

The Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigen: The Labour Movement in The Netherlands, 1905-1914

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Today the *Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigen* (NVV) with over 560,000 members, constitutes the largest, single, national trade union central in the Netherlands. Closely tied to the contemporary Labour Party, the NVV articulates a broad spectrum of social democratic welfare demands and is fully integrated into the structure of the capitalist order in the Netherlands. As such it regularly participates in policy determination at the governmental level and assists its member unions in collective bargaining.

Between the formation of the NVV in 1905 and 1914, the Dutch social democratic labour movement was not yet integrated into the capitalist polity. Only rarely did social democratic unions bargain collectively, and labour had virtually no voice at all in the determination of government social, labour, and economic policy. Beyond this, the pre-1914 social democratic movement had a socialist programme, ideology and political intent. Even partial integration into the capitalist polity was regarded at best as a temporary situation, and a transition to the final realization of a socialist state.¹

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¹ A scholarly history of the NVV before 1914 has yet to be written. The Dutch labour movement on the eve of the First World War is discussed by Jan OUDEGEEST, a former NVV official and leader of the Dutch Union of Rail and Tram Personnel, in his highly partisan *De geschiedenis der zelfstandige vakbeweging in Nederland* (2 vols.; Amsterdam: Uitgave van het NVV, 1926-1932). Frits DE JONG Edz., *Om de plaats van de arbeid* (Amsterdam: N.V. De Arbeiderspers, 1956), pp. 1-122; and John WINDMULLER, *Labor Relations in the Netherlands* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), pp. 1-40, both deal with the origins and development of the NVV on the eve of the First World War. The strongest discussion of the Dutch labour movement down to the 1903 general strike action is A.J.C. RUTER's, *De spoorwegstaking van 1903. Een spiegel der arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (SUN reprints; Leyden: E.J. Brill, 1935), pp. 1-178. The interplay between the social democratic trade unions and the Social Democratic Workers Party before the First World War can be traced through the first two volumes of Willem VLIEGEN's, *Die onze kracht ontwaken deed. Geschiedenis der Sociaaldemocratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland gedurende de eerste 25 jaren van haar bestaan* (3 vol.; Amsterdam: N.V. Ontwikkeling, 1924-1938). All citations to Dutch sources in this essay retain the original spelling and word formation and thus will not be consistent. Since the NVV archive did not survive the Second World War, the authors have based this essay upon the *Verslagen* issued by the NVV, 1906-1914. The authors would like to extend their thanks to Mevrouw J.M. Welcker of the International Institute for Social History, Amsterdam, for her kind and gracious assistance during the 1970-

This essay will attempt to probe the origins of the NVV and its consolidation down to 1914. This process was largely complete by the beginning of the First World War. An examination of the formation of the NVV is instructive for a number of reasons. It illuminates a series of problems which faced other European social democratic trade union movements. Like most European social democratic trade union movements, the NVV was at least partially a reflex against revolutionary syndicalist doctrine. The struggle against syndicalism gave the NVV a particular orientation and direction. Like most other European social democratic trade-unions, the NVV also conducted a parallel struggle against confessional trade unions and thus was in sharp competition with religious bodies for the loyalty of broad sectors of the blue-collar community. Beyond this, the NVV had to establish some type of ideological and policy stance toward the Dutch Social Democratic Workers Party. Would the trade-unions stand apart from the party as in France or would they be an integral arm of the party as in Belgium? This process, in turn, forced the NVV to reconcile its immediate bread-and-butter demands with the ultimate social democratic goal of a collectivist society. The NVV also constituted a response on the part of Dutch labour to the organizational issue of trade union centralization versus decentralized union structures. In its origins the NVV was a confederation of highly centralised autonomous federations organized along industrial or craft lines.

The issues which faced the NVV appear in a unique combination in the Netherlands. Though the Netherlands embodied a number of confessional groupings, it also encompassed a workers' movement which in its origins inclined toward syndicalism. Furthermore, a highly developed commercial sector was surrounded by a relatively weak industrial base. In no other European country did social democratic trade unions face opposition from both a relatively strong syndicalist movement and a rapidly growing, potentially powerful cluster of confessional trade unions. Despite its importance, the NVV has not attracted extensive scholarly attention. This follows, in part, from the loss of the NVV archive during the Second World War and the relative difficulty in obtaining prime source materials. This essay is based upon the NVV *verslagen* which are currently available at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam.

II

By 1900, the Dutch labour movement embodied a number of deep and powerful cleavages which were mirrored within Dutch society at large. The first of these was religious. Both Roman Catholic and Protestant labourers had moved toward the establishment of separate confessional workingmen's associations. The confessional organizations were paralleled by a series of liberal, syndicalist, and social democratic trade unions. Of these, the liberal unions were the first to organize a national

1971 academic year and since. The authors would also like to express their appreciation to Professor John Windmuller of Cornell University for his advice and criticism in the preparation of this essay.

federation. In October 1871 the *Algemeen Nederlandsch Werkliedenverbond* (ANWV) was founded in Utrecht in an attempt to bring together the city centrals which had been generated by the organizational activity of the 1860s in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, and Arnhem.² With an initial membership of 3,400 the ANWV would not, however, develop into a major trade-union federation. From its origins the ANWV was dominated by the Amsterdam furnituremaker B. H. Heldt, who, in concert with his supporters, was able to give the ANWV a liberal bent.³ This meant, among other things, that the ANWV endorsed the capitalist mode of production, repudiated formulations of class struggle, and called for solidarity between labour and management. The ANWV federations remained small and the organization did not experience dramatic growth down to 1914.

The emergence of socialist, or social democratic, trade unions in the late-nineteenth century generated yet another division within the labour force. The creation of the *Sociaal Democratische Bond* in 1882 fused various types of socialists into a unitary national party. The cleavage between revolutionary socialists and both marxists and parliamentary socialists was thus carried over into the union movement.⁴ By 1890 some socialist trade unions inclined toward revolutionary actions, others toward parliamentary social democracy. This final cleavage within the labour force was of crucial importance after the turn of the century.

The confessional trade unions had yet to form a national central body by the turn of the century. In 1876 a number of Protestant trade union men in Amsterdam founded a Christian workingmen's association, *Patrimonium*.⁵ Led by the mason, Klaas Kater, the founders of *Patrimonium* sought to create an association which would serve to bring labour and management together for discussion and Christian exchange. It was not envisioned as a trade union, nor did it function as such. *Patrimonium* refused to endorse strikes and offered the Christian labour doctrines of social solidarity in lieu of class struggle. Protestant trade unions, while often linked to *Patrimonium*, did not form their own national federation until 1909. In that year the *Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond* (CNV) was formed.⁶ Roman Catholic labourers remained largely unorganized; however, the continued creation of Roman Catholic trade unions during the decade before and after the turn of the century did create pressure for the establishment of a Roman Catholic trade union central. After a series of unsuccessful negotiations between Roman Catholic and Protestant trade union representatives aimed at securing a national, trans-sectarian, Christian, organizational framework, the Roman Catholic trade union leader-

² L.G.J. VERBERNE, *De Nederlandsche arbeidersbeweging in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: P.N. Van Kampen & Zoon N.V., 1940), p. 80.

³ A.J.C. RÜTER, *op. cit.*, p. 2-3.

⁴ This theme runs through the second chapter of *Ibid.*, pp. 55-178.

⁵ L.G.J. VERBERNE, *op. cit.*, p. 95. For a more detailed discussion of the confessional trade union movement, see Erik Hansen and Peter A. PROSPER, Jr., "Religion and the Development of the Dutch Trade Union Movement, 1872-1914," *Histoire sociale — Social History* IX, No. 18 (November 1976): 357-383.

⁶ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, p. 113.

ship formed the Bureau of Roman Catholic Trade Organizations in the summer of 1909.⁷ On the eve of the First World War, the two major Christian trade union federations were still rather small and limited in scope.

During the middle of the nineteenth century, an industrialization and modernization process began in the Netherlands. Although the process was by no means complete by 1914 and was neither as intense nor as dramatic as that experienced by Great Britain, Belgium and Germany, it had a powerful impact upon the fabric of Dutch society. Industrialization was accompanied by steady population growth. Between 1830 and 1909, the population of the Netherlands grew from 2.6 to 5.9 million.⁸ During this same period, Amsterdam trebled from 202,000 to 609,000, Rotterdam from 72,000 to 472,000 and The Hague from 56,000 to 312,000. As the Netherlands became more urbanized, the occupational distribution of populations also began to shift. In 1849, 44% of the labour force was involved in agriculture or related activity, 26% owned or operated a retail, commercial, or productive enterprise, and only 12% could be termed factory workers in any sense of the word.⁹ The Netherlands contained only 74 corporations in 1864, a number which increased to 882 by 1908. The process of social transformation is reflected in the following census data.¹⁰

By 1914 agriculture still remained the single largest employer in the Netherlands, although its share in the total labour force had declined from 31.7% in 1889 to 27.3% by 1909.¹¹ Apart from household servants and help, who still constituted 9.8% of the labour force in 1909, the next three largest sectors were construction, commerce, and transport. The last experienced sharp and dramatic growth at the turn of the century as its share in the labour force rose from 7.9% (131,255 workers) in 1889 to 9.6% (216,603 workers) in 1909.¹² Trade, commerce and transport dominated the economy, which was otherwise composed of generally small units of production. Agriculture was labour intensive and holdings, either of owners or tenants, were small. Above the agrarian sub-structure lay a sizable *petit bourgeois* retail and commercial sector which was flanked by craft trades and the developing industrial areas.¹³ In 1914, however, shipping, transport, banking and commerce constituted the "commanding heights" of the economy and not industrial enterprise and production.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

⁸ CENTRAAL BUREAU VOOR DE STATISTIEK, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), p. 2.

⁹ J. A. DE JONGE, *De industrialisatie in Nederland tussen 1850 en 1914* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1968), p. 281.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹¹ The figures cited above are derived from CENTRAAL BUREAU VOOR DE STATISTIEK, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1901), pp. 56-57; and, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), pp. 78-79.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57, and *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

¹³ For a detailed discussion of the modernization process in the Netherlands, see J. A. DE JONGE, *De industrialisatie in Nederland tussen 1850 en 1914* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1968).

Table 1: OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE DUTCH LABOUR FORCE, 1889-1909

Occupation	1889		1899		Totals	% of labour force
	Totals	% of labour force	Totals	% of labour force		
Pottery, glass etc.						
Diamonds, jewels	28,527	1.7	23,558	1.2	27,907	1.2
Printing, lithographs, photography	--	--	9,921	0.5	9,709	0.4
Construction and repair	12,105	0.7	13,223	0.7	17,955	0.8
Chemicals	120,975	7.3	147,077	7.6	174,877	7.7
Wood-, cork-, straw working, cutting of various materials	3,509	0.2	9,170	0.5	11,558	0.5
Clothing and cleaning	37,387	2.3	40,665	2.1	48,529	2.1
Art	75,645	4.6	91,335	4.7	105,839	4.7
Leather, Oil Cloth, Indian Rubber	1,598	0.1	2,272	0.1	2,377	0.1
Metal extraction, coal, peat	37,422	2.3	39,926	2.1	36,939	1.6
Metal working	15,371	0.9	16,070	0.8	22,174	1.0
Machinery, instruments, war materials	41,633	2.5	48,218	2.5	47,677	2.1
Ship building, coaches	6,456	0.4	18,710	1.0	58,176	2.6
Paper	3,516	0.8	18,856	1.0	26,006	1.1
Textiles	2,923	0.2	7,101	0.4	10,075	0.4
Gas and electricity	44,455	2.7	48,465	2.5	57,054	2.5
Food and medicines	6,332	0.4	3,560	0.2	4,771	0.2
Agriculture	84,327	5.1	108,618	5.6	120,759	5.3
Fishing and hunting	524,624	31.7	571,942	29.7	616,395	27.3
Commerce	16,650	1.0	21,481	1.1	23,182	1.0
Transport	127,306	7.7	183,279	9.5	185,357	8.2
Banking and credit	131,255	7.9	131,126	6.8	216,603	9.6
Insurance	708		1,792	0.1	3,506	0.2
Free professions	1,098	0.1	2,691	0.1	4,104	0.2
Private education	30,015	1.8	32,165	1.7	65,221	2.9
Nursing and care	9,655	0.6	14,200	0.7	19,199	0.8
Household servants	3,782	0.2	11,374	0.6	14,969	0.7
Unskilled workers	166,495	10.1	196,276	10.2	222,526	9.8
State employees telephone, printing, etc. exclud- ing post, telegraph	25,164	1.5	33,335	1.7	22,744	1.0
Provincial employees	34,436	2.1	34,246	1.8	36,747	1.6
Municipal employees excluding gas, public works	886	0.1	750	0.0	494	0.0
Polder employees	25,299	1.5	28,963	1.5	36,529	1.6
Clerics and Ecclesiastics	2,604	0.2	3,416	0.2	1,545	0.1
	12,208	0.7	9,803	0.5	10,088	0.4
Total Labour Force	1,652,594	100.0	1,923,634	100.0	2,261,635	100.0

Source: Adapted from Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1901), pp. 56-57 and pp. 76-77; and *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), pp. 78-79.

As elsewhere in Europe, the social conditions were harsh when judged by current standards. Wages were low. Carpenters, for example, usually earned from 12 to 20 Dutch cents per hour in the major cities.¹⁴ The average carpenter in a major city worked 13-14 hours per day in the spring and summer months and 10 to 12 hours per day during the winter. The employment of women and children was a frequent practice; between 1889 and 1909 the number of women in the labour force rose from 353,054 to over 540,000.¹⁵ In 1874, an Act of Parliament forbade the employment of children under twelve years of age; however, the hours which a person from twelve to fifteen years of age could work was not restricted until the labour law of 1889.¹⁶ Women and all employees in the twelve to fifteen year range were limited to an eleven-hour day and could not be asked to work nights or on Sunday. Throughout the late-nineteenth century the Dutch population registered steady growth. Between 1840 and 1909, the life expectancy for men rose from 29.5 to 51 years and for women from 32.6 to 53.4 years.¹⁷

It was not until the turn of the century that statistically significant organizational advance was made by the labour force. One of the major reasons for this can be found in the importance of religion in Dutch life. Labourers quite often conceived of themselves as members of a religious community first and only secondarily as members of a social class. The partial division of the labour force along religious lines also acted as a powerful braking force upon the development of the Social Democratic Workers Party. Social Democratic weakness stemming from confessional cleavages was further compounded by the suffrage law. The right to vote was restricted to males above the twenty-fourth year who met stern property qualifications. In 1870 only 12.1% of the men in the Netherlands had the right to vote. The percentage rose to 67.6% in 1914 as a result of relaxations in property requirements and the general prosperity during the decades before the war.¹⁸ The major political parties, the Roman Catholic State Party, the Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party and its off-shoot, the Christian Historical Union, the old Liberals, the Union Liberals and the Radicals, after the turn of the century known as the Free Thinkers, all represented bourgeois or *petit-bourgeois* interests and were thus not responsive to the social needs and political demands of wage earners. The property qualifications for suffrage were relaxed during the late nineteenth century as progressive clericals and liberals alike sought to incorporate the *petit bourgeoisie* and small farmers into the electorate.

¹⁴ Jan OUDEGEEST, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁵ CENTRAAL BUREAU VOOR DE STATISTIEK, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1901), pp. 56-57; and, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1901), pp. 56-57; and, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), pp. 78-79.

¹⁶ I.J. BRUGMANS, *Paardenkracht en Mensenmacht. Sociaal-economische geschiedenis van Nederland, 1795-1940* ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961), p. 408-409.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 427.

¹⁸ For suffrage data, see CENTRAAL BUREAU VOOR DE STATISTIEK, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), p. 315.

III. — THE ORIGINS OF THE NVV

The formation of the *Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen* in 1905 mirrored a dissatisfaction on the part of the social democratic trade unions with the existing *Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* (NAS). NAS was permeated by a revolutionary syndicalist ethos which precluded social democratic trade union membership and which rendered cooperation between the NAS affiliates and social democratic trade unions virtually impossible.

(1) *The NAS experience.* — The *Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* was created in 1892 in response to a resolution passed by the Second International in the course of its 1891 congress in Brussels.¹⁹ The resolution called on each of the Second International's member parties to establish a social democratic labour secretariat within their respective nations if such did not already exist. The secretariat in the Netherlands was thus the creation of the *Bond*. The *Bond's* action was unique in that it was the only member section of the Second International to respond to the resolution by creating a national labour secretariat. From its origins NAS thus reflected the revolutionary currents with the *Bond* and immediately began to incline toward revolutionary syndicalist doctrine. Initially, social democratic unions affiliated with NAS; consequently, the nation's first national, socialist, trade union confederation claimed 18,700 members by the end of 1895. NAS membership declined to 3,674 members by 1909 and then rose to 9,103 on the eve of the First World War.²⁰ The syndicalist stance of NAS eventually drove social democratic unions out of the organization and hence its dramatic decline after the turn of the century.

NAS was governed by a secretariat composed of a chairman, a first and second secretary, and a treasurer.²¹ By 1899 only the chairman and first secretary were salaried. The secretariat was chosen by, and responsible to, an annual convention. Each affiliated union was represented at the convention and was also represented by a single delegate on the governing board of NAS which met on an irregular basis. The affiliated trade unions voted at the annual convention in accord with a weighted vote formula. Each affiliate received one vote per 200 members up to a ceiling of six. In this way, the large affiliates were prevented from dominating the convention. The secretariat administered a central strike fund which drew revenues from the affiliates on an annual basis.²² Strike actions by NAS unions were to be supported by the central fund and

¹⁹ For an extended discussion of the formative years of NAS, see A.J.C. RÜTER, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-148. Throughout this essay the term federation will be used to denote a national grouping of trade-unions on an industrial or craft basis, thus the typographers federation, the carpenters federation and the diamond workers federation. Strictly speaking, the NVV was a confederation of separate federations and did not constitute a monolithic bloc.

²⁰ *Gedenkboek. Uitgegeven door het Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat ter gelegenheid van zijn 25-jaring bestaan* (Amsterdam: NAS, [1918]), pp. 34-35.

²¹ For the initial by-laws of NAS, see *Het Nationaal Arbeids-Sekretariaat in Nederland. Zijn Ontstaan en Werking* (n.p., no.d., [1895]), pp. 8-9.

²² Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

consequently the secretariat did not encourage member unions to maintain their own strike funds.

The initial leadership of NAS was composed of men who were either members of the revolutionary current within the *Bond* or were sympathetic to this particular direction within the Dutch labour movement.²³ As a consequence, the construction of a national labour bureaucracy with centralized leadership and salaried administrators received a low priority. NAS leadership conceived of its mission in largely agitational and propaganda terms. The goal of NAS was to develop a sense of revolutionary class consciousness among Dutch wage earners which would ultimately lead to a spontaneous revolution and the subsequent realization of a decentralized, federative, syndicalist society. NAS leadership proceeded on the assumption that labour had nothing to gain from participation in the parliamentary process and that NAS goals could only be realized through continual strikes. Advances in wages, hours, and the conditions of employment were valued as symbolic gains rather than ends in themselves. The NAS leadership was thus led to repudiate organizational principles which stressed salaried administrators, centralization, and high compulsory dues. Instead, the NAS leadership encouraged low dues with an accent on voluntary contributions, and highly decentralized federations of local trade unions which were often administered at the local level on a part-time or spare-time basis.

The NAS rejection of political participation further complicated relations with the social democratic trade unions and with affiliated social democratic unions. The *Bond* had affiliated with NAS from its origins until 1894 when the government dissolved the *Bond* on the grounds that the organization was a threat to internal security. Its successor organization, the *Socialistenbond* immediately joined NAS. When the *Sociaal Democratische Arbeiderspartij* (SDAP) was created in 1894, it too joined NAS. The 1896 NAS convention, seeking to establish a sharp distinction between social democracy and revolutionary syndicalism, voted to expel all political parties.²⁴ This action established an adversary relationship between NAS and the SDAP. Beyond this, the action was a clear indication that NAS would refuse to support agitation for universal suffrage and legislated redressment of working-class grievances. After 1896 social democratic unions either began to withdraw from NAS, or, when new social democratic trade unions were formed, they refused to affiliate with NAS. Although NAS almost collapsed during the first decade of this century, its presence posed a number of problems for the NVV. Labourers throughout the Amsterdam harbour area and sectors of the Amsterdam construction trades, while not members of NAS in many cases, were sympathetic and proved highly resistant to NVV organization. Beyond this, the first secretary of NAS, Christiaan Cornelissen, had succeeded in giving syndicalist doctrine a currency sufficient to act as a partial check on NVV organizers.

²³ A.J.C. RÜTER, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

(2) *The movement toward a national, social democratic, union confederation.* — In the course of a strike involving unorganized diamond workers in Amsterdam during the autumn of 1894, the *Algemene Nederlandse Diamantbewerkerbond* (General Dutch Diamond Workers Federation — ANDB) was formed.²⁵ An Amsterdam diamond cutter, Henri Polak, played a key role in the formation of the ANDB and for decades would serve as the head of the union. Born in Amsterdam on 22 February 1868, Polak had lived in London from 1886 to 1890.²⁶ During this period, he had extensive contact with the British trade union movement and with fabian socialist doctrine. Four years after his return to Amsterdam, Polak, a parliamentary socialist, took part in the formation of the SDAP. As a union leader, as distinct from a social democratic party activist, Polak would stress the importance of salaried, highly centralized union leadership, high compulsory membership dues, and the development of adequate strike funds. By 1898, the ANDB numbered over 7,800 members and had rapidly developed into a model trade union. Polak's hostility toward the NAS organization, an attitude shared by the balance of the ANDB leadership, precluded membership in that organization. The ANDB thus functioned as an independent body.

The first significant step toward the establishment of a social democratic trade union federation came in 1898.²⁷ In that year Polak published a brochure, *A Federation of Trade Unions*, which articulated the following propositions. The organizational and fiscal philosophy of the ANDB was held up as a model and was contrasted with the NAS organization. Polak then contended that the Dutch labour movement would only acquire a viable confederation of trade unions when a sufficient number of social democratic trade unions styled their internal organization along ANDB lines. "Beyond the General Dutch Diamond Workers Federation there are only three trade federations in our land of any significance and those are primarily their Amsterdam sections. These are the typographers federation, the cigar makers federation and the carpenters federation. The other trade organizations are many in number but little in size and significance."²⁸ The thrust of the brochure was directed more toward the internal fiscal operations of Dutch trade unions and their refusal to demand high compulsory membership dues than it was toward the role that a national, social democratic federation of trade unions might play in the Dutch labour movement. Polak's brochure did not lead to action nor did it have concrete results. The brochure articulated a need for strong, industry-wide federations with high compulsory dues and centralized strike funds. Given the relative weakness of the labour movement and the rapidly growing power of the ANDB, Henri Polak enjoyed towering prestige and status within the social democratic trade union movement.

²⁵ O. MONTAGNE and Johan Winkler, eds., *Doctor Henri Polak. Van het vuur dat in hem brandde* (Amsterdam: J.J. Kuurstra, 1948), contains a semi-autobiographical essay by Jan van Zutphen which describes the 1894 formation of the ANDB, pp. 77-109.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 36-39.

²⁷ Henri POLAK, *Federatie van Vakverenigingen* (n.p., n.d. [1898]).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Polak's contention that trade unions should concentrate solely upon economic demands and leave political action to the SDAP would become the orthodox NVV position along with the insistence upon high compulsory dues, salaried union administrators, and centralized, industry-wide federations. To a certain extent the NVV bore the personal stamp of Henri Polak.

Between 1898 and 1905, the SDAP leadership, and particularly the parliamentary party leader, Pieter Jelles Troelstra, insisted that the SDAP would not take the lead in creating a national, social democratic trade union confederation.²⁹ Initiative would have to come from the trade unions themselves. For a number of years one of the leaders of the General Dutch Typographers Federation, Hendrik Spielman, had argued that NAS could be internally transformed into a social democratic structure. When an attempt to do just this failed in 1901, Jan Oudegeest, a leader of the Dutch Union of Rail and Tram Personnel, spoke with Polak about the possibility of a new, central as an alternative to NAS.³⁰ Both men agreed that while a need clearly existed to take such action, the time had not yet come. Between 1902 and 1909, the SDAP was torn by savage internal debate between Troelstra, Willem Vliegen and J. H. Schaper on the one hand and the left-opposition faction grouped around the journal *Nieuwe Tijd* on the other. Henriëtte Roland Holst, Pieter Wiedijk, Herman Gorter, Anton Pannekoek, Frank van der Goes and F. M. Wibaut launched continued attacks upon revisionist and reformist currents within the SDAP but the *Nieuwe Tijd* faction was unable to penetrate the social democratic trade unions and beyond this, also failed to win a majority within the SDAP itself. Trade union officials like Hendrik Spielman and Jan Oudegeest supported Troelstra during the prolonged party crisis and as the NVV evolved, it retained its initial hostility to left-opposition forces within the SDAP. In 1907 three members of the left-opposition, David Wijnkoop, Willem van Ravesteijn, and J. C. Ceton began to publish a left-opposition newspaper in Amsterdam, *De Tribune*, which carried the debate to such a point that Troelstra, in concert with others forced the three to leave the SDAP in 1909. Wijnkoop, Van Ravesteijn and Ceton immediately formed a new social democratic party of a more Marxian and revolutionary character, however, the party remained a minor splinter party until late in the First World War. Its creation drew Pannekoek, Wiedijk and about five hundred members out of the SDAP; however, the new

²⁹ At the turn of the century, Troelstra did propose a federal structure linking the trade unions with each other and with the SDAP. The proposal did not materialize; see *Verlag van het Zevende Congres der SDAP, April 7-8, 1901*, pp. 14-16; and TROELSTRA'S editorials in *Het Volk*, September 5 October 22, 1900.

³⁰ Jan OUDEGEEST, *op. cit.*, I, p. 452. The relations between the social democratic trade unions and the SDAP constitutes a subject in itself. For survey treatments see Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*; pp. 1-122, and John WINDMULLER, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-40. For more detailed discussions see J. M. WELCKER, "De verhouding tussen vakbeweging en socialistische partij in Nederland, 1903-1913," *Mededelingenblad* (#38 (1970): 3-17, of the *Nederlandse Vereniging tot beoefening van de sociale geschiedenis*, and Erik HANSEN, "Workers and Socialists: Relations Between the Dutch Trade-Union Movement and Social Democracy, 1894-1914," *European Studies Review* VII (#2, 1977): 199-226.

grouping was unable to establish a secure foothold in the trade unions. Intra-party debate thus bolstered the position of Troelstra, Vliegen and Schaper within the SDAP and their orientation, in turn, strengthened moderate forces within the NVV.

Pressure for a national, social democratic alternative to NAS began to mount in the aftermath of the 1903 strike crisis. In January of 1903 a number of NAS strike actions in the Amsterdam harbour area spread into the social democratic railway workers union.³¹ This had the effect of transforming railway sympathy strike actions into a general railway strike action by the end of the month. The railway action was aimed at securing more favourable terms of employment and conditions of labour along the nation's rail lines. The threat of a national rail strike was sufficient to force a favourable settlement. In February, however, the government began to draft anti-strike legislation which would forbid strike actions by public employees and would thus sharply curtail the possibility of transport strikes. In response to this legislative offensive, the SDAP, NAS, and various social democratic unions organized a Resistance Committee which then proceeded to draft plans for a national railway strike, to be followed by a general strike should parliament legislate such measures. When the measures were, in fact, legislated, the Resistance Committee was forced to call a national railway strike and when that failed, to call for a general strike. The latter was a failure and in the aftermath of defeat the NAS and syndicalist elements within the Resistance Committee were quick to accuse both the SDAP and social democratic union leaders of having defused the strike actions.

The failure of the April actions widened the gap between the social democratic unions, the SDAP, and NAS. During his Christmas address to the SDAP membership, the titular head of the party, Pieter Jelles Troelstra, mentioned the possibility of forming a socialist alternative to the NAS organization.³² In January of 1904 Hendrik Spiekman followed up the Troelstra speech by publishing an article in the theoretical journal of the SDAP, *Nieuwe Tijd*, calling for the formation of just such an alternative.³³ While advocating a national, social democratic, trade union confederation, the leadership of the SDAP still held to the principle that initiative must come from the trade unions themselves. The key social democratic trade union leaders, and especially Oudegeest, Polak and Spiekman, regarded the trade union movement as a social democratic force of a purely economic nature which complemented the political thrust of the SDAP. This view was also shared by the party leadership. As a consequence, Troelstra argued that initiative in the areas of trade union organization would have to come from the trade unions themselves and not from the political party.

³¹ For a thorough description of the 1903 strike actions and their consequence, see A.J.C. RÜTER, *De spoorwegstakingen van 1903*, op. cit., pp. 260-542.

³² Frits DE JONG, Edz., op. cit., p. 58.

³³ Hendrik SPIEKMAN, "Wat staat nu te doen? Naar aanleiding van het NAS," *Nieuwe Tijd* (January, 1904): 1-8.

(3) *The 1905 agreements.* — When the initiative finally came, it came from the ANDB. After preliminary consultation with social democratic trade union leaders in the Amsterdam and Rotterdam city centrals, Henri Polak extended an invitation to the administrative heads of select trade union federations requesting that they send representatives to an organizational meeting to be held in Amsterdam on 26 February 1905.³⁴ The assembled union leaders shared a common organizational and political philosophy. 30 July 1905 was set as the date for a constituent meeting which would approve the by-laws of the new federation. The latter would then begin to operate on 1 January 1906.

IV. — ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

From its origins, the NVV combined federal and centralizing principles. The member unions were to maintain their own strike funds and were also charged with the development of special funds covering sickness, accidents and unemployment. The latter funds would be placed at the disposal of the union member should such be necessary. The member unions would be governed by salaried administrators and would be highly centralized. Each individual union would be responsible for maintaining its own newspaper and propaganda arm. In his history of the Dutch labour movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Jan Oudegeest indicates that NVV policy embodied the following principles.³⁵

1. Responsibility of organizations for their own actions and their own funds;
2. the pursuit of wage increases, so far as possible through negotiations and the concluding of contracts, while striking will be used only as a last resort;
3. the forming of strike-sickness-accident-unemployment-and-survivors funds, as inducements for men and as propaganda for women;
4. centralization of federations with competent executives and concentrated funds;
5. salaried administrators who direct the administration and assist the membership.

Henri Polak was influenced by the British New Model trade unions; an influence which found expression in the initial principles of the NVV. Polak stressed the high compulsory dues, the salaried administrators, and the centralized strike support funds of the New Model trade unions.

(1) *The Structure of the NVV.* — The NVV embodied three governing organs, an annual convention, an administrative board, and a smaller bureau which handled the daily affairs of the organization.³⁶ All member unions of the NVV were represented at the annual convention. Votes at

³⁴ Jan OUDEGEEST, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 452-454.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II, p. 15.

³⁶ For a highly partisan description of the general structural contours of the NVV written by one of the founders of the federation see Jan OUDEGEEST, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 1-18.

the convention were awarded to the component unions in direct proportion to their membership; thus the larger unions would generally have to favour a policy statement or resolution before such could be approved by the convention. The administrative board which governed the NVV between elections embodied one delegate from each affiliated trade union federation. From their number the board selected a smaller bureau, including a chairman, secretary and treasurer, to handle the daily affairs of the NVV. Henri Polak's proposed federation of trade unions had accented strike tactics and the need to procure adequate strike funds based upon substantial compulsory dues. It did not stress broader questions of social legislation and legislative action. At the initial meeting of trade-union representatives on 26 February 1905, broad social demands were placed within the NVV's scope of interest by virtue of the following resolution.³⁷

1. The Federation has as its goal the bringing and holding together of trade federations and unions to promote and advance the industrial and social interests which they have in common with each other and which each organization alone cannot properly obtain.
2. The promotion and advancement of these interests will be realized through:
 - a. the collection and analysis of statistics and other data concerning the scope and condition of the national and foreign trade-union movement, and also upon such industrial, economic, and social matters as might be of service to trade union actions;
 - b. entrance into similar central organizations at the international level;
 - c. the promotion of sound labour laws, be it done alone or in cooperation with other organizations;
 - d. the furnishing of advice concerning industrial, economic, or social matters when and where such is sought by the affiliated organizations;
 - e. the mutual extension of tactical and financial support in times of strikes or lock-outs;
 - f. the preparation of the principles upon which the federation is founded and upon which it operates.

While seemingly committing itself to legislative activity on behalf of labour's interest, the NVV remained politically cautious during its early years, a point which will be discussed later.

(2) *Membership and Composition.* — Between 1905 and 1914, the NVV registered constant and steady growth. Over a nine year period, the number of federations affiliated with the NVV increased threefold and the total membership of NVV unions quadrupled. The NVV, it must be noted, stipulated that only industry-or-craft-wide federations could join. It refused affiliation to individual unions or to local trade unions.

In its origins, the NVV was composed of industrial and manufacturing trade unions. Government employees constituted the second largest

³⁷ The text of the resolution is reproduced in Jan OUDEGEEST, I, *op. cit.*, p. 455.

Table II: NVV MEMBERSHIP BY YEAR, 1905-1914

Year	No. of Affiliated Federations	Total Membership
1905	11	18,960
1906	18	26,227
1907	24	32,270
1908	27	36,671
1909	27	40,628
1910	28	44,120
1911	32	52,235
1912	33	61,535
1913	35	84,434
1914	35	87,611

grouping of NVV members with only a handful of organized NVV workers involved in agriculture, food processing, trade and commerce. The most dramatic shift in the membership and composition of the NVV between 1905 and 1914 lay in the increasing number of workers involved in agriculture, food processing, trade and commerce. In 1906, only 3.3% of the NVV membership was involved in agriculture and food processing. By 1914 agriculture and food processing accounted for 11.1% of the NVV membership.

Table III: NVV FEDERATIONS GROUPED BY TRADE, 1906 AND 1914

Trade Grouping	No. of Federations		Membership		Membership as a % of Total NVV Mem.	
	1906	1914	1906	1914	1906	1914
Industry and						
Manufacture	7	17	13,886	50,697	73.2	60.8
Agriculture and						
Food Processing	1	4	730	9,234	3.3	11.1
Trade and Commerce	1	5	214	3,534	1.1	4.2
Transport	1	5	1,300	11,111	6.9	13.3
State Employees	1	3	2,930	8,832	15.5	10.6

Source: *1e Verslag van de Werkzaamheden des Bestuurs van het NVV*, p. 6, and *Het NVV in 1914*, p. 6.

Increased organizational activity in the white-collar and agrarian sectors, combined with organizational advance in the provincial cities and towns, served to decrease the over-representation of workers from Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague. In 1907, around 60% of the NVV membership lived in one of the three major cities. By 1914, only 47.7% were residents of Amsterdam, Rotterdam or The Hague. Amsterdam alone accounted for 42.3% of the NVV membership in 1907. By 1914, Amsterdam's share in the total membership of the NVV had declined to 30.8%.

The provincial distribution of NVV membership quite naturally reflected the urban geography of the Netherlands. The highly urbanized province of Noord-Holland, which included, among others, the city of Amsterdam, accounted for 46.5% of the NVV membership in 1906 and

41.3% in 1914. Zuid-Holland, encompassing the port of Rotterdam, claimed 24.4% in 1906 and 26.5% in 1914.³⁸ The remaining nine provinces combined for just a quarter of the NVV membership. The NVV was especially weak in the Roman Catholic provinces across the southern zone of the nation. This weakness reflected both the absence of concentrated large-scale enterprise and the hostility of Dutch Roman Catholic communities in general to the socialist movement. The period 1905-1914 was characterized by a smooth and steady growth in both the size and number of NVV federations. During these years, the federations within the NVV increasingly fell within the 500-5,000 membership range. In 1906 three of the NVV's eleven federations had under 500 members. Eight years later, only three out of thirty-four federations fell under 500 members. On the other hand, the NVV did not contain large federations. Between 1906 and 1912, the ANDB was the only NVV federation to contain more than 5,000 members. At no point between 1906 and 1914 did an NVV federation surpass 10,000 members.

Table IV: URBAN DISTRIBUTION OF NVV MEMBERSHIP, 1907-1914

City	1907	%	1910	%	1914	%
Amsterdam	11,095	42.3	17,750	40.2	27,022	30.8
Rotterdam	3,196	12.2	4,618	11.4	8,838	10.1
The Hague	1,276	4.9	2,703	6.1	5,967	6.8
Utrecht	850	3.2	1,285	2.9	3,047	3.5
Groningen	720	2.8	760	1.7	1,506	1.7
Haarlem	432	1.7	835	1.9	2,608	3.0
Arnhem	727	2.8	931	2.1	1,529	1.8
Leyden	495	1.9	616	1.4	1,677	1.9
NVV Membership in the eight largest cities as a % of total membership		71.7		67.8		59.6

Source: The above data has been extracted from the NVV *Verlagen*, 1906-1914. Unfortunately, we have no data for 1909.

Table V: SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF NVV FEDERATIONS, 1906-1914

Number of Members	1906	1910	1914
1-500	3	4	3
501-1,000	3	8	6
1,001-2,500	3	7	13
2,501-5,000	1	4	7
5,001-10,000	1	1	5
Total Federations	11	24	34

Source: Adapted from NVV *Verlagen*, 1906-1914.

(3) *NVV Finances*. — Given the federal nature of the NVV, the governing board handled relatively modest funds and administered few services. The executive board coordinated organizational and propaganda

³⁸ *1e Verslag van de Werkzaamheden des Bestuurs van het Nederlandsch Verbond van Vakvereenigingen, 1 Januari 1906 — 1 Januari 1907*, p. 6; and *Het NVV in 1914*, p. 15.

activity, collected statistics and social data of interest to the union movement, authorized and coordinated strike actions and sometimes, though not always, remitted strike support funds. With the approval of its federal components, the governing board also implemented decisions bearing upon the union's position on measures pending in parliament. Finally the governing board supervised the publication of a newspaper *De Vakbeweging*. The monies received by the NVV were usually handled only by the federal component. Each federation maintained its own strike chest, and supported its own staff of salaried administrators and clerks. The federations were encouraged to finance their own newspaper and to proceed with the publication of such if financial circumstances were favourable. Beyond this, the affiliated federations also maintained their own unemployment, accident, and illness funds if the federation in question had sufficient fiscal strength. These social services were not funded from a central NVV account. Between 1906 and 1914 the total revenues and expenses of the NVV assumed the following contours.

Table VI: AGGREGATE NVV BUDGETS IN FL., 1906-1914

	1906	1910	1914
Total Funds Received by NVV Federations	453,437	1,114,656	1,553,970
Total Funds Received <i>per capita</i>	17	25	17
Total Expenses of NVV Federations	93,792	595,755	2,056,657
Total Expenditures <i>per capita</i>	3.5	13.0	23.5

Source: Adapted from NVV *Verslagen*, 1906-1914.

In principle the NVV demanded that its component federations impose high, compulsory dues upon their membership. In practice the federations varied greatly in both the dues charged and in their financial strength.³⁹ The ANDB constituted by far and away the strongest federation in both fiscal and organizational terms. The ANDB membership was largely Jewish and tightly concentrated in the city of Amsterdam. The highly structured federation was thus buttressed by powerful religious, cultural, and neighborhood ties. Between 1906 and 1914, the ANDB's share in the monies collected by the NVV federations far exceeded its share in NVV total membership.

Table VII: ANDB FUNDS IN FL., 1906-1914

	1906	1910	1914
ANDB Membership	8,457	8,914	9,749
ANDB Funds Received	428,026	811,510	761,154
ANDB Funds Received as a % of Total NVV Funds Received	94.4	72.8	49.0
ANDB Funds Received <i>per capita</i>	50.6	91.0	78.0

Source: Adapted from NVV *Verslagen*, 1906-1914.

The ANDB constituted the NVV fiscal base during the year 1906 and its declining share in total monies collected after that date reflected higher dues and organizational advance in the flanking federations and not internal stagnation or decline within the ANDB. The federations varied greatly in the compulsory dues charged. In the year 1906, for example, the dues per member charged by the diamond workers exceeded the railway and tram workers elevenfold, and were over four times as great as the dues charged by the municipal employees federation and almost twice that of the metal workers federation.³⁹

V. — NVV POLICY

NVV guidelines delineated policy in three major areas; one, establishment of collective bargaining agreements which defined the terms and conditions of labour, two, the planning and winning of strike actions, three, the establishment of a satisfactory relationship between the NVV as a social democratic union arm and the SDAP as a political party. The NVV leadership continued to press for an expansion of the cadre of salaried union officials and office personnel. By 1907 the NVV federations employed thirty-three salaried officials and twenty-two clerks.⁴⁰ The number of salaried union officials grew to eighty-eight by 1914 and the number of clerks in federation offices numbered forty-four in that year.⁴¹ During this time period the ANDB alone accounted for nineteen of the NVV's twenty-two clerks. Seven years later the ANDB employed nineteen of the forty-four clerks in NVV service.⁴² In short, the labour bureaucracy in the Netherlands had yet to constitute a dense network on the eve of the First World War. As noted NVV federations were encouraged to publish their own newspaper. This policy was a success in the sense that every NVV federation maintained a newspaper on the eve of the First World War.

(1) *The terms of employment.* — The NVV federations concentrated upon higher wages and the realization of a ten-hour work day. From their various origins until the formation of the NVV in 1905, the Dutch social democratic trade unions had supported the eight-hour day. However, the NVV soon dropped this demand, arguing that a ten-hour day could be realized more quickly and that it, in turn, would eventually lead to an eight-hour day.⁴³ In theory the NVV federations were to realize wage and hour demands through collective bargaining agreements and two to three year contracts with employers. Given the relative weakness of the Dutch labour movement and a general refusal by employers to bargain collective-

³⁹ These variations are mirrored in the data bearing on dues and revenue presented in the three reports *Het NVV in 1912*, pp. 115-117, *Het NVV in 1913*, pp. 154-156, and *Het NVV in 1914*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ *2e Verslag van den Toestand en de Verrichtingen van het Nederlandsch Verbond van Vakvereenigingen 1 Januari 1907 — 1 Januari 1908, bijlage A, Overzicht van de sterkte der aangesloten organisaties.*

⁴¹ *Het NVV in 1914*, p. 64. The figures are given as of Jan. 1, 1915.

⁴² *2e Verslag, op. cit., bijlage A*; and, *Het NVV in 1914*, p. 64. Both reports list the number of salaried administrators and clerks by federation.

⁴³ For the reasoning behind this decision see, Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, p. 103.

Table VIII: NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED BY FEDERATIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE NVV, 1910-1914.

Year	Frequency of Publication				Total
	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Others	
1910	5	13	5	5	28
1911	6	11	5	10	32
1912	7	13	4	9	33
1913	8	14	3	10	35
1914	8	15	4	8	35

Source: Adapted from NVV *Verlagen*, 1910-1914.

ly, collective bargaining was not a common practice on the eve of the First World War. The first contracts of this type to be signed were forced upon the Amsterdam diamond industry in the course of the 1894 diamond workers' strike.⁴⁴ In fact this was the same strike which resulted in the creation of the ANDB. In 1899 a second collective bargaining agreement was reached between the Federation of Machinists and Stokers and the operators of Rhenish tugboat services.⁴⁵ Still by 1904 only one collective bargaining agreement was in force in the Netherlands and that agreement lay within the printing industry. Although the number of agreements between unions and management rose sharply by 1914, relatively few workers were covered. In 1911, for example, 87 collective bargaining agreements covered 23,002 workers of whom 10,200 were concentrated in the diamond industry alone and were thus covered by a single agreement.⁴⁶

The firm commitment to collective bargaining within the NVV federations reflected similar support for the parliamentary path to socialism. Although the NVV leadership regarded the realization of a socialist state as its ultimate goal, it proposed to confront the capitalist polity with contractual demands and not acts of revolutionary violence.

(2) *Strike actions and strike policy.* — The capacity to organize, conduct, and finance, orderly and effective strike actions constituted a major weapon in the NVV arsenal. Although the inability of the *Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat* to formulate a satisfactory strike policy and strategy had been a contributing factor to the creation of the NVV, the NVV itself quickly developed into far more than just a strike machine. The Dutch labour historian, Frits de Jong, Edz., has noted that Henri Polak's 1898 brochure detailing a national federation of trade unions sharply differed from the initial NVV statutes.⁴⁷ The 1898 brochure concentrated upon the funding of strikes through high, compulsory dues and centralized union leadership. In short, it came very close to advocating a more

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁵ Jan OUDEGEEST, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 201-212.

⁴⁶ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), p. 107.

⁴⁷ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, p. 61.

Table IX: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS IN FORCE IN THE NETHERLANDS, 1904-1914

<i>Industrial Grouping</i>	1906	1910	1914
Ceramics, Stone, etc.			2
Diamond Working		1	1
Printing	1	2	13
Construction	2	13	51
Chemicals			1
Woodworking			3
Clothing		4	34
Cleaning			3
Metalworking		5	63
Paper		2	6
Textiles		2	2
Food and Pharmaceutical Processing		5	38
Agriculture			12
Trade		5	40
Transport		7	28
Insurance			
Totals	3	46	290

Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Jaarcijfers voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage, 1915), p. 107.

efficient and streamlined form of NAS. Between 1905 and 1914 the NVV federations adhered to the following set of strike regulations.⁴⁸

1. The NVV only gives financial support to striking or locked-out workers in cases where such is immediately requested from the federation.
2. In the event that this support is requested from non-affiliated organizations or from unorganized workers, the following must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the NVV administration:
 - a) that everything possible has been done to end the conflict without a strike or lock-out.
 - b) that the union had attempted to take measures to raise the necessary funds in the event that the conflict was foreseen and the possibility existed to do just this.
 - c) that an attempt is made to obtain support from workers in the business at other locations.

Articles three through nine regulated the flow of funds in the event of a strike action or a lock-out. In 1909 the regulations were supplemented by four additional stipulations.⁴⁹

1. Federations may only become involved in a conflict without consulting the NVV when the federation involved is in a position to support the strikers from its own funds; when help is requested from the NVV then consultation must occur. If that does not take place, then under no circumstances will support be given.
2. It must be pointed out to the federations that it is their duty to attempt to raise, so far as possible, part or all of the required support funds through the placement of extraordinary dues upon their membership. It speaks for

⁴⁸ The text of the strike regulations is reproduced in Jan OUDEGEEST, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 291-292.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 294.

- itself, that monies received through extra contributions remain completely at the disposal of the federation involved.
3. Organizations who request support from the NVV can only work with support lists from the NVV and all contributions from these signed lists must be paid to the NVV and for our part incoming funds from organizations in conflict will be used for momentary needs.
 4. Federations are requested to take measures to insure that our support lists are aggressively used and as much money as possible is placed at our disposal.

Within this framework, the NVV did not allocate as high a percentage of its resources to strike support as one might suspect.

Table X: FUNDS ALLOCATED BY NVV FEDERATIONS TO SUPPORT STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS, 1906-1914

	1906	1910	1914
Total Strike Support Funds	F1 30,718	F1 42,863	F1 183,862
Total Strike Support Funds as a % of Total Expenses	32.7	7.2	8.9
Per capita Strike Support Funds	1.1	0.9	2.1

Source: Adapted from NVV *Verslagen*, 1906-1914.

At no time between 1905 and 1914 did NVV federations attempt to mount strikes with political goals. During these years, NVV strikes were usually conducted by the federation involved, limited in scope, and directed toward the realization of demands bearing on the terms of employment.

(3) *Relations with the SDAP.* — Although the NVV was a social democratic union structure, it did not move toward the establishment of institutionalized ties with the SDAP.⁵⁰ There were several reasons for this. NVV leaders generally feared that a tight association with the SDAP would damage organizational efforts and might alienate either antisocialist workers or workers with deep religious convictions. Beyond this, the two arms of the social democratic movement were quite unequal in size. In January of 1906, the NVV already numbered 18,960 workers while the SDAP had a party membership of only 6,805.⁵¹ Although the SDAP had grown to 25,708 members in December of 1913, the NVV had now reached 84,434.⁵² The initial link between the SDAP and the NVV lay in personal contacts and overlapping membership. Salaried administrators in the NVV were often active within the SDAP. This was particularly true

⁵⁰ For a brief discussion of this problem see Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, pp. 81-88.

⁵¹ The SDAP membership figures for 1906 are contained in *Jaarverslag van den partijsecretaris over het jaar 1906*, p. 10, bound in *Verslag van het dertiende congres van de Soc. Dem. Arbeiderspartij, gehouden op 31 Maart, 1 en 2 April 1907*.

⁵² The membership figures for the SDAP at the end of 1913 are derived from the *Jaarverslag van den partijsecretaris over 1913*, p. 1, bound in *Verslag van het twintigste gewone congres der S.D.A.P., gehouden 12, 13 en 14 April 1914*.

of Henri Polak and Jan Oudegeest. Although neither the NVV's rank-and-file nor administrators were required by statute to join the SDAP, or even to support the SDAP, it was generally assumed that NVV administrators would, in fact, support the SDAP. This assumption received somewhat of a challenge in the aftermath of the 1911 harbour strike when Henk Sneevliet, who had recently been named chairman of the Dutch Union of Rail-and-Tram Personnel, left the SDAP to join the *Sociaal Democratische Partij*, a left-marxist grouping which had broken off from the SDAP in 1909. Considerable pressure was placed upon the NVV by Pieter Jelles Troelstra, the leader of the SDAP parliamentary faction, to force Sneevliet to resign from his post.⁵³ Sneevliet, in fact, resigned — an action which further reinforced the assumption that NVV administrators must be at least sympathetic with the SDAP. In no case could an administrator in the NVV belong to a political party other than the SDAP. In a general sense NVV leadership took the position that the organization would concentrate on economic demands and would leave political matters solely to the SDAP. Three issues dominated the interplay between the NVV and SDAP; the suffrage movement, labour legislation, and NVV strike policy.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both the SDAP and individual social democratic trade unions had joined various mixed associations. The associations grouped social democrats, trade unionists, bourgeois radicals and various types of liberals into an agitational front aimed at forcing legislative action on a certain issue. The Committee for Universal Suffrage was perhaps the most important of these associations. Until the spring of 1908, the NVV, while allowing individual union members, and in some cases federations, to participate in the activity of the committee, refused to become officially involved in suffrage agitation.⁵⁴ The influential Henri Polak had consistently argued that the suffrage question was a political issue pure and simple and thus lay outside the scope of NVV interest. On 13 April 1908, a congress of the NVV approved a motion authorising formal participation in the suffrage agitation on the condition that the SDAP withdraw from the Committee for Universal Suffrage and assume sole leadership of the suffrage movement. Within a week, the SDAP congress acted to do just this.

The mass suffrage agitation did not begin until the autumn of 1910. During the spring congress of the SDAP another motion was approved which provided for the creation of an NVV-SDAP committee which was eventually chaired by Pieter Jelles Troelstra of the SDAP.⁵⁵ The committee drafted a petition calling for universal suffrage and then proceeded to accumulate signatures. The petition was then presented to the government

⁵³ For a detailed discussion of the Sneevliet affair see J.M. WELCKER, "De verhouding tussen vakbeweging en socialistische partij in Nederland, 1903-1913," *Mededelingen blad van de Nederlandse Vereniging tot beoefening van de sociale geschiedenis* (1970), pp. 3-17.

⁵⁴ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, pp. 81-83.

⁵⁵ *Verslag van het zestiende congres der S.D.A.P., gehouden op 27, 28 en 29 Maart 1910*, p. 32.

at the ceremonial opening of parliament on the first Tuesday in September. The petition would be presented in 1911 and the presentation would be backed up by a mass demonstration around the parliament buildings in The Hague. On 17 June 1911, a meeting was held between NVV officials and representatives of the SDAP to weigh the possibility of a week-long general strike as a means of underscoring the urgency of universal suffrage. At this point the caution of both the NVV and SDAP began to exert itself. Much to the anger of SDAP Marxists, and particularly Henriëtte Roland Holst who at this point was on the brink of leaving the SDAP, NVV and SDAP leaders agreed not to call a political strike nor were union workers expected to halt work on the "red Tuesday". In 1910 Roland Holst had argued in vain for a series of political strikes; however, NVV leadership refused to take this measure.⁵⁶ The petition, numbering 317,000 signatures, was an agitational success but did not result in the initiation of suffrage reform. This would come during the First World War and under far different circumstances.

From its 1905 origins, the NVV was continually drawn into uneasy working relations with the SDAP concerning labour legislation. On 15 September 1906, talks began between NVV leaders and representatives of the SDAP concerning the desirability of joint agitation in this general area.⁵⁷ The initial talks dealt with a motion placed before the SDAP congress that spring calling for immediate agitation for a ten-hour day as a waystation leading to the ultimate realization of an eight-hour day. NVV leadership accepted this proposition and thus both NVV leaders and members played a major role in the agitation committees which were formed in the spring of 1907. Between 1906 and 1914 the NVV membership continued to participate in various mixed associations which agitated on behalf of state pensions, social insurance against illness and accident, and the protection of female and child labour. Still the relations between the NVV and the SDAP were often rather cool. In the spring of 1906, for example, legislation was placed before the parliament which would revise the 1891 Act bearing on labour law.⁵⁸ Among other things, the new Act would provide for the withholding of a fraction of the employee's wage as a guarantee against income lost by strikes. If a strike took place between the time that a person was hired on the basis of a given wage agreement and the renewal interval, the deposit would be forfeited. Beyond this, the employees would have to give a notice of one week for every year they had been employed before they could strike for more favourable terms without forfeit. They could only strike at the end of the time interval set by the agreement. Although the law established the two bargaining forces on equal legal footing, the trade unions objected to the above terms.

⁵⁶ See, for example, the three installment essay by Henriëtte ROLAND HOLST, "De vooruitzichten der kiesrechtbeweging," *Nieuwe Tijd* (1909): 801-827, and *Nieuwe Tijd* (1910): 46-68, and pp. 135-166. Roland Holst's appeal for a radicalization of the suffrage movement also came to the fore during the 1910 party congress; see, *Verslag van het zestiende congres der S.D.A.P. gehouden op 27, 28 en 29 Maart 1910*, pp. 29-32.

⁵⁷ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

⁵⁸ W.H. VERMEULEN, 1901-1914, Vol. III of *Schets eener parlementaire geschiedenis van Nederland* (5 vols.: 's-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1918-1956), pp. 101-115.

The SDAP took the lead in forming an agitation committee to oppose the labour law and accordingly the editor-in-chief of the SDAP newspaper *Het Volk* and deputy in the lower house, P.L. Tak, headed the committee. When debate began in the lower house, however, it became quite clear that Pieter Jelles Troelstra, the leader of the SDAP parliamentary faction, favoured a compromise on the measure which would limit the deposit withholding to the period of termination notice and would in turn limit the period of termination notice to a maximum of six weeks.⁵⁹ The compromise was finally adopted and included, among its many elements, a statement legalizing the right of an employer to fine an employee.

In taking this position, Troelstra repudiated many of the demands of the agitation committee, whose position he argued was politically unrealistic, and even disassociated himself from statements made in parliament by P.L. Tak.⁶⁰ Though the episode did not involve the NVV directly, in fact some NVV leaders supported Troelstra's position, it served as an indication of the independence of the SDAP over and against the NVV. The SDAP policy position on this question, an issue which vitally affected the NVV membership, was eventually determined by forces and considerations within the SDAP and not by the NVV.

The NVV, though continuing to cooperate with the diverse mixed associations, moved toward the transformation of the old city centrals.⁶¹ Originally the city centrals were open to representatives from social democratic, syndicalist, liberal and politically neutral local trade unions. As early as 1907 Henri Polak of the ANDB proposed that the *Bestuurdersbonden*, as they were called, be transformed into municipal groupings of purely NVV unions. Although NVV leadership immediately favoured this policy, implementation would span six years. Many NVV locals were quite satisfied with the older, mixed, form of the *Bestuurdersbonden*. By 1913 the process of transformation was virtually complete and the NVV was gradually moving away from further contact with mixed associations.

Many of the social services which were later provided by the national state were offered by the NVV federations to their membership. In 1913, for example, 27 federations provided illness benefits, 17 maintained survivors benefits, and 12 maintained unemployment benefits.⁶² In theory all NVV federations were to maintain benefits which would parallel the state services of a later era. In practice the union movement was not yet strong enough to create an adequate system of social insurance. The NVV was in a position, however, to combine agitation for parliamentary action with a certain measure of self-help.

⁵⁹ Troelstra's position on this issue was sharply challenged at the 1906 party congress; see, *Verslag van het twaalfde congress der S.D.A.P., gehouden op 15, 16 en 17 April 1906*, pp. 18-24, 30-34.

⁶⁰ P.J. TROELSTRA, *Gedenkschriften* (4 vols.; Amsterdam: Em. Querido's Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1927-1931), III, pp. 48-56.

⁶¹ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

⁶² *Het Nvv in 1913*, p. 152.

The final issue involving NVV-SDAP relations bore on the question of strike policy. During the 1905 construction workers' strike in Amsterdam, the 1906 textile strike in Twente, and the 1911 harbour strikes in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the NVV had refused to support striking syndicalist workers.⁶³ In all three cases, Marxist elements within the SDAP had urged the party to ignore the NVV position and to offer full SDAP support on the grounds that striking syndicalist and unorganized workers were comrades in a common class cause and thus worthy of support. In the course of the 1911 harbour strikes, the tension between the NVV and the leadership of the SDAP was especially great. This flowed from the fact that the generally moderate Troelstra did incline toward some type of SDAP support for the workers striking throughout the entire Amsterdam port complex.⁶⁴ The fact remains, however, that the SDAP, in each of the three cases mentioned above, ultimately followed NVV policy guidelines. As a result of the tension and distrust generated by the harbour strikes, a joint NVV-SDAP commission was formed to study the possibility of tightening connections between the two.⁶⁵ The commission did not meet regularly and failed to advance proposals by the coming of the First World War in 1914.

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Although they shared a social democratic orientation and a commitment to the realization of a socialist polity, the component federations of the NVV repudiated revolutionary violence and generally inclined toward working within the capitalist system. This inclination resulted in the high priority assigned to collective bargaining agreements, wage increases, and a reduction in the working day. These demands, highly instrumental and pragmatic, were further reflected in the emphasis that NVV leadership ultimately placed upon the realization of social reforms through parliamentary action. The implicit faith in the capacity of parliament to execute social redress was, in turn, a reflection of the confidence in both the NVV and SDAP that universal manhood suffrage would eventually lead to a socialist majority in parliament. However incorrect this latter assumption may have been, it created a situation which was conducive to compromise. Although this process was by no means complete by 1914, a framework for integrating the social democratic trade unions into the capitalist polity and into the existing political structure was established. One can argue that by 1914 the NVV federations could not be expected to serve as a revolutionary vanguard or to menace the existing social order.

The relative success of the NVV lay in just these attributes. It was strong enough to offer the working class community concrete personal

⁶³ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, p. 117.

⁶⁴ The ultimate decision to back the NVV position drew sharp criticism from the left-wing of the SDAP at the 1912 party congress; see *Verlag van het achttiende congres der S.D.A.P., gehouden op 7, 8 en 9 April 1912*, pp. 4-14; for Troelstra's version of events see his autobiography, *Gedenkschriften* (4 vols.; Amsterdam: Em. Querido's Uitgevers-Maatschappij, 1927-1931), III, pp. 174-179.

⁶⁵ Frits DE JONG, Edz., *op. cit.*, p. 121.

gains and to mount effective strike actions. For thousands of workers, it could also hold out the promise of a new social order. At the same time, the NVV maintained a sufficient distance from social radicalism and from the SDAP to allow apolitical or devoutly religious workers an opportunity to join without a crisis of conscience. The ideological flexibility of the NVV explains, in part, its rapid growth, 1905-1914. From 1905 to 1914, the NVV grew from 18,960 members to 87,611. By way of contrast, the Protestant *Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond* had only 12,386 members in 1914 and the Roman Catholic Bureau for Trade Organization claimed only 37,498. On the eve of the First World War the NVV was the dominant force in the Dutch labour movement, a position it would enjoy throughout the contemporary era.