



Associate!

A MONTHLY DIGEST FROM THE WORLD OF ASSOCIATIVE ECONOMICS

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THEME

Steiner & Keynes Brothers in World Economy

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ONE-WORLD ECONOMY

Humanity is now part of a one-world economy. Despite diverse interpretations of this fact ranging from 'alternative' to neo-liberal, the challenge is to reach an understanding of today's economy that all can 'own'.

ASSOCIATIVE ECONOMICS

Non-partisan and based on the idea that economic life is the shared responsibility of all human beings, associative economics aims to play its part in this great task.

RUDOLF STEINER

Associative economics recognises its debt to Rudolf Steiner, whose insights make a valuable contribution to the task of developing a modern humanity-wide economy.

The Origin and Independence of Economic Life

Rudolf Steiner

In this article, abridged and extracted from a lecture given on 15 December 1919, Rudolf Steiner outlines the essential issues, as he saw them, facing Germany and the world at the end of WW1. His themes are not only of interest because of the perspective they afford on modern developments, but because the end of WW1, specifically the Wilsonian basis of the Treaty of Versailles, represents a defining moment in world history as also in the life and work of John Maynard Keynes (see bio note on p.5.).

In the methods of economic life, whose roots are to be found in the popular customs of the Anglo-American world, the final consequence is to be seen of that which has been developed as outgrowths from what one might call the Mysteries of the Earth, of which, for example, the Druid Mysteries are only a special variety. The primitive European population, which was quite barbaric, which knew nothing regarding the revelations of oriental wisdom, or of what later became Roman Catholicism - that population which advanced to meet the spreading Christianity possessed a strange kind of life-steeped-in-wisdom, peculiar to it, which was entirely physical wisdom. Of this one can at best study only the most external usages, which are recorded in the history of this current: namely, the festivals of those people from whom have come the customs and habits of England and America. Here the harvest as such was the festive occasion; and the highest solemn festivals of the year were connected with things that belong entirely to the economic life.

[In Europe] an economic life sprang up which had to develop of itself and work its way up, which really was originally so completely economic in its legal customs and in its spiritual adaptations that, for example, one of the yearly festivals consisted in the celebration of the fructification of the herds as a special festival in honour of the gods; and there were similar festivals, all derived from the economic aspect of life. If we go through the regions of northern Russia, middle Russia, Sweden, Norway, or into those regions which until a short time ago were parts of Germany, or to France, at least northern France, and to what is now Great Britain - if we go through these regions, we find dispersed everywhere a population which, before the spread of Christianity in ancient times, undoubtedly had a pronounced economic life. And what ancient customs can still be found, such as festivals of legal practices and festivals in honour of the gods, are an echo of this ancient economic culture.

This economic culture met what came from Greece and Rome, with their 'hinterlands' of Asia and Egypt. At first it did not succeed in developing an independent rights life and spiritual life. The primitive legal customs were discarded because Roman law flowed in, and the primitive spiritual customs were cast aside because the Greek spiritual life had entered. And so this economic life becomes sterile at first, and only gradually works its way out of this sterility; it can succeed in this, however, only by overcoming the chaotic condition created by the introduction of the spiritual life and rights life from outside.

Anglo-American Spiritual Life

Consider the present Anglo-American spiritual life. In this you have two things very sharply differentiated from one another. First, you have everywhere in the Anglo-American spiritual life, more than anywhere else on earth, the so-called secret societies, which have considerable influence, much more than people know. They are undoubtedly the keepers - and are proud to be the keepers - of the ancient spiritual life, of the Egyptian or oriental spiritual life, which is completely diluted and evaporated into mere symbols, symbols no longer understood but having a certain great power among those in authority. That, however, is ancient spiritual life, not spiritual life grown in its own soil.

Side by side with this there is a spiritual life which does grow entirely in economic soil, but hitherto it has produced only very small blossoms, and these in abundance. Anyone who studies

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