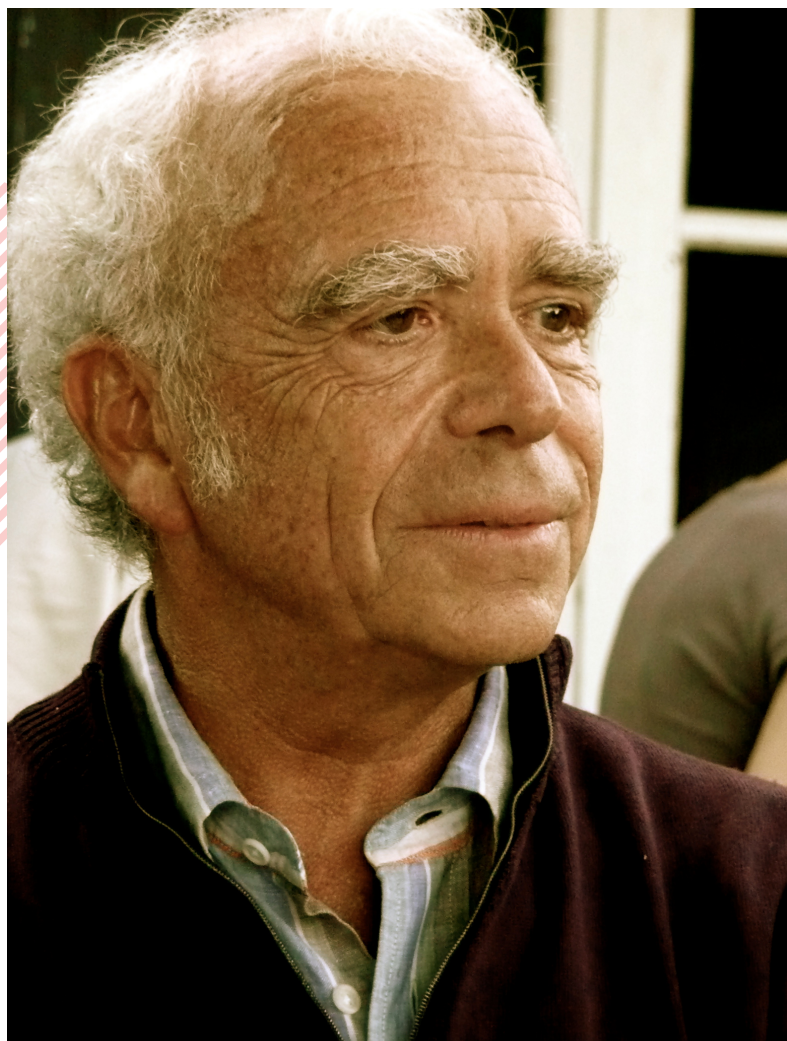


INTERVIEW

JEAN-MICHEL SERVAIS,
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE STAFF UNION



Interview No 3

PRÉSIDENT 1979-1981

Question 1

What does the ILO Staff Union, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, mean to you?

100 years of efforts to defend and promote the legitimate interests of international civil servants of both sexes.

Question 2

What motivated your commitment to run for President of the Staff Union and what message would you like to convey to future Presidents?

Colleagues had asked me to run for the Committee of the Union and then for the Presidency of the Union at a time when the United States had suspended all contributions and wanted to leave the Organization. I felt it was my duty to accept.

I still retain from that period a very strong sense of the solidarity and friendship that united and animated us all in our common will to help colleagues in difficulty and to maintain the rights of the staff.



Question 3

What have you gained from your years as President? Do you have an anecdote that remains in your brief?

A lot of friendships, knowledge of the system common, precious memories. I had the feeling that I practically knew all ILO officials.

An anecdote? I had a colleague who was not very active in the Committee, but open to criticism from other members. He regularly spoke out against us. One day, when I was annoyed, I quoted him a sentence from the French pamphleteer Rivarol: "It is a terrible advantage to have done nothing, but it should not be abused". He never bothered us again.

Question 4

What are the 2 challenges and 2 major successes you have faced during your mandate?

Challenges: continuing the efforts of the Committees to avoid layoffs after the notice of withdrawal filed by the Americans; to maintain the salaries of colleagues in these critical times.

The successes: the absence of any layoffs otherwise one or two disciplinary referrals; maintenance of General Service salary levels when all other organizations of the common system had accepted the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) on a reduction in salaries.

Question 5

In closing, what would you say about motivating newcomers to the ILO and especially young people to join the ILO Staff Union?

For me, joining a union is a moral obligation of solidarity towards other members of the working community one has entered. Everyone should join the Union and participate in one way or another in the development of its programme of action and in its realization.

