



the

# steady stater

Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy

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## encouraged, empowered and energized:

### words seldom heard at an economics conference

*Rob Dietz recaps the amazing [Steady State Economy Conference](#) in Leeds, UK.*

When CASSE and Economic Justice for All began brainstorming about a one-day conference to move the steady state concept forward, we weren't banking on the level of buzz generated by the actual event. On June 19, 250 people convened at Leeds Metropolitan University to generate ideas about policies to move the economy from a dismal state to a steady state.

The keynote speakers set the tone by delivering potential

solutions to the problems posed by pursuit of perpetual economic growth. Peter Victor, with his wit and humor on full display, described how to manage an economy without growth. Dan O'Neill used his trademark clarity to provide a definition of the steady state economy, and he initiated the conversation about specific policies to achieve a steady state economy. Tim Jackson (via video-feed) provided inspiring and thought-provoking ideas for changing our economic institutions to break free from the dilemma of growth. Andrew Simms fired up the audience, declaring that the time for boldness is at hand – we need to reinvent how we provision ourselves in the economy.

As intriguing as the keynote speakers were, they couldn't top the energetic workshops. I participated in a workshop  
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## our 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:

- 1 educating citizens on the conflict between economic growth and (i) environmental protection, (ii) ecological and economic sustainability, and (iii) national security and international stability;
- 2 promoting a steady state economy as a desirable alternative to economic growth; and
- 3 studying the means to establish a steady state economy.

## words of encouragement

*We're delighted to hear from people who believe in our work.*

"You are putting my thoughts into words and into the real world."

"I'm very pleased to find this initiative."

"I heard about CASSE at the Leeds conference. It's fantastic that there is a group looking at the realities of policy needed to create better lives rather than just more stuff." •



CASSE's Dan O'Neill speaks at the Leeds conference.

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## outreach highlights

- CASSE organized a [symposium](#) for the annual conference of the Society for Conservation Biology in Edmonton. Brian Czech, Rob Dietz, and two steady state champions (Julianne Mills and Falk Huettmann) delivered well-received presentations at the symposium.
- CASSE organized a [session](#) for the annual conference of the Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences. Brian Czech chaired the session and insightful presentations were given by CASSE affiliates Richard Clinton, Warren Aney, and Philippe Sapinski.
- Jordan Poppenk has just finished his [bike ride](#) across Canada to raise awareness about steady state economics. He set out from Vancouver over two months ago, and he just pedaled into Halifax. What a journey, and what a fitting way to raise awareness!
- Will Anderson and [Green Vegans](#) supported CASSE and the steady state economy by providing information at a booth at the Seattle Green Festival. Will's booth and the CASSE message really [resonated with writer Pam Zimmerman](#).

from page 1 ... about how to engage the media and politicians. It featured filmmaker Franny Armstrong and sustainability guru Ian Christie as speakers. The ideas were flying, and we now have some serious tasks to tackle. By all accounts, the other workshops were equally stimulating and well received.

The conference report and various other results (such as the collection of videos) will be available soon, but one product of the conference can't readily be portrayed on a conference website. That result is inspiration.

It's hard to overstate the sense of inspiration that sprang from the conference. My take is that people are overburdened by the litany of social and environmental problems around the world. They want to roll up their sleeves and figure out a way to change society so it can be sustainable and fair. They want to blaze a path forward that will lead to a better place for their children and grandchildren. The steady state economy and the topics of this conference provided a glimpse of that path and gave participants an opportunity to help the UK start walking down it. But don't take my word for it. Read these quotes (a small sampling) from other conference



*Franny Armstrong enjoys the Leeds conference.*

participants:

- Just a quick note to congratulate you on such an excellent conference. I go to so many but this was really one of the best. The right people, good structure, fantastic motivation. I went away feeling like doing more of this stuff, not less - and that is quite an achievement for conference organizers!

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## position endorsement spotlight

### CommonSource

CommonSource is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that publishes [Shareable](#), the online magazine that tells the story of sharing. *Shareable* covers the people, places, and projects bringing a shareable world to life.

### Mike Dombeck

Mike Dombeck has also signed the position. He is a former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, professor of global conservation at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, recipient of the Audubon Medal and the Lady Bird Johnson Conservation

## signatories

to the casse position on growth

**5534** individuals have signed it.

**131** organizations have endorsed it.

**11** professional societies, government agencies, and scientific groups have adopted similar positions.

as of 16 August 2010

Award, and author of *From Conquest to Conservation: Our Public Lands Legacy*.



# scholarly publications

- Grant, L. K. (2010). [Sustainability: From Excess to Aesthetics](#). Behavior and Social Issues.
- Bradshaw CJA, Giam X, Sodhi NS (2010) [Evaluating the Relative Environmental Impact of Countries](#). PLoS ONE 5(5): e10440. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0010440.



Participants browse the literature at the Leeds conference.

from page 2 ... • Very many congratulations on an excellent conference last Saturday. I really enjoyed it and came away inspired. I feel I made some good contacts and in some small part added my voice to the growing movement.

• It was a pleasure to be in Leeds and take part in such a well organized, accessible and jargon-free event. So very inspiring.

• Well done for today. I thought it was a huge success. You deserve credit for pushing the steady state economy into the mainstream. Bravo.

• Congratulations again on a fantastic conference! Very energizing, hopefully the start of something really big.

• I had an absolutely brilliant time. LOTS of conversations with interesting people. I got the general impression that people were really feeling their way around this subject and hungry for views that either augmented or developed their own.

• It was in my view the best conference format and process that I have attended in 20 years.

Congratulations on a really well organized and stimulating conference. My impression as just one participant was that there was a real buzz. Thank you for all the effort you put in – it really paid off.

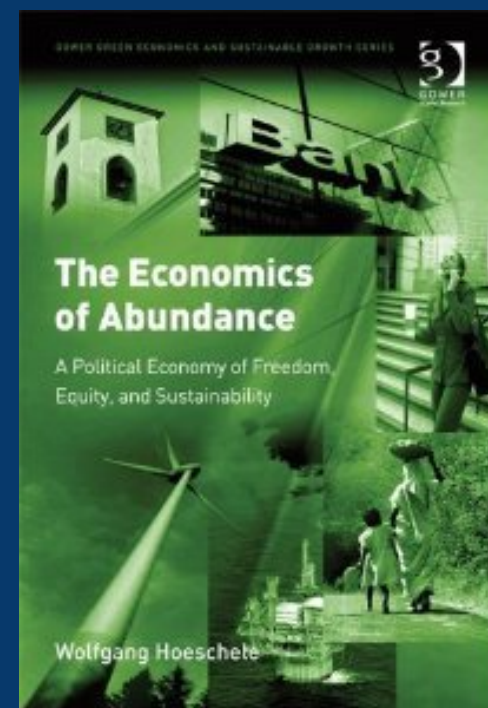
It is encouraging to receive that sort of feedback and to recognize the energy that can be generated by working toward the shared goal of transitioning to a better economy. I would be remiss if I didn't close with a huge "THANK YOU" to the conference organizers, speakers, volunteers and participants. The conference set a new benchmark for CASSE – now we'll see if we can live up to it. •

## hot off the press

### *the economics of abundance*

Wolfgang Hoeschele has written a valuable and insightful text. He opens with this:

“The most basic paradox of our times, the times that we call modern and the mode of social organization we call capitalist, is that, no matter how many resources we consume, we never seem to have enough. It is this paradox that drives us humans to despoil even the most remote landscapes, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska or the rainforests of the Amazon and of Borneo, in the never-ending race for natural resources.”



## policy column

The three main characteristics of a steady state economy are:

- (1) Sustainable scale of the economy with respect to the containing ecosystem;
- (2) Fair distribution of income and wealth; and
- (3) Efficient allocation of resources.

While such an economy aims to provide a high quality of life without undermining environmental quality, point two often attracts controversy. But concerns about this idea are overblown, as Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have brilliantly illustrated.

Nations with more equitable distributions of income and wealth perform better on a wide variety of social indicators (e.g., life expectancy, drug abuse, violence, teenage birth rates, obesity, mental illness, and imprisonment). On the flip side, more unequal societies have a powerful tendency to become socially dysfunctional.

There are many different policies to achieve fair distribution of income and wealth. Some places, such as Sweden and Vermont, use tax-based redistribution. Other places, such as Japan and New Hampshire, maintain a smaller gap in income between the highest and lowest paid members of society. The key is to have democratic control of the institutions that decide differences in compensation.

Wilkinson, R., Pickett, K., 2009. *The Spirit Level: Why more equal societies almost always do better*. Allen Lane, London.

## media highlights

For up-to-the-minute updates, subscribe to our [Twitter feed](#).

- Brian Czech appeared on the television program, *Headline*, on the Business News Network to [talk about economic growth](#) along with Dean Maki, the chief economist of Barclays Bank and BNN host Howard Green. Brian's logical analysis about the limits to growth was not challenged by the banker, and he was invited back for future programming.

- "Steady as it goes is fast enough". [Geoff Mosley's piece](#) in the *Brisbane Times* tells it like it is when it comes to economic growth and sustainability.

- The insights of Dan O'Neill are on full display in an [article by Neil Hudson](#) of the *Yorkshire Evening Post*. Dan was also a featured guest on the radio program of BBC broadcaster Alex Belfield.

- Rob Dietz's hour-long [presentation](#), *Better not Bigger: Reshaping the Economy for a Finite World*, was aired by KBOO radio of Portland, Oregon.

- Dave Gardner's documentary, [Hooked on Growth](#), is on track for a 2011 release date. The film examines the forces that keep modern society locked into its quest for never-ending economic growth. Dave recently discussed the film on [Peak Moment TV](#). Please visit Dave's [website](#), and volunteer or contribute to ensure this non-profit film's success.

- The cover of the July/August edition of the *New*



*Internationalist* reads "Life beyond growth." The magazine features a series of articles about the transition away

from economic growth, including one entitled [Nature's Bottom Line](#).

## funding update

CASSE received a "starter" grant from the [Wallace Global Fund](#), our first grant for operating costs from a major foundation. This grant provides a much-needed boost (thank you very much Wallace Global Fund!), but we still have goals of hiring staff and undertaking more projects to advance the steady state economy. We are following up leads with several other foundations, and we are making a concerted effort to increase our grassroots membership. If you are not already a member of CASSE and want to help us address the root cause of so many of our social and environmental problems, [please join today](#). •



### quote this!

*People buy things they don't need, with money they don't have, to impress people they don't like.*

Clive Splash

CASSE is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of the steady state economy.

Comments and correspondence to [info@steadystate.org](mailto:info@steadystate.org)