

steady stater

the irony of growth

The irony is not lost on us. Yes, it's true. At CASSE, we want to grow — we want our own organization to get bigger. Some might view this as a hypocritical stance. After all, we are an organization dedicated to telling the truth about economic growth and opposing it from time to time. But we're not a bunch of hypocrites. In fact, our goal is to make CASSE obsolete, to close our doors one day and ride off into the sunset (hopefully a sunset over a stunning landscape with some wilderness to explore). If we achieve our mission, the public will embrace the idea of a steady state economy, and we won't need to advance it. In the meantime, we have a boatload of

work to do, and we need a strong organization to do it.

How do you grow an organization like CASSE? There's really just one way to do it. We need to attract talented and dedicated people to the cause. Growth in CASSE means expanding our network of people — courageous people who can counter the dominant and delusional devotion to unending growth, well-informed people who can describe the spot-on logic of the steady state economy. We currently have two strategies: (1) scouring the countryside for funding so that we can collect enough cash to hire a core staff, and (2) recruiting volunteers to serve on our staff, direct local chapters, popu-

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late our speakers network, and provide other outreach services.

Strategy #1 is slow-going, but we are making progress. For example, we just submitted a year-end grant report to the Wallace Global Fund, the first major foundation to provide CASSE with operational support. (Please note that CASSE received critically important funds from smaller foundations that got us off the ground **next page** ▶



Brian Czech giving keynote address, International Year of the Forest, Bogota, Colombia.

the irony of growth

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prior to the Wallace grant).

Strategy #2 has been working quite well in recent times. Maybe it's disillusionment with the status quo in the business world, maybe it's frustration with the growth-at-all-costs mentality that's running up record debts and failing to provide jobs, or maybe it's the sadness from witnessing the dire state of the planet (e.g., dead zones in the oceans, shrinking rainforests, endangered species, etc.). Whatever it is, there seems to be mounting interest in CASSE's work. Here are the most recent recruits to the CASSE team:

- Aashish Khullar is serving as our Research Associate this summer. For someone early in his career, Aashish already possesses a wealth of experience in the political and economic aspects of human development. He is exploring CASSE partnerships with academic programs, researching situations in which people have adopted sustainable economic policies, and (of course) seeking signatures and endorsements on the CASSE position on economic growth.
- Bart Haverkorn has started a CASSE chapter in Zurich, Switzerland. Besides being an avid outdoorsman, Bart is working toward his Ph.D. in systems biology, and he clearly understands the conflict between economic growth and ecological integrity.
- Stephen Ewington is initiating a chapter in Sydney, Australia. As a high school math teacher and a former worker in the finance in-

dustry, he "gets it" when it comes to the impossibility of infinite growth on a finite planet.

- Julie Anne Ames will be kicking off a chapter in Montreal, Canada. Julie Anne is a graduate student in ecological economics at McGill University, and a rising star in the degrowth movement. She is a key member of the team planning the [North American Degrowth Conference](#) slated for May 2012.

Certainly economic and environmental conditions—that is, the failures of growth on display around the world—have brought people to CASSE, but we're also doing our part to increase interest. For example, Sharon Ede (director of the South Australia Chapter) is managing an engaging activity. After our "outrage meter" topped out in response to [this story](#) about a gold- and platinum-coated yacht, we thought it would be fun to establish an "award" for the most offensive display of conspicuous consumption. Voters have chosen the name for this dubious distinction: the *Redundant Abundance Award*. We are currently sorting through the nominations for an upcoming vote (competition is stiff—from indoor ski lifts to outdoor heaters and more), so stay tuned!

In a steady state economy, some sectors will rise while others fall. We'll continue to grow the "sector" that acknowledges limits to growth and supports a sustainable, fair, steady state economy. That's how we'll get an economy that meets people's needs without undermining the life-support systems of the planet.

outreach highlights

- CASSE surpassed 2,000 supporters on our Facebook page. Please join the fun [there](#).
- Congratulations to Peter Victor (CASSE board member), who [received the Molson Prize](#) from the Canada Council for the Arts for his pioneering efforts to establish economic strategies that are compatible with the environmental constraints of the planet.
- Brian Czech (CASSE President) delivered keynote speeches in a variety of venues (International Year of the Forest in Bogota, Colombia; EcoFair360 in Elkhorn, Wisconsin; International Conference on Environmental Future in Newcastle, UK).
- Rob Dietz and Brian Czech presented papers and spread CASSE's message at the conference of the U.S. Society for Ecological Economics in East Lansing, Michigan.
- Members of the CASSE Speakers Network, Heather Reynolds and Oliver Bettis, delivered public presentations on the steady state economy.

policy corner: expansionary monetary policy

Expansionary monetary policy is used to increase the money supply (i.e., to make money more available in the economy). The purpose of expansionary monetary policy is to stimulate economic growth. Here are three methods the Federal Reserve Bank of the U.S. (the Fed) uses to increase the money supply:

- (1) Lowering the reserve requirement of banks – When private banks are allowed to make loans far in excess of what they hold in reserves, they can increase the amount of money in circulation.
- (2) Decreasing baseline interest rates – Interest rates, which determine how expensive it is to borrow money, are based on a baseline interest rate called the discount rate. The Fed can make it cheaper to borrow money (and thus make money more widely available) by lowering the discount rate.
- (3) Purchase of government securities – The Fed can buy government securities from private banks; the banks, in turn, can use the money they receive to grant loans, making money more freely available among financial institutions.

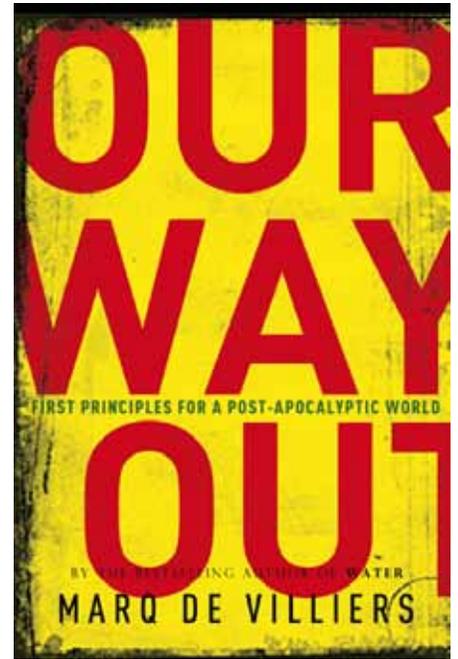
Because economic growth has sputtered, the Fed has been pursuing expansionary monetary policy for years. Reserve requirements in the U.S. are miniscule – [see the table here](#).

The discount rate has remained [historically low](#) in recent times, and the Fed has been purchasing securities in fits of “quantitative easing.”

The problem with all this expansionary policy is that the real wealth on our planet [can't grow as fast as money](#) (which exists largely on computer hard drives). As Eric Zencey, CASSE's Chapter Director for the University of Vermont, likes to say, “The planet has a budget, too.” This fact, at least in part, explains the inability of recent expansionary monetary policy to stimulate economic growth to the level our ecologically under-educated financial gurus would like to see.

For more information, see Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, [“What are the tools of U.S. monetary policy?”](#)

hot off the press



[Our Way Out](#) by Marq de Villiers provides a refreshing perspective.

“The converging crises of global warming/climate change, the continuing (if diminishing) population explosion, and the inevitable termination of the oil-based fossil-fuel economy present not just problems, but also opportunity... Solutions have a cascading effect, just as crises do, and crises become easier to solve once the crucial decision has been reached that we can in fact do something, remembering also that if crises reinforce each other, solutions enable each other.”

In [“Breaking the Spell of Money”](#) (*Orion*, July/August 2011), Scott Russell Sanders examines the propensity of people to confuse financial wealth with real wealth and how to remedy this condition.

Ernest Callenbach wrote “Sustainable Shrinkage: Envisioning a Smaller, Stronger Economy” in *Solutions* (July/August 2011).

position endorsement spotlight

Manfred Max-Neef, renowned Chilean economist, has joined the impressive list of CASSE signatories. Dr. Max-Neef is the Past Rector of the Universidad Austral de Chile and author of *From the Outside Looking In: Experiences in Barefoot Economics and Human Scale Development*. He is the win-



ner of the Right Livelihood Award, the Kenneth Boulding Award, and the Chilean National Prize for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights. In addition to his outstanding scholarly pursuits, he achieved an impressive minority vote in the Chilean presidential election of 1993.

scholarly publications

- Daniel W. O'Neill, "[Measuring Progress in the Degrowth Transition to a Steady State Economy](#)," in press.
- A. Strong, J. Tschirhart and D. Finnoff, "Is Economic Growth for the Birds?," vol. 70, no. 7, pp. 1375-1380.

media highlights

John David Evans, former CASSE Research Associate, is the subject of a 4-minute mini-documentary by Voice of America in their "Off the Beaten Path" series: [A Steady State Student](#).

James Johnston (CASSE Canadian Director) published an op-ed in the *Winnipeg Free Press*: [Art Valuable Regardless of Price](#).

Keith Harrington (CASSE Climate and Energy Specialist) and Brian Czech published these articles in the *Huffington Post*:

- [Egypt — the World's Most Advanced Democracy?](#)

- [Koch Brothers Declare War on Offshore Wind](#)
- [No Balanced Budget without Independence from Wall Street](#)
- [President Obama's \(Hoped For\) "Amaze Speech"](#)

Dave Gardner, the filmmaker behind the much anticipated documentary *GrowthBusters: Hooked on Growth*, has announced plans for a world premiere in Washington, DC in late October – most likely October 24 or 25. This film explores our culture's obsession with unending economic growth. CASSE will play a prominent role helping to host the premiere.

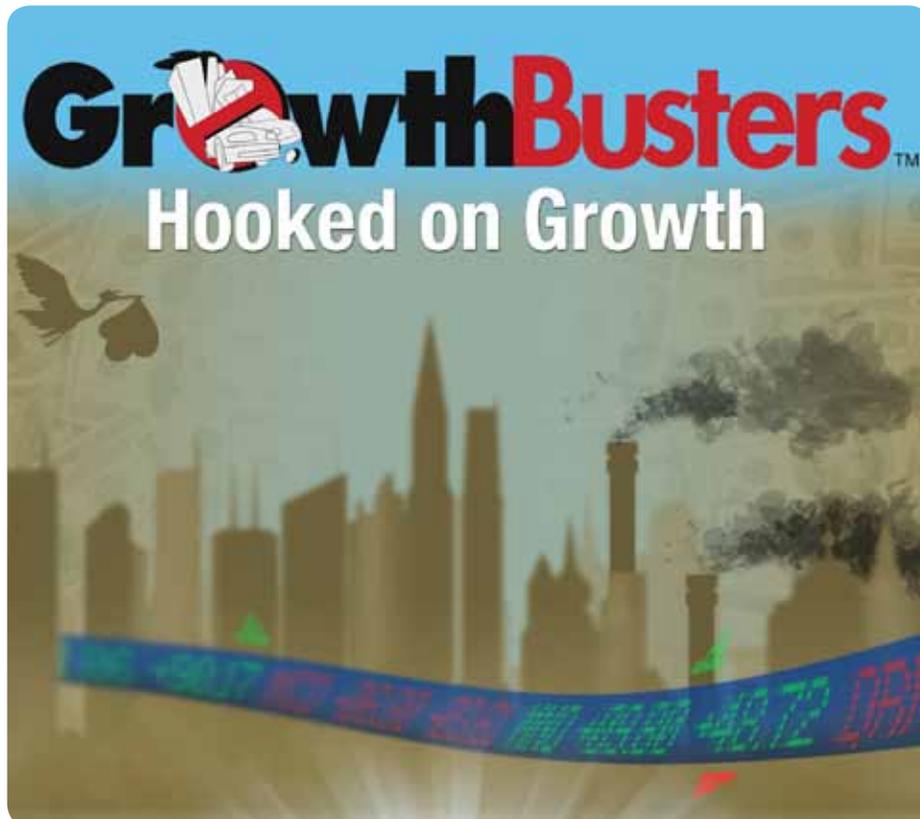
funding update

We'd like to give special thanks to our members. We began our membership program two years ago, and we've been able to attract well over 300 dues-paying members. The two-pronged purpose of the program is to develop a crew of core CASSE friends and maintain a pool of grassroots funding to accomplish actions like those noted in this newsletter. We have been successful at developing this core, and we hope to continue building our membership over the remaining months of 2011. The funding our members provide is critical (and it's empowering to know that we have your support). If you are not yet a member and like what we're doing, please visit our online membership page.

encouraging words

Wow - been looking for a forum with just these ideas, non-extremist, commonsense, quality-before-quantity thinking, etc. Thanks.

I've resisted the economic model that relies on growth for years, and am delighted to find such thoughtful and organized opposition seeking an alternative worldview. It must happen, and hopefully it will before the damage is irreparable.



president's peninsula: our run with rob dietz

The *Peninsula* is normally reserved for recent developments in the landscape of steady statesmanship. This time, for example, I'd note that the first national-level legislator has signed the CASSE position on economic growth, as well as the first large-city mayor, plus the first university president. Such [progressive dignitaries](#) are immensely important in advancing the steady state economy, so a hearty thank-you goes out to Senator Mauricio Ospina (Cali, Columbia); Geoff O'Brien (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK) and Ben Malayang (Silliman University, Philippines), respectively. Each of them, and each of their communities, will be bastions of steady statesmanship for years to come.

But I also like to focus on CASSE, and in that regard the topic of this *Peninsula* is clear: Rob Dietz. The biggest news for all things CASSE is Rob's decision to resign as Executive Director. As if we needed more proof that big – big news in this case – is not always good!

Before readers get too dismayed, I hasten to add that Rob is far from out of the CASSE picture. Details

are pending, but Rob is likely to retain a formal position as *Daly News* Editor. Formally or not, rest assured that Rob will continue to play a key role in CASSE affairs. But this isn't the place for dry discussion of CASSE business; rather for a salutary summary of Rob's remarkable tenure...

I first met Rob at a biodiversity conference about a decade ago, and soon our paths crossed frequently. Rob took a job as a conservation planner in the Washington Office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where I'd recently signed on as a conservation biologist. I was gung-ho about engaging the Service in the issue of economic growth vs. biodiversity conservation. It was tough political sledding, but searching for like minds, I quickly found a friend and confidant in Rob.

For a while, I had high hopes that Rob and I would lead the charge in delivering the message, right from the bowels of the federal government, that biodiversity conservation is nearly an exercise in futility as long as the overriding policy goal is economic growth. Alas, Rob

was the quintessential non-bureaucrat and determined to move into greener, less-constraining pastures. It was a real loss for the civil service.

I was too stubborn to give up on the feds, but on the side I also established CASSE as a non-profit organization in 2004. Then I pestered Rob to consider the role of CASSE Executive Director. I gnashed my teeth for months until Rob finally agreed. It turned out to be a perfect fit! Two things stood out from the get-go: Rob walked the talk, and he was a jack of all trades.

By walking the talk, I mean firstly that Rob agreed to take more than a 50% pay cut – tens of thousands of dollars – from his federal post in order to serve as CASSE Director. How many people do you know who would do such a thing? It wasn't easy to come up with even that much funding, but somehow we scraped it up, and Rob succeeded in securing the flow throughout his Directorship.

Rob also moved into an eco-village in Oregon with his wife Jen and daughter Skya, directing CASSE out of his "office" – that is, his residence in the village. How many sustainability NGOs can say they have a Director living that green? And of course it kept CASSE expenses to the barest minimum. For seven years we've been able to describe CASSE as the leanest NGO in the sustainability world. Given our mission and message, it's a profound distinction.

signatories to the CASSE position

- 7,927 individuals have signed the CASSE position on economic growth
- 12 professional societies, government agencies, and science groups have adopted positions on economic growth similar to CASSE's, and
- 179 private, corporate, nonprofit, and political organizations have endorsed the CASSE position.

as of 15 August 2011

▶ president's peninsula *continued from previous page*

By “jack of all trades” I mean that, in the NGO world, Rob can do it all. Only the most rudimentary elements of CASSE administration were in place when he stepped up to the plate. We had a website that could only be described as Version 0.01. Today, www.steadystate.org is known far and wide as a beacon of steady statesmanship. Grant-writing was hardly Rob’s first love, but he persevered enough to keep us out of the red. He also kept us out of the IRS doghouse. He kept the books, filed the forms, developed the databases – signatories, endorsements, members, volunteers, foundations – and automated the systems, all the while giving talks, attending conferences, writing articles, and encouraging countless young volunteers.

That latter is an understatement, too. Anyone who’s met Rob knows the meaning of genuinely nice.

The only problem with describing Rob as a jack of all trades is

it tends to connote “master of none,” whereas Rob excelled on a number of fronts, and would have on others if given the time. Rob’s passion for the cause and creative mind shone through time and again: dubbing our blog the “Daly News,” begetting that nefarious “[Milton Mountebank](#),” labeling membership levels the “Cato Negatos” and “Growth Busters” ([see more here](#))... not easy to squish such creativity into the steady din of emails, phone calls, and website maintenance that eat away the days of an NGO everyman.

They say nothing good lasts forever, but we know that good work lasts a long time. And that’s what advancing the steady state economy is all about; getting good things to last a long time, for a lot of people. So when Rob steps down in September, we’ll hire a new Executive Director for CASSE. There’s no replacing a Rob Dietz, but we will find someone to shine their own light. We’ll start the search soon, although it could take awhile for the new Director to step in. Meanwhile we’re counting

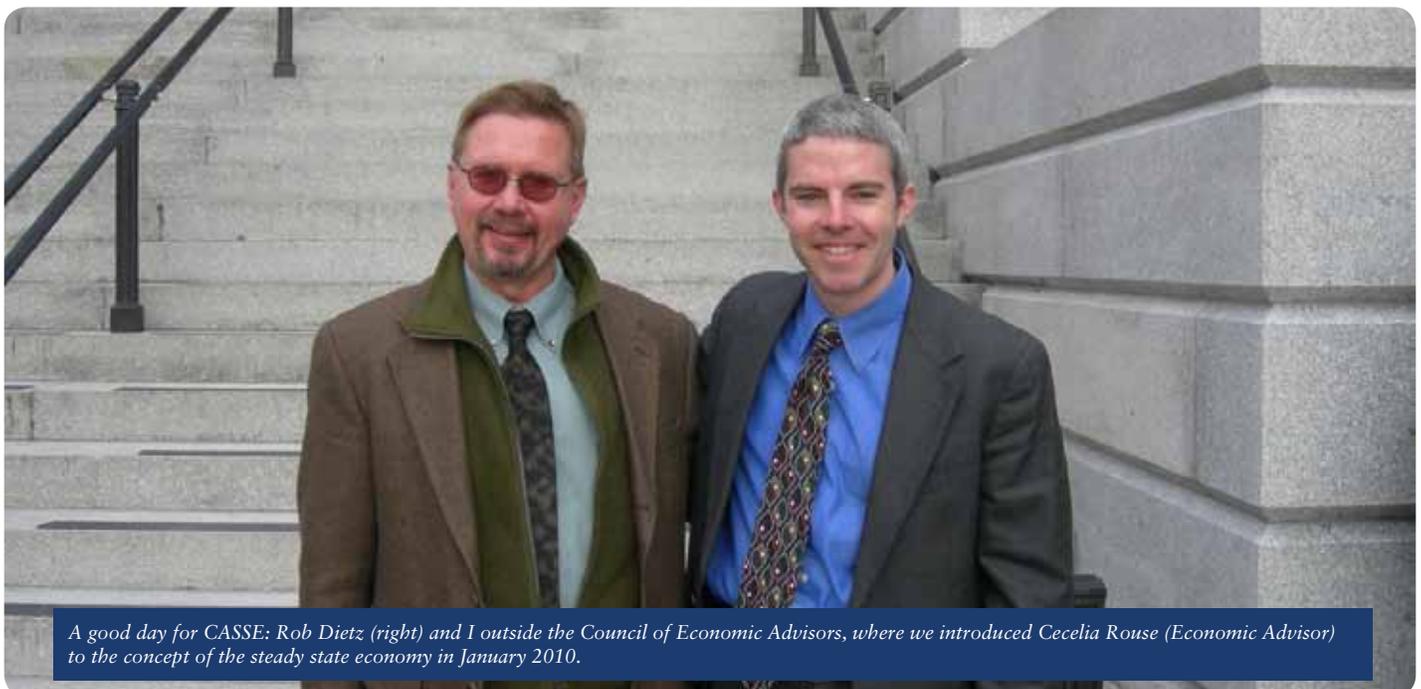
on our CASSE chapters, directors, volunteers, speakers, writers, and general members to be as proactive as ever. There’s little time to rest from the urgent task of steady statesmanship.

But for the moment, let’s take a minute to celebrate the good times we’ve had with Rob at the helm of CASSE. And maybe another minute to shoot him a thank-you at rob_dietz@steadystate.org. Don’t expect him to write back, though. He’s not quite off the hook with work yet!

Brian Czech, CASSE President

“ *Nothing could be more salutary than a healthy contempt for a plethora of material blessings.* **”**

Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*



A good day for CASSE: Rob Dietz (right) and I outside the Council of Economic Advisors, where we introduced Cecelia Rouse (Economic Advisor) to the concept of the steady state economy in January 2010.