

# ***Gelebte Weihnachtstagung/ Living the Christmas Conference*** **Society for the Preservation of the General Anthroposophical** **Society of 1923 and 1925**

## **April/May 2006 Update**

In my last letter I reported on the fate of five member motions to be presented at the April 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> annual members' meeting. Continuing a recent and disturbing trend, Paul Mackay wrote letters turning them all away. When the bringers of the motions replied that they would turn to the court to secure their legal right to have them heard, he wrote back promising that he would take up the motions, after all, at an extraordinary members' meeting scheduled to begin at 2 pm., one hour before the start of the Annual General Meeting on Saturday, April 8. The Executive Council does not have the legal right to suppress member motions, neither according to our society's Principles and Statutes, nor according to Swiss law.

This formal, written reversal seemed a positive step, even though the hour allotted to hearing, discussing, and voting on the five motions was not nearly enough. What actually happened during that hour at the Goetheanum, though not a complete surprise to some, was, nevertheless, deeply disappointing: Despite the assurance Paul Mackay gave in his official letter that the motions would be presented (*behandelt*), which means read to the members, freely discussed, and then voted on, individual Executive Council members brought "countermotions" (*Nichteintretensanträge*) against every single one of the motions, moving that they not be heard, and asking the members to vote in support of not hearing them, which most did. To help him dispose of the motions quickly, Paul Mackay claimed the Council's "countermotions" were "procedural" motions, and as such needed to be voted on right away with no discussion allowed, which successfully suppressed protests and questions, and any sort of meaningful exchange on the issue. The fact that the Council's tactic of the "countermotion" is actually used only in politics, and even there never for the wholesale suppression of motions, and has no place in societies such as ours, was not mentioned.

The image that clearly emerges is that of an executive council that does not feel in any way accountable to the membership or the laws of its society or its country, and, perhaps even worse, does not hesitate to go back on its word and "change the rules of the game" when it is to its advantage. Furthermore, Paul Mackay called the members' willingness to go to court to protect their legal members' rights "blackmail" (*Erpressung*), and Heinz Zimmermann claimed these members were "terrorizing" the Society. Terms such as these have been applied to those who do not go blindly along with the Council for some years, and, unfortunately, many members who are not independent thinkers have believed them.

Meaningful discussion, exploration of issues, was not possible at the regular, 3 ½ - hour Annual General Meeting, either, because, ever since the December 2002 meeting, members have had to hand in all oral contributions in written form in advance of the meeting, and may not speak for longer than three minutes.

Right after the meeting, at a nearby hotel, about 60 members met for an open discussion sponsored by the **Living the Christmas Conference Society** or *Gelebte Weihnachtstagung*. Members agreed that at this meeting, open exchange was prevented more strongly and by more ingenious methods than ever before, and that the only antidote is free, open discussion elsewhere, among as many members as possible. Only this can lead members to reconfirm, and pledge renewed support to, the ideals of Anthroposophy – never more important than now, since current leadership is so tragically ignoring these ideals.

Christiane Marks