

Hope College

Hope College Digital Commons

Van Raalte Papers: 1860-1869

Van Raalte Papers

5-5-1860

De Hollander Discuss the Establishment of De Grondwet

Simone Kennedy

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp_1860s

The original documents are held in the Holland Museum. This digitized material is intended for personal research/study only. The original documents may not be reproduced for commercial use in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, without permission in writing from the [Holland Museum](#).

Recommended Citation

Kennedy, Simone, "De Hollander Discuss the Establishment of De Grondwet" (1860). *Van Raalte Papers: 1860-1869*. 68.

https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/vrp_1860s/68

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Van Raalte Papers at Hope College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Van Raalte Papers: 1860-1869 by an authorized administrator of Hope College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.

5 May 1860

Holland, Michigan

De Hollander gave big play to fact the John Roost established the newspaper *De Grondwet* in Holland, Michigan. It will be published on Wednesdays. The editor of *De Hollander* indicated that the new paper would be Republican. The translation of the article comes to six pages. The editor also expected the new paper to be printed in Dutch and English.

In Dutch; translation by Simone Kennedy.

Original in the archives of the Holland Museum.

De Hollander, Wednesday 9 May 1860

The Republican weekly *De Grondwet*

“De Grondwet” [The Constitution]

Last Tuesday night we received *De Grondwet*, the Republican weekly that was promised to us and announced in this paper. There was no name nor X on this weekly, and we do not know what our connection is to this weekly – are we subscribers or are we supposed to exchange our issues? The latter is the more common practice and we assume that this is what they mean – we will add the *Grondwet* on our list of journals that exchange issues with us.

After looking briefly at the lay-out, the articles that were chosen, the business cards – which are familiar to us – and the to be expected advertisements, we focused on the title words: “to our fellow countrymen in the United States”. We will walk the readers through this weighty article and, as usual, add a few comments.

We can expect *De Grondwet* to be published in both Dutch and English, from now on to be published on Wednesdays. This half magazine was dated Monday, the 30th of April, which was probably done to satisfy an article of the law, so that they are allowed to print a tax list, which is usually quite expansive. We may doubt that they will succeed in this, since the *Clarion* of Grand Haven (another Republican journal) already received the promise of permission from the Auditor General and other influential gentlemen within

the Republican Party. Notwithstanding these promises, we have reasons to think that *De Grondwet* might get this privilege.

They gave the weekly the – for Dutch people inviting and tempting – name of “Grondwet”, because they imagine to be the publishers of (and read this carefully) “the firmness of the ground, grounded in the law”.¹ The ground is thus grounded in the law? We thought that the word “grondwet” simply stood for the law, or the basis of all other laws. They say that their only foundation is “reason, law and justice.” We think that it is more. From what we have read from the founding fathers, who wrote the *grondwet* or Constitution, we dare to conclude that “religion according to the Bible” can be put first as part of this above mentioned foundation. Not just “reason, law and justice”, but “biblical religion, reason, law and justice.” Moreover, when all is said and done, what are the latter without the first? They follow with extensive praise for the Constitution of the United States. We think that you can never give too much praise to the Constitution. If they really mean what they say, if their words are not hypocritical, simulated, sly or a manipulation to attract the Dutch to their views, then we ask: to which party do the publishers say that they belong? The Republicans, and especially the Abolition-Republicans to whom the publishers can be reckoned, see things very differently. They want an anti-slavery God, an anti-slavery Bible and an anti-slavery Constitution. They do not say, like the publishers of *De Grondwet*: “We see that the current Constitution of the United States as one of the most beautiful monuments of human reason and ingenuity.” Mr. Seward – the father of the Republican party and the probable candidate for President (as proposed even by the Republican State Convention in Detroit on the second day of

¹ ‘Grond’ in Dutch can mean ‘soil’, ‘land’, ‘basis’ or ‘foundation’. What the author exactly means is not clear to me.

this month) – says the contrary. Even though Mr. Seward swore to the Constitution, he still said to the people: “The Constitution violates the law of God, do not live according to it, the Higher Law (nothing else than what you think fit) surpasses this.” We state openly that we do not understand how the Republican publishers dare to say, among a Christian, religious people: “We desire to stand or to fall with the Constitution”, while their leader, who represents the party, and the last Convention held in Detroit, speak to the contrary. *They* should know what *they* confess to believe. The people will have to guard and check to make sure that they dare to give the same witness when they are standing in front of an American public.

“All freedom, if true freedom, should aim for Union, Association and Alliance”, continues *De Grondwet*. Again, beautiful and enchanting words. Let us ask you these questions. Can it be called ‘aiming for Union’ if the North attacks the South? Are you looking for Association if you, instead of trying to win your opponents over through expressing opinions, repel them by reckless and burning zeal? Are you allowed to talk about Alliance if you divide the people against each other, as Mr. Seward and his disciples do directly and indirectly? Why does Mr. Seward not dare to go to Virginia? Though the headings of this weekly are beautiful, the rational and analyzing people who love the Union and the Constitution will not neglect to examine, issue after issue, how this weekly will work these principles out in the future.

The publishers promise to bring their readers the most recent news from the Netherlands. This is quite something, it is easier said than done – unless they have dollars that they can spend according to their own wishes.

The publishers “do not want to give the impression that they disrespect or neglect religion. Absolutely not; every article that promotes true religion, morals and values will be included” in their weekly. We are curious to know what they consider True Religion: the religion of the Bible or the religion of the Reason?

Politically speaking this weekly will “support the party which fights for freedom, law and justice”, they say. That is how the disciples of Mr. Seward describe their party. The publishers allude to the Abolition-Republican party, the party that (note this!) curses and tramples the Constitution publicly. Readers, those principles will be upheld!

They want to “support and defend the continued existence of our beloved and blessed Union”. But this Union is supposed to have been built upon the Constitution, and they do not need to live according to the Constitution, says their leader Mr. Seward. How then can the Union continue its existence? Should we not consider how the Abolition-Republican party might play into the divisive goals of England and lead to the break-up of this beautiful and beloved Union, especially if encouraged by the golden dollars that are being sent to the Union by England. We fear a divide and rule strategy. Readers, think about the separation of Belgium, which was brought about by England. We have good reasons to fear and we would like to keep Washington’s words (boldly used even by the publishers of *De Grondwet*) in mind: “The person who ever wants to break this blessed Union should be branded as a traitor.” And yes, we dare to add this to these words: “Avoid journals and people who assist with this like the plague.” They tear loose instead of associate.

The publishers “honor *those* principles and support *that* party, that gives *equal* rights and freedoms to *all* people”, etc. So the Dred Scott decision, that a negro cannot become a

citizen of the United States, is rejected by them. By stating the above, they reject the decree of the Supreme Court of this Union (that a negro cannot become a citizen of the full Union). They despise the authorized body, whose only work is to explain the Constitution. They, the publishers of *De Grondwet*, think that negroes should be able to vote, to take office, to be part of the juries, to have the ability to be elected as judges, governors and even senators. They believe this against the lawful decree of the Supreme Court. We ask again, and are very serious since we swore an oath: Are the above mentioned principles good? Are we not bound by our oath to obey the decree of the highest court of this country?

De Grondwet can place advertisements for little cost, which is understandable. The value of advertisements is in the distribution of the journal. It does not make much sense to paste a poster at a place where people seldom pass by.

“Finally”, say the publishers, “we are ready to call a spade a spade.” This may be so in the future, but they did not yet do this. If they had done so, they should have said straight from the start: “Our weekly supports the Abolition-Republican party, which battles the current government, the beloved Constitution and the Supreme Court, which rebels against every measure – even the good ones – that were taken by them.”

Perhaps some of our readers are wondering where the printer came from. Although we have some idea about its origins, we would like to present you with the words of a former owner in the *Grand Haven News*: “The office of the *Grand river Time* in Eastmanville, that was formerly in Grand Haven, came last week through on its way to Holland, in this county. Trustworthy sources told us that this printer was bought by the Republican Central Committee of the State (Michigan) and will be used solely for political means.

John Roost of Holland will apparently edit the weekly. Should the tax-paying citizens not ask where the money came from that will be used to operate this preferred interest?"

Look at what he said. We are not certain about the editor or editors of this weekly.

ROOST & HOOGESTEGER are mentioned as publishers, but not as editors. But they were generally desired as being the editors of this journal. The printing etc., was given to a Dutch person, Gerrit Frik. It is a disappointment that the first issue of their journal did not look better, but this happens to the best of us.

We would like to leave it at this. We think that we did our duty and informed the people.

Let everybody who received the first issue of *De Grondwet* read the article titled: "To our fellow countrymen in the United States" unprejudiced to see if our comments are just.

Excepting the principle, may Mr. Roost be luckier with his printer than with his

Daguerreotype! And the youthful Mr. Hoogesteger may in all respects become the pride of his mentors!