



Building World Economy

Toronto Report

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A consideration of key topics from Rudolf Steiner concerning today's economic problems. Three evening stand-alone background lectures followed by one-day 'bring and share' sessions. The event was held in Toronto from 24-27 October 2013.

Many of us who attended this event came expecting to find answers or guidance on how to help the Waldorf schools we were each associated with in their current financial predicaments. It quickly became evident that this was not going to be about some quick fix or taking sides but considering and being empowered by certain truths based on Steiner's contribution to economics; then through this deeper understanding we can choose to change our approach to the problems we face, problems that are actually a microcosm of the larger problems humanity is presented with today.

The backgrounding lectures took on a story-telling format following humanity's biography from Aristotle to today. This instantly made something abstract interesting, easy to follow and each lecture something to look forward to. On the journey we discovered that what mainstream history often considered unimportant events were actually key turning points in history that continue to play a significant role in today's economic world. One example was how in the early 1800s the Napoleonic wars led England to veer from the gold standard. We were able to see how even this war is still impacting today's economy.

Making the connections of different historical events in a novel form and blending in some of the underlying esoteric history, not only made economics fascinating but also more relevant. Through this same novel historical context, we were able to perceive interesting threads between the personalities of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Marx, Adam Smith, Rudolf Steiner, Woodrow Wilson and John Maynard Keynes, Joan of Arc and others. We saw how certain collective false beliefs that man has passed on through generations played a significant role in the financial bubble of 2007-8 and that if maintained will wreak havoc in the future.

One of these false beliefs is that human beings believe they can "own" land and as such that property is a commodity that can be traded. In fact we can only ever have the "right" or "entitlement" to use land. This by the simple fact that one cannot produce an invoice that shows actual land bought. You buy the title, but even then one can ask, with Steiner, should one buy titles? Are rights commodities?

When human beings mistakenly believe something is a commodity when it is not (like land) and begin trading it, they tie up huge amounts of capital that should be flowing, producing a falsity in the economic environment that at some point will correct itself like it did in 2007-8. (When there were fewer people on the planet such false beliefs did not create the problems as they do now that we have 7 billion plus people.)

Once this fact (that it is impossible to buy and sell land) is understood, the importance of how this impacts economics becomes clear. By the end of the lecture series (after being looked at from different perspectives including the larger picture of karma) the

necessity collectively to change this paradigm became evident if we are to avoid even larger catastrophes in the future.

The *great* importance of implementing Steiner's economics approach began to become more evident over the weekend. Taking the "view of an eagle" enables us to observe humanity on its long journey rather than our current tendency to focus on the smaller picture or time frame. Without this greater perspective it would have been very difficult to appreciate and understand the economic environment we face today and how we should be approaching the future.

There is a saying that if truth is spoken anyone should be able to understand the gist of it regardless of the topic or the person's background. Einstein seemingly got upset when he saw how the scientific community was beginning to make his Relativity Theory elitist, so in 1916 he wrote a short book for the layman called Relativity so "*readers unfamiliar with physics may not feel like a wanderer who was unable to see the forest for the trees.*"

Truths about economics (as discerned by Steiner) enable a layperson to understand the basics and not lose sight of the forest for the trees. Strict adherence to the actual words and context that Steiner used opens our eyes to the simplicity behind the seemingly complex world of economics.

It became evident by the end of the weekend that the "novel" we are collectively writing as human beings is far from over and that in certain sense we can still affect the outcome of that story if we individually rid ourselves of certain false beliefs and act out of the true humanity in each of us.