



The Steady Stater

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

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2008

Celebrating Some Firsts for CASSE and the Steady State Economy

You don't have to look far and wide to notice a CASSE first. Just look at the title line of this newsletter – Volume 1, Issue 1. Although it may be worth celebrating our first edition of *The Steady Stater*, CASSE has several other firsts that rank a bit higher in the celebratory priorities. These firsts relate to actions that will help us achieve our mission more effectively.

Starting in November of 2007, CASSE hired its first employee, executive director Rob Dietz. CASSE was founded by Brian Czech in 2004, and the organization has accomplished many goals while subsisting on volunteer labor. Brian and his team of supporters have logged untold hours presenting the benefits of the steady state economy to audiences around the world and convincing organizations and individuals to adopt a position on economic growth. With a new executive director on board, CASSE instantly increases its capacity to distribute information and promote the philosophies of ecological economics.

Rob arrived at CASSE with 15 years of experience in applying analytical methods from the fields of

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.

Highlights from the Web

In addition to CASSE's own website, which can be found at www.steadystate.org, there are many resources on the Internet regarding economic growth, ecological economics, the steady state economy, and sustainability. Here is a description of three outstanding resources:

www.worldwatch.org – Worldwatch provides *State of the World* publications and a slew of online resources. The 2008 *State of the World* focuses on the transition to a sustainable economy. You can download the first two chapters at <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5561>.

www.growthbusters.com – Dave Gardner is working on a documentary film that questions the all-out pursuit of economic growth.

<http://capitalism3.com/> -- You can download *Capitalism 3.0* by Peter Barnes for free. This book describes how a "commons sector" can be developed to combat some of the excesses of economic growth. ❖

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Firsts for CASSE and the Steady State Economy
- 1 Highlights from the Web
- 2 Steady Stater Quotable
- 3 Count of Position Signatories
- 3 Policy Corner

environmental science and economics to natural resource problems. His task is simple in concept – to increase CASSE’s ability to advance the steady state economy. In practice this effort requires a number of actions, from securing long-term funding to implementing a new communication plan. The CASSE executive directorship is currently funded by seed money donated by numerous generous contributors. This grassroots funding supply is fitting for the grassroots work CASSE is doing to change the goal from continuous economic growth to a sustainable economy.

CASSE’s website (www.steadystate.org) has also experienced some firsts due to a major overhaul at the end of 2007. Contributors are now able to donate funds to CASSE online with a credit card using the PayPal service. This feature bolsters the Center’s ability to receive grassroots funding. All of the web pages have been updated, but especially the Resources and Action pages – www.steadystate.org/CASSEResources.html and www.steadystate.org/CASSEAction.html).

CASSE has also initiated its first blog (www.steadystateblog.org). The blog is a great way to get involved in the discussion on ecological economics and the steady state economy. You can comment on any of the entries and make your ideas public. All of these updates appear to be paying off as the website saw another first – over 100 visitors in a single day. The website is the cornerstone of CASSE’s communications strategy, so please spend some time browsing the site, and let us know what you think (you can find contact information on the site in the “About Us” section).

Along with all these CASSE firsts, there are a couple of firsts for the steady state economy worth celebrating. It seems that current events are pushing society closer to mainstream political discourse on the merits of a steady state economy. Events like global climate change, peak oil, bubble-bursting in the housing markets, and financial instability are driving citizens to ask questions about how we got where we are and where we might go next. To our knowledge, the first mainstream U.S. politician took up the call for the transition to a steady state economy. In a kickoff speech to the Hawaii legislature, state senator Fred Hemmings said, "If we are to achieve a steady state

economy with selected growth and measured consumption of our most valuable resource -- land -- we need action now. We all must rethink how we operate and make small adjustments in addition to expediting the big changes such as making fossil fuels obsolete within ten years."

Meanwhile, Europeans are busy planning the first *International Conference on Sustainable Degrowth for Sustainability and Equity*, which will take place in Paris, France, on April 18-19, 2008. Conference organizers state that economic growth is more and more questioned internationally, and it is time to consider the possibilities for degrowth. CASSE president Brian Czech will be one of the keynote speakers.

Although there is much to celebrate, there is much work ahead as well. The sobering reality is that as long as economic growth is the top policy goal for the United States and other nations, functioning ecological systems and political stability are at risk. Please continue to work with CASSE and your own organizations to spread the message about the conflict between economic growth and environmental protection, economic security, and international stability. Let our politicians, business leaders, and fellow citizens know that the steady state economy offers a hopeful and practical way forward. With perseverance, a lot of work, and a bit of luck, we’ll see a passel of firsts for the steady economy in the coming years.❖

Steady Stater Quotable:

The assumed independence of economic activity from nature, always illusory, is simply no longer credible.

-Gary Gardner and Thomas Prugh in the Worldwatch Institute’s 2008 State of the World Report

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 January 29, 2008:

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

1,474,

the number of professional societies which have endorsed or adopted positions on economic growth similar to CASSE's is

6, and

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

25. ❖



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.

Pigouvian taxes, named for the economist Arthur Cecil Pigou, are taxes that seek to include external costs in the prices of goods. Applying a Pigouvian tax, then, equates prices with marginal social costs rather than marginal private costs. Economists widely recognize the benefits of Pigouvian taxes for both efficiency and equity (the idea has been floating around since the early twentieth century).

Pigouvian taxes have rarely been applied in the United States. Why? There are several technical barriers, such as the difficulty of figuring out how to measure marginal external costs accurately. There is also the issue of property rights. Application of a Pigouvian tax assumes that society has a property right -- a right to avoid or be compensated for the external costs of production. In most instances in the U.S., producers hold property rights and do not pay for external costs.

See Daly, H. E., and J. Farley. 2003. Ecological economics: principles and applications. Island Press, Washington, DC. 450pp (Ch. 21, Sustainable Scale).
❖



CASSE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the Advancement of the Steady State Economy. Please e-mail comments to info@steadystate.org or find additional contact information in the "about us" section of our website (www.steadystate.org).

Thank you for reading the *Steady Stater* Newsletter.

