

22/65



Paul FINET

COMMUNIQUE

Mr. Paul FINET, Member and former President of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community died in Luxembourg in the evening of 18th May 1965.

Mr. Finet's whole career had been devoted to the improvement in workers' conditions and social advancement of the labour movement.

Born the son of a miner in 1895 in the industrial area of Charleroi, Mr. Finet began work at the age of fourteen in the metallurgical industry. He was active in the trade union movement, first of all at local level and subsequently at regional level.

In 1936, his qualities of leadership and his knowledge of social affairs led to his nomination as national secretary of the Belgian General Confederation of Trade Unions (Confédération Générale du Travail) at a time when the Belgian labour movement was meeting with great success in the improvement of working conditions.

During the war Mr. Finet was in London where he worked for the Belgian Government in exile. In 1944 he resumed his trade union work, playing an important conciliatory role in the establishment of the Belgian Federation of Free Trade Unions (Fédération Générale du Travail) of which he was General Secretary until 1952.

With the same concern for social aims, Mr. Finet's career was at this stage turned increasingly to international affairs. He was one of the founders, and first president, until July 1952, of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (Confédération Internationale des Syndicats Libres). In this capacity he was also active in the work of the International Labour Office at Geneva.

In August 1952, the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community, set up in July 1952 under the Paris Treaty, co-opted Mr. Finet as its ninth member in the knowledge

that the first European Community executive body would thus number amongst its members a man who held the confidence of the trade union movement throughout Western Europe.

As a member of the High Authority, Mr. Finet, devoted himself above all to labour problems. He was Chairman of the Mines Safety Commission and played an active role in the High Authority's social activities, workers' readaptation, construction of workers' houses, etc... One of his major concerns, particularly following his famous speech of 1956 in Aix-la-Chapelle, was to provide a European Code for the miner's profession. Mr. Finet also chaired the Joint Committees on the harmonisation of working conditions.

From January 1958 to September 1959, Mr. Finet was named President of the High Authority at a time when the coal industry was undergoing a period of crisis. As President he showed the same concern for the conditions of the workers and of basic industries in Europe.

He leaves to all those who knew him, the memory of a man who remained faithful to his ideals. He will have given to those who were near to him, to his colleagues and to his collaborators, the example of one who was both a European and a worker for social progress.