

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE:

### First reactions in the Dutch national press to the 1891 Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*<sup>1</sup>.

M. Wintle

All over the world *Rerum Novarum* made a significant impact, but in some ways the impact in the Netherlands was unusual and more impressive than elsewhere. Serious and practical discussion amongst Dutch Catholics of 'the social question' (the generic term used to refer to the social consequences of economic and political change since the French Revolution) had hardly arisen at all before the 1880s, with its economic depression and social strife. The Dutch Catholic historian L.J. Rogier remarked that the debate on these matters fought out by such men as Von Ketteler, Manning, and Mermillod 'had apparently entirely eluded the Netherlands', and suggested that this lack of serious interest in the social question amongst Dutch Catholics was due to late industrialization in the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> It is also the case that Dutch Catholics had undergone a relatively late political emancipation process, and their episcopal hierarchy had been restored only as late as 1853: Dutch Catholics were too concerned with the essentials of specifically Catholic life, like their Church and their schools, to expend very much time and attention on universal matters like the condition of the working classes. Liberal Catholicism, as it was manifested in opposition to Pius IX at the time of the Vatican Council of 1869-70, had also virtually passed the Netherlands by. So for many Dutch Catholics in May 1891, the doctrines put forward in *Rerum Novarum* were a surprise, and in some cases almost revolutionary.

On the other hand, the decade of the 1880s had been as economically distressed in the Netherlands as it had in other countries, particularly in the agricultural

1. This paper is an extended and revised version of one delivered to the International Conference on the Centenary of *Rerum Novarum*, 'Social Catholicism and the Development of Catholic Social Doctrine', at the University of Hull (UK), 12-14 April 1991.

2. L.J. Rogier, *Katholieke herleving: geschiedenis van katholiek Nederland sinds 1853*, The Hague 1956, 309-310. See also J. Perry, *Roomsche kinine tegen roode koorts: arbeidersbeweging en katholieke kerk in Maastricht 1880-1920*, Amsterdam 1983, 33-34; and H. Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa: een vergelijkend onderzoek naar het ontstaan van verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, België en Nederland*, Meppel 1986, 219.

sector, which (as in Britain) received no protection whatsoever from a free-trader government. In industry and the larger service sectors too, it was a decade of strikes and disputes, seeing the rise of organized Socialism, and of the Social Democratic League under Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. These developments were later and less powerful than in many other western European economies, but even Dutch Catholics were made aware of the consequences of the structural depression in the Dutch open economy. Various forms of organization were growing up to try to look after the interests of Catholic working men, or at the very least to keep them away from the Socialists, and in the course of this development a local discussion grew up around the correct or safest form these organizations might take. The Roman Catholic People's League (*Volksbond*) of 1888 was a general association open to all classes, in many ways emulating the old guilds of the *ancien régime*; this was the form favoured by most of the Dutch bishops. More progressive Catholics, however, like Alphonse Ariëns, and even Herman Schaepman, saw that in order to provide real answers, and a real alternative to Socialism, it would be necessary to set up trade unions on a Roman Catholic basis, exclusively for working men.<sup>3</sup> This Dutch debate on the legitimate methods for Catholic organization was a microcosm of the international one played out between the various schools of social Catholicism in the 1880s, like the Fribourg and Liège groups,<sup>4</sup> and *Rerum Novarum* was seen as an authoritative comment in the dispute, albeit one designed to alienate as few parties as possible.

In this situation, the reception of the encyclical in the Netherlands was understandably mixed. In some Catholic quarters there was ecstasy; in others it was viewed with only thinly veiled alarm. Nearly all parties, Catholic or otherwise, took it seriously. The impact of *Rerum Novarum* has been making itself felt for a hundred years, but here we shall assess the immediate and direct reception in the Netherlands. In some ways the reactions were predictable; in others the nuances are surprising and help to clarify the range of opinion on social issues in the Dutch media at the end of the nineteenth century. It has been neither possible nor desirable to cover every single organ of the contemporary press in a systematic manner, but I have instead concentrated on the daily newspapers, especially those with national ambitions rather than the purely local press; some reference to weeklies, monthlies and even pamphlets has been made here and there to add depth to

3. Rogier, *Katholieke herleving*, 327-328; and Righart, *De katholieke zuil*, 223-224.

4. J. Roes, ed., *Bronnen van de katholieke arbeidersbeweging in Nederland: toespraken, brieven en artikelen van Alphons Ariëns 1887-1901*, Nijmegen 1982, XXXVI.

the impressions gained. With some exceptions I have scanned only the reactions during the summer and autumn of 1891. I have taken representative organs of the whole spectrum of political opinions as expressed in the Dutch press in the early 1890s: I have tried to gauge the reaction of the Socialists (in *Recht voor Allen*), the free thinkers (in *De Amsterdammer* and *Vragen des Tijds*), the liberals (the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, and the *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant*), and the Calvinists (in *De Standaard* and *De Heraut*). Amongst the Catholic press, dailies have been selected which cover a wide range of views, from the ultramontane conservative *De Maasbode*, through the episcopate-loyal *De Tijd*, to the sometimes quite progressive and independent *Het Centrum*.<sup>5</sup>

The encyclical was eagerly awaited, and reports of rumours and leaks about the tone and content were disdainfully scorned, but nonetheless reported in detail, by the Dutch Catholic press. The ultramontane *De Maasbode*, with its strong orientation both towards Rome and to the person of the pontiff, peppered its reports in early May 1891 with indications of the importance of the awaited encyclical, its probable contents, and its progress through all the stages of preparation, translation and publication.<sup>6</sup> 'This momentous document is impatiently awaited', exclaimed the foreign editor, 'and it will create quite a sensation amongst the non-Catholics as well'.<sup>7</sup> The rest of the Catholic press also kept its readers up to date with the leaks,<sup>8</sup> as did the free-thinking liberal *De Amsterdammer*.<sup>9</sup> The bishops' mouthpiece, *De Tijd*, printed an extraordinary article on 20 May called 'In Anticipation of the Papal Encyclical',<sup>10</sup> in which it argued that the interest shown by non-Catholics, and particularly by the liberals, was because the only way to avoid the imminent disastrous and apocalyptic social revolution (itself a result of the venomous effects of liberal *laissez-faire* capitalism) was to turn to the Catholic Church as 'the only spiritual power which, with God's help, is capable of performing the miracle'.<sup>11</sup>

5. A useful summary of the characteristics of the Catholic press at this time is provided by J.P. de Valk, in 'Rooms-katholieke stemmen over de Doleantie', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis van de negentiende eeuw*, 22-23 (1986), 47-52.

6. *De Maasbode*, 3, 17 and 21 May 1891.

7. *De Maasbode*, 3 May 1891.

8. *De Tijd*, 16 May 1891; *Het Centrum*, 20 May 1891.

9. 17, 18, 19 May 1891.

10. 'In Verwachting der Pauselijke Encyclick'.

11. *De Tijd*, 20 May 1891.

*De Maasbode* was the first to publish part of the text of *Rerum Novarum* in Dutch, on 22 May;<sup>12</sup> *De Tijd* published a translation of the entire text on 23 May, which was prepared and then distributed at low cost by the publisher Van Langenhuisen.<sup>13</sup> The Catholics made sure the text was well publicized: Schaepman himself addressed the Roman Catholic People's League in Vlissingen on 1 July, explaining the contents in rapturous tones, and then published his speech in pamphlet form shortly afterwards.<sup>14</sup> The Amsterdam section of this League, the *Rooms-Katholieke Volksbond*, also organized a meeting of the representatives of various Catholic associations to discuss the implications of *Rerum Novarum*; it ended up being more of a celebration and thanksgiving rather than a critical assessment.<sup>15</sup> *De Tijd* published a translation of an exposition which had appeared in *The Tablet*,<sup>16</sup> and generally the Catholic press buzzed with the pope's 'most recent encyclical' during the early summer of 1891. As had been predicted, other papers took an interest too, and even published summaries of the content, as well as their own comments.<sup>17</sup>

The great majority of commentators, including non-Catholics, were impressed with the seriousness with which the Pope had treated this highly important subject, and showed respect for at least the majority of the sentiments expressed. The *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and the *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant* both remarked how important the piece was, and how much interest there would be in the ensuing months.<sup>18</sup> Abraham Kuiper's orthodox Calvinist *De Standaard* printed a lengthy summary of the contents, and in expressing its opinion was very positive indeed.<sup>19</sup> The Socialists were initially enthusiastic,<sup>20</sup> and indeed

12. The rest followed in small instalments on 23, 24, 26, 27, 28 and 31 May, and 2 and 3 June.

13. See *De Tijd*, 23 May and 10 June 1891.

14. H.J.A.M. Schaepman, '*Rerum Novarum*': *rede over de jongste encycliek van Z.H. Paus Leo XIII*, Utrecht 1891. The exposition is highly enthusiastic, rather superficial, and interesting in its emphasis on the papal approval for all kinds of workers' organizations, especially those of the trade-union type (see 22).

15. See reports in *De Tijd*, 13 July 1891.

16. *De Tijd*, 15 June 1891. The report had first appeared in *De Nieuwe IJsselbode*, and emphasized the criticism which appeared in *Rerum Novarum* of the encroaching role of the modern state.

17. E.g. *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant*, 25 May 1891. *De Amsterdammer* published four long articles containing a detailed paraphrase of the encyclical in the issues of 29 and 30 May and 2 and 3 June 1891.

18. *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant*, 23 May 1891; and *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, 21 and 27 May 1891.

19. *De Standaard*, 27 and 28 May 1891.

20. E.g. *Recht voor Allen*, 26 May 1891.

the *Volkstribuun* was so full of praise for radical Catholic social theorists like Manning and Von Ketteler that it distributed the text of *Rerum Novarum* free!<sup>21</sup> The free-thinking section of liberal opinion was generally impressed, as well: Hendrick Quack was delighted with the Pope's fondness for his own hobby horse, the guilds, and their modern equivalents,<sup>22</sup> Sam van Houten (despite some criticism as well) was pleased to see Leo XIII's 'antirevolutionary Socialist' approach,<sup>23</sup> and *De Amsterdammer* also approved, while remarking that Leo had reserved, perhaps not surprisingly, a rather large role for his Roman Catholic Church in the resolving of the great social question.<sup>24</sup> It was only certain liberal papers, those which represented the entrepreneurial, secular interest, which appeared totally disinterested: *Het Nieuws van de Dag*, a rather lightweight Amsterdam liberal daily, ignored *Rerum Novarum* entirely, and the more serious *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which had pretensions of serving the business community and of providing a firstclass foreign news coverage, merely mentioned the encyclical in passing, and then only to be sarcastic about it.<sup>25</sup> From the point of view of employers, these liberal papers did have an interest in 'the social question', but were not impressed by the posturings of either the Calvinists or the Catholics: the Socialists they saw as a threat, and took more seriously.<sup>26</sup> Even the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* showed only a passing interest, and its reports of 21 and 27 May saw the encyclical largely as a domestic Italian matter.<sup>27</sup> But with the exception of these entrepreneur-oriented liberal papers, there was general interest and respect for the Pope's new pronouncement.

There was of course criticism, for in many ways *Rerum Novarum* was an explicitly anti-liberal and anti-Socialist document, and some of that criticism took the form of satire and ridicule. True to the elite liberal tradition of refusal to take seriously the efforts of emergent confessional groups, the *Algemeen Handelsblad*

21. Issue of 4 July 1891; see Perry, *Roomsche kinine*, 85.

22. H.P.G. Quack, *Herinneringen uit de levensjaren 1834-1914*, Nijmegen 1977, 384-385.

23. S. van Houten, 'Paus Leo XIII over het arbeiders-vraagstuk', *Vragen des Tijds* (1892), Part I, 1-37; see 9, and 1-9 *passim*.

24. *De Amsterdammer*, 3 June 1891.

25. On 4 June 1891 *Rerum Novarum* was referred to in connection with the colonies (see below), but on 7 June there was a major article on 'Maatschappelijke Toestanden' (The Social Situation), in which *Rerum Novarum* was not even mentioned.

26. See the major articles on the strikes in Belgium and the Workers Congress in Brussels in these papers, e.g. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 31 July 1891.

27. After the announcement of the encyclical's publication, the *NRC* did not return to the subject during the rest of the summer.

reported in the most scathing tones the events at a meeting in Amsterdam in July 1891, where the priest J.W. Brouwers addressed the local Roman Catholic People's League on the subject of *Rerum Novarum*. In the rather sarcastic words of the reporter: 'Coming to the encyclical itself, the speaker explained that *Rerum Novarum* was an act of paternal concern, for it demonstrated that everything is not quite as it should be in the world; that much injustice and suffering exists.'<sup>28</sup> The Socialist *Recht voor Allen* also adopted a parodying tone, and published a long piece pretending to be from a confused Catholic, who couldn't understand what on earth the Pope was talking about in *Rerum Novarum*, especially when it came to the subject of property.<sup>29</sup> The Old Catholics (originating from a Jansenist schism of the previous century) thought it far too vague to be of any concrete help to anyone,<sup>30</sup> the Protestant Evangelical Society saw it as Roman retrenchment, and the Marxist Henriette Roland Holst called it 'organized blacklegging'.<sup>31</sup>

Much of the non-Catholic criticism was more reasoned, however, and had to do with the Pope's economics. *De Tijd* loyally hailed it in the following terms: 'For the first time an economic theory has been developed here ... which is favourable to the lower classes of society without promoting hate and ... revolution.'<sup>32</sup> But despite all the help and advice that Leo had reputedly taken from all manner of experts and economists,<sup>33</sup> he was severely criticized. The most thorough-going condemnation of papal economic theory came from the radical liberal Samuel van Houten, who completely rejected the Pope's estimate of the value of labour in the production process, his criticism of the conduct of entrepreneurs, his negligence of demographic matters, his notion of a family wage, and most of all his theory of property and ownership.<sup>34</sup> This substantial article by the grand old radical, published in 1892 in *Vragen des Tijds*, strangely (and almost perversely) ends up being a fierce apology for the role and importance of the beleaguered entrepreneur in society, but many agreed with his attack on the economics of

28. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 16 July 1891.

29. *Recht voor Allen*, 2 June 1891.

30. In *De Oud-Katholiek*, reported in *De Tijd*, 3 August 1891.

31. 'Evangelische Maatschappij'; 'georganiseerde onderkruiperij'. Quoted in Rogier, *Katholieke herleving*, 331.

32. *De Tijd*, 1 June 1891.

33. The *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* reported on 21 May 1891 that the Pope had spent three years working on it, and that 'numerous economists who were in Rome had been consulted - directly or indirectly - by the Pope about the matters discussed in the encyclical.'

34. S. van Houten, 'Paus Leo XIII', 10-36.

*Rerum Novarum*, especially the sections on property.<sup>35</sup>

However, even in non-Catholic circles none of the criticism was entirely damning, and it is a general feature of *Rerum Novarum* that both its elusiveness on certain crucial issues and the enormous range of material covered by the encyclical implied that it could mean something to nearly everyone, even if feelings were mixed in reaction to some of the Pope's principles. For example, the Dutch neo-Calvinists, led by Abraham Kuyper, had concerns of their own with the 'social question', and many of Leo's views were in complete accordance with Kuyper's vision of a corporatist solution to social problems. 1891 was the year of the famous oration *Maranatha*, which he delivered on the subject of the Christian version of democracy, to the conference of local Antirevolutionary Party representatives in Amsterdam on 12 May, only days before the promulgation of *Rerum Novarum*.<sup>36</sup> And in November of the same year, the Calvinist Antirevolutionaries held their own first Social Congress in Amsterdam, concerned with exactly the same issues as *Rerum Novarum*, and providing many of the same answers.<sup>37</sup> Of course the role for the Roman Catholic Church envisaged by Leo was not quite Kuyper's idea of how things would run, but it is not surprising that *De Standaard* in general supported the encyclical, and remarked that 'Leo XIII ... is following an identical line in his attempts to solve these issues as the Antirevolutionary party in the Netherlands'.<sup>38</sup> As for the Socialists, despite the fact that the Pope had devoted a substantial section of his work to rejecting the Socialist answer, *Recht voor Allen* exclaimed in banner headlines, 'The Pope a Socialist too?'. The Pope was, according to the leader, 'infected with Socialism', and when Leo spoke of 'a handful of immeasurably rich people laying a yoke on the necks of the masses of the proletariat ... sentiments like that would go down tremendously at a social-democratic rally', and he would 'bring the house down for hitting the nail so squarely on the head'.<sup>39</sup> A parallel list was drawn up of nineteen quotations from *Rerum Novarum* matched up with nineteen points of Socialist doctrine: the Pope was issuing such wonderful Socialist propaganda that the paper was sure that it would draw Roman Catholic workers in their

35. E.g. *De Amsterdammer*, 30 May 1891.

36. A. Kuyper, *Maranatha: rede ter inleiding van de deputatenvergadering op 12 mei 1891*, Amsterdam 1891.

37. For the Social Congress, see the announcements and reports in *De Heraut*, 15 and 29 November 1891.

38. *De Standaard*, 27 May 1891.

39. *Recht voor Allen*, 26 May 1891.

thousands into the Socialist fold.<sup>40</sup> The Catholics were quick to point out the perversity of the comparison in the Socialist press,<sup>41</sup> but there were many ways in which the left could claim that *Rerum Novarum* followed their own line of reasoning. Van Houten used it in support of his views against strikes,<sup>42</sup> and a columnist calling himself Jan Holland in *De Tijd* managed to find support in Leo's words for his own version of Bellamy Socialism.<sup>43</sup> The most ingenious use of part of the encyclical was devised by the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, which utilized it to condemn the continuation of the infamous Culture System in the Dutch East Indies, which large sections of the liberals wanted to see completely abandoned as a government monopoly: the Pope, so ran the argument, condemned exploitation of the masses, Javanese in this case, and therefore the Catholics should withdraw their support in the approaching Dutch elections from those Catholic politicians who were in favour of maintaining the old exploitative system! Significantly, Schaepman and Des Amorie van der Hoeven were specifically exempted from blame.<sup>44</sup>

One of the aims of the encyclical was to bring Catholics together, rather than to plump for any one particular policy or approach, and as a result virtually all Catholic groups used it as an authority for at least part of their actions.<sup>45</sup> For example, Alphonse Ariëns immediately saw *Rerum Novarum* as a legitimization of his struggle for Catholic trade unions,<sup>46</sup> while those who criticized his actions used exactly the same authority for their censure.<sup>47</sup> The reactionary *De Maasbode* of course made copious use of the parts of *Rerum Novarum* which condemned Socialism (even if the rest of the encyclical was often unpalatable),<sup>48</sup> and *De Tijd* did the same, warning those Catholics who were sympathetic to parts of the 'siren-song' of Socialist and Radical programmes that all aspects of those doctrines had been 'most definitely and emphatically opposed, countered and condemned by His Holiness in his Encyclical.'<sup>49</sup> The same paper also used

40. *Recht voor Allen*, 14 July 1891.

41. *Het Centrum*, 1 and 3 July 1891.

42. S. van Houten, 'Paus Leo XIII', 3.

43. *De Tijd*, 30 May and 1 June 1891.

44. *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 4 June 1891.

45. Perry, *Roomsche kinine*, 35.

46. See Roes, *Bronnen*, 329-331 and 505-508.

47. E.g. an article in *De Gelderlander* of 8 May 1895, quoted in Roes, *Bronnen*, 334-337; see also 364.

48. In an article on 'Het Eigendomsrecht', in *De Maasbode*, 21 August 1891.

49. *De Tijd*, 15 August 1891.



*Rerum Novarum* for more specific ends: in a cautious article entitled 'The Yardstick for Wages according to the Encyclical', it was carefully argued that some wages, even Catholic ones, were clearly set at far too low a level, and that this had now been expressly forbidden by the Pope with the full backing of his apostolic authority.<sup>50</sup> And in an apparently ambitious article called 'The Solution of the Social Question', *De Maasbode* used *Rerum Novarum* as its authority for strong arguments couched in corporatist terms and much 'body-imagery' that the state should return to the Church the control of poor-relief and charity which it had usurped.<sup>51</sup> The least conservative of the Catholic national dailies, *Het Centrum*, remarked rather darkly that there were a number of Catholics who hadn't yet given *Rerum Novarum* their full attention, and who thought that other things were more important: in this they were gravely mistaken.<sup>52</sup>

It is thus clear that Leo was not always successful in uniting the Dutch Catholics with his *Rerum Novarum*, and that in some cases it actually divided them. For example, the monthly *De Katholiek* was very guarded, while the Jesuit *Studiën* was enthusiastic.<sup>53</sup> A new daily was set up, the *Noordbrabantsch Dagblad* in January 1892, to spread the word of *Rerum Novarum*, while at the other extreme it was maintained that Leo's words only really applied to Italy.<sup>54</sup>

The dominant reaction was one of effusive devotion, thanksgiving and wonder at the brilliance of the pontiff in his wisdom. For Ariëns, Leo was more than ever the prophesied 'Lumen in caelo' or 'Light from heaven',<sup>55</sup> while Schaepman spoke of 'the greatest encyclical of Pope Leo XIII', of its 'invincible logic', and of 'the thrill you all have felt, along with thousands of others, which the supreme pastor's message has sent through the highest and lowest, through the hearts and the heads of all'.<sup>56</sup> In its main leader on *Rerum Novarum*, *De Tijd* spoke of 'the enduring power which rests in the Papacy', and of the encyclical's 'calm confidence in its own potency'.<sup>57</sup> 'No other power in the world', exclaimed the leader-writer, 'is capable of a performance like this!'<sup>58</sup> Of the Catholic

50. *De Tijd*, 24 August 1891.

51. *De Maasbode*, 27 September 1891.

52. *Het Centrum*, 15 July 1891.

53. Rogier, *Katholieke herleving*, 329.

54. Rogier, *Katholieke herleving*, 330.

55. See Roes, *Bronnen*, XXXIX.

56. Schaepman, *Rerum Novarum*, 5-7.

57. *De Tijd*, 2 June 1891.

58. *De Tijd*, 1 June 1891.

dailies, the reaction of *Het Centrum* was the most impressive. It had indulged much less in the fanfare at the appearance of the encyclical than had the other papers, and except for a stern rejection of Domela Nieuwenhuis' claims that the Pope had 'gone Socialist',<sup>59</sup> it had waited until mid-July before issuing its leader on 'The Most Recent Encyclical'. It was a eulogy, calling *Rerum Novarum* 'a treasure trove, a wonderful work of art, where the more you explore, the more delights you discover'. 'The greatest and noblest movement to manifest itself in the world at the end of the nineteenth century' was under way - and by this *Het Centrum* meant the workers' movement - and now that Leo had given his apostolic blessing and support, nothing was going to stop it.<sup>60</sup> The air of thanksgiving and joy was ecstatic and highly emotional.

For more conservative, not to say reactionary Catholics, the welcome had to be more guarded. Most of the episcopate in the Netherlands was not exactly overjoyed at the idea of independent Catholic workers' unions, free to demonstrate and even to strike. Godschalk in 's-Hertogenbosch and Snickers in Utrecht were far more in favour of the general Catholic societies open to all classes, as were their successors in those dioceses Van de Ven (in 1892) and Van de Wetering (in 1895).<sup>61</sup> The episcopal organ, *De Tijd*, managed to publish a major leader on 'Working Hours and Working Wages' on 30 July, without even mentioning *Rerum Novarum*, and its very condescending and paternalist line was not really in the spirit of the encyclical at all.<sup>62</sup> But by far the most pathetic contortions were performed by the editors of *De Maasbode*, which as well as being very right-wing was also ultramontane in the extreme: these left-wing dogmas coming from the Pope himself were virtually a contradiction in terms. In May the paper joined in happily with the gossip and rumours surrounding the forthcoming great work,<sup>63</sup> and published the Dutch text in nine instalments between 22 May and 3 June, without comment. It was almost as if the editors could not believe what they were reading. *De Maasbode* continued to fire broadsides at progressive Catholics like Schaepman, and called them disapprovingly the 'Roman Antirevolutionaries',<sup>64</sup> until finally on 12 August, it delivered its editorial. Very carefully, the leader-writer explained that, despite the document's great importance,

59. *Het Centrum*, 1 June and 3 July 1891.

60. *Het Centrum*, 15 July 1891.

61. Righart, *De katholieke zuil*, 224, 243.

62. *De Tijd*, 30 July 1891.

63. E.g. *De Maasbode*, 3, 17 and 21 May 1891.

64. *De Tijd*, 2 June 1891.

it was not spoken *ex cathedra*. 'It is not therefore necessarily the case that the Pope is directly addressing the entire Church': it might only be directed to certain areas or persons. 'Leo XIII did not intend to speak as infallible teacher'.<sup>65</sup> This sophistry was followed the next day by another leader entitled 'The Authority of the Encyclical', in which it was argued that 'the Encyclical does not directly require a true Catholic obedience and consent'. It went on to say that *Rerum Novarum* fell into two distinct parts: the first, which was universally applicable, had to do with principles about property ownership and suchlike; the second part was merely advisory, and concerned the various 'possible techniques which might be employed to alleviate the burden of the working man. This second part was all relative: 'The advisory section may require adjustment according to the political and economic circumstances in the various countries.'<sup>66</sup>

In summary, the press reactions in the Netherlands to *Rerum Novarum* were for the most part respectful and - with qualifications - favourable, the exception being the liberals representing the free market entrepreneurial line, who more or less ignored it. Nearly all parties, Catholic and others alike, used parts of the encyclical selectively to prove their points in limited arguments which fell short of embracing the whole of the papal pronouncement. There was criticism from non-Catholics, especially from the liberals of the Pope's economics. As for Dutch Roman Catholics, for the progressives it was manna from heaven, and for the conservatives it was a mixed 'blessing', an awkward occurrence which had to be dealt with delicately and with tact.

Because of factors such as late emancipation and late industrialization, much of Dutch Catholicism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly extremely conservative. In political circles Schaepman was virtually isolated in the 1880s, the other Catholic MPs resenting the very concept of an organized party and certainly rejecting any democratic or otherwise progressive leanings.<sup>67</sup> In social matters, men like Ariëns were equally alone, with the episcopate clearly in favour of more traditional and integrated organizations than the trade unions that Ariëns wanted.<sup>68</sup> Despite this prevailing situation, by 1896 Schaepman

65. *De Maasbode*, 12 August 1891.

66. *De Maasbode*, 13 August 1891.

67. See D.P. Blok, et al., ed., *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, 15 vols, Haarlem 1975-83, vol. 13, 454. See also J. van de Giessen, *De opkomst van het woord democratie als leuze in Nederland*, The Hague 1948, 229-39; and Rogier, *Katholieke herleving*, 289-93.

68. Righart, *De katholieke zuil*, 224 and 243.

had achieved the acceptance of a common political programme knitting together all Catholic members of the Second Chamber in Parliament: this unprecedented unity amongst political Catholicism in the Netherlands was based in the tenets of *Rerum Novarum*, and indeed the party programme itself, penned by Schaepman, directly followed the encyclical in its passages on social issues. The programme was ratified the next year by all the local Roman Catholic electoral associations throughout the country.<sup>69</sup> The impact of *Rerum Novarum* in the Netherlands was profound indeed, not least in assisting such a transformation in the space of only five years.

69. E.H. Kossmann, *The Low Countries 1780-1940*, Oxford 1978, 351; and Righart, *De katholieke zuil*, 247-248.