

# Interview: February 23, 2016

Interviewed by co-author, Ranger Kidwell-Ross, in the year 2016, economist Jack Lessinger explains the surprising turn taken by the economy after 2009 that he predicted would occur.

RK-R: Hello, this is Ranger Kidwell-Ross, welcoming you to our February 23rd, 2016 telecast from the new, energy-efficient city of Lovinsberg, Colorado. I'll be interviewing economist Jack Lessinger. In 1986, he wrote his first book introducing the Lessinger Theory of Socio-Economics. It also outlined the first of his accurate predictions for the 21st century. Today, Jack is celebrating his 94th birthday.

RK-R: Happy birthday, Jack. Welcome to this table.

JL : Happy to be here, Ranger.

RK-R: You've written that 1900, 1945 and 1960 were landmark dates in the transition to today, 2016. Please tell how you recognized 1900 as an auspicious beginning date.

JL: I'm glad to, Ranger. After 1900, the American people slowly but inexorably embraced a new shared vision. Nineteenth-century Americans had been proud of how much they saved. In stark contrast, the new generation were consumers who believed the saving habit was both old-fashioned and unproductive. Free spending was what they felt would light the way to a new prosperity. Welcome the consumer economy of the Little Kings.

RK-R: Americans became big-time consumers after 1900?

JL: Until the end of World War II, consumer spending continued to be restrained. Blame lingering Victorian attitudes, unskilled and low-paid manual labor, old-fashioned rote education, extreme income inequality, congested cities and

lack of consumer infrastructure, e.g., roads, supermarkets and TV. And we also had to contend with two World Wars and the Great Depression.

RK-R: So, 1900-1945 marked a slow beginning.

JL: Yes. High-flying consumer spending didn't commence until 1945. That's when up to 15 million veterans of World War II led a mad dash to create a very new America. They married and bought houses in a new place to live—suburbia—then filled them with furniture, appliances, cars, boats and much more. Then, they sired millions of future hippies. The new paradigm spread like a happy contagion. Everybody caught it. The vision to “Get it ALL and get it NOW!” allowed us to become the little kings of our own domains.

RK-R: What was significant about 1960?

JL: That's when the consumer-based Little King socio-economy reached its peak, which marked its decade of greatest acceleration. The increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) swelled to its highest rate of the 20th century. The 1960s was also the decade of the hippies. They, too, were symptoms of the climaxing consumer economy. Hippies rebelled against their parents in an outlandish array of instant gratification that included orgies of sex, drugs and alcohol.

RK-R: What we look back on as the time of the hippie movement precipitated a strong reaction.

JL: Two different reactions, actually. There were two notably different beginnings of the transformation to the next shared vision. The Christian Right attacked the hippie version of consumerism, with its promiscuous sex and drugs. At the same time, Rachel Carson's groundbreaking book, “Silent Spring,” heralded and inspired a crop of environmentalists and others interested in a sustainable and responsible world.

RK-R: After the 1960s, history shows that both reactions gained support in every decade.

JL: Still, as late as 2004, most Americans thought we'd continue along old, familiar lines. To slow carbon emissions to acceptable levels, for example, conventional wisdom was that we would reach needed goals by driving smaller hybrid cars, pay a little more in taxes, encourage alternative energy sources. Nothing big. No really earth-shattering changes.

RK-R: In retrospect, though, the world changed rapidly after 2004.

JL: Yes, but 2011 was the critical year.

RK-R: Ah. That's when a brilliant CEO began the construction of a revolutionary new city she named after your term for the concept: Pentropolis.<sup>™</sup>

JL: Yes. Her Pentropolis design became seen as just what we needed to counteract the decentralized planning previously so essential to shopping and consuming—and so disastrous in the fight against global warming.

RK-R: I'd be interested in your view of her thinking.

JL: I see four premises. First, she recognized that the threat of global warming trumped all other issues confronting us. Second, she saw that only energy conservation was a truly effective way to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. She recognized, rightly, that every technological innovation brings its own set of problems.

Third, suburbia had been one of our worst offenders. To sell large, fashionable houses at low prices, builders offered cheap lots at ever greater distances from work. The result: Millions of cars “parked” on thousands of miles of suburban freeways, continuously belched heavy concentrations

of CO<sub>2</sub> and other gases and used increasingly precious hydrocarbon resources. In addition, suburban homes were heated and cooled by coal-fired, extremely dirty energy sources. America led the world in energy usage as well as in many of the other elements of global warming.

Fourth, she saw the enduring value of a new kind of city design that could provide a rural, more caring environment for children.

RK-R: Her Lovinsberg, where we are today, was the first Pentropolis™ to be built.

JL: And in one fell swoop, a single corporation—not a socialist government—showed how to cut suburbia’s enormous contribution to global warming.

RK-R: Is green corporate planning central to the term you coined for this socio-economy, “Responsible Capitalism?”

JL: Green corporate planning actively seeks to produce public benefits. The Pentropolis cures the major ills of suburbia.

RK-R: All factories, offices and shopping centers were located in the very center of the Pentropolis.

JL: All commutes from the populated perimeter to the center are made via mass transit facilities providing sumptuous views, dining, package delivery and fast Internet services. All at low cost, with a small energy footprint.

RK-R: And the concentric periphery of the city offered a series of picturesque, spacious and energy-efficient villages.

JL: Bucolic neighborhoods, alternative energy, good air, controlled use of cars and enlightened accommodations. Tree-lined streets, children playing, birds singing. Responsible Capitalism had arrived.

RK-R: Initially, the concern was smaller profits.

JL: Yet, on the contrary, the company earned huge profits.

RK-R: Since 2011, millions of former suburbanites have migrated to the new cities.

JL: By 2014, previously high-priced suburban homes in formerly great locations had lost much of their value.

RK-R: Believers in the old “location, location, location” were at a loss.

JL: I teach “transformation, transformation, transformation.” As has occurred since the first one in 1845, socio-economic transformation from one socio-economy to the next shifts values at all locations.

RK-R: Yet, 2014 was also a time of incipient depression. Those terrible years are now behind us. May they never return.

JL: Never is a long time. Let’s be content with the decades of vigorous prosperity that surely lie ahead. By 2020, our new shared vision of the good life will be so entrenched that those hard times will be only a distant memory.

RK-R: Thanks, Jack, for the vital part your research has played in minimizing the length of our depressed times.