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The Making of the Democratic Party. The Emergence of the Party Organizations of the German Social Democratic Workers' Party, the British National Liberal Federation and the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party, 1860s-1880s

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II. Education: The Missing Link between Association and Party

1. Opposition to Political Organization

Looking back at the history of Orthodox Protestantism, the party founder Abraham Kuyper told his followers that the emergence of the Anti-Revolutionary Party (Anti-Revolutionaire Partij, ARP) was an unavoidable necessity in 1879: “Now organization could no longer be postponed.”¹⁸⁰ This chapter analyzes the period before party organization to critically engage with this statement and analyze the processes that led to party foundation. Based on comparative source analysis and recent historiography, it argues that party emergence was not as inevitable and gradual as Kuyper wanted to make it seem.¹⁸¹ Despite membership in local organizations, it took several decades before Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries could transform previous organizational traditions into party organization. This difficult process was not limited to the Netherlands, but shared among the different cases of this study. The reason for this was that party founders of different national circumstances encountered fierce opposition to setting up a formal political organization. Not only their political opponents, but also the adherents of their political orientation, including close allies, questioned whether a more outspoken political course on the part of their respective communities was desirable. These people suspected that further institutionalization facilitated the manipulation of ordinary people. Even worse, the radical adjustment of political culture that party founders proposed had the potential of igniting violent revolution. Hence, the question that stands in the center of the chapter is: How did party founders like Kuyper, Bebel and Chamberlain overcome this opposition and gain enough support for the foundation of party organizations?

The national organizations that preceded the three party organizations were founded for educational purposes. In the context of the nineteenth century, this was not a coincidence as education became a regular feature of private and public life, because it was as much a formative activity in schools, universities and associations as an attractive political cause. Especially for political reformers, education was a crucial topic, because it was directly related to the creation of the future nation.¹⁸² Regardless of specific ideological orientation, Liberals,

¹⁸⁰ “Thans kon organisatie niet langer worden verschoven.” Abraham Kuyper, “Vergadering van het Voorlopig Centraal Comité voor Antirevolutionaire Kiesverenigingen,” 1879, 2, Politieke Organisaties, Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme.,

¹⁸¹ See the detailed studies of Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*; Janssens, *opbouw*.

¹⁸² In Britain, the example of the school movement in Manchester and Birmingham is a good example. A. F Taylor, “Birmingham and the Movement for National Education 1867-77: An Account of the Work and Influence of the National Education League” (University of Leicester, 1960). For the German context, see Frolinde Balsler, *Die Anfänge der Erwachsenenbildung in Deutschland in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts: eine kultursoziologische Deutung*, Beiträge zur Erwachsenenbildung (Stuttgart: Klett, 1959); Birker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine*; Francis Ludwig Carsten, “The Arbeiterbildungsvereine and

Socialists and Anti-Revolutionaries broadly agreed that schools and educational associations were responsible for preparing citizens for the future state. This was also the reason why education was an important topic in the discussions around suffrage rights extension. Contemporary commentators believed that ordinary people could participate in the political process only if they developed a thorough understanding of the functioning of the state.¹⁸³ At the same time education provided ordinary people with the tangible opportunity and transformative experience of social advancement and the advancement of their material situation. Even in the biographies of party founders, education played an important role. Bebel, Chamberlain and Kuyper were determined to succeed in the century's race for upward social mobility, creating a better life than their fathers had.¹⁸⁴

In the process of party formation education became a frame that helped overcome the reservation against institutionalization. Education had a powerful mobilizing effect, because it

the Foundation of the Social-Democratic Workers Party in 1869," *The English Historical Review* 107, no. 423 (April 1, 1992): 361–77; Werner Lesanovsky, *Lernen, lernen und abermals lernen: August Bebel über Volksbildung, Erziehung und Pädagogik* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 2005); Winfried Meid, "Die Volksbildungskonzeption Wilhelm Liebknechts: Versuch einer Rekonstruktion unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Liebknechts politisch-aufklärerischem Wirken in der sächsischen Arbeiterbewegung (1865-1878)" (Universität Marburg, 1980). For the Dutch case, see Jan Lenders, "Van kind tot burger: Lager onderwijs en de vorming tot burgerschap in de negentiende eeuw," in *Tot burgerschap en deugd: volksopvoeding in de negentiende eeuw*, ed. Nelleke Bakker, Rudolf Dekker, and Angeliqve Janssens (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 11–34; Haan, Ido de, "Van staatszorg tot vrijheidsrecht. De Schoolstrijd in de Nederlandse politiek en samenleving," in *Tot burgerschap en deugd: volksopvoeding in de negentiende eeuw*, ed. Nelleke Bakker, Rudolf Dekker, and Angeliqve Janssens (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006), 81–103; Michael Wintle, "Natievorming, onderwijs en godsdienst in Nederland, 1850-1900," in *De eenheid & de delen: zuilvorming, onderwijs en natievorming in Nederland, 1850-1900*, ed. Henk te Velde and Hans Verhage (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1996), 13–28; Miert, "Wars van clubgeest en partijzucht," 78–82; Th Veld, *Volksonderwijs en leerplicht: een historisch sociologisch onderzoek naar het ontstaan van de Nederlandse leerplicht 1860-1900* (Delft: Eburon, 1987), 77.

¹⁸³ Birker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine*, 149–59; Haan, *Het beginsel van leven en wasdom*, 77–86; Robert Saunders, "Democracy," in *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. David Craig and James Thompson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 142–67.

¹⁸⁴ Most educated was Abraham Kuyper, who according to some historians was already "brilliant" in his early years. In 1870, his commitment and charisma helped the thirty-year-old to become the minister of the prestigious parish of Amsterdam. Jasper Vree, "Abraham Kuyper in de jaren 1848-1874: een briljante, bevolgen branie," *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* 29, no. 65 (2006): 26–49. Although unable to afford university education, the young August Bebel had benefitted from public schooling, despite his family's poverty. When the family moved to the Prussian town of Wetzlar, the clever boy qualified for extra lessons in mathematics. Later Bebel would start his vocational training as a carpenter to become his own master, financially struggling, but determined to keep his business going. Carsten, *August Bebel*, 15–22; Bebel, *Aus meinem Leben*. Like his German and Dutch counterparts, Joseph Chamberlain was a bright student, winning several prizes at his school. With the financial support of his father, Chamberlain was able to join his uncle's automated factory for screw production in Birmingham. This provided the young entrepreneur with a formidable income and fortune. Balfour, *Britain and Joseph Chamberlain*, 52–57; Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 10–28.

demonstrated the connections between the living situations of geographically scattered individuals. School legislation gave state authorities increased influence in the local context. This intervention became a shared experience for many ordinary men and women. In this way, education created a social context where national cooperation became a viable course of action. The topic was so important that it inspired activists to extend their practices in three arenas: national assemblies, newspapers and organizations. Party founders used these platforms to address the constituencies of Dutch Orthodox Protestants, German Social Democrats and British Radical Liberals. They referred to the failed attempts of previous forms of national cooperation to advocate a more advanced form of organization. Only through better political representation could they improve the living situation of their community.

2. Dutch Anti-School Law League

2.1 Contested Political Protest

In the Netherlands, Protestants not only constituted the vast majority of the population, they also increasingly saw themselves as the core of the Dutch nation.¹⁸⁵ The Dutch Reformed Church was the unofficial state church of the Netherlands, organized in a national network of church councils. Within this broad church, different interpretations of Christian faith competed for support.¹⁸⁶ A crucial segment of the Anti-Revolutionary Party consisted of Orthodox Protestants who belonged to the most conservative form of Protestantism. In fact, the history of this group is one of a continuous struggle over the inclusion of the masses in political agitation. After the 1848 constitutional reform under Liberal politicians like Johan Rudolph Thorbecke, traditional forces had come under pressure in the new political order that was committed to the separation of state and church.¹⁸⁷ Ironically, these new political circumstances also provided the ground for the foundation of the first party organization under Orthodox Protestant leadership.

Following Liberal principles of citizenship, the new circumstances encouraged electors and non-electors alike to express their opinion in political protest.¹⁸⁸ A first expression of this was the no-popery April Movement of the 1853 that took protest into the streets to prevent the reinstatement of Catholic bishops in the Netherlands.¹⁸⁹ The protest movement was organized without the support of parliamentary representatives and relied on church councils

¹⁸⁵ Haan, *Het beginsel van leven en wasdom*, 106–11.

¹⁸⁶ Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, chap. inleiding.

¹⁸⁷ Velde, “Van grondwet tot grondwet.”

¹⁸⁸ Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, chap. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Anti-Catholicism had a longer violent tradition in the Netherlands. See, for instance, Pieter de Rooy, “‘Een reuk des doods ten dood’: De fakkel van het antipapisme in Nederland,” in *Met alle geweld: botsingen en tegenstellingen in burgerlijk Nederland*, ed. Conny Kristel et al. (Amsterdam: Balans, 2003), 60–77. For the indirect relationship of the April Movement with the history of Anti-Revolutionary ideology, see Deursen, “Van antirevolutionaire richting”; de Jong, “Antirevolutionaire partijvorming.”

to organize national cooperation for a mass petition of different Protestant groups.¹⁹⁰ In total, the impressive number of 200,000 signatures was gathered and delivered to King Willem III in a short ceremony.¹⁹¹ Despite this formal recognition by the political establishment, the political achievements of the movement were moderate. Under the Dutch constitution, the protest's most outspoken demand, the prevention of an episcopal seat in Utrecht, could not be prevented. Only in the long-term did the potential of the April Movement become apparent. Dutch historians regarded the protest as the first early episode of a century-long struggle about politics in which contemporaries not only argued about the distribution of political power, but also over how political decisions should be made.¹⁹² The question was one of political legitimacy: should parliament or street pressure determine the political course of the nation?¹⁹³ In this struggle, education became the most contested issue.¹⁹⁴

In the years after the April Movement, the members of the Dutch parliament discussed how to translate the principles of the new constitution into school legislation. The consequence was a second national petition movement that tried to prevent the introduction of denominationally neutral public schools in 1856.¹⁹⁵ Collecting only 13,250 signatures, this smaller movement likewise failed to achieve its political purpose.¹⁹⁶ This did not mean that the 'school question' had lost its mobilizing function. The introduction of a new public school system inspired Orthodox Protestants and their political leader Groen van Prinsterer to advocate the creation of private religious schools. For this purpose, Groen suggested founding an association, but did not show much interest in taking the necessary practical steps to arrange the actual implementation of his idea.¹⁹⁷ Eventually it was the teacher Nicolas Mattheus Feringa

¹⁹⁰ Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 25,220.

¹⁹¹ Houkes, 25.

¹⁹² Haan, *Het beginsel van leven en wasdom*; Janse, *De Afschaffers*.

¹⁹³ Janse, "What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?"

¹⁹⁴ See for an overview of this period Veld, *Volksonderwijs en leerplicht*, 36–41.

¹⁹⁵ Petrus Boekholt and Engelina Petronella de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987), chap. 11, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/boek009gesc01_01/.

¹⁹⁶ Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 190; Th. van Tijn, "De wording der politieke-partijorganisaties in Nederland," in *Vaderlands verleden in veelvoud: 31 opstellen over de Nederlandse geschiedenis na 1500*, ed. G. A. M. Beekelaar et al. (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1975), 590–601; Wintle, "Natievorming, onderwijs en godsdienst in Nederland, 1850-1900."

¹⁹⁷ Dirk Langedijk, *De schoolstrijd in de eerste jaren na de wet van 1857* (Kampen: Kok, 1937), 40. Nineteenth-century Anti-Revolutionaries saw 1857 as a turning point. *De strijd om de school in Nederland sedert 1857* (Rotterdam: J.M. Bredée, 1888), <http://www.delpher.nl/nl/boeken/view?coll=boeken&identificer=MMUBVU02:000008946>. Historian Janssens argues that Van der Bruggen's law was the turning point for Protestant critics who concluded that they could not hope for Christian elementary education. Rienk Janssens, "Politieke bewustwording van christelijke onderwijzers," in *De school met de bijbel: christelijk onderwijs in de negentiende eeuw*, ed. George Harinck and Gerrit Jan Schutte, Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme na 1800 14 (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2006), 133–48.

who managed to initiate the Association for Christian-National School Education (Vereniging voor Christelijk-Nationaal Schoolonderwijs) in October 1860, after two years of discussion and adjustment.¹⁹⁸ The mission of the new organization was to stimulate Orthodox Protestant education by collecting and distributing financial resources to support private schools.¹⁹⁹ The charitable character was no coincidence, but followed the widely shared skepticism among ordinary people about political agitation. Especially Orthodox Protestants distrusted the idea of vesting political legitimacy outside of the traditional processes of parliamentary politics. They often did, in fact, not like politics at all.²⁰⁰ An often cited example is Groen van Prinsterer who is known for criticizing the popular and ad hoc form of mass participation for involving ordinary people in political questions.²⁰¹ In his newspaper *Nederlandsche Gedachten* (Dutch Thoughts, 1829-1832), Groen had labelled his political orientation Anti-Revolutionary to signal his opposition against what he considered the individualistic and subversive values of the French Revolution.²⁰² But although the Anti-Revolutionary parliamentary leader advocated an independent political course for Orthodox Protestants, he later distanced himself from the political motives of the April Movement.²⁰³ This also explains why Groen failed to translate his political potential into parliamentary influence. On the one hand, contemporaries criticized his political methods for their similarity to British political practices of mass politics.²⁰⁴ Suffrage rights, on the other hand, were limited to a small part of the population that did not see how the Anti-Revolutionary political ideology was related to their local context.²⁰⁵ For a while, it even

¹⁹⁸ Langedijk, *De schoolstrijd in de eerste jaren na de wet van 1857*, 40–47; Arent Th. Bloemendal, *Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging voor Christelijk Nationaal Schoolonderwijs, 1860-1970*, Archiefpublicaties 2 (Voorburg: Besturenraad PCO, 1994), 5–8; E. Zuidema, “Feringa, Nicolaas Mattheus,” ed. P.J. Blok and P.C. Molhuysen, *Nieuw Nederlandsch biografisch woordenboek* (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, online 2008 1911), http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/molh003nieu01_01/molh003nieu01_01_1399.php.

¹⁹⁹ Deursen, “Van antirevolutionaire richting,” 33–35.

²⁰⁰ Historian Houkes has shown how contested political action was among Orthodox Protestants throughout the nineteenth century. *Christelijke Vaderlanders*. See also Janssens, “Politieke bewustwording van christelijke onderwijzers.” Janse, “What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?”

²⁰¹ For leading Anti-Revolutionaries, the idea and practices of popular politics was not only dubious, but also deeply problematic, threatening social and political order. Kuiper, *De voormannen*. This interpretation has been more generally described in Haan and te Velde, “Vormen van politiek.” For a more favorable interpretation of Groen’s ideas about mass politics, see historian Janse, “What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?”

²⁰² Deursen, “Van antirevolutionaire richting”; Roel Kuiper, “Antirevolutionair,” in *Het Gereformeerde Geheugen: Protestantse Herinneringsculturen in Nederland, 1850-2000*, ed. George Harinck, Hendrik Jan Paul, and Barend Theodoor Wallet (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2009), 140–51. See also Groen’s most prominent writing Groen van Prinsterer, *Ongeloof en revolutie. Eene reeks van historische voorlezingen* (Leiden: S. en J. Luchtmans, 1847), http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/groe009ongeo1_01/.

²⁰³ Janse, “What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?” See also Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, 32–43; Gerrit Jan Schutte, *Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer* (Goes: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1976); Kirpestein, “Groen van Prinsterer als belijder van kerk en staat in de negentiende eeuw.”

²⁰⁴ Janse, “What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?”

²⁰⁵ De Jong, “Antirevolutionaire partijvorming”; de Jong, *Van standspolitiek naar partijloyaliteit*.

seemed as if the Anti-Revolutionaries could be integrated into the Conservative branch of parliamentary representation.²⁰⁶

This period of crisis allowed Abraham Kuyper to become an increasingly important figure in Anti-Revolutionary politics.²⁰⁷ Following his theology studies, the Protestant minister first developed his argument for a new form of representation by commenting on the decision-making structure in the Dutch Reformed Church. In 1867, the male members of the church were granted the right to vote for local church offices. For Orthodox Protestants, these new procedures had an ambiguous nature. They had the theological conviction that church matters were subject to the sacred authority of God, in contrast to the mundane interests of ordinary church members. But Kuyper also saw an opportunity in the changing governance structure of his church. In his brochure *Wat moeten wij doen?* (What must we do?) he acknowledged the theological problem but encouraged his fellow churchmen to take action after all. His pragmatic advice was that believers should overcome religious reservations and participate in the church election, in particular because Orthodox Protestant parishes constituted the majority in the Dutch Reformed Church.²⁰⁸ Kuyper's argument brought him in contact with the influential MP Groen van Prinsterer.²⁰⁹ The two men quickly discovered that they shared many political convictions. Their most severe frustration about parliamentary politics was the reserved stance of Anti-Revolutionary parliamentarians in the school question.²¹⁰ Differences of opinion occurred only when Kuyper suggested institutionalizing political cooperation to produce a more active political course for school reform.²¹¹ In 1869 Groen rejected Kuyper's idea of a fixed political program. The older parliamentarian feared the alienation of his parliamentary peers, especially over his advocacy for new forms of political culture: "suspicion of a political party [is] a dangerous weapon against us."²¹² Despite his opposition to further institutionalization, Groen saw himself as a "party man" in the sense that his political convictions and behavior were based

²⁰⁶ Jong has pointed to the short-lived Conservative General Electoral Association (De Algemeene Kiesvereeniging) as the first party organization of the Netherlands. "De Algemeene Kiesvereeniging." For the development of political conservatism, see Ronald van Raak, *In naam van het volmaakte. Conservatisme in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw van Gerit Jan Mulder tot Jan Heemskerck Azn* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2001).

²⁰⁷ De Jong, "Antirevolutionaire partijvorming."

²⁰⁸ Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 102–9; Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*; Velde, "Ervaring en zingeving in de politiek."

²⁰⁹ Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, 71–82.

²¹⁰ Over the years, Groen had grown distant from Anti-Revolutionary parliamentarians who refused to address the school question in parliament. Kuiper, *De voormannen*, 17.

²¹¹ Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, chap. 3.

²¹² "de verdachtmakerij van *politieke partij* [was] een gevaarlijk wapen tegen ons" 'Groen to Kuyper', 24 November 1869, in Adriaan Goslinga, ed., *Briefwisseling van Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer met Dr. A. Kuyper, 1864-1876* (Kampen: Kok, 1937), 64–65.

on principles different from other parliamentary groups.²¹³ Two years later Kuyper took things into his own hands and developed a three-point agenda for the upcoming national elections with the editors of six Protestant newspapers. This initiative was chaotic and not well communicated with local Anti-Revolutionary foremen.²¹⁴ Even worse, Kuyper failed to coordinate his electoral campaign with Groen who had lost patience with the Anti-Revolutionary parliamentary group. Publicly separating from the parliamentary establishment, Groen announced that only three electoral candidates were worthy of the support of Anti-Revolutionary voters: M.D. van Otterloo, L.W.C. Keuchenius and Kuyper.²¹⁵ This incoherent message split the votes for Anti-Revolutionaries, and none of the three candidates gained a parliamentary seat.²¹⁶

For Kuyper, this disastrous electoral result illustrated the urgency of tight national coordination, but his position remained isolated. Appealing to Groen, he wrote: "Organization is indispensable."²¹⁷ Groen ignored this suggestion and only after the elderly parliamentarian's death did another opportunity emerge for Kuyper to pursue party organization. When in June 1877 the electoral association of Kuyper's parliamentary constituency Gouda, Fear God, Honour the King (Vreest God, Eert den Koning), proposed a short electoral program, Kuyper praised this initiative and argued that the candidate who "shows his feelings so clearly, is a recommendation in itself."²¹⁸ In the following years, Kuyper rewrote the Gouda proposal, asking Anti-Revolutionary spokesmen and electoral associations to support his draft program for a more coherent Anti-Revolutionary orientation. In the spring of 1878, he published the text in his newspaper *De Standaard*. But even at this point in time this bold public strategy caused renewed resistance. Although Kuyper used the title *Ons Program* (Our Program) of his manifesto to verbally construct the political community of Anti-Revolutionaries, his initiative was slowed down again. The future party founder was forced to justify his plans in a series of articles, and the party organization seemed again to be off the table of realistic options.²¹⁹

²¹³ "partijman" De Jong, *Van standspolitiek naar partijloyaliteit*, 69–71. For a discussion of the term party in nineteenth-century Dutch politics, see Veldhuizen, "De Partij," chap. 1. The next decades were characterized by a changing perception of the role of Dutch MPs that increasingly voted along party lines. Erie Tanja, "Good Politics. Views of Dutch MPs on Parliament and Parliamentary Culture, 1866–1940," *Parliaments, Estates and Representation* 28, no. 1 (2008): 121–35.

²¹⁴ Janssens, *opbouw*, chap. 7.

²¹⁵ Janssens, 79–80; Kuiper, *De voormannen*.

²¹⁶ Kuiper, *De voormannen*, 22.

²¹⁷ "Organisatie is onmisbaar" G. M. den Hartogh, "Groen van Prinsterer en de verkiezingen van 1871" (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1933), 245.

²¹⁸ "die op zoo ronde wijs van zijn gevoelens doet blijken, is een aanbeveling op zich zelf" "Het Goudsche Program," *De Standaard*, June 4, 1877, 1, Delpher.

²¹⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *Ons program* (Amsterdam: J.H. Kruyt, 1880), <http://archive.org/details/onsprogram1880kuyper>.

2.2 Two Roads to the Christian School

To develop a more general perspective on party emergence, it is important to understand that Kuyper was not the first Anti-Revolutionary to suggest national cooperation in an electoral campaign. Since 1869, a central committee had been formed during election time to coordinate the campaign of local Orthodox Protestants under the aristocrat B.J.L. de Geer van Jutphaas.²²⁰ Kuyper's suggestion differed from these initial attempts, because he believed that a closer relationship between voters and parliamentary representatives was needed to make national cooperation successful.²²¹ His plan was to create a broad organization built on a political program and formalized national structure.²²² Not many Orthodox Protestant leaders agreed with this bold strategy. Only when the education question inspired further political organization did Kuyper's plan gain sufficient support, first limited to activists outside of parliament. In 1872 the Rotterdam insurance- and stockbroker Jacob Voorhoeve founded the Anti-School Law League (Anti-Schoolwet Verbond).²²³ His aim was to build a national organization to mobilize mass support in the school struggle.²²⁴ It was no coincidence that the name of this association was similar to that of the British Anti-Corn Law League that was known for its success in influencing parliament.²²⁵ In 1869, the Anti-Stamp Tax League (Anti-Dagbladzegel Verbond) had demonstrated that this British model could work in the Netherlands.²²⁶ Like these two previous pressure groups, the Anti-School Law League aimed at using public opinion so that "free education becomes the rule and public education supplemental."²²⁷ Seen from its leaders' perspective, the political demands of the organization were not an overly bold idea, but fit in with the nineteenth-century understanding of the potential of mass organization.²²⁸ In fact, the

²²⁰ In the historiography, the 1869 meeting under B.J.L. de Geer van Jutphaas is named as the first meeting of the Central Committee. Kuiper, *De voormannen*, 17–18; Janssens, *opbouw*, chap. 1.

²²¹ Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, chap. 2; Janssens, *opbouw*, 156–58.

²²² De Jong argues that the failure of Conservative members of parliament to accommodate Orthodox Protestant concerns about the education question gave Anti-Revolutionaries new impulses. De Jong, "Antirevolutionaire partijvorming." For Kuyper's determination to develop a political program see Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, 117–28.

²²³ H. Algra, "De weg naar het volk enige opmerkingen over het Anti-schoolwetverbond, van 1872," in *Anti-Revolutionaire Staatskunde*, ed. J. Schouten, vol. 23 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1953).

²²⁴ First, he presented this idea at a meeting of educational activists where participants were enthusiastic about creating a more political movement outside of the non-political structure. Kuiper, *De voormannen*, 28. One month later in June, Voorhoeve's suggestion for an organizational committee was accepted by a gathering of representatives of educational associations, the Protestant press, ministers and teachers. Rienk Janssens, "Antirevolutionaire organisatievorming 1871-1879," in *De Antirevolutionaire Partij, 1829-1980*, ed. George Harinck, Roel Kuiper, and Peter Bak (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 53–72.

²²⁵ Houkes and Janse, "Foreign Examples as Eye Openers and Justification."

²²⁶ Janse, *De Afschaffers*, chap. 5.

²²⁷ "het vrije onderwijs regel en het Staatsonderwijs aanvulling kan worden" "Statuten van Het Anti-Schoolwet-Verbond," *De Standaard*, February 8, 1872, 2, Delpher, <http://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011065322:mpeg21:a0005>.

²²⁸ Janse, *De Afschaffers*.

optimism among its founders was so great that they became the first in Dutch history to pledge to submit their petition only after they reached a threshold of 10,000 signatures.²²⁹

It was exactly this mass aspect of educational agitation that further alarmed more traditional Orthodox Protestant spokesmen.²³⁰ Following his earlier reservations about the mobilization of ordinary people in the April Movement, Groen van Prinsterer became an early skeptic of what he considered an aggressive strategy and tone.²³¹ Also the wider community of Protestant leaders - P.J. Elout van Souterwoude, M. Bichon van Ijsselmonde and Andries Willem Bronsveld - shared Groen's concern.²³² The proponents of the Anti-School Law League defended their organization by emphasizing its orderly character and the urgency of the education question.²³³ For them, the school struggle was not only about the denominational upbringing of individual Orthodox Protestant children, but concerned the religious future of the entire Dutch nation.²³⁴ While critics were right in noting that this was "a time when the number of associations, societies and unions increases in an extraordinary way," their League had the duty to use the potential of mass politics for its sacred mission.²³⁵ In this perspective, the Anti-School Law League stood for more than the cooperation of like-minded individuals to increase efficiency. The organization was based on a general nineteenth-century fascination with quantity, which was shared by the proponents of many political orientations.²³⁶ Its leaders went so far as not only including the disenfranchised, but also accepting signatures of women for their petition. This is remarkable as most political organizations at this time targeted only men.²³⁷ The Anti-Revolutionary spokesman Esser broadly defined the basis of the League in his

²²⁹ "Statuten van Het Anti-Schoolwet-Verbond," 2; Janse, "What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?"

²³⁰ Kuiper, *De voormannen*, 28–31.

²³¹ Hartogh, "Groen van Prinsterer," 266; Algra, "De weg naar het volk enige opmerkingen over het Anti-schoolwetverbond, van 1872."

²³² Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 145–46.

²³³ For an analysis of the strategy of Dutch single-issue organizations, see Janse, *De Afschaffers*, 305.

²³⁴ This vision had its roots in the Liberal understanding of citizenship. Lenders, "Van kind tot burger: Lager onderwijs en de vorming tot burgerschap in de negentiende eeuw"; Veld, *Volksonderwijs en leerplicht*, 71–81.

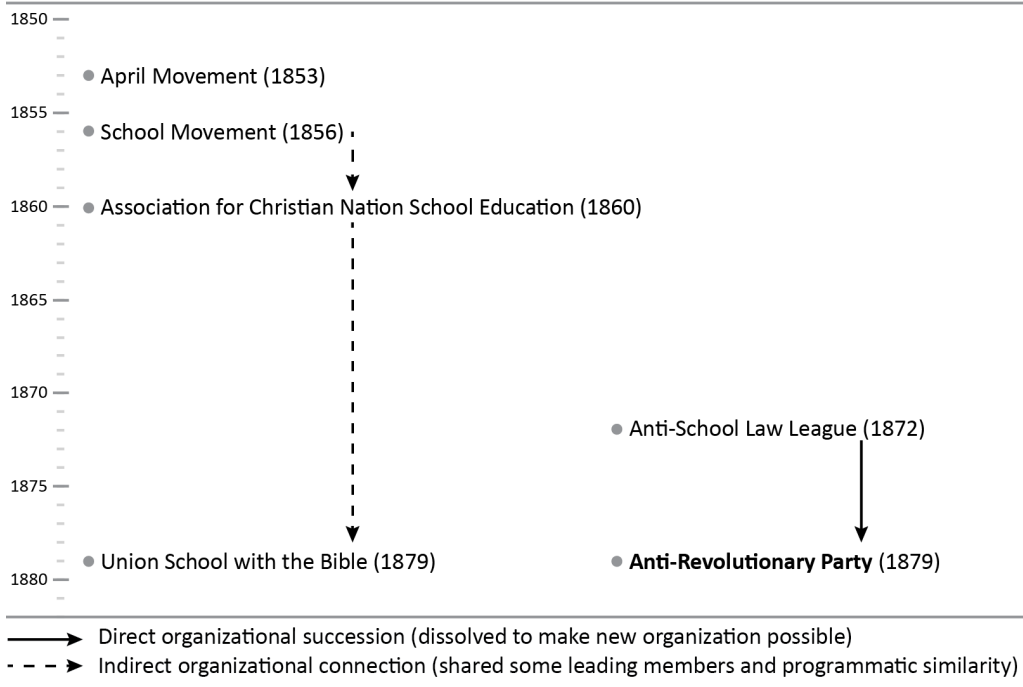
²³⁵ "een tijd, waarin het aantal Vereenigingen, Genootschappen en Verbonden buitengewoon snel toeneemt" J. A. Geerth van Wijk, "Een woord over het Anti-Schoolwet Verbond" (G.J. Reits, 1873), 1, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:xGzvNnqh1TQJ:leesmuseum.bibliotheekarnhem.nl/Books/mp-pdf-bestanden/LM02460.pdf+&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=nl>.

²³⁶ Haan and te Velde, "Vormen van politiek"; Velde, "Van grondwet tot grondwet"; Janse, "What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?"; Nico Randerdaad, *Het onberekenbare Europa: macht en getal in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2006).

²³⁷ Janse, *De Afschaffers*, chap. conclusie.

brochure *Antirevolutionaire Catechismus* (Anti-Revolutionary Catechism) as “also the people behind the voters.”²³⁸

Graph 3: Overview of organizational development of Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries



It took half a decade before Kuyper could transform the single-issue organization of the League into the party organization of the Anti-Revolutionary Party. Although the school movement had ignited enthusiasm for political action, it remained difficult to convince the divided Orthodox Protestants to commit to formal political cooperation. It is even possible that the single-issue character of the Anti-School Law League delayed the foundation of party organization, because it directed attention and resources into the new petition movement, instead of supporting a broader political organization.²³⁹ At the same time, the broad popular approach of the school movement fit Kuyper’s political ideology with his focus on ordinary people. The main audience of the speeches and newspaper articles of the party founder were ordinary farmers and the lower parts of the middle classes.²⁴⁰ In 1878 when a new legislative

²³⁸ “ook het volk achter de kiezers“ Janssens, *opbouw*, 106; I. Esser, *Antirevolutionaire catechismus, ook voor het volk achter de kiezers* (’s Gravenhage: H. J. Gerretsen, 1874), <http://objects.library.uu.nl/reader/index.php?obj=1874312678&lan=nl#page//12/63/02/126302626888994342157045380978801533077.jpg>.

²³⁹ Janssens, *opbouw*.

²⁴⁰ The phrase “de luyden van kleine en middelbare middelen” appeared in the first issue of Kuyper’s newspaper. “De Standaard,” *De Standaard*, January 4, 1872, 1, Delpher. For a study of the term “kleine

draft for elementary education was discussed in parliament, the idea of mass petition gained new support in the Protestant community. The reform improved the general state of schools, regulating class size, training of teachers and hygienic standards. When broken down to the practicality of school legislation, this was essentially connected to the distribution of public resources. The problem was that state schools were supported “out of the public cash box” to implement the legally required school modifications.²⁴¹ Religious schools did not receive any financial support but had to adhere to the new rules. In short, as the Anti-School Law League explained “[t]he ‘Christian’ school (...) must be founded and maintained by the private pockets of stakeholders”.²⁴²

In 1878 a committee around Kuiper and Feringa was formed to organize the petition to demonstrate the power of the people.²⁴³ All over the country, supporters were mobilized to sign the “petition (...) whereby His Majesty is asked to not support the bill of lower education of the Second Chamber of the Estates General.”²⁴⁴ Because the organizers submitted the petition only after the parliamentary decision, it had predominantly a symbolic value to establish a counterweight to the political legitimacy of the Dutch Lower House.²⁴⁵ When parliament did not adjust its course, the petition leaders could argue that the political elite had disregarded the more than 469,000 signatures of Protestant and Catholic families.²⁴⁶ With this disappointing experience, two different courses of action were chosen. The first stood in the tradition of the social mission of Orthodox Protestantism and led to the union School with the Bible (*Een School met den Bijbel*) in January 1879.²⁴⁷ Its members collected and distributed donations for private Orthodox Protestant schools.²⁴⁸ Another faction of the petition movement decided to take a more radical stance. They used the parliamentary decision as a symbol of political injustice to strength their argument that new methods of political agitation

luyden” and its meaning, see Kuiper, “De weg van het volk”; Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, chap. 2; van Helden, “De ‘kleine luyden’ van Abraham Kuiper.”

²⁴¹ “uit de openbare kas” Wijk, “Een woord over het Anti-Schoolwet Verbond,” 9.

²⁴² “De ‘Christelijke’ school (...) moet uit de private beurs der belanghebbenden worden gesticht en onderhouden” Wijk, 10.

²⁴³ This happened under the banner of the already mentioned Vereniging voor Christelijk-Nationaal Schoolonderwijs (Association for Christian-National School Education) Kuiper, *De voormannen*, 43; Janssens, *opbouw*, chap. 12.

²⁴⁴ “smeekschrift (...), waarbij aan Zijne Majesteit gevraagd wordt om de door de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal aangenomen Wetsvoordagt voor het Lager Onderwijs niet te bekrachtigen” A.W. van Beeck Calkoen and T. A. J. van Asch Van Wijk, “Naar den Koning,” in *De opbouw van de Antirevolutionaire Partij 1850-1888*, by Rienk Janssens (Verloren, 2001), 148.

²⁴⁵ Janse, “What Value Can We Attach to These Petitions?”

²⁴⁶ Figures are calculated on the basis of Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 205.

²⁴⁷ Translation is from McKendree R. Langley, “Emancipation and Apologetics: The Formation of Abraham Kuiper’s Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, 1872-1880” (Westminster Theology Seminar, 1995), abstract.

²⁴⁸ Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 229; Janssens, “Antirevolutionaire organisatievorming 1871-1879,” 153–54.

were urgently needed. In 1879 they founded the Anti-Revolutionary Party in Utrecht. The statutes of this first party organization emphasized the belief in organizational power. Through “unification and cooperation” Orthodox Protestants could continue and broaden their political struggle.²⁴⁹ The purpose of party organization was “to promote the unity of orientation under the Anti-Revolutionaries in the country, and to increase the support of the Anti-Revolutionary principles which is available among voters by stimulating private initiatives in the constituencies.”²⁵⁰ This statement became the leading theme of the new Anti-Revolutionary Party. While the loose group of Anti-Revolutionary parliamentarians had cherished their political freedom and acted cautiously in the school question, Kuyper emphasized programmatic coherence as a means to promote the interests of ordinary Orthodox Protestants in parliament.

3. Federation of German Workers’ Associations

3.1 Education as a Uniting Frame

From a current perspective, it might seem as if the road to the democratic mass party was cleared by the changing socio-economic circumstances of the nineteenth century. But in reality, party founders had to overcome numerous obstacles and insecurities. The Orthodox Protestants around Kuyper could not rely only on their determination for political change. They also had to convince their skeptical contemporaries of the necessity of taking political action. In this process the topic of education became crucial because it provided a tangible justification for intensified national cooperation. A second example for the mobilizing forces of education can be found in German history.²⁵¹ While Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries struggled for a long time to form a coherent political strategy, developing a shared identity turned out to be an even more profound challenge for German Social Democrats. Activists like August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht had to overcome the political and geographical separation of their followers over the extensive territory of the German states, as well as the restrictive associational laws that obstructed political cooperation.²⁵² To make matters worse, there was a strong socio-economic

²⁴⁹ “aaneensluiting en samenwerking” “Statuten van het Centraal Comité van Antirevolutionaire Kiesverenigingen,” March 4, 1879, 1, Politieke Organisaties, Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme.

²⁵⁰ “de eenheid van richting onder de Antirevolutionairen in den lande te bevorderen, en de kracht die voor de antirevolutionaire beginselen onder der kiezers beschikbaar is, door opwekking van het particulier initiatief in de kiesdistricten, te verhogen” “Statuten,” 1.

²⁵¹ The topic of education remained important for the workers’ movement in the following decades, even though workers were less interested in theory and rather aimed for light entertainment. Dieter Langewiesche and Klaus Schönhoven, “Arbeiterbibliotheken und Arbeiterlektüre im Wilhelminischen Deutschland,” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 16 (1976).

²⁵² In 1832, all political association became prohibited in the German Confederation. Hans-Werner Hahn and Helmut Berding, *Reformen, Restauration und Revolution, 1806-1848/49*, ed. Jürgen Kocka, Gebhardt, Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte 14 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2010), 451. For the difficult situation of

heterogeneity among the potential members who were subject to many different living conditions. In contrast to later periods, employment in factories was the exception rather than the rule. Under the broad category of the working class, domestic workers of the textile industry as well as coal miners earned their living under increasingly restricted and difficult conditions.²⁵³ Eventually the majority of early Social Democrats were economically struggling artisan apprentices and masters.²⁵⁴ This was probably the reason why at the beginning, German workers' associations were tied to their local context for the purpose of furthering special trades, gymnastics and the distribution of educational writings. The first organizations to go beyond this local focus emerged outside of the German states, also because travelling was a crucial part of the educational training of craftsmen. In the 1830s, travelling artisan apprentices and exiled German Socialists came together in associations in Paris, Brussels, London and a number of Swiss cities.²⁵⁵ Most famous in this regard was the League of the Just (Bund der Gerechten), which was renamed the League of Communists (Bund der Kommunisten) in 1847. This organization established a secret network connecting France, Switzerland, Germany and Britain on a transnational level.²⁵⁶

The first working-class organization on a national scale emerged after the establishment of a parliament for a unified nation state, even if it was only for a short moment in time.²⁵⁷ In 1848, the Brotherhood of Workers (Arbeiterverbrüderung) was founded in Berlin. This organization remained politically independent from the middle-class parliament in Frankfurt, abstaining from direct political representation. Nevertheless, its size, which historians estimate to have reached the impressive number of 15,000 members, demonstrated that it was possible to found a workers' organization on a national scale.²⁵⁸ At the same time, the short period of parliamentary activity in Frankfurt encouraged the foundation of the Central

German workers, see also Pollmann, "Arbeiterwahlen"; Pracht, *Parlamentarismus und deutsche Sozialdemokratie*, XV; Kupfer, "Die organisatorische Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratie"; Lidtke, *Outlawed Party*. Reichard saw these difficult early years characterized by economic challenges and political oppression as a reason for Social Democrats to be a failure from the beginning. Reichard, *Crippled from Birth*.

²⁵³ Kocka, *Lohnarbeit und Klassenbildung*, chap. 5.

²⁵⁴ For a comprehensive study of the social-economic background of early Social Democracy see Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, 145–228.

²⁵⁵ For this early history of the German workers' movement, see Birker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine*; Berger, *Social Democracy*, chap. 2..

²⁵⁶ Bert Andréas, *Gründungsdokumente des Bundes der Kommunisten (Juni bis Juli 1847)* (Hamburg: Dr. Ernst Hauswedell & Co., 1969), 7–39.

²⁵⁷ For the emergence of political organizations in this period, see Jonathan Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals: The Democratic Movement and the Revolution of 1848-1849* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Hahn and Berding, *Reformen, Restauration und Revolution, 1806-1848/49*, 554–74; Waling, "1848 Clubkoorts en revolutie"; Frolinde Balsler, *Sozial-Demokratie, 1848/49-1863: Die erste deutsche Arbeiterorganisation "Allgemeine Arbeiterverbrüderung" nach der Revolution*, vol. 1, 2 vols., Industrielle Welt 2 (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1962); Offermann, "Die regionale Ausbreitung der frühen deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 1848/49-1860/64."

²⁵⁸ The figure is from Berger, *Social Democracy*, 39.

March Association (Centralmärzverein), which some say was the first German party organization.²⁵⁹ As the political organization of Moderate Democrats, it had no commitment to working-class independence, but supported its bourgeois parliamentary representatives with a large-scale membership structure. After the end of the revolution, the focus of organizational activity returned to the local level, where workers' associations survived the restoration, even when the post-revolutionary authorities banned the Socialist Brotherhood of Workers.

A decade later, the Liberal middle-class National Association (Nationalverein) was founded in 1859. Pursuing a political course, its members rejected radical transformation of German society. In fact, some members were related to a group of parliamentarians that called itself Prussian Progress Party (Fortschrittspartei), which favored a German state under the leadership of the authoritarian government.²⁶⁰ These Liberal activists feared the revolutionary potential of the masses and opposed working-class mobilization. In this skeptical environment, education became an alternative reason for working-class organization. Initially, however, German Liberals hoped that private initiatives would keep the masses away from political protest. Instead of relying on the state, these bourgeois foremen believed that schooling and training could alleviate working-class misery.²⁶¹ As a consequence, the national cooperation of workers was not a primary aim but emerged as a side effect of a seemingly innocent study trip. In 1862 the National Association sponsored a delegation of workers to visit the London World Exhibition.²⁶² A year later, two participants of this trip, cigar worker Friedrich Wilhelm Fritzsche and shoemaker Julius Vahlteich, decided to organize a German workers' congress.²⁶³ When they asked Ferdinand Lassalle, lawyer and son of a wealthy silk trader, to comment on their idea, they initiated a powerful movement.²⁶⁴ In his famous *Offenes Antwortschreiben* (Open Response Letter), Lassalle directly attacked the Liberal education initiative and argued that “[a]nd although it is true that now and then somebody climbs up a tower without rope and ladder, and although it is true that individuals have educated themselves without teachers, schools and public libraries (...), these exceptions do not abolish the rule but only confirm it.”²⁶⁵

²⁵⁹ Langewiesche, “Die Anfänge der deutschen Parteien.”

²⁶⁰ A comprehensive study of this political organization has been carried out by Biefang, *Politisches Bürgertum*, chaps. 3–4; Biefang, “The German National Association 1859–1867: Rise and Fall of a Proto-Party.”

²⁶¹ Birker, *Die deutschen Arbeiterbildungsvereine*, 50–56..

²⁶² Na’aman, *Die Konstituierung*, 25–26.

²⁶³ “Fritzsche, Friedrich,” *Biographien Sozialdemokratischer Parlamentarier in den deutschen Reichs- und Landtagen 1867 - 1933*, accessed April 16, 2018, http://zhsf.gesis.org/biosop_db/biosop_db.php; “Vahlteich, Julius,” *Biographien Sozialdemokratischer Parlamentarier in den deutschen Reichs- und Landtagen 1867 - 1933*, accessed April 16, 2018, http://zhsf.gesis.org/biosop_db/biosop_db.php.

²⁶⁴ Shlomo Na’aman, *Lassalle* (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1970); Na’aman, *Die Konstituierung*, chaps. 2–3.

²⁶⁵ Und obgleich es wahr ist, daß hin und wieder jemand einen Turm erklettert haben mag ohne Strick und Leiter, und obgleich es wahr ist, daß sich einzelne gebildet haben ohne Lehrer, Schulen und öffentliche Bibliotheken (...), so heben doch alle diese Ausnahmen ihre Regel nicht auf, sondern bestätigen sie nur. Lassalle, *Offenes Antwortschreiben*, 47.

Lassalle's argument was that real improvement of the socio-economic discrimination of workers was possible only on a structural level with the "support of the state."²⁶⁶ These considerations transformed the Liberal education mission into a political agenda. In March 1863, the General German Workers' Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein) was founded, and Lassalle became its first president. When the alarmed Liberals of the National Association realized the magnitude of this innovation, their response was a remarkably bold attempt to maintain their influence over the working classes.

3.2 Two National Organizations for German Workers

Three months after Lassalle's founding congress, a group around the publisher Leopold Sonnemann founded a second national organization in Frankfurt am Main.²⁶⁷ The name of this organization, Federation of German Workers' Associations (Vereinstag Deutscher Arbeitervereine), not only sounded very similar to Lassalle's General German Workers' Association, it also functioned as a direct competitor for working-class support. Constituted in June 1863, the Liberal organization was committed to an explicitly unpolitical mission and focused primarily on furthering workers' education in local associations.²⁶⁸ The Federation of German Workers' Associations was the direct predecessor of the Social Democratic Workers' Party. In less than five years, the agitation for working-class education transformed into an openly political organization. From the beginning, the organization's leaders justified their national structure with the need to extend their educational mission. As in the Dutch school movement, the size of the membership became an important argument to demonstrate the potential of cooperation. A rhetoric of quantity was used to justify the new organization. It was no coincidence that the attribute "German" was used in the organization's name. In a period when the political institutions of the nation were still divided among several state entities, this was a conscious decision to formally connect the scattered local associations on German territory. In this sense, the Federation of German Workers' Associations stood in the European tradition of national conventions where meetings and organizations had mutually reinforced each other.²⁶⁹ The location of the first meeting, Frankfurt am Main, offered short travel distance to the many delegates from the South German region of the Maingau. Although delegates from Hamburg and Hannover were absent, the organizers announced that a diverse group "from all

²⁶⁶ "Hilfeleistung des Staats" Lassalle, 47.

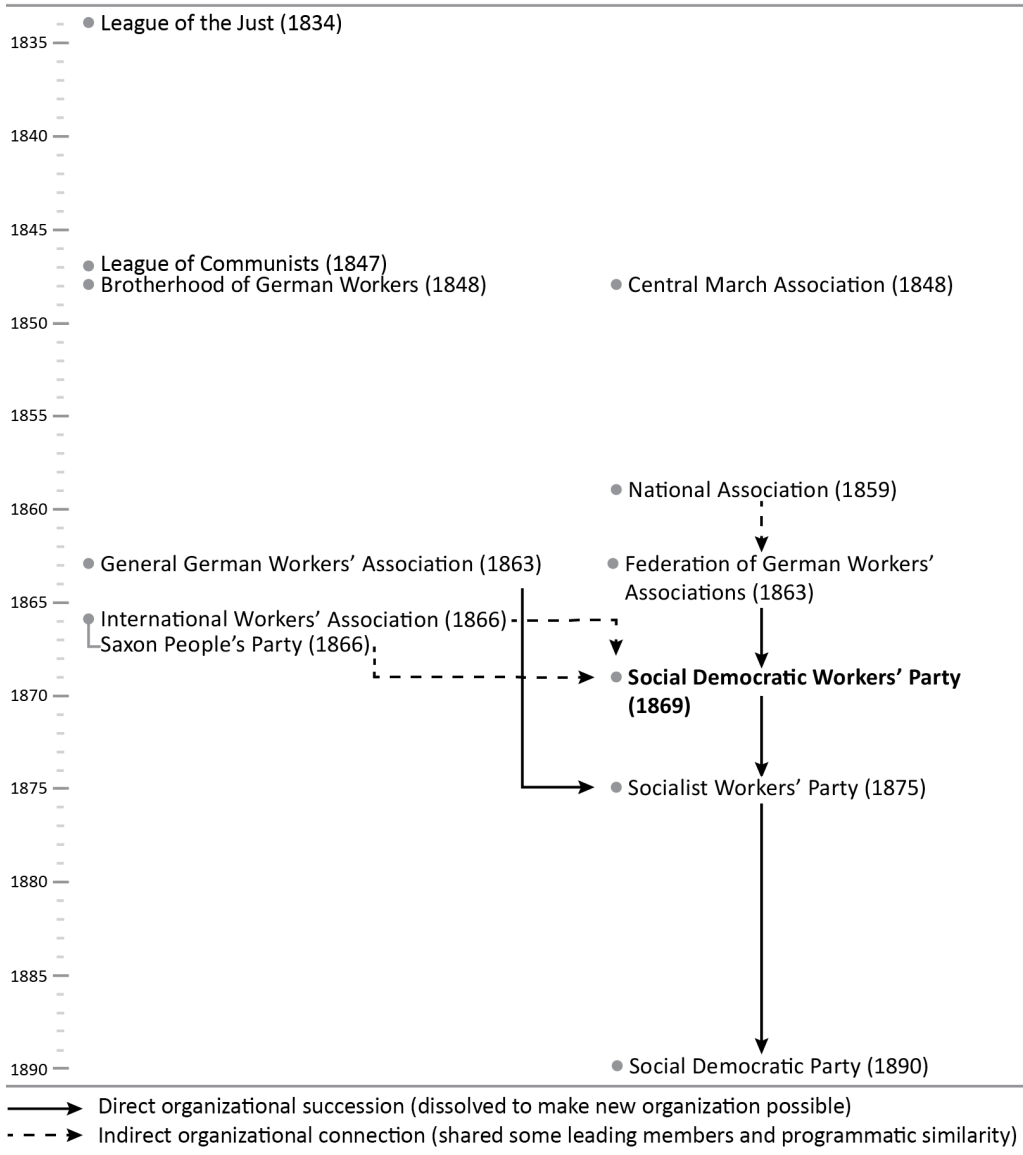
²⁶⁷ Sonnemann was the founder and editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and a parliamentary representative of the democratic German People's Party (Deutscher Volkspartei). Klaus Gerteis, "Leopold Sonnemann: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des demokratischen Nationalgedankens in Deutschland" (Frankfurt am Main, 1968).

²⁶⁸ Na'aman connects the unpolitical character of the Federation of German Workers' Associations to the agenda of the organization's leader Sonnemann. Shlomo Na'aman, *Von der Arbeiterbewegung zur Arbeiterpartei: der 5. Vereinstag der Deutschen Arbeitervereine zu Nürnberg im Jahre 1868* (Berlin: Colloquium-Verlag, 1976), 18–19.

²⁶⁹ Waling, "1848 Clubkoorts en revolutie"; Janse and Velde, "Introduction."

parts of the fatherland” had gathered.²⁷⁰ This national dimension was formalized by introducing speakers with their place of residence in the minutes of the meeting. In this way, the 110 attendees, who spoke for more than 17,000 workers, could claim to represent the geographically diverse scene of workers’ associations of the entire German nation.²⁷¹

Graph 4: Overview organizational development of German Social Democrats



²⁷⁰ “aus allen Theilen des Vaterlandes” Leopold Sonnemann, *Jahresbericht über die Thätigkeit des Ständigen Ausschusses für den zweiten Vereinstag der deutschen Arbeitervereine* (Frankfurt a. M.: Frankfurter Societätsdruckerei, 1864), 6, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bibliothek/bestand/z-15523/index.html>.

²⁷¹ The figure is from Ausschuss des Vereinstages, “Bericht über die Verhandlungen des ersten Vereinstages der deutschen Arbeitervereine,” in *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Vereinstage deutscher Arbeitervereine 1863 bis 1869*, ed. Dieter Dowe, Nachdrucke (Berlin: Dietz, 1980), 3.

At the congress delegates explained why national cooperation was a good idea. They were drawn to the assembly by the strong feeling that they were participating in a cause that was greater than their private interests. Each of them had been given the rare opportunity of leaving a mark in history. In the annual report, they articulated this feeling: “finally find the form that can be given to the so far unsuccessfully aspired unification of workers’ associations among each other.”²⁷² Chairman, Leopold Sonnemann, said that the new organization was an “organ (...), which could serve as a common focal point for the aspirations of the workers’ associations.”²⁷³ The ultimate reason for these joined efforts was education. As delegate Bremer explained, education was not only a political tool to transform workers into “free citizens.”²⁷⁴ He also hoped that workers would improve their material situation by attending the classes of educational associations: “All our interests point us to the educational workers’ associations, because the individual is not capable of educating himself on his own.”²⁷⁵ Strictly speaking, these statements left open how the goals of education could be reached by national cooperation. But under closer investigation, they are testimonials of the strong sense of solidarity at the congress and point to the great achievements that delegates hoped would emerge out of national cooperation. As Bremer said, each attendee alone was not able to educate himself, but they could overcome these barriers in a national organization. The delegate Bitter from Leipzig summarized the spirit of the congress. Also for him, national organization was the best way to achieve education for workers: “The question is how do we make the educational workers’ associations large. Hundreds of thousands should we count in Germany, because the larger the number the faster we come to our goal.”²⁷⁶

Bitter’s reference to the enormous membership numbers of national organizations offers insight into the reasoning behind national cooperation. Like the activists of the Dutch Anti-School Law League, the delegates agreed that the situation of their community needed improvement. Their approach was to start an educational movement on the basis of mass support. Looking at the quantitative scope of the organization, the target number of several hundred thousand was an unrealistic goal because the young organization had slightly more than twenty thousand members in 1864.²⁷⁷ But this did not stop delegates from expressing their

²⁷² “endlich die Form zu finden, welche der bisher immer vergebens angestrebten Vereinigung der Arbeitervereine unter einander zu geben war.” Sonnemann, *Jahresbericht über die Thätigkeit des Ständigen Ausschusses für den zweiten Vereinstag*, 5.

²⁷³ “Organ (...), welches den Bestrebungen der Arbeitervereine zum gemeinschaftlichen Brennpunkt dienen konnte” Sonnemann, 5.

²⁷⁴ “freie Staatsbürger” Ausschuss des Vereinstages, “Bericht über die Verhandlungen des ersten Vereinstages,” 10.

²⁷⁵ “Alle unsere Interessen weisen uns also auf die Arbeiterfortbildungsvereine hin, denn der Einzelne ist nicht im Stande, sich für sich allein fortzubilden.” 10.

²⁷⁶ “Die Frage ist, wie machen wir die Arbeiterbildungs-Vereine groß. Hunderttausend sollten wir in Deutschland zählen, denn je größer ihre Zahl, um so rascher kommen wir ans Ziel.” 11–12.

²⁷⁷ The exact figure of 22,463 is calculated based on the list of local branches. Leopold Sonnemann, *Jahresbericht über die Thätigkeit des Ständigen Ausschusses für den dritten Vereinstag der deutschen*

hopes for progress and change. At the congress in Frankfurt, impossible things seemed to be within reach.²⁷⁸ The basis of this expectation was the rhetoric of quantity that became a tangible experience in the national membership structure of the organization. Even though actual membership numbers were initially surprisingly low, members had the feeling that they were part of a bigger movement. Maybe even more importantly, they shared the expectation that membership numbers would quickly rise and transform the organization into a massive institution. For this purpose, the membership numbers of local associations were meticulously gathered. The existence of these figures alone is an indication of the importance of mass support. Most local associations submitted detailed figures with the exact number. Only in Bromberg had the chairman of the local Craftsmen Association (Handwerker-Verein) Dr. Bange sloppily reported an estimate “of around 500.”²⁷⁹ In Stettin, Leuchner who was chairman of the local Workers’ Association (Arbeiter-Verein) had likewise failed to report the correct membership numbers, noted by a question mark in the list of the annual report. The reasons for Bange and Leuchner to abstain from submitting a precise account of their membership size cannot be retrieved from the primary sources. But it is notable that their omissions remained exceptions in the four-page list of local associations. Although still not having achieved the hoped-for hundreds of thousand members, the delegates considered the current scope of their organization as a fact that was worth reporting.

The national dimension was further emphasized by the organization’s own press. In 1865 its leaders started to publish leaflets, which were later circulated under the name *Deutsche Arbeiterhalle* (German Workers’ Hall).²⁸⁰ Quoting directly from an issue, the intention of this outlet was “through vivid intellectual exchange to nurture the feeling of belonging together among associations and comrades.”²⁸¹ Historian Benedict Anderson has described how newspapers were an important aspect in the emergence of national community of the nation state by connecting individuals with a shared political interest.²⁸² For early parties,

Arbeitervereine (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurter Societätsdruckerei), 15–18, accessed May 8, 2015, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bibliothek/bestand/z-15523/3-1865.pdf>.

²⁷⁸ For the meaning of assemblies for democratic political practices, see for other national circumstances and periods Johann N. Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*; Waling, “1848 Clubkoorts en revolutie,” chap. 7; Welskopp, *Das Banner der Brüderlichkeit*, 291–338; Resch and Murr, *Lassalles “südliche Avantgarde,”* 41–42.

²⁷⁹ “gegen 500” Sonnemann, *Jahresbericht über die Thätigkeit des Ständigen Ausschusses für den dritten Vereinstag*, 15.

²⁸⁰ Dieter Dowe and Shlomo Na’aman, *Flugblatt vom ständigen Ausschusse des Vereinstages deutscher Arbeitervereine. - Deutsche Arbeiterhalle.* (Mannheim: Dietz Verlag J.H.W. Nachf, 1980), VII–XXXV.

²⁸¹ “durch einen lebhaften geistigen Verkehr das Gefühl der Zusammengehörigkeit der Vereine und Vereinsgenossen zu nähren” “Zur Einleitung,” *Deutsche Arbeiterhalle*, January 6, 1867, 1–2.

²⁸² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006). Cox has related this argument to the emergence of party identities with a quantitative analysis of British electoral constituencies where after the removal of the stamp tax, partisan

newspapers played a similar role. Outside of Liberal structures, other politically oriented working-class activists in the German states recognized the importance of newspapers for the creation of a national workers' movement. Best known is probably Wilhelm Liebknecht's countless journalistic activities, which he also continued during his London exile.²⁸³ Liebknecht was also involved in the foundation of the *Demokratisches Wochenblatt* (Democratic Week Paper), whose first issue appeared in 1868.²⁸⁴ Later he became the editor of the newspaper *Der Volksstaat* (People's State) of the Social Democratic Workers' Party.

Newspapers were also an important factor in the emergence of party organizations in other national circumstances. In the Netherlands and Britain, party organizations emerged after the abolition of the stamp tax, allowing the free and permanent flow of information.²⁸⁵ In the Netherlands, the Dutch Anti-School Law League did not have its own press organ, but relied on the Anti-Revolutionary national newspaper *De Standaard*. Under the editorship of Abraham Kuyper, the paper functioned as a catalyst of the national community of Orthodox Protestant. By pointing its readers towards the many local meetings of the Anti-School Law League, *De Standaard* showed Orthodox Protestants that they belonged to a larger community that had members all over the country. The future party leader Kuyper was aware of the community-building effects and directly referred to the synchronizing effects of his newspaper. Kuyper argued that, despite their many different local settings, Orthodox Protestants were united in reading the same articles: they responded with the same thoughts - even though most of them

interests became more outspoken. Cox, "The Development of a Party-Orientated Electorate." See also the Dutch political organization of the Anti-Stamp Tax Association that was formed for an anti-stamp-tax campaign. Janse, *De Afschaffers*, chap. 5. On German territory, the period after the 1848 revolution was shaped by reactionary forces in government that restricted press coverage. Kurt Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert*, vol. 2, *Abhandlungen und Materialien zur Publizistik 6* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1966), chap. 10.

²⁸³ Utz Haltern, *Liebknecht und England: zur Publizistik Wilhelm Liebknechts während seines Londoner Exils (1850-1862)*, Schriften aus dem Karl-Marx-Haus 18 (Trier: Karl-Marx-Haus, 1977), 15–22. Also Lassalle was a keen supporter of the educational function of the press and demanded its economic freedom. Konrad Dussel, *Deutsche Tagespresse im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Münster: LIT, 2004), 83.

²⁸⁴ Dominick, *Wilhelm Liebknecht*, 134; Georg Eckert, ed., *Wilhelm Liebknecht: Briefwechsel mit deutschen Sozialdemokraten*, vol. 1, *Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der deutschen und österreichischen Arbeiterbewegung* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973), xxii.

²⁸⁵ More specifically, one of the most underestimated factors of party emergence is the abolition of the stamp tax, which predated the emergence of party organizations. Cox has related the emergence of party identities to the abolition of the stamp tax in 1856. "The Development of a Party-Orientated Electorate." For the transformative influence of newspapers on nineteenth-century politics, see Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Routledge, 2016). Also in the Netherlands, the stamp tax (*dagbladzegel*) was abolished in 1869, inspiring an extension of the format, daily publications and low subscription prices. Joan Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel in 1869* (Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp, 1969), 268–74. In the German states, however, the period after the 1848 revolution saw increased press restrictions in states like Prussia. Koszyk, *Deutsche Presse im 19. Jahrhundert*, 2:124–25.

had never spoken to each other in person.²⁸⁶ The British case of this study, the National Liberal Federation was a direct successor of the National Education League that was manifested in the *Monthly Paper*. As a demonstration of the national scope of the organization and the large size of its support, its editors published lengthy lists of financial contributors and reports of traveling agents and local meetings.

3.3 Politicization

After the foundation of the Federation of German Workers' Associations in 1863, it might seem like a small step from its nationally organized structure to the party organization of the Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1869. One could argue that once the community of German workers was constituted in a formal structure, its leaders could start implementing the political participation of this community. Especially older accounts of this period suggest that this was a natural and gradual development.²⁸⁷ In reality, it took another six contested years before the famous inaugural congress of the party in Eisenach. Like the many negative voices in the Dutch Orthodox Protestant community, skepticism about political activism was widely shared among German educational activists. At the third annual congress in September 1865, the leaders of the Federation of German Workers' Associations still avoided political statements. Wundt from Heidelberg argued that "the time is not here yet, when the Assembly of Workers' Associations as such, should speak out on specific political principles. I think that if we do not risk political mass agitation, we should also not start such an agitation in our associations."²⁸⁸

Wundt directly addressed the congress delegates, reminding them of the non-political character of their organization. They shared the idea that education was the goal of their organization. In contrast, steering the masses towards political protest was a dangerous

²⁸⁶ Velde, "Kappeyne tegen Kuyper," 129.

²⁸⁷ See, for instance, the early twentieth-century Franz Mehring who starts his history of German Social Democracy with their "opposition against common suppressers, against the backward classes who derive their demands to political rule from outlived ways of production" *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie: Von Lassalles "Offenem Antwortschreiben" bis zum Erfurter Programm, 1863 bis 1891*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Dietz, 1960), 6. See also Mayer who argued that the "falling part" of Liberal and Social Democratic activists not be "prevented." *Die Trennung der proletarischen von der bürgerlichen Demokratie in Deutschland (1863-1870)*. (Leipzig: C. L. Hirschfeld, 1911), 2. Likewise, Abendroth emphasized the "uninterrupted continuity" of German Social Democracy since 1863. *Aufstieg und Krise der deutschen Sozialdemokratie: das Problem der Zweckentfremdung einer politischen Partei durch die Anpassungstendenz von Institutionen an vorgegebene Machtverhältnisse* (Frankfurt am Main: Frankfurt am Main, 1964), 11.

²⁸⁸ "Aber die Zeit ist noch nicht da, wo der Arbeitervereinstag als solcher bestimmte politische Principien aussprechen soll. Ich meine, wenn wir eine politische Massenagitation nicht wagen, so sollten wir eine solche Agitation auch in unseren Vereinen nicht anfangen." Dieter Dowe, ed., "Bericht über die Verhandlungen des dritten Vereinstags deutscher Arbeitervereine," in *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Vereinstage deutscher Arbeitervereine 1863 bis 1869*, Nachdrucke (Berlin: Dietz, 1980), 20.

endeavor and could lead to uncontrollable, possibly violent results.²⁸⁹ In practice, however, the organization's unpolitical agenda was already under pressure. When in the summer of 1865 Sonnemann discussed the question of "wage increase," he not only described the "organized activity of workers to achieve higher wages," but explicitly praised the "direct influence" of the organization on political institutions.²⁹⁰ As Sonnemann reported, local associations had managed to influence the parliamentary agenda. While this statement still referred to education as a goal of organizational activities, the mentioned debate in the Prussian Assembly of Delegates was described as a "a very informative one."²⁹¹

This reference to political institutions was possible because there were no clear guidelines regarding what the self-declared distance to politics meant in organizational practice. Did the social mission mean that members could simply not exercise direct influence on political institutions or should they also not address any issues that were discussed in parliament? Already in 1865, both possibilities were discussed at the annual congress, but direct encounters with political institutions were still rejected. According to delegate Hirsch, circumstances made a discussion of suffrage rights necessary: "I consider the refusal of electoral suffrage as the last remains of slavery."²⁹² This was a bold statement because universal suffrage was widely associated with Lassalle's organization of the General German Workers' Association that was still the main competitor.²⁹³ Hence, Hirsch quickly mentioned that his attempts differed substantially. Both workers' organizations focused on the same class, but only the leaders of his organization had understood how to improve the situation of the workers. Instead of focusing on political mobilization, they alleviated the social question by providing workers with the educational means to rise into the middle classes.²⁹⁴

In the second half of the 1860s, there were increasing difficulties with separating political claims from the educational mission. A first encounter in this critical course was the leaflet of the second chairman Johann Peter Staudinger, who openly criticized the bloodshed of the Austro-Prussian War. In the text, Staudinger explicitly left the struggle about the consequences of the armed conflict to the "political parties."²⁹⁵ But he, nevertheless, attacked the Prussian government by criticizing universal male suffrage in the North German

²⁸⁹ For a discussion of the perception of violence in connection with early party organizations, see also chapter 5 of this dissertation.

²⁹⁰ "Lohnerhöhung" organisierte Tätigkeit der Arbeiter zur Erzielung höherer Löhne" "direkte Einwirkung" "Die Lohnerhöhung," *Flugblatt vom vom ständigen Ausschusse des Vereinstages deutscher Arbeitervereine*, June 1, 1865, 2.

²⁹¹ "sehr lehrreiche" "Die Lohnerhöhung," 2.

²⁹² "Ich halte die Verweigerung des Wahlrechts für den letzten Rest (der) Sklaverei." Dowe, "Bericht über die Verhandlungen des dritten Vereinstags," 18.

²⁹³ On the ADAV's organizational structure see Offermann, *Die erste deutsche Arbeiterpartei*.

²⁹⁴ Dowe, "Bericht über die Verhandlungen des dritten Vereinstags," 19.

²⁹⁵ "Politische Parteien" Johann Peter Staudinger, "Flugblatt Staudinger: Freunde, Brüder, Arbeiter Deutschlands!," n.d., 1, Frühzeit der Arbeiterbewegung, Archiv der Sozialen Demokratie.

Confederation. For Staudinger, this was a meaningless concession; an appeasement of critical opposition rather than a dedication to true popular politics.

Effectively, however, not much is won with this electoral law, because the electoral right in this case is only supposed to serve forming an advisory powerless body, while the authority to dispose over the pockets and the working force of the people is left to representations who have been constituted by an artificial electoral system that is nearly excluding of the working class. 296

The radical message of the leaflet caused a small scandal. Hirsch, who had spoken in favor of suffrage at the previous congress, responded furiously. When he learned that Staudinger had not written the leaflet himself, he demanded that the chairman should act according to the “great majority of German workers, a[nd] according to the requirements of the same statute of association.”²⁹⁷ Hirsch’s appeal to “keep actual politics away from the association” was successful.²⁹⁸ At the end of the month, it was announced that “[t]he activity of the association should from now on focus again exclusively on social tasks.”²⁹⁹

This was only a short-term solution, because outsiders like Wilhelm Liebknecht emphasized the political dimension of the organization’s most important topic education.³⁰⁰ When Julius Vahlteich, a member of the General German Workers’ Association, wrote to Liebknecht in 1865, he criticized public schools for preventing working-class mobilization:

Would indeed somebody be able to prove with reasonable rationale that we could quickly reach revolution also through a purely social movement, that not the reaction is capable of building a sufficient dam through demoralization of the people mainly conveyed by the schools, then I would happily declare my views as false, because if I have to levy something I prefer taking the entire sum instead of instalments, our entire

²⁹⁶ Thatsächlich ist jedoch mit diesem Wahlgesetz noch nicht viel gewonnen, denn das Wahlrecht soll in diesem Falle nur dazu dienen, eine beratende (sic!) machtlose Körperschaft zu bilden, während die Befugniß (sic!), über den Geldbeutel und die Arbeitskraft des Volkes zu verfügen, nach wie vor Repräsentationen überlassen bleiben soll, die vermittelst der künstlichen, den Arbeiterstand nahezu ausschließende Wahlsystem zusammengesetzt werden. Staudinger, “Flugblatt Staudinger: Freunde, Brüder, Arbeiter Deutschlands!”

²⁹⁷ “große Majorität der deutschen Arbeiter, u[nd] nach Maßgaben desselben Verbandstatuts” ‘Max Hirsch to Staudinger’, 5 March 1867, in Schraepler, “Der Zwölfer-Ausschuss des Vereinstages Deutscher Arbeitervereine,” 244.

²⁹⁸ “die eigentliche Politik von dem Verband fernhalten” ‘Max Hirsch to Staudinger’, 5 March 1867, in Schraepler, 244.

²⁹⁹ “[d]ie Thätigkeit des Verbandes soll sich von jetzt an wieder ausschliesslich der socialen Aufgabe widmen.” Leopold Sonnemann, “Protokoll der Sitzung des ständigen Ausschusses deutscher Arbeitervereine zu Cassel, Gasthof ‘Ritter’, 2/1/2 Uhr Nachmittages,” März 1867, 1, A 11, Archiv der Sozialen Demokratie, Bonn.

³⁰⁰ Liebknecht’s political goal of creating a “free people’s state” was to be achieved by enhancing the education of workers.

Meid, “Die Volksbildungskonzeption Wilhelm Liebknechts,” 315.

development in Germany, however, is not in a way that I could believe that it could happen without one.³⁰¹

These considerations probably inspired some members of the Federation of German Workers' Associations to start connecting their organization to more radical demands. In particular August Bebel became a close associate of Liebknecht and an active representative of an increasingly politicized climate.³⁰² In 1867 he suggested that the workers "take the question of organization in our hands and thoroughly study it."³⁰³ With regard to the irregularly published leaflets, he demanded a more outspoken political position and style. For him, the moderate tone did not serve the agitation strategy: "with this we antagonize the relevant elements, and others cannot be won by the colorlessness of the reports."³⁰⁴ In 1867 Bebel became president of the Federation of German Workers' Associations and extended his political activities of the organization. As a member of the Socialist International Workers' Association (Internationale Arbeiterassoziation), he had founded the Saxon People's Party (Sächsische Volkspartei) with Wilhelm Liebknecht.³⁰⁵ Unlike the South German People's Party (Volkspartei), the Saxon People's party incorporated representatives of the two national workers' organizations.³⁰⁶ As president of the Federation of German Workers' Associations Bebel initiated a thorough reorganization process to centralize decision-making. After having being elected president, the twelve members of the leadership, which were scattered all over the German states, were replaced with a smaller seven-member committee located in a specific branch (Vorort).³⁰⁷ This

³⁰¹ "Könnte freilich jemand durch vernünftige Gründe beweisen, dass wir auch durch eine rein sociale Bewegung so schnell eine Revolution erzielen, dass uns nicht (...) die Reaction durch Demoralisation des Volkes hauptsächlich vermittelt der Schulen einen genügenden Damm entgegenzusetzen im Stande ist, so würde ich meine Ansicht mit Freuden für falsch erklären, denn wenn ich etwas zu fordern habe so nehme auch ich lieber die ganze Summe anstatt Abschlagszahlungen, unsre ganze Entwicklung in Deutschland ist aber nicht der Art, dass (ich) glauben könnte es ginge ohne solche ab." 'Julius Vahlteich to Wilhem Liebknecht', 19 March 1865, in Eckert, *Wilhelm Liebknecht: Briefwechsel mit deutschen Sozialdemokraten*, 1:23.

³⁰² Dominick, *Wilhelm Liebknecht*, 121–22; Carsten, *August Bebel*, 29.

³⁰³ "die Frage der Organisation in die Hand zu nehmen und sie gründlich zu studiren" Quoted in Fischer, *August Bebel und der Verband Deutscher Arbeitervereine 1867/68*, xxxix.

³⁰⁴ "damit stößt man den entscheidenden Elementen vor den Kopf, und die anderen sind durch die Farblosigkeit der Berichte nicht gewonnen" 'August Bebel to Johan Peter Staudinger', 4 September 1867, in Herrmann, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Geraer Vereinstags 1867," 206.

³⁰⁵ For the connection of the Saxon People's Party to workers' education association, see Carsten, "The Arbeiterbildungsvereine and the Foundation of the Social-Democratic Workers Party in 1869."

³⁰⁶ Dieter Langewiesche, "Zur Frühgeschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 15 (1975): 301–21. For the South German People's Party, see for instance Runge, *Die Volkspartei in Württemberg*; Gerteis, "Leopold Sonnemann."

³⁰⁷ Dieter Dowe, ed., "Die Verhandlungen des vierten Vereinstages deutscher Arbeiter-Vereine zu Gera am 6. und 7. Oktober 1867," in *Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Vereinstage deutscher Arbeitervereine 1863 bis 1869*, Nachdrucke (Berlin: Dietz, 1980), 138; Carsten, "The Arbeiterbildungsvereine and the Foundation of the Social-Democratic Workers Party in 1869," 370.

centralization was highly contested among local associations, but Bebel was committed to a tighter organization, linking organizational reform with increasing politicization.³⁰⁸

No longer chairman, but officially titled president, Bebel approached independent associations to join the organization, frequently reminded branches to pay their outstanding membership dues and actively offered advice to local chairmen. When 101 mine workers died in an accident in the Saxon Lugau, Bebel asked local members to financially support the victims' families. This was the first of a series of solidarity campaigns. Soon the president organized support for striking cigar workers in Berlin, the impoverished population of East Prussia and Saxon home workers.³⁰⁹ In 1868, this agitation gained new relevance when Bebel appealed to his local allies to attend the annual congress in Nuremberg. Expecting a final clash with the opponents of this political course, he mobilized his supporters: "because of the program question, [it might] come to a very lively confrontation."³¹⁰ His appeal was to "use their entire influence so that the decisions offer a true picture of the attitude of German Workers' Associations."³¹¹

This strategy proved successful and the congress voted to join the International Workers' Association and formally take a more contentious political direction. The consequence of this profound reinterpretation of purpose and structure of the Federation of German Workers' Associations was the dissolution of its organization in 1869. From now on, the Social Democratic Workers' Party became the political organization of German workers. The purpose of this newly founded party organization was directly related to the educational roots of the movement. As Bebel explained, education was an essential pillar of the new state: "The people's state shall be tried to be brought about by enlightenment of the masses (...), and this enlightenment can be carried out effectively through the organization (foundation) of party

³⁰⁸ Herrmann, "Zur Vorgeschichte des Geraer Vereinstags 1867," 153–55; Carsten, "The Arbeiterbildungsvereine and the Foundation of the Social-Democratic Workers Party in 1869," 365. Remarkably, Robert Michels would argue for later decades that institutionalization had led to depoliticisation of ordinary members. Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie*.

³⁰⁹ See for Bebel's activities as president, Fischer, *August Bebel und der Verband Deutscher Arbeitervereine 1867/68*, XLVIII–LIV.

³¹⁰ "wegen der Programmfrage zu sehr lebhaften Kampf kommen" "ganzen Einfluß aufzubieten, damit die Beschlüsse ein getreues Bild der Gesinnung der deutsch[en] Arb[eiter]Ver[eine] bieten" 'Bebel to Carl Bürger', no date, in Fischer, 242.

³¹¹ "wegen der Programmfrage zu sehr lebhaften Kampf kommen" "ganzen Einfluß aufzubieten, damit die Beschlüsse ein getreues Bild der Gesinnung der deutsch[en] Arb[eiter]Ver[eine] bieten" 'Bebel to Carl Bürger', no date, Fischer, 242.

branches, trade unions etc.”³¹² At the founding congress, delegate Klees from Buckau argued that the new party would serve “as preschool for the state which we want to create.”³¹³

The political organization of Social Democrats was justified by the inevitable struggle of the working classes for social and political equality: “[i]n consideration that the political and economic emancipation of the working class is only possible if it fights together and uniformly, the Social Democratic Workers’ Party gives itself a uniform organization.”³¹⁴ This statement was typical of the rhetoric at the 1869 gathering, but it also needs to be seen as a performative act in itself.³¹⁵ Over decades, Social Democrats activists had tried to build a national community in relation to organizational structure, including the Brotherhood of Workers of the 1848 revolution, Lassalle’s General German Workers’ Association and the Saxon People’s Party. The Eisenach gathering has gained so much attention in the literature, because it formalized the politicization of the Federation of German Workers’ Associations. But Bebel and his peers were not the only social group going through this process. Dutch Orthodox Protestants justified the creation of the political organization of their national community in a similar way. Regardless of the specific ideological orientation, the leaders of the three parties promised to unite the ordinary people against an unjust political system.³¹⁶ Even the Radical Liberals around the entrepreneur Joseph Chamberlain claimed true representation of the working class for their political organization.

The connection between political struggle and organization was the most important selling point of early party organizations. In more abstract terms, the adaption of new institutional goals can be called “institutional conversion.”³¹⁷ This was not a natural process, but actively shaped by party founders who argued that the emancipation of their national

³¹² “Der Volksstaat soll zunächst herbeigeführt gesucht werden durch Aufklärung der Massen (...), und diese Aufklärung kann wirksam betrieben werden durch Organisation (Gründung) von Parteiverbänden, Gewerkschaften etc.” August Bebel, *Unsere Ziele: eine Streitschrift gegen die “Demokratische Correspondenz”* (Berlin: Dietz, 1870), 10–11.

³¹³ “als Vorschule für den Staat, den wir schaffen wollen.” Walsker et al., “Protokoll.”

³¹⁴ “In Erwägung, daß die politische und ökonomische Befreiung der Arbeiterklasse nur möglich ist, wenn diese gemeinsam und einheitlich den Kampf führt, gibt sich die Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei eine einheitliche Organisation” Dieter Dowe and Kurt Klotzbach, eds., “Programm und Statuten der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei, beschlossen auf dem Kongress in Eisenach 1869,” in *Programmatische Dokumente der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 2. (Berlin/Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz Nachf., 1984), 174.

³¹⁵ These sorts of quotes have contributed to the interpretation that the Eisenach congress was the decisive moment where the “independent workers’ party” (selbstständige Arbeiterpartei) emerged. Mayer, *Die Trennung der proletarischen von der bürgerlichen Demokratie in Deutschland (1863-1870)*, 1.

³¹⁶ Also in terms of socio-economic background, the impoverished intellectual writer Wilhelm Liebknecht and the master carpenter August Bracke did not belong to the industrialized working class.

³¹⁷ Kathleen Thelen, “How Institutions Evolve. Insights from Comparative Historical Analysis,” in *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 229.

community required a new model of organization. Their argument contained two elements.³¹⁸ First, party founders identified a situation as unjust. They argued that national governments denied their community the rightful place in society and political institutions. As a second step, party leaders declared that the only way to change national politics was through further institutionalization and politicization. Previous organizations might have united the community behind one purpose, but the results of the formal cooperation over education were unsatisfactory. Neither the petition movements of the Dutch Orthodox Protestant Anti-School Law League nor the German Federation of German Workers' Associations was successful in decisively changing the situation of their community, but it did delegitimize the existing political system. In order to stimulate collective action, party founders presented party organization as a necessary innovation: the tool to incorporate the masses into politics. This narrative was convincing because it fit into a changing contemporary understanding of politics. As historian Osterhammel has noted, starting from the French Revolution the public debate was no longer dominated by concerns about just rule. Rather the focus shifted to the question of who should participate in politics, and to what extent.³¹⁹ State officials became increasingly interested in the lives of their subjects.³²⁰ Conversely, inhabitants of the geographical periphery increasingly looked to national capitals, judging the performance of political elites.³²¹

4. British National Education League

4.1 Birmingham and the Caucus

In Britain, this changing public sphere left a fruitful ground for the political activism of Radical Liberals. The prominent founder of the party organization of the National Liberal Federation was the entrepreneur and political activist Joseph Chamberlain. Already as a young man, he demonstrated his talent to draw attention to the limitations of the existing political system. Despite his status as a successful businessman and political leader, Chamberlain succeeded in presenting himself as a parliamentary outsider, criticizing the Liberal elites in Westminster for neglecting the interests of ordinary people. Like Bebel and Kuyper, he developed a radical language to support the working classes and promised his ordinary followers representation in

³¹⁸ This process of framing has also been described for later periods. Snow and Benford, "Master Frames and Cycles of Protest."

³¹⁹ Osterhammel, *The transformation*, 593–94; Keith Michael Baker, "Public Opinion as Political Invention," in *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 176–99.

³²⁰ For instance, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Joyce, *Visions of the People*; David I. Kertzer and Marzio Barbagli, eds., *Family Life in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1789-1913*, The History of the European Family 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 573.

³²¹ De Jong, *Van standspolitiek naar partijloyaliteit*.

national political institutions. In 1873, Chamberlain argued that a new organization was necessary for the unprivileged classes.

The working classes are still without the organization which will give them the full power of their numbers, and enable them to seat their own representatives; but in the meantime they are not likely to give their support and confidence to those who have neglected their petitions and denied their prayers, and whose only claim to their devotion is their reputed possession of the musty title-deeds of Liberalism, which (...) are preserved in the archives of the great Whig families.³²²

Essentially, these words carry the same message as the quote of the German Social Democrats mentioned above. The founders of the Social Democratic Workers' Party argued that the "political and economic emancipation of the working class" from the Liberal bourgeoisie made a uniform party organization necessary. Even the Dutch Orthodox Protestant party leader Kuyper developed with his legendary "kleine luyden" (little people) a similar perception of the discriminated ordinary people.³²³ In these three political discourses, the unprivileged masses stood up against selfish political elites.

The local roots of Chamberlain's political activities were situated in Birmingham, where the controversial organization of the National Liberal Federation soon became known as the *Caucus*.³²⁴ At the beginning the term Caucus was not tied to a specific organization, but broadly associated with the intensified use of electoral organization in American politics.³²⁵ The first commentator to use the term in relationship to Chamberlain's organization was the Conservative Benjamin Disraeli. In 1878, Disraeli tried to criticize the tight coordination of voters that was considered by many contemporaries as electoral manipulation.³²⁶ The origins of Chamberlain's organizational model could be found in Birmingham where two local organizations emerged. For one, there was the Birmingham Liberal Association of 1865 whose organizational structure was used as a basis for the Liberal electoral campaign after the 1867 Reform Act.³²⁷ Birmingham had gained three parliamentary representatives, but each individual

³²² Joseph Chamberlain, "The Liberal Party and Its Leaders," *Fortnightly Review*, 1873, 292, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

³²³ Kuiper, "De weg van het volk"; van Helden, "De 'kleine luyden' van Abraham Kuyper"; Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap*, chap. 2.

³²⁴ Ostrogorski, "The Introduction of the Caucus into England." In the history literature, there is discussion about which specific organization was called Caucus. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, 1978, chap. 7; Herrick, "The Origins"; Tholfsen, "The Origins of the Birmingham Caucus."

³²⁵ In Britain, it was generally believed that the ruthless manipulation of electoral practices had become a dangerous feature in the political system of the United States that was generally seen as corrupt and vulgar. Owen, *Labour and the Caucus*, chap. 3; John Coffey, "Moody and Sankey's Mission to Britain, 1873-1875," in *Citizenship and Community: Liberals, Radicals and Collective Identities in the British Isles, 1865-1931*, ed. Eugenio Biagini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113-16.

³²⁶ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 124.

³²⁷ Briggs, *Borough and City*, 7, 165. See also Stephens who argues that the Birmingham Liberal Association was founded in close connection with the Reform League. Stephens, "Political and Administrative History."

elector was restricted to two, instead of three, votes.³²⁸ The leaders of the Liberal Association refused to accept this principle, developing a scheme to circumvent the minority clause. The writer and progressive Liberal activist William Harris was the coordinator of this electoral organization, which organized the city's municipal wards as Liberal electoral districts.³²⁹ At annual meetings, each ward elected the representatives of its own committee. Participation was free of charge and open to every citizen who lived in the ward and generally agreed with the objectives and organization of the Liberal Association. Once elected, the ward committees formed a general committee of 400 people (later this would become 600) that elected a smaller leadership committee of 100.³³⁰ Through this organizational structure national elections were coordinated. The voters of each district received meticulous instructions as to which of the three Liberal parliamentary candidates they should cast their two votes for. As the political analyst Ostrogorski pejoratively noted, the slogan was "Vote as you are told."³³¹

For the 1868 election some voters were instructed to vote for the Liberal candidates Bright and Dixon, others to focus on Dixon and Muntz. Another electoral group was to cast their ballot for Muntz and Bright.³³² This disciplining strategy proved successful, and the Birmingham Liberals gained three seats in Westminster. Only their failure to gain the majority on the city's school board elections two years later in 1870 suggested that the organizing technique still required some improvement.³³³ Therefore, the gifted organizer Francis Schnadhorst was hired to coordinate the practices of Liberal electoral campaigning for the coming decades. Schnadhorst, whose biography still needs to be written, was from a modest family background. His father owned a drapery and hosiery shop.³³⁴ After accepting the position as secretary, he secured the Liberal victory in the school board elections and in the town council of Birmingham in 1873.³³⁵ Frequently depicted in newspapers and cartoons, Schnadhorst became known as the ingenious wirepuller behind the Caucus.

The second organization behind the Caucus had its origin in a campaign that was less outspoken in its political mission and focused on the issue of education. The traditional center of British education protest was Manchester, but Birmingham quickly took the lead in the organized struggle for denominationally neutral primary schools.³³⁶ After several informal

³²⁸ Chris Cook, *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914*, Longman Companions to History (London: Longman, 1999), 62.

³²⁹ Harris was known as the "Abbé Sieyès of Birmingham" Briggs, *Borough and City*, 168.

³³⁰ Balfour, *Britain and Joseph Chamberlain*, 92.

³³¹ Ostrogorski, *Democracy and the Organization*, 1:1.

³³² Briggs, *Borough and City*, 167.

³³³ Balfour, *Britain and Joseph Chamberlain*, 92.

³³⁴ Barry McGill, "Francis Schnadhorst and Liberal Party Organization," *The Journal of Modern History* 34, no. 1 (March 1, 1962): 19.

³³⁵ This also had a positive effect on Joseph Chamberlain's political ascent who became the city's mayor in the same year.

³³⁶ Taylor, "Birmingham and the Movement for National Education," 3.

meetings in the first half of the year, the city's leading dissenters around the popular politician George Dixon founded the Birmingham Education Society in 1867.³³⁷ In addition to Liberal convictions of progress that had played such a mobilizing role in the German states, in Britain also religious motives were important.³³⁸ Because most of the politically active families in Birmingham were non-conformists, they were united in their dissent from the Anglican Church. Also Chamberlain and his family invested the enormous sum of £4,500 in the local association.³³⁹ They hoped that a better education system would support the economic progress of the nation.³⁴⁰ The mission of the Birmingham Education Association was to gather information about the current state of the local school system and develop statistical overviews about the municipal education system.³⁴¹ Like the members of the local branches of the Dutch Association for Christian-National School Education and School with the Bible, the Birmingham activists aimed at allocating funding to the improvement of primary schools.³⁴² They demanded that local authorities be allowed to levy taxes for educational purposes, arguing that more opportunities should be created for children to attend school.³⁴³

Two years later, the Birmingham Education Association initiated the foundation of the National Education League to formalize its activities for the free and non-sectarian compulsory education of children on the national scale.³⁴⁴ The plan for this national organization emerged out of disappointment about local initiatives' failure to achieve political change.³⁴⁵ Drafted in the residence of George Dixon, Birmingham was chosen as the location of the founding meeting. As the popular parliamentary representative of the city, Dixon became the president of the new single-issue organization. Also the two younger co-founders, Joseph Chamberlain and Jesse Collings, were inhabitants of the industrially thriving city.³⁴⁶ At the first meeting, the Birmingham delegation promised the cheerful participants that this new organization would address the education question on a national level. Their goal was nothing less than a complete reform of the national education system. Already in the invitation to the meeting, Dixon referred to the national scale of the problem that the "new machinery" would address. He

³³⁷ Conrad Hill, *Manor and Borough to 1865*, History of Birmingham 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), 382–87; Taylor, "Birmingham and the Movement for National Education," 27–33.

³³⁸ This was a phenomenon more wide-spread in the Anglo-American context. J. P. Parry, *Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Stamatov, "The Religious Field and the Path-Dependent Transformation of Popular Politics."

³³⁹ Judd, *Radical Joe*, 46.

³⁴⁰ Taylor, "Birmingham and the Movement for National Education," 44..

³⁴¹ Taylor, chap. 1.

³⁴² Hill, *Manor and Borough to 1865*, 383, 387–387; Herrick, "The Origins"; Auspos, "Radicalism, Pressure Groups, and Party Politics," 122.

³⁴³ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 34.

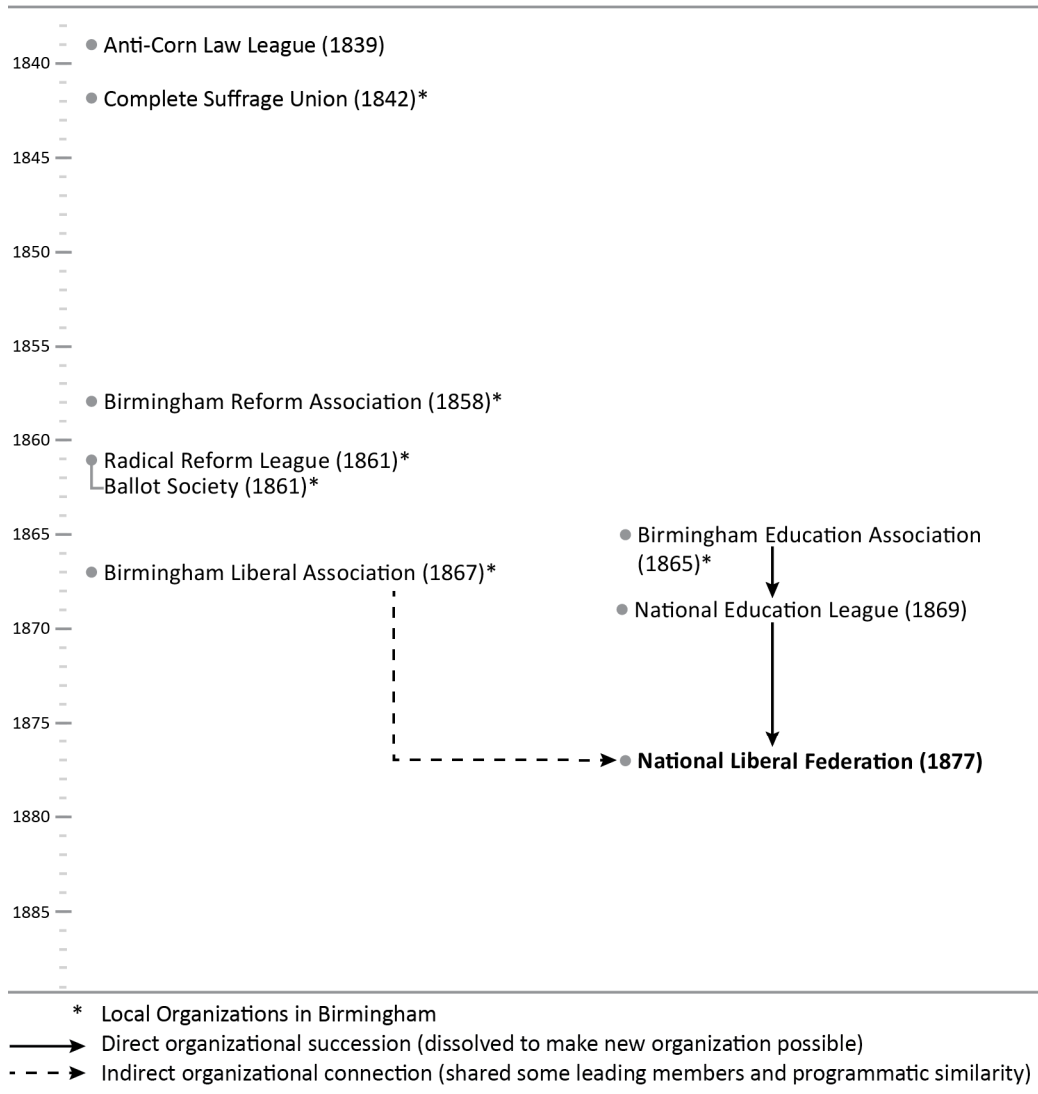
³⁴⁴ Auspos, "Radicalism, Pressure Groups, and Party Politics," 185.

³⁴⁵ Taylor, "Birmingham and the Movement for National Education," 63.

³⁴⁶ Marsh, *Joseph Chamberlain*, 36–37. For Birmingham's economic development, see Briggs, *Borough and City*, chap. 3; Watts, *Joseph Chamberlain*.

argued that “no time should be lost in bringing a good education within the reach of (...) the (...) children in the country.”³⁴⁷ After the delegates had gathered in Birmingham, Dixon greeted them as “the eminent men who have come from various parts of the country.”³⁴⁸ He further expressed the hope that the generous financial support of some early supporters would be

Graph 5: Overview of organizational development of British Radical Liberals



³⁴⁷ National Education League, “Report of the First General Meeting of Members of the National Education League: Held at Birmingham, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 12 & 13, 1869” (The Journal, 1869), 4, <http://books.google.nl/books?id=VnsWAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

³⁴⁸ National Education League, 9.

“imitated in other parts of the country.”³⁴⁹ In the same tone, Henry Holland, former mayor of Birmingham, referred to the many supporters, who not only included “the ladies and gentlemen present,” but also “those friends of education throughout the kingdom who (...) could not attend the meeting.”³⁵⁰ Afterwards, Dixon read out letters from sympathizers all over the country, including from London, Birmingham, Glasgow and Bath.³⁵¹

4.2 Solving the Democratic Problem of the Nation

It remains unclear whether it was Joseph Chamberlain’s plan from the beginning to transform the National Education League into a programmatically broader political organization.³⁵² In the Birmingham Liberal Association he had experienced the potential of organizing voters on a municipal level. Meanwhile, members of the single issue organization of the National Education League passionately supported the mission of changing the government’s position on religiously neutral elementary education.³⁵³ But as early as 1873, Chamberlain aggressively advocated a radical change within mainstream Liberalism in his article about *The Liberal Party and its Leaders*. Making his criticism of the national Liberal leadership appear like a general conflict within the loose group of the parliamentary Liberal Party, he claimed to speak for “[t]he Liberals who are credited with the intention of dividing the party at elections,” but were “at least as sensible of the value of Liberal principles and the importance of past Liberal legislation.”³⁵⁴ As the self-acclaimed representative of true Liberalism, Chamberlain criticized the organizational ability of the parliamentary Liberal Party by comparing it to its political opponents: “if Conservatism be, (...) organized selfishness, Liberalism has now become selfishness without organization.”³⁵⁵ In this way, the problems of the Liberal community were directly related to the absence of a coherent political agenda among its parliamentary representatives. As a consequence, the diversion from its primary principles had become acceptable behavior for its leaders and followers: “leaders without a policy and statesmen without principles find their natural result in followers without loyalty and a party without discipline.”³⁵⁶ In this quote, there is a first indication of Chamberlain’s main justification for the foundation of this later party organization. The ambitious politician presented coherent organizational structures as the tool to articulate the people’s frustration with the Liberal

³⁴⁹ National Education League, 9.

³⁵⁰ National Education League, 9. See list of Mayors of Birmingham in Briggs, *Borough and City*, 329.

³⁵¹ National Education League, “Report of the First General Meeting of Members of the National Education League,” 10.

³⁵² Auspos, “Radicalism, Pressure Groups, and Party Politics”; Herrick, “The Origins.”

³⁵³ Hamer, *The Politics of Electoral Pressure*, 129–31.

³⁵⁴ Chamberlain, “The Liberal Party,” 289.

³⁵⁵ Chamberlain, 289.

³⁵⁶ Chamberlain, 289.

political elite. His argument was that their disregard of ordinary people's concerns made it an inevitable necessity to embark on more powerful action and a more compelling organization.

In 1874 the Liberal government called for a national election. This time, the National Education League did not get involved in the electoral campaign and even gave up its political course, after the Liberals were defeated.³⁵⁷ While the organization's *Monthly Paper* continued to agitate for the education question, it became much more difficult with a Conservative government in power to shape national politics. Hence, the organization shifted its focus to philanthropical activities in the local context. Concentrating on the work in local school boards, its leaders hoped to promote religiously neutral schools in many municipal circumstances. This change in strategy was also related to Chamberlain's new political office as mayor of Birmingham. From this political base, Chamberlain had a new platform to attack the traditional elite in the parliamentary Liberal Party. In his eyes, the recent loss of the elections made a new sort of Liberalism – in content and form - even more urgent.³⁵⁸ His call for a more radical political agenda was based on working-class demands for reform.

In summing up the result and experience of the general election, it seems safe to say that the absence of any definite programme certainly intensified the disaster; and that even the adoption of the whole Radical platform could hardly have made it worse. It must not be supposed, however, that this extreme course is even now to be urged on the Liberal leaders; it is only sought to show that, as a mere question of policy, some definite programme is necessary for the reunion of the party, and that it is a pure hallucination to imagine that Liberalism can be made popular by a close imitation of Conservatism.³⁵⁹

This renewed attack on the Liberal establishment was accompanied by a remarkable reinterpretation of the role of extra-parliamentary pressure groups. Although still chairman of the executive committee of the League, Chamberlain denounced the phenomenon of the single-issue organization in Britain. For him, these politically aggressive associations had hijacked the electoral campaign and political strategy of the Liberal Party. While the League had already abandoned its strategy to exercise pressure on electoral candidates, Chamberlain aimed for a more general point. As he explained in his article, he did not deny single-issue organizations their right to exist. Rather, they pointed to a larger problem in Liberal politics: the absence of a coherent agenda. Reminding his audience of the grand Liberal victory of 1868, Chamberlain argued that only a strong programmatic alignment in the Liberal Party, could create renewed electoral success:

In the election of 1868 these voices [of single-issue organizations, A.H.] were silent, for the question on which verdict of the nation was wanted was felt to

³⁵⁷ Hamer, *The Politics of Electoral Pressure*, 137–38.

³⁵⁸ Auspos, "Radicalism, Pressure Groups, and Party Politics."

³⁵⁹ Joseph Chamberlain, "The Next Page of the Liberal Programme," *Fortnightly Review*, October 1874, 413, Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham.

be of sufficient magnitude to justify the postponement of all minor subjects; and it is only when leaders cease to lead that their followers are driven to attempt to campaign on their own account.³⁶⁰

Following his own call, Chamberlain founded the thematically broad party organization of the National Liberal Federation in 1877. At the founding congress, he argued that it was time to initiate the organization “on a new basis” so “that the people at large should be taken into the counsels of the party.”³⁶¹ As NLF president, he explained to the delegates that in previous decades it made sense for “party organization” to “be restricted,” because the number of voters was comparatively small.³⁶² With this argument, Chamberlain referred again to education as a justification for mass politics and his new form of political organization. Like his Dutch and German counterparts, he argued that under the new circumstances, “thanks to the increased intelligence of the people (...), to their increased education,” it was time for a new organizational format.³⁶³

5. Justifying Party Organization

The three party organizations of the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party, German Social Democratic Workers’ Party and British National Liberal Federation went through similar processes of politicization and institutionalization. But in contrast to party founders’ narratives, this development was neither inevitable nor an exception. Recent national studies have shown that party founders faced considerable opposition to their suggestions to establish parties as a new form of politics. The active process of reinterpretation of political organization becomes even more apparent in the comparative perspective of this dissertation. For Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries, skepticism about formalizing party organization was related to the distrust of popular politics, especially among the leaders of Orthodox Protestantism, but also German and British political activists opposed the creation of party organization.³⁶⁴ In this situation, education became the decisive frame that allowed national cooperation under seemingly less controversial banners. Schooling and training was a practice that transformed the lives of nineteenth-century individuals. The creation of national organizations like the Dutch Anti-School Law League, German Federation of German Workers’ Associations and the British National Education League convinced geographically separated activists of a shared social identity on the basis of the practical experience of being part of a larger collective. They hoped

³⁶⁰ Chamberlain, 413.

³⁶¹ “Proceedings,” 14.

³⁶² “Proceedings,” 14.

³⁶³ “Proceedings,” 14.

³⁶⁴ Owen, *Labour and the Caucus*; Na’aman, *Von der Arbeiterbewegung zur Arbeiterpartei*, 24–36; Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, chap. 6.

that newspapers, conventions and organizations would help them improve their personal and their communities' circumstances.

Education also created a social context where further institutionalization could be presented as a logical step for an unprivileged community. In the case of the Federation of German Workers' Associations, education was meant to prevent political mobilization. But, as in the Dutch and British Leagues, German activists like August Bebel increasingly argued that a more powerful form of organization was necessary to increase the educational efforts of existing national organizations. This enthusiasm for national cooperation was related to the manifestation of the national community in organizational structure and reached a peak when ambitious members expressed their disappointment with the political elites. Increasingly, education became connected to a wider agenda of improving the social status and the political rights of Dutch Anti-Revolutionaries, German Social Democrats and British Radical Liberals. While most members did not want to engage in the political battle directly, people like Abraham Kuyper, August Bebel and Joseph Chamberlain started to demand a more radical form of campaign.

At this stage education again played an important role – this time to legitimate political agitation in national parliaments. From his experience in the National Education League, Chamberlain referred to the growing education of ordinary people to justify their organization for political influence. Like his counterparts abroad, he argued that social inequality was the result of systematic discrimination and thus could not be abolished with conventional means of organization. As leaders of their national community, he and his German and Dutch counterparts invoked a rhetoric of quantity to establish a more immediate link to national parliamentary assemblies. In their perspective, the permanent organizational structure and a broad political program were needed to fight the discrimination against German Social Democrats, British Liberals and Dutch Orthodox Protestants. This argument united the three party organizations of the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party, the German Social Democratic Workers' Party and the British National Liberal Federation. Despite all the national and ideological differences, education can be seen as the missing link between first organizational experiences and the national party organization.