



Drumbeat: December 16, 2011

Posted by [Leanan](#) on December 16, 2011 - 8:50am

[As Gas Drilling Spreads, Towns Stand Ground Over Control](#)

SOUTH FAYETTE, Pa. — As energy companies move to drill in densely populated areas from Pennsylvania to Texas, battles are breaking out over who will have the final say in managing the shale gas boom.

The fight, which pits towns and cities against energy companies and states eager for growth, has raised a fundamental question about the role of local government: How much authority should communities have over the use of their land?

[Oil above \\$94 on signs of improving US economy](#)

SINGAPORE – Oil prices rose above \$94 a barrel Friday in Asia amid signs the U.S. economy is slowly improving, which could boost demand for crude.

[U.S. Consumer Prices May Show Inflation in Check](#)

The cost of living in the U.S. was probably little changed in November as gasoline prices dropped, a sign inflation remains in check, economists said before a report today.

[Heating Fuels to Miss Biting Cold of Past Two U.S. Winters](#)

The biting cold of the past two winters in the U.S. may be delayed until January, if it comes at all, easing demand for heating fuels during their peak season.

[Trailing Gas Demand Signals China Import Boom](#)

China's ranking as the biggest energy consumer and the least reliant on natural gas for power generation among the world's leading economies is raising the prospect of an import boom as it seeks to cut pollution.

[Peak Oil? Not According to This Chart](#)

Near the height of the energy crisis in 2008, the Republicans popularized the slogan, “Drill, baby, drill!” But they should have been chanting, “Frac, baby, frac!”

Why? Because the largest gains in domestic oil production are coming from hydraulic fracturing. And this is most evident in North Dakota and Montana, which are home to the Bakken Shale.

[A Simple National Energy Independence Strategy](#)

The United States and Canada possess enormous conventional and unconventional oil and gas reserves that could not just make NAFTA energy independent, but also fundamentally change the global balance of power in oil and global geopolitics, breaking OPEC's control and ensuring developing nations that their energy sources are secure. All the U.S. government needs to do is two things: 1) open up these resources for development, and 2) put in a modicum of protection that will ensure that an OPEC price war does not (once again) crush North American production. This second point will also encourage the development of non-carbon-based technologies. Unfortunately, there are political forces in the U.S. that oppose any further development of carbon-based resources.

[Energy: In search of the least evil](#)

The world's production of crude oil may have peaked in July 2008, at 74,666 barrels per day. In other words we may already have passed the feared Peak Oil, without almost anybody noticing the event.

This is because the production of natural gas is still increasing, and growing amounts of gas have been converted to various oil-replacing products. Things will only get serious when we hit the global peak in combined oil and gas production. After this the supply of hydrocarbons can no longer satisfy the demand, and the prices will skyrocket.

[Kinder's Major Bet on a Boom in Fracking](#)

HOUSTON — The oil and gas business is full of gamblers who drill deep and often, praying for gushers but frequently ending up with dry holes.

Then there is Richard D. Kinder, chief executive of Kinder Morgan, who has personally made billions of dollars operating the industry's equivalent of a toll road: pipelines.

Now, with Kinder Morgan's \$21 billion deal to buy a leading rival, the El Paso Corporation, he is doubling down.

[Iraq oil security tested as U.S. forces withdraw](#)

BAGHDAD (Reuters) - A bombing of southern Iraqi crude pipelines despite a nationwide alert against a possible surge in insurgent attacks has heightened fears for the future security of Iraq's vital oil sector as American troops withdraw.

[Clashes break out in west Kazakhstan oil town after months of protests, deaths reported](#)

ALMATY, Kazakhstan — Violent clashes broke out Friday between police and demonstrators in an oil town in western Kazakhstan where workers have been protesting for higher wages.

One witness said police opened fire on demonstrators meeting in the center of Zhanaozen, killing at least five people and wounding dozens.

[Kuwaiti police fire tear gas at stateless demo](#)

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwaiti riot police used tear gas and water cannons on Friday to disperse hundreds of stateless protesters who were demanding citizenship and other basic rights.

[ConocoPhillips Makes Highest Bid in Sale of Gulf Oil Leases](#)

ConocoPhillips (COP) submitted the highest bid among \$337.7 million in the first sale of leases for oil production in the Gulf of Mexico since BP Plc's spill last year, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said.

[BP to Get \\$250 Million in Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Settlement](#)

LONDON — The British oil company BP said Friday that Cameron International, one of its contractors in the oil well that exploded last year in the Gulf of Mexico, has agreed to pay \$250 million to settle claims related to the ensuing spill.

[Final report finds several faults in Gulf oil spill](#)

A mix of shoddy safety practices by the oil industry, a blowout preventer that was never adequately tested, and the failure of a concrete cap led to last year's historic Gulf of Mexico oil spill, an expert panel concluded Wednesday.

[Chevron Oil Spill Spurs Lawsuit to Freeze 17% of Brazil's Rigs](#)

A Brazilian lawsuit that seeks to halt Transocean Ltd. and Chevron Corp. operations after an oil spill would reduce the country's offshore drilling at a time when it wants to double output in ten years.

[Japan Traders Eye \\$200 Billion Power Market Post-Fukushima](#)

Japan's trading companies own enough electricity capacity to supply more than 40 percent of the country's homes. Problem is, their generators aren't in Japan.

[Japan May Declare Control of Reactors, Over Serious Doubts](#)

TOKYO — Nine months after the devastating earthquake and tsunami knocked out cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, causing a meltdown at three units, the Tokyo government is expected to declare soon that it has finally regained control of the plant's overheating reactors.

[Toshiba Reactor Wins Majority Backing From Feuding U.S. Nuclear Commission](#)

Toshiba Corp. (6502)'s Westinghouse Electric won majority support for the design of its AP1000 reactor from the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, even as the members were feuding publicly over the panel's leadership.

[Leader of Nuclear Agency Hears Litany of Objections](#)

WASHINGTON — In exchanges that ranged from merely testy to caustic, four members of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission told a House committee on Wednesday that their chairman had withheld information from them, berated the agency's professional staff, reduced female employees to tears with abusive comments and created a "chilled" atmosphere that was hurting the agency's ability to function.

[Iran Says It May Move Uranium Enrichment to 'Safer Places'](#)

Iran may relocate its uranium enrichment work to more secure locations, a senior Iranian defense official said Wednesday, an acknowledgment of increased concern that Iran's suspected nuclear program could face a military attack from Israel or the United States.

[FACTBOX-How do Asian buyers pay for Iran's oil?](#)

(Reuters) - Plans for fresh U.S. sanctions to isolate Tehran have sent shudders among Asian governments who fear they will have no way to pay for Iranian crude imports and face rising costs to fuel the region's growing economies.

[Hoping for a wider progressive trend](#)

Nor do Democrats talk forcefully about energy. Engineers and utility executives, like the CEO of California's NRG corporation, speak openly about how close we are to having solar power that can achieve "grid parity" with power generated by fossil-fuel-burning plants. Do Democrats have a position? Well, not really. Who is the senior Democratic leader, locally, statewide, or nationally, who is out there warning about peak oil, the coming oil crisis, or the urgency of green-powered public transport? Republicans, meanwhile, are forthright about their position on energy. They've been purchased outright by the fossil fuel industry, so they advocate for the fossil fuel industry, and impugn solar, wind, and other alternatives.

[Nader Agha's holdings span Monterey County, but he's looking to conquer the world](#)

These days, Agha's seeing profit potential in green business, the sunny side of dire forecasts on peak oil and water wars. He says he's assembled a 16-person board to advise a new solar farm business he hopes will go national.

He also sees opportunity in the wreckage of Green Vehicles. The city of Salinas invested nearly \$550,000 in the electric car company before it filed for Chapter 7 in August; Agha bought its remnants, a few bodies and transmissions, in November. He plans to make magnesium or lithium ion batteries, and make the entire venture domestic. "We need to bring our jobs back to this country from the Orient."

[Should we all look to change travel habits earlier rather than giving up driving when we get old?](#)

A major report looking into the travel habits, needs and issues surrounding driving in old age has found that older people have a mixed range of views to changing their habits and or opting to use other modes of transport. The report reaches some predictable conclusions about loss of independence and worries about isolation if people live in remote areas. However it examines the potential of an about turn in travel habits earlier in life that could help people avoid some of the 'withdrawal' symptoms like depression and loneliness.

[PG&E SmartMeter draws customer rebellion](#)

Fed up with a company they say is bullying them, some SmartMeter critics have had the devices removed, and seen their power cut as a result. According to PG&E, fewer than 20 people have disconnected their SmartMeters.

PG&E maintains that disconnecting SmartMeters is dangerous, and the company doesn't want the idea to spread. Hence the decision to cut off power to people who do so.

[Study: Hunger stalks US cities as poverty rises](#)

WASHINGTON -- A growing number of families in the United States are struggling to put food on the table as poverty rises in major cities, a new survey showed on Thursday.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors' 2011 hunger and homelessness survey found all but four of the 29 cities surveyed reported an increase in requests for emergency food assistance during the period between September 2010 and August 2011.

[Occupy This: The Crusade Against Holiday Shopping](#)

Buy Nothing Christmas is on a mission to recast the holidays so that they're "richer in meaning, smaller in impact upon the earth and greater in giving to people less privileged," according to BuyNothingChristmas.org. It also aims to expose the downside of an economy largely reliant on consumer purchases.

[Russia slams Kyoto Protocol](#)

Russia supports Canada's decision to pull out of the Kyoto Protocol, says its foreign ministry, reaffirming Friday that Moscow will not take on new commitments.

[Canada hits bottom with withdrawal from Kyoto](#)

The costs of the government's actions are likely to be high. Clearly the chances of any serious effort from the federal government to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions have become more remote than ever. The international reaction — Canada's decision is being given much more prominent play in the international media than in Canada itself — has been overwhelmingly negative from both developed and developing countries. It certainly looks like the Harper government has made a serious miscalculation if it expected to have any company in its decision to formally withdraw from the protocol.

[Jerry Brown criticizes 'political lemmings' of climate change](#)

SAN FRANCISCO -- Gov. Jerry Brown railed this morning against politicians who doubt climate change, calling "political lemmings" the chief obstacle in combating global warming.



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