

Brazil Loses Celso Furtado, One of Its Brightest Intellectuals

Contributed by Ricardo C. Amaral
Saturday, 20 November 2004

Celso Furtado has died today November 20, 2004. With Dr. Furtado also has died the best chance Brazil had to win a Nobel Prize.

In May 2003 I wrote an article for Brazzil magazine requesting the Nobel Committee to award the Nobel Prize for Economics to the outstanding Brazilian intellectual and economist Celso Furtado.

I also sent a copy of my article to various members of the Nobel Committee.

At that time in response to my article, I received various emails from European economists saying that they agree with my nomination, and they also would write letters to the Nobel Committee for them to award the Economics Nobel Prize to Dr. Celso Furtado.

The Nobel Committee did not award the 2004 Economics Nobel Prize to Celso Furtado.

Today, Celso Furtado died at age 84 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Nobel Committee once again missed the opportunity to award a Nobel Prize to another outstanding candidate.

The Nobel Committee never awarded a Nobel Peace Prize to Mahatma Ghandi. The Nobel Committee's oversight of Celso Furtado can be compared with the Committee's oversight of Mr. Ghandi in terms of importance to the particular category of the Nobel Prize.

In November of 2003, the Brazilian senate approved the nomination of Celso Furtado to the Nobel Committee for the Economics Nobel Prize.

My article was published in Brazzil magazine in June 2003. That same article also was published at that time on other Brazilian newspapers including "The Brasilians."

You can read my article nominating Celso Furtado, the great Brazilian economist, for the Economics Nobel Prize at the following website:

June 2003 – article: "I Nominate Brazilian Furtado to the Nobel Prize."
<http://www.brazzil.com/p116jun03.htm>

With the deepest sympathy I give my condolences to the members of the Furtado family. Dr. Celso Furtado all Brazilians will miss you—rest in peace!

Furtado's Life

Here's an excerpt of the Brazzil article mentioned above:

Celso Furtado, a world-renowned Brazilian economist and intellectual, was also one of the leading Latin American economists and social thinkers.

He was a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, and the permanent holder of chair number 11 of that prestigious

organization.

The Brazilian Academy of Letters is constituted of forty chairs, whose perpetual occupants are elected, after they are presented as candidates to a vacant chair, and they have to meet its qualifications.

Quoting from a profile of Celso Furtado, which was published on March 22, 1999, here is further information about him:

"Celso Furtado is one of those near-mythical figures who has managed to achieve the ideal for those concerned with problems of development: a career as a development theoretician and practitioner that has spanned the complementary paths of academia, government service, the international arena, and 'non-political politics'.

"Furtado's life can be encapsulated under several headings in the context of the Brazilian bildungsroman: Celso Furtado as one of Brazil's (and indeed Latin America's) most highly regarded and prolific scholars; Celso Furtado the internationalist, working with the UN and traveling the Western Hemisphere; Celso Furtado as the champion of development in his native Northeast; and Celso Furtado in his hands-on attempt to put his theories into practice through working with the government.

"One of the most significant features of his work as a technocrat was with the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE). This final aspect is not just a part of Furtado's story, however; it also constitutes a significant leitmotif for Brazil's contorted political economic trajectory.

"Furtado the theoretician: Along with Raúl Prebisch, Celso Furtado is seen as one of the creators of the highly influential structuralist school of economic development thought, which articulated the initial blueprint of the industrialization by invitation development strategy followed by many if not all Latin American states in the 1940s and 1950s.

"Joseph Love's review of Furtado's role as "the first, most original, and most prolific of the structural writers in Brazil," attributes Furtado with being the first to "specifically assert that development and underdevelopment were part of the same process of the expansion of the international capitalist economy"

Celso Furtado has been a prolific writer and many of his works have been translated to other languages. Many of his books have been published in English, and are available in the United States. Among them:

Economic Development of Latin America: Historical Background and Contemporary Problems, The Economic Growth of Brazil: A Survey from Colonial to Modern Times, Accumulation and Development: The Logic of Industrial Civilization and Underdevelopment and dependence: the fundamental connections

Ricardo C. Amaral
Author and Economist
amaral@alumni.fdu.edu