

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',⁵⁹ 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.⁶⁰ 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).⁶¹ 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.⁶² 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,⁶³ 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',⁶⁴ 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.