



# The Steady Stater

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

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## Reaganomics vs. the New Green Economy

Rob Dietz recaps the wild ride at the [New Green Economy Conference](#) developed by the National Council for Science and the Environment.

The New Green Economy Conference was a smashing success, especially for those of us interested in an alternative to the growth paradigm. Never before have I seen so many energetic people in one place addressing the critical topic of what to do about the dilemma of economic growth. Tim Jackson (author of *Prosperity Without Growth*, and a rising star of the sustainable economics movement) framed this dilemma for us magnificently in the opening plenary. On one hand, economic growth, especially in highly consumptive nations, is undermining the life-support systems of the planet. On the other hand, growth is required to prevent unemployment and maintain social stability within the current economic framework. The conference generated many new relationships and many outstanding ideas for escaping this dilemma.

That doesn't mean that the conference avoided the dangerous, "win-win" rhetoric that we can have our cake and eat it too. Lisa Jackson, head of the U.S.

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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 new website is up and running. Please visit [www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org), spend some time exploring, and let us know what you think.
- Deb Schober and several members of our Network of Outreach Volunteers have organized several working groups. Scott Gast is chairing a group to develop print products; Josh Nelson is chairing a group to respond to online articles and discussions about economic growth; Cole Thompson is chairing a group to create online videos about the steady state economy.
- CASSE staff and board members were involved in multiple presentations and sessions at the New Green Economy Conference (see feature article).
- Dan O'Neill presented his work on the steady state economy at the Growth in Transition conference in Vienna, Austria.
- Brian Czech was a plenary speaker for the Southeastern Society of American Foresters. ❖

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Environmental Protection Agency, flatly stated, “The choice between growing the economy and protecting the environment is a false choice.” She offered no evidence to support this politically expedient statement, so it’s clear there’s much work to be done to dispel that myth. Besides the occasional rhetoric about “sustainable growth,” there was a more blatant tribute to wishful thinking literally hanging over the conference, which took place at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC. The main hall featured a large circular plaque with a quote from Reagan in his heyday: “There are no limits to growth and human progress when men and women are free to follow their dreams.” The irony was not lost on conference participants. The quote is an optimistic one – we all want to overcome the limits to human progress, and that may well be possible, but not if we mindlessly pursue unlimited economic growth.

The highlight of the conference was Herman Daly’s acceptance of the lifetime achievement award from the National Council for Science and the Environment. After receiving a rousing standing ovation (I’m pretty sure I was the first one to jump out of my seat), he resoundingly debunked the myth of perpetual growth. His speech touched on the recurring message of his career: we need to recognize the difference between development and growth. In his description of what a “green” economy entails, he received a warm audience reaction from the following:

*Specifically, a green economy would invest scarce terrestrial minerals in things like windmills, photovoltaic cells, and plows (or seed drills) – not squander them on armaments, Cadillacs, and manned space stunts. A green economy can be sufficient, sustainable, and even wealthy – but it cannot be a growth-based economy. A green economy must seek to develop qualitatively without growing quantitatively, to get better without getting bigger.*

CASSE staff members were directly involved in planning the conference, and we organized three sessions: (1) *Building Undergraduate and Graduate Programs in Ecological Economics*; (2) *Green Accounting for the Green Economy: Improving GDP and the U.S. National Accounts*; and (3) *Perverse Incentives, Subsidies, and Tax Code Impediments to a Sustainable Economy*. In addition, CASSE President Brian Czech spoke at two other sessions on the shortcomings of neoclassical growth theory as it deals with technological progress and sustainability. CASSE board members, along with Herman and Brian, also were active at the conference. Brent

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### Steady Stater Quotable:

**Questioning growth is deemed to be the act of lunatics, idealists and revolutionaries. But question it we must. Economists have to be able to answer the question of how a continually growing economic system can fit within a finite ecological system.**

-Tim Jackson

### HOT OFF THE PRESS

#### Solutions

*Solutions* is a new publication that aims to showcase innovative ideas for solving the world’s environmental, social and political problems. The journal brings the cutting edge ideas of academics and professionals in the field to an audience of policy makers, business leaders, and engaged members of the public. The work of CASSE board members, Herman Daly and Peter Victor, has already been highlighted in this new journal. ❖



### POSITION ENDORSEMENT SPOTLIGHT

#### Tellus Institute

Tellus Institute works to advance a global civilization of sustainability, equity and well-being through research, education, and action. Rooted in analytic rigor, the Institute’s projects offer visions of hope and strategies for change. Tellus recently consolidated its programs to address the grand challenge of this century: a *Great Transition* to a sustainable, just, and livable global civilization. The *Great Transition* will require society to find ways of producing, consuming, and living that balance the rights of people today, future generations, and the wider community of life.

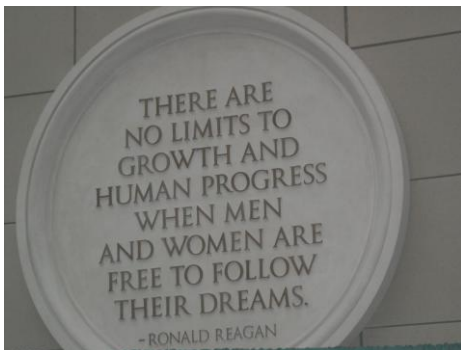


By endorsing the CASSE position, Tellus has embraced the steady state economy as a key component of the *Great Transition*. ❖

Blackwelder, Lisi Krall, David Orr and Peter Victor all delivered outstanding presentations. And CASSE volunteers played a big role. Joshua Nelson donated his time and energy to spread the CASSE message, and Jason Leppig, on assignment for Island Press, provided useful books.

There are too many additional highlights to relate, especially with the cast of planetary heroes in attendance, but I'll provide one more. The closing session was a panel discussion that included Cecilia Rouse, one of three members of the U.S. Council of Economic Advisers. She spoke about "green growth" in her remarks, so from the conference floor, I noted that Herman Daly had won the award for his work on a steady state economy, and asked her if the Council would facilitate a public dialogue about an economy striving to be better rather than bigger. Her response made it clear that she didn't understand the question – she used phrases like "sustainable growth, steady state growth, and balanced growth." To her credit, she asked me for clarification. I explained that a steady state economy features stable population and stable consumption of energy and materials at sustainable levels. She still seemed confused, as if she had never considered the limits to growth, and then suggested that we arrange a meeting at a future date.

Brian and I took her up on her offer and met with her the following week, just after President Obama's State of the Union address. She listened to us as we described CASSE's mission, presented some policy ideas, and offered three suggested action items. She made no promises about the action items, but she did say that every time she considered economic growth, she would be thinking about our meeting and our message. I would call that a success, given her pipeline to the President. ❖



Ronald Reagan's tribute to wishful thinking

## SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Victor, Peter. 2010. [\*Ecological economics and economic growth\*](#), Published in the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*.

Daly, Herman. 2010. [\*From a failed growth economy to a steady-state economy\*](#). Published in *Solutions*.

Heinberg, Richard. 2010. [\*Turning the corner on growth\*](#). Published in *Solutions*. ❖



Brian Czech discusses steady state economics with acclaimed biologist E. O. Wilson.

## ENCOURAGING WORDS

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

"My whole life I have strongly agreed with the economic principles of a steady state economy, I just didn't know what to call it. Thanks for advocating this type of economy!"

"I am so glad to have found this website as this issue has been on my mind a lot recently!"

"Finally some common sense. Great to see this issue being brought to awareness. Keep up the good work to stop the growth machine that is eating this world." ❖

## 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](http://www.steadystate.org).

As of February 20, 2010:

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

**4,529,**

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

**112.** ❖

## 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.

Companies represent the dominant institution in the major economies of the world. The revenues of the highest grossing corporations exceed the gross domestic product for many nations of the world. In the U.S., the Supreme Court recently decided a case that extended the rights of "corporate personhood." The upshot is that businesses are powerful entities, and a transition to a sustainable economy will require business leadership and better business practices.

There are many possible policy prescriptions for "greening" the way businesses operate. Examples include:

- Applying true-cost accounting to prevent businesses from externalizing environmental and social costs;
- Changing the rules of marketing to avoid unsustainable consumption of materials and energy;
- Regulating the degree to which businesses use commonly held resources (such as the atmosphere).

Weybrecht, Giselle. 2010. [The Sustainable MBA: The Manager's Guide to Green Business](#). John Wiley & Sons, West Sussex, United Kingdom. ❖

## MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

CASSE posts highlights from the Internet and news outlets on our website, [www.steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org). Check *The Daly News* regularly for updates. Here are three notable items:

The new version of [steadystate.org](http://www.steadystate.org) is here! CASSE has an improved website with up-to-date material, revamped graphics, and a new blog (*The Daly News*) featuring essays by Herman Daly, Brian Czech, Brent Blackwelder, Rob Dietz and others.

Film students at the University of Southern California produced a [creative online animation](#) for CASSE. It is available on CASSE's website and YouTube.

[Ecological Economics](#) is the subject of an episode of the program *Emerging Science* on Vermont Public Television.

EcoLabs, a nonprofit organization dedicated to visual communication of ecological literacy, is in the process of developing an [EcoMag with the theme of ecological economics](#). It will include an intricate poster about the steady state economy. ❖

## FUNDING UPDATE

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 have updated the donation page on our new website. Prospective members and donors now have more options for supporting CASSE's operations. Donations from individuals are still our primary source of funding (we are running a bit low, too).

CASSE also has successfully made contacts with several philanthropic organizations. We have been able to share our funding proposal with outstanding foundations, and we will continue to build our relationships to gain backing for our efforts. ❖



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). Thank you for reading the *Steady Stater* newsletter.