



Drumbeat: October 22, 2009

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[‘The Violent Twilight of Oil,’ Part II](#)

The following is the second part of a two-part interview with Peter Maass, a journalist and contributing writer for The New York Times magazine. His new book, “Crude World,” chronicles what he calls “the violent twilight of oil.”

Over the course of a decade, Mr. Maass traveled to more than a dozen countries where the existence of oil shapes, and often violently corrupts, the economic and political culture. Indeed, the world of oil painted by Mr. Maass is bleak, volatile and — punctuated by environmental degradation — ultimately unsustainable.

ocal Corp. was scuttled by Congress on national security grounds. The El Segundo oil firm eventually merged with Chevron Corp. of San Ramon.

[What Goldman Learned from a Trip to China](#)

Goldman Sachs has been bullish about all things BRIC for years now. In a recent trip to China a number of Goldman analysts visited local and foreign oil and gas related companies as well as various equity investors in major Chinese cities. Their main takeaway from the trip was that their bullish thesis on the country was justified, China commodity demand would drive prices higher and they feel increasingly confident about their current \$94 crude oil price target. Their micro takeaways from the trip included some focused ideas on the energy markets:

[New York's natural gas battle](#)

(Fortune Magazine) -- The farmland around the college town of Oneonta, N.Y., is punctuated by barns and cows. But the quiet setting belies a battle that is raging over the Marcellus Shale, a largely untapped deposit of natural gas that runs from West Virginia to New York.

Gas companies, environmentalists, and cash-strapped farmers have been squaring off over the lucrative commodity, whose fate could be decided soon.

Experts say Marcellus is the largest natural gas deposit in North America, even bigger

than Texas's lucrative Barnett Shale. A Penn State study of the shale has placed the amount of recoverable gas there at 489 trillion cubic feet -- more than 20 times the amount that the United States uses each year.

[US urging China, Japan to buy less oil from Iran](#)

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The Obama administration is urging China, Japan and other countries to scale down their Iranian petroleum purchases to put pressure on Iran while the U.S. and others consider toughening economic sanctions on the regime.

"We are telling them not to engage in business as usual," an administration official said Wednesday.

[BP Said to Study Bid for Jubilee Stake, Hire Goldman](#)

(Bloomberg) -- BP Plc, Europe's second-biggest oil company, may bid for Kosmos Energy LLC's stake in the Jubilee field off Ghana's coast and has hired Goldman Sachs Group Inc. to advise it, two people familiar with the matter said.

BP has held talks with Ghana National Petroleum Corp. about a potential joint offer for Kosmos's Ghanaian assets, though no decision has been made, the people said, asking not to be identified because the discussions are confidential.

[Analysts await signs that electricity demand is coming back when Exelon reports 3Q results](#)

Like other utilities and power generators in the U.S., Exelon has been hurt by weak demand for power because of the recession and a cool summer in much of the country.

The Energy Information Administration has projected a 3.3 percent decline in electricity consumption this year with industrial demand especially weak. The agency says the rate of decline is expected to slow in the second half of 2009 and then pick up in 2010 as the economy improves.

[Lester R. Brown: The Rising Tide of Environmental Refugees](#)

Our early twenty-first century civilization is being squeezed between advancing deserts and rising seas. Measured by the biologically productive land area that can support human habitation, the earth is shrinking. Mounting population densities, once generated solely by population growth, are now also fueled by the relentless advance of deserts and may soon be affected by the projected rise in sea level. As overpumping depletes aquifers, millions more are forced to relocate in search of water.

[Leaner and cheaper: The rise of thin-film solar power](#)

THE modernist box that won this year's Solar Decathlon, a contest for solar-powered houses sponsored by America's Department of Energy, had solar panels of the conventional, crystalline sort on its roof. But the walls were covered in solar cells made with thin coatings of silicon and other materials in the place of expensive slices of crystal. Thin film, as this technology is known, is still less popular than crystalline cells and its move to the mainstream has been a year or two away for a decade. But its time may have come at last.

[A Streetcar System Concept Plan to Desire? A Look at Portland's](#)

The project team, along with Portland Mayor Sam Adams, identified six goals for the project (three for the overall system and three for streetcar corridors). A successful streetcar system will help the city implement its peak oil and sustainability strategies; provide an organizing structure and catalyst for the city's future growth along streetcar corridors; and integrate streetcar corridors into the city's existing neighborhoods. A successful streetcar corridor will be a viable transit option with adequate ridership; have (re)development potential; and demonstrate community support.

['The Violent Twilight of Oil,' Part II](#)

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Over the course of a decade, Mr. Maass traveled to more than a dozen countries where the existence of oil shapes, and often violently corrupts, the economic and political culture. Indeed, the world of oil painted by Mr. Maass is bleak, volatile and — punctuated by environmental degradation — ultimately unsustainable.

[John Michael Greer: Strange Bright Banners](#)

It's not the "cornpone Hitler" James Howard Kunstler has predicted that we have to fear, much less the imaginary conspiracies that occupy so much space in today's alternative discourse, but a suave, articulate, and charismatic figure who harnesses the widespread assumption that anything must be better than what we have today, and replaces a dysfunctional democracy with an all too functional tyranny.

Such a figure, it bears remembering, could as easily emerge from the left as from the right. One popular DVD that circulated widely in the peak oil scene a few years back was called *The Power of Community*, a documentary about how Cuba survived its own equivalent of peak oil when Soviet fuel subsidies stopped at the end of the Cold War. It's

a worthwhile case study of how a society can weather an extreme energy shortage, but it finessed one of the key points that enabled the Cuban response, namely, that Cuba is a dictatorship. To impose the draconian restrictions on energy use that got his country through its "Special Period," Castro did not have to mobilize public opinion, placate powerful special interests, and shepherd legislation through a fractious Congress riven by ideological splits and determined to defend its prerogatives; he simply had to impose them, and those who disagreed were welcome to spend the next few years discussing the matter at length behind bars with their fellow political prisoners.

[British Navy to Return to Iraq to Help Protect Oil Platforms](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Britain's Royal Navy will return to Iraq to help train Iraqi sailors and protect oil platforms, the U.K. armed forces minister said, following an agreement that had been held up by lawmakers in Baghdad for five months.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his Iraqi counterpart, Nuri al-Maliki, announced in December that some British personnel would stay in Iraq after the end of U.K. combat operations on May 27 to help train Iraq's navy.

[Little Action for China's Oil Deals](#)

It might sound as if Cnooc is busy vacuuming up the world's oil reserves. But neither the Nigerian nor Ghanaian situations look particularly promising for it. The Statoil deal is just talk for now. Another deal involving Cnooc, to buy Marathon Oil's stake in an Angolan field, appears to have been stymied by Sonangol, Angola's own national oil company (NOC).

Indeed, for all the talk and Western uneasiness, actual deal activity by China's oil majors remains surprisingly low. Neil Beveridge at Sanford Bernstein reckons Chinese and Indian NOCs have accounted for less than 5% of global energy mergers and acquisitions over the past five years.

[Chevron secures gas for Australia LNG export plant](#)

PERTH (Reuters) - Apache Energy (and Kuwait Foreign Petroleum Exploration Company) have agreed to supply gas to Chevron's proposed Wheatstone gas export project in Australia, U.S. energy major Chevron Corp said on Thursday.

[Canada August retail sales up 0.8 pct on gas, cars](#)

OTTAWA (Reuters) - Canadian retail sales increased by 0.8 percent in August from July on higher sales at gasoline stations and new car dealers, Statistics Canada said on

Thursday. Excluding these retailers, sales were flat.

The increase was greater than the 0.4 percent rise predicted by market operators. In volume terms, retail sales grew by 0.4 percent from July.

[Petrobras' Capital Increase Should Be Largest in History](#)

The Director of Finance and Investor with of Petrobras, Almir Guilherme Barbassa, detailed, in a public hearing in the Brazilian Senate this Tuesday, October 20, the capitalization process of Petrobras. The officer stated that the company's capital increase should be the largest in the world's history. Nearly 20 senators attended the hearing.

[Resilience Thinking: an article for the latest 'Resurgence'](#)

The term 'resilience' is appearing more frequently in discussions about environmental concerns, and it has a strong claim to actually being a more useful concept than that of sustainability. Sustainability and its oxymoronic offspring sustainable development are commonly held to be a sufficient response to the scale of the climate challenge we face: to reduce the inputs at one end of the globalised economic growth model (energy, resources, and so on) while reducing the outputs at the other end (pollution, carbon emissions, etc.). However, responses to climate change that do not also address the imminent, or quite possibly already passed, peak in world oil production do not adequately address the nature of the challenge we face.

[Wind powered factories: history \(and future\) of industrial windmills](#)

In the 1930s and 1940s, decades after steam engines had made wind power obsolete, Dutch researchers obstinately kept improving the – already very sophisticated – traditional windmill. The results were spectacular, and there is no doubt that today an army of ecogeeks could improve them even further. Would it make sense to revive the industrial windmill and again convert kinetic energy directly into mechanical energy?

[Review: *Power from the Sun* by Dan Chiras, with Robert Aram and Kurt Nelson](#)

For the average home- or small business-owner looking to purchase a solar PV array, there is much homework to be done—and truly good textbooks, amid the cacophony of voices on the subject, are a real find. Thankfully, *Power from the Sun*, the latest offering from green building guru Dan Chiras, is just such a book.

In eminently readable, informative, accessible prose, *Power from the Sun* describes the components and workings of a solar electric system, how to go about having one installed and some basic things to know in order to be an informed consumer and avoid common pitfalls. Solar PV buyers will still have a bit of legwork to do after reading the

book, including finding local solar contractors and obtaining quotes. But once these steps are done, their learning curve will no doubt be greatly reduced.

[Baffin Island reveals dramatic scale of Arctic climate change](#)

A frozen lake on a remote island off Canada's northern coast has yielded remarkable insights into how the Arctic climate has changed dramatically over 50 years.

Muddy sediment from the bottom of the lake, some of it 200,000 years old, shows that Baffin Island, one of the most inhospitable places on Earth, has undergone an unprecedented warming over the past half-century. Scientists believe the temperature rise is probably due to human-induced warming. It has more than offset a natural cooling trend which began 8,000 years ago.

[The Peak Oil Crisis: More Reports](#)

The main conclusion of the British report is that there is a "significant risk" that conventional oil production will peak before 2020, and that forecasts which delay the event beyond 2030 are based on assumptions that are "at best optimistic and at worst implausible." This is a nice balance between warning of trouble just ahead and not seeming overly alarmist. One suspects that a lot of effort went into crafting the phrase.

A fair question to ask is whether reports of this type have any impact or change government policy? In recent years, two other major reports were issued in the U.S., one by the Government Accountability Office, and one by the National Petroleum Council at the request of the U.S. Secretary of Energy. While these extensive reports did a workman like job in weighing the pros and cons of imminent peak oil, they failed to reach any particularly alarming conclusions and were largely ignored by the media and the U.S. government. The general sentiment these days seems to be that anything that will not happen in days, weeks, or at most a few months can safely be ignored as over the horizon of concern.

[Exploding U.S. National Debt Means Bye Bye Miss American Pie](#)

We have had a Department of Energy since 1979. Over this time we have become more dependent on foreign oil. No nuclear power plants or oil refineries have been built in the U.S. in 30 years. Pipelines and energy infrastructure rusts away, while we twiddle our thumbs and agonize over the health of the planet. Doing nothing is a decision. It is a decision which will have dire consequences. Ethanol, solar, and wind will not save us now. It is too late. The United States depends on oil, natural gas, and coal to supply 87% of its energy, with nuclear power providing another 7%. The beloved solar, wind and geothermal sources supply 1.5% of our energy needs. The onset of peak oil will devastate the suburban American way of life.

[The issue of our time](#)

Whatever you think of President Obama's surprising Nobel Peace Prize, one thing is certain: It caused a great deal of debate about how his presidential success will be measured. Obama arguably faces a wider set of challenges than any president since FDR: Iraq, Afghanistan and the economy, to name just three. Yet whatever his success in the areas, his presidency may be viewed as a failure if it fails to make significant change on the most crucial issue of our time: how we obtain and use energy.

Whether we know it or not, virtually every facet of daily life in the United States is dependent upon oil. Not only our cars but also our computers, clothing, food and just about anything else you can think of is either made with or transported by fossil fuels.

[Byron King: An Update on Peak Oil \(Yes, It's Still a Problem\)](#)

It was clear from the reaction of many in the ASPO audience that Marcio hit nerves. If his analyses of the South American, African and GOM petroleum systems are right, then in the future the world has access to much more conventional oil than people previously believed. But it's not the same as saying the nothing has to change in modern habits of energy use. Getting this oil will require a trillion-dollar level of offshore, deepwater investment. It's a 50 to 100 year project.

The new thinking about deep petroleum systems may allow the world's energy thinkers to back off from raw geologic concerns about the wheres and how-muches of resources. But like a game of "whack-a-mole," the reduced worry about geology now translates into a new emphasis on exploration and development technology, as well as capital, skilled personnel, political issues, environmental safety and climate alteration.

[What is Peak Oil Theory? A Thorough Look at This heavily Debated Topic](#)

Currently there is a lot of debate going on regarding Peak Oil and precisely what we need to be doing about it, both now and in the near future.

The term "peak oil" refers to that specific point in time when the Earth's oil supply will finally reach that theoretical "maximum rate" of global petroleum extraction and will then signal the start of a progressive decline, where our thirst for oil will finally exceed our available supply of oil!

"Peak Oil Theory" is a concept originally derived from the measured postulates and predictions of M. King Hubbert, who in the year 1956, set out to scientifically formulate a method to prognosticate peak oil production within the United States between the years 1965 and 1970.

[Surging oil has petro companies drilling again](#)

NEW YORK — With oil prices surging, petroleum drillers have dusted off idled rigs and kick-started a global production network that thrives on high energy prices.

Some oil executives have declared the yearlong slump in petroleum over, pointing to an uptick in exploration and drilling operations around the world. At \$82 per barrel and growing, oil prices are finally at a level that gets drillers excited.

[Shale Gas Will Tip The Scale](#)

A seismic shock wave is coursing through the global energy industry. Based on American innovation, a new way of extracting natural gas from prehistoric clay called shale is unbalancing the global energy equation. The traditional rulers of the fossil fuels industry – Saudi Arabia, Iran and Russia -- are watching in horror as independent wildcatters in unlikely places like Poland and Pennsylvania are finding gigantic new natural gas reserves.

[Shale gas supply debate heats up](#)

Just as the rest of the world begins to get excited about prospects for shale gas reserves, a skirmish is growing over just how much shale gas is actually recoverable in the US.

Matt Simmons has said a few times this year that he doesn't see evidence that the big shale plays such as Barnett are actually providing big increases in natural gas production, despite the number of wells being sunk. He also pointed to the environmental problems with the hydraulic fracturing used to extract shale gas.

[Oil Falls Below \\$81 as Rising Dollar Crimps Commodities Demand](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Crude oil declined as the dollar strengthened against the euro, reducing demand for commodities as an alternative investment.

Oil retreated from a one-year high as the dollar advanced after China's economic growth missed some analysts' forecasts. Investors buy dollar-priced commodities to hedge against a weaker U.S. currency.

"The dollar was a key driver yesterday for the crude market," Frank Schallenberger, head of commodities research at Landesbank Baden-Wuerttemberg, said by phone from Stuttgart. "The dollar is stronger today, that's why crude is down."

[Norway bank boss keen on \\$75 oil](#)

Norway's Central bank governor Svein Gjedrem said \$75 per barrel oil was not only good for the Norwegian economy, it was also good for players operating on the Norwegian continental shelf.

[OPEC Says It May Raise Oil Output at December Meeting](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, supplier of 40 percent of the world's oil, may decide to increase production at its meeting in December, the group's Secretary-General Abdalla El-Badri said.

An increase will depend on prices remaining at \$75 to \$80 a barrel, as well as on stockpiles returning to the five-year average and the elimination of floating storage, El-Badri told reporters today in London.

[U.S. companies 'entitled' to some of Iraq's crude oil, Pickens tells Congress](#)

Oil tycoon T. Boone Pickens told the U.S. Congress in Washington yesterday that U.S. energy companies are "entitled" to some of Iraq's crude oil because of the large number of U.S. troops that lost their lives fighting in the country and the U.S. taxpayer money spent in Iraq.

[Nigerian rebels want peace talks before ceasefire](#)

ABUJA (Reuters) – Nigeria's main militant group will consider reinstating a ceasefire in the oil-producing Niger Delta if the government is willing to begin serious peace talks, the group said on Wednesday. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) lifted a three-month old ceasefire last week and threatened to resume its campaign of violence, which has kept OPEC member Nigeria from pumping above two thirds of its capacity for years.

"MEND will consider the option after we are convinced the government is serious and sincere about engaging our team of negotiators in constructive dialogue on the root issues that has led to years of agitations and armed rebellion," the group's spokesman said in a statement.

[Ahmadinejad sets up 'oil task force'](#)

Iran's government has set up a special task force of top officials to decide on oil-related affairs on behalf of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, according to local media reports.

The move appears to be a bid by Ahmadinejad to strengthen his control of and influence over the industry in Iran.

[China National Offshore Starts Construction of Ningbo LNG Plant](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China National Offshore Oil Corp., the biggest offshore oil producer in the country, started construction work on the nation's fourth liquefied natural gas import terminal, the company's president, Fu Chengyu, told reporters in Beijing today.

[CNPC to Sell 20 Billion Yuan of Short-Term Commercial Paper](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China National Petroleum Corp., the nation's biggest oil company, plans to sell 20 billion yuan (\$2.9 billion) of short-term commercial paper starting Oct. 29.

China National, or CNPC, will use the money raised to supplement working capital, the state-owned company said in a statement on the Chinabond Website today.

[South Korean Oil Company Buys Canadian Producer](#)

Korea National Oil Corp., the state-owned oil and gas company of South Korea, said it would buy Harvest Energy Trust in a deal worth 4.1 billion Canadian dollars, or \$3.9 billion. The transaction represents a major coup for Seoul as it seeks a steady supply of oil from overseas.

Harvest, an oil producer and refiner based in Calgary, said late Wednesday that K.N.O.C. would pay about 1.8 billion dollars in cash and assume 2.3 billion dollars in debt to acquire its reserves in western Canada and its refining operations on the country's eastern seaboard.

[Fla. House panel discusses offshore drilling](#)

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Texas and Alabama get far less money every year from offshore drilling in their state waters than advocates say Florida can expect, the state's environmental chief told a House panel Wednesday.

Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael Sole said Texas gets about \$45 million and Alabama anywhere from \$50 million to \$300 million. That compares to an estimate by the pro-drilling group Florida Energy Associates that Florida's treasury can expect to rake in \$2.25 billion a year from oil and natural gas production.

['Kazakhs may fill Samsun-Ceyhan link'](#)

Kazakhstan may supply oil for the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline linking Turkey's Black Sea and Mediterranean coasts, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin told his Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan today.

[DECC: 'Fuel poverty on the increase'](#)

Fuel poverty is on the increase, according to the latest government figures.

The annual report on fuel poverty statistics from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) revealed there were around 4m fuel poor households in the UK in 2007, up from 3.5m in 2006, while in England there were around 2.8m fuel poor households, up from 2.4m in 2006. Projections for England suggest substantial increases are on the way, with around 3.6m fuel poor households in 2008 and 4.6m in 2009.

[Venezuela to Ration Water, Save Power as El Nino Reduces Rain](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Venezuela will impose conservation measures for water and electricity because the El Nino weather pattern has reduced rainfall, affecting hydroelectric stations and drinking-water reservoirs.

The country will distribute 50 million energy-saving light bulbs, ban the import of products that use excessive amounts of electricity and increase electricity charges for heavy users, President Hugo Chavez said late yesterday on state television. He decreed the creation of a new electricity ministry and promised to speed up the construction of power plants.

[Utah's 4-day workweek brings some dividends](#)

Former Gov. Jon Huntsman made the switch for Utah in August 2008, largely to cut energy costs.

Utah, however, achieved only a sixth of the \$3 million it expected to trim on energy costs.

The state couldn't shut down as many state buildings as it planned on Fridays, officials said, and it didn't save much by closing the smaller buildings.

Also, the state assumed gasoline for state fleet car use and building utility costs would soar, and it would save as much.

Both expenditures actually fell over the past year, however. Utah has some of the lowest utility rates in the country.

[Change of view for Houston among mayoral hopefuls](#)

HOUSTON – The nation's fourth-largest city, once dominated by Big Oil, is warming to greener options as it chooses a new mayor.

Voters in sprawling Houston, a city crisscrossed by clogged freeways and freewheeling development, are picking from a low-key field of mayoral candidates who are focused on public transit, regulated development and environmentally friendly policies.

[Veteran Journalist Predicts Industrial Crash, Says Sustainable Living Could Save Us](#)

In his new book *Brace for Impact: Surviving the Crash of the Industrial Age by Sustainable Living*, Thomas A. Lewis analyzes the gathering threats to our society's life-support systems, and the inability of our political and economic institutions to save us. With chapters on food, water, oil, electricity, politics and finance, he makes a convincing case that we can't win the race against catastrophe. What sets *Brace for Impact* apart is that after it faces the conclusion from which others shrink -- that industrial society cannot survive -- it then shows how easily individual families and communities can weather the coming collapse through sustainable living.

[Family gardens may hold answer to world's well-being](#)

There are ample reasons why the integration of food production into our modern urban and suburban environments can help build resilience, value and an improved sense of community.

Even in the dry Mojave, I believe we can achieve this. We already use about 70 percent of our water on irrigation. We're just not irrigating edible plants. Education about the value of local food can help us shift our appreciation from simple ornamental gardens to those that are truly life sustaining. It can improve our local economy and hedge against the effects of peak oil while helping to address the issue of climate change.

[Meeting of minds for the good of food](#)

Linked to the Sydney International Food Festival “Hungry for Change” is a gathering for food lovers but not wholly about food. The summit has been organised by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, which is calling for urgent and robust conversation about our food future in the face of local and global threats to food security through climate change, urban development, peak oil and more.

[Here's the dirt on how to compost](#)

(Real Simple) -- Composting upgrades garden soil, keeps plants healthy, and can even lessen planet-unfriendly greenhouse gases. Here's how to do it.

[Environmental impact: back to the future](#)

We sold that little company tens of thousands of used boxes over the years, and I was greatly disappointed a few years later -- after I'd joined the family business full time -- when its buyer informed me they couldn't ship in used boxes anymore. Apparently, the sales folks had gained the upper hand at Columbia and they'd convinced management that the company's new image required new boxes with company advertising on the side.

My protests that used boxes advertised an effort to keep costs down, and customers preferred sensible economies on the part of their suppliers, not fancy branding, fell on deaf ears.

"A box is a box! Why cut trees down unnecessarily?" I asked.

They ignored me.

[Alaska Files Lawsuit Challenging Federal Polar Bear Protections](#)

(Bloomberg) -- The state of Alaska filed suit in federal court asking that the U.S. government's designation of the polar bear as a threatened species because of climate change be overturned.

[Timor Sea Oil Spill May Have Reached 63,000 Barrels, Greens Say](#)

(Bloomberg) -- An oil spill from a leaking well off Western Australia may have polluted the Timor Sea with 10 million liters, about 63,000 barrels, of oil, making it among the three worst in the country's history, the Greens said today.

The Montara well may be spilling as much as 3,000 barrels of oil a day, Greens Senator Rachel Siewert said in a statement, citing information sourced by the party. That's up to 10 times higher than the estimate from field operator PTT Exploration & Production Pcl, which puts the flow at about 300 to 400 barrels a day, spokesman Mike Groves said by phone today.

[Big oil stains the Amazon in the documentary film 'Crude'](#)

For the indigenous people of Ecuador's blemished Amazon, it doesn't matter whether Chevron is to blame, or Texaco, or the state-owned company Petroecuador. All that matters is that the kids have rashes, the chickens are dying, the people have cancer and

the earth around many of their villages is soaked with oil.

And that, in the end, is what persuaded documentary maker Joe Berlinger to take on the complex battle now playing out in an Ecuadoran court. After returning from a trip to the Amazon he took a drink of clean, clear tap water at his suburban New York home in Westchester County and realized he had to make a movie. The result is "Crude," which opens Friday at Landmark's E Street Cinema.

[Fuel](#) (movie review)

Tickell tends to see the collapse of the biodiesel market as a conspiracy—perhaps even the continuation of a century-old conspiracy. He recounts the mysterious death of Rudolph Diesel, who invented what remains the world's most popular engine a century ago with the idea that it would run on plant-based fuels, not oil. The description of Diesel's 1913 drowning while taking a steamer to London was followed by an insidious-looking photo of Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller—also a major proponent of Prohibition, which pretty well destroyed the competing biofuels market in the early days of the car industry.

[Costs of plug-in cars key to broad consumer acceptance](#)

DETROIT, Mich. — A University of Michigan survey released today shows widespread consumer interest in buying plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs). But the cost of the cars is much more influential than environmental and other non-economic factors as a predictor of purchase probabilities.

[GMs Volt, Electric BMWs May Boost South Korean Battery Makers](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Electric cars developed by General Motors Co. and Bayerische Motoren Werke AG may help South Korean battery makers grab market share from Japanese rivals tying up with Toyota Motor Corp. and Honda Motor Co.

[Vermont Senate chief questions Entergy spinoff](#)

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) -- The Vermont Yankee nuclear plant's future as a provider of a third of the state's electricity could be in jeopardy if the plant's owner spins it off to a newly created company, the head of the state Senate said Wednesday.

[Thinking solar power? It's never been cheaper](#)

NEW YORK – Jillian Lung says she's no environmentalist. Still, she couldn't pass up a chance to install a carpet of solar panels atop her co-op in Queens.

"At these prices, why not?" Lung said.

The government has plowed so much cash into the solar industry that it's effectively pulled the luxury tag off of home solar systems. Combined with local incentives, buyers can save up to 90 percent on a system, whether it's for a single-family home or a 75-unit condo in the city.

[Partners in solar research break ground in Colo.](#)

AURORA, Colo. – The National Renewable Energy Laboratory is joining the development of a research center in Aurora to promote commercial solar energy technologies.

The announcement was made Wednesday at the site for the groundbreaking of facilities at the Solar Technology Acceleration Center, or SolarTAC.

[OSU experts discuss sweet sorghum use in ethanol](#)

CHICKASHA, Okla. – With demand growing for ethanol produced from sources other than corn, researchers at Oklahoma State University said Wednesday that state agriculture producers could someday grow sweet sorghum or switchgrass as cash crops.

Division scientists and engineers from OSU's Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources spoke during a "biofuels field day" at the university's South Central Research Station in Chickasha about the potential of crops that could be grown by Oklahoma farmers for use in ethanol production.

[Algae may be secret weapon in climate change war](#)

MIAMI (AFP) – Driven by fluctuations in oil prices, and seduced by the prospect of easing climate change, experts are ramping up efforts to squeeze fuel out of a promising new organism: pond scum.

As it turns out, algae -- slimy, fast-growing and full of fat -- is gaining ground as a potential renewable energy source.

[Are oil sands in crosshairs of Obama plan?](#)

The Obama administration is determined to regulate greenhouse-gas emissions - with or without passage of the climate-change legislation now before Congress - and the Canadian oil sands could be in the crosshairs, a prominent Democratic adviser says.

[Maine Coast Could Soon Be Inundated by Rising Seas, Scientists Warn](#)

Sea levels are likely to rise at least three feet across the globe in the next 90 years, which is a lot more than previous estimates -- and Maine will probably get the worst of it. That was the message delivered by two climate change experts who just returned from the Arctic Circle and are on a tour of the East Coast to highlight their research and discuss possible policy solutions.

[Katrina victims get OK to sue polluters over global warming](#)

A federal appeals court in New Orleans has given the go-ahead for a groundbreaking class-action lawsuit over global warming to proceed.

[China hopeful about Copenhagen climate talks](#)

BEIJING – China wants to increase cooperation with the U.S. and other nations to reach a deal at global climate talks in December, Vice Premier Li Keqiang said Thursday.

Li's comments come less than two months ahead of the global climate conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, that seeks an international agreement on a treaty to cut greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. It would replace the U.N.'s Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012.

[China, India Forge Alternative to UN Climate Treaty](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China and India's joint plan to cut greenhouse-gas emissions gives the developing world an alternative to the climate treaty that wealthier nations want them to sign in Copenhagen, analysts said.

[Maldivians face life as 'climate refugees': president](#)

NEW DELHI (AFP) – The people of the Maldives face the prospect of life in a "climate refugee camp," President Mohamed Nasheed warned Thursday as he urged rich countries to clinch an effective global warming treaty.

Calling the South Asian island chain a "frontline state" in the fight against climate change, Nasheed said global warming threatened to submerge his low-lying country and "kill our people" unless action was taken urgently.

"We have a written history of more than 2,000 years and we don't want to trade our paradise for a climate refugee camp," he told a climate change summit in New Delhi.

[India: Climate deal can't sacrifice poor nations](#)

NEW DELHI – Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said Thursday that the world's poor nations will not sacrifice their development in negotiations for a new climate change deal.

The issue of how to share the burden of fighting global warming has divided the developing and industrialized worlds as they prepare to negotiate a replacement to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol at a December summit in Copenhagen.

[UN: For 7th year, warming emissions grew again](#)

BONN, Germany – The industrialized world again in 2007 boosted, rather than reduced, its emissions of global-warming gases, the U.N. reported Wednesday, as international negotiators looked ahead to crucial climate talks in December.

Emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases rose by 1 percent between 2006 and 2007 among 40 nations classified as industrialized under the 1992 U.N. climate treaty, the treaty secretariat reported, detailing data for the latest available reporting period.

It was the seventh consecutive year of an upward trend, it said.

[Britain publishes doomsday climate change vision](#)

LONDON – Two British Cabinet ministers showed off a doomsday vision of disappearing cities and rising seas on Thursday, part of an effort to push nations to strike a new pact on curbing emissions of global warming gasses.

Foreign Secretary David Miliband and his brother, Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Miliband, published an online map detailing the predicted impact of a 4 degrees Celsius (7 degrees Fahrenheit) rise in global temperatures.



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