



Drumbeat: November 14, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on November 14, 2011 - 8:05am

[Herman Daly: Wealth, illth, and net welfare](#)

One reason that growth may be uneconomic is that we discover that its neglected costs are greater than we thought. Another reason is that we discover that the extra benefits of growth are less than we thought. This second reason has been emphasized in the studies of self-evaluated happiness, which show that beyond a threshold annual income of some \$20-25 thousand, further growth does not increase happiness. Happiness, beyond this threshold, is overwhelmingly a function of the quality of our relationships in community by which our very identity is constituted, rather than the quantity of goods consumed. A relative increase in one's income still yields extra individual happiness, but aggregate growth is powerless to increase everyone's relative income. Growth in pursuit of relative income is like an arms race in which one party's advance cancels that of the other. It is like everyone standing and craning his neck in a football stadium while having no better view than if everyone had remained comfortably seated.

[Stuart Staniford: Size of the US underground economy](#)

My sense of the likeliest evolution of society in coming decades is that global economic capitalism will persist but that it become more efficient by continuing to become more automated. Thus it will be able to serve the interests of economic and cultural elites while requiring fewer resources (particularly oil) because it will increasingly not require the services of, or serve the interests of, the masses. I've written on a number of occasions of how I think one of the earliest symptoms of the gradual approach of the "singularity" is the continued lowering of the US male employment/population ratio:

[What's Wrong with Economic Growth?](#)

Dave Gardner is a gutsy guy. Gardner, who is 56, a former corporate filmmaker, set his career aside a few years ago to run for office in his hometown of Colorado Springs, CO, and make a documentary film called *Growthbusters: Hooked on Growth* that puts forth an unpopular idea—that economic growth is bad for the environment and bad for human happiness.

“I want to make it OK for people to be against growth,” Dave says, when asked why he ran for office and made the movie.

Dave and I fundamentally disagree. I think economic growth is vital, not just to lift billions of people out of poverty—global per capita income is currently about \$10,700, if

Wikipedia is to be believed—but because societies that are more prosperous are better able to deal with the issues of environmental and social justice that matter most to me.

[Energy crisis looming for Asia-Pacific region](#)

Asia-Pacific countries are facing critical energy challenges that threaten to undermine economic and national security in the region, according to leaders from China and Hawaii who spoke at an energy summit during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting.

[BHP Billiton to Spend \\$4.5B On US Shale This Year](#)

BHP Billiton plans to invest roughly US \$4.5 billion developing the shale oil and gas assets it bought in the U.S. this financial year as it ramps up production, the head of the mining company's petroleum division said Monday.

[UK Forties oil pumping reduced](#)

LONDON (Reuters) - Oil pumping along the UK's Forties oil pipeline has been reduced in the last few days, trading sources said on Monday, lowering supply of the North Sea crude which usually sets the dated Brent oil benchmark.

The sources said the reduction in volume was due to a problem at the Buzzard oilfield operated by Nexen, one of the fields that feeds the BP Plc operated Forties crude oil pipeline.

[EU tightens noose on Syria, urges UN action](#)

European Union nations tightened the noose on Syria on Monday, slapping new sanctions on President Bashar al-Assad's regime and urging UN action to protect civilians after eight months of bloodshed.

Foreign ministers from the 27-nation bloc blacklisted a further 18 Syrians, mostly members of the military, bringing to 74 the members of Assad's inner circle hit in past months by an EU assets freeze and travel ban.

[Jordan's king calls on Syrian president to step down](#)

Jordan's King Abdullah calls on Syrian President Bashar Assad to step down, the BBC reports.

"I believe, if I were in his shoes, I would step down," he told BBC World News in an exclusive interview.

[Libyan Oil Bristles OPEC Once More](#)

Six months after Libya's production shutdown sparked a clash within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Tripoli's oil status is set to pour oil again at the group's next meeting on Dec 14. This time it's not because Libyan barrels are out but because they are back on the market.

Following a swift return of the country's production, a split has resurfaced within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries between members like Kuwait which believe the market still requires extra oil and those like Iran which want other members to cut their output.

[Kurds push to cash in gas reserves](#)

Kurdistan is eager for work to begin on the Nabucco pipeline, a dream gas route from Turkey to Europe. But it's not willing to wait too much longer.

[Pemex says natgas line explodes in northern Mexico](#)

Experts were determining the cause of the blast but the explosion may have been due to an attempt to tap the pipeline illegally, a Pemex spokesman said.

[Coast Guard Admiral to Lead Drilling Safety Bureau](#)

The Interior Department has named James A. Watson IV, a rear admiral in the Coast Guard who helped coordinate the response to BP's huge oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, to succeed Michael R. Bromwich as director of the department's Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

[Chevron drilling caused Brazil oil spill: official](#)

(Reuters) - Drilling by U.S. oil major Chevron off Brazil's coast led to an oil spill near the company's Frade project, an official with Brazil's energy regulator ANP told Reuters on Monday.

Chevron says oil seeps have created a "sheen" with a volume of 400 to 650 barrels of oil in the vicinity of the project, which is located 370 kilometers (230 miles) northeast of Rio de Janeiro.

[Nuclear plant decommissioning presents array of challenges](#)

How should Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, which caused the ongoing nuclear crisis, be dismantled?

The government's Atomic Energy Commission has compiled its first report on decommissioning the plant.

[Orbital solar power plants touted for energy needs](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The sun's abundant energy, if harvested in space, could provide a cost-effective way to meet global power needs in as little as 30 years with seed money from governments, according to a study by an international scientific group.

Orbiting power plants capable of collecting solar energy and beaming it to Earth appear "technically feasible" within a decade or two based on technologies now in the laboratory, a study group of the Paris-headquartered International Academy of Astronautics said.

[Audit faults Air Force's Alaska wind turbines](#)

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The Defense Department's attempt to go green at remote radar locations in Alaska by replacing diesel generators with wind turbines was poorly planned and delays could cost millions, according to an audit by the department's inspector general.

A test wind turbine constructed in 2008 at remote Tin City northwest of Nome was built without the benefit of a 12-month wind study. As of July it was producing "sporadic, unusable power," according to the audit, which focuses on three projects that followed.

[South Africa gets \\$250mn loan for wind, solar power](#)

South Africa signed a \$250-million (183-million-euro) loan deal with the World Bank on Monday aimed at adding 200 Megawatts of solar and wind power to the coal-dependent country's grid.

[Eugene will have no choice but to reduce reliance on oil](#)

Eugene aims to cut fossil fuel use in half by 2030, according to the Oct. 30 Register-Guard. That may seem like an ambitious goal, but city officials believe it's attainable. On the other hand, I wonder if it's possible to not cut fossil fuel use in half by 2030.

Many Register-Guard readers probably didn't notice the small article on Page B4, Oct. 28, "Oil companies face production slowdown." The reporter, Chris Kahn of The Associated Press, couldn't bring himself to utter the words "peak oil," but the article was

about exactly that. In spite of record profits and with crude oil prices remaining in the \$95 per barrel range, the major oil companies are experiencing declining production. This is peak oil. World oil production has peaked and is now declining.

[Commentary: The 2011 ASPO-USA Conference: Truth in Energy, Truth in Community](#)

The 2011 ASPO-USA Conference, held in Washington, DC November 2-5, in the shadow of the US Capitol, attracted more than 300 participants from many walks of life. These attendees were brought together, presumably, by a belief that we are entering an era of inexorable decline in fossil fuel production and a desire to face head-on this very serious yet underreported predicament.

[The 27 reasons to fear economic apocalypse](#)

Energy costs are rising, up 15 per cent this year. On top of these we have green taxes being cooked up by energy minister Chris Huhne. Industry is already squealing. Last week the British Plastics Federation president Philip Watkins demanded an investigation into prices. BP has forecast energy demand will rise 40 per cent by 2030, the equivalent of adding two current-day Chinas. If supply can't rise with demand, prices will continue to hit new highs.

[Reaching a Comfort Level With Geoengineering](#)

Until recently, the idea of coping with climate change by means of geoengineering was something it seemed no one wanted to talk about. Even people who saw potential merit in deliberately altering conditions on Earth or in the atmosphere to mitigate climate change feared that if people thought there was an engineering fix, it would encourage them to abandon efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

All that is changing, as a new report from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, "Geoengineering for Decision Makers," reflects.

[Regions must brace for weather extremes: UN climate panel](#)

Southern Europe will be gripped by fierce heatwaves, drought in North Africa will be more common, and small island states face ruinous storm surges from rising seas, according to a report by UN climate scientists.

The assessment is the most comprehensive probe yet by the 194-nation Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) into the impact of climate change on extreme weather events.

[Devastation at Japan Site, Seen Up Close](#)

AT FUKUSHIMA DAIICHI NUCLEAR POWER PLANT, Japan — The most striking feature at this crippled plant on Saturday was not the blasted-out reactor buildings, or the makeshift tsunami walls, but the chaotic mess.

The ground around the hulking reactor buildings was littered with mangled trucks, twisted metal beams and broken building frames, left mostly as they were after one of the world's largest recorded earthquakes started a chain reaction that devastated the region and, to some extent, Japan. The damage reached the second story, a testament to the size of the tsunami that slammed into the reactor buildings, which sit 33 feet above the sea.

[Crude Futures Decline as Italy Names New Leader, China Sees 'Soft Landing](#)

Oil dropped, erasing earlier gains, on concern that new leadership in Italy may not contain the European debt crisis and China's demand for crude may weaken.

West Texas Intermediate fell as much as 1.3 percent after rising earlier to \$99.69 a barrel, the highest level since July 26. Italy's president offered Mario Monti, a former European Union competition commissioner, the post of prime minister yesterday. The International Monetary Fund's Deputy Managing Director Zhu Min said yesterday the world's second-largest economy was heading for a "soft landing" as growth slows.

[Domestic Inefficiency Also Crucial Energy Issue](#)

Russia wastes almost one-third of the energy that it uses — an amount similar to that consumed by Britain every year, the report said. Potential yearly savings of natural gas alone, about 180 billion cubic meters, are equivalent to Gazprom's entire annual export volumes.

[Petrobras Profit Slides 26% on Currency, Higher Fuel Imports](#)

Petroleo Brasileiro SA, Brazil's state-controlled oil producer, said third-quarter profit fell 26 percent as rising domestic demand forced it to increase imports and a weaker local currency boosted costs.

[Japanese Power Utilities Boost October Liquefied Natural Gas Imports 20%](#)

Japan's 10 regional utilities imported 20.1 percent more liquefied natural gas in October as reliance on thermal generation grows because of the lowest operating rates at nuclear plants in at least 34 years.

Power-generation companies led by Tokyo Electric Power Co. imported 3.9 million metric tons of LNG in the month, up from 3.25 million tons a year earlier, according to data released by the Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan today.

[Libya expects to produce 800,000 barrels of crude by end of 2011](#)

Libya, the holder of Africa's biggest oil reserves, will produce as much as 800,000 barrels of crude a day by the end of this year, the chairman of state-run National Oil Corp. said. Libya's oil industry will recover more quickly than the International Energy Agency predicted after suffering disruptions this year amid fighting that engulfed the country, Nuri Berruien said Sunday in an interview in Doha, Qatar.

[Canada eyes Asia after U.S. delays Keystone project](#)

(Reuters) - Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper said on Sunday his country will make a bigger push to sell its energy products to Asia after Washington delayed a decision to approve the Keystone XL Canada-to-Texas oil pipeline project.

"This does underscore the necessity of Canada making sure that we are able to access Asia markets for our energy products," Harper told reporters on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

[Analysis: Canada oil export hopes at risk after pipeline delay](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - The delay in a massive Canada-Texas pipeline project will inflame opposition to other export options for crude from Canada's oil sands and threaten the nation's aim of becoming a top global energy supplier.

[Canada's oil industry faces an urgent search for new markets](#)

The lengthy delay in a U.S. decision on the controversial Keystone XL pipeline has created sudden soul-searching for Canada's energy and political leaders, who have now turned their attention to opening the way for oil exports to Asia.

Without new pipe of some form, it will only be a few years before Canada's oil gets backed up and begins selling at a deep discount, a prospect that stands to erode corporate and government revenues by billions of dollars a year.

[US, China in Sudan great game](#)

In 1898, amid the age of imperialist acquisition, Great Britain and France confronted each other at Fashoda in the Sudan. The two powers almost went to war but happily, diplomacy prevailed. Today, amid fierce global competition for commodities and regional influence, the US and China are facing each other in several parts of the world and the oil-rich Sudan may become one of the more complex and portentous sites of this contest.

Recent fighting there is drawing greater attention to the region.

[Shell reports new Nigerian spill](#)

Anglo-Dutch supermajor Shell said it was containing a new oil spill in Nigeria's onshore delta, the latest in a string of leaks from the company's pipelines, which it has blamed on sabotage attacks and oil theft.

[Exxon's Tillerson Follows Ex-BP CEO Hayward Into Kurdish Bonanza](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Exxon Mobil Corp. Chief Executive Officer Rex Tillerson is playing catch-up with a former rival, ex-BP Plc CEO Tony Hayward, in a race to tap oil riches in Iraq's Kurdish region that dwarf the deep-water Gulf of Mexico.

[Why Peak Oil is Nonsense: A Look at Small and Mid Cap Domestic Oil Stocks](#)

M. King Hubbert first created and used the models behind peak oil back in 1956 and he did accurately predict that USA oil production would peak some time between 1965 and 1970. However, Hubbert along with the anti-oil ideologues that followed him who have taken a more strident and doomsday approach when it comes to future oil production did not anticipate that human ingenuity along with technology would allow for the discovery and exploitation of vast new reserves of both conventional and unconventional oil or natural gas. Just consider some of the following facts or estimates:

[Government Support for Electric Drive Must Continue](#)

As deadlock continues on Capitol Hill and storm clouds darken over the Super Committee on deficit reduction, there is increasing danger that government support for vehicle electrification may get sucked into the maelstrom.

Vehicle electrification has historically been one of the few points of bi-partisan policy agreement. It is important that supporters of vehicle electrification and advanced battery technology rearticulate why vehicle electrification is so important to the country and why government support for it is essential and should find strong backing on both sides of the aisle.

[Ofgem study 'undermines' case for nuclear](#)

Plans being considered by the industry regulator could undermine the prospect of new UK nuclear power plants.

The cost of feeding the north of Scotland's renewable energy into the national power grid could fall by 80% under the proposals.

A study carried out for Ofgem suggested the change would boost the case for building wind and marine turbines in and around Scotland.

[While you were sleeping: 2000-2012](#)

November 13, 2011: countries aggressively search for increasingly thinning resources. Financial markets are collapsing. Western governments have enormous deficits. Populations are exploding. More people are alive now than have ever died in history. Emerging markets are levelling the world.

Short-term sustainability is costly and difficult; long-term sustainability is difficult to imagine. Warming oceans cause growingly chaotic and violent weather. Seas are rising, claiming valuable land and space. Planetary ecology is buckling. We have hit peak oil.

['The economic disparities are just growing'](#)

“We are the 99 per cent” is the slogan associated with the Occupy movement. It is a reference to the difference in wealth between the top one per cent and the remaining citizens.

“I’m here for the environment, because I think environmental issues are key,” Gagnon, the program director at ReThink Green, said. “I’m also concerned about peak oil, the economy, everything. I think everything is interconnected.”

[Francis Moore Lappe Offers a New EcoMind Diet for a Big Planet](#)

Hunger is indeed proof that scarcity exists, said Lappe, but accepting this idea at face value can easily divert our eyes from the fact that our economy, this one-world economy, actually creates more waste and destruction than it does growth and things that we enjoy.

“The estimates of the waste of energy in the United States varies from 55-87 percent of all of the energy it produces. So suggesting this idea that we’ve hit the limits—if we’re wasting more than we’re using, how can we say that we’ve hit the limits?” asked Lappe.

[A Graying Population Reduces Global Warming](#)

Population factors heavily into greenhouse gas-emission projections, however, the influence of the age composition of a population is not included in calculations, like those used by the U.N.'s International Panel for Climate Change. This was part of the motivation for the research, Zagheni said.

The age of the U.S. population is changing; the past four censuses have shown steadily

increasing numbers of Americans heading into the 65-and-older category. This segment of the global population is also growing.

[UN chief urges leaders to finalize financing of \\$100 billion climate change fund](#)

DHAKA, Bangladesh — U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged world leaders on Monday to finalize the financing for a multibillion-dollar fund to fight the effects of climate change.

Delegates at a U.N.-sponsored climate-change conference that starts Nov. 28 in Durban, South Africa, are to consider ways to raise \$100 billion a year for the Green Climate Fund created last December to help countries cope with global warming.



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