15 The Fryske Nasjonale Partij: Frisian and Federal in the Netherlands

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Introduction

On the 16th December 1962 the *Fryske Nasjonale Partij* (FNP) made its entry into the amazing world of Dutch politics (Huisman 2003). Until then the Dutch political landscape consisted only of national or local organized political parties. The initiative to establish the new federalist regional party was taken by two Frisian cousins, who revived the Frisian question following strategic consideration over whether it was worthwhile to take the time and energy to work through the existing political parties or to take a new direction by establishing a Frisian party (Kramer 2001). These two youngsters began a new party, which for the first time took part in the provincial elections of 1966. The result was one out of 55 seats in the provincial assembly of Friesland. Since then the FNP has played a role in Frisian politics with varying success. In the provincial elections of 2003 36,871 voters (i.e. 13.2% of the electorate) voted FNP, which meant that the party received seven seats in the provincial assembly of Friesland. Apart from the provincial polity the FNP is represented in 21 of the 31 Frisian municipalities with around 50 seats (9.4% of the votes). The goal of this chapter is to describe the history, ideology, electorate, party organisation and electoral performance of the FNP.

The administrative structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands is characterized by three levels: state, provinces and municipalities. Nowadays there are twelve provinces and about 500 municipalities. The province of Friesland and the 31 Frisian municipalities are an integral part of the fairly centralized state of the Netherlands, as it exists since the building of the modern Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815. Situated in the northern part of the country the province of Friesland is characterized by its peripheral position within the country, combined with a relatively small population of about 630,000 people (i.e. 3.9% of the Dutch population) (Boneschansker and Heemstra 2001: 18), about a 10% lower average income compared to the Netherlands at large (Provincje Frysln 2001: 14), and since the 1960s a declining position for the agricultural sector, which accounts nowadays for 7% of Friesland’s employment, compared with 34% in 1947 (Van der Meulen 2001). Friesland is also characterized by its bilingualism. It is the only Dutch province in the Netherlands where, next to Dutch, a second autochthonous language, namely Frisian, is spoken. Frisian is nowadays an officially recognised regional language in the Netherlands spoken daily by 74% of the inhabitants of Friesland, whereas 94% can understand Frisian, 65% can read Frisian and 17% can write Frisian (Gorter and Jonkman 1995: 9-10).
sociolinguistic position of the Frisian language is threatened by the increasing mobility of people, influence of mass media, and decline of the agricultural sector. Nevertheless the Frisian language is still one of the main elements of Frisian identity. Though the Frisian language since 1962 has its political expression in the FNP, by and large, Frisians show the same electoral behaviour as the Dutch. This behaviour is made possible by a political infrastructure, which is the same in Friesland as in the rest of the Netherlands. Leading Dutch parties are also leading parties in Frisian politics, having their local and provincial branches. Regionalism and autonomy are not issues for these parties and the FNP is rather an outsider in Dutch and Frisian politics.

**Historical Background**

In the 19th century, the era of European Romanticism, Frisian literature experienced a renaissance. A Frisian movement came into existence in 1827 with the creation of the first organization, the Dutch language using *Provinciaal Friesch Genootschap voor Geschied-, Oudheid- en Taalkunde* (Provincial Frisian Society for History, Antiquity and Linguistics) aimed at the promotion of the study of the Frisian language and history. In 1844 a second organization was founded, the *Selskip foar Frysk e Tael- en Skriftekennisse* (Society for Frisian Language and Literature): a literary society aimed at writing and publishing Frisian literature (Hemminga 2000). Both organizations were mainly culturally-oriented. Political parties did not exist in those days, with the first Dutch political party founded in 1879 (Koole 1995). And it was only in the very beginning of the 20th century that the Frisian Movement became more or less politically aimed, when the *Selskip foar Frysk e Tael- en Skriftekennisse* mobilised over the issue of the teaching of Frisian in primary schools in Friesland. A very moderate implementation of this policy was realized in 1937. Then World War II not only caused a break in policy building concerning the Frisian language, but also closed down the Dutch democratic polity.

After World War II, in 1945, the old political system and parties were quickly restored and the economic recovery of the country became priority number one. The Frisian Movement used the period of World War II to formulate new Frisian demands in the field of administration, agriculture, business, culture and education (*Rapporten Friesche Beweging 1940-1945*). In the Frisian Movement's programme, published in 1945, the first declaration concerned the region's inseparable solidarity with the Kingdom of the Netherlands. However, other parts of the programme indicated a clear desire for decentralisation, which was situated in a broader Dutch proposal for decentralisation in those days. The publication of the programme of the Frisian movement was followed by two other relevant reports about the same issue. Piter Wijbenga wrote an in-depth report about decentralisation under
the authority of the Frisian Movement, published in 1948 (Wijbenga 1948). And in 1951, the report of a broad provincial committee on decentralisation also appeared (Rapport van de Provinciale Adviescommissie voor het Decentralisatievraagstuk). But despite these efforts, the issue lost its relevance and decentralisation never become a topic in Dutch politics again.

Besides these organisations and developments, the existence and campaigning of the Striidboun ‘Fryslân Frij’ should be mentioned. This by name rather militant association ‘Friesland free’ was the more radical wing of the Frisian Movement, made up of about 200 middle aged men, representing all kind of professions and vocations in Frisian society, who were dissatisfied with the subordinate position of Friesland within the Netherlands, as well as the neglect of Frisian language and culture by Dutch politics (Hemminga 2001a: 324). The association formally pursued cultural and economic autonomy for Friesland, but in practice its struggle was limited to nice words and anxious letters, especially about many less principal, but more practical matters (Hemminga 2001a: 325-9). One issue which received a lot of attention from the association was the financial distribution given to municipalities and provinces, and in connection with that, the underdeveloped position of Friesland within the Netherlands. This theme about the cleavage between centre and periphery became a mainstay of politics in Friesland and since 1966, the issue was pursued by the FNP as it entered into the provincial assembly of Friesland. However, the founder of the association, Eeltsje Boates Folkertsma, author of the brochure Selbststoer for Fryslân (Autonomy for Friesland) in 1930 (Folkertsma 1930), was too impractical to implement his ideas in a more practical way (De Jong 1970: 25). Folkertsma discussed issues and proclaimed solutions but did not take the final step to advance them, e.g. the foundation of a political party, because he failed to find enough partners to found a Frisian national party (De Jong 1970: 16). Nevertheless, the association ‘Fryslân Frij’ can be seen as a predecessor of the FNP (Van der Schaaf 1977: 352, 387). Rather dominant themes like Friesland’s periphery and Dutch dominance in the appointment of officials, as well as unprofitable financial state arrangements were for association and political party the same. Moreover the two organisations shared a membership.

Before the FNP could be founded the social and cultural climate in the Netherlands had to change. The 1960s formed the very beginning of a new post-industrial era, realized in the Dutch welfare state (Ellemers 1979: 432). Those years can be seen as synonymous with change (Koole 1995; 53). New political parties gained political space which had been missing before. New protest-movements and political parties were founded: ‘Provo’ and ‘New Left’ and in 1963 the ‘Farmers Party’ entered Parliament with three seats and then seven seats in 1967. Democrats‘66 was founded and entered Parliament in 1967 also with seven seats (Ellemers 1979: 433). In this changing cultural and political climate in Friesland, the first articles arguing in favour of a
regional party were published. In 1962 two Frisian cousins, Folkert Binnema and Pyt Kramer, took the initiative to found the FNP by publishing a declaration of principles. Thereafter a third phase in Frisian nationalism, political nationalism, began, following on from a limited linguistic nationalism and a broader cultural nationalism earlier (Penrose 1992: 93).

The announcement of the new Frisian party caused, just as in the case of the foundation of the association Fryslân Frj, a lot of public commotion. In the first place the Dutch press wondered if Frisians had gone out of their mind. Maybe they are still not sufficiently civilized to be full Dutchmen (De Boer-de Jong 1987: 4). These reactions were not surprising, but the Frisian reactions, among them the reactions of members of the Frisian Movement, were much more interesting. Among others Fedde Schurer, editor in chief of the daily Friese Koerier and important man of Frisian letters and politics, was quite against the idea of a Frisian national party. He made clear that one who cannot play should not give a concert (Schurer 1962: 1). And as a matter of fact Schurer was quite right. The initiative of Binnema and Kramer was taken too fast and ill considered to be a real opportunity. Jelle Brouwer, director of the Fryske Akademy, was also against the FNP, but pointed out that the initiative to a create a new party illustrated the bad treatment of Friesland and the Frisian language by the central government (De Boer-de Jong 1987: 5). Quite remarkably Frisian students were also not immediately convinced of the sense and usefulness of the initiative, as was illustrated by articles in students’ magazines (Straatsma 1962: 5).

The FNP-initiators did not quite foresee the implications of their initiative, but it quickly became evident that participation in the provincial elections of 1962 was impossible due to lack of preparation. The 1966 elections become the next goal. The FNP created an executive committee of which Tsjerk Jehannes de Jong was chairman. The appearance of Tsjerk Jehannes de Jong was rather a disappointment for Dutch journalists, who expected to encounter a right-wing-nationalist, and instead met a well-respected and educated liberal Frisian farmer. The party’s new board decided on a programme and a list of candidates. In the elections for the provincial assembly of March 23, 6,645 Frisians, (i.e. 2.4 %) voted for FNP. On 1st June 1966 Jan Bearn Singelsma entered the provincial assembly, where he remained an elected member until 1st January 1980. In the same year 1966 the FNP competed in 7 out of 44 Frisian municipalities at the municipal elections. These elections resulted in the election of 5 FNP-seats in five different municipal councils. Despite this modest beginning, the party proved capable of attracting voters. Since 1966 the FNP has participated in all provincial and municipal elections in Friesland, with varying degrees of success. Since 2003 and 2002 the FNP has been represented with seven members (out of 55) in the provincial assembly and with 48 members (out of 553) in 20 of 31 Frisian municipal councils.
The FNP is the foremost regional party in the Netherlands. Different from the southern Dutch provinces, Friesland and other northern regions, there is no tradition of local and regional parties. Only since the 1994 municipal elections have local lists become more and more a factor in municipal and provincial politics in Friesland, influencing the position of the national parties, in a province in which the FNP was the only real local factor before (Hemminga 2001: 114). Nowadays the FNP has a stable membership of approximately 1,250 members. Compared with the Frisian membership of CDA (christian-democrats) of about 6,800 members, PvdA (socialists) of 4,400 members and VVD (liberals) of about 2,200 members, the FNP has developed itself to a settled factor in Frisian politics (Hemminga 2001: 112).

**Electoral Performance**

When the FNP took part in the provincial elections for the first time, the party gained 6,645 votes and one seat. Four years later charismatic groupchairman Jan Bearn Singelsma was joined in the assembly by a second FNP-representative. In 1974 as many as 21,734 people voted FNP, which elected four members to the provincial assembly. Looking back, the 1974 electoral performance—with 7.4% of the votes—was the third best result in the history of the FNP. However, in 1982 one of the four seats was lost and the party had only three seats until 1998, when 8.5% of the votes delivered four seats in the provincial assembly. In the 2003 elections the FNP gained its best result: 13.2% of the votes and seven seats in the provincial assembly (see graph 15.1).

**Graph 15.1**

**FNP Results Provincial Elections 1966-2003**

![Graph showing FNP results from 1966 to 2003](image-url)
Sometimes the Frisian political climate favours the FNP, as in 1970 when the proposal to abolish the railway connection between Sneek and Staveren led voters in the south-western part of the province to support the FNP. Similarly, at the time, a central government report intending to increase the Frisian population by more than 200,000 people and plans for a huge recreational project were all grist to the FNP's mill. Next to the charismatic and speech-making leadership of Jan Bearn Singelsma these factors contributed to the success of the party between 1966-1974 (De Boer-de Jong 1987: 13-14). After this period, the leadership impact of Jan Bearn Singelsma faded and controversial political issues were less prominent. This downturn in the FNP's political opportunity structure was evident at the elections of 1978, at which the party gained only 4.8% of the votes and two seats in the provincial assembly. Singelsma left the assembly at this time, but a new hot political issue emerged in the area of regional planning. The FNP operated as the spokesman for about 200 Frisian villages who opposed the proposals. The impact on the provincial policy was great, to the cost of the development of the provincial capital and the campaign can be regarded as the greatest success of the FNP in terms of provincial politics. In 1982, 5.4% of the voters voted for the FNP, which grew to three seats in the provincial assembly. Five years later, at the 1987 elections, the FNP became the victim of the polarisation in national politics, the electorate divided between socialists and liberals and the FNP lost two of its seats.

Unlike 1987, the 1991 elections were less tied to national issues and electoral considerations, and the vote for the FNP rose to 6.1% and three seats. In 1995 the FNP scored slightly better than in 1991, but insufficient for a fourth seat. The party had to wait until 2003 to gain the greatest election result in its history. At least two factors can be mentioned to explain the election result of 2003. In the first place the FNP stood out from other parties with its issue ownership concerning the opposition against plans regarding the building of a high-speed rail project, and in the second place, a new and young political leader attracted a lot of voters. But there is another explanation, shown by the electoral history of the FNP. The electoral successes of the FNP do not only depend upon its performance, the appeal of leading personalities or the quality of its programme, but also from political developments in national politics as national political issues take away from regional political attractiveness. This dependent position characterizes the FNP at provincial elections. At the same time, the personal performance of local party leaders seems to be very relevant in the case of municipal elections. For instance the eminent position of the FNP in the municipality of Achtkarspelen, the municipality with the highest number of FNP-voters in the last municipal elections, can partly be explained by the popularity of the local party leader.
Ideology and Autonomy Goals

The party’s ideology can be illustrated by the party’s slogan. That slogan is short and clear: Frisian and Federal. As a matter of fact these two principles go back to the first declaration of the party, as published in 1962 in the first newsletter of the FNP. The FNP strives for self-government for Friesland, based on two reasons: The FNP aims at a democratic and federalistic polity in the Netherlands and Europe, in which lower administrative units should have governing and regulatory powers. Higher administrative organs should, if necessary, coordinate. Higher organs have the power to regulate or co-regulate in the case that lower organs are not able to do so. With recognition of utility and necessity of some central regulations, in the polity of the Kingdom of the Netherlands municipalities should have priority over provinces and the state. The same principle counts for the greater European context. A living democracy demands that a higher administrative organ has no power or does not get power which can be executed as well by a lower administrative organ: the principle of subsidiarity in essence. The FNP takes the existence and the right to exist of the Frisian people for granted. Based upon this situation the party is in favour of autonomy for Friesland, either with other provinces, or in a special constitutional arrangement. The FNP stands at the forefront of Frisian interests and is opposed to damaging and unnecessary centralistic trends. It will promote the social-economic and cultural development of Friesland. The Frisian language should have equal rights as the language of the state, and, have all possibilities to develop.

The first programme of the FNP was aimed at eliminating two main historically developed evils. On one hand the fact that the state takes decisions over the Frisians, with little influence from the Frisians, and on the other hand, the second-class position of the Frisian language in Friesland. Further the programme is in favour of the election of the Commissioner of the King, the highest state official in the province, by the provincial assembly, instead of a state appointment, as still is the case. More important is the party’s demand to raise provincial taxes and its proposal for a Frisian broadcast organisation to be realised within three years. The Frisian landscape should not be damaged, and people should earn their living in their own place or region of residence (Hemminga 2000: 223-4). It should be clear, however, that the dreams of the FNP have not been fulfilled either in those early years, nor later on. Only one issue has been realized. After a lot of efforts by many actors, among them the FNP, the extension of the Frisian broadcasting community through Frisian television was realized in 1994 (Hemminga 2000a: 222-40). The issue of a federal state and self-government was in 1966 and nowadays still an ideal, its realisation is as far away as ever. Dutch politics do not support the idea of federalism at all.
In its recent policy programme, that of 1995-1999 the FNP declared that Friesland should be an autonomous region in Europe. It is not quite clear what the party is intending with that formulation. Does it mean that the FNP ignores the powers of The Hague? Of course not, when the financing of the Frisian broadcasting system is under discussion, the FNP is convinced that the state, and not Brussels or the province of Friesland, should pay. It is also the state which should legislate the equal position of Frisian and Dutch in the Netherlands. But on the other hand the FNP is in favour of provincial control of the educational system in Friesland. Moreover small schools in small villages should be bailed out instead of closed. Provisions like post offices, banks and housing for the elderly in small villages should be continued, whereas large recreational projects and exclusive housing projects in the countryside are not permitted (Hemminga 2000: 224-5).

The continuing thread in the ideology of the FNP does not only consist of a demand for federalism and greater autonomy, two leading but almost unrealisable principles in Dutch politics, but also by the lasting idea that ‘small is beautiful’. Scaling down is in FNP-eyes always better than scaling up. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the FNP strongly opposed a rather substantial reorganisation of Frisian municipalities. In 1983, the historical 44 municipalities were reduced to 31 municipalities, each with a number of residents of at least 10,000. In threatened municipalities such as Doanjewerstal, Drylts, Menameradiel and Frjentsjerteradiel the FNP secured a lot of votes, but without having any possibility to stop the process. This rearrangement of municipalities especially affected the electoral heartland of the FNP. Nowadays the FNP has voters all over the province, but in its first decade of existence the party especially found its electorate in the south-western part of Friesland, a protestant and agricultural area comprised of traditionally liberal-christian-democratic Frisian speaking voters. Later on some eastern parts of the province have joined the western region as popular areas for the FNP. Municipalities like Achtkarspelen and Kollumerlân are nowadays leading FNP-municipalities, with over 25% FNP-voters in 2002. The later shift of these eastern municipalities to the FNP can be explained as a consequence of the more orthodox religious structure of those areas. In other words, it has taken some time to break through traditional voting in those regions due to the substantial barrier created by the pillarization of Dutch society and the compartmentalization of Dutch politics.

In its support for the conservation of old and traditional structures, institutions and provisions the ideology of the FNP can be qualified as right-wing-conservatism. But what can be expected from a party which mainly aims at the conservation of the Frisian language, which is menaced by all kind of modernization? On the other hand in the actual political spectrum the FNP’s ideology can be qualified as rather left-wing-progressiveness in the domain of environmentalism, energy politics and agricultural politics. The
question of the right- or left-wing character of the party has been problematic since the foundation of the FNP. The absence of a clear economic policy in the party programme is one indication of the problem, solved by the party by saying: ‘We’re not right, we’re not left, we’re only Frisian’. Particularly in the first decades, in the sixties and seventies, Dutch politics were characterized by a strong polarization between parties on the right and the left, the left- or right-wing identity of the FNP played some role among voters and FNP-members of the provincial assembly. Jan Bearn Singelsma, chairman of the FNP-group in the provincial assembly between 1966 and 1980, had a fairly right-wing image, which played some role in his resigning office. However, nowadays, the question right or left plays a much lesser role.

A continuous theme within the party has been the adjective ‘national’ in the party’s name. In 1970 party-founder Pyt Kramer thought that the N in the name of the party overshadowed the federal aspects of the party. But other FNP-members were fully in favour of the N of national in the party’s name. In 1991 two local departments of the FNP reopened the matter of the party’s name and party members were asked to give their opinion on the issue. With help of a survey the majority of the members were quite content with the name, but a large minority was against the name and favoured change. The general meeting of November 1992 decided to keep the original name. In September 2000, in a survey among the membership on whether the FNP should take part in national elections, the question of the name was raised again. Just as ten years before a quarter of the membership were in favour of change, six percent was strictly in favour of removing the N, whereas nearly half of the membership were in favour of the N of national in the name. Why such problems with the adjective national? The explanation is that Frisians (just like the Dutch, and Frisians are Dutch) are not nationalists. The national consciousness of Dutch is very weak, although international football matches may give a somewhat different impression. There is not any Dutch sympathy for Frisian nationalism meaning a movement striving for its own state. In reality such a movement has never existed in Friesland. Although neither Frisian nationalism nor the programme of the FNP seek Friesland’s independence from the Netherlands, the public is quite clear in its judgement. As a matter of fact the public does not make any distinction between different types of nationalism, and is it not easy to make a relationship between Frisian nationalism and national socialism? When journalists met FNP-chairman Tsjerk Jehannes de Jong in the sixties, they are quite astonished at not meeting a national socialist. In conclusion, the reason why the adjective national is a contentious issue within the FNP has a lot to do with the fact that the adjective national is counter-productive in the case of elections. On the other hand Frisians who are consciousness of their own language, culture and history have no problem with the adjective national, which actually is synonymous with Michael Hechter’s peripheral
nationalism, i.e. the pursuit of a more autonomous place not outside, but within the Dutch state (Hechter 2000: 15-17).

The 2000 survey among the FNP membership also made the party’s profile clear, which the public relates to the FNP. This profile consists of five different aspects, which can be determined as:

- green: meaning nature, conservation of the landscape and biological agriculture;
- countryside;
- small-scaled;
- administrative powers for Friesland;
- Frisianness.

The element ‘Frisianness’ forms a concept that is wider than just the Frisian language, though the public views the FNP first and foremost as a language party. Interestingly, it is clear that in the electorate’s eyes federalism, one of the two main principles of the party, does not belong to the FNP-profile!

**Party Membership**

In 1992 Penrose posed the question: ‘Who are Frisian nationalists?’ (Penrose 1992). To answer this question she made an investigation into the membership of the FNP. Firstly Penrose examined the socio-economic characteristics of the FNP-membership to determine its fundamental social characteristics of age, gender, and marital status. With regard to the age distribution of FNP members it was clear that there was not any difference with non-FNP-members. The FNP was not the exclusive domain of youngsters, middle aged, or the elderly. Ultimately the FNP was supported by all age groups. In terms of gender, membership in the FNP indicated that men were nearly three times more likely than women to join the FNP. Though again there was not any great difference with national parties, with the exception of the membership of D66 which is characterized by a fifty-fifty distribution in so far as gender is concerned (Hemminga 2001: 112). With regard to marital status, the FNP data contradict any romantic notions which see nationalists as loners who have dedicated themselves —heart, mind, body and soul— to the nationalist cause. In fact, the vast majority of FNP-members were married. Compared with the Frisian population at large, it even appeared that the FNP was slightly overrepresented in the married and living-together categories (Penrose 1992: 94-6).

In the Netherlands, as a whole, religion has played a critical and lasting role in shaping the entire structure of society. The tolerance of ideological differences was essential to the formation of a unified political entity from
the diverse groups which occupied the Netherlands. Over time this led to the institutionalization of pillarization, or ‘verzuiling’ as it has been called in Dutch, which created a society of essentially self-contained units, or pillars. Though the insularity of these pillars has been quite reduced in recent years, particularly as a result of declining religious commitment, each of these traditional pillars is still represented by a political party, and it is these parties that dominate Dutch and Frisian politics. The power of religious affiliation in determining political allegiance means that it is, or anyhow was difficult for new parties to attract voters who are committed to a particular religion and with that to a particular political party. In 1990 this reality was reflected in the fact that the largest block of FNP-voters had no religious affiliation. Next to that the FNP has drawn members from all religious groups. Compared with the Frisians at large even a disproportionately high number of party members also belonged to the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, or associated themselves with Baptist congregations. FNP-members are or anyway were slightly under-represented among Roman Catholics and Calvinists (Penrose 1992: 96-7). These groups form minorities within the Frisian society and that may be one of the reasons why they remained loyal to their original pillars.

FNP-members were relatively well-educated, compared to the level of education of the Frisian population at large. Whereas 43% of the FNP-members had higher level training or university education, only 21% of the investigated non-FNP-members and a mere 8% of a 1980 survey fell into these categories. Conversely, the FNP was relatively under-represented in the three lowest levels of education. However, Penrose compared the FNP-membership with non-FNP-members, if FNP-members were compared with the memberships of other Dutch parties, then it would have been clear that the membership of political parties was especially attractive for well-educated middle-aged men (Hemminga 2001: 112). And, when the actual and important functions of political parties are reviewed, i.e. mediator between persons and political offices, it is not surprising to discover that well-educated middle-aged men constitute the majority of the party-membership. At the same time the FNP has little role in these mediating functions, because there are only a few public offices occupied by FNP-members.

The observation that people with all kinds of jobs, and from the full spectrum of employment status, have decided to join the FNP is rather surprising. It is also clear that the majority of members worked as middle-level-employees or practice high-level occupations. FNP-members cannot be identified with a particular type of work and their commitment to a regionalist party cannot be explained by marginalization in the work force (Penrose 1992: 98-9). Income was another factor in determining social status. The FNP has drawn members from the full range of income groups. It is clear that FNP-members were under-represented in at least the three lowest income categories
and over-represented in the three highest. This indicates that, on average, FNP-members were better off than most residents of Friesland. But at the same time the actual 1,250 members of the FNP did not distinguish themselves from the membership of other political parties in Friesland. When the statistics on income are combined with those on education and occupation, it becomes clear that FNP-members did not conform to the general trend that sees pro-Frisian attitudes strongly correlated with low social status. FNP-members can be seen as an interesting exception to the general pattern, so that one can speak about an advance guard. But these conclusions do not deviate from conclusions on the membership of every Dutch political party.

Language is an important background, principle and issue for the FNP, so Penrose assumed that an examination of linguistic background and language use would tell something about FNP-membership. FNP-voters were more likely to speak Frisian or a Frisian dialect as their mother tongue than Dutch or any other language or dialect. The FNP-membership was more likely than other members of Frisian society to have Frisian as its first language. Next to that 5% of the FNP’s members were native Dutch speakers. This makes clear that the FNP drew its members from both the Frisian speaking and the Dutch speaking segments of society. Similar conclusions can be derived from an examination of functional ability in the various aspects of Frisian language use. The results indicated that FNP-members were better skilled in understanding, speaking, reading and writing the Frisian language, than members of Frisian society in general. But none of these skills was the exclusive domain of FNP-members. FNP-members however distinguished themselves, including nearly 16% of FNP-members who did not speak Frisian as their mother tongue, by speaking and reading the language with reasonable facility. Moreover only 3% of the FNP-membership was unable to write Frisian at all. That means that the FNP-membership has made a conscious effort to improve its functional abilities in Frisian language use. In contrast Frisians at large reveal that many of those who speak Frisian as their mother tongue have not retained the ability to read or write this language. Accordingly FNP-members were characterised by an active commitment to the preservation and promotion of the Frisian language (Penrose 1992: 102-3).

What is the political orientation of the FNP membership? Just in relationship to the missing clear identity of the FNP on a left-to-right spectrum, it is relevant to know the political orientation of the FNP-membership. When FNP-members were asked to identify themselves as left- or right-wing, their responses covered the full breadth of the political spectrum. Moreover 2% of the respondents actually demonstrated resistance to the very concept of a left-to-right spectrum by creating their own category: ‘both left — and right — wing’. Cultural concern is the common bond between FNP-members. More specifically FNP-members were people whose concern for Frisian culture had been translated into a political priority
(Penrose 1992: 111). Until then, the FNP had only taken part in municipal and provincial elections. When national or European elections came up, FNP-voters had to forgo their rights or vote for another party. In that case the majority of the FNP-voters were voting either socialist, christian-democrat or for small left-wing-parties, rather than left-wing liberals, liberals and the small right-wing parties. Having said this, the fact remains that nearly 20% of the FNP-members would vote for parties associated with anti-Frisian perspectives. This phenomenon has to do with the shift to the national political sphere, which is accompanied by greater support for parties that actually resist the preservation and promotion of Friesland’s cultural distinctiveness. If the FNP did not take part in provincial elections, most of the party’s supporters could switch their allegiance to another party that espoused pro-Frisian attitudes. In national elections, however, Frisian issues are not considered relevant and a number of people take the seemingly irrational step of voting for parties that are associated with overly anti-Frisian attitudes in provincial politics (Penrose 1992: 112). Where the survival of Friesland and Frisian language and culture is perceived to be at stake, FNP voters subordinate political proclivities primarily based on social or economic concerns to a secondary position. Only where Frisian issues are not a consideration do FNP members allow these other more traditional political interests to regain a position of priority (Penrose 1992: 114).

Leadership and Party Organisation

Who are the FNP’s leaders? The young founders of the FNP, Folkert Binnema and Pyt Kramer, were in the party’s early days a student at a teacher training college and an electrician. The first chairman of the party, Tsjerk Jehannes de Jong, was a well-to-do farmer and his successor Jaap Rinzema, was a state-archivist of Friesland. Four of the seven chairmen in the FNP’s history had an academic degree. Since 1966 five of the seventeen FNP-representatives in Friesland’s provincial assembly had an academic degree. The FNP’s first chairman in the provincial assembly was a teacher at a vocational secondary school for agriculture. His successor was an economist and teacher in secondary general education, and Geeske Krol, chairwoman between 1982 and 1995, was an agricultural engineer. Her successor, Jan van der Baan, 1995-2003, was a teacher in special elementary education. Since 2003 Jehannes Kramer was chairman of the FNP-group in the provincial assembly and the party’s political leader. He has an academic degree in public administration. The party is organized in one provincial department with a central board as the highest organ and a number of municipal departments, which are, based on their bylaws, recognized by the central board of the FNP. The party has no professional staff, but is a real
volunteer organisation. Since the very beginning the FNP the party had its own information bulletin: the Frijbütser, which is published about ten times a year and 350 issues have been published.

Nowadays the FNP is represented in 21 out of 31 Frisian municipalities by 39 men and 11 women. They represent all kinds of occupations, but 20% of the FNP representatives earn their living as a public servant and the same percentage of the representatives is employed in the domain of education. The FNP membership of the provincial assembly consists of four men and three women. Seen in a perspective of gender divisions and vocations the small FNP - group in provincial and municipal councils does not really differ from that of other political parties (Hemminga 2001: 124).

The FNP is a member of the European Free Alliance (EFA), founded in 1981 as an alliance of political parties which aim at integral regionalism. The FNP is too small even to think about participation in European elections. In the late 1990s the FNP considered participation in Dutch elections for the Second Chamber of Parliament. In 1997 the central board of the party decided to join in the national elections of 1998, but the party saw this plan was unrealistic due to lack of time and a shortage of funds. A small committee investigated the opportunities to have success in national elections and concluded that the party should at least meet conditions like sufficient preparation time, sufficient funds, a high quality party leadership and an attractive programme. In 2001 the FNP decided to join in national elections after estimating that it was realistic to meet the national electoral quota. Cooperation with other regional parties in the Netherlands has resulted in a FNP-member as a chairman and only member of the Onafhankelijke Senaatsfractie.

**Conclusion**

The FNP can be seen as the political manifestation of the Frisian Movement, which had, until the founding of the FNP in 1962, mainly a linguistic and cultural character. The foundation of the FNP was largely driven by younger generations, who dared to do what their predecessors had not by entering party politics and elections, doubtless helped by the changing cultural and political climate in the Netherlands in the 1960s. The electoral strategy gained some success, with the FNP winning one seat in the provincial assembly in 1966. After that moderate beginning the party broadened its base in the Frisian speaking municipalities. From then until 2003 the party's provincial electorate grew from 2.4% in 1966 to 13.2% of the voters. Though the FNP-election results cannot be characterized as stable and only increased in the course of time, the FNP developed to become a stable and continuous factor in Frisian politics. However, it would not be correct to conclude that the institutionalization of the FNP is complete, as is proven by
the actual number of official offices occupied by members of the FNP. Since 1966, the party has only elected one mayor, one senator, three aldermen and, since its creation, has never enjoyed membership of the provincial executive. Such limited office success is rather disappointing for the FNP and does not do justice to the percentage of voters it gained over the years.

The FNP has pursued two principles of which one, the aim of a federalistic polity can be qualified as rather unrealistic in Dutch politics, and the other one, the preservation of the Frisian language does not do justice to the party’s broader politics and policy. As a matter of fact the regional status of the party is a weakening factor, as the electoral performance of the FNP always runs up against the relevance of national politics in Friesland and the centralized politics of the Dutch state. Provincial elections are ‘second order’ elections (Hemminga 2001), and it is easy to undermine provincial themes under the weight of national issues and politicians. The membership of the FNP does not really differ from the membership of national parties or provincial departments of those parties. Only in one aspect does the FNP-membership differ from that of other parties, that is to say in the knowledge of and ability to use the Frisian language. FNP-members are more skilled in understanding, speaking, reading and writing the Frisian language, than members of Frisian society in general. But none of these skills are the exclusive domain of FNP-members. However, this situation presents something of a dilemma for the FNP. On the one hand, the FNP is not only a language party, with its federalist stance and range of policies, but on the other hand the FNP is the main arbiter of the preservation of the Frisian language and therefore a real language party.

Notes

1. Since 1st January 1997, the official name of the province is Fryslân. In this chapter I use the internationally better known name Friesland.

2. The Republic of the United Netherlands (1579-1795) was the first federal state in modern history. After three intermediate forms, between 1795 and 1813, in the last year the French authority over the Netherlands came to an end and since the end of that year the Netherlands was reigned by King Willem I. In 1814 a new constitution came into force, which had to be adapted under the influence of international developments in 1815. These constitutions form the base for the modern state with unity of legislation, administration of justice, government and finances. The centralised character of the Netherlands can be illustrated by article 131 of the Constitution, which established provinces and municipalities with their constitution and powers provided for by law. The law also prescribes what taxes can be levied by provinces and municipalities. The financial relationship between state and provinces and municipalities are also arranged by law (See: J. W. van Deth, J. C. P. M. Vis, Regeren in Nederland.).
3. Generally Dutch and Frisian are seen as the two languages spoken in the Netherlands, but under the European charter on regional or minority languages other languages are recognised in the Netherlands such as Limburger, Lower-Saxon, Yiddish and Romanes.

4. The Frisian speaking regions of the province (country-side and the so-called ‘new towns’) make that there is a habitus for a lot of Dutch speakers to converge to Frisian in the daily contacts. In the less regular contacts in more formal settings an increase in the use of Dutch and a decrease in the use of Frisian and the regional varieties is shown. All the same the percentages of Frisian language behaviour by native speakers of Frisian remain high in these settings, especially in the Frisian speaking regions. See: Jonkman (2001), ‘Taalgedrach yn Fryslân besjoen neffens it begryp ‘taalhabitux’.

5. Eeltsje Boates Folkertsma (1893-1968) was one of the leading figures in the Frisian movement since the 1920s.


7. At the time of the first step to the FNP Folkert Binnema (1937) was a student at the teacher training college ‘Mariënburg’ in Leeuwarden. He went into hiding, when he was confronted with all the journalists wanting to know the intentions and aims of the initiators. After some days he withdrew from the FNP-initiative. See: Kerst Huisman, Tusken Fryskse dream en Nederlânske macht.


9. Fedde Schurer (1898-1968) was between 1956 and 1963 a member of parliament for the PvdA (socialists).


13. Until now the FNP did not take part in municipal elections in non-Frisian speaking areas such as the Frisian islands and the Stellingwerven.

14. From issue n. 5, June 1964 on, FNP’s information bulletin is called Frijbûtser.


23. Since the mid-1990s, the FNP had only one state-appointed mayor and, depending on election and coalition results, 3 out of 91 alderman in Friesland and one member of the first chamber of parliament.
24. The *Onafhankelijke Senaatsfractie* (OSF = Independent Senate Group) is a cooperation of 11 different political parties, with 18 seats represented in 9 different provinces. The *FNP* is with seven seats in the provincial assembly of Friesland by far the greatest party of these quite different parties and lists of candidates. The OSF was founded in 1999 and represented with one seat in the Dutch First Chamber of Parliament. Since 2003 Hendrik ten Hoeve, former chairman of the *FNP* in the provincial assembly, is a senator. See: http://www.osf.nl.

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