



## Drumbeat: November 28, 2009

Posted by [Leanan](#) on November 28, 2009 - 9:17am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Oil falls to \\$76 on Dubai's money troubles](#)

Benchmark crude prices plunged by 7 percent in early trading, though those declines eased as investors weighed the chances that Dubai's problems would spread to Europe, Asia and the United States.

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doldrums that they say have chased jobs and young people away from their area. Others express concerns about the environment and quality-of-life issues like noise and heavy-truck traffic.

In some cases, the issue has pitted neighbor against neighbor or spouse against spouse.

### [High prices don't deter gas guzzling](#)

Everyone knows that \$4 gasoline in 2008 finally led Americans to abandon their gas guzzlers and start buying gas sippers - right?

Turns out, everyone is wrong.

According to a new report released with little fanfare last week by the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans bought vehicles in 2008 that averaged only 0.4 mpg better than a year earlier, when gas cost nearly 50 cents less.

### [Europe should not count on an oil-backed Dubai bail out](#)

Many analysts shrugged off the long-term repercussions of Dubai's request, on the grounds that oil rich neighbour and fellow UAE federation member Abu Dhabi would stump up the necessary cash to save Dubai's face – and by extension – the federation's reputation on the world stage.

But the composition of the UAE economy is a rare – and therefore barely tested – model. Each of the seven component emirates retains the physical rights to its natural

resources. And neighbouring Abu Dhabi sits on no less than 95% of the UAE's oil reserve.

### [India: Living with 100% food price hike](#)

NEW DELHI: The past year has been a particularly tough year for households as food bills seem to be headed for a roofless upward spiral.

From vegetables to fruits, milk products to grains and packaged foods, prices of all commodities have been going up since the beginning of the year. The mutton crisis recently also pushed chicken prices through the roof. Since January, the monthly budget for food items has gone up several fold.

A poor monsoon, strikes, inferior quality of seeds and consequent hoarding has seen prices shoot up by as much as 100% in case of some items.

### [Food banks nationwide report more 1st timers](#)

"The line has grown so long that when you walk outside, it's overwhelming," said Jesse Taylor, senior director at the pantry. "A lot of people are coming out in suits, they're carrying brief cases."

Food banks across the country report about a 30 percent increase in demand on average, but some have seen as much as a 150 percent jump in demand from 2008 through the middle of this year, according to Feeding America.

### [Water Funds Proliferate in Latin America](#)

Despite an abundance of water in Latin America, 77 million people in the region still lack access to safe drinking supplies, according to the World Water Council — particularly in areas with poor farming practices, unregulated industrialization and urban poverty.

But a proliferation of "water funds," which combine private and state contributions to help protect the watersheds around urban areas, have been chipping away at the problem.

### [Books Quarterly: Books for the big thinker](#)

***Carbon Shift: How the Twin Crises of Oil Depletion and Climate Change Will Define the Future***

**Edited by Thomas Homer-Dixon (Random House; 240 pp.; \$34.95)**

Essays by six people from different backgrounds: two oil experts, two economists and two from newspapers. It's refreshing to see someone making an attempt to bring this variety to this complicated issue. Thomas Homer-Dixon is a professor at the University of Waterloo's Centre for the Environment and Business. Tom Spears, Ottawa Citizen

### [Afghanistan: Pay for it or charge it?](#)

Some lawmakers are pushing for a war tax. Peter Orszag, the White House budget director, took part in the latest war council meeting. And Obama is expected to raise the cost issue in his Tuesday evening address at West Point.

Since 2001, close to \$1 trillion has been appropriated by Congress - and borrowed by Treasury - to pay for U.S. war efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to a report from the Congressional Research Service published in September.

### [India: Why more power cuts in rural areas? asks MGP](#)

Joining the protest against power cuts, the JD(S) members said the rural areas are deprived of power supply due to the policy of the government. The MGP also questioned the power utilities' move to force more power cuts in secondary cities and rural areas and called it discriminatory.

### [British company to help India harness the power of the sea](#)

A small British-based tidal energy company has won a landmark contract to attempt to harness the power of the sea around India for the first time.

Atlantis Resources has forged a deal with the western state of Gujarat, under which the privately owned company will establish the feasibility of developing tidal power projects capable of generating more than 100 megawatts of power — enough to supply about 40,000 households.

### [Syria turns to private sector to ease electricity shortage](#)

After years of battling to increase the output of the power sector in Syria to meet the growing needs of the population, the government looks set to give the job of building a new generating plant to a private company.

The decision was seen by analysts as part of the government's effort to overhaul ailing public establishments by turning to private investors as the country moves from a socialist-type economy to a more market-oriented one.

## [U.S. Unlikely to Use the Ethanol Congress Ordered](#)

WASHINGTON — Two years ago, Congress ordered the nation's gasoline refiners to do something that is turning out to be mathematically impossible.

To please the farm lobby and to help wean the nation off oil, Congress mandated that refiners blend a rising volume of ethanol and other biofuels into gasoline. They are supposed to use at least 15 billion gallons of biofuels by 2012, up from less than seven billion gallons in 2007.

But nobody at the time counted on fuel demand falling in the United States, which is what has happened during the recession. And that decline could well continue, as cars become more efficient under other recent government mandates.

## [German Biofuel Industry Collapsing Under New Taxes](#)

Not everyone wants to save the planet. This is a sad, but true fact. Yet everyone who lives and works within a capitalist economy loves saving money. So it's good for the planet that, in many cases, saving money and green initiatives go hand in hand by providing an increased economic benefit while lessening environmental impact. Many of these benefits come directly from the government, such as tax exemption status or tax credits for using alternative fuels in vehicles.

## [California Takes Step to Limit Emissions](#)

WASHINGTON — California has taken a major step toward creating a broad-based trading system to limit emissions of pollutants blamed for harmful climate change.

The California Air Resources Board, often a trailblazer in environmental regulation, released a draft rule on Tuesday establishing a cap-and-trade program that sets a declining ceiling on emissions of greenhouse gases and allows companies to buy and sell permits to meet it.

## [Much less stable ice for polar bears, expert says](#)

Arctic sea ice conditions are even worse than feared after a survey found that ice detected as older and thicker by satellites is actually thin and fragile, a prominent Canadian researcher reported Friday.

University of Manitoba researcher David Barber said experts around the world believed the ice was recovering because satellite images showed it expanding, but the thick, multiyear frozen sheets have been replaced by thin ice that cannot support the weight of

a polar bear.

### [The rise of the Carbon Fat Cats](#)

The 'carbon market' – trading in an invisible gas which cannot be used – has involved the redistribution of resources to unproductive green pursuits and the creation of a vast bureaucracy. Let's bring it down before it gets any bigger.

### [Hacked E-Mail Data Prompts Calls for Changes in Climate Research](#)

A fierce debate over the significance of the hacked material erupted as soon as the e-mail messages and other documents surfaced on Web sites just over a week ago. Some see in the e-mail correspondence – which includes heated discussions about warming trends, advice on deleting potentially controversial e-mail messages and derisive comments about climate skeptics – evidence of a conspiracy to stifle dissenting views and withhold data from public scrutiny, or, as some have put it, "Climategate."

To others, the e-mail messages are merely evidence that climate scientists can be as competitive, proprietary, defensive and caustic as people engaged in any other high-level enterprise. They cast as villains those who disclosed the e-mail correspondence and who now, they say, are distorting the contents.

### [Talking Energy: carbon capture and storage](#)

Carbon capture and storage (CCS) - also known as 'clean coal' - could soon allow for a new generation of coal-fired power stations.

### [Coal Towns Remain the Heartbeat of China's Economy](#)

Amid the glowing reports of new wind farms and investment in solar photovoltaics throughout China, it's easy to forget that cities like Datong are still the heart of this country. Located about 150 miles west of Beijing in Shanxi province, this city is the coal capital of China. The Jing Hua Gong mine on the city's outskirts produces about 4.5 million tons of coal each year -- in a country that produces more than 2.4 billion tons each year, according to the World Coal Institute.

### [Report Outlines Best Practices for Connecting Renewables to the Grid](#)

A new report on state renewable energy regulations gives California, Colorado, New Jersey and Oregon top marks and failing grades for Georgia, Idaho and Texas.

"Freeing the Grid," which was written by renewables advocates, examines each state's policies on net metering and interconnection procedures. Those are two of the main regulatory elements that enable homeowners and businesses to connect solar panels or other energy technologies to the electric grid, and be reimbursed for their efforts.

"If not implemented fairly or properly, these policies can pose a barrier to the development of customer-sited renewable energy," the report states. Some customers, it noted, encounter "byzantine" regulations.

### [Korea Moves to Secure Rare Metals](#)

South Korea will spend a total of 300 billion won (\$257.1 million) over the next nine years to secure and refine rare metals used in various modern gadgets.

...Following petroleum, rare metals will be the ``new momentum to lead the global industries in this new century," Minister of Knowledge Economy Choi Kyung-hwan said at a forum for CEOs in the industry, where the plan's outline was unveiled.

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### [Stock Markets Fall Globally Over Dubai Debt Crisis Fears](#)

There has been fear that Dubai has overextended itself in recent times, riding the wave of the global boom which deflated last year. Some have noted that Dubai's "Las Vegas in the Middle East" attitude over a long period, as once peak oil hits and the Middle East wealth "dries up," that area of the world will be left high and dry.

### [Abu Dhabi to Aid Dubai "Case By Case" - Official](#)

ABU DHABI (Reuters) - Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates and one of the world's top oil exporters, will "pick and choose" how to assist its debt-laden neighbour Dubai, a senior Abu Dhabi official said on Saturday.

"We will look at Dubai's commitments and approach them on a case-by-case basis. It does not mean that Abu Dhabi will underwrite all of their debts," the official in the

government of the emirate of Abu Dhabi told Reuters by phone.

### [U.S. natural gas rig count rises by 22](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The number of rigs drilling for natural gas in the United States rose by 22 to 748 this week, according to a report on Wednesday by oil services firm Baker Hughes in Houston.

The U.S. natural gas drilling rig count has gained in 15 of the last 19 weeks after bottoming at 665 on July 17, its lowest level since May 3, 2002, when there were 640 gas rigs operating.

### [Piped gas from Russia to boost Britain's supplies from 2012](#)

Britain is to start piping gas directly from Russia for the first time in 2012, according to the chief executive of Nord Stream, the Kremlin-backed gas pipeline venture.

In an interview with *The Times* in Switzerland, Matthias Warnig said that more than 4 billion cubic metres of gas a year had already been booked for the UK market through the pipeline, which is due to enter service by the end of 2012.

That is equivalent to more than 4 per cent of total UK gas demand of about 94 billion cubic metres per year.

### [Gas shortage eased in central Chinese city](#)

WUHAN (Xinhua) -- Central China's metropolis Wuhan, once grappling with natural gas shortage, has resumed its natural gas supplies to industrial users since Friday.

An executive from the Wuhan Natural Gas Company said Saturday this was because of more gas supplies from the upstream providers.

### [U.S. Coal Consumption Increased 1.3% Last Week, Genscape Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- U.S. coal consumption rose 1.3 percent in the week ended Nov. 26 from the previous seven-day period, according to an analysis by Genscape Inc.

Power plants in the East increased usage 1.5 percent, while consumption at those in the West fell 0.4 percent, the data provider said. Overall consumption to generate electricity was down 11 percent from a year earlier, Genscape said.

### [Energy firms are accused of overcharging](#)

FIVE of the "big six" energy suppliers, including ScottishPower, were today accused of overcharging customers using pre-pay meters despite new Ofgem rules.

The National Housing Federation (NHF) said the firm, as well as British Gas, Npower, Scottish & Southern and E.ON, were all breaking caps on how much more pre-pay customers can be charged than those paying by direct debit.

### [Indonesia's Medco Energi Sees Crude Oil Production Fall of 12.5%](#)

PT Medco Energi Internasional predicted its crude oil production will shrink 12.5 percent to 35,000 barrels per day next year from this year's estimate of 40,000 barrels on the average.

Medco spokesman A Nugraha Adi said starting 2010, the company's crude oil output will decline on shrinking reserves.

### [Latest U.N. censure of Iran may start more confrontational phase](#)

The resounding censure of Iran on Friday by the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, signals the start of a potentially more confrontational phase in the Obama administration's dealings with the Islamic republic, including the prospect of strengthened U.S.-led efforts to cut off Iran's economic links to the world.

### [Canadian biofuel cuts emissions sharply: report](#)

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (Reuters) - Canadian ethanol emits 62 percent less greenhouse gas than conventional fuel, taking into consideration all stages of the fuel's production from planting a crop to burning the fuel, a new report prepared for Canada's biofuel industry said on Friday.

The results rebut a key argument against producing biofuels, that they use more energy than they can generate, said Gordon Quaiattini, president of the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association.

### [Whistle-blower sees 'Collapse' on horizon](#)

Chris Smith walked into his interview with L.A. police detective-turned-whistle-blower Michael Ruppert early this year planning to make a film about the CIA's alleged drug-



smuggling operations in the 1980s. Smith emerged from the meeting with an entirely new movie in mind. "Michael had no inclination to talk about the past," Smith recalls. "This was in February when the economy was at its worst, so Mike delivered this three-hour monologue about what he saw happening around us. The amount of information he had synthesized was astounding."

In the resulting documentary, "Collapse," Ruppert draws on a large array of facts and figures to forecast the end of American civilization mainly because of a dwindling oil supply. A self-taught analyst, Ruppert foresaw the Wall Street crash in 1998, when he began publishing his From the Wilderness newsletter.

### [Growing a library](#)

*Local Food: How to Make it Happen in Your Community* by Tamzin Pinkerton and Rob Hopkins (Transition Books/Green Books, £12.95) is about building food resilience in a local area. With the twin challenges of climate change and peak oil upon us, it's time we embrace allotments, land shares, community supported agriculture and other ways of growing our food that don't cost us the earth. This worthy book, although written for a British readership, has valuable advice for those of us on this island too. It should be in the Christmas stocking of every community leader, councillor, TD and opinion maker.

### [A nation divided by the weather](#)

The storm track has now slipped south. Science can't be certain why – changing sea surface temperatures may be the cause but as part of a process not yet sufficiently understood. The consequences are no longer containable by wry jokes. Unprecedented rainfall has spectacular and noticeably tragic effects – see Cumbria this week – but the general trend to a more watery climate could, slowly and less dramatically, eventually undo an economy and a way of life. Crops can't be planted or rot at their roots; tourists and their money go elsewhere; basements and lofts that have been dry for centuries spring leaks; gardens never stop squelching; doors squeak and wood crumbles; sewers overflow; buried cabling sparks out. In 2004, the A83 from Glasgow was closed for days by a landslip, marooning the people of south Argyll. The same thing happened last year and this. Peat, soil and stone that had been secure on the hillside for thousands of years suddenly romped down the slope. Nobody could remember such a phenomenon happening in summer before.

### [Virginia: Why rising seas pose threat here](#)

JAMES CITY — Sea level and global warming are the topics of a forum next week by the James City County Citizens' Coalition.

"Much of our coastal area is very low-lying and already subject to significant flooding," said J4C member Terence Elkins in a recent interview. He's also one of the speakers for the forum. "This will be exacerbated as global sea level rises. Sea level is rising more

rapidly here in the mid-Atlantic states than in most other regions... due to a combination of global warming and land subsidence.”

### [Commonwealth talks boost hopes of climate deal](#)

PORT OF SPAIN (AFP) – Hopes were rising Saturday that a new global climate pact is within reach after rich nations at a Commonwealth summit offered to help poorer countries bear the costs of implementing any deal.

### [China's climate pledge raises expectations for Copenhagen summit](#)

Although China's announcement that it will reduce the intensity of its greenhouse gas emissions does not mean a reduction in total emissions, environmentalists now see more promise for climate summit.



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