



Drumbeat: October 1, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on October 1, 2011 - 9:34am

[The Transition movement: Today Totnes... tomorrow the world](#)

Its founder believes it is our best hope for a future after the worldwide banking crisis. Now, it seems, a growing number of people are starting to agree. The "Transition" movement has grown eightfold since the recession hit three years ago and is now operating in 35 countries around the world.

When the first Transition town was established five years ago in Totnes, Devon, the "experiment" was simple. Like-minded people would work on creating a more sustainable community to reduce their dependency on oil. By 2008, there were 100 registered initiatives in 11 countries. Today, there are more than 850 Transitions in three times as many countries. More than 300 groups have signed up in the past year.

[Unconventional gas production costs in Gulf too high: Saudi Aramco](#)

DUBAI: Saudi Aramco is keen to develop unconventional gas resources to meet rising demand in Saudi Arabia, but production costs are still too high, a senior company official has said.

In its 2010 annual report published in June, 2011, Aramco said it has started evaluating tight gas and shale gas resources, with an initial focus on the North-West area of the world's largest onshore oilfield, Ghawar, as gas infrastructure is already in place.

[Chinese regions face severe winter power shortage-NEA](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) - China's southern and central regions, which depend heavily on hydropower, will face a power supply squeeze this winter due to low water storage and strong demand growth, the country's top energy agency said on Thursday.

[PM feared riots over power crisis: WikiLeaks](#)

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/NewsDetail.aspx?ID=23717&title=PM-feared-riots-over-power-crisis:-WikiLeaks>

[Problems in LPG supply](#)

KUWAIT: Public unhappiness is growing in Kuwait at a shortage of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders widely used for cooking, especially since Kuwait does not yet have any mains gas supply.

[Turn in US-Saudi ties](#)

Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's richest and most powerful state, is once again at loggerheads with the United States, its longtime patron, oil customer, and weapons dealer. The current split opened with the US abandonment of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in January and widened as President Barack Obama's administration haltingly embraced pro-democracy demands from the Arab street - a trend the kingdom staunchly opposes.

[Blast kills four at Kuwait's largest refinery](#)

Four workers were killed and three firemen injured in a gas pipe explosion on Saturday at Kuwait's largest refinery of Mina Al Ahmadi, an industry source told AFP.

[Turkey ends gas deal with Russia](#)

Turkey decided to terminate its 25-year old deal with Moscow on natural gas supplies, Turkish Energy Minister Taner Yildiz was quoted by CNN-Turk as saying.

The minister expressed hope that private companies would be allowed to tender for the gas.

[Spain Denies Repsol's Request to Probe Increased Pemex Stake](#)

Spain's energy regulator won't investigate Petroleos Mexicanos' increased stake in oil producer Repsol YPF SA (REP), denying a request from the Spanish company's management for a review that could have lasted months.

[The other Keystone debate](#)

THE popular impression of the fight over the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry crude oil from Alberta's tar sands to Texas, is that it is a clear-cut battle between greens and the energy industry. But in Canada the involvement of a third group blurs this dividing line: those who support development of the tar sands but don't want the pipeline built.

[Putin's gamble: a bet on high oil prices](#)

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's decision to reclaim the Kremlin is a bet on high oil prices.

[U-Md. 'WaterShed' home wins Solar Decathlon](#)

A green home designed and built by University of Maryland students took top overall honors in this year's U.S. Energy Department Solar Decathlon, which aims to showcase innovative and affordable solar-powered homes.

[Energy Secretary Chu defends loan program for solar, renewable energy projects](#)

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration's energy chief, facing increased pressure over the failure of solar panel maker Solyndra, defended on Saturday a loan guarantee program that has provided billions of dollars for solar energy and other renewable energy projects.

Energy Secretary Steven Chu said a stimulus law program that expired Friday will help develop the world's largest wind farm in Oregon, several large solar power farms in California and Nevada, and the installation of solar panels on 750 rooftops in 28 states, among other projects.

[Argentina: Change Energy Models Or Underpin Current One?](#)

In Argentina there are positive signs and concrete steps toward a transition in energy production that leaves oil behind, but there is a risk of innovating without addressing the underlying problem. One key is to discuss why energy is needed: to satisfy the enormous demand from a consumption-based society, or with the hope of changing the energy system and social model, looking to consume less? The debate is just starting.

[Kurt Cobb: The trouble with apocalypse](#)

The great energy crisis of the 1970s passes and is followed by an era of cheap energy lasting more than 20 years. The great run-up in energy prices in recent years is followed by a collapse in prices, and then another run-up (and perhaps another collapse?). The "worst economic downturn since the Great Depression" is followed by a ceaselessly heralded recovery. The much feared Y2K computer bug was either fixed or of little consequence on January 1, 2000. A modern plague has been in the wings for years, first as SARS and then as avian flu. Now that the H1N1 virus is here, it doesn't seem like the civilization-destroying event it was advertised to be. Even such events, despite the drama they propagate, create a certain cyclical continuity making them seem not all that remarkable. Once the worst is over or the predicted crisis fails to materialize, the fear that most people felt fades from memory.

[Our Panarchic Future](#)

A theory that explains the evolution of ecosystems may apply to civilizations as well-and it says we're approaching a critical phase.

[John Michael Greer: A preparation for philosophy](#)

Thus we've arrived as a society, and at a very late stage in the game, at the same point that classical philosophy reached after the execution of Socrates, when it became uncomfortably clear that having a small minority of people passionately interested in asking and answering the right questions was no guarantee against catastrophic levels of collective stupidity. The Neoplatonist answer was a personal answer, the development of a toolkit to make clear thinking and decisive action possible for anyone with the self-discipline, patience, and persistence to put the tools to work, and it's as valid an approach now as it was in the days of Iamblichus—though it's only fair to say that there are other ways of getting to the same place, some similar, some very different.

[Surprise! U.S. might meet its climate targets](#)

Back in 2009, at the global climate talks in Copenhagen, the United States promised to cut its greenhouse-gas emissions 17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. The conventional wisdom is that there's no way we can possibly hit that target, especially after the Senate killed a cap-and-trade bill last year. But David Hone, the climate change adviser for Shell*, has a worthwhile analysis suggesting that the combination of the steep recession, new EPA rules on power plants, and low natural-gas prices might actually let us meet those goals, after all.

[When food prices rise, some blame investors](#)

Earlier this month, the German news magazine Der Spiegel published an in-depth article, called "[Speculating with Lives,](#)" looking at what's driving up food prices.

The authors argue that while some of the factors we hear a lot about, such as global warming, biofuels and population growth, are small contributors to rising food prices, they aren't the main culprit.

Instead, the article points a finger at investors who have increasingly fled the financial markets and started trading in commodities such as silver, gold and, yes, food.

[When Will We Admit that our Corn Ethanol Policy is Immoral?](#)

Having just returned from a trip to Eastern Nebraska, I feel as if I participated in a movie set for "The Road" or its equivalent. It's all about ethanol in this region of the country and it's not a pretty sight. Because of our unbridled and unquenchable thirst for

liquid fuels, this policy is creating a vast environmental ruin not so different from that of the tar sands areas of Canada. In recent years, this land which was a prairie a short one-hundred-and-fifty years ago has become a region that produces primarily only two industrial agricultural crops, corn and soybeans.

Nebraska, of all places, should not be producing large volumes of ethanol, since it does so largely through the use of irrigation using Ogallala aquifer water. Using irrigated corn further lessens the energy return on energy invested of already low EROEI corn ethanol, since irrigation requires large inputs of generated electricity. Yet, it is the nation's second largest ethanol producer, turning out about two billion gallons per year.

[BIO: Advanced biofuels can be commercialized rapidly for military use](#)

Advanced biofuels can be commercialized rapidly for military use, on military timelines, with adequate support and coordination of efforts by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense and Energy. The Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO) today submitted comments to the Air Force's Request for Information on the commercial status and market for advanced drop-in biofuels.

[Biofuels May Push 120 Million Into Hunger, Qatar's Shah Says](#)

Biofuel policies in countries from Australia to the U.S. may push 120 million people into hunger by 2050 while doing little to halt climate change, said Mahendra Shah, an advisor to Qatar's food security program.

So-called first-generation biofuels produced from commodity crops compete with food for land use and fertilizers, resulting in higher grain prices and increased deforestation, Shah said at the MENA Grains Summit in Istanbul today.

[Hawaiian Electric disappointed by PUC's biofuels ruling](#)

The PUC said Thursday that the contract price for the project is "excessive, not cost-effective and, thus, is unreasonable and inconsistent with the public interest."

[Oil Falls, Caps Biggest Quarterly Slump Since 2008 on Bets Demand to Drop](#)

Oil capped the largest quarterly drop since the 2008 financial crisis by tumbling to a one-year low as signs of slowing growth in China, the U.S. and Germany heightened concern that fuel demand will weaken.

Futures dropped 3.6 percent after China's purchasing managers' index fell for a third month while German retail sales declined in August and U.S. consumer spending slowed. Prices tumbled 17 percent from the end of June, the biggest quarterly decline since the 56 percent plunge during the last three months of 2008.

[Gasoline Cargoes to U.S. Set to Gain as Refinery Maintenance Crimps Supply](#)

Gasoline shipments across the Atlantic Ocean will be at the highest level since June over the next two weeks on declining production from U.S. refineries and excess inventories in Europe, a survey showed.

[Shell in Customer Talks After Fire Shuts Its Biggest Refinery](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc is in talks with customers about the supply of products as it halts all units at its largest oil refinery after the worst fire at the Singapore plant in 23 years.

[Oil and water don't mix in Nebraska debate over pipeline](#)

(Reuters) - The old adage that oil and water don't mix is proving true in Nebraska, where hundreds of people filled a small town gymnasium to protest a proposed oil pipeline they fear could pollute a major U.S. drinking water source.

[Let Canada's oil flow](#)

With oil at any price over \$50 a barrel, Canada's economically viable oil reserves are greater than Saudi Arabia's and Canada could be reasonably relied upon not to lead an exploitive oil cartel, as Saudi Arabia has, raising oil prices to extort money from the West and Japan; rolling prices back only on the rare occasions when the United States made purposeful noises about emerging from its flaccid torpor and increasing domestic oil production and reducing demand for foreign oil. Fortunately, Canada has supplanted Saudi Arabia - soon by a margin of two million barrels per day to one million - as the largest foreign supplier of oil to the United States.

[Analysis: Debt, dividend fears crush Canada's oil stocks](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - A combination of falling oil prices and debt levels better suited to headier days is hammering Canadian oil and gas shares as investors fret that growth prospects are shriveling.

[Agency overseeing oil, gas exploration gets shakeup](#)

The Obama administration fulfilled a vow made just after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill to reorganize and revamp the beleaguered agency that oversees the domestic offshore oil and gas exploration and production.

[Boosting Bakken Reserves](#)

Twenty billion barrels of oil.

That's only six billion barrels behind Saudi Arabia's Ghawar oil field, making it the second largest reserve in the world.

[U.S. Energy Boom: Peak Oil Postponed](#)

Energy exploration activity is booming in all across both North and South America. From the Alaskan Arctic, to the the tar sands region in Canada, along with booming North Dakota and many other locations, North America is once again an energy hotspot. In South America, important new fields are being discovered in Brazil, Colombia and even Argentina. These new discoveries may well offset the conventional wisdom that all the big oil fields have already been discovered.

[Q&A: Daniel Yergin found surprises while writing 'The Quest'](#)

Yergin talked to FuelFix recently about surprises he found while writing the book, the obsessive individuals at the heart of energy innovation, and what stories he had to leave out.

[How politics fail America's need for energy independence](#)

No less than eight presidents and multiple congressional sessions said they would put America on the path to energy independence. All failed, here's why and how that can change with the NAT GAS Act.

[Ireland: A blot on the landscape? Depends how you look at it](#)

The proposed national landscape strategy itself sets high objectives, including preparation "for the known and suspected changes to the landscape that will arise from climate change, peak oil and the need to reduce our carbon footprint". One begins to see, indeed, why mere good taste in landscape is of rather limited use.

[Nuclear Electricity: A Fallen Dream?](#)

A string of energy-starved developing countries have looked at nuclear power as the magic solution. No oil, no gas, no coal needed – it's a fuel with zero air pollution or carbon dioxide emissions. High-tech and prestigious, it was seen as relatively safe.

But then Fukushima came along. The disaster's global psychological impact exceeded Chernobyl's, and left a world that's now unsure if nuclear electricity is the answer.

[Trustee Is Sought for Records of Solyndra](#)

The Department of Justice asked a federal court on Friday to appoint a trustee to oversee the bankruptcy of the solar panel maker Solyndra because its top executives asserted their Fifth Amendment right to avoid self-incrimination before a House subcommittee.

[U.S. Closes \\$4.75 Billion in Solar Power Loans on Final Day](#)

The U.S. Energy Department approved \$4.75 billion in loan guarantees for four solar energy projects on the final day of a 2005 program funded by the stimulus act.

[Shell hopes to break the ice on Arctic drilling](#)

LAROSE, La. — A ship taking shape along the balmy Gulf Coast will have to sail a long way to do what it does best.

The vessel has the power to break through thick sheets of ice. It can operate at temperatures as low as 58 degrees below zero.

Those conditions don't come up much in the Gulf of Mexico, but the oil exploration support vessel nearing completion in Larose has a mission in waters thousands of miles north, as Shell hopes to ramp up a search for oil in the Arctic.

[The Threats to a Crucial Canopy](#)

Trees, natural carbon sponges, help keep heat-trapping carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. But insect and human threats are taking a heavy toll on them.

[An Illustrated Guide to the Science of Global Warming Impacts: How We Know Inaction Is the Gravest Threat Humanity Faces](#)

In this post, I will summarize what the recent scientific literature says are the key impacts we face in the coming decades if we stay anywhere near our current emissions path. These include:

- Staggeringly high temperature rise, especially over land — some 10°F over much of the United States
- Permanent Dust Bowl conditions over the U.S. Southwest and many other heavily populated regions around the globe
- Sea level rise of around 1 foot by 2050, then 4 to 6 feet (or more) by 2100, rising

some 6 to 12 inches (or more) each decade thereafter

- Massive species loss on land and sea — perhaps 50% or more of all biodiversity
- Unexpected impacts — the fearsome “unknown unknowns”
- Much more extreme weather
- Food insecurity — the increasingly difficult task of feeding 7 billion, then 8 billion, and then 9 billion people in a world with an ever-worsening climate.
- Myriad direct health impacts

Remember, *these will all be happening simultaneously and getting worse decade after decade.* Equally tragic, a 2009 NOAA-led study found the worst impacts would be *“largely irreversible for 1000 years.”*



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