

'Large majority expected for Schuman Plan' from the Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant (31 October 1951)

Caption: On 31 October 1951, the Dutch daily newspaper Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant outlines the positions taken by some Dutch MPs during the debates on the ratification of the Schuman Plan by the Second Chamber of the States-General of the Netherlands.

Source: Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant. dir. de publ. Baas, F; Pluygers, W. ; Réd. Chef Rooy, M. 31.10.1951, n° 257; 108e année. [s.l.]: Rotterdam. "Grote meerderheit verwacht voor plan-Schuman", p. 1.

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Last updated: 06/07/2016

Large majority expected for Schuman Plan

(Afternoon and evening sitting of Tuesday, 30 October)

Prof. Gerbrandy did not manage to secure a postponement of the debate on the Treaty establishing a Coal and Steel Community (Schuman Plan). Only the Communists were prepared to back him. So he abandoned the attempt, and, as a result, the Netherlands is the first country in which the Coal and Steel Treaty has reached a decisive phase of deliberation in Parliament. In all probability, the Second Chamber will be the first national parliament to ratify the Treaty, since, of the thirteen members who took part in the debate, only the two Communist spokesmen opposed it, with Prof. Gerbrandy expressing 'serious doubts'. Following his attempt to secure a postponement, this was a relatively positive comment (attempts of this kind are, after all, usually made by those planning to vote against). The remaining members were – to varying degrees – in favour of ratifying the Treaty.

To varying degrees: what one person saw in the Treaty, another most definitely did not. Mr Nederhorst (Socialist Party) saw the Treaty being implemented along Socialist lines, and Mr Schouten (Anti-Revolutionary Party) said he could not accept the Treaty if that was the vision behind it. And this lofty futuristic debate on issues of international law formed the backdrop to squabbling between two 'Strasbourgers', Miss Klompé (Catholic People's Party) and Mr Van der Goes van Naters (Socialist Party). Mr Van der Goes's desire to label the Community 'sovereign' was dismissed by Miss Klompé as irrelevant. The question might be important in the context of whether or not the Community might conclude treaties on matters governed by international law, for example with Britain, whose position of distancing itself from the Treaty was regretted from various quarters. The view of the Netherlands Government was that a tie with Britain could not be forged in a treaty between Britain and the Community; that would require a treaty between all the Community Member States on the one hand and Britain on the other. Another 'Strasbourg', Mr Bruins Slot (Anti-Revolutionary Party), who was very much in favour of the Community, unlike his party leader, Prof. Gerbrandy, thought that the Community, as a legal person, certainly could conclude an agreement with Britain. Whether this was called a treaty was immaterial for the time being.

In this particularly rarefied atmosphere, Mr Van der Goes insisted on regarding the Community as a kind of supranational industrial regulatory body. But he wanted to have politicians in the Community's Assembly, which Miss Klompé thought was inconsistent with the nature of an industrial regulatory body. Mr Bruins Slot rightly made the point that it was not right to equate a supranational body of this kind with something which the Netherlands had but the other participating countries did not have. Mr Welter, unreservedly enthusiastic about the Treaty, was against comparisons with the industrial regulatory body for the same reason.

This lofty debate also has its useful side, of course, especially as the Government seems little inclined to accept the majority view of Parliament. The Government, according to Mr Bruins Slot, is doctrinally fearful of a society bursting out of its judicial forms. But it was also good to hear the honest views of Mr Korthals (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), who is also a 'Strasbourg'. His well-considered remarks (echoed in the contributions of members of the KVP-Catholic People's Party – Maenen and Van Thiel) were not lacking in enthusiasm. He regarded it as fortunate that the Netherlands was one of the pioneers in this new initiative (a fact also welcomed by Mr Van der Goes). The Treaty marked a new step forward on the road towards European integration.

The question of Germany also had to be borne in mind. If Germany was on board, this would be a good thing, said Mr Korthals. Mr Van der Goes thought it would be especially good for German workers.

Communist opposition to the Schuman Plan was well known: 'a blueprint for war drawn up by the Americans and Germans', according to Mr De Groot. And Mr Stokvis claimed that the Treaty was unconstitutional, especially as regards the Court of Justice which the Treaty provided for.

Mr Van den Brink, seconded by the Prime Minister, was there to listen to the debate, and he will speak on Wednesday. The Foreign Minister, Mr Stikker, who would normally have been present, was in Paris; and his

Junior Minister, Mr Blom, was also absent from the parliamentary stage; a fact to which several members drew attention.