

Progress in Germany

For those of you who, like me, like to hear about Georgist tendencies outside of the English-speaking world, I have some modestly good news. Having lived for twelve years in Stuttgart, south Germany, I have finally located an organization of potential allies. The *Seminar Fuer Freiheitliche Ordnung* (loosely translated as "Society for a Liberal Social Order) is a grouping which advocates the public collection of rent, and which organized what was for me a surprisingly high-academic-level event late in 1997 to commemorate the centenary of George's death. Unfortunately they also advocate compensation for recent purchasers of real estate affected by sudden hikes in the rate of LVT, but I am now working on them to show the absurdity of that. Another unfortunate piece of intellectual baggage they carry is the notion, stemming from Silvio Gesell, that the hoarding of money due to liquidity preference has a significant economic effect, and their propaganda concentrates on this rather than the Georgist message. Again, that could change.

The centenary event was addressed by a young Swiss, Dr. Maarten Willemsem [a Graduate of the HGI's *Principles of Political Economy* – Ed.] who impressively expounded Georgism and to my delight declared his great enthusiasm for it. Mason Gaffney's address to the liberal club in Zurich was what got him going and he has since founded his own Georgist campaigning body.

Given the strength of the German economy until recently, it was extremely difficult to interest people in Henry George, but now ears are more open. The country's economic woes in any case are largely due to the orgy of speculative investment in the former East Germany, and our prospects may improve if the present coalition is kicked out at the election in September. The Greens want the local property tax to be pure LVT. — *George Morton*