

Fredy Perlman: An Appreciation

reprint from FE #321, October 1985

George Bradford (David Watson)

It is with great sorrow that we announce the passing of our friend and comrade, Fredy Perlman, who died while undergoing heart surgery in Detroit on July 26, 1985.

Radical means “at the root,” and such was the radical perspective of Fredy Perlman. As in theory, so in one’s practical activity, one’s life. The problem was to exercise one’s freedom appropriately to become a “masterless” human being, to overcome the split between thought and action.

The seriousness with which he confronted this problem led Fredy to many important decisions, notably the decision to leave the United States in the wake of the [1962] Cuban missile crisis, the decision to abandon his university teaching job at the end of the 1960’s, and to create, with his wife Lorraine and others, Black and Red and the Detroit Printing Co-op.

Fredy was often an animating influence in our circle because he was courageous enough, masterless enough, to follow his instincts. He was not afraid to recognize the consequences of his discoveries.

Our community, being far greater than the sum of the individuals who make it up, is much diminished by his untimely passing. But cloth remains to be spun. Two days before his death, he was working on a Black & Red project, mailing out a book of poetry. He would, and we should, expect no less of those of us who survive him.

This appreciation of Fredy’s work is appropriate for the *Fifth Estate* to the degree in which this publication is a forum of radical social thought. As an accurate expression of the feelings of our community, it says next to nothing about our friend, about his physical presence among us, his preposterous jokes and pointed stories, the sound of his voice, his handshake and his unique way of greeting people, and so many other aspects of his life. This is what is difficult, impossible for us to write, but we have all sensed as we hold his books and discuss his ideas, that somehow they stand on their own, and we’ve still lost our friend.

fifth Estate

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