may be conciliated by the Minister of Labor and National Service and the parties urged to use voluntary arbitration. When all else fails, he can refer the case to the tribunal, whose award becomes a compulsory part of the contract. Strikes are no longer forbidden.

Government wage policy

Minimum wages have been set since 1909 by wage councils in particular industries. These tend to blend aspects of collective bargaining into their activities, especially in industries where other forms of collective bargaining are weak. The boards are bipartite. They are abolished and succeeded by true collective bargaining whenever a majority of workers and employers in an industry decide that statutory regulation is no longer necessary.

Agricultural wages are set by tripartite agricultural wages boards. They are linked closely with prices of agricultural commodities, which are supported by the Government on a cost-plus basis.

Where collective bargaining does not cover an entire industry, the Government has often inserted "fair wage" clauses in purchase contracts. These require all Government contractors to meet bargained rates in their industries.

In nationalized industry, firms are managed by quasi-autonomous public corporations (which are ultimately responsible to Parliament). Collective bargaining had in most cases been long established here and nationalization has made little difference. Its main effects have been a tendency toward centralized bargaining and some elimination of interplant wage differentials.

The most successful Government plea for wage restraint was that of the Labor government in 1948–50. Even then there was not a complete wage freeze, though wages did lag rises in living costs. Considerable wage increases in 1950–51 followed the period of restraint.

Employment policy

A special problem since the war has been a shortage of labor for coal mines, arising from full employment and a general dislike of work in the mines. An effort has been made to attract foreign miners and some progress has been made, though there has been union opposition and the program seems to have been on a relatively small scale.

Price control

In 1948, while production and allocation controls were being relaxed, price control was tightened up and a price freeze was instituted at 1948 levels; this covered a wide range of goods, some of which had not been effectively controlled before. Losening of this control has come in the fifties. Rents were also tightly controlled. Pressure for rises in rents developed and finally in 1954 the Housing Repairs and Rents Act was passed, permitting increases conditional upon the performance of repair work by landlords.

Imports and exchange controls

There was some slight relaxation of import restriction in the late forties, but substantial new controls were introduced in late 1951 and tightened in the spring of 1952. New relaxation began in the spring of 1953, when the free list was lengthened and some quotas were increased. With continued favorable conditions, more liberalization took place and exchange controls also began to be relaxed as a move toward the avowed goal of convertibility.

Material allocation

During the war the controlled allocation of industrial materials was operated in conjunction with manpower controls. The latter were removed immediately after the war, but material allocation (as well as most other controls) continued for some time afterward. Controls over nonferrous metals were dropped in 1945 when the demand for war production ended. Forest products, steel, cotton, and other goods continued to be allocated. In 1950 most kinds of steel were freed (though allocation was reintroduced in 1952 and removed in 1953).

In 1948 most of the wartime production controls over miscellaneous consumer goods were ended. Shortages of wood and fibers led to the retention of controls over furniture and some textiles into the fifties.

Monopoly regulation

Before 1948, though it had public utilities laws and nationalization provisions, the United Kingdom did not have a law relating to monopolies in general and the old common-law doctrines were no longer effective. In 1948 the Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Act set up a commission to investigate cases reported