



Drumbeat: April 30, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on April 30, 2011 - 11:18am

[John Michael Greer - Alternatives to Nihilism, Part Three: Remember Your Name](#)

Look beyond the realm of partisan quarrels and the same deeply troubled conscience appears over and over again in American life. Consider, as one example out of many, the way that protecting children turned from a reasonable human concern to an obsessive-compulsive fixation. Raised under the frantic surveillance of helicopter moms, forbidden from playing outside or even visiting another child's home except on the basis of a prearranged and parentally approved play date, a generation of American children were held hostage by a galaxy of parental terrors that have only the most distorted relationship to reality, but serve to distract attention from the fact that the lifestyles chosen by these same parents were condemning their children to a troubled and dangerous life in a depleted, polluted, and impoverished world.

The irony reached a dizzying intensity as tens of thousands of American parents rushed out to buy SUVs to transport their children to places every previous generation of American children proved perfectly capable of reaching by themselves on foot or on bike. It became the conventional wisdom, during the peak of the SUV craze, that the safety provided to young passengers by these massive rolling fortresses justified their purchase. No one wanted to deal with the fact that it was precisely the lifestyle exemplified by the SUV that was, and remains, the single most pressing threat to children's long-term safety and welfare.

[Tripoli witness: Rioting, fighting and dying for fuel](#)

Tales of tension and gang-fights are common in Tripoli's long queues for fuel. One resident in the Libyan capital - who does not want his name to be used for security reasons - explains.

It has been an explosive week in Tripoli, both literally and figuratively.

Nato air strikes intensified after a quiet period.

Meanwhile, the fuel shortage, that state television channels deny exists, has hit an all-time high in the past eight days.

[Fertiliser sector seeks gas diversion from power plants](#)

ISLAMABAD: The fertiliser sector has offered the government that it will pay cost differential of running power plants on fuels other than gas, provided the government diverts 120 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) of gas to fertiliser plants, as low availability of gas has not only reduced power generation by 800 megawatts, but is also becoming a reason for urea shortage.

[Russian fuel shortage to impact Tajik harvests, ministry says](#)

Tajikistan's Agriculture Ministry on Friday issued a warning that fluctuations in the availability of Russian gas could impact harvests and have a negative impact on the country's agribusiness sector.

"The sowing campaign was carried out in the country in good time, but acute fuel shortages may seriously affect land treatment that will tell on productivity and quality of agricultural crops, including cotton," the Tajik news agency AsiaPlus.tj reported ministry spokesman Narzullo Dadaboyev as saying on Friday.

[LPG's Aramco price hits record high at \\$ 980 per ton](#)

KARACHI: The international price of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) has jumped by \$ 96 to record high at \$ 980 per ton for May 2011, raising its import price by Rs 9,043 to Rs 97,560 per ton, the highest ever in country's history.

[Gasoline prices soar in Germany to new record high](#)

Gasoline prices in Germany reached a record high of 1.62 euro per liter, a day after Russia raised export duties by 44 percent to ensure domestic supply. Earlier this week, oil companies reported huge profits.

Drivers in Germany about to return from Easter holidays will face a nasty shock as gasoline prices on Friday reached a record high of around 1.62 euros per liter (\$2.41). That's even higher than the 2008 record of 1.59 euros per liter.

[Mideast Oil Recovery Enters New Phase](#)

DUBAI—It has always been an axiom of world energy markets that Persian Gulf oil is both easy and cheap to produce.

The crude that gushes from the scorching desert sands of Saudi Arabia is thought to cost less than \$5 a barrel to produce, compared to the \$70 price tag on raising a barrel from deep Atlantic waters.

But many of the Persian Gulf oilfields have been producing for decades, and a number of the newer fields in the region contain heavier and harder-to-extract crudes. Squeezing out the remaining reserves from some existing fields and developing new, more

complicated ones will be costlier and will require more advanced technology, according to analysts and oilfield engineers.

[Stuart Staniford: Chinese inflation and next recession musings](#)

So, in 2007/2008 the sector that gave way was the American subprime consumer, along with a significant chunk of the financial system that was predicated on the idea that poor Americans could continue to take on more and more debt indefinitely. Instead, rising gas and food prices eventually destabilized the finances of that sector of consumers, they started to default, then their lenders started to default, financial contagion set in, and the situation was only stabilized with massive extraordinary interventions by sovereign governments. That worked, but left a lot of the sovereigns in significantly weaker condition than before.

Now poor Americans borrowing more and more to bid house prices higher and higher was always an unsustainable trend that was going to end in tears one way or another. But the timing was likely determined by the oil/food price shock that ended in 2008.

So now, just three years later, here we are again with oil and food prices rising fast, and the question in my mind is this: what part of the global fabric tears next? And when?

[Shale Boom, Gas Demand to Make North America LNG Exports Reality](#)

The increase in North American natural gas due to the shale gas boom and a projected increase in global gas demand mean that North America will become a liquefied natural gas (LNG) exporter within the next few years.

[PA State Senate Proposes Impact Fee on Gas Drilling](#)

The ranking Republican in the state Senate today proposed an impact fee on Marcellus shale gas drilling, of which an estimated 60 percent would go to counties and municipalities with deep wells as well as townships and boroughs neighboring drilling production sites.

[Pemex Output May Reach 3 Million Barrels in 2015-2017](#)

Petroleos Mexicanos, the state-run oil company, may see production rise to 3 million barrels a day in the period from 2015 to 2017, Juan Jose Suarez Coppel, chief executive officer said today.

Pemex, as the company is known, will cut losses in its refinery business by about 8 billion pesos this year, Suarez Coppel said at an event in Mexico City.

[What's wrong with China becoming Afghanistan's main patron?](#)

We are hearing that Pakistan has urged Afghan President Hamid Karzai to turn away from the United States, and embrace China as his country's chief big-power patron. Is that a wacky idea? The answer is no. As we've observed with the flow of oil and natural gas from Central Asia, an active Big China serves U.S. and western interests when it comes to this particular region.

[Deep Oil From Diamonds? Maybe, Says A New Report](#)

According to a new computer model, liquid methane in contact with a partially hydrogen-terminated diamond surface at extremely high pressures and temperatures spontaneously forms longer hydrocarbons, and hence the material of crude oil could be formed deep in the earth.

[Nigeria's Ruling Party Keeps Majority in General Elections](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Nigeria's ruling party retained a majority in national legislative and state-governor elections that were called the cleanest in a decade in Africa's top oil producer, according to partial results released by authorities.

[ANALYSIS-China sharpens axe to cull "teapot" refiners](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - China's state-owned oil companies can cover any shortages of refined fuel products under plans to shut small refiners known as "teapots" that make up 10 to 15 percent of the country's capacity, though fuel oil imports would fall sharply.

[When is it time to say goodbye to a company?](#)

Even if you do have hundreds of great people in the company, BP's culture is extremely problematic. Short of serious criminality, laws do not permit a government-led off-with-his-head approach applied to bad dictators. As for a market response, one might ask what type of incident would trigger a company-changing selloff. The type that forces a lopping off of the entire top of the company, and a true transformation of the culture. Or its acquisition by a more responsible rival.

[A Spanish Island's Quest to Be the Greenest Place on Earth](#)

At the moment, the project that will transform the future of El Hierro doesn't look like much more than a hole in the ground. Or two, to be exact: one on top of a mountain, another smaller one down below, and in between, a long stretch of pipeline tinted the same color as the scrub that grows so abundantly on this volcanic island. But when this innovative wind-power system goes online at the end of 2011, it will turn El Hierro, the easternmost of Spain's Canary Islands, into the first inhabited landmass in the world to

become completely energy self-sufficient. And that's just the first step in a plan that may make the island the most sustainable place on Earth.

[Bitching About an Unsustainable Lifestyle](#)

My Facebook pal — who I won't name out of courtesy and to save her possible embarrassment — recently urged her online followers to take part in a national Post-It Note campaign at the gas pump designed to show outrage at the spiraling prices that she had read about somewhere. In her words, "Every time I buy gas, I leave a sticky note on the gas pump which says, 'How's that Hope & Change working out for you?' I encourage all of you to join me in my little adventure."

If you can't tell, my acquaintance is a conservative Republican and she's blaming President Obama and his energy policies for the rising prices, and borrows a smart-ass barb from everyone's favorite half-term governor, Sarah Palin.

(By the way, this acquaintance opposes Cincinnati's proposed streetcar system and generally is against mass transit. Go figure.)

[Obama renews call for ending oil subsidies](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – US President Barack Obama on Saturday said Congress should halt subsidizing oil companies to invest in the energy of the future.

"When oil companies are making huge profits and you're struggling at the pump, and we're scouring the federal budget for spending we can afford to do without, these tax giveaways aren't right," Obama said in his weekly radio address.

"They aren't smart. And we need to end them," he added.

[Pump prices rise 2 cents as supplies tighten](#)

Gas pump prices across the country rose to within a dime of \$4 a gallon Friday, as weather-related refinery outages tightened supplies and pushed prices up.

The national average increased 2 cents to nearly \$3.91 a gallon for regular gasoline. It's the highest level since July 31, 2008, when pump prices were falling from a record \$4.11 a gallon on July 17 of that year.

Drivers in nine states and the District of Columbia already pay \$4 a gallon or more for gas. At the current rate of increase, the national average could reach \$4 by May 8, Analysts expect it to start falling later in the month, as refineries return to full production and more gas becomes available.

[Gas Prices: Californians Are Mad as Hell but Still Driving](#)

The driver of a white Porsche zips into the Costco gas station in Marina del Rey, Calif., and takes his place in line. It's a Friday afternoon and all 16 of the pumps are taken. At \$4.19 per gallon, prices there are among the least expensive on the west side of Los Angeles these days. The Porsche owner, Santa Monica attorney Matt Jones, ends up paying \$56 to fill up — \$15 more than it would have cost him a year ago, but \$10 less than he could have spent last week at a more expensive station in Santa Monica.

[End in sight for soft natural gas price as U.S. inventories, production falling](#)

There may be an end in sight for soft natural gas prices that have plagued the industry over the last three years. A U.S. Energy Information Administration report released Thursday showed natural gas inventories this year are lower than expected and now sit at 20% below the fiveyear average.

[Iran's Revolutionary guard gets new gas project](#)

TEHRAN — A consortium connected to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard has been awarded two giant gas development projects.

The semiofficial Mehr news agency quotes Mahdi Fakoore, a senior Oil Ministry official, saying that Khatam-ol-Anbia will develop Halgan and Sefid Baghoon gas fields in southern Iran.

[How Syria and Libya Got to be Turkey's Headaches](#)

With neighboring Syria in crisis, the Arab Spring has finally arrived on Turkey's doorstep — and with it, one big headache for a government that has spent recent years staking its political fortunes on the region.

[Review of Carl Safina's "A Sea in Flames," a post-mortem on the BP oil spill.](#)

Not since Rachel Carson wrote her sea trilogy — "Under the Sea-wind," "The Sea Around Us" and "The Edge of the Sea" — has a conservationist written about marine ecosystems with the factual elegance of Carl Safina. His 1997 book "Song for the Blue Ocean" jarred readers about the tragic diminution of numerous fish species: bluefin tuna, white marlin, swordfish. All the great runs of these species, he warned, were lurching toward expiration. Safina, a marine biologist, has positioned himself as a protector of the seas, a man in communion with dolphins and whales. Other Safina books have dealt with leatherback turtles, Laysan albatross, shellfish stocks — any and everything that grapples with the health of the world's oceans.

[BP Accident Lives On in Ads](#)

A book by Sinclair Lewis that was published in 1935 has been largely forgotten, except for its chilling title, "It Can't Happen Here." That idea provides the premise for a campaign for an advocacy organization that is tied to the one-year anniversary of the BP oil spill.

[Plains' 200,000 bpd Alberta pipeline spills oil](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - A 200,000 barrel per day oil pipeline belonging to a unit of Plains All American Pipeline LP ruptured on Friday, spilling hundreds of barrels of oil, regulators said.

Plains' Rainbow pipeline, which runs from Zama in northwest Alberta 770 kilometers (480 miles) south to Edmonton, sprung a leak at 7:30 a.m. local time.

"It's not a small leak," said Davis Sheremata, a spokesman for Alberta's Energy Resources Conservation Board, which regulates pipelines in the province. "It's a significant leak, in the hundreds of barrels."

[Energy Information Agency Feels Budget Ax](#)

The federal government's ability to gather and analyze energy data and produce market forecasts will be significantly impaired by the recently enacted budget cuts, the administrator of the Energy Information Administration said.

[Why China Could Prove to be the Better Place for EVs](#)

This week Shai Agassi's Better Place is realizing a long held dream of moving to a better place to realize electric vehicle battery swapping in lieu of fast charging for the electric car: Guangzhou, China. While Agassi's electric vehicle battery swapping stations have already launched in far smaller nations: Agassi's native Israel, and Denmark and Hawaii, it could well be that this launch in China will turn out to be the one that really gives lift-off to the Better Place battery swapping model for the electric car industry.

[Peak Oil Aware Biologist John Janovy, Jr. Predicts Future Human Evolution](#)

What Will Human Life Be Like in a Couple of Thousand Years?

Obviously there is no way to answer this question of the title for certain, but we can do a little thought experiment that might suggest some answers. Picture yourself in what is now Israel at the time of Jesus' crucifixion attempting to predict what human life would be like in the year 2010 and you will have a sense of the difficulty in making such predictions. ...

Regardless of specific predictions by various experts, many of whom have personal or political agendas, the historical record is fairly clear. That record tells us two things: (1) you cannot predict technological innovations and developments very accurately or very

far in advance, and (2) deteriorating environmental conditions are probably the most important factor in the collapse of civilizations.

[New Brazil Policies May Not Prevent Rising Ethanol Prices, Analyst Says](#)

Brazil's move to assume more authority over the country's ethanol supply chain may not prevent a repeat of this month's surge in prices for the renewable fuel, an analyst said.

[Johnsonville plant shutdown fuels counties' job fears](#)

TVA's game-changing plan to shut down parts of its coal-burning power production fleet will mean cleaner air for Middle Tennessee and elsewhere, but it has left at least one community in shock.

Humphreys County, already dealing with an 11.6 percent unemployment rate, could lose as many as 270 jobs with the shuttering of the coal-fired boilers at the Johnsonville plant.

[Radiation exposure levels near limit for 2 nuclear plant workers](#)

TOKYO — As the nuclear crisis continues at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, two workers, who were previously hospitalized for possible radiation burns, turned out Saturday to have been exposed to radiation levels close to the limit of 250 millisieverts while seven women in affected areas were found with slightly contaminated breast milk.

[IAEA to send team to inspect Fukushima plant in mid-May](#)

VIENNA — The International Atomic Energy Agency plans to send a team to Japan in mid-May to inspect the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, IAEA sources said Friday.

[Russia to Keep Nuclear-Energy Expansion Plan to 'Balance' Mix, Putin Says](#)

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said Russia is keeping its plans to increase the share of nuclear power to have a "balanced" energy industry.

"We need to produce as many units, I mean big units, as in the entire Soviet period," Putin said at a meeting with trade unions in Penza, central Russia, yesterday. "Our energy should be balanced; it should be based on several sources: nuclear, hydrocarbon, hydro power, wind, solar panels."

[Council for Renewable Energy demands a ban on Nuclear Energy](#)

The World Council for Renewable Energy (WCRE) demands a global ban on new nuclear power, policies to phase out current plants - and a decisive, immediate move to a 100% renewable world.

[The Top 10 Solar States](#)

Here, courtesy of the Solar Energy Industries Association, is a Top 10 list for cumulative installed solar capacity in the United States as of 2010.

[Philippines need not forego growth for environment, says World Bank exec](#)

Manila (Philippine Daily Inquirer/ANN) - Like other developing nations, the Philippines does not have to sacrifice growth to save the planet, according to the World Bank's special envoy on climate change.

Andrew Steer, who was on a two-day visit here earlier this week, said the Philippines, a relatively low emitter of greenhouse gases, was not obliged to enact climate-change policies if this would mean the loss of jobs and income.

[Europe's top 300 firms get climate-ranked](#)

LONDON (UPI) -- British insurer Aviva ranks the climate-friendliest of 300 large European companies but many companies don't do enough to bring down greenhouse gas emissions, a new study indicates.

[Disaster Needed for U.S. to Act on Climate Change, Harvard's Stavins Says](#)

The U.S. probably won't take significant steps to curb climate change until an environmental disaster sways public view and prompts political action, Robert Stavins of Harvard University said.

"It's unlikely that the U.S. is going to take serious action on climate change until there are observable, dramatic events, almost catastrophic in nature, that drive public opinion and drive the political process in that direction," Stavins, director of Harvard's Environmental Economics Program in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said today in an interview in Bloomberg's Boston office.



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