



## Drumbeat: February 12, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on February 12, 2010 - 8:56am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

### [Family values](#)

What is almost universal, however, is the public, socially integrated nature of the family. No matter how weird its form, the family is almost everywhere an economic and politic unit. As Cristopher Lasch pointed out, the idea of the family being a private place removed from the economic world is a fairly recent innovation. It appeared in Victorian England, among the upper class, and slowly spread outward and downward during the last two centuries until it became the norm at least in the developed world.

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treme weather, rising sea levels and temperatures, food security and water scarcity, disease — as potential contributors to instability and conflict.

This approach leads to recommendations that limit the flexibility of the military by, for example, limiting its options regarding the use of energy. While the QDR asserts that such steps will not undermine the military's ability to perform its missions, it is likely they will. This is like telling the fire department to cut down on hydrant use in order to conserve water.

### [Medvedev backs tighter oil controls, no action yet](#)

OMSK, Russia (Reuters) - President Dmitry Medvedev lent support to the idea of tightening state control over oil and refined products exports but stopped short on Friday of adopting proposals that would have effectively restored the Soviet-era monopoly.

"I support (Deputy Prime Minister) Igor Ivanovich Sechin on issues of supply control," Medvedev said at a meeting on energy with top government officials and oil executives of the world's largest energy producer.

### [More Hot Air on Peak Oil](#)

We've been having that debate for years already, and the consensus is that Peak Oil will occur sometime between 5 years and 50 years from now. When it comes, we will not see a steep drop off in oil supply but a so-called "undulating plateau" with oil companies responding to rising prices by finding new and novel ways to wring more oil out of the ground. Likewise motorists and corporations will respond to rising prices by buying smaller cars and exploring alternatives, like powering cars with ammonia or turning coal into liquid fuel. Recall how quickly we all formed carpools and abandoned our SUVs during 2008's price spike.

### [For Venture Capital, Efficiency Is in Vogue](#)

Venture capital investments in cleantech companies plunged by 50 percent to \$2.6 billion last year as investors put their money in energy efficiency projects instead, according to a report released this week by Ernst & Young.

Investors shifted their money from capital intensive solar and biofuel companies into firms that use technology to reduce or monitor energy use, the Ernst & Young report found, because the funding requirements are lower and the returns are often faster.

### [Sowing the seeds of change](#)

There's an exciting new movement sweeping the globe that focuses on local sustainability in response to peak oil and climate change.

One goal of this movement is to grow and buy more food locally. This simple, logical concept aims to improve food quality, reduce exposure to pesticides and genetically modified crops, and save resources.

### [With Masdar Institute, Abu Dhabi Seeks Reputation as Clean-Tech Research Hub](#)

As the United Arab Emirates looks to diversify its oil- and gas-dominated economy, the royal family is hoping that its Masdar Institute of Science and Technology will lead the way — and it is aggressively recruiting students and researchers toward that end.

### [Oregon to Reduce Clean Energy Incentives](#)

Oregon's House of Representatives Wednesday passed a bill that will rein in a business energy tax credit that was designed to help strengthen the city's renewable energy industry.

The Oregonian newspaper pointed out in a series of articles that the program had several problems, including being so popular that it put funding for other programs in jeopardy.

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## [Will Obama Destroy Any Hope of U.S. Energy Independence?](#)

The U.S. consumes nearly three times the amount of oil that it produces domestically on a daily basis. How can this statistic get any worse, you might ask?

Imagine in 2010 the Obama administration persuades Congress to pass a budget that results in a reduction of domestic oil production by 10% - 20%, making the supply/demand imbalance even more lopsided. Foreign oil companies will gain a distinct advantage over American domestic operators as an unintended consequence of these proposals.

Sound farfetched? It's closer to reality than you may think... If it comes to pass, it will likely be the biggest structural change in the U.S. domestic oil and gas industry in decades and have far-reaching implications for investors and for the entire country.

## [Cold-weather states lose heating aid to South](#)

The South was the beneficiary last month when the Obama administration released \$490 million in emergency heating funds, using a formula that took into account colder-than-normal temperatures and, for the first time, unemployment levels. Both factors favored the South, so Sun Belt states reaped the biggest gains.

Compared to last year, Maine saw a drop in emergency aid of 81 percent, followed by Vermont's 80 percent and New Hampshire's 78 percent. Alaska's was down 62 percent, Minnesota 28 percent.

By contrast, emergency funding more than tripled for Florida and Georgia, and more than doubled in North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee and Texas, according to the Northeast-Midwest Senate Coalition. Even Puerto Rico picked

up \$540,000 under the formula.

### [Total Spearheads Remote UK North Sea Frontier](#)

Total SA said Friday it will go ahead with the development of two gas fields in a remote area of the U.K. North Sea that is the country's last big untapped hydrocarbon basin.

The French company's decision is a major boost for the flagging U.K. oil industry and a notable success for recent changes to the North Sea tax regime.

### [The Oil Kingdom Goes Green](#)

Saudi Arabia is the world's richest oil producer — the desert kingdom pumps out nearly 10 million barrels a day of crude. So when Saudi Arabia turns to the sun to solve its energy problems, you should sit up and take notice.

### [Cold realities of the wind farms that won't work when it snows](#)

When the country ground to a halt during weeks of sub-zero temperatures, wind farms across the country came out in sympathy and their blades refused to budge.

The problem seems to be that the cold weather was accompanied by high pressure and a distinct lack of wind and meant at a time when even the most frugal were turning up the thermostat, one of the country's most controversial energy supplies all but dried up.

### [Ethanol Opinions From the NY Times? Have You Ever Eaten Iowa Feed Corn? Yuk!](#)

Brazil and other countries will continue to clear virgin land and move the land into production regardless of a biofuels strategy in the United States. Contrary to the indirect land use argument, the USA is still idling productive land in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Slowly, the USA is moving back to fence row to fence row production similar to the early 1970's. Farmers, Agribusiness and taxpayers will all benefit from our agricultural capacity moving towards 100% of use.

### [Tracking U.S. farmers' supply of nitrogen fertilizer](#)

We burn through more of it per capita than any other country; and our appetite for it can only be sated with massive imports.

No, not oil—I'm talking about nitrogen fertilizer. With only 5 percent of the world population, the U.S. consumes nearly 12 percent of the globe's annual synthetic nitrogen

fertilizer production. And we're producing less and less of it at home—meaning that, as with petroleum, we're increasingly dependent on other nations for this key crop nutrient.

### [Vancouver goes for the green and more](#)

Most of us will never experience the thrill of Olympic victory. Our decrepit old computers and TVs, on the other hand, might make it to the podium as glittering gold medals — thanks to an innovation from this year's winter Olympics.

The 2010 games will boast the first medals in Olympic history to contain metal recovered from end-of-life electronics that would otherwise go to the landfill.

### [Kremlin eyes oil export control](#)

Russia's top energy official, Deputy Premier Igor Sechin, wants the state to take full control of the country's exports of oil and refined products, a system which would resemble the oil export monopoly in place during the Soviet era.

A document obtained by Reuters showed Sechin held a meeting in early January with energy and transport ministers, officials from the state security agency the FSB - formerly known as the KGB - as well as customs officials to discuss new export regulations.

Also: [Russia seeks greater control over oil shipments via rail, road](#)

### [Falklands oil prospects raise Argentina-Britain tensions](#)

BUENOS AIRES (AFP) – British oil drilling operations around the Falkland Islands are whipping up new tensions with Argentina almost 30 years after the two countries went to war over the South Atlantic archipelago.

The former foes locked horns again Thursday after Buenos Aires blocked a shipment of pipes it said was bound for the Falklands: the scene of a brief but bloody conflict in 1982 that Britain won but Argentina has not forgotten.

### [Crude Falls After China Seeks to Cool Expansion, Dollar Gains](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Oil fell in New York for the first day in five after China, the world's second-largest oil consumer, sought to cool its economic expansion.

The People's Bank of China ordered banks to set aside more deposits as reserves for the

second time in a month, boosting the dollar and sending futures below \$74 a barrel. A weekly Energy Department report today may show U.S. crude and gasoline supplies rose last week, according to analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News.

“The latest move is another attempt to cool down rampant growth,” said Neil Atkinson, director of energy research at Datamonitor in London. “The outlook for oil demand growth for China has been getting pared back, and I think they’ll be lucky to see much more than 300,000 barrels a day growth this year.”

### [China January Power Use Gains 40% as Economy Recovers](#)

(Bloomberg) -- China’s January electricity consumption jumped 40.1 percent from a year earlier as an economic recovery in the world’s second-biggest power producer spurred demand from factories.

Power use reached 353.1 billion kilowatt-hours last month, 2.7 percent higher than in December, the Beijing-based National Energy Administration said on its Web site today. Consumption by secondary industries, which includes manufacturing and construction, grew 46 percent to 262.4 billion kilowatt-hours.

### [Jeremy Leggett - The Next Crisis: Peak Oil](#)

This is a loud blast of the whistle from a fairly broad group of companies. Neither are we alone on this side of the “premature peak oil” debate. The CEOs of oil companies Total and Petrobras are on record as saying the world will never produce more than 89 million barrels a day. The IEA has warned of an oil supply shock within five years and on Thursday raised its oil demand forecast for 2010 to 86.5 million barrels a day.

But the taskforce companies find themselves on the minority side of a polarized debate. Those on the other side--led by BP, ExxonMobil and others - offer a much more comforting narrative: forty years of supply at least, and no chance of global oil supply dropping before demand does. Theirs is the view that is favored in most governments, and in boardrooms, often implicitly. I know of no company that views premature peak oil as a serious risk issue.

### [Peak oil theory could become a stark reality](#)

“Within five years we think peak oil is going to affect every aspect of our daily lives,” warned Philip Dille, chairman of engineer Arup, yesterday.

We are set for shortages and rising prices. And just to cheer you up, gas is probably going the same way too.

It all sounds familiar. The concept of “peak oil”, the stresses caused when oil production

stops increasing, has been kicking around since the 1950s.

It hasn't happened yet and, to many, the theory is becoming a little tiresome.

But the membership of the UK Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil and Energy Security, whose report Dilley was introducing, suggests these concerns are reaching the mainstream and business is getting anxious.

### [Richard Branson Gives Peak Oil Street Cred](#)

Peak oil has long suffered from a credibility problem. The food-hoarding, live-off-the-grid survivalists scared the general public away from the legitimate debate surrounding the world's oil supply with all of their conspiracy theories and worries about mutant urban cannibals. But Richard Branson, the well-coiffed billionaire and founder of Virgin Group has managed the impossible: turn what the mainstream considers an "extreme" view into something much more palatable, without losing the urgency.

### [Exxon, Chevron 'Land Grab' for Europe Shale Gas, JPMorgan Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Exxon Mobil Corp. and explorers including Chevron Corp. are securing land in Europe to exploit shale gas, a hard-to-extract deposit that could reduce global demand for liquefied natural gas, JPMorgan Chase & Co. said.

...“A land-grab has occurred in Europe over the last two years with majors such as Exxon, Conoco, Chevron and Statoil ASA all participating, not willing to miss out as they did in the U.S.,” said Mark Greenwood, a Sydney-based analyst with JPMorgan. “While it's still early days for European and Chinese shale gas plays, its potential is yet another threat for the LNG supply-demand balance.”

The International Energy Agency said in November the world may have an “acute glut” of gas in the next few years because production of so-called unconventional fuel, which includes shale gas, is set to rise 71 percent between 2007 and 2030.

### [Natural Gas Transportation - Why Not?](#)

When I first started advocating natural gas transportation, the supply question was not so easily answered. However, when I looked at Alaskan and lower-48 natural gas reserves, low cost LNG supplies from a diverse number of sources, and the huge natural gas reserves being discovered worldwide, it looked as though supply would be adequate at least 30-40 years. It certainly seemed a more secure bet than a worldwide oil supply which will have trouble keeping pace with worldwide demand.

Since that time everyone is now quite aware of the shale plays which have been a complete game changer in the energy arena. It is now clear the US has enough domestic natural gas to supply home heating and industrial consumption as well as to replace all

dirty coal electrical generation and power half the US car and truck fleet - all of this, for at least 100 years.

### [Turkmens Seek Foreign Bids for Caspian Fields to Expand Market](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Turkmenistan, holder of the world's fourth-largest gas reserves, is seeking bids from foreign producers to develop untapped Caspian Sea deposits as Europe, Russia and China compete for supplies.

### [Gazprom Cleared to Build \\$10 Billion Baltic Pipeline](#)

(Bloomberg) -- OAO Gazprom, the world's largest natural-gas producer, won its last permit to build a \$10 billion pipeline to Germany, its first direct link to western Europe.

### [Iraq sets up new oil player](#)

Iraq has launched a fourth state oil company, with the new outfit - the Midland Oil Company - overseeing development of fields in the country's central belt.

### [Mend awaits talk invitation](#)

Nigeria's main militant group will wait to be invited by Acting President Goodluck Jonathan to resume peace talks and its ceasefire in the oil-producing Niger Delta remains suspended, it said on today.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend) dismissed claims by another militant faction to have blown up key pieces of oil infrastructure this week but said small attacks by disgruntled communities and oil thieves continued.

### [Shell says no reports of attack on Nigeria ops](#)

LAGOS (Reuters) - Royal Dutch Shell said on Friday it had no report of an attack on its operations in Nigeria's restive Niger Delta following a claim by a militant group to have blown up one of its manifolds.

### [Nigeria acting pres approves oil savings disbursal](#)

ABUJA (Reuters) - Nigeria's acting president has approved the disbursal of \$2 billion from windfall oil savings to the country's 36 states and government agencies, Minister of



State for Finance Remi Babalola said on Friday.

### [Canada Will Use Robot Subs to Map Arctic Sea Floor, Boost Territorial Claims](#)

Two robot submarines will plunge into the Arctic next month in an effort to help Canada stake a claim to a large swath of potentially mineral-rich seafloor in the polar region.

### [New study links drilling to Indonesia mud volcano](#)

JAKARTA (Reuters) - A team of scientists said in a report on Friday that they had found the strongest evidence yet linking a devastating mud volcano in Indonesia to drilling at a gas exploration well by local energy firm PT Lapindo Brantas.

### [Rap Moguls Go From Lil' Wayne to Oil, Keep It Real With Tattoo](#)

(Bloomberg) -- An oil well tattooed on the shaved head of Bryan "Birdman" Williams and a Web site for a company called Bronald Oil & Gas LLC indicate that two men known for their gushers in rap music are getting into the energy business.

Williams and his brother Ronald "Slim" Williams founded Cash Money Records, the music label behind such artists as Lil' Wayne. Their foray into energy with Bronald, a name that blends Bryan and Ronald, prompted Houston investment bank Tudor Pickering Holt & Co. to quip that this may be a sign of the end of an oil-market rally.

"Doctors and dentists investing in oil wells was sign of top in 1980s," the bank said last week in a note to clients. "Rappers the sign this cycle?"

### [Shell Employee List Leaked to Environmental Groups](#)

Royal Dutch Shell PLC says a database containing business contact details for many of its employees and contractors has been leaked to several environmental groups.

Shell spokesman Wendel Broere confirms the database with 176,000 entries sent to Greenpeace and others is authentic, though the information it contains is not particularly sensitive.

The database was sent from anonymous e-mail addresses with a note claiming authorship by employees who want the company to right alleged wrongs in Nigeria, where Shell is the largest foreign oil producer.

### [Questions About Biofuels' Environmental Costs Could Alter Europe's Policies](#)

BRUSSELS — A top European farm official has suggested that yet-to-be-released studies by the European Commission could be used to “kill” heavily promoted and subsidized biofuels by focusing on their total environmental impact.

...The industry has already been dogged by contentions that the main justification for policies supporting biofuels — that they are greener than fossil-based products — is unsound. Many environmental advocates claim that a large number of fuels grown from crops do not merit public subsidies or production incentives.

### [Norway to build worlds biggest wind turbine](#)

Norway will spend Nkr137 million (\$23 million) to build what it says will be the world's biggest wind turbine with rotors 145 metres in diameter and producing 10 megawatts of electricity, green energy incubator Enova said today.

### [Gas Prices Are Up...But Small-Car And Hybrid Interest Down?](#)

A continued rise in fuel prices means that people migrate to smaller vehicles and those that get higher fuel economy. Right?

Well that's what common sense might lead us to think, but the Fuel Price Impact Survey from the Tustin, California-based market-research firm AutoPacific shows otherwise.

The firm reports that interest in small cars and hybrids is, surprisingly, fading as pump prices continue to rise. When motorists were asked what they would replace their current vehicle with, just 12 percent in the latest January 2010 survey said that they'd consider a small car (like the 2010 Honda Fit, the very diminutive 2010 Smart Fortwo, or the highly anticipated 2011 Ford Fiesta); that's down significantly from 16 percent in June 2009 and 24 percent in January 2009.

### [Georgia GOP leaders strike transportation deal](#)

ATLANTA — Georgians voting in the 2012 presidential primary will be able to decide whether to increase the sales tax by one penny to pay for transportation projects, under a deal announced Thursday by Gov. Sonny Perdue and legislative leaders.

Under the plan — which must still be approved by the Legislature — regions that approve the tax increase would have money to spend on local road and infrastructure projects. Others could reject the increase and would not see any additional funding.

### [On Broadway: Traffic-free zones a 'hit'](#)

NEW YORK — No more tail lights among the bright lights of Broadway: New York will keep the Great White Way closed to cars in Times Square.

In May, the city turned two stretches of Broadway into pedestrian plazas in an attempt to lessen traffic jams and ease sidewalk crowding. Eight months later, traffic has improved far less than predicted, but fewer pedestrians have been injured and not as many people are walking in the street, Mayor Michael Bloomberg said Thursday.

"The reviews are in and it's clear we've got ourselves a Broadway hit," Bloomberg said.

### [New investments in agriculture likely to fail without sharp focus on small-scale 'mixed' farmers](#)

NAIROBI — A new paper published today in *Science* warns that billions of dollars promised to fund programs to boost small-scale agriculture in developing countries are unlikely to succeed in feeding the world's increasing populations. This is due not only to increasing populations and changing environments, but also to little "intellectual commitment" to the ubiquitous small-scale "mixed" farmers who raise both crops and animals and are the source of much of today's food supplies and economic development.

### [Radical new directions needed in food production to deal with climate change](#)

Yields from some of the most important crops begin to decline sharply when average temperatures exceed about 30 degrees Celsius, or 86 Fahrenheit. Projections are that by the end of this century much of the tropics and subtropics will regularly see growing season temperatures above that level, hotter than the hottest summers now on record.

An international panel of scientists writing in the Feb. 12 edition of the journal *Science* is urging world leaders to dramatically alter their notions about sustainable agriculture to prevent a major starvation catastrophe by the end of this century among the more than 3 billion people who live relatively close to the equator.

Specifically they urge world leaders to "get beyond popular biases against the use of agricultural biotechnology," particularly crops genetically modified to produce greater yields in harsher conditions, and to base the regulations of such crops on the best available science.

"You're looking at a 20 percent to 30 percent decline in production yields in the next 50 years for major crops between the latitudes of southern California or southern Europe to South Africa," said David Battisti, a University of Washington atmospheric sciences professor.

### [Mexico Proposes Two Additional Climate Change Meetings in 2010](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Mexico, which will host the United Nations' main annual climate change meeting in November and December, proposed two further negotiating sessions to

prepare for the talks.

A week-long session should be held in mid-April, with another set of discussions in September or October, Mexico's delegation said in a letter posted today on the Web site of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, or UNFCCC, which organizes the global effort to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

### [Climate change: Study shows 'shocking' results for South Dakota waterfowl](#)

"We thought it couldn't be right, what the data was showing," said Carter Johnson, professor of wetland ecology at SDSU and a researcher involved in the study, "Prairie Wetland Landscape in a Changing Climate."

"It was shocking," Johnson said. "These are all projections, of course. But the insurance is gone from the system."

### [Antarctic Ice Shelf Collapse Possibly Triggered by Ocean Waves, Scripps-led Study Finds](#)

Depicting a cause-and-effect scenario that spans thousands of miles, a scientist at Scripps Institution of Oceanography at UC San Diego and his collaborators discovered that ocean waves originating along the Pacific coasts of North and South America impact Antarctic ice shelves and could play a role in their catastrophic collapse.

### [Arizona Quits Western Cap-and-Trade Program](#)

Citing financial worries, the State of Arizona has backed out of a broad regional effort to limit greenhouse gas emissions in the West through a cap-and-trade system.

In an executive order issued last week, Gov. Jan Brewer, a Republican, said a cap-and-trade system — which would impose mandatory caps on emissions and allow pollution credits to be traded among companies — would cripple Arizona's economy.



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