

Letters From Our Readers

The Term "Free Trade" Antagonizes Potential Allies

Ole Lefman has suggested (GJ #90) that as most people have no concept of true free trade, Georgists should not use the term. His suggestion that free trade is no longer an attractive trademark is probably one of the greatest understatements of the century. In the UK and Southern Ireland the term conjures up visions of ports blocked by people protesting the export of live animals which will be handled and slaughtered in conditions that are illegal in the exporting countries. This industry, which would not be viable without a colossal subsidy, is carried out in the name of Free Trade. There are many other examples of such abuse. He ends his excellent article by asking what Georgists should do about this.

It seems that the word "free" should be replaced by something nearer to its original meaning. But, the ones that spring to mind have already been coined by other organizations. "Fair trade" sounds like protectionism — as it is used by charities to market Third World goods which have not been made by exploited labor. "Ethical trade" is used by both environmentalists and financial organizations. "Just trade" would probably suit — it would at least suggest the concept of justice, and invite further questions. Any of these terms would be better than "Free trade", which has the effect of closing the minds of those who would be most likely to support us. — *Margaret Harrington, Brooklyn, Hants, England*