

Education and Dutch Society: The Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers in the Late Nineteenth Century

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The Bond van Nederlanse Onderwijzers was formed in the late nineteenth century as a voluntary civic association to advance and protect the interests of the Dutch primary school teachers. The organization was supported by teachers in the public sector of the school system and functioned as their lobby. As it evolved it offered a growing number of services to its members. During the decades before the First World War, some members attempted to transform the BNO into a trade union and to move it into the social democratic orbit. These attempts failed and the BNO remained a professional association with liberal orientations. Throughout the 1890-1914 era, the BNO struggled to check the growth of the confessional school systems. Given a growing clerical political bloc in Dutch public life and increased public support for clerical organizations and the churches, this effort was doomed to failure.

Le Bond van Nederlanse Onderwijzers fut une association civile volontaire formée à la fin du XIX^e siècle aux Pays-Bas pour promouvoir et protéger les intérêts des instituteurs. Il était soutenu par des enseignants des écoles publiques et leur servait de moyen de pression sur le gouvernement. Les services offerts aux membres augmentaient avec le développement de l'association. Dans la décennie précédant la Première guerre mondiale, certains membres tentèrent de transformer le BNO en syndicat et de l'amener dans l'orbite sociale-démocrate. Ces tentatives échouèrent et le BNO demeura une association professionnelle à orientations libérales. À travers la période 1890-1914, il s'efforça de limiter le développement des systèmes scolaires confessionnels. À cause de la croissance d'un bloc clérical dans la vie publique hollandaise et de l'augmentation de l'appui populaire des organisations cléricales et des églises, cet effort fut voué à l'échec.

In the course of the late nineteenth century European society experienced a series of internal transformations. A heightened rate of industrialization, increased mechanization, continued urbanization, internal migration, and population growth ushered in a new era of concern with social issues, social policy, labour relations and the changing political economy of the European nation-state. To be sure, the movement toward a new industrial order was by no means complete in 1914.¹ Semi-feudal social formations still played a major role in the public life of central Europeans, and vestiges of the vanishing feudal order permeated various walks of life across the continent. Nevertheless, continued expansion of the industrial capitalist base had a profound socio-economic impact upon the peoples of Europe.

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1. For a full development of this theme, see Arno MAYER, *The Persistence of the Old Regime: Europe to the Great War* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

Within the context of fitful and often uneven industrialization the ruling élites of Europe were confronted with a new wave of policy issues stretching from business, commercial and industrial law into fiscal policy, tariffs, duties and the terms of foreign trade and from there into a complex matrix of interrelated social issues. The policy issues arising from an expanding industrial base were also intertwined with a series of broad political issues. The realization of parliamentary democracy, universal manhood suffrage, the rise of self-conscious and often tightly organized political parties, the beginnings of trade unions, cartel agreements and producer syndicates foreshadowed European public life in the subsequent century.

Public debate over the education of Europe's youth reflected this process of socio-economic and socio-political change.² The issues were the same from Scandinavia across the nations of the great northern European plain and over the Alps into Italy. Should the nation maintain a system of free, secular primary schools? Should or should not the primary schools teach specific bodies of religious doctrine? Should the secular state support private primary schools maintained by a specific church? How should teachers be trained and how well ought they to be paid? Should the network of secondary schools be broadened and, if so, how far should enrolments of the gymnasias, *lycées*, and ultimately the universities be expanded?

As educational systems grew, the nature of education, its funding and institutional organization became serious issues of public debate. Throughout Europe political parties were drawn into parliamentary confrontation on educational policy and in many instances began to include educational positions and demands in their programmes. Given the painful and gradual evolution of trade unions and the often reflexive strengthening of employer associations, it was also inevitable that associations, if not unions, of teachers would be formed and would attempt to influence state policy on education. This essay examines educational policy in the Netherlands, where public funding of confessional schools was a particularly controversial issue, from the vantage point of an association of schoolteachers in public primary schools.

In 1874 the *Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers* (League of Dutch Educators, hereafter the BNO) was created. Throughout the late nineteenth century, it functioned as a professional association of primary schoolteachers. The worlds of university, technical and secondary education lay beyond its usual frame of reference. Most of its activity centred directly upon primary education and issues relating to normal schools and the training and certification of primary schoolteachers. As a professional association, the BNO offered services and amenities to teachers, lobbied for legislative action in areas which affected primary schools, and pressed for teachers' rights and a strong salary policy. Like most organizations of its type across Europe, the BNO drew its membership from the faculties of public primary schools. It generally demanded free, compulsory, state-supported primary education and opposed a growing demand in the Netherlands for state support of confessional schools.³

2. Fritz RINGER, *Education and Society in Modern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), contains a lucid discussion of the relation between socio-economic change and educational institutions.

3. The clerical offensive which led to the formation of socio-religious blocs, or *zuilen*, in the late-nineteenth century has been discussed in detail by Dutch scholars for decades. A sociological formulation is J.P. KRUIJT and Walter GODDIJN, *ofm.*, "Verzuiling en ontzuiling als sociologisch proces", in *Drift en Koers. Een halve eeuw sociale verandering in Nederland*, eds. A.N.J. den HOLLANDER et al. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1968), pp. 227-63. A useful English-language introduction is Johan GOUDSBLOM, *Dutch Society* (New York: Random House, 1967).

In the course of the late nineteenth century, the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities began to develop their own elementary school systems, press, political parties, trade-unions, and voluntary civic associations. This process of *verzuiling*, or *pillarization*, was further reinforced by the rapid development of the social democratic movement with its political, press and trade-union arms. By 1900, Protestant, Roman Catholic, and social democratic *zuilen* were fairly well-established. The bourgeois liberal community which had dominated Holland during the post-1848 decades was gradually forced to share power with Protestants, Roman Catholics, and representatives of either the Social Democratic Workers Party or any number of trade-union officials.

The *verzuiling* process in Holland was unique by general European standards. The three Scandinavian monarchies were religiously homogeneous; and while a conservative-liberal-social democratic split characterized public life, there was nothing comparable to the confessional *zuilen* in Holland. In France a religiously homogeneous population broke along conservative/clerical, liberal/anti-clerical, and social democratic lines. The ideological divisions in Belgium correspond to those in France, with the important addition of the Flemish issue. Belgian movements all had Flemish wings; and given the realities of the Flemish-Walloon ethnic and cultural split within the nation, Belgian society was quite different from ethnically homogeneous Holland. On the other hand, Belgium had only one clerical community in contrast to two in Holland.

The German territories were probably most like Holland in that some of the territories had substantial Protestant and Roman Catholic populations within the same area. Many of the German territories had an active Roman Catholic Centre Party with a solid press and Roman Catholic schools. In general, however, German Protestants were not as tightly organized as their Dutch counterparts. Beyond this, Protestant leadership in the German territories inclined toward authoritarian conservative parties which were usually dominated by a socially and politically powerful nobility. Holland was a bourgeois nation and thus lacked the feudal and semi-feudal élites who played such an important role in the Second Reich.

As Dutch society became increasingly divided into four tightly organized blocs — Protestant, Roman Catholic, liberal bourgeois, and secular labour — the BNO was placed under considerable pressure. Its membership was largely middle-class and secular in its values. As such, the BNO quite naturally floated in the liberal orbit which generally stood for a progressive, mildly reformed capitalist economy and a strong commitment to public education. It had an affinity for the Protestant bloc which was clearly hostile to the Roman Catholic bloc. The secular, social democratic sectors of the labour force were also potential allies. Most BNO members were not socialists and overwhelmingly supported liberal capitalism, but the rapid decline in liberal political power rendered liberal protection of public education increasingly unsure. In searching for new allies to defend their policy interests, BNO leaders were gradually pushed toward the social democratic movement, highly supportive of public education and quite hostile to the confessional blocs.

However, the BNO never clearly defined its identity. The leadership reaffirmed the BNO's status as a professional association and rejected pressure from within the organization itself aimed at transforming it into a trade union with formal ties to the socialist movement. At the same time, in demanding compulsory primary

school attendance, the BNO was drawn into the world of child labour, farm labour, and ultimately broader issues of labour policy. Its quest for a favourable learning environment forced it to address the issue of parental poverty and thus indirectly the social condition of the Dutch nation as a whole.

I

The BNO was formed and evolved within a dynamic socio-economic context. Midway into the nineteenth century Dutch society was characterized by labour-intensive agriculture, craft production of finished goods, and a substantial number of people tied to *petit bourgeois* retail trade in the towns.⁴ There was relatively little industry and scant use of machine power. The nation was an important transit and shipping centre, commanding the North Sea entrance into the German Rhineland, and a major supplier to western Europe of colonial produce extracted from the Dutch East Indies. In the late nineteenth century the mechanization of the Dutch economy began to accelerate. Given the nation's raw material base and geography, this process, however, did not result in the massive industrial concentrations found in Germany, Belgium and Great Britain.

Industrialization in the Netherlands entailed the mechanization of existing craft trades. To the extent that new industries appeared, they were generally evenly distributed across the nation and usually involved fairly small plants and few employees. Between 1849 and 1909, the agrarian sector declined from 44 percent of the total labour force to 27 percent.⁵ At mid-century, around 26 percent of those active within the labour force were self-employed in either the retail or craft sectors. Only 12 percent were craft or fabrication employees.⁶ By 1910, about one-third of the labour force was employed in industrial or craft fabrication. While the nation retained a massive *petit-bourgeois* social base, mechanization generated a rapidly growing blue-collar and skilled labour force. This process was quite naturally accompanied by increasing urbanization.

Although the twin processes of industrialization and urbanization were not as intense as in a number of other areas in north-western Europe, they were more than sufficient to generate a trade-union movement. When the BNO was founded in 1874, the Dutch labour force was unorganized. There were a few scattered brotherhoods of craft workers, a number of which included employers within their membership. The trade-union movement developed rather slowly during the late nineteenth century, but after the turn of the century, it suddenly took on momentum.⁷

The Dutch labour movement tended to split along religious lines, particularly in the craft sectors. The secular, social democratic trade-union federation, the

4. For a scholarly analysis of Dutch economic growth in the late nineteenth century, see J.A. de JONGE, *De industrialistie in Nederland tussen 1850 en 1914* (Amsterdam: Scheltema and Holkema NVV, 1968).

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 237.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 19. An excellent analysis of the Dutch economy at mid-century is to be found in Joel MOKYR, *Industrialization in the Low Countries, 1795-1850* (New Haven: Yale, 1976).

7. The literature on the late nineteenth-century labour movement is quite extensive. Ger HARMSSEN and Bob REINALDA, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid* (Nijmegen: SUN, 1975), provide a summary introduction.

Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV—Dutch Federation of Trade-Unions), was formed in 1905. From an initial membership of 18,960 in that year, it grew to over 87,000 members by 1914.⁸ In 1909, a number of Protestant trade unions created the *Christelijk National Vakverbond* (CNV—Christian National Trade Federation).⁹ Considerably smaller than the highly secular and social democratic NVV, the CNV still doubled its membership from 6,000 to 12,000 in the five years before the First World War. In the same year that the CNV was formed, a number of Roman Catholic trade associations formed a national federation of Roman Catholic workingmen's associations. Known as the *Bureau voor Rooms Katholiek Vakorganisatie* (Bureau for Roman Catholic Trade Organization), the new federation experienced rapid growth.¹⁰ Its membership, which totaled just 9,000 in 1909, rose to 37,000 by 1914. The vast bulk of the labour force remained unorganized. Nevertheless, the rapid growth of the NVV did generate a measure of debate within the BNO as to the desirability of affiliation with that federation during the years before the war.

The confessional split within the labour movement found equally clear expression in parliament and the evolving party system. The 1848 constitution, while embodying the principles of parliamentary sovereignty, responsible ministers, and legislative initiative on the part of the lower house (known as the *Tweede Kamer*), also established a restricted suffrage. By 1870 only 12 percent of the adult male population was enfranchised, a figure which reached 67 percent by 1913 as a result of relaxations in the suffrage law.¹¹

Until the late nineteenth century, representatives in the lower house were largely *grand bourgeois* notables who ran as individuals. Structured political parties did not exist. In the absence of formal parties, the deputies in the *Tweede Kamer* represented communities of sentiment and shared values. Public life and policy thus revolved around three blocs: liberal, Protestant, and Roman Catholic. As the suffrage was broadened, the more élitist *grand bourgeois* social formations which supported liberal candidates were increasingly submerged in new numbers of middle-class voters.¹² The latter tended to be more devout and confessional in outlook and hence more prone to vote for either a Protestant or Roman Catholic. By the end of the century, liberal political power had begun to wane.

The growth of clerical political power was also accompanied by the emergence of a more formal party system. In 1878 Dr. Abraham Kuyper founded the Anti-Revolutionary Party.¹³ The new movement was Protestant and ultimately would

8. The Amsterdam scholar Fritz de Jong traces the evolution of the NVV in his volume, *Om de plaats van de arbeid* (Amsterdam: N.V. De Arbeiderspers, 1956). See also John WINDMULLER, *Labour Relations in the Netherlands* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), chap. 1.

9. Erik HANSEN and Peter PROSPER, "Religion and the Development of the Dutch Trade Union Movement, 1872-1914", *Histoire Sociale — Social History*, IX (November 1976): 357-83.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-383.

11. Arend LIPHART, *Versuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* (Amsterdam: De Bussy, 1968), p. 104.

12. Dutch public life in the late-nineteenth century is discussed in two studies by Hans DAALDER, "Parties and politics in the Netherlands", *Political Studies*, III (January 1955): 1-16, and "The Netherlands: Opposition in a Segmented Society", in *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, ed. Robert DAHL (New Haven: Yale, 1966), pp. 188-236; by Robert BONE, "The Dynamics of Dutch Politics", *Journal of Politics*, XXIV (February 1962): 23-49; and in GOUDSBLOM, *Dutch Society*, chaps. 1 and 2.

13. For a recent discussion of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, see I. LIPSCHITS, *De protestants christelijke stroming tot 1940* (Deventer: Kluwer, 1977).

develop a strong middle-class and lower middle-class following and appeal. Kuyper, among other things, was an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church and a determined opponent of latitudinist tendencies within the Reformed Church, so much so in fact that he led a withdrawal of conservative ministers from the Church in 1886, an action which resulted in the immediate formation of the *Gereformeerde Kerken*. After the turn of the century, a faction uncomfortable with the *petit bourgeois* leanings of Kuyper formed the Christian Historical Union. The Union tended to be more aristocratic and *grand bourgeois* in its general tone and values and was more closely linked with the Dutch Reformed Church than were the Anti-Revolutionaries. Meanwhile, pressure within the Roman Catholic community led to the creation in 1896 of the Roman Catholic State Party.¹⁴ On the eve of the First World War, the three clerical parties constituted a powerful bloc in the *Tweede Kamer*.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, secular attitudes in Dutch Society had found liberal political expression. The spiritual heirs of the mid-century liberal notables had formed a structured liberal party in 1885.¹⁵ Within a generation it was shattered by splits, walk-outs and ultimately the development of two additional liberal parties. Three liberal movements were present in the Netherlands: Old Liberals, Union Liberals, and the Free Thinkers. The Old Liberals tended to support Manchesterite social doctrine, restricted suffrage, and a night-watch state. Free Thinkers would, and did, support demands for universal suffrage and a limited degree of social legislation. The Liberal Union occupied a centrist position between these two poles.

While the liberals were dividing into three separate currents, a new secular political force appeared on the scene. The Dutch section of the Second International, the Social Democratic Workers Party, was founded in 1894.¹⁶ In 1897, the party elected its first representative to the one hundred seat *Tweede Kamer*. By 1913, the social democratic delegation had risen to fifteen despite the obvious barrier of suffrage restriction. The liberal community was sharply and bitterly opposed to social democracy. Thus, in the quarter-century before the First World War, the Christian parties faced a secular bloc in parliament which had deep internal divisions.

The nature and character of primary education was a major public issue throughout the nineteenth century. The authoritarian monarchy had attempted to develop a state system of optional schools with a general Christian character.¹⁷ Between 1815 and 1830 these schools were seen as a direct threat to the Roman Catholic parish schools in the southern provinces. Across the southern zones of the kingdom there were very real fears that the Protestant monarchy in the Hague intended to destroy Roman Catholic education and replace the parish schools with

14. L.J. ROGIER and N. DE ROOY offer an excellent introduction to the politics of the Roman Catholic community in their volume, *In vrijheid herboren: Katholiek Nederland, 1853-1953* ('s-Gravenhage: Pax, 1953).

15. See P. HOEKSTRA, "De laatste tien liberale jaren in het Noorden, 1891-1901", in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, eds. J.A. VAN HOUTTE et al., 12 vols. (Utrecht: W. de Haan N.V., 1949-1958), 11: 60-79, for a discussion of Dutch liberalism at high tide.

16. Two popular histories of the SDAP are H. DE VOS, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme in Nederland in het kader van zijn tijd*, 2 vols. (Baarn: Wereldvenster, 1976), and H. VAN HULST, A. PLEYSIER and A. SCHEFFER, *Het roode vaandel volgen wij* ('s-Gravenhage: Kruseman, 1969).

17. See the summary discussion by L.G.J. VERBERNE, *Nieuwste Geschiedenis, Geschiedenis van Nederland*, vol. 7 (Amsterdam: Vondel, 1935-1938), pp. 229-32.

a network of secular state institutions. These fears played a major role in the confrontations which climaxed in the 1830 revolution and the creation of a Belgian state. Since the authoritarian monarchy operated under certain fiscal constraints, the construction of a systematic state network was still out of the question in 1848. At the same time, many Protestant and Roman Catholic notables only opposed either secular schools or schools rooted in a general, non-sectarian Christian humanism. Both warmly endorsed confessional schools linked directly to the churches. In an ideal world the churches alone would educate at the primary level. Since this was out of the question, confessional notables demanded that communities be allowed to maintain Free Schools of either a Dutch Reformed or Roman Catholic character, depending upon the religious composition of the community. Once again in an ideal world, such schools would be funded on a parity with the state schools.

The parliamentary order brought at first little response to the spokesmen for confessional education.¹⁸ A new school law in 1857 lifted the restrictions which had been placed upon Free Schools as early as 1815 and allowed sects to found and maintain schools subject to a certain degree of state control; but it forbade the teaching of a specific religious doctrine in the state schools and did not allow for public subsidy to confessional schools. Both policies were reaffirmed in the 1878 school law. The latter was approved in the same year that the Anti-Revolutionary Party was founded. Dr. Kuyper and other party leaders immediately launched a massive petition action calling for subsidy to Free Schools on a parity with the state system. The petition was delivered directly to the Crown. Despite its 300,000 signatures, it did not receive an immediate response. Subsequently, both Protestant and Roman Catholic candidates for election to the *Tweede Kamer* ran on a platform of subsidy parity. Three times, in 1889, 1904, and 1908, the school law was revised and on each round the subsidy level was raised. Finally, in 1917, confessional schools received public funding on a parity with the state system.

The liberals bitterly opposed subsidy; but as the century wore on and their political base in parliament eroded, so did their ferocity on this particular issue. The growing Social Democratic Workers Party, on the other hand, gave strong initial support to the principle of free, secular, compulsory education at the primary level and opposed subsidy to confessional schools. However, the 1902 party congress at Groningen suddenly reversed the latter position, approving a resolution calling for subsidy to the Free Schools on a parity with the state system.¹⁹ This action, which clashed with social democratic policy at the international level, was taken to render social democracy more attractive to religious workers and prevent further clerical gains within the working-class.

II

The Dutch educational system expanded dramatically during the decades before the First World War. The total number of primary schools grew from 3,277

18. *Ibid.*, 8: 214-19. See also the lucid references to the school issue in E. KOSSMAN, *The Low Countries, 1780-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 206-361.

19. The 1902 party resolution is analysed in Erik HANSEN, "Marxism, Socialism, and the Dutch Primary Schools", *History of Education Quarterly*, XIII (January 1973): 367-92.

in 1850 to 3,727 by 1870 and to 4,258 during the next twenty years.²⁰ During the 1890s and after the turn of the century, there was an acceleration in the opening of new primary schools. By 1913, the total number of primary schools had reached 5,602, an increase of 1,344 schools within twenty-three years.²¹ The continued growth of the primary school system had been further secured by the enactment of compulsory primary school attendance legislation in 1900.

As a consequence of the severe restrictions placed upon the operation of confessional schools in the early and mid-nineteenth century, the Netherlands contained only 831 private elementary schools in 1850.²² While the 1857 school law lifted these restrictions, it did not provide for subsidy to confessional schools. Still, the number of private elementary schools reached 1,073 by 1860. The 1878 school law further strengthened the state primary school system by granting a cost subsidy from the central government to the municipalities and communities. Until that date state primary education was financed by the municipality. On the other hand, the 1878 law set standards of construction, size, furnishings, etc., which increased costs. These new standards were applied to both state and private primary schools; thus an additional financial burden was placed upon the confessional systems.

The 1889 revision of the school law gave a powerful impetus to the further expansion of the confessional primary school network. Roughly one-third of the operating cost of a confessional school would be paid by the state. The subsidy level was raised by subsequent acts of parliament in 1904 and 1908. As noted, confessional schools finally reached parity with the state system in 1917. The impact of these policy shifts is reflected in an increase of private primary schools from 30.7 percent of all primary schools in 1891 to 40.5 percent in 1913 and an equivalent increase in the proportion of students enrolled at the primary level. While the number of primary schools in the state sector increased in this period from 2,976 to 3,334, the number of confessional schools increased even more rapidly from 1,316 to 2,268.

The trend toward confessional education also had an impact upon the distribution of teachers. In 1891 there were 12,142 primary schoolteachers in the Netherlands. Of these, 8,594, or 70.8 percent, were teaching in the state system and 3,548, or 29.2 percent, in the private sector.²³ By 1913, there were 23,299 teachers of whom only 13,708, or 58.8 percent, were in the state system.²⁴ In the meantime, the private school teaching corps had grown to 9,591, or 41.2 percent of all primary schoolteachers.

At the same time that education at the primary level was becoming increasingly confessional, the number of female teachers was steadily rising. Female faculty

20. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *De ontwikkeling van het onderwijs in Nederland* (Utrecht: w. de Haan, 1951), p. 37.

21. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Jaarcijfers voor het Kroninkrijk der Nederlanden* ('s-Gravenhage: CBS, 1915), p. 36.

22. Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *De ontwikkeling*, p. 37.

23. *Jaarcijfers*, 1893, pp. 22-23. Throughout this essay we are counting as teachers only those individuals on the school staff who were classified as teachers by the Dutch state. We are thus excluding principals and heads of schools, many of whom taught, student teachers, and various types of school aids.

24. *Jaarcijfers*, 1915, p. 38.

were somewhat more numerous on the private school staffs. In 1891, they represented 43.9 percent of the teachers in confessional primary schools compared to only 28.2 percent of the teachers in state schools. The number of females in both sectors increased dramatically during the quarter-century before the First World War. In 1913, 54.2 percent of private primary schoolteachers and 40.2 percent of state primary schoolteachers were women.

Like all nineteenth-century European nations, Holland had a highly élitist educational system. In 1891 primary school enrolment exceeded 652,000 students in the combined state and private sectors. Secondary school enrolments stood at only 7,207, gymnasia enrolments at 2,567 and total university enrolments at 2,815. Within the context of this socio-economic pyramid, the higher the level, the fewer the females. In 1891 just over 48 percent of all primary students were female, 22.9 percent of all secondary students, and at the gymnasia and university level no government data was assembled. In 1893, the first year that female enrolment figures were released for the gymnasia, females accounted for 2.6 percent of all enrolments.²⁵ These same patterns also existed within the teaching corps. Again, in 1891, there were 12,142 grade schoolteachers, 32.8 percent female, 914 secondary school faculty, 13.4 percent female, and 428 gymnasia faculty with no mention of females.²⁶

III

The BNO, while founded in 1874, did not become a substantial organization until after 1890. In the summer of 1874 the executive committee of a small Amsterdam-based association of public primary schoolteachers across the Netherlands called for a conference in that city in late autumn. On 7 November 1874, the conference created the *Nederlandse Openbare Hulponderwijzers-Vereeniging* (Dutch Public Assistant Teachers Union).²⁷ Only four municipalities were represented at the founding congress, and the union had only 247 initial members: 104 in Amsterdam, 65 in Rotterdam, 60 in the Hague, and 18 in Dordrecht.²⁸ Its activities were directed by a seven-person executive committee which for years was elected by the membership of the Amsterdam section. Years later, a general congress would elect the members of the executive committee. The new organization was designed to function as a special public interest lobby and not as a true union. Its two major concerns were higher salaries for teachers in the public primary school sector and a statutory re-entitlement of teachers *as teachers*, not assistant teachers, a title used to distinguish teachers from school heads, many of whom also taught. From its origins the BNO conducted a constant struggle against what it perceived as the tyranny, authority and prerogatives of school heads.

Between 1874 and 1890, the BNO almost disintegrated as an organization.²⁹ The 1878 school law vastly increased salaries in the public schools and with the

25. *Jaarcijfers*, 1901, p. 53.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23, 36, 38 and 43 respectively.

27. *Gedenkboek van de afdeling Amsterdam van de Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers* (Amsterdam: BNO, 1915), p. 17.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-27.

passage of time teachers were recognized as teachers in their own right and ceased to carry the demeaning title of assistant, the latter term being reserved for support staff who aided teachers in the instructional process. By 1882, the organization had only two sections, Amsterdam and Rotterdam, with the Amsterdam section alone accounting for 137 of the union's 197 members.³⁰ Given massive indifference across most of the nation, the Amsterdam section actually considered a motion to dissolve the national organization, which existed in name only, and reconstitute itself as a purely Amsterdam association. While the motion was defeated, the core of what evolved into the BNO was for all practical purposes an Amsterdam club.

Between 1888 and 1891 there was a sudden surge of interest in the association. This process began first in Amsterdam where section membership suddenly began to increase, growing from 180 to 400 within a single year. At the same time Rotterdam membership rose suddenly to 250. In 1889 five new sections were established and in the course of 1890 another thirteen sections were created.³¹ By 1891 an organization which had had only 250 members twenty-four months earlier had grown to over 3,000. This process reflected in part broader trends in Dutch society: the growing trade-union movement, broadening lay organizations within the Roman Catholic community, the gradual rise of social democracy, the suffrage movement, and momentary populist activity in the northern province of Friesland. Within this context of organizational ferment, the association once again changed its name, becoming the *Bond van Nederlandse Onderwijzers* on 1 January 1890.

As the BNO assumed national dimensions, the following programme was adopted in 1890:

- a. Improvement of the salaries of educators.
- b. Greater independence for the teacher in the school in the spirit of article 21 of the Law for Elementary Education, namely, the conduct of school affairs by the principal in consultation with the personnel, and greater independence for the schoolteacher in society.
- c. Improvement of teachers' education.
- d. Establishment of compulsory education.
- e. Establishment of a pension fund for teachers, widows and dependents.
- f. Further elimination from the Law on Elementary Education of provisions damaging to the educator or to education, and inclusion [in the law] of provisions judged to be in the interest of the educator or education.³²

In the course of the next quarter-century the programme of the BNO changed somewhat, reflecting broad developments in Dutch society, such as the call for equal salaries for female teachers, or sharpening the language of the demand that primary education be free, secular and compulsory. By 1914, the official programme read as follows:

- a. Improvement of the salaries of educators; complete equality in salaries, benefits, etc., for male and female teachers, without regard for marital status.
- b. Equal influence in the regulation of school affairs for all teaching personnel, including vocational teachers in so far as it concerns their area of education.
- c. Improvement of teachers' education.
- d. Better regulation of unemployment compensation.

30. BNO brochure, *Wat wij willen!* (Amsterdam: Van Twisk, 1892), p. 39.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 1. Down to the First World War, the text of the BNO program was published in the opening pages of the annual *Jaarboek*.

- e. Adoption of a better compulsory school law.
- f. Strengthening governmental transfer of food and clothing to needy schoolchildren.
- g. Realization of general, free education at mixed schools.
- h. Education free of religious and political dogmas and above all a strong development of neutral public education.³³

The growing feminization of the teaching corps at the elementary school level, combined with the female suffrage movement and a heightened sensitivity to salary discrimination against women, accounts for the substantial revision in the clause bearing upon improvement of salaries for educators. In calling for equal salaries for female teachers and increased "governmental transfer of food and clothing to needy schoolchildren", the programme moved into areas of social policy which had not been touched upon in 1890.

Although the BNO was not a political party, it quickly adopted the western European party practice of issuing a series of immediate demands which supplemented the statement of general principles embodied in the programme. In 1898 the BNO developed and approved a *strijdplan* (plan of action) which laid out courses of action aimed at realizing BNO goals.³⁴ It called for a free and constant flow of petitions, letters and communications from the BNO executive committee to the national and provincial governments, and from the executive committee and the concerned sections to municipal authorities. On balance the *strijdplan* called for institutionalized lobbying: public meetings with elected public officials, cooperation with other civic associations on issues of educational policy, use of the press, and support of candidates sharing the BNO orientation who were standing for election to municipal councils, provincial estates and parliament. However, the plan did depart from normal civic lobbying in a clause calling for "the boycotting of municipalities which damage the interests of education or educators or do not fully support them". The 1898 statement of tactics was not significantly altered down to 1914. Most importantly, at no time over the quarter-century before the First World War did the BNO officially advocate strikes or collective bargaining.³⁵

The organizational contours of the BNO were typical of most voluntary civic associations in north-western Europe during the late nineteenth century. The executive committee in Amsterdam handled daily routine affairs, reporting to an annual conference of the membership. The BNO offered three major services to its members, all of whom paid annual dues. A Resistance Fund was maintained to support actions against schools whose principal had either fired, dismissed or in some way abused teachers. This was flanked by a broader Support Fund which awarded cash advances to teachers who had been unfairly dismissed or had experienced unusual or severe personal difficulties such as illness, accident, emotional problems and sudden financial stress. Members in difficult financial situations submitted a written request to a steering committee which then accepted or rejected it. The committee published an annual report on the state of the Support Fund and gave an extremely detailed summary of each approved request, the circumstances and the money involved. During the years immediately before the war, around 150 requests were received

33. *Jaarboekje van de Bond van Nederlandsche Onderwijzers*, 1 April 1913 - 1 April 1914 (Amsterdam: BNO, 1914), p. 2.

34. *Jaarboekje, 1898-1899*, p. 9.

35. *Ibid.*

annually and roughly two-thirds were approved.³⁶ The fund was capitalized by membership dues and annually reinforced by repayments. The steering committee always closed the year with a surplus.

Table 1 **BNO Support Funds,
1899-1912**

Year	Monies Received	Advances	Surplus
1899	4,532	2,784	2,873
1900	5,214	4,449	580
1901	7,633	4,346	3,132
1902	8,265	6,389	1,691
1903	6,978	6,261	552
1904	9,240	7,195	1,830
1905	10,417	8,171	2,079
1906	12,939	12,134	452
1907	12,875	10,848	1,223
1908	12,739	10,002	1,986
1909	13,330	10,187	2,443
1910	14,439	11,805	1,969
1911	15,974	14,907	1,066
1912	14,142	11,556	2,585

Source: *Jaarboekje van de Bond van Nederlandsche Onderwijzers* (Yearbook of the Federation of Dutch Educators), 1899-1912.

Beyond these limited measures of financial support, the BNO also offered its members a weekly newspaper, *De Bode*. It began as a flyer for the Amsterdam section in 1883.³⁷ In 1890 it was still little more than a sectional forum, but within the next few years it rapidly evolved into the weekly voice of the BNO. The annual reports of the BNO tell us little about the funding and circulation of *De Bode*. Only 500 copies per issue were published in 1894, at a time when BNO membership was already over 3,000. By 1900 copies per issue rose to 6,500 and by 1908 reached 8,700, remaining at this level until 1914.³⁸

Directly after the turn of the century, the BNO launched its most ambitious service to members. A recovery and rest facility, complete with doctors, nurses, lodging, and three daily meals was established for teachers and immediate family who were suffering from either minor illness or nervous tension.³⁹ The *Herstelord*, as it was called, charged a modest daily fee and provided peace and quiet. Prolonged stays were not allowed and serious cases were transferred to regular hospitals. The BNO yearly reports published detailed budgets of the *Herstelord* between 1907 and 1912, at which time the BNO spent around 25,000 guilders annually on the facility, roughly two-and-one-half times the sum allocated to support funds. At this time the *Herstelord* admitted from 117 to 138 cases per year.

36. The *Jaarboekjes* of the BNO published an annual report of requests received and monies granted. Unfortunately, these were cited case by case without a final annual summary and tabulation.

37. *Gedenkboek*, pp. 24-26.

38. The total number of copies printed per issue was reported annually in the *Jaarboekje*. The figures given were total aggregates and were not broken down by city or region.

39. Once established, the *Herstelord*'s operation for a given year was reported in considerable detail in the *Jaarboekje*.

As noted, the BNO experienced explosive growth in the early years of the 1890s. The membership peaked in 1906,⁴⁰ and then went into a gradual annual decline until the First World War. The expansion and subsequent contraction of the BNO is partially explained by the growing power of the confessional blocs which forced a revision of the school law in 1889. The new law granted a subsidy to confessional schools and thus seemed to threaten the public primary schools. Such a threat in and of itself was sufficient to drive a substantial number of teachers into an association which functioned as a lobby for the public sector. This initial impulse was reinforced by Roman Catholic and Protestant demands for a broader level of subsidy.

Although BNO membership was not restricted to primary schoolteachers, there is every reason to believe that most members taught in public primary schools. Primary school issues certainly dominated BNO activity and the pages of *De Bode*. This sector had just over 12,000 teachers in 1906 when BNO membership stood at 7,354.⁴¹ The BNO did not break down its membership into categories. A few members may have taught at the secondary school level, but assuming that most were primary schoolteachers, the BNO had an impressive degree of penetration into its natural constituency by 1900.

Table 2 **BNO Membership Patterns,
1899-1912**

Year	Membership	Number of Sections
1894	3,495	112
1895	3,438	106
1896	3,651	112
1897	4,161	129
1898	4,966	142
1899	5,565	158
1900	5,940	172
1901	5,939	176
1902	6,269	185
1903	6,835	191
1904	6,672	191
1905	7,049	200
1906	7,354	198
1907	7,165	200
1908	7,102	203
1909	7,143	203
1910	7,083	203
1911	6,805	198
1912	6,868	197
1913	6,960	198

Source: *Jaarboekje van de Bond van Nederlandsche Onderwijzers* (Yearbook of the Federation of Dutch Educators), 1894-1913.

The BNO membership on the eve of the war had a sharp regional contour. The organization was strongest in the northern and western provinces and generally

40. See membership data in the appropriate *Jaarboekje*, 1906-1914.

41. *Jaarcijfers*, 1915, p. 38; *Jaarboekje*, 1907-1908, p. 12.

reflected liberal and secular attitudes in these areas. As a general rule, it was quite weak in the southern Roman Catholic provinces.

Table 3 BNO Membership by Province, 1895-1910

Province	1895		1900		1905		1910	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
North Brabant	48	1.37	121	2.03	151	2.14	117	1.65
Gelderland	287	8.34	551	9.27	557	7.90	606	8.55
South Holland	872	25.36	1,229	20.69	1,561	22.14	1,717	24.24
North Holland	916	26.64	1,501	25.26	1,911	27.11	1,946	27.47
Zeeland	111	3.20	259	4.36	313	4.44	286	4.03
Utrecht	53	1.54	241	4.05	268	3.80	315	4.44
Friesland	183	5.32	391	6.58	526	7.46	489	6.90
Overijssel	246	7.15	370	6.23	508	7.20	549	7.75
Groningen	412	11.98	527	8.87	640	9.08	601	8.48
Drente	108	3.14	154	2.59	290	4.11	293	4.13
Limburg	15	0.43	8	0.13	22	0.31	26	0.36

Source: *Jaarboekje van de Bond van Nederlandsche Onderwijzers* (Yearbook of the Federation of Dutch Educators), 1896-97, pp. 16-24, 1901-02, pp. 18-30, 1905-06, pp. 45, 49, 50, 1910-11, pp. 62, 66, 68.

As one might expect, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and the Hague accounted for a substantial percentage of total BNO membership. However, rapid growth in the 1890s resulted in deeper penetration of small town school systems and a relative decline in the position of the three major cities.

Table 4 BNO Membership in Major Cities, 1895-1910

Year	Amsterdam		Rotterdam		The Hague	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1895	608	17.7	348	10.1	225	6.5
1900	926	15.6	413	7.0	292	4.9
1905	1,205	17.1	496	7.0	383	5.4
1910	1,168	16.5	559	7.9	468	6.6

Source: *Jaarboekje van de Bond van Nederlandsche Onderwijzers* (Yearbook of the Federation of Dutch Educators), 1896-97, pp. 21-22, 1901-02, pp. 25, 27-28, 1905-06, pp. 45, 49, 50, 1910-11, pp. 62, 66, 68.

IV

Four major issues dominated BNO lobbying: teachers' salaries, the internal lines of authority within the primary school, compulsory education and sustaining the struggle against further expansion of the confessional school network. From its modest origins in 1874, the BNO consistently argued that teachers were seriously underpaid. A brochure published by the executive committee for organizational and propaganda purposes in the early 1890s, *Wat wij willen!* ("What we want"),

devoted an entire section to the salary issue which captures the general flavour of the BNO position. The discussion opens with the observation that "the financial circumstances of the educator in Holland at the end of the nineteenth century are extremely bad."⁴² The 1889 school law had established a three-rung compensation schedule with minimum starting salaries of 400, 600, and 700 guilders. BNO leaders argued that these minimums were far too low and under certain conditions tended to become maximums: "Many communities appear to view it as an obligation to pay no more than 400 guilders as if there were a large supply [of teachers] and little demand."⁴³ Beyond this, the increments to the base salary were inadequate: "Full of energy and enthusiasm, the young educator enters the school; for his age, in comparison with other professions, his salary is reasonable; but *this same salary*, even if it is increased by a few hundred guilders, is far from sufficient for the older educator and above all for *those who are married*."⁴⁴ Other public employees were better paid; a *maréchaussée*, for example, received 750 guilders per year and a bridge guard 830 guilders.⁴⁵ As the years passed BNO discussion of salary levels often turned on comparisons with Swiss or German salary levels. As a general rule Dutch teachers were poorly paid by German standards.

The salary issue was further conditioned by the great central European economic depression from 1873 to 1896. With recovery came inflationary pressures. While salaries did rise above the 1889 minimum starting levels, these gains were quickly eroded by inflation, which led *De Bode* to observe in 1913: "The small increments yield nothing, given the continued price increases which began in 1896. In many communities educators, who earn the minimum or a little more, slip further and further behind."⁴⁶ The BNO leadership continued to press the government for higher salary levels. Judged over twenty-five years the organization had a certain degree of success; nevertheless in 1914 there was still a sense that teachers in Holland were poorly paid.

The struggle for better salaries was accompanied by a demand for democratization within state primary schools. By law the internal affairs of a state school were to be conducted solely by the principal. For years the BNO leadership argued that this stipulation reduced teachers, professionals in their own right, to the status of servants. "Yes, we even know a municipality *where the principal has a separate entrance to the schoolyard* through which neither children nor educators may pass."⁴⁷ The BNO would have preferred schools which were highly collegiate in their internal organization, with regular staff conferences, meetings between the principal and individual teachers, joint or collective decisions, and a direct teacher input into lesson plans, classroom planning, and the sensitive area of child discipline. In such a situation, the individual teacher would no longer be under the direct control of one person: "The school must become an educational institution where a number of independent people work together in mutual consultation on the noble task of educating children into thinking people."⁴⁸

42. *Wat wij willen!*, p. 17.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

46. Unsigned editorial, "Denkt bij de verkiezingen om de salarissen", *De Bode*, 21 March 1913.

47. *Wat wij willen!*, p. 7.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

While this issue was important and the BNO was quick to support members who had some type of confrontation with a principal, it paled in comparison with the question of confessional schools. By granting subsidies to church-affiliated schools, the 1889 school law put the BNO in a highly defensive position. The issue shifted from whether confessional schools should exist or not to whether they should be supported by public money.

Generally, the BNO leadership advanced two major arguments on behalf of the public primary school. The first was largely ideological. The state school should be absolutely neutral in questions of religious doctrine. The confessional schools, it was charged, injected a high degree of sectarian indoctrination into the educative process.⁴⁹ This process, in turn, only served to heighten tensions between Roman Catholics and Protestants in a society with severe religious cleavages. BNO editorials and brochures often documented this point by quoting from confessional school readers in such a way as to generate a sense of outlandish bias and historical falsification. Thus a BNO brochure cited a Roman Catholic reader: "Deceiving himself in his arrogant expectations, Luther began to openly oppose the Church in 1517. He spoke about monks and priests in the most scornful way, and also about the Pope and the Church, and attacked the holiest laws and the most sublime holy doctrines. He, the fallen priest, dared to charge the Church with error and in his madness placed himself above the Pope."⁵⁰ The same brochure quoted in turn a similar source of Protestant origin: "Every church reform in the fifteenth century ended in a strengthening of the hierarchy. The protest of John Hus and Hieronymus was strangled in flames and many of their followers put to the sword. Thus moaning, Christ's Church waited for better days."⁵¹ The second argument used against confessional schools was economic. Subsidy of such schools, BNO leaders contended, was costly and quite obviously drained monies which would otherwise have flowed into the public sector. Despite the BNO's efforts, the trend toward confessional education continued.

As noted, the BNO continually pressed for compulsory grade school attendance. This was finally mandated by an Act of Parliament in 1900. The initial bill, as proposed by the liberal Pierson cabinet, provided for compulsory schooling to and including the age of thirteen.⁵² Conservative liberals found this excessive and the final text of the law mandated six years of compulsory schooling, from ages six to twelve. Moreover, in rural areas parents were granted the right to hold children needed for farm labour out of school for up to six weeks. For a number of years the BNO pressed for rescinding this escape clause. Beyond this there were fears in Amsterdam that the law might not be properly enforced by district school inspectors in the provinces, a fear which led the executive committee of the BNO to fund a

49. The BNO published a fairly substantial number of brochures defending public education and attacking the principle of confessional schooling, for example: *De Vrije School* (Amsterdam: BNO, 1901); *Onze Christelijke Regeering en de Openbare School* (Utrecht: BNO, n.d.); *Stuurt Uw kind naar de Openbare School* (n.p.: BNO, n.d.); *Maakt front voor de Openbare School!* (Utrecht: BNO, n.d.); and *De Openbare School* (n.p.: BNO, n.d.).

50. *De Openbare School*, p. 6.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

52. BNO leaders regarded the new school law as insufficient; see the editorials in *De Bode*, 5, 12, 19 April 1901.

series of highly detailed reports on the application of the law province by province.⁵³ According to official government figures, 8.4 percent of all males and 10.1 percent of all females, ages six to eleven, did not attend school at all in 1891.⁵⁴ By 1899 these percentages had fallen to 7.1 and 8.6 percent respectively.⁵⁵ Ten years later, in the ninth year of mandatory schooling, the numbers had sunk to 4.3 and 5.4 percent.⁵⁶ Thus the 1900 law at best accelerated a process which was already well under way.

During the early years of the 1890s the BNO concentrated upon teacher demands: better salaries, democratization of the school and various benefits to teachers.⁵⁷ That is not to say that the schoolchildren themselves were totally ignored. They were not. But the fact remains that the BNO tended to speak more for primary schoolteachers than for children. Toward the turn of the century, the BNO became increasingly sensitive to three tightly interrelated issues: poverty's effect on the dress and food of schoolchildren, the employment of schoolchildren and its impact upon their classroom performance, and the need for tighter controls on the employment of children six to twelve years of age.⁵⁸

In 1899, 1903, and again in 1913, the organization published reports on child farm labour, the general employment on a part-time basis of children who were attending school, and a more specific study of the impact of part-time employment on Amsterdam schoolchildren.⁵⁹ All three reports concluded that children in school should not be employed. The Amsterdam study in particular stressed that children who worked on a part-time basis appeared in school tired and usually lagged in their studies.⁶⁰ At the same time, it was consistently recognized that part-time child labour generated income for poor and often impoverished families and that attempts to halt such work would result in hostile parental reactions. The farm labour report in particular made this point. One correspondent grimly noted: "Although it would certainly be possible to do without child labour in agriculture, such a ban would be difficult to maintain, first, because employers benefit from the modest wages children receive for their work, and secondly, because the low wages in this area [the north-west sector of Friesland] force parents to put their children into the labour market."⁶¹

A growing concern with the eating habits and dress of children is reflected in the 1900 BNO congress deliberations. After some discussion, a resolution was passed calling on the central government to pay to municipalities 50 percent of the cost of food and clothing for schoolchildren.⁶² While this demand did not become

53. For example, see the 95 page summary, *Rapport omtrent de werking der leerplicht* (Groningen: Noordhoff, 1904).

54. *Jaarcijfers*, 1893, p. 26.

55. *Ibid.*, 1901, p. 36.

56. *Jaarcijfers*, 1915, p. 42.

57. This attitude is clearly reflected in *Wat wij willen!*

58. Discussions of these issues run through *De Bode*, 1896-1900.

59. See *De Veldarbeid van kinderen in Nederland* (Dordrecht: BNO, 1899); *Arbeid van Schoolgaande Kinderen* (Amsterdam: afd. Amsterdam BNO, [1903]); and *Arbeid van Schoolgaande Kinderen te Amsterdam in 1913* (Amsterdam: afd. Amsterdam BNO, 1913).

60. *Arbeid van Schoolgaande Kinderen te Amsterdam in 1913*, pp. 11-16.

61. *De Veldarbeid van Kinderen in Nederland*, p. 19.

62. *Handelingen van het Onderwijs-Congres, op 25 November 1900* (Amsterdam: Vermeer, 1901), p. 20.

law, it does signal a growing awareness of the relationship between poverty, material environment and education. It also reflects a growing predisposition on the part of middle-class parents to enrol children in an appropriate confessional school and the practice in large towns of tracking primary schools by family income level, a practice which led in Amsterdam to a three-tier system with one type of primary school open only to the poorest families. As a consequence, the state schools in Amsterdam and larger towns were not only socially segregated, but were also in a real sense institutions of the poor.⁶³

V

The political interests of the BNO clearly lay with the liberal bloc and against the confessional parties. Its relationship to the SDAP was not so clear. In 1890 the *Sociaal Democratische Onderwijzers Vereeniging* (Social Democratic Educators Union—SDOV) was formed in Amsterdam. As a union of social democratic teachers, the SDOV affiliated with the *Sociaal Democratische Bond* and the *Nationaal Arbeids Secretariat* (NAS).⁶⁴ As the latter two inclined toward revolutionary syndicalism, the SDOV withdrew and shifted its loyalties to the SDAP when the latter was formed in 1894. In the meantime the SDOV was allowed to affiliate with the BNO as a type of autonomous satellite. A number of social democratic activists, J. Ceton, A.H. Gerhard, and J.G. van Kijkhof were simultaneously members of the SDOV and the BNO.

While the mainstream within the BNO was more liberal than social democratic, it was not totally hostile to the labour movement and its social democratic arms. Beyond this, the newly formed SDAP was highly supportive of public education and naturally anti-clerical.

The good-will and trust between the BNO and the SDAP, however, came to an abrupt end in the spring of 1902 when at the Groningen congress the latter reversed its position on subsidies and endorsed funding of confessional primary schools on a parity with the state system.⁶⁵ Although supportive of public education, the leadership of the SDAP feared that continued party support for free, compulsory public education would alienate devout workers. Its decision to support the clerical bloc on the issue of subsidies was made on the grounds that it would allow the SDAP to present social programmes to the working-class without their being tangled up with the school issue. This action led to a bitter debate within the SDAP and involved a number of protest resolutions from the SDOV and particularly from J.C. Ceton.⁶⁶

63. See the judgments which run through the brochures *Arbeid van Schoolgaande Kinderen* and *Arbeid van Schoolgaande Kinderen te Amsterdam in 1913*, a follow-up study done ten years later.

64. A scholarly analysis of the SDOV does not exist. The activities of the SDOV were reported in *De Bode* and on occasion in the social democratic paper, *Het Volk*.

65. This issue is discussed in HANSEN, "Marxism, Socialism, and the Dutch Primary Schools", pp. 367-92.

66. J.C. Ceton's articles in the Marxian journal *Nieuwe Tijd* clearly reflect the SDOV position; see, for example, his "Vrije School of verplichte Staatsschool?", *Nieuwe Tijd* (January and February 1902): 37-51 and 109-21.

Despite bitterness within the BNO and a number of critical editorials in *De Bode*, the organization was not at first drawn into a polemic with the social democratic press. The strongest attacks on Pieter Jelles Troelstra, the leader of the SDAP, came instead from the SDOV and the Marxist faction within the Social Democratic Workers Party itself.⁶⁷ During the 1903 strike movement, the BNO supported the labour movement; and again in the 1904 diamond industry lock-out, funds were given to support the cause of labour. When the Dutch Federation of Trade Unions (the NVV) was formed in 1905, the BNO was clearly sympathetic although it continued to stand apart from the NVV trade-unions until the war. In the meantime the SDOV quietly disintegrated. From its origins in 1890 it never embraced more than a few dozen members, the vast majority of whom lived in Amsterdam.

The major figures within the SDAP all supported the 1902 Groningen resolution. This was true of Troelstra, J.H. Schaper, a major force within the parliamentary faction and at the annual party congress, and Willem Vliegen of the *Het Volk* editorial staff. But between 1902 and 1909 a Marxian opposition faction developed within the SDAP.⁶⁸ The left-opposition to the party leadership was grouped around the high-brow journal *Nieuwe Tijd* and included intellectuals like Herman Gorter, Henriette Roland Holst, Anton Pannekoek, Frank van der Goes, Pieter Wiedijk, and F.M. Wibaut. Of the group, Pannekoek, Wibaut and van der Goes supported the Groningen resolution, while violently objecting to the general direction the SDAP seemed to be taking. Nevertheless, writers like Gorter, Roland Holst and Wiedijk continually pointed to SDAP school policy as evidence of reformism, revisionism, opportunism, and *petit bourgeois* political values.

The split within the SDAP widened in 1907 when a popular, inexpensive newspaper, *De Tribune*, began to publish in Amsterdam. Expressing a sharply focused, militant, highly oppositionist Marxism, *De Tribune* was edited by J.C. Ceton, Willem van Ravesteijn, and David Wijnkoop.⁶⁹ Ceton was a schoolteacher and had been active in the SDOV. As such he used *De Tribune* as a forum in which to pound away at the Groningen resolution. When he, van Ravesteijn and Wijnkoop were expelled from the SDAP in 1909, they immediately formed the Social Democratic Party (the SDP), a more orthodox Marxian alternative to the SDAP which in 1918 became the Communist Party of Holland. In the meantime the SDAP leadership sanctioned the publication of a weekly supplement to *Het Volk*, the *Weekblad*, which was Marxian and initially edited by Frank van der Goes, Roland Holst and Wibaut, as a means of preventing a total Marxist bolt from the SDAP.⁷⁰ Despite the support which Van der Goes and Wibaut gave to the Groningen resolution, the

67. Two of the sharpest attacks upon Troelstra came from Marxists who had no ties with the SDOV: Henriette Roland HOLST, "Beginsel en Praktijk", *Nieuwe Tijd* (March 1902): 195-209, and J. SAKS [Pieter Wiedijk], "Naar rechts of naar links?", *Nieuwe Tijd* (March 1902): 210-28.

68. This split is discussed in H. VAN HULST, A. PLEYSIER and A. SCHEFFER, *Het roode vaandel volgen wij. Geschiedenis van de S.D.A.P. van 1880-1940* ('s-Gravenhage: Kruseman, 1969), pp. 13-26, and in Erik HANSEN, "Crisis in the Party: *De Tribune* Faction and the Origins of the Dutch Communist Party, 1906-1909", *Journal of Contemporary History* (July 1976): 43-64.

69. The formative years of *De Tribune* faction are still best approached through the pages of Willem van Ravesteijn's autobiographical *De wording van het Communisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Kampen, 1948), pp. 5-103.

70. See the autobiography of Pieter Jelles TROELSTRA, *Gedenkschriften*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Querido, 1927-1931), 3: 89-128, for an analysis of the party crisis and his role therein.

Weekblad published articles condemning the resolution and associating confessional primary schools with social reaction.⁷¹

Some BNO members were active in the SDAP and these individuals continued to support the SDAP well after the collapse of the SDOV. As a rule, social democrats within the BNO accepted the fact that the BNO was a special interest lobby which need not bear a socialist stamp. Beyond this, the majority of BNO social democrats were reformist or, if Marxist, closer to the Marxism of the *Weekblad* circle rather than the left-opposition factions that evolved into the Social Democratic Party. Despite the fact that the SDP's endorsement of free, compulsory, secular primary schools was closer to BNO policy interests than was the official position of the SDAP, BNO social democrats were not drawn into the radical orbit. They were not revolutionaries and apart from a spectacular exception like J.C. Ceton, who regarded the BNO as a bourgeois organization, remained comfortable in the SDAP.

In the autumn of 1913, the executive committee of the BNO developed a policy resolution reiterating the traditional demand for a secular, compulsory network of state primary schools.⁷² At the same time serious consideration had begun within the BNO as to the desirability of affiliation with the social democratic NVV.⁷³ For seven years the BNO had selectively supported various NVV causes and in 1911 had also supported a massive petition calling for universal suffrage. The action had been directed by the SDAP with considerable NVV support and cooperation. Suggestions that the BNO affiliate with the NVV immediately triggered a flow of letters to *De Bode* taking *pro* and *con* positions. On 21 November 1913, for example, a teacher writing from Rotterdam seriously questioned the wisdom of linking blue-collar interests with those of teachers. "No, the debate must turn on the question: what are we? Are we a trade-union like the others, yes or no? The NVV is composed of workers' unions. The *Bond* is a professional union. Between the two there is a difference significant enough to conclude that we cannot affiliate."⁷⁴ In the same issue J.A. Bergmeijer made an impassioned social democratic case for affiliation: "It is thus in our own interest and in the interest of the people's children's education that we seek close affiliation with our workers.... Once one simply expressed the hope, now one can act. This act is affiliation with the NVV."⁷⁵ As letters continued to pour into *De Bode*, a number of teachers protested affiliation on the grounds that the BNO membership contained substantial numbers of liberals who were ideologically and politically opposed to social democracy: "It is a great illusion for our opponents to argue that we could bring a large educators' organization into the NVV. Rather, entry into the Trade Federation will be a *death ride* for our *Bond*."⁷⁶ The question of affiliation was still open in 1914 when war broke out in Europe and confronted all Dutch organizations with an entirely new set of issues.

71. For examples, see Henriette Roland HOLST, "Het onderwijsdebat en zijn gevolgen", *Het Weekblad*, 28 January 1910. Nevertheless, some SDAP Marxists did support the Groningen resolution. See the unsigned editorial, "De strijd om de school en de Groninger motie", *Het Weekblad*, 11 March 1910, and Th. VAN DER WAERDEN, "Tegen de 'verplichte neutrale staatschool'", *Het Weekblad*, 27 January - 3 February 1914.

72. Articles and editorials defending the BNO position appeared regularly in *De Bode* from 9 January 1914 to the end of April.

73. J.A. BERGMEIJER, "De aansluiting bij het N.V.V.", *De Bode*, 21 November 1913.

74. M.G. WARFFEMIUS, "De aansluiting bij het N.V.V.", *De Bode*, 21 November 1913.

75. BERGMEIJER, "De aansluiten".

76. A. REIJERS, "Non possumus", *De Bode*, 5 June 1914.

Meanwhile a sharp polemic erupted between Troelstra and the executive committee of the BNO. The debate, which was conducted largely in the press, began in the late autumn of 1913 and came to involve three issues. While Troelstra welcomed BNO support on specific issues, he did not take well to continued criticism of the Groningen resolution, a policy position of which the SDAP leadership was quite proud. As a consequence, Troelstra charged that social democrats within the BNO often acted as members of a vested interest group and in the process lost sight of broad socialist goals.⁷⁷ At a second level of policy debate, he and the editors of *Het Volk* seriously questioned the wisdom of the continued attacks upon the principal, contending that principals *per se* were desirable and that even a Marxian teacher like A.H. Gerhard, himself a principal at one point, defended the institution: "For younger teachers benevolent and continued leadership is necessary and a benefit for the students."⁷⁸

Finally, Troelstra clashed with the BNO over the so-called Beishuizen affair. Beishuizen had been dismissed from a primary school faculty after a number of arguments and subsequent incidents with his principal. The BNO took his side, an action which Troelstra argued was unjustified on the merits of the case. The charges, rebuttals, attacks and replies led to over thirty-six articles in *De Bode* and *Het Volk*. The BNO position was generally defended by F. Ossendorp, a member of the BNO executive committee and an active member of the SDAP. Leaving particulars aside, Troelstra's general message was that teachers must learn to be social democrats first and members of a special interest group a far distant second: "It has been our goal not to belittle the *Bond* but to inform the *Bond* membership in the most sober way what many friends of the *Bond* in our circle think ... and we will continue to hold further criticism of the *Bond* within these limits which we ourselves set."⁷⁹

The polemical exchange transpired at precisely the same time that fairly open discussion was being held within the BNO on the question of NVV affiliation. A number of NVV leaders favoured affiliation to the extent that Jan Oudegeest, one of the more powerful leaders within the federation, actually entered the pages of *Het Volk* with a clear defense of the teachers and a sharp repudiation of Troelstra's major criticism: "Those who need the trade union for their economic interest, need [our] party just as well. There it stands. It is clear that the teachers in their entry into the party probably know more about the theory of social democracy than the worker, although this naturally says nothing about their prime motive in entering [the party]."⁸⁰

VI

From its distant origins in 1874 until the coming of the First World War, the BNO had evolved from a mere handful of largely Amsterdam schoolteachers into

77. Troelstra began his critique of BNO policy in a series of articles, "Lijnen van Strijd", *Het Volk*, 21-24 October 1913. This led to a series of replies in both *De Bode* and *Het Volk* and most important to the Ossendorp articles, "Geen inmenging", *Het Volk*, 12-13 January 1914.

78. Cited in unsigned editorial, "Kritiek op den B.V.N.O.", *Het Volk*, 2 February 1914.

79. See the 10 article series, "Kritiek op den B.V.N.O.", *Het Volk*, 26 January - 13 February 1914. This particular point was stressed in the editorial on 26 January 1914.

80. Jan OUDEGEEST, "Onderwijzers en klassenstrijd", *Het Volk*, 25 June 1914. Subsequent installments of the essay were published in *Het Volk*, 26-27 June 1914.

a substantial national organization. By late nineteenth-century standards, the BNO offered an impressive series of services to its members. On the other hand, it remains rather difficult to assess its effectiveness as a lobby for the advancement of teacher interests. While the real income position of teachers may have improved slightly by 1914, such improvement was modest and cannot necessarily be attributed to the efforts of the BNO. On the other major issues, the role of the principal in the primary school, checks or restraints on the growth of confessional schools, and assistance programmes to the children of the poor, the BNO efforts were not effective. This failure was due in part to the fact that segments of the liberal community gradually dropped their once violent objections to confessional education. In addition, the growing social democratic movement refused to support demands for compulsory secular, state, primary education after the 1902 party congress.

On the eve of the war, a number of activists within the BNO sought to bring the organization into the social democratic orbit through affiliation with the NVV. Failure to do so was largely rooted in the fact that a substantial number of BNO members were, and remained, liberal and would not easily consent to affiliation with an organization of social democratic character. The refusal to strike and to sanction strike strategies is a clear indication of the essentially liberal mentality of both the BNO leaders and the rank-and-file. The organization was clearly an association which lobbied and offered services to its members. It was not a group which would quickly evolve into a trade-union.

Beyond this, the SDAP leadership, and particularly P.J. Troelstra, consistently objected to the BNO endorsement of compulsory, secular primary education. Seeing in this demand a serious political liability, Troelstra was quick to question the judgement of BNO leaders like Ossendorp, asserting that they were more representative of a vested interest group than social democrats. Disputes of this nature only served to weaken socialist currents within the BNO at the very time that liberal political power was waning and clerical forces were developing considerable cultural and political momentum.