

Frank Girard: In Memorial

Regular readers of Red & Black Notes will also be familiar with the Grand Rapids based publication [The Discussion Bulletin](#). I was deeply saddened to hear last month of the passing of Frank Girard, the long time editor of the publication. Frank stopped publishing the Discussion Bulletin in July 2003 citing his age and the increasing importance of the internet, which he felt made publications like the Discussion Bulletin less and less relevant. He planned continued involvement in the socialist movement. His death at 77 is a felt loss to his many friends and comrades.

Frank worked as a machine operator and later a high school English teacher, but more important was his membership from the 1940s on in the Socialist Labor Party, the organization of followers of American socialist leader Daniel De Leon. Frank ran for political office several times in Michigan, but argued he was "running against capitalism." Unsurprisingly, he was never elected.

In the early 1980s, as part of a seemingly endless series of schisms in the SLP, Frank was expelled from the party along with much of the Grand Rapids section (in 1991 he published a short history of the party along with another former Socialist Labor Party member Ben Perry). In 1983, Frank began to publish the Discussion Bulletin.

The Discussion Bulletin was unlike many other socialist publications in that it was simply a forum for discussion. Its contents were, aside from Frank's editorial remarks and occasional contributions, entirely from its readership. It was also a model of regularity for socialist publications, appearing every two months like clockwork for twenty years.

Frank's other strength was that he was genuinely committed to discussion and debate in what he called the non-market socialist sector, in which he included De Leonists, World Socialists, council and left communists, and class struggle anarchists among others. Throughout its existence the Discussion Bulletin featured, unedited, contributions from all of the above sectors. And although he never completely broke with De Leonist politics and all its incumbent weaknesses, but which had played such an important role in his life, Frank was also prepared to learn from discussion, and admit when he was wrong. Frank was a non-sectarian in the best sense of the word.

I met Frank in 1999 when he was a member of the Grand Rapids Industrial Workers of the World General Membership Branch. That a member of the "Detroit IWW" might rejoin the Chicago branch suggested an ongoing commitment to struggle for a socialist future.

The cessation of publication by the Discussion Bulletin left a hole. Frank's passing leaves a much larger one.

Neil F. /Red & Black Notes