

They were always quarreling

On dilettantes and political newcomers in Dutch politics of the twentieth and the twenty-first century

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October 10, 2018

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Abstract

During the years 1925-1940 many newly formed Dutch fascist political parties have spent most of their time and energy fighting other fascist parties and other fascists. Often this led to discord within the party, followed by the party splitting up. This article investigates the possible causes of this behavior and in particular the role of the party leaders, who were mostly political dilettantes. Their inexperience may have contributed to the fate of their parties. Two cases will be demonstrated: the *National Socialist Movement* (Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, 1931) and the *National Socialist Dutch Workers Party* (Nationaal-Socialistische Nederlandsche Arbeiders Partij, 1931), followed by an investigation into the role of political newcomers after the Second World War. It will be argued that they have learned from their pre-war predecessors. In particular the similarity in the legal structure between the two political newcomers from 1931 (*National Socialist Movement*) and from 2005 (*Party for Freedom*) is striking.

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I. Introduction¹

In The Netherlands, during the years between the two World Wars, many newly-formed fascist political parties fell prey to internal squabbles, quarrels, separation of spirits and finally party splitting. In this essays the reasons for this behavior shall be investigated, with a particular view on the role of the party leaders, mostly dilettantes.² Their political inexperience may have played an important role. Two cases in particular will be investigated: the *National-Socialist Movement* (Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, NSB) and the *National-Socialist Dutch Workers Party* (Nationaal-Socialistische Nederlandsche Arbeiders Partij, NSNAP). The former will be dealt with in summary terms, because in the past that party has been the subject of frequent research, and the latter will be given more attention because of its relative unfamiliarity. Subsequently the role of political newcomers after the Second World War will be investigated. It will be demonstrated that these political newcomers have learned from the adventures of their predecessors. In particular the similarity between the legal construction of Mussert's *National-Socialist Movement* and the *Party for Freedom* of Geert Wilders, is striking.

In 1917, the Dutch parliamentary democracy was enriched by the introduction of proportional representation, followed shortly after by universal suffrage. Before 1917 day-to-day politics had been the domain of 'gentlemen of class', after 1917 newcomers entered the political arena. These newcomers (consciously or unconsciously) had little respect for the norms, values, customs and traditions that had developed in Dutch politics since the mid-nineteenth century.³ Many new and small political parties tried to be elected into parliament. The fact that in order to be successful, one had to gain support for one's own ideas and the fact that one had to obtain consensus within one's own circle, was something not clear to every newcomer and that had to be learned the hard way. Especially in the case of the newcomers, the strategy of confrontation seemed to be the guiding principle. This caused that new parties regularly had to contend with quarrels in their own bosom that sometimes led to schism, separation of spirits and finally splitting of the party. In doing so, the high idealistic motives that initially had led to the founding of the party became beyond reach.

Thus, the fascist *Union of Actualists* (Verbond van Actualisten), which was founded in 1923, split into two parts just after the July 1925 elections. Amongst many other points its election program included: rejection of the French Revolution, of socialism and communism (and the ensuing class struggle) and of parliamentary democracy. In addition the *Union* wanted strengthening of government authority, but strangely enough, it also wanted a restriction on the power of parliament, provincial states and municipal councils. The division within the *Union* (the more extreme Mussolini supporters became increasingly uncompromising towards the moderate wing) hampered the conduct of an election campaign. The election results were accordingly: 2,253

1. I wish to thank Gerben Wynia, whose critical comments have improved the original text.

2. Within the framework of this article I define political dilettantes as those persons who behave like amateurs in political matters, and having no previous political experience whatsoever.

3. Koen Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark. Kleine politieke partijen in Nederland 1918-1940* (Amsterdam 2003) 34-39.

votes (0.07%) did not yield a seat in parliament. After the 1925 election, the *Union* broke up into two parts.⁴

The same applies to the *Fatherland Union* (*Vaderlandsch Verbond*). The poor results of the 1925 election led to a change of policy, which in its turn led to meetings with the *Union of Actualists*, with the goal of merging the two parties. This resulted in internal resistance within the *Fatherland Union*, which broke the party in two.

Another example: in the spring of 1931 the *Federation of Nationalists* (*Verbond van Nationalisten*) tore. One of the prominent members of the party was professor H.P. Blok from Utrecht University. He thought that the party was led in an amateur way and during a party meeting on March 15, 1931 on his initiative the decision was taken to reorganize the party. After having agreed with Blok's proposal at first, the current leadership of the party changed its mind. Blok and a number of his supporters were expelled. The outcasts then formed the *New Federation of Nationalists*.

The events that took place in the *Fascist Union 'The Broom'* (*Fascistenbond 'De Bezem'*) form a final example. This union was founded in the last months of 1928 and in the early Spring of 1932 there rose some disagreement about which course the party was to take. In April 1932 this discussion forced Tommy Hooykaas (a retired civil servant from the colony in the East) to leave the party, after which he immediately founded his own fascist party: the *Dutch Fascist League* (*Nederlandsche Fascisten Bond*). It didn't take long however, before the next schism in 'The Broom' occurred. Due to growing political differences of opinion, the bombshell was dropped during a rally on June 29, 1932. During that meeting, a majority of those present decided to expel the prominent financier Alfred Haighton as a party member and to entrust the overall management to Jan Baars. The name of the movement was changed to *General Dutch Fascist Union* (*Algemeene Nederlandsche Fascisten Bond*). Only a small group remained loyal to Haighton: over 75% of the members made the switch to the new party.

These examples show the squabbles, quarrels, schisms and splits that ravaged early Dutch fascism. At the time, people were annoyed by this counterproductive phenomenon. For example, there is the testimony of a young fascist from The Hague, member of 'The Broom', who remarks in retrospect: 'They were always quarreling and as a young man who wanted enthusiastically to help build a movement, you did not understand that. You would say, we all have the same ideals.'⁵ The national-socialist writer-publisher George Kettmann noted: 'In Jan Baars's *General Dutch Fascist Union* I had ample experience how enthusiasm could light up the sky like a firework, but how she also extinguished again and again; for any proper management was lacking.'⁶ By letter of June 30, 1932, one day after the splitting of 'The Broom', Kettmann terminated his membership.

In the following the organizational form of the two first Dutch national socialist parties will be presented: the *National-Socialist Movement* (*Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging*) and the

4. This example as well as the three following, from Willem Huberts, *In de ban van een beter verleden. Het Nederlandse fascisme 1923-1945*. PhD thesis University of Groningen, [https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/nl/publications/in-de-ban-van-een-beter-verleden\(4946e2ab-5212-4f55-a456-c715b949883d\).html](https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/nl/publications/in-de-ban-van-een-beter-verleden(4946e2ab-5212-4f55-a456-c715b949883d).html). Commercial edition: Nijmegen 2017.

5. Martin Schouten, *Voor de oorlog. Herinneringen aan de jaren 30* (Leiden 1982) 64.

6. George Kettmann, *Leven in tweespalt. Nagelaten geschriften van een nationaal-socialist* (Hilversum 1999) 115.

National-Socialist Dutch Workers Party (Nationaal-Socialistische Nederlandsche Arbeiders Partij). In the adversities of the *National-Socialist Dutch Workers Party* we will see the culmination point of how a party goes down in discord, in those of the *National-Socialist Movement* we will be able to see the successful fight against it.

II. Before the Second World War

At the end of February 1920 the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers Party), which had seen the light a year earlier, was renamed into the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers Party). From that moment on Adolf Hitler began his long march to power, which ended with the *Machtergreifung* of January 30, 1933. The march did not go by itself, for a long time it looked as if Hitler's *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* would remain one of those many mayflies, without any prospect of having ever any access to state power. It was not until the year 1929 that Hitler succeeded in getting his party some electoral success. Then things started to speed up. In September 1930 the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* became the second largest party in Germany and from that moment on the party joined the government in a few federal states.

The steady rise of Hitler and his *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* did not go unnoticed in The Netherlands. In the Dutch press during the years 1926-1928 Hitler was mentioned more than 100 times a year. In the following years, the number of entries rose steadily and in 1931 the number of mentions of the name Hitler had increased to 2,574.⁷ Until then, Dutch fascists had focused almost exclusively on Mussolini, who had been in power for some time in Italy. From 1923 on they had made efforts that were aimed at having fascism taking part as a political movement in the Dutch political system. However, no success was achieved. 'If we fail while aiming at Mussolini's fascism, perhaps Hitler's national socialism will do the trick,' so ambitious Dutch fascists might have thought. In December 1931, along the lines of following the footsteps of national socialism, the first two Dutch national socialist political parties saw the light. On December 14th Anton Mussert in Utrecht convened the first meeting of his *National Socialist Movement in The Netherlands* (Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland, NSB) and two days later the first meeting of the Dutch counterpart of Hitler's NSDAP took place in The Hague under the leadership of Adalbert Smit: the *National-Socialist Dutch Workers Party* (Nationaal-Socialistische Nederlandsche Arbeiderspartij, NSNAP). The NSB became a success, the NSNAP didn't.

In this essay the first months of the history of the NSNAP will be described.⁸ What strikes are the ignorance and incompetence of its leaders. As a result, the NSNAP never really made it out of the starting blocks. The leader of the NSNAP was the aforementioned Adalbert Smit. He was assisted by Ernst Herman knight van Rappard who acted as general secretary. Their very first activity was to send a letter to Hitler. No answer from the German Führer has been found in the archives. Before the end of 1931, the third protagonist had signed up: Albert de Joode – being an anti-Semite his

7. Delpher. URL: www.delpher.nl (consulted April 3, 2018).

8. For the complete history of the NSNAP in its relation to other fascist parties, see: Huberts, *In de ban van een beter verleden*.

Nationaal-Socialistische Nederlandsche Arbeiders-Partij



Kasteel „De Binckhorst”, Den Haag

DEN HAAG, Januari 1932.

Volksgenooten, Heil!

De stichting van de Nationaal-Socialistische Nederlandsche Arbeiders Partij (N. S. N. A. P.) is tot een feit geworden.

Hiermede wordt ook voor ons volk een nieuwe tijd ingeluid.

Op in den beginne vaak overweldigende tegenstand rekenen wij.

Op wanbegrippen bij welhaast allen, die de beteekenis van de N. S. N. A. P. niet verstaan, al evenzeer.

Om den tegenstand te overwinnen zullen wij trachten de wanbegrippen uit den weg te ruimen door verspreiding van kennis omtrent de N. S. N. A. P.

De grondslag van het Nationaal-Socialisme is

„Algemeen belang vóór Eigenbelang”.

De stelling, die sinds jaar en dag onze Westersche kultuur heeft ondermijnd en de ellende van deze dagen tot gevolg moest hebben, luidde: **Winst als doel**”.

De reden, waartoe volgens het beginsel van de N. S. N. A. P., de arbeid van allen slechts mag en moet verricht worden, heet:

„Voorzien in de behoeften”.

De wijze, waarop de enkeling in de door de N. S. N. A. P. gedachte samenleving, zal staan tegenover alle anderen, wordt kortweg samengevat in de vraag:

„Welke dienst bewijst hij aan de Samenleving?”

De belooning, waarop de enkeling recht heeft voor door hem geleverden arbeid wordt bepaald door **de grootte van den dienst**, die hij aan de samenleving bewijst.

De N. S. N. A. P. stelt zich op het **nationale** standpunt, in zooverre de natie **niet** is een enkel toevallige samenleving binnen een bepaald grensgebied, maar een, door den gemeenschappelijken wil tot hoogere ontwikkeling, door kultuur, ras en historische bestemming vast besloten verband, dat ook meerdere staten omvatten kan.

De N. S. N. A. P. is **socialistisch** en wel in den meest volstrekten zin van het woord, omdat de N. S. N. A. P. voorzieningen treft voor alle geleidingen der samenleving, geen bevoordeeling wil van den een, ten koste van den ander en de verschillen in levenshouding dusdanig beperkt, dat de, tot op heden kunstmatig in het leven gehouden **klassetegenstelling**, wegvalt.

De N. S. N. A. P. is Nederlandsch, omdat ze zich veeleer een beperkte en daarom bereikbare taak oplegt, dan eene, die door de wijdheid harer grenzen valt buiten bereik van het mogelijke.

De N. S. N. A. P. is een **arbeiders**-partij, omdat ze ieder, die geestelijk of lichamelijk deelneemt in het productie-proces, als arbeider ziet en daardoor getuigenis geeft van een zuivere waardeerding der dingen — in ideëlen zin is niemand heer en niemand knecht — doch zijn allen **dienenden**, omdat allen op elkaar zijn aangewezen.

De N. S. N. A. P. is **partij**, omdat het ieder rechtgeaard volksgenoot geboden is, partij te kiezen — partijloosheid is evenzeer een teeken van lamendigheid, als luiheid tot arbeiden — zij, die partijloos door het leven willen gaan, missen dan ook elk recht tot protest, zoo er over hen anders beslist mocht worden, dan zij wenschen.

Het program van de N. S. N. A. P. is drastisch en kent geen tegemoetkomingen, omdat het uitgaat van de wetenschap, dat zachte dokters stinkende wonden veroorzaken.

De N. S. N. A. P. ziet geen heil in het wegnemen der gevolgen van wat rot is in onze samenleving, doch eischt de verwijdering der oorzaken, die anders blijvend leiden tot verkeerde gevolgen.

Als gewichtigste en meest snuikende oorzaak van de ellende, die thans onze samenleving teistert, ziet de N. S. N. A. P. de materialistische opvattingen, die het met of zonder nationalistisch masker optredend Super-Kapitalisme, vooral van Niet-Volksgenooten, overal in ons Westen heeft doen voortwoekeren.

De N. S. N. A. P. bestrijdt een ieder, Volksgenoot of niet, die door zijn materialisme de belangen van het Nederlandsche Volk schaadt.

De N. S. N. A. P. staat niet op het eenzijdig standpunt, hetwelk alle schuld der maatschappelijke verwording en ellende op een bepaalde groep der samenleving afschuift.

surname must have made him feel rather uncomfortable.⁹ He therefore preferred to call himself Albert van Waterland. Of course the NSNAP did not appear out of the blue and the three protagonists also had a history in Dutch fascism.

Bertus Smit (1897-1994, he called himself Adalbert) had traveled through Europe between 1920 and 1930, being a propagandist for the artificial language Esperanto. After a visit to Mussolini's Italy he embraced fascism.¹⁰ In 1929 he became a member of the Fascist Union 'The Broom', consisting of a mixture of idealists, opportunists and activists. It was being financed by Alfred Haighton, a very wealthy man who trusted no one except himself and who, partly because of his suspicious personality, continually caused schisms in every political party he was active in – including 'The Broom'. In mid-1931 Smit broke all ties with Haighton and founded the *Dutch Corporate State Party* (Nederlandsche Corporatieve Staats Partij, NCSP). Due to lack of money the NCSP soon perished. In the meantime Smit had come into contact with Ernst van Rappard and he convinced Smit to make the transition from a Mussolini like fascist to an anti-Semitic national socialist.

Ernst Herman knight van Rappard (1899-1953) was a scholar who became a political activist.¹¹ As early as 1922 he was involved in the founding of the *Union of Actualists* (Verbond van Actualisten), the first fascist political party in The Netherlands. He was an economist and in 1930 he obtained his PhD in Vienna with a thesis on constitutional law. Between 1925 and 1930 he stayed in Austria and Germany, where he came into contact with fascist and national socialist ideas. In the course of 1930 he returned to The Netherlands. He came into contact with Bertus Smit, with whom he was very frequently connected in the last months of 1931. This led to their joint efforts to get national socialism and anti-Semitism firmly established in The Netherlands.

Albertus de Joode (1891-1972) was jack-of-all-trades and master of none.¹² He originated from the region north of Amsterdam, from which he derived his pseudonym: Albert van Waterland. He lacked a formal school education but proved to be very ambitious. He started his career as a reporter at the local newspaper *De Waterlander*. In 1916 he worked as a journalist at the national newspaper *De Telegraaf*. In the early twenties he became a member of the *Communist Party Holland*, where he became active in the region around Landsmeer and Den IJp. From 1925 on he worked as a journalist in Nijmegen. When, in December 1931, he learned that the NSNAP had been

9. *De Joode* meaning *The Jew* in Dutch.

10. Further details on his biography in: Willem Huberts, *De man van vele namen. Bertus Smit 1897-1994* (Nijmegen 2017).

11. Further information on Van Rappard is to be found in G.R. Zondergeld, 'Rappard, Ernst Herman ridder van (1899-1953)', in *Biografisch Woordenboek van Nederland*. URL: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn6/rappard> (consulted April 5, 2018) and in P.J. Schultheiss, *Niet volgens het boekje: over drie Nederlandse edellieden die in de periode 1930-1945 kozen voor het nationaal-socialisme*. Bachelor thesis University of Utrecht, 2014.

12. Further information on De Joode in Erik Schaap, 'Oostzaner Albert de Joode: pionier van het nazisme'. URL: <http://www.meitotmei.nl/oostzaner-albert-de-joode-pionier-van-het-nazisme/> (consulted April 5, 2018). I would like to express my gratitude to Alex Geelhoed. He let me consult his documentation on Albert de Joode, without which I wouldn't have been able to add many biographical facts.



Bertus Smit, Berlin, probably Spring 1933



Albert de Joode, probably 1935



Ernst Herman van Rappard, probably 1943-1944

founded, he contacted Smit and Van Rappard, who instructed him to set up an Amsterdam branch of the NSNAP.

The founding of the NSNAP did not go unnoticed in the national press. Just the day after the party had been founded, the national newspaper *Het Vaderland* reported on it. The striking similarity with Hitler's *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* was noted by the journal, as well as its outspoken anti-Semitic views and its firm opposition against capitalism.¹³ The socialist daily *Het Volk* carefully analyzed the program of the NSNAP and concluded: 'The new group, with the scary German relationship and with known names in the leadership, could in fact be financially stronger than the insignificant groups present so far. And since money is also the soul of anti-Semitism, the message this is bringing, is to be careful.'¹⁴

Smit and his fellow leaders will have been satisfied, for this newspaper article demonstrated that the NSNAP was being taken seriously as a new star on the Dutch fascist sky. Some days later this positive feeling would have been reinforced by the interview with Bertus Smit on the front page of the national daily *Het Volk*. He was given the opportunity to amply bring his views to the attention of the readers of the newspaper: 'Above all, we want to be a movement, we shall only be a political party insofar it will make us known by the general public and to lead us to our goal: a revolutionary reform of the state, but within legal boundaries.'¹⁵ It remains unclear if the ironic tone of the interview will have frustrated the positive fact of press attention.

Like almost all fascist and national-socialist parties and movements in The Netherlands between 1923 and 1940, the NSNAP also fell prey to dissension and schism. The speed with which this happened, however, was so great that even within the collection of comparable political organizations the NSNAP turned out to be an exception. On January 16, 1932, one month after the founding of the NSNAP, its members convened in The Hague. On behalf of the Amsterdam faction Albert de Joode argued that the leadership of the party should not be in the hands of those that had founded the party, but that the party should appoint its own leadership. The leader would present himself in a natural way and would rise from the party ranks, according to De Joode. Adalbert Smit, being the founder and president of the NSNAP, obviously did not agree with De Joode and he claimed the position of leader, being the initiator.¹⁶ In mid-February a 'party council meeting' was held in The Hague where the conflict with regard to the leadership issue became evident. Van Rappard chose the side of De Joode and the former distanced himself from Smit.¹⁷ Then Smit expelled Van Rappard and some of his supporters as members of the NSNAP. On behalf of the

13. *Het Vaderland*, December 17, 1931.

14. *Het Volk*, December 30, 1931.

15. *Het Volk*, January 2, 1932.

16. *De Tijd*, February 26, 1932.

17. *Het Vaderland*, February 24, 1932.

Amsterdam faction Albert de Joode did not agree with Smit's decision. He chose Van Rappard's side and by doing so created the first schism in the NSNAP.¹⁸

On March 11, 1932 a public meeting of the NSNAP was organized in The Hague, with Adalbert Smit and Dirk Forma as speakers.¹⁹ Their journal was called *The Swastika (Het Hakenkruis)*. A few weeks later the newspaper *Het Vaderland* reported that the national head office of the NSNAP will be located in Amsterdam. Its journal will be called *The National Socialist*.²⁰ It seems fair to conclude that from March 1932 on at least two NSNAP's are active: one with Smit as its leader and one with De Joode as leader. The NSNAP of De Joode was founded during a meeting on February 27, 1932.²¹ On this meeting it was decided not to take a decision who was to be the leader of the party. Albert de Joode, however, had a seat in the national board and in addition he was chairman of the Amsterdam faction, so in all honesty all members will have thought that De Joode was the leader of the party.²²

In April 1932 Smit and his NSNAP renounced anti-Semitism as easily as they had embraced it in December 1931.²³ That turnaround also appears to have been Smit's swan song, because on April 28, 1932 he announced via a press release that since of April 27, 1932 he no longer was in charge of the NSNAP.²⁴ In the same article, it is mentioned that Albert de Joode from Amsterdam assumed the leadership of the NSNAP. The first thing De Joode did, being the new leader of the NSNAP, was to send a telegram to Adolf Hitler, in which De Joode congratulated him on his recent election victory.²⁵ Background of Smit's resignation as leader of the NSNAP seems to have been that he had alienated other NSNAP members in such a way that they took refuge with De Joode.²⁶

However, the confusion did not end here. A day later *Het Vaderland* reported that Adalbert Smit had founded a new party: the *National Socialist Party in The Netherlands*.²⁷ The reasons he provided for this unexpected action are: firstly German national socialism can not be transferred to

18. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, February 26, 1932.

19. *Haagsche Courant*, March 9, 1932.

20. *Het Vaderland*, March 27, 1932.

21. *Het Vaderland*, March 1, 1932.

22. Worth mentioning is the role played in this NSNAP by ir. H.J. van Houten. He turned out to be the secretary of the Hague faction, but presumably he acted as a spy of Mussert and his NSB. Van Houten was one of the very first members of Mussert's NSB. His party number was 5, which means that, after Mussert and his second man Cornelis van Geelkerken, Van Houten was the fifth person to join the NSB, probably in December 1931 or in January 1932.

23. *Haagsche Courant*, April 19, 1932 and *De Maasbode*, April 20, 1932.

24. *Het Vaderland*, April 28, 1932.

25. *Het Volk*, April 28, 1932.

26. *Het Vaderland*, April, 28 1932.

27. *Het Vaderland*, April 29, 1932.

The Netherlands, secondly German anti-Semitism doesn't do right by Dutch Jews, who have a completely different position in The Netherlands than the Jews in Germany and thirdly because the multiplicity of fascist and national-socialist political movements would be confusing for the Dutch electorate. With this new party, Smit intended to join forces in the fascist political field, which was so fragmented. It is highly doubtful whether those interested in fascist politics of 1932 will have understood Smit's reasoning. Apparently he changed his political views as easy as he did his stationery.

In the subsequent activist adventures the three protagonists chose different paths. From 1935 on Smit showed himself a staunch opponent of Hitler, which caused him to be arrested after the German invasion in May 1940. In 1942 he was arrested again and in a Berlin trial sentenced to death, but afterwards he was released. He spent the rest of the war as an odd-jobber and spent time in various concentration camps. After the war he ended all political activities. He proved to be an opportunistic activist that constantly overestimated his own leadership capacities and organizational skills.

De Joode soon rebaptized his NSNAP in *National Socialist Party* and participated unsuccessfully in the national elections of 1933 as well in the 1935 elections for the Amsterdam city council. From that moment on he then earned his living as an administrator of an Amsterdam travel agency and as warehouse manager at an Amsterdam factory. During the Second World War he became a member of Musserts *National Socialist Movement in The Netherlands*, but soon he was expelled because he did not pay his contribution fee. After the Second World War he was sentenced to pay a fine due to his political activities. As a political activist De Joode showed unstable views and he proved himself to be as unsuccessful as opportunistic.

From 1932 to 1940 Van Rappard led his *National-Socialist Dutch Workers Party* (NSNAP) on a path towards a full integration of The Netherlands into Hitler's Third Reich. Due to a lack of success and a constantly diminishing number of adherents, he discontinued his NSNAP in 1939. After the German invasion of May 1940 he re-established his party, thanks to considerable financial support from the occupying German forces. With his new NSNAP he strove for 'the re-awareness of the German blood of the Dutch and of the unity of the Dutch and Germans through National Socialism'. In March 1941 he joined the Waffen-SS. In December the same year he discontinued his NSNAP, by order of German authorities. After being arrested in May 1945, Van Rappard was sentenced to a life imprisonment. As a mitigating circumstance, the judge ruled that Van Rappard was 'an idealist without any sense of practical attitude'. In 1953 he died at the age of 52 from a cerebral hemorrhage in the Central Hospital for the Prison System in Vught. He proved to be an idealist, in any case unsuitable for every day political activities.

After having founded the *National Socialist Movement in The Netherlands* on Dec. 14, 1931, Anton Mussert made every effort to protect his NSB from all party political and organizational problems mentioned above. Among other things, he did this by having people believe he never had any involvement with one of the many fascist political parties that preceded the NSB and in doing so, distancing himself from his predecessors. This was not entirely in accordance with the truth,



Anton Mussert, leader of the *National Socialist Movement in The Netherlands*

because he had joined the right-authoritarian National Union in 1927.²⁸ A year or so later he enlisted as a member of the Fascist Union 'De Bezem'.²⁹ Mussert also tried to stay aloof from all the craziness in which the many groups of fascists and national socialists excelled, because why should 'the nationally known and respected Mussert lose his reputation by engaging himself with murky figures of the caliber Sinclair and Haighton?'³⁰ Mussert distanced himself from his predecessors and competitors, not only to keep his image clean, but also because he did not want his NSB down and out before it had properly started – the fate of many a predecessor fascist party. That was why Mussert wanted to organize his NSB in such a legally sound way that it would be impossible for him to ever lose full control over the party against his will. Most probably he was advised by the lawyer Mr. A.J. van Vessem, who acted as legal counsel for Mussert since the very beginning of the NSB. In November 1932, almost a year after the foundation of the NSB it was provided with a legal framework. It was to be a foundation, a form of organization that in The Netherlands did (and still does) not have any members and therefore no annual members' meeting, in which members could not only criticize chairman Mussert, but even change the NSB policy in a direction undesirable by Mussert. The newly established foundation had only one director, called 'general leader' and that was Mussert himself. This one director did not have to answer to anyone. However, the director would be assisted by a so-called 'General Council', but not only was this council appointed by Mussert himself, but it was also stipulated by statute that this council would only have an advisory

28. Robin te Slaa & Edwin Klijn, *De NSB. Ontstaan en opkomst van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, 1931-1935* (Meppel 2009) 115.

29. Archives of Hugo Sinclair de Rochemont, BHIC-328, inv. nr. 18. Sinclair is short for Hugo Sinclair de Rochemont, one of the founders of the *Union of Actualists* (Verbond van Actualisten), the very first Dutch fascist political party.

30. Te Slaa & Klijn, *De NSB*, 202.

function.³¹ To summarize: it was Mussert, and Mussert alone, who determined the policy of the NSB. Over the course of time a number of attempts have been made to put Mussert aside, but mainly because of the legal structure of the NSB these attempts never stood a chance.³² The way the NSB was legally structured, ensured that it was kept free from the eternal squabbles, the quarrels, the schisms and the splits to which almost all other fascist and national-socialist parties fell prey. In doing so Mussert had succeeded where others failed.

III. After the Second World War

Can lessons be learned from the adventures of pre-war dilettantish political adventurers and activists? And if so, which ones? Dilettantes in politics are a relatively commonplace phenomenon. For a part of the electorate they fulfill the function of the court jester, whose self-righteous grolles and jokes provide the serious and professional politics with an ironic counterpoint. More forcefully formulated: the dilettante's ambition is to show the political establishment once and for all how things should be done. This sentiment can be observed as well as in The Netherlands as abroad. In The Netherlands, during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s Boer Koekoek from the *Farmer's Party* played the role of the clown with 'common sense' who tried to make a fool of other politicians, while larding his speeches with jokes and grudges. Thierry Baudet of the *Forum for Democracy* constantly presents itself as a counterpart to 'the party cartel' that distributes jobs and in doing so holds and keeps the power in hands. As for the United States, before and after his election as president Donald Trump promised to dampen the swamp of the political establishment. Here we find the interface between dilettante and populist. Since the introduction (some 100 years ago) of universal suffrage and proportional representation people of all kinds have tried to earn their place in politics. Some aroused the laughter of their contemporaries, others only found sympathy. In the following I will present some of these dilettantes and their political parties.

Farmers' Party (Boerenpartij)³³

The *Farmers' Party* of Hendrik Koekoek can be regarded as the most prominent post-war protest party. It started in the late 1940s as a pressure group that was committed to limiting governmental interference with agricultural business. The party had to wait some ten years for the first political successes. It was striking that from that moment on the electorate of the *Farmer's Party* was not found exclusively in rural areas. Supporters of the *Farmer's Party* showed to be dissatisfied with excessive government interference, the presence of too many civil servants in government administration and too much prominent socialism in the overall society. From the early 1980s on Koekoek's *Farmer's Party* remained an reservoir of dissatisfied voters, despite (or perhaps even because of this) an obvious inability to set up an efficient party organization. During his first years

31. Ibid., p. 169.

32. In 1937 Gerrit van Duyl attempted to replace Anton Mussert and in 1943 Henk Feldmeyer tried the same. Both failed.

33. See: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/repertoriumkleinopolitiekepartijen/PartijDetail?Id=23> (consulted May 12, 2014) and <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/pp/bp/geschied> (consulted February 20, 2016).



Poster of the *Farmer's Party* for the 1963 parliamentary elections

in the House of Representatives, the political dilettante 'Farmer Koekoek', as he became known, drew general attention because of his unconventional and sometimes even rude and unparliamentary style. After the parliamentary debut in 1963, amongst the party members tensions arose about the course, organization and leadership of the party. In 1965 Koekoek expelled a number of party members because they challenged his leadership. Soon after the positive results in the 1966 elections, Dutch newspaper journals published discoveries concerning the behavior during the Second World War of a number of prominent party members, who had collaborated with the occupying German Nazi forces. Once again many criticized the way in which Koekoek's handled this affair. In reaction to that a number of party members then set up an action committee called 'emergency council' ('noodraad'). The purpose of this council was to purge the *Farmer's Party* of former Nazi elements and to professionalize and democratize the party organization. This 'emergency council' wanted to elect a completely new party leadership. Koekoek by himself held all important positions in the party: he was president of the *Farmer's Party*, chairman of all party members in the House of Representatives and editor-in-chief of the party magazine. He was not willing to honor any of the wishes of the 'emergency council' and on October 11, 1966 he expelled all members of it out of the *Farmer's Party*. On June 21, 1968, this process repeated itself: Koekoek

expelled four of the seven members of the House of Representatives, again after they had criticized the lack of member participation in the party. This continued through the 1970s, when the *Farmer's Party* was plagued by discord and split-offs. Again and again Koekoek was the center of the controversies. In 1977 a part of the party split off after Koekoek again had refused to meet their wish to install a more democratic and professional organization.

Looking back, it can be concluded that Koekoek has not succeeded in making his *Farmer's Party* a stable and reliable factor in Dutch politics. However, he did succeed in retaining all power during the existence of the *Farmer's Party*, but this proved no guarantee for any success in the House of Representatives. His dilettantism prevented him from having a lasting influence on government policy.

Centre Party (Centrumpartij) / *Centre Party '86* (CP '86) / *Centre Democrats* (Centrumdemocraten)³⁴

During the 1980s and the 1990s voters saw the rise and fall of the *Centre Party* (in 1986 it was declared bankrupt, after which it renamed itself *Centre Party '86*) and the *Centre Democrats*. Hans Janmaat has been the undisputed leader for most of the period. The history of this political movement can be characterized by on the one hand an almost continuous struggle for power and on the other hand endless disputes about the ideological principles. Continuously the party was plagued by quarrel, disagreement, splitting of the party, alternating with all kinds of half-hearted attempts to regain unity. Hans Janmaat remained the party leader, who, thanks to his amateurish and dilettantistic fiddling about, was partly responsible for the constant unrest in his party. Undoubtedly the government also played an influential role, as Hans Janmaat and his party were constantly being watched and scrutinized. The party and its members had to cope with frequent prosecution by the government, as well as enduring opposition by fellow parliamentarians and an almost unanimous negative press, not to mention the active opposition of various left-wing action groups. These factors ensured Hans Janmaat never succeeded in making his party into one comprehensive movement for the extreme right.



Cover of the bye-laws of the *Centre Party*, 1980

34. See <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/pp/cp> and <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/pp/cd> (consulted February 20, 2016).

*Elderly Parties (Ouderenpartijen)*³⁵

Since the end of the 1980s in Dutch politics several interest groups for the elderly were formed. Over a period of 25 years more than ten political parties emerged, some of which were ephemerons and others that lasted longer. In alphabetical order a presumably incomplete overview: *50Plus*, *General Elderly Association* (Algemeen Ouderen Verbond), *General Seniors Party* (Algemene Senioren Partij), *New Solidarity Elderly Union* (Nieuw Solidair Ouderenverbond), *Elderly Politically Active* (Ouderen Politiek Actief), *Elderly Union 55+* (Ouderen Unie 55+), *Elderly Union* (Ouderenunie), *Political Party for Elderly* (Politieke Partij voor Ouderen), *Political Union 55+* (Politieke Unie 55+), *United Senior Citizen Party* (Verenigde Senioren Partij), *Seniors 2000* and *Union 55+* (Unie 55+). All of these parties displayed a kind of behavior that also can be seen amongst the majority of fascist parties in the years 1925-1935. Certainly in their first years of existence the quantity of expelled members is astonishing. This can be attributed to the growing pains that political newcomers have to endure, but the dilettantism of their leaders (combined with a large number of highly assertive members) will certainly have played a role.

*Pim Fortuyn List (Lijst Pim Fortuyn)*³⁶

Pim Fortuyn also was a dilettante in politics. As a result of his assassination on May 6, 2002, he never had the chance to show that he had the ability to become a competent politician or leader. It will forever be unclear whether he would have taken steps to prevent what in the past happened to almost every new political party in The Netherlands: quarrel, discord and separation of spirits, resulting in splitting of the party. However, that was exactly what happened after Fortuyn's death. During its existence, between 2002 and 2008, the number of quarrels, suspensions, expulsions, schisms, exits, splits, riots and disturbances in the *Pim Fortuyn List* is impressive.

(Candidate) MPs became discredited and dubious financial transactions of administrators were extensively discussed in the press. Immediately after Fortuyn's death the party leadership became the subject of overt quarreling, all sorts of hassle arose around intended and already appointed Secretaries of State, as the party participated in the Cabinet. Soon after the 2002 parliamentary elections the party sunk in a deep crisis because of the inadequate functioning of the party organization. The party leadership and the parliamentary faction fought over possible influence exerted by former members of the extreme right *Centre Party*. There wasn't any consensus over who was to be leader of the *Pim Fortuyn List* as the party leadership and the MP's fought over who was to be the real leader of the party. Members of parliament left the party and started a party of their own, as did a Cabinet Minister who left the Cabinet. Provincial delegates split off and even an entire provincial faction broke away from the *Pim Fortuyn List*. In total, the parliamentary fraction of the *Pim Fortuyn List* fell prey to a split six times over a period of four years – a record in Dutch parliamentary history. Fortuyn can be considered as the last in the line whose political party fell prey to disorder and schism.

35. More information on the political parties in this section is to be found at: <http://dnpp.nl/>.

36. Information from: <http://dnpp.nl/dnpp/pp/lpf/jaarboek> (consulted May 17, 2018) and from <http://dnpp.nl/dnpp/content/partijafsplitsingen-de-tweede-kamer-vanaf-1946> (consulted May 17, 2018)

Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid)³⁷

From the vicissitudes of Geert Wilders, after he split off from the VVD parliamentary faction in 2004, it can be concluded that he made every effort to prevent that his new *Party for Freedom* (Partij voor de Vrijheid) would succumb to what has been described in the previous paragraphs. On September 2, 2004, Wilders left his political party, the VVD, and continued as 'Group Wilders'. He took with him his chair in parliament. Hardly two months later he created the *Foundation Group Wilders* (Stichting Groep Wilders), with fundraising as the primary goal. This foundation had only one member: Geert Wilders himself. On March 30, 2005, Geert Wilders and the *Foundation Group Wilders* jointly set up an association called *Party for Freedom* (Partij voor de Vrijheid). A halt on recruitment of new members was announced immediately after the foundation had taken place. From a legal point of view, the *Party for Freedom* therefor only has one member: Geert Wilders. He and only he has the power to decide on all matters concerning his party. Initially there appeared to be no question of a fundamental choice for this party model, Wilders merely tried to prevent the disruptive events that had happened before to other political parties. The chosen legal structure of the *Party for Freedom* could not prevent splits from his parliamentary faction from happening: there were seven MP's that split off in the period 2012-2017. Nor did it prevent numerous uprisings within the party or within several provincial and regional factions of the party. What he did achieve however is that his *Party for Freedom* never fell prey to disintegration by insurgents from within, or that the policy of the *Party for Freedom* (after all only determined by him) could ever be questioned. Wilders was and still is the undisputed and only leader of the *Party for Freedom*. He controls the *Party for Freedom* in a strict manner, leaving no room for dissenting opinions. In doing so, Wilders has been the first to prove having learned from the past and subsequently having put those lessons into practice.

Forum for Democracy (Forum voor Democratie)³⁸

Forum for Democracy originally was set up by Thierry Baudet and others as a think tank, but in September 2016 it was converted into a political party. In the 2017 parliamentary elections *Forum for Democracy* obtained two seats, which were taken by the leader of the party, Thierry Baudet and by a nationally well-known lawyer Theo Hiddema. Baudet was a newcomer in politics and he made it clear he wanted to renew democracy. The legal organization of *Forum for Democracy* is a classic 'normal' one: a party with members who had joined. This party grew rapidly in numbers, 750 members in October 2016, 2,000 in January 2017 and almost 23,000 in January 2018. *Forum for Democracy* is tightly led in a highly centralized way: the party management selects election candidates at the national, provincial and municipal level. Provincial and local departments function as 'informal consultation platforms' without any authority that would permit them to make decisions of their own. At the end of 2017 internal problems rose in the fast-growing party. Several prominent party members expressed their dissatisfaction with the alleged lack of internal

37. https://www.montesquieu-instituut.nl/id/vj5eflkxm6yg/een_unieke_partij_de_organisatie_van_de (consulted May 18, 2018)

38. <http://dnpp.ub.rug.nl/dnpp/pp/fvd/geschied> (consulted May 18, 2018) and https://www.montesquieu-instituut.nl/id/vka0ih3iyavi/nieuw_met_stip_3_forum_voor_democratie (consulted May 18, 2018).

democracy. In February 2018 this led to the expulsion of a few prominent and critical party members, soon to be followed by more expulsions. It rapidly became clear that the risks of an association with voting members quickly and effectively were tackled by stern hand top-down intervening in order to guarantee the unity of the party and its policy. It remains to be seen if this method will have a lasting positive effect on the future of this young party.

IV. Conclusion

In this essay I hope to have demonstrated that political dilettantism in leadership has deprived many political parties of a successful future. When in the autumn of 1932 Anton Mussert gave his party the *National Socialist Movement in The Netherlands* a legal framework, it turned out that he had learned from the adversities of the newcomers on the political scene who appeared in the years before Mussert did. He did not opt for the legal form of an association, but instead he chose the form of a foundation with a one-man board: himself. He did not prevent problems in his political party, but he did succeed in protecting his party against an early demise, caused by squabbling, internal party battles and party splitting.

Newcomers after 1945 have tried in various ways to preserve the unity in their party; one (Hendrik Koekoek) succeeded better than the other (Hans Janmaat), while others did not succeed at all (all of the political parties aimed at the elderly and the *Pim Fortuyn List*). Thierry Baudet successfully controls his party with a stern fist. The first one who showed himself knowing the past and wanting to learn from it, was Geert Wilders. He set up his *Party for Freedom* in exactly the same way as Anton Mussert had arranged his *National Socialist Movement in The Netherlands* seventy years earlier.