RE-EXAMINING DUTCH LABOUR HISTORY

Exploring the changes in FNV women's organisations' attitudes towards social reproduction during the second wave of feminism

Josephine Läuferts

VU

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment (30ECT) of the requirements of the Research Master Humanities: Global History track.

Josephine Läuferts
[redacted]

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

Under supervision of:
Prof. Dr. Pepijn Brandon

Second reader:
Prof. Dr. Petra J.E.M. van Dam

Completed on: 12th of July, 2024
Word count: 27,382

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Introduction

In December 2023, the Dutch opinion magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* published an article in which journalist Eva Hofman explores the resurgence of the traditional housewife, or "tradwife" on social media.[1] Female social media influencers, often self-described as "mom-fluencers," post content about their life in the domestic sphere, dedicating their days to baking, reading to their children, cleaning and crafting. Hofman asks us: is this heaven? What was until recently seen as exhausting, unrewarding and disastrous for female autonomy, she argues, is now painted as a freedom to embrace the fulfilling duty of motherhood and more importantly, a life free from the confines of wage labour. A life that promises endless free time and consumption. "Mom-fluencers" or "tradwives," Hofman notes, are able to market and monetise this fantasy, contrasting the lack of financial autonomy of generations of lower- and middle-class housewives before them. Hofman addresses this connection and ends by stating: "just as in the 1950s, these women present the bearing of a child as the end of the working life, however now, it is a luxurious option."[2]

The idea that the father of a family should provide an income that was sufficient to maintain a household in which the mother did not have to work was one that permeated Dutch workers' unions as late as the 1960s.[3] Behind the union's mission to improve the legal standing and working conditions of (predominantly male) wage workers, was a broader cultural expectation that a married woman does not work, a position that the Vrouwenbond of the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen (NVV) effectively embodied throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Whilst women had been organising themselves decades prior, for example in the Naaistersvereniging "Allen Één" which organised women in the sewing industry, the Vrouwenbond was created in 1948, specifically for the wives of male union members to help spread and bring to fruition the broader goals of the NVV.[4] Up until the second wave of feminism, which introduced the idea of the housewife under capitalism as an unwaged and exploited worker, the Vrouwenbond, and the NVV more generally, saw women as playing a

[1] Eva Hofman, 'De Huisvrouw als Escapistische fantasie', *De Groene Amsterdammer* (20 December 2023).
[2] Ibid., All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
[3] Corrie van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer: vrouwen, arbeid en vakbeweging, 1945-1990* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG 1997) 22.
[4] Maria van der Klein, *Kranig En Dwars* (Amsterdam: Stichting beheer IISG 1998) 42.

supporting role to the union struggles fought by male workers. Today however, the FNV presents itself as being at the forefront of debates surrounding the gender-pay gap, equal pay, sexual harassment and sexism on the work floor.[5] They offer women a place to connect, share experiences and engage in activism.

The journey of the Vrouwenbond and the FNV in recognising the unique struggles women face in society, in particular the role of housewives in the broader struggle against capitalism, has been a tumultuous one. The Vrouwenbond and the Vrouwensecretariaat (a separate organisation for women in wage labour in the FNV) would come to be pivotal in re-assessing the role of paid and unpaid labour in women's lives. The aim of this thesis is to explore how the second wave of feminism manifested itself within the FNV, looking at how the rank and file of the organisation reflected on issues of social reproduction and how this impacted the broader activities of the Vrouwensecretariaat and the Vrouwenbond. Though many studies have looked at the broader development of Dutch women's trade union organisations, there has been a notable lack of attention to the experiences and opinions of ordinary women in these organisations. To address this gap, this thesis seeks to answer the following main research question: How did women of the rank and file in FNV' women's organisations think about issues of social reproduction during the second wave of feminism, and how did these attitudes influence the activities of the Vrouwensecretariaat and Vrouwenbond?

In order to understand the broader context of these developments, the activities of feminist movements will be explored to help elucidate how ideas about the relationship between wage labour, domestic work and emancipation developed within, and outside of, the FNV, answering the sub questions:

1. What new ideas about social reproduction and women's emancipation emerged from feminist activism in the Netherlands and internationally during the second wave?
2. How did the relations between the Vrouwenbond and the Vrouwensecretariaat develop and in what ways did their understandings of social reproduction differ from each other?

[5] Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging FNV Voor Vrouwen, https://www.fnv.nl/acties/fnv-voor-vrouwen (consulted 14 May 2024). In 1977 began its fusion with the Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond to form the FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging) which currently remains the Netherland's largest union.

In line with a more bottom-up approach to a feminist history of unions, this thesis is focused on how women in the rank and file of the union perceived these changes and perceived themselves as workers within the union and society as a whole; exploring how these women carved out agency for themselves in a formalised union structure that was historically hostile to women. This thesis is concerned with the second wave of feminism, from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, aiming to bring forth stories of women in this tumultuous and transformative time of renewed feminist inquiry, as well as the simultaneously contrasting neo-liberalisation of Dutch society as whole.

Conceptualising women's labour under capitalism

Though the means and methods by which women justify and theorise their domestic roles continue to change, the romanticisation of housework is by no means a new phenomenon. Ideals of women, motherhood and manhood, as argued by Eileen Boris and Kirsten Swinth, have developed synchronously with capitalism.[6] Since the early nineteenth century, cultural portrayals of gender and labour increasingly diluted ideas of women's labour, re-imagining the household as "as exclusively a domain of wifely and maternal devotion, but primarily for white women and increasingly for the middle-class among them."[7] Writers of "prescriptive domestic literature" in antebellum America, through a process of "romantic idealization" effectively transformed the household into a paradise, or haven, which had sprung from nature and was free from the "curse" of labour.[8] The portrayal of the household as a sanctuary, or Eden, which Hofman observes in the homes of the "tradwife", has a long history rooted in relations of domination and subordination between men, women and capital.[9]

Tracing the roots of contemporary conceptualisations of domestic labour calls for an understanding of capitalism that dissects the different spheres of labour that women have historically been bound to. In their work about the history of the FNV entitled *Maandag tolereren we niets meer,* Corrie van Eijl follows the evolution of women, work and unionism in

[6] Eileen Boris and Kirsten Swinth, 'Household Matters: Engendering the Social History of Capitalism', *International Review of Social History* 68:3 (2023) 483–506, 493.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (Oxford University Press 1994) 147.
[9] Boris and Swinth, 'Household Matters', 493.

the second half of the 20th century. Exploring the legal and political restraints placed on women's waged labour in tandem with developments in labour organisation and unionism, van Eijl historicises the feminist struggles for equal pay, equal rights and opportunities for working women around the time of the second wave of feminism. In particular, van Eijl explores how women increasingly utilised the FNV as a platform for women's issues.

Beginning her analysis in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, van Eijl shows that women did the vast majority of unpaid domestic and care work, but also engaged in waged labour.[10] Effectively, they were saddled with a double burden. In addition to this, the waged labour people engaged in was highly gendered, with most work being designated "women's work" or "men's work", though these binary categories would change overtime.[11] The boundaries between waged and unwaged work were also contentious. Women often worked without wages in their family or husband's businesses, conducted (largely unregistered and often unwaged) forms of production work in their homes, and waged work of women was only counted toward national statistics when conducted in a field separate to their husbands.[12] Furthermore, Dutch work legislation from the late 19th century prohibited women from working in certain sectors and restricted the time they were able to engage in waged labour.[13] Simultaneously, the rapid growth in the numbers of unions that formed around the turn of the 20th century was accompanied by many ideological differences, particularly regarding the topic of how to best organise working people and under what ideological framework this should occur.[14]

This unequal and conditional participation in waged labour was certainly reflected in the low numbers of women who organised themselves in trade unions at the turn of the twentieth century, with only two percent of female wage workers being organised, in contrast to fourteen

[10] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer*.

[11] Ibid., 16. van Eijl notes that these changes in association usually occurred when women gradually entered a new sector. Office work, for example, which used to be dominated by men, slowly became considered women's work. The author also distinguishes between in the roles taken up by men and women in work. In fields where women and men worked together, such as the cotton industry, men worked with different tasks and operated different machinery.

[12] Ibid., 14.

[13] Marianne Zwankhuizen, *Vrouwen in de Vakbond: Als Vrouw of Als Arbeider* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit 1983) 7.

[14] Sjaak van der Velden, *Broodnodig: Honderdvijftig jaar Nederlandse vakbeweging* (Rotterdam: Pallas Publicaties 2016) 47.

percent of the male workforce.[15] Social and cultural beliefs about the role of women in unions further cemented unions as places of hostility towards women, with one male director of a Dutch tobacco and cigar union remarking that women working in factories contributed nothing in the domestic sphere and therefore actively contributed to the destruction of the male worker.[16] The development of unions in becoming a representative force for the struggles of women therefore faced considerable hurdles.

While the role of unions in protecting and advancing the rights of waged workers is largely undisputed in labour history, with the common definition of trade unions as being organisations that enable "employees to protect their interests", this role is brought under scrutiny when the question of "*which employee?*" is asked.[17] Scholars of social reproduction theory bring much needed attention to the often invisible and precarious nature of women's work, particularly that tied to the domestic sphere. Who represents the unwaged, unregistered and invisible domestic labourer? Social reproduction theory has brought a new understanding of housewives, daughters, and other kin non-producers as forming part of the labouring class, which has proven vital in expanding and engendering histories of labour and capitalism.[18]

Historians of labour have increasingly accounted for intricate understandings of gender, the public and private divide as well as the development of capitalism more generally. Unions have, in tandem, transformed into more diverse organisations. Yet, it is clear that the development and strength of unions did not always evolve together with grass-roots and bottom-up movements, and certainly did not readily reflect changes in attitudes regarding women's work and feminist issues that became apparent around the rise of the second wave of feminist thought. In the 1950s and 1960s women who worked in wage labour and were members of a union (forming part of the Vrouwensecretariaat) looked down upon women, in particular housewives, who were part of the Vrouwenbond of the NVV, and in many cases refused to work together with them.[19] Housewives, as they argued, had little stake in the union's fight for women's waged work. It was not until the 1970s that the union had slowly begun addressing social reproduction

[15] Van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer,* 19.
[16] Ibid., 23.
[17] Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the world: Essays toward a global labor history* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill 2008) 220.
[18] Boris and Swinth, 'Household Matters', 495.
[19] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer,* 165.

issues faced both by women working at home and women participating in wage labour. Though van Eijl's exploration of women in the Dutch union movement provides us an in-depth history on the organisational and political developments within the union and the Netherlands, we learn little about the process that brought increased attention to the nature of social reproduction and the struggles faced by housewives.

Since its publication in 1997, the field of labour history has seen major shifts in theory that invite us to re-examine the role of social reproduction in women's unions; in particular examining the historic relationship between formalised trade union activities, feminist activism and the development in feminist theory surrounding work and labour in capitalist society. Looking closely at these developments will also reveal to us how the FNV has responded to and approached these changes. Many feminists have long argued for the recognition of domestic and social reproductive work as a form of labour, whilst simultaneously acknowledging that the entry into formalized, or productive, wage labour is a necessary condition for economic emancipation.[20] How exactly unions have dealt with these contradicting developments, is not always clear.

Feminist perspectives in labour history

Understanding the historic relationship between feminist movements and unions is essential for evaluating and exploring the potential of activism in effecting and promoting social change for people. For this, new methods are necessary in order to elucidate the intersections between economic and social catalysts for women's actions, as well as understand the inter- and transnational elements of activism.

Labour history has seen many shifts since its conception, the most recent of which have arguably strived to make labour history a more inclusive and encompassing historiographic tradition. Traditional, or "old" labour history concerned itself largely with formalised labour in industrialised western societies, particularly from an institutional perspective with a focus on formal documents, strikes and larger political debates and grand narratives.[21] Whilst seminal

[20] Heidi Tinsman, 'More Than Victims: Women Agricultural Workers and Social Change in Rural Chile' in: Peter Winn ed., *Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973–2002* (Duke University Press 2004) 261–97.
[21] Marcel van der Linden, 'Labour History: The Old, the New and the Global', *African Studies* 66:2-3 (2007): 169–80. 169.

texts of the old labour history tradition, such as Frits de Jong's *Om de plaats van de arbeid*, undoubtedly make an important contribution to the Dutch history of trade unions by contextualising them within broader political and social movements of the twentieth century, de Jong's analysis is focused largely on the top-down developments in the structure of unions, and devotes almost no attention to issues of women's work.[22] Up until the late 1960s, scholarship on trade unions and social movements more broadly was very much limited to observing and analysing the formal developments within the structures of organisations and how they effected change on a broader, institutional level.[23] In the Dutch context, many scholars focused on the developments of individual trade unions (for example the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond, the Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond or the Nationaal Arbeids-Secretariaat) and later would pay homage to pivotal figures within the movements or commemorate organisational milestones of the unions.[24] These studies showcased the achievements and failures of trade unions from a historical standpoint but paid little attention to experiences and lives of ordinary workers. The fact that old labour history paid little attention to the role of women within labour movements, in particular within unions, would later also be addressed by unions themselves.[25]

The emergence of the "new" labour history in the 1970s and 1980s, would provide a much-needed fresh perspective on the history of unions, by emphasising bottom-up approaches, everyday culture and making analytical connections beyond organisations. This further opened up academic discussions about the relationship between work, gender, ethnicity and age. These developments, as noted by prominent labour historian Marcel van der Linden, marked a "genuine intellectual revolution" for the field.[26] This new social history would also make way for the

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[22] Frits de Jong, *Om de plaats van de arbeid: een geschiedkundig overzicht van ontstaan en ontwikkeling van het Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers 1956).

[23] See for example: Mayer Zald and Roberta Ash, 'Social Movement Organizations: Growth, Decay and Change', *Social Forces* 44:3 (1966) 327–41.

[24] Moira van Dijk, Matthias van Rossum, Loran van Diepen, Rosa Kösters, and Bob Scholte, *Precaire Polder: Rapport in Het Kader Van Het Onderzoeksproject Historische Verkenningen Vakbeweging* (Amsterdam IISG 2018) 13. See for example: W.G. Versluis, *Van klei en zand. Geschiedenis van de Katholieke Arbeidersbeweging in het Bisdom Breda* (Breda 1959); Paul Coomans, Truike de Jonge and Erik Nijhof, *De eenheidsvakcentrale (EVC) 1943-1948* (Groningen 1976), Volkert Bultsma and Evert van der Tuin, *Het Nederlandsch Syndicalistisch Vakverbond 1923-1940* (Anarchistische Uitgaven 1980).

[25] IISG, Archief FNV, ARCH00419, stafafdeling onderzoek, Vakbeweging En Historisch Onderzoek: Teksten Ter Voorbereiding Van De Themadag, 27 October 1984.

[26] Marcel van der Linden, 'Labour History: The Old, the New and the Global', 169.

inclusion of insights from women's studies and gender history to explore union environments and their hostility towards women; in particular the "meeting culture" of unions and the organisational structures that were largely dominated by men.[27] Dutch scholars paid increasing attention to the interaction between women and unions, and began dedicating studies exclusively to women's organisations within unions.[28]

Many scholars of Dutch union history during the new period of social history took a renewed interest in the first wave of feminism and women's participation in unions around the turn of the twentieth century. Mirjam Elias' *Drie cent in het uur: Over naaisters, feministes en arbeiders rond de eeuwisseling* explores the complexities and developments within unions specifically aimed at organising women, such as the seamstress' union of Amsterdam.[29] Elias argues that this led to very tense relationships between women's organisations and existing unions. Unions argued against the necessity of organisations that exclusively targeted women's issues, preferring them to be organized together with male wage labourers.

Towards the turn of the twenty-first century, feminist scholars wrote more comprehensive studies of specific union movements. While Corrie van Eijl's study gives an insight into the general history of women in the FNV, Marian van der Klein's *Kranig en Dwars* provides us with an in-depth history of the Vrouwenbond of the FNV which commemorated the organisations fiftieth anniversary. [30] Van der Klein explores the development of the Vrouwenbond from a conservative organisation to an activist organisation, conducting interviews with prominent members of the Vrouwenbond. With her study, questions about the organisational goals of the Vrouwenbond are addressed, giving us insight into how other unions

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[27] IISG, Archief FNV, ARCH00419, stafafdeling onderzoek, Vakbeweging En Historisch Onderzoek : Teksten Ter Voorbereiding Van De Themadag, 27 October 1984.

[28] See for example, Peter-Paul de Baar, 'Sani Prijes van de Naaistersbond' in: Jacques J. Giele ed., *Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van Socialisme en* Arbeidersbeweging in Nederland 1980 (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij 1981) 120-143; Peter-Paul de Baar, *Alida De Jong 1885-1943: Een Vakbondsvrouw Van Voor De Oorlog* (Amsterdam 1985); Angelina de Beer and Ien van Laanen, *Thuiswerk : Vrouwenarbeid Zonder Rechten: Vrouwenarbeid Zonder Rechten* (Amersfoort: De Horstink 1984); Joke van Bommel, *Vrouw En Vakbeweging: Een Studie Toegespitst Op De Positie Van De Vrouw in De Algemeene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkersbond (*Arnhem 1977); Janke Plantenga, *Een afwijkend patroon. Honderd jaar vrouwenarbeid in Nederland en (West-) Duitsland* (Groningen 1993).

[29] Mirjam Elias, *Drie cent in het uur: over naaisters, feministes en arbeiders rond de eeuwwisseling* (Amsterdam 1984).

[30] van der Klein, *Kranig en Dwars.*

and organisations interacted with the Vrouwenbond and how this changed with the rise of the second wave of feminism. A similar study was conducted by Marjet Derks and Marijke Huisman on the women of the Catholic union movement.[31] Both van Eijl and van der Klein make use of the extensive archives of the International Institute of Social History (IISH), allowing them to sketch in-depth organisational developments of women's organisations within the FNV. However, both authors tend to shed more light on prominent figures within the FNV and more general political developments within the union, leaving room for a historical account with sensitivity to the rank and file of the FNV, one that gives insights beyond organisational politics. The rich archives of the IISH have yet to be "read against the grain" to explore the experiences of ordinary women who crossed paths with the women's organisations of the FNV.

More recently, scholars of labour history have also critically unravelled notions of "work" in history, providing the analytical tools that will be used in this thesis to explore women's historic relationship with labour and activism. These studies draw attention to the historic struggle faced by women in gaining recognition of household labour. In *Global Histories of Work*, Andreas Eckert states that what constitutes work is largely "determined by the conditions that industrial development and the labour movement imprinted on modern societies", adding that the recognition of the concept of "work" as a malleable and context dependent phenomenon has been one of the key developments of the scholarly subfield of global labour history.[32] This development in historiography is paired with the idea that the "male proletarian does not represent the quintessential worker but is rather one among a number of categories of workers whose histories are connected."[33]

An important analytical shift of global labour history is thus the recognition of different understandings of work: complicating binaries of the free/unfree, waged/unwaged, permanent/precarious worker to include histories that allow "for marginalized groups and their activities to form part of labour history – e.g. 'guestwork', housework, care work, children's work, sex work, surrogacy, prison and convict labour, but also non-manual work by employees

[31] Marjet Derks and Marijke Huisman, *'Edelmoedig, fier en vrij' : Katholieke arbeidersvrouwen en hun beweging in de twintigste eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren 2002).

[32] Andreas Eckert, 'Why All the Fuss about Global Labour History?' in: Idem ed. *Global Histories of Work* (De Gruyter 2016) 3–22. 3. For more insights into feminist interpretations of work in global labour history, see Andrea Komlosy, *Work: the last 1,000 years*, transl. Jacob K. Watson and Loren Balhorn (London: Verso 2018).

[33] Ibid., 5.

and civil servants or the work of the police and soldiers."[34] Such theoretical developments are essential for exploring how unions have historically understood the concept of work, in particular, how women responded to and shaped ideas of work within unions in an international context.

While Dutch feminist histories of unions address the role that women have played in the broader union movement, there is a lack of contemporary studies that contextualise women's organisations within international developments in feminist thought and theory, in particular addressing the role that conceptualisations of social reproduction played in determining women's attitudes to labour.[35] By focusing on the period of the second wave of feminism, during which women in the Netherlands experienced a growing and subsequently declining welfare state, this thesis draws on theoretical insights from global labour history scholars like Eckert and van der Linden to go beyond the binary of "housewife" or "wage labourer", by exploring and complicating this dichotomy and placing it amongst the broader context of the development of capitalism.[36] While traditional labour history is occupied with a largely economic history of capitalism, the Boris and Swinth relatedly call for a "reconceiving" of the field through a gendered lens: "economic history must be reconceived as a gendered history that is both about how people live and about who has the power to define those lives, that is, as social and cultural history."[37] It is therefore important to look not only at the economic developments that underscored the second wave of feminism, but also how social and cultural depictions of gender and work influenced the experiences of women in the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat, and in particular, influenced the relations between them. This gendered lens has proven fruitful in

[34] Ibid.

[35] It is important to note, however, that the most recent monographs and studies on Dutch feminist union history already date back to the early 2000s. With scholarly sub-fields like global labour history shedding light on much-needed global south perspectives and comparative studies, the study of Dutch union history, in particular studies about the role of women in this movement and its relationship with the history of capitalism, has fallen to the background.

[36] Boris and Swinth, 'Household Matters', 484.

[37] Ibid., 485.

diverse studies within labour history, particularly in dissecting sexual divisions of labour and exploring how inequalities manifest in women's lives.[38]

In what is probably considered one of the most pivotal contributions to gender history, Joan Scotts' 1986 "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis" has become a established work in contemporary historiography. In this paper, Scott makes an important analytical contribution to the study of gender history by arguing that "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of' signifying relationships of power."[39] Scott's definition of gender provides a tool to connect gendered notions of labour in the household to broader historical developments, as she argues that the prevailing uncritical investigation into the notion of gender "limits the concept of gender to family and household experience and, for the historian, leaves no way to connect the concept (or the individual) to other social systems of economy, politics, or power."[40] Feminist historians, Scott argues, are in need of theoretical and analytical tools that can "explain continuities and discontinuities" of women's history, as well as "account for persisting inequalities as well as radically different social experiences."[41] The way individuals experience social relationships, both within the private sphere and beyond, is contingent upon gender as an analytical category. This is crucial for addressing the research questions of this thesis, which aims to explore women's attitudes toward social reproduction and their interactions with each other as active participants within the union. Women's experiences in the household, on the work floor, and within the union were fundamentally shaped by ideas of gender: separate organisations were created for women precisely because their experiences differed to those of working men. The

[38] See for example, Bonnie Fox, *Hidden in the Household: Women's Domestic Labour Under Capitalism* (Toronto: Women's Press 1980); Meg Luxton, *More than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: Women's Press 1980). These authors all lay bare the limits of traditional Marxist labour theory in adequately theorising the nature of women's oppression under capitalism, arguing for a consideration of women's work as a mode of production in the sustaining and producing of human beings. Luxton's study further traces the history of gendered divisions of labour, using a case study of a Canadian mining town to show how companies shifted labour relations from "primitive" to "fully modern" and capitalist; almost exclusively employing men and setting in motion a rigid sexual division of labour, thereby relying on the unpaid work of women to provide them with a basis for the growth and maintenance of a stable workforce.

[39] Joan Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review* 91: 5 (1986) 1053–75. 1067.

[40] Ibid., 1063.

[41] Ibid., 1055.

mere existence of these women's organisations (specifically catered to two fundamental different "types" of women, those working as housewives and those engaged in wage labour) within the FNV underscores the pervasive influence of gender on women's lives.

Exploring the developments in women's experiences of social reproduction during the second wave of feminism requires an understanding of gender as context-dependent and historically situated. Particularly in a time where gender roles came under increased scrutiny by feminists, Scott's notion of gender as an analytical category can aid in exploring how ideas of motherhood, femininity and womanhood influenced the actions of women in the FNV.

The study of social reproduction theory, which is concerned with legitimizing and analysing "the relation between labor dispensed to produce commodities and labour dispensed to produce people" as part of the entire system of capitalism, is particularly necessary for studying the historic relationship between women and work.[42] Scholars have argued that, with the development of capitalism in the eighteenth century into the dominant economic system, came with it the emergence of the heterosexual nuclear family model that formed a strong division of labour based on gender.[43] The expectations and social structures this family model imposes on women has "shaped all women's lives, although they played out differently depending on women's class, race, ethnicity, religion, and other social locations."[44] Luxton and Corman detail how, since the late 1970s, debates about productive and unproductive work have been complicated by significant neo-liberal transformations in the global economy, which has systematically undermined and de-valued gains made by social justice movements and significantly eroded the standards of living for most people.[45] Exploring how women in the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat experienced issues of social reproduction in a declining welfare state entails us to consider them not only as individual actors, but as actors forming part of a larger family model whose responsibilities and roles were shaped by patriarchal and capitalist relations.

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[42] Tithi Bhattacharya, 'Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction theory' in: Idem ed., *Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression* (Pluto Press 2017) 1-20.

[43] June Corman and Meg Luxton, 'Social Reproduction and the Changing Dynamics of Unpaid Household and Caregiving Work' in: Vivian Shalla and Wallace Clement eds., *Work in Tumultuous Times*: Critical Perspectives (McGill-Queen's University Press 2007) 262–288.

[44] Ibid., 264.

[45] Ibid., 263.

When locating the origins of gendered divisions of labour and women's oppression, liberal feminists have often pointed to patriarchy as the most prevalent systematic mode of reproduction that effectuates male domination over women.[46] However, social reproduction theory makes use of the valuable insights of Marxism in identifying class-based oppression of women's lives and combines this with a developed theoretical understanding that patriarchy co-constitutes a complex, intertwined system of relations of domination and subordination. Social reproduction theorists seek to complicate understandings of precisely how labour power comes to reproduce itself, arguing that classical Marxist theory falls short on fully exploring the processes behind this, as Marx primarily focused on the analysis of commodity production, overlooking the production of labour power itself.[47] As Luxton succinctly phrases it: "by developing a class analysis that shows how the production of goods and services and the production of life are part of one integrated process, social reproduction does more than identify the activities involved in the daily and generation reproduction of daily life. It allows for an explanation of the structures, relationships, and dynamics that produce those activities."[48] It is precisely this theoretical framework that allows us to examine the experiences of women in the FNV, and the relations between them, in a way that accounts for the influence of socially embedded gender roles and economic oppression.

Tithi Bhattacharya's 2018 edited volume on social reproduction forms two central proposals about how to best understand it.[49] Firstly, social reproduction theory is a "methodology to explore labor and labor power under capitalism and is best suited to offer a rich and variegated

[46] Kate Bezanson and Meg Luxton, 'Feminist Political Economy in Canada and the Politics of Social Reproduction' in: Idem eds., *Social Reproduction: Feminist Political Economy Challenges Neo-Liberalism* (McGill-Queen's University Press 2006) 11-44. 26.

[47] Alessandra Mezzadri further provides an insightful overview of how social reproduction scholars have expanded on the limitations of Marx's theory of commodity production; Alessandra Mezzadri, 'The Informal Labours of Social Reproduction', *Global Labour Journal* 11:2 (2020) 156-163; and 'On the Value of Social Reproduction Informal Labour, the Majority World and the Need for Inclusive Theories and Politics', *Radical Philosophy* 2:4 (2019) 33-41.

[48] Bezanson and Luxton, 'Feminist Political Economy in Canada and the Politics of Social Reproduction', 37. Much of this work is built on insights of Lise Vogel's seminal text *Marxism and the Oppression of Women,* which was one of the first major theoretical contributions to social reproduction, opening up "a more genuinely historical materialist reading of the social relations of power, one that identifies the conditions under which race, gender, sexuality, and class are (co-)reproduced, transformed and potentially revolutionised." Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the oppression of women: Toward a unitary theory* (Leiden: Brill 2013) Xxxvii.

[49] Bhattacharya, 'Introduction: Mapping Social Reproduction theory', 4.

map of capital as a social relation" and secondly, it is a methodology "that privileges process."[50] In other words, social reproduction theory places analytical value on exploring the social, economic and political conditions necessary to bring the worker to the doors of her work every morning: "it is an approach that is not content to accept what seems like a visible, finished entity− in this case, our worker at the gates of her workplace− but interrogates the complex network of social processes and human relations that produces the conditions of existence for that entity."[51] Bhattacharya also emphasises that a social reproductive framework "seeks to make visible labour and work that are analytically hidden by classical economists and politically denied by policy makers" and thus transforms our ability to understand and respond to complex social issues.[52] Bhattacharya, too, connects this framework with a historiographic motivation in understanding capital accumulation. Referencing an unpublished paper by scholar Susan Ferguson, she writes: "Our understandings of capitalism are incomplete if we treat it as simply an economic system involving workers and owners, and fail to examine the ways in which wider social reproduction of the system- that is the daily and generational reproductive labour that occurs in households, schools, hospitals, prisons and so on- sustains the drive for accumulation."[53]

Scholars of social reproduction theory call for a critical understanding of the developments of industrial capitalism and how this impacts the division of labour within and outside of the household. Boris and Swinth emphasise how Marx himself noted that "connecting the home to the factory were 'invisible threads', women and child pieceworkers that made the factory system more profitable by undertaking time-consuming tasks and shifting the cost of production from the employer to the worker who usually supplied the space, tools, and other materials."[54] Household-based production, they argue, made a notable jump from serving household needs to meeting the demands of the capitalist class, and with this leap, social reproductive labour within the household increasingly met capitalist demands for cheap labour

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 2.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Boris and Swinth, 'Household Matters', 495.

power.[55] Recent studies on social reproduction theory have built on the feminist theory of the second wave of feminism (from feminist thinkers like Meg Luxton, Anja Meulenbelt and Silivia Federici) providing us with more refined tools to analytically dissect and understand the historic relationship between women and labour.

The above examination into scholarship makes evident that labour history is incomplete without adequate insights from feminist theory.[56] Scholars have further emphasised the methodological necessity to consider the household "the basis unit of analysis rather than individuals, because [. . .] doing so enables us to keep 'in focus at all times the lives of both men and women, young and old, and the variety of paid and unpaid work necessary to maintain the unit.'"[57] Decentring the factory as the predominant place of labour, has further "also redefined the working-class to include wives and daughters."[58] These insights have paved the way to fascinating new studies on labour in global and local contexts.[59] As aptly put by Marcel van der Linden in his reflection on the developments of labour history: "we as labor and working-class historians are now realizing that our discipline encompasses a much larger intellectual territory than we were previously taught. It will take quite some time yet before we can trace out all the far-flung corners of this 'new world' on our mental maps."[60] New and global labour history provide us with the tools to re-consider how we approach studies on women's history, drawing on insights from feminist theory and social reproduction theory to help highlight the fact that

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[55] Ibid.

[56] More recent publications have made indispensable contributions towards a more inclusive understanding of Marxism and social reproduction theory, challenging heteronormative and Eurocentric labour scholarship. See, for example; Jordy Rosenberg, *Transgender Marxism* (Pluto Press 2021); Françoise Vergès, *A Decolonial Feminism,* transl. Ashley J. Bohrer (Pluto Press 2021); Peter Drucker, *Warped: Gay Normality and Queer Anti-Capitalism* (Leiden: Brill 2015).

[57] Marcel van der Linden, *The World Wide Web of Work: A History in the Making* (London: UCL Press 2023) 39.

[58] Boris and Swinth, 'Household Matters', 490.

[59] Some great examples of new labour theories in practice are; Ethel Tungohan, *Care Activism: Migrant Domestic Workers, Movement-Building, and Communities of Care* (University of Illinois Press 2023);
Carolyn A. Brown, 'Locals and Migrants in the Coalmining Town of Enugu (Nigeria): Worker Protest and Urban Identity, 1915–1929', *International Review of Social History* 60:1 (2015) 63–94; Henrique Espada Lima, 'Wages of Intimacy: Domestic Workers Disputing Wages in the Higher Courts of Nineteenth-Century Brazil', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 88 (2015) 11–29; Laura Schwartz, 'A Job Like Any Other? Feminist Responses and Challenges to Domestic Worker Organizing in Edwardian Britain', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 88 (2015) 30–48.

[60] Marcel van der Linden, 'The Promise and Challenges of Global Labor History', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 82 (2012) 57–76. 72.

there is a need for studies that go beyond the binary distinction between people within and outside of the wage labour industry. These important developments in theory highlight that housewives (women engaged in labour in the domestic sphere) are important actors for the study of labour history. Moreover, exploring how historical understandings of the boundaries between waged and unwaged work have developed reveals new insights into the experiences of women that have hitherto remained understudied.

There has yet to be a study of women in the Dutch union context that synthesises these complex developments in feminist theory from a bottom-up approach that does not exclusively centre larger institutional developments, but rather looks at the perspectives and experiences of women in all ranks of the FNV. This thesis is based on material from the IISH in Amsterdam, where the archives of the FNV/NVV are kept, in addition to writings and publications from key feminist figures and activists. This material is scrutinised to construct a narrative that sheds light on the experiences of women in the union, elucidating how changing ideas about family and social reproduction were dealt with around the second wave of feminism. Spanning the period of 1960 - 1980, the scope of this research is intended to supplement and strengthen the existing body of literature, providing new insights on the history of social reproduction in unions.

Methodology

To build the historic context and highlight the most important developments in second wave feminist theory, the first research chapter of this thesis draws on a combination of secondary material, consisting of scholarly literature, and primary material, comprising of contemporary feminist writings and activist discourse. This approach captures how new ideas about women, work, and social reproduction emerged during the second-wave of feminism, highlighting the key broader societal developments that gave rise to this changing discourse. By examining key feminist texts and rhetoric of this period, this chapter provides the necessary historical background to understand and explore the developments in the activities of the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat. The selected texts do not intend to provide a comprehensive overview of all the different strands of feminist thought and theory, but instead highlight the writers and thinkers that dealt with the topics of social reproduction, domestic labour and who challenged the divide between the public and private sphere. Some of these texts became essential for the activities of women in the FNV and were key in helping develop their ideological framework for

understanding women's issues. Ultimately, this chapter allows us to comprehend how evolving ideas about women and work influenced the experiences and strategies of women within the FNV. Additionally, it lays the groundwork for subsequent analysis by situating the FNV in the broader socio-political landscape that shaped the feminist movements and labour activism of this time.

The IISH is home to the extensive archives of the various sections of the FNV. For the scope of this research, the archives of the Vrouwenbond, Vrouwensecretariaat, and the national FNV archives provide ample source material for exploring the research questions in the remaining chapters of this thesis. Although the archives offer a fragmentary insight into the workings and history of the union, with records often privileging larger organisational developments, they were systematically sifted and analysed to reveal source material that provides a rich account of the experiences of women at all levels of the union. By combining more organised, top-down materials like newspapers, yearly reports, and meeting notes with more informal documents such as letters, internal correspondence, feedback, and reflection forms, a well-rounded and diverse insight into the developments of the Vrouwensecretariaat and Vrouwenbond is achieved. This multifaceted approach allows for a deeper understanding of the nuanced and varied experiences of women within the union, highlighting both the broader organisational changes and the personal, grassroots-level interactions and contributions.

The most valuable and innovative source material for exploring the experiences of rank and file members is the educational programs that were central to the tasks of the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat. Both organisations designed trainings (in the form of individual courses and training sessions) which were specifically aimed at integrating rank and file members into the broader mission of the union and providing them opportunities to discuss contemporary issues that both the unions and the participants themselves were facing. These trainings focused on the role that women played in the broader labour union and were simultaneously indicative of the larger goals and aspirations of the women's organisations within the FNV. Since these educational programs were pivotal in attracting new members and engaging women to be active within the union, the Vrouwensecretariaat and Vrouwenbond had to be responsive to changing ideas and needs of their members in order to further the impact of their organisations. This offers us a valuable insight into the major shifts and developments that occurred, as well as the relationship between rank and file women and the organisations they formed a part of. We are able to see how the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat appealed to their members through

designing the content and trajectory of the trainings, as well as how their members responded and what issues they decided to bring up, through feedback forms, reflections and letters. This helps uncover how women felt during the transformative period of the second wave of feminism, as well as providing insight into what extent the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat responded to these changes.

These educational materials offer a fascinating and new perspective on the history of the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat. They reflect the direction these organisations were taking in the 1960s and 1970s and highlight major international discussions and contradictions of the time. This discourse is incredibly valuable but has remained understudied in Dutch feminist history. Analysing these materials gives us crucial insights into the significant shifts within these women's organisations and the discussions that arose from them.

Chapter One. Historical context: two feminist waves and the changing landscape of the Dutch union movement

In this chapter, contemporary feminist writing and literature is examined to elucidate the position of women amongst the general development of trade union movements in the Netherlands. It is argued that despite the slow uptake in women's issues within the union movement, women have found ways to organise and protest working conditions and discrimination since the inception of a more formalised union movement. In particular, Dutch feminist activists in the post-war period utilised the momentum of international feminist movements to shed light on inequality in the Netherlands, and used history to substantiate their demands and carve out a place for women in the broader working class and trade union movement, bringing forth new ideas about women's domestic labour and emancipation. Examining the works of feminist activists gives us a crucial insight into not only the development of feminist ideas during the second wave of feminism, but also places the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat in a broader historical context for a better understanding of its developments.

The early 20th century

In 1975, the 'Verbondsraad' (the covenant council) of the NVV accepted a resolution on the position of female employees, which detailed some of the most prominent challenges to women working outside of the home.[61] In his introductory speech, NVV director Frans Drabbe spoke about the historic role of the NVV's in facilitating the organisation of women, mentioning a congress that took place in 1916, in which previous chair Jan Oudegeest encouraged women to organise within the NVV. What was left out of this acknowledgement, was the fact that Oudegeest had only been moved to address the role of women in unions after repeated criticism from other unions that the NVV had been too passive in addressing women's organisation.[62] Since its inception in 1906 as a federation of fifteen different unions, the NVV struggled to engage women in their organisation, or rather, working women were not on their radar. Women

[61] Joyce Outshoorn, 'Loondruksters of medestrijders? Vrouwen in de vakbeweging in Nederland 1890-1920' in: Selma Leydesdorff, Anja Meulenbelt and Joyce Outshoorn eds., *Te elfder Ure, feminisme 1* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij 1975) 722-745. 722.
[62] Ibid.

were organised at a significantly lower rate than men, and unions tended to point to the fact that women did not readily organise themselves as men did.[63]

The first unions that emerged within the Netherlands in the mid to late nineteenth century were often against the waged work of women, arguing that this had a suppressing effect on the wages of male workers.[64] This, coupled with the development of the capitalist family structure, which developed synchronously with industrialisation, made the topic of women's work an underrepresented issue in the Netherlands around the turn of the twentieth century. The Dutch national trade union centre, 'Het Algemeen Nederlandsch Werklieden-verbond' (General Dutch Workers' Association) which was set up in 1869 to strengthen the position of the Dutch workers' movement, proclaimed "isn't our slogan: keep women and children away from places of work? To this end only man is designated by the law of nature and civilisation."[65] This sentiment was further echoed by catholic and protestant streams of unionists.

Yet women continued to organise themselves, with the first workers' organisation created by women being set up in 1896: the Amsterdam union of seamstresses.[66] Other unions like the 'Algemene Nederlandsche Diamantbewerkers' (the Dutch diamond workers' union) had provided a place for women in more gendered parts of industry (such as the practice of diamond cutting) to organise themselves alongside male workers and participate in strikes.[67] The subsequent first wave of feminism brought with it a host of changes and conflicts within the broader socialist and unionist movement. Dutch unions and political parties had a lot to consider with regards to their stance on women's participation in wage work as well as movements regarding their right to work more generally.[68] The 'Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiders Partij' (SDAP, the Dutch Social Democratic Labour Party), for example, initially took a stance against women's right to vote, arguing that proletariat women first and foremost were to support the rights of working men.[69] Questions had to be raised within broader social and workers

[63] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren wij niets meer*, 26.
[64] Joyce Outshoorn, 'Loondruksters of medestrijders?', 722.
[65] Anje Hendrika Boswijk and Dirk Hendrik Couvée, *Vrouwen vooruit! De weg naar gelijke rechten* (Den Haag: Bakker 1962) 115.
[66] Joyce Outshoorn, 'Loondruksters of medestrijders?', 732.
[67] Zwankhuizen, *Vrouwen in de Vakbond: Als Vrouw of Als Arbeider,* 11.
[68] Ibid., 14.
[69] Ibid.

movements, about the nature of women's work and their role within the family. Ultimately, unions were forced to deal with the reality that many women engaged in wage work and that this brought into question the idea of the sole breadwinner of the family.

After the first world war, women's unions became less common and unions began to encourage the idea that women should organise themselves with men; with one prominent unionist and politician stating that "the wage earner organises herself with men. There can be no reason for why she should organise a separate union."[70] There were few attempts from within women's movements to further encourage separate organisation for female wage workers. Unions had become a growing force in the Netherlands and facilitated drastic changes in working life through their increased organisational power which resulted, amongst other things, in the introduction of the eight hour work day, as well as "stakingskassen" (strike funds) that supported workers through strikes, significantly increasing the political and bargaining leverage of unions in the Netherlands.[71]

The emergence of new women's organisations in the postwar period

The decades after the second world war presented a rapid change for the Netherlands on all fronts. The Vrouwenbond was created shortly after the second world war in 1948 to provide a platform for the wives of union members, though the NVV had not taken any drastic steps in taking up women's labour issues in their agendas.[72] Born out of the holiday camps organised for the families of union members, the Vrouwenbond presented a rather traditional extension of the NVV itself, and was largely concerned with helping organise women to form a cohesive supporting network to the broader goals of the NVV, and in particular, the men organised within it.[73] The first chair of the Vrouwenbond, Nel van Kranenburg, stated that it was the job of women in the Vrouwenbond to "stand next to them, [our men] in their attempts, mentally and materially, in improving the well-being of the working class."[74] The Vrouwensecretariaat, on the other hand, was created in 1959 to provide women organised within unions in the NVV a platform with the aim of recruiting more women into the union overall. Whilst membership in

[70] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren wij niets meer*, 26.
[71] Sjaak van der Velden, *Broodnodig: Honderdvijftig jaar Nederlandse vakbeweging*.
[72] Els Blok, *Loonarbeid van vrouwen in Nederland 1945-1955* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij 1978) 162.
[73] van der Klein, *Kranig en Dwars.*
[74] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer*, 43.

the Vrouwensecretariaat was open to all members of the NVV who engaged in wage labour, the Vrouwenbond was limited to wives of working members of the NVV, effectively creating a "housewife" and "working women" divide amongst the organisations.

After the second world war, increased industrialisation and urbanisation was paired with rapid economic growth, and unemployment remained incredibly low until the 1970s. This fast economic expansion did little to improve the living conditions of the working class, and it wasn't until the 1960s that real wages increased significantly with a stronger leftist government that facilitated a transformation into a welfare state.[75] It was around this time that the NVV put forth the idea that individual unions should merge together to form a "vakcentrale" (centralised union) that was independent from political or religious affiliation and that would allow them to aggregate the demands of employees, but this was rejected by the catholic and protestant unions.[76]

The 1960s presented a period of unprecedented social change and contrasting developments. Protests amongst young people, often spurred by international student movements, against the Vietnam war and Dutch "burgerlijkheid" (traditionality or civism) took off, but were often still dominated by men.[77] Though the early 1960s saw increased availability of contraception and acceptance of pre-marital cohabitation, outdated laws obstructed real progress, in particular for working women. Women who became pregnant or got married were legally forced to quit their jobs in many sectors, a law that would only be scrapped in 1976.[78] The composition of the population of working women further illuminated Dutch ideals about family and work. Until 1960, the vast majority of women in waged work were unmarried, and in the decades after the war, women's participation in the work force did not increase in many sectors, as labour shortages were often supplemented with migrant labour.[79] Not only was

[75] Ibid., 34.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ger Harmsen and Bob Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij 1975) 377.
[78] Zwankhuizen, *Vrouwen in de Vakbond: Als Vrouw of Als Arbeider,* 26.
[79] Scholars have illuminated the role that Dutch colonialism has played in facilitating capitalist industrialisation and have in particular looked at how Dutch ideas of society and family have impacted the lives of migrants. In her study of the second wave of feminism, Vilan van de Loo looks at how ideas of equality that people from the former Dutch-east indies brought with them to the Netherlands (in particular the powerful status of older unmarried women in Moluccan culture) were ignored as migrants were forced to assimilate and adapt to patriarchal Dutch culture. Vilan van de Loo, *De Vrouw Beslist: De Tweede Feministische Golf In Nederland,* (Wormer: Inmerc 2005) 28. See

women's waged work highly gendered, but the social expectation that once married or pregnant, a woman should not work, was still all encompassing, and little was done to address the double burden faced by mothers who also engaged in waged labour.

The 'Nederlandse Vereniging voor Seksuele Hervorming' (NVSH, the Dutch association for Sexual Education and Reforming) and the COC (an LGBT+ organisation) had fought for increased social and legal recognition of reproductive rights and sexual freedom in the 1960s, which, coupled with increased secularisation in broader Dutch society and availability of tertiary education for women, made it difficult to maintain the strict gender roles that had been strongly imposed in the decades prior.[80] Women were presented with increasingly conflicting ideals of their social roles and responsibilities within families. On the one hand they were able to gain increased access to specialised education and methods of family planning, but on the other, they were expected to start and maintain families and abandon any thoughts about wage labour.[81] The ability of women to study and enter into wage labour made clear to many women that in practice, few institutional structures existed that could facilitated wage labour together with social reproduction labour. This was made clear by the fact that there were few provisions that facilitated waged work for mothers, such as daycares, paid maternity and parental leave, or part time wage labour opportunities. Though increasing numbers of women participated in the workforce in the 1960s, they were paid less and had less promotional opportunities, and employers rarely facilitated part time work or even were legally enabled to terminate employment for pregnant or married women. Furthermore, Dutch unions were still proponents of the "breadwinner model", largely organising and lobbying for the financial stability of the male

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also; Roline Redmond and Mieke Goudt, *'Daar hoor ik ook bij': de zwarte en migrantenvrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Leiden: Stichting Burgerschapskunde 1990); Maayke Botman, Klazien Jouwe, and Gloria Wekker, *Caleidoscopische visies: de zwarte, migranten en vluchtelingen-vrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Koninklijk instituut voor de tropen 2001).

[80] Atria, International Archives for the Women's Movement, Actiegroep Paarse September, Magazine article entitled "Lesbisch zijn is politieke keuze", by Jeanne Doomen, published 18th of November 1972, accessed via https://hdl.handle.net/11653/art232665. Here it should be noted that the COC focused primarily on combatting discrimination against gay men. This was heavily critiqued by an increasingly vocal lesbian feminist movement in the Netherlands, in particular, Paarse September, a radical feminist lesbian activist group that focused on drawing links between heterosexuality and patriarchal oppression, which argued that the COC did not recognise that homosexuality and queerness manifested itself differently in the lives of women.

[81] Joyce Outshoorn, Anja Meulenbelt and Selma Leydesdorff, 'Feminisme in Nederland 1968-1975' in: idem eds., *Te elfder Ure, feminisme 1* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij 1975) 606-623. 608.

head of family, and were certainly not vocal about supporting the entry of married women into wage labour.[82] These contradictions that women increasingly came face to face with would spur the start of the second wave of feminism in the Netherlands.

International influences: activists and scholars take a renewed look at unions and social reproduction

The start of the second wave of feminism in the Netherlands is generally seen to have been triggered by an essay published in 1967 by *De Gids*, entitled "Het Onbehagen bij de Vrouw" (the discontent of women).[83] In this essay, journalist Joke Kool-Smit reflected on the gruelling and entrapping nature of domestic work that, in her eyes, prevented women from participating and enjoying the broader social and cultural society: housewives were essentially barred from any forms of self-actualisation and emancipation. This sentiment set in motion a broader discussion of the nature of women's formalised (waged) work and its potential for female emancipation, after which Joke Smit co-formed 'Man Vrouw Maatschappij' (Man Woman Society), a reform-oriented liberal activist group which "did not call for sabotaging men, marriage, the family, and capitalism, but instead argued for a long march through the institutions."[84]

Slowly, ideas about women and work in the Netherlands in the late 1960s were changing. These ideas were also heavily influenced by other international feminist movements, which were increasingly critiquing union movements for their lack of interest into the labour issues of women.[85] Evelyne Sullerot's *Histoire et sociologie du travail feminin*, a sociological and historical account of women's work, critiqued the western capitalist model of work which had "generally admitted the mass of working women, which is numerically limited, to subordinate positions. So far, women have been regarded as a safety net for the labour market, as reserve soldiers that could be called upon in glorious, feverish times of great economic development and in the bleak hours of wars and mobilisation of men."[86] Sullerot argued that women's formalised

[82] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer*, 48.

[83] Joke Kool-Smit, 'Het onbehagen bij de vrouw', *De Gids* 130 (1967) 267-281.

[84] Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin, 'Three Feminist Waves' in: Emmeline Besamusca and Jaap Verheul eds., *Discovering the Dutch: On Culture and Society of the Netherlands* (Amsterdam University Press 2010) 211-221. 214.

[85] Bob Reinalda and Natascha Verhaaren, *Vrouwenbeweging en internationale organisaties 1868-1986: een vergeten hoofdstuk uit de geschiedenis van de internationale betrekkingen* (Nijmegen: De Knipe 1989).

[86] Evelyne Sullerot, *Histoire Et Sociologie Du Travail Féminin. Essai* (Paris 1968), as translated and referenced by Bob Reinalda and Natascha Verhaaren in *Vrouwenbeweging en internationale organisaties 1868-1986*, 200.

labour was subject to the whims of capitalist development, in addition to the fact that they were further plagued by social and cultural responsibilities of child-bearing and social reproductive tasks. Women's waged work was thus viewed as ultimately incompatible with the demands of capital. In addition to this, addressing the fact that women's wage work under capitalism was seen as much more disposable than the work of their male counterparts, Sullerot also importantly highlighted the precarious and contradictory nature of women's work. Her work would also later become influential in the activities organised by the Vrouwensecretariaat in the mid 1970s.

Spurred by this international uptake in research and feminist critique, Dutch activists also increasingly looked at the relationship between women, work and unionism. In 1969, sociologist Hendrika Langeveld addressed the role of social reproduction in her study *Vrouw-Beroep-Maatschappij*, pointing out the contradictions of increased participation of (married) women in the workforce when coupled with an unchanged family structure.[87] In a chapter dedicated to the union movement, Langeveld pointed out how Dutch unions had struggled to adapt to the increased number of women in the workforce, blaming their failure to adapt to the unique situation women faced with regards to working times, pensions, parental leave, and ultimately pointing to the fact that married women faced disproportionate salary and tax disadvantages compared to men.[88] Langeveld called for unions to create more developed strategies for the issues of female workers if they wanted to encourage more women to organise themselves.[89]

Criticism of Dutch unions further became heightened as more radical women's activist groups started to develop. Shortly after the creation of Joke Smit's reformist Man Vrouw Maatschappij, the more radically-oriented group 'Dolle Mina' was formed, which organised confrontational and provocative actions aimed at gaining media traction for their central goals: free creches, equal pay, legalised and free access to abortion, and an end to the gendered divisions of (household) labour.[90] Dolle Mina was furthermore ideologically aligned with the socialist cause and announced in a 1971 congress that they saw their feminist movement as

[87] Hendrika Marie in 't Langeveld, *Vrouw - Beroep - Maatschappij: Analyse Van Een Vertraagde Emancipatie: Analyse Van Een Vertraagde Emancipatie* (Utrecht: Bijleveld 1969).
[88] Ibid., 121.
[89] Ibid., 135.
[90] Marjo van Soest, *Meid, Wat Ben Ik Bewust Geworden. Vijf Jaar Dolle Mina* (Den Haag: Stichting Uitgeverij Dolle Mina 1975).

forming a part of the broader class struggle.[91] They had a more developed and radical approach to issues of social reproduction, influenced by a Marxist understanding of the feminist struggle. Their allegiance to the socialist cause reflected a broader social engagement with political ideology, as many unions themselves were also struggling with approaches to ideology and social change in a rapidly changing cold-war context.[92] Dolle Mina had also criticised the NVV for not sufficiently representing women's interests, particularly for issues of equal pay, as they had repeatedly discarded the issue during collective labour agreement negotiations in the early 1970s.[93]

Feminist interpretations of traditional Marxist theory became increasingly important in feminist circles during this time. Marxist feminist scholars and activists began reflecting more broadly on the cultural and social roles imposed upon women. Italian activist and writer Silvia Federici, along with two other activists, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, showed how the labour of women in households was indispensable to capitalist production and argued that women themselves became a commodity in the household under capitalism.[94] Federici, Dalla Costa and James spearheaded the 'International Wages for Housework' campaign, arguing that pay for housework would be the first step towards recognising the indispensable nature of housework and the subsequent "struggle against it, both in its immediate aspect as housework and its more insidious character as femininity."[95] Whilst Della Costa and James went into more detail regarding the origins of the capitalist family, analysing women's position from a historical perspective, Federici maintained that the cultural notion that women "labour for love" hid a much more sinister truth. Federici namely argued that women's bodies were essentially bought by their husbands: housewives cook, clean and perform emotional and sexual services for their spouses in exchange for a roof over their heads. The relationship is essentially a transaction.

Federici further criticised the notion that work outside the home (productive paid labour) would serve to liberate women, arguing that "the second job not only increases our exploitation, but simply reproduces our role in different forms. Wherever we turn we can see that the jobs

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[91] Vilan Van de Loo, *De Vrouw Beslist: De Tweede Feministische Golf In Nederland,* 89.
[92] Sjaak van der Velden, *Broodnodig: Honderdvijftig jaar Nederlandse vakbeweging*, 128.
[93] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer,* 107.
[94] Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Falling Wall Press 1975).
[95] Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (Bristol: Power of Women Collective 1975).

women perform are mere extensions of the housewife condition in all its implications."[96] Her manifesto thus also highlighted the fact that some Marxist interpretations of what constituted women's emancipation opposed the notion that women's entry into paid labour, and were rather focused on tackling the system of capitalism as a whole. The works of Federici, Della Costa and James were key to the development of more robust social reproduction theory that recognised the coercive and exploitative elements of housework, in particular in the lives of working class housewives. Recognising housework as real, and exploited, labour, constituted "one of the most important theoretical concerns for early thinkers of second-wave feminism."[97] These would become central points in the development of feminist thought in the Dutch context.

Joyce Outshoorn similarly used feminist insights to explore the role of working women in the broader union context from 1890 to 1920.[98] Looking at the feminist struggle from a historic perspective became a central tenet of the second wave; activists were using history to trace the origins and manifestations of oppression faced by women. In her analysis, Outshoorn refused the simple perspective taken by Dutch unions at the time, one that argued that women were more difficult to organise, or were less ready to organise themselves. By exploring the hostility of unions towards women in the greater socio-political context of Dutch industrialisation, Outshoorn brought attention to the deeply rooted historic inequalities regarding divisions of labour. Whilst during pre-industrial times, she argued, there was not a strong distinction between productive and unproductive labour, the emergence of wage labour pushed women into more domestic roles, which further cemented a double burden for women who also engaged in wage labour.[99] Despite the challenges women faced in engaging in waged labour and resisting discrimination, Outshoorn shed light on the fact that women organised themselves in collective labour actions as early as 1890, pointing to a three week long strike organised by women in a thread spinning factory in Groningen. [100] Outshoorn argued that women's waged

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[96] Ibid., 83.

[97] Louise Toupin, *Wages for Housework: A History of an International Feminist Movement, 1972–77*, transl. Käthe Roth (UBC Press and Pluto Press 2018) 2. Other seminal contemporary texts on households and labour of the 1970s included Wally Seccombe, 'The Housewife and Her Labour Under Capitalism', *New Left Review* 83 (1974) 3–24; and Ann Oakley, *Woman's Work: The Housewife, Past and Present* (New York: Pantheon Books 1975).

[98] Joyce Outshoorn, 'Loondruksters of medestrijders?', 722.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 730.

work was seen as an unavoidable consequence of the development of capitalism and therefore had changed the stances of some unions who had previously sought to ban it completely. With this development emerged the movement "gelijk loon voor gelijk werk" (equal pay for equal work) which would seek to mitigate the salary suppressing effect of women's work. Despite this, Outshoorn argued that women's work remained an incredibly contentious and understudied part of unions. The language used by unions almost exclusively catered to a male audience (calling to "Men of the union movement") and entirely ignored issues surrounding social reproduction.[101]

The re-examination and use of historical perspectives was key in developing new insights into feminist theory and activism of the second wave. Scholars and activists alike were using historical perspectives of capitalism to substantiate claims that there was nothing "natural" or obvious about women's domestic roles in western society. The use of historical perspective aided feminists in their arguments surrounding social reproduction: it was not women's gender that inherently made them best suited to domestic tasks, rather, women's confinement to the domestic sphere was a direct result of industrialisation and urbanisation. Union activism would thus have to consider this history and the unique burdens faced by women, and develop specific measures to address these.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the NVV was still largely ignoring how issues of the private sphere influenced and shaped women's experiences as workers, yet, the boundaries of the public and private spheres were becoming increasingly eroded by activists and scholars. Eli Zaretsky's *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* written in 1975 further rejected a simple dichotomy of private and public matters under capitalism.[102] Echoing Joke Smit's analysis of the trapped nature of the housewife, Zaretsky conducted a critical history of capitalism that centred social reproduction and re-assessed the value of domestic labour: "This process, the 'private' accompaniment of industrial development, cut women off from men in a drastic way and gave a new meaning to male supremacy. While housewives and mothers continued their traditional tasks of production - housework, child-rearing, etc. - their labour was devalued through its isolation from the socialized production of surplus value. In addition, housewives and mothers were given new responsibility for maintaining the emotional and psychological realm of personal

[101] Ibid., 738.
[102] Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, and Family and Personal Life* (Pluto Press 1976).

relations. For women within the family work and 'life' were not separated but were collapsed into one another."[103]

Anja Meulenbelt's *Feminisme en Socialisme* written a year later further explored Federici's and Zaretsky's arguments of housewives as exploited labourers under capitalism.[104] Joining a global movement of activists reflecting and theorising on the role of the family in capitalism, Meulenbelt explored the blurred boundaries between labour and free time of housewives and argued that the housewife never really has time off: "Is folding clothes while watching TV work or relaxation? Is visiting someone whilst simultaneously taking care of your children work? Is it really considered vacation if you're spending all your time while camping doing all the same activities you do at home; cooking food and wiping your children's noses? Is ensuring your husband's relaxation after he comes home from work your free time or not?"[105] Meulenbelt argued that acts of labour towards the "housemates" of women (their husbands, children or other family members) should be considered work. Meulenbelt's work shows that ideas of social reproduction were being handled with increased attention by feminists, by arguing for conceptions of housewife work and family that recognised the nuclear family model as a "cheap means to reproduce the working force" and a system that forced the housewife to be the "economic buffer in times of crises, allowing salaries to be kept low without people protesting cuts in the welfare system."[106] Placing the housewife in a broader socio-political context of a declining welfare state, Meulenbelt showed how it was often women who experienced the brunt of economic austerity.

Marxist feminists thus increasingly connected the issues women faced in Dutch society to capitalist developments, but also began to reject reformist socialism that they felt still spoke to a "masculine socialism" that continued to be tied up with capitalist ideas of patriarchy.[107] Marxist feminist thinkers of this period, such as Monika van Paemel, Truus Pinkster, Joyce Outshoorn, Selma Leydesdorff and Anja Meulenbelt echoed international ideas of Marxist feminism (as put

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[103] Ibid., 30.
[104] Anja Meulenbelt, *Feminisme en socialisme: een inleiding* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep 1976) 34.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid., 56.
[107] Renée Belonje, Jan Fontijn, Guus Houtzager, Inge Polak and Sjoerd Ybema, 'Literatuuropvattingen van Feministische Auteurs En Critici, Een Tussentijdse Balans', Spektator. Tijdschrift voor Neerlandistiek, no. 7:1 (1978-1977) 513-525. 517.

forward by Silvia Federici in her 1975 manifesto) that capitalism and patriarchy strengthen each other in exploiting women.[108] These feminists took a much more ideologically radical stance compared to prominent liberal feminist figures of the time such as Joke Smit, who argued for a more individualised idea of liberation in which women would be free to pursue their emancipation however they saw fit. Other radical feminists like Andreas Burnier further argued for the embracing of homosexuality as a form of liberation that would facilitate emotional autonomy from men.[109]

In the early to mid 1970s these thinkers provided the theoretical perspectives necessary to facilitate discussions about feminism and ideas of the family in Dutch society. Outshoorn, Meulenbelt and Leydesdorff pointed to the strong "moederschapscultuur" (motherhood culture) that they felt was present in the Netherlands, in which a traditional family structure of a housewife and breadwinning husband was a robustly established norm.[110] These were also norms that were reinforced by unions themselves. These observations were paired with an increased criticism and discussion of the public and private divide, arguing that women's personal and family lives are ultimately dictated by capitalist and patriarchal relations. In particular, Marxist feminists brought increased attention to Joke Smit's analysis of housewives' life from a social reproductive perspective; housewives were isolated, physical and mentally, and it was men who benefited from the continuous labour of their partners.[111] Yet, housewives were presented as benefiting from a "luxury" of living a life at home on the financial costs of the male breadwinner. Insights from Dutch feminists were crucial in addressing these contradictions: "If women are a parasitic class, that live off of the men's economy, then the inverse is also true: men/culture is parasitic, feeding off of the emotional strength of women without reciprocity."[112]

Simultaneously, Dutch unions were becoming a growing force and presented a new potential for the working class women. Prior to the second world war, women's participation in the NVV made up between less than six percent of total membership, increasing to almost ten

[108] Ibid., 515
[109] Ibid.
[110] Meulenbelt et al, 'Feminisme in Nederland 1968-1975', 607.
[111] Ibid., 785
[112] Ibid., 785.

percent in 1975.[113] Yet, insights from the second wave of feminism were not always readily accepted or adopted into practice by women in the NVV. The interests of the Vrouwensecretariaat and Vrouwenbond frequently clashed, leaving little room for solidarity between working women and the housewives of the Vrouwenbond. Members of the Vrouwensecretariaat and the commission for Women's work further argued that the NVV prioritised the Vrouwenbond's activities, and painted them with the same brush as the Vrouwenbond.[114] Nel Tegelaar, the Vrouwensecreteriaat's first paid employee even went as far to say that they had no desire to have developed contact with the Vrouwenbond.[115] Contact and collaboration between the two organisations remained limited for the period of the 1960s as they also had vastly different interests. Operating in different contexts with different goals, the emergence of feminist inquiry into social reproduction would require new ways of thinking from both groups in the 1970s.

The above exploration of activist writing and contemporary feminist theory of the time showed that social reproduction issues were being handled with increased vigour, particularly around the mid 1970s. Feminists were no longer accepting simple depictions of women's struggles, and were shedding light on cultural, social and economic forms of discrimination. Issues such as the double burden, gendered divisions of labour, the public/private divide and childcare were seen as increasingly important issues for the emancipation of women. Activist groups like Man Vrouw Maatschappij and Dolle Mina highlighted the ideological diversity of the feminist movement. While some were concerned with more radical understandings of, and solutions to, capitalism, others were concerned in gradual political reformism and more individualistic solutions to women's emancipation. These differences would also manifest themselves in the women's organisations of the NVV throughout the late 1960s and 1970s. The coming chapters will focus on three major transformative periods within the second wave of feminism; the build up and start of the second wave (the early 1960s to 1970), the transformative period of 1970-1975, and ending with the last phase of the second wave within the NVV, 1975 to the early 1980s.

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[113] Zwankhuizen, *Vrouwen in de Vakbond: Als Vrouw of Als Arbeider*, 26.
[114] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer*, 84.
[115] Ibid.

Chapter Two. 1960-1970: The tide slowly turns.

From the early to mid-1960s the tasks and responsibilities of the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat remained relatively unchanged from the decade before. The former was focused largely on organising meetings and educational trainings for women surrounding the topic of household labour, family, health and their supporting role in the unions, emphasising in particular the social aspect of the group as a place for married women to create friendships and share experiences.[116] The latter organised, together with the Henri Polak foundation, trainings for female members of the NVV. These trainings were intended to help women understand the purpose and mission of the NVV, and in particular, their role within it as members. While the Vrouwenbond organised exclusively married or widowed women with lower levels of education who had little to no experience in wage work, the Vrouwensecretariaat organised women engaged in waged work who were members of one of the unions within the NVV, leading the goals and purposes of the two organisations to be quite disparate during this period. This chapter explores how the two organisations approached their roles and purpose, revealing the most central disparities between the two, and how they respectively approached women's issues. It is argued that women of the rank and file increasingly made use of the trainings as a platform to raise issues of social reproduction, and that the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat slowly started to accommodate and mobilise for these issues.

Emergence of issues beyond the NVV's scope in the Vrouwensecretariaat

The trainings organised by the Vrouwensecretariaat, though their content relatively unchanging for the period of the 1960s, give us a valuable insight into the views of women engaged in waged work, in particular those who were just starting to become active in the unions. Despite the trainings being oriented largely on explaining and discussing the position of women in the labour process and the union more broadly, they became a place for women to discuss their discontents with aspects of working life, and sometimes even the union movement more broadly. In an invitation for the course week sent from the central administration of the 'Nederlandse Bond van Vervoerspersoneel' (Dutch union for transportation personnel) to "bondsvriendinnen" (union friends) of different unions, the trainings were described as being opportunities to bring together women out of all different branches of NVV organisations, to encourage contact and knowledge

[116] van der Klein, *Kranig en Dwars*, 31.

exchange among them, and explore the role and work of the NVV more broadly.[117] They also emphasise that topics had been chosen specifically for women in the NVV, and that the course should therefore only interest female members of the union. Interestingly, it is also emphasised that the nature of the course is interactive and that the participants "will not only sit and listen. They will be divided into discussion groups, where conversation about the discussed topic is deepened beyond what the course instructor will provide. The course week will ask effort of you, it is not a vacation week."[118]

The sober emphasis on the educational and practical nature of the course could also be interpreted as a subtle attempt to separate the activities organised under the auspices of the Vrouwensecretariaat from activities in the Vrouwenbond, which was well known for organising leisure weekends and activities for women. In addition to this, some reflections on the course week from the union itself described that some women viewed the union as a "hobby", which was not picked up positively by the Vrouwensecretariaat. This was an association that the Vrouwensecretariaat perhaps even consciously attempted to distance itself from, as connotations of leisure, hobby or "free time" where often seen as terms associated with the Vrouwenbond, which was repeatedly dubbed a housewives' "hobby" club by other unions, in particular by the commission of women's work (which worked closely with the Vrouwensecretariaat), who did not view the Vrouwenbond as conducting "real" union work.[119]

Participants of the educational trainings provided by the Vrouwensecretariaat were asked to write in-depth reports reflecting on their experiences with the course and what they had learnt, and though these were collected and archived by the Vrouwensecretariaat, many participants shared vulnerable and sometimes critical thoughts about their experiences. The course book provided for participants highlighted some of the most pressing issues that the NVV saw for working women at the time, which was largely focused on economic and legal issues of employment; the fact that women received lesser pay, unequal or no pension funds, in addition to

[117] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, Uitnodiging voor 1e jaars NVV-kursusweek voor vrouwelijke leden van 11 t/m 16 maart 1963, 8 januari 1963.
[118] Ibid.
[119] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer*, 83.

laws that enabled employers to fire pregnant or married women.[120] The trainings combined practical, skills-based courses and more theoretical trainings, with the following structure:

1. Introductory remarks over the goals of the course
2. The position of women in the Netherlands, in the labour process and in the union movement
3. "How do we express it?"– Workshop on discussion skills
4. Excursion to a business
5. Social-economic developments in the Netherlands
6. Social security
7. Equal pay for men and women

The programme shows that the Vrouwensecretariaat was very focused on providing women with practical skills and more theoretical knowledge about the union and labour movement as whole.[121] Though the courses focused mostly on the nature of paid wage labour conducted outside of the house, the women participating often reflected on issues of social reproduction. In a reflection on the course, one participant wrote about barriers to organisation for married women: "I was particularly interested by the course on women in the labour process. In the last years, more and more married women are also becoming involved in labour. But I've also come to realise that much too few of these women are organised, making it a job for us to try and change this. The married woman in many ways has it harder than the unmarried women, she has to take into account the agreement and duty that she took upon herself when engaging in work, and cannot disregard the responsibilities of maintaining her family."[122] The participant here expresses particular solidarity with married women, who she argued face the additional worry of how to balance their family responsibilities alongside their jobs, in particular also alluding to the inability of employers to meet the concerns of working women. Another participant in a later course remarked that the discussion led by T. van der Meulen about the position of women in the labour process and in the Netherlands, had made her realise that the reality and working rights of women were significantly behind those of men.[123] They remarked that the discussions were confrontational and foreign, but that with some pushing from the discussion leaders, they started to feel more comfortable to engage.

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[120] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, Scholing en Vorming, De vrouw in het arbeidsproces.

[121] ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, Programma eerstejaars cursusweek voor vrouwelijk leden, september 1963.

[122] ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, reflection submitted by O.G Jansen.

[123] ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, reflection submitted by B. Lakerveld-Beverwijk.

The NVV had also set out to educate and train women into being better representatives for the union itself. The courses from the early to mid 1960s were heavily focused on giving new members practical skills in being able to discuss union issues on the work floor. The course "Hoe zeggen we het" (How do we express it) was aimed at giving new members the skills to represent and adequately argue over topics that represented the union, such as encouraging organisation, defending positions of the union and arguing for their necessity. Combined with theoretical background on the socio-economic developments of the Netherland, this course in particular was used to encourage participants to discuss union issues confidently. Though the Vrouwensecretariaat was facilitating discussions about the pay gap as early as 1960, the reality remained that salary negotiations for the CAO (collective labour agreements) were led by union directors of the individual unions and not by the central trade union, leading a lot of negotiations to remain unfruitful for female employees.[124] The work of the organisers of the trainings, predominantly women of the Vrouwensecretariaat, was thus crucial in facilitating some discussion about the demands they thought should be spearheaded by the union. This discrepancy between discussions on equal pay and the realistic role of the union in facilitating that was also something that was felt by the participants. One participant remarked in their feedback that they would have liked to have seen exactly what the NVV could do about these issues, in particular referencing the gendered nature of work within the labour process.[125] Perhaps then, the Vrouwensecretariaat was unable to provide answers as to how they could precisely tackle these issues, particularly because their influence on a structural level within the union was not great. There were, after all, almost no women representing the issues of female workers in higher positions at the NVV.[126]

Though issues like equal pay and gender roles on the work floor were being discussed, it was not always clear exactly what the NVV could do on an institutional level to address these challenges, thus the Vrouwensecretariaat rather addressed actions that women could take individually on the work floor. Yet, at the same time, it also became more clear that the Vrouwensecretariaat began to critically address the historic role of unions with regards to women's work, acknowledging the role that activism played in shaping the institution itself, with

[124] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer,* 101.
[125] ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, reflection submitted by N. de Werk.
[126] Zwankhuizen, *Vrouwen in de Vakbond: Als Vrouw of Als Arbeider,* 26.

one participant writing: "the goal of the union movement originally was to stop the working of women and children, specifically addressing better salaries for men. But then working girls and women started taking jobs such as nursing and teaching, though they were met with a lot of resistance."[127] Another woman remarked that learning about the history of the helped her understand the situation that women currently faced with regards to waged work. Thus, the use of history was already a method that was being utilised by the Vrouwensecretariaat to help contextualise and justify women's struggle for emancipation within the union movement.

Overall though, the trainings were largely framed around women's issues and experiences with formal employment, rather than focusing on how issues of family life and gendered divisions of labour impacted women's experiences at work. Issues of social reproduction were mostly brought up by the participants themselves in the reflections. In a report on one of the courses, it is stated that an issue of concern amongst women was the culture amongst the unions of which they were part of.[128] One participant said that when she attended her first meeting with her union, she felt that the majority of men there were old and would that she would be made fun of as the only woman participating in the meeting. Another woman remarked that, when she asked her colleague what union meetings were like, he responded with "I don't know. I've never been a woman."[129]

Female participants thus regularly brought up ways in which the atmosphere of the unions were inhibiting their participation in union activities, and speaking up more generally. The report also detailed that multiple women who were either married or engaged had experienced difficulties in participating in union activities because their partners were not supportive, and that they were asking for advice on how to convince their partners. The topics of the trainings, whilst participants found them engaging and educational, were not geared towards discussing issues that women faced in the private sphere. The responses of these women showed that there was an increased need for a platform in which women could discuss issues pertaining to the private sphere, but one that the Vrouwensecretariaat was not confident in facilitating yet. These reflections are thus evidence of the fact that the rank and file of the Vrouwensecretariaat

[127] ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, reflection submitted by N. de Werk.

128 ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, Scholingsweek voor vrouwelijke leden NVV, van 11 tot en met 15 maart 1963 in het vacantieoord "Dellenhove" te Epe.

[129] Ibid.

were pushing the boundaries of the structured trainings that were provided to them; they were asking the NVV to mobilise and respond to issues that they were bringing up.

It perhaps became more clear to the Vrouwensecretariaat that issues faced by women in the private sphere could not be separated from their broader involvement with the union. This would come to change in 1967, when a new course and training structure was introduced for more experienced women in the union movement, which kept topics of social security, socio-economic theory women in the union movement, but also focused more on cultural and social aspects of women and union work. [130] One topic in particular was concerned with addressing cultural responses to women's work in unions and in politics. Thus, the Vrouwensecretariaat was slowly moving from addressing work floor issues to addressing broader cultural and social problems women had dealt with.

Vrouwenbond in the 1960s: a slow shift from traditional to organisational power

Around this time, the Vrouwenbond was also more concerned with broader political developments in the Netherlands, in particular drawing attention to the role of housewives as consumers in times of economic austerity. The courses and activities offered to working women within the Vrouwensecretariaat were largely concerned with establishing women within the broader goals of the union, shying away from addressing issues that involved the private sphere. But since the Vrouwenbond largely organised housewives, the nature of their activities largely pertained to the private sphere, and the Vrouwenbond used this to gain traction in wider union activities. Through their association with the NVV's 'Stichting Consumenten Contact Orgaan' (Consumer Contact Organisation/Foundation), the Vrouwenbond amplified the voices of Dutch housewives and sought to shed light on issues faced by women as consumers, particularly in terms of managing a household in times of scarcity and changing consumer dynamics.[131] Though their activities remained limited to issues of married women with little or no waged work, the Vrouwenbond drew attention to the aspects of domestic work that were underrepresented by the union. Women, they argued, though they were not the breadwinners of the family, spent time and money maintaining the household budget and were also affected by austerity on social services and pay cuts. They had to make difficult decisions and sacrifices to maintain the well-being of

[130] ARCH02317, (inv) nr. 2, Programma tweedejaars scholingsweek voor vrouwelijke leden 1967/1968.
[131] IISG, Binding: maandblad van de Vrouwenbond FNV, June 1966, year 15, no.6.

their families.[132] Much like the courses provided to working women in the NVV by the Vrouwensecretariaat, the Vrouwenbond provided women access to practical information and tips to manage budgets and compare prices across brands, focusing on the needs of working class families.

Yet, the Vrouwenbond approached these issues from a traditional standpoint. In the first publication of their monthly magazine 'Binding' (bond or contact) of the year 1967; they reaffirm this with their title: "The woman next to the man" in an article that outlines their position within the NVV. Whilst the Vrouwenbond's Binding was also predominantly aimed at encouraging women to become members, and highlighting their position within the broader NVV, they placed their work in a broader social and political landscape and made this clear in their magazine. Though their magazine reflects the image that they wanted to represent of themselves, rather than those if its members, it gives us an indication of the stance and purpose of the Vrouwenbond. On the one hand, they presented themselves as a group concerned with the overall political developments that concerned the union movement, but on the other hand they also made clear their role in guiding women (in particular housewives) in issues of social reproduction.

In one issue, the Vrouwenbond published a letter they sent to the minister of economic affairs, outlining their concern for inflation and further economic austerity.[133] In the same issue, they outline the importance of housewives in this debate, based on a talk given by the director of the scientific and educational institute of the NVV: "A week has 168 hours, one works on average (officially) 45 hours and of that, the lady spends on average 4 hours and 10 minutes shopping. In this relatively short time, she decides on 3/4 of the money that men and women bring in together, 75-80 per cent of the income is spent by the woman; whether she spends this money wisely or unwisely affects not only her own family, but society as a whole."[134] Though the Vrouwenbond outlines the agency that a housewife has in determining the direction of household finances, illuminating her as an active participant in society, emphasis is placed on the broader social and familial relevance of this and what the housewife can do to change this: "How do women make decisions about their purchases? Do they do so impulsively, politely, sensibly,

[132] Binding, January 1967, year 16, no.1.
[133] Binding, June 1966, year 15, no.6, p1.
[134] Ibid.

irresponsibly? Women often react emotionally. With the current price increases causing the inflation, they are often angry with the producer, expressing her indignation towards the shopkeeper. But she still buys out of fear of further price rises, which she thereby provokes. Not wise after all, says the speaker."[135] Though the Vrouwenbond uses this talk to highlight the importance of the housewife in society, this passage makes clear that stereotypes and disparaging language use was commonplace in the NVV, and that the Vrouwenbond had an active role in re-enforcing such practices.

The Vrouwenbond used the speech of the educational institute to garner attention for the importance of educating women on consumption, particularly in times of austerity, and thereby, in their task to be a supporting organ of the NVV, made use of imposed gender roles to justify their purpose. Since the Vrouwenbond at this time did not have the right to vote on union matters, *Binding* became pivotal for them to express their voice. By presenting the housewife, on the one hand, as an impulsive, uneducated woman in need of guidance, and on the other hand, as a woman wielding important familial and social responsibility, the Vrouwenbond appealed to housewives and the male-dominated NVV alike. The Vrouwenbond was able to maintain and justify its importance in training and guiding housewives, but was also never expected to exceed this territory into one of activism. This image that the Vrouwenbond had co-constituted, was one that reduced the appeal of collaboration for women of the Vrouwensecretariaat and commission for women's work.

An interview with Co van den Born (the first female director of the Mercurius union) conducted by Corrie van Eijl in 1994 reflects this attitude: "The Vrouwenbond was the darling of the NVV, these women paid contribution and the NVV had to be sure to continue to befriend them."[136] Whilst the women of the Vrouwensecretariaat and Commission for women's work continually experienced a lack of support from the NVV, they reluctantly worked together with them. In the late 1960s, van den Born recalls occasionally writing a piece for *Binding*, or conducting a reading for members of the Vrouwenbond, but that largely, their contact was incredibly limited. One notable story highlights the distance between her and the Vrouwenbond, when in the early 1960s, during a training conducted by Mercurius, she was asked to drop by

[135] Ibid.

[136] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer,* 83. Interview with Co van den Born on the 27th of June 1994.

Van Wingerden (at the time chair of the NVV): “When I came to van Wingerden, he asked if I wanted to become secretary of the Vrouwenbond. I said: "Did you have to make me leave a course for that? No, I don't want that." Then he asks: "Don’t you want to think about it first?" "No," I said, "I don't have to think about that at all." He was astonished because he thought he was doing me a favour. Well he didn't do me any favours at all. I had a job as a fully-fledged union director, then you're not going to become secretary of the Vrouwenbond!"[137] Women engaged in waged work (perhaps more importantly, those occupying higher ranking positions) in the union were thus not happy with associations with the Vrouwenbond. The work that waged women conducted in the union was serious, “real” union work, though it was not seen as such by men in the NVV; who painted all “women’s activities” within the NVV with the same brush, indicated by the chair’s lack of sensitivity to the internal attitudes and politics between these groups. Though these animosities existed from the side of women in higher positions at the NVV, women who had recently joined the union or had participated in their first trainings showed more sympathy and understanding for housewives.

The Vrouwenbond was however, not unaware of its image throughout the rest of the NVV. In 1969, they welcomed a new chair, Ans Bakker, who wanted to facilitate change within the Bond: the Vrouwenbond was to be taken seriously, as a peer, of the Vrouwensecretariaat.[138] In that same year, the congress of the Vrouwenbond called for the creation of a commission which would scrutinise the role and future of the Vrouwenbond, and eighty percent of members voted for a renewal of the Vrouwenbond. Women of the Vrouwenbond thus also felt that they wanted to see the organisation go in a new direction, and felt that the attitudes of the Vrouwenbond did not reflect the broader change in mentality in Dutch society. This renewal called for increased attention to contemporary issues faced by women in Dutch society. Members wanted to be involved in more activities that would promote standpoints that they were concerned with, namely education for women and social welfare.[139]

The above analysis shows that the 1960s were a turning point for both the Vrouwensecretariaat and the Vrouwenbond. Though their activities were largely kept separate and they did not interfere with each other’s work, members of both groups had begun expressing

[137] Ibid., 84.
[138] IISG, Archief Vrouwenbond, ARCH01595, (inv.) nr 606, 25 jaar Vrouwenbond NVV, 1972.
[139] Ibid.

discontent with the role of the NVV more broadly in addressing the struggles faced by women. The continuing use of sexist stereotypes and disparaging language that the Vrouwenbond expressed was also a great source of animosity between the women's organisations within the NVV. However, the work of the Vrouwenbond did not always reflect the perspectives of their members, who wanted to see more action arise for societal issues and bigger political developments. Similarly, participants of the trainings of the Vrouwensecretariaat expressed discontent with the inability of the union to help them deal with issues that largely concerned their private life and issues of social reproduction.

Chapter Three. 1970-1975: The start of a new era

The following chapter explores how the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat became increasingly attuned to issues of social reproduction and sheds light on the changes that took place within the organisations which enabled them to facilitate discussions on contentious issues of women's emancipation, such as daycare availability, abortion access and equal pay. It is argued that by seriously reforming its image, the Vrouwenbond was able to collaborate with the Vrouwensecretariaat, aiding both organisations in developing a stronger women's movement within the NVV. It is further demonstrated that internal differences and disagreements regarding demands and solutions to women's issues remained rampant within the organisations. Despite this, the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat appealed to an increasingly diverse group of women in the union by collaborating on an event that protested the impact of gender roles in women's lives.

The anti-discrimination event in Dronten

The year 1970 marked an important turn for women's organisations in the union, in terms of voicing the struggles faced by women in Dutch society. The Commission for Women's work organised their yearly nationwide meeting, which would come to be of a very different nature than the previous years. After receiving criticism on the fact that their yearly meetings where too demonstrative, a group of union women, assisted by the Vrouwensecretariaat, decided to organise a large and lively demonstration to bring attention to the different kinds of discrimination faced by women.[140] What was eventually called the "Diskriminatiebeurs" (discrimination fair), became an event at which women of all ages and backgrounds came together to make their demands and frustrations known.

Members of individual unions (including the union of Dutch catholic women), the Vrouwensecretariaat, the Vrouwenbond, Dolle Mina and other activist groups came together to demand more of the NVV, and it would also become a turning point for the collaboration between the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat. Framed as a "bargain" or "close-down" sale (likely mocking the union's use of disparaging language by associating women's events

[140] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 5, Letter to the Algemene Bedrijfsbond textiel en kleding, Amsterdam, 13 May 1970.

with shopping and consumerism) the event was geared towards encouraging women to share their stories on a "schandpaal" (communal pillar): "All women bring their discriminations. It will be a total sell-out: everything must go! We will hang up the remnants of discrimination! Furthermore, women must bring all other obstacles they face on a daily basis."[141] Some of the most important topics they advertised in their invitations included discussions about abortion, daycare access, equal pay and pension rights.[142]

Figure 1: People surround the N.V.V "Schandpaal" at the "Diskriminatiebeurs" in Dronten, 17 october 1970. IISG Archive, Vrouwensecreteriaat.

[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

The event intended to shed light on a range of issues faced by women not only on the work floor, but also in the private and broader social-cultural sphere, and this was heavily discussed in the meetings leading up to it. In the topics for discussion of a meeting for the "Diskriminatiebeurs", discrimination of the private sphere was frequently mentioned.[143] There was debate about whether or not part time work (for both men and women) would relieve some of the domestic burdens for women, as they could both engage in domestic work for half of the day. It was noted however, that this would impact unmarried women working full time. The minutes of these meetings held prior to the events highlight, in the form of short and fragmented notes, the most important topics that were noted down. It is clear that these discussions were also wary of the mixed crowd that would attend the event: housewives, activists, unmarried women and part time mothers etc: "[we should not] impose views on anyone. Free personal decision. Males and females are not equal nor are all females the same. Some like to feel like slaves to men. Nurturing type often find satisfaction in housework. Does the man possess the right qualities for this? In principle do not exclude, but neither man nor woman should do work based on disposition."[144] Preparations for the event thus emphasise that views on social reproduction were not ideologically cohesive amongst female members of the union. Perhaps in an attempt to also welcome those who would be attending the event that were not working (in particular the housewives and widows of the Vrouwenbond) the Vrouwensecretariaat clearly distinguished a woman's right to choose, thereby focusing more on the individual woman and her choices rather than attempting to find a collective voice.

The "Diskriminatiebeurs" brought to light not only the fact that the NVV had not achieved enough in securing more rights for working women, it also exposed manifold internal differences between women in the NVV and showed that the women's movement was anything but homogenous. One particular discussion that emphasised this was a discussion led by Mary Zeldenrust (former president of the NSVH) on daycare, which was described as a discussion with many contradicting opinions.[145] Whilst many mothers said they felt happy with the choice to stay at home and exclusively take the role of caregiver to their children, others argued that this

[143] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 5, Punten voor Bespreking, 7 February 1970.
[144] Ibid.
[145] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 5, Middagdiscussie, 17 october 1970, Dronten, 1.

responsibility should be shared with the man.[146] Interestingly, there was also a notable group (consisting largely of teachers) that felt that women must choose, at the time of marriage, between work or children. However, attention was also drawn to conceptions of motherhood more generally, with some pointing to the fact that if all women should be the ones raising their children, then all women should be (in theory) totally equipped to be mothers.[147] Others, pointing to the agency and well-being of children, argued that women should not view children as their property; sometimes some parts of upbringing and care are better in the hands of others, such as creches or daycares.[148] Ultimately, one of the key disagreements seemed to be about *who* was best suited to child rearing and *why,* and the answer to these questions were largely determined by how individual women felt about how inherent or natural women's caregiving and nurturing qualities were. If women weren't the ones solely responsible for the well-being and success of their children, what institutions or changes had to come into place to help supplement women's social reproduction tasks? How were men to get involved in social reproduction?

Van Eijl's interview with Antje Smits-Maat, a member of the NVV Vervoersbond, who had experienced two to three decades of activism as a member from the early 1950s to 1980, highlights a further source of tensions between women's groups in the NVV.[149] Smits argued that she felt that the earlier generation of union women, having experienced the difficult (post) war period, had become members of the union based on ideals of solidarity with those less fortunate in society, which clashed greatly with individualism of the younger generations. These women, Smit argued, were much more individualistic, striving to combine paid and unpaid work and desired things such as free childcare. They also had less solidarity with women from lower educational or financial backgrounds, for whom their activism on economic independence would not always turn out favourably.[150] There was thus not only a rift between working and not working women, but also notable differences in background that would determine what area of emphasis women thought were important within the union. Some women viewed women's entry into wage labour as self-serving and harmful to family life.

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[146] Ibid., 2.
[147] Ibid., 3.
[148] Ibid.
[149] van Eijl, *Maandag tolereren we niets meer*, 137. Interview with Antje Smits-Maat on the 22nd of September 1994.
[150] Ibid.

This is further reflected in another report of the event, which details that "the selfishness of the mother came up. For the child - especially from an under stimulating environment - daycare is better. The daycare is then a valuable addition, Not everyone was convinced of this, despite scientific evidence. The irreplaceable 'mother's love' still lives deeply in our minds."[151] Despite this, the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat ultimately, affirmed a stance that daycare should be integrated into housing more broadly. Discussions about motherhood, daycares and the double burden of women, also contributed to a greater discussion about the nuclear family and the broader construction of the family in Dutch society more generally. This is reflected in the discussions that occurred around issues of housing, which showed that there was a high interest in topics of experimental housing, particularly housing with more communal possibilities and better living possibilities for single and lower-earning women.[152] The interest in these topics could thus have reflected a social need for new forms of living that could accommodate different lifestyles and living situations, or even communalise social reproduction tasks. Ultimately, five hundred (well over half) of the overall participants of the event signed a petition demanding more daycare in the Netherlands.

The Vrouwensecretariaat broadens its reach and aims

Throughout the 1970s, the courses provided by the Vrouwensecretariaat would continue to be a platform for discussion and education for working women in the NVV. The contents of these courses would also come to change and reflect the growing importance of women's activism within the union itself, and that its activities were not entirely inflexible to new developments. In 1971, the course provided to new female members of the NVV changed quite considerably since the late 1960s and included the following programme:

1. The position of women in the labour process
2. The position of women in the union movement
3. How is the NVV structured and how does it work?
4. Social relations on the work floor
5. Tasks and possibilities of the secretariat for working women
6. The I.V.V.V. (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) Charter for women.

[151] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 5, Eerste koncept: Meningen, Opinies, Eisen en Wensen van NVV Vrouwen, genoteerd op de diskriminatiebeurs op17 oktober 1970 in Dronten, 2.
[152] Ibid., 10.

The new courses had been developed with more of an eye for addressing the practical issues that women experienced (for example social relations on the work floor, which dealt with uncovering and managing work related experiences of women), in addition to highlighting and discussing the role that the NVV played within these struggles.[153] It has thus become necessary for the union to address questions women previously had about their role in advancing women's rights, not only on the work floor but also in a broader social and cultural context; exactly what could the NVV do for these women? And what steps were they taking? The courses increasingly reflected a more self-critical approach, perhaps in anticipation of new, younger, members that would be asking these questions. These courses showed that action was being taken to address some of the concerns women had expressed in the previous courses, but failed to address the important issues of social reproduction that had dominated the "Diskriminatiebeurs." The activities of the international labour movement were also increasingly important to the workings of the Vrouwensecretariaat, as these developments were discussed heavily in the training courses.

In an internal note from the Vrouwensecretariaat, member Hanny van Erp highlights the importance of the Vrouwensecretariaat in building on existing courses and finding out new ways to engage (new) female members of the NVV.[154] She criticised the fact that, despite an enormous amount of input from different women and groups, the output of the Commission of Women's work was marginal and asked for the Vrouwensecretariaat to consider whether it was because there was not a clear defined issue that they were focused on, and that they might also consider the fact that the issues that they are concerning themselves with do not matter enough to the female members of the union. Referencing the "Diskriminatiebeurs" in Dronten, she argues that they had not sufficiently built on the momentum of the demonstration: "To develop a new framework, you will first have to revise the old framework. There are numerous training meetings for female members, but it seems sensible to me that these meetings should be more focused on the real issues that arise in the field of women's work. It could only be beneficial if those training weeks for female members (for example Epe) were taken to a slightly higher

[153] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 2, Nederlandse Bond van Vervoerspersoneel Hoofdbestuur: Kursusweek van het N.V.V. voor vrouwelijke leden, 29st of july 1971.

[154] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 2, note written by Hanny van Erp on the 21st of April 1972.

level."[155] More critical assessments were thus also coming from within the organisations themselves, in particular focusing on the relation between the NVV and its growing young member base. The "Diskriminatiebeurs" had drawn attention to the fact that women were facing issues beyond those that the NVV was concerning itself with; they wanted advice and visible change on how to tackle issues of social reproduction. It was not enough to talk about equal pay and access to education, but rather action had to be taken for issues of combining work and familial obligations, such as part time work possibilities, parental leave and gendered discrimination.

In this letter, attention was also drawn to the discrepancies in topics between the activities in the Vrouwensecretariaat in different locations; while their department in Den Haag focused on employment opportunities, equal pay and part-time work, Amsterdam was focused largely on trainings and education, and the department of Rotterdam largely centred on creches and abortion.[156] Though these distinctions were indicative of different and perhaps more local priorities, the communication between departments on exactly what plan of action that was to be taken with regards to the diverse scope of issues, was minimal. Internally, the Vrouwensecretariaat was thus troubled by different conceptions and formalisations of issues, but also, was lacking developed strategies to bridge regional and internal divides.

The letter written by van Erp further highlights that the Vrouwensecretariaat drew a strict distinction in terms of issues discrimination between private and public life. Issues faced by women, outlined in a summary in her letter, are distinguished by whether they are "work" and "private" issues. Many women had expressed that they felt that their work environment reinforced sexist stereotypes: men addressed women by their first names, using the more casual "je", but women were expected to use the formal "U" towards male colleagues, women were asked to do tasks seen as "womanly" and conversely had tasks taken away from them that were not "womanly."[157] Interestingly, though the letter is largely concerned with labour related discrimination and the NVV's role in combatting it, some issues "outside of the work terrain" were expressed as follows:

[155] Ibid., page 3.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., page 4.

- "Advertisements on TV (women in advertisements are all housewives and come across as brainless beings)
- A male dominated society makes decisions over women's own bodily autonomy.
- That men quickly come to the rescue when a woman tries to do something that is not supposed to be done according to ancient custom (thinking that a woman is not capable of *xyz*).
- 90% of older women experience discrimination in their marriage."

The letter itself makes clear that issues faced by women in the public and private sphere could no longer be entirely conceptually separate from issues faced on the work floor, and needed to form part of what the NVV concerned itself with.[158] Here, attention was also drawn to cultural portrayals of women, in particular housewives, and represented as a newer topic of focus for the Vrouwensecretariaat. The previous courses which took place in the late 1960s which focused a lot on austerity and consumption, perhaps encouraged a renewed interest of members to focus on how women were presented more broadly within media and advertisement, and in particular that ideas of domesticity and issues women face in marriage, should be discussed and dealt with by the union.

During the period of 1971 and 1972, the Vrouwensecretariaat was thus increasingly busy with exploring gender roles and their impact on women within the union and more broadly in Dutch society. The "Diskriminatiebeurs", trainings and criticisms outlined above show us that issues of social reproduction (such as the idea that it is women who are inherently caregivers) were closely linked to stereotyping and traditional mentalities, but also contradictorily framed as being conscious choices (as shown by the internal notes which argued that some women inherently enjoy being subservient caregivers). Whilst it was clear that more structural solutions had to come into play to relieve some of the discrimination women face (access to sufficient contraception, free or subsidised daycare, access to abortion, new forms of communal housing), these would require radical reconsiderations of the deeply engrained social norms and mentalities that were still staunchly defended by many, also in the unions themselves. This was furthermore a task that the Vrouwensecretariaat could not conduct alone.

[158] Ibid.

A new era for collaboration? The Vrouwenbond re-brands

In 1971, the Vrouwenbond and the Vrouwensecretariaat came together to discuss the necessity for their collaboration, with the shared goal to change attitudes towards the position of women in society.[159] In January 1972, after three meetings, they had come up with a plan for a joint demonstration; they would organise an event with the topic of the "influence of upbringing on the position of women" which would be held in 1974, just before the UN-organised International Women's Year in 1975.[160] The goal of the project was to change attitudes and mentalities towards the education and acceptance of historically entrenched male/female gender roles, which was seen as an essential prerequisite for women's emancipation, and was stated to be a "necessary stage in the process of societal renewal."[161]

Around the same time, the Vrouwenbond was engaging in more self-reflection and re-branding, which likely aided in facilitating their newfound collaboration with the Vrouwensecretariaat. In 1972, they celebrated their twenty fifth anniversary, and used this as an opportunity to announce a new era for the organisation.[162] Jenny Zwanepoel, secretary of the Vrouwenbond at the time, felt that the organisation had fallen in a slumber: "We no longer had a face of our own. We had none of our own goals."[163] After a congress in March 1972, the Vrouwenbond had made the decision to revise their statutes to open up membership to all women, even those who did not have partners who were members of a union of the NVV. This would radically shift the overall purpose of the Vrouwenbond from a largely supportive, subsidiary organisation, to one with a much larger terrain. They could effectively recruit women from any sort of household that attached importance to the struggles of working class people and political activism. It also meant that their allegiance had shifted slightly from being concerned with the goals of the NVV more broadly, to also focusing on the development of their own goals, and strengthening the position of the Dutch housewife more generally: "The new objective expresses much more clearly that it is about the woman herself- which then fits well with the

[159] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Notitie voor de leden van het Verbondsbestuur – Voorstel tot een door NVV- Sekretariaat vrouwelijke werknemers en Vrouwenbond NVV gezamenlijk te organiseren, Manifestatite Mentaliteitsverandering, 18 December 1972.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid., 2.
[162] IISG, Archief Vrouwenbond, ARCH01595, (inv.) nr 606, 25 jaar Vrouwenbond NVV, 1972.
[163] Ibid.

new understanding that she will no longer be granted access to women's union membership only 'on the presentation of a husband' (and even then, an NVV man). The modern, conscious woman has enough problems and threatened interests of her own to make an organisation like the reinvented Vrouwenbond indispensable."[164]

This major shift in purpose was likely an essential one for their collaboration with the Vrouwensecretariaat. Women in the Vrouwenbond wanted to be taken seriously, not only as members of the union, but as activists. In 1972, the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat started planning for their new project "Rol´s Om" ("roll over", a play on words about gender roles), which was aimed at starting a discussion on gender roles and upbringing in the Netherlands, asking: are these roles inherent or do we make them so?[165] It was also one of the first projects that was not exclusively targeted to female members of the NVV, but was rather intended as a collaborative project for both men and women to participate in and reflect on their upbringing and roles. The notes of the preparatory meetings show that the presence and strength of the Vrouwenbond was seen as a substantial asset to the Vrouwensecretariaat; they had an immense number of members that was steadily growing and had an interesting target group for these discussions: housewives.[166] The Vrouwenbond thus brought a large number of groups from throughout the Netherlands, and the Vrouwensecretariaat utilised its connections with other activist groups and non-NVV related women's organisations.

The preparations for the material itself for the discussion day were also heavily influenced by contemporary feminist and activist voices; the NVV had invited Joke Kool-Smit and Anja Meulenbelt to give talks about education and social reproduction, respectively.[167] Yet, their willingness to collaborate with other groups also exposed to what extent the NVV was (or wasn't) ahead of the curve. They had reached out to 'Vrouwenkontakt' (women's contact) the women's organisation of the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA, the Dutch Labour party), to collaborate on this project. Vrouwenkontakt responded, saying that going forward, their work would be

[164] Ibid.

[165] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Rol 's Om, Diskussieprojekt 1973/1974 Vrouwenbond NVV en NVV sekretariaat voor Vrouwelijke Werknemers.

[166] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Notitie voor de leden van het Verbondsbestuur – Voorstel tot een door NVV-Sekretariaat vrouwelijke werknemers en Vrouwenbond NVV gezamenlijk te organiseren, Manifestatite Mentaliteitsverandering, 18 December 1972.

[167] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Manifestatite 1974 – conversation on the 3rd of May 1973.

based on a vision that looked at a "mens and maatschappij" (people and society) rather than looking at "men and women" in society.[168] They were thus less focused on the differences between men and women (ideologically or practically) and more interested in broader societal questions. There was also criticism from within the NVV, in particular from Wim Sprenger, an education and training researcher from the NVV, who in a note to the Vrouwensecretariaat argued that the goals of the project were somewhat unclear.[169] He argued that some of the discussion questions formulated by the project leaders were too individualistic: "The questions and ideas are frequently structured too individualistically, something like: it's all a question of mentality, one simply has to change the way they think to change something. Accentuation of group influence, working on it together, in my opinion, is necessary. Also, more emphasis on the relation with the broader social "why" of the current situation."[170] Focusing on individual actions, Sprenger argued, rather than the systemic culture (perhaps he was alluding to capitalism or even patriarchy more broadly), thus took away from the practical organisational power of the union. Yes, individuals could change their mentality with respect to some entrenched gender roles, but this would do little to effect structural change, which is something that the NVV (and the Vrouwensecretariaat in particular) had been trying to do since their inception.

But the project did something to test the waters- the discussion questions and brochures that they circulated certainly worked to challenge issues of social reproduction. In particular, they revealed the contradictions that women faced daily in terms of work and family. Letters sent from women that were included in the project's publications detailed some of these challenges:

"I am twenty-three and have been married for two years. We don't have any children. Before my marriage I worked at a travel agency. We moved to Zeeland to escape the busy city. I expected that here, I would be able to find a job quickly, but that appeared to be far from simple. The employment agency did not take me (as a married woman) seriously. I was registered with them, but I was the one who had to call and ask them for work. In the span of six months I've applied for sixteen jobs. First they tried to make it clear to me, in subtle ways, that they were afraid I would become pregnant. When I said openly that we were not planning to, they offered a salary much too low for my level of education and age. […] I view my current job as secretary as a temporary solution. While at the moment, we share the household tasks, my husband cooks and

[168] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Notitie voor de leden van het Verbondsbestuur – Voorstel tot een door NVV-Sekretariaat vrouwelijke werknemers en Vrouwenbond NVV gezamenlijk te organiseren, Manifestatie Mentaliteitsverandering, 18 December 1972, 2.

[169] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, letter from Wim Sprenger, Sommige Opmerkingen over vraagstukjes.

[170] Ibid., 2.

does the shopping, and I keep the house (a little bit) clean, we do eventually want a child. In larger cities they have creches, but these don't exist here. Something seriously needs to change in our society. Why do women have to choose between a career or children, even though for a man its acceptable that he just has both?"[171]

Though there was perhaps nothing out of the ordinary in this particular experience, it exemplified the purpose of the project; addressing different manifestations of gender roles and their consequences. The writer of the letter refers to not only facing difficulties with the hiring office, who viewed her attempts for employment as futile and fleeting, but also her employer who sought to take advantage of her status as a married woman with no children, offering a lower salary. The letter also alludes to the discrepancies in childcare facilities for families between busier, urban areas and rural areas. These distinctions ultimately rule out possibilities for more equitable labour opportunities between women and their partners. Ultimately, the project was concerned with drawing attention to how social reproduction is shaped by gender roles, expressed through biases on the work floor and private life, and how this impacted the ability of women to choose freely for work and/or family.

Perhaps in response to the internal criticisms they had received on the individualistic nature of the project (it was after all aimed at addressing individual gender biases), the self-published book that was given to participants of the discussion details a literature list of books that were made available to people for more in-depth theoretical discussions surrounding the emancipation of women. Interestingly, while the literature list reflects a varied number of authors from the Netherlands: such as a book by Joke Kool-Smit about changing gender roles: *'Rok en Rol' Vrouw en man in een veranderde samenleving*, and Joyce Outshoorn's *Women's emancipation and Socialism*, there were also numerous publications from international feminists like Susan Sontag and Evelyne Sullerot. By placing their activism for women's emancipation in an international context, the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat attempted to build on the momentum of the international feminist movement, perhaps also reinforcing a sense of legitimacy on their projects. The project "Rol´s Om" also dedicated a large portion of its educational material to "de vrouw internationaal" (the role of the woman internationally) in particular pointing to women's rights in Chile at the time of the US-backed military coup led by

[171] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Rol 's Om, Diskussieprojekt 1973/1974 Vrouwenbond NVV en NVV sekretariaat voor Vrouwelijke Werknemers, letter sent in from B.S., 12 May 1973.

Augusto Pinochet, which argued that social change does not happen by itself; women everywhere must first recognise their oppression and resolve to address it and change it.[172]

The collaboration between the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat laid bare an entirely new terrain of work, the NVV's activism had to appeal to all women: housewives, (single) mothers engaged in wage work, widows, as well as women abroad. Addressing issues of social reproduction through a gender role lens, perhaps lent the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat freedom to be less critical of broader systemic change. Nevertheless, it was becoming clear that they had to address and include each other's diverging target audience, particularly in an increasingly international environment where it would become important to represent a more unified women's movement.

[172] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 7, Rol 's Om, Diskussieprojekt 1973/1974 Vrouwenbond NVV en NVV sekretariaat voor Vrouwelijke Werknemers.

Chapter Four. 1975-1980: The second wave becomes more tangible

The final chapter of this thesis highlights the increased global attention for women's issues, both within and outside of the private sphere. It is argued that during this time, more robust and critical Marxist-feminist theory became pivotal for the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat in appealing to members and theorising their own role in the union. Acknowledging a necessity for deeper theoretical engagement, the Vrouwensecretariaat invited feminist scholars like Joyce Outshoorn to integrate new Marxist-feminist perspectives in their trainings and courses. This theory would further aid the Vrouwenbond in theorising the role of the housewife under capitalism. By the late 1970s, the Vrouwenbond, driven by member discussions and students from the UvA, advocated for wages for housewives, as well as their voting right in the NVV. The discussions conducted in the Vrouwenbond highlighted an increased need for part-time wage work opportunities, daycare availability, and educational initiatives aimed at empowering women economically and socially. Ultimately, it is demonstrated that the second wave resulted in a significant feminist awakening within Dutch unions, most notably characterised by a shift towards integrating Marxist-feminist theory and demanding more systemic change.

From mentality shifts to systemic change

The increased militancy and activism that was exerted globally by feminist groups in the 1970s led to the development of more robust theory and scholarly practices surrounding the study of women's economic emancipation.[173] The focus on economic emancipation expanded in view of the increased number of divorces in the west, which confronted women with their economically weak position, and soon, the idea gained ground that women's position were strengthened when they engaged in wage labour.[174] Simultaneously, there were discussions about household responsibilities and the need for role reversal for men within the home, coupled with role reversal for women outside of the home. This also led to more radical, as well as more moderate feminists, to eventually address each other's concerns in their analyses.[175] The increased attention for the diversity in women's issues would manifest itself in the United Nations' 1975

[173] Reinalda and Verhaaren, *Vrouwenbeweging en internationale organisaties 1868-1986,* 221.
[174] Ibid.
[175] Ibid.

"Year of the Woman" which had as its theme "Women and men of the coming 25 years", during which panellists from around the globe highlighted the necessity for a change in the deep-rooted social and economic structures that prevented women from becoming fully emancipated.[176]

In a discussion pamphlet published by the Vrouwenbond for the international year of the woman in 1975, they stated that they had changed from "from a 'social club' that focused on cultural development and the family, to a union with a critical attitude of society, which is also focused on changing this society."[177] A lot had changed in the span of a few years, and the Vrouwenbond was making this clear in their approach to activism. Their pamphlet detailed their approach to tackling discrimination against women, using the UN's *Year of the Woman* as a catalyst for this. Their approach had also changed considerably since the "Rol´s Om" project; they were no longer solely focused on addressing individual mentalities, but rather they were concerned with more structural institutional change that included social reproduction as a vital tenet. In their strategy, they outline "just changing this division of roles does not help the emancipation of human beings. If a woman fixes a bicycle tire and a man puts laundry in the machine, we have not changed anything. Our activities should therefore be aimed at structural changes in society."[178] These structural changes that the Vrouwenbond were demanding, were a direct embodiment of the important discussions held by women in the "Diskriminatiebeurs" a few years prior. The Vrouwenbond had created much more thorough and explicit stances toward issues of social reproduction, in particular childcare. Calling for more affordable daycares, the Vrouwenbond drew attention to the fact that women are often bound to the domestic sphere, and that it was impossible for many single parents to work and care for their children.[179] They also addressed the role of communities in facilitating and communalising childcare responsibilities, arguing that some possibilities in creating more accessible daycare included "mobilising the parents of toddlers, i.e starting a creche with the parents as volunteers, finding space in a neighbourhood center, and try and facilitate subsidies by municipal means."[180]

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[176] Ibid., 222.
[177] IISG, Archief Vrouwenbond, ARCH01595, (inv.) nr. 596, Het Internationale Jaar van de Vrouw 1975, gespreksmateriaal Vrouwenbond NVV, 1.
[178] Ibid., 6.
[179] Ibid., 9.
[180] Ibid.

This shift from looking at individuals and "mentality" changes to addressing the broader systemic and economic elements of oppression was also readily reflected in the courses organised by the Vrouwensecretariaat. Discussion questions included insights from feminist theorists and addressed links between capitalism and women's emancipation, and asked members to draw in their own life experiences: "Evelyn Sullerot, in her book 'Women, Society and Change' argues that there is a link between the economic system and the legal position of women. What does she mean by this and can you name some examples?"[181] In the same document, there are also discussion questions aimed at exploring the idea for a "huisvrouwenloon" (wages for housewives). Moving from having only discussed issues of working women, particularly limited to issues on the work floor, in the 1960s, to encouraging discussions about contentious and new feminist ideas, was a rather remarkable shift for the Vrouwensecretariaat, particularly since this issue largely fell into the terrain of the Vrouwenbond.

Incorporating feminist discourse in union activities

It was also during this time that the Vrouwensecretariaat recognised the importance of including newer, contemporary feminist voices in its courses. The years of 1975 and 1976 were, after all, fruitful years for the development of feminist discourse in the Netherlands, and Dutch Marxist-feminists were increasingly studying contemporary issues through a historical and anti-capitalist lens.[182] One such prominent activist and feminist thinker was Joyce Outshoorn, who had written about the history of feminism and unionism in the Netherlands, conducted feminist critiques of Marx and Engels, and together with Anja Meulenbelt and Selma Leydesdorff had written about how the female "private life" was inherently political.[183] The Vrouwensecretariaat itself had recognised the fact that it did not have the expertise nor connections in this area, and contacted Outshoorn by letter asking for help in the development of more robust and critical courses:

"As a result of the discussions at the first meeting, we thought it desirable to incorporate some more economic education into this course. This would give the participants more background information on the position of housewives in capitalism and the position of women in wage labour. Also because we have found that almost none of the course participants are

[181] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 2, Kursus "De Vrouw in Werk en Vakbeweging", 30 January 1976.
[182] Anja Meulenbelt, *Feminisme en socialisme: een inleiding* (Amsterdam: Van Gennep 1976); Joyce Outshoorn, Anja Meulenbelt and Selma Leydesdorff eds., *Te elfder Ure, feminisme 1* (Nijmegen: Socialistische Uitgeverij 1975).
[183] Ibid.

educated on these economic issues, and we feel that this education is necessary for each of them to better understand their position in society.

Therefore we would like to ask you to put us in touch with the someone who is willing and able to act as a guest lecturer for this part. After all, we ourselves do not have sufficient contacts in this field, and the purpose of our request is actually also to broaden the contacts between the feminist-socialist movement and the union movement. However, if you yourself would like to lecture in our course, you are of course welcome."[184]

While originally their courses were focused almost exclusively on educating women on the mission of the union and the position of the female wage labourer, after 1975, their courses had evolved to address the broader, and substantially more socialist, task of women's social emancipation from capitalism. Issues of social reproduction where thus no longer limited to the discussions of individual participants in the course (as shown earlier in the reflections from the 1960s), but, together with the input of contemporary activists, became necessary and developed agenda points for the courses.

After having conducted various projects in the previous years to address and discover the problems faced by women in the union movement, the Vrouwensecretariaat also became much more focused on taking particular stances, especially in the trainings provided to female members. In notes preparing for the courses "women in the labour and union movement", the Vrouwensecretariaat discussed suggestions and changes to be included in the courses in the year 1977.[185] They argued for the encouragement of part time work, for both men and women, which would also depend on the availability of more day care and flexible school times. Compared to the earlier courses they provided in the 1960s and early 1970s, they also explicitly acknowledge the "double burden" and how this impacts different groups of women, addressing the fact that for single parents, it is essential to develop a plan with employers for when issues of childcare come up (for example if the child is sick and the parent has to stay at home).[186] For married women, they argued, this task is largely an "organisational" one that has to be discussed and planned with their partner: "with a good division of tasks, this should not be a problem", with a note that "mentality change" is important for this.[187] It was thus becoming increasingly essential to

[184] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 3, Letter to Joyce Ousthoorn from the Henri Polakstichting Epe, 25 January 1977.
[185] IISG, Archief Vrouwensekretariaat, ARCH02317, (inv) n. 2, Themacursus Vrouwenarbeid in Nederland: De vrouw in werk en vakbeweging, 1977.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.

combine more structural solutions (availability and funding of daycare) with "mentality changes" (more equitable division of household and emotional labour).

Not only were issues of social reproduction addressed more from the side of the union, it also became much more of a theoretical endeavour for members of the Vrouwensecretariaat. Part of the reading requirements for the course included Anja Meulenbelt's *Feminisme en Socialisme,* which was used to make comparisons and links to the experiences of women in the course.[188] In addition to this, they had invited Joyce Outshoorn to discuss issues faced by working women, and in particular, contextualise these issues by placing them in the broader history of women's work.[189] They were thus also adopting tactics that were used by feminist thinkers, namely utilising the history of capitalism and the union movement to show not only how gender roles had historically developed to produce gendered divisions of labour, but that women had consequently been organising for decades to combat these forms of discrimination. Previously, the courses had intended to provide women with knowledge about the union, the work floor, and their position amongst them, but through the influence of activists and more developed feminist theory, the courses became places where women were schooled on complex and critical Marxist-feminist theory.

The Vrouwensecretariaat had also developed their own publications that were used by participants of the introductory course, which detailed their increasingly Marxist-feminist attitudes towards social reproduction and analyses not only the position of the female wage labourer and her double burden, but also the housewife.[190] They placed the struggle of women, and the working class, amongst the broader system of capitalism: "A more comprehensive analysis of the position of housewives and the role of the family was made under the influence of the second feminist wave. It was discovered that in the family lies the subordination of men and women to capital. For the family has a number of functions: reproduction of labour power, reproduction of labour, it is a consumption unit [...]."[191] Referencing Marx and Engels, as well as contemporary feminists like Meulenbelt, they go into detail about the history of the nuclear

[188] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 2, letter from Scholings- en vormingsinstituut NVV to members, subject line: Vervolgkursus "de vrouw in de werk en vakbeweging van 29 t/m 31 augustus 1977", Epe, 19 August 1977.
[189] Ibid.
[190] ARCH02317, (inv) n. 3, Cursus "Vrouwen in werk en vakbeweging" Een introductie cursus voor vrouwelijke vakbondsleden, 1 March 1978.
[191] Ibid., 19.

family and its effect on women, also emphasising the historic divide between productive and unproductive work, as well as the decrease in distinction between work and private life for women: "The separation between the private and productive spheres eventually devalued family tasks and housework, because there was no added value to be gained from them. These tasks became increasingly devoid of content, leading to a vague feeling of dissatisfaction among housewives. The new task of housewives becomes to nurture the realm of emotions and personal relationships. As a result, their work and private lives are not separated."[192]

The reading material also emphasised the broader social and cultural impact of the bereavement of housewives, arguing that "the fact that they are interested in clothes and chatting about the children is a necessity for them to make a place for themselves in this society. Given the above, it is understandable that housewives are prey to many inner conflicts, often see no way out, therefore repress feelings of displeasure."[193] Rather than solely focusing on the issues of working women, and perhaps as a result of their close work with the Vrouwenbond in the past years, the content of the courses commissioned by the Vrouwensecretariaat more readily reflected the changing global landscape of feminist discourse. Not only this, but they were also asking much more from their new members with theory-heavy discussions and reading material compared to their earlier introductory courses.

The Vrouwenbond utilises Marxist-feminist theory

Similarly, the Vrouwenbond was more consciously addressing their history and role as an organisation, while reflecting on the broader change in understanding of the role of the housewife. During a general meeting in September 1978, the president of the Bond acknowledged this:

"Folks, we made it together! Started by a small group of women who, to the disappointment of others, decided to discover their own 'me', have granted you access. We have grown into a union of many, sometimes differently minded, women, and we have managed to do so while rejuvenating the Vrouwenbond, lowering the average age, and maintaining respect for and trust among all generations (and there are at least three of them), who see 'Vrouwenbond NVV' and 'feeling at home' as synonymous. In 1969 we decided that the Vrouwenbond was more than an organisation of wives of union members. Since then, we've opened our doors for every woman, who aligns with the goals of the union and together with the NVV, wants to work

[192] Ibid., 22.
[193] Ibid., 23.

on her social consciousness, politicisation, and the humanising of our broader society. Humanising also, by feminising things. By taking so-called 'feminine attributes' and making them part of society.[194]

Not only did the Vrouwenbond want to address their role in facilitating the consciousness of housewives, but also their part in claiming and repurposing gender roles for the improvement of society. The Vrouwenbond was consciously reclaiming femininity as part of their activism, which was a move that likely appealed to its members who were finding ways to understand their more "traditional" roles as wives within a broader activist movement that was largely focused on women engaged in wage labour. By not rejecting femininity, the Vrouwenbond attempted to move away from the assumption that femininity was inherently harmful to the feminist movement.

It was also during this time that the NVV was undergoing discussions to merge with the NKV (Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond) to form the FNV. These developments brought into question the role of the Vrouwenbond more broadly, as the new FNV statutes declared that all ancillary organisations of the FNV were to be "werknemersorganisaties" (employee organisations) which would officially exclude the Vrouwenbond.[195] They had the disadvantage of having no voting rights within the central administration of the NVV. They thus also had to justify their value to the union, a task made easier by the incorporation of Marxist-feminist theory, which argued that it was not only the lives of waged union men which were subject to political whim and capitalist development, but rather, this was consequence of a much larger issue of increased liberalisation and austerity which affected the entire working class, and women's emancipation, in particular. The Vrouwenbond further did no shy away from employing such language when addressing the plight of the housewife, and defending her organisation within the union:

"So the NVV Vrouwenbond is not the knitting circle it was sometimes insulted as, but a Union where women knew what their needs were and let them be seen; although sometimes the method by which we defended these needs were sometimes lacking. Women in the Union know only too well that the work they do at home has everything to do with society [...] Now the government wants to make social welfare cheaper by using volunteers on a large scale, and these are, of course, housewives again. After all, cuts are again being made where the domestic work

[194] IISG, Archief FNV, ARCH00419, (inv) nr. 4614, Stukken betreffende de Scholingscommissie van de Vrouwenbond, Verslag Algemene Vergadering Vrouwenbond NVV, 28 september 1978.
[195] Ibid., 3.

of women is a substitute. The woman is made of elastic, we'll watch out for that! First we had to work outside the home if necessary (when it was necessary for the economy), now we have to stop and return to the family and volunteer for free and for nothing from tomorrow: motherly love is free after all."[196]

The Vrouwenbond was thus appealing to the organisational aspect of the union, they represented a large number of women (the majority of which housewives), whose interests depended on protection and representation of the broader union. The Vrouwenbond had come to represent much more than a "gezelligheidsorganisatie" (a cosy organisation), they now provided women with the practical option of organising and escaping the domestic sphere, and the feminist and class consciousness to theorise their role within the union itself.

The impact of, and interest in, the Vrouwenbond also permeated other groups. Though the Vrouwensecretariaat and Vrouwenbond both had to prove their malleability to new activism and feminist discourse, the inverse appeared to also be true. In October 1979, a group of eleven andragogy students of the University of Amsterdam, who were part of a theme group at their study and had chosen the Vrouwenbond as their topic, sent a letter to the Vrouwenbond detailing their wish to work together with them on their training commission, in particular to help design something for the national training project: "The goal with which we set to work is to support the Vrouwenbond's demand for the right to vote in the NVV/FNV, partly by contributing towards an ironclad argument for this based on research into the domestic-wage labour relationship […] we would therefore like to help you plan and carry out a national project about 'the place of the Vrouwenbond in the union movement.'"[197] Though it is unclear exactly what background that these individual students had within the broader union movement, this letter makes clear that the Vrouwenbond had a visible reach amongst not only the younger generation, but also women pursuing higher education. These women in particular utilised their skills and knowledge from their study to attempt to strengthen the position of the Vrouwenbond in the NVV/FNV, in particular aiming to use theory to demand voting rights of the Vrouwenbond in the central administration. The Vrouwenbond made use of this opportunity to work together with the

[196] Ibid., 22.

[197] ARCH00419, (inv) nr. 4615, Letter from Annejikke Ebbinge to the Vrouwenbond, subject line: verg. Scholingscommissie 7-11-1979, 25 October 1979.

students, particularly because they were also in need of a more robust representation within the broader union, especially during the period of fusion with the NKV.

The increasingly critical formulations of the role of the housewife under capitalism from within the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat, as well as within the broader feminist movement, began to lead towards a stronger sympathy for the wages for housewives movement within the union. Discussions within the training commission of the Vrouwenbond were becoming increasingly geared towards theorising the role of the housewife.[198] One report of different regional meetings shows what different women in the Vrouwenbond thought about domestic work. Members were asked about their thoughts on the issues surrounding social reproduction and the life of a housewife. They were asked to fill in a questionnaire and reflect on the answers they had given. Though the answers given were mostly brief, they give us a valuable insight into the self-perception of women participants. When asked why companies rely on the work of housewives being done well, women responded that tasks such as cooking food and making the house presentable all contributed to the well-being and productivity of their husbands, but also added that companies needed them as consumers of products.[199]

Women of the Vrouwenbond were thus becoming increasingly aware of their role not only in taking care of the working population, but also about their role as consumers, which was one of the major ways that the Vrouwenbond appealed to housewives in the 1960s. Reflecting on their role as active consumers impacting the economy may have thus also afforded a sense of agency to housewives, as this was one of the ways in which housewives were in command; they managed and spent the household budget, and this was not a new fact. The Vrouwenbond had long before appealed to housewives' individual sense of autonomy by addressing them as important financial decision makers in the Dutch economy.[200] It was thus an important and consistent way that the Vrouwenbond appealed to its members and justified their necessity as an educational and supporting organisation. This sentiment was certainly echoed by the members themselves, shown by statements given by women on what aspects of domestic work required skill and education. Some women argued that one of the biggest responsibilities of being a

[198] ARCH00419, (inv) nr. 4615, Agenda punten vergadering scholing commissie 6 December 1979, written by Saskia van Hoek, 17 November 1979.
[199] Ibid., 3.
[200] Binding, June 1966, year 15, no.6, 1.

housewife was dealing with household finances, essentially they had to be bookkeepers, they had to know how to be frugal and spend wisely.[201] Interestingly, most women also argued that they felt that their husband's salaries belonged to their family, particularly because they felt that they worked just as hard as their husbands. Some women, however, felt that they should be entitled to some "pocket money" that they could use for themselves.[202]

Some of the most notable disadvantages viewed by members included the fact that domestic work was boundless: "there is never and end to it, you cant get sick, you don't get vacation, you don't have a pension," and that it was a "thankless job" that did not get taken seriously, and further isolated women.[203] However, a small minority said they saw no disadvantages to being a housewife. They expressed that women "knew the responsibilities when they got married and therefore cannot complain about it. It's a consequence they must accept."[204] Some aspects of domestic work remained a contentious topic within the Vrouwenbond, as internal divides continued to take place on the extent to which women could complain and take action in regarding their own exploitation. However, the vast majority of members agreed that their work was undervalued and believed that this resulted in them occupying a significantly more precarious position than women who had their own income. When asked what solutions they saw as providing the most potential for strengthening the position of housewives, they said that access to part time work, education, paid sick leave (for housewives), pension rights (particularly for widows) as well as more theoretical trainings to "make women aware of their rights" were some of the best strategies.[205] It is clear then, that women of the Vrouwenbond were also not opposed to wage labour outside of the home and that they in fact viewed it as having emancipatory potential.

The discussions that were conducted by the training commission not only gave women of the Vrouwenbond the platform to reflect on the role of the housewife within society, but it also gave the Vrouwenbond a direction in which they could take their activism. The increased feminist consciousness of members meant that there was enough momentum within the union

[201] ARCH00419, (inv) nr. 4615, Agenda punten vergadering scholing commissie 6 December 1979, written by Saskia van Hoek, 17 November 1979, 1.
[202] Ibid., 3.
[203] Ibid., 1.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid., 7.

for a more developed housewife agenda, and the Vrouwenbond, together with students from the UVA, developed a research report that would reflect the position of women within the Vrouwenbond. In a final report reflecting the viewpoints of over two-thousand women form the 146 regional sections of the Vrouwenbond, when asked about what the best solutions for the emancipation of women was, 96 of the departments stated that both men and women should have a paid part time job, and 33 argued that there should be a wage for housewives, both of which where by far the most popular answer out of all other choices.[206] The answers reflect, rather aptly, the two major strands that had emerged more prominently from the second wave of feminism.

Towards the late 1970s and early 1980s, international movements like Wages for Housewives afforded women within the NVV the theory necessary to help explore the position of women under capitalism. Though tension had manifested itself between members of the Vrouwensecretariaat and Vrouwenbond, as well between members of the two groups, towards the late 1970s there was notable attention allocated from both sides in exploring their different experiences of discrimination. An important development was the acknowledgement of a range of solutions for women occupying different statuses, whether they were married and worked, housewives, single mothers or single working women. There was increased sensitivity and attention for these differences, particularly in the discussions led by the trainings.

Initiatives led by the Vrouwensecretariaat had therefore evolved to incorporate Marxist-feminist theories, which linked women's subjugation to capitalism. They campaigned for systemic reforms in addition to the mentality changes they had previously advocated for together with the Vrouwenbond. Collaborations with feminist scholars like Joyce Outshoorn also show that there was an increased need for deeper engagement with activism and feminist theory. The Vrouwenbond's evolving publications and courses similarly reflected a shift towards Marxist-feminist perspectives, highlighting the exploitation inherent in the traditional family structure and advocating for broader societal change, which was further necessary to navigate the Vrouwenbond’s role within the NVV, particularly during discussions on merging with the NKV to form the FNV.

[206] IISG, Archief Vrouwenbond, ARCH01595, (inv.) nr 592, Overzicht Rapportage-formulieren over de Huisvrouw, Vrouwenbond NVV, January 1980.

Discussions within the Vrouwenbond increasingly focused on the concept of wages for housewives, reflecting a growing consensus among members on the need for more economic recognition of domestic labour. These efforts ultimately culminated in research and reports that reflected their advocacy for part-time work opportunities, day care, and other reforms aimed at enhancing women's socio-economic status. Overall, the late 1970s marked a period of significant feminist consciousness and organisational evolution within the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat, distinguished by a deepened commitment to Marxist-feminist theories and strategic advocacy for women's rights within both domestic and union issues.

Concluding remarks: challenging divides and building solidarity

The second wave of feminism was a turning point for the consciousness of housewives and women who engaged in waged labour and greatly impacted the relations between them, affording women within the NVV the momentum necessary to address the oppression of women within the structures of the union. While women who engaged in wage labour increasingly brought up issues about social reproduction and the double burden, women who worked at home and organised as housewives in the Vrouwenbond increasingly fought for the recognition of household labour. Through the development of trainings, workshops and demonstrations we can see that the activities conducted by the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat became increasingly radical and attuned to issues of social reproduction. As early as 1963, women in wage labour had brought up issues of social reproduction and discrimination in the private sphere, but no structures within the NVV existed for women to discuss these issues and preconceptions limited interaction between women organised as wage labourers and the organised housewives of the Vrouwenbond. Activities organised by the Vrouwensecretariaat dealt largely with union activism and employer/employee relations and did not do much to address issues of social reproduction. Throughout the 1960s, women who participated in courses expressed that they felt that the union did not sufficiently demonstrate the ability to address these issues and develop solutions for working women and housewives.

Events like the “Diskriminatiebeurs” of 1971 highlighted the need for spaces in which women could discuss a diverse range of issues (such as social and cultural discrimination, access to paid employment, part time work, pensions, abortion rights, housing and day care access) and begin to develop political demands. It also became clear that the issues faced by housewives needed to be addressed, as they represented an increasingly vocal group within the women’s movement, and the Vrouwenbond was forced to radically change their approach to organisation during the early 1970s in response to this. They had to make it clear that they represented housewives and that they also understood the broader socio-cultural and economic status of housewives in a capitalist society. From organising largely ancillary activities that supported the broader cause of the union, the Vrouwenbond had made a radical shift in theorising its own role and autonomy within the union. They reflected the growing feminist consciousness of their members and organised, together with the Vrouwenbond, activities and events that shed light on the harmful effects of gender roles, discriminatory divisions of labour and the double burden of

women engaged in wage labour. Simultaneously, conflicts and disagreements occurred amongst members on the best way to approach issues of social reproduction. The topic of how to best encourage the emancipation of women was a contentious one, with some in favour of wages for housewives and others more in favour of paid employment outside of the home for all women. Overtime, the Vrouwensecretariaat adapted their trainings and programme to reflect the rapidly changing – and diverse – attitudes of women. With the aid of women in the activist movement and students from outside the union, the Vrouwenbond and Vrouwensecretariaat increasingly utilised Marxist-feminist theory to help underscore their demands and educate members on their economic position in an increasingly neoliberal system.

Ultimately, though starting out as a more traditional hierarchic structure, the NVV provided working women and housewives alike with a platform to discuss and facilitate activism, and this research has shown that women from lower levels in the union significantly shaped the direction of discourse, by bringing up issues of social reproduction during training courses, expressing solidarity with other women (particularly with women working at home), sharing their own experiences of discrimination and letting their opinions be heard.

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