Netherlands
New government, same old policies

Despite their supposed differences the parties that make up the Dutch government, the Labour Party (PvdA) and the liberal right-wing VVD, rapidly reached an agreement after the election. They know each other well. They were the main parties in the coalitions of the nineties and just like then their party programme is based in the rhetoric: neoliberal euphoria of the nineties has been replaced by threats of worsening economic conditions if austerity measures are not implemented.

Rent subsidies for people with low incomes are abolished, while the housing cooperatives that manage public housing increase rents. Such policies create a vicious circle of economic decline as consumer demand decreases, which then increases the supposed need for even further austerity and further hardship. The latest round of EU-imposed austerity has had an impact on the Dutch economy comparable to that on southern European countries (Ireland, Portugal, Greece) but there is negative growth. Austerity is driving the economy into the ground by taking money out of circulation and lowering demand. Real wages have stagnated since 2001, which coupled with inflation, means a further decrease of purchasing power and demand. Policies are not only wrong but also the result of well-meaning mistakes. International exports are growing and the Netherlands has a trade surplus of 7 per cent of GDP.

The majority of Dutch exports are to other European countries so a Dutch trade surplus implies a trade deficit for other European countries. This explains Dutch support for harsh austerity inside the EU to force countries to pay their external debts. The big winners of these policies are the large multinational companies that dominate foreign trade. The portion of the national income going to labor will shrink by 2.1 per cent vis à vis the income going to capital. In absolute figures, this means an increase in profits of over 12 billion euros – three-quarters of the total value of cuts. As a result, many people talk about ‘preparing for the crisis’ and ‘sustaining Dutch competitiveness’.

Editorial
PIGs and cattle

Bad economies don’t happen due to laziness, excessive consumption and corrupt public servants. The economic crisis is due to a worldwide situation in which there are no government forces capable of building a popular society. This will be a crucial test for social democrats. The Dutch society will be increasingly characterized by a process of privatization. Simultaneously, in other countries, such as the left-wing Socialist Party (PS) of Greece, the xenophobic right-wing Golden Dawn, which captured 52% of the vote. The results of the Dutch national elections there have not calmed the debate on the left. The Liberal (VVD) and the Labour party (PvdA), the largest party. A shift towards positions on which it was elected and embraced the electoral programme on which the PvdA takes a more lenient position. This right-wing social-economic proposals contrast starkly with the socialist profile the PvdA cultivated during the election-campaign but it is incorrect to say Labour capitulated to the Right. Both parties share the same fundamental beliefs. The differences are mainly in policies of immigration, culture and repression on which the PvdA takes a more lenient position. Recent predictions that Labour was returning to its social-democratic roots proved wrong. The party pays lip service to opposing neoliberalism but their alternative is an appeal to citizens to ‘take responsibility for themselves and each other’. This soft communitarianism fits for themselves and each other. This soft communitarianism fits the electoral needs of the PvdA leader Diederik Samson.

Refugees in Amsterdam
The absurdity of fortress Europe

The absurdity of fortress Europe

Alex Merlo

During the recent parliamentary campaign, the PvdA’s (Labour Party, now in power in coalition with the VVD) presented itself as a defender of migrants rights against the slogan ‘everyone counts’. But on this issue as on others they seem willing to compromise their principles for the sake of ‘governability’ before their principles. The current government plans to follow the path of the previous one: towards the classification of undocumented migrants as criminals. The absurdity and arbitrariness of these repressive laws is obvious. The PvdA and the 100 refugees who now have occupied the St. Joseph Church in Bos en Lommer (Amsterdam West) since 2 December are suffering the results. The Dutch justice system has denied them refugee status, formally asking them to leave the country while admitting that they cannot be sent back to Africa. They are thus left in legal limbo, denied all social and civil rights. And yet, this has not demoralised this group, who from the start have shown an impressive determination in collectively claiming their human and civil rights. Inspired by the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement, they affirm that collective action is the only way forward, refusing to be divided and struggling for visibility within Dutch society. With this aim, together with supporters, they have created a website (www.devluchterk.nl) in which they explain their case and propose ways for people to provide them with practical help. Supporting migrants is key to fighting increasing racism and hatred of the ‘other’ in the Netherlands. Through their actions, the refugees have made protest against the inhuman immigration policies visible again. To achieve real results, they need collective solidarity. See you on the 23 March (see agenda).

What is borderless?
Borderless is a radical bimonthly paper written in English for non-Dutch speakers interested in Dutch progressive politics. It provides news and commentary from an anti-capitalist perspective on Dutch politics and on events and social struggles in the Netherlands and around the world.

Borderless is written and published by a collection of Dutch and non-Dutch activists living in Amsterdam. We consider ourselves socialists, feminists and ecologists and we seek anti-capitalist solutions to the many economic and ecological crises facing working people worldwide. We oppose capitalism, a political-economic system that is based on exploitation and whose increasingly frequent crises are devastating communities around the globe. We oppose all attacks on the civil and human rights of citizens, immigrants, workers, and minorities both inside and outside the Netherlands. We stand in solidarity with all people engaged in the struggle against exploitation and oppression.

Borderless is a supplement to our sister magazine, Grenzeloos, published by SAP, the Dutch section of the Fourth International.

Join us!

If you are interested in what we do, feel free to contact us at borderless@grenzeloos.org and to like our Facebook page (borderless.nl). We appreciate comments on our articles, proposals or contributions for our next issue and interesting events to add to our agenda.

We meet regularly to discuss current political issues, our involvement in social movements and how to put our ideas into practice. If you are interested you are welcome!
### Netherlands

**Labour Unrest at the Vrije Universiteit**

- **Michael Marchman**

Last year the Executive Board of Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam announced devastating cuts (33 million euros) to the university’s budget, resulting in the loss of 400+ jobs, the outsourcing of university services, and the merging of faculties, likely to lead to fewer courses, larger classes, and increased work loads for employees. The decisions by VU’s Executive Board reflect the larger trend of commercialization and neoliberalisation in higher education, driven by a top-down management model. But that doesn’t mean that the VU is lying down, angry VU workers have organized and are fighting back. They formed Verenigde VU'er’s (“Concerned VU'er”) to “put a halt to the implementation of a Strategic Plan that has recently been rejected by the Works Council, and a social plan that has been rejected by the Trade Unions” (On 16th February, they have organized a day of protest actions to draw attention to the issue and press their case. They began with an “Alternative Open Day”, organized with ABvkaabo, the trade union representing university employees, and in May issued a manifesto entitled “Decolonize the VU”.

The “Netherlands” states that “it seems that the VU is colonized. The scientific culture is infiltrated by the management culture. The university is headed by directors who seem to have no heart for the university sector, education and research. They are remaking the university as an economic entity, turning it into a business […]” This course aims to reform the university in a way that clearly runs counter to a growing tradition of good employment and the pursuit of excellent quality in education and research. Staff and students have insufficient control over the proposed changes to their work and study environment”.

**Netherlands National Demonstration in Solidarity with Refugees**

De Vluchtkerk, St. Josephkerk, Erik de Roodestraat 16, De Vluchtkerk (ISSO) in collaboration with CREA Debate. Speakers: Klaas Jelle (lawyer socio-economic rights), a refugee from the ‘Flight Church’ and St Joseph’s Church in Amsterdam, Free entrance.

### Quebec

**Student struggle: why did they win?**

– **Anne G.**

“I’ve got the impression that we were fighting in an individualist way and that Quebec was passive. And now, I feel we have woken up” said a Quebecois student in May 2011, putting into his own words the surprise everyone felt in seeing the wave of protests that emerged and managed to stop a massive increase in university fees that Quebecois students are paying.

These attacks, however, were not a first. In 1996 and 2000, students had already announced increases in university tuition, but were forced to back down after thousands of students took to the streets. In 2011, the liberal government decided to increase university fees by 75% to $7,800 Canadian dollars would have been the tuition they would have paid while students would have had to pay up to $12,000 per year by 2016-2017.

**Indefinite strike and massive demonstration**

In February 2012, Canadian student associations voted in favor of the indefinite general strike and 300,000 participated in the first day of strike on 13 February. With numerous students engaged in efforts to negotiate resulting in a massive demonstration in Montreal on 22 February. During the following weeks of strike, the government agreed to sit down with the student associations but after two days of discussion the government broke off the negotiations, saying that CLASSE (Coalition large de l’Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante, a 100,000-member student association) had an ambiguous attitude towards the violent clashes that had taken place between students and police during the demonstrations in Montreal. By this point, the resistance of the students had won broad support among the public and collective of teachers was formed at the very beginning of the movement and showed its importance. (In student picket lines, while many unions and associations supported the students movement, and people across Quebec pinned red squares on their shirts as a sign of solidarity.

**Harsh repression and student determination**

The turning point in the struggle was the passage of the so-called “Law 78” on 17 May. This law constituted a clear attack on student associations and established restrictions in the right to demonstrate. The law commanded teachers to hold their classes and forbade them from striking, and forbade blockading classrooms or even gathering within a 50-meter perimeter around the university. On 22 May, the 100+ day of strike, over 100,000 people participated in demonstrations in Montreal. In the following days, “cassebois marches” (a tactic imported from the Chilcan students’ movements) multiplied linking student protestors with neighborhood assemblies born from Occupy, emerged and negotiations with the government started again. In August, under the pressure of street protests, the liberal government fell when Jean Chrétien announced the dissolution of Parliament and announced elections.

The electoral victory of the social-democratic Parti Québécois in 2008, was a vindication of the student students’ total victory as the fees increase and the main dispositions of Law 78 were reversed.

In the course of the strike, a new generation of students showed extraordinary maturity and determination in standing up against actions that have become almost normal in neoliberal reforms all over the world. As the Chilcan movement was an inspiration for them, the Quebecois students may have, in turn, inspired Hungarians students who, after a massive demonstration on 19 December, forced the right-wing government to reverse neoliberal reforms on education which included the suppression of the grant system.

During the struggle in Quebec, CLASSE refused the strategy of lobbying and trying to influence policy through the formal bureaucratic institutions. Right from the beginning, they were not only fighting the line of the Liberal government but also student associations which, like CLASSE, reject the line of the government and are fighting independently to fight for their right to high quality education. The struggle was necessary and all students should all support these struggles in any way we can.

**CLASSE refuses the strategy of lobbying and trying to influence policy through the formal bureaucratic institutions.**

### Den Haag

**17 year old unarmed shot by police**

– **E. Q.**

In November 2012, 17-year-old Rishi Chakrasing was shot dead by police on a platform at Hollands Spoor railway station in The Hague. Police received reports that an armed man had been seen in the station and had threatened another man with a gun. According to eyewitnesses, three police officers, one in plain clothes, rushed into the station with their weapons drawn. Police gave a sob story for his midrift when ordered to put his hands in the air, prompting an officer to open fire. He was hit in the neck and died shortly afterwards.

Den Haag’s shooting police stated the boy was armed and lived in a housing complex under the supervision of social workers and said he had been out at that time in the morning.

However, in December the public prosecutor’s office (OM) in The Hague confirmed that both statements were false: the teenager was not carrying a weapon and a restraining order against him had been lifted before he was killed.

On New Year’s Day, Rishi’s family released a photo showing the Rishi they want to remember. The family says that they were not only devastated by the killing, but also by the lies and slander of the police.

On Saturday 2 February, friends of Rishi commemorated his death by celebrating his 18th birthday on the platform where he was shot.