

PERSONAL TRIBUTE TO JOHN PEARCE

Alan Kay

John Pearce was a close friend, a colleague and a source of inspiration. I shall miss his patience, his humour and his wisdom. He strode through life...with original ideas that he put into practice...with a strong sense of values and social justice...and with an ability to include and support the most vulnerable in society.

He had little patience with misguided authority and self-justifying power structures. He was *always* on the side of the common folk.

I first met John in 1988 when I applied for a job with Community Business Scotland (CBS) and we went out for a coffee at the People's Palace in Glasgow. I think he wanted to check me out. After the coffee we went on a visit to the hard-pressed Ferguslie Park housing estate in Paisley and he explained that what was lamentable was not that places like Ferguslie Park existed, but that they seemed to be allowed to continue to exist...

He converted me to a form of community development based on the need for local people to take charge of their own economic activity. By helping local communities to do this, we are empowering them.

John has inspired and influenced many people throughout his life. He was an activist in the Community Development Programme in the early 1970s in Cumbria. He then worked tirelessly on promoting and developing community businesses in Glasgow and the West of Scotland. He established and ran Strathclyde Community Business which was the first development unit supporting the growing community business movement in Scotland. That led to the founding of Community Business Scotland in the early 1980s and the Scottish Community Enterprise Investment Fund.

After leaving SCB in the early 1990s he became self-employed and worked on ways community enterprise could account for their social purpose. This led to the development of social accounting and audit and work with the New Economics Foundation and others.

He had an agile mind coupled with a curiosity and sense of fairness which impressed nearly everyone he came into contact with. He truly was a social entrepreneur but with an understanding that lasting community change would only be achieved if it involved collective action – people working with each other for the common good.

Over the years he and I worked closely together - in odd places from Shetland to Wales, from Newcastle to Liverpool; and with the occasional trip abroad on European research projects.

I learnt a lot from John as he always behaved with integrity and showed me ways in which we can help others, maintain a set of values and do interesting work – all at the same time!

For me John is irreplaceable and I look back on the work we did together over the last fourteen years with affection. They are filled with good memories – too many to go through but ones that will stay with me and be remembered with fondness.

And so, if any of us in the future stop long enough in the lay-bys of life and contemplate the origins of social enterprise and social impact we shall stumble across the work of John Pearce – much more than a footnote in the history of the social economy.

I shall miss him – my friend, John Pearce.