



## DrumBeat: July 19, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on July 19, 2009 - 10:15am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Time Is Running Out On Our Culture Of Consumerism](#)

Our civilization now confronts its ultimate challenge. I refer to the disparity between declining supplies of essential resources and increasing demand for them.

Oil is not the sole concern; humanity is approaching a shortage of minerals indispensable to industry and the way of life it has engendered.

### [Price falls will prompt delays in Gulf construction sector](#)

The trend of clients retendering contracts in the hope of securing lower bids on their projects has become an increasingly common feature of the Gulf construction market.

Costs are certainly falling in many areas, according to the latest industry data from UK-based construction cost consultant Davis Langdon. But while clients benefit, contractors are suffering.

### [Jackup count increases along with uncertainty](#)

The global jackup rig fleet has grown significantly from January 2004 to May 2009. The rig count increased from 387 to 440 and is expected to add about 60 more before the year ends. However, 2009 expects to be a challenging year. Some jackups will be without contracts for all or part of the year and others planned for construction will not be built.

### [Sabic Net Tumbles 76% on Plastics, Fertilizer Demand](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Saudi Basic Industries Corp., the world's largest petrochemical maker, said second-quarter profit fell 76 percent, missing analysts' estimates, as the economic slump hurt prices and demand for plastics and fertilizers.

### [Gas price record, one year later](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- It's been one year since drivers across America were stuck paying the highest gas prices on record, and the memory is not a pleasant one for consumers.

### [Oil May Rise on Slumped Earnings, Survey Shows](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Crude oil may rise as better-than-expected second-quarter earnings bolster the outlook for a recovery in demand, a survey of analysts showed.

Seventeen of 37 analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News, or 46 percent, said futures will climb through July 24. Ten respondents, or 27 percent, forecast that prices will be little changed, and 10 expected a decline. Last week, 46 percent of analysts said oil would fall.

### [Debate on Clean Energy Leads to Regional Divide](#)

WASHINGTON — While most lawmakers accept that more renewable energy is needed on the nation's grid, the debate over the giant climate-change and energy bill now before Congress is exposing a fundamental rift. For many players, the energy not only has to be clean and free of carbon-dioxide emissions, it also has to be generated nearby.

The division has set off a fight between Eastern and Midwestern politicians and grid officials over parts of the bill dealing with transmission lines and solar and wind energy. Many officials, including President Obama, say that the grid is antiquated and that thousands of miles of new power lines are needed to allow construction of wind farms and solar fields in the most promising spots. Many of the best wind sites are in the Midwest, far from the electric load in populous East Coast cities.

An influential coalition of East Coast governors and power companies fears that building wind and solar sites in the Midwest would cause their region to miss out on jobs and other economic benefits. The coalition is therefore trying to block a mandate for transcontinental lines.

### [China's Wide Reach in Africa](#)

AMONG Westerners, the economic partnership between China and Africa is often overlooked. But in "China Safari: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion in Africa" (Nation Books, \$27.50), Serge Michel and Michel Beuret examine the roots of this relationship — and argue that China is engaged in a conquest of Africa that will have worldwide economic implications.

### [U.S. Finding Its Voice in Africa Again](#)

SHANGHAI — For several years, the prevailing winds blowing over the African continent have come from China.

Starting quietly, while the United States and Europe were preoccupied elsewhere, China has built up an impressive head of steam in Africa, winning large new markets in country after country and bringing welcome foreign investment on a scale not seen in many parts of the continent since the end of the superpower competition between the United States and the Soviet Union.

### [The Nigerian House Of Darkness](#)

INCESSANT and inadequate power supply is a major bane of the development process in Nigeria. Its effect can be seen in the frustrations that have been expressed by the manufacturing sector and the citation of the country's power and energy crisis as one of the factors responsible for the flight of some companies from Nigeria (Dunlop, Michelin), away to more conducive neighbouring countries (Ghana, Republic of Benin), and also the low capacity utilisation in that sector. With companies having to rely on the use of diesel and petrol-guzzling generating sets, usually for 24 hours non-stop, and almost for the entire year, the cost of production is driven up to unsustainable levels. Worse is the effect on social life and national security: the average Nigerian is accustomed to darkness and the generating set, so many lives have been lost to generator-related accidents, the entire economy is powered by generator noise and fumes, creating a helpless environmental crisis. Under the cover of darkness, sundry criminal activities are carried out. Doing business in Nigeria, any business at all, including artisanal engagements requiring the use of electricity is difficult and expensive. These are the facts.

### [Largest Green-Power Program Stumbles](#)

The nation's largest green-power program has seen enrollment fall far short of expectations as its wind power prices have soared.

Austin Energy, which offers homeowners and businesses the chance to power their homes with renewable energy (mainly wind) through its GreenChoice program, has signed up only 1 percent of its hoped-for customers for its latest wind power offering, according to The Austin American Statesman.

### [California: Jail Sentence in a San Francisco Oil Spill](#)

The helmsman of a cargo ship that set off an environmental disaster in San Francisco Bay has been sentenced to 10 months in prison. The man, John Cota, was sentenced for two misdemeanor environmental crimes of illegally discharging oil in the bay and killing thousands of birds.

## [Peeling Back Pavement to Expose Watery Havens](#)

SEOUL, South Korea — For half a century, a dark tunnel of crumbling concrete encased more than three miles of a placid stream bisecting this bustling city.

The waterway had been a centerpiece of Seoul since a king of the Choson Dynasty selected the new capital 600 years ago, enticed by the graceful meandering of the stream and its 23 tributaries. But in the industrial era after the Korean War, the stream, by then a rank open sewer, was entombed by pavement and forgotten beneath a lacework of elevated expressways as the city's population swelled toward 10 million.

Today, after a \$384 million recovery project, the stream, called Cheonggyecheon, is liberated from its dank sheath and burbles between reedy banks. Picnickers cool their bare feet in its filtered water, and carp swim in its tranquil pools.

The restoration of the Cheonggyecheon is part of an expanding environmental effort in cities around the world to “daylight” rivers and streams by peeling back pavement that was built to bolster commerce and serve automobile traffic decades ago.

## [Mercedes Reveals Electric SLS AMG](#)

The Mercedes-Benz SLS AMG is an exotic gull-wing supercar, still in the testing stage, that packs a 6.3-liter V-8 engine, capable of 570 horsepower — and consuming some gas, one assumes. Hardly en vogue these days, and that might explain the development of an electric version of the supercar, the SLS AMG with electric drive.

## [Raining savings](#)

Rain barrels are an idea whose time has come — again. Rainwater harvesting has been around for centuries and used to supplement ground water supplies, but recently it's found new life in the environmental movement as a way to conserve water, prevent runoff into storm drains and offer plants a better source of moisture.

“It's a better water for the plants than treated water,” says Buchanan County extension agent Thomas Fowler. “It's water that doesn't have chlorine, fluoride or anything like that in it. Those types of things can build up in your soil eventually. So in a way, it's a better moisture source.”

## [Bottled Water Makers in the Hot Seat](#)

Bottled water makers, it seems, are under seige. The Environmental Working Group, which found chemical contaminants in tests of bottled water, has begun calling for more oversight of the bottled water industry. Proponents of low-carbon lifestyles, meanwhile,

are urging consumers to eschew bottled water and fill up reusable bottles with tap water instead.

Restaurants have started to pull bottled water from their menus, and cities like Toronto are delivering chilled, dispensable drinking water to public events so people won't have to buy it.

### [Georgia: Judge Rules Against Atlanta in Water Dispute](#)

A federal judge ruled against Georgia in the state's water dispute with Alabama and Florida, deciding that Atlanta must stop withdrawing water from a massive federal reservoir within three years unless it can get approval from Congress. The judge, Paul A. Magnuson of Federal District Court, said that Lake Lanier had not been built for water supply and that the state's withdrawals were illegal. Judge Magnuson acknowledged that it would be impossible to stop using the lake immediately because it is metro Atlanta's main water supply. But he said that if the state could not get Congressional permission within three years, the withdrawals must end.

### [Are the deserts getting greener?](#)

It has been assumed that global warming would cause an expansion of the world's deserts, but now some scientists are predicting a contrary scenario in which water and life slowly reclaim these arid places.

They think vast, dry regions like the Sahara might soon begin shrinking.

### [Limits on Logging Are Reinstated](#)

In a move to protect endangered species, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced Thursday that his department had reversed a Bush administration decision to double the amount of logging allowed in and around old-growth forests in western Oregon.

### [Mining Firms Could Post Cleanup Bonds](#)

The Obama administration signaled its determination to ensure that mining companies clean up their toxic debris as the Environmental Protection Agency announced plans to require the companies to post bonds to guarantee, in the words of an agency release, "that owners and operators of these facilities, not taxpayers, foot the bill for environmental change."

### [The Age of Stupid](#) (review)

In “The Age of Stupid,” a frightening jeremiad about the effects of climate change, the craggy-faced British actor Pete Postlethwaite plays the Archivist, a finger-pointing, futuristic voice of doom in 2055. Peering into a retrospective crystal ball that shows scenes from the early 21st century, he scolds the human race for having committed suicide.

### [Schools foster climate illiteracy](#)

The textbooks used in the Portland area -- texts that are playing a larger and larger role in the curriculum -- adopt a Rush Limbaugh-like skepticism toward global warming.

### [Bill McKibben: Comment & Analysis: A death warrant for Maldives](#)

For years scientists had wondered where exactly the red line was for global warming —and they’d always hoped it lay somewhere in the future.

But two summers ago Arctic ice melted dramatically, and way ahead of the predictions of various computer models. Suddenly it seemed that wherever the threshold of danger lay, we’d already crossed it.

### [Disillusioned Environmentalists Turn on Obama as Compromiser](#)

Compromises made to win passage of a climate-change bill have infuriated and disappointed environmental activists.

### [Dearborn-on-Amazon](#)

With “Fordlandia,” Greg Grandin, a professor of history at New York University, tells a haunting story that falls squarely into this tradition: Henry Ford’s failed endeavor to export Main Street America to the jungles of Brazil. Fordlandia was a commercial enterprise, intended to extract raw material for the production of motor cars, but it was framed as a civilizing mission, an attempt to build the ideal American society within the Amazon. As described in this fascinating account, it was also the reflection of one man’s personality — arrogant, brilliant and very odd.

### [The environmental problem the world is loath to address](#)

A quick question: What's the biggest environmental problem facing humanity today. Is it global warming? One would certainly think so judging from the actions of various governments, which are trying to reduce those manmade greenhouse gas emissions we hear so much about. Is it dwindling energy resources, running up against the limits of

agricultural technology in feeding the earth's population, or perhaps diminished supplies of fresh water, without which life cannot be sustained? All of the above are exacerbated by the continued growth in the number of people living on this planet. Overpopulation is the proverbial 800-pound gorilla in the attic. It is the most disastrous environmental threat we face, yet one whispered about rather carefully since there are no apparent solutions to it that are politically viable.

### [Cushing Refinery hub part of ABC oil special](#)

ABC News' anchor Charles Gibson plans to get viewers up to speed with the whole story from gas pump to oil well in the special "Over a Barrel: The Truth About Oil," airing Wednesday.

"The real purpose is, if you drive a car or happen to be alive and live in America today, your life is deeply affected by our addiction to oil," said executive producer Tom Yellin, who is president and executive producer of the Documentary Group, and spent most of most of his childhood summers in Okmulgee and "at least 15 Thanksgivings in Tulsa."

### [The new scramble for Africa](#)

AfriCom - currently headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, but aiming to transfer to Ghana - is a measure of how seriously Washington is taking the new scramble for Africa and how determined it is to compete there with China, which has major strategic and economic goals throughout the continent. It also shows how seriously the US takes threats from al-Qaeda-aligned Islamic movements which have footholds in several African states; and how seriously it intends securing its burgeoning oil and gas interests in West Africa.

### [U.N. Sudan chief raises alarm over oil area troops](#)

KHARTOUM (Reuters) - The head of the United Nations in Sudan accused south Sudanese soldiers Saturday of straying into the contested oil area of Abyei, stoking tension ahead of a sensitive ruling on the region's boundaries.

The armies of north Sudan and its semi-autonomous south, which clashed in Abyei last year, had agreed to stay out of the area to prevent further escalations in violence, as part of a deal brokered by the United Nations.

### [New oil refinery in Kurdistan](#)

ARBIL: Iraq's largely autonomous Kurdistan region opened a new oil refinery yesterday, with a projected capacity of 40,000 barrels per day (bpd), the director of the group that built the refinery said.

### [Ecuador unlikely to nationalize oil sector](#)

QUITO (Reuters) - Although Ecuador seized control of Perenco's oil fields over a tax dispute, the OPEC nation is unlikely to nationalize petroleum companies while it seeks to renegotiate contracts in a bid to increase revenue.

The leftist government of Rafael Correa, a key ally of Hugo Chavez, who has nationalized scores of energy companies as president of Venezuela, seized control of Perenco's operations on Thursday.

### [Michigan: Area experiencing oil boom](#)

Jackson County's oil boom has been raging quietly since a Traverse City oil company struck liquid gold late last year. Now, with hundreds of oil and gas leases being signed in at least nine townships, oil suddenly is this economically challenged county's ace in the hole.

Napoleon Township Clerk Dan Wymer was serious Tuesday when he told fellow board members, ``It looks like Napoleon Township is on the verge of becoming the oil capital of Michigan."

### [Uphill Road for Europe to Kick Russian Gas Habit](#)

BRUSSELS — After hundreds of thousands of East Europeans shivered through a bitter winter because of a standoff over natural gas between Russia and Ukraine, European Union officials this past week sought to be reassuring.

Even if Gazprom, the Russian gas export monopoly, turned off the taps again, there should be enough natural gas to go around because of forward planning being done now, the E.U.'s energy commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, said at a news conference.

That applies even to such vulnerable countries outside the E.U. as in the Balkans, E.U. officials said.

### [Two men and a website mount vendetta against an oil giant](#)

A man obsessed indeed. His modest three-bedroom house in Colchester, Essex, is home to what is probably the world's largest dossier on Royal Dutch Shell. It also serves as the headquarters for royaldutchshellplc.com, the website where Donovan and his father Alfred – frail but lucid at 92 – pursue a surprisingly effective crusade against the world's biggest oil company.



### [Australia: Nationalise coal— to fund a just transition away from it](#)

If we're serious about this transition, we can't afford to have coal companies skipping the country. We should be nationalising it, or at the very least upping the royalties to 80%, and that money would pay for the transition.

Because, make no mistake about it, these coal companies will skip the country once it starts to wear out.

### [Consciousness and Complexity](#)

Global warming: it's a hoax, just ask conservative commentators such as George Will, Rush Limbaugh and Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe. Not to worry. Same response to peak oil concerns. The market will somehow always keep us supplied with all the energy we can use, or science will, or there is simply no foreseeable shortage of hydrocarbon energy to begin with. Not to worry—all is well. And so on for all of humanity's mounting existential threats.

Like the great apes we are able to comprehend reality abstractly through mathematics, and for humans, science, but at a concrete, tangible level, we are unable, as a species, to translate abstraction into changed action. Humans fail the test, though at a higher level of social complexity than great apes. This conclusion strongly suggests that a creature that was cognitively to humans as we are to great apes would NOT fail this test. Therefore it is possible to not fail. The question before us is: is it possible for humans to not fail it?

### [Study shows significant savings in alt-fuel cars](#)

"The point we make is that it is not just about fuel," he added in the release.

Of the 51 alternative-fuel cars and trucks tested, 35 delivered cash savings over a five-year period when taking into account several factors such as maintenance, repairs and retained value. In some cases, the savings were huge.

### [The green revolution](#)

Ed Miliband's 1,000-page opus is big on aspiration but short on detail, say industry chiefs, and Labour's low-carbon dreams will remain just that without investment.

### [A Growing India Sets Goal to Harness Renewable Energy](#)

NEW DELHI - In the new India, villagers in far-flung areas might have cellphones but live in darkness because they have no access to electricity. The cellphone network towers in the villages run on diesel-powered, smoke-spewing, portable generators.

Indians say this is a clear example of how the country's woefully inadequate power supply lags behind an expanding consumer market.

### [Automakers seek battery ties as cars go electric](#)

TOKYO (Reuters) - Rechargeable batteries could become the core technology for the auto industry if pure electric cars enter the mainstream -- a prospect that has carmakers racing to team up with battery makers.

Auto executives say that with fewer moving parts, easy-to-assemble electric cars may also lower the bar for entry into the cut-throat autos industry and make battery manufacturers the unlikely competitors for car giants.

### [Some See Exxon Investments Into Alt Energy Signaling 'Paradigm Shift' for Big Oil](#)

Is Big Oil warming at last to the notion of an alternative-energy future?

### [Ready or not, here comes China](#)

Outside of China's gleaming cities, the country's growth has been accompanied by tremendous pollution.

### [Trade and Climate](#)

When leaders of the world's richest nations and the big developing countries agreed at the Group of 8 summit this month to restart global trade negotiations, they sent a powerful signal about the need for concerted action to deal with the world's economic emergency.

It was disturbing, however, that they could not agree on a common strategy for reducing the greenhouse emissions causing global warming. Trade and climate policy have become increasingly entangled. A failure to agree on how to address global warming could undermine half a century of opening world trade.



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