

The Steady State Economy Conference

Working Towards an Alternative to Economic Growth

Saturday, 19 June 2010 – Leeds, UK

Objectives of the Conference

To bring together NGOs, academia, businesses, politicians, the media, and the general public to explore the idea of a *steady state economy*, and to identify specific, implementable policies to achieve a steady state economy in the UK.

Background

Economic growth remains the primary policy goal of national governments in most developed countries, including the UK. However, there is a fundamental conflict between economic growth and environmental protection. As the economy grows, we use more resources and discharge more wastes. Since we live on a finite planet, it's not possible for the economy to grow forever. Nor is it desirable. Economic growth is not improving people's lives in developed countries. Although real incomes have tripled in the UK since 1950, well-being has not increased.

A *steady state economy* is a positive alternative to the failing policy of unlimited economic growth. It is an economy that aims to maintain a stable level of resource consumption and a stable population. It is an economy where energy and resource use are reduced to a level that is within ecological limits (a process of *degrowth*), and where the goal of maximising GDP is replaced by the goal of maximising quality of life.

Format

The conference will include keynote presentations on the need for a steady state economy in developed countries such as the UK, and how the UK might move towards this goal. Ten interactive workshops will explore specific policy proposals for achieving a steady state economy. Each workshop will begin with a 20-minute presentation of a policy proposal from an invited speaker, followed by a facilitated discussion amongst workshop participants, who will be asked to reflect on these questions:

- Will the proposal work, and if not, how should it be modified?
- What questions still need to be answered?
- What obstacles exist to implementing the proposal?
- What actions can be taken to make the proposal happen?

Each workshop will be asked to produce a summary of its policy proposal (which may differ from the speaker's version), and a short list of questions, obstacles, and actions identified in the discussion. Conference attendees will be able to participate in two of the ten workshops, and hear the reports from all workshops in the final panel discussion.

Keynote Presentations

Peter Victor, Professor in Environmental Studies, York University, Canada

Andrew Simms, Policy Director and Head of Climate Change and Energy, NEF

Dan O'Neill, European Director, Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy

Tim Jackson, Professor of Sustainable Development, University of Surrey (by video)

Workshop Topics

- *Limiting resource use and waste production* – How will levels of resource use and permitted pollution be agreed, monitored and enforced?
- *Stabilising population* – How will population growth issues be discussed and addressed?
- *Distribution of income and wealth* – How can fair distribution of income and wealth be ensured?
- *Money and the financial system* – What sort of money system would promote a steady state economy?
- *Measuring progress/ quality of life* – How can progress towards improving the personal well-being of the majority of the population be measured in a steady state economy?
- *Engaging politicians and the media* – Why is there so little discussion of alternatives to economic growth in the media, and how can this be changed?
- *Changing behaviour (the psychology of consumerism)* – How can behaviour that is supportive of a steady state economy be encouraged?
- *Employment* – How can full employment and satisfying work be achieved in a steady state economy? What types of jobs will increase and what types of jobs will decrease?
- *Business and production* – What form would business and production take if markets are required to work within a system prioritising optimal scale and fair distribution?
- *Global issues* – What measures would a country need to take if it wished to move to a steady state economy? What are the implications of a steady state economy for developing nations?

Workshop speakers include **Kate Pickett** (co-author of *The Spirit Level*), **Molly Scott Cato** (Economics Speaker for the Green Party), and **Roger Martin** (Chair of the Optimum Population Trust), among others.

Cost

£30 for registration by 31st May 2010, or £50 after this date. Advance online registration is required. The conference will be held at The Rose Bowl, Leeds Metropolitan University, from 10 am to 6 pm. Please email leeds2010@steadystate.org with any questions.

Visit www.steadystate.org/leeds2010

for more information or to register



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