



The Steady Stater

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

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More Growth: The Wrong Prescription for an Overgrown Economy

The *New York Times* recently ran a story about economic growth and recovery. The columnist, Catherine Rampell, applauded the 3.5% annual growth rate of U.S. GDP for the 3rd quarter of 2009. But she cautioned that the rise in consumption might dissipate after government stimulus programs taper off. She also quoted Goldman Sachs economist, Jan Hatzius: "The big-picture perspective is that things have improved. The question is, how sustainable is this growth going forward?"

When Rampell and Hatzius contemplate "how sustainable growth is," they aren't considering whether the activities associated with 3.5% growth are ecologically sustainable. They're simply assuming that growth is desirable, and that its sustainability is a function of our economic willpower and "consumer confidence." An annual growth rate of 3.5% means a doubling in about 20 years. Can we produce and consume twice as much stuff just 20 years from now? Even if we can, would we be better off?

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CASSE MISSION

The mission of CASSE is to advance the steady state economy, with stabilized population and consumption, as a policy goal with widespread public support.

We pursue this mission by:

- educating citizens 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 as a desirable alternative to economic growth; and
- studying the means to establish a steady state economy.

OUTREACH HIGHLIGHTS

CASSE works hard to spread the message about the steady state economy as a desirable alternative to unsustainable growth. Here are a few recent examples.

- CASSE's network of outreach volunteers has been active. Led by Cole Thompson, the volunteers created and published a newspaper ad about signing the CASSE position on economic growth. Deb Schober is guiding an effort to create working groups within the volunteer network.
- Soumitri Das (India), Neil Dawe (Canada), Dan O'Neill (U.K.), and Brian Czech and Rob Dietz (U.S.) have delivered presentations in a variety of venues. For more information, see the [events section of our website](#).
- CASSE supporters are [voting to help us compete](#) for an outreach grant. Free Range Studios is an outstanding online marketing group that specializes in progressive causes. They are the makers of the online video, *The Story of Stuff*. Voting is now open for an organization to receive \$15,000 worth of marketing services from Free Range. CASSE is in 6th place out of 400 candidates, and we will become a finalist by finishing in the top 20. ❖

CASSE's answer to questions like these is to consider the costs of growth alongside the benefits. Measurements such as the ecological footprint summarize the costs of growth. According to the Global Footprint Network, we are overshooting the capacity of the planet by 40%. In our race to grow the economy, we are using resources 40% faster than they can be regenerated, and the costs are mounting. Given this sobering state of affairs, recommending more growth as the solution to our societal problems is irresponsible and dangerous. It's akin to a doctor prescribing donuts, cases of beer, and loose-fitting clothes as the cure for a morbidly obese patient.

The problem is that most people, especially economists such as Jan Hatzius, don't see it that way. They are so blinded by the growth paradigm that they are unable to see the costs right in front of their faces. That's where CASSE steps in. We help people understand the costs of growth, and we promote the steady state economy as a hopeful and sane framework for meeting people's needs without undermining the life support systems of the planet. CASSE staff members have been working around the world to deliver this message, and it looks like interest from the public is picking up. The conference rooms for two recent presentations by CASSE staffers were filled to capacity. Neil Dawe, director of Canadian operations, delivered a presentation entitled "*Sustainability: How Do We Get There from Here?*" to the Gulf Islands Alliance on Salt Spring Island. The response was terrific. When Neil stated, "What we've been doing isn't working because we've only been dealing with the symptoms; we need to deal with the root cause: economic growth," the audience actually broke into applause. Dan O'Neill, director of European operations, along with four volunteers (Lorna Arblaster, Claire Bastin, David Adshead, and Dave Abson), organized a workshop and discussion session about the steady state economy at the Schumacher Conference in Leeds, U.K. The session garnered more participants than any other at the conference, and John Battle, a Member of Parliament, has taken an interest in the steady state platform.

Back in the United States, CASSE staff members have been working with diverse groups to deliver the message about economic growth and the steady state economy. Activists with concerns about overpopulation have long been stymied by rhetoric about the necessity of a growing population to maintain a strong economy. CASSE has been providing information to the Population Institute and the Population Media Center to point out that a strong and sustainable economy is a steady state economy

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Steady Stater Quotable:

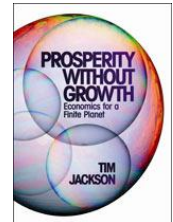
Organisms cannot survive in a medium consisting of their own final outputs. Neither can economies.

-Herman Daly

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Prosperity without Growth

CASSE advisor Tim Jackson has repackaged his work with the U.K. Sustainable Development Commission into a hugely important book. Professor Jackson uses facts and brilliantly constructed arguments to convince readers that growth is not the answer to our problems. But he doesn't stop there – he describes how we can aim for the right economic goals, restructure our economic institutions, and find the path to real prosperity. ❖



POSITION ENDORSEMENT SPOTLIGHT

Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)



PEER is a U.S. non-profit alliance of local, state and federal scientists, law enforcement officers, land managers and other professionals dedicated to upholding environmental laws and values. PEER was the 100th organization to endorse the position on economic growth, a milestone in CASSE's drive to gain support for the steady state economy. With the endorsement, PEER calls upon public employees, the media, and politicians to illuminate the perils of perpetual growth and support the positive vision of a steady state economy.

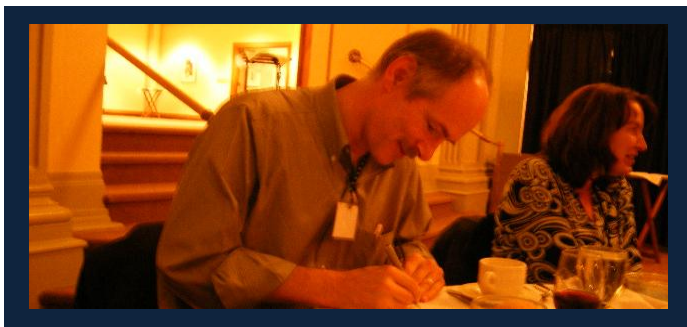
Thanks to CASSE supporter Kirsten Stade for her help in building a connection with PEER. ❖

that features stable population. As a result, we participated in a forum in Washington, DC to explore strategies for improving public understanding of the connections among population, consumption, the environment, and well-being.

CASSE also has been collaborating with an innovative partnership called the Faith, Economy, and Ecology Working Group. We helped the working group create postcards about economic growth that will be distributed to participants of the climate change talks in Copenhagen, and we provided editorial input to a [statement developed by the group](#).

CASSE is gearing up for a major conference on the new green economy being organized by the National Council for Science and the Environment in Washington, DC (January 20 -22). Deb Schober (director of outreach), Brian Czech (president), and Rob Dietz (executive director) are on the conference planning committee. We will coordinate and participate in a variety of workshops, including one on developing ecological economics curricula and one on overhauling GDP. The conference is designed to deliver actionable ideas to the Obama administration and Congress, providing a unique opportunity to advance the steady state economy among policy makers.

At CASSE, we'd certainly like to see an example of government, businesses, and citizens united in an effort to make the transition to a steady state economy. But that's not our immediate goal. We don't expect to sculpt a new economic paradigm overnight. Our first goal is to make the steady state economy a concept that is understood by the public and a topic that politicians are willing to discuss. With each presentation, each signature on our position, and each message we deliver, we're chipping away at the growth paradigm. One day, perhaps not too far off, with the help of CASSE and collaborators, the steady state economy will take shape in the majority's mind as the path to real prosperity – healthy people and a healthy planet. ❖



Mayor of Croton-on-Hudson signs the CASSE position.

SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand. 2009. [Strong sustainability for New Zealand: principles and scenarios](#).

Costanza et al. 1997. [An introduction to ecological economics \(ebook\)](#). Published in the *Encyclopedia of the Earth*.

Harris, Jonathan. 2008. [Ecological macroeconomics: consumption, investment and climate change](#). ❖



Dan O'Neill presenting the steady state economy at the Schumacher Conference in Leeds, U.K.

ENCOURAGING WORDS

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

"You're right on target with your position statement. Thanks for finally stating this."

"This should be everyone's first priority. We need to become a sustainable society."

"Thank you. Your work gives me a ray of hope."

At last a viable alternative to established economics... ..I will be doing all I can to tell people about CASSE and the steady state economy. Thank you. ❖

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

As of November 23, 2009:

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

4,320,

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

12, and

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

105. ❖

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

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

Political commentator Garland Nixon sat down with Brian Czech for an in-depth interview about economic growth and the steady state economy. The interview aired on Montgomery Municipal Cable Television.

In a [segment on Good Dirt Radio](#), Rob Dietz provided an overview of the conditions required for a sustainable economy.

Brian Czech appeared on the Jeff Farias radio program. The interview had quite an effect, as the program provided an organizational endorsement of the CASSE position. ❖

POLICY CORNER

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

The most common reason mainstream economists hype economic growth has to do with jobs. Providing opportunities for meaningful work is a noble societal goal, but growth is no longer the best way to make sure there are enough jobs to go around.

Over the period from 1947 to 2008, GDP (the measure of total economic output) increased at an average annual rate of 3.4%. At the same time, unemployment has not shown continual improvement. Instead, it has fluctuated around a long-term trend of about 6%.

Growth, therefore, may not be the best policy for avoiding unemployment. Other policies that can help alleviate unemployment include shortening the work day, week, and year; providing incentives to limit off-shoring of jobs; and working toward population stabilization to limit the number of workers competing for existing jobs.

Khemraj, Tarron, Jeff Madrick, and Willi Semmler. 2006. [Okun's Law and Jobless Growth](#). Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis. ❖

FUNDING UPDATE

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

CASSE's funding comes from two main sources: (1) donations and membership dues from citizens who support our work, and (2) grants from foundations.

We launched our [membership program](#) at the end of July, and we now have over 100 members. We will look to expand our base of members and the variety of membership options in the new year. If you are considering a charitable donation toward the end of the year, please consider [giving to CASSE](#).

CASSE is working to expand our connections with philanthropic organizations to gain additional support for our efforts. We have drafted a proposal that we will be sharing with selected foundations. ❖



CASSE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of the steady state economy. Please e-mail comments to info@steadystate.org. Thank you for reading the *Steady Stater* newsletter.