

An Excerpt From

***Enough is Enough:
Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources***

by Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers

enough is

ROB DIETZ & DAN O'NEILL

BUILDING
A SUSTAINABLE
ECONOMY IN
A WORLD
OF FINITE
RESOURCES



Foreword by HERMAN DALY

ENOUGH

More Praise for *Enough Is Enough*

“If you think there must be a better way forward than more of the same, then *Enough Is Enough* is the book for you. It tackles our affluenza, our growth fetish, and our wildly unfair social order head-on and points the way to a better place. I highly recommend it.”

—**James Gustave Speth, former Dean, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies; cofounder, Natural Resources Defense Council; and author of *America the Possible***

“Walking in the steps of E. F. Schumacher, Ivan Illich, Thich Nhat Hanh, and of course the great religions, perhaps best represented by the Taoists and Buddhists for their ethics of simplicity and not grasping always for more, Rob Dietz and Dan O’Neill bring the modern dilemma of growth and the dogma of ‘more is better’ into the contemporary reality. *Enough Is Enough* offers important new thinking on how to address the planet’s most urgent crises and establish an economy that achieves true biological sustainability and shared wealth for all.”

—**Doug Tompkins, founder, The North Face; cofounder, Esprit; and President, Conservation Land Trust**

“In *Enough Is Enough*, Dietz and O’Neill have accomplished something special. They offer a hopeful and practical plan for righting the economic and environmental ship, and they do it in a very engaging way. I hope my colleagues in Parliament are paying close attention to the ideas in this book—I know I am.”

—**Caroline Lucas, Member of the UK Parliament and former leader of the Green Party of England and Wales**

“*Enough Is Enough* is the most accessible and well-argued case for a sustainable economy I’ve ever read. With stories, examples, and plenty of data, but without the tedium of academic writing, Dietz and O’Neill dismantle the most persistent of all economic myths—that economies must grow without limit to provide full employment and improve the conditions of the poor. They explain how a different economic model can meet our needs without irreversible damage to the life-support systems of our planet. I can’t recommend a book more highly.”

—**John de Graaf, coauthor of *Affluenza* and *What’s the Economy for, Anyway?***

“Rob Dietz and Dan O’Neill have written the most readable description of the fundamental problems with the ‘growth at all costs’ economic paradigm and how focusing on ‘enough’ material consumption can make room for all the other things that contribute to human well-being. If you’ve had enough of the crazy economics of growth for the 1 percent at the expense of well-being for the 99 percent and the planet, then this is the book for you.”

—**Robert Costanza, Professor of Sustainability, Portland State University, and Editor-in-Chief, *Solutions* magazine**

“What scope is there for moving beyond today’s increasingly desperate pursuit of conventional economic growth? For politicians to carve out some real space in that territory, they need to immerse themselves in the ‘beyond growth’ debate, and there is no better way of doing that than familiarizing themselves with the ideas and insights in *Enough Is Enough*.”

—**Jonathon Porritt, founder and Director, Forum for the Future, and author of *Capitalism as If the World Matters***

“This is the book we’ve all been waiting for as we watch the growth economy collide catastrophically with the constraints of a finite Earth. It’s a clear, informed, practical, honorable, and witty guide to where we are, where we need to go, and how to get there. If you are one of so many of us who are bewildered or despairing about the fate of the future, this is the book that will give you an energized sense of purpose and reason-based hope.”

—**Kathleen Dean Moore, Professor of Philosophy, Oregon State University; author of *The Pine Island Paradox*; and coeditor of *Moral Ground***

“Two qualities that allegedly distinguish humans from other species are high intelligence and the capacity for forward planning. At no time in history has there been a greater need for these qualities or less evidence of their existence—the global human enterprise is on a trajectory toward social and ecological collapse. But clear-thinking, forward-looking people can take heart. *Enough Is Enough* provides both the unassailable rationale and the visionary plan the world needs to live well, more equitably, and sustainably within the means of nature.”

—**William Rees, Professor of Public Policy and Ecological Economics, University of British Columbia, and cocreator of the ecological footprint**

“*Enough Is Enough* should be required reading for every economics student as an antidote to the wacky assumption that a finite planet can support infinite growth. Dietz and O’Neill show the importance of growing long-neglected human capacities for creativity and compassion rather than obsolete economic indicators like GDP. Whether or not you agree with all their proposals, this highly readable and provocative book will profoundly expand your thinking about what’s possible.”

—**Michael Shuman, author of *Local Dollars, Local Sense* and *The Small-Mart Revolution***

“Saying ‘Enough!’ is heresy in our growth-based economy, in which more, bigger, and faster are the only permissible goals. The authors not only offer specific policy proposals for an economy of sufficiency but argue persuasively that we could all be happier by exiting the growth treadmill. This is a book that every American should read.”

—**Richard Heinberg, Senior Fellow, Post Carbon Institute, and author of ten books, including *The End of Growth***

“In an age where economic orthodoxy remains all too fixated on growth, *Enough Is Enough* offers a thoughtful contribution to creating an ecologically sound economic system that meets human rather than financial needs.”

—**Gar Alperovitz, Professor of Political Economy, University of Maryland, and author of *America Beyond Capitalism***

“*Enough Is Enough* is a fine addition to the growing literature on how society might change its ways and actually avoid catastrophic collapse. Everyone should read it and become more aware of the scale of the human predicament, the economic insanity that is largely responsible for it, and the desperate need for dramatic change.”

—**Paul Ehrlich, Professor of Population Studies, Stanford University; President, Center for Conservation Biology; and coauthor of *The Dominant Animal***

“In the sixth century BCE, Lao Tzu wisely wrote that the person who knows that enough is enough will always have enough. It has taken us twenty-six centuries of apparent progress to forget that, and it is high time to relearn it. Rob Dietz and Dan O’Neill provide a compelling case for us to do just that. As well as an accessible guide to the growth-and-greed economy, they offer a series of simple and achievable steps to replacing it with something sustainable and infinitely more satisfying.”

—**Molly Scott Cato, Professor of Strategy and Sustainability, Roehampton University, and author of *Environment and Economy***

“The notion that economic growth is the enemy and not our salvation still has about it more than a whiff of heresy. Not after this admirably lucid book, though. Dietz and O’Neill argue persuasively that adopting a governing axiom of ‘enough’ rather than ‘more’ will help make our politics more democratic, our economy more egalitarian, and our society more creative—and then they show how to bring it about. How bad is that?”

—**Marq de Villiers, journalist and author of thirteen books, including *Our Way Out***

“*Enough Is Enough* is an extremely important and timely work. Herman Daly and his many colleagues have masterfully articulated the importance of creating a new economy that can enhance rather than destroy our natural resources and, at the same time, improve our quality of life. Now, in *Enough Is Enough*, Rob Dietz and Dan O’Neill have laid out a pragmatic scenario that describes, in great detail, how we can all become involved in making that economy a reality in the communities and on the planet in which we live. This is a must-read for all those interested in their own welfare and that of their children and grandchildren.”

—**Frederick Kirschenmann, Professor of Philosophy, Iowa State University, and author of *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience***

“Rob Dietz and Dan O’Neill are leaders in the new generation of thinkers and doers on the steady-state economy. In *Enough Is Enough* they present a compelling case for why ‘enough’ should replace ‘more’ as the goal of a successful economy, and they provide information, arguments, and examples to show how our lives would be much improved by such a fundamental change.”

—**Peter Victor, Professor of Environmental Studies, York University, and author of *Managing Without Growth***

“This wonderful book focuses on the heart of the matter: our world is being destroyed because, as a society and an economy, we have become oblivious to limits of every kind—limits of resources on a finite earth, limits of planetary carrying capacity, and most of all limits to human material aspirations. This book is a great primer for systematically unpeeling the dominant insanity of our time and then waking up and doing something to change it. It should be required reading for every high school and college class devoted to the economics of sanity—and every government official as well.”

—**Jerry Mander, author of *In the Absence of the Sacred* and *The Capitalism Papers***

“*Enough Is Enough* provides a preview of the new world we must inevitably enter. Although Dietz and O’Neill pay careful attention to real-world limits to growth, these two visionaries show us how we can lead happy lives by embracing an economy of enough.”

—**Richard Lamm, former Governor, Colorado**

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

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BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY
IN A WORLD OF FINITE RESOURCES

Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill



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Enough Is Enough

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FOREWORD

I have long wanted to write a book on the subject of “enough” but never did. Now I don’t have to because Rob Dietz and Dan O’Neill have done it in a clearer and more accessible way than I could have. Therefore it is a special pleasure for me to write a foreword calling attention to their important contribution.

Enough should be the central concept in economics. *Enough* means “sufficient for a good life.” This raises the perennial philosophical question, “What is a good life?” That is not easy to answer, but at a minimum we can say that the current answer of “having ever more” is wrong. It is worth working hard and sacrificing some things to have enough; but it is stupid to work even harder to have more than enough. And to get more than enough not by hard work, but by exploitation of others, is immoral. Living on enough is closely related to sharing, a virtue that today is often referred to as “class warfare.” Real class warfare, however, will result not from sharing, but from the greed of elites who promote growth because they capture nearly all of the benefits from it, while “sharing” only the costs.

Enough is the theme of the story of God’s gift of manna to the ancient Hebrews in the wilderness. Food in the form of manna arrived like dew on the grass every morning and was enough for the day. If people tried to gather more than enough and accumulate it, it would spoil and go to waste. So God’s gift was wrapped up in the condition of enough—sufficiency and sharing—an idea later amplified in the Lord’s Prayer, “give us this day our daily bread.” Not bread for the rest of our lives or excess bread with which to buy whatever luxuries we may covet, but enough bread to sustain and enjoy fully the gift of life itself.

This story from Exodus has parallels in the thoughts of the pioneer ecological economist and Nobel Prize-winning chemist Frederick

Soddy. Soddy observed that humanity lives off the revenue of current sunshine that is gathered each day by plants with the aid of soil and water. Unlike manna, some of the sunshine was accumulated and stored by geologic processes, and we have consumed it lavishly with mixed results. Today we also try to accumulate surplus solar income and exchange it for a permanent lien on future solar income. We then expect this surplus, converted into debt in the bank, to grow at compound interest. But the future solar-based revenue, against which the debt is a lien, cannot keep up with the mathematics of exponential growth, giving rise to debt repudiation and economic depression.

For the Hebrews in the wilderness the manna economy was designed with “enough” as a built-in feature. Our economy does not have that automatic regulation. We have to recognize the value of enough and build it into our economic institutions and culture. Thanks to Dietz and O’Neill for helping us do that.

HERMAN DALY
Professor Emeritus
School of Public Policy
University of Maryland

PREFACE

The numbers are telling us something:

- 7 billion people on earth, with 2.7 billion scraping by on less than \$2 per day.
- 394 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, threatening to destabilize the global climate.
- \$15 trillion of public debt in the United States, an unfathomable sum of money to be paid back by the next generation.
- 2 percent of adults owning more than half of all household wealth in the world.
- 400 ocean zones devoid of life, with the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico estimated to cover almost as much area as the U.S. state of New Jersey.

Hidden in these numbers are stories of real people and real places in real trouble. And perhaps the most important number of all is *one*—one single blue-green planet with finite resources that we all must share.

But how do we share this one planet and provide a high quality of life for all? The economic orthodoxy in use around the world is not up to the challenge. The core of this orthodoxy is a strategy that has ensnared all nations, from China to Chile, from the United States to the United Arab Emirates, from Switzerland to Swaziland. That strategy, the pursuit of never-ending economic growth, has become dysfunctional. With each passing day, we are witnessing more and more *uneconomic* growth—growth that costs more than it is worth. An economy that chases perpetually increasing production and consumption, always in search of *more*, stands no chance of achieving a lasting prosperity.

The 7 billion of us have to do better, and we'd better do better soon.

We need to find ways to reverse the climate change we've set in motion and halt the extinction crisis. At the same time we have to eradicate poverty and erase the divide between the haves and the have-nots. Now is the time to change the goal from the madness of *more* to the ethic of *enough*, to accept the limits to growth and build an economy that meets our needs without undermining the life-support systems of the planet. The good news is that ideas for creating an ecologically sound economy are emerging from all corners of the world. In fact, the desire to assemble a cohesive set of such ideas formed the motivation for this book.

Enough Is Enough was conceived as a collection of policy proposals for achieving a prosperous, but nongrowing economy (also known as a steady-state economy). The book sketches a plan for solving the sorts of social and environmental problems described by the numbers above. Such a plan cannot flow from one or two minds. Indeed, much of the information on these pages stems from workshops, presentations, and discussions that took place at a remarkable conference held in Leeds, U.K., during the summer of 2010. Participants at the Steady State Economy Conference offered a wealth of ideas, and these ideas form the core of this book. The conference concentrated on tough questions about how to build a better economy and tasked the attendees with generating viable answers.

It's a hopeful assignment, this business of figuring out how to change the economic paradigm from *more* to *enough*. If we can successfully harness our know-how for the job of remaking our economic institutions, we'll commence a process of healing—healing degraded ecological systems, healing relationships with our neighbors, and healing the lives of people who have been left behind by the current economic system. Historians will mark the effort as a turning point, a singular and triumphant achievement shared by all.

ROB DIETZ, *Corvallis, Oregon, United States*

DAN O'NEILL, *Leeds, United Kingdom*

Note to the reader: This book is a collaborative work, but sometimes you will encounter the pronoun "I" in the text. In such cases, the "I" refers to Rob Dietz. The purpose of these first-person accounts is to help describe concepts in an accessible way.

[PART I]

QUESTIONS OF ENOUGH



[CHAPTER 1]

HAVE YOU HAD ENOUGH?

A person who knows that enough is enough will always have enough.

LAO TZU (SIXTH CENTURY B.C.E.)

A game of checkers offers very little insight into how to solve the world's intertwined environmental and social problems, or so I thought. In one particular game, my opponent opened with a series of reckless moves, placing checker after checker in harm's way. When I jumped the first one and swiped it off the board, I briefly wondered if I was being lured into a trap. But it was just a fleeting thought. After all, my opponent was only five years old.

I was playing against my daughter. She had just gotten home from her kindergarten class, and I was giving her a few strategy pointers from my limited bag of tricks. Her moves showed some modest improvement, but after a while, we both lost interest in the game. Besides, there are other fun things you can do with checkers, like seeing how high a tower you can build. At first, we were fast and free with our stacking—we even plopped down two or three checkers at a time. But as the tower grew, we changed our approach. With the light touch and steady hands of a surgical team, we took turns adding checkers one by one to the top of the stack. By this point, our formerly straight tower had taken on a disconcerting lean. On our final attempt to increase its height, the mighty checker tower reached the inevitable tipping point and came crashing down to earth. Like a reporter interpreting the scene, my daughter remarked, “Sometimes when things get too big, they fall.”

I sat back amid the pile of checkers scattered on the floor and smiled. With a simple observation and eight words, she had managed to sum up

the root cause of humanity's most pressing environmental and social problems. Even a partial list of these problems sounds grim:

- Greenhouse gas emissions are destabilizing the global climate.
- Billions of people are living in poverty, engaged in a daily struggle to meet their basic needs.
- The health of forests, grasslands, marshes, oceans, and other wild places is declining, to the point that the planet is experiencing a species extinction crisis.
- National governments are drowning in debt, while the global financial system teeters on the verge of ruin.

People desperately want to solve these problems, but most of us are overlooking the underlying cause: our economy has grown too large. Our economic tower is threatening to collapse under its own weight, and beyond that, it's threatening the integrity of the checkerboard and the well-being of the players. The economy is simply too big for the broader social and ecological systems that contain it.

That's a strong indictment against economic growth, but (as we'll see in the next chapter) this indictment is backed up by scientific studies of environmental and social systems. The evidence shows that the pursuit of a bigger economy is undermining the life-support systems of the planet *and* failing to make us better off—a grave situation, to be sure. But what makes the situation even more serious is the lack of a viable response. The plan being transmitted from classrooms, boardrooms, and pressrooms is to keep adding more checkers to the stack.

The model of *more* is failing both environmentally and socially, and practically everyone is still cheering it on . . . it almost makes you want to climb to the top of the highest building and shout, “ENOUGH!”

Crying out in such a way expresses intense frustration at the seemingly intractable environmental and social problems we face, but it also carries the basic solution to these problems. By stopping at *enough* when it comes to production and consumption in the economy, instead of constantly chasing *more*, we can restore environmental health and achieve widespread well-being. That's an incredibly hopeful message, but it opens up all sorts of questions. What would this economy look like? What new institutions would we need? How would we secure jobs? This book attempts to answer these and related questions by pro-

viding a blueprint for an economy of *enough*, with detailed policies and strategies for making the transition away from *more*.

Before diving into the science (Chapter 2) that clarifies why *enough* is preferable to *more*, it's worth thinking about it from a commonsense perspective—perhaps even incorporating the wisdom of a checker-stacking kindergartner. More is certainly a good thing when you don't have enough. For instance, if you can't find enough to eat, then more food is better. If the alarm wakes you up before you've gotten enough sleep, hitting the snooze button and resting for a few more minutes feels great. If you didn't study enough to pass an exam, then spending more time hitting the books would have been useful. But what about times when you do have enough? Eating more food leads to obesity. Sleeping too much could be classified as a medical condition. Studying more could mean missing out on other things in life. More, then, may be either helpful or harmful, depending on the situation, but enough is the amount that's just right.

People often overlook this relationship between *more* and *enough*, especially in economic affairs. It took me a long time, a lot of dot-connecting, and even some soul-searching to get it. My path to understanding began years ago in an improbable place.

When I was a kid living in the sprawling suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia, I had a poster taped to the wall of my bedroom. In the background of the poster, a gaudy mansion sits on a seaside cliff. The light at dusk bathes the scene in a soft, orange glow. A walkway curves down from the mansion to a huge garage that takes up the whole foreground. The taillights of five luxury cars (a Porsche, a Ferrari, a Mercedes, a BMW, and some other fancy ride that I can't recall) stick out from the arched openings of the garage. Scrawled across the top of the poster is the title: "Justification for Higher Education."

The strangest thing about this poster was that I didn't find it strange at all. The culture—my culture—is largely about owning things, and the more the better. The prospect of owning a big house and an expensive car or two seemed like a valid reason for attending college. My cluttered closet, which sat right next to the poster, provided further illustration of the culture. The entire closet floor was covered with Rubik's Cube-style puzzles, Star Wars action figures, and other plastic ghosts of Christmas past. Like a fish that pays no attention to the fact that it's swimming in water, I was swimming in a consumer culture

and had no idea of its existence. This culture, which values owning and consuming over doing, being, and connecting, goes hand-in-hand with an economy that pursues *more*.

One day, having resolved to clean my room, I stared at the mess in my closet, and something clicked into place. I realized that I received precious little joy from all these things. Their novelty had long since worn off, and now I was just spending time shuffling them around when I could be doing something else—anything else! When I finally took the sensible step of giving the stuff away, I felt lighter and freer. I felt as though I had enough.

A few years later when I went to college, I majored in environmental studies. But, worried that I wouldn't be able to find a high-paying job to "justify my higher education," I also majored in economics. In truth, I was hoping to combine lessons from the two fields—to use the tools of economics to fix environmental problems. And what problems they were! Climate change, degraded water and air quality, persistent toxic substances, loss of soil productivity. These are what E.F. Schumacher called "divergent problems,"¹ meaning (among other things) that you couldn't solve them overnight with a couple of tweaks to the system.

In contrast, the economics program seemed to gloss over the problems. Environmental issues barely figured in the discussion, and social problems, such as poverty and inequality, received only slightly more attention. The problems that we did study, such as how to forecast future prices and smooth out business cycles, mostly came with stepwise prescriptions. You supposedly could solve these problems with a few tweaks to the system (as well as some nearly incomprehensible mathematics).

I had a tough time trying to apply economic methods to environmental problems, both inside and outside of academia. Admittedly some of the fault lay with the practitioner, but I found economics (at least the economics I was learning) to be ill-equipped to deal with the divergent problems of the day. I don't mean to be overly harsh. The discipline definitely contributes some useful tools and helpful ways to analyze worldly matters, but I mostly failed when I tried to apply its lessons.

When faced with failure, it's helpful to get a fresh perspective. Author, farmer, and activist Wendell Berry offers an outstanding piece of advice for how to do that. He maintains that you're unlikely to solve

big problems by talking about them remotely. You have to see them for yourself. He says, “[I]t is in the presence of the problems that their solutions will be found.”² Later, when I was working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, I got a chance to follow Berry’s advice. That’s when the landscape taught me something important about *enough*.

Bosque del Apache, a wildlife refuge in central New Mexico, is an enchanting place. On winter mornings, as the desert sun rises over the San Pascual Mountains and illuminates the marshlands along the Rio Grande River, tens of thousands of waterfowl take to the skies. The immense flocks of snow geese and sandhill cranes are quite a sight, and so are the flocks of binocular-toting bird enthusiasts. These visitors are able to encounter wildlife on a scale that’s become rare these days.

It can be a magical experience for visitors, but in a way they’re deceived. The birds are present, so the food and other resources they need must also be present. But the refuge provides adequate resources only through careful management by a dedicated staff. The natural functioning of the Rio Grande River, which forms the backbone of the refuge, is long gone, taken by dams and diversions for irrigation. Floods, the major driver of the ecosystems that provide for the birds, no longer occur at their historical scale and frequency. Refuge managers, biologists, and other staff find ways to work the land and water to provide enough resources. In some cases, they try to mimic conditions that would have occurred naturally. For example, they use pumps and diversion channels to flood fields and create temporary wetlands. In other cases, they grow corn and other crops to supply bird food. Without these interventions, the flocks would be much smaller, and might not even spend the winter at Bosque del Apache.

The problem is that the modern landscape lacks a set of interconnected, highly functional conservation areas, mostly because society has appropriated so much land and wildlife habitat for economic purposes. Intensive refuge management may be the best option for conserving wildlife under such circumstances, but this approach amounts to triage. We have chosen to apply bandages (i.e., intensively managed refuges) on the landscape to stop the bleeding (i.e., habitat conversion, species extinctions, and declining ecosystem function). However, as any good doctor knows, preventing disease or trauma is much more effective than treating symptoms after the damage has been done. Preventive medicine in this case calls for balancing the amount of eco-

conomic activity with the amount of wilderness preservation—a clear example of the principle of *enough*.

I've learned a lot by roaming places like Bosque del Apache, and I wish I had the powers of observation to unlock more of their wisdom. But most of my progress toward the destination of *enough* has come from people as opposed to places. I met one such person, Brian Czech, while I was still working at the Fish and Wildlife Service. Brian is an avid “wildlifer” and an even more avid “enougher.” He takes issue with economic growth—well, at least the continuous pursuit of economic growth. When you first meet him, he's quick to ask what you think about “the economic growth issue.”

In the work leading to his doctorate, he analyzed the causes of species endangerment. It turned out that the causes were, as he puts it, a *Who's Who* of the American economy. Agriculture, mining, urbanization, logging, tourism, and other sectors of the economy were the culprits behind habitat loss and exotic species invasions that were wiping out native species. Once Brian understood this, he began researching the conflict between growing the economy and protecting the environment. This research led him to another teacher.

Herman Daly is an economist who is known around the world for his analyses and writings on economic growth and human development. His intellectual curiosity and tenacity have turned him into something of a salmon, swimming against the mainstream economic current. Despite many years fighting the misguided pursuit of economic growth, he's managed to avoid cynicism. In person and in prose, he conveys a heartfelt desire to create an economy that cares for both people and the planet.

I first met Herman at an academic conference where I acquired his book (new at the time), *Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications*,³ which he co-wrote with Joshua Farley. I proceeded to read it from cover to cover. I'm well aware that reading an economics textbook for enjoyment constitutes bizarre behavior. But it was a revelation. I kept asking myself, “Where was this information when I was in college?” Brian opened the door to a new world where I questioned my economic assumptions, and Herman filled that new world with a vision of a sustainable and fair economy—what he called a “steady-state economy.” I wanted to be a part of developing and promoting that vision.

Soon after, I agreed to help Brian run an organization he had estab-

lished, and I became the director of the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy. Thankfully, its name is usually abbreviated to CASSE (rhymes with classy). CASSE's purpose is to help people understand why continuous economic growth is impossible and undesirable, and to promote the steady-state economy as a positive alternative.

Since you can already read Herman's books or visit CASSE's website to find out more about the concept of a steady-state economy, what's the purpose of this book? To answer that question, I need to introduce one more character. Dan O'Neill, my coauthor and good friend, is an ecological economist working at the University of Leeds in England. Early in my tenure with CASSE, he became the director of our European operations.

In June 2010, Dan and I found ourselves sitting side-by-side in his office at the university. Tired and grouchy from being trapped under the fluorescent lights on a delightful day, we were trying to sketch an outline for a report to transmit the wealth of information in front of us. The day before, we had achieved a great success. In partnership with Economic Justice for All, a discussion forum of scholars and activists based in Leeds, we had organized and run the first-ever Steady State Economy Conference. The conference brought together academics, business leaders, politicians, activists, the media, and the general public to explore the steady-state economy as an ecologically and socially responsible alternative to economic growth.

Both Dan and I were already admirers of Herman Daly's work, but we had been asking ourselves for some time how a steady-state economy would work in practice. Herman had previously identified the main problems with pursuing continuous economic growth, and he had described a broad vision of an alternative economic system. But we were hungry for more details—specifically, the policies and transition strategies that would turn his vision into a reality. That's why we had decided to work together on the conference and report. We hoped to understand for ourselves, and help others understand, what a steady-state economy would mean in practice.

Months later, with too many late nights to recount, with plenty of arguments over content, and with outstanding contributions from numerous scholars, we released our report.⁴ The information collected at the conference and compiled in the report provides the backbone of this book.

You probably have some of the same concerns as we do about the environment and the economy. We're not pessimists, but with all the disturbing facts that confront us, it's hard to avoid feeling worried about the future we face. Yet there is still hope in the midst of such worries. Once we put aside our obsession with growth, we can focus on the task of building a better economy. At the Steady State Economy Conference, Tim Jackson (the author of a brilliant book entitled *Prosperity without Growth*⁵) provided a much-needed rallying call. He said:

Here is a point in time where our institutions are wrong. Our economics is not fit for purpose. The outcomes of this economic system are perverse. But this is not an anthem of despair. It's not a place where we should give up hope. It's not an impossibility theorem. The impossibility lives in believing we have a set of principles that works for us. Once we let go of that assumption anything is possible.⁶

This book tries to provide a new set of principles that *can* work for us. We don't want to mislead you into thinking we have a precise set of directions for fixing everything that's wrong with the world—after all, the economy and the ecological systems that contain it are highly complex. We do, however, have an economic plan that can help move humanity toward a better future where sustainable and equitable human well-being is the goal, not economic growth. Successful implementation of this plan rests on three requirements:

- 1. Widespread recognition that our planet is finite.** Humanity (along with all the other species here) draws life and comfort from a limited pool of resources. Recognition of this fact requires us to change the way we regard our relationship with nature, especially within our economic institutions.
- 2. Practical policies for achieving a steady-state economy.** A set of well-conceived steady-state policies can replace and outperform the obsolete growth-oriented policies in use today. But people need a strong sense of these new policies before they'll be willing to embrace them.
- 3. The will to act.** The economic changes that are required won't materialize on their own. We must dismantle the prevailing

institutions and policies that have produced a destructive and unfair economy. At the same time, we must initiate and nurture the required changes.

This book is organized around these three requirements. If you're already on board with the first one, you may recognize some familiar ideas in the next two chapters. Even so, it's worth spending some time considering the problem of "too much" before jumping to the solution of "enough." But the purpose of this book (in fact, the feature that sets it apart from others) is to describe how to establish a prosperous yet nongrowing economy. This is not a book that focuses on problems while relegating solutions to the last few pages.

That said, Part I, *Questions of Enough*, is more about *why* than *how*. It's where we summarize some of the scientific evidence that condemns the pursuit of continuous economic growth. Part I also considers what constitutes desirable levels of population and consumption, and then makes the turn toward *how* by describing the defining features of a steady-state economy.

Part II, *Strategies of Enough*, provides solutions—an escape route from the perpetual growth trap described in Part I. It's the part of the book that explains how, in a steady-state economy, we can:

- Limit the use of materials and energy to sustainable levels.
- Stabilize population through compassionate and noncoercive means.
- Achieve a fair distribution of income and wealth.
- Reform monetary and financial systems for stability.
- Change the way we measure progress.
- Secure meaningful jobs and full employment.
- Reconfigure the way businesses create value.

Taken together, the policies described in Part II form an agenda for transforming the economic goal from *more* to *enough*. But these policies will sit on the shelf unless we can gain extensive support for, and concerted action toward, achieving an economy of *enough*.

Part III, *Advancing the Economy of Enough*, provides the call for action. This part of the book contains ideas for moving past the culture of consumerism, starting a public dialogue about the downsides of growth

and the upsides of a steady-state economy, and expanding cooperation among nations. All this discussion leads up to the presentation of an economic blueprint that summarizes the components and steps needed to build a steady-state economy.

This blueprint offers hope at a time when we need it most. It provides a viable way of responding to the profound environmental and social problems of our era. The ever-present drone of what we can't do has become both tiresome and unproductive. The time has come to figure out what we can do. We can build a better economy. We can meet our needs and care for the planet at the same time. We can live balanced lives, including time for the occasional game of checkers. This is *our* checkerboard, after all, and we don't have to play by the old rules anymore. Let's get to it. Enough is enough.

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SHIT.
I'M STILL
NOT
HAPPY...

Polyg.org.uk

ULTRA

USA

DISC

This material has been excerpted from

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Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources***

by Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill

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