

## **Tribute To Nancy Riche, An Extraordinary Woman**

4 October 2011: The ITUC mourns the death of Nancy Riche, former Vice-President of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and Chair of its Women's Committee from 1993-2002.

Nancy, a prominent Canadian union activist and former Secretary Treasurer of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), was a tireless advocate of workers' and women's rights.

"It was a shock to learn about Nancy's death, a woman deeply respected by labour women and men around the world for her passionate and unconditional fight for justice, decent work and gender equality at work. I am proud to have known and worked with her," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "Nancy always stood firm in the trade union family to ensure women were elected in top union leadership positions. This was one of her largest contributions to the international trade union movement, and so many of us today are still grateful to her for that."

Under Nancy's dynamic leadership, the Women's Committee grew in stature and influence worldwide. In all trade union decision making structures in which she represented the ICFTU Women's Committee, she always fiercely defended the view of working women. She has been the voice of women on numerous high-level trade union missions, meetings, summits and conferences. She led the trade union delegation to the 4th UN World Women's Conference (Beijing, 1995) and, subsequently, to the sessions of the UN Commission for the Status of Women, in particular Beijing + 5 (New York, 2000).

Nancy co-chaired and chaired two major international events: the 6th and the 7th World Women's Conferences of the ICFTU (The Hague, October 1994 and Rio de Janeiro, May 1999, respectively).

One of the most important legacies of Nancy was the immeasurable contribution of the women members of the ICFTU in the Millennium Review Process (2000-2001). Nancy has been the driving force behind a successful ICFTU women organising campaign. This campaign was based on a pioneering grassroots survey amongst working women, trying to identify their main priority issues and to what extent the trade unions were addressing these priorities. Nancy was deeply involved in that survey, carefully listening to their worries and expectations.

Under Nancy's leadership, the ICFTU Constitution was amended by Congress in favour of positive action measures to ensure full integration of women into trade union structures, adding to the key objective of gender parity in this founding document.

"Nancy has provided endless inspiration to women worldwide, actively working to set up and strengthen women's structures within trade unions everywhere and constantly defending and promoting women's rights at work, in trade unions, the community and in society. She created strong foundations on which working women internationally are building today, and truly represents international women's solidarity, both within and beyond trade unions," said Diana Holland, the current chair of the ITUC Women's Committee.

Nancy will be missed as a labour leader and activist, a mentor and a sister, a guide and a friend.

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The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates.