

Ending banks' control of the economy

A new movement wants to end private banks' control of money creation, circulation and their control of the economy as a whole.

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HELSINKI TIMES

COUNTRIES and people alike paddle in an ever-spiralling whirlpool of debt, resolved to get through it as unscathed as possible without ever seriously embracing the possibility of another reality. One man in Finland is struggling to put forward this other reality to the nation. **Lars Österman**, an economics teacher at several vocational colleges, is setting up a new political party called Suomen Talousdemokratia (Economic Democracy Finland), which proposes "a change in paradigm" for the monetary system – and, indeed, for life as we know it.

Q: How did the idea of creating a new political party occur?

A: After reading many books on the subject, I learnt that the problems we have with public finance are just policy. We really don't have to have these problems. It's a policy! A deliberate policy. It was quite shocking to realise that we live in a world where some people deliberately want it to be this way and that they are in power. I noticed that there was nothing written in Finnish about these things so I started a blog, Suomen Talousdemokraattinen Puolue. The blog attracted a lot of people and we shared ideas. In 2009, we got a small group together and decided to form an association, Suomen Talousdemokratia ry. I had this vision that it should be a political party so that it would be noticed. When you read about the Money Reform Party in the UK, the Canadian Action Party and the New Zealand Democrats for Social Credit, you realise that there have been many similar things happening around the world. I wanted to raise some attention to these things in Finland.

Q: What are the main problems with the current economic and political system?

A: The main issue is that Finland does not have the sovereign right to issue money. It has to borrow it from some bank. All of the money in circulation is somebody's bank credit. And it will only circulate as long as you still owe the bank something. When you have paid off your loan, the money disappears. Unless somebody else borrows money, the level of money will go down, so you need to have people borrowing more and more to keep the system going. As soon as the borrowing decreases, the system gets too little

money. Then we have recessions and big public deficits, and then we need to cut services and close schools and make things lousy. People don't know what the banks are doing. People think that the banks just lend other people's money. They don't know that banks issue completely new money. Banks have a right to create it out of nothing! I suppose the main problem is the indifference of the people. People are indifferent, people are not educated, they're kept busy and lazy. You should somehow be able to get people to march on the streets like in Egypt or in Tunis. It's very hard to get Finns out on the streets.

Q: What economic and political reforms does Talousdemokratia suggest?

A: We need to get a debate going: *Is it right that the state – the people – has to bow down and borrow money created out of nothing from private banks?* To quote **Damon Vrabel**, "This is the civil rights issue of the 21st century!" The state needs to take back the power to issue money. They can control the level of money through spending and taxation. Our party also advocates the "basic income" programme. The basic income would be paid by the state to everyone. Some people think that this would make people lazy. It's a flaw in the thinking if you always expect everyone to run like hell in the hamster's wheel. The basic income would mean fewer social problems, less shop-lifting, less violence, fewer alcohol-related problems, less stress, fewer psychological problems.

Q: How should money be created?

A: It should be a sovereign state's right to create money. Not the private banks'. As to whether money should be backed by something... There are people who are still totally brainwashed by the gold standard. They think that every single cent not backed by gold debases the value of the currency and causes inflation and all of this nonsense. I don't think so. If the state creates the money and people work, creating value for the money, there is nothing wrong with giving the state's money for the value created, is there? It can be backed by the workforce and skills of the people and the nation. This is such a big change of paradigm, so it can't be "issue 9 b in a political programme". This is a new way of thinking: a new way to create revenue for the public sector. The

state wouldn't have to borrow money, tax or collected fees! It could just create the money, issue it and spend it.

Q: What is the main opposition that Talousdemokratia faces in Finland?

A: The "bankers' party" is the main opposition because the bankers will protect their privilege. They have this tremendous power to issue money – it's such a power that they won't easily give it away to anyone and they don't even admit that they have this power! So the bankers will back and give money to politicians to help banks protect their privilege.

Q: Will Talousdemokratia be running in the upcoming elections in April?

A: It's too soon, as our own party. Perhaps in 2015. It de-

pends on whether or not we can collect the 5,000 supporter cards in one year – 365 days. We started in July last summer. To register a new party, you have to get 5,000 cards signed. It has to be a physical piece of paper with a specific weight – 120 grammes/m² – and size A6L. Then you can send them to the Department of Justice and they register you as a new political party (laughs) – it's like the horse and buggy times! It should just be a "click" away. Our people can however be found among the candidates of other parties in the 2011 elections – mainly in Piraattipuolue (the Pirate Party) and Muutos (Change).

Q: How do you see Talousdemokratia's future?

A: As every country gets deeper and deeper in debt, I think there will be a social demand for change and we can offer a solution. Every single party in Finland thinks that to make money the state has to borrow money, collect taxes or charge fees. But this is not sustainable. It will lead to a financial crash and people will suffer. So Talousdemokratia is a solution for any country anywhere who wants to prevent this crash from happening.



Lars Österman is the brains behind the new political party Suomen Talousdemokratia (Economic Democracy Finland).

More info:

<http://talousdemokratia.blogspot.com>
www.talousdemokratia.fi
www.democrats.org.nz

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Job hunting seminars

2 March at 14-16

Tony Eichholz workshop: Pimp my CV

Maximum 12 participants. Bring your CV along to have an expert comment and give advice on how to improve your it.
Register by 1 March.

29 March at 14-16

What's an open application?

Mia Ingman from Arcada explains open application procedures for economists and job seekers with a technical degree.
Register by 28 March.

14 April at 14-16

Tony Eichholz lecture: The next step - job interview

How do you prepare for a job interview? Eichholz gives useful advice.
Register by 13 April

Hygiene proficiency test

19 March at 10

Do the Hygiene proficiency test

Come and do the hygiene proficiency test with Therese Meriheinä, a certified Proficiency Examiner. Fee 20€ to be paid on the spot.
Register by 18 March.

Culture programmes

6 April at 16:30-18

Culture on your way home

Interview with the author Monika Fagerholm by Hufvudstadsbladet's Philip Teir. Monika Fagerholm is a Finland-Swedish author who has published several novels. She received the Runeberg Award in 1994 and the Swedish August prize in 2005. Come and learn more about the author and her literary work. Languages: English and Swedish.
Register by 4 April.

12 April at 17

City Tour around Tölö bay

Stefan Johansson (SFP), member of Helsinki City committee of the City Planning, will take you on a tour around the Tölö bay. Helsinki has many plans for the area and it will undergo many changes in the future. Languages: English and Swedish.
Register by 10 April.

4 May at 14

Exkursjon till Ateneums standardutställning

Luckan ordnar en guidad tur till Ateneums standardutställning på lättförstådd svenska. Luckan organises a guided tour in the standard exhibition in Ateneum. The guide will speak an easily understood Swedish.
Register by 27 April.

Admission fee: 8€. Place: Ateneum, Brunngatan 2, Helsinki. www.ateneum.fi

Language courses

Wednesdays at 14-16

13, 20 and 27 April and 11, 18 and 25 May
Swedish language conversation course

Language teacher Reidar Wasenius offers six lessons where participants get to practice Swedish through conversation. The course is free-of-charge.
Register by 1 April and mention at which level you have been studying Swedish.

All registrations to bridge@luckan.fi or call 040-485 9636

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