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Netherlands

A Left "No"

- News from around the world -

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The radical left faces an uphill fight in the Netherlands as it heads towards a June 1st referendum on the proposed European constitutional treaty. Not only is there a united front of the ruling right-wing coalition (Christian Democrats and two liberal parties), most of the centre-left opposition (the social-democratic Labour party and Green Left) and the employers' federation. All the trade-union federations and big environmental organisations are also for.

[<https://association-radar.org/IMG/jpg/Nee.jpg>]

But much of the Dutch radical left stands behind the Comité Grondwet Nee (Constitution No Committee). The Socialist Party, the one parliamentary left party fighting against ratification, backed Grondwet Nee from the start. Green Left dissidents and global justice and peace activists actively support it. Fourth International supporter Willem Bos is its chairperson. It is riding on a wave of discontent with the right-wing government, whose approval ratings have sunk below 20 per cent. In late April for the first time a poll showed a narrow majority planning to vote No.

But the pro-Yes media barrage is gathering speed. By law state funds should be divided equally, 400,000 for Yes campaigns, 400,000 for No campaigns and 200,000 for neutral information. In fact the "neutral" information is barely disguised propaganda for a Yes. Grondwet Nee got only 30,000 euros, less than the small Protestant fundamentalist Christian Union or the eccentric anarchistic Eurodusnie.

A left No is competing not only with Yes forces but with the right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn List and maverick right-wing liberal Geert Wilders. Even the SP is sending mixed messages. Members of the FI section SAP (Socialist Alternative Politics), who are SP members particularly in Rotterdam, were reasonably content with the SP's special congress on the issue. But in practice the ex-Maoist leadership tends to stress the danger of Holland's being reduced to a "province" of a "European superstate".