



Drumbeat: July 3, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on July 3, 2010 - 9:26am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[When Less Was More](#)

We tend to think of the decades immediately following World War II as a time of exuberance and growth, with soldiers returning home by the millions, going off to college on the G.I. Bill and lining up at the marriage bureaus.

But when it came to their houses, it was a time of common sense and a belief that less truly could be more. During the Depression and the war, Americans had learned to live with less, and that restraint, in combination with the postwar confidence in the future, made small, efficient housing positively stylish.

As we find ourselves in an era of diminishing resources, could “less” become “more” again? If so, the mid-20th-century building boom might provide some inspiration.

d last month in its medium-term oil and gas market report. Last year, the US became the world's biggest gas producer, overtaking Russia.

[G20 ignores looming energy and African trade crises](#)

Despite attempts by violent black-clad militants to disrupt the G20 summit at Toronto, the leaders of the top industrialized and emerging economies managed to make progress on global economic issues.

Unfortunately, Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his guests failed to address a looming global energy crunch that will scuttle the G20's commitment "to work with Least Developed Countries to make them active participants in and beneficiaries of the global economic system." And Africa will be hardest hit by the inevitable crisis.

[US Works With Nigeria On Oil-rich Niger Delta Amnesty-Reports](#)

IBADAN, Nigeria (Dow Jones) - U.S. experts worked on conflict management in the amnesty program declared by the Nigerian government for militants in the oil- rich Niger Delta, Robin Sanders, U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, has said.

"We are working with a local non-governmental organization; we brought U.S. experts to work with them on conflict management in the first phase of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the amnesty program," the News Agency of Nigeria quoted Sanders as saying in a report Friday.

[Spill a wake-up call heard in the Americas](#)

Most of Cuba's oil production comes from Matanzas or from shallow offshore waters. But Cupet, Cuba's state oil company, estimates that Cuba potentially has more than 20 billion barrels of undiscovered oil reserves offshore.

Spanish oil company Repsol-YPF began drilling for oil in waters 18 miles off the Cuban coast in 2004. Although several foreign oil companies have offshore concessions, Pinon said none of them are currently drilling.

But when they do, there's always the potential risk of a blowout - and that's when things could get sticky. The U.S. embargo would preclude U.S. equipment being sent to Cuba to stem a spill.

[Libya NOC Still Has Faith in BP](#)

Libyan National Oil Company (NOC) Chairman Shukri Ghanem said his company would continue to work with BP in oil exploration in Libya, and that the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico has not affected its confidence in the company.

"Exploration drilling in over two thousand meters of water is a new activity and of course, any new activity has effects, but should not stand in the way of scientific progress," Ghanem said.

[Has the BP oil spill tarred your pension fund?](#)

The BP oil spill disaster has done more than wake up the world to the risks of deep-sea drilling – it has also brought home to pension savers just how reliant they are on the fortunes of a handful of giant companies.

[Why Is The Gulf Cleanup So Slow?](#)

As the oil spill continues and the cleanup lags, we must begin to ask difficult and uncomfortable questions. There does not seem to be much that anyone can do to stop the spill except dig a relief well, not due until August. But the cleanup is a different story. The press and Internet are full of straightforward suggestions for easy ways of improving the cleanup, but the federal government is resisting these remedies.

[Protest against hike in electricity, gas tariffs](#)

Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) activists staged a demonstration in front of the National Press Club here to register protest over recent increase in electricity and gas tariffs and the government's complete failure in keeping a check on rates of essential kitchen items.

[India: Don't Leave the Fate of Power to the States](#)

Coal found in India is of low quality and, thus, almost everyone is importing it from Indonesia, Australia or South Africa. This is despite India having one of the largest reserves of coal globally. The problem is that coal is being produced only by one government-owned company [Coal India]. At present, it has a capacity of about 450 million tonnes. Though it is increasing its production, it might not be enough as India would need nearly 1,000 million tonnes of thermal coal every year if the announced capacities come on line.

[China, Pakistan reach nuclear energy deal](#)

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (UPI) -- The Pakistani government has finalized a deal with China to build two new nuclear power plants in the country, the Pakistani foreign minister said.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Mehmood Qureshi said Pakistan was working with its Chinese counterparts on more than 120 different projects, including two nuclear power facilities in Pakistan, the Associated Press of Pakistan reports.

[Indonesian nuclear energy plan: A peer review](#)

It is interesting that from all the so-called G20 distinguished major economies, only Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey are currently not exposed to nuclear energy, let alone nuclear power plants.

But wait, the information is not entirely correct because just last month, Saudi Arabia decided to build its first nuclear power plant, the King Abdullah City for Nuclear and Renewable Energy, to be based in Riyadh.

And a short time ago, Turkey concluded a deal with Russia to build its first nuclear power plant in Mersin's Akkuyu district.

[The other side of the nuclear power option](#)

The government, as the latest developments indicate, is going forward with a plan to set up a nuclear power plant to mitigate Bangladesh's energy crisis. A Russian technical expert team has already been working on the prospect of setting it up at Rooppur, an old site designated for that very purpose in the 1960s by the then Pakistan government. It is considered a prestige project. Proposals have reportedly been received from China, South Korea as well, but the Russians have clearly won in the bid to clinch a state-to-state deal for at least a 1000 MW nuclear reactor. We are told that a clearance certificate and technical and financial support worth US\$ 3,66,000.00 from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has already been received during the caretaker government to prepare the Rooppur site for the purpose.

[North Africa set to lead MENA in renewable power](#)

Egypt's recent announcement of firm plans to develop a 1,000 megawatt wind farm is a sign that North African nations are set to lead the MENA region in renewable energy, outpacing richer Gulf states.

There are several reasons for this. They include superior wind resources, denser indigenous populations with less access to basic energy services, fewer conventional power generation options, proximity to Europe and lower fuel subsidies.

[Smart meters: Truly a cure for energy blindness?](#)

And now for a dose of reality.

No doubt smart meters are a good thing, but even their most ardent fans must admit that a degree of hoopla surrounds these little digital boxes. We hear that if consumers can just see how much power they use in real time, and what it costs, our energy woes will be no more.

Smart meters will even cure the blind. The energy blind that is.

[Ray Kurzweil On 'The Singularity' Future](#)

"When I was a student at MIT, we all shared one computer and it took up a whole building. The computer in your cell phone today is a million times cheaper and a thousand times more powerful. What now fits in your pocket 25 years from now will fit into a blood cell and will again be millions of times more cost effective."

[GM's Chinese sales top U.S.](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- China has become the top sales market for General Motors, the iconic American automaker owned by U.S. taxpayers.

[When Less Was More](#)

We tend to think of the decades immediately following World War II as a time of exuberance and growth, with soldiers returning home by the millions, going off to college on the G.I. Bill and lining up at the marriage bureaus.

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[Smaller Oil Firms Might Exit Gulf, Browner Says](#)

WASHINGTON—The White House's top energy adviser acknowledged that smaller oil firms might no longer be able to drill in the Gulf of Mexico as a result of legislation moving through Congress that would eliminate the cap on their liability for oil spills.

"Maybe this is a sector where you really need large companies who can bring to bear the expertise and who have the wherewithal to cover the expense if something goes wrong," Carol Browner, special adviser to President Barack Obama on energy and climate change, said in an interview. Eliminating the \$75 million cap on liability for oil spills "will mean that you only have large companies in this sector," she said.

[Crude-Oil Futures Fall After U.S. Reports Declines in Jobs, Factory Orders](#)

Crude oil dropped for a fifth day after a U.S. government report showed that employment slipped in June for the first time this year and factory orders declined more than forecast.

Oil fell 1.1 percent after the Labor Department said payrolls decreased by 125,000 last month as the government cut 225,000 temporary census workers. The 1.4 percent reduction in bookings with manufacturers was the biggest since March 2009, the Commerce Department said. Economists in a Bloomberg News survey projected a 0.5 percent drop.

[Gas prices fall as July Fourth weekend begins](#)

The economy may be making people nervous, but drivers should have a happy Fourth of July at the pump.

Gasoline prices have changed very little this week and, by some analyst estimates, may even fall a bit over the long holiday weekend.

The good news for motorists is that even with more people expected on the roads, ample supplies and anemic demand likely will keep prices fairly stable and below \$3 a gallon this summer.

[Gunmen attack two cargo ships off Nigeria, kill one](#)

Nigeria (Reuters) - Gunmen attacked two cargo vessels off the coast of the oil-producing Niger Delta, killing one crew member and kidnapping several others, a Nigerian navy spokesman said Saturday.

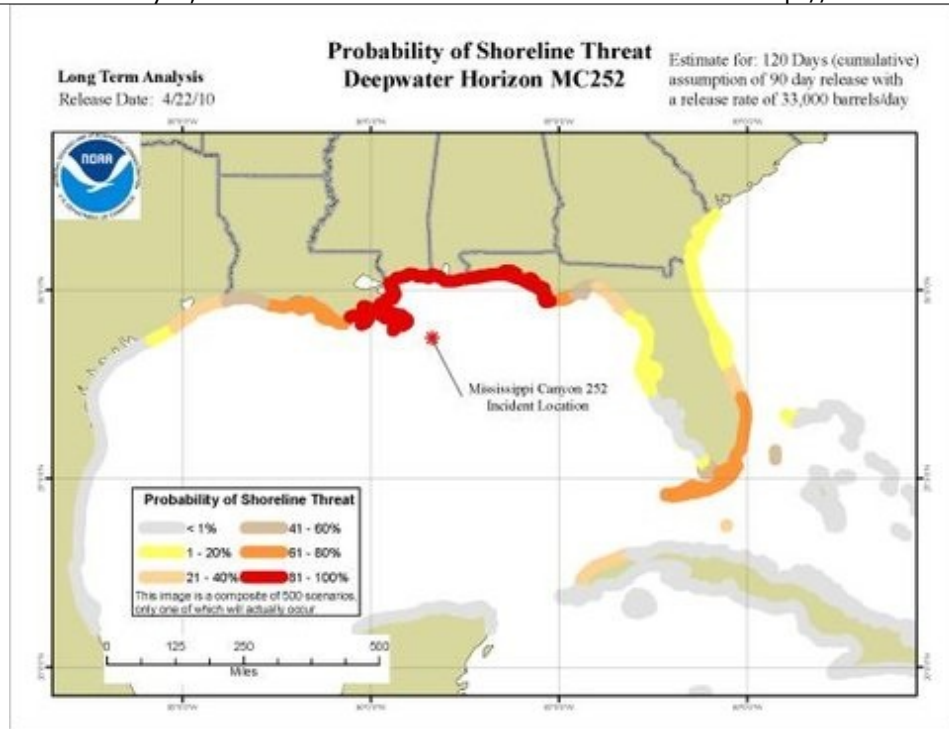
[Embargo on shipment of oil products to Iran was mistake—Total CEO](#)

PARIS (Itar-Tass) -- The imposition of sanctions on Iran implying an embargo on petroleum products supplies was a mistake, says the chief executive officer head of France's Total corporation, Christophe de Margerie.

Speaking at an economic forum in Aix-en-Provence in southern France on Thursday, de Margerie said that Total had suspended oil products supplies Iran. He said the decision was made in connection with the position of the United States and the European Union, which came out for more restrictive measures and introduced them unilaterally in addition to those that were endorsed by the UN Security Council on June 9.

"But I remain certain that this is a mistake. The embargo on petroleum products cannot be used to settle disputes of a political nature. It affects common people," de Margerie said. He assured that the Total would resume supplies "at the earliest opportunity."

[The Oil's Reach: A Risk Assessment](#)



Follow-up: The likelihood that the oil from the spill in the Gulf of Mexico will reach shorelines along the Eastern Seaboard remains remote, according to projections issued on Friday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

[In BP 'war room,' small victories, many uncertainties](#)

The war room is not exactly a place where people are eager to be interrupted by reporters. This is where engineers devise plans for what is known as the "sub-sea" response. It's mostly a BP operation, but there are engineers from other oil companies, plus a smattering of federal employees. (Of 569 people on duty Friday, 221 were contractors and 18 were federal workers, according to BP.)

Decisions have to be reviewed and approved by government officials, but those officials, all the way up to the president of the United States, have made clear that killing oil wells is not a government specialty. BP is the responsible party for the spill, and this is the responsible war room for fixing the problem at its source.

[The Petroleum Industry: Past the Tipping Point?](#)

In the wake of the BP oil spill in the Gulf, is this time different? Will the U.S. finally be able to change its stance on petroleum? Will the petroleum industry itself be irrevocably altered?

Though I don't always agree with its perspectives, one of the better (i.e., more well-informed and reasoned) weekly energy newsletters I receive is "Musings from the Oil Patch", written by Allen Brooks, Managing Director of the boutique investment banking

firm of Parks Paton Hoepfl & Brown.

[BP Bringing in Equipment to Double Amount of Oil Caught From Leaking Well](#)

BP Plc will put equipment in place this weekend that will allow the company to double the amount of crude being caught from its leaking Gulf of Mexico well.

BP has been using two vessels to capture an average of 25,000 barrels a day from the Macondo well. The company plans to connect the Helix Producer I, a floating platform which alone can process as much as 25,000 barrels daily and can easily be disconnected in case of a hurricane, by July 8.

[In a Refuge Haunted by Katrina, BP Swirls In](#)

The two-story structure was once a parochial school, and the touchstone for a neighborhood boy, long ago. Then Hurricane Katrina filled it halfway with water. Then it became a time-frozen reflection of the surrounding emptiness. Then it became Camp Hope, where volunteers spent their nights after working to restore pockets of St. Bernard, as much as could be done with lawnmowers and drywall.

Now the building has a new purpose. BP, the energy behemoth, is spending an estimated \$600,000 to renovate it into a carpeted, air-conditioned dormitory where more than 300 workers can sleep after long days of helping to clean up BP's catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico — a spill that has tainted the waters of this coastal parish, still grappling with its last calamity.

[Possible oil-spill solutions pour in, seemingly unheeded, from around the world](#)

A constituent of Sen. Mike Enzi's makes a product from beetle-killed pine trees that soaks up oil like crazy, but the man can't get BP to listen to his ideas. What's happened to his suggestions? "They've been lost," the Wyoming Republican complained at a hearing two weeks ago.

[A Life on the Water, Drying Up](#)

Capt. Pete Lacombe has the cabernet nose of a man who spends too much time in the sun. He would prefer to be underwater, diving or showing tourists the wondrous coral reefs of the Florida Keys, but the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico has largely kept him onshore.

Advance bookings for his diving company are now nonexistent. His 28-passenger red-and-white boat mostly sits idle these days, sloshing in a marina here, its life jackets dry

as sand.

[BP, Coast Guard agree to cut risks of burning turtles in oil slicks](#)

Under threat of legal action by environmental groups, BP and federal agencies on Friday said they would take steps to reduce the risk of burning sea turtles along with oil slicks.

[BP - Not ARMAGEDDON but cover up.](#)

World Oil published a database of 1200 blowouts in the Gulf between 1960 and 1996. That is equal to 33 blowouts per year in the Gulf Coast and we're still here.

I know you're probably thinking, "What about all the horrendous stories I've been hearing about the BP Deepwater Horizon well in particular?" Most of them are sheer nonsense. Now, the Facts instead of Myths, or disinformation, which ever you prefer.

[Bob Moriarty: Due for End-of-Empire Do-Over?](#)

TGR: What about the impact on future drilling?

BM: That's a really interesting question because, obviously, we need more regulation-some effective regulation. We didn't have it. In this situation, everybody involved was guilty. There will be far more rules on offshore drilling in the future and it will drive the cost of energy up.

TGR: That sounds odd coming from you. Normally you're sort of an anarchist and oppose regulations. You're anti-government-you call government impotent, useless and stupid. But in this case, if we'd had better regulations this wouldn't have happened.

BM: If you want to live in a country with no government regulation, move to Zimbabwe. Government regulation is appropriate in some situations. But it has to be efficient. We are at an end of empire. It couldn't possibly be any clearer-we are losing three and a half wars. We want to go nuke Iran, which is not the enemy of anybody, under the theory that they have nuclear weapons when 16 U.S. government agencies agree they don't. It's end of empire.

[In depth: BMW Megacity Vehicle and Project I](#)

2007 was a big year for the planet. That's when, for the first time ever, more people lived in cities than in rural areas. For car companies, this global trend means finding new ways to move people around in tighter and tighter spaces.

[2010 BMW Group Innovation Days Mobility of the Future - Why electromobility?](#)

The entire planet is affected by a looming shortage of resources. Key raw materials such as petroleum and precious metals are not in unlimited supply, yet day-to-day demand is rising. One of the causes of dwindling resources lies in the increasing industrialisation of the emerging nations. But population growth, rising living standards and the irresponsible use of raw materials are also contributing to this trend. The upshot: prices are rising in almost every commodity sector. In the foreseeable future – the exact point in time is disputed – the global limit of oil extraction (“peak oil”) will be reached. From that point onward the gap between supply and demand will grow ever wider and it will not be possible to meet all needs. That is why the quest for alternatives to oil is already proceeding.

[Does the U.S. Lag in Social Entrepreneurship?](#)

However we develop our social innovation chops, one thing seems certain; we live in a world of peak oil, peak food, peak water, peak credit and climate change. This set limiting factors is growing logarithmically in its capacity to shape civilization in the 21st century. At some indiscernible point in the future, these social innovation strategies will need to be directed inward to solve systemic problems for communities domestically; communities which were architected upon the fatal assumption that natural capital was infinite.

[Ethanol likely to have major role as fuel](#)

Former Saudi oil minister Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani was once quoted as saying, “The Stone Age didn’t end because we ran out of stones.”

Rather, it ended because somebody invented something better.

Is that what’s eventually going to happen to oil?

[Abengoa, Abound to Get \\$1.85 Billion in U.S. Solar-Project Loan Guarantees](#)

President Barack Obama today announced \$1.85 billion in loan guarantees to Abengoa SA’s Abengoa Solar unit and Abound Solar Inc. to build sun-powered facilities in the U.S. that he said will create thousands of new jobs.

In his weekly address on the radio and Internet, Obama said the money from the Department of Energy will help the U.S. transition to a “clean energy economy” that creates hundreds of thousands of jobs in the future.

[Japan donates 10 million dollars for Galapagos solar energy](#)

Japan has donated 10 million dollars to Ecuador to help fund a solar energy project in the Galapagos Islands, a UN-designated World Heritage site, Ecuador's Electricity Ministry said Friday.

An agreement between Quito and the Japan International Cooperation System Company will help start a plan to introduce "clean energy with solar generation systems to be located on Baltra Island," one of 13 islands that form the archipelago, the ministry said in a statement.

[Bard Group Units to Build Two Wind-Energy Parks off Netherlands Coastline](#)

ZeeEnergie CV and Buitengaats CV, units of German wind-turbine maker Bard Group, agreed with the Dutch government to build two wind-energy parks off the country's northern coast.

[China to Include Smart Grid Technology in Five-Year Plan, Xinhua Reports](#)

(Bloomberg New Energy Finance) -- China is drafting a five-year energy plan through 2015 to include smart grid technology as one of the key industries for research and development, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The government will provide funding to build several research centers this year to develop transmission technology to connect wind and solar power to the grid, said Li Ye, a government official at the National Energy Administration.

[China Exploring New Approaches To Protect Environment](#)

NANJING (Bernama) -- China's government is exploring new approaches to protect the environment, as well as to deal with the heightening conflict between environmental protection and economic growth, said Zhou Shengxian, Environmental Protection Minister on Saturday.

China took only 30 years to have the environmental problems that had gradually emerged in developed countries over 200 to 300 years, Xinhua news agency quoted Zhou as saying at a theme forum of the Shanghai World Expo in Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu Province.

[Could Crystals Sponge Up the Carbon?](#)

As a climate change prevention strategy, carbon capture and storage is nowhere near

ready for prime time. On the storage side of the equation, major questions remain on how and where to sequester the billions of tons of gas produced by power plants and industry every year. Another stumbling block, known as the parasitic energy cost, is the amount of energy needed to strip carbon out of power plant emissions. Carbon capture technologies being tested today, like amine scrubbing, exact an energy penalty as high as 30 percent, a vast and perhaps untenable expense to utilities and society.

Yet a breakthrough in chemistry may be able to radically reduce the cost of stripping carbon from power plant emissions, potentially making carbon capture and storage a far more realistic climate change solution. That is the hope, at least, of researchers studying a remarkable class of materials called metal-organic frameworks.

[Activists Beg Obama to Step Up Climate Push](#)

A coalition of environmental organizations sent President Obama a letter on Friday pleading for him to intervene in the stalled Senate negotiations on climate and energy legislation. The groups, which have been largely supportive of the president's energy policies, expressed concern that time was running out for any action on climate change this year. Only the president's personal and persistent attention can break the stalemate, they say.

[Obama May Back Down on Carbon Regulation Deadline to Court Republicans](#)

How much is President Obama willing to compromise with Republicans in order to produce an energy bill this month? A GOP senator present at Obama's Cabinet Room meeting to discuss energy on Tuesday said that Obama appeared prepared to postpone one of his most serious threats to the country's top emitters of greenhouse gases in order to bring a handful of Republicans on board.

[Nixon administration debated global warming](#)

YORBA LINDA, Calif. — Global warming warnings were debated in President Richard Nixon's administration as early as 1969, according to newly released documents examined by The Orange County Register.

...Moynihan wrote in a September 1969 memo that it was "pretty clearly agreed" that carbon dioxide content would rise 25 percent by 2000,

"This could increase the average temperature near the earth's surface by 7 degrees Fahrenheit," he wrote. "This in turn could raise the level of the sea by 10 feet. Goodbye New York. Goodbye Washington, for that matter."



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