



Drumbeat: August 4, 2012

Posted by [Leanan](#) on August 4, 2012 - 10:40am

[The implications of overpopulation are terrifying. But will we listen to them?](#)

Ten Billion, on the other hand, is a piece of theatre only because it occurs in a theatre. The curtain rises on a reconstruction of a modern office; we hear the melancholy sound of a cello; a middle-aged man walks on stage, opens his laptop and begins to talk. He says he's a scientist and not an actor – that will become obvious – but that the set is a "depressingly accurate" reproduction of his office in Cambridge. His name is Stephen Emmott. He's head of computational science at Microsoft Research in Cambridge and professor of computational science at Oxford, and what he wants to tell us about is the future of life, particularly human life, on Earth. And for the next 75 minutes that's what he does, moving just a little around the set with the help of a stick (because a disc in his lower spine has popped out) as visuals appear on screens to illustrate what soon becomes a tide of frightening facts and predictions.

Taken singly, few of these facts would be new to even the most casual Monbiot reader or the least faithful friend of the Earth, but their accumulation and the connections between them are terrifying. Rarely can a lay audience have heard their implications spelled out so clearly and informally: a global population that was 1 billion in 1800 and 4 billion in 1980 will probably have grown to 10 billion by the end of this century; the demand for food will have doubled by 2050; food production already accounts for 30% of greenhouse gases – more than manufacturing or transport; more food needs more land, especially when the food is meat; more fields mean fewer forests, which means even more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which means an even less stable climate, which means less reliable agriculture – witness the present grain crisis in the US.

[How can clever people be so stupid?](#)

The first is that the great expansion of the population is over. Those who are going to have the grandchildren which lead to the peak population of 10 billion or so already exist. And it's not really the increase in children that's going to lead to that 10 billion anyway: it's the failure of people to die before old age that is. What's left of this last surge of population, from today's 7 billion to that 10 billion or so peak is much more about the demographic transition than it is out of control birth rates.

That rural peasantry is stopping dying at 40 and living to 60, 70. That's the real underlying story of the blow out.

[Oil Surges Most in a Month as U.S. Adds Jobs, Services](#)

Oil surged the most in a month after U.S. payrolls climbed more than estimated and service industries expanded at a faster pace, bolstering optimism about economic strength in the world's biggest crude-consuming country.

[Tropical Storm Ernesto Stronger, May Become Hurricane Tomorrow](#)

"On the forecast track the center of Ernesto will move across the eastern and central Caribbean Sea over the weekend and pass near or south of Jamaica on Sunday," the center said on its website. "Gradual strengthening is forecast during the next couple of days and Ernesto is expected to become a hurricane on Sunday."

[Korea rushes to jump on shale gas development bandwagon](#)

"We must thank God."

This is how Rex Tillerson, the head of the world's largest oil company Exxon Mobil, described the shale gas development boom in the U.S. Amid growing fears that crude oil deposits could be gradually depleted, he said the existence of shale gas itself is a "blessing from God."

The shale gas reserve is reportedly enough for the world to use for up to 200 years.

Korea National Oil Corp. will enter shale gas development by establishing a related company in the U.S. to avoid falling behind in the shale gas revolution.

[India: AP braces for more power outages as Centre cuts gas supply](#)

Hyderabad: The Centre remained indifferent to the Andhra Pradesh Government's plea for withdrawal of its order diverting two million metric standard cubic metres per day (MMSCMD) of natural gas from the Krishna-Godavari Basin to the Ratnagiri power plant in Maharashtra.

Union Petroleum Minister S. Jaipal Reddy today refused to intervene or even speak on the controversial decision, even as the principal opposition Telugu Desam Party blasted both the Centre and the State Government for jeopardising Andhra Pradesh's interests.

[Petrobras posts first loss in 13 years; result shocks](#)

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) - Brazil's state-led oil giant Petrobras on Friday reported its first quarterly loss in more than 13 years as a weaker Brazilian currency raised debt costs and the company faced charges related to recently drilled dry and uncommercial wells.

Petrobras lost 1.35 billion reais (\$665 million) in the three months ending June 30 compared with a net profit of 10.9 billion reais a year earlier, according to a securities filing. All nine analysts surveyed by Reuters expected the company to post net income of 3.69 billion reais.

[Oil Royalty? Committee to study oil revenue payment](#)

KUALA LUMPUR -The government has agreed to set up a special committee to study in a fair and transparent manner on the issue of cash payment from petroleum revenue to the states in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

[Desperate Syria Pleads with Russia for Aid](#)

Syria reached out to its powerful ally Russia on Friday, as senior officials pleaded with Moscow for financial loans and supplies of oil products — an indication that international sanctions are squeezing President Bashar Assad's regime.

The signs of desperation came as resilient rebels fought regime forces in the Syrian capital only two weeks after the government crushed a revolt there. The renewed battles in Damascus show that Assad's victories could be fleeting as armed opposition groups regroup and resurge, reports The Associated Press.

[Syria reaches oil deal with ally Russia](#)

Syria has reached an agreement with ally Russia to secure much-needed fuel as a delegation of ministers sent by President Bashar al-Assad asked Moscow to help alleviate the effects of sanctions on the war-torn country.

[Iraq summons Turkey envoy to protest over visit](#)

Iraq made a formal protest to Turkey's envoy in Baghdad on Friday after the Turkish foreign minister made a surprise visit to an oil-rich Iraqi city claimed by both the central government and the country's autonomous Kurdistan region.

[Sudan confirms oil agreement with South](#)

Sudan has confirmed that it has reached an oil agreement with its neighbor, South Sudan. But it said security issues had to be clarified before implementing the deal.

[Navy: At least 4 foreigners kidnapped off Nigeria](#)

Gunmen stormed two ships off the coast of Nigeria's delta early Saturday, killing two Nigerian navy sailors protecting the vessels and kidnapping four foreign workers before fleeing in to the darkness, officials said.

[Revisiting oil deal with Nigeria](#)

JAMAICA AND Nigeria have agreed to revive a special oil arrangement between them that has been on hold for some time.

[Fallout from Nigerian oil spill haunts locals](#)

Rights group Amnesty International has termed investigations by corporate giant Shell into oil spills in Nigeria a "fiasco", alleging that the company repeatedly blamed sabotage in an effort to avoid responsibility.

"No matter what evidence is presented to Shell about oil spills, they constantly hide behind the 'sabotage' excuse and dodge their responsibility for massive pollution that is due to their failure to properly maintain their infrastructure," Audrey Gaughran, director of global issues at Amnesty, said in a recent statement.

[Prepare for gas economy, Kikwete tells Tanzanians](#)

The government is taking all steps necessary to ensure Tanzanians benefit when the country becomes one of the leading gas suppliers in five years' time, President Jakaya Kikwete said on Thursday.

[Diesel power will remain first choice](#)

Clean diesel engines will continue to be the dominant power source for heavy-duty vehicles in the United States for "decades to come because of their power and efficiency," according to a newly released study prepared for the US Department of Energy.

[Tight deadline for Gateway review as political headwinds grow](#)

The federal government has imposed a strict deadline on a review panel to conclude the work on Enbridge Inc.'s controversial Northern Gateway pipeline, even as it scrambles to rescue the \$6-billion project from a political sinkhole.

[Trans Mountain: The other Pacific pipeline](#)

It is a sunny Sunday and Vancouver is doing what it does best: looking pretty and post-

industrial. Morning lights up the downtown's glass horizon. A half-dozen scooters rip down the road in a platoon. Cyclists swish past Zipcar lots, kayakers and stand-up paddle surfers ply the waters.

But just a few kilometres away, an oil tanker is preparing to raise anchor and slide into port. Soon, it will open its holds, with a total capacity of 650,000-barrels, to a flush of Alberta oil. After 30 hours of pumping, it will slip away to Long Beach, Calif. Oil tankers are, for now, relatively rare here. A tanker sails into the Vancouver harbour about once a week, docking at the Kinder Morgan-owned Westridge Terminal to accept Alberta crude flowing across the Rockies in the Trans Mountain pipeline.

[Oil spill the cause of rising gas prices](#)

In 2010, Enbridge Inc., an oil pipeline company based in Alberta, Canada was responsible for one of the worst inland oil spills in United States history when 800,000 gallons of heavy crude oil was spilled near Marshall.

Now, the heavily criticized company is again at fault after 50,000 gallons of light crude oil has been spilled in rural Wisconsin, shortly after the company said it had improved its safety procedures.

Patrick DeHaan, senior petroleum analyst at GasBuddy.com, said the spill, in addition to several problems with units at refineries in Indiana and in the Chicago area, has led to a sharp jump in gas prices throughout the state of Michigan.

[Enbridge's Monaco says company coping with Line 14 shutdown](#)

CALGARY, Alberta (Reuters) - Enbridge Inc President Al Monaco said on Friday that his company still has no timetable for when regulators will allow it to restart Line 14, which has been shut since spilling 1,200 barrels of oil into a Wisconsin field a week ago.

[Pickens: Let's make the switch to natural gas](#)

Four years ago, we kicked off the Pickens Plan and changed forever the discussion of energy in the United States.

From a standing start we attracted 1.7 million Pickens Plan supporters who have been able to keep up a conversation with their state legislators and members of Congress to make sure the issue of reducing our dependence on oil imported from OPEC didn't become the "Washington flavor-of-the-month" and then forgotten about.

[Jellyfish swarms in danger of clogging Ise thermal power plants](#)

Large numbers of jellyfish have been swarming near nine thermal power plants on Ise

Bay. Chubu Electric Power Co. estimates that there are close to 24,000 tons of the sea creatures swimming around the area, twice the usual level and the second-most recorded in the past decade.

[Official pushed pronuke stance](#)

A senior government official in charge of nuclear policy planning on Friday admitted pressing the Japan Atomic Energy Commission last year over continuing to generate nuclear power.

[Court Weighs an Order on Nuclear Waste Site in Nevada](#)

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court indicated Friday that it would issue an order for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to resume an evaluation of a possible nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain, a volcanic ridge in the Nevada desert, unless Congress acted by December to resolve the legal tangle around the project.

[\\$90m to win coal's super market](#)

FEDERAL and state governments have put \$90 million on the table for new brown coal technology projects in the Latrobe Valley, including potential export schemes.

The fund will receive \$45 million from each government and pay for new projects, such as drying brown coal for export, converting to fuel and fertiliser, and cutting emissions from coal-fired electricity generation.

[Marines take lead in 'green' campaign](#)

The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms started going green back in 2003, in the wake of California's energy crisis, by installing what is still one of the largest federally owned solar systems in the nation.

“We were trying to be forward-thinking with renewable energy,” recalled Gary Morrisett, the installation's energy manager, standing among the 1.2-megawatt field of panels on a hillside overlooking the main base.

[Romney's Folly: Ending Tax Breaks for Wind Power](#)

You'd be hard-pressed to name a single American energy source that doesn't benefit from government support. Coal companies get subsidies. Nuclear power plants are backed by massive loan guarantees. Oil companies, even the most profitable ones in the world, get truly impressive federal handouts. And, of course, wind and solar companies get tax credits.

But presidential candidate Mitt Romney opposes just one of the incentives listed above; want to venture a guess as to which one it is? It's tax breaks for wind power, obviously!

[North Koreans in desperate need of food after floods](#)

(CNN) -- The World Food Programme is stepping in to feed people in North Korea, where floods have ruined crops and left hundreds of thousands homeless, according to reports.

The United Nations declared the situation in North Korea an emergency Thursday after torrential rain soaked the country between July 18 and 29. Eighty-eight people have died, a U.N. report said, though national media put the toll at 169.

[Powerful Shaper of U.S. Rules Quits, With Critics in Wake](#)

Few proposed rules escaped his gaze or his editor's pen. Of the hundreds of regulations issued by the administration as of late last year, three-quarters were changed at OIRA, often at the urging of corporate interests, according to an analysis from the Center for Progressive Reform, a liberal-leaning group that monitors federal regulation. For rules from the Environmental Protection Agency, the figure was closer to 80 percent, the group found. In virtually every case, the rule was weakened, the group claimed.

[Climate change prompts French ski area to consider downsize](#)

A MODEST ski area in the French Alps is ready to unbolt its chairlifts and rope off slopes as the local mayor concludes that climate change means the trails ahead will be rocky.

[Rising sea levels throughout metro Vancouver putting landmarks at risk](#)

Vancouver is at risk of losing landmark communities like Granville Island and False Creek unless the city starts taking measures to defend its shoreline against rising sea levels, an urban planner warns.

[Climate science still trumps skeptics](#)

My Op-Ed article on climate science and climate hype provoked plenty of online responses -- as pretty much anything touching on this very touchy subject inevitably will. Also quite predictably, several of the comments repeated critiques of mainstream climate science that have been raised and thoroughly debunked literally hundreds of times. Here's a sampling, along with my responses:

[Who Are Your Sources?](#)

Their work is worth studying in some depth. They found that people's views on the credibility of sources on climate and scientific information depends to a large degree on where they stand on a scale of belief in climate change, from dismissive to alarmed. Those who are most concerned about climate change have a very high degree of trust in climate scientists, while those who doubt or dismiss climate change as a phenomenon are strongly distrustful of climate scientists and scientists in general.

The survey also found that the skeptics turned more to radio for their information than those who express concern about climate change.

[Bill McKibben: Even Industry-Funded Climate Change Deniers Can't Ignore Planet's Warming](#)

AMY GOODMAN: Your assessment of Dr. Muller's conversion, as he describes it, now saying that global warming is human-caused?

BILL MCKIBBEN: Scientifically, it's not very interesting because, you know, most scientists figured it out 20 years ago. All he has done is confirm their work. Politically, it is interesting because we're reaching the point where even the kind of industry-funded deniers can't with a straight face, say that it's not warming. In fact, Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson, two weeks ago, probably more importantly, said, Yes, forget all the things that my predecessors have said about how global warming was a hoax. Global warming is real, and we're causing it.

[The climate change tipping point](#)

So far 2012 is on pace to be the hottest year on record. But does this mean that we've reached a threshold a tipping point that signals a climate disaster?

For those warning of global warming, it would be tempting to say so. The problem is, no one knows if there is a point at which a climate system shifts abruptly. But some scientists are now bringing mathematical rigor to the tipping-point argument. Their findings give us fresh cause to worry that sudden changes are in our future.

[James E. Hansen on Public Acceptance of Climate Change](#)

The greatest barrier to public recognition of human-made climate change is probably the natural variability of local climate. How can a person discern long-term climate change, given the notorious variability of local weather and climate from day to day and year to year?

[James E. Hansen: Climate change is here — and worse than we thought](#)

When I testified before the Senate in the hot summer of 1988 , I warned of the kind of future that climate change would bring to us and our planet. I painted a grim picture of the consequences of steadily increasing temperatures, driven by mankind's use of fossil fuels.

But I have a confession to make: I was too optimistic.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 United States License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/us/).