



Drumbeat: September 9, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on September 9, 2010 - 9:12am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Mining the Truth on Coal Supplies](#)

No matter how bad coal might be for the planet, the conventional wisdom is that there is so much of it underground that the world's leading fuel for electricity will continue to dominate the energy scene unless global action is taken on climate change.

But what if conventional wisdom is wrong?

A new study seeks to shake up the assumption that use of coal, the most carbon-intensive fossil fuel, is bound to continue its inexorable rise. In fact, the authors predict that world coal production may reach its peak as early as next year, and then begin a permanent decline.

link this growth exclusively to increased consumption, the resulting disillusionment will be exceedingly painful, with globalization likely making this a pain felt by all.

[Natural gas from shale rock promises energy revolution](#)

A new source of energy, shale gas promises to add significantly to the world's energy reserves but there are concerns about the environmental impact of extraction.

BP's former chief executive Tony Hayward has described it as a "game changer" in energy supply, the major oil companies are betting millions on its success and it might just turn Blackpool into the new Dallas.

Shale gas seems to answer the oil industry's desire for an accessible energy source perfectly just as other sources are becoming more problematic.

[Canada Helps Create an Oil Sands World](#)

Alberta is showing the way for nations with similar reserves. Brace for a global 'age of tough oil.'

[OPEC Sailings Seen -130,000 B/D In 4 Weeks To Sept 25-Tracker](#)

LONDON -(Dow Jones)- Oil exports from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, excluding Angola and Ecuador, are forecast to drop 130,000 barrels a day in the four weeks to Sept. 25, tanker tracker Oil Movements said Thursday.

[BP Spill Report Hints at Legal Defense](#)

WASHINGTON — BP spent months this summer trying to contain the gusher of oil on the floor of the Gulf of Mexico. Now the company is trying to contain the legal and financial fallout from the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon, and on Wednesday it released the results of an internal investigation that mostly pointed fingers at other companies.

[Mexico's Pemex 2011 budget 30 pct lower than request](#)

(Reuters) - The Mexican government proposed on Wednesday a 2011 investment budget for state oil monopoly Pemex that was more than 30 percent below what the company had said earlier this year it would need.

[Venezuela Bonaire oil terminal still shut due fire](#)

(Reuters) - Shipping was halted for a second day at a 12-million-barrel oil storage terminal on the Caribbean island of Bonaire as smoke and flames billowed from a naphtha tank, traders and a witness said.

The terminal is owned by OPEC-member Venezuela's PDVSA, which uses it to mix and ship crude and products to China and the United States. The Bonaire terminal is 50 miles (80 km) north of Venezuela and also stores fuel for its neighbor's domestic market.

[Nigeria: 2 kidnapped Russian sailors released](#)

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) -- Authorities say two kidnapped Russian sailors have been released after a month in captivity in Nigeria's oil-rich and restive southern delta.

The Seafarers Union of Russia tells The Associated Press that kidnapped sailors Igor Ivanov and Andrei Pukke have been released by their captors.

[China U-turn on enforced power cuts in Hebei](#)

Thousands of people in China are to have their electricity restored after the reversal of

an order for enforced power cuts to meet energy-saving goals.

Officials in Hebei province ordered local governments to maintain normal power supplies for residential users.

[Oman oil rises as refiners start buying; Aramco supplies](#)

Oman crude oil, an Arabian Gulf benchmark for Asia, rose as refiners started early purchases of the grade on expectations of stronger demand spurred by winter fuel needs.

[Deadly car bomb strikes near Russian market](#)

ROSTOV-ON-DON, Russia — A car exploded Thursday near the central market of a major city in Russia's restive North Caucasus region, killing at least 12 people, regional police said according to the Interfax news agency.

[Explosion Rocks Honeywell Uranium Facility Run by Scab Workers](#)

On Saturday, nuclear regulators allowed Honeywell to start up core production at the facility, where core production had been shut down for over two months due to concerns about the training of replacement workers. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission delayed reopening the plant for several days after questions were raised about the unusually high levels of uranium that were appearing in the urine tests of several nuclear workers.

The following day, a hydrogen explosion rocked the plant. The blast shook the ground in front of the plant and could be heard a mile away, according to local reports. State Trooper Bridget Rice said that police were called to investigate to the scene of the explosion after receiving several phone calls reporting an explosion at the plant. Nuclear Regulatory Commission spokesman Roger Hannah also confirmed that there was indeed "a small hydrogen explosion that was very loud" at the Metropolis facility.

['Not So Big House' makes a better home for you, Earth](#)

The choices we make about where and how we live have a tremendous impact on our environment, community and economic well-being. If we choose wisely, we can minimize the negative impacts while maximizing value. They go hand in hand. Well-designed, efficient spaces can be beautiful, functional and comfortably provide for our needs.

Architect and "Not So Big House" author Sarah Susanka defined a relationship with "home" that is driven by quality not quantity. This is a timeless message that is often

lost in our culture of consumption and growth. The term "bigger is better" means little when it comes to green living.

[Green building takes off in real estate slump](#)

Green building remains the bright spot in an otherwise dull U.S. real estate market as companies and homeowners look to lower utility bills.

It now accounts for nearly one-third of new U.S. construction, up from 2% in 2005, according to a report aired Tuesday by NPR, which cites industry data from McGraw-Hill Construction. The story attributes much of that success to the private U.S. Green Building Council, begun in 1993.

[John Michael Greer - Animals I: birds, bats and bumblebees](#)

You're not going to get anything close to a majority of the net primary production of your garden onto your dinner table, by the way, and it's a mistake to try; if you do, you'll starve other living things that depend on a share of net primary production to keep their own dinner tables stocked, and you need these other living things in order to have a healthy and productive garden. (Ignoring this latter point is one of the critical errors of today's industrial agriculture.) Your goal instead is to make sure that as much of the net primary production diverted from your table as possible goes to living things that earn their keep by doing something for your benefit.

[Have a canning party](#)

About once a year I have what I consider a pretty great idea. This summer, it was a canning exchange, a hot-weather version of the holiday cookie swap: Throw a party and ask each of your friends to make a batch of pickles, preserves, jam or chutney. You bring maybe half a dozen jars of one kind, but you go home with a seasonal medley that lasts through the coldest months.

Brilliant. Except for that nagging little voice inside my head: Please, please don't let me kill anybody.

[Mining the Truth on Coal Supplies](#)

No matter how bad coal might be for the planet, the conventional wisdom is that there is so much of it underground that the world's leading fuel for electricity will continue to dominate the energy scene unless global action is taken on climate change.

But what if conventional wisdom is wrong?

A new study seeks to shake up the assumption that use of coal, the most carbon-intensive fossil fuel, is bound to continue its inexorable rise. In fact, the authors predict that world coal production may reach its peak as early as next year, and then begin a permanent decline.

[Tom Whipple: Politics In The Great Transition](#)

Someday there will be thousands of scholarly books on how political systems coped or failed during the transition from fossil fuel-sustained civilizations to that which is to come. For now, however, there are practically none as only a relative handful of the 6.7 billion on earth today have even a glimmer that the great transition is underway.

Indeed, it will be many years before we begin to appreciate the dimensions of how the various forms of government, (parliamentary democracies, theocracies, military dictatorships, "Communism" etc.) that have evolved around the world will cope with the great multi-decadal transition to civilizations that can function with little or no fossil fuel. Some already are predicting anarchy as industries, businesses, and monetary system crumble without their accustomed sources of energy; some talk of the great wars that will be fought over dwindling energy resources; and some foresee a return to pastoral towns akin to life in the 18th and 19th centuries - albeit after much social turmoil.

[Easy to be complacent about energy until it's too late](#)

David Suzuki warns us about complacency with the story of the pond where the lily pad population doubles every week. Starting with one plant, a corner of the pond starts filling up. But the week before the lily pads smother the whole pond, half the water is still open, so choking from overcrowding still seems a long way off.

That's an apt metaphor to illustrate a report recently released by two highly respected United Kingdom institutions: Lloyd's of London and Chatham House Royal Institute of International Affairs. The report dives headfirst into the doomsday pool by predicting "catastrophic consequences" for businesses that fail to prepare for a world of increasing oil scarcity, higher oil prices, and disrupted energy supplies. They're all on the way, says the report, because of soaring energy demand in China and India (40 percent growth projected in the next two decades in China), constraints on production resulting from the BP oil spill, and moves to cut carbon dioxide emissions to slow down global warming (and mitigate floods like the one now ravaging Pakistan).

[The Crisis Papers](#)

Place a few fruit flies in a bottle with a layer of honey at the bottom, and they will quickly multiply to an enormous number, and then, just as quickly, die off to the very last, poisoned by their wastes. Similarly, add a few yeast cells to grape juice, seal the

bottle, and the cells will consume the sugar and turn it into alcohol. When the alcohol rises to 12.5% it will kill off all the yeast, and the wine will be ready for the table.

Fruit flies and yeast in a bottle are embarked upon suicidal endeavors. They can't help it. They don't know any better, lacking the cognitive equipment to "know" anything at all.

Human beings, we are told, are different. Humans can utilize their accumulated knowledge, evaluate evidence and apply reason, and with these skills and accomplishments they can imagine alternative futures and choose among them to their advantage.

[Crude Rises on Speculation U.S. Inventory Growth Fell Short of Estimates](#)

Oil rose for a second day on speculation that a government report today may show a smaller increase in crude inventories than previously forecast.

U.S. crude stockpiles fell 7.31 million barrels last week, the industry-funded American Petroleum Institute reported yesterday, which may lead traders to revise expectations for U.S. Energy Department data due today. A Bloomberg survey earlier this week forecast that the government report will show that crude supplies climbed by 1 million barrels.

"The API drawdown was massive," said Thina Saltvedt, a commodities analyst at Nordea Bank AB in Oslo. "The DOE and API often go in the same direction but the sizes are different. But there's more than enough oil in the market."

[OPEC Trims 2011 Demand Forecast as Production Outside the Group Advances](#)

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries trimmed the outlook for demand for its members' crude in 2011 as production from outside the group grows.

OPEC, responsible for about 40 percent of global supplies, predicted in a monthly report today that the world will need 28.8 million barrels of oil a day from its 12 members next year. That's about 100,000 barrels a day less than in last month's report. The organization left its forecast for global oil demand in 2011 unchanged at 86.56 million barrels a day.

[Refiners Cut Oil Output in U.S. to April Low, Survey Shows](#)

U.S. refiners probably cut crude- processing rates to the lowest level since April as they began seasonal maintenance, a Bloomberg News survey showed.

Refineries operated at 86.5 percent of capacity last week, down 0.5 percentage point

from a week earlier, according to the median of 14 analyst estimates in the survey. The Energy Department is scheduled to release its weekly supply report at 11 a.m. today in Washington, a day later than usual because of the Labor Day holiday on Sept. 6.

[Saudi Aramco to Supply Full Contracted Volumes for October to Asian Buyers](#)

Saudi Arabian Oil Co., the world's largest state-owned oil company, will supply full contractual volumes of crude to Asia for loading in October, according to refinery officials in Japan and South Korea.

Saudi Aramco, as the company is known, will provide 100 percent of cargoes sold under long-term contracts for an 11th month, according to a survey of refinery officials, all of whom asked to remain unidentified, citing confidentiality agreements with the Middle East producer.

[Tropical Storm Igor drifting north in the Atlantic](#)

MIAMI -- Tropical Storm Igor is drifting northward in the Atlantic off the coast of Africa near the Cape Verde Islands.

Maximum sustained winds for the storm Thursday are near 40 mph (65 kph). The National Hurricane Center in Miami says the storm could begin strengthening some on Friday.

[British MPs to grill BP CEO Hayward](#)

LONDON (Reuters) – British Members of Parliament (MPs) will next week grill outgoing BP Plc Chief Executive Tony Hayward, as part of an investigation into risks around deepwater drilling in the North Sea.

BP's Gulf of Mexico oil spill has raised concerns globally about the dangers of drilling in ever-deeper waters.

[US government sends oil clean-up bill to BP](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – The US government Wednesday sent a sixth bill to BP for clean-up costs related to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill, bringing the total to date to 389.9 million dollars, officials said.

BP has already spent eight billion dollars trying to contain the disaster and has forecast that it will eventually cost the group more than 32.2 billion dollars.

Wednesday's 128.5-million-dollar bill covers costs incurred by federal, state and local governments involved in the massive response effort, US officials said.

[Should \\$10 a Barrel Be the Real Price of Oil?](#)

I have been in the investment business for 30 years. Oil peaked at monthly average prices around \$40 per barrel in 1980-81. It bottomed around \$11/barrel in 1999. Oil peaked in 2008 at a monthly average around \$126/ barrel and stands today somewhere around \$73/barrel. Like many other investors we at Smead Capital Management have been conscious of "Peak Oil" theory. In his book, "The Prize", Daniel Yergin points out that "Peak Oil" theory has popped up every ten to twenty years since oil was first discovered in Pennsylvania in 1855. Whether "it's different this time" doesn't matter to us because we see a dramatically quicker transition away from gasoline to electric and hybrid automobiles than the average portfolio management firm does. We believe the transition to electric/hybrid vehicles is a 10-15 year process. If you spend much time in Los Angeles or Seattle, you can see the speed of the transition with your own eyes. If you cut demand for gasoline by 25-50% in twenty years, you chop off the "lack of supply" argument which "Peak Oil" is all about.

[Resource Investing with Exchange Traded Funds Part 2](#)

Recently John Stephenson, senior vice president and portfolio manager with First Asset Investment Management Inc., shared his thoughts on the marketplace rapid structural changes around the world "setting the stage for a massive bull market in commodities as smart investors know that after a decade of decline, stocks aren't where the big money will be made."

Selecting one particular asset class, Mr. Stephenson was bullish on oil, "If it's just one, then you would have to pick oil. It's a miracle fuel, costs less than orange juice on a volume-weighted basis, we've reached peak oil and China has just become the largest car market on the planet."

[On Clean Energy. China Skirts Rules](#)

The booming Chinese clean energy sector, now more than a million jobs strong, is quickly coming to dominate the production of technologies essential to slowing global warming and other forms of air pollution. Such technologies are needed to assure adequate energy as the world's population grows by nearly a third, to nine billion people by the middle of the century, while oil and coal reserves dwindle.

But much of China's clean energy success lies in aggressive government policies that help this crucial export industry in ways most other governments do not. These measures risk breaking international rules to which China and almost all other nations subscribe, according to some trade experts interviewed by The New York Times.

[Metro Vancouver unveils draft regional food system strategy](#)

A long-time farmer and Richmond city councillor is predicting a time when B.C. beef is no longer sent to Alberta for processing.

As a case in point, Harold Steves told the *Straight* that, with his help, his son Jerry's Cache Creek farm already "direct-markets" much of its beef to Lower Mainland customers.

[Hollywood star in north Queensland](#)

She lives in a house powered by solar panels, drives a vehicle that runs off used cooking fat and grows most of her own food.

Yet Hollywood star Daryl Hannah isn't convinced she's doing enough for the environment.

The 1980s pin-up girl is in far north Queensland for a two-week course on permaculture, which aims to mimic the principles of natural eco-systems in human settlements and agriculture.

Ms Hannah says she's searching for "a more sane way of living in harmony with our environment".

[Murphy examines cars, consumption](#)

Electric cars may not be the answer to reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, says local author Pat Murphy in his recently-released book, *Spinning Our Wheels*.

Instead, Murphy proposes, we should share rides to increase transportation's efficiency and reduce the number of total cars on the road.

[Traffic deaths at lowest in 60 years](#)

Traffic deaths in the USA are at a 60-year low despite a slight uptick in miles driven, and the chances of dying on the road are the lowest ever, the Department of Transportation says.

[An exclusive first drive of a Tesla-powered electric Mercedes](#)

CALIFORNIA -- I got an unexpected treat during a recent visit to Tesla Motors' headquarters near San Francisco: They let me be the first journalist, ever, to drive the electric version of the Mercedes A-Class.

Let me say up front, I was totally captivated by this car, a product of the growing collaboration between Tesla and Daimler. Some 500 will be built, likely for delivery to "hand raisers," probably mostly in Europe.

[Automakers still making a date with the powerful V-8 engine](#)

Just when its future looked to be in doubt, automakers are putting some new life in the old V-8.

Despite pressure from federal gas mileage rules ratcheting up, makers are selectively peppering their lineups with the iconic engine — known for smooth, high-torque power — that many thought was an endangered species. These days, however, it likely is reserved for luxury or performance models.

[Vestas Wind Tumbles After Reporting That Blade Broke on Turbine Prototype](#)

Vestas Wind Systems A/S fell to its lowest in almost two years in Copenhagen trading after the world's largest wind turbine maker said a blade snapped on a prototype and Danske Bank A/S downgraded the stock.

[Alex Salmond unveils plan to turn Scotland into 'world's first hydro-economy'](#)

Proposed legislation would allow state-owned Scottish Water to use vast landbank and pipe network for renewable energy projects.

[To Go Where Compact Fluorescents Cannot](#)

Mention “new lighting technology” and what leaps to mind is probably a compact fluorescent curlicue. Shaped like a soft ice cream cone, it is viewed as a replacement for the ubiquitous 60-watt incandescent light bulb, which looks almost like it did 90 years ago.

But a profusion of light-emitting-diode lamps is about to hit the market, many of them in applications that are awkward or impossible for compact fluorescents.

[Federal Agency Sues LED Bulb Maker](#)

Even as lighting companies report advances in LED technology, consumers are being warned that some LED lighting products do not live up to the hype.

The Federal Trade Commission announced on Wednesday that it had sued Lights of America, a light bulb manufacturer based in California, for misrepresenting the light output and life expectancy of its LED bulbs. It is the first F.T.C. case challenging LED marketing claims.

[China may relax its one-child rule](#)

"In the past, we only focused on slowing population growth," says Peng Xizhe, a professor at Shanghai's Fudan University. "It's much more complicated than we earlier thought."

The National Population and Family Planning Commission, which enforces the "one-child policy," refused interview requests. The policy has prevented 400 million births in China, which has a population of 1.3 billion, according to the family planning agency. But a dramatic decline in birth rates and improved longevity over the past two decades have caused China's population to age at one of the fastest rates ever recorded, says the Population Reference Bureau, a demographic firm.

Also, a traditional preference for boys has led to the abortion of many girls. In 2009, the ratio of newborn boys to newborn girls was 119 to 100, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics.

[U.S. names Asian carp czar](#)

The White House has tapped a former leader of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Indiana Wildlife Federation as the Asian carp czar to oversee the federal response to keeping the invasive species out of the Great Lakes.

[This summer really was hotter than others](#)

The intense heat this summer wasn't a mirage for the tens of millions of people in the eastern and southern USA. Every state east of the Mississippi River recorded one of its 10 warmest summers since records began, according to the National Climatic Data Center.

[Obama's Climate Image Blurs as He Nears Last Half of Presidential Term](#)

Barack Obama was considered a climate change savior 20 months ago, rushing into the White House with promises to price carbon, accelerate renewable energy technology and participate in a worldwide effort against global warming.

He was a champion to environmentalists and sometimes described the atmospheric impacts of unregulated emissions as a threat to his own family. Global warming, he said in 2007, is not "a someday problem; it is now."

But the legislative remedy would have to wait. Now, nearly two years into Obama's term, the president's climate image has changed. He is no longer a champion to some, and others are astonished at his administration's unenthusiastic support of a climate bill in the Senate this year. It failed without a vote.

[Climate Forecasters Should Share Studies More to Help, Science Body Says](#)

Climate researchers need to do a better job of sharing their studies to raise the effectiveness of their findings for insurance companies and farmers, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences said.

The research community should increase collaboration with the public by holding workshops and through researcher exchanges with weather centers, The National Academy of Science said in a report on its website. Establishing public archives of forecasts would improve transparency, it said.

[Study: Irrigation affecting global warming](#)

NEW YORK (UPI) -- Expanding irrigation is helping feed the world's billions of people and may even mask global warming, but the future could bring problems, scientists say.

Columbia University researchers say some major groundwater aquifers, a source of irrigation water, will dry up in the future hitting people with the double blow of food shortages and higher temperatures, an article in the journal Geophysical Research says.

"Irrigation can have a significant cooling effect on regional temperatures, where people live," Michael Puma, a university hydrologist, says. "An important question for the future is what happens to the climate if the water goes dry and the cooling disappears? How much warming is being hidden by irrigation?"



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](#).