



Drumbeat: November 27, 2010

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[In California, Carports That Can Generate Electricity](#)

SAN JOSE, Calif. — And California begat cars, and the cars begat asphalt parking lots. And the lots spawned electricity, transforming the hills and the deserts.

Ersatz roofs made of solar panels have sprouted above dozens of school parking lots in the state, altering vistas and promoting a philosophy of green thinking among the young. Yet the primary driver of the solar roofs is economic.

By forming partnerships with banks and other backers, school districts get guarantees of reliably cheap electricity for their buildings for as long as 20 years. The institutions, which finance the systems and sell the electricity back to the schools, also receive tax incentives from the federal and state governments.

ff in the first place." Expensive oil will also mean diabetics will have trouble affording insulin, families will lose their homes, and many more children will go hungry.

[Independence, risk, and energy: a view from Saudi Arabia](#)

From Saudi Arabia, US bluster about energy independence must look delusional.

Saudi Prince Turki Al Faisal Al Saud, a former ambassador to the US, didn't express the kingdom's view in those stark terms in a Nov. 11 lecture at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy in Houston. But he raised issues frequently overlooked in American discussions of the subject. He asserted, for example, that the pursuit of energy independence eventually will drive producers and consumers toward interdependence. And he supported work on energy other than oil.

"No country can or should power itself from one form of energy," said Faisal, who was ambassador in the US in 2005-07 and in the UK and Republic of Ireland before that. "It is strategically, economically, politically, socially, and environmentally irresponsible."

[Airlines' lessons in safety for oil industry](#)

One senior oil industry manager, interviewed anonymously by researchers from the Aberdeen Business School of Scotland's Robert Gordon University for an independent study commissioned by OPITO, described the problem thus: "The biggest difficulty you face in this industry is that while nothing is going wrong everybody is happy ... and it is only after a major incident that suddenly things start to come out."

Said another respondent: "Unfortunately a lot of training has been developed because people have been killed."

The study also revealed a lack of internal consistency in safety standards within large international oil firms, as well as a lack of co-operation between companies.

"They don't speak to each other. They don't share standards with each other," said an interviewee. "This is how ridiculous it is. Basically in the oil and gas companies, each individual operating unit seems to stand and fall on its own. There is very little sharing of information."

[Mexico closes Gulf oil port due to bad weather](#)

(Reuters) - Mexico closed the oil exporting port of Coatzacoalcos on Saturday due to bad weather, the government said.

[Uganda: Museveni to Blame for Oil Sector Confusion](#)

The introduction of the Income Tax Amendment Bill before the Petroleum Act epitomises a muddled, unsystematic approach by government to the emerging oil industry in Uganda that leaves it vulnerable to corruption, say analysts. Recent events in the industry demonstrate that oil is being governed by presidential fiat rather than institutions and the rule of law.

[The Copenhagen emissions gap](#)

The IEA has a typically lopsided view of subsidies. When it comes to oil, "getting prices right" means abandoning subsidies. When it comes to renewables, "getting prices right" means abandoning markets. The IEA bemoans that fossil fuel subsidies were some US\$312-billion in 2009, but these were overwhelmingly lower local prices to subsidize industry or pacify those living under petro-tyrannies, not grants to Exxon Mobil. Subsidies in Iran alone approached US\$70-billion, while the other big subsidizers were - in descending order -- Saudi Arabia, Russia, India, China, Egypt, Venezuela and Indonesia.

[The End of Cheap Coal?](#)

As early as the mid-1990s energy forecasters warned about the demise of cheap oil. But

was the world overlooking a potentially larger problem: the end of cheap coal?

In a comment article in the Nov. 18 issue of *Nature*, Richard Heinberg and David Fridley of the Post-Carbon Institute in California argue that growing demand for coal—particularly in China, where it is needed for steel making.—cannot be met by global coal reserves because estimates of the amount of easily retrievable coal are outdated and optimistic.

[Six days working week resumes](#)

All the provincial and federal offices of government, banks and private offices, public/private schools were open on Saturday as the 6-day working week has been resumed following government orders. Only Sunday will be observed as holiday, while Saturday will be a working day.

It may be mentioned here that the government had decided to observe two weekly holidays in order to overcome energy crisis.

[Gas shortage doesn't stop drivers from idling](#)

Yellowknife, N.W.T. - Yellowknife drivers have had mixed reaction to the gas shortage this week.

While many have been lining up to buy gas when it's available, contractor Derry Pond notes how many drivers continue to idle and use up gas.

"It just blows me away that there's no fuel left in town and everybody, ah not everybody, but a lot of people are still leaving their vehicles running," he said. "You know, they can't walk or they just can't let it run for five minutes. It's been like 30 minutes, one lady here, I just timed her."

[Friction leaves North Korea hungrier](#)

Desperate for food, people eat tree bark and rodents, according to defectors. Thanks to some improved equipment and fertilisers, the UN expects this year's harvest, 2010-2011, will be 3 per cent higher than 2009. Still, the improvements were not as great as expected because of heavy snows and flooding.

Floods are a constant problem as hillsides are deforested by people foraging for fuel.

[The top 100 questions of importance to the future of global agriculture](#)

Despite a significant growth in food production over the past half-century, one of the most important challenges facing society today is how to feed an expected population of some nine billion by the middle of the 20th century. To meet the expected demand for food without significant increases in prices, it has been estimated that we need to produce 70-100 per cent more food, in light of the growing impacts of climate change, concerns over energy security, regional dietary shifts and the Millennium Development target of halving world poverty and hunger by 2015. The goal for the agricultural sector is no longer simply to maximize productivity, but to optimize across a far more complex landscape of production, rural development, environmental, social justice and food consumption outcomes. However, there remain significant challenges to developing national and international policies that support the wide emergence of more sustainable forms of land use and efficient agricultural production. The lack of information flow between scientists, practitioners and policy makers is known to exacerbate the difficulties, despite increased emphasis upon evidence-based policy. In this paper, we seek to improve dialogue and understanding between agricultural research and policy by identifying the 100 most important questions for global agriculture. These have been compiled using a horizon-scanning approach with leading experts and representatives of major agricultural organizations worldwide. The aim is to use sound scientific evidence to inform decision making and guide policy makers in the future direction of agricultural research priorities and policy support. If addressed, we anticipate that these questions will have a significant impact on global agricultural practices worldwide, while improving the synergy between agricultural policy, practice and research. This research forms part of the UK Government's Foresight Global Food and Farming Futures project.

[Can energy retrofit loans bring wonderful life to economy?](#)

Energy saving and renewable energy projects can more than pay for themselves by cutting the energy expenditures of households and businesses. Though they take up-front dollars to implement, a steady monthly stream of utility bill savings pays off the cost of the project.

An energy loan on good terms can convert the cost of the energy saving and renewable energy projects into a monthly payment that is less than the savings. The family budget improves from Day 1 of project completion.

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incentives from the federal and state governments.

[Oil Futures Decline on Concern Ireland Crisis May Spread, Tension in Korea](#)

Crude oil fell from a one-week high on concern Ireland's debt crisis will spread to Portugal and Spain, reducing economic growth and fuel demand, and as tensions in Korea mounted.

Oil dropped as the euro declined to a two-month low against the dollar, curbing investor demand for commodities. Euro-area finance ministers plan to complete an agreement on an Irish bailout on Nov. 28, a European Union official said on condition of anonymity. North Korea warned its confrontation with South Korea could lead to war.

"Concerns that the European debt crisis will spread pushed the euro to a new two-month low against the dollar," said Tom Bentz, a broker with BNP Paribas Commodity Futures Inc. in New York. The oil market is down "primarily on European debt worries."

[Crude Oil Prices May Hold Steady Amid European Debt Concern, Survey Shows](#)

Oil prices are forecast to be little changed next week as signs of U.S. economic recovery are balanced by concerns that Europe's debt crisis may hurt growth and fuel demand, according to a Bloomberg News survey.

Fifteen of 36 analysts, or 42 percent, predicted crude oil will be little changed through Nov. 26. Thirteen respondents, or 36 percent, estimated prices will rise and 8 predicted a decline. Last week, 47 percent said futures would rise.

[China May Become a Net Importer of Diesel This Month, JPMorgan Chase Says](#)

China may become a net importer of diesel in November as new supplies are brought into the country to meet rising domestic demand, JPMorgan Chase & Co. said.

Diesel fuel imports will rise "significantly" as the country tries to refill declining stockpiles and alleviate shortages at service stations, according to a report by Brynjar Eirik Bustnes yesterday. The jump in new outside supplies may be "short-lived" as refiners return from maintenance.

[Mexico, Peak Oil, and Immigration](#)

To put it lightly, it seems unlikely that the Mexican economy will be saved by windmills.

Nonetheless, Webber and Kirshenbaum should be applauded for recognizing the probability and consequences of Mexico's economic meltdown. And, of course, for attempting to think about mass immigration outside of the cliches of multiculturalism and xenophobia.

['Iran produces 1bn liters of gasoline'](#)

Iran's oil minister says more than one billion liters of gasoline has been produced in the country so far, rendering enemy efforts to ban gasoline sales to Iran ineffective.

[Shell Said to Delay FCC, Hydrocracker at Pernis Refinery, Europe's Largest](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc delayed the start of processing units at Pernis, Europe's largest oil refinery, according to two people with knowledge of the matter.

A fluid catalytic cracker that was shut for unplanned work at the refinery in Rotterdam, and a hydrocracker, which had been halted for planned repairs, are expected to resume operations next month, the people said, declining to be named because the information is confidential. They weren't able to give a specific restart date. Wim van de Wiel, a Shell spokesman based at company headquarters in The Hague, declined to comment.

[Ghana far from OPEC status: official](#)

Ghana was nowhere near the status of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and was no dream of joining it, Ato Ahwoi, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), declared here on Friday.

Addressing a dialogue between Ghana's oil development partners including Tullow, Kosmos, Anadarko, GNPC, EO Group and Sabre, Ahwoi warned Ghanaians against higher expectations on the offshore oil field that was discovered in 2007.

"But we have hyped the prospects of Ghana's oil so much that the expectations now far outweigh the reality on the ground," he said, calling on all stakeholders to help manage the expectations.

[China said ready for big oil sands move](#)

LAKE LOUISE - Billions of dollars of Chinese investment are poised to be invested in the Canadian energy sector as it plays catch-up with the rest of the world, a business forum heard Friday.

"Chinese companies are coming out and they are looking for investment overseas," said

Jiang Shan, minister counsellor of commercial affairs for the Chinese Embassy, speaking at the Bennett Jones Lake Louise World Cup Business Forum.

[Energy companies blame green taxes for high bills as Ofgem launches prices inquiry](#)

Energy firms have blamed the Government's green taxes for rising customer bills, after Ofgem launched an inquiry into whether they are acting anti-competitively over prices.

[Rain, failures halve Venezuela oil upgrader output](#)

(Reuters) - Venezuela's heavy crude upgraders were operating at half capacity on Friday as heavy rain delayed the start-up of one unit and mechanical problems kept another offline, a senior PDVSA source told Reuters.

[Belarus, Venezuela, Azerbaijan to cooperate on oil transport](#)

President Alexander Lukashenko said Friday that Belarus, Venezuela and Azerbaijan would launch a joint logistic venture to transport oil and other freight.

Lukashenko earlier pledged to provide Azerbaijan with oil transported from Venezuela, in exchange for Azeri oil supplies to Belorussian refineries.

[Enbridge pipeline back at full capacity next week](#)

Enbridge Inc. expects to return its 670,000 barrel-per-day Line 6A pipeline to full capacity Nov. 30, after an electrical problem on Thursday trimmed flows through the critical U.S.-Canada crude connection.

A power failure at an electrical substation near Enbridge's terminal in Lockhart, Ill., forced the company to warn crude shippers that the pipe would not operate at full capacity. The substation is owned by a local utility, which expects to complete its repairs by Monday morning, Enbridge spokeswoman Jennifer Varey said in a statement Friday.

[Feds seeking Gulf spill data sue Transocean](#)

The Department of Justice has filed a civil suit against drilling giant Transocean, saying the firm refuses to turn over documents subpoenaed as part of an investigation into the Gulf of Mexico oil spill and explosion of the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig.

The suit, filed in a New Orleans federal court, says Transocean is not releasing

documents related to safety audits on its rigs and safety training for particular workers that were requested by the joint U.S. Coast Guard-Interior Department panel investigating the accident.

[Official: Iran's nuclear power plant fueled up](#)

TEHRAN, Iran—Iran's nuclear chief says the country's first nuclear power plant has been loaded up with fuel required before it can go on line.

[A green light for nuclear power](#)

For years, Ontario's Liberal government has woven dreams of an alternative-energy future for the province: homes, cars and factories powered by clean wind, solar, hydro and biofuel. On Tuesday, though, provincial Energy Minister Brad Duguid laid out an energy strategy for the next 20 years that relies on nuclear power, which the Minister claimed has been the "backbone" of the province's energy supply for 30 years. Apparently all the government's grand and expensive scheming has led it back to where it began.

[GM already working on 2nd generation Chevrolet Volt](#)

Even before the public gets to see the first generation of the Chevrolet Volt, General Motors was reported to already be working on the second iteration of the Chevrolet Volt. It appears that GM has discovered ways to cut production costs so that all the upgrades will be featured on the second version of the car. Autocar reports that General Motors will focus on the 1.4-liter gasoline engine. However, there are rumors that the parent company might replace it with a newer version specifically optimized for better mileage. Slated to go on sale in the next few days, the first generation Chevrolet Volt will be priced at \$41,000, or \$33,500 net of full federal income tax credit.

[Salford Christmas Books To Make You Think](#)

And all this is just one tiny chapter (10) of the whole book which looks at alternative ways to make housing work for communities – be they made of straw, hemp or mud. This book is generally a tour of Britain where social housing is working – both for the community and for keeping energy costs down, with the by product of saving the planet.

And it's crucial because, as Bird says, "as we reach peak oil, it becomes increasingly difficult to continue building and using our houses in the same old way. Look around your home. What can you find that doesn't depend on cheap oil or other fossil fuels...

[A little green every day](#)

Advent calendars mark the beginning of the Christmas season – a time of gift giving and celebration.

The Advent Sharing Calendar takes it one step further by helping us to be mindful of those in need every day of the year. The idea is to add monetary gifts every day of Advent, based on a particular theme. In keeping with growing concerns about climate change, rising energy prices and peak oil, this year's theme is energy conservation.

[A 'Crazy Bad' Day in Beijing](#)

Since last year, the United States Embassy has been issuing hourly Twitter updates on Beijing's air quality, and some of the readings have been pretty shocking. The tweet emerged last week when levels of tiny particulate matter (known as PM 2.5) rose to over 500 micrograms per meter cubed. That's about 20 times the limit that the World Health Organization regards as "acceptable and achievable" for a 24-hour period.

[Can We Blame Extreme Weather on Climate Change?](#)

No matter how bizarre the weather, the mantra of climatologists has been that one cannot attribute any single event to changing climate. All science can do is conclude that extreme events are getting more likely as humankind pumps more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Finally, climate scientists see a way to stop being so wishy-washy and start assigning blame, through a technique called "fractional risk attribution."

[Most wanted list of climate change culprits rewritten](#)

China is the new number one cause of global warming, yes? It just got ahead of the US, right? Maybe not. It all depends how you look at the numbers, says a new analysis that finds new heroes and villains in the story of global warming.

[Facing the consequences](#)

Global action is not going to stop climate change. The world needs to look harder at how to live with it.

[Medical Panel Urges a Low-Carbon Diet](#)

A network of the world's leading medical academies on Friday urged nations to adopt policies to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas pollutants because it would have a salutary effect not just on the planet but on human health.

[U.N. panel issues 20 million carbon offsets](#)

(Reuters) - A United Nations panel overseeing trade in carbon offsets under the Kyoto Protocol decided late on Friday to issue 20 million tonnes of offsets, the information company Point Carbon reported.

[Front-Line City in Virginia Tackles Rise in Sea](#)

NORFOLK, Va. — In this section of the Larchmont neighborhood, built in a sharp “u” around a bay off the Lafayette River, residents pay close attention to the lunar calendar, much as other suburbanites might attend to the daily flow of commuter traffic.

If the moon is going to be full the night before Hazel Peck needs her car, for example, she parks it on a parallel block, away from the river. The next morning, she walks through a neighbor's backyard to avoid the two-to-three-foot-deep puddle that routinely accumulates on her street after high tides.

For Ms. Peck and her neighbors, it is the only way to live with the encroaching sea.

As sea levels rise, tidal flooding is increasingly disrupting life here and all along the East Coast, a development many climate scientists link to global warming.

[Heaven on Earth melting away](#)

The rate of change along the Antarctic Peninsula is shocking. Over the last few years, I have spent a total of six months at a 40-person U.S. science base, Palmer Station, on the western Antarctic Peninsula. On my first visit in 2004, a gaping hole opened up in a section of the retreating Marr Ice Piedmont, connecting two bays that probably hadn't been linked for thousands of years. Scientists who have been at Palmer since the mid-1970s have seen the Marr glacier withdraw 1,500 feet behind the station. The disappearing sea ice has caused populations of ice-dependent Adelie penguins near the station to plummet from more than 30,000 breeding pairs in 1975 to roughly 5,000 pairs today.



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