



The Steady Stater

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

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Feature Article – Outreach Volunteers on the Move

CASSE is largely powered by volunteers. For years, we've been fortunate enough to work with an outstanding set of regional representatives. These enterprising individuals take the lead on delivering our message about economic growth and the steady state economy to citizens around the world. We've also been able to maintain a network of public speakers who deliver presentations on steady state economics. Over the past few months, volunteers like Deb Schober (an outstanding graduate student in sustainable development) have made great strides in generating more awareness about CASSE's efforts.

Even with our already impressive cadre of volunteers, we decided to step up our efforts to work with volunteers. We came to this decision for two main reasons: (1) with the economic mess swirling all about us, now is the time to bring the idea of the steady state economy into prominence; and (2) we need more people like Deb helping to achieve this task. See www.steadystate.org/CASSEVolunteers.html to get more information and sign up to be a CASSE Outreach Volunteer.

continued on page 2

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 staff and volunteers delivered many rousing presentations on and around Earth Day:

- Brian Czech gave the keynote address for Earth Day ceremonies at the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point (see photo on page 3).
- Rob Dietz was a keynote speaker at the Four Corners Green Living Expo in Durango, Colorado.
- Fola Babalola, Director of African Operations, delivered two presentations to students in Nigeria and collected over 100 signatures on the CASSE position on economic growth.
- Members of the CASSE speakers network (Jay Jones, Stephen Coghlan, and Barry Solomon) also delivered public speeches on the steady state economy.

CASSE has officially launched a network of Outreach Volunteers (described in the feature article). If you're interested in volunteering, please visit www.steadystate.org/CASSEVolunteers.html

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1-3** Feature: Outreach Volunteers on the Move
- 1** Outreach Highlights
- 2** *Steady Stater* Quotable
- 2** Hot off the Press
- 2** Position Endorsement Spotlight
- 3** Scholarly Publications, Encouraging Words
- 4** Count of Position Signatories
- 4** Policy Corner
- 4** Media Highlights
- 4** Funding Update

I can elaborate on the first reason with a personal story. I recently had the pleasure of visiting a friend in the suburbs of Sacramento, California. She lives with her family in a well-to-do neighborhood with very large homes, manicured lawns, and backyard pools. Her family is weathering the effects of the failing growth economy, but some of her neighbors are not. A significant number of front yards are marked by foreclosure signs.

The circumstances provide an interesting investment opportunity for my friend. She is searching for a foreclosed home that she can purchase, possibly renovate, and rent to a tenant. As we were strolling through the neighborhood on a sunny, brisk spring morning, we happened upon a foreclosed home where a three-man cleanup crew was carting stuff from the garage to the back of a big pickup truck. My friend had a look inside while I took the opportunity to chat about the foreclosure scene with the crew. The conversation was nothing short of astounding.

It turns out that the foreman typically works in construction and repair, but lately he and his coworkers had been extremely busy preparing foreclosed homes for auction. They were employed by the bank to remove leftover items and provide cleaning services in houses where the owner had been evicted. I remarked how odd it was that his role had completely flip-flopped. Where he had been building houses a few months prior, now he was taking them apart. The irony was not lost on him.

Even odder was the process of getting rid of household items. The garage was full of stuff like un-built Ikea cabinets (still in the original packages), lamps, exercise equipment, and plastic toys. I asked the foreman what he was going to do with it all. He told me that it was too much trouble to sell it. Instead, they were filling the pickup truck as full as possible, and then dumping loads at the local landfill.

What an amazing indictment of the growth economy! Here was a prime example of the mortgage meltdown coupled with a throw-away culture. People who had been involved in the productive effort of building homes were now working full bore to tear them apart. How long can this sort of treadmill turn in the name of economic growth?

The story of the overgrown economy is being crystallized for all to see on neighborhood streets across America. The report of the cleanup crew solidified in my mind the urgency of the problem. We need to make it clear to our local and national leaders

continued on page 3

Steady Stater Quotable:

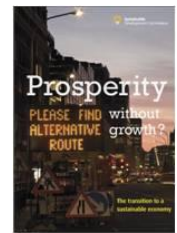
It is imaginable that someday we will discover how to create materials from nothing, how to achieve perpetual motion, how to reverse time's arrow, and so on. But to take such science-fiction miracles as a basis for economic policy would be absurd.

-Herman Daly

HOT OFF THE PRESS

[Prosperity without Growth? The transition to a sustainable economy.](#)

Tim Jackson, the Economics Commissioner of the UK Sustainable Development Commission, debunks the myth of continuous economic growth and sets a new course for the economy. He writes about development of an "ecologically-literate macro-economics capable of offering meaningful guidance for a lasting prosperity." ❖



POSITION ENDORSEMENT SPOTLIGHT

"On behalf of the Green Party of England and Wales, I should like to endorse the CASSE position statement on economic growth." So said Green Party leader and member of the European Parliament, Caroline Lucas. The endorsement came on the heels of a dialogue at the Green Party conference in Blackpool, England, where CASSE European Director Dan O'Neill delivered an address on steady state economics and the financial crisis.



In addition to increasing our list of organizational endorsements, CASSE has been stepping up efforts to collect signatures on our position from leading sustainability thinkers. Recent additions include Chris Matthews, David Suzuki, Vandana Shiva, David Orr, Bill McKibben, Gus Speth, and Wendell Berry. ❖

that we want a sustainable economy without growth. We should at least be discussing this idea alongside the bailouts and stimulus packages.

The way to get our politicians and business leaders to consider a better path than unsustainable growth is to develop widespread public support for the idea of a steady state economy. CASSE needs help in gaining that support. Growth has become so ingrained structurally and culturally that most people haven't ever considered the possibility of a healthy yet non-growing economy. That's where Outreach Volunteers can lend a hand.

CASSE Outreach Volunteers are individuals concerned about the environmental consequences of economic growth. They recognize the steady state economy as a desirable alternative to unsustainable growth. We have developed a toolkit, which can be accessed on the [Outreach Volunteers](#) webpage, to assist volunteers in delivering a positive message about a better economy.

Although volunteers can help in many ways, CASSE is specifically looking for people to gather support for our position on economic growth (from both individuals and organizations). Until we gather a critical mass of support for an idea whose time has come, it will be business as usual. With enough voices, we can make the switch from a landfill economy to sustainable prosperity.



Brian Czech on Earth Day planting a tree with Andrew Halverson, mayor of Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

Czech, B. 2009. [Ecological economics](#). In *Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems*. Developed under the auspices of UNESCO-EOLSS Publishers, Oxford, UK.

Mills J. H., and T. Waite. 2009. [Economic prosperity, biodiversity conservation, and the environmental Kuznets curve](#). *Ecological Economics* 68(7):2087-2095.

Kitzes, J., et al. 2009. A research agenda for improving national ecological footprint accounts. *Ecological Economics* 68(7):1991-2007. ❖



ENCOURAGING WORDS

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

"CASSE is shaping up to be what I have been trying to find for over a decade. Thanks!"

"It is absolutely crucial that we begin discussing all economic activity through this paradigm rather than the current destructive one, and make policy and business decisions accordingly."

"The good sense and insight in your bulletin are manifest. It's a boost to the morale and hope of this grandmother who is a hopeful realist!" ❖

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 May 5, 2009:

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

2,954,

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

10, and

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

77. ❖

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 central problem of the economic growth paradigm is that natural capital (e.g., forests, rivers, soil, and the atmosphere) gets overused in the continuing effort to produce and consume increasing amounts of goods and services. Some amount of conversion of natural capital into goods and services is a must for human welfare – all societies (in fact all species) rely on natural capital for survival. The question is how much natural capital can be converted before we undermine the productivity of ecological systems and their life-support services.

The key policy for preventing overuse of natural capital is conservation of a healthy network of lands. By definition, lands that are conserved are kept out of economic production. A healthy conservation network requires landscapes that are big enough to retain ecological functions, and it requires chunks of land that contain the full variety of ecosystem types.

Dietz, R., and B. Czech. 2005. [Conservation deficits for the continental United States: an ecosystem gap analysis](#). *Conservation Biology* 19(5):1478-1487. ❖

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:

In a commentary in *Sustainable Industries*, CASSE executive director, Rob Dietz, writes about how to get our derailed economy back on the right track.

<http://www.sustainableindustries.com/commentary/38728482.html>

In the *New York Times*, Tom Friedman asks if " ...the whole growth model we created over the last 50 years is simply unsustainable economically and ecologically and that 2008 was when we hit the wall – when Mother Nature and the market both said: 'No more.'"

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/opinion/08friedman.html?_r=2&em

German President Horst Kohler, former head of the International Monetary Fund, is seeking a revolution from quantitative to qualitative growth. He asserts that growth does not bring happiness.

<http://www.heute.de/ZDFheute/inhalt/3/0,3672,7535011,00.html> ❖

FUNDING UPDATE

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

CASSE recently received another small grant from a family foundation – enough to keep the doors open for a while longer! We have also received several small contributions from private citizens, acts of generosity that never cease to amaze and humble us (especially with the growth economy crumbling around us).

We have enough operating funds to continue our operations (one paid staff member and minimal expenditures on projects and information campaigns) for the rest of the year, but we are **still searching for funding to hire another staff member** and increase our capacity to deliver our message. ❖



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.