



Drumbeat: January 24, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on January 24, 2010 - 9:07am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Course creator's socioeconomic ideas gain momentum](#)

SONORA - Chris Martenson started out by earning a Ph.D. in neurotoxicology.

Then he got an MBA in finance and became a vice president first at Pfizer and then at Science Application International Corp.

Yet seven years ago, he sold his five-bedroom waterfront house in Mystic, Conn., and two years later quit his high-paying corporate job. He now lives in a small rental house in rural western Massachusetts, home schools his children, raises a garden, cans food and brews his own beer.

He's also the increasingly famous creator of The Crash Course, an online video class that has popularized such concepts as peak oil, the limits of economic growth and the possibility that America's economy and society are beginning a dramatic transformation.

ducers to tap unconventional reserves.

The new market realities raise questions about the viability of the three LNG terminals proposed in Oregon. Analysts are skeptical there will be enough supply in the Pacific Basin to assure a regular flow to the Northwest, or that gas prices will be consistently high enough to make it attractive to land cargoes here. They're not sure who would finance a billion dollar terminal in Oregon, or spend hundreds of millions more on a pipeline.

[Thousands protest in Venezuela](#)

Thousands of protesters have turned out in Venezuela, both in support of Hugo Chavez, the president, and against him, signaling a heated political climate ahead of the 2010 elections.

[Venezuelan state oil firm's debt jumps 42 percent](#)

CARACAS — State-owned oil company Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) saw its debt jump 42 percent in 2009, compared to a year earlier, climbing to 21.4 billion dollars, according to official figures.

[Saudi shunned domestic borrowing in 2009 to encourage bank lending](#)

Saudi Arabia shunned domestic borrowing and resorted to its massive overseas assets to finance its fiscal deficit during 2009 to encourage bank lending to the private sector, a key bank in the kingdom said yesterday.

A decline in the foreign assets of the world's oil powerhouse through 2009 following a steady rise in the previous seven years indicated the government withdrew from those funds to shore up the budget deficit and slightly cut its domestic debt, the Saudi American Bank Group (Samba) said in a study.

[Saudi sees deadlock in climate talks](#)

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia does not expect any global climate change pact soon because current proposals lack fair burden-sharing and would hit oil exporters unfairly, the country's top climate negotiator said on Sunday.

"There was no real agreement in Copenhagen and I don't foresee any agreement in the near term," Mohammed al-Sabban told AFP, referring to December's summit in the Danish capital.

[Climate talks bigger threat to Saudi than oil rivals](#)

RIYADH (Reuters) - United Nations climate talks are a bigger threat to top oil exporter Saudi Arabia than increased oil supplies from rival producers, its lead climate negotiator said on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia's economy depends on oil exports so stands to be one of the biggest losers in any pact that curbs oil demand by penalizing carbon emissions.

[Conservation as a Matter of Managing People](#)

People are hard-wired to be fearful of large carnivores. What's more, it's hard for the poor to see the economic advantage of rewilding. Humans don't like conservationists telling them what they can and can't do with the land that surrounds them. As one conservationist counterintuitively points out to Ms. Fraser: "Conservation is about managing people. It's not about managing wildlife."

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[Oil Production: Post-Peak Mexico](#)

Each year brings fresh updates to the body of peak oil research but I thought the recent *An Explanation of Oil Peaking*, R.W. Bentley, University of Reading 2009 was particularly good reading. Bentley does such a good job of explaining in direct terms a simple model for peak oil, without excluding any of the attendant complexity. (This would be a very good introduction for someone new to the subject).

I especially liked his articulation of how the *total production arc* for, say a country or a region, is a sequence composed of the largest fields eventually giving way to many smaller fields. That description made me think of the post-peak production profile of the United States, with its long-life extension at levels well below the 1971 peak. And, it also brought to mind Mexico.

[Ammonia-energy Plan In Works In Maine](#)

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP) — Maine has been heavily involved in generating power from wind, and now Gov. John Baldacci is drawing attention to a plan to create ammonia as a green energy source.

Baldacci mentioned the Rockland-based Ocean Energy Institute's work during his [State of the State speech](#) Thursday. While most of the attention has gone to Maine's wind power projects, Baldacci said OEI founder Matt Simmons is working on an innovative approach to create a new energy source "almost literally out of thin air."

[Gasoline Falls on Lower Demand, Concern Over Obama Bank Limits](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Gasoline slid to a one-month low as demand fell to the lowest in almost six years and as U.S. stocks dropped on concern that President Barack Obama's proposal to limit risk-taking at banks would slow the economic recovery.

U.S. gasoline demand last week was the weakest since January 2004, according to the Energy Department. The Standard and Poor's 500 index fell 1.9 percent at 3:21 p.m. in New York percent, and had erased its 2010 gains in three days of losses.

[Iran budgets for \\$60 price for crude oil](#)

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Iran planned next year's budget based on an oil price of \$60 per barrel, nearly double the price from the last year, the official news agency reported on Sunday, indicating rising optimism over energy prices.

Last year, the parliament approved a budget based on \$37.5 per barrel for the fiscal year ending in March, reflecting the steep drop in prices that severely impacted the economy. About 80 percent of Iran's foreign revenue comes from oil exports.

[Uganda Plans to Discuss Tullow Oil, Eni 'Controversy'](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Uganda's government said it will meet to discuss the "controversy" between Eni SpA and Tullow Oil Plc over assets in the East African nation.

[Coast Guard: Oil spill in Texas waterway contained](#)

PORT ARTHUR, Texas – The Coast Guard said a crude oil spill in a southeast Texas port had been contained to a two-mile area and was not believed to have hurt any local wildlife.

It was unclear exactly how much oil spilled into the water when an 800-foot tanker collided with a towing vessel pushing two barges near Port Arthur on Saturday, but the Coast Guard said it could be as much as 450,000 gallons. The Coast Guard said the crash left a 15-by-8-foot hole in the tanker and damaged one of its oil tanks, resulting in the spill.

[RBS May Delay Sempra Sale after U.S. Trading Plans, Times Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Bank of Scotland Group Plc may be forced to delay the sale of its stake in Sempra Commodities, as U.S. plans to curb proprietary trading would reduce Sempra's revenues, the London-based Times reported.

[Nexen not ready to expand oil sands project yet](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - Nexen Inc's chief executive said on Friday his company

won't rush into an expansion to double the size of its C\$6.1 billion (\$5.8 billion) Alberta oil sands project, saying he needs a longer record of production and confidence in the economy.

[Crown in row over energy supply](#)

Utility companies hoping to build eight vital gas storage projects for UK supplies have written to MPs urging them to stop the Crown Estate from tripling fees for leasing suitable land off the British coast.

[Arctic resources up for grabs; are U.S. hands tied?](#)

The United States is the world's leading maritime power but has tied its hands in the ability to act the part.

Having the longest coastline and largest exclusive economic zone in the world, with jurisdiction over fisheries and mineral resources, we have potentially more to gain than any other nation by joining the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

[Peak oil puts rail resurgence on track](#)

During the recent heated debate over the use of that 88-acre piece of land east of Eagle, I noted that there is still an intact railroad track running through this valley.

While it is at best marginally maintained, at least east of the American Gypsum plant, which uses rail service regularly in shipping its product west, this track may soon be the valley's most important transportation resource.

[Panel faces tough road to highway improvements](#)

As it stands, the message is: Arkansas can't make its road-building ends meet with some \$900 million in annual revenue from state and federal motor fuel taxes. State Highway Director Dan Flowers says the state needs \$200 million a year more just to maintain its highways at current levels.

To supplement road funds, the highway committee is endorsing three options — shifting \$425 million a year from state general revenues; indexing fuel taxes based on the annual Construction Cost Index increase, which is a general measure of inflation associated with construction commodities; and levying an excise tax on the wholesale price of motor fuel.

[Leaders stress development at Mardi Gras](#)

Today, event leaders host an economic-development luncheon. This year the speaker is Matt Simmons, chief executive officer of Simmons and Co. of Houston, an investment-banking firm for energy companies. A panel discussion is scheduled featuring energy company CEOs.

[BP's green vehicle offer getting little mileage](#)

BP has offered to convert 25 to 30 Clear Creek school district school buses to run on natural gas, but it's up to the federal government whether the district can participate in the settlement deal.

[Going Green: How energy efficiency aids bottom line](#)

"It's a perfect storm," Miller said. "A tough economy is forcing people to conserve energy. Add to that the groundswell from the stimulus package, state stimulus money, the quagmire over oil and climate change, and everybody sees the benefits of going green."

[Diane Farsetta: Dump nuke provisions in Clean Energy Jobs Act](#)

Would a truly "clean energy" source produce "one of the nation's most hazardous substances"? Of course not.

So why include provisions on nuclear reactors in the state's Clean Energy Jobs Act, recently introduced in the Legislature? Nuclear reactors generate high-level radioactive waste, which is "one of the nation's most hazardous substances," according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

[Storm brews over glacier blunder](#)

A MISTAKE about the timing of melting glaciers has snowballed into an unprecedented assault on the credibility of climate science, after revelations that an author of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report knew that one passage was wrong but included it anyway.

[Emerging nations meet in India over climate change](#)

NEW DELHI (AFP) – Environment ministers from Brazil, South Africa, India and China met in New Delhi on Sunday to agree a common position for future talks after the Copenhagen climate change summit, officials said.

The four emerging economies -- a key bloc within troubled negotiations on how to tackle global warming -- lobbied successfully at the Copenhagen meeting in December against binding emissions caps.

[The Case for a Climate Bill](#)

The conventional wisdom is that the chances of Congress passing a bill that puts both a cap and a price on greenhouse gases are somewhere between terrible and nil. President Obama can start to prove the conventional wisdom wrong by making a full-throated case for a climate bill in his State of the Union speech this week.



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