

POGONOMICS

"We have met the enemy and he [or she] is us."

by Joe Dominguez

What makes life work – for one person, and for all people? Joe Dominguez has focused on that question throughout his life, as a paper boy in his native Harlem, as a market analyst on Wall Street in the 1960s, and during his 20 years of financial self-sufficiency and voluntary service to humanity.

Joe has always been a sharp – some might say cutting – observer of how "economics" functions in both the individual's life and in society as a whole. His radical thesis, "Pogonomics," tells it like it so often is, and suggests an alternative course.

While no one was paying much attention, economics replaced religion as the touchstone of human life. Like religion, economics has priests and rituals. The purpose of these priests and rituals is to interpret the meaning of events while keeping the people in confusion. Any effort on the part of the masses to connect directly with the realities behind the rituals is considered a sacrilege.

There is supply-side economics, Keynesian economics, invisible-hand market economics – but none of these deal with the real driving force behind economics. The following simple explanations will put you in direct contact with this essential driving force.

1 – LEXICON

ECOLOGY: The mutual relations between organisms and their *environment*.

ECONOMICS: The mutual relations between human organisms and their *environment*. The Dismal Science that investigates the conditions and laws affecting the production, distribution and *consumption of resources*. The material means of satisfying human desires. Since humans appear to be insatiable, that last definition is obviously an oxymoron; therefore, antonym: *enough*.

EARTH: Our home planet, mother, source of all sustenance, *resource* base, host, life support sys-

tem, teat.

RESOURCE: Everything in, on, or above *Earth* that we can *consume*, use up, destroy, annihilate, violate or deprive others of. We accomplish all this with the use of *money* (see below).

CONSUME: Use up, devour, destroy, waste, squander.

CONSUMER: One who uses up, devours, destroys, wastes, squanders.

DEMAND: To claim as just or due. In economics, the desire to consume, combined with the ability to ignore one's conscience.

ENVIRONMENT: That which results from the *consumption of resources*.

EMPLOYMENT: Activity by which one exchanges one's human *resource* (life-energy) for *money*. A vital step in the conversion of a *resource* into *environment*. Also, contemporary man's (and increasingly, woman's) primary purpose for existence and primary means of identification – e.g., "I am a _____" (lawyer, plumber... etc.).

MONEY: That which we spend one-third of our adult lifetimes acquiring, one-third disposing of, one-third recovering from the acquisition and disposal of, and the rest of the time bemoaning the lack of. *Money* is a lien on *Earth's resources*.

DEBT: In ancient theology, a sin or trespass. In modern sociology, a euphemism for incarceration, as in "He paid his *debt* to society." In the social practices resulting from the contemporary theology of *economics*, a highly respected way to repay your children for the suffering they have caused you. A device for keeping people trapped in *employment*, thus creating more *environment*.

SAVINGS: The result of a practice, now obsolete,

whereby *money* (or *resources*) was set aside to provide for when *employment* was not available or advisable, due to its deleterious effect on the *consumer* or on the *Earth*. Antonym: *debt*.

ENOUGH: A condition apparently experienced only by lower animals, plants, galaxies and primitive hominids of the Pre-Industrial Revolution era (the latter were said to have *enough* after spending only a few hours per day acquiring *resources*).

VALUE: (n) Monetary or material worth; cost, expense; (v) to prize, esteem.

VALUES: What we profess to be truly important guiding principles in our lives.

INTEGRITY: The state of being complete, undivided; unity, concord, harmony; congruity; wholeness, completeness; alignment between *values* and behavior.

POGONOMICS: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

ECO-ECONOMICS: The interactions of all of the above.

2 - ECONOMICS

Our *employment* greatly depends upon converting some aspect of *Earth* into *resources*. This is obvious in farming, logging, mining, cocaine- and cigarette-making, and tract house and shopping center developments. Since most of those *resources* are not really needed, many other forms of *employment* exist whose sole purpose is to convince people that *consuming resources* is a way toward greater happiness: e.g., *employment* in advertising, sales, higher education, television. Then there are the *employments* that deal with the results of the previous two forms, among them being psychiatrists, hernia specialists, divorce lawyers, day-care operators, police officers and morticians. Another interesting observation: The term of conscription for killing each other with permission is generally two to four years; for killing each other without permission it is generally 20 years; for *employment* it is generally 45 years.

All these *employments* are for the purpose of acquiring *money*. A common cultural taboo insists on using circumspect language to obscure this simple fact. One does not say "I'm acquiring *money*" but instead says, "I'm Making a Living" -



though it is obvious that the individual speaking returns home from *employment* much less alive than when he or she left! Also, one would never ask "How much *money* do you acquire?", but rather, "What do you do?" (In certain sub-cultural groupings one might, however, ask "Are you Following Your Bliss?" or, "Have you found your Right Livelihood?")

The purpose of *money* is to *consume resources*. Any time that you spend *money*, you are *consuming resources*. Since you have traded a piece of your life to get that *money* (through your *employment*), you are also *consuming* your own *resource* (your life-energy) when you spend *money*. The new *resource* you bought with the *money* now belongs to you - it is not available to others. It is now your right to use it up, to prevent others from getting it, to hide it from other people in your closet, to make other people feel bad because they don't have it.

When you want to *consume* more *resources* than you can get with the *money* you got by selling your own *resource* (your life energy) through your *employment*, you can sell your future and your children's future. This is called "trading futures," or *debt*. You have to use up even more *resources* when you are *consuming* via *debt* - the extra amount being called, interestingly enough, "interest on con-

sumer debt." This is a very efficient way to "use up, devour, destroy, waste and squander."

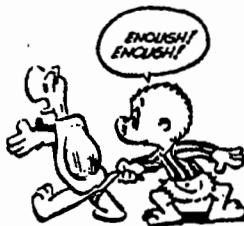
While you are in *employment*, acquiring *money* and *debt*, and *consuming*, you are creating the *environment*. All along the way, from when that *resource* was taken from the *Earth* to the time you have *consumed* as much of it as you want and then thrown it "away," it has been creating *environment*. The mining equipment that got to the *resource* had to create *environment* by removing trees and topsoil that were in the way, had to burn (*consume*) fuels that created a different recipe for the air *environment*, had to run a lot of water to take the used-up chemicals into the river *environment*. Then the *resource* had to be transported to the refiner, creating a lot of *environment* along the way, and the refiner created more *environment*, and then the manufacturer created still more *environment*, and then the shipper had to create lots more *environment* to package the *resource* so that it would appeal to the *consumer*, who would pay the *money* that it cost for all that *environment* (and *employment* and *resource*). The *consumer* often uses the new *resource* to create more *environment* as well, and then throws it "away" – creating even more *environment*.

3 – POGONOMICS

"We have met the enemy and he is us."
– Pogo

If the *environment* is not to our liking, it is because of our *employment*, our *consumption*, our *debt*, our focus on *money*. It is us – as individuals – who are the enemy.

- It is not due to the "Military-Industrial Complex."
- Or "The Federal Budget."
- Or "Defense Spending."
- Or EXXON.
- Or the Logging Industry.
- It is not even due to McDonald's!



It is due only to our individual *consumption*.

OUR DEMAND.

Prostitution would be the world's loneliest profession without *demand*.

The Medellin Cartel would be a 4-H club without *demand*.

Loggers would be owlophiles without *demand*.

OPEC would be a Solar Energy and Desalinization Consortium without our *demand*.

Japan would be a leader in Third World sustainable development if not for our *demand* ... for sushi, Toshibas, Suzooks, CDs, VCRs, TVs, HDs, RAM, CVCCs...

What sort of *demand*?

Bigger house. Remodelled kitchen. Full employment. Boat. Mountain Bike. Second car. Vacation cabin. Job security. Motor home. Four wheeler. Satellite dish. Microwave. Laptop. Riding mower. Silk blouse. Bigger paycheck. Second income.

Why this *demand*?

Because we have come to believe, or *act as if* we believe, that:

More Is Better

We Must Raise Our Standard of Living

Quality of Life Is Measured by Income

Abundance and Prosperity Are Material Birthrights

Whoever Dies with The Most Toys Wins

We Should Shop Till We Drop

We Deserve It

It's The American Way

We Are Our Jobs

Success Is a Many-Spended Thing

We Can Serve Two Masters – God and Mammon

4 – ECO-ECONOMICS

The Ecology of Values and Value

What do we *value*? Do we *value* our lives? What *value* do we put on our lives? Do we *value* life? Do we *value* the host of life – *Earth*? (Organisms that survive "know" that the health of their host eco-system is vital to their survival; apparently this "knowledge" has escaped cancer cells, humans, and other parasites.) Do we *value* breathable air? Drinkable water? Fertile topsoil? Healthy children? Functioning families? Time to love?

What are your personal *values*?

When our actions are in alignment with our *values*, we experience wholeness – *integrity*.

Money is not only a lien on a physical *resource*, it is also a lien on our personal *resource*: we sold X number of hours of our life to acquire Y dollars. Since *money* is unique to the human species, we can even say that money = human life-energy!

How we spend our life-energy and how we spend *money* are direct measurements of the degree of alignment between our actions and our *values*.

When we spend *money* for a *resource* we must ask: "Is this *money* spent in alignment with my *values*?"

Fulfillment, by its very definition, is a function of knowing when you have *enough*.

The questions to ask: "Am I likely to get fulfillment from this *money* spent in proportion to the *resources* that it represents?"

"Am I likely to get fulfillment from this *money* spent in proportion to my expenditure of my *resource* (my life-energy)?"

"Am I likely to get fulfillment from this *money* spent in proportion to the *environment* that it has created and will create after I am finished *consuming* it?"

What if asking those questions results in spending much less *money*, and yet feeling much more fulfilled and whole?

Savings is *money* not spent, *resources* not *consumed* and *environment* not created. It can instead be used to *consume debt* and reduce dependence on *employment*.

By *saving money*, you maintain the *integrity* of the *Earth*. You do not maintain the *integrity* of the *Earth* by spending *money*, no matter how "green" the product. All *consumers* are "green" *consumers* simply because the color of their *money* is green.

But what will we do if we do not *consume*? Who are we, if not *consumers*?

Answering that question is life's greatest adventure. When we're not *consuming*, we are creating, caring, communicating, communing, conserving, cooperating, being concerned, being conscious. What we have, when we let go of *consuming*, is *integrity* – wholeness. ▲

Joe Dominguez retired at 30 in 1969, having saved enough out of his regular paychecks to live off the interest for the rest of his life. By 1980, he recognized that his greatest service would be to help liberate people from their fear, confusion, and unconsciousness about money. See the box at right for more information about the cassette course that is his vehicle for this basic education about money in our lives.

THE JOY OF KNOWING HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH

Our guest editors for this issue, the members of the New Road Map Foundation (NRM), are a remarkable group of people who preach what they practice – "Transforming Your Relationship to Money and Achieving Financial Independence." That's the title of the cassette course by Joe Dominguez that they distribute. And here's the clincher: they give away all the proceeds from the course – which sells for \$60 – to other non-profits working for positive cultural change. NRM doesn't even pay salaries to its staff – they're all (financially independent) volunteers.

The course includes six cassettes and a workbook, and it walks you through an enlightening and penetrating experience that will not only clarify your relationship with money, but help you figure out what's really important in your life as well. To illustrate, here are some quotes from people who have taken the course and written to NRM about it. You can order it direct from NRM at P.O. Box 15981, Seattle, WA 98115.

"The notion that money is something I exchange my life energy for gave me the power to say no to the unsatisfying, [and] the go-ahead to explore what is fulfilling."
– Lucy Woods, Paonia, CO

"For us the satisfaction of knowing what's enough has been reward in itself. There's no question that we would have been seduced into gradually larger purchases if we hadn't had the clear focus the [New Road Map] program provides."
– Helen Gabel, Mercer Island, WA

"There is no girdle budgeting aspect to this. I never feel deprived. Rather I buy myself and my freedom many times a day."
– Penny Yunuba, Jamaica Plains, MA

"My renewed and enhanced commitment to living my life according to my deepest values and continuing to become more and more of a global citizen has been one of the most meaningful payoffs of the course."
– Tom Clayton, Yakima, WA

"I am going through a subtle metamorphosis from being a consumer to being a conscious shaper of my own destiny."
– Mario Kujawski, Professor
Kent State University, OH

The [financial independence] course has a lot more to do with life than it does with money... [Financial independence] gives us more time to love and be loved."
– Ted Pasternak, Boulder, CO