



# The Steady Stater

Newsletter of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy

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## Feature Article – CASSE to Organize a Forum on Population and Economic Growth

At CASSE, we are honored to be working with the Population Media Center, the Wallace Global Fund, and Harvard University to develop and organize a forum on population growth, economic growth, and their collective role in societal prosperity. This project represents a big opportunity for CASSE on two fronts: (1) as a way to carry out the educational part of our mission by convening experts and developing a unified message about the effects of population growth and economic growth; and (2) as a way to raise CASSE's profile among scholars and funding networks.

Although dates have not been finalized, plans for the forum are progressing. Twenty to thirty of the top minds in the fields of demography, ecological economics, sustainable development, and neoclassical economics, will be invited to clarify the interaction

*continued on page 2*

### CASSE MISSION

The mission of CASSE is to advocate a sustainable economy by:

- educating citizens, organizations, and policy makers on the conflict between economic growth and (1) environmental protection, (2) ecological and economic sustainability, and (3) national security and international stability;
- promoting a steady state economy of stable or mildly fluctuating size as an alternative to economic growth; and
- studying the means to establish a steady state economy.

### MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

CASSE posts highlights from the Internet and news outlets on its website, [www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org). Check the news/events section of the website regularly for updates. Here are three notable items:

In July CASSE participated in a symposium on economic growth at the annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The well-attended symposium consisted of six presentations and sparked a lively discussion about the effects of economic growth on biodiversity conservation. A local news crew interviewed CASSE staff about ecological economics and the environmental impacts of a new auto factory. The symposium also spurred interest in a book on the effects of economic growth.

[www.sd-commission.org.uk](http://www.sd-commission.org.uk) – As the UK's independent government watchdog on sustainability issues, the SDC has taken on the task of redefining prosperity. The organization aims to map out the relationships between growth, sustainability, and wellbeing.

[www.sni-hueting.info](http://www.sni-hueting.info) – Roefie Hueting is a pioneer in ecological economics, and he developed this website to share his work on sustainable national income.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1-3** Feature: Forum on Population and Growth
- 1** Media Highlights
- 2** Steady Stater Quotable
- 2** Hot off the Press
- 2** Position Endorsement Spotlight
- 3** Recent Scholarly Publications
- 3** Encouraging Words
- 4** Count of Position Signatories
- 4** Policy Corner
- 4** Funding Update

between growth and economic wellbeing. We hope to enhance the dialogue among experts on population, economic growth, and optimal scale, and help coordinate the efforts of organizations working on sustainability issues.

The first part of the three-part forum will focus on the effects of lowering birthrates on economic scale, and the costs and benefits of increasing scale in nations with varying levels of wealth and income. These are thought-provoking issues with sweeping implications. In a short amount of time, forum participants will hypothesize how population size, age distribution, and other demographic factors affect economic scale, and how scale affects economic wellbeing.

The second part of the forum will develop scenarios on changes in population size and economic scale in both poor and wealthy nations. In exploring such scenarios, experts will develop arguments to debunk the "birth dearth" – the notion that stabilized populations are harmful to the economy and social wellbeing. The scenarios will also help participants describe sustainable economic scale and paths for maximizing societal prosperity.

The third and final part of the forum will focus on communicating a unified message about optimal scale and the effects of continuing growth on both population and economic output. Forum participants will craft a set of agreed-upon principles of population growth, economic scale, and wellbeing in both poor and wealthy nations. The participants will also brainstorm the best means and audiences for spreading the unified message.

CASSE will be involved in all phases of organizing and coordinating the forum – from logistics to facilitation to development of both preparatory and concluding materials. CASSE will undertake much work to design and direct the forum, but the partners will provide extensive experience and expertise. The Population Media Center <[www.populationmedia.org](http://www.populationmedia.org)> has years of experience in the politically sensitive realm of population issues. The organization strives to improve the health and wellbeing of people around the world through the use of entertainment-education strategies, like serialized dramas on radio and television, in which characters evolve into role models for the audience.

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### **Steady Stater Quotable:**

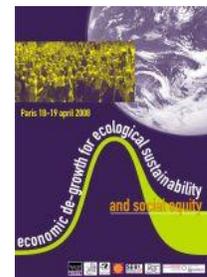
***What is quite clear is that a way of life that bases itself on materialism, i.e., on permanent limitless expansionism in a finite environment, cannot last long, and that its life expectation is the shorter the more successfully it pursues its expansionist objectives.***

*-E.F. Schumacher*

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### **HOT OFF THE PRESS**

The Conference on Economic Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity (held in Paris April 18-19, 2008) adopted a declaration calling for economic "right-sizing." The declaration makes a strong case for aligning economic activity with ecological capacity.



### **POSITION ENDORSEMENT SPOTLIGHT**



A recent addition to the list of organizations endorsing the CASSE position on economic growth is the EcoNorfolk Foundation. The principal environmental organization on the South Pacific Territory of Norfolk Island in Australia, EcoNorfolk has a long record of involvement with international initiatives. While Norfolk Island itself covers a mere 35 square kilometers, it has most of the land use, economic development, heritage protection, and waste disposal problems that beset larger areas. CASSE's Director of Australian Operations, Geoff Mosley, is hopeful that this endorsement will encourage other Pacific Island communities. For further information contact EcoNorfolk at <[www.econorfolk.nf](http://www.econorfolk.nf)>.

Characters model positive behaviors related to family planning and reproductive health. Harvard University needs no introduction. The Department of Global Health and Population seeks to improve global health through education, research, and service from a population-based perspective. World-renowned scholars generate knowledge and ideas through their research and enhance national capacities through collaborative projects, especially in the developing world. The Wallace Global Fund <[www.wgf.org](http://www.wgf.org)> has a track record in funding and directing projects that enhance human wellbeing and elicit positive social change. The organization's mission is to promote an informed and engaged citizenry, to fight injustice, and to protect the diversity of nature and the natural systems upon which all life depends. It is an understatement to say that CASSE is in good company with these partners on the project.

Just as the planning for the forum is getting underway, CASSE's participation is paying dividends. Because of contacts made through the partners' network, CASSE has been invited to attend a private seminar on the intrinsic impacts of economic globalization on the natural world, as well as human societies. CASSE will lend its expertise on the transition to the steady state economy as the seminar looks to organize ways to overcome the problems of globalization. Perhaps it is a bit ironic, but CASSE's project portfolio continues to grow in the name of ending the growth paradigm. ❖



## RECENT SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Czech, B. 2007. The foundation of a new conservation movement: professional society positions on economic growth. *Bioscience* 57(1):6-7.

Victor, P. and Rosenbluth, G. 2007. Managing without growth. *Ecological Economics* 61:492-504.



## ENCOURAGING WORDS

CASSE is delighted to receive positive comments from visitors to the website.

"At last I have found others who are talking some sense."

"Really great to know that there is a group promoting and educating people about the steady state economy. All power to you!"

"Welcome, important addition to stopping the lunatic growth lobby."

## SIGNATORIES COUNTER

In this space, CASSE tracks the support for our position on economic growth, which can be viewed and signed at [www.steadystate.org/CASSEPositionOnEG.html](http://www.steadystate.org/CASSEPositionOnEG.html)

As of August 11, 2008:

The number of individuals who have signed the CASSE position on economic growth is

**1,852,**

the number of professional societies, government agencies, and science groups that have adopted positions on economic growth similar to CASSE's is

**9,** and

the number of private, corporate, nonprofit, and political organizations that have endorsed the CASSE position is

**37.** ❖

## POLICY CORNER

In this space, CASSE provides a brief introduction to a policy idea that supports a sustainable economy. A more in-depth resource is also listed for further study.

It is becoming common knowledge that GDP (gross domestic product) is not a good measure of societal wellbeing. Among GDP's most glaring shortcomings are its inclusion of defensive expenditures (e.g., environmental clean-up and prison construction) and liquidation of natural resources as current income. If GDP doesn't do the job of indicating wellbeing, what are some national-scale measures that provide a clearer picture of wellbeing and sustainability? Ecological footprint, genuine progress indicator, environmentally sustainable national income, index of sustainable economic welfare, human development index, human appropriation of net primary production, happy planet index, and environmentally weighted material consumption are a few possibilities.

See Best, Aaron et al. 2008. Potential of the Ecological Footprint for monitoring environmental impacts from natural resource use: Analysis of the potential of the Ecological Footprint and related assessment tools. Report to the European Commission, DG Environment. ❖

## FUNDING UPDATE

In this space, CASSE reports on organizational finances and efforts to raise additional funding.

The executive director is the only paid position on the CASSE staff, and other operating expenses are minimized. Small grants from foundations have provided some of the money needed, but the majority comes from generous citizens who are concerned about the sustainability of our economic systems. The grant from the Wallace Global Fund (see feature article), a grant from the Yang Foundation, and donations from individuals have provided CASSE with enough cash in reserves to supply about 6 months of operating costs. ❖



CASSE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of the steady state economy. Please e-mail comments to [info@steadystate.org](mailto:info@steadystate.org) or find additional contact information in the "about us" section of our website ([www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org)).

Thank you for reading the *Steady Stater* Newsletter.

