing 300,000 people each year.

...The vast majority of deaths -- 99 percent -- are in developing countries which are estimated to have contributed less than one percent of the world's total carbon emissions.



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