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## Personal Circulation in the Dutch Second Chamber 1888-1993: Towards Institutionalization and Professionalization and then?

*Wilhelmina P. Seeker\**

Abstract: This article describes developments regarding institutionalization of the Dutch Second Chamber and professionalization of its members during a century, using two categories of data: on pre-parliamentarian political experience of the members on the one hand, on turnover, tenure and age at the other hand. Not all of the here investigated aspects lead to the same conclusion concerning the process of institutionalization. Institutionalization seems to be confirmed by the fact that the renewal rate points, in the postwar decades at least, more or less to some »fossilization«. Tenure of parliamentary mandate, however, in the whole rather tends to decrease over time, at least until the seventies. In these last decades the renewal rate no longer was as strongly connected to the mean age as before. Pre-parliamentary political experience has been an important recruiting factor during the entire period. While local political experience slightly decreases, party-experience among new members of parliament even increased since the thirties. MP's with previous political experience have been re-elected more frequently. Recent complaints about »petrification« of parliament are less firmly grounded than supposed.

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## Introduction

With three electoral campaigns ahead in 1994, for municipal councils, the Second Chamber and the European Parliament, Dutch political parties have been fully involved with the composition of the lists of candidates in the second part of 1993. As always nervous rumours about the chances of old and new candidates went round. Especially in parties with serious reasons to fear a more or less heavy defeat at the polls sitting representatives calculated their chances of survival. The more so since most parties openly declared to be in favor of a rather important renewal to break through the pretended petrification in parliament. To reach this goal a limitation of tenure of the parliamentary mandate to twelve years has been suggested in some of the bigger parties. Quite a few sitting members who hoped to continue their mandate unvoluntarily disappeared from the lists or risked to be not re-elected.

It is not easy to say if this line taken by the political parties was totally new. Since the 1980s some recruitment studies of Dutch political elites have been published, concentrated on the social background of members of the Second Chamber.<sup>1</sup> They filled the gap that especially in an international, comparative context had existed for a long time. However, political career itself (tenure, continuity and risks of political life for the individual member on the one hand, consequences of the same phenomena for the functioning of the institute at the other hand) got less attention. As regards the career of parliamentarians some aspects of (dis-)continuity and seniority were treated by Van den Berg (1983, 1989).

This article aims at elaborating some of the findings of Van den Berg and adding some new aspects of legislative circulation in the Netherlands for comparative analyses.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J.Th. J. van den Berg, 'Herkomst, ervaring en toekomstperspectief van kamerleden', in: M.P.C.M. van Schendelen a.o. (eds.), »Ledert van de Staten-Generaal...«, *Kamerleden over de werking van het parlement*, Den Haag 1981, pp. 21-72; idem, *De toegang tot het Binnenhof, de maatschappelijke herkomst van de Tweede-Kamerleden, 1849-1970*, Weesp 1983; idem, 'Het »prefab-kamerlid«. De gewijzigde recrutering van de Tweede Kamerleden sinds 1971-1972', in: J.Th.J. van den Berg a.o. (eds.), *Tussen Nieuwspoor en Binnenhof, De jaren 60 als breuklijn in de naoorlogse ontwikkelingen in politiek en journalistiek*, Den Haag 1989, pp. 191-210.

<sup>2</sup> Preceding Van den Berg's doctorate thesis on the recruitment of Dutch members of parliament (1983), an article based on his findings was published in English: Hans Daalder and Joop Th. J. van den Berg, 'Members of the Dutch Lower House: Pluralism and Democratization, 1848-1967', in: Moshe M. Czudnoswski (ed.), *Does Who Governs Matter? Elite Circulation in Contemporary Societies*, DeKalb, Illinois 1982, pp.214-242. This summarizing article dealt with several social background data (regional origin and domicile, social status and milieu, parental and personal occupation and educational background) but did not treat aspects of the parliamentary career like tenure, continuity or seniority.

The main theme will be the impact of personal circulation on developments toward political institutionalization and professionalization of parliament. Following (part of) the definition Nelson Polsby used to describe developments in the House of Representatives in the United States of America, institutionalization of the Second Chamber here is seen as the »establishment of boundaries«, which means more explicitly »the channeling of career opportunities« of its members.<sup>3</sup> In Polsby's words: »As an organization institutionalizes, it stabilizes its membership, entry is more difficult, and turnover is less frequent. [...] Thus the organization establishes and 'hardens' its outer boundaries.« Increasing seniority and decreasing turnover were the key indicators of political institutionalization. To measure developments in the Dutch Second Chamber here too renewal, age and seniority were used as main tools. Seniority has been interpreted in terms of the number of times members had been elected and of the average number of years they had served in parliament. One more indicator for a trend toward the professionalization and in the same time politicization of the parliamentary elite has been used: activities in politics at other levels, local, national or in parties.<sup>4</sup> As is the case in several European democracies political parties in the Netherlands strongly dominate the selection of legislative candidates. Party activists, who have held party offices at several, mainly regional levels, are strongly favored in this context in the first place. The same mechanism promotes the renomination of those selected and in the running as well.<sup>5</sup>

The phenomenon of institutionalization implies a professionalization of the parliamentary career of the individual incumbents as well. Because of the possible consequences of the process of institutionalization for both the Institute and the incumbents this article has a twofold starting point. On the one hand personal circulation and its consequences are seen from the legislative institute, here the Second Chamber, itself for each legislative period. The first section of this article will follow developments in turnover, tenure and seniority in parliament and in addition look for trends towards professionalization in terms of previous political qualifications of the incumbents on the other hand. This part is meant to give an overall view on developments in the Dutch Second Chamber over time. Then the attention shifts to the parliamentary career of individual members, once definitely being finished. Circulation in that case is looked at from a retrospective point of view. In this second section, some additional data regarding MPs at the final end of their term are also taken into account: besides age at the exit of parliament and tenure, continuity or

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<sup>3</sup> N. Polsby, 'The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives', *American Political Science Review*, 1968, 62 nr. 2, p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> Idem: Christopher Anderson, 'The Composition of the German Bundestag since 1949: Long-Term Trends and Institutional Effects', in: *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 18, 1993, no. 1, p. 8

<sup>5</sup> Gerhard Loewenberg and Samuel C. Patterson, *Comparing legislatures. An analytic study*, Boston/Toronto 1979, p. 115.

discontinuity of their parliamentary mandate and reasons for their retiring. These data concerning aspects of the individual political career do not refer to specific election years or periods. For analytical reasons more parliamentary sessions therefore have been put together in time-periods of some decades.<sup>6</sup>

### Legislative Circulation: the Institute

Essential to the way an institute functions is the way it is »manned«. The personal composition of the House under study might have its impact on its functioning as well. In Van den Berg's analysis of the recruitment of the MPs since 1849 it was made clear that conspicuous changes in the social background had partly resulted from constitutional reforms affecting suffrage and the electoral system in general. In this respect especially the election years 1888 and 1918 had left clear traces. Renewal in this sense in the first place meant that, following the extension of the suffrage, new types of candidates, acting on behalf of new or established parties, were elected. The rejuvenation of the personnel of the Second Chamber he found was mainly related to institutional renovation too, but partly also to generational renewal. Some of these findings are, in a somewhat different way, visualized in Figures 1a, b and c.<sup>7</sup> These present -for each parliamentary session- data pertaining to members of parliament of potential influence on the functioning of the parliamentary institute: turnover, i.e. the number of newcomers, age and seniority or number of times the incumbents had been (re-)elected.

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<sup>6</sup> The division of the 29 parliamentary sessions between 1888 and 1993 into four time-periods has been made according to criteria also used by Van den Berg in his mentioned study (1983). In 1888 and 1918 constitutional reforms brought extension of the suffrage and a radical change of the electoral system, 1946 was the first election after the 5-year warperiod without parliament and 1967 was the first election in what has been called a critical period. The election year 1888 has been chosen as a startingpoint because from then on the now fixed number of 100 MP's had to be elected in one election all together at one time. Until 1888 the number of seats was related to population density and had to be adapted every five years. More important was the fact that elections took place every two years in order to elect half of the members.

<sup>7</sup> Figures in this article are sometimes deviating from those in Van den Berg's book (1983) due to another criterium to mark the incumbents of each newly elected House. Members who resigned within short time for some reason, e.g. such as the appointment as a Cabinet minister, were excluded in his study, whereas this article deals with all members who were elected as the first incumbents of parliamentary seats immediately after the elections. Those who came as later incumbents of seats, fallen vacant between times, have not been taken into account.

Figure 1a Turnover  
(per election year)

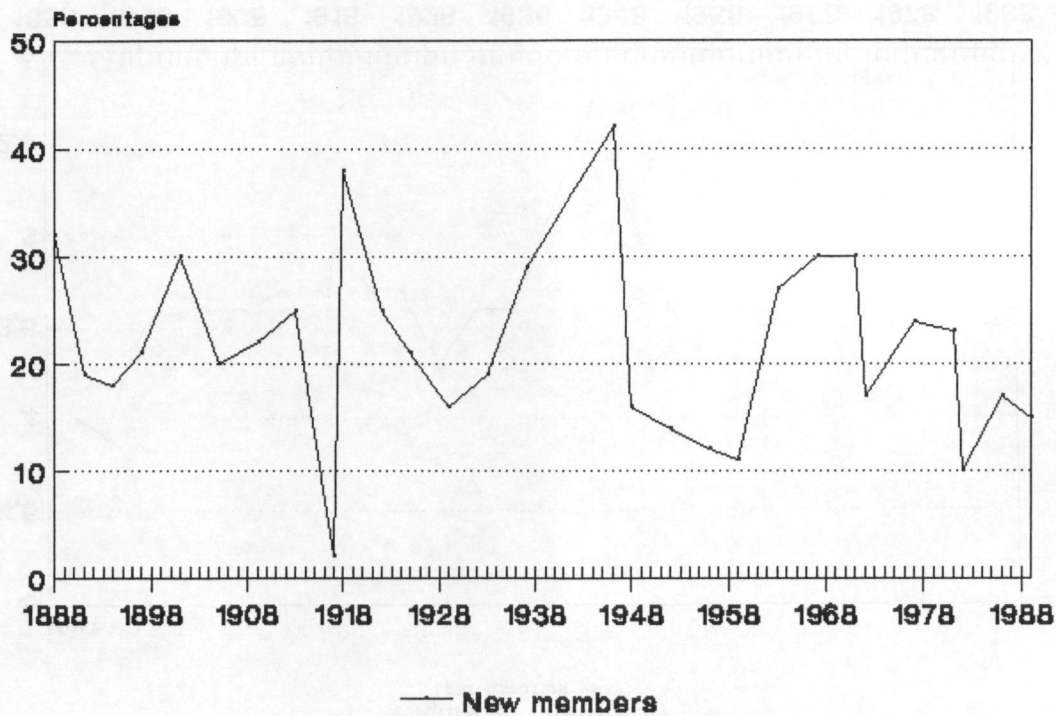


Figure 1b Seniority  
(per election year)

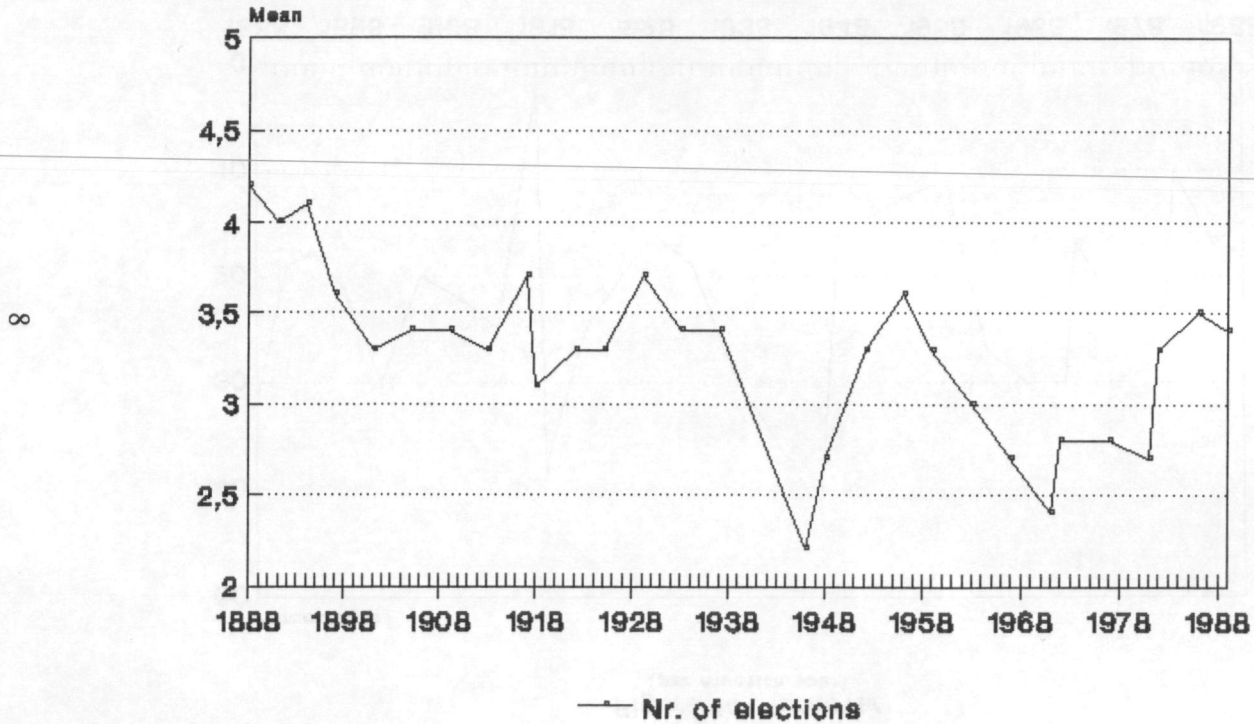
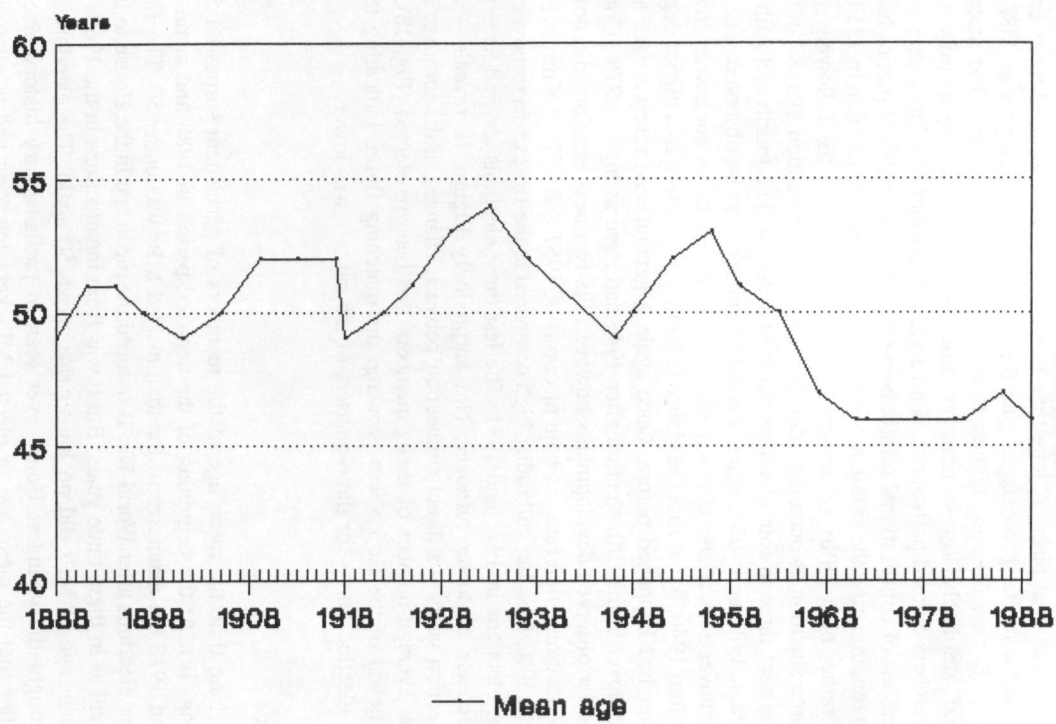


Figure 1c Mean Age  
(per election year)



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### *Renewal*

What may influence the way of functioning of parliament most is the degree of circulation of persons. Logically therefore first a view on turnover in the House over time is at place. A long time turnover regarded 20 to 30 members, which meant a similar percentage.<sup>8</sup> The first described election year of 1888 brought with 32 new MPs the highest turnover in the first decades. The most curious and absolutely lowest turnover took place in 1917, when only two new members entered parliament. With a view to another election within a year, for reasons of constitutional reform being near at hand, political parties had agreed in renominating the sitting members. The planned next election in 1918 brought a rather high influx of newcomers, 38%. We see in the following years the same situation as occurred after the high-turnover election in 1888: turnover at the next three to four elections decreased slowly. The fourth and fifth election years, 1933 and 1937, again a rise in turnover is to be observed. The average turnover rate at the afterwar elections appeared to be somewhat lower than before 1940, but at first the House in 1946 was renewed in a higher degree than ever had happened before. Once again a generational renewal was apparent. Turnover at the fifth election after 1946 had risen as high as 27%. Contrary to earlier observed developments however, the two next elections did not show a lower circulation rate. At both elections of 1967 and 1971 the turnover degree was 30%. Less but still rather high compared to the fifties was turnover again at the elections in 1977 and 1981. The last three elections showed as expected a decrease of lower turnover. Not surprisingly Figure 1a reveals - in most election years - a direct connection between changes in the turnover rate and the average number of times members had been re-elected (Fig. 1b). As the renewal of the House was growing, the matching figure indicating the mean re-election rate - for three-quarters of the cases - was lower.

### *Age*

A long time the mean age of the members of parliament surpassed 50 years (Fig. 1c). At the beginning of the depicted period in 1888 and again in 1901 and 1918 the mean age of the then elected MPs was under 50. The first post-war elections after World War II reduced the mean age in the House to the same level as in these three years. But it was from the elections in the 1960s that the mean age of MPs did no longer rise above 50 again. The elections in 1967 brought the youngest House ever seen in parliamentary history since 1888. After that the mean age of elected MPs kept lowering and never reached 50 again.

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<sup>8</sup> Up to 1956 the number of seats in the Second Chamber was 100, then this number had been raised to 150.

*Table 2: Twofold Political Expertise (percentages of members) per Election*

<i>Year</i>	<i>Nr. of times elected</i>			<i>Previous political functions</i>				<i>Nr. of functions</i>		
	<u>1</u>	<u>2-3</u>	<u>4+</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Cabinet</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>&gt; 1</u>
1888	32	7	61	63	46	4	5	24	36	40
1891	19	34	47	49	50	3	2	26	44	30
1894	18	41	41	50	48	4	6	23	48	29
1897	21	40	38	49	46	3	4	26	46	28
1901	30	33	37	47	49	3	4	27	43	30
1905	20	48	32	56	53	5	3	19	45	36
1909	22	43	35	50	49	4	2	27	42	31
1913	25	32	43	56	49	3	3	26	39	35
1917	2	52	46	53	44	2	2	30	39	31
1918	38	25	37	41	48	1	2	32	45	23
1922	25	33	42	41	48	2	2	29	50	21
1925	21	46	33	40	50	3	3	29	47	24
1929	16	39	45	36	48	1	4	32	47	21
1933	19	24	57	35	51	3	6	27	51	22
1937	29	28	43	38	50	5	8	22	56	22
1946	42	45	13	49	50	8	7	18	52	30
1948	16	65	19	45	48	9	12	19	51	30
1952	14	44	42	46	47	8	10	20	52	28
1956	12	33	55	53	44	6	6	23	46	31
1959	11	49	40	57	51	6	4	19	47	34
1963	27	44	29	65	49	5	4	14	51	35
1967	30	41	29	71	39	4	4	15	52	33
1971	30	55	15	73	43	6	2	13	50	37
1972	17	52	31	72	45	5	3	11	55	34
1977	24	45	31	69	50	11	3	10	51	39
1981	23	49	28	63	47	8	3	14	53	33
1982	10	51	39	65	49	8	2	12	54	34
1986	17	29	54	63	51	5	1	13	55	32
1989	15	39	46	65	46	3	-	17	52	31

something to the virtual amount of political expertise of the House as a whole. In that respect the potential effect of the renewal of 1888 suddenly seems to be rather modest. Against the one-third of members that had been elected for the first time, almost two-thirds of the new House had stood at least four elections. Such a high number of repeatedly elected members and consequently a high amount of political experience never was to be seen again at any election." Nearest to it come the elections in 1933, 1956 and recently in 1986, when over 50% of the re-elected members equally had stood a fourth or still higher-numbered election for the House. However, the highest renewal rate at the post-war election in 1946 (42%) was »real« and not - as in 1888 - »neutralized« by a relatively large number of long-term incumbents. In that year of all members only 13% belonged to this last category.

As regards the political experience of MPs in extra-parliamentary fields before their first election, it is clear that some political function has been fulfilled by an overwhelming majority. Never a new parliament has been composed of more than 32% of members without previous (non-parliamentary) political experience. In other words: at least 68% of (re-)elected candidates could look back to a political function whatsoever. This number only increased over time; after 1945 the percentage rose to 80 and even 90%. Most of them had been active in local offices or in party-functions. A minority had occupied political posts at the national level only, in the Cabinet or the First Chamber. In the years before World War II rarely former Ministers or Senators were candidates or were elected in the House of Representatives. Their presence in the House increased to 8 a 12 percent at the elections in the afterwar years 1948-1952. At the following elections ex-senators again seldom set foot in the House. As to members of the Cabinet: at three successive elections in 1977, 1981 and 1982 again 8 to 10 percent became (at least temporarily) a member of parliament

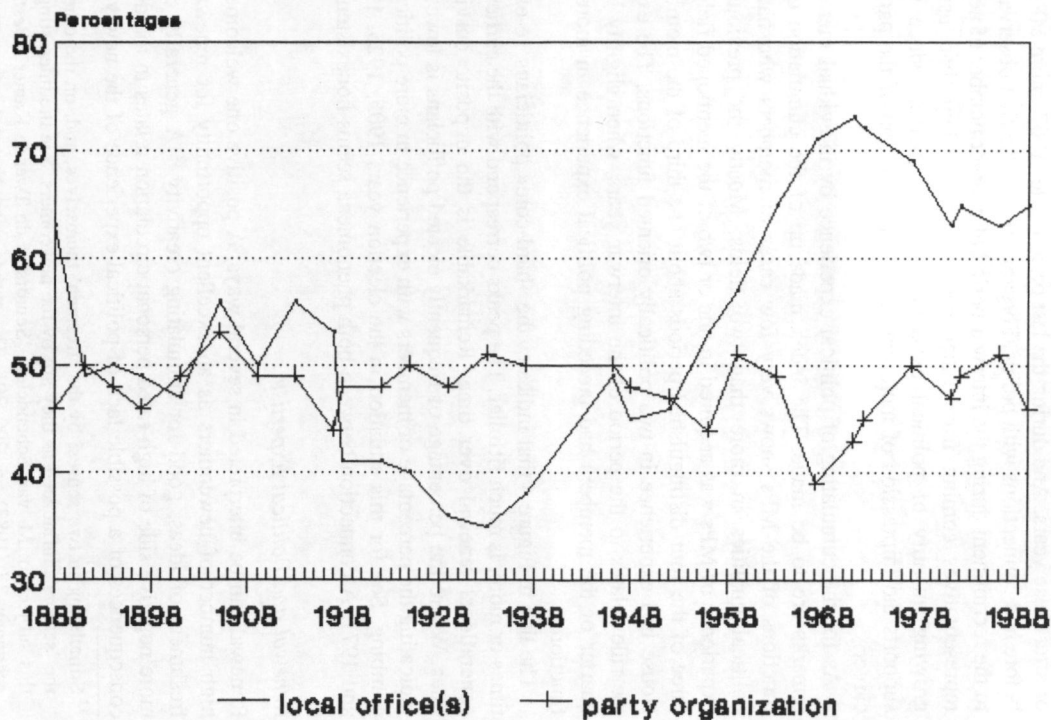
However, as mentioned earlier, the majority of the elected persons possessed some local political experience or had had functions in party organizations. The figures in Figure 3, visualizing the developments in percentages of politically-equipped newly elected MPs, don't show many differences over time in this respect

Local functions had been fulfilled by roughly half of the members in every parliamentary period. These local roots of national politicians often described as a typically Dutch, historically rooted pattern of political recruitment, seem to have never really disappeared. The figures about the newly elected members

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" The length of the parliamentary career of those who had been re-elected in 1888 exactly for the fourth time without interruption was only four years and in itself not very impressive. For several reasons preceding elections had taken place within a short time: 1887, 1886, 1884. But the mean number of times being elected regarding the 1888-members was higher than ever, 5.8. So a lot of MP's of that year had indeed a long-term experience in the House.

Figure 3 Pre-parliamentary expertise  
(per election year)



once related to party political institutes and organizations look somewhat different. In all four time-periods political experience in this field among the members was relatively high. During the years between the two World Wars, however, fewer MPs had been involved in party-political functions than before or after these years. And during the last period, after 1967, more MPs than ever before had connections with political organizations. The first observation points to the recruitment during the interwar period of a larger number of new types of representatives coming from other parts of the society than usually. The growing quantity of political expertise in the parliament since the sixties supports the impression of increasing professionalization of the parliamentary career.

As for the cumulating of political experience by individual members some remarks are to be made. The index made up of the cumulation of political functions of the MPs shows very few cases of members who had obtained political qualities in more than two fields. Mostly the previous political experience of MPs was acquired in one or two of the mentioned fields. During three of the four distinguished periods about one-third of the members of the House had experience in two politically oriented functions. The exception to the rule relates to the period of the interwar years, when slightly less than a quarter of the members had preceding political experience in more than one function.

The line in Figure 4 that indicates the »hard-core« politicians, re-elected four times or more, is much fuller. The peaks correspond with the earlier observed generational renewal over time. Remarkable is the opposite curving of the lines. Where the percentage of frequently elected politicians is lowest, the line indicating the percentage of members with experience in more political fields is climbing. See for this situation in the election years 1905, 1925, 1946, 1963 and 1971. A connection between both phenomena seems nonexistent.

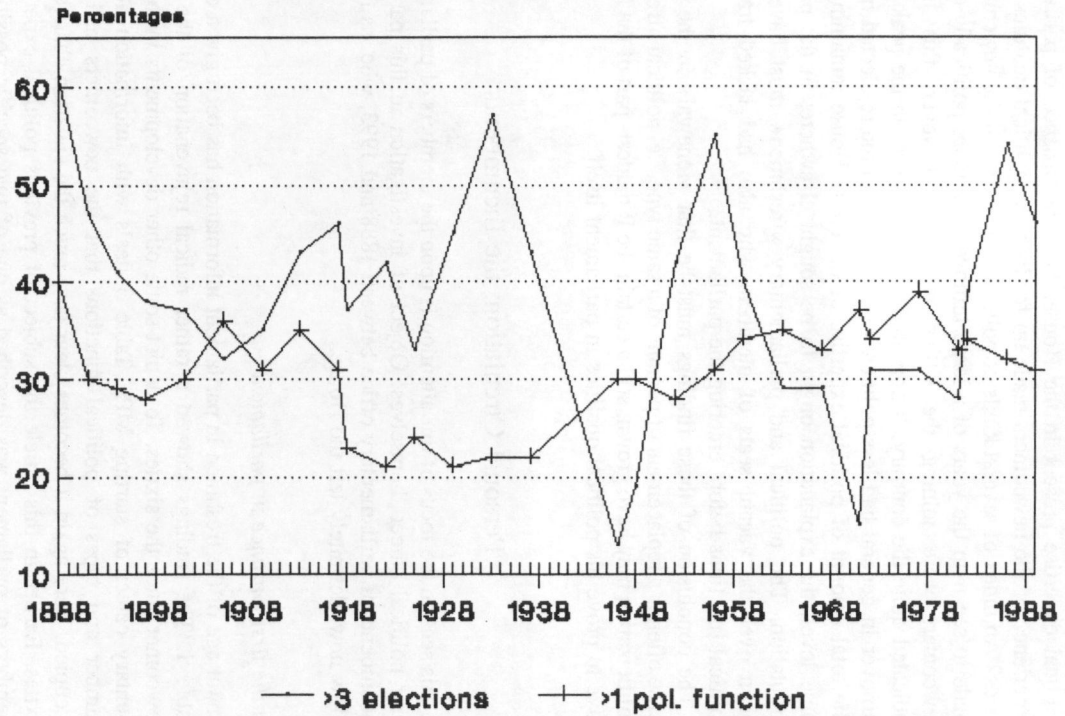
### *Renewal and Political Expertise*

Renewal can be interpreted in several ways. A positive one welcomes a rather high number of newcomers as an excellent opportunity for renewal and refreshment of ideas, good for stimulating creativity.<sup>12</sup> A generally considered more negative side of high-rated personal circulation relates to the detrimental consequences of a possible lack of political experience of the newly-elected.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> **Stimulating in two senses: by the 'fresmen' themselves, and, on the other hand, by the 'seniors', influenced as they are by the newcomers.** See the interesting article on this subject in: M. van Schendelen, 'Seniors in de Tweede Kamer', *Bestuurswetenschappen* 37 (1983) pp. 290-301. The author states that not only new and young members are a dynamic group in parliament; a high turnover affects also the opinions and the behaviour of the re-elected, the 'seniors'.

<sup>13</sup> **M.N. Pedersen (unpublished paper 1992), on negative effects of the critical 1971-election in Denmark when so many politically unexperienced newcomers were hampering a good functioning of the House.**

Figure 4 'Superpoliticians'  
(per election year)



There seems to be little or no difference in the quantity of political expertise in the House as a whole between the years of large turnover and other. The entrance of more or fewer newcomers, did not visibly affect the total amount of political expertise present in the House. Was the absence of parliamentary experience of the newcomers made up for by their political qualities in other fields? An index of several kinds of political experience of the newcomers was made to see if in the years of a large turnover rate more politically-equipped newcomers were joining the sitting members. However, this inventory indicated quite the contrary. It appeared that newcomers in the peak years of turnover in general had less political experience than the re-elected members. The total amount of political expertise of the entire House remaining on the same level, the explanation ought to be sought elsewhere: in the pattern of circulation. The political and parliamentary »freshmen« must have mainly taken over the vacant seats of members who also had lacked training in political functions before entering the parliament.

The conclusion of these findings must be that »renewal« in the personal sense often is a replacement of persons of a same type, i.e. political »freshmen«. Politicization may have grown, still a certain -be it modest- part of the MPs will have to prove his political qualities in parliament itself.

### Personal Circulation: the Incumbents

In this section the focus of our attention is upon the members of parliament and their political career themselves. Object of investigation in this part are all incumbents of parliamentary office between 1888 and 1993, who, as far as we know now, definitely left the House.

#### *At the first entrance in parliament*

About age of the freshmen in parliament information has been given earlier in Table 1. The findings showed a rather radical rejuvenation of the average newcomer since the sixties. To depict some other developments in the parliamentary career of starting MPs, Table 3 deals with information about the number and types of political functions that the newcomers had already occupied. Here again it becomes clear how much the situation changed in the sixties. Earlier in this article the subject of previous political experience of members of parliament was described as one of two specific possibilities to qualify for the job. Obviously at every moment a large majority in the House disposed of this kind of political experience. When one now looks at the individual political career, therefore taking into consideration the new members only, one can not expect to find totally different results, unless especially political experts were re-elected time and time again.



**Table 3: Newcomers: Previous Political Experience (Type and Number) per Period (percentages of members)**

<u>Period</u>	<u>Type of political function</u>				<u>Number of functions</u>			
	<u>Party</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>Cab.</u>	<u>Senate</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3-4</u>
1888-'18	44	53	3	1	28	44	28	<1
1918-'46	37	53	5	5	26	51	22	1
1946-'67	59	47	16	7	15	45	34	6
1967-'93	60	42	12	3	16	53	30	1

The figures on the percentage of MPs with political experience of one or more types do indeed not differ much of those already presented about the 100% population of each new House. In one respect however a difference became visible. Table 2 with the data of the entire House for each parliamentary session indicated a slowly rising number of members with pre-parliamentary political qualifications in the last half century. The data of the individual careers confirm the observed rise of politically trained MPs since 1946, but do not show a further rise of politically equipped new members in the last three decades. In these years politically trained MPs must have been re-elected disproportionately, while MPs without previous political functions for some reason kept their seats for a shorter period. This confirms indeed the earlier made remark about the replacement of persons of a same type.

With regard to the various types of political functions also some remarks are to be made. Plain differences can be observed as to the practising of newcomers in the two distinguished previous political functions at a national level. It never was a tradition for Dutch Cabinet members to enter parliament for the first time after their resignation as Minister. As is well known Ministers in the Netherlands - contrary to some other European democracies - for a long time had scarcely roots in parliament. It was only recently -after World War II- that a rising number of Cabinet members has been recruited from the Second Chamber.<sup>14</sup> It now becomes clear that coinciding with this slowly changing ministerial recruitment pattern, also more resigning Cabinet Ministers are willing to accept a seat in the House. Especially the first decades after World War II a comparative high percentage of MPs had been involved in national politics as Cabinet Minister first 16% of all new MPs between 1946 and 1967. Since then this percentage has sunk to 12, but this lower percentage still exceeds largely the figures for earlier times. The step over from Cabinet to

<sup>14</sup> See W.P. Seeker, *Ministers in beeld. De sociale en functionele herkomst van de Nederlandse ministers (1848-1990)*, Leiden: DSWO-Press (1991).



parliament seems to be accepted. But one has to bear in mind that for many ex-Ministers this only is a temporarily affair. Their acceptance of a parliamentary mandate has to be judged in the light of their expecting a reappointment in next Cabinet or in some other interesting governmental function.<sup>15</sup> As to the membership of the senate such a development did not take place, some exceptions in the forties and begin fifties left aside.

The bulk of political experience of MPs being concentrated in local governmental offices or party organizations, these areas are more interesting to focus upon. About the number of MPs who had occupied local political posts before entering parliament, it was said earlier that there was no change whatsoever to be observed over time (see Table 2). Seen from the point of the individual career of MPs the impression is not at all the same. Instead of a constantly approximately equal percentage of MPs who had occupied governmental functions at a local level, one now observes that after 1945 much fewer *newcomers* in parliament had roots in local government. Their percentage decreased from 53% before 1940 to 47% in the forties and fifties and even to 42% during the last thirty years. Although still in force, the »doctrine« about the strong local roots of Dutch MPs seems to be crumbling off.

The percentages concerning new MPs with previous links with political party organizations are more or less in accordance with the figures in Table 2 referring to the entire House. By comparison fewer newcomers had political practise in this field at the turn of the century, and this also applies for the new members since the sixties. Nevertheless the development towards the recruiting of more and more candidates from the political institutes self can hardly be denied.<sup>16</sup>

Examples of cumulation of political functions in more than two of the distinguished areas are rare. In the years after World War II the highest percentage in this respect was reached, when five to six percent of new MPs had such a political past.<sup>17</sup> For the rest the average individual political career

<sup>15</sup> In an article on the political career of Dutch ministers from 1946 to 1989 I gave some detailed information about the step over to parliament. Of all resigning ministers who took a seat in parliament, over 50% had disappeared already within one year. Two-thirds had left parliament within two years. (W.P. Seeker, 'Van beroep politicus? Nederlandse ministers en hun politieke loopbaan (1946-1989)', in: J.Th.J. van den Berg a.o. (eds.) (1989), pp: 211-225).

<sup>16</sup> See also R. Hillebrand, *De Antichambre van het Parlement. Kandidaatstelling in Nederlandse politieke partijen*, Leiden: DSWO Press, 1992. One of the conclusions of this study about candidate selection in Dutch political parties in 1986 (p. 371, English summary): 'The party background of potential candidates played an important role in candidate selection in all of the parties. Virtually all candidates possessed extensive experience in representative bodies at the local or regional level and almost all had held some office within the party. This was even more so for those candidates high on the list as for those who ended up lower or not on the list. Very little selection or recruitment occurred outside the group of party activists.'

<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately the way the data for this article were coded prevents a comparison with

does not differ too much of the already described image of MPs in general. More newcomers already involved in politics one way or another since the forties confirm the suggested professionalization of the parliamentary career.

### *At the end of the parliamentary mandate*

Looking at the political career of members of parliament from a retrospective point of view one has to deal with those members who have reached the definite end of their mandate. Figures about the number of MPs who in each election period dealt with their last term already reveal a lot about radical changes in personnel.<sup>18</sup> They confirm the earlier described data regarding high turnover. Each parliamentary session during the first fifty years under study, between 1888 and 1940, meant the final term to about 20 to 30% of the members of the sitting Second Chamber. Due to the odd circumstances of war and occupation, including a five-year suspension of parliamentary meetings, the parliamentary session that started in 1937 was an exception. Of the members elected in what later on appeared to be the last pre-war election, 47% did not return at the next election nine years later, nor at following ones. A comparable high percentage of definite »leavers« is to be found only among the MPs who had been elected in 1963. Of them 40% fulfilled their last term. In that respect the 1967-election really meant a clean sweep. Table 4 presents some data on the parliamentary career in retrospective, i.e. of those MPs who entered the House for the last time.<sup>19</sup> About the course of the parliamentary career itself data are presented on tenure, the number of elections that candidates had stood successfully, with or without breaks.

#### — Tenure —

Over time about an equal percentage of persons has remained only a very short period -less than 4 years- a member of the House. The figures in Table 4 about these mainly one-term MPs indicate a slow rising from 15% in the decades 1888-1918 to 20,23% in the sixties. The same data seen for each election year, however, point out rather big differences. At the end of the two first examined parliamentary sessions, 1888-1894, more MPs left definitely within four years

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e.g. the German situation, where traditionally a political career is built up from the base up to the highest positions. See D. Herzog, *Politische Karrieren. Selektion und Professionalisierung politischer Führungsgruppen*, Opladen 1975.

<sup>18</sup> One has always to bear in mind the definition used here to mark out the population of the parliamentary personnel at each election: those members who had been elected as the first incumbents, which definition excludes all the members elected between times.

<sup>19</sup> As far as my present knowledge reaches the data as presented are trustworthy. However, some retired members of parliament might return in the House, which would influence the figures over the last period.

**Table 4: The Parliamentary Career in Retrospective: Tenure and Continuity (percentages of members)**

<u>Last term</u>	<u>N</u>	<i>Tenure in years</i>				<i>Nr. of Elections</i>			<i>Conti- nuity</i>
		<u>&lt; 4</u>	<u>4-12</u>	<u>12-20</u>	<u>&gt; 20</u>	<u>1 x</u>	<u>2-3 x</u>	<u>&gt;4 x</u>	
<i>(Nr. of MPs: 100)</i>									
1888	25	32	52	4	12	24	12	64	80
1891	30	23	58	17	2	17	40	43	83
1894	23	9	52	17	22	9	39	52	78
1897	39	10	51	23	16	13	46	41	87
1901	29	14	62	10	14	31	28	41	83
1905	26	12	42	31	15	27	39	34	92
1909	28	11	43	28	18	32	18	50	86
1913	18	17	22	33	28	17	22	61	89
1917	36	11	39	36	14	3	47	50	90
<b>1888-1918</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>85</b>
<i>(Nr. of MPs: 100)</i>									
1918	35	43	26	17	14	49	11	40	74
1922	23	35	30	22	13	35	17	48	87
1925	20	5	70	15	10	25	45	30	85
1929	21	29	24	24	23	29	19	52	90
1933	37	5	38	35	22	22	23	59	81
1937	47	11	28	25	36	23	23	54	83
<b>1918-1946</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>83</b>
<i>(Nr. of MPs: 100)</i>									
1946	22	64	9	18	9	59	14	27	91
1948	17	35	41	18	6	29	53	18	71
1952	17	17	41	18	24	23	23	54	88
1956	18	22	39	17	22	11	28	61	78
<i>(Nr. of MPs: 150)</i>									
1959	52	10	31	48	11	14	27	59	83
1963	61	20	56	11	12	18	49	33	80
<b>1946-1967</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>82</b>
<i>(Nr. of MPs: 150)</i>									
1967	52	17	39	23	21	17	33	50	83
1971	34	41	47	6	6	29	50	21	74
1972	53	15	68	13	4	17	49	34	81
1977	50	16	50	28	6	4	50	46	80
1981	16	31	37	25	7	31	19	50	63
1982	38	21	49	29	1	8	47	45	55
1986	40	13	32	47	8	5	18	77	50
1989	30	3	47	40	10	3	13	84	67
<b>[1967-1993</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>71]</b>

than in the following periods. A still higher percentage of newly elected MPs in 1918 and 1922, when general suffrage had just been introduced and put into practise, left after a similar short tenure. These facts lead one to suppose that the winning or loosing of political parties at the polls account mostly for these phenomena. The elections in 1888 and 1918 followed suffrage reforms which had evidently strongly influenced the electoral results. Short-term leavers in 1891 were mainly to be found among the protestant MPs, who had had such an enormous success at the previous election. The same holds for the seven socialist MPs, who after only one session in the House, did not return at the next election in 1922. The early resigning of some liberal one-term members in 1894, can not be explained as easily by electoral reasons, although the 1894-election took place in a period of great confusion in all parties due to extreme disagreement about extension of suffrage. Of the -rather few- »leavers« at the end of the session 1946-1948 two-thirds had only been a MP very shortly, about one term only, which, moreover, because of constitutional reforms only lasted half the normal period. Similar to the after-1918 session it were some socialists who saw their parliamentary career ended within a very short time-span. It is curious to see that one period after another »big turnover« election again quite a few recently elected members left the House. This time it were merely new members of the protestant and catholic parties who after electoral losses in 1971 and 1972 had to leave after one term only.

These findings about the rather early resigning of MPs - though not applicable in all cases- suggest a rather strong connection between the degree of turnover at elections and the number of »short-living« members. The higher the percentage of new members the higher the percentage of MPs who only were in function for a short time. That leads to the conclusion that among the »crowd« of newcomers many »mayflies« have entered.

Table 4 leads to still another conclusion. Data on the percentage of long-serving MPs -long to be defined as 12 or more years- indicate that on the average at least one-third of the members remained in parliament quite a long time. In the same time that more MPs than ever left the House definitely after only one period -between the two World Wars-, even almost half of all leaving MPs, 46%, could boast of such a record. In this period one of four to five resigning MPs even had occupied his seat over 20 years. Continuity -interpreted in a broad sense as the undisturbed going on of parliamentary life in general - might be higher than the figures of turnover suggest, because a large majority in the House is re-elected time and again. Observed changes in the selecting and recruiting process of parliamentary candidates in the sixties as regards age are also visible in the area of tenure. Between 1967 and 1971 still one of five MPs retired after a tenure of more than 20 years. But from that year on only very few members have survived as long as that. Does this mean that the average length of parliamentary mandate was reduced as well?

On the average the membership of one-third of all MPs in the past had lasted more than 12 years. There were a few exceptions to this »rule«. At the end of

(or during) the parliamentary periods 1888-1894, 1901-1905 and much later, of 1971-1977 a much lower percentage of long-sitting members retired. On the other hand a extremely large part of parliamentary expertise disappeared out of the House in the periods 1913-1918, 1933-1946, 1959-1963 and also after 1986. Half or more than half of the leavers then had been members during at least 12 years.

What is the meaning of these findings in the light of the recent trend of restraining the process of professionalization? The mentioned figures do not point very convincingly to a »natural« shift towards a shorter tenure of the average MP. However, the results in Figure 5 of the average tenure in years of definitively leaving MPs in the four time-periods do indicate towards a lower average tenure. From 10.4 years between 1888 and 1918 tenure increased to 12.2 years in the next period between the two world wars, to decrease with 10.5 years to the earlier level. For resigning MPs in the last three decades the average tenure had been sunk further to 9.2 years.

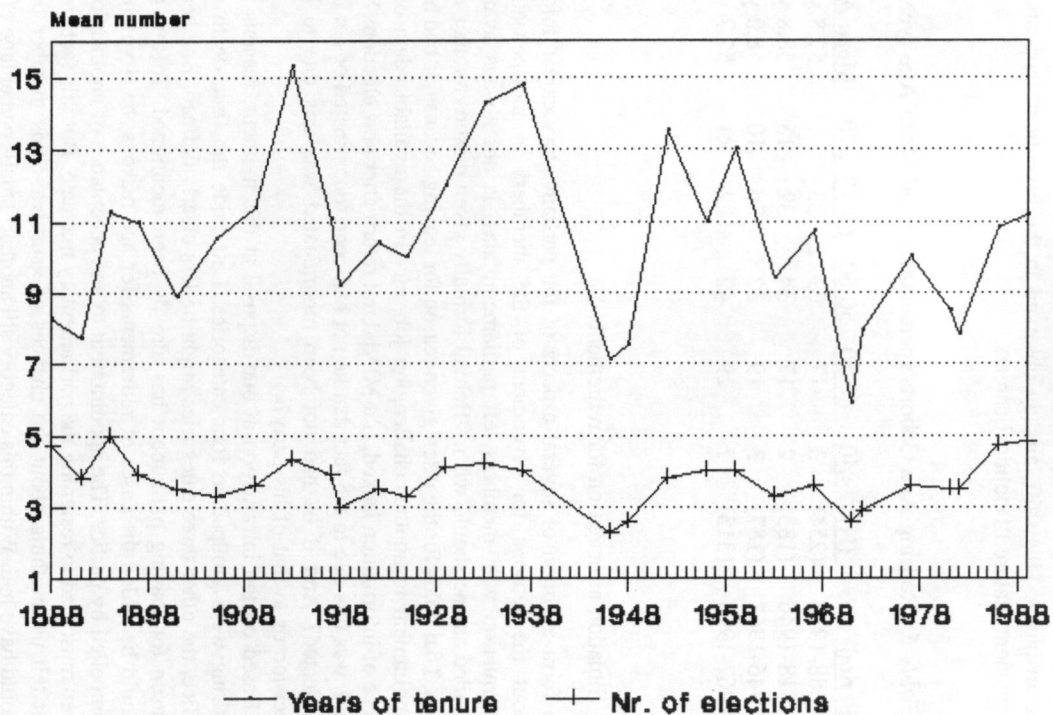
Restrictive rules with respect of tenure for that reason certainly are not to be considered as a rather radical encroachment upon tradition. Moreover indicates the fact that after the seventies never a MP succeeded to stay longer than 20 years, a long-life membership had already died a natural death. The proposed party rules about tenure therefore are to be judged as superfluous.

More than 80% of all MPs kept their seats without interruption. Remarkable is that continuity of the parliamentary career was even higher - be it not very impressively - during the years that candidates had to win their seats in a constituency. The risks of political life were obviously not higher during this period of more personal campaigning. After the electoral system of proportional representation had been introduced in 1918 interrupted parliamentary careers increased with a five percent. More than before this slightly increased discontinuity can be explained either by party-political losses at the polls or by ministerial or other occupational intermezzi of candidates themselves.

#### — Age at retirement —

The fact that after the sixties members started their parliamentary career younger than before, as shown in Table 1, had its consequences also for their retirement age. The picture, shown in Table 5, is quite clear about that. The percentage of members of parliament who still remained in office over-70 years old, was considerable in the decades round 1900. From 17 this percentage dropped to 15 in the interwar years, and further to (still) 10 in the forties and fifties. With respect to the retirement age again the sixties mark a deep cleavage in developments of the parliamentary career. In fact the two last over-70 years old MPs retired in 1967 and 1971. They were the last of the generation of MPs who had been elected in parliament before the Second World War.

Figure 5 Tenure  
(per election year)



Remarkable also is the early end of the parliamentary career of about one-third of the MPs. Since the sixties a suddenly risen percentage retired at an age under 50. Until then an equal part of the members, one of five, of that same age had resigned. This shift, already observed in the seventies<sup>20</sup>, appears to be a permanent feature of political careers.

**Table 5: Retiring Age Cohorts (percentages) and Mean Age (years)**

<u>Period</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>&lt;40</u>	<u>40-50</u>	<u>50-60</u>	<u>60-70</u>	<u>&gt;70</u>	<u>Mean Age</u>
1888-1918	(254)	3	17	39	23	17	57.8 yrs.
1918-1946	(183)	2	17	34	32	15	58.8 yrs.
1946-1967	(187)	3	19	32	36	10	58.0 yrs.
1967-1993	(313)	7	29	42	22	<1	52.7 yrs.

— Situation at or reason for retirement —

To form a notion of several aspects of the parliamentary career information about the reasons for retirement of the members is indispensable. The information why members left parliament, alas, is not always available as detailed as one should wish.<sup>21</sup> Behind formally given reasons another truth can hide. That holds for the often given reason for leaving because of bad health, of appointment to another challenging job, etc. In the available data one other piece of information lacked. If a MP did not return after new elections had been held, was this due to the fact that he not had been renominated or not had been re-elected? And if he had not been renominated was this due to his own decision or to that of his party?

Based on the information at our disposal at this moment, reasons for final retiring were grouped in four categories. Left aside the first, death while in office, the other three categories might be less clearly defined. Bad health as a reason for leaving parliament has already been mentioned. To this category should be added the cases of retirements for age reasons, be it voluntarily or compelled by parties. The appointment to and acceptance of another job can or even must lead to resigning the parliamentary mandate. But this fact alone does not tell us anything about the chances of »survival« this member otherwise should have had. Within this category stil another -small- percentage of cases is

<sup>20</sup> M.P.C.M. van Schendelen and R.N.G. van der Paardt, 'De Tweede Kamer als carrierekanaal', in: U. Rosenthal a.o., *Ministers, ambtenaren en parlementariërs in Nederland* (Groningen 1975), pp. 190-201.

<sup>21</sup> See P.L. de Vos, *De uitgang van 'net Binnenhof. Een onderzoek naar het vertrek van kamerleden*, (Arnhem 1990).

included, of persons who withdrew for unspecified »personal« reasons. The last category of not re-elected persons contains also a unknown number of persons who had not been renominated by their parties.

*Table 6: Reasons for/Situation at Resignation (percentages)*

<u>Period</u>	<u>(N)</u>	<u>Death</u> <u>/Age</u>	<u>Health</u>	<u>Other</u> <u>Job</u>	<u>Not re-</u> <u>elected</u>
1888-1918	(254)	23	17	19	41
1918-1946	(183)	18	27	30	25
1946-1967	(190)	10	32	42	16
1967-1993	(316)	4	6	54	36

Amazingly high is the percentage of MPs during the parliamentary sessions around 1900 who remained in office until death. But this tells more about the mean age of men in that period than that it has anything to do with tenure, for this same period did not see more long-sitting MPs than in later decades. During the following periods, until 1967 at least, fewer members died in the parliamentary harness, but a rising percentage left Parliament for reasons of health or age. The more remarkable therefore is the very sharp decline of members who since the sixties left Parliament because of age. In this period when the age at first entrance in Parliament was much lower than ever before, members in general do not stay in the House until retirement age. From the first described period on more and more MPs left the House in order to start another job. This category has undoubtedly increased over the years because the parliamentary mandate has developed into a full-time profession, that does not allow for combining more functions in the same time. But the growing importance of this argument as compared with the diminishing of the age factor as reason for resigning corroborates the thesis of professionalization of the parliamentary career.

### Some Conclusions

Investigating the social background of the MPs Van den Berg had already pointed out the professionalization of the parliamentary function since the 1970s as one of the main developments.<sup>22</sup> An important condition in this process was the decrease in payed secondary occupations thanks to a better financial arrangement for MPs. Although these data deviate slightly from those presented by Van den Berg, due to other formulated criteria on behalf of the

<sup>22</sup> J.Th.J. van den Berg (1989), p. 191.



population<sup>23</sup>, the main conclusions still hold. Based on further elaboration of aspects of turnover and seniority some other conclusions can be drawn. The main question here referred to the impact of personal circulation on developments towards institutionalization and professionalization of parliament. Institutionalization of parliament as defined here, following Polsby, is indicated by lower turnover, longer tenure and higher age. Stabilization of membership for those once inside the House is realized by narrowing the entrance to newcomers. Professionalization of parliament and its members which results from the process of institutionalization can be measured in a different way too by a growing influx of candidates with political qualities based on previous experience elsewhere.

From the aspects investigated here, renewal or turnover, tenure of parliamentary mandate or seniority, and pre-legislative political qualifications, not all point to the same direction.

- The renewal **rate was highest** at the elections of 1888, 1918, 1946 and last but not least in the 1960s and 1970s. This confirms the indication of these years as generally accepted watersheds in Dutch parliamentary history, but do in itself say nothing about rising or decreasing of the renewal rate in general. Obviously it was rather a question of generational turnover following institutional renewal again and again. Through the rather capricious curve of the renewal rate (Fig. 1) however, the line from the fifties on points to a slowly »fossilizing« process.

- Over the years **there is a trend** of decreasing seniority expressed by the mean number of times MPs were re-elected. Only recently, since the seventies, this trend changed: the curve indicating the re-election rate in the House is slowly rising. But in the whole seniority since last century decreases. No confirmation of a more closed character of the political elite in this regard can be distilled out of these data.

- Findings about the resigning of MPs at an rather early age **suggest a rather** strong connection between the degree of turnover at elections and the number of short-living members: the higher the percentage of new members the higher the percentage of short-living MPs. That leads to the conclusion that among the »crowd« of newcomers many mayflowers have entered. Information lacks to explain this phenomenon satisfactorily, although one can assume that more or less considerable shifts between parties as a consequence of electoral results are part of the explanation. A fact, however, is that this phenomenon does not affect continuity in parliament as such. For the same findings also lead to the conclusion that continuity -interpreted in a broad sense as the undisturbedly going on of parliamentary functioning in general- might be higher than the figures of turnover suggest, because a large majority in the House is re-elected several times.

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<sup>23</sup> See earlier note 7.

- The indication of the sixties/seventies as most important watershed in Dutch parliamentary history is proved by several facts. One of the striking features is the rejuvenation of the members of the House since the sixties. Two successive elections in the early seventies within one year and a half had contributed to this phenomenon. But the mean age remained at the same level in the successive elections. This can only be explained by the systematically retiring in these years of the eldest members, which made up for the lesser influx of -young- newcomers. The renewal rate no longer affected the mean age in the House during the last three decades to the same degree as before.

- As for the politicization in terms of **exclusive recruitment out of political circles** it is clear that - since 1888 at least- a political background always has been an important selecting channel. Parliamentary candidates with previous political experience were even more numerous present in the House since the thirties. That is to say especially with regard to experience in political party offices. Local political experience, although still present in the curricula of quite a few members, seems to be slightly decreasing. The role of local political experience of candidates in the recruiting process seems to be corroborated by the fact that MPs with a political training in an earlier phase of their career must have been re-elected disproportionately, while MPs without previous political functions kept their seats for a shorter period. The conclusion is that the impact of the influence political parties exert on the recruiting process, as described by Loewenberg/Patterson, holds for the Dutch selection situation too.<sup>24</sup>

- Since last century membership of parliament has increasingly become a full-time occupation, not only in the Netherlands, but in many other countries. »Recruitment to many legislatures, certainly including those of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany, is the beginning of a legislative career rather than a fleeting episode. (...) In the most firmly established assemblies, those who enter cease to be lawyers, businessmen, or trade union officials and become career legislators.«<sup>25</sup>

The paradox thus is that although converted into an occupational profession similar to other ones in terms of a full-time profession and corresponding payment this legislative function now seems to be denied an according position and to be allowed to be occupied only during a part of active occupational life. Does that mean that the development towards institutionalization and professionalization of the parliamentary profession now has to be regretted? It is a good thing to prevent the process of recruitment and selection of legislative candidates of becoming a too automatically one, leading to a certain degree of petrification. However, the days of the *Gerousia* of the ancient Greeks may belong to the past almost an eternity, their ideas about the wisdom of the old, i.e. experienced people, are not to be totally forgotten.

<sup>24</sup> See note 5.

<sup>25</sup> Loewenberg/Patterson, *op.cit.* p. 106.

**The Victorious Legislative Incumbent: A Threat to Democracy?**<sup>26</sup> Recruiting processes as in the Netherlands risk indeed to convert the parliamentary mandate into a long-term career with a tendency toward petrification. »If the degree of representation is perceived by the public to be unsatisfactory, the legitimacy of the institution may suffer«.<sup>27</sup> Data about the Dutch legislators, however, show that parliamentary mandate turned up to be less than ever a lifelong function. Nevertheless, when it comes to the question of amelioration of the qualitative level of MPs in behalf of a better functioning of parliament, the solution has to be found in changing the selecting procedure in the sense that -more than has been done- sitting members have to be compared critically with potential new candidates.<sup>28</sup> Restrictions concerning age or length of parliamentary mandat in itself do not automatically guarantee higher quality of parliament

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<sup>26</sup> Based on the observation of this world-wide phenomenon one of the annual meetings of political scientists dealt with this theme and bore this name: Panel 9-14, APSA meeting in Chicago, September 3-6, 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Loewenberg/Patterson, *op.cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>28</sup> R. Hillebrand, *op.cit.*, added thesis nr. 4.