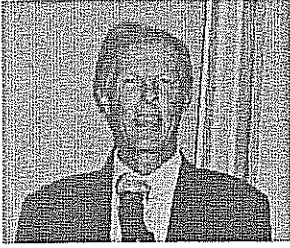


FRANK DE JONG SPOKE AT CGO BANQUET



Stand for Office, and Get Your Message Heard was the title of the speech Frank de Jong of Toronto, Ontario, Canada gave at the Aug. 5, 2011 banquet at the Council of Georgist Organizations conference in Minneapolis. According to Wikipedia, he has run for office 13 times, 3 times as a Georgist.

(The following are notes on his speech by your GroundSwell editor.)

After a lot of research you become a Georgist. Now you have two choices. You can become a passive Georgist and get the newsletter and come to conferences. Or you can become an active Georgist. I had been an active environmentalist. Running in an election is one way to make contact with people. Decide if you are going to get the word out personally or locally or state or province wide or internationally. There are different applications of Georgist theory at all levels. Then decide if you are going to be apocalyptic or use a sneak attack and drop a word here and there. That is how John Fisher got me into this, by slipping me a paper every month or two and talking to me a little bit.

Decide on the tone of how to approach someone – plant a seed and step back or go right in for the kill. Another question is whether we will take the hard line or consider it just the finishing touches on how to make our society and economy really hum. I am not convinced that our society has a lack of social cohesion to weather an economic storm. I see social cohesion in North America. There is a lot of slack in our system. Maybe we will have to give up one of our three cars. Yes, we have poverty, but is being a hard liner effective? If we use the Henry George idea we can get rid of poverty, and people could make a contribution to society.

Is the Henry George theorem inclusive enough to bring everyone into the definition of “us”? Do we want to modernize the present economy? Will it deliver and achieve for us what you want? We want to be inclusive to every human but the economic system is still set up to exclude people. The goal should be to be inclusive with our economic program.

Decide on what you are going to say and how to say it, and then decide if you are going to be passionate or earnest. You have to learn people skills. You have to ask questions and actually listen. You have to draw people out. Give them a chance to say something. Stop and let them process it. Sometimes it takes maybe five years for them to get the idea or maybe they will get it in a minute and a half.

If you decide to be an economist for Henry George, that is what I consider myself. I have chosen electoral politics. Political parties don't usually lead in change. Society is run by people in institutions in dynamic relationships: faith, corporate, educational, academic, business, and arts. Government is only one of the sectors in a dynamic society. Another realization is that political parties are made up of people. It has been commented that 10 percent are policy people, 10 percent are process people, and 80 percent are just people there to see what is going on.

It is almost impossible to talk about Henry George to every person in the country. Political parties are one place you can talk to people. But political parties have a high turnover. Most people

don't last more than a few years. Erich Jacoby-Hawkins and John Fisher finally got resolutions passed by the Green Party in Ontario. John sent an email to the leader, Elizabeth May, and she got it and read it.

The next thing is you have to develop people skills. You mingle and are inclusive. The election is every 2-4 years. Before the election it gives you time to campaign and do committee work. It gives you access to people that otherwise you don't have. As you run as a candidate you get better at it. I have run 13 times. John has run 5 times. After I became a Georgist it gave me an economic program that compliments my Greens perspective. Use the period before getting yourself nominated to start getting out there. Ask people to set up coffee meetings. You can tailor your message to Greens, poverty, or business groups. You can get to community leaders. You can phone up the minister and introduce yourself and set up time to have coffee. You can get to be a speaker at service clubs or the Chamber of Commerce or business improvement associations. When you become a nominated candidate, you have a mandate and people expect you to phone them up. You can try to get endorsements from these people. You can explain about shifting taxes off of buildings and onto land values. If someone endorses you that is great to post on your website and put on your literature.

I spoke at the Toronto Organic Agricultural Organization and the president of the chapter was impressed with my spiel. She asked if I would like to go on an internet TV station. She set up a one-half hour interview on that channel. They did a copy and paste of my interview and posted it on You Tube.

When election day is near you get to debate before 200-400 voters who want to hear what the candidates have to say. When I say “Pay for what you burn, not for what you earn” and “Don't punish people for working”, it throws the other candidates off and makes people think. Explain the Henry George theorem in common language. We all have skills sets and I consider myself a popularizer of Henry George. When you are a candidate at the podium, though, you shouldn't rant about Henry George. You have to mix up your comments with other issues – green energy, electric trains.

Every idea has to be attached to a person delivering the message. Many political parties and organizations are always waiting for a messiah. You have got to do it yourself. As a candidate, you are fragile and need support. Donations support is important.

Toronto has a population of 13 million and 44 wards. It would be fabulous for us to have a candidate in every ward. Losing an election is lonely. Coming to these conferences is empowering and recharges the battery.

(Editor's note: Frank de Jong is the former head of the Green Party of Ontario. He is a frequent candidate for political office, most recently for City Council in Ward 18 in Toronto. He may be emailed at fdejong@sympatico.ca) <<