



Drumbeat: May 18, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on May 18, 2011 - 10:30am

[Oil output cut as Alberta wildfires rage](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - Canadian oil production cuts could more than double by Wednesday as companies move to protect employees and property from wildfires raging through northern Alberta and cope with the shutdown of a key pipeline.

Oil companies had shut in close to 50,000 barrels per day of production Tuesday because of wildfires in the Western Canadian province, one of the largest suppliers of crude to the United States. Further cuts are expected as big fields are closed in because they cannot ship their oil to market.

Spurred by warm temperatures and gusting winds, 100 wildfires are burning in Alberta, with 23 considered out of control in a fire season unlike any seen before.

[Ahmadinejad at OPEC will hamper output increase](#)

LONDON/TEHRAN (Reuters) - Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's plan to attend an OPEC meeting next month is likely to hamper any move by Saudi Arabia to raise the group's oil output targets and bring crude prices down.

[Mexico Stepping Up Natural Gas Imports as Pemex Focuses on Oil Production](#)

Mexico, which is building about six new power plants this year, is likely to step up natural-gas imports because slumping prices for the fuel are deterring state-owned Petroleos Mexicanos from developing its own fields.

[ANALYSIS: Where Are Oil Prices Headed?](#)

Robust worldwide demand, along with the lack of Libyan output, will keep crude oil prices trending above \$100 per barrel for some time to come, according to a review of current statistics from Rigzone and interviews with leading analysts.

"From a long-term perspective, we're just in a different world than we were in the 1990s, when there was \$10 to \$20 oil," commented Ruchir Kadakia, director of global oil fundamentals for IHS' Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA.)

[Kazakhstan set to freeze major gas project, minister says](#)

Kazakhstan will freeze further development of its most promising gas field, Karachaganak, if it fails to resolve its dispute with foreign shareholders in the project, the Kazakh oil and gas minister said on Wednesday.

Kazakhstan, a vast Central Asian nation holding 3 per cent of the world's recoverable oil reserves, has grown more assertive over its abundant natural resources in recent years, pushing to revise agreements signed with foreign energy majors when its budget coffers were empty following the Soviet collapse in 1991.

[The gas price blame game](#)

More Americans actually believe in UFOs and ghosts than blame President Barack Obama for causing their pain at the pump.

Three years of hammering away with the "drill, baby, drill" mantra hasn't gotten the GOP very far politically despite fuel costs crossing into the \$4-a-gallon no man's land.

Now, public angst about the cause of soaring fuel costs centers on Big Oil and market speculators — the same bad guys that Obama and Senate Democrats have targeted with tax increases and federal investigations.

[Drilling offers only a political benefit](#)

If past data turn out to be at all accurate, there's not much oil or natural gas off Virginia. There's another treasure, the real lure of Virginia's outer continental shelf: the prospect of prying open the ocean floor off America's populous and prosperous East Coast.

There's no other plausible explanation for this eagerness to drill off Virginia. Unless there is a major surprise discovery, drilling will do nothing for the punishing price of a gallon of gasoline. And because oil goes to international markets, it would do nothing to lower the specific price Virginians pay at the pump.

[Western Australia's Gas Policy Seen Preventing New Entrants](#)

Western Australia's domestic gas reservation policy is interventionist and may prevent new entrants to the market, the petroleum sector's peak body says.

Former state premier Alan Carpenter in late 2006 introduced the policy, whereby 15 percent of gas from offshore projects must be set aside for domestic use.

[Poland to develop shale gas despite environment risk](#)

(Reuters) - Poland reaffirmed its commitment to developing its shale gas reserves on Wednesday despite French plans to ban drilling, but officials and industry experts said tough regulatory and environmental challenges lie ahead.

The U.S.-based Energy Information Administration (EIA) said last month Poland's technically recoverable reserves of shale gas are the biggest in Europe at an estimated 5.3 trillion cubic meters, though some experts are skeptical about the figure.

[Kenya-Economy: Small Oil Marketers Say Another Shortage Looms](#)

Kenyans should brace themselves for more fuel shortages in the months of June and July because of market manipulation by major oil companies small oil marketers said yesterday. An association of small oil firms warned that the country was facing the acute shortage after some major oil companies manipulated the award of supply of 95million litres of product that only caters for their requirement and locking out the small players.

[EDL to step up crackdown on electricity theft](#)

BEIRUT: Electricite du Liban (EDL) will intensify a nationwide crackdown on electricity theft in an effort to enhance power grids ahead of a summer season set to witness heightened energy demand, the company said in a statement Tuesday.

[Tohoku Electric to set up 800-meter-long levee near Onagawa plant](#)

SENDAI — Tohoku Electric Power Co said Wednesday it will construct a coastal levee about 800 meters long near its Onagawa nuclear power plant in Miyagi Prefecture, which shut down in the immediate aftermath of the March 11 massive earthquake and tsunami.

[Can Batteries Replace Power Generators?](#)

When the Long Island Power Authority said last summer that it was going to need new power capacity in the next few years, most people assumed that meant new generating stations or new transmission cables. But of the 16 companies that submitted proposals, one, AES Energy Storage, took an entirely different tack: it proposed batteries.

[Land use claims against biofuel industry fall flat](#)

Based on what they describe as a “‘bottom-up’, data-driven, statistical approach,” researchers at Michigan State University have concluded that biofuel production in the

United States through 2007 “probably has not induced any indirect land use change.”

[Forget the gas tax - a driving tax may be next](#)

Earlier this year, North Dakota Democrat and Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad asked the Congressional Budget Office to study the idea. In March CBO issued a report that said such a tax was feasible and had many advantages over a gas tax.

"Because highway costs are more directly determined by miles driven than by fuel used, appropriately designed [mileage] taxes can do more to improve the efficiency of road use than fuel taxes can," the report said.

[The only way forwards is backwards: A budget reply](#)

This is a budget reply from the hypothetical leader of the hypothetical catabolic collapse party, placing the not so hypothetical predicament of industrial society into budgetary perspective.

[Richard Heinberg - Shrinking Pie: Competition and Relative Growth in a Finite World](#)

In this chapter we will explore the growth prospects of the Asian economies. We will also examine the dynamics of currency wars. And we will see how rich and poor countries, and demographic sectors within those countries, are likely to fare in post-growth economy, and how increasing competition for depleting resources may drive nations toward conflict.

The best place to start this survey of prospects for short-to-medium-term relative growth is with China, which not only exemplifies rapid residual economic growth, but also points the way to how currency and resource rivalries, as well as old/young, rich/poor, urban/rural divisions might play out as the global economy contracts.

[Review: A User's Guide to the Crisis of Civilization by Nafeez Mosaddeq Ahmed](#)

There are two common reactions to news about our species' present-day crisis. One is confusion and bewilderment arising from the fact that even the experts can't seem to agree on which threats are real or what to do about them. The other is despair at the sheer number of crises and the dire implications of each, which can eventually lead to tune-out, apathy and annoyance whenever they're mentioned. Neither response is productive, and thus there's a dawning recognition on the part of experts, activists and educators that the way in which these issues are presented to the public must change if we're to keep people engaged.

[Saudi Aramco speeds up Manifa, eyes full output by 2015](#)

KHOBAR, Saudi Arabia (Reuters) - State oil giant Saudi Aramco plans to accelerate the development of its 900,000 barrels-per-day (bpd) Manifa oilfield and reach full capacity by early 2015, an Aramco executive said on Wednesday.

Aramco had said in its 2009 annual review the project would not pump at full volume until January 2024, as the company looked to cut costs across its energy projects following the oil price slump in 2008 in the wake of global economic slowdown.

But in 2009, Aramco's chief executive Khalid al-Falih said the company decided to push on with the project despite the fall in oil prices then taking place.

[Saudi Sweet Oil Supply Too Low to Offset Libya, al-Husseini Says](#)

Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter, won't be able to produce enough low-sulfur blends to replace lost Libyan output for refiners in Europe, said Sadad al-Husseini, a former Saudi Aramco executive.

The country doesn't have enough Arab Super Light to create sufficient amounts of low-sulfur, or sweet, oil similar to Libya's grades, al-Husseini, Aramco's former executive vice president for exploration and development, said today by e-mail.

[Aramco 'Keen' to Develop Shale, Tight Gas to Meet Local Demand](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil exporter, wants to develop unconventional gas resources such as shale rock to reduce the burning of crude for power generation, a company official said.

"We are in the early stages of assessing the kingdom's resources of unconventional gas but the company is very keen on developing it," Brian Gratto, manager for exploration resource assessment at the company, said today in Khobar, in the east of the country.

[U.S. sanctions target Syrian president, Iranian commanders](#)

(CNN) -- President Barack Obama Wednesday imposed tough sanctions against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and six other senior Syrian officials in an effort to stop the regime's fierce crackdown on protests, the U.S. Treasury Department said.

The sanctions also target two top Iranian officials whose unit was a "conduit for Iranian material support" to Syrian intelligence, according to a copy of the executive order issued by the White House.

[Sechin says BP-Rosneft deal failed, praises BP](#)

(Reuters) - BP's \$16 billion share swap and Arctic drilling deal with Russian oil company Rosneft has failed but BP is still a good partner, Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin said on Wednesday.

Sechin, Russia's top energy official, said Rosneft could sue over the breakdown of talks on Monday to buy out BP's partners in Rosneft rival TNK-BP (TNBP.MM) who opposed the tie-up.

[Jeff Rubin takes questions on global oil and gas prices](#)

What's next for global oil and gas prices?

Author and economist Jeff Rubin will take your questions in a live chat on Friday May 20 at noon ET.

[Portland hearing on Hanford radioactive waste plan](#)

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) -- The Energy Department is holding a public hearing Thursday night in Portland on a proposal to store more radioactive waste at the Hanford nuclear reservation in Eastern Washington.

The Oregonian reports the state of Oregon opposes the idea because of the risk of radioactive contamination in the Columbia River.

[Surprises on list of cars, trucks in shortest supply](#)

You'd think the list would be dominated by Japanese models whose production was stopped or reduced because of the March earthquake. And, sure, some are on the list. But it's actually a pretty mixed bag.

If there anything in common, it is that gas savers prevail. A year ago, more SUVs were in short supply.

As for the vehicle in shortest supply, Edmunds.com says it's Nissan's all-electric Leaf.

[Book Review: Seth Fletcher's "Bottled Lightning"](#)

In 1976, *Forbes* declared that "the electric car's rebirth is as sure as the need to end our dependence on imported oil." As we all now know, that exuberance was dead by the end of the decade. Japan later picked up Exxon's detritus and made lithium-ion batteries a fabulously profitable industry, but for everyone else, they were old news.

Now we are in an age that sounds eerily similar to those days three decades ago. Yet Seth Fletcher reports that this time may be different: Oil prices are higher, and there is

more concern about fuel economy, not to mention alarm about global warming -- and 9/11. Plus, batteries are much more advanced -- electric cars have reached commercial critical mass, he writes.

[Peak Oil Has Shattered The North American Housing Sector](#)

Of the many asset classes to be victimized by the end of cheap energy, residential real estate is perhaps the most vulnerable. A call option on future wage growth, and, leveraged to our liquid-fuel based transport system, housing in North America is currently making its way back to the stable, but barely appreciating asset it once was. However, having started this journey only recently there is still a long way to go. A long way in price that is, for housing to fall.

The housing crash is currently in the midst of its next leg down. In similar fashion to those who missed the initial crash, the past year has seen a number of observers calling for a bottom. One of my favorite calls came last year from Karl Case's in an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal*. In *A Dream House for All*, Mr Case made the following argument: because house prices had fallen so much already, housing was now more affordable. But of course that wasn't true at all. Not then, and not now.

[Oil Rises From Three-Month Low as Cushing, Fuel Supplies Fall](#)

Oil rose from a three-month low after an industry-funded report showed U.S. gasoline stockpiles dropped and crude inventories at the delivery point for New York futures declined the most since June.

Prices gained as much as 1.1 percent today. Gasoline supplies last week fell 676,000 barrels, the American Petroleum Institute said. An Energy Department report today will show they increased 950,000 barrels, according to a Bloomberg News survey. Crude inventories at Cushing, Oklahoma, the delivery point for the benchmark West Texas Intermediate grade, slid 1.5 million barrels, the API said.

[Jim Rogers says Oil Price to Rise "beyond anyone's expectations"](#)

Speaking with the BBC, Tuesday, Jim Rogers said he believes oil prices will rise "beyond anyone's expectations" in coming years.

The billionaire investor, author and co-founder of the legendary Quantum Fund also said the U.S. economy will "slow down" as a result of headwinds brought on from higher oil prices.

In firm responses to the host of BBC Hardtalk Stephen Sackur's contentious questions, the 68-year-old Rogers reminded viewers of last year's published IEA data, which strongly suggest that world oil production appears to have peaked in 2006—though the agency's 2010 annual report didn't make a definitive statement along the lines of the 'peak oil' theses.

[JPMorgan Says Crude Oil, Gold to Drive Rebound in Commodities on Shortages](#)

Crude oil and gold will lead a rally in commodities as production fails to keep pace with demand, said Ray Eyles, chief executive officer of JPMorgan Chase & Co. (JPM)'s commodity business in Asia.

Oil supply will trail consumption in the second half as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers won't increase output fast enough, the bank said in a report May 6. Rabobank Groep expects shortages in corn and cotton this year while Barclays Capital is predicting deficits in copper, nickel, tin, lead and platinum.

[Jeff Rubin: Will export restrictions on energy echo those on food?](#)

Higher prices are supposed to encourage more world supply. It's standard textbook economics. But what happens when, instead of export-oriented global firms, it's governments that control supply. They may not respond to price signals the same way as profit-maximizing companies. In fact, they may respond in the exact opposite way.

Instead of soaring food and energy prices encouraging food and energy producers to export more, they may export less and divert more of their output to domestic markets. The reason is simple: to keep domestic prices from matching soaring world prices.

[7 in 10 Americans say high gas prices hurt](#)

As gas prices hover near \$4 a gallon, nearly seven in 10 Americans say the high cost of fuel is causing financial hardship for their families, a new USA TODAY/Gallup Poll finds.

More than half say they have made major changes to compensate for the higher prices, ranging from shorter trips to cutting back on vacation travel.

For 21%, the impact is so dramatic they say their standard of living is jeopardized.

[Bring on the gas hikes](#)

"Peak oil" theorists argue that someday soon — maybe even now — we're going to run out of new oil supplies and prices will rise permanently. Maybe. But today's rise seems more ephemeral, a consequence of the Arab Spring, the newly reviving economy, and speculation by oil traders. Indeed, a week ago per-barrel prices were almost \$105. Now they are down in the high \$90s. Gas, I'm betting, will soon be inexpensive again.

[High gas prices depress Ohio Turnpike car traffic](#)

YOUNGSTOWN, Ohio (AP) - The Ohio Turnpike says fewer cars used the toll road during the first month of its new, higher speed limit.

A spokeswoman says high gasoline prices have hurt passenger vehicle traffic.

The turnpike upped its top speed from 65 mph to 70 mph in April, partly to lure more traffic onto the highway and off smaller, parallel roadways.

[Russia's Vankor to ship 13 mln t crude in 2011](#)

PURPE, Russia (Reuter) - Rosneft's Vankor oil field, a key source of new output for Russia as it struggles to sustain production, will deliver 13 million tonnes into the pipeline system, pipeline operator Transneft said on Wednesday.

[China forced to ration electricity](#)

Chinese provinces are rationing electricity as soaring coal prices squeeze power generation companies, underlining the challenges facing the world's largest energy consumer as global fuel prices rise.

While China experiences power cuts each summer, some provinces have started rationing earlier than usual this year. In recent days Hunan, Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Anhui provinces have implemented cuts, alongside Shanghai and Chongqing.

[Iran president to chair next OPEC meeting](#)

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) -- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will head the upcoming OPEC meeting in Vienna in his capacity as the country's caretaker oil minister, state media reported Wednesday.

Ahmadinejad dismissed Oil Minister Masoud Mirkazemi last week as part of a Cabinet restructuring plan under which the government is required to merge eight ministries into four. The move puts him temporarily at the helm of the country's most vital sector. Iran also holds the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries' rotating presidency this year.

[Libya rebels eye OPEC meeting as oil minister 'defects'](#)

Rebels fighting to topple strongman Moammar Gaddafi's regime by contrast were growing in confidence and laid claim on Wednesday to being able to represent Libya at the June 8 meeting of oil cartel OPEC in Vienna.

[Tunisian source: Libyan oil minister defects](#)

TRIPOLI, Libya - Libya's oil minister defected and fled to Tunisia, a Tunisian security official said Tuesday, one of the highest profile figures to abandon Moammar Gadhafi's government.

Shukri Ghanem, the head of the National Oil Co. and Libya's oil minister, crossed into Tunisia by road on Monday and defected, the Tunisian official said. The official, based in the region around the Ras Jdir border crossing, spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

[Rebels accuse Gadhafi fighters of shelling mountains in west, say people lack food, medicine](#)

TRIPOLI, Libya — Forces loyal to Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi shelled villages and towns to try to take control of the high ground in a western mountain range as NATO widened its campaign of bombings and leafletting to persuade government troops to stop fighting.

[Frustrated U.S. warns Pakistan of cuts in aid](#)

Washington — Congressional Republicans and Democrats warned Pakistan on Tuesday that billions of dollars in American aid are at stake if Islamabad doesn't step up its efforts against terrorists, a clear sign of the growing exasperation after the U.S. takedown of Osama bin Laden deep inside Pakistan.

[Pakistani troops, NATO helicopters engage in firefight](#)

ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN — Pakistani paramilitary troops shot at NATO helicopters that crossed from Afghanistan into Pakistan early Tuesday, triggering a firefight that left two soldiers wounded, military officials here said.

[Syrian government denies mass grave found near Daraa](#)

(CNN) -- The Syrian government is denying claims that a mass grave was found near the embattled city of Daraa, a focal point in the nationwide wave of anti-government rage.

The country's Interior Ministry said the news was untrue and is part of a "campaign of incitement and slandering," Syrian state TV reported Tuesday.

[Interior chief asks for shorter drilling time](#)

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration is asking Congress to shorten the time

energy companies get to start drilling on public lands they lease, as part of the government's strategy to boost oil and gas production.

[US Senate blocks bill targeting oil firm subsidies](#)

WASHINGTON (AFP) – The US Senate defeated a bill taking aim at some \$2 billion in annual subsidies to some of the world's largest and most profitable oil companies amid deep voter anger at high gasoline prices.

Lawmakers voted 52-48 to end debate on the measure, falling short of the 60 required and effectively killing a proposal that the White House's Democratic allies had portrayed as a belt-tightening step in cash-strapped Washington.

[Is Obama's call for more drilling bad messaging or cynical policy?](#)

One thing we know for certain -- more domestic drilling starting now will have exactly the same impact on prices that the increased domestic drilling in the last two years had. Zilch.

[BP Defeat Puts Arctic Oil Trove Back in Play](#)

The collapse of BP Plc (BP/)’s alliance with Russia’s state-run oil company brings one of the world’s largest untapped drilling opportunities back onto the market.

[Medvedev raps Sechin over BP-Rosneft deal failure](#)

SKOLKOVO, Russia (Reuters) - Russian President Dmitry Medvedev has rapped Premier Vladimir Putin's top deal maker for lapses that contributed to the collapse of a major oil deal between Rosneft and BP.

[Rosneft receives new proposals from BP](#)

MOSCOW (AFP) – Russia's state-run oil firm Rosneft said on Wednesday it had received new cooperation proposals from BP after their joint Arctic exploration agreement collapsed this week.

The Russian giant did not give details nor make clear whether they included a potential new Arctic agreement covering joint exploration of Russia's northern reserves.

[Russia's Medvedev says Ukraine gas price may change](#)

SKOLKOVO, Russia (Reuters) - Russia's President Dmitry Medvedev said on Wednesday the gas price formula for its neighbour Ukraine could be subject to change in future.

Ukraine's government has called the current price agreement, set in January 2009 when the government of Yulia Tymoshenko was in power, "unfairly high". It hopes new talks will lead to lower gas prices that would benefit Ukraine's economy.

[PetroChina to expand overseas, eyes progress in Sino-Russian pipeline](#)

BEIJING (Xinhua) -- Senior executives of PetroChina Co., Ltd., said Wednesday that the company will continue to seek opportunity for overseas merger and acquisition (M&A) and further expand its Latin American presence.

In an interview with Xinhua at PetroChina's annual shareholders' meeting, Chairman Jiang Jiemin said current high oil and gas prices don't make it an ideal time for overseas M&A, but the company won't miss a profitable chance when it comes along.

[Pennsylvania fines Chesapeake Energy \\$1.1 million](#)

HARRISBURG, Pa. - Pennsylvania has fined Chesapeake Energy Corp. \$1.1 million for contaminating well water and causing a tank fire during natural gas drilling operations.

The state environmental protection department said Tuesday that the well contamination fine was the largest it ever imposed against companies drilling in the Marcellus shale, energy-rich formations under the Appalachians.

[Judge at Heart of Landmark Oil Pollution Case Unfazed by Spotlight](#)

LAGO AGRIO, Ecuador -- Sitting in a dimly lit office with blue paint peeling off the walls, Judge Nicolas Zambrano is remarkably relaxed for a man responsible for the biggest environmental damage ruling in history.

In February, Zambrano ordered Chevron Corp. to pay up to \$18 billion for oil pollution in the region around this hard-edged frontier town on the fringe of the Amazon jungle.

[Sasol Considers Plans to Produce Fuel from Shale Gas, Coal in China](#)

Sasol Ltd. (SOL), the world's largest maker of motor fuels from coal, is open to adding plants to convert coal to fuels in regions of China such as Xinjiang, said John Armstrong, company president for the country.

The Johannesburg-based company will also consider projects to turn shale gas into

liquid fuels should the nation allow access to such an industry in the future, Armstrong said in an interview in Tianjin today.

[ID Summit: Warning over oil liability cap](#)

MUNICH Re's controversial plan to pull together a \$20bn drilling liability product for the Gulf of Mexico created an unrealistic sense of available capacity among US regulators, and with proposals to lift the oil spill liability cap back on the agenda, oil companies are anxious that the same mistakes are not repeated.

According to Robert Stauffer president and chief executive of Bermudian energy industry mutual Oil Insurance Ltd (Oil), US legislators had considered using Munich Re's aspirational \$20bn figure as the basis for setting the new cap, which he said would have left only the largest oil companies able to afford cover.

[Tepco revises plan for cooling reactors](#)

TOKYO — Confronted with worse-than-expected damage at its battered nuclear plant, Tokyo Electric Power Co. on Tuesday revised its strategy for cooling Fukushima Daiichi's reactors. However, the utility company reaffirmed its goal of stabilizing the facility — and ending the country's nuclear crisis — within six to nine months.

[A Worldwide Nuclear Slowdown Continues](#)

Aftershocks from Fukushima shake political confidence in nuclear—and provide a boost for renewables.

[Why Japan's Shift Away from Nuclear Is Good for Business](#)

Seven/Eleven convenience stores in Japan may seem like just another chain of 24/7, overly lit, electricity-burning businesses wasting this island nation's precious energy resources. But in fact, they are among a host of forward-looking companies helping set the pace for change within the nation's energy policy. With over 13,000 locations nationwide, the convenience store chain plans to spend over \$123 million to switch to energy efficient LED lighting at about 6000 outlets in Tokyo, and will install solar panels on roofs of 1,000 stores around the country over the next few months. The plan will not only save 125KW a day per store, but also benefit manufacturers of LED lighting and solar cell panels — a win-win for all.

[Americans ready for vacation, despite high gas prices](#)

Many Americans, fed up with being pent up, appear determined to go on vacation this summer — even though they know it's going to cost them more than in recent years.

[More seniors going hungry](#)

Although programs that address senior hunger also are on the rise, Ziliak says the growth hasn't been enough to compete with the growing need.

An AARP Public Policy Institute analysis of data released last fall showed that between 2006 and 2008, the percentage of poor and near-poor seniors who were hungry more than doubled, from 4.7% to 10.1%.

[Six irrational ideas about oil and gas prices debunked](#)

It's not pretty when several irrational ideas collide. On May 12, the Senate conducted a hearing to discuss the removal of a \$2 billion per year tax break for the top five oil companies. *The New York Times* called the testimony at the hearing "a big whine for big oil." Eliminating a tax break like this should be a no-brainer, but that idea is blocked by six irrational notions from the right that come together in an explosion of false logic:

[Beyond Petroleum. Or Not.](#)

Can Big Oil figure out the climate-friendly future of energy? Does it actually want to?

[Can natural gas fuel the U.S.?](#)

The United States does not have a decades-long supply of inexpensive, locally sourced natural gas, according to a new report commissioned by the Post Carbon Institute, a nonprofit think tank that examines issues related to the economy, energy and the environment.

[No silver bullet for energy crisis](#)

Mount Carroll, Ill. — The search goes on. Because we are so resistant to the idea of conserving energy, we hope for the silver bullet. Since the disaster in Japan has fueled doubts about the safety of nuclear energy, concerns for powering our future have taken a front seat.

[Australia: Solar dishonesty](#)

Last year I entered into a contract with the NSW Government to feed solar electricity into the state's power grid. It was a contract without deception, one in which both I and the NSW Government knew what was offered and expected. I was to pay to install a solar system at my home and the NSW Government was to pay me 60 cents a kilowatt-

hour until the end of the 2016.

Late last week the O'Farrell government announced that it was going to renege, that it was going to reduce the payment from 60 cents a kilowatt-hour to 40 cents. The O'Farrell government tries to portray me and the other 120,000 contracted producers of solar power as greedy and selfish by describing its payments to us as windfall profits. Windfall? Unexpected? Accidental? What nonsense! The government knew very well what the scheme was to cost, what it was to pay, what solar producers were to receive, and Barry O'Farrell and his fellows supported the introduction of the scheme in 2009. The government made an offer and I, somewhat late in the day, accepted it. I have met my obligation in the contract by installing the solar system, at a cost to me of \$15,000, now Barry O'Farrell and his Coalition government say it won't meet their obligation.

[Wind resistance](#)

Opponents of Horizon Wind Inc.'s wind farm plans have a message for Ontario's premier and the area's two MPPs – no Liberals, no turbines.

[Open house](#)

"It's not something that Western society really has a choice about. You've heard the term peak oil I mean there really isn't any more so the prices of that are going to escalate. We know the problems that it is causing so we have to make a switch," Zwig said.

But most questions raised by the over 120 people attending the first open house, in a large tent on the grounds of Blake Hall, were more concerned with location than green energy. Nor'Wester Mountain Escarpment Protection Committee spokesman Mike Payne said the committee came to get answers about the project but none were given despite six Horizon representatives on-site.

[Group responds to potential NW wind power shutdown](#)

PORTLAND, Ore. – Wind power companies facing a springtime shutdown to accommodate a surge of hydropower in the Northwest said Tuesday the region's main power manager has a conflict of interest, using authority over transmission lines to protect its business interests.

The claim by the American Wind Energy Association follows the Bonneville Power Administration's announcement last week that it plans to curtail use of wind power because of a surplus of energy from hydroelectric dams.

[The month in sustainable development](#)

Last month was a tough one. As a card-carrying optimist working on the sustainable development agenda, I was struck by how pessimistic the expert community has become about humankind's prospects this century.

[Do More With Less Or Things Will Get Ugly: Study](#)

As it stands, economic growth is largely dependent on resource consumption. As a country grows, so does its use of natural--and limited--high-quality resources like oil, gold, and copper. But this is untenable in the long run, especially as growing countries like India and China model themselves increasingly on American habits of consumption (a car, two cell phones, and 30 pounds of meat for all!). The seemingly impossible solution: separating resource use and environmental impact from economic growth--a process with the unfortunate moniker "decoupling."

[Our potential can become our reality](#)

The city centre attracts visitors and local residents alike as a safe, friendly and culturally vibrant place. A beautification project launched by the city has resulted in the planting of many trees, flower gardens and community vegetable gardens that have added to the character of the neighbourhoods.

The once dominant car culture is receding as the impact of peak oil sinks in. The majority of our food is grown locally. Readily accessible and affordable public transit makes it easy to travel around and appreciate the natural beauty and architectural heritage of the area. The streets are people friendly and there are many pedestrian areas throughout the city that limit or are closed to traffic. Weather permitting, cyclists are a common sight on bicycle lanes and trails.

[As Aired on Discovery's Planet Green, Passion River Films Releases on DVD "Houston We Have A Problem," Documentary About the Future of Energy](#)

Featuring interviews with the Chairman of BP Capital, the Executive Director of the Sierra Club, the Former President of Shell Oil, and other top oil companies, "Houston We Have A Problem" seeks the truth about our nation's dependence on foreign oil. Screened at our Nation's Capital and nationwide for Earth Day, and featured on Discovery's Planet Green as part of its Reel Impact series, the documentary is now available on DVD.

[The Draw of Doomsday: Why People Look Forward to the End](#)

Apocalyptic beliefs have been on rise for the past 40 to 50 years, said DiTommaso, who has been researching doomsday believers for an upcoming book, "The Architecture of Apocalypticism." What ties these disparate groups together is a sense that the world's problems are too big to solve, DiTommaso said.

"Problems have become so big, with no solutions in sight, that we no longer see ourselves able as human beings to solve these problems," DiTommaso said. "From a

biblical point of view, God is going to solve them. From other points of view, there has to be some sort of catastrophe."

[Stagnant wages, high unemployment slam Wal-Mart US sales](#)

CHICAGO — Wal-Mart Stores Inc's U.S. same-store sales have fallen for two straight years, as customers struggle with high unemployment and wages that are not keeping up with rising prices for food and other basics.

"Rising gas prices, high unemployment and increasing inflation continue to be the most important issues facing our customers today," Bill Simon, chief executive of Wal-Mart's U.S. stores, said on a recorded message for investors.

[Blacks' exodus reshapes cities](#)

Taylor's decision to live outside Chicago makes him part of a shift tracked by the 2010 Census that surprised many demographers and urban planners: He is among hundreds of thousands of blacks who moved away from cities with long histories as centers of African-American life, including Chicago, Oakland, Washington, New Orleans and Detroit.

At the other end of the spectrum, in Maine, is the Lewiston-Auburn area, which saw a 476% increase in its black population from 2000 to 2010. Most of the newcomers are refugees from Somalia, says Phil Nadeau, deputy city administrator in Lewiston.

[Habitat ReStore outlets growing](#)

Habitat for Humanity officials say ReStores are finding success in part because more people are doing home improvement projects themselves to save money, and partly because of a greater concern for the environment.

There's also the chic factor associated with thrift stores, which have seen a resurgence in popularity among those who enjoy hunting for unique or eccentric items, Gluth says.

[Climate Panel Announces Reforms](#)

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, rocked by controversy in recent years, has adopted a series of reforms of its management and governance to increase transparency and improve the quality of its hugely influential climate change reports, the group says.

[U.K. to Cut CO2 Emissions in Half by Mid-2020s, Most in Industrial World](#)

“Our ambition is to effect the transformation of our economy into a new low-carbon model,” Greg Barker, a minister in the energy department, said in an interview last night after Huhne’s statement to Parliament in London. “This will give investors the certainty they need to invest in clean energy and will put Britain at the cutting edge of the new global industrial transformation.”

[Carbon rule may clip wings of China's aviation sector](#)

The European Union has set Jan 1 as the starting date for all flights, incoming and departing from the continent, to meet emission limits or pay penalties for breaking them.

The four Chinese airlines - Air China, China Eastern Airlines, China Southern Airlines and HNA Group - that operate flights between China and Europe have been asked to abide by the rule.

The airlines have protested strongly, criticizing the EU's emission program as a "unilateral and indirect" mechanism that violates widely accepted principles on fighting climate change. However, experts say China's chances of being exempted from the program are slim.

[Central China Hit by Drought, as Reservoirs Become 'Dead Water'](#)

As of Sunday, 4 medium-size reservoirs and 1,388 small reservoirs in Hubei had dropped below the allowable discharge levels for irrigation, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, citing the director of the reservoir management office for the Hubei Provincial Water Resources Department. One-fourth of all small reservoirs had what officials called “dead water” remaining, which could be pumped for use only in an emergency.

The drought adds to concerns over the effect that a gargantuan water-diversion project will have on the central provinces of China. The project, called the South-North Water Diversion, is supposed to move water from the Yangtze and its tributaries north to Beijing along a canal, and to Tianjin along an eastern route.



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