

**SECTION 6**



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12 photo/Frankie Frost

**CASH CRITIC:** Gerald Armstrong of San Anselmo reflects on how the world would be a better place without money

# Is money the root of problems?

## Critic of cash, credit urges monetary abolition

By Richard Polito

*Independent Journal reporter*

Gerald Armstrong has an idea for dealing with the national debt — write it off. Forget it. It doesn't exist.

It's that easy.

The novel prescription for fixing the fiscal fiasco is only part of Armstrong's larger message that money should be abolished. No more pay checks, no more loan payments, no more taxes, and forget that \$20 you owed your brother-in-law.

Bank presidents would clean up litter. Donald Trump could get a real job. The Financial District would be a ghost town with marble lobbies — and lots of parking.

And it all starts today.

In a rare moment of realism, Armstrong admits today's deadline "is probably not going to be achieved."

## Renouncing cash, credit

Armstrong, self-proclaimed founder of the Organization of United Renunciants, set the date for people who have taken his "pledge of renunciation" to stop using money. Fellow renunciants will renounce all cash and credit, stop taking money, stop paying with money, forgive all their debts and stop keeping financial records.

The critic of credit has already put his money where his doubts are. He gave it all away. And it was more than pocket change.

Armstrong won an \$800,000 settlement in a harassment suit against the Church of Scientology six years ago. Once a member of the inner circle, he is now a vocal critic.

Armstrong doesn't expect everyone to buy in from the start, just "somewhere between 1 and 11 percent."

He's a tad short. Armstrong can count only a handful of friends as converts, but he is trying to get the word out. Detailed proposals have gone out to Bill Clinton, Ross Perot and Pete Wilson (no one has tapped him for an economic advisory post just yet.) He has also written to the New York Times and other mega-media.

Ted Koppel has not called.

## Money considered valueless

Armstrong is not discouraged.

The monetary messiah insists there is much about daily life that will not change. People will still go to work, shop at the market and pick out a new car every few years. They just wouldn't exchange any money along the way.

Money, in Armstrong's eyes, has no value and the existence of money has created entire industries that do nothing more than transfer mythical essences of value from one account to another.

In Armstrong's cashless Utopia, there would be total employment because people could do jobs they wanted to do and companies could employ more workers because they would not have to pay them. Farmers would still farm. Autoworkers would still make cars. Sewer workers would still shovel sludge.

And Disneyland would no longer charge admission.