

model. This book heightens the necessity and requirement for many sequels of individual models for reversing growth. Every sovereign nation is responsible for living within the limit of its resources and for suffering the consequences of not doing so. The U.S. has a duty to itself and the world to stabilize U.S. population to reduce the burden on global natural resources and to serve as a model for other nations.

Hard cases make good science and ethics. The allocation of scarce resources is a good example. The wisdom of triage can be fully appreciated only if we recognize the inevitability of competition; and competition between members of the same species is inescapable so long as death is not a sufficiently effective

thinning agent, which we prevent it from being with medical advances. Life, cooperation, and compassion are all good things, but we can have too much of any one good thing, considered in isolation and elevated to the status of an absolute good. The central problem, both philosophically and practically, is to find acceptable ways of weighing opposing goods (with due regard for the interests of posterity) so that we and our descendants can lead healthy and balanced lives (Hardin, 1980).

REFERENCE

Hardin, Garrett. *Promethean Ethics: Living with Death, Competition, and Triage*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980.

Unlimited Growth Stopped in its Tracks

Book Review by Anne Manetas

The Sunday morning talk shows are host to a variety of pundits debating the week's hottest policy issues. But on one issue it appears that a consensus has been reached: Whether the economy is backtracking or headed full-steam ahead, the belief that economic growth can be sustained in perpetuity trumps all. Sunday morning is for many a time of worship and reflection, but every day a national coalition of media, politicians, and business leaders kneel at the altar of economic growth. It is the creed to which we subscribe, the mantra we subconsciously chant.

An example of this national phenomenon can be found in the debate over the energy crisis in

California. Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, business leaders and environmentalists are all divided as to how to solve the problem of a demand for energy that has outpaced supply in California (some don't even agree on the problem), yet solutions from all sides rest on the premise that California's economic growth will and should continue.

In *Shoveling Fuel for a Runaway Train*, wildlife biologist Brian Czech addresses this pursuit of the "American mega-economy" and its effects on long-term ecological sustainability. Czech convincingly and in a very readable way argues that perpetual economic growth is not sustainable, and calls for nothing short of a revolution to establish an alternative economic paradigm. A tall order to be sure, and one that might strike some readers as so unlikely as to deter them from reading further, but a fair hearing indicates that Czech's thesis may prove to be one of the pillars upon which a sustainable future rests.

In order to make the case for a new economic

Shoveling Fuel for a Runaway Train

by Brian Czech
Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
206 pages, \$22.50



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system, Czech first exposes the “runaway train” of economic growth. From the highest levels of federal agencies to political candidates to the media, economic growth has become a national goal. (Interestingly, Czech’s writing harkens back to similar tracts from the beginning of the modern environmental movement challenging the religion of growth in the United States. Yet thirty years later, Czech is virtually alone in his writing and the congregation of growth is larger than ever.) “American society has no greater obsession than with economic growth,” writes Czech.

“Czech’s proposal will raise concerns for some about a cooling economy, layoffs, and potential economic collapse, not to mention those who will claim it is just plain unrealistic.”

This school of thought is supported and perpetuated by neoclassical economists. Having moved fundamentally away from the big issues (distribution of wealth, power of nations, etc.) of the classical economists such as Malthus, Smith, and Ricardo, neoclassical economists rely on the principles of substitutability, efficiency, and human capital to posit there is no limit to economic growth.

Paramount among the neoclassical economists was the late Julian Simon, Cato Institute fellow and author of *Ultimate Resource 2*. Czech describes Simon as the “most influential proponent of unlimited economic growth of all time,” whose optimism and selective attention to the facts allowed him to become the champion of human intellect and perseverance overcoming ecological limits to economic growth. Simon’s legacy is alive and well today thanks to a host of disciples, such as Stephen Moore of the Club for Growth, who espouse economic growth and the conditions that ostensibly fuel it, namely continued population growth. But the neoclassical assumption that economic growth can continue indefinitely begins

to break down in the face of a finite natural resource base and limited space.

Loss of rural land to urban sprawl, rolling blackouts, and water shortages all attest to the crisis facing the “economically impacted environment” as Czech says. Ecological economists, unlike neoclassical economists, recognize physical and biological limits to economic growth. Rather, ecological economists (the most notable among them being Herman Daly, professor of Economics at the University of Maryland and author of *Toward a Steady-State Economy*, 1973) see the steady state economy as an alternative to economic growth. Unlike a continually growing economy, the steady state depends upon a stable population and minimal throughput of capital. (At this point it is important to note a difference Czech is careful to point out between ecological economics and environmental economics. As Czech suggests, environmental economics is a subset of neoclassical economics. It is neoclassical economics applied to environmental affairs, and therefore rests upon the ideal of continued economic growth.)

The steady state is the new economic paradigm Czech recommends for ecological sustainability, but achieving it requires fundamental societal changes: “a steady-state revolution.”

Putting an end to “economic bloating” requires a non-violent social revolution that equals the academic revolution of ecological economics. This is a revolution in public opinion that must be a process by which “the virtually ubiquitous cherishing of economic growth is transformed into an equally ubiquitous castigation of economic growth.” Utopian? Perhaps, but Czech’s blueprint for change based on his definition of steady-state consumer levels makes it clear he is not just tilting at windmills.

Czech defines the top one percent of consumers as “Liquidators,” those who liquidate capital for their own excess. Liquidators are the most conspicuous of consumers. The success of the steady-state revolution depends on castigation of the liquidators, which will be done by the Steady State and Amorphous classes. In Czech’s hierarchy of consumers, “Steady-Staters” represent the bottom eighty percent in terms of personal consumption spending. Steady-staters are

those who are largely responsible in their consumption patterns and are concerned about preserving the environment for future generations. This includes all of the poor, most of the middle class, and some of the rich. The remaining nineteen percent of consumers are what Czech calls the "Amorphic class." These are the consumers below the liquidators who are generally well educated. In the steady-state revolution the Amorphic class should be "patiently tolerated" because the Steady-State class will need their support in creating disdain for the consumptive patters of the Liquidators. Czech's prescription for castigation of the Liquidators depends, in large part, upon women of all classes rejecting "liquidating males" as suitors, thereby removing the incentive of the liquidators to conspicuously consume and motivating them to reduce consumption. This process will result in a cooling of the economy and creation of the steady state.

Czech's proposal will raise concerns for some about a cooling economy, layoffs, and potential economic collapse, not to mention those who will claim it is just plain unrealistic. Czech offers suggestions as to why the steady-state revolution can become a reality and he assures the reader that in the ideal steady state economy, the standard of living is high enough for all to benefit. But regardless of the likelihood of his proposal, it bears relevance for those concerned about U.S. population size and sustainability issues.

Particularly important is Czech's challenge of the neoclassical sustained growth model. As University of Colorado professor of physics Al Bartlett says "In Growth we Trust" has become our national motto and this poses a major challenge for those who seek to stop population growth or urban sprawl, for example. In fact, the perpetual growth model has become so pervasive that even most environmental groups have bought into it. Understanding the degree to which the perpetual growth model has inundated our culture helps those seeking to stop growth (of population size, of urban land, etc.) understand the challenges they face. Furthermore, a stable population is required for the steady state, and herein lies common ground that advocates of the steady state and those seeking to stabilize U.S. population should explore.

Czech's treatise on the steady-state revolution should give pause to anyone who is concerned about the future our younger generations will inherit. Other alternative economic paradigms have been proposed, but few are as relevant to long-term sustainability. After reading *Shoveling Fuel*, one cannot help but stop chanting the perpetual growth mantra at least temporarily. To quote Aldo Leopold, "Nothing could be more salutary at this stage than a little healthy contempt for a plethora of material blessings." Perhaps a little "healthy contempt" for perpetual economic growth will turn the lone hymn of the steady state into a chorus of sustainability for the future. ■



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American Labor's Surrender to Immigration

Roots of a historic reversal

Book Review by David Simcox

Sometimes even the most obvious truths can be confounded by self-interested ideologues and dilettantes of political correctness.

Vernon Briggs describes expertly in *Immigration and American Unionism* how America's labor organizations, from the pre-civil war National Labor Union to today's AFL-CIO, have generally thrived in times of low or declining immigration and struggled in periods of mass immigration. Working people, millions of whom are not union members, have also thrived or struggled in lock step with the fortunes of unions, as shown in data on real wages and distribution of income, and in the current wage stagnation of our own mass immigration era.

For a century and a half leaders of American labor have recognized this connection. Masses of new workers imported at will by a U.S. government doing employers' bidding — or recruited by the employers themselves — have undercut union bargaining power, helped break strikes, and made organizing harder. These simple, obvious facts until now have underlain American Labor's consistent opposition to mass immigration.

Labor's willingness to proclaim that high immigration was bad for the American working man — unionized or not — was as compelling in its candor

and accuracy as it was devoid of the conceits of political correctness. Samuel Gompers, himself an immigrant, had it right when he said "Immigration is, in its fundamental aspects, a labor problem." Even so Labor's concern more often than not has been either ignored or given only lip service by policy makers. The historical record of Labor's legislative victories from ending the Foreign Contract Labor law to the Chinese Exclusion Act to today's employer sanctions is a dismaying record of under-enforced mandates.

The economic interests that dominate politics at all levels of government more often get their way, not by overcoming unwelcome view points with reasoned debate, but by seeing to it that inconvenient issues such as immigration and the

declining labor standards of American workers are kept off the agenda in the first place.

Briggs does not go into the strategy in detail, but his work reminds us that another book is needed to show how historically the business-dominated pro-immigration lobby has subtly co-opted the churches, charities, educators, ethnic groups, civil rights movement, internationalists, lots of well-intentioned but innocent Americans, and, most recently, even some labor leaders, in the prevailing ideology that immigration is pre-eminently a moral need, essential for the nation's spiritual and economic growth and demographic "success."

For Briggs, the much maligned restrictive immigration law of 1921 ushered in a golden age of American trade unionism that lasted until the 1965 Immigration Act reopened the doors to mass immigration. Between these two historic pieces of legislation the nearly fifty years of low immigration

Immigration and American Unionism

by Vernon M. Briggs Jr.

Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press
213 pages, \$37.50, cloth; \$16.95, paper



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