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**Conflict**

by P. Valkenburgh

The basic assumption is that social conflicts are the motor of the political process. Social conflicts point to a want or a strife for social changes. These changes are subsequently realized in the political process, the results of these changes being laid down in the law. In reference to Dahrendorf and De Moor the hypothesis is formulated that disproportional positional changes of actors within a social system bring about conflicts.

Positions are tied to value distributions, hence the hypothesis may also be formulated in terms of disproportional distributions of values, leading to conflicts. In addition to this structural approach, a second approach may be followed, joining Black, Arrow, Sun, Murakani, Fishburn and others, viz. the utility-theoretical or the satisfaction-theoretical approach. This approach deals with an analysis of utility-functions of actors, conflict being defined as a position on the satisfaction-scale.

**Conflict in Dutch politics**

by J. van Putten

Typical of conflict resolution in the Netherlands seems to be that conflicts in Dutch society are quickly politicized. Either an existing political party makes itself a mouth-piece of one of the groups involved in the conflict, or one of these groups found a new party. The latter solution is favored by the existing electoral system, that guarantees easy access for new parties to parliament.

It's remarkable that various new parties that have emerged in this way, have attracted quite a lot of voters but have also lost them again after a relatively short period, without having reached the goal they aimed at.

Not only proves the increase of the number of political parties an increase of the number of political controversies, opinion-research also makes clear that the sharpness of a number of controversies has increased in the course of time at least in the opinion of the respondents. This is especially true as far as the perception of the opposition of employees to employers is concerned, notwithstanding the increased level of welfare of the employees.

The Dutch political system cannot be denied a certain degree of flexibility in the handling of conflicts. With an increase of the number of conflicts this flexibility may get lost if the influence of parliament on the government is not increased at the same time and if no structural changes are introduced into the relations between employers and employees.

**Conflict in Dutch local politics: mirrors and fights**

by J. de Lange

The concept of local political conflict presupposes local issues or controversies that can be settled by local authorities. Does this situation exist? Local authorities are involved in violent conflict because riots do happen somewhere, viz. on the territory of a local government, whether or not the conflict is about local issues. Therefore the objectives of an action have to be taken into account to determine whether a conflict is a local one. Generally the objections of an action can be the change of local power holders or a change of their policies. Replacement of local officials by means of local action in the Dutch situation is not so

obvious. In most cases a decision of the national government is required, e.g. the appointment of a new mayor. By-elections for political reasons never have happened. What has happened is the putting aside of a local council and appointment of a commissioner by the national government.

Is a change of local policy more easily conceivable? Actually in many cases local authorities must reach the cooperation of the national government to realize plans of some importance, at least financially. But even where this problem does not exist a local government could not deviate too much from national policies. Local revolutionary change is not possible, because local government is subordinate government. Local conflict cannot change the 'first-order politics' (policies) or the 'second-order politics' (political institutions) very far; the limits are to be found in the national political system.

In this situation it is rather remarkable that recently is tried to change the way local and provincial boards of aldermen are traditionally composed, viz. proportionally to the strength of all or as many as possible parties in the councils (as a mirror of the council). Some parties have succeeded to form majority-coalitions which take all aldermen seats. Though this procedure might be reasoned as a way of politization of local and provincial government, as far as this government has no real room for policies of its own the main effect will be to reduce the number of candidates in competition for seats.

**From international to transnational politics: a change of paradigms?**

by J. Henk Leurdijk

This article deals with recent developments in the theory of international politics which amount to a critical re-examination of prevalent assumptions in international relations literature. The traditional model of the inter-state system, which gives the nationstate a prominent place as actor and unit of analysis and conceives of the international system as a collectivity of states aiming at a state of equilibrium, has been generally accepted by scholars in the field as exemplified by the popularity of the concept of the balance of power. After analyzing these assumptions, the author points to developments in international reality which seem to contradict these assumptions. They are summarized in the concepts of the 'nuclear age' and the 'transnational system' and combined in the notion of interdependence which is said to characterize the present international system. These developments also point to the increasing convergence of rational and international politics. Thus, in recent international relations literature, the traditional horizontal, territorially-based organization of the political process is contrasted with its increasingly vertical, transnational character, while at the same time the equilibrium model of international politics is superseded by a view of the international system as based on relations of dominance and supremacy. These new insights, finally, are combined in a model of a world political system that is global in its geographical dimension.

**Where to take up the study of political science**

by W. Kok

Despite some recent conflicts (see the special edition of *Acta Politica* in particular) at two political science departments the total number of people interested in studying political science hasn't decreased. About the same number of students

turned out to have started in '73/74 as in '72/73 at the various universities where this study can be taken up. From an analysis of the motives of these fresh-years it becomes clear why they started studying political science at a *specific* university. In the first instance they probably decided to study political science, then an entirely different kind of considerations weighed heavily ((non-)confessional character of the university, distance from parents, opportunities to rent a room and the presence of friends) and finally reasons concerning the study (the way the study is set up and its fame) played a large role. A closer analysis of these motives shows a clearly differentiated demand for studies in political science set up in different ways: some prefer a rather general curriculum while others prefer a more specialized one.

#### **Power and Powerlessness of Parliament — a contribution to conceptualization**

by I. Th. M. Snellen

Recent discussions on the above subject ask for conceptual specification as to 1. what are the relations between power and powerlessness (in Dutch: 'onmacht'; in German: 'Ohnmacht') and 2. what do we mean when we speak in this connection about parliament? This specification may be necessary to future research in behalf of parliamentary reform proposals.

Power and powerlessness are no opposites; they belong to different language and meaning contexts, to different 'language games'. Power belongs to a relational, powerlessness to a reflexive frame of (language) activities. As a consequence both power and powerlessness (e.g. of parliament) may increase or decrease at the same time. Modern conditions under which this may occur are mentioned.

As to 'Parliament', when speaking about its power or powerlessness, various spatial-temporal emanations of this institute have to be distinguished.

#### **The standing committees in the Second Chamber of the Dutch states-General**

by L. van Waasbergen\*

Standing committees are instituted for various reasons.

Every cabinet Minister (except the Prime - Minister) is faced by at least one standing committee. Undersecretaries however have no 'own' standing committees. Usually the chairman of the Second Chamber appoints the members and deputy-members of the standing committees. Seats are distributed among the parliamentary parties by means of proportional representation. Since this would mean that the small parliamentary parties would not be represented in any standing committee, these are dealt with in a different way.

Every bill has to be examined in a committee (either a standing or a special one) before the full Chamber can debate on it. By far the most bills are dealt with in the standing committees. This preparatory examination of bills usually takes place by sending a paper to the Minister or Undersecretary concerned. He will send a reply, and so on. The procedure of examination may include a hearing. The preparatory examination hardly ever takes place in a public committee meeting. Most committee-meetings are in private. Apart from their legislative task, the standing committees are now more often engaged in other activities, such as deliberation with a Minister or Under-secretary, and hearings. Correspondence

is increasing. Pressure from society on parliament, its members and its institutions has increased. This seems to have changed roles of members of parliament and also the way committees handle things. This change is more perceptible in some committees than in other ones. The influence of committee chairmen, committee members, members of the cabinet, and the public on this process of change has been examined.

\* The article to which this summary refers has been published in vol. 9, nr. 2.