



DrumBeat: July 5, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on July 5, 2009 - 10:30am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[In Public Housing, Talking Up the Recycling Bin](#)

Proselytizing on the issue in housing projects is an enormous challenge but crucial, environmentalists say, given the incentive to cut back on energy and garbage disposal costs and a housing authority's power to impose recycling rules building by building.

In New York, the incentive may be greatest of all. Only 17 percent of the city's household waste makes it into recycling bins, and New York has the largest public housing system in the country, with 2,600 buildings, 174,000 apartments and more than 400,000 residents in five boroughs.

[Saudi Aramco Cuts All Crude Prices to U.S. in August](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Saudi Aramco, the world's largest state-owned oil company, lowered its official selling prices for exports of all crude oil grades to the U.S. in August.

Saudi Arabia decreased the price of its heavy crude to all destinations, the company said in an e-mailed statement today. Aramco cut heavy crude prices to the U.S. the most, by 75 cents a barrel to \$5.50 below the cost of West Texas Intermediate crude.

[A New Chief at Shell, and a Rocky Inheritance](#)

NEW YORK — Even as Jeroen van der Veer was preparing to pass the baton to Peter Voser, who took over as chief executive of the oil giant Royal Dutch Shell last Wednesday, the contentious legacy of the company's activity in Nigeria was nipping at its heels.

[Earthquakes in Texas get the attention of Louisiana agency](#)

A series of minor earthquakes recorded as recently as last week in Texas have raised the specter of tremors in northwest Louisiana, where a natural gas discovery has launched a gold-rush style drilling boom.

A similar rush hit north Texas several years ago, after geologists found vast stores of natural gas in the Barnett Shale, a layer of underground rock spanning 5,000 square miles. Thousands of wells have been drilled, and some scientists have blamed the recent earthquakes on the intense process used to extract gas from the shale, called fracturing.

[El Niño Variant Is Linked to Hurricanes in Atlantic](#)

Scientists have known for some time that El Niño, the warm spell that turns up every four or five years in the waters of the eastern Pacific Ocean, reduces hurricane activity in the Atlantic. But in a new study, researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology have linked a variant of that pattern — periodic warming in the central Pacific — to more frequent hurricanes in the Atlantic, particularly on the Gulf Coast and in the Caribbean.

[Five things John Stackhouse can do to improve the Globe and Mail](#)

Pay attention to peak oil. Stackhouse should give all of his editors and reporters a choice of one of three books to read: *The Empty Tank* by Jeremy Leggett; *The Party's Over* by Richard Heinberg; or *Why Your World Is About to Get a Whole Lot Smaller* by Jeff Rubin (which actually got covered in the *Globe*). Then Stackhouse should ask his reporters to investigate ways in which Canadians can prepare themselves for what will likely be the biggest transformation in their lives. The *Globe* could play a significant role in preparing the country for major changes in the global energy market, which will have ramifications on transportation, agriculture, and trade. Most federal politicians are asleep on this issue. They won't be if the *Globe* gives it more attention. Why not base a reporter in the oilsands? It's one of the biggest stories in the world.

[This is not your father's energy crisis](#)

Every recession has its own unique characteristics, but usually there are a few common threads. Economic and employment issues, for example, typically tend to completely eclipse all others when conditions start to tank.

This time around, however, one issue that has historically fallen off the public agenda during downturns is proving to be one of the most urgent and enduring: the environment.

[Costa Rica tops list of 'happiest' nations](#)

(CNN) -- Forget Disneyland! Costa Rica is the happiest place in the world, according to an independent research group in Britain with the goal of building a new economy, "centered on people and the environment."

[Calculating Consumer Happiness at Any Price](#)

As an exercise, Dr. Miller asked readers of the blog to list the 10 most expensive things they had ever bought, and then list the 10 purchases that had brought them the most happiness. More than 200 responded. As we expected, many people rued spending lots of money for stuff that hadn't brought them joy. Boats seemed to have particularly low utility in delivering happiness per dollar; many cars fit that category, too, and so did many expensive weddings.

But we were struck by how much overlap there was between the most-expensive list and the most-happy list. People repeatedly included on both lists their homes, their college education, their vacation trips, their high-priced electronics (large-screen televisions, Blu-Ray player, audio equipment, computers) and certain models of cars (BMW 325, Audi A4, Jaguar, Subaru WRX, Toyota Prius, Honda Civic).

[SNP Would Bankrupt an Independent Scotland, But Benefit England](#)

The prime driving force for Scottish independence is that of the perceived benefits from North Sea Oil revenues going wholly to Scotland rather than to Westminster. Whilst it is true that 90% of North Sea oil revenues are due come from Scottish waters, however North Sea oil peaked in 2001, since which daily output has fallen by 50% in 8 years, the trend in declining output is expected to continue in the coming years as new oil fields are not able to make up for the declining output from existing fields, this is called PEAK OIL. The revenue to the government from North Sea oil has now fallen to £10 billion, of which £9 billions is attributable to Scottish oil fields set against the block grant Scotland receives of £32 billion from central government of which £8 billion is the value of the net subsidy.

[Poland also grapples with fossil-fuel issue](#)

Wind turbines generating electricity dot a hilltop in the largely flat, grassy expanse lying between Warsaw and Krakow.

A few miles away stands evidence of Poland's main power source shrouded in a thin cloud of haze: one of the country's massive coal-burning plants.

The country, with rich veins of coal, produces about 90 percent of its electricity from coal, compared with 50 percent in the U.S. and 60 percent in Tennessee.

[Funding Boost for Waste Methane Processor](#)

Landfills, coal beds and cattle feedlots all produce methane, which is often either flared — that is, burned off — or released into the atmosphere as a greenhouse gas.

Prometheus Energy, a five-year-old company based in Redmond, Wash., has developed a technology to turn that waste methane into liquid natural gas. And the company this week raised \$20 million from the Shell Technology Ventures Fund, a fund related to the petroleum company Royal Dutch Shell and Black River Asset Management, a subsidiary of the agriculture giant Cargill.

[Britain Could Be Wind and Wave Titan](#)

Britain could become the largest producer of electricity from offshore wind by the end of the next decade, according to the Carbon Trust, a group funded by the British government.

With carefully targeted subsidies and regulations, Britain could build 29 gigawatts of capacity compared to a global total of 66 gigawatts by 2020, giving it 45 percent of the offshore power market, said the Carbon Trust. By comparison, Germany would have 12 gigawatts by 2020, the group said.

[Food Stocks Look Good](#)

In 233 years the world population has swollen from less than a billion to almost seven billion. The Japan Times reports that Canada produces 145% more calories of food than it consumes and the United States is close with 128% while the island nation of Japan has recently dipped to 39%.

[Tough Senate battle likely on energy bill](#)

Washington — - President Barack Obama's landmark bill on energy and global warming squeaked through the House this week only after the White House made dozens of concessions to coal, manufacturing and other interests. As the battle moves to the Senate, Obama faces demands for more concessions, including to open the coastline to offshore oil and gas drilling.

The Senate will take up issues that were glossed over or omitted from the House bill. Among them is giving the government sweeping new powers to overcome local objections and approve thousands of miles of new transmission lines to carry electricity to coastal cities from wind turbines in the Upper Midwest and solar power generators in the Southwest.

[Environment Groups Find Less Support on Court](#)

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court heard five environmental law cases in the term

that ended Monday, and environmental groups lost every time. It was, said Richard J. Lazarus, a director of the Supreme Court Institute at Georgetown University Law Center, “the worst term ever” for environmental interests.

[Post-Bubble Landscapes](#)

Are these portraits, perhaps, of the end of the age of unfettered consumption, simply a short pause before human communities resume their 150-years-and-counting fossil-fueled sprint, or a foretaste of Alan Weisman’s 2007 thought experiment, “The World Without Us”?

[A House in the Woods, After the Woods Are Gone](#)

When my wife and I bought land in Montana, the stands of timber were so dense you couldn’t walk through parts of the property. Then the beetles came, killing the stately old trees.

[Thomas L. Friedman: Can I Clean Your Clock?](#)

Over the past decade, whenever I went to China and engaged Chinese on their pollution and energy problems, inevitably some young Chinese would say: “Hey, you Americans got to grow dirty for 150 years, using cheap coal and oil. Now it is our turn.”

It’s a hard argument to refute. Eventually, I decided that the only way to respond was with some variation of the following: “You’re right. It’s your turn. Grow as dirty as you want. Take your time. Because I think America just needs five years to invent all the clean-power technologies you Chinese are going to need as you choke to death on pollution. Then we’re going to come over here and sell them all to you, and we are going to clean your clock — how do you say ‘clean your clock’ in Chinese? — in the next great global industry: clean power technologies. So if you all want to give us a five-year lead, that would be great. I’d prefer 10. So take your time. Grow as dirty as you want.”

Whenever you frame it that way, Chinese are quizzical at first, and then they totally get it: Wow, this energy thing isn’t just about global warming! In a world that is adding one billion people every 15 years or so — more and more of whom will be able to live high-energy-consuming lifestyles — the demands for energy and natural resources are going to go through the roof. Therefore, E.T. — energy technologies that produce clean power and energy efficiency — is going to be the next great global industry, and China needs to be on board.

[T. Boone Pickens fueling dialogue on clean-energy efforts](#)

In July of last year, Dallas billionaire T. Boone Pickens began a \$60 million advertising campaign and speaking tour designed to persuade Americans to stop using foreign oil.

The oilman-turned-environmentalist proposed a seemingly simple plan: Convert cars, especially big fleets operated by companies and municipalities, from gasoline to domestic natural gas. And start generating more electricity from wind.

By the end of this year, Pickens predicts, Congress will finish passing laws to implement his plan. And within two years, oil imports will drop.

[Kuwait needs oil majors to hit targets - minister](#)

OPEC member Kuwait will need help from oil majors to reach its oil and gas production targets, the deputy prime minister for economic affairs said on Thursday.

"Not only for the oil (sector) but also for the gas," Sheikh Ahmad Al Fahad Al Sabah, also a former oil minister, said when asked about a possible role for international oil companies in the country's state-run energy sector.

"Now we have the gas production (issue) for which we will mainly need international companies," he told reporters without being more specific about the envisaged role of foreign firms.

[Kuwait wants oil price to remain above \\$60](#)

Kuwait wants to see the price of oil stay above \$60 a barrel, the OPEC member's oil minister said on Sunday.

"We will be watching the market very closely," Kuwait's Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Abdullah al-Sabah told reporters at parliament. "We would not like to see the price go below a certain level so it at least meets our budgetary requirements."

[Total Expects to Get Oil Projects in Iraq, De Margerie Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Total SA, Europe's third-largest oil company, said it will continue to bid for business in Iraq after the government there said it may allow competitor BP Plc to develop the Rumaila oil field.

[RCMP confirms sixth pipeline blast in B.C.](#)

POUCE COUPE, B.C. — There has been a sixth bombing of natural gas infrastructure in northeastern British Columbia, police say.

Officials said the explosion occurred early Saturday morning at an EnCana Corp. site, in the immediate vicinity of a blast that took place Wednesday.

"This is very frustrating," said Rhona DelFrari, EnCana's spokeswoman. "We're angry and we're getting very frustrated."

[Nigeria militants attack Shell, amnesty hopes fade](#)

LAGOS (Reuters) - Nigerian militants said on Sunday they had launched their third attack against Royal Dutch Shell since President Umaru Yar'Adua made an amnesty offer and warned their campaign of sabotage would intensify.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) said in an emailed statement it had attacked a Shell oil well head in the Cawthorne Channel at about 0200 GMT, again dashing hopes that the amnesty offer would buy a period of calm.

[David Strahan: Thirty contestants, only one winner in the Iraqi oil licence gameshow](#)

The auction of Iraqi oil production licences last week was truly historic – not least because it was the first such exercise ever to be broadcast live on TV.

More than 30 companies were expected to compete for eight contracts, all in front of the cameras. In effect, the Iraqis had set up a high-stakes reality TV show, with Hussain al-Shahristani, Iraq's minister of oil, in the role of Sir Alan Sugar, and company executives as the desperate wannabes. Some bidders feared it would degenerate into an unseemly scramble, and with good reason.

[Pakistan: City shuts to protest outages, raise in fuel prices](#)

LAHORE - City witnessed complete shutdown on Saturday as the traders and shopkeepers closed down their business and took to streets to protest against the worst power outages and increase in fuel and electricity tariff.

All the major political parties in the Opposition supported the strike call and urged the masses to take to the streets to force the government to withdraw steep increase in the fuel and electricity prices.

[Saudi spending to surge 24 per cent in 2009, says Samba](#)

Saudi Arabia will likely be tempted by the recent improvement in crude oil prices and increase public spending by nearly 24 per cent through 2009 as an expanded deficit could be easily covered, a leading Saudi bank said yesterday.

Although actual revenues are projected to be higher than budget forecasts, the surge in

expenditure will sharply widen the shortfall but the world's dominant oil powerhouse need not borrow again given its massive financial reserves, the Saudi American Bank Group (Samba) said in a mid-year review of the economy of Saudi Arabia.

[The food rush: Rising demand in China and west sparks African land grab](#)

A million Chinese farmers have joined the rush to Africa, according to one estimate, underlining concerns that an unchecked "land grab" not seen since the 19th century is under way.

Some of the world's richest countries are buying or leasing land in some of the world's poorest to satisfy insatiable appetites for food and fuel. In the new scramble for Africa, nearly 2.5m hectares (6.2m acres) of farmland in just five sub-Saharan countries have been bought or rented in the past five years at a total cost of \$920m (£563m), research shows.

"Lands that only a short time ago seemed of little outside interest are now being sought by international investors to the tune of hundreds of thousands of hectares," said a recent report by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). It described the huge deals reported to date as "the tip of the iceberg".

The report said farmland purchases are being driven by food security concerns, rising demand and changing dietary habits, expanded biofuel production and interest in what is, in theory, an improved investment climate in some African countries.

[What the future of the auto industry will look like](#)

Surging demand for cars in rapidly growing nations will mean a robust car industry in 20 years. The US will have a piece of it – though smaller than today – and the models it turns out will be much greener as the iconic industry reinvents itself.

['Green revolution' could create 400,000 jobs, claim ministers](#)

A "green revolution" that should create 400,000 jobs is to be launched by ministers later this month in the most ambitious ever bid to transform the British economy, industry and sources of energy.

[Energy-pioneering Austrian town exports its model](#)

GUESSING, Austria (AFP) — After 20 years investing in renewable energy, the small Austrian town of Guessing, a model of energy self-sufficiency, is spreading its pioneering technology far and wide.

A town of 4,300 inhabitants near the Hungarian border, Guessing launched into renewable energy in the early 1990s and now produces more than it can consume.

[Jordan - Mining company expands uranium exploration](#)

(MENAFN - Jordan Times) A Jordanian-French company has expanded its exploration of uranium in the central region, after recent studies confirmed the presence of commercially viable amounts of the resource.

[Extraordinary climate solutions presented in Manchester](#)

Under a vaulted ceiling decorated with the arms of the countries and cities with which Manchester once traded, now lit by low-energy chandeliers, a panel of experts heard pitches for ideas ranging from a fleet of remote-controlled sailing ships that would spray seawater into the air to make whiter clouds to livestock farming methods modelled on the great migrations of the Serengeti.

Today it will hear a proposal to increase the carbon absorbing capacity of the ocean by adding limestone to it, a plan for generating energy from a 'big underwater stomach' digesting algae, and new ideas about harnessing tidal energy.

[Global Warming Is Fake. What Matters Is Why This Fakery Is Being Promoted](#)

The global warming movement is not about global warming. It is about the creation of an international political control arrangement by which bureaucrats who favor socialism can gain control over the international economy.

[Prince Charles wants pension funds to take lead on climate change](#)

Prince Charles is to convene a meeting of some of the world's largest pension funds to discuss how best to invest their trillions of dollars to help reduce climate change.

The meeting, likely to be held at Clarence House in October, will bring together senior executives from 12 funds including Calpers, America's largest public pension fund. Known as the P8 Group, after the number of founder funds, they control \$3 trillion (£1.8 trillion) in total.



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