

‘Schuman and Stikker’ from De Volkskrant (24 June 1950)

Caption: On 24 June 1950, the Netherlands daily newspaper De Volkskrant reports on the progress of the negotiations on the Schuman Plan in Paris and discusses the economic implications of the future coal and steel pool.

Source: De Volkskrant. 24.06.1950. [s.l.]. "Schuman en Stikker".

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Schuman and Stikker

Following the Paris talks on the Schuman Plan, the Dutch delegation has decided — and practically all the other delegates have followed its lead — to return home for consultations and detailed instructions. As we see it, there is nothing strange in needing consultations and precise guidelines and orders on such a far-reaching and important issue. Once the delegates have consulted their governments they may, perhaps, put forward counter-proposals. We would find it very regrettable if the political side of the Schuman Plan were watered down in order, say, to satisfy the British. Not that we want to put the British off. But if they themselves insist that they want to be tied to the Continent as little as possible, the Continent has to take this seriously. It must then try everything possible to ensure that a grand plan like Robert Schuman's succeeds, because the aim is to make war between France and Germany impossible and to unite the two countries, not against but with others, in an alliance of steel. Because a supranational authority is to wield power here, rather than the two governments, there is less chance that these two big countries will dominate the other smaller ones.

The socio-economic side of Schuman's concept is, however, much less transparent, and if the Dutch want it to be clear, explicit and unambiguous, they are absolutely right. Socially and economically the Limburg mining industry, for instance, is streets ahead of other mining areas in Europe. In Belgium in particular the situation in the mines is poorer than here. So we could well be the main losers if there is a merger in this field. If we had to sell less or charge more in order to allow others to compete, it would be anything but welcome.

However, one of the fundamental elements of the Stikker plan which is intended to spread the burden of the merger could strengthen the foundations of the Schuman Plan. Would not an 'integration' fund as proposed by Dirk Stikker be likely to boost Schuman's 'coal and steel fund'? In the Benelux context a Dutch contribution to this integration fund could be paid with the Dutch debt to Belgium. Any Dutch contribution would have to take account not just of the conditions in one industry, but of the generally difficult situation throughout the country. There are various possibilities here and, where there's a will, there's a way.