

Daniel Freeman, a founding member of the Workers League, dies at the age of 84

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13 February 2019

Daniel Freeman, a founding member of the US Workers League and lifelong supporter of the International Committee of the Fourth International, died in New York City on February 5. He was 84 years old.

Danny, as he was known to family, friends and comrades, was born in Brooklyn on July 3, 1934, and brought up in the Bronx, where his family moved when he was still a toddler. Except for a few years in Seattle in the early 1960s, he was a lifelong New Yorker.

Introduced to the ideas of Marxism while he was a student at Columbia University, Danny joined the Socialist Workers Party, which was at that time the Trotskyist movement in the United States, allied with the International Committee of the Fourth International. When the SWP abandoned Trotskyism, Danny defended the continuity of the revolutionary movement with the formation of the Workers League. Though he withdrew from active participation as a member of the WL (the predecessor organization of the Socialist Equality Party) in late 1972, he remained politically supportive.

Under the impact of the post-WWII economic boom and the ideological pressures it brought to bear on those fighting for a revolutionary perspective, the SWP was moving sharply to the right just as Danny joined. This party, founded with the assistance of Trotsky, had played the key role in the formation of the ICFI in 1953, when James P. Cannon wrote the historic Open Letter to the World Trotskyist movement, opposing the liquidationist faction led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. By the late 1950s, however, the SWP was proposing to reunify with the Pabloites.

The next few years were critical, and Danny played an important role during this period. I also joined the Trotskyists, meeting Danny Freeman in early 1958.

Several years later, we both joined the minority faction in the SWP, led by Tim Wohlforth, which opposed the SWP's reunification with the Pabloites and its break with the International Committee in 1963.

We remained in the SWP with the intention of fighting for the program of the ICFI. However, in 1964, the nine pro-IC members, including Danny, were expelled from the party for demanding an open discussion on the entry of the Pabloite Lanka Sama Samaja Party into a bourgeois coalition government in Sri Lanka.

Wohlforth and the others who were expelled founded the American Committee of the Fourth International (ACFI), and began publishing the mimeographed fortnightly *Bulletin of International Socialism*.

The ACFI was invited, as a sympathizing section of the IC, to its Third Congress, held in London in April 1966. Danny was one of three ACFI delegates to that Congress.

In November 1966, the members of the American Committee for the Fourth International founded the Workers League. Danny was among its founding members, alongside Wohlforth, this writer, and veteran Trotskyists Bill and Jean Brust.

The Workers League launched the printed *Bulletin* newspaper, and turned to the growing struggles of the working class.

The WL intervened in militant strike struggles, as well as in the antiwar movement and the struggle against poverty and the heritage of Jim Crow discrimination. Danny became the labor editor of the *Bulletin*. Writing under the name Dan Fried, he authored numerous articles and two important pamphlets on labor struggles, *Steel: Lessons of the Past*, *Program for Today*, and *Showdown on the Docks*. He was well known, in the Newark, New Jersey branch

and elsewhere, for his ability to draw upon the lessons of the history of the international working class.

The early 1970s saw the winding down of the middle class antiwar protest movement, the collapse of the mass civil rights movement, and the betrayal of the strike wave that crested in 1970-71. The sharp change in the political situation required a deepening of the theoretical and political struggle against Pabloite revisionism, which had played a major role in petty-bourgeois radical politics. Instead, Wohlforth—who was himself disoriented by the break-up of the mass petty-bourgeois protest movement—sought to evade political problems by resorting to frenetic activism. His political conduct and behavior toward members became increasingly arbitrary, disrespectful and even contemptuous.

Danny Freeman, a very sensitive person, found it difficult to function in the environment created by Wohlforth's erratic behavior. He left the Workers League in December 1972, but he remained sympathetic and in touch with former comrades. When Tim Wohlforth resigned from the party and immediately rejoined the SWP, denouncing his whole political past, Danny resolutely defended the Workers League and the International Committee.

Danny's loyalty was first and foremost to Trotskyist principles and program. When he became aware of the ICFI majority's break with the Workers Revolutionary Party in 1985-86, Danny studied the documents written by David North and informed the Workers League of his agreement and solidarity with the IC majority.

Over the following 33 years Danny maintained close relations with the movement. He was especially encouraged by the development of the *World Socialist Web Site*, and followed its work and expansion over the past 20 years.

Danny returned to school in the 1980s, obtaining a law degree and practicing for a number of years, focusing on civil rights and police brutality cases. He went on to become an Administrative Law Judge in New York City's Parking Violations Bureau, where he worked for more than a decade—and where he ran into difficulties with his supervisors, because he insisted on treating fairly the motorists who appeared before him to appeal fines for parking tickets.

Danny was also a devoted chorister, and sang in the amateur St. Cecilia Chorus in New York for more than

three decades.

In the most recent period, Danny continued to read the WSWWS every day as long as his health permitted. He continued to support the SEP financially, came to most public meetings, as well as to several larger SEP conferences. He also commented prolifically on articles on the WSWWS. In more than 200 contributions of this kind, he fiercely defended the basic principles of Marxism.

Danny is survived by his wife, Marilyn Crockett, his sister Lucy and niece Cathy, as well as his stepson Jeff and stepdaughter Pam. The many members and supporters of the SEP who met Danny over the years, as well as workers and youth joining the ranks of the Trotskyist movement today and in the future, will honor his contributions in the struggle for socialism.



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