

CHRIS FREEMAN

Funeral tribute by Geoff Oldham, 26th August, 2010

We are here today to celebrate the life of a truly remarkable man: Chris Freeman. Chris was warm-hearted, modest, tolerant, kind and optimistic man. He was generous with his time, concerned for other people, especially those in need. His gentleness, however, did not prevent him from being intellectually tough and decisive. He had a razor sharp mind and could make even the most complex issues seem deceptively simple. He also had the ability to combine theory with practise in all aspects of his life.

I remember in particular, a meeting that we both attended in Buenos Aires on innovation in Latin America. The meeting was becoming very heated and fractious when Chris asked for the floor. In a brilliant intervention he clarified the issues, resolved the differences, and showed the way forward. In the process he gave pertinent quotations from sources as varied as Borges and the Bible. For a moment the participants at the meeting were stunned, they then broke into loud applause. It was Chris at his best.

Each of us has our own memories and anecdotes about Chris and on how he made an impact on our lives. I first met Chris forty-five years ago at the OECD in Paris. It was a meeting that changed my life. This was not only because it led to my being invited to join Chris at Sussex University at the start of the Science Policy Research Unit, but because of all the admirable qualities which Chris possessed and which over the next forty-five years I tried, mostly unsuccessfully, to emulate.

In addition to the effect Chris had on our lives as individuals, we should recognise the enormous impact he had in providing intellectual legitimacy to the field of science, technology and innovation policy. At the time when he started SPRU there were many who argued that it was inappropriate for a university to engage in policy studies. That is no longer true. There can be few people in this field, world wide, who have not been influenced by Chris, either as a mentor, teacher, or by his writings.

Chris also wanted to see his and the work of others in SPRU, have an impact on decision-making. We spent much time together discussing how best to achieve this objective. He was always pleased when there was evidence that SPRU's work had an impact.

Brenda and I were neighbours of the Freeman family in Kingston Village, and we got to know Peggotty and the children well. We helped them build and then swam in their swimming pool, timorously shooed their geese into their pens at night if the family was away, and watched England win the World Cup on their colour TV. It was evident to all that Chris was a loving and proud father. We are also fortunate to have known Maggie. And Chris has had the blessing of the kind and caring love of Carlotta, who was also his partner in their further development of the long wave theories of innovation.

As a husband, father, colleague and friend, Chris will be missed by us all. He has enriched our lives and our world. Thank you, Chris.