

# ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND THE GREEN MOVEMENT

"Economic Justice and the Green Movement" was the title of the 22nd annual conference of the Council of Georgist Organizations held August 21-25, 2002 in London, Ontario, Canada. John Fisher, chairman of the Ontario/Quebec chapter of Common Ground-USA, and his fellow Canadians put together a superb program, and selected speeches will be printed in later issues of GroundSwell. Working with Council of Georgist Organizations Vice. Pres. Alanna Hartzok, Ontario host John Fisher used his connections to the Green Party to find speakers to address potential economic and environmental relationships between the Green Party activities and the Georgist movement goals. (Fisher was the Green Party Member of Parliament candidate in his Elgin-Middlesex-London riding in year 2000); Hartzok was the Green Party candidate in year 2001 for US Congress from her Pennsylvania district).

Frank de Jong, the leader of the Green Party of Ontario, Canada, addressed the conferees at the banquet Saturday evening, Aug. 24. He was introduced by Frank Peddle from Ottawa, Ontario, who is Vice President of the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation of New York City and who is a member of the Ontario/Quebec chapter of Common Ground-USA. De Jong has been elected since 1986 to serve as the Spokesperson for the Green Party of Ontario. De Jong was the principal spokesman and main coordinator of the Candian Green Party election campaigns in 1995 and 1999. He was active in the 1980s anti-nuclear activities and is active in sustainable forestry and organic agriculture activities. De Jong received his degree in music from the University of Western Ontario and is an elementary school teacher. He also is a member of the Ontario/Quebec chapter of Common Ground-USA.

De Jong addressed four topics during his speech at the conference banquet: 1) The Green movement and the Green Party. 2) The Simultaneous Policy Initiative promoted in a book by John Bunzl from the United Kingdom, where churches, policy individuals, politicians, academics, etc., would register to simultaneously cease some activity, all to act on the same day everywhere. Unless all countries agreed to act on the matter simultaneously (i.e., shut down tax shelters, levying a Tobin tax on currency exchanges, banning nuclear weapons, levying fees on unearned income), others don't have to. 3) Green economics. 4) The relationship between the Georgists and Greens.

Some of the de Jong's comments follow.

The Green Party is in its fourth decade, though its roots go back to Aldo Leopold and Thoreau. In the 1960s the Hippie movement centered on rejection of the consumer culture. That collapsed, but popped up in the 1970s in health food stores, in the peace movement, in the womens' movement, in the wind turbine groups, and environmental activists. Then, though disjointed, this time they had an economic base and they had a structure. So in the 1980s, coalition building emerged, in the Canadian Peace Alliance, in the Voice of Women, in the Canadian environmental movement, in the Canadian Wind Energy Association, and in the Solar Energy Society of Canada. Disappointed at not being able to make a bigger impact on political

leaders, they decided to go "whole hog", and roughly in the 1980s they started a political party to challenge the powers that be at the ballot box.

The Green Party basically started in New Zealand with the Values Party in the 1970s. In Eastern Canada it was called the Small Party after "Small Is Beautiful". In England they had the Ecology Party which they later named the Green Party. Germany was where the Greens first came to international stature. In Germany, the four pillar groups were Women, Peace, Ecology, and Social Justice, which got together and they attained five percent of the vote.

Green economics means what you have to do in the economic system so that humans can live in balance with nature. There are five green components to address in economics. We need alternative economic indicators. The GDP (gross domestic product) doesn't know how to add and subtract. We need a social and ecological portion along with the fiscal quotient. Merge those three and then you get the genuine progress indicator. Now when government wants to pay off fiscal debt, they grind up some more nature or trash a few more communities, thus deepening the ecological and social debt to pay off the fiscal debt. We need a Green economics mechanism and tool box to make sure we can keep those debts in check. The rationale for Green economics is full cost accounting. The ticket price has to reflect the true cost of the product. When you buy a pound of coffee, you can pay two bucks for regular monoculture coffee grown where a couple of thousand people were evicted from a rain forest, or you can pay \$8 to \$12 a pound for coffee from shade grown, fair trade, organically grown coffee.

We have to go through every aspect of society to do that kind of full cost accounting numbers crunching. A standing forest has no worth, but when you cut it down, somebody gets rich. When that is gone, we are poorer. We need to add the moral side to economics. How do you monetize things -- air, water, endangered whooping cranes, etc.? Once we have our alternative cost accounting green indicators in place, we can start doing some real green economics. We can increase the list of sin taxes of alcohol and tobacco to add higher taxes on eco-sins -- things that are destroying our planet and our health (pesticides, fossil fuels, etc.) In the meantime, you have a tax free list: bicycles, solar equipment, musical instruments, books, non-motorized recreational vehicles. In Canada we have a 15% consumption tax, of which half is provincial and half is federal. When you buy virgin paper at \$4 a ream, it is an uneven playing field with when you pay \$10 to \$12 for recycled or recovered paper.

The cornerstone of Green economics, aside from the land value taxation idea of Henry George, is the Green tax shift, which is very accessible and people understand that. It means "tax bads, not goods," or "Tax resources, not incomes." The rationale is that industry always follows the path of least tax resistance. Industry doesn't deliberately start out to grind (continued on page 14)

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up more nature, but they focus on providing a product and paying the payroll, and providing for the shareholders. The business people are morally neutral on destroying the planet or not. In the Green tax shift, put taxes on the good stuff and industry will follow. We need to educate, tax, and then legislate. Educate as to what is right and what is wrong, and then we apply the green taxes to move a lot of industry in the right ways, and then legislate to clean up the recalcitrant folks who refuse to do what is "good for them".

Community economics means we have to survey the community, formally and informally, and figure out what services your community can provide and what are the goods and services that your community needs. Then match them up. When a Walmart or McDonalds comes to your community, currency leaves your community. When you think of community economics, think of a bathtub. When the bathtub is full of water, everybody is happy, but when the bathtub has too many leaks, like with a McDonalds or a Walmart, you have to keep pouring more water into the bathtub. You end up hurting your education and health care system in order to have a bathtub of water, instead of plugging the hole in the bathtub by getting rid of Walmart or McDonalds. Go to the local furniture maker, and the profit stays in the community and you have social cohesion.

The fourth thing is how the Georgist movement can impact not only the Green Party but all kinds of other organizations. The Georgist movement is brains without a body. The Green Party and

lots of organizations like it are bodies without brains. Environmentalists can work for days on growing organic veggies, but if you don't understand the economics of agriculture, you are lost. The determining factor in organic agriculture is the amount of labor that you put forth. In petro-chemical agriculture, the determining factor is the amount of land, capital and pesticides you have. That is the same for forestry. The determining factor for organic or collective forestry is the amount of labor, selective logging or allowing small amounts of forestry to grow wild. If you do the math of transportation, bicycles are faster than cars. Figure out how much time it takes to save up money to buy the car, how much time it takes to save up money to spend on roads through taxes. If you add it up, you don't have to spend all that time at work earning enough money for the car.

The Georgists can help other people and organizations by providing a vision of how to get out of this mess. Our agriculture system is seriously flawed, our forestry system, our economic, our schools, our health care are in danger of collapse, our eco-system and our whole biosphere -- the environmental refugees now exceed the economic or victims of war refugees. We have very serious problems. How do we get out of this mess? Learning the Georgist economics is indeed the way out for myself and other people. We have to press our ideas onto the general public and certainly on decision makers. Kick at the darkness until it bleeds daylight, and that is what Greens, and Georgists and thousands of other folks have to do.