



trade union information

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THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN
THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY - PART II

THE BELGIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

THE LUXEMBOURG TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

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This is the second of three special numbers which between them provide brief descriptions of the trade union movements in the nine countries of the European Community. The descriptions are based on a series of articles produced by the trade union information division at an earlier date.

Increasing numbers of trade union representatives are involved in contacts with their counterparts in other countries and they may wish to have background material for such contacts. Other trade unionists may be interested more generally in seeing how the different trade union movements in the European Community compare with their own.

We have tried to list and to answer questions which trade unionists might ask about West European movements: How did the trade union movement develop? What is its structure? What overall policies does it pursue? What are the relations with political parties? What method of collective bargaining does it employ? Does it have a policy on industrial democracy? Finally, what attitude does the trade union movement adopt towards European unification?

Providing information from nine countries on all these questions is not an easy matter. We shall aim to make frequent revisions, so as to ensure that the items are up-to-date and comprehensive.

The titles in this second part are:

THE BELGIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

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THE BELGIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Permanent trade union pluralism

Almost all trade unions in Belgium are "de facto associations", that is to say associations without legal personality. Although there are two laws which would enable them to acquire this legal personality¹ the unions do not take advantage of them, in order to avoid certain resulting obligations which they consider might endanger their safety. Nonetheless, they are recognized by the Government which, particularly since the last war, has called them in to help in the management of numerous semi-State bodies, as well as in the elaboration of draft laws.

One of the foremost characteristics of Belgian trade unionism is pluralistic structure, solidly rooted for three-quarters of a century. The trade unions, which group the workers according to their industry (workers in the metal industry, for instance) or profession (salaried employees, supervisory staff ...) are organized in national confederations of greatly different sizes.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC), of Catholic tendency, had 1,200,000 members in 1975. It is the outcome of the merger in 1912 of two confederations: the Federation of Christian Professional Unions of Belgium², created on 17 December 1908 for the Flemish part of the country, and the Confederation of Christian and Free Trade Unions of the Walloon Provinces, which dates from 5 September 1909.

The Belgian General Federation of Labour (FGTB), of socialist ideology, had 1,100,000 members in 1975. The FGTB is the successor organization of the CGTB, which itself arose on 1 January 1938 from the Trade Union Committee created by the Belgian Workers' Party in 1898.

¹The Law of 31 March 1898 on occupational unions and the Law of 27 June 1921 on non-profit-making associations.

²Verbond der Christene beroepsverenigingen van België.

The General Federation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium (CGSLB) had 120 864 members in 1966. It was founded in 1930.

The grouping of the Independent Trade Unions in the Public Services (SISP) had a total of 72 000 members in 1966. It was set up for the public sector in 1926.

The Confederation of Unified Trade Unions of Belgium (CSUB) had 26 100 members in 1966 and was created in 1963.

The pluralistic structure is based on ideologies which are sometimes formulated in "statements of principles". This is the case with the FGTEB, which at its founding congress in May 1945 adopted its "statement of principles" whose first nine points are quoted here.

1. The FGTEB, which has emerged directly from the organized workers' movement, proclaims that the trade union ideal, aiming at a classless society and the dissolution of the wage-earning class, will be accomplished by a total transformation of society.

2. The FGTEB, born of the class struggle, emphasizes that this struggle is developing into another, no less vigorous, of all producers against an oligarchy of banks and monopolies which have become the supreme rulers of the entire machinery of production.

3. In a spirit of absolute independence from political parties and in full respect of all political as well as philosophical opinions, the FGTEB affirms its will to achieve its aims with its own means and by appealing to all wage and salary earners in particular and to the entire population in general, since the spiritual as well as the material interests of the overwhelming majority are identical with those of the wage earners, salaried employees and technicians.

4. The trade union movement will accept the support of a party or parties which will collaborate in its action for achieving its aims without considering itself indebted to them and without allowing them to interfere in the conduct of trade union action.

5. The trade union movement aims at achieving a genuine rule of social justice that would give to everyone his place in society.

In order to ensure for everyone his share in accordance with his work and his needs, the FGFB declares that it is essential to supplement political democracy by economic and social democracy. To this end, it demands that labour, as creator of all value and the source of all goods, be finally considered as primary factor, the other factors being merely subordinated to it or parasites depending on it.

6. The movement's origin, its character and the permanence of its ideals show that it is designed to be the main driving force of this constructive revolution.

7. In a spirit of justice it formally repudiates the false values consecrated by the capitalist regime, such as those of birth and wealth. It wants to turn the exploited, now reduced to sell their labour, into free participants in the common task of production.

8. Faithful to its conceptions, it will work for the creation of organizations whose final aim must be to transfer to the forces of labour the management of a transformed economy for the benefit of the whole of society.

9. The trade union movement has not the intention of supplanting the parties in their political action. It calls on the workers in their capacity as producers, for it is on their economic condition that their prospects of social, intellectual and cultural development will depend."

The CSC, on the other hand, has not adopted a statement of this kind, but gives as its aim in its Statute "to concentrate to the maximum the Christian trade union forces so as to achieve the organization of professional and economic activity and a society based on Christian principles". By Christian principles should be understood the teaching of the Catholic Church; this was clarified in a significant report submitted to the CSC's 1951 Congress: Christian trade unionism, its nature and its mission: "By its mission the Catholic Church has authority

in all matters that may directly or indirectly concern the eternal destiny of man. The Christian trade unions recognize this authority."

Faith in this doctrine is expressed in a resolution adopted by the Congress as a result of this report: "The Congress ... declares once again that Christian social doctrine constitutes the foundation of the social order and that the application of its principles is the necessary condition for giving the worker, with full respect for his human personality, the possibility of attaining through his working life, on the material and on the spiritual level, the destiny appointed by God to all men."

The confessional character of the CSC is thus established without equivocation. At its 11th Congress in 1934 its President Henri Pauwels stated that Christian trade unionism was "an active fighter for social peace and for the defence of Catholicism among the workers". At the 1951 Congress the abovementioned report stated: "Trade union discipline is essential to maintain the Christian character of the trade union. Generally, the persuasive influence of the leadership is sufficient to maintain discipline in its ranks but the danger of marxist infiltration is not an imaginary one; should the Christian trade union organization become systematically undermined, the sanctions foreseen by the Statute should be vigorously applied to expel the opponent's agents."

The CGSLB is based on liberal doctrine. Its Statute gives as its task "to create understanding between the givers and takers of labour, based on mutual respect of reciprocal rights and duties in accordance with the fundamental liberal principles of freedom, solidarity, progress, justice and social peace ...".

Structure of the FGTB and the CSC

The structure of the Belgian trade union organizations is determined by their "statutes" and not by any legal text. They are simply de facto associations.

The structures of the Belgian General Federation of Labour and of the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions are to a large extent similar. They are both national inter-occupational organizations. Both cover groups of national unions established for an industry or group of industries or for an occupation. The general principle is that of trade unions by industry, except in the case of the large salaried employees' sector - Union of Employees, Technicians and Administrative Workers (FGTB), and the National Union of Employees (CSC) - which covers the salaried employees in various industries, commerce and the tertiary sector independently from the trade unions for wage earners in those same industries.

The FGTB and CSC, like the national unions, are structured geographically at regional, provincial and local level or by undertakings. In both trade union organizations the Congress is paramount and, within the Congress, the unions outweigh the inter-occupational regional sections by two to one.

The two main organizations and the Belgian trade union movement in general are characterized by the very small number of unions.

The FGTB has only twelve unions: the Central Union of Public Service Workers, the General Union (wood, building, petroleum and allied sectors), the Central Union of Metalworkers, the Union of Salaried Employees, Technicians and Administrative Workers, the Union of Textile Workers, the Union of Food and Catering Workers, the Union of Clothing Workers, the Belgian Transport Workers' Union (including the dockers), the Central Union of Miners, the Central Union of the Book-Trade Workers, the Diamond Workers' Union and the Journalists' Union.

In 1975, the FGTB stated that its total membership was 1 100 000. In descending order of size, the largest unions within the FGTB are those for public service workers, the General Union (wood and building), metal workers and salaried employees.

The CSC consists of 17 unions, covering: food; power, chemicals and leather; the diamond industry; the graphic and paper industries; wood and building; metalworking; mining; the public services; the railways, post office, telephone and telegraph; stone workers, cement, ceramics and glass; textiles and clothing; transport; salaried employees; Christian teachers; technical education; State teachers; lay teachers in secondary and teacher training institutions. An 18th union is being formed, to organize professionals in the field of sport.

The CSC states that in 1975 it had a total membership of 1 200 000. In descending order of size the largest unions within the CSC are those for metalworking, wood and building, textiles and salaried employees.

Neither the FGTB nor the CSC have structural links with the political parties. There are, nevertheless, informal affinities and relations with the Belgian Socialist Party (PSB-BSP) and with the Christian Social Party (PSC-CVP) respectively.

The FGTB is a part of "Joint Socialist Action", in which the heads of the Belgian Socialist Party, the Socialist mutual insurance institutions, the Socialist cooperatives and the FGTB are represented. Joint socialist action enables the four movements which make it up to compare their ideas on political and social problems. Mention should, however, be made - while stressing its completely ad hoc character - of the agreement arrived at between the Belgian Socialist Party and the FGTB on what the policy and forms of the economic and political regionalization in Belgium should be. This agreement was concluded in February 1974.

The CSC has no structural or organic links with the Christian Social Party (PSC-CVP). It is within the Christian Labour Movement (MOC), together with the people's cooperative societies and insurance institutions, the League of Christian Women, the workers' teams, youth movements and the Association of Christian Mutual Insurance Institutions. There are, however, informal contacts with the PSC-CVP.

General policies

Although both trade union organizations often cooperate to some extent through the trade union "Common Front" - which has neither structure nor organization - there are fairly appreciable differences in the long-term options which are the basis of their respective doctrines.

In its statement of principles, the FGTB said that a classless society and the dissolution of the wage-earning class are trade union ideals which will come about as a result of the total transformation of society. The trade union movement will have the class struggle as principle. Since the movement cannot immediately demand the socialization of industry it must proceed step by step.

At its extraordinary Congress in 1971 on trade union ideology, the FGTB's declaration of principle was once again confirmed and supplemented by statements of positions on the immediate future. The FGTB stated inter alia that it is intent on achieving worker control at an early date, that it wants coordinated action at European level, and that it advocates joint single action with the CSC.

At its Congress in April 1975 the FGTB in particular expressed its decision to strengthen the Government in its handling of the economy by the setting up of a national public holding corporation. This public holding corporation should help to mitigate the deficiencies of the private sector by, for instance, creating jobs. The corporation would be autonomous and have at its disposal sufficient financial and technical means of its own.

The CSC's trade union doctrine stems from a set of more complex elements than those which motivate the FGTB. It is the result of the CSC's "centrist" position between economic liberalism and socialism, notwithstanding the fact that the CSC considers itself bound by the Church's social encyclicals, which apply to both employer and worker and are of universal character.

The CSC advocates a humanitarian social and economic structure for our society, distinguished by the primacy of man and labour over capital, by more equitable sharing of wealth, and by vastly greater participation of the lower levels of society in the cultural heritage. It spurns the class struggle as a basic principle.

The purpose of the 1968 ideological Congress, called "The CSC's responsibility for the future", was to reconsider and give fresh direction to the Christian movement. At that Congress the CSC asserted the need to extend its action with a view to reshaping society by taking upon itself greater responsibilities for economic matters. According to the CSC, both Liberalism and Marxism are outworn doctrines. The basis of trade union theory on economic policy must be "an economy for all men". The aims to be achieved are, therefore, an economy of services, an economy which is egalitarian, democratic, structured in world terms and for the well-being of all.

The CSC is still an advocate of trade union pluralism, which it believes to be an irreplaceable stimulus for a better defence of the workers' interests. The trade union Common Front is therefore an ad hoc marriage for practical reasons of the forces of the two trade union organizations, and is not a step towards trade union unity.

Mention should also be made of the General Federation of Liberal Trade Unions of Belgium, which has much fewer members than the FGTB or CSC but is represented in the National Labour Council and participates in the conclusion of collective interoccupational agreements. The CGSLB rejects the class struggle. It has reservations about the planned economy and accepts certain formulae for participation. Democratization of the socio-economic system is only possible through the progressive introduction of structural reforms, if possible by negotiations, but if necessary by trade union confrontation.

Collective bargaining

In Belgium collective agreements are governed by two kinds of negotiations, interoccupational negotiations and sectoral negotiations.

Interoccupational negotiations are carried out between the employers - the General Industrial Federation (FEB) and "les Classes moyennes" which consists of small businesses, craft industries and the liberal professions - and the interindustrial trade union organizations - the General Federation of Labour, the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions and the General Federation of Liberal Trade Unions. These negotiations generally produce interoccupational agreements which last for two years. They cover objectives which apply to all paid and pensioned-off workers with the exception of public servants in respect of whom the public services unions negotiate directly with the State employer, i.e., with the Government. The agreements settle such questions as hours of work, length of holidays, social security allowances and their link with the movement of wages, pre-pensioning allowances, travelling costs, etc.

The most recent interoccupational agreement covers 1975 and 1976 and, for the first time, includes an arrangement for the introduction of a guaranteed minimum monthly wage for all workers twenty-one years old and over. This is an important innovation since, until now, the question of wages came within the exclusive jurisdiction of the trade unions.

Until 1968 the interoccupational agreements were not in themselves binding; the FEB and the "Classes moyennes" undertook to encourage their members to apply the agreements. Since 5 December 1968 the Law on joint committees and collective agreements has laid down that interoccupational agreements on specific points may take the form of collective agreements concluded within the National Labour Council. They can then be enforced.

The sectoral negotiations take place in joint committees, and the resulting collective agreements apply only to the workers and employers in the sector concerned.

The Law of 1968 assigns to the joint committees the task of preparing the agreements and of preventing or settling any dispute between the employers and the workers of the sector for which they are responsible. These joint committees consist of an equal number of representatives of employers' and workers' organizations and they have a chairman and a vice-chairman. The social conciliators - officials of the Ministry of Employment and Labour assigned to the Collective Labour Relations Department - may be instructed to chair the joint committees.

The fields covered by the occupational collective agreements, whose duration varies according to the economic situation (two years, one year, sometimes six months for particular questions), are basically the wages, working conditions and the system of index-linking of wages in the sector. The agreements apply to all employers in the sector provided they have been published in the form of a Royal Decree. If they have not been so published, employers may depart from them by individual written agreements.

The joint committees may establish a conciliation office within their organization, which, in the case of conflict, may have the dispute laid before it by either party.

At first sight it will be seen that institutionalization of collective relations between employers and workers is fairly advanced; but it is clear that the effectiveness of the joint committees lies in the relation between the forces facing each other. "The effectiveness of the joint committees also stems from the determination of the representatives to negotiate, to extinguish the latent or open conflict, and to turn a state of belligerence into a state of peace, even if the latter is but relative. It is obvious that if, for example, in the coming years the trade union attitude moved towards a radicalization of action in order to bring about a deep change in the régime's structures, such action, coupled with the employers' resistance, would probably render the joint committees quite unable to settle the conflict."¹

¹ Les commissions paritaires en Belgique - J. Neuville. Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques C.R.I.S.P.) (Joint Committees in Belgium: J. Neuville. Centre for Research and Socio-political Information (CRISP), Brussels.

Pegging of wages and salaries to the consumer price index

In Belgium automatic indexing of wages and salaries has been generally applied since 1948. It was introduced in the mining industry as long ago as 1920. Although the principle of automatic indexing is applicable to all wages, salaries and social security allowances, its method of application varies from sector to sector. In the public sector a uniform scheme for adapting wages and salaries to the consumer price index was introduced by the Law of 12 April 1960. The wages and salaries of all public servants thus change simultaneously, as also do their social security allowances - pensions, family allowances, annual holiday, unemployment benefits, sickness and invalidity insurance - as soon as the index rises by 2.12 points in two consecutive months against the index which gave rise to the preceding adjustment. This adjustment is 2.5%; it becomes payable on the first day of the second month following the two consecutive months which generate the adjustment.

In the private sector it is fair to say that there are as many adjustment systems as there are different occupational branches, since the systems for relating wages and salaries to the index are established by each occupational joint committee. In the private sector, therefore, wages and salaries do not increase simultaneously or in the same proportions for all paid workers. The reference index which fixes the various wage adjustments is nevertheless the same in all parts of the country, and for both the private and public sectors. It is a weighted index of retail prices, established and published by the Ministry of Economic Affairs after being approved by the Consumer Prices Index Committee, on which employers and trade unions are represented. This index is published monthly and is based on the list of the prices of 147 products and services which is compiled each month by officials of the Department of Economic Affairs.

It should be noted that this system, based on time-honoured principle, of automatic pegging of wages to the consumer price index has been challenged since the start of the widespread inflation of 1973-1974 both by the trade unions, which blame the system for not following price rises sufficiently quickly and hence for no longer guaranteeing the purchasing power of wages, and by the employers, who claim that the system is responsible for a large part of the price-wage spiral that gives rise to inflation.

Representation of the workers in the firm

Industrial democracy

The workers are represented at three different levels within the firm: in the trade union delegation, in the works council, and in the industrial safety and health committee. These three levels are not necessarily to be found in each firm, since the setting-up of a works council and an industrial safety and health committee is determined by the size of the firm: a labour force of 150 for the first and of 50 for the second.

Trade union delegation

The need for a review of the trade union delegation's terms of reference as established immediately after the Second World War - to be precise, in the national Agreement of 16 and 17 June 1947 - was among the conclusions of the Economic and Social Conference of 16 March 1970. That Conference, which was attended by the representatives of the employers, the trade unions and the Government, also decided on extension of the functions of the works councils.

As regards the trade union delegation, the findings of the Conference were put into practice by the conclusion of the Inter-Trade Collective Agreement in the National Labour Council on 24 May 1971. This is an outline agreement which establishes the principles and the basic provisions of the trade union delegation's terms of reference. It was then necessary to incorporate these principles in the agreements on the trade union delegation's terms of reference which had been established by each occupational joint committee.

The outline agreement contains twelve principles:

1. The employers' undertaking not to interfere with freedom of association;
2. The workers' recognition of the lawful authority of heads of businesses;
3. A request to the signatories of the outline agreement to comply and enforce compliance with social legislation, collective agreements and working regulations;

4. The affirmation of the principle that unionized workers shall be represented by the trade union delegation in dealings with the employer. Such representation may be extended to the entire staff;
5. The trade union delegation's powers shall include responsibility for labour relations and the negotiation of collective agreements within the firm;
6. The trade union delegation shall have the right of consultation with the employer when there is a threat of collective or individual dispute;
7. The trade union delegation shall be advised beforehand by the head of the firm of any changes likely to alter working conditions or wages. Moreover, where no works council has been established, the trade union delegation shall be given all information on employment and on any changes in the firm's structure in the case of shutdown, reopening, combination, merger or reorganization;
8. The trade union delegate shall retain the right to normal advancement and promotion;
9. The trade union delegate cannot be dismissed for reasons connected with the exercise of his mandate;
10. Workers' meetings may be organized by the trade union delegation on the firm's premises and during working hours;
11. The delegation shall be given the time and the facilities required to carry out its functions;
12. The permanent delegates of the trade union organizations may be called in when required by the trade union delegation, after the employer has been advised of this.

Works councils

Works councils exist only in firms employing at least 150 workers. Their tasks were laid down for the first time by the Law of 20 September 1948 which organized the economy, and was supplemented several times, in particular as regards the information to be supplied by heads of firms. The last major changes were those providing for the supply of more complete information regarding job prospects and especially regarding the firm's economic and financial prospects.

Half the members of the works council are from the management. The worker members are elected every four years, at the time of the normal parliamentary elections, from lists prepared by the trade unions and put to the vote by the firm's workers.

The works council meets once a month under the chairmanship of the head of the firm. It has four kinds of function: decision-making, advice and consultation, supervision and information.

The works council has authority to take decisions on organization of work, establishment of the criteria for dismissal and re-engagement, arrangement of the dates of annual holidays, and management of the firm's social services.

The works council has to be consulted before any decision is taken on employment, vocational training and retraining, personnel policy, organization of work, alteration to the firm's structure such as closure, merger, combination, reopening and rationalization. Such preliminary consultations are to enable the works council to express opinions with full knowledge of the facts.

The works council has to ensure strict application of industrial and social legislation for safeguarding the workers' interests.

Finally, the works council had its rights to information defined and extended, respectively, by two measures: Collective Labour Agreement No 9 of 9 March 1972, which coordinates the provisions previously in force and sets out the information to be given to the works council about the firm's general prospects and their consequences for employment, and Royal Decree of 27 November 1973 regulating the economic and financial information to be given to the works council. The information on employment also covers the structure of the latter, the probable trend, employment forecasts for the following financial year, and the social measures regarding employment which have been decided or planned.

The economic and financial information on the firm's progress and prospects shall be concerned with its competitive position on the market, production and productivity, financial structure, budget and

calculation of cost price, personnel costs, the firm's programme and general prospects, scientific research, all types of public aid granted to the firm, and the firm's establishment table.

Three years elapsed before the text of this Royal Decree on the economic and financial information to be given to the works councils was published. Great difficulties had to be surmounted, the employers' main fear being that the information requested might impair "trade secrecy" and hence the firm's competitive position. Incidentally, Articles 32 and 33 of the Royal Decree do specify that the members of the council must preserve trade secrets and that the head of the firm may stress the confidential nature of certain data.

The industrial safety and health committee

Like the members of the works council, those of the industrial safety and health committee are elected every four years at the time of the parliamentary elections from lists prepared by the trade unions in firms with at least 50 workers.

The various tasks of the industrial safety and health committee may be summarized as follows:

- The committee shall issue an opinion before a decision is taken, and shall make proposals for maximum conditions of safety, hygiene and health, for the prevention of strain at work, and for the adaptation of the work to those performing it. It shall issue opinions on the policy for prevention of accidents and industrial diseases. It shall also issue opinions on the choice and replacement of the factory medical services and on protective measures and arrangements.
- The safety and health committee shall receive from the employer complete information on all plans, measures and means to be applied which may affect the safety, hygiene or health of the workers.
- The committee shall participate in the detection of dangers, shall examine their causes, and propose methods of eliminating them. It shall prepare and carry out publicity campaigns for the prevention of accidents at work and industrial diseases.

- Finally, the committee shall examine the grievances expressed by the workers and shall express an opinion on the way in which the medical and pharmaceutical service established for dealing with accidents at work carries out its task.

The committee for safety and health shall also work together with the factory inspector.

FGTB: Workers' control - CSC: Workers' council

There are fairly appreciable divergences of view between the two big trade union organizations, the FGTB and CSC, on the way in which industrial democracy is to come about and on the concept of possible participation by the workers.

The Confederation of Christian Trade Unions considers that the legislation on the works councils should be amended and that they should be replaced by "workers' councils". These workers' councils, as defined by the CSC's extraordinary Congress on 16 March 1974 in Brussels, would have the "general right to make proposals and to issue opinions on the firm's policy, its operation and all problems of employment in the firm, without prejudice either to the powers of the safety and health committee or to those of the trade union delegation".

The workers' council would be composed solely of workers' delegates, elected from lists prepared by the representative trade union organizations, whereas under the present works council system their proposals, their opinions and their points of view "are generally obscured by joint proposals, decisions and opinions". The 1974 Congress considered, moreover, that this adoption of joint positions prevented the worker from judging the real attitude taken by their representatives.

A workers' council would overcome this drawback, since the workers' delegates could work more effectively if they were not "embarrassed" by the presence of the management in their midst. Otherwise the workers' council would have, broadly speaking, the same functions as the works council. The CSC proposes, however, that they be instituted in all firms with at least 50 workers instead of 150 as is currently the case with the works councils.

For the Belgian General Federation of Labour, the "workers' council" is a step towards codetermination and participation. The FGTB prefers to strengthen the controlling power of the trade union delegation. Moreover, the FGTB Congress of 14, 15 and 16 April 1975, held in Brussels, confirmed in this respect the position adopted at the Special Orientation Congress of 1971. The FGTB consequently still rejects any form of integration into the capitalist system and consequently rejects comanagement "for such comanagement gives the workers responsibilities but not power". The FGTB considers that it is not for the trade union to assume responsibility for the employers' management of a firm under the capitalist system. According to the FGTB this refusal does not mean inaction but contestation and continuous pressure on decisions in order to influence them. The FGTB Congress confirmed that the long-term objective remains self-management and that, in the meantime, the line to be taken is that of "workers' control", which is a guarantee of complete trade union autonomy as opposed to comanagement, while opening the door to concertation, which leads either to the conclusion of agreements or to contestation.

Faith in the European ideal

Since the Schuman Plan was launched, numerous statements on the question of Europe have been issued by the trade union organizations, either by their congresses or by their leaders.

Apart from a few shades of meaning, the points of view of the CSC and of the FGTB follow certain guiding lines, the main ones being listed below:

1. Agreement on the aims of the integration plan

Thus, on 23 March 1954, in connection with examination of an opinion issued by the Conseil Central de l'Economie (Central Economic Council), the Bureau of the CSC expressed its agreement with the aims and methods of the integration plan. The FGTB, also, gave its support to the principles of the Schuman Declaration, in particular in a Memorandum of December 1950 and at its 1951 Congress.

This agreement has not lessened with the passage of time, but on several occasions the trade union organizations made it clear that they did not want just any kind of Europe. "It is not our view," said the memorandum of the FGTB, "to agree to any form of organization, no matter what. An organization is required that implies a kind of economic planning that would be totally opposed to the political action practised hitherto by the employers' trusts ..."

The President of the CSC declared at the 1962 Congress that "the Common Market must be more than a customs union and must become a genuine economic entity ...", a point of view which was incorporated in a resolution voted by the Congress.

2. Insistence on social aims of integration process

The trade union organizations have frequently expressed their concern at the Treaties' weaknesses in formulating social aims. "We do not accept", the President of the CSC declared on 21 January 1958, "the thesis, which appears in the Treaties and which is defended by certain

political representatives, that it would be enough for economic integration to be achieved for social integration to follow automatically." And the 1962 Congress of the CSC, "considering that economic activities must be subordinate to social aims", adopted a series of resolutions concerning social objectives of which only the following will be quoted for the moment: "demands that, in cooperation with the trade union organizations, an overall social policy at European level be systematically studied".

As far back as 1950, the Bureau of the FGTB declared: "although the economic aspect is extremely important, it cannot be the only one to be considered. Together with it, the social effects must be examined". At its 1965 Congress, the FGTB demanded "that the trade union organizations be regularly consulted in the preparation of social and economic policy. The present consultation of the Economic and Social Committee must be complemented by organizing direct consultations at Community level on the elaboration of the fundamental lines of economic and social policy".

3. The trade unions want to be associated in the decision-making process

Already during the discussions about the Schuman proposals, the FGTB declared that "the trade union organizations must be represented at all levels, first in the national delegations, then within the High Authority itself". The Memorandum of December 1950 stresses that "the trade unions must always be closely linked to all leading administrative bodies in process of creation". The Congress of 1965 "notes that the trade union organizations are not represented in the unified executive body in conformity with what had been done when the High Authority of the ECSC had been set up" and a resolution was adopted insisting on regular and direct consultation of the trade union organizations. The CSC also declared from the start its will to be associated effectively through the presence of delegates in all the bodies, national and international, where the conditions to realize the plan were to be elaborated. At the end of 1957, the Bureau even considered that the new international bodies "will only fulfil their tasks properly if the workers are fully associated with them; this could only be achieved by having the various trade union tendencies represented both in the leading administrative bodies and in the consultative bodies".

4. Unions complain of less rights at Community level than at national level

The demand to be associated at the decision-making level not having been fully met, the trade unions have frequently expressed their regret that the prerogatives they enjoy at national level have not been granted to them at Community level. "No readiness has been shown", the President of the CSC declared at the beginning of 1958 "to grant to the workers and to the trade unions on the European level the powers and the recognition they conquered long ago on the national level". Regretting at the 1964 Congress the absence of direct contacts between employers' and workers' organizations at European level, the President stated: "We feel that the Council of Ministers does not desire these contacts and is excessively affected by the permanent delegations which exert a very great influence on Council decisions. It seems to me that the Europe of the Governments is gaining more and more weight in these circles. We are recognized at national level and ignored at European level ..."

At its 1965 Congress, the FGTB noted in their resolutions that "in the present process of European integration, the trade union organizations run the risk of losing the rights of consultation which they have acquired at national level".

5. For a Community open to the democratic countries

The trade union organizations do not want a Community which is closed to the outside world. The 1965 Congress of the FGTB "stresses that the EEC must be open to all democratic countries of Europe which accept the principles and achievements of the EEC". Similarly, the President of the CSC declared at its 1962 Congress that the Common Market should stay wide open "on the one hand, to European countries which should have the possibility of joining or of associating themselves with it. On the other hand, it should remain wide open to the non-European world and its problems". In a resolution the Congress "emphasizes that membership should be granted only to those countries which subscribe to the Treaties and to the decisions already taken by the European Communities, countries which have a democratic structure and accept the principle of political integration"; the Congress "in the framework of these principles, hopes for the successful outcome of the negotiations between the European Communities and the United Kingdom".

The Belgian trade unions and Europe

Because of the positions they adopted from the start in favour of the European idea, and because of the criticisms they were repeatedly led to make concerning the insufficient attention paid to the social aspect in the new Europe, both the FGTB and the CSC have participated actively in the work of the European Trade Union Confederation.

The FGTB was one of the founder organizations of the ETUC in 1973 in Brussels and one of those which insisted on the need to leave the door open to Western European democratic trade union organizations which were not members of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. It was because of this that, in the spring of 1974, the ETUC was able to affiliate the trade union organizations which, until then, had been members of the European Organization of the World Confederation of Labour and which included the Belgian Confederation of Christian Trade Unions and, in July 1974, affiliate the General Union of Italian Workers, CGIL, which is Communist-Socialist inspired.

Since then, within the ETUC, the two Belgian organizations have worked hand in hand with the other European trade union organizations for the transformation of "the Europe of shopkeepers" into a social-minded and humanitarian Europe. At its Congress in April 1975 the FGTB called Europe "the colossus with feet of clay", as it faced the successive crises which shook it and the difficulties of working out common policies when the Community's political determination gave way before national preoccupations. It is for this reason that Belgian trade unions bring all means to bear in order to overcome those national considerations within the European Trade Union Confederation.

THE LUXEMBOURG TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Early developments

The Luxembourg trade union movement began rather timidly in the early 1860's. It was called into being by Bavarian brewery workers who, by maintaining their links with their home trade union, founded in Luxemburg their local section of the German "Brauerei-arbeiter-Verband". The results of this experiment which took place in an almost entirely primary and agricultural environment were considerable. Stimulated by this success, three further organisations were founded between 1864 and 1867: a printers' trade union, a trade union of the cigar-makers of the tobacco industry, and finally in 1867, the trade union of the glove-makers.

However, the development of the workers' movement was severely handicapped from 1871 onwards by the strict application of laws restricting the right of free association. Thus the president of the glove-makers union was arrested as strike-leader and the following year twenty printing workers were condemned to heavy fines. As a result, the number of trade union members fell to below one thousand. Only in the twentieth century did the trade union movement start to grow.

Confined to the capital, the trade union movement had ignored the industrial revolution which took place between 1870 and 1900 in the Canton of Esch. The first trade union organisations were concerned less with improving the conditions of the workers, or with the ideas of the class-struggle, than with the aim of protecting their craft. A determining factor in their creation was therefore the division between craft labour and the invasion of mechanical production, the prelude to the ruin of the cigar-making and glove-making industries.

With the industrial development of Luxemburg, but especially with the first world war and its consequences of misery and inflation the modern trade union movement began to take shape. It was at this time, on 30 August 1916, that the "Mineworkers' and Steelworkers' Union" was founded in Esch. Simultaneously, the metalworkers in Luxemburg and the textile workers in Hamm organised themselves into unions. One year later, on 1 July 1917, the principle of permanent cooperation among all the free trade unions was decided at a meeting of the "Entente syndicale," a grouping of trade union leaders.

This was to be the key-stone for the merger of the metalworkers of the mining basin with those of the centre of Luxemburg (Berg-Metall- und Industriearbeiter-Verband) as well as the basis for a confederation grouping all industrial workers: the General Confederation of Labour (Confédération générale du travail-CGT).

But this unity movement was short-lived. Two events, both on the national and international level, were to break its momentum.

The first general strike for higher wages and the maintenance of their purchasing power was broken by the German authorities in 1917; three and a half years later it was the French army which marched against the strikers and made them evacuate the factories they had occupied. The repression was brutal. The trade unions underwent a crisis period, also because the CGT's links with the socialist party caused misgivings both among workers of christian-democratic tendency and workers of communist tendency. The creation of the Christian trade union international in Utrecht in 1920 was the starting signal for the resurrection of christian trade union organisations which had been set up in 1906 but which had disappeared during

the first world war. Finally, with the birth of the Luxemburg Communist Party, mistrust was sown within the working class.

The disillusion caused by these dissensions and the lassitude brought about by the failure of the strikes left their mark on the membership figures in the period between the two wars. From 1919 to 1920, membership showed a startling growth by passing from 8,200 to more than 26,000. Then came the down-turn: 18,000 in 1921, 12,000 in 1929 and 10,000 at the nadir of the economic crisis. It is true that membership figures started to climb again on the eve of the second world war thanks to economic upswing but above all as a result of the creation of the National Labour Council and the suppression of the articles of the penal code which limited the right of free associations (1936). However, at the same time, the divisions in the movement had become stronger.

Two major confederations

The working class is divided in two major groupings, the socialist tendency on the one hand and the social-christian tendency on the other.

The CGT (Confédération générale du Travail), of socialist tendency and affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, has grown continuously in membership and political influence since its foundation in 1919 but particularly since the end of the second world war. It groups five major trade union federations in Luxemburg. The CGT strength resides chiefly in two organisations: the Federation of Luxemburg Workers - LAV and the National Federation of Railwaymen, Transport Workers, Civil Servants and Employees of Luxemburg - FNCTFEEL. The other member unions are: LVOV: Luxemburg Union of Foreman and Leading Engineers; FTL: Bookbinders Federation; and GANYMED: Hotel Workers National Federation.

The second confederation, the "Letzeburger Chreschtleche Gewerkschaftsbond" - LCGB (Christian Trade Union Federation of Luxemburg) had a slower and later development. On the local level there were already in 1906 workers' associations based on christian ideals, but for a long time they remained without real influence on the working class. Only at the beginning of the 1920's did these federations join into a single organisation. The LCGB brings together:

- FCML: Christian Federation of Luxemburg Metalworkers;
- FCML: Christian Federation of Luxemburg Mineworkers;
- FCOUL: Christian Federation of Luxemburg Factory workers;
- FCPSP: Christian Federation Public Service Workers;
- FCEF: Christian Federation Employees and Civil Servants;
- FCCA: Christian Federation Craftsmen and Apprentices;
- FCOBC: Christian Federation Building and Quarry Workers;
- FCTPAS: Christian Federation Social insurance pensioners;
- FCPT: Christian Federation Transport workers.

Apart from these two confederations, there are two autonomous trade unions, untouched by political or philosophical considerations, which represent specific vocational interests. One is the NHV (Independent Union of Artisans) which in 1965 became the successor-organisation of a non-trade union association of artisans; the other is the FEP (Federation of Private Sector Employees) which emerged from a non-profit making association which had been founded in 1918. Politically independent - according to the constitution "any political or religious preoccupation within the Federation is forbidden" - the FEP is nevertheless internationally affiliated both to the CIC (International Federation of Supervisory Staffs) and to the FIET (International Federation of Commercial, Clerical and Technical Employees).

A step towards trade union unity was taken in 1965-1966, when the "Freie Letzeburger Arbechterverband" of communist tendency and affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions, merged with the socialist-orientated LAV, mentioned above.

The membership of the CGT was approximately 30,000 in 1974, while that for the LCGB was 15,000.

Freedom of association and right to strike

Luxemburg's small size and the concentration of heavy industry in the mining basin as well as the monolithic unity of its economy have profoundly influenced the country's trade union structure. They have imposed an advanced degree of centralisation, even more marked in the case of the LCGB and the FEP than in the CGT.

The second common characteristic is that the three organisations have both a horizontal structure - the individual trade unions - and a vertical structure whose smallest unit is the local section. While neither the LCGB nor the FEP has an autonomous youth section, the LAV has one, the LAJ (Letzeburger Arbechter-Jugend), which has its own constitution, approved by the central committee.

The LCGB is the only federation to have a strike fund, which pays a daily allowance equal to twice the monthly dues in case of strike.

In the third place, it is important to point out that none of the three confederations have a civil status in law. The Luxemburg trade unions are in fact free associations having no legal status; though the law recognises specifically their existence and their representative character. There is one exception to this general rule: the FNCTIFEL which in 1915 constituted itself as a consumer cooperative in accordance with the dispositions of the law of 10 August 1915 on commercial companies.

In Luxemburg, freedom of association and the internal organisation of trade union movements are not limited by any legal provisions. But this does not apply in respect to the right to strike.

These rights were acquired only through a long struggle which lasted until 1936. The right to free association was formally guaranteed by the Constitutions of 1848 and 1868, but in practice it was seriously restricted by articles 414, 415 and 416 of the French penal code of 1810 against the right to assembly, which subsisted in Luxemburg until 1879. Though from then onwards, striking became legal as such, article 310 of the new penal code sanctioned severely any physical or moral constraint on the part of the trade union organisations as an infringement of the right to work.

The working class considered article 310 as "one of the worst monuments of exceptional legislation", all the more so because until then "the country had never been troubled by serious agitation by the workers". The first strike worth mentioning in the country's social history - that of the printing workers - did not take place until 1898. In fact, with this article of the penal code, the legislator aimed in the first place at the repercussions of industrial action by neighbouring industrial centres and at the influence of migrant workers. But whatever the motives for the vote, the trade union organisations continued to fight article 310 for having instituted a state of exception against the right to strike. They had to wait until 1936 for its abrogation under the influence of a new element : the creation of the National Labour Council which had the task "of preventing and settling collective labour conflicts".

According to the Grand-ducal decree which instituted this body, recourse to conciliation procedure is not optional but obligatory. This means that anyone who causes a suspension or stoppage of work, without having first brought the case before the Council, is liable to be fined.

The right to strike is thus subjected to a rigid procedure even though article 11 of the Constitution "guarantees trade union rights" and - according to the rapporteur on the constitutional law of 1948 - "the right to strike is one of the attributes and a corollary of trade union rights".

The regulation concerning the collective stoppage of work, with the introduction of the trade unions into the negotiating procedure is one of the most important events in the social history of Luxemburg. It would however be a mistake to conclude that the trade union movement seeks and accepts negotiations within four walls as the natural limit of its activities.

Strikes are exceptional in Luxemburg, but this is because collective contracts normally contain clauses dealing specifically with social peace.

Committee for negotiating collective agreements

The trade unions have formed a "trade union committee for negotiating collective agreements" so as to present a united front to the employers. Joint management-labour bodies exist for the purpose of undertaking collective bargaining in particular industrial sectors. Once a contract has been signed between the unions and the employers, the government usually extends its application over the whole of the industry concerned. The government also fixes an overall minimum wage rate. As in Belgium, wages are linked to the cost of living.

Cooperation in state bodies and industrial democracy

The Luxemburg trade unions participate in the running of state and semi-state institutions, such as the Social Security Office, the National Labour Office, the Luxemburg Office for Higher Productivity and the Economic and Social Council. They are represented on the Sickness Insurance Fund.

Six "Chambers of Labour", on which employers and workers are represented, advise the government and parliament on all aspects of labour legislation.

The basic level of representation of workers in the firm is that of the "manual workers' delegation" and "office workers' delegation" established by law in 1958. The "delegates" are elected for a four-year period. The appropriate trade unions of different ideological tendencies present lists of candidates, which are voted on (through proportional representation) by all the workers in the firm.

A system of works councils within firms introduced by legislation in 1962 was modified by a law of 6 May 1974 instituting joint committees in firms of the private sector. This law applies to firms employing at least 150 workers. The committees are composed of an equal number of management and worker representatives. The latter are elected by secret ballot, by a system of proportional representation: lists of candidates are put forward by the workers' delegates in the firm. Seats are earmarked for manual workers' representatives and office employees' representatives in proportion to the numbers concerned. Advisers, either from inside or from outside the firm, can attend meetings in a consultative capacity when an absolute majority of a group requests this; the number cannot exceed half the number of elected representatives in the group. They are designated by the representative trade union or employers' organisations at national level.

The joint committee has power of decision over rules or measures concerning certain personnel matters. The head of the firm must inform and consult the committee in advance about important changes in the firm's installations and operations. He is obliged to inform and consult the committee twice a year in writing on the economic and financial situation of the firm. The committee also superintends the administration of staff welfare schemes.

The law of 6 May 1974 also provides for representation of workers on boards of limited liability companies. All joint stock companies employing at least 1,000 workers are affected, as well as all joint stock companies in which the Luxemburg government has at least a 25 per cent financial holding or where there is a state concession related to the principal activity. One third of the board of directors must be representatives of the workers. The electoral system is similar to that in force for the joint committees. A worker must have been employed for at least two years in the firm concerned in order to be eligible for election. (A different system of nomination applies in the steel industry and up to three of the representatives may be designated by representative trade union bodies, from inside or outside the firm). The worker directors are elected for a limited period but they may stand for re-election. They cannot be dismissed from their job while in office without authorisation from the court dealing with labour contracts. However, their mandate as board members may be revoked either by the workers' representatives in the firm, or by the trade union organisation, or by the Minister of Labour, from whom they hold their mandate.

The board members representing the workers have the same responsibilities for the situation of the firm as other board members.

The law applies to commercial firms with a single-board structure; however, "when following the introduction of the model of limited liability company with management board and supervisory board a firm falling under the application of the present law will have opted for this new system, the dispositions of the present law referring to the board of directors will be applicable to the supervisory board".

General policies

The CGT and the LCGB hold distinct ideological principles:

"The CGT proclaims that the ultimate aim of trade union activity is the transformation of the present society into a classless society where social justice rules and where labour, creator of all values, will be considered as a fundamental factor and where the workers will be able to live without social fear. The trade union movement will defend the immediate social claims of the wage-earners and strive for structural reforms, particularly the introduction of economic democracy, so that everyone may obtain the share of wealth to which he is entitled, according to his labour and his needs.

"The trade union movement repudiates false values, such as rights claimed on grounds of birth or wealth, and will carry on the struggle against the oligarchy of the banks and the monopolies which has made itself the master of the means of production.

"The trade union movement wants to make the wage-earner, now forced to sell his labour, a free participant in the common task of production".

To achieve these aims, the CGT has continuously insisted on the following claims:

- democratisation of the economy, which implies guaranteed full

employment and an equitable shareout of the national product. However, these aims can only be attained in the degree in which it will become impossible to take unilateral decision, inspired only by the profit-motive, concerning the means of production. It is therefor necessary to introduce workers' co-determination effectively in the directing bodies of companies. At the national level, an Economic and Social Council must be given the task of controlling and studying the development of prices, tax legislation, and general market conditions.

- democratisation of education and information as necessary conditions of any political and economic democracy;
- furtherance of social security, that is, the creation of a national health service and the development of labour legislation, but particularly the harmonisation and generalisation of the system of social insurance, including the right of the insured persons to an autonomous administration of the system.

The LCGB adopted a new and wide-ranging basic programme on the occasion of its 50th anniversary in 1971. It remains linked to a Christian viewpoint on the world and to Catholic social teaching.

Its conception of society is that work should have the prior place. Society should be governed by the principles of helpful support, mutual responsibility and codetermination in the spirit of partnership. The LCGB calls for a thorough family policy ensuring the best possible fulfilment of all tasks of the family. There should be a genuine partnership between capital and labour in the firm; this requires a reorganisation of the relationship between workers, employers and capital.

All trade union organisations and institutions should cooperate in view of achieving equality of treatment for wage and salary earners. It believes in the virtues of trade union pluralism. The LCGB stresses the need for democratic participation by the membership in trade union activities.

In regard to work, the LCGB aims to give work a true value through the achievement of a new social order. It calls for full employment and a harmonious relationship between work and use of leisure. The widest possible distribution of wealth is considered to be a precondition of the creation and maintenance of a free and socially just order. The LCGB aims to create a state based on social laws and a welfare state. This conception is different from that of a state based merely on legality and from one which sets out to provide everything.

The two main trade union bodies have informal but close links with the parties corresponding to their political outlook - the Luxembourg Socialist Party and the Luxembourg Christian Social Party.

Migrant workers

Luxemburg has a higher proportion of migrant workers to total labour force than any other country of Western Europe. It amounts to over thirty per cent. The problem of absorbing such a large percentage is not as great as might appear, since 16,700 out of 40,900 migrant workers (1972 figures)

come from the neighbouring countries of France, Belgium and Germany, and settlement in Luxemburg would not present major difficulties for them. Nevertheless, the number of migrant workers from distant lands is still higher than in other West European countries, comparatively speaking. Two main groups predominate, one from a European Community country, Italy (10,900) and the other from a non-member country, Portugal (8,500).

The Luxemburg trade union movement has devoted substantial resources to organising the migrant workers into the unions and backing their aspirations for equality of treatment with local workers.

The LCGB held a congress of Portuguese trade union members in January 1975. It adopted a resolution summing up their present status in Luxemburg and making certain requests, as follows.

The Portuguese section of the LCGB:

- protests against all discriminatory measures between foreign and national workers;
- urges the Luxemburg Government to take the necessary short, medium and long-term measures to end all discriminatory measures, thus providing a programme to facilitate the integration of foreign workers into Luxemburg national life;
- calls for the suppression of all discrimination against personnel employed in hotels, clinics, hospitals, agriculture and household services;
- hopes that vocational qualifications will be recognised;
- calls for genuine and effective inspection of conditions of work in factories and building sites (safety, hygiene and working hours);
- affirms the right to representation on trade union committees at the work place;
- calls for assimilation in the matter of the right to employment and the final abolition of the "hiring" of men;
- asks for the speedy establishment of a vocational rehabilitation centre for workers handicapped as a result of an accident;
- calls for the minimum wage to be guaranteed to all workers who do not find work corresponding to their physical capacities as a result of a work accident;
- urges employers to improve and to respect work contracts;
- calls for the reform of all laws preventing the Inspectorate of Labour and Mines from convicting employers who dismiss workers without valid reason, as well as for heavy fines to be imposed on employers who make unjustified dismissals;
- stresses the need for the reform of the legal system of the tribunal of conciliators and the arbitration council, for the present legal procedure is too slow;
- calls for decent housing at a moderate price and for the opportunity for those who want to purchase dwellings to obtain credit;

- wants the sickness insurance of foreign workers to be continued during the winter period while they go on holiday to their country of origin, as well as the same family allowances, payable in Luxemburg, and the right to the birth allowance;
- stresses the need for a better teaching policy regarding the children of migrant workers, so that they should be able to follow secondary schooling, having as basic languages French and German, with the language of their country of origin as secondary language - in the meanwhile subsidies should be granted by the Minister of Education to the parents who are obliged to send their children abroad to continue their studies;
- calls for improvements in the organisation of the reception services for migrant workers and their families, the abolition of the measure prohibiting residence to families of inhabitants of Cap Verde, as well as Consultation and representation in all organs discussing and deciding the situation of migrant workers and their families.

Views on European integration

Both the CGT and the LCGB declared themselves in favour of the Schuman Plan right from the start and later for the construction of a new Europe.

Security of employment, the guarantee of a high living standard, but also the elimination of armed conflicts and the protection against all forms of dictatorship were the determining factors in obtaining the support of the Luxembourg trade union movement for the European Coal and Steel Community.

"Without the Schuman, there is no security in the European economy and without economic security in Europe, social security for the workers cannot be envisaged", declared Antoine Krier, President of the LAV, in 1952.

Five years later, the very same motives were invoked to decide the trade union standpoint on the Common Market, which was welcomed as a necessary stage on the road towards European unity and as an indispensable instrument for achieving permanent social progress. At the same time, however, the trade unions expressed their regret that, in the new Community institutions, they had not been granted the right to co-determination which corresponded to their real economic and political importance.

From that time on, the trade union view with respect to Europe has not undergone any fundamental change: European integration should be achieved on a democratic basis, taking into account in particular the workers' aspirations.

For the Luxembourg trade union organisations in their entirety the economic unification of Europe can only be directed towards "the effective participation of the trade unions in the decision-making process of the Communities", for it is out of the question "to create a prosperous Europe at the workers' expense and against the resistance of their organisations".

The CGT and the LCGB played an active role in the former European Confederation of Free Trade Unions and European Organisation of the World Confederation of Labour respectively. The CGT became a founder member of the European Trade Union Confederation and the LCGB joined it along with other former EO/WCL members in 1974.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

At the end of March 1973 the total population of the Netherlands was 13.5 million, of which 4.2 million belonged to what is known as the dependent working population. Of this working population 1 650 000, or 39%, belonged to a trade union.

The Netherlands has three recognized trade union federations: the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV) (Dutch Trade Union Federation) with 656 615 members, the Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond (NKV) (Dutch Catholic Trade Union Federation) with 396 300 members and the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (CNV) (National Christian Trade Union Federation) with 234 950 members (memberships at 31 March 1973)¹. Broken down by age groups the figures for the NVV are: under 25 years of age 100 370, aged 26-64 496 424, and aged 65 or over 59 821; for the NKV the corresponding figures are 64 398, 297 982 and 33 921, and for the CNV 34 307, 180 528 and 20 113. The number of women who are members of a trade union federation amounted to 55 380 for the NVV, 19 797 for the NKV and 19 016 for the CNV.

There are also a number of sectoral trade union organizations in the Netherlands which are not affiliated to any recognized trade union federation. At the end of March 1973 these unions had a total membership of 366 370, including 70 492 members in the under 25 age group, 206 927 aged 25-64, 14 923 aged 65 or more and 74 028 members whose age was not known. 49 010 women belonged to trade union organizations which were not associated with a trade union federation.

In contrast to their colleagues in other European countries workers in the Netherlands did not begin to organize until the latter part of the nineteenth century. As a consequence the trade union movement in the Netherlands did not develop until relatively late. Economic development proceeded slowly, workers' spiritual and material conditions were wretched, while a ban on associations prevented workers and employers from banding together for purposes of unilateral reform of working conditions.

BIRTH OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

Although the law prohibiting associations disappeared from the criminal code in 1872 there were already a few trade unions in existence before that time. The first national trade union was the typographers' union set up in 1866; it joined the Algemeen Nederlands Werkliedenverbond (General Association of Dutch Workers) (ANWV), the first trade union federation in the Netherlands, which was founded in 1871 and also included other local and national trade unions.

The Lutheran minister Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, who left the church in 1878 in order to devote himself entirely to socialism, played an important role in the development of the first trade unions in the Netherlands. Many workers turned away from the ANWV in order to join the Sociaal-Democratische Bond (Social Democratic Association) (SDB).

In 1891 the Second International, which had been set up in Paris in 1889, decided that national labour secretariats should be established. The Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat (National Labour Secretariat) (NAS) was set up in 1893 as a result of the efforts of the Second International. The aim of the NAS was to coordinate the organization of political groups and trade unions in the widest possible sense.

¹At the end of March 1975 the total membership of the NVV, NKV and CNV amounted to 682 600, 354 000 and 228 000 respectively.

The social-democrats, or believers in negotiation, who joined together in 1894 to form the Sociaal-democratische Arbeiders Partij (Social-Democratic Workers Party) (SDAP), expected, in contrast to the anarchists, to achieve important results from political action. They were advocates of central national trade unions, to which the local organizations would be able to affiliate while relinquishing their independence. The differences of opinion within the NAS persisted, leading in 1897 to the NAS becoming simply a trade union federation. The leadership of the NAS was strongly in favour of direct action by workers, of spontaneous solidarity as the financial basis for strikes, of revolutionary strike exercises, of no Parliamentary action and of no paid officials. The wild-cat strike tactics of the NAS, which led to defeat after defeat, intensified the struggle between the anarchists and social-democrats.

Disenchanted and disappointed workers left the NAS. The crisis in the trade union movement came in 1903, when the various trade union organizations were completely disorganized after the rail strikes of January and April.

At the beginning of 1905 the executive of the Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkerbond (General Association of Dutch Diamond Workers) (ANDB), which had been founded in 1894 and was led by Henri Polak and Jan van Zutphen, called for serious and organized cooperation between workers.

The result was that on 25 February 1905 thirteen trade unions decided on far-reaching cooperation. On 30 July the second labour secretariat, the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (Dutch Trade Union Federation) (NVV) was established, and began work on 1 January 1906.

The Protestant trade union movement

Besides the ANVW and the Dutch branch of the International Workers Association (known as the First International), established in 1864, there emerged in 1871 a third tendency within the trade union movement in the Netherlands: the "protestant-christelijke Vaderlandse Werkmansvereniging" (the Protestant Christian National Working Men's Association), which was intended to further the interests of the working class on the basis of the Word of God. This association included not only working people but also employers. In 1877 the christian-social labour organization "Patrimonium" was established, which included among its members both workers and employers. At the first Christian-Social Congress in 1891 specialized sections were formed within Patrimonium, but the organization could still not be described as a trade union federation.

In May 1909 the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (National Christian Trade Union Federation) was established; it was based on christian principles and hence rejected class conflict. Originally the CNV included members of both main religious groups; both Protestants and Roman Catholics were members of the executive. This corresponded to the situation in individual unions such as Unitas and the Textile workers' union, in which both Protestant and Catholic workers were organized together.

However, as early as 1906 the Dutch bishops had expressed their desire that members of the church "should unite and remain united in Catholic organizations". There followed in 1912 a ban on Catholic membership of Unitas. As a result the CNV, while remaining interconfessional in theory, became in fact a Protestant trade union federation. When it was founded in 1909 the CNV had 6 452 members; in 1940, after the outbreak of the Second World War, there were about 120 000 members.

The Roman Catholic trade union movement

After the emergence of the ANWV and the Protestant organization, several years were to pass before Catholic workers became socially organized.

Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum Novarum, (1891) rejected the class conflict advocated by Socialists; private property was to be kept intact.

It also argued the necessity for Catholic organizations, and in so doing made a decisive contribution to the development of the Catholic workers' movement in the Netherlands. In 1909 the office of the Roman Catholic trade union organization was established, including ten unions, with a total of 9 000 members. In 1916, when the episcopacy decided that the general interests of working people should be fostered by the social organizations, and their special occupational interests by the union organizations, the independence of the Roman Catholic trade union movement was recognized for the first time.

In October 1924 the episcopacy gave church approval to the establishment of the Rooms-Katholiek Werkliedenverbond (Roman Catholic Working Peoples' Association) (RKWV), which included the diocesan associations and trade union associations. The federation flourished; beginning with about 107 000 members in 1924, membership had reached almost 210 000 on 10 May 1940, when the Netherlands became involved in the Second World War.

DEVELOPMENT AFTER 1906

When the NVV was established the trade union organizations had adopted three organizational principles: national trade unions with efficient leadership by paid officials, a high level of contributions and strong fighting funds.

The consistent application of these principles and the firm line of the officials appeared to impress workers, who increasingly turned away from the NAS. At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the NVV had 80 000 members and the NAS scarcely 10 000. Although there was a revival in the membership of the NAS after 1918 so that it had 50 000 members in 1920, it was clear that the role of the National Labour Secretariat was at an end. After the occupation (1940-45) the NAS did not re-emerge on the trade union scene in the Netherlands.

It became increasingly apparent that the NVV and the religious trade union movement, in the form of the Rooms-Katholiek Werkliedenverbond (RKWV) and the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (CNV), were faced with the same problems, which gradually increased the need for contact and cooperation between them. Thus, in 1933 they conducted a joint action for the improvement of the provision of employment, and in 1938 the committees of the unions belonging to the NVV consulted jointly with their colleagues from the Catholic and Protestant associations concerning the introduction of collective agreements.

The period 1906-40 was one in which the trade union movement was of great importance to workers in the Netherlands. As the representative and guardian of workers' interests the trade union movement gained increasing recognition during these years. Partly owing to its influence it was possible to introduce laws which were of far-reaching significance for workers and their position in society. Workers gained increasing recognition both as people and as citizens, and the trade union movement played an important role in this "integration" into society.

The years 1930-40 were particularly difficult for the trade union movement in the Netherlands. The economic crisis which ravaged the world, and did not spare the Netherlands, caused massive unemployment, which at its height plunged 500 000 workers and their families into the deepest misery.

On 10 May 1940 the Netherlands were also drawn into the Second World War and occupied by the Germans. On 16 July 1940 the NVV was placed under the control of the National-Socialist Woudenberg, who also became the leader of the nationaal-socialistische Nederlands Arbeids Front (Dutch National-Socialist Workers Front) (NAF) when this was established to replace the NVV by decree of the Reichskommissar for the occupied Netherlands, Dr Seys Inquart, on 30 April 1942. For the moment the intervention of the German occupation authorities put an end to the work of the free trade union movement in the Netherlands.

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 1945

While Holland was still under German occupation, officials of the NVV, the RKWV and the CNV met in secret to discuss together the reconstruction of the trade union movement after the war.

Rivalry between trade union federations in the post-war period could only damage their aim of furthering the workers' interests. Proceeding on this basis the representatives of the trade union federations at their illegal conference decided that after the war wide-ranging cooperation should be established in the social and economic field. They drew up a "Cooperation Code" which provided for cooperation between the trade union federations and between their associated unions at national and local level.

The consultative body of the three trade union federations, the Trade Union Federation Council, was made public on 5 May 1945, the day on which the Netherlands were liberated from the German occupation forces.

In the meantime, immediately after the end of the Second World War, a fourth trade union federation had appeared in the Netherlands. This was the Eenheidsvakcentrale (United Trade Union Federation) (EVC), which some workers joined because they considered that it could lead to a unified trade union movement in the Netherlands. Among the members of the EVC were the earlier supporters of the NAS and the Communists.

The EVC was unable to reach agreement with the leadership of the other three trade union federations, whose aim was the rapid recovery of the Dutch economy. The EVC demonstrated this in a number of strikes which in part had political motives.

After the bloody repression of the Hungarian revolution in 1956 the NVV once again stated clearly that there was no place in its ranks for Communists. A few years later scarcely anything remained of the attraction of the EVC; moreover, as an instrument of the Dutch Communist Party (CPN) the federation had become worthless, and was disbanded.

It was decided in 1971 that Communists might again become members of the NVV's associated organizations, provided they refrained from political activities within the trade union movement.

Cooperation in the Trade Union Federation Council, composed of the NVV, RKWV and CNV, came to an end in 1954, when the Dutch bishops forbade Roman Catholics to be members of a trade union belonging to the Socialist NVV, on pain of exclusion from the holy sacraments. This prohibition was the cause of the NVV breaking off cooperation within the Trade Union Federation Council.

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE THREE TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS

After a confidential discussion between the Dutch episcopacy and the NVV in 1957 (which incidentally led to the episcopacy lifting the ban on membership of the NVV, although not until 1965) it was decided in January 1958 to re-establish cooperation in the consultative body of the three trade union federations. However, cooperation and regular consultation was to apply only to the three trade union federations and not to their affiliated trade unions, to the officials' associations (local trade union federations) or the branches of the trade unions. Instead of the name "Trade Union Federation Council" the body was in future to be known as the Consultative Council.

The Consultative Council can set up committees to deal with all subsidiary work. It has almost always proved possible to reach unanimous decisions on the most important social and socio-economic problems.

The re-established cooperation between the three trade union federations led to the publication in 1963 by the NVV and the Katholieke Arbeidersbeweging (Catholic Workers Movement) (KAB), the former RKWV, of a joint action programme in which were formulated hopes and desires concerning a number of socio-economic and other problems. Although the original intention was that the CNV should also participate in this action programme, that organization brought out its own socio-political programme. A year later, however, the three trade union federations came together to publish jointly the report on "Asset Formation by Division of Capital Increase", and in February 1967 the three trade union federations decided to bring out a joint action programme.

The steadily increasing cooperation between the three trade union federations NVV, NKV and CNV was apparent in discussions, which began in 1969 and were aimed at the creation of a "full confederation" of the three bodies. After the three trade union federations had, for the first time in history, held a joint protest meeting in 1968 as a result of a memorandum published by the Government on wages and employment policy, it became apparent from opinion polls among NVV and NKV members that the vast majority were in favour of a united trade union movement. Although in the meantime discussions on far-reaching cooperation were continued and the three trade union federations had published an action programme for the period 1971-75 which contained a number of social objectives concerning wage and employment conditions, labour market policy and social insurance, they were still unable to reach any decision on "full confederation". Agreement was, however, reached on limited forms of cooperation, and they were able to establish the Stichting Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek Vakcentrales (Foundation for the Scientific Investigation of Trade Union Federations) (SWOV), since closed, and the Stichting Ontwikkelingssamenwerking Vakbeweging (Foundation for Development and Cooperation in the Trade Union Movement) (SOSV).

At the end of 1973 it became clear that each of the three trade union federations had a different picture of the confederation to be created. As a result the CNV took the view that it should not collaborate in the creation of this confederation, since it considered that this would endanger its own identity. On the other hand, the NVV and NKV did wish to achieve "full confederation". At the time of writing the final discussions on the achievement of this objective are about to take place. If these plans go through, the administration and staff of the Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (Federated Dutch Trade Union Movement) (FNV) are to be installed in the NVV building in Amsterdam. Departments of the trade union offices of the NVV and NKV which are still working independently are to be integrated in order to improve efficiency and to represent more effectively the interests of the approximately 1 million trade union members belonging to these two federations. **

** A list of the most important trade unions inside the national centres is attached to this article.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND SOCIETY

Particularly after 1945 the trade union movement gradually broadened its area of social concern. Already during the war years (1940-45) the basis had been laid for the consultative institute which was to become known as the Stichting van de Arbeid (Labour Foundation). In addition to the illegal consultations between the representatives of the three trade union federations, regular discussions were held between them and the representatives of the central employers' organizations on urgent questions which would have to be dealt with immediately after the liberation of the Netherlands. The aim was a form of cooperation which would encourage lasting good social relationships within industry. It was agreed that a permanent contact body should be established, which was presented to the Dutch people on 17 May 1945 as the Labour Foundation, and which included on the basis of equality between employers and workers both the three trade union federations and all the important employers' organizations from industry, the private retail sector and agriculture.

The chairman of the Foundation was provided alternately by the employers and the workers. The Foundation was recognized by the Government as an advisory body for all provisions in the social field.

When the Sociaal-Economische Raad (Socio-Economic Council) (SER) was set up in 1950 an important part of the tasks of the Labour Foundation was taken over by this public body. It is nevertheless true that in the years following 1945 the Foundation played an important role in the rapid reconstruction of the Dutch economy which had been dislocated by the German occupation. From 1945 until 1962 the Foundation functioned as an advisory body to the Industrial Disputes Tribunal, which was composed of legal and other experts appointed by the Government. This tribunal had the task of approving all collective labour agreements which had resulted from discussions between employers and workers.

Numerous changes in wage policy resulted in the introduction on 1 January 1968 of the system of free wage policy, under which the Labour Foundation functioned as the central body for discussions between the employers' organizations and the trade union movement.

The Socio-Economic Council (SER)

In the manifesto introducing the Labour Foundation on 17 May 1945 it was stated in reference to statutory industrial organization (PBO) that a consensus had been reached concerning the desirability of wide-ranging representation of the workers' movement in the highest economic bodies, that the Government would have to stand aside and also that there was a need to establish a number of subsidiary public bodies in this area.

In December 1945 the Government presented a preliminary draft of a law on the reorganization of trade and industry (the Law on Industrial Organization - BO) into large comprehensive units, in which the Government, employers and workers would have their place, in order to establish generally binding economic and social rules for the various branches of industry.

In mid-February 1950 the Law on Industrial Organization was implemented and at the same time the Socio-Economic Council with 45 members (15 experts appointed by the State, 15 by the employers' organizations and 15 by the three recognized workers' trade union federations) began its work. The Chairman of this body was appointed by the Government. Among the most important tasks of the SER was to give advice to the Government both on request and voluntarily.

In the meantime, as a result of pressure from the trade union movement, a discussion has been initiated concerning the purpose, composition and methods of the SER. The trade union movement, which would like to see the SER become instrumental in introducing the reforms which are urgently necessary in society as it stands, is afraid that precisely those consultative procedures employed by the SER signify a restriction on its freedom of movement.

In addition, the SER has the task of advising the Government on all measures which it proposes to introduce in the economic or social area.

In addition to the Socio-Economic Council the Law on Industrial Organization of 15 February 1950 also set up public bodies such as marketing boards and trade corporations composed of employers and workers on a parity basis.

The trade union movement quickly became involved in social insurance. Thus representatives of the trade union movement obtained places inter alia on the Social Insurance Council, the Social Insurance Bank, the Sickness Fund Council and the General Unemployment Fund. As a result of all these measures workers in the Netherlands achieved an amply guaranteed social position.

While at the end of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies it was still possible to describe cooperation between both sides of industry (employers and workers) as good and aimed at directing the Dutch economy, organized labour was thereafter quickly confronted by a very tense social situation. A wage law submitted by the Minister of Social Affairs, Article 8 of which empowered him to declare collective agreements inoperative, was approved by the Upper House. The NVV and NKV withdrew temporarily from the discussions on wage policy in the Labour Foundation and the Socio-Economic Council.

When a new cabinet took office it appeared that the Government set great store by efficient consultation between Government and industry on socio-economic problems. To this end wages legislation and the provisions concerning price calculation were withdrawn and both employers and workers declared themselves willing to cooperate in restraining the inflationary tendencies in the Dutch economy. The trade union movement in particular wanted to take into account in increases in real wages the financing of urgently required extensions to collective provisions. In sharing out the burden of payments, those who were paid least should as far as possible bear the least burden.

Since then the Dutch trade union movement has continued to lay great emphasis on the need to redistribute income, considering this to be a desirable contribution towards a more just distribution of knowledge, income, wealth and power.

When it came to modifying existing relationships in the Netherlands the question arose of whether this aim should be achieved by a policy of "small steps" in order to achieve social improvements or of whether, without neglecting the furtherance of workers' interests, the main stress should be laid upon the reform of society. The strategy and tactics of the trade union movement, in which the value attached on the one hand to consultation or on the other hand to conflict as the more suitable tactic for the trade union movement also played its part, led in October 1972 to a serious difference of opinion between the NVV industrial association and the trade union federation, which was supported by the rest of its member trade unions. The result was the resignation of NVV President H.ter Heide. A short time later, however, the conflict with the NVV industrial association was resolved and the NVV unions were again able to follow a common policy as regards the securing of changes in income relationships.

In 1973 the Dutch trade union movement was able to extend a hearty welcome to a Government which, led by the Socialist Dr. J.M. den Uijl as Prime Minister, had come to power with the watchword of combatting the existing inequalities of income, possessions, power and knowledge. However, the worsening world economic situation and the resulting high unemployment were not calculated to facilitate the achievement of these aims, however much the deteriorating conditions were considered to provide an additional impulse towards a fairer division of welfare and the improvement of human well-being.

In recent years the trade union movement in the Netherlands has encountered an increasing number of problems. Questions of economic growth, environment, technological development and the provision of energy demand attention. Just as important, however, is the democratization of Dutch industry and the strengthening and realization of economic participation, matters in relation to which the position of the undertakings and general economic and social objectives are relevant. The development of a social welfare policy requires considerable effort. An important place in the policy of the trade union movement is reserved for education, which is the prerequisite for the development of the individual. As unemployment

increases, employment policy comes to occupy a central place. The Government's budget policy (e.g. the provision of financial support to combat unemployment) must be closely watched, since taxation is of major importance for the distribution of income. Traditional policy areas such as working conditions and social insurance have become increasingly complicated as regards their practical content and demand continual attention on the part of the trade union movement.

These developments are reflected in the 1976/77 policy programme of the three trade union federations NVV, NKV and CNV, published in July 1975, which reveals what the trade union movement expects the Government and Parliament to do in order to bring about the social changes and improvements which it considers most urgent.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The trade union movement in the Netherlands not only has a voice at national level, but also makes an international contribution. Being international in outlook the trade union movement has always supported international cooperation. It welcomed wholeheartedly the coming into force of the European Economic Community (EEC). The trade union movement has done its utmost to further the aims of the EEC, although in recent years there have been many instances when a warning had to be given against a particular development within the EEC which might work counter to the interests of workers in the six Member States.

The trade union movement also participates in world bodies. Thus its representatives always form part of the delegation at the annual session of the United Nations in New York and the International Labour Organization in Geneva. It is also represented on the organization for European Cooperation and Development (OECD). And in addition the Dutch trade union movement has its representatives in all its "own" international bodies, such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Brussels, of which the NVV is a member, and the World Confederation of Labour to which the NKV and the CNV belong.

At European level the Dutch trade union federations now belong to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) set up in 1973.

TRADE UNION VIEWS ON WORKERS' PARTICIPATION

Laws affording workers a certain role in regard to the management of firms are relatively recent in the Netherlands, and there is no overall trade union view about them.

The system of enterprise councils was initiated by law in 1950 and extended in 1971. All firms employing at least 100 workers must have such a council, in which the members are elected by the workers but the chairman must be a member of the management board. There is a right of prior consultation on major changes in the firm and on major personnel policy changes. The Council has a right of codecision on certain matters concerning working conditions not regulated by collective agreements.

Since 1973 (following a law passed in 1971) the enterprise council has been able to influence the choice of members of the supervisory board in the case of large firms. New members of such boards are to be coopted by existing members. The enterprise council can make a recommendation, and it can make an objection to the appointment envisaged. However, no person may be a member of the board who is in the service of the company or of a trade union involved in determining working conditions for the company concerned.

The NVV and the NKV object to the presence in the enterprise councils of a management representative as chairman and want appropriate changes in the law. The law concerning supervisory boards has not been in operation long enough for judgements about it, and there is yet no widespread view in favour of direct worker representation on supervisory boards.

APPENDIX - UNIONS AFFILIATED TO THE THREE NATIONAL CENTRES

Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV)

15 trade union federations. The largest are:

Industriebond NVV (Engineering, textiles, various industries)
Algemene Bond van Ambtenaren ABVA (Public services)
Algemene Nederlandse Bond voor de Bouw- en Houtnijverheid

Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond (NKV)

8 trade union federations. The largest are:

Industriebond NKV (engineering, textiles, various industries)
Bouw- en Houtbond NKV (Building and wood)
Katholieke Bond van Personeel in de Sektoren Overheid, Volksgezondheid,
maatschappelijk Welzijn en sociale Werkvoorziening (KABO) - (Public Services)

Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (CNV)

13 trade union federations. The largest are:

Nederlandse Christelijke Bond van Overheidspersoneel (NCBO) - (Public services)
Industriebond CNV (Engineering, textiles, various industries)
Hout- en Bouwbond CNV (Wood and building)

