

'The Schuman Plan' from the Volkskrant (13 May 1950)

Caption: On 13 May 1950, the Dutch daily newspaper De Volkskrant welcomes the announcement of the Schuman Plan which proposes that French and German coal and steel production be placed under the authority of a supranational European organisation.

Source: De Volkskrant. Katholiek Dagblad Voor Nederland. dir. de publ. KOLKMAN, J.A. ; Réd. Chef ROMME, C.P.M. 13.05.1950, n° 7 744; 28ste Jaargang. Amsterdam: De Volkskrant. "Het plan-Schuman", p. 6.

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The Schuman Plan

This week, France's Catholic Minister, Robert Schuman, took the world by surprise with his plan to place French and German coal and steel production under the control of a common international regulatory body with both economic and welfare tasks and objectives. This may be seen as the first attempt at creating a regulatory body for industry at international level. French capitalists have been quick to object to this proposal. The extremely hesitant response of the British and German Socialists shows that those countries remain strongly committed to nationalised control, and, if they do decide to go down the road of an industrial regulatory body, that they will do so only reluctantly. Enthusiasm for the plan in Dutch 'coal and steel circles' has been 'lukewarm'. Are workers in the mining and metalworking industries also part of these rather vaguely defined circles?

If we remember that, in our country, too, the first real industrial regulatory body was created in the mining industry, it will come as no surprise that Schuman should specifically choose coal and steel production as his starting point. These sectors are vital to the prosperity and wellbeing of the nation. So it is doubtless not by chance that Mr van den Brink called the Schuman Plan a 'welcome surprise', saying that it would be 'of great significance in helping to rebuild Europe's economies'.

The Netherlands has a pivotal role in this project. It is one of the countries, together with the other two Benelux partners and America and Britain, to which the French Government has officially proposed the Plan. Paris would be very happy to see the Benelux countries as part of this international regulatory body. And the Netherlands is more or less the first country to have made a start on establishing an industrial regulatory body at national level. As we see it, however, the chances of success for this new socio-economic system depend largely on international developments. If the international trend is also towards statutory systems for the regulation of welfare and economic matters, the outlook for the Dutch system will be very bright. But if Europe's wellbeing is pursued on the basis of a Liberal or Socialist economy, we think that this will be very bad news both for our country and for the continent as a whole.

The Schuman Plan merits more than just serious and well-intentioned study. At present, we still know too little about its potential repercussions to be able to deliver a definitive verdict on it. What we can say is that it points the way towards a sound and urgently needed solution. Let us hope it is adopted soon, with the Netherlands and the Benelux countries playing a part, because time is running out.