

## HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS OF THE GEORGIST MOVEMENT IN EASTERN CANADA (MAINLY ONTARIO)

by John Fisher, Rodney, Ontario, Canada

**THE EARLY 1900s.** The Town of Weston (now in N.W. Toronto) experimented with site value taxation in the 1930s. Site value maps were made using landowners' own valuations which were linked to buying/selling figures. However, WW II brought the experiment to a halt.

In the early part of the century, Georgist ideas were popular in Canada, especially in the West (see Alberta's Heritage, Land Value Taxation, Oct. 1962). In Ontario, Premier E.C. Drury of the United Farmers of Ontario got close to implementing Georgist principles (see excerpt from E. C. Drury, Agrarian Idealist, by Charles Johnson.)

Active Ontario Georgists of the time were Arthur and Ernest Farmer and Arthur Roebuck (later to become Senator). The School of Economic Science was founded in 1938. Also in 1938, the Single Tax Association of Canada hosted the 13th Henry George Congress in Toronto.

**THE RISE OF GEORGISM IN THE '60S AND '70S.** The School of Economic Science had a staff (mostly part time) of over 100. Graduates from Basic Economics, Protection or Free Trade, etc. formed the Alumni Group. The Square Deal was the monthly alumni publication until the late '70s with John Fisher (Dec. 1962) being just one of the many contributors.

Activities included submissions to the Smith (1967) and later Blair Commissions on Taxation. Numerous letters to the editor were printed. Alumni members were on radio and many politicians, including Conservative M.P. Paul Hellyer (1973) and Liberal M.P. Michell Sharpe visited the School of Economic Science office in Toronto.

A major project in the early '70s was the Port Credit Project spearheaded by Malcolm McCarthy. An extensive site value assessment and taxation report was done with the cooperation and support of the town of Port Credit (west of Toronto) and resolutions from over 30 Ontario municipalities.

Very active Georgists during this period were Art Adamthwaite, Craig Cringen, Tim Fielding, Laurie Mannell, Helen Nesbit, and Peter Vanneggelen. Other supporters and activists were in the hundreds.

**GEORGIST REBIRTH IN THE LATE '80S AND '90S.** The Canadian Research Committee on Taxation (CRCT) made several submissions to the Ontario and federal governments (i.e., Peterborough and the Site Value Connection - Ontario Ministry of the venue).

Site Value Taxation studies were done in Rodney (1991) and after amalgamation, Aldborough (1997). The Two-Tier Property Tax Committee in Peterborough (Mal McCarthy) produced the Peterborough Report (1991).

Tax reform support was received from the City of Ottawa (Frank Peddle.) Peddle also wrote a book, Cities and Greed (1994).

Mal McCarthy was on the Working Group (Property Tax) with the Fair Tax Commission (1992).

Frank Peddle, as Research Director of the CRCT, produced the City of Montreal Two Rate Impact Study (1998) and follow-up

publications to the Ontario Fair Tax Commission Report (Henry George and the End of Tax Commissions) and the Montreal Bedard Report (The Missing Link in Municipal Restructuring).

Recently, due to the efforts of John Fisher, Georgist economic philosophy has been largely accepted by the Ontario Green Party. The "Tax Shift" (building value to site value) is now found in the GPO Election Platform and in many Green Party brochures.

Although Conservatives, liberals and the New Democratic Party have all rejected site value case studies in the past, it seems the next government (Liberal?) may give more attention to the wholistic Tax Shift approach as recommended by Pembina Institute, National round Table on Economics (NRTEE), Center for Integral Economics and the Green Party. The Site Value Tax Shift is either a part of this wholistic approach or has a sympathetic ear within these organizations.

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