



EUROPEAN TRADE UNION INSTITUTE

Info 18

**The trade union movement
in Belgium**

The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) is the research, information/documentation and educational instrument of the European trade union movement. It was established in 1978 at the initiative of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to deal with European aspects of economic, social and political developments of particular importance for workers and their trade unions.

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FRANCE	CFDT CGT-FO
GREAT BRITAIN	TUC
GREECE	GGCL
ICELAND	ASI BSRB
IRELAND	ICTU
ITALY	CGIL CISL UIL
LUXEMBOURG	CGT-LUX LCGB
MALTA	GWU CMTU
NETHERLANDS	FNV CNV
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SWEDEN	LO TCO
SWITZERLAND	SGB CNG
TURKEY	DISK

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT IN BELGIUM

**EUROPEAN TRADE UNION INSTITUTE
BRUSSELS 1987**

The European Trade Union Institute is a non-profit organization established in 1977 to promote the interests of workers in the European Community. It is a unique institution of workers' organizations in Europe, designed to provide a forum for the exchange of information and the promotion of workers' interests in the EEC and to coordinate the activities of workers' organizations in the EEC.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

IN BELGIUM

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F O R E W O R D

"INFO" is a series of reports published by the European Trade Union Institute since October 1982.

Each issue in this series consists of a short report covering subjects of topical relevance and information value.

The "INFO" series thus represents an additional means of information provided by the ETUI and at the same time serves as a support for educational work.

This report gives a concise description of the trade union movement in Belgium: It is the eighth report to cover a national trade union movement in this way and has been prepared by **Martin Hutsebaut**, Assistant to the Director.

In the coming months, further publications in this series will offer similar descriptions of trade union movements in other countries which are affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation. The reports will be structured along the same lines so that valid comparisons can be made of the situations in different countries.

We hope that the "INFO" series will contribute towards a better understanding of trade union positions in Western Europe.

Brussels, January 1987

Günter Köpke
Director of the ETUI

F O R E W O R D

"1970" is a series of reports published by the European Trade Union Institute since October 1967.

This series consists of a broad report covering subjects of typical relevance and importance.

The "1970" series thus represents an additional means of information provided by the ETUI and at the same time serves as a support for educational work.

This report gives a concise description of the trade union movement in Belgium. It is the eighth report in this series published by the ETUI and has been prepared by Martin Huisman, Assistant to the Director.

In the coming months, further publications in this series will give a concise description of trade union movements in other countries which are significant to the European Trade Union Institute. The reports will be structured along the same lines as this volume and will be published in different countries.

We hope that the "1970" series will contribute towards a better understanding of trade union activities in various European countries.

Director of the ETUI

Brussels, January 1971

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1. THE CONFEDERATIONS

The Belgian trade union movement has grown up around two major confederations, the Socialist FGTB-ABVV and the Christian CSC-ACV. Over the years, these two nationally-based confederations have each gradually developed their own regional and community-based(*) structures. The French titles of the two organisations (FGTB and CSC) and their Dutch equivalents (ABVV and ACV) thus serve to designate either the national confederations or their respective regional formations. There exists, in addition, a small confederation of Liberal trade unions, the CGSLB-ACLVB. Details of the three representative confederations which currently comprise the Belgian trade union movement are given below in order of present size (i.e. membership figures) :-

Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens (CSC)

Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond (ACV)

(Confederation of Christian trade unions)

Rue de la Loi 121,

1040 Brussels

Tel : 02/237.31.11

President : JOSEPH HOUTHUYS (until July 1987)

New elected president : WILLY PEIRENS (to take up office in August 1987)

General Secretary : ROBERT D'HONDT

(*) The term community is used in the specifically Belgian sense to designate the two principal linguistic communities in the country, the Flemings (Dutch-speakers, living in Flanders) and the Walloons (French-speakers, living in Wallonia).

Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (FGTB)

Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond (ABVV)

(General confederation of Belgian Labour)

Rue Haute 42,

1000 Brussels

Tel : 02/511.64.66

Present : ANDRE VANDEN BROUCKE

General Secretary : JEAN GAYETOT

**Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique
(CGSLB)**

**Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België
(ACLVB)**

(General confederation of Liberal trade unions in Belgium)

Koning Albertlaan, 95,

9000 Ghent

Tel : 091/22.57.51

Chairman : ARMAND COLLE

2. HISTORY

The origins of the Belgian trade union movement date back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. At that time there existed in Belgium a whole range of workers' self-help organisations or friendly societies organised by trade. The Ghent printworkers, for example, set up their organisation, entitled "De Gezellenvereniging van drukkers", in 1806.

In the second half of the nineteenth century these different societies of workers developed into the first professional associations and the region around Ghent, in

Flanders, may be regarded as the cradle of Belgian trade unionism. The first trade unions were set up around 1857 in the textiles sector. They were the Fraternity of Ghent weavers and the "Union of indigent brothers", also known as the "United spinners". These were followed in 1859 by the third trade union to be set up in Ghent, this time by the metalworkers.

In 1860 the metalworkers, weavers and spinners together formed a league of workers - "Werkersbond" - which was the first regional federation. From then on, trade union structures developed gradually. The formation of a number of federations at local, regional and national level meant that organisation was developing in twofold fashion, both within specific industries and, at the same time, on a geographical or interprofessional(*) basis.

Between 1868 and 1870 trade union organisations were also formed in other parts of the country :- the federation of mineworkers from central Belgium (1868), and the federations of metalworkers in Brussels (1869), Verviers (1869) and Antwerp (1870).

The federation of typographers, founded in 1865, was the first national federation. Others were to follow :- the federation of woodworkers (1883), the national federation of metalworkers (1890), the federation of miners (1890), the national federation of the building industry (1897) and the national federation of textile workers (1898).

(*) interprofessional - term used extensively in Belgian parlance to describe aspects of trade union organisation or activity spanning the whole range of individual unions or industry federations.

In 1866 a law was passed allowing associations of workers but banning all trade union activity. The repressive nature of this law was further reinforced by the law of 1892 and it was not until 1921 that trade union freedom and the right to form associations were explicitly recognised in law.

Politically and ideologically speaking, the first workers' associations were neutral. However, the 1860s saw the emergence of different political and philosophical leanings among workers. In 1866 there was a split in the neutral Union of Weavers and this subsequently led to the formation of the Socialist weavers' trade union the "Vooruit". There was a pause in the conflict in 1876 when the two currents - Socialist and Christian - merged into one. The organisation continued to be known as the Fraternity of Weavers although the Socialist "Vooruit" current gained the upper hand.

In 1886 tensions surfaced once more when the Ghent weavers protested against their professional organisation's membership of the First International. On 18 December 1886 they set up the "Anti-Socialist Cottonworkers' League" in Ghent. It was from this organisation that the CSC was later to derive its origins.

On the Socialist front, the formation of the Belgian Workers' Party (Parti Ouvrier Belge) in 1885 gave new impetus to the fledgling trade union movement, prompting the creation of new trade union organisations, strengthening the trend towards centralisation, and improving standards of organisation. The Belgian Workers' Party and those trade unions with socialist leanings spearheaded the opposition to the law of 1898 on professional organisations which, among other things, laid down the terms under which trade unions could obtain legal personality.

The **Christian** trade union movement began its development in 1886, albeit in a rather fragmented way. The first Christian trade unions frequently emerged from a cluster of social organisations which included insurance, savings bank, co-operative, cultural and leisure facilities.

In Flanders these services were frequently organised within the framework of the "Gilde", i.e. mixed associations of employers and workers. Between 1888 and 1904, with the exception of those at Ghent and Lokeren, most of the Christian trade unions took shape in this context.

In Wallonia on the other hand, the origin of the Christian trade unions is to be found in the Democratic Federations. The trade unions in Charleroi, Liège and Namur gradually became organised. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII, in his *Rerum Novarum* encyclical, acknowledged the existence, alongside the mixed associations, of workers' trade unions. Yet for quite some time thereafter the Christian workers' organisations - with the exception of a few cases, most notably those of Ghent and Lokeren - rarely displayed true trade union characteristics.

The history of **Liberal** trade unionism in Belgium goes back to 1889 when the first Liberal trade union was founded in Ghent as a consequence of dissidence within the Fraternity of Ghent weavers. A minority faction was unable to tolerate either the Marxist ideology of one set of members or the religious doctrine and clericalism adhered to by the others. These dissidents thus founded a Liberal trade union under the umbrella of the Liberal Workers' Defence Organisation. In the following years Liberal trade unions were gradually set up in the cities, initially in Flanders and, from 1912, in Wallonia too.

The F G T B

The FGTB has its origins in the **Trade Union Committee** created in 1898 by the Belgian Workers' Party. One of the tasks of this committee was to set up trade unions and form federations. Although in the first few years the Belgian Workers' Party was in a position to exert the predominant political influence, this changed in 1904 when the trade unions gained the right to choose the members of the bureau of the Trade Union Committee themselves. At the same time, a way was being sought of enabling trade unions not affiliated to the Belgian Workers' Party to sit on the Trade Union Committee. To this end, the committee changed its name in 1907 and became the "Trade Union Committee of the Belgian Workers' Party and the Independent Trade Unions". From the organisational standpoint, the Trade Union Committee sought principally, up to the First World War, to foster the creation of national federations and to increase its confederal powers. By 1914 some 97% of the membership were organised in national federations. The Trade Union Committee underwent major developments after the First World War. All the trade unions soon banded together to form 31 occupational federations at national level. This figure was reduced to 24 in 1937 and to 16 in 1946. The national federations enjoyed a very considerable degree of independence from the Trade Union Committee.

In 1937 the Trade Union Committee became the **Belgian Trade Union Confederation** (Confédération Syndicale Belge). The new organisation was to receive considerably increased funding, in particular as a result of the creation of the National Strike Fund (Caisse Nationale de Résistance). Whereas previously the decision to strike could be taken only by the federations, henceforth the trade union confederation was to be allowed a say and was even entitled to call a general strike. Between 1940 and 1944,

undercover contacts were established among trade unionists of different political leanings, particularly Socialist and Communist, in the hope that after the War it would be possible to unite all the forces of labour. The **Fédération Générale de Travail de Belgique (FGTB)** came into being at the Congress of 1945. At this Congress several different trade unions, including the Belgian trade union confederation (private sector), the general public services trade union, the unified trade union movement (principally the Liège metalworkers) and the Belgian confederation of single trade unions (Communist leanings), merged into one organisation. The call for unity was also addressed to the CSC and the CGSLB, but in both cases it went unheeded. During the founding congress a statement of principle was adopted declaring the FGTB's total independence of all political parties. At the same time, it was decided to develop trade union structures at regional level.

In 1954 the FGTB's **National Committee** (Comité National) adopted the regulations for a **National Strike Fund** (Fonds National de Résistance), the purpose of which was to pay strike benefit. This fund remained in operation until the end of 1960. Since 1961, the individual unions have managed their own strike funds independently.

Since 1968 the FGTB has had, in addition to its national, regional, sectoral and plant level structures, an organised inter-regional network of relations. However, the new inter-regional structures were not officially incorporated into the FGTB Statutes until 1978. Article 18 bis of these Statutes provides for the creation by the FGTB of the **Flemish Inter-regional** (Vlaamse Intergewestelijke), the **Walloon Inter-regional** (Interrégionale Wallonne) and the **Brussels Inter-regional** (Interrégionale de Bruxelles).

So far most of the individual unions have retained their strictly unitary structure. However, two important unions, the civil servants union (CGSP) and the private sector employees union (SETCA) have already set up regional structures (the "interrégionales") while another major union, the "Centrale Générale" is also beginning to adjust its structures to the regionalisation of the country.

The C S C

1904 saw the founding of the **General Secretariat of Christian Trade Unions in Belgium**. This Secretariat performed the same function as the Trade Union Committee set up a few years earlier by the Belgian Workers' Party. Under its co-ordinating influence, a number of Christian trades federations were set up :- in 1905 workers from the textile, metal, building, timber and books industries formed federations and in 1906 those from the footwear, cigars, bakery, painting and docking trades followed suit. In December 1908 the idea of a union of the Christian federations was first put forward and in 1909 this led to the creation of the **Union of Christian Trades Associations in Belgium** (Union des Associations Professionnelles Chrétien-nes de Belgique - Verband van Christelijke Beroepsverenigingen van België) which was joined by sixteen Flemish federations and one from Wallonia. In 1909 the **General Confederation of Christian and Free Trade Unions from the Walloon provinces** was also set up. At the founding Congress of the **National Confederation of Christian and Free Trade Unions** held in Mechelen in 1912, the Flemish and Walloon organisations merged.

It was at the Antwerp Congress in 1923 that the confederation received its final title of **Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC)**. In 1926 the CSC set up a Central Strike Fund. As from 1925, the regional federations

gained seats on the CSC Bureau and Committee alongside the trade federations. During the same period the different occupational associations were increasingly grouping together. The 1947 Congress revised the CSC's statutes and drew the regional federations more closely into the confederation. In 1968 the 24th Congress adopted an outline report entitled "The CSC and responsibility for the future" ("**La CSC, responsable de l'avenir**") containing the underlying principles which still guide the CSC's trade union activity today. The report states that the former deep-rooted ideological differences between the CSC and FGTB have lessened, making room for temporary collaboration, should circumstances so dictate. At the same time, the CSC sets out its reasons for preferring trade union pluralism in Belgium.

In 1974 the CSC's trade union structures were adapted to the new structure of the Belgian State and the Confederal Bureau laid down the principles in accordance with which the CSC would act upon the concerns expressed at regional level. This action continued to be conducted under the direct auspices of the national structures until 1978, when the Bureau of the CSC decided to create three **regional committees** within the confederation - one for Flanders, one for Wallonia, and one for Brussels. These committees became responsible, by and large, for covering all those matters which, at government level, had now devolved to the regions. These new modified trade union structures were enshrined in the CSC statutes in 1984. With the exception of the federation of private sector employees, which now has two separate component bodies, namely the LBC for Dutch-speakers and the CNE for French-speakers, the other trade unions have retained a single national structure. However, some unions, including the metalworkers and the communications and culture workers, have set up regional committees.

C G S L B

In 1920 the Liberal trade unions set up a central strike fund which they designated national union ("centrale nationale"). This fund was an indication of the extremely centralised approach adhered to by the Liberal trade union movement in Belgium. In 1927 the Liberal Trade Union of Civil Servants and Railway Workers joined the national union, thus adding a public sector element to its membership and confirming its multi-occupational character. The **National Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions** (Centrale Nationale des Syndicats Libéraux) was formed in 1930 with a centralised strike fund and unemployment fund. After the liberation of Belgium, the Liberal confederation resumed its activities under the official title of **Centrale Générale des Syndicats Libéraux de Belgique - CGSLB** (November 1944) and endorsed the Belgian Liberal Party's Social Charter. The CGSLB gained official recognition as a national representative trade union organisation in 1946.

3. PURPOSES AND TASKS OF THE CONFEDERATIONS

The purpose of the FGTB is to pursue the goals set out in the **Statement of Principle** adopted by its founding congress in 1945.

In this statement, the FGTB proclaims its aim of fostering social change in order to bring about a classless society. The FGTB, itself sprung from the class struggle, stresses that this struggle has now evolved into a struggle of all workers against an oligarchy of banks and monopolists. In a spirit of total independence from all political parties

and of respect for all political and philosophical opinions, the FGTB states that it wishes to pursue its aims by its own means and by appealing for action by all workers.

The Socialist trade union movement wants to achieve social justice by guaranteeing everyone a fair share of wealth in proportion to his labour and needs. It is essential to this end that social and economic democracy should go hand in hand with political democracy. The FGTB considers it necessary to socialise the major banking and industrial trusts (*) and to organise, channel and regulate foreign trade. It rejects the idea of State or bureaucratic management and argues in favour of management of the nationalised undertakings by workers and consumers.

The FGTB wishes to pursue its goals in collaboration with those international trade union organisations that are run according to democratic principles. As well as structural reforms and the transformation of capitalist society, it also defends the immediate demands of the workers.

The purpose of the CSC is to foster the growth and development of Christian trade unions in Belgium in order to promote an organisation of economic and labour activity and a form of society that accord with Christian principles.

The CSC's principles are set out in the already mentioned text "La CSC responsable de l'avenir", published in 1968. It is stated that the CSC's activity is founded on a conception of life which regards the human person and society

(*) see chapter 7

in terms of their deepest essence, totality and final purpose. For the CSC, the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church continue to represent an essential source of inspiration and moral strength. Yet it is clearly stated that "the Christian character of the CSC does not mean that it is the only trade union to adhere to these fundamental values. We could not, as Christians, isolate ourselves from other conceptions of life or other organisations".

The CSC states that it is heedful of the values adhered to by other trade union organisations and that it is prepared to establish good relations with a view to fostering the interests of all workers. The CSC also subscribes to the statement of principles issued by the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) in 1968 and to the basic tenets of the **Christian Workers' Movement** (Mouvement Ouvrier Chrétien - MOC) formulated in 1979. The MOC is a grouping comprising various organisations from the Christian social movement such as the CSC and the Christian mutual ("mutualité") and other organisations with similar leanings (see Chapter 10). The CSC is independent as regards its own programme and the means to be employed in implementing it. It belongs to the MOC in order to collaborate in implementing the general programme for Christian workers.

The CGSLB's conception of society is founded on three principles: the primacy of the individual, the equality in principle of all human beings, and the promotion of individual freedom. The CGSLB defines itself as a movement whose aim is the emancipation of the human person and as a modern variant of humanism. Its ultimate purpose is the achievement of a liberal social order.

4. TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP

Each of the representative Belgian confederations organises all categories of workers, i.e. workers from the private and public sectors, manual workers, white-collar office workers and managerial staff. In addition, pensioners and the unemployed may retain their trade union membership.

Whereas the CSC and the FGTB organise workers in industry unions the CGSLB, which has no such unions, is structured exclusively along interprofessional lines.

There exists a **National Union of Independent Trade Unions** (Union Nationale des Syndicats Indépendents) which groups together a number of autonomous trade unions representing specific categories (National Confederation of Managerial Staff - Confédération Nationale des Cadres⁽¹⁾, Single Trade Union of Ministry of Finance Staff - Syndicat Unique du personnel du Ministère des Finances, National Trade Union of the Belgian police, Syndicat National de la Police Belge, etc). However, its significance at national inter-trade union level is relatively slight.

(1) The National Confederation of Managerial Staff (CNC - Confédération Nationale des Cadres) was recognised by the Belgian government in November 1986 as being representative of managerial staff for elections to works committees. The CNC claims it represents 10 003 managerial staff (10 000 being the minimum membership required for the government to accept a trade union as representative). In the National Labour Council (Conseil National du Travail) the CSC and the FGTB officially contested this representativeness, arguing that the CNC membership included not only managerial staff but also clerical workers and that the CNC had adopted the practice of collective membership which left the door wide open to abuse.

EMPLOYED LABOUR FORCE (figures for 1986)

Total population	9 857.000
Working population	4 202 000
comprising - total employment	3 662 000
- unemployed	554 000
waged persons (including armed forces) (*)	3 017 000
including - services	2 040 000
- industry	964 000
- agriculture	12 000

(*) In Belgium members of the armed forces may join trade unions.

TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

CSC	1 363 919
FGTB	1 097 594
CGSLB	210 000

TOTAL	2 671 513

Rate of unionisation

The unionisation rate is extremely high in Belgium. In 1985 it totalled 75% of the employed working population. However, bearing in mind that the trade union membership figures include a certain number of pensioners (86 000 in the CSC, 82 000 in the FGTB and 7 000 in the CGSLB), the true unionisation rate among employed workers is around 70%. In the last five years the unionisation rate in Belgium has remained remarkably stable.

5. TRADE UNION STRUCTURES

The Belgian trade union organisations are de facto organisations. The law merely stipulates the criteria according to which trade union organisations are deemed to be representative (see Chapter 8). Trade union structures are thus determined exclusively by the statutes of the organisations themselves.

The two large Belgian trade union confederations, the CSC and the FGTB, are organised along basically similar lines. However, there are a few significant differences between the two confederations.

In both the FGTB and the CSC, manual workers in the private sector are organised in industry federations. White-collar private sector workers are organised in a separate federation of employees from the various industries and services. However, in the FGTB the white-collar employees' federation has retained its national structure, whereas the CSC has two autonomous federations, one French-speaking and the other Dutch-speaking.

The CGSLB, on the other hand, is organised solely on the basis of interprofessional associations and thus has no trade or industry federations. All the members from a given region employed in the private sector are direct members of the regional branch of the CGSLB.

Public sector workers - both blue- and white-collar - are organised within the FGTB in a single federation and within the CSC in six autonomous federations. In the CGSLB, members working in the public sector are organised, as in the FGTB, in a single federation.

The demarcations between the various occupational federations and the regional organisations are different in the CSC and the FGTB.

Alongside its bodies for the three regions of the country (Brussels, Wallonia and Flanders), the CSC has also set up community bodies to cover the three linguistic Communities (French-, Dutch- and German-speaking). At the FGTB, on the other hand, the bodies responsible for the three regions also have responsibility for the three linguistic communities. In the FGTB the strike funds are organised by the individual unions, whereas in both the CSC and the CGSLB they are organised at confederation level, which indicates a higher degree of centralisation.

The National Secretaries of the FGTB are elected for the period between two congresses, whereas at the CSC they are elected for an indefinite period.

A worker who joins the CSC simultaneously becomes a member of both the occupational trade union and the local inter-professional organisation, whereas a worker joining the FGTB becomes a member solely of the occupational trade union at local level.

At local level, the FGTB's activities are principally concentrated within the workplace, whereas the CSC places greater emphasis on the operations of the local inter-professional secretariats.

The FGTB is in favour of trade union unity, whereas both the CSC and CGSLB advocate trade union pluralism.

The F G T B

The FGTB is made up of 12 nation-wide trade unions or national industry federations. It has created 24 regional FGTB sections (regional interprofessional structures) to which the regional trade union branches are affiliated. The FGTB regional sections are grouped in three inter-regional organisations (the trade union structure corresponding to the three regions of the country, Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels). The regional occupational trade union branches are made up of local branches (i.e. district level) and/or of works branches.

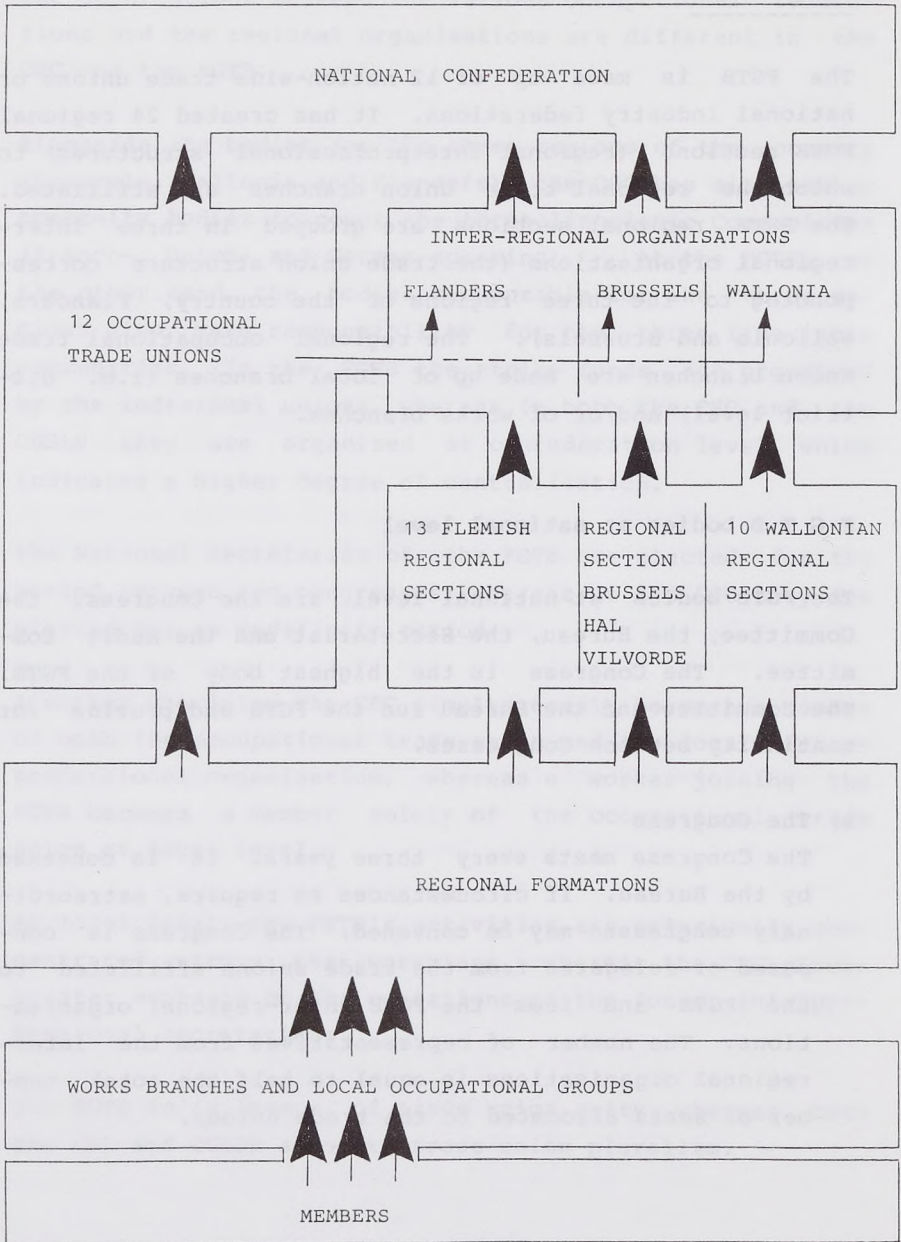
F G T B bodies at national level

The FGTB bodies at national level are the Congress, the Committee, the Bureau, the Secretariat and the Audit Committee. The Congress is the highest body of the FGTB. The Committee and the Bureau run the FGTB and provide for continuity between Congresses.

a) The Congress

The Congress meets every three years. It is convened by the Bureau. If circumstances so require, extraordinary congresses may be convened. The Congress is composed of delegates from the trade unions affiliated to the FGTB and from the FGTB inter-regional organisations. The number of representatives from the inter-regional organisations is equal to half the total number of seats allocated to the trade unions.

STRUCTURE OF THE FGTE



The tasks and powers of the Congress include the following :

- discussion and approval of reports from the Secretariat ;
- discussion of proposed amendments to the Statutes ;
- appointment of members of the Bureau and the Secretariat ;
- fixing the amount of the minimum subscription payable by the member organisations ;
- appointment of the 4 members of the Audit Committee.

b) The Committee

The National Committee is made up of the members of the Bureau, delegates from the affiliated trade unions and delegates from the FGTB inter-regional organisations (50% of the number of delegates from the individual unions).

The members of the Committee are appointed for the period between one statutory congress and the next. The Committee's allotted tasks include :

- examination of any issue of relevance to the trade union movement as a whole ;
- examination of applications for FGTB membership and of expulsion proposals made by the Bureau.

The Committee meets by decision of the Bureau at least eight times a year. It provides for continuity between Congresses.

c) The Bureau

The Bureau is composed of :

- an equal number of representatives from the federations and from the inter-regional organisations (14 from each category) the latter distributed as follows : 6 from the Flanders region, 6 from the Wallonia region and 2 from Brussels-Hal-Vilvoorde ;

these members are elected by secret ballot by the Congress delegates ;

- the FGTB national secretaries appointed by the Congress ;
- if necessary, members elected by the Committee to restore linguistic balance.

The members of the Bureau are elected for the period between two statutory congresses. The Bureau's allotted tasks include :

- general running of the FGTB ;
- implementation of the decisions taken by the Congress and the Committee ;
- fixing the pay scales and working conditions of the FGTB staff.

The Bureau meets as often as circumstances require (in principle once a week).

d) **The Secretariat**

The FGTB is run by a college of permanent secretaries, their number being fixed by the Congress (in accordance with the principle of linguistic parity) which elects them by secret ballot. Currently the Secretariat is composed of the President, the General Secretary and 5 National Secretaries. The Secretaries of the three inter-regional organisations are members of the FGTB National Secretariat. For this reason, their election by the inter-regional Congress is ratified by the national Congress. The secretaries are elected for the period between two statutory Congresses. The Bureau divides the tasks allotted to it among the different Secretaries, while the Committee appoints one of them President and another - from the other linguistic community - General Secretary.

The general administrative apparatus of the confederation consists of a series of departments, some of which operate on a regional basis. The most important are the President's and the Secretariat's administrative services, the research office, the company advice service, the youth service, the migrant workers service, the women's department, the services for the unemployed, the service for pensioners and the early-retired, the press department, the unemployment department, the finance department, the training institutes.

e) **The Audit Committee**

The FGTB Congress appoints the four members of the Audit Committee. This Committee checks all the FGTB's books and accounts at least once a quarter.

FGTB bodies at inter-regional level

Since the extraordinary congress of 27 May 1978, the FGTB statutes have contained provision for three inter-regional organisations. These cover the three administrative regions of the country, namely Flanders, Brussels (including Hal and Vilvorde) and Wallonia. The Statutes now provide that the FGTB should set up :

- the "Vlaamse Intergewestelijke", a grouping of the 13 Flemish regional branches ;
- the "Interrégionale Wallonne", a grouping of the 10 regional branches in Wallonia ;
- the Brussels interregional organisation.

The responsibilities of the inter-regional organisations correspond to those which, on the political front, have been devolved to the regional authorities. They include regional economic expansion, housing policy, planning and development, environment and labour market policies.

The inter-regional organisations comprise the following bodies : the Congress, the Committee, the Bureau and the Secretariat.

The Regional Sections

The FGTB has set up 24 regional sections. These cover different administrative areas, in some cases just a few districts, while others extend over a whole province.

The regional sections are responsible for the organisation of interprofessional activities, for general propaganda, training and activities for young people, women, the unemployed, the early retired and migrants. They are also responsible for administering and running labour law offices, which provide legal assistance for members, and for the payment to their members, via their unemployment services, of unemployment and early retirement benefits.

The five largest regional sections, in terms of membership numbers, are the following (1985 figures) :

Brussels	158 777 members
Liège	139 022 members
Antwerp	104 293 members
Charleroi	88 259 members
Ghent	55 294 members

The Occupational Trade Unions

The FGTB currently comprises 12 national trade unions. These are listed below in order of size (figures from 1985) :

- Public Services General trade union (manual workers, white-collar workers and managerial staff)
(Centrale Générale des Services Publics - CGSP)
253 125 members
- General Union of manual workers from the building, timber, glass, paper, chemicals, oil industries
(Centrale Générale des secteurs de la construction, du bois, du verre, du papier, de la chimie, du pétrole, etc.) :
246 589 members
- Belgian metalworkers union (manual workers)
(Centrale des Métallurgistes de Belgique)
204 762 members
- Trade union of Belgian clerical, technical and managerial staff (private sector)
(Syndicat des Employés, Techniciens et Cadres de Belgique - SETCA) :
186 747 members

The other trade unions, which each have less than 100 000 members are :

- The food and hotel workers trade union (manual workers)
(Centrale des Travailleurs de l'Alimentation et de l'Hôtellerie)
- The federation of textile workers in Belgium
(La Centrale des Ouvriers Textiles de Belgique)

- Federation of clothing and allied workers in Belgium
(manual workers)
(Centrale du Vêtement et parties similaires de Belgique)
- Trade union of mineworkers in Belgium
(Centrale Syndicale des Travailleurs des Mines de Belgique)
- Belgian union of transport workers
(Union Belge des Ouvriers du Transport)
- Book and paper industry trade union (manual workers)
(Centrale de l'Industrie du Livre et du Papier)
- The "cadets" (students)
- The diamond workers trade union
(Le Syndicat des Ouvriers Diamantaires)

Unless the national committee takes a decision - ratified by the Congress - to the contrary, the FGTB recognises only one national trade union per industry or occupational sector. This in each case groups together all the workers in the industry or sector concerned.

All the private sector white-collar, technical and managerial staff are grouped together in a single union, the SETCA. All public service workers, manual workers as well as clerical staff, belong to the public sector union, the CGSP. The national unions are constituted by the regional branches which are in turn made up of local and/or works branches.

FGTB bodies at local level

At local level, the FGTB relies principally on its works branches. Its local sections are relatively less important, although they are currently developing around a variety of activities - for example the Cultural Centre, which is a non-profit-making organisation close to the FGTB, and the services for the unemployed and early-retired. The works branches of the FGTB are made up of the trade union delegates, the militants and the members. They are run by the delegates appointed by the trade union or elected by the membership in the plant. The worker-members of the mixed bodies such as the works councils or the health and safety committees, who are all elected on the basis of lists submitted by the representative trade union organisations, also have an important role to play. Within the plant or company the trade union delegate is responsible principally for collective bargaining with the employers.

The C S C

The CSC comprises 17 national industry unions and 32 interprofessional regional federations (generally referred to simply as regional federations). The national industry unions draw together the regional industry federations, and these in turn comprise all the works branches from a given locality. The regional federations, which within each province are drawn together into provincial federations, are groupings of the local sections.

The CSC has, since 1979, also had three regional interprofessional committees (one for each of the regions recog-

nised by the Belgian Constitution, i.e. Wallonia, Brussels(1) and Flanders) and three community interprofessional committees (one for each of the communities recognised by the Belgian constitution, i.e. the Dutch-speaking, French-speaking and German-speaking communities).

CSC bodies at national level

The CSC bodies at national level are the Congress, the General Council, the Committee, the National Bureau, the Daily Bureau, the Secretariat and the Committee of Auditors.

a) The Congresses

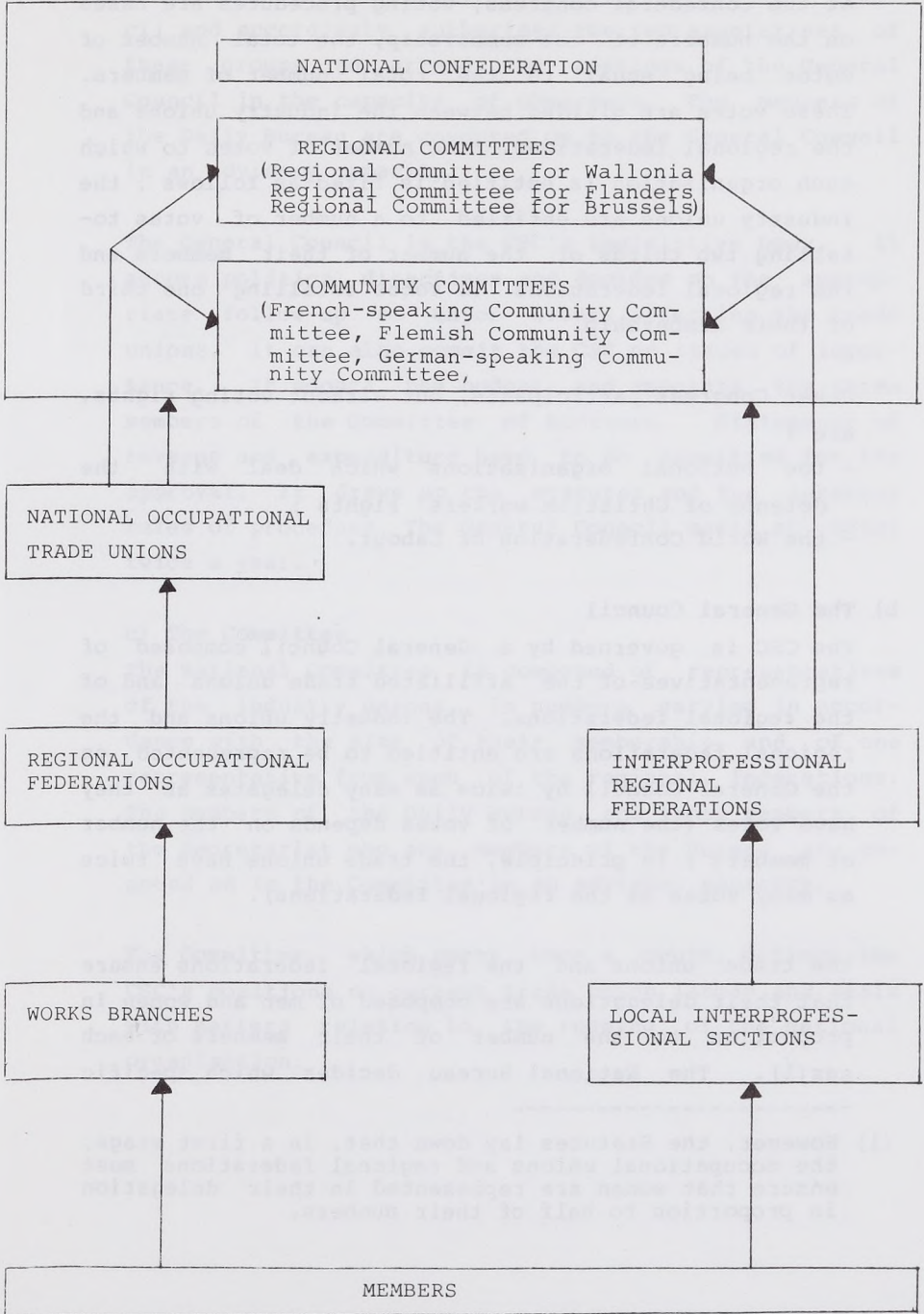
The CSC General Congress meets at the instigation of the General Council. It is held at least once every four years. The task of the General Council is to lay down the general programme of the CSC and establish the attitude of the Christian trade union movement on issues of importance. The Congress also reviews the activity of the CSC. Except in the years when a general Congress is held, the CSC holds an ordinary Congress each year. The ordinary Congress has the same powers as the general Congress.

The participants in the confederal congress, with voting rights are :

- the affiliated industry unions ;
- the regional federations.

(1) The regional committee for Brussels was not set up until 1983

STRUCTURE OF THE CSC



At the confederal congress, voting procedures are based on the numbers of the membership, the total number of votes being equal to the total number of members. These votes are divided between the industry unions and the regional federations. The number of votes to which each organisation is entitled is fixed as follows : the industry unions are entitled to a number of votes totalling two thirds of the number of their members and the regional federations to votes totalling one third of their membership.

Other Congress participants, but without voting rights, are :

- the national organisations which deal with the defence of Christian workers' rights ;
- the World Confederation of Labour.

b) The General Council

The CSC is governed by a General Council composed of representatives of the affiliated trade unions and of the regional federations. The industry unions and the regional federations are entitled to be represented on the General Council by twice as many delegates as they have votes (the number of votes depends on the number of members ; in principle, the trade unions have twice as many votes as the regional federations).

The trade unions and the regional federations ensure that their delegations are composed of men and women in proportion to the number of their members of each sex(1). The National Bureau decides which specific

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- (1) However, the Statutes lay down that, in a first stage, the occupational unions and regional federations must ensure that women are represented in their delegation in proportion to half of their numbers.

categories have to be represented on the General Council and accordingly authorises the representatives of these groups to attend the meetings of the General Council in the capacity of observers. The members of the Daily Bureau are co-opted on to the General Council in an advisory capacity.

The General Council is the CSC's legislative body. It adopts political directives and decides on the appropriate follow-up to major events affecting the trade unions. It can also commit the CSC on issues of importance. It adopts the budget and appoints the three members of the Committee of Auditors. Statements of revenue and expenditure have to be submitted for its approval. It draws up the statutes and the internal rules of procedure. The General Council meets at least twice a year.

c) **The Committee**

The National Committee is composed of representatives of the industry unions, in numbers varying in accordance with the size of their membership, and of one representative from each of the regional federations. The members of the Daily Bureau and those members of the Secretariat who are members of the Bureau are co-opted on to the Committee in an advisory capacity.

The Committee, which meets once a month, defines the CSC's positions on current trade union issues and deals with matters relating to the running of the national organisation.

d) **The National Bureau**

The National Bureau is composed of the following representatives :

- representatives of the industry unions : one representative from each manual workers' unions, two representatives from the government services and public enterprise unions, two representatives from the teachers union ;
- one representative from each provincial federation ;
- one representative from each regional committee ;
- the members of the Daily Bureau ;
- four co-opted members, including at least two women and at least two French-speakers.

The National Bureau directs the CSC in accordance with the decisions taken by the Congress, the General Council and the National Committee. In cases of force majeure, it is entitled to take decisions binding on the confederation. The members of the National Bureau are appointed for two years, half of them being renewed each year. Generally speaking it meets twice a month but may meet as often as circumstances require.

e) **The Daily Bureau**

The Daily Bureau is composed of the President, the General Secretary, the spiritual adviser and three national Secretaries. The task of the Daily Bureau is to run the CSC in accordance with the decisions taken by the General Council, the Committee and the National Bureau. The CSC President is elected by the General Council for an indefinite period. The Statutes stipulate that he must devote himself exclusively to his work for the CSC. He directs the CSC and its services, and is responsible to the National Bureau, the National Committee and the General Council.

The General Secretary - like the national Secretaries elected by the National Bureau for an indefinite term of office - must also devote himself exclusively to the service of the CSC. He assists the President in his work and stands in for him when necessary.

The spiritual adviser attends the meeting of the Daily Bureau as moral adviser and representative of the Catholic church. He is appointed by the Belgian bishops.

f) The Secretariat

The following departments/services exist within the confederation : coordination of public services, women's trade union department, administrative and financial department (personnel department, unemployment department, financial department, administration), research department, training department, company service, national youth action department, migrant workers department, frontier workers department, legal department, press, information, propaganda and external relations department, CSC overseas service, facilities for the unemployed department, international relations department.

g) The Committee of Auditors

A three-member committee appointed by lot from among the full members of the CSC General Council is set up to check the confederation's books and audit its accounts. The members of this committee are appointed for a three-year term, one of them being renewed each year.

CSC bodies at regional level

The CSC has formed three regional committees :

- Regional Flemish committee for Flanders ;
- Walloon regional committee for Wallonia ;
- Brussels regional committee for the 19 districts of Greater Brussels.

The regional committees are empowered to take up stances and adopt decisions relating to matters for which the Constitution has devolved power to the regions and on regional aspects of national policy.

CSC Bodies at Community Level

The CSC has created three community committees (based on language) :

- Flemish Community committee ;
- The French-speaking community committee ;
- Regional committee for the German-speaking area.

The community committees are empowered to take up stances and adopt decisions relating to matters for which the Constitution has devolved power to the communities and on community aspects of national policy.

The Regional Federations

The CSC has 32 regional federations, their principal task being to organise trade union publicity, to organise and run all administrative services at regional and local level (legal service, trade union training, payment of unemployment benefit, payment of trade union premiums, levying of subscriptions and dues and accounting), and to represent the workers in their region.

The five largest regional federations are the following (1985 figures) :

Hasselt	163 743 members
Brussels	58 452 members
Antwerp	112 731 members
Turnhout	87 923 members
Ghent	79 704 members

The Affiliated Trade Unions

The CSC currently has 17 affiliated trade unions. These are listed below in order of size (1985 figures) :

- Christian trade union of Belgian metalworkers (manual workers)
(Centrale chrétienne des métallurgistes de Belgique - CCMB) : 232 312 members
- Christian trade union of timber and building workers (manual workers)
(Centrale chrétienne des travailleurs du bois et du bâtiment) : 191 862 members
- Clerical and managerial staff in the private sector in Flanders
(Landelijke Bediendencentrale) (LBC) 187 336 members
- Christian trade union of food and services (manual workers)
(Centrale chrétienne de l'alimentation et des services) 134 125 members
- Christian trade union of Belgian textile and clothing workers (manual workers)
(Centrale chrétienne des travailleurs du textile et du vêtement de Belgique) : 121 555 members

The other trade unions each have less than 100 000 members. They are :

- The Christian public service union (CCSP) (staff from ministries and local government offices)
(Centrale chrétienne des services publiques-CCSP)
- Christian trade union of communications and culture (telephone, railway, radio and TV staff)
(Syndicat Chrétien des communications et de la culture)
- Christian union for energy, chemicals and leather (manual workers)
(Centrale chrétienne de l'énergie, de la chimie et du cuir)
- Federation of Christian primary school teachers in Belgium (primary school teachers from the non-State schools)
(Fédération des instituteurs chrétiens de Belgique)
- Christian union of technical teaching staff (teachers in technical non-State education)
(Centrale chrétienne du personnel de l'enseignement technique)
- Christian union of transport and diamond workers (private sector)
(Centrale chrétienne des ouvriers du transport et des ouvriers diamantaires)
- Free-miners union
(Centrale des francs-mineurs)

- Christian union of graphical and paper industries (manual workers)
(Centrale chrétienne des travailleurs de la pierre, du ciment, de la céramique et du verre)

- Christian union of secondary school and college teachers in the non-State sector
(Centrale chrétienne du personnel de l'enseignement moyen et normal libre)

- Christian union of teaching staff in the State schools
(Union chrétienne des membres du personnel de l'enseignement officiel)

Other groupings to be added to this list of trade unions are the service for professional sportsplayers (SPORTA), the national grouping of managerial staff (GNC) (French-speaking private sector managerial staff), and the CSC Overseas secretariat.

The Statutes stipulate that only one union from each industry/sector may join the CSC. The member unions are independent as far as devising their own programmes and the means of implementing them are concerned. However, they are bound to act within the terms of the CSC Statutes and to respect the decisions of the Congresses, General Council and Committee. Each year the affiliated organisations, the trade unions and the regional federations are required, before the end of November, to forward to the CSC their budget and, before the end of May, their annual report.

CSC Bodies at Local Level

At local level the CSC relies principally on an extremely dense network of local branches or secretariats. These branches or secretariats generally cater for a whole range of services for the membership (legal assistance, administrative assistance) and are frequently located in the same premises as other branches of the MOC (mutual, savings bank, etc.). In this connection, it is important to remember the CSC practice of twofold membership, i.e. membership of both a trade union and the local interprofessional organisation.

6. FINANCING OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

F G T B

The FGTB is financed almost exclusively out of the subscriptions paid by the members of the affiliated unions. However, trade union training is financed in part out of subsidies from the government or local authorities and contributions from the employers, the amount of the latter being fixed by collective agreement.

With regard to subscriptions, the FGTB Statutes state that the organisations affiliated to the FGTB must levy from their members a subscription the minimum level of which is fixed by the Congress. In fact, it is the FGTB Committee which fixes annually, on a proposal from the Bureau and the Financial committee, the minimum level of dues for the different categories of member (by age and sex, etc.) and the proportion to be paid to the Central Bureau of the FGTB for financing the confederal administration and press and the national solidarity fund.

The regional branches of the trade unions may set the subscription levels above the minimum rate (for example, in order to grant social benefits such as marriage or maternity grants). The subscriptions are worked out as flat-rate sums and not as proportions of earnings : the level of the subscription varies in accordance with criteria such as age, sex, occupational standing (employed, unemployed, early retired, pensioner) and, for white-collar workers, in accordance with salary. Generally speaking, it may be said that the levels of subscriptions for those in work are very similar, ranging between 300 and 370 Belgian Francs a month for working adults, which represents around 0.5% of average monthly gross wages. Subscription levels are slightly higher for workers in the private sector than for those in the public sector and for manual workers than for white-collar workers.

Subscriptions are almost always levied by the trade union organisation itself. The system whereby pay is deducted at source is in operation only in a few public services such as the Post Office and the Railways.

Financial Management and Control

According to the FGTB's Statutes, the Bureau has responsibility for managing the FGTB's financial resources. The Committee of Auditors checks the FGTB's books and accounts at least once a quarter. The FGTB's treasurer and Committee of Auditors are assisted by auditors appointed by the Bureau. They are required to make checks on the general administration and financial running of the industry unions, regional sections, works branches and local sections and on the management of the FGTB's own funds.

Strike Funds - Strike Pay

The FGTB confederation has no strike fund but it does have a solidarity fund. Within the FGTB each trade union has a strike fund and, according to the statute, the FGTB Congress decides on the minimum sum to be paid into the strike funds of the various trade unions and into the strike-reinsurance fund. In practice, it is the FGTB Committee which, on an annual basis, fixes the proportion of the subscriptions to be paid into the strike fund and which sets the level of the flat-rate strike payments.

Solidarity and Financial Assistance in the event of Industrial Action

According to the FGTB Statutes, when a major conflict over a question of trade union principle breaks out or a major claim is made, the Committee may decide that the FGTB will support the action embarked upon by the organisation most directly involved in the conflict. In this case, the Committee may either levy a special due on all FGTB members or order extension of the action to all the affiliated organisations whose intervention is deemed useful.

The Committee or the Bureau is alone responsible for deciding on the case to be made for continuing, extending or calling off the action begun.

Apart from the type of solidarity action described above, the Committee may order a general or partial strike :

- when a demand is in the interests of all the workers in the country ;
- when the existence of the trade union organisation is in jeopardy ;
- when the country's freedom and democratic institutions are under threat.

National Solidarity Fund

A national solidarity fund has been set up in the FGTB, its purpose being to cover expenses incurred in connection with national interprofessional action (e.g. demonstrations) with the exception of strike pay, and as a result of these actions (e.g. strike victims). The FGTB Bureau is responsible for managing this fund.

C S C

The expenses of the Christian trade union movement are covered virtually entirely by subscriptions from the membership. Like the FGTB, the CSC also receives from the employers, in accordance with collective agreements, funding for trade union training ; the State also provides some funding for the same purpose. The amount of the flat-rate subscription to be paid by the members is set by the CSC General Council. The level of subscriptions varies slightly depending on the sector and the professional category of the workers concerned (i.e. manual workers, white-collar workers, public servants). As at the FGTB, there are in the CSC several categories of subscription depending on age, sex, etc.

The subscriptions are levied by the trade union organisation. In some public services and some firms there is a system of deduction at source.

Financial Management and Auditing

The CSC's annual budget is adopted by the General Council in December for the following year. Each year the trade unions and regional federations are required to submit a draft budget to the CSC.

The Daily Bureau is responsible for administering the finances of the confederation but the National Bureau has to be consulted before important decisions are taken. The Daily Bureau keeps checks on the administration and the finances of all the member organisations. The balance sheet of the confederation, approved annually on 31 December, is submitted for scrutiny to the General Council, after the Committee of Auditors has conducted checks and drawn up its report. The Bureau also manages the central strike fund, while the confederation's annual budget and accounts must be approved by the CSC General Council. This does not apply to the two white-collar unions (LBC and CNE) which have their own rules.

Central Strike Fund

A central strike fund has been set up by the CSC in order to centralise the member unions' power to resist and to take over their obligations in the event of strike or lock-out. The proportion of the subscription dues to be paid into the central strike fund and the flat-rate allowances paid out of this fund are fixed by the CSC General Council. The central strike fund is managed by the CSC National Bureau. The individual trade unions decide whether a strike is legitimate or not and give their opinion as to whether the strikers should receive strike pay. The final decision on this score is taken by the National Bureau.

7. PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES

F G T B

At its statutory congress in November 1981 and its extraordinary Congress in March 1986, the FGTB updated its programme. The major themes of this programme are the preservation of peace, the defence of trade union freedom and rights, the abolition of hunger and underdevelopment in the world, the creation of a new international order and the achievement of a workers' Europe on the basis of stronger trade union action at European level.

The FGTB argues that economic recession, unemployment, industrial restructuring and the energy crisis require solutions which can be implemented within a united Europe. It believes that the central issue is to endow the trade union movement with a real capacity to organise initiatives likely to carry weight at European level. The FGTB intends to pursue its purpose of strengthening the capacity of intervention of the European Trade Union Confederation. It believes that such combined action should enable a selective and concerted relaunching of the economy, a guarantee of purchasing power and the preservation of social gains, a new industrial and regional policy on a European scale, negotiation on working time and increased co-operation with the Third World.

In the general resolutions adopted at its 1981 and 1986 Congresses, the FGTB formulated an alternative trade union strategy for economic change in Belgium. The following paragraphs offer a résumé of this strategy.

Primary Emphasis on Employment

The FGTB considers that a selective multi-annual programme for relaunching the economy should be the paramount aim to which all other government policies should be subordinated.

The policy of selective relaunching, which must be co-ordinated at European Community level, needs to comprise a policy for the rational use of energy, a revival of the building industry to promote better housing, urban renovation and the development of collective infrastructure projects, improvement of public transport and telecommunications, support for industrial manufacturing investment, protection of the environment, the development of technological sectors by means of a planned policy of public procurement, a stimulation of key services such as health care, tourism, adult education and retraining, and the media.

The policy of relaunching advocated by the FGTB must be accompanied by a better distribution of existing work to remedy the current shortage of jobs. The FGTB supports the ETUC's priority demand for the 35-hour week. Furthermore, the FGTB wishes to promote an improvement in working conditions, a regulation of part-time work, which must always be a choice rather than an imposition, and the organisation of new employment formulae for the long-term unemployed, who should not be forced to accept fixed-term contracts.

Transformation of Economic Structures

In order to adapt the foundations of production in Belgium to current developments, the FGTB has defined the contents of a new industrial policy conferring a major dynamic role on the public authorities. Three major conditions of the achievement of this economic objective are :

- a general energy policy must be developed with a priority on the rational use of energy, effective price controls and the development of indigenous energy resources (principally coal) ;
- socialisation of the principal financial institutions by means of nationalisation and democratic management ;
- new technologies can be introduced only as the outcome of collective bargaining, while scientific research must be placed in the service of employment ; ten per cent of public research funds should be devoted to social research.

Progressive Tax Policies

The FGTB calls for a lightening of the tax burden on wages and social benefits by an indexing of tax thresholds, more separate taxation of earnings of married couples, a tax on large fortunes, fairer taxation of unearned income (dividends, etc.), active steps to tackle tax fraud and evasion, a study of the effects of tax relief for companies and a reduction of the budgetary deficit by a reduction of tax expenditure, military expenditure and interest charges.

Guarantee the Financing of the Social Security System

The FGTB takes the view that, since the Belgian social security system is financially balanced, its future financing should pose no insurmountable problems. It thus opposes any direct reduction (or indirect reduction by means of taxation) of social security cover. The FGTB wishes to endow the social security system with a solid financial basis, funded by contributions from employers and workers and compulsory subsidies from the State. Privatisation of the social security system or of parts of it is regarded as totally unacceptable. Social security must remain the expression both of insurance against certain risks and of collective solidarity among waged and salaried workers.

This implies, on the one hand, that social security must guarantee a substitute income in proportion to income lost and a complementary income (family allowances and health care) which must be financed progressively by taxation, and, on the other hand, that social security benefits must be an individual right for workers whose social allowances must keep pace with the cost of living. However, some changes to the system are required. For example, the introduction of an employer's social contribution to superannuation schemes and the transfer of funds from family allowances to pensions are among possible ways of guaranteeing the financial future of the legal pension system.

Strengthening Workers' Control

The FGTB rejects co-management. The trade union delegation should alone be entitled to negotiate on all matters. Delegates must be guaranteed protection against arbitrary behaviour on the part of the employer. In particular, there must be a guarantee that any delegates arbitrarily dismissed will get their job back. Social, economic and financial information should be provided to make for transparency at all levels so that action can be taken in time. There must be full recognition of workers' rights to trade union expression in the workplace, involving the freedom to communicate with their representatives and their trade unions and to choose trade union experts and advisers.

C S C

The CSC's programme for basic action deals with the following issues :

Defence of Workers' Incomes

The CSC is in favour of higher wages and a fairer distribution of income. At its statutory Congress in 1975

the CSC defined this notion of "fair distribution of incomes" and stated that it considered the ideal ratio between minimum individual net earnings and the highest income to be one to five. The CSC wishes to achieve its general goal by :

- raising the national minimum wage ;
- maintaining the link between wage trends and social benefits and between wages and the retail price index ;
- using taxation to effect a better distribution of income and wealth, e.g. progressive scales of taxation, heavier indirect taxes on luxury products, indexation of tax thresholds ; steps to combat tax fraud, in particular by companies and the liberal professions ;
- scrutinising the retail price index.

Right to Employment

The CSC proposes a series of actions designed to achieve :

- the fostering of a new type of growth ;
- the creation of jobs, first and foremost by private initiative, while also retaining a role for public industrial initiative ;
- a redistribution of existing employment ; the CSC has come out in favour of the 36-hour week ;
- the creation of genuine long-term employment opportunities for the unemployed.

Where part-time work is concerned, the CSC wishes to retain only the notion of half-time work, always on a basis of free choice.

Defence of Social Security

The CSC demands that the government should abide strictly by the basic principles of the social security system i.e. insurance and solidarity. Insofar as the social security system is financially balanced, the CSC is opposed to any direct reduction of benefits. It demands that the

State abide by its financial undertakings with regard to workers' social security provision. The CSC wishes to see fiscalisation of the social security system applied solely to the health care sector.

The CSC has come out in favour of a reduction of social contributions for undertakings in the competitive sector. Compensation for this reduction could be in the form of a selective rise in indirect taxes or an increase in contributions from undertakings which pay wages above the national average, or by a special increase in social contributions for protected industries, or by a levy on depreciation or appreciation of undertakings.

The CSC also wants all paid employment, including jobs involving no more than two hours work a day, to be subject to social contributions.

Democratisation of the company

By democratisation of the company the CSC understands :- information for workers and control of information ; concertation in the workplace ; replacement of the works council (conseil d'entreprise) by a workers' council ; reform of public limited companies. The CSC is in favour of replacement of the current "monistic" structure of public limited companies (board of directors with representatives only of shareholders) by a "dualistic" structure with, on the one hand, a committee of directors and, on the other hand, a watchdog body, with representatives of the workers alongside those of the shareholders. Under no circumstances could the workers be in a minority on this body.

Solidarity in Europe and with the Third World

The CSC supports the idea of the political and social unification of Europe. It also considers that the trade union organisations should be striving to obtain legal and mandatory codes of conduct for multinational firms.

With regard to development aid, the CSC believes that Belgian aid should benefit the poorest population groups. When it comes to human rights, the CSC supports the steps undertaken by the World Confederation of Labour in favour of trade union leaders and militants who, in a number of countries, have suffered encroachments of their freedom. It also supports the WCL's programme for the preservation of peace and the achievement of a new international order at political, social and economic level in the UN framework. At its Congress in 1985, the CSC set its priorities for the four years to come. It believes that Europe must find ways of implementing a policy of additional and alternative growth that will generate jobs. To this end, it is necessary to reach consensus with the employers' organisations and the public authorities at both national and European levels, in the following three spheres :

- with regard to a certain number of social options, e.g. the preservation of peace in Europe, the promotion of quality of life and vocational training for all ;
- with regard to ways of achieving a balance between flexibility of working time and the guaranteeing of fundamental workers' rights ;
- the preservation of the social security and democratic social system, including trade union recognition.

C G S L B

In the face of economic recession, the CGSLB wants to bring about a redistribution of available work. It regards a lowering of the retirement age and a system of gradual retirement as the most appropriate means to this end.

The CGSLB also calls for a strengthening of international worker solidarity, in particular with regard to the multinational firms.

The CGSLB wishes to achieve a democratisation of company structures, replacing the works council by a workers' council.

A company committee, composed of members appointed by the board of directors (shareholders) and others appointed by the workers' council in equal numbers, should head the company.

8. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

In Belgium the history of institutionalised industrial relations begins at the end of the 19th century. In 1887 the first **Industry and Labour Councils** were set up (Conseils de l'Industrie et du Travail). After the First World War in 1919, the first industry joint committees were formed, namely those for the metal industry and the mining industry. However, it was not until after the Second World War that collective consultation and bargaining on social and economic matters really took off. A distinction has to be made between the situation in the private sector and that in the public sector.

Private Sector

A decree of 9 June 1945 gave legal standing to the joint committees and laid down their structures and powers. Above all else, they were empowered to conclude collective agreements on working conditions and wages.

The law of 5 December 1945 allowed the joint committees to set up security funds, with legal personality, in order to finance supplementary schemes for social security, vocational training for workers and young people and health and safety measures for workers. The law of 5 December 1968 defined the notion of collective labour agreement, stated which persons and/or organisations may be party to such agreements and empowered them - whether or not they have legal personality - to act in legal proceedings in connection with any disputes to which application of the agreement might give rise.

On the employers' side, the parties to the agreement may be one or several employers and/or one or several organisations representative of employers ; on the trade union side, they may be one or several organisations representative of workers.

Representativeness is granted to those organisations of workers and employers which are set up at national level and represented in the **National Labour Council** (Conseil National du Travail). Where the workers' organisations are concerned, a further condition of representativeness is that their membership must be at least 50 000. Representativeness is also granted to any of the trade unions or sectoral employers' organisations affiliated to the aforementioned national organisations, and also to any employers' professional organisations acknowledged as representative by the King, following an opinion from the National Labour Council and the sectoral or national employers' organisations and approved in the framework of the official organisation for the self-employed.

Collective agreements may be concluded either within a joint body (Joint Committee or National Labour Council) or independently of any institutional framework. They may be

concluded at a variety of levels (national, regional, local, interprofessional, industry, company or inter-company).

Only the collective agreements concluded within a joint body can be rendered mandatory by royal decree, either in all the workplaces in the country or in all the workplaces in the economic sectors involved or for which the joint body in question is competent.

The effect of the mandatory nature of an agreement is two-fold : failure to observe it is liable to penal sanction, while clauses may not be inserted into written contracts of employment with a view to waiving its terms.

Collective agreements concluded within a joint body but not rendered mandatory by royal decree, and collective agreements concluded outside any institutional framework are binding :

- on the employers' side :- on individual employers and on all present and future employer members of the signatory employers' organisations ;
- on the workers' side :- on the signatory workers' organisations.

In principle, the advantages gained benefit all workers, whether unionised or not, in the economic sector or sectors concerned. However, in practice, the social partners have reserved some rights for unionised workers alone. These include the trade union bonuses paid in a number of industries and service sectors and the supplementary unemployment allowances granted in the textile sector.

Results Gained

Of paramount importance are the **national level interprofessional agreements** (accords interprofessionnels), which are also known as programming agreements (accords de programmation) because they normally cover a two-year period and some points of their contents are designed to be implemented progressively over this period. These agreements have always been concluded outside the joint bodies, since implementation of certain points, particularly those relating to social security, comes under the purview of the government or the legislator. Other matters can be settled by means of national interprofessional collective agreements or national industry-wide agreements. On account of the twofold nature of the subjects covered by these agreements, the social partners have expressed the wish that the government take account of and respect the interprofessional agreements. Those parts of the agreements falling within the purview of the social partners have been concluded in the form of collective agreements, in some cases negotiated in the National Labour Council and in others in the industry joint committees. These national interprofessional agreements have enabled the gains made in "strong" sectors to be generalised for the benefit of workers in all sectors. They cover matters such as length of holidays, holiday pay, public holidays, the working week (generalisation of the 40-hour week), trade union education, the fixing of a minimum monthly wage and of a guaranteed monthly income in the event of sickness or accident.

Other national agreements covering several sectors have been directly negotiated in the National Labour Council. This applies to the National Collective Agreement on information and concertation on the social consequences of the introduction of new technologies (December 1983) and the National Collective Agreement on the organisation of working time (April 1986).

At national or regional industry level, collective agreements are normally negotiated and concluded in **Joint Committees**. These agreements relate to wages and other conditions of employment. Some committees have set up conciliation committees and drawn up strike or lock-out regulations.

As regards plant-level agreements, an interprofessional collective agreement concluded in the National Labour Council on 24 May 1971 outlines the principles governing the status of trade union delegations in the workplace, while leaving it to the joint committees to lay down the specific rules relating to their individual sectors.

In the immediate post-war period (1945-1948), the Belgian governments conducted a strict wages policy hand in hand with a rigid prices policy. Between 1949 and 1976 governments respected free collective bargaining. From 1976 the governments began to place spokes in the wheels, first indirectly and later directly. From 1982 government measures restricted free bargaining and actually banned the conclusion of collective agreements on wages and working time. In 1986 the social partners were once again free to conduct collective bargaining, having signed the National Interprofessional Agreement for 1987-88 and gained the government's pledge that it would not interfere in the area covered by this agreement.

Industrial Action

In Belgium it is important to realize that there is no strike legislation and hence no legal limit on strike action.

During the period covered by the collective agreement, the social partners guarantee they will not embark on industrial action; this no-disruption undertaking is

generally written into the agreements themselves. If, nonetheless, difficulties arise during the period covered by the agreement, the parties may address their grievances to the conciliation committee set up by each joint committee. This conciliation committee is also the body to which, generally speaking, the negotiators go in the event of failure of the negotiations for the conclusion of a new agreement. If it has proved impossible to reach any agreement within the conciliation committee, the parties may appeal to the minister of employment who can send one of his officials, known as a "social conciliator", to break the deadlock and reach agreement. If, after all these attempts at conciliation - in Belgium there is no compulsory arbitration procedure - an agreement still cannot be reached, the trade unions will generally resort to tougher action. One form of such action is strike action and in this respect the trade union organisations enjoy complete freedom. Nor is there any prohibition on employers' recourse to lock-out, although this weapon is not frequently used in practice. If the confederations or trade unions declare a strike, they pay their members strike pay. If a strike breaks out spontaneously, the unionised members receive no strike pay until their union has recognised the strike. In the FGTB and CSC, strike pay consists of flat-rate payments which increase as the strike lengthens ; the amounts are the same for manual and white-collar workers, whatever the sector of activity. The only differences are based on age and sex (union dues being different in this respect too).

Weekly Strike Pay as from 1.7.1986 in the FGTB

<u>Categories</u>	<u>1st week</u>	<u>2-4 week</u>	<u>5-8 week</u>	<u>as from 9th week</u>
Men over 20	3 000	3 725	4 175	4 675
Women over 20	2 750	3 475	3 875	4 300
Men under 20	2 750	4 475	3 875	4 300
Women under 20	2 750	3 475	3 875	4 300

Weekly Strike Pay as from 1.10.1986 in the CSC

<u>Categories</u>	<u>1st week</u>	<u>2-4 week</u>	<u>5-8 week</u>	<u>as from 9th week</u>
Men over 20	3 000	4.000	5 250	6 500
Women over 20				
Women and youths				
18 to 20	2 750	3 750	4 950	6 125
Youths 14-18	2 250	3 250	4 400	5 525

Workers who have been laid off because of a strike, for example in a sub-contracted firm, can apply to the national unemployment fund for unemployment benefit.

It is important to stress in this context that in Belgium neither the trade union organisations nor the employers' organisations have legal personality or status. Since they are de facto organisations, the Belgian trade unions can thus never have legal proceedings brought against them on the grounds of strike action.

Public Sector

In the public sector collective labour relations were until recently regulated in a fairly fragmented kind of way. The law of 1974 and its implementing regulations of 1984 and 1985 introduced a thoroughly new system of collective labour relations, which has been brought in on a gradual basis since 1 December 1984.

The new legislation gives the representative trade union organisations very wide opportunities for participation when the employing authority wishes to enact measures affecting staff. This participation is achieved on the basis of negotiation and conciliation procedures. Henceforth, in accordance with the new legislation, employees are entitled to trade union leave. The law of 1974 obliges each public authority to hold prior discussions with the representative trade union organisations on all measures affecting staff. These discussions take place within an institutionalised framework, consisting of negotiating committees and conciliation committees.

When, in the course of the negotiations, the public authorities and the trade union organisations reach a joint position, the record of the meeting is equivalent to a political agreement, which obliges the authorities to enact the measures concerning which they have given undertakings to the trade union organisations. Otherwise the result of the concertation takes the form of a reasoned opinion.

In addition, the conciliation committees enjoy the powers which, in the private sector, are held by the committees for health, safety and improvement of the workplace.

In order to be regarded as representative to sit on these committees, a trade union organisation must fulfil a certain number of general requirements in terms of the way it is run, i.e. it must represent the interests of all categories of staff and exercise its activity at national level. It must furthermore have recruited at least 10% of the staff working in the services concerned.

An independent commission of magistrates examines which trade union organisations fulfil this last condition. The CGSP (public sector trade union, affiliated to the FGTB) and the FSCSP (Federation of Christian public sector trade unions, affiliated to the CSC) are currently the only organisations to sit on all the committees. The Liberal Union of Civil Servants and the National Union of Independent Trade Unions are representative on only a certain number of committees.

A separate section of the law of 19.12.1974 deals with the rights of the representative trade union organisations to exercise a certain number of possibilities for concrete action in the workplace, such as intervention with the authorities to defend the interests of members of staff, the levying of members' dues, and the organisation of meetings in the workplace.

For staff members to receive trade union holiday a leader of the trade union organisation merely has to submit a formal request to the authority to this end.

All trade union delegates are protected against disciplinary action for any acts committed in the exercise of their duties.

9. RELATIONS AMONG TRADE UNIONS

The three Belgian trade union confederations have varying attitudes to the issue of trade union unity. The FGTB is in favour of trade union unity, regarding it as essential when confronting employers. The CSC and the CGSLB, on the other hand, believe in trade union pluralism, which they regard as the best guarantee that workers' interests will be defended. This fundamental difference of opinion between the CSC and the FGTB has not prevented the two major Belgian trade union confederations from forming a common front on certain occasions since the early 1960s. However, this common front is to be regarded as a circumstantial tactic and not as a stage towards trade union unity. As such it has no institutionalised form or administrative back-up.

The common front has emerged, with ups and downs, at plant, sectoral, regional and national levels. It has taken the form of joint platforms of demands, joint statements and actions, while respecting the individual characteristics and organic independence of each trade union organisation.

At national level in the 1960s it was principally a question of joint action. In the 1970s, particularly since 1971, the common front has become stronger and all nation-wide bargaining has been conducted in this way. It is thanks - among other things - to this united front, that the Belgian trade union movement has since 1960 been able to conclude a whole series of nation-wide agreements which have brought great gains for workers.

In the 1980s the common front became weaker and did little more than publish a series of joint stances and state-

ments. In 1986 the two trade union organisations met to prepare for the nation-wide bargaining but these contacts did not lead to any practical commitments.

At regional level it is in Wallonia that united action has emerged most clearly and that the common front has developed most markedly (joint demonstration in Namur in 1979 and joint programme in 1980), but still this has not meant any organic unity. Since 1984, however, joint action and positions have grown weaker. In Flanders, the joint trade union front has emerged from time to time in some sectors (e.g. metalworkers), in some regions (Bruges, St. Nicolas), and in some large firms.

With regard to relations between the CGSLB and the CSC and FGTB, the CGSLB reports that, in the course of their daily work, delegates are frequently called upon to collaborate with delegates from the other two trade union organisations.

10. RELATIONS WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

Although in Belgium the two major trade union confederations are independent of political parties, this does not mean that their attitude to the parties is neutral. Quite the contrary, for the two trade union organisations endeavour to get over their messages and viewpoints in the programmes and the activity of those political parties with which they respectively cultivate special relations. The national CSC regards it as incompatible for a paid trade union official to hold a paid political post of a certain level (i.e. member of parliament, mayor or alderman of a commune of more than 10 000 inhabitants). The Christian trade union movement finds its political expression via the MOC in the French-speaking areas and via the ACW, the

equivalent of the MOC among Dutch-speakers. The MOC and ACW are autonomous structures which incorporate the trade union organisation, the mutual, the cooperatives, the women's movement, the youth movement and others. The MOC and ACW each have a permanent secretariat and a multitude of departments. ACW members are elected on the lists of the Flemish Christian party, the CVP. The Christian workers' movement thus constitutes - alongside the farmers and the self-employed - one of the three pillars on which the CVP's strength rests.

The CSC and ACV have no direct links with the political parties. But in Flanders there are close indirect links between the ACV and the CVP via the ACW, while in Wallonia the CSC has indirect links with three political parties, including the PSC, via the MOC.

The FGTB, which developed from the Trade Union Committee of the Belgian Workers Party, now regards it as incompatible for a paid trade union official to hold major political office at the same time. However, some industry federations and certain regional sections do on occasion allow this principle to be waived.

The FGTB maintains special relations with the Socialist parties (the PS (French-speaking) and SP (Dutch-speaking)) via the French- and Dutch-speaking joint Socialist action groups. This is a form of coordination of the programmes and activities of the Socialist trade union movement, the Socialist co-operative movement, the Socialist mutualist movement and the Socialist parties. Joint Socialist action has no permanent secretariat or structure but meets whenever the organisations involved deem it to be necessary. The FGTB and the ABVV have consultative capacity on the Bureaux of the Socialist parties (French and Flemish-

speaking, respectively). On the French-speaking side, the FGTB's Wallonian inter-regional organisation and the PS in 1984 jointly devised a political agreement which is regularly updated.

11. TRADE UNION BUSINESS INTERESTS AND REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Christian trade union movement owns a series of holiday and training centres and the Fondation André Oleffe, which is a grouping of co-operative production firms. It is currently the majority shareholder in two newspapers, Het Volk and La Cité. The CSC also has management stakes in a series of undertakings and organisations belonging to the Christian workers movement, such as the C.O.B. Savings Bank, the travel agency "Loisirs et Vacances", and the Christian mutual.

The FGTB confederation or some of its affiliated unions own a series of holiday and training centres (via the non-profit making organisation "Vacances et Santé") and the newspaper "La Wallonie". FGTB leaders are members of the board of directors of certain undertakings in the Belgian Socialist movement such as the co-operative insurance firm "La Prévoyance Sociale". The trade union organisations are represented on a series of social or economic conciliation bodies, and on social security, energy, finance, price policy and transport bodies.

At national level the trade union organisations are represented on the National Labour Council, which is a joint body issuing opinions on a wide range of social questions. Since 1968 the law has also authorised this Council to conclude collective labour agreements.

On the sectoral front, the trade union organisations sit on the joint committees. Their principal task is to conclude collective agreements for the sector concerned and to forestall or settle disputes between employers and workers.

In the sphere of economic conciliation, the trade union organisations are represented on the Central Economic Council (Conseil Central de l'Economie - a joint body set up in 1948) and on the industry councils (Conseils professionnels - consultative sectoral bodies). The trade union organisations also sit on the management committee of the National Social Security Office (ONSS), the management committee of the National Employment Office (ONEM), the gas and electricity users council, the national energy council, the national bank, the savings and retirement bank (CGER), the national investment company (SNI), the prices commission, the index commission, the national railway company, and the national science policy council. At regional level, the trade union organisations are also represented on a series of bodies and groupings such as the "Concertation Wallonne", an economic and social committee of the Walloon region, the socio-economic Flemish concertation committee (Vesoc), the Flanders regional investment society (GIMV), the investment society for Wallonia (SIRW), the regional development societies and the Flanders Technology foundation (STV).

12. MEMBERSHIP OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

The FGTB is a founder member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which was set up in 1973. All the FGTB's member unions are members of the European industry

committees. At international level, the FGTB is a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC). Its affiliated trade unions are all members of the International Trade Secretariats.

The CSC has been a member of the ETUC since 1974. Several of its member unions are affiliated to the European industry committees. At international level, the CSC belongs to the WCL and the TUAC. With the exception of the metalworkers union CCMB, all the industry federations in the CSC are affiliated to the WCL's World Committees for Trade Action. The CSC's foodworkers' union belongs to the sectoral structures of both the ICFTU and the WCL. The presidents of the CSC and the FGTB are vice-presidents of the ETUC. The CGSLB is not a member of the ETUC.

13. SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE BELGIAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS

Below we indicate some of the most characteristic features of the Belgian trade union movement :

- The high level of union membership in Belgium can be explained by a series of factors which include the ideological conceptions of Belgian workers, historical reasons, reasons of social protection, but also the services and advantages provided for members, such as information, training, payment of unemployment benefit and free legal assistance. In a large number of sectors, the Belgian trade union organisations negotiate

with the employers' organisations agreements which involve the payment of a trade union bonus or "social allowance". In some sectors, other financial advantages known as supplementary social allowances, reserved for union members, have also been won as a result of collective bargaining. For example, in the textile and knitwear sector, unionised workers in 1986 received a trade union bonus amounting to BF 2 450 and a supplementary social allowance for each day of unemployment, the maximum being BF 6 000 over 50 days.

- A survey conducted by the Federation of Belgian enterprises (FEB) in July 1986 shows that Belgian companies - in accordance with collective agreements - currently pay an annual total of 4.3 billion francs to Belgian trade union organisations, mainly for the funding of trade union bonuses and training for trade union delegates and militants. In a number of sectors, these financial transfers are explicitly linked to no-disruption agreements. The companies justify these financial transfers in terms of the importance they attach to strong and representative trade unions and the training of trade union delegates. On the trade union side, it is considered that an entitlement to financial advantages reserved for trade unionists derives from the role played by union members in improving working conditions for all workers.
- The regional structures corresponding to the three regions of the country are becoming increasingly important within the national trade union organisations.
- In Belgium, the social elections to the works councils (conseils d'entreprise) and health and safety committees

which take place once every four years, are very important. Before the "loi de redressement social" of 22 January 1985, only the three representative trade union organisations (CSC, FGTB and CGSLB) could put up candidates and only the electoral colleges of workers and employees could be formed after the elections. However, in 1987 an electoral college of managerial staff, made up of representatives of managerial staff on the works council, will have to be set up. Candidates for this college can be put up by the three traditional trade union confederations, by representative organisations of managerial staff (category organisations recognised by the Ministry of Employment) and by 10% of the managerial staff in the firm (individual candidates). These elections provide an important indication of the influence of the trade union confederations on the ground and of how this influence is developing over the years.

- The Belgian trade union organisations are entitled to a certain number of broadcasting hours per year on the radio and the television to put their point of view.

14. PUBLICATIONS

Each member of the CSC receives free a regular copy of the weekly "CSC INFO" (French) or "Volksmacht" (Dutch). The latter magazine is published by the ACW, the Flemish Christian Workers' Movement. For its militants and delegates, the CSC publishes the twice-monthly "Syndicaliste" (French) and "ACV-Vakbeweging" (Dutch). Delegates also receive publications from their industry union. FGTB members receive free "Syndicats" (French) or "De Werker" (Dutch). "Jongerenkontakt" is an FGTB publication for young Dutch-speakers. The FGTB training

service regularly publishes brochures on different subjects relating to trade union work. These brochures are principally intended for militants and trade union delegates. The "Centrale Culturelle" which is a non-profit making organisation independent of but closely linked to the FGTB, regularly prepares audio-visual material and has a video library of films made by the trade union movement. The CGSLB publishes "Le Syndicaliste Libéral" and "Librement", the publication of the Liberal trade union youth movement.

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The Commission on the Status of Women, established in 1946, was the first international body to focus on the status of women. It was created by the United Nations and has since then been instrumental in promoting gender equality and women's rights. The Commission's work is based on the principle of equality between men and women, and it has been instrumental in the development of international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The Commission's mandate is to promote the advancement of women and to ensure their full and equal participation in development and decision-making processes. It does this through a variety of means, including the organization of world conferences, the holding of regular sessions, and the submission of reports to the General Assembly of the United Nations.

The Commission's work is also reflected in the work of other United Nations bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Commission's work is also reflected in the work of other United Nations bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

CONCLUSION

The Commission on the Status of Women has played a significant role in the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. Its work has been instrumental in the development of international instruments such as CEDAW, and it has been instrumental in the organization of world conferences on women. The Commission's work is also reflected in the work of other United Nations bodies, such as the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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