

More Oil

"US Government scientists say they believe the Arctic holds as much as 90 billion barrels of oil, which is enough to meet the current world demand for almost three years."

Ref: ABC News, 24/7/08

Comment: Wow, three years!

"Some 90 billion barrels of oil and a third of the world's undiscovered natural gas lie beneath an area north of the Arctic Circle, US government scientists estimate in the largest-ever survey of the energy resources there. The US Geological Survey, which announced the findings on Wednesday, called the region, which includes parts of the United States, Russia and Canada, 'the largest unexplored prospective area for petroleum remaining on Earth'. All told, the area accounts for about a fifth of the world's recoverable oil and natural gas reserves, the USGS says: 13 per cent of the oil, 30 per cent of natural gas and 20 per cent of natural gas liquids. At today's current consumption rate of 86 million barrels a day, the yet-to-be-tapped oil in the Arctic would supply global demand for three years.

"Pursuing it is sure to be controversial with environmental groups that want to protect the pristine wilderness and the area's endangered species. The oil is considered "technically recoverable" using existing technology, but the survey did not consider the cost of overcoming obstacles to drilling, such as permanent sea ice or deep ocean waters. Melting caused by global warming has opened up some areas that were previously considered too difficult to reach. Oil companies have already spent billions to secure leases to explore some of the uncharted waters."

Ref: Macquarie Radio Network, 25/7/08

Less Oil

"Motoring body the NRMA says taxpayers should no longer give \$10 billion a year in subsidies to the fossil fuel industry to search and drill for oil. Intent on weaning Australia off its addiction to oil, the NRMA's released an alternative transport blueprint which includes lower registration fees for greener cars and tough compulsory fuel standards. The biofuel industry would be better supported, while a public transport revolution would see more metros and light rails built around the country. The NRMA says it wants Australia's oil consumption to halve by 2050."

Ref: Sky News, 27/3/08

Biofuels Warning

"Rising food prices and the increasing scarcity of vital resources, especially water, will continue to breed social unrest around the world, the head of Melbourne-based mining giant BHP Billiton has

warned. ... The BHP chief executive [Marcus Kloppers] has also joined the growing list of critics of biofuels. Biofuels, made from crops such as sugar cane, palm and soybean, were once hailed as a solution to carbon emissions from petrol



'At least our bio-fuel emissions are bio-degradable'

and oil dependency. But, with tracts of farm land turned over to fuel crops, and demand for grains pushing food prices higher, they have since been blamed for contributing to food shortages in developing nations — in turn leading to civil unrest. 'I think biofuels are a selfish way for the West to placate itself and to basically impose the cost on the developing world', Mr Kloppers says. 'We are making hundreds of millions of people worse off with biofuels, because it's pushing up food prices'. BHP has substantial interests in petroleum and uranium, making it a logical opponent of biofuels. But with mining interests in at least 20 developing countries — mostly in Asia, Africa and South America — it also has reason to be concerned about the economic and social stability of these countries."

Ref: Ruth Williams, The Age, 25/7/08

Seller Beware

"News that Ford sold only 3400 new FG Falcons last month (a paltry 200 more than they sold of the old model a year ago) should come as no surprise to anyone."

Ref: Richard Watson, Herald Sun, 9/8/08

"If car makers didn't already know, stagnant car sales for big vehicles are telling them the world has changed, probably forever. Because of high petrol prices and climate change, new car buyers are voting decisively for smaller, less-polluting vehicles. ... These days, cars that are six and eight cylinders and 4WDs are on the nose. Toyota's four-cylinder Camry is 2008's best seller. Successful car makers must accept buyer commitment to the environment and their hip pocket, or pay the price." Ref: Herald Sun, 6/8/08

And Also ... Clothes Miles

"For every dollar I spend on an item of clothing I aim to get one day of wear." Overheard at a party.

Walking - Not!

"Shoppers too lazy to walk to their local supermarket are responsible for adding an estimated 1.9 million tonnes a year to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. A national audit into everyday shopping habits ... also found shoppers who travelled outside their local area to make their purchases were robbing local businesses of up to \$92 billion a year in revenue.

"Australia's environmentalist of the year for 2007, Arron Wood, said Australians needed to get over their reliance of driving to where they wanted to shop. 'We are heavily reliant on our cars all round', he said. People need to understand the benefits of shopping locally, he said. 'Obviously there's the environmental benefit, but the whole fact of shopping locally ... drives your own local economy which has positive spinoffs for your own region', he said. The study revealed that over a 12 month period, the average Australian made over 43 trips, travelling up to 477 kilometres outside of their local area and spending over \$7000. Collectively, this generated 7.3 billion kilometres of extra travel, the study found. The study looked to identify where a basket of nine common purchases were made. The trips which caused the most greenhouse gas emissions were ones to buy clothing and takeaway food."

Ref: Chelsea Mes, The Advertiser, 25/7/08

Suburban Rail in Victoria

"Religious leaders from the Baptist, Anglican, Uniting and Catholic churches, and the Hillview Community Church and Rowville Salvation Army have all written to Transport Minister Lynne Kosky begging for a railway line to Rowville. The line they want built was first promised in a 1969 transport plan. Governments since have promised to evaluate a rail link, from Huntingdale station to Rowville. 'We've been waiting too long for this train', Rowville Baptist Church Pastor David Devine said. In the 1999 election campaign, Labor promised a feasibility study into building a train line to Rowville.

"Opposition Leader Ted Baillieu this week reiterated his party's support for rail lines to South Morang and Cranbourne East, and a light rail line to Doncaster. But he stumbled when quizzed on how much these projects would cost. Ms Kosky said it was ironic that the Opposition was calling for new train lines. 'We remember that it was them who closed so many', her spokesman, Stephen Moynihan, said."

Ref: Clay Lucas, The Age, 24/7/08

Cycling in LA

"Of all the least-expected consequences of soaring fuel prices, this has to be near the top of the list: swarms of cyclists are taking to the intimidating, multi-lane thoroughfares of Los Angeles, some even defying the law and whizzing between the stationary cars on the gridlocked freeways. The result is a city of diehard motorists in need of some anger management. Criminal charges have already been filed against one driver accused of deliberately braking in front of two cyclists Both cyclists ended up in hospital. Meanwhile, pedestrians are beginning to repeat the constant gripe of the modern Londoner: traffic-dodging cyclists are hogging the sidewalk and almost knocking them off their feet. The city is so alarmed by this clash of car culture and pedal power that it has enacted an emergency plan, which so far consists of a Cyclists' Bill of Rights and a public conversation about how everyone can get along without killing each other. More meaningful developments are also afoot: the city has hired Alta Planning & Design, a planning consultancy, to revamp its haphazard and under-maintained cycle lanes & come up with cyclist-friendly initiatives. ...

"Yet the problems of cycling in Los Angeles go deeper than just dealing with touchy and credit-crunched SUV owners. The summer heat can be unbearable. Then there are the poorly maintained surfaces, the wheel-buckling storm grates and the debris that slides into the road after the occasional rainstorm. Brad House, a member of the Los Angeles Bicycle Advisory Committee, told a meeting: 'We are the illegitimate bastard child of the transportation industry'. Having apparently never encountered a London taxi driver while on two wheels, he added: 'In Europe, motorists are very respectful of cyclists'."

Ref: Chris Ayres, The Australian, 29/7/08

PT4me2 (in the West)

For improved public transport in Western Melbourne sign the PT4me2 petition which can be found at: <http://pt4me2.org.au/west/index.php>

And Also ...

New Zealand Family Court Judge Murfitt "took a stand against ... parents saddling their children with bizarre names despite officials often trying to talk them out of unusual choices, saying this could create 'social hurdles' as they grew up. He cited as examples a family who named their children after six-cylinder Ford cars, twins called Benson and Hedges & youngsters called Midnight Chardonnay, Number 16 Bus Shelter and Violence." **Ref: The Advertiser, 25/7/08**

Petrol Heads

"Petrol heads will be shocked by the sacrilegious centrepiece of this year's British International Motor Show. It's a green 'village' crowded with dinky electric cars, electric bicycles and even a Lotus Eco Elise (pictured below) partly made out of hemp. Km/h and bhp are out. Km/l and grams of carbon dioxide per kilometre are the statistics every manufacturer is shouting. On pedestals where gull-winged V8s once revolved, hydrogen and hybrid machines now stand, with dashboard components made of cork. The manufacturer boasts that it is the only wood that can be harvested without killing the tree. Faced with rising fuel prices, a growing consciousness of carbon tyre prints and lower revenues (car sales fell by 6.1% last month compared with June 2007), does this motor show mark the end of our passion for the petrol engine? ... The green concept cars look impressive, but mass production is a distant goal. Cadillac's Provoq is still '15 to 20 years away', according to General Motors. Even Mercedes' electric Smart will not be in production until 2010. In the electric village, most of the vehicles are still cottage industries compared with the major marques. Away from the electric village, the real motor show is still alive and revving. Every green offering is more than matched with an ungreen one. On one side of the show, Lotus shows off its Eco Elise, on the other, two women in revealing cocktail dresses present its brand-new Evora sports car in the traditional motor show manner." Ref: Patrick Barkham (Guardian), The Age, 26/7/08



"Rudd Government ministers are driving gas-guzzling V6s and four-wheel-drives that consume as much as three times more fuel than smaller hybrid cars. A list of taxpayer-funded, private-plated cars chosen by ministers and parliamentary secretaries for their home base reveals most are family-sized sedans, V6s and wagons that are less fuel-efficient than environmentally friendly hybrids. Opposition frontbenchers, who are also guilty gas-guzzlers, did not criticise Labor ministers' for their choice of vehicles, but said it was disingenuous to then ask Australian households to reduce their carbon emissions." Ref: Sharri Markson, Daily Telegraph, 3/8/08

Rail and Emissions

"As a model for how not to tackle climate change, it seems hard to go past the Rudd Government's approach to transport. Rail is three to four times more energy-efficient than road, according to rail industry calculations here and overseas. A British study found that carbon dioxide emissions from train travel were a little more than half those of cars, when measured by kilometres per passenger. The industry says the comparison is substantially more favourable still for rail freight.

"According to Australasian Railway Association chief executive Bryan Nye, a freight train travelling between Sydney and Melbourne replaces 150 trucks and saves 45,000 litres of fuel and 44 tonnes of greenhouse gases. So it would seem to make sense for the Government's much vaunted carbon pollution reduction scheme to encourage more people and more freight to shift from road to rail. Climate change has the potential to lead to a renaissance in rail, including

the revival of glamour projects such as fast trains between Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra that fell victim to high costs and lack of government support in the 1980s and '90s but are commonplace in Europe and are spreading throughout Asia and South America. A three-hour train trip between Sydney and Melbourne would be an alternative to air travel, the fastest growing source of emissions in the transport sector.

"Despite all that, last week's government green paper discussing climate change heads in the opposite direction, tipping the benefits of an emissions trading scheme towards road and away from rail. For petrol users, the effect of putting a price on carbon will be neutralised by cutting the excise by an equivalent amount for at least the first three years of the scheme's operation from 2010. For heavy vehicles, cuts in the fuel tax will offset the impact of the higher carbon price for at least a year. And the offset for rail? Zero. 'I thought we were trying to get more people to use public transport, not get them back on the roads', Nye says. Nothing better illustrates how climate change policy can be held hostage to politics. Motorists and truck drivers see the result of rising fuel prices directly, are vocal about it and have votes. For rail users, the effect is hidden in fares or freight charges. Transport overall contributes 14 per cent to Australia's greenhouse emissions, making it the third largest sector after energy and agriculture." Ref: Mike Steketee, The Australian, 26/7/08

The Story of Highways (Pt 3)

“Annabelle Quince: *During the 1970s and '80s, there was a re-evaluation of the freeway, first by citizens who questioned their place in a modern city and later by governments who didn't want to invest in freeway construction.*

“Thomas Zeller: *What's happened is that roads and building roads for significant parts of society, has become problematic just in and of itself. The way that roads in the early 20th century were seen as harbingers of progress, as sort of the embodiment of a modern society, and what you see in the 1970s is that there's a re-evaluation of public transportation: long-distance trains are being introduced, and faster long-distance trains are being introduced all over Europe, first in France and then in Germany as well; locally trams and public transportation receive more support because people see the negative consequences of road-building, the congestion, the noise, the exhaust fumes that threaten to destroy those very cities that people want to live in. ...*

“Thomas Zeller: *In the last ten years or so, cash-strapped governments are trying to use road-building as a way to create revenue for themselves, rather than spending a lot of money on these roads. They enable private companies, sometimes to build, sometimes to run these roads, sometimes a combination of both, and there's a lot of debate going on among economists, among politicians, whether this is a wise move, fiscally speaking, or not, because there's some money that the States receive right now, but in the long term, they might be left with the cost for maintenance, they might be saddled in fact with enormous debt. And for an historian it's ironic to watch this, because what you saw in early modern Great Britain was that governments would give charters to private companies that built turnpikes, and turnpikes were roads built by private entities which would charge a toll for anyone to use these roads, and then in the 19th and the 20th century, we had a major trend towards public expenditures for roads, and now we seem to see the beginning of more private investment and private licensing for road-building.*

“Peter Norton: *Throughout the 20th century, at least until the '70s, highways were consistently sold on two grounds. One is safety, it's safer to drive on highways that have great separated interchanges and median strips and wide shoulders, than it is to drive on city streets that don't have those things. As it turns out, a lot of*

recent transportation research has shown that in fact drivers will often take less responsibility to be safe on a road they perceive as foolproof; in other words, they'll drive faster, and pay less attention because the road seems so safe to them. At least as important though, these highways were sold as congestion fighters. If automobiles were stuck in traffic then the solution really from the end of World War II to about 1970, was automatic: just build more highways and this will reduce congestion. The credibility of that claim, which at first was really unquestioned, began to decline in the 1960s when a lot of people began to argue that in fact what you're doing when you're building highways is inviting more traffic, and more than that, you are coaxing people out of alternatives such as rail, and enticing them onto highways so that you're worsening the traffic that way, and you're also encouraging people drive more because for example, a highway lets you live in a suburb with a front and back yard and now you can drive to work because there's a big highway, so why live in the city at all? And thus the provision of more highways can invite greater dependence on the automobile.

“Gabriel Roth: *This is an argument against providing roads that are unpriced or under-priced. But if roads could be priced properly, and people had to pay for using them, then congestion would never be excessive. If road-owners in cities had the power to levy prices for the use of the roads, there would be no excessive traffic congestion. So it is only because roads are not priced that one gets this tendency for them to become overcrowded. But of course I think one should add to that, that if roads were built and became overcrowded and then they were priced and the people who built those roads made big profits from the payments, then other people would come in and provide more roads and eventually one would get a balance, with people getting the roads that they were prepared to pay for. That would be the limit in the same way that you have a big demand for cars, but somehow we never seem to have a shortage of cars. One can always get a car, all one has to do is to pay for it.”* {Continued next issue}

Ref: ABC Radio National program Rear Vision: ‘The Story of Highways’ produced and presented by Annabelle Quince, 20/7/08 See: <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/rearvision/stories/2008/2281165.htm>

