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Mr. MANFRED SCHALLMEYER, President
International Textile Garment and Leather Workers' Federation
Rue Joseph Stevens, 8
B – 1000 Brussels
BELGIUM

Dear Brother Schallmeyer,

We have lost one of our finest global trade union leaders with the passing of Neil Kearney. He will always hold a special place in the history of the international trade union movement.

Trade union leadership is not easy even in good times. Neil led an organisation with a long and proud tradition through times of hardship. Work was shifting rapidly to countries in which organising free trade unions was difficult or outlawed. With the integration of the global economy, it was workers with insufferable conditions who produced our garments and footwear.

Neil spoke for millions of workers who were deprived of the right to speak, to act, and to form unions. He carried the torch of liberty and social justice to any and all parts of this world – wherever workers were exploited. He fought any and all forms of tyranny, public or private.

It is rare that one person, through passion, determination, courage, persistence, and force of character has made such a difference for so many. He was a source of hope for workers for a future of dignity and respect.

This struggle, his struggle, has not been in vain. Who would have imagined that the promotion of “mature industrial relations” in co-operation with some employers would have been possible in an industry that preferred public relations? Such recent progress as well as the inspiration that he brought to so many throughout his trade union service will form part of his permanent legacy.

He faced grim challenges without ever becoming a grim person. He never lost his sense of outrage at injustice. But, he also never lost his keen and quick sense of humour. We have lost a good trade unionist, a good friend and a good colleague.

Please convey to his family, co-workers and many friends our condolences and our solidarity.

Yours sincerely,

Anita Normark
Chair, Council of Global Unions

