

David Fleming (1940 – 2010)

David Fleming a great friend and supporter of organic farming and ORC died suddenly on the 29th November. He was one of the most innovative and imaginative thinkers in the environmental movement; his perceptions and analysis were way ahead of others on so many issues. He wrote elegantly and often beautifully and his influence on the radical thinking of this organisation was profound.

I first met David when he became treasurer and then chairman of the Soil Association and he became a key part in its regeneration. Before that he had been a founder member, treasurer and press officer of the Ecology (later Green) Party. He played a leading role in the creation of the ground breaking “The Other Economic Summit” (TOES) which led to the formation of the New Economics Foundation.

So we had known each other for several years before he outlined to me his ideas on the “lean economy”. Both David Astor (our founding trustee) and I were captured by Fleming’s profound insights and analysis and the power of his writing. Through EFRC (as we were called then) we set up and funded The Lean Economy Initiative as a platform for his work.

Starting in 1996 a series of publications, meetings and articles emerged conveying ideas that had a significant impact on some environmentalists and people working for change but which were controversial and dismissed by others. These included what is now called “Peak Oil”, tradable personal carbon quotas (now called TEQs), a reassessment of the role of households and communities and the core analysis of the lean economy.

David was not the originator of all of these ideas but he set them in a coherent and powerful overarching analysis and promoted them so that they have been taken up and adopted by others. So much so, that even though he died before completing what he regarded as his definitive book, his ideas will live on and will have an impact.

Above all, he was a thoroughly nice guy. I was proud to be his friend and grateful for his friendship.

Lawrence Woodward