



Drumbeat: September 17, 2011

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[There Will Be Oil](#): *For decades, advocates of 'peak oil' have been predicting a crisis in energy supplies. They've been wrong at every turn, says Daniel Yergin*

Since the beginning of the 21st century, a fear has come to pervade the prospects for oil, fueling anxieties about the stability of global energy supplies. It has been stoked by rising prices and growing demand, especially as the people of China and other emerging economies have taken to the road.

This specter goes by the name of "peak oil."

[The Quest](#)

In Yergin's lucid, easy prose, the 800 pages flow freely. There are some vivid character sketches, such as Marion King Hubbert, the brilliant, abrasive originator of the theory of Peak Oil: the idea that the world is at or close to the maximum rate of oil production it will ever reach.

There are also many wonderfully revealing observations and anecdotes, such as John Prescott, then Britain's deputy prime minister and chief European negotiator at the 1997 Kyoto climate conference, being beaten down by his US counterpart to accept cap-and-trade as the sole global instrument for controlling greenhouse gas emissions.

[Crude Oil Trims Fourth Weekly Advance in New York on European Debt Crisis](#)

Oil slipped in New York, trimming its fourth straight weekly gain and longest winning streak since July, on concern that European plans to solve the region's debt crisis may founder, threatening economic growth.

[Traders Question Platts' Decision On Dated Brent Changes](#)

North Sea oil traders Friday expressed concern that oil price assessment company Platts is proceeding with revisions to its assessment of dated Brent, the benchmark used to price more than half the world's oil, in early 2012 despite industry worries it is too soon for the market to adequately prepare for the changes.

[Chris Skrebowski: An brief economic explanation of Peak Oil](#)

The current failure of most western economies to achieve anything more than minimal growth this year (2011) is most likely because oil prices are already at levels that severely inhibit growth. Indeed, research by energy consultants Douglas-Westwood concludes that oil price spikes of the magnitude seen this year correlate one-for-one with recessions.

[Iraq: Seeking Jobs and Electricity](#)

Several thousand followers of the anti-American cleric Moktada al-Sadr took to the streets in Iraqi cities on Friday, calling for the government to provide more electricity and jobs. Far fewer people took part in the protests on Friday than in previous demonstrations organized by Mr. Sadr, a Shiite. In the Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City in Baghdad, slightly fewer than 1,000 people protested for about 20 minutes immediately after prayers on Friday. In addition, about 3,000 followers of Mr. Sadr protested in Najaf.

[Libyan rebels plot moves after setback](#)

BANI WALID, Libya (AP) – Revolutionary fighters struggled to regroup Saturday outside the loyalist stronghold of Bani Walid after being driven back by fierce resistance from followers of Moammar Gadhafi, temporarily quieting one battlefield while a second offensive sought to capture Gadhafi's hometown from followers of his shattered regime.

[Saudi Jubail refinery to open Dec 2013](#)

(Reuters) - Saudi Aramco Total Refinery and Petrochemicals Company (Satorp) expects its new refinery at Jubail in Saudi Arabia to be fully operational in December 2013, the joint venture's chief executive said on Tuesday.

[Pipeline to prosperity or channel to catastrophe?](#)

Enbridge calls the project Northern Gateway, promising jobs, prosperity and expanded markets. Opponents, including nearly all of the first nations along its intended route, see it as an oil-spill catastrophe waiting to happen. Yet while pipelines are fast emerging as a flashpoint in the climate-change debate, so far the argument has been muted in Canada – a symptom of our conflicted feelings about the role our energy resources should play in our national destiny.

[Nebraska Cornhuskers Punt Tar Sands Pipeline Ads Out of Stadium](#)

Last Saturday, TransCanada, the company seeking approval for construction of this

1,700-mile-long pipeline that would carry tar sands crude from Alberta to the Gulf Coast, got booed and then booted out of the most important and influential place in the whole state. No, not the state capitol, nor the Berkshire Hathaway headquarters. I'm talking, of course, about Memorial Stadium, where the University of Nebraska's adored Cornhuskers take to the gridiron.

[Two Recession-Proof Secrets for Oil Investors](#)

Over the last few weeks, we've talked endlessly about how the U.S. is setting itself up to receive more Canadian crude via the Keystone XL pipeline.

At first glance, everything appears as if it is falling into place. But that's because most people haven't caught wind of *another* pipeline in the works — a second project that hasn't even made U.S. headlines.

[Colombia Oil Pipeline's Construction Delayed By Labor Strife](#)

Workers hired to start building the Bicentenario oil pipeline, which, when completed in late 2012, will be Colombia's largest, have walked off the job due to a salary dispute, a representative for the pipeline company said Friday.

[Top Offshore Drilling Regulators Named](#)

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar on Friday appointed leaders for the two entities that will assume responsibility for offshore oil and gas development.

Michael R. Bromwich, the former Justice Department inspector general who has overseen the reorganization of the former Minerals Management Service, will temporarily take over the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, informally dubbed Bessie, until a permanent director is found.

[Yanbu Cement Says Production Line to Be Delayed on Fuel Shortage](#)

Yanbu Cement, a Saudi Arabian cement maker, said that a production line scheduled to open by the end of this month will be delayed because of a lack of oil and natural gas needed to power its output.

[Mumbai reels from pricy petrol burden; angry customers allege hoarding](#)

The sudden announcement of increase in petrol prices on Thursday evening created an 'artificial' shortage of the fuel at some petrol pumps.

Thousands of motorists were left standing in serpentine queues at petrol filling stations,

causing chaos at many places in the city. There were reports of stone-pelting and roadblocking on Thursday night with buyers getting into skirmishes with petrol pump staff.

[Robust Demand Boosts West Africa O&G Production](#)

West Africa oil and gas production is expected to grow in the near-term as new field development projects come online and producers expand production from existing fields and continue exploration efforts for new reserves.

[Plug-in hybrids are the future, but gasoline-driven cars aren't giving up yet](#)

When one technology sees a rival coming over the hill, it does not ordinarily just lie down and surrender -- clunky cigarette-box-shaped cell phones persist despite the feverish popularity of the smart phone, for example. So it will be with electric-propelled vehicles. Plug-in hybrids look likely to start small, then make a serious dent in the vehicle fleet in the 2030s -- forecasters think that half to 70 percent of new vehicles sold in 2030 in China will be electrics of some sort. But that does not mean the disappearance of gasoline-driven vehicles -- makers of vehicles using the internal combustion engine are already cooking up devilish upgrades now that they see competition nipping at their heels.

[Questions Raised Over Letting Another Lender Help a Failing Solar Company](#)

WASHINGTON — The political brawl over Solyndra, the solar array manufacturer that received \$528 million in government aid and then went bankrupt, shifted focus Friday to a decision by the Energy Department that allowed another lender to step in to help rescue the company.

That decision in February gave Solyndra a temporary reprieve and a chance to survive, but it also forced the government to waive its privilege as first creditor in the event of a bankruptcy — which then occurred at the end of August.

[John Michael Greer: The Glass Bead Game](#)

This is where Hesse's future history bounces right off the rails of our expectations, into territory that may seem surprisingly familiar to regular readers of this blog. It's worth remembering that science fiction of the more standard kind, with plenty of whiz-bang technology, was widely read in the central Europe Hesse knew. Nobody likes to talk much these days about pre-1945 central European science fiction, because a very large part of it enthusiastically pushed the aggressive authoritarian populism that got its lasting name from Mussolini's Fascist Party and helped launch the metastatic horror of Nazi Germany, but there was a lot of it, packed with the usual science fiction notions of endlessly accelerating social change driven by limitless technological advances. It's pretty clear that Hesse deliberately rejected those notions in his own work.

The future the busy scholars of Castalia create, rather, is a period of ordinary European history differing from earlier periods mostly in its lack of war. Technology, far from progressing, stabilized after the Age of Wars, and most modern machines seem less common than in our time. A trip by railway makes a brief appearance early on, but only that once. Automobiles exist, but only two of them appear in the story; one is owned by a wealthy and politically influential family, while the other is assigned to take a high official of the Castalian hierarchy to important meetings. Most of the time, when a character goes someplace and the mode of travel is mentioned at all, the trip is made on foot.

[Cassandra's curse: how "The Limits to Growth" was demonized](#)

In 1972, "The Limits to Growth" study arrived in a world that had known more than two decades of unabated growth after the end of the Second World War. It was a time of optimism and faith in technological progress that, perhaps, had never been so strong in the history of humankind. With nuclear power on the rise, with no hint of scarcity of mineral resources, with population growing fast, it seemed that the limits to growth, if such a thing existed, were so far away in the future that there was no reason to worry. And, even if these limits were closer than generally believed, didn't we have technology to save us? If we could reach the Moon, as we did, in 1968, what was the problem with such trifles as resource depletion and pollution? The future could only be shiny for ever and ever.

Against that general feeling, the results of "The Limits to Growth" were a shock. The future was not to be shiny at all.

[A new view of work](#)

Many of us have been raised according to the "Protestant work ethic." That is to say, we were encouraged to work hard and thus become a successful and productive member of society. But what if this advice is wrong? As the economy reaches and breaches the limits to growth, working long hours causes market failures, giving weight to the idea that governments should intervene to reduce average working hours.

In the "empty world" of the past, hard work was a public good with few negative externalities on society. In today's "full world," work has become a common-pool resource, vulnerable to over-exploitation. In the absence of social or cultural norms to take care of this common-pool resource, governmental intervention is the best option for preventing market failure and encouraging an optimal amount of work. Unfortunately, our work ethic is worsening the situation.

[Richard Heinberg: Gross National Happiness](#)

One factor that is increasingly being cited as an important economic indicator is *happiness*. After all, what good is increased production and consumption if the result

isn't increased human satisfaction? Until fairly recently, the subject of happiness was mostly avoided by economists for lack of good ways to measure it; however, in recent years, "happiness economists" have found ways to combine subjective surveys with objective data (on lifespan, income, and education) to yield data with consistent patterns, making a national happiness index a practical reality.

[Water, oil and food – a crisis for Saudi Arabia and the world](#)

A water crisis is unfolding in Saudi Arabia that could have profound implications for both the Saudi people and for the rest of the world.



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