

At present prices seem to be determined mainly by the chambers of industry and commerce in a loose and quasiofficial system of controls. A number of essential consumer goods (bread, milk, fats, sugar, etc.) were long under official price control and may continue to be to some extent. Rents have been controlled continuously since 1917.

The Government Price-Wage Commission acts as a restraining force on prices, as it does on wages. It must be consulted for approval of all price increases and advises the Government on all kinds of economic policy.

Price supports and subsidies

Extensive subsidies existed at the end of the war. The largest were in agriculture and these have continued, though they were decreased in the early fifties. There were also, in the early years, subsidies on the import of grains and raw materials for fats to adjust for the fact that world prices of these items were far above internal prices. Smaller subsidies existed on sugar, glass, drugs, and hides.

The capital market and profits taxes

The capital market is still weak and the great bulk of business financing is done internally. Profits are not taxed heavily.

Nationalization

About one-fourth of all industry came under government ownership in 1947 (most of the firms taken over then had had German owners). This included the largest iron and steel works, electrical power, 95 percent of the coal mines, and most heavy engineering, shipping, and oil companies.

In 1947 the industrial output of nationalized firms represented 22 percent of the total value of Austrian production and 93 percent of the total output of raw materials and basic products. In 1954 they accounted for one-fourth the total value of Austrian exports and employed about 108,000 men. All this does not include the many enterprises (public utilities, banks, insurance, slaughterhouses, hospitals, etc.) which are provincially and municipally owned. In 1951 some 304,000 persons were employed in the public sector as a whole out of total employment for the economy of 1,674,000.

Many public enterprises preserve a high degree of autonomy. They often join chambers and may occasionally belong to employers' associations. Their employees belong to both chambers and unions. Wages and conditions of employment are determined by legislation, but labor has substantial influence over the terms of this legislation.

BELGIUM

Unions

The two principal federations are the General Federation of Belgian Labor (FGTB) and the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions of Belgium (CSC). The former group had in 1951 some 638,000 members, more than half of whom were in three large industrial unions: (1) Building and woodworking, (2) metalworking, and (3) public services; it also has numerous small craft unions. The CSC is composed of 17 national industrial unions and had a membership of 534,000 in 1951; about half its membership was contained in three unions: (1) Textiles, (2) building and woodworking, and (3) metalworking. There is also a General Confederation of Liberal Trade Unions with some 38,000 members, as well as a few independent unions.

Each federation is loosely and unofficially affiliated with a political party: The FGTB with the Socialist Party, the CSC with the Christian Social Party, and the Liberal Confederation with the Liberal Party.

Total union membership in 1950 was approximately 1.3 million; there were at the time some 1.7-1.8 million wage earners and salaried employees, so about 70 percent of all those employed were organized.

Employers' associations

The Federation of Belgian Industries (FIB) has a membership of about 40,000 of the 79,000 enterprises in the economy; when the extremely small size of many of the enterprises counted in the total is considered, it is probable that the FIB represents employers of well over half of all workers. There are also industrial federations or associations in almost every industrial sector.

Collective bargaining

In many industries bargaining is decentralized, taking place at the enterprise level, and private in nature, with the Government playing no role. A different procedure applies, however, in the case of homework and in certain key industries.