



trade union information

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT
IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

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Of the total population of the Netherlands of 14.2 million on 1 October 1981 4.2 million belonged to the dependent working population. Of this number 1.7 million were members of a trade union organization, representing 38% of the working population.

The Netherlands has three trade union federations: De Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging [The Federated Dutch Trade Union Movement] (FNV), a product of the merger of the former NVV and NKV trade union federations, with 1,024,917 members, the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond [National Christian Trade Union Federation] (CNV), with 296,741 members and the Vakcentrale voor Middelbaar en Hoger Personeel [Supervisory and Managerial Staffs Federation] (MHP), with 113,801 members. (Figures as at 1 October 1981.) As at 1 January 1982 the CNV had 350,000 members following the affiliation of the Katholieke Onderwijzersorganisatie [Catholic Teachers' Organisation] (KOV). In addition, there are a number of sectoral trade union organizations which are not affiliated to a recognized trade union federation. As at 31 March 1981 these organizations numbered in all about 280,000 members.

The history of the trade union movement

Just as in other European countries the trade union movement in the Netherlands came into being as a reaction against the excesses of industrial capitalism. However, in comparison with those countries, developments in the Netherlands were late getting under way. Around 1850 almost half the Dutch population still worked in farming. The great majority of the population lived in villages or small provincial towns. In the Netherlands it was not until around 1870, when more and more factory chimneys started to belch out smoke that the face of society began to change rapidly. A great migration began from the countryside into the towns where people hoped to find work in the building industry, the docks, the factories and in domestic service.

The advance of machine production led to the establishment of the oldest industrial centres in the Netherlands: the cotton industry in Twente, the wool industry in Brabant, the glass and earthenware industry in Maastricht, the

diamond industry in Amsterdam and the food industry in the Zaan area, the potato starch and strawboard industry in Groningen and the Amsterdam and Rotterdam metal industry.

Along with this there arose misery and poverty in the towns. Inhuman working conditions, low wages, child labour and appalling housing formed an ideal breeding ground for apathy and alcoholism.

In a British government report from 1868 the Dutch workers were described as follows: "great jenever (Dutch gin) drinkers, ill-fed, puny in build, totally ignorant and oddly inept in handling any kind of tool with which they have not been familiar since their early years. About the most poorly educated and badly trained people in all western Europe, as slow and laborious of movement as the waters which flow sluggishly through their polders".

At the time when this sketch was written the workers and unemployed in England and France had already taken up the cudgels. Major demonstrations did not take place in the Netherlands until after 1872. It was not until that year that the law forbidding strikes was repealed. In the previous year the first Dutch trade union federation was set up: the Algemeen Nederlands Werklieden Verbond /General Association of Dutch Workers/ (ANWV). In 1874 the ANWV supported a big rural demonstration against child labour, which was later abolished, although this really signalled the end of the ANWV's heyday. Other organizations sprang up along the lines which are still a feature of social life in the Netherlands today, i.e. divided according to ideological conviction.

Thus were the seeds sown at the end of the last century for a trade union movement which was divided according to political or religious conviction. The three most important groupings were the Socialists, the Catholics and the Protestants. Particularly in the early period the various groups fought fiercely with each other. This lasted until the middle of the twentieth century when various forms of close cooperation developed.

The socialist trade union movement

When some members of the above-mentioned ANWV failed in their attempt to give this organization a socialist character, they founded social-democratic associations which combined in 1881 to form the Sociaal-Democratische Bond /Social-Democratic Association/ (SDB). This organization soon fell under the influence of the father of Dutch socialism, the Lutheran minister Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Initially the view prevailed in the SDB that socialism would come about through a violent revolution. There was at that time a very close link within the SDB between the trade union movement and politics. It was not until later that there developed from the SDB a separate organization which came to act as a trade union association, the Nationaal Arbeids Secretariaat /National Labour Secretariat/ (NAS). The aim was to create a general trade union organization without any political or religious basis with membership open to all workers. However, in spite of this aim, the NAS developed into an anarchistic-syndicalistic stronghold. Put crudely, its policy boiled down to maintaining that to achieve anything you have to paralyse a firm and take to the streets. A general strike would be the signal for revolutionary change. The NAS emphasized spontaneous strike action and collections to demonstrate solidarity with striking colleagues. This was not to the taste of the powerful association of diamond workers (ANDB), which was set up in 1894. This Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerders Bond /General Association of Dutch Diamond Workers/ favoured a tight organization with a centrally conducted policy, full-time salaried officials, a solid strike fund and correspondingly high subscriptions.

The wanton strike tactics of the NAS led to defeat after defeat, and the conflict between anarchists and social democrats was fuelled as a result. A profound crisis in the socialist trade union movement occurred in 1903. The rail strikes of January and April resulted in a total failure. Strikers were dismissed in their thousands, with the NAS powerless to offer any resistance. Stations and railway lines were occupied by troops. The denominational organizations conducted anti-strike propaganda. Eventually the strike was ended without having attained its aim: the rejection by Parliament of anti-strike laws.

For the opponents of the NAS the way the strike had gone was proof that the trade union movement needed to be better organized. The association of diamond workers pressed for the creation of a trade union federation on the basis of its "modern" organizational principles.

This resulted on 1 January 1906 in the formation of the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen [Dutch Trade Union Federation] (NVV).

The NVV's aim was the "promotion and furtherance of the industrial and social interests" of its members, i.e. not a political aim, but merely the promotion of economic interests. The most important instrument in attaining this goal was, as far as the NVV was concerned, instead of the strike weapon, talks with the employer (or government). Strikes were to be used only as a last resort and then only if the leadership so decided. Numerous wildcat strikes had to go ahead without the support of the NVV.

Despite these "neutral" objectives, in practice a very close link emerged with the Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij [Social-Democratic Workers Party] (SDAP). This connection was so strong that for officials of the NVV membership of any political party other than the SDAP was not tolerated.

The Protestant trade union movement

In 1871 there came into being the protestant-christelijke Vaderlandse Werkmansvereniging [Protestant-Christian National Working Men's Association], whose aim was to promote the interests of the working classes on the basis of God's Word. This association included not only workers as members but also employers. The Christian-Social Association "Patrimonium", set up in 1877, acquired considerably greater influence. It was set up as a splinter group from the Algemeen Nederlands Werklieden Verbond [General Association of Dutch Workers] (ANWV) because this organization adopted a neutral position with regard to the Christian principles professed by a number of ANWV supporters. In particular, these members wanted the rejection of Sunday work, support for special education (i.e. organized on denominational lines) and a "hierarchical society ordered by God".

The founder of Patrimonium, Klaas Kater, also believed that employers and workers rightly belonged together in one association. Strikes were rejected on principle. Emphasis was laid on the "spiritual emancipation" of the worker.

The setting-up in 1909 of the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond [National Christian Trade Union Federation] (CNV) was rejected by Patrimonium for two reasons. Firstly, on account of its interdenominational character (which sought to embrace both Protestants and Catholics) and also on account of

objections in principle to the independence of the trade union movement, since Patrimonium wanted a labour organization covering both employers and workers. The interdenominational character of the CNV was in accordance with the situation in some associations, such as the textile workers association, Unitas, in which both Protestant and Catholic workers were organized. By virtue of its espousal of Christian principles as its basis the CNV rejected the class struggle. According to the CNV a regeneration of society is possible only by applying the gospel of Jesus Christ. The CNV's interdenominational character ceased to exist in practice when the Catholic bishops issued a ban in 1912 forbidding Catholics to become members of Unitas. As a result, the CNV became in effect a Protestant trade union federation. In recent years, however, Catholic trade union organizations have again affiliated themselves to the CNV and the CNV has presented itself since 1976 as a general Christian trade union movement.

The Catholic trade union movement

The encyclical 'Rerum Novarum' issued by Pope Leo XIII (1891) was crucial to the Catholic element of the population in terms of forming their own organizations. In this encyclical, too, the class struggle was rejected. For this reason, Catholic trade union organizations were set up in most cases to take the wind out of the sails of the general or socialist organizations, which advocated the class struggle.

One of the first organizations was the "Nederlandsche Roomsche Katholieke Volksbond" [Dutch Roman Catholic Working People's Association] (RKWV), set up in 1888. Not for nothing was one of its objectives: "through the collaboration of its members in spirit and in accordance with the principles of the Roman Catholic Church to safeguard above all the working class and the property-owning class from the socialist errors of our day".

In the east of the Netherlands it was the minister Alfons Ariëns who espoused the workers' cause and founded the St Joseph's Roman Catholic workers association. Many pioneers of the Catholic workers' organizations belonged to the clergy. An important motive for their activities was that they wanted to prevent Catholic workers from joining socialist unions. They were supported in this by the bishops who regularly caused to be promulgated from pulpits the message that Catholic workers belonged in Catholic organizations. Such organizations were not always out-and-out trade union organizations. Often they were chiefly religious and culturally-inclined associations which

focussed their efforts in particular on the emancipation of the under-privileged Catholic population. In 1906 these organizations were brought together under an umbrella organization known as the Federation of Roman Catholic People's and Workers' Associations. In 1909 the Roman Catholic Trade Union Bureau was set up for the purposes of trade union work proper. Only in 1925 did both organizations come under one roof in the "Room Katholiek Werkliedenverbond" [Roman Catholic People's Association].

Uneasy bedfellows

With the formation of the NVV, the CNV and the Roman Catholic Working People's Association (subsequently, the NKV) the foundations were laid for the three trade union federations which have played a major role in the social history of the Netherlands.

It was a long time before there was any question of cooperation between the three groups. Rather it was a question of deep, mutual distrust and even hostility. The NVV, in particular, regularly had cause to note that strikes which it called came to nothing because strike-breakers from denominational unions took over the work. One NVV leader of the time said: "The history of Patrimonium and of the Roman Catholic People's Association is in large measure the history of blacklegging in the Netherlands".

This may be an explanation for the opposed positions, but it is also a fact that, from a religious point of view, socialism was seen as a great danger.

Among the miners in Catholic Limburg Poels, a Catholic priest, was active. He wrote in 1917: "We must guard most scrupulously against the far from hypothetical danger that our Catholic workers come to regard dealings of a more or less familiar nature with socialists as something natural. If we want them to continue to see in the socialists the most dangerous enemies of their most precious possession, the Holy Faith, as well as of their true welfare here on earth, then we must treat the socialists at all times and in all places as such". The Roman Catholic Church employed every possible means to oppose the rise of socialism. In Catholic families where the husband was under the influence of socialism the wife received a talking-to by the priest.

Within the Protestant trade union movement, too, the rejection of socialism has remained a major guiding principle down the years. At the time of its foundation one of the bases of the CNV was as follows: "The association

accepts the Christian principles as contained in the Bible and consequently rejects both the doctrine of class conflict and that of the all-pervading state". Many preachers preached resignation, which in effect amounted to acceptance of the existing social relationships between high and low, rich and poor, those wielding authority and those subject to it. Some Protestant leaders, such as Dr Abraham Kuyper, did call for far-reaching social reforms. However, this new society was not to be based on relationships of power. Justice was to be the basic principle. This implied, among other things, a fair distribution of the fruits of joint efforts and good cooperation between employers and employees.

The force and emotional points of opposition between the conflicting orientations in the trade union movement have been reduced only gradually. In point of fact, it took until the Second World War before any attempts were made to find a basis for cooperation. In spite of these divisions the trade union movement managed to achieve a great deal in this period. Also, thanks to its influence it was possible for laws to be introduced which were of enormous import for employees for their position in society. The trade union movement made a major contribution towards the acquisition by workers of increasing recognition as human beings and as citizens.

The crisis

The years between 1930 and 1940 were particularly difficult for the trade union movement in the Netherlands. The economic crisis which afflicted the world and which did not spare the Netherlands caused massive unemployment. At the height of the crisis, in 1936, there were 500,000 unemployed in the Netherlands i.e. 17.4% of the working population, although the poverty and misery were many times greater than the percentage of 17.4 might suggest, because anyone who was in work had to accept repeated wage cuts.

Towards the end of the '30s the trade unions came increasingly to be recognized by the government and employers as social organizations. The leaders of the three groupings began to meet one another more often as a result. The interests of their members simply demanded cooperation, for example, in collective bargaining and in implementing the law on sickness insurance. As a result mutual understanding and sometimes also mutual appreciation began gradually to develop.

Developments since the Second World War

On 10 May 1940 German troops marched into the Netherlands, beginning an occupation which was to last until 5 May 1945. Action by the German occupation authorities put an end to free trade union activities.

The three union federations were placed under the control of a quisling. On the other hand, this period of repression saw the growth of a community of interests between workers and employers which laid down the foundations for an entirely new pattern of labour relations in the post-war years.

While the Netherlands were still under German occupation, leaders of the NVV, the RKWV and the CNV met in secret to discuss the reconstruction of the trade union movement after the war.

Rivalry between trade union federations could, it was felt, only prejudice their aim of furthering workers' interests. Proceeding on this basis, the representatives of the three federations decided at the outcome of their illegal negotiations that extensive cooperation in the social and economic fields should be the order of the day after the war. They drew up a "Cooperation Code", which provided for cooperation between the trade union federations and between their affiliated unions at both national and local level. One concrete result was the establishment of a Council of Trade Union Federations, which came into the open on the day of liberation.

The sense of responsibility for the reconstruction of the country was not, however, confined to the workers' organizations. Both workers and employers were determined to work together in this task - to share responsibility for attaining the common goal. This spirit of cooperation took concrete form in the Labour Foundation, which was set up at the end of the war as a joint employer-worker body with the task of promoting social harmony, order and justice. The intention was that the Foundation should act as a forum for consultations between employers and workers on social matters at both sectoral and national level. Both sides were agreed that the trade union movement must have a say in the highest economic counsels of the Government. It was in this form that the desire of the workers' organizations to share responsibility found expression. The Labour Foundation stated explicitly that "there is no demand for worker participation in the management of undertakings".

In the immediate post-war period both employers and workers believed firmly in the new social order based on cooperation instead of conflict. "The trial we have undergone together has, we believe, broken down earlier conflicts and barriers."

It was, however, already clear that the employers were only willing to tolerate the exercise of influence by the workers' organizations in social matters. Free enterprise, the distribution of profits, investments and economic policy for both the short and the long term were all topics outside the scope of discussion in the Labour Foundation.

Statutory incomes policy

One characteristic feature of the post-war years in the Netherlands was that wages and other conditions of employment were not open to free negotiation between employers and workers. The Government had statutory powers to regulate the level of collectively agreed wages and prohibit the introduction of a working week shorter than 48 hours. Workers could neither be dismissed nor resign of their own accord without special authorization. This statutory policy was supported by the three recognized union federations. This was the time of what was later referred to as the "harmony" pattern of industrial relations. The only opposition came from a new union federation set up after the war - the Eenheidsvakcentrale /United Trade Union Federation/ (EVC). Having become increasingly closely identified with the Dutch Communist Party, however, the EVC lost support rapidly after the Russian suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and was disbanded a few years later.

The three recognized federations took the view that there was no avoiding low wages during the first few years of reconstruction. Strikes on the part of these federations were very much the exception during this period.

The low wages policy was based on various considerations:

- Maximum stability of employment was one of the recognized federations' main goals. Unemployment levels such as those which the Netherlands had experienced in the 30s were to be avoided at all costs. Keeping wages low was seen as an important facet of the task of maintaining a "favourable business climate". Moreover, the loss of the Dutch East Indies meant that the economy urgently needed the new impetus which low wages could give.

- The emphasis in the post-war period was on building up a sound system of social insurance against the consequences of unemployment, illness, invalidity and old age. This swallowed a substantial proportion of the country's slowly growing resources.

With hindsight it can be seen that over-long adherence to the policy of keeping wages low also had substantial disadvantages. One consequence, for example, was that some sectors failed to re-equip adequately with modern technology. This in turn undermined the international competitiveness of the country's industries.

In spite of growing unrest amongst their membership, the recognized federations succeeded in maintaining industrial peace, managing to restrain their members from disruptive action and preserve union discipline. Even outside the recognized federations, strikes were less frequent in the 'fifties than ever before in the history of the Dutch labour movement. On the other hand, the Netherlands had a lower per capita income in 1960 than any other Community country except Italy.

Of the three recognized federations, the NVV was the most strongly committed to the principle of furthering the "general interest". When the denominational federations showed signs of wanting to make wages once again a matter for negotiation between employers and workers the NVV held fast to its support for a centrally directed incomes policy.

In 1957, after the workers had been allowed a taste of the country's increased prosperity for a couple of years, the Government proclaimed a spending squeeze with the agreement of the trade union movement. The aim was to ward off the threat of a slump in the economy. Fares and other public sector charges were raised, as were taxes, food subsidies were abolished and a number of public works projects were cancelled - this latter measure bringing a further increase in unemployment. In addition, the practice of increasing wages in line with prices was stopped, which meant a cut in real earnings.

Many workers made their dissatisfaction felt by withdrawing from the trade union movement. The NVV in particular lost some tens of thousands of members within the space of a couple of years.

Pressure from trade union members dissatisfied with their meagre wages was, however, not the only force at work against the statutory incomes policy. The rapid growth of manufacturing industry had, in a number of sectors, led to severe manpower shortages. The difficulty of obtaining labour encouraged employers to pay wages above the official rates. The "black wages" phenomenon spread rapidly, forcing the trade union movement to change its approach. It was, moreover, becoming increasingly apparent that the low wages were primarily benefiting employers. Both productivity and profits rose dramatically during this period. The trade union representatives on the Labour Foundation pleaded for a more equitable distribution of profits. Working parties were established to investigate the question, but profits remained where they were - with the employers.

Looking back at this period in 1981, the "trade union philosopher" Fons Arnolds remarked that: "It is surprising that the union movement made no serious attempt in the post-war years to achieve a genuine structural reform - and more particularly to bring about a redistribution of wealth by demanding a genuine share in investments. Had this been done, it would have been possible to avoid the situation whereby employers were able in the course of time to reconstruct the production apparatus thanks in part to the efforts and moderation of workers, whilst the latter remained in the same situation of wage dependence as before and discovered before long that they had not even succeeded in safeguarding their jobs."

The end of the statutory incomes policy

It was not until the beginning of the 'sixties that resentment against the statutory incomes policy finally burst into the open. In the first instance, it was not action on the part of the unions which began the fight against low wages but rather a series of unofficial strikes which were frequently crowned with success (in the shape of substantial wage increases). This pattern of events brought the official union movement into increasing difficulty. The statutory incomes policy became more and more of a dead letter and in 1968 free collective bargaining was brought in officially. Wages and conditions were henceforth to be a matter for negotiation between the organizations representing employers and workers. Thanks, however, to two articles in the Law introducing free collective bargaining, the Government retained some scope for intervention in the matter of wages. One of these articles - Article 8 - empowered the Government to declare a collective agreement invalid where necessary on grounds of social/economic policy, whilst the

other - Article 10 - made provision for the introduction of a wage freeze.

The return to free collective bargaining opened the way for Dutch workers to make up rapidly the ground they had lost vis-à-vis other European workers in the matter of wages.

The Social and Economic Council

The post-war period saw the establishment not only of the Labour Foundation but also of another important body which was to play a key role in the field of social policy: the Social and Economic Council (SER). The latter has the task of advising the Government on all measures planned by the public authorities in the field of social and economic policy. The SER has 45 members (15 appointed by the Crown, 15 by the employers' organizations and 15 by the workers' organizations).

The SER was the cornerstone of the system of statutory industries bodies introduced in 1950. The purpose of this system was to provide a framework within which the public authorities, employers and workers could jointly draw up binding rules for the operation of industry in economic and social matters. The system also includes a series of joint employer-worker product councils and industry councils set up for the purposes of regulating the activities of the individual sectors of the economy.

During the statutory incomes policy era the SER played an important role in the process of establishing the level of annual wage increases. With the return to free collective bargaining, the unions tended increasingly to avoid discussion of wages policy in the SER. The Council's other activities - the preparation of opinions for the Government on social and economic questions - continue, however, to form one of the main elements of the trade union federations' work.

The purpose, composition and methods of the SER are now under review as a result of pressure from the trade union movement, which would like to see the SER become an instrument for the reform of society but fears that, as matters stand, the consultative procedures employed simply restrict the movement's freedom for manoeuvre.

With the expansion of the social insurance system in the period following the war, representatives of the trade union movement obtained places on a

range of bodies such as the Social Insurance Council, the Social Insurance Bank, the Sickness Fund Council and the General Unemployment Fund.

Growing unity within the movement

The Council of Trade Union Federations established at the end of the war remained a forum for close cooperation between the NVV, the CNV and the RKWV until 1954, when the Dutch bishops forbade Roman Catholics to join Socialist organizations such as the VARA (broadcasting), the PvdA (political party) and the NVV.

This represented an attempt on the part of the bishops to support the Catholic organizations following elections in which the Katholieke Volkspartij (Catholic People's Party) had lost ground to the PvdA.

As a result of this action, the three union federations drifted apart and it was not until 1958 that cooperation resumed - and then only in a looser form.

From that time on, however, cooperation grew steadily in matters of concrete policy and in 1963 the NVV and the Catholic federation adopted a joint action programme. All three federations were then able, in 1967 and 1971, to agree on joint programmes aimed at influencing new governments. In 1969 the Catholic federation - which had in the meanwhile changed its name to the NKV - decided that the time had come to attempt close organizational cooperation between the three federations and suggested this in the course of discussions in the Consultative Council, proceeding in 1970 to propose the creation of a confederation of the three bodies. The initial reactions of the other two federations were by no means unfavourable. The NVV would have preferred a fully united trade union movement but saw the establishment of a confederation as a step in the right direction. For its part, the CNV was prepared to consider the idea but warned that its own Protestant identity must not suffer.

In that same year a working party comprising one representative from each of the federations began work on drafting a plan for closer cooperation. The working party ultimately recommended the establishment of a "strong" confederation, which would take over the decision-making powers of the individual federations, thus permitting a saving in both time and manpower. Greater efficiency was one of the main aims of the move for closer cooperation.

The attempt to create a confederation bringing together all three existing organizations ultimately failed because of a difference of view between the NVV and NKV on the one hand and the CNV on the other. The NVV and NKV were in favour of a "strong" confederation with cooperation pushed to the maximum possible extent. Independent action and separate standpoints on the part of the affiliated federations should, in their view, be a thing of the past. They also stressed the need for a confederation of individual unions. The CNV on the other hand wished to continue to operate in its existing form as a clearly recognizable unit within the confederation. When it became apparent that the gap was too wide to be bridged, the NVV and the NKV carried on with the task of creating a confederation on their own. Cooperation with the CNV within the framework of the Consultative Council came to an end on 1 January 1976.

The Federation

The Federation set up by the NVV and NKV officially began life on 1 January 1976 as the Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging (Federation of Dutch Trade Unions) (FNV). The FNV included 24 unions, 15 from the NVV, 8 from the NKV and the hitherto "homeless" Association of Dutch Journalists. At the time of its foundation the FNV had more than one million members: 700,000 from the NVV and 360,000 from the NKV.

Wim Kok (NVV) became President and Wim Spit (NKV) became Vice-President. Amsterdam, where the NVV was already located, became the headquarters of the FNV. All the administrative sections and the secretariats of both organizations were fused into one joint FNV apparatus. FNV policy is prepared by this single apparatus and decisions are taken by the Federation's administrative board, which consists of responsible secretaries who were originally secretaries of the NVV and NKV.

This development in the area of the trade union federations went more or less hand in hand with a similar trend among the affiliated unions of the NVV and NKV.

Everywhere in the various sectors of industry where unions belonging to both federations were active they adopted the same kind of close cooperation. The unions belonging to the federation called themselves FNV unions. Since September 1981, this federative cooperation of the FNV and affiliated unions has moved on an important further stage. The FNV congress held in

that month decided to merge the federation with effect from 1 January 1982. This means that the two separate organizations which until now have formed the FNV (NVV and NKV) are being disbanded and that they are being completely merged into one single organization bearing the same name: FNV.

After the CNV trade union federation found itself alone, it underwent a development which has reinforced still further the general Christian character of the organization. In recent years various Catholic organizations have affiliated themselves to the CNV. These are trade unions which were autonomous and thus not affiliated to the Catholic trade union federation, NKV.

Those organizations which have joined the CNV are chiefly representatives of government staff and semi-government staff: the civil servants' union ARKA, the St Michael police union, and the St Martinus Association for Servicemen and women. The Catholic teachers' union KOV has also joined the CNV. Harm van der Meulen is President of the CNV at the moment.

A new trade union federation

In 1974 a third trade union federation announced its existence in the Netherlands, alongside the FNV and CNV, and has since received the title "Vakcentrale voor Middelbaar en Hoger Personeel" /Trade Union Federation for Supervisory and Managerial Staff/ (MHP). The MHP has around 120,000 members and is regarded as a bona fide trade union federation. It also takes part in national consultations in bodies such as the SER and the Stichting van der Arbeid /Labour Council/. The MHP chiefly defends the interests of employees who occupy supervisory, managerial or senior positions. At the moment the President of the MHP is Henk van der Schalie.

STANDPOINTS OF THE DUTCH TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

A. Europe

The Dutch trade union movement has from its early days had a strong international orientation and has constantly supported international cooperation. Both the big trade union federations (FNV and CNV) are affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

(At world level the FNV is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and the CNV to the World Confederation of Labour.)

The coming into being of the European Community was received positively by the trade union movement in the Netherlands. Economic integration in Europe has always been viewed as important in raising living standards.

However, at the moment, the Community is faced with even more difficult tasks than integration alone. For the Dutch trade union movement the question is whether "Europe" can tackle these new tasks without undergoing far-reaching changes in its structures and ways of working. Both the FNV and the CNV are in complete agreement that matters such as employment, the fight against inflation, income distribution, worker participation and environmental control can properly be tackled only on a European scale.

As far as the trade union movement is concerned, this implies that a democratic European Community must emerge. The trade union movement wants to make of Europe a workers' community. In order to attain this, the following demands, among things, must be accepted:

- in all sectors of industry an obligation must be introduced to report on large-scale investment in order to prevent overcapacity, for example;
- the influence of workers in the Community's advisory bodies must be increased;
- democracy in the various European institutions must be reinforced, if necessary at the expense of nationalistic restrictions which accord too great a place to the individual interests of specific countries.

The Dutch trade union movement sets great store by extending the powers of the European Parliament, since the Parliament can make a significant contribution towards solving European problems. To this end the European Parliament should be able to exercise control over the occasionally very far-reaching decisions which are now taken by the ministers of the EEC countries without the Parliament having any say. The Parliament's position must be strengthened via the following measures:

- the Parliament must be given the right to determine the EEC budget;
- the Parliament must play a decisive role in deciding the members of the European Commission.

The Dutch trade union movement attaches great importance to the Parliament's maintaining contacts with workers' organizations at European level and with the Economic and Social Committee. The European Commission must be given more executive and supervisory powers. Above all, the CNV considers that

the Commission is at present too big and would like to see it reduced to one Commissioner per country.

The Dutch trade union movement would also like to see, given the dramatic rise in unemployment in the Community, a system of orderly consultation set up between employers, workers and government. The object of such consultation must be:

- to decide on a common strategy to combat unemployment;
- to plan for a common industrial policy in order to foster controlled economic development;
- mutual alignment of the Member States' social and economic policies.

In this way the impact of the total effort would be increased and national measures which hamper or counteract each other would be avoided.

In every sector of industry joint committees must be formed to be responsible for framing sectoral policy.

Having said all this, the CNV still holds the view that there are too few Dutch people serving with the European Community. The CNV would like to see their numbers brought up to a level commensurate with the Netherlands' share in the Community.

Both the FNV and the CNV are supporters of the Community's draft Directive in which multinational undertakings are obliged to provide information regularly to the employees. This so-called "Vredeling Directive" is seen by both organizations as an instrument for protecting the position of those working for multinationals.

B. Unemployment

Combating unemployment is the main aim of the social and economic policy of the trade union movement in the Netherlands. As a result of the economic crisis unemployment in the Netherlands has already risen to 450,000. This represents a good 10% of the working population. The FNV and CNV find this socially unacceptable. They are therefore putting forward a policy which consists essentially of the following measures:

- the establishment of general economic recovery by improving the structure of private industry. This will help the employment situation.
- major action by the government, too, in creating employment: better housing provision, urban renewal, environmental protection, education,

health and old age care on the one hand to improve the quality of life and, on the other, to form a basis for creating jobs.

- action to take account of the fact that, in spite of the approach outlined, the number of people seeking work will continue to outstrip the number of jobs available.

It is necessary, therefore, for work to be shared out more fairly. This can be attained by reducing working time in many ways: early retirement, extending part-time work, shortening the working week, switching from four- to five-men teams, raising the school-leaving age.

Such a three-pronged policy is desperately needed because the prospects for employment in the near future are very grim. Every year large numbers of school leavers are seeking places on the job market, more and more married women want to go out to work (in the Netherlands women have traditionally played a relatively small part on the employment market, but things are changing now) but the number of jobs is declining as a result of automation and closures of firms.

The growing number of non-working persons (the unemployed and the unemployable) also presents ever more acute financing problems for the public purse, as in the Netherlands all major benefits under the social security system are linked to the industrial wage trend. Because of this link and the growing number of people making demands on all forms of social insurance the costs have risen enormously. The financing of social security in the Netherlands is becoming one of the major social and economic problems of the 80s. The Dutch trade union movement has already made its position clear on this matter: it is unacceptable that recipients of benefits should become whipping boys for the problems of the economy. This group is already suffering in terms of living conditions and prospects; they should not have a lower income to put up with as well.

C. Wages policy

The trade union movement in the Netherlands advocates a revival of industry through new investment.

Both the FNV and CNV believe that workers can contribute to the financing of such new investment by means of an 'investment wage'.

This would mean that workers did not receive part of the wage rise or cost-of-living rise to which they were entitled. In exchange they would receive forms of title to their firm (shares, for example).

The investment wage is thus a form of wage moderation which directly benefits investment in the workers' own firm. Moreover, by virtue of the investment wage, a participatory relationship develops within the undertaking to the benefit of the workers, since a share by workers in ownership of the firm obviously produces a form of participation.

Plans to introduce the investment wage as early as 1982 came to nothing in the tripartite consultations which the Government, employers and workers held at the end of 1981 concerning social and economic policy for 1982.

The FNV and CNV accept that a recovery plan demands sacrifices, from workers as well. It will be nowhere near possible for purchasing power to remain stable for everybody. However, the Dutch trade union movement still starts out from the conviction that the strongest shoulders must bear the heaviest burdens. The trade union movement has still more conditions to put before accepting any fall in purchasing power:

- only if a policy is pursued which offers the prospect of more work can workers be asked for a contribution;
- workers must have a say in deciding the form which their contribution is to take;
- the link between the incomes of those in work and benefits received by those not in work must be maintained.

The Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Dr J. den Uyl, who has been a member of the new cabinet since mid-1981, has put forward a plan to divert more money to the Government by means of a "solidarity levy" which it would use to create extra jobs. There has been a lukewarm reaction to the plan on the part of the trade union movement. The FNV has serious doubts concerning its effects, and the CNV has even gone so far as to reject the idea completely. The CNV is more in favour of a decentralized effort to create employment via the various sectors of industry than centrally directed efforts via the Government. The FNV's criticism is that the solidarity levy would lead only to the creation of jobs in the State sector, while the way to economic recovery is via a strengthening of industry.

The lack of agreement between Government, employers and workers concerning the policy to be pursued in 1982 has led to the Dutch Government adopting its umpteenth wages measure. The measure has the effect of setting an upper limit on cost-of-living increases and holiday bonuses. A maximum has been set for both payments for 1982. The measure, which has already been passed by Parliament in the final weeks of 1981, has two advantages in the Government's eyes: it offers a saving in wage costs for industry (and for the Government), and its effect is such that those earning higher incomes pay in more so that the burdens can be said to have been shared out more fairly. The trade union movement has sharply criticized this interference in its freedom to negotiate.

CONCLUSION

The economic recession which is evident throughout the world has faced the Dutch trade union movement, too, with difficult tasks. Furthering the interests of its members at a time marked by industrial closures, rising public expenditure, attacks on purchasing power and rising unemployment, is far from simple.

However, the FNV and CNV have not thrown in the towel. Both organizations drew up programmes in 1981 designed to lead to economic recovery. The programmes were drawn up also as a guide for the actions of the centre-left coalition cabinet which took power in mid-1981. The programmes contain desiderata which the Government must take into account in the coming four years. The FNV programme "Aan de slag" (Let's get cracking) is aimed chiefly at the creation of jobs by stimulating economic growth. Implementation of the plan may, according to the FNV, create 250,000 jobs in the coming years, including jobs in the building industry and in projects for energy saving. From various sources, according to the plan, something like Hfl 7 to 8,000 million may be released every year for the financing of the plan. Among such sources of financing are included some speeding-up in the extraction of natural gas, a creaming-off of the oil companies' profits, and judicious use of the higher export profits from natural gas. In addition, the FNV considers that regulations are called for to oblige institutional investors (such as insurance companies and pension funds) to invest in State house-building programmes. The CNV programme for the years 1981 to 1985, "Om werk en welzijn" (On work and well-being), lays emphasis, as does the FNV's plan, on restoring the level of employment. However, the CNV also argues that more attention should be paid to workers' well-being. In the CNV's view economic

progress has in many ways come up hard against the limits of growth and is at odds with the well-being of the individual. Society is paying a high price for its prosperity: noise, smell, pollution of soil and water, hazards to public health, the looming shortage of raw materials, energy problems, the dehumanization of many kinds of work, a hardening in relationships between people, aggressiveness, apathy, etc. Like the FNV, the CNV is therefore advocating controlled economic growth.

Much of what the trade union movement has submitted in terms of desiderata can be realized only in collaboration with the Government. The trade union movement is dependent for this on the present Government coalition of CDA, PvdA and D'66 - a coalition which the trade union movement, too, deemed highly desirable.

In the coming years we shall see what comes of the wishes of the trade union movement.

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EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES - INFORMATION

Commission of the European Communities, Rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Bruxelles

Informationskontorer - Presse- und Informationsbüros - Γραφεία τύπου και Πληροφοριών -
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BELGIQUE — BELGIË

Rue Archimede 73 -
Archimedesstraat 73
1040 Bruxelles — 1040 Brussel
Tél. : 735 00 40/735 80 40

DANMARK

Gammel Torv 4
Postbox 144
1004 København K
Tlf. : (01) 14 41 40/(01) 14 55 12

BR DEUTSCHLAND

Zitelmannstraße 22
5300 Bonn
Tel. : 23 80 41

Kurfürstendamm 102
1000 Berlin 31
Tel. : 8 92 40 28

ΕΛΛΑΣ

Ὁδὸς Βασιλίσσης Σοφίας 2
Καὶ Ἡρώδου Ἀττικοῦ
Ἀθήνα 134
τηλ. : 743 982/743 983/743 984

FRANCE

61, rue des Belles Feuilles
75782 Paris Cedex 16
Tel. : 501 58 85

IRELAND

39 Molesworth Street
Dublin 2
Tel. : 71 22 44

ITALIA

Via Poli, 29
00187 Roma
Tel. : 678 97 22
Corso Magenta, 61
20123 Milano
Tel. 805 92 09

GRAND-DUCHÉ DE LUXEMBOURG

Centre européen
Bâtiment Jean Monnet B/O
L-2920 Luxembourg
Tél. : 43011

NEDERLAND

Lange Voorhout 29
Den Haag
Tel. : 46 93 26

UNITED KINGDOM

20, Kensington Palace Gardens
London W8 4QQ
Tel. : 727 8090

Windsor House
9/15 Bedford Street
Belfast
Tel. : 407 08

4 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF1 9SG
Tel. : 37 1631

7 Alva Street
Edinburgh EH2 4PH
Tel. : 225 2058

ESPAÑA

Calle de Serrano 41
5A Planta-Madrid 1
Tel. : 474 11 87

PORTUGAL

35, rua do Sacramento à Lapa
1200 Lisboa
Tel. : 66 75 96

TURKIYE

13. Bogaz Sokak
Kavaklıdere
Ankara
Tel. : 27 61 45/27 61 46

SCHWEIZ - SUISSE - SVIZZERA

Casse postale 195
37-39, rue de Vermont
1211 Genève 20
Tél. : 34 97 50

UNITED STATES

2100 M Street, NW
Suite 707
Washington, DC 20037
Tel. : 862 95 00

1 Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza
245 East 47th Street
New York, NY 10017
Tel. : 371 38 04

CANADA

Inn of the Provinces
Office Tower
Suite 1110
Sparks' Street 350
Ottawa, Ont. K1R 7S8
Tel. : 238 64 64

AMERICA LATINA

Avda Ricardo Lyon 1177
Santiago de Chile 9
Chile
Adresse postale : Casilla 10093
Tel. : 25 05 55

Quinta Bienvenida
Valle Arriba
Calle Colibri
Distrito Sucre
Caracas
Venezuela
Tel. : 91 47 07

NIPPON

Kowa 25 Building
8-7 Sanbanchu
Chiyoda-Ku
Tokyo 102
Tel. : 239 04 41

ASIA

Thai Military Bank Building
34 Phya Thai Road
Bangkok
Thailand
Tel. : 282 14 52