



INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

**GENERAL COUNCIL**Brussels, 16-18 December 2008

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**Agenda item 3:****Obituaries**

It was with deep sorrow that the ITUC learned of the deaths of:

Douglas Andrew Fraser  
Died 23 February 2008

Born in Scotland, US trade union leader Douglas A. Fraser, was President of the United Auto Workers (UAW) from 1977 to 1983, passed away at the age of 91.

Well-known for the key role he played in a number of major negotiations leading to better conditions in workplaces, he was a strong advocate for trade union concerns on corporate governance, and was deeply committed to improving the economic and social well-being of working people around the world.

He served on the boards of several organisations and was a member of the ICFTU Executive Board from 1982 to 1987.

Douglas Fraser retired from the UAW in 1983, but remained active in union issues and politics whilst serving as a professor of labour law at Wayne State University, which decided in 1998 to honour his contribution by creating the Douglas A. Fraser Center for Workplace Issues.

His fundamental message that “the true spirit of our democratic society embraces the fundamental rights of workers to organize and to have safe and secure jobs in democratic workplaces”, serves as testament to his life’s work in the service of working people.

Jamshedpur Gopeshwar  
Died 23 May 2008

Gopeshwar, a leading figure of the Indian trade union movement, passed away at the age of 87.

He was General Secretary of the Indian National Metal Workers’ Federation for many years, General Secretary of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) from 1987 to 1997, and General Secretary of the Telco Workers’ Union for almost 30 years, until his death.

Gopeshwar played an active role at the regional and international levels. In 1982, he was elected Vice-President of the ICFTU and was a member of its Executive Board until 1986. In 1988, he participated in the founding of the South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) and subsequently led that organisation. He was President of the ICFTU-Asia and Pacific Regional Organisation from 1989 to 1994.

A firm believer in the "Trusteeship Theory" pronounced by Mahatma Gandhi, he was a champion of the cause of workers' participation in management. He will be remembered as a forceful and effective advocate for workers' interests in India's Parliament and society.

Georges Debunne  
Died 22 September 2008

In 1947, Georges Debunne was elected General Secretary of the Belgian Centrale Générale des Services Publics (CGSP), and became its President in 1956. He was elected General Secretary of the Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (FGTB) in 1968, a position he held for the following 14 years.

In addition to his exceptional contribution to the Belgian trade union movement, Georges Debunne played a historic role at the European and international levels. He was one of the founders of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in 1973, becoming the organisation's President from 1982 to 1985.

He played a key role in the creation of the European Federation of Retired and Older Workers (FERPA) and served as its President from 1988 to 2003. He was a member of the ICFTU Executive Board for over ten years and served as a Vice-President of that organisation.

As a fervent defender of workers' rights, his leadership qualities and long-term vision were major factors in developing new spheres of action, including around the notion of "qualitative growth", a 1970s prelude to sustainable development. He was also known for his strong commitment to the struggle for women's rights.

Frank Kooger  
Died 26 September 2008

After teaching history and social studies at Lethbridge Christian High School, Canada, Frank Kooger started with the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC) in 1982 as a representative for the construction and health care sectors.

His expertise in industrial construction was recognised when he was sent in 2004 to Fort McMurray, Alberta, where he organised with great success in oil sands projects. His leadership qualities were highly prized by CLAC, and he was elected to Staff Council Executive in 2004 as well as being appointed the CLAC representative to the Confederal Board of the WCL.

He was known for being highly principled, decisive, and trustworthy. His boundless energy, enthusiasm and sense of humour made him one of CLAC's most popular representatives, and a mentor to younger colleagues.

Frank Kooger made an outstanding contribution to CLAC and the international labour movement. He will be remembered not only for his accomplishments, including his organisation's rise in the industrial construction sector, but also for the profound influence he had on those around him.

Madia Diop  
Died 11 November 2008

Affectionately known as "Father Madia", Madia Diop, former General Secretary of the Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal (CNTS) passed away at the age of 80.

He served as the leader of the national Food Workers' Union in 1957, before becoming Regional General Secretary of the CNTS in 1978. He went on to lead the CNTS itself from 1982 until 2002.

Madia Diop was also a leading personality in the African and international trade union movement. In 2004 he was elected President of the African Regional Organisation of the ICFTU, and was also a member of the ICFTU Executive Board.

An illustrious trade unionist, who was also an MP, he was one of the sources of the so-called "responsible participation" branch of trade unionism and is regarded as a spiritual leader of Senegal's trade union movement. His contribution will remain engraved in the annals of the African and international trade union movements.

José Olivio Miranda  
Oliveira  
Died 10 December 2008

Affectionately known as Zé Olivio, José Oliveira died at the age of 61 in Salvador de Bahia.

Zé Olivio was trained as a civil engineer and taught at the UFBA polytechnic in Brazil. In 1981, he became President of the Engineers' Union in Bahia state, and in 1984 played a key role in the foundation of the Brazilian United Workers' Central CUT, which he subsequently served with distinction at leadership level.

As a titular member of the ILO Governing Body he also represented Brazilian workers in Mercosur and Organisation of American States bodies and served as Vice-President of a Commission of the Organization of American States, COSATE. In 2002, he was elected Assistant General Secretary of the ICFTU. He served in that position until 2006, when he joined the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ILO-ACTRAV) as a specialist for Latin America and the Caribbean, and retained that post until his death.

His trade union career, spanning the national, regional and

international levels, was a manifestation of his strong commitment to promoting democracy and protecting workers.

Along with his deep passion for justice, human dignity and solidarity, Zé Olivio will be remembered for his humanity, positive spirit and congenial demeanour.

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