5. Constitutional reform, abolition, and apprenticeship

It was not until March 1848 that King William II finally conceded to liberal calls for reform of the Dutch constitution, an initiative from the House of Representatives. Public opinion had by now turned against the conservative Ministry of the Colonies, where Jean Chrétien Baud as minister had come to personify the old colonial system.[428] Pressured by his waning popularity, by the revolutionary unrest in Paris and the German principalities, and by Dutch blackmailers, William II decided to save his own skin at the expense of his cabinet. His ministers, he claimed, had kept him "in chains."[429] To the Speaker of the House, he insisted that he had personally – without consulting his ministers – come to the conclusion that constitutional reform was a matter of national interest. The liberal politicians J.R. Thorbecke and D.D. Curtius and the conservative L.A. Lightenvelt were instructed to draw up a proposal. Thanks to this manoeuvre and the appointment of a constitutional commission, William II effectively bypassed his ministers; amongst them Baud, who had previously put forward proposals for moderate constitutional reform without success. Parliament had received petitions requesting that the abolition of slavery be included in the new constitution as a matter of principle, as part of a broader emancipatory campaign; the petitioners also pleaded for freedom of religion and education. The Council of Ministers did consider adopting emancipation as a constitutional principle, but decided that it would be unwise to do so.[430]

The version of the revised constitution piloted through the States General by Donker Curtius thus made no mention of slavery. Worse still for the proponents of abolition, it actually deprived them of a key driving force in a central position of power. Baud resigned as minister as a matter of honour: in his view parliament should not have any say over the formulation and implementation of colonial policy. With his departure the department lost the initiator and liaison who, since 1840, had been the principle point of contact for the Amsterdam lobbyists, for the colonial administrators in The Hague, and for their envoys in the Caribbean. As such, with regard to the issue of abolition, 1848 marked a turning point in the relationship between the government and those with interests in slavery.[431] And this just at a point when international politics was pushing the matter back onto the political agenda in The Hague: in that same year, France finally abolished slavery, creating free territory right on the Netherlands' doorstep on the shared island of St Maarten.

At DNB, meanwhile, the composition of the board of directors and the board of non-executive directors was also very much moving with the times, reflecting in particular the rise of industry in the second half of the nineteenth century.[432] Evidence of the bank's prestige in these years can be found in the way these officials flaunted their position on the public stage. Take for instance roman catholic trustee Johannes Emanuel Bonnike (1798-1882; n. 1863-1880), who together with his father Gerhardus (1742-1808) and son Leonardus Maria (1840-1919) ran the trading house G. Bonnike & Son. For a long time, this firm was known as a linen merchant in Amsterdam, and although it did indeed import large quantities of that cloth up until 1835, colonial goods from Surinam and elsewhere were also an important part of its business: tobacco, cotton, indigo, and other products, shipped in from both Dutch and non-Dutch ports.[433] With the capital he had accrued by the 1850s, Bonnike began to invest in new public limited liability companies such as lending bank De Rente-Cassa and the Nederlandsche Chemische Fabriek (Netherlands Chemical Works). He also owned shares in a number of banks – the Credit- en Depositobank, the Nederlandsche Hypotheekbank, and De Surinaamsche Bank[434] – and served as a non-executive director for various companies, such as insurance firm Securitas in Amsterdam, the Amsterdamsche Kanaalmaatschappij (Amsterdam Canal Company, engaged in digging the North Sea Canal), and the Amsterdamsche Scheepvaart-Maatschappij (Amsterdam Shipping Company).[435] Advertisements for these companies' shares not only mentioned Bonnike by name but also pointed out that he was a trustee of De Nederlandsche Bank. By this time, that was clearly a byword for trustworthiness. Together with Willem Cornelis Mees and others, Bonnike formed the electoral association De Grondwet (The Constitution). In the 1850s, the association dominated elections to the provincial assembly in Noord-Holland because it favoured retaining the protectionist cultivation system in the Dutch East Indies, a popular cause with the Amsterdam business community.[436]

By playing an active role in setting up and running associations of this kind, the financial elite managed to retain its political power after 1848. Since the constitutional reform of that year, the House of Representatives had been directly elected. The country was divided into constituencies, with the electorate confined to men who paid more than a certain amount of tax. Electoral associations put forward suggestions for suitable candidates. Nicolaas Gerard Pierson (d. 1868-1885; p. 1885-1891), like fellow DNB officials Mees and Bonnike, was a prominent member of De Grondwet, the association in Amsterdam for distinguished moderate liberals. In 1866, its list of candidates included two relatives of former colleagues at DNB: Herman Albrecht Insinger and H. Luden. Pierson also tried to persuade other associations in the city to support the list; for instance, by organising a joint meeting with the electoral association Burgerpligt (Civic Duty). Liberal politician Isaäc Dignus Fransen van de Putte praised "the appointment of Mr Mees to lead the meeting [as] a masterstroke, [which] has generally made a good impression both in and outside Amsterdam".[437] Mees' authority clearly had the desired effect: during the 1860s and 1870s, Burgerpligt shifted the political balance in Amsterdam, allowing the liberals to gain the upper hand over the conservatives and anti-revolutionaries.[438]

In 1851, future DNB non-executive director Pieter Jacob Teding van Berkhout (n. 1856-1886) was one of the founders and first committee members of the anti-revolutionary electoral association Nederland en Oranje (The Netherlands and Orange) in the capital. He and his brother James John were also members of the Protestant revivalist Réveil movement led by Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, an outspoken abolitionist sometimes known as "the Dutch Wilberforce" (after the famous British abolitionist William Wilberforce).[439] The other members of the Nederland en Oranje committee were H. van Marselis Hartsinck, H.M. Labouchere and C.F. Gülcher – all surnames that, in earlier generations, had appeared on petitions from inhabitants of Amsterdam with interests in slavery in Surinam. In appointing them, the association had actively sought men with knowledge of the West Indies.[440] With their backing, Teding van Berkhout won a seat in the provincial assembly in 1852 and held onto it uninterrupted until 1883. He was also a judge in the district court and involved in numerous philanthropic activities linked to Réveil, as initiator, committee member, or benefactor.

One of the institutions set up by Réveil was the Benevolent Fund of the Society for the Advancement of Religious Education amongst the Heathen Peoples of Surinam (Fonds der Maatschappij ter Bevordering van het Godsdienstig Onderwijs onder de Heidensche Bevolking in Suriname).[441] The colonial administration considered Christianisation of the enslaved people an essential precondition for their emancipation, so the work of The Hague Society – as the organisation was more concisely known – was an important step along the road to abolition.[442] Although we cannot say how Teding van Berkhout viewed slavery itself, he was most definitely concerned about saving the souls of the people enslaved in the West Indies.

DNB directors in the second half of the nineteenth century

Despite increasing industrialisation in the Netherlands, there were still DNB officials involved in slavery in the late nineteenth century, either economically or administratively. Such involvement could take a variety of forms. With regard to plantations, as well as owning them directly, in whole or in part, a person could be active in their administration, finance their loans, represent their shareholders in a fund, and/or personally own a stake in such a fund. As for trade, although transatlantic human trafficking had been outlawed, dealing in slave goods (as Crommelin did; see Chapter 1) was still allowed, of course, and so was processing them (as Croockewit and Van Eeghen did). Finally, after 1863 it remained possible to receive Dutch compensation for the abolition of slavery – just as it had been available from the British post-1833.

The administrative documentation of the abolition of slavery in the Dutch part of the Atlantic region on 1 July, 1863 has been well preserved and contains not only long lists of the people freed, sorted by plantation, but also an overview of the indemnified owners. Of the six directors of DNB on that date, three are found in the latter group.[443] For Jacobus Hermanus Insinger (d. 1844-1871), the payment as a partner in Insinger & Co totalled *f* 255,000.[444]

Ferdinand Rendorp (d. 1845-1865) acted as "general assignee of all the interested parties and holders of shares in the W.G. Deutz fund". This had been set up in 1753 by Willem Gideon Deutz (1697-1757) as the first of the so-called negotaties, funds allowing investors in Amsterdam to buy a share in colonial mortgages. At general meetings, they elected assignees, agents, commissioners, and representatives nominated by the leading shareholders to look after their interests in the fund. As assignee, Rendorp was supposed to promote the interests of the shareholders of this fund.

In 1863, the fund's portfolio included several plantations in Surinam – *Vreeland*, *La Paix*, *Johannesburg*, and *D'Alyda* – for which its investors eventually received total amounts, respectively, of *f* 79,200 (for 264 enslaved persons); *f* 59,700 (199 enslaved persons); *f* 66,600 (222 enslaved persons), and *f* 24,600 (82 enslaved persons).[445] Sloppy bookkeeping caused their original application for compensation to be rejected because they were unable to prove definitively that the fund actually owned these people. A year later, the shareholders were able to provide sufficient additional documentation and their claim was upheld.

Alongside his mandate for the W.G. Deutz fund, Rendorp also represented the shareholders in the company Weduwe J.S. van de Poll. Amongst its holdings were the plantations *Zorg en Hoop*, *Purmerend*, *Beekvliet*, *Bleijendaal*, and *Potribo*,[446] where 393 people were enslaved in all. They generated indemnities totalling *f* 117,900. Finally, Rendorp was also the agent in the Netherlands for the plantations *Lust tot Rust* and *Einde Rust*, where another 114 enslaved people yielded *f* 34,200. Unfortunately, the records do not state how much Rendorp himself received from these payouts.

The third DNB director to be compensated in 1863 was Johannes Hermanus Molkenboer (s. 1863-1871). His son of the same name is far better known today than his father, due primarily to his marriage to prominent feminist pioneer Hermanna Elisabeth Trip (1851-1911) and the purchase of a steam-powered weaving mill in Oldenzaal that owed its subsequent success to her business acumen. Molkenboer senior's entitlement to compensation in 1863 was down to his spouse. In 1840, he had married Catharina Henriette Elisabeth Eijben (1818-1890), a descendant through her mother of plantation owner Pieter Kerkhoven. Her 11/144th share was the largest single holding in *Adrichem* in Surinam and yielded her and her husband *f* 2,431.08 to indemnify them for the equivalent of more than eight enslaved people.[447]

There are also two DNB officials, Jan van Heukelom (d. 1851-1879) and Ananias Willink (d. 1835-1845; n. 1846-1852), whose surnames appear in the compensation records. We therefore investigated whether either was a close relative of the actual recipient. Since trading in plantation shares had largely ceased by the 1860s, most were inherited. An indemnified brother or father may indicate that other family members also had links with slavery.

Compensation recipient Frans van Heukelom is obviously someone other than DNB director Jan, whose first wife, Anna Margareta Beetz, died in 1847. Six years later he was living on Keizersgracht in Amsterdam, at number 373, with his second wife, Emilie Cornelia. Jan's grandfather, uncle and brother were all called Frans van Heukelom.[448] However, none of these is the one who, as commissioner of the W.G. Deutz fund in 1863, signed for receipt of its indemnity. That was in fact Jan's first cousin, the son of his uncle Frans. And there is no evidence that Jan himself participated in any slavery-related activities.[449]

The Willink family was partly British, but Ananias Willink was a member of its Dutch branch; he was born in Amsterdam in 1778 to Jan Ananias Willink and Johanna van der Laan. His father's British-born cousins formed the firm Daniel & John Abraham Willink & Co, which is listed in 1837 as receiving compensation following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. The plantation concerned was *La Bonne Intention* in British Guiana (which had been mortgaged to Van Eeghen & Co; see Chapter 3), but there is no reason to suppose that Ananias had any involvement with it.[450] While his father had always been a merchant first and foremost, Ananias Willink was primarily a company administrator and politician. As well as serving as a director and non-executive director of DNB and a non-executive director of the West Indies Company (West-Indische Maatschapij), he was a supernumerary member of the House of Representatives during the constitutional reform of 1840, and a member of the Noord-Holland Provincial Estates between 1840 and 1856.[451] By the time of his death in 1863, he had amassed a considerable fortune. As well as several pieces of land and houses in the Netherlands, he owned securities including ƒ50,000 in shares in DNB, but none related to slavery.[452] The Willink indemnified in 1863, Jan Abraham Willink Willemszoon, was a relative, but only a distant one: a cousin of the British Willinks mentioned above.[453] Whilst not reimbursed as an owner of enslaved people, Ananias was involved with slavery in his capacity as a non-executive director of the West Indies Company.

Although the president of DNB on 1 July, 1863, Mees, was an outspoken opponent of slavery, he shared the boardroom with three men who would be indemnified for its abolition.

Insinger in particular was no silent partner in the plantation investments made by his family firm; as a director of Insinger & Co, he involved himself actively with the mortgage funds it administered. We have already discussed how this also applied to Huydecoper (see Chapter 3), with meetings sometimes held at his home. One such gathering attended by both men, a meeting of the directors of the Biesterbos fund in 1836, once again reveals the extent to which they were implicated in the policies enforced on the ground in Surinam.

The Biesterbos portfolio comprised six plantation loans, one of them for *De Nieuwe Grond* in Surinam. This estate had seen better times and, amongst other things, its buildings were in need of maintenance. Many of the people enslaved there had been weakened by a bout of measles, but fortunately no one had died. Nevertheless, they decided to extend the plantation a further credit of *f* 6,000 "for the effective strengthening of the slave force."[454] A good part of that money had already been spent: *f* 4,550 as "the purchase price of five negresses and six young children" and, only recently, another *f* 700 for "a young and strong negress named Kaatje."[455] This "strengthening" brought the total number of those enslaved on *De Nieuwe Grond* to 124 – 75 men and boys, 49 women and girls. Even more hands could do no harm, though, so the directors readily agreed to a request by the head carpenter, J. Carrevelo. He asked that his seven-year-old daughter, Katrijntje, might receive "the gift of liberty" in exchange for "a healthy and strong negro girl" of adult age.[456] A good deal, the meeting reckoned, from which "*De Nieuwe Grond* can only [...] gain."[457]

From this example, it is clear just how closely some fund directors and non-executive directors monitored the day-to-day running of plantations. For the Cooke fund, also administered by Insinger, a detailed inventory of all the people it enslaved has survived. At *Resolutie*, part of this portfolio, the ages and duties of 94 men, 79 women, 42 boys, and 53 girls are noted. And alongside each individual entry is a space for comments. Magdalena, a housemaid, is listed as "mulatto" and "pregnant." Francis is "old, of little use." Jan is "crooked and cross-eyed." Finally, Jupiter has been "absent for years."[458] The enslaved were thus known in Amsterdam by name, age and sex, and decisions about which of them could and could not receive "the gift of liberty" were taken at meetings there. It is also obvious from these records that even well after the ending of the slave trade by William I in 1814, and the legal ban on the supply of new people to slavery in Surinam in 1828, the purchase of adults and children for plantations there continued. Insinger's involvement with slavery only ended when it was made illegal.

Since many of the executives of DNB had a background as bankers, several also appear as partners in firms providing plantation loans. Some of the same names also appear time and again as shareholders in mortgage funds: many of the banking families in Amsterdam invested in each other's ventures. Not all of the funds' records have survived, so we lack a complete picture of everyone who received interest payments (distributions) on these investments. Likewise, not all of the individuals concerned have left financial or probate documentation in the archives, so we have been unable to trace exactly who participated in what.

The fact that many of the examples we cite begin with Jacobus Hermanus Insinger is partly because the archive of the trading house founded by his father, Herman Albert Insinger (1757-1805), has been so well preserved. Later DNB director Jacobus Hermanus joined the firm as a partner in 1821, and in that capacity was involved with funds responsible for at least 21 plantation loans in Surinam, Berbice, St Thomas, St Croix, and St John. Due to their transnational nature, it is not possible here to provide an accurate estimate of the total number of enslaved people used as collateral for these payments. As a firm, Insinger & Co was involved with at least eight separate plantation mortgage funds. And in one case there are surviving annual records of the "slave force" included in its assets. That is the Linck fund, set up in 1830, the founding deed of which was signed not only by Insinger and his brother, but also by Johanna Borski's son and by P.C. Labouchere. It financed three plantations in Surinam, *Anna Catharina*, *Jagtlust*, and *Zoelen*, where a total of 744 people were enslaved in 1836, of whom 695 remained in 1840.[459]

Because the documentation from Insinger & Co is so well preserved, it is also possible to illustrate how the returns on a plantation fund were distributed in the Netherlands using an example from 1836. In the payments book for *Zeezigt* in Surinam, the firm kept a record of who had received proceeds from its mortgages and how they were paid out. The shares yielded 6 per cent dividend per annum, and each year a number of shares were drawn by lot and redeemed in full. But the plantation did not always generate enough to enable this distribution. In 1833 and 1834, for example, no payments were forthcoming. But in 1835 a single payout was made to cover all the three years. The example in Table 6 is from 1836, when there were still 169 outstanding shares qualifying for dividend. This year has been chosen because, unlike the previous three, it was one in which the fund worked as intended.

Table 6. *Extract from the payments book of the Zeezigt mortgage fund from 1836.*

Month	Date	Holders	Coupons	Interest in *f*	Method of payment
January	6	Baum	1	60	Ned. Bank
January	6	Van 't Vlie, Windsen, Van Limmeken	4	240	Ned. Bank
January	6	Wed. Baum	10	600	Ned. Bank
January	6	Swarth/Schellwald	1	60	Ned. Bank
January	11	Wed. W. Borski	116	6,960	Offset
January	11	The minor H.A. Insinger	7	420	Current account
January	11	A.Insinger	3	180	Current account
January	11	A.F. Insinger	5	300	Current account
January	11	Hermina Maria Jacoba Insinger	1	60	Current account
January	11	J.H. Insinger	5	300	Current account
January	11	Anna Hermina Insinger	1	60	Current account
January	11	G.A. Swebilius	1	60	Ned. Bank
January	20	Swarth/Schellwald	13	780	By S & S
March	30	C. de Veer jr	1	60	Cash
		Total	169	10,140	

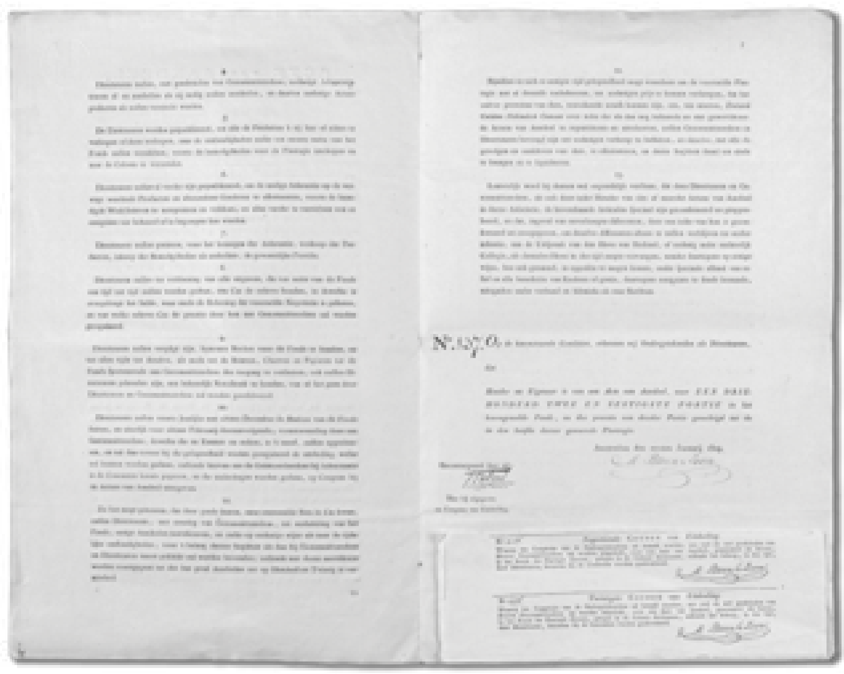
Source: NL-AsdSAA, 1455, Inventaris van het Archief van de Bank Insinger & Co. [Inventory of the archives of the bank Insinger & Co.], inv. no. 1456: "Betaalboek" [Payments Book] 1821-1839.

Bearing in mind that one coupon could be redeemed per share, the first striking thing about this list is that "Wed. W. Borski" – the widow Johanna Borski – had by far the largest holding in this fund: more than two-thirds of its shares. Since each of these had a nominal value of *f* 1,000, at some point someone had paid *f* 116,000 for them. Johanna was not actually paid the 6 per cent dividend that these yielded, *f* 6,960 in cash, but instead that amount was offset against other payment traffic between the firms Insinger & Co and Wed. W. Borski. What she did receive (not shown in the above extract) was the full face-value of five shares drawn by lot, *f* 5,000, plus the dividend they had accrued in the past four and a half months. That was *f* 22.50 each, or *f* 112.50 in all. Another interesting point is that various members of the Insinger family themselves held shares, so they not only administered this fund but also owned part of it. DNB director Jacobus Hermanus Insinger, for example, redeemed five coupons that year. The *f* 300 they yielded him was credited to his current account with the firm as liquid funds. The "minor" H. A. Insinger is probably Herman Albrecht (1827-1911); even at the age of nine, he evidently benefitted from the proceeds of *Zeezigt* by cashing in seven coupons. In later life, he would become well known as a Conservative member of parliament (1866-1884). Finally, there is a clear connection with DNB in the fact that payments totalling *f* 1,020, about 10 per cent of the distribution, were made using the bank's paper notes. This says nothing about its involvement in slavery, but does show that DNB was playing a significant role in the Dutch payment system by the 1830s.

The *Surinaamsche Almanak* for 1836 lists *Zeezigt* as home to 421 enslaved people.[460] Based upon a count from 1848 in which names and years of birth are recorded, we can ascertain that in 1836 three of them – Sibilla, Trobellina, and Jansie 2ᵉ – each bore a child into slavery there, respectively the boys Alexander, Verdriet, and Jacques.[461]

Further names possibly associated with DNB are found in the payment books of other plantation funds managed by Insinger & Co. For example, a "Röell" who received a total of *f* 516 for ten Dedel coupons in 1835. Since no initial is given, it is not possible to say with certainty whether this is Willem Röell (d. 1828-1829), but that is certainly not unlikely. The same applies to a "Rendorp" – possibly Ferdinand – who redeemed 37 coupons in the same fund.[462]

As early as the turn of the nineteenth century, shares in plantations and their mortgage funds had lost all their commercial or book value. Most owners had inherited them, as Herman Hendrik Beels (d. 1864-1889) probably did from his father.[463] The lack of a market also meant that shareholders found them hard to dispose of, unless they were willing to accept that their entire portfolio would most likely raise no more than a guilder at auction. On the other hand, the payments they yielded more than outweighed the cost of hanging onto them, so it is hardly surprising that shareholders opted for that. Finally, and especially after the British had done so in 1833, there was always the prospect that the Dutch government would compensate their owners in the event of abolition.



A share in the Livonia plantation with, bottom right, its unredeemed nineteenth and twentieth coupons.

Source: Securities and lottery ticket collection, ARCH03766, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.

As discussed earlier (see Chapter 3), the maximum value of Johanna Borski's slavery-related investment portfolio was *f* 70,000. The great majority of her annual earnings through the firm Wed. W. Borski, between about *f* 200,000 and *f* 400,000, came from government bonds. Only two entries in the company's ledger can be linked to industrialisation: a mortgage of just under *f* 31,000 for Verveer's Ironworks and an investment of almost *f* 29,000 in the Illinois Canal in 1848.[464] That was the Illinois and

Michigan Canal, which had just been completed to provide a link between the Mississippi River and the industrial centres to the north, and as such would play an important role in propelling US industrialisation. On the other hand, the ironworks operated by C. Verveer & Co on Roeterseiland in Amsterdam closed its doors in 1843. In short, not every investment in the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century automatically paid off. New and emerging industries may have been "the future" at the time, but backing them was a lot riskier for the financial élite than government bonds or holding on to a few coupons in a mortgage fund or actual shares in a plantation.

A committee of interested parties in Amsterdam

The consultation by the government, which the Amsterdam petitioners had been demanding since 1846, finally materialised shortly after the constitutional reform of 1848. The former governor-general of the Dutch West Indian possessions, Jules Constantijn Rijk, was now acting Minister of the Colonies. On 15 May, 1848 he dispatched a missive to the capital, stating bluntly "that stubborn adherence to the principle of slavery as it still exists in Surinam is extremely dangerous."[465] In view of possible desertion to British Guiana or the French colonies, where slavery had also just been abolished, Rijk called on the interested parties in Amsterdam to ease the fate of the people they enslaved.[466] This time, unlike in 1845, the reply came in the form of a confidential letter to the minister rather than a petition to parliament. Moreover, the tone was constructive and seemed to point the way to a status quo whereby slavery could be maintained in Surinam; the word "emancipation" was not mentioned once. Perhaps it was this combination which persuaded the Insingers, amongst others, to sign on behalf of their firm. Broen & Co and Bunge & Co also appended their names, but for them it does not seem to have mattered whether their case was being made in a public petition or a confidential communication.

The signatories mentioned a number of points indicating that Rijk's call for improved conditions had been passed on to the administrators of their plantations. For example, they had limited the working hours of the enslaved to nine hours a day and arranged that "our black labourers" be fed "entirely in the spirit of your instructions." Moreover, they considered it "most gratifying" that the minister's views "regarding the transfer of the negroes from infertile to productive lands correspond entirely with ours."[467] Previous studies of plantation management by the Insingers have shown that providing an adequate diet and the relocation of enslaved labour from exhausted to fertile estates were recurring problems on their watch.[468] Finally, the signatories once again requested the minister "not to introduce any measures concerning the management of the plantations or their inhabitants, without first giving us the opportunity to share our opinions with you".[469]

The Amsterdam lobby mattered when it came to colonial policy, because the government knew that it exerted considerable authority over the plantation managers on the ground in Surinam.[470] On the same day the Amsterdam-based owners instructed the managers in Suriname to co-operate in improving conditions, Rijk sent his own emphatic orders to Reinier Frederik Van Raders, Surinam's governor-general. It was crucial, the minister insisted, that the government keep its ranks closed against the Amsterdam lobby, which began demanding compensation as soon as emancipation was even discussed. Rijk forbade Van Raders from uttering "the word *emancipation*" on behalf of the government "without it having, as it were, [undertaken] to provide the owners with any degree of compensation."[471] For as long as abolition was not arranged in law, the government had to present a united front.

Rijk now again approached the interested parties in Amsterdam, this time with an emancipation plan drawn up by his permanent secretary, George Severijn de Veer. On 21 August, 1848, the owners received a "private letter" from the minister offering them the opportunity, "entirely confidentially and unofficially", to share their views with him. The recipients did not need to be asked twice. A select group of six stakeholders immediately set about drawing up a memorandum, which would run to almost seventy pages, in which they put the revised constitution to maximum use in support of their cause.[472] Their main criticism was the lack of any form of compensation scheme in De Veer's proposal, whereas Article 14 of the Constitution stipulated that the expropriation of property was permitted only for the public benefit and with prior compensation.[473]

The document set out the arguments in support of the owners' property rights. Some of these were rooted in legal history. How could the government eliminate, with "a single stroke of the pen", a right it had protected and encouraged for so long? For the source of their entitlement to count people as property, the authors referred to the charter of 1682, by which the West India Company (West-Indische Compagnie, WIC) was "obliged and bound to deliver a certain number of slaves annually from the coast, at determined prices."[474] The paper further contested the necessity of emancipation and the idea "that regular labour can be exacted from emancipated negroes."[475] Moreover, De Veer's plan included a proposal for a system of "patronage" under conditions so generous for the emancipated that a day labourer in the Netherlands could justifiably consider that they left him "socially disfavoured and aggrieved."[476] For the owners, on the other hand, the writers foresaw that the accumulation of mortgages and loans would create an inextricable tangle of competing property claims, making it an impossible task in practice to determine who should become patron of a particular plantation.

It had been known in government circles that the eighteenth-century financing model for the plantations had led to a mountain of claims in Amsterdam arising out of unpaid interest and commission, which brokers tried to pass on to investors. A mountain so large, indeed, that "amongst the Amsterdam trading houses so long promulgated as reputable are found diverse brokers [from whom], by whatever means, one can obtain no settlement other than an account accumulated by them with interest upon interest, which claim they bring at the expense of other shareholding owners or entitled participants in the plantations."[477] In short, the owners needed the compensation to pay off their own creditors, not the government. Rijk did read this memorandum, and indeed added some critical comments to the manuscript in pencil, but he was not persuaded by it to make any changes to his parliamentary bill. After the House of Representatives had voted that down, however, Rijk did install a committee for parties interested in the agriculture and trade of the colony of Surinam.

The lines between those parties in Amsterdam, the government in The Hague, and Surinam were short, but they came under great pressure after 1848. After complaints about him from the colony, Van Raders received a reprimand from Guillaume Louis Baud, the new Minister of the Colonies (and a nephew of the former minister). The governor-general had refused to co-operate with efforts to relocate enslaved labour from exhausted to fertile land, which the Amsterdam lobby claimed was a breach of the promise of May 1848, affirming that such transfers would receive official backing as long as the owners improved their treatment of those affected, as per the latest guidelines.[478] Van Raders riposted that he was only acting in accordance with his instructions from The Hague, which forbade the colonial administration from using force to impose relocations against which the enslaved protested.[479] Owners in Amsterdam were also angered by handouts of shoes to "exemplary slaves" on government plantations, and deeply concerned at the persistent rumours on their holdings about impending emancipation.[480]

Van Raders' high-handed (in their view) behaviour may have been the reason why, in 1849, a group of Amsterdam owners and investors requested an audience with the newly inaugurated King William III. That resulted in the drafting of three secret reports analysing possible ways to restore the colonial prosperity of Surinam.[481] The tense relationship between the government and the Amsterdam lobbyists was caused in part by the government consistently striving to avoid public disputes like the one between Elias and the Amsterdam stakeholders. As a consequence, the government took into account the interests of the slave owners and their associates.

Revised slave regulations and establishing of State Commission

One example of effective co-operation between the government and the group of interested parties in Amsterdam is the revision of the slave regulation. At Baud's suggestion, in November 1849 his protégé Charles Ferdinand Pahud was appointed Minister of the Colonies – a choice for a conservative liberal with decades of colonial experience in the Dutch East Indies, which also pleased King William III.[482] While amending the regulation, Pahud gave the slave owners prior access to the confidential official documents upon which they were based. The new version would also include an emancipation plan. As soon as the interested parties in Amsterdam gained the impression that Pahud was bypassing them, however, they raised objections. As when the committee set up by Rijk complained that, "with regard to the emancipation of slave children", it had learned nothing more than "what had come to its attention indirectly and elliptically, but very indeterminately."[483]

In response to this the committee decided to write imploringly to the minister "that every one of them, as a human being, as a citizen, as a loyal subject of His Majesty, would consider it irresponsible to lend the slightest support to such an emancipation plan."[484] This entreaty failed to achieve the desired effect, even with the subsequent backing of two petitions sent to the House of Representatives from Paramaribo in May and June 1852. "We know now what His Excellency proposes in this regard, and we therefore have no option other than to present our objections by means of a petition to your Assembly" rather than the "Council of Ministers."[485] From this it seems that the interested parties in Amsterdam were still not keen on the petition as a political instrument, as we have already seen in the cases of the sugar excise duty of 1819 and Insinger's dissuasive round of calls in 1844; they saw it as a last resort to raise awareness of their concerns in The Hague. But they now felt that they were left with no other choice, and on the petition submitted to the House on 5 November, 1852 we find the names of the DNB-affiliated firms Luden & Van Geuns, Insinger & Co, Broen & Co and Wed. J.S. van de Poll, as well as Gebroeders Hartsen. The petition explained their aspiration as follows.

> We most certainly do not wish the perpetuation of slavery, in whatever form. We desire only to be able to keep the grounds of the colony in cultivation for ourselves, to preserve the colony for the state. We would rather work with free men than with slaves, but agriculture cannot be undertaken without workers; yet the negro declared free in his present condition, even at birth, is not and will not become a worker. By consequence, however desirable in itself the abolition of slavery may be, all plans for emancipation will be either unreasonable for the white man or unjust and ruinous for the owners of the slaves, or disastrous for the commerce and the prosperity of the state.[486]

Even in Amsterdam, the realisation had dawned that maintaining slavery was not the way forward. The objection now was that abolition would inevitably lead to a decline in the productivity of the plantations, because their freed men would be unwilling to work as hired labourers.[487] Moreover, the draft government regulation still did not provide for compensation – a condition clearly stipulated by the owners for any possible act of emancipation back in 1841. This latest plea on their part proved effective: following receipt of the petition, the House refused to even consider the draft regulation submitted by Pahud because its members were convinced the proposed emancipation scheme would be most unreasonable for both those who were enslaved and the owners.[488]

The parliamentary debates on the issue reveal the opposing standpoints being championed in The Hague. Since his election as an MP in 1850, former minister Jean Chrétien Baud had become the leading proponent of "old-style" colonial statesmanship. On the other side of the discourse, the "colonial opposition" was led by Wolter Robert van Hoëvell, formerly a church minister in Batavia. Despite their divergent views on colonial politics, by 1853 the two men found themselves in agreement on the point that emancipation should no longer be dealt with in conjunction with new statutes for the government of the West Indies. From November 1853, a State Commission started investigating which measures the government should take regarding slavery. Baud chaired the commission, whilst two of his old acquaintances were appointed to represent the interested parties in Amsterdam: G.C. Bosch Reitz and the lawyer A. Brugmans, legal adviser to Amsterdam's plantation owners. Three members had administrative experience in the West Indies: Rijk, Van Raders, and Rutgerus Hermanus Esser. From the House of Representatives came Jan Heemskerk Bzn and Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer, the latter also serving in his capacity as president of the Society to Advance the Abolition of Slavery (Maatschappij tot Bevordering van de Afschaffing der Slavernij, MBAS). However, Groen van Prinsterer resigned from the committee in 1854 in protest at its cumbersome procedures. In the same year, Van Hoëvell published his account of "slaves and free men under Dutch law", which further convulsed a national public debate already reeling from the recent translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853). Van Hoëvell dedicated his book to the State Commission, but it exerted hardly any influence over the political decision-making process.[489]

Whilst the State Commission was conducting its investigation, Minister of the Colonies Pahud continued to take the tenor of the 1852 petition fairly seriously. In the House of Representatives, the liberal faction had managed to elicit from him a statement that the question was no longer "whether emancipation will take place, but how we will achieve a careful, gradual and well-prepared emancipation."[490] For the answer to this question, Pahud again sought the collaboration the Amsterdam petitioners had requested; in his search for a solution to the alleged lack of work ethic amongst emancipated slaves, this time he would not pass them by. Importing free labourers from elsewhere appeared to be the way to overcome this problem. In a letter to Rodolphe le Chevalier, the minister expressly invited the interested parties in Amsterdam to provide him with "consideration and advice" as to how they thought the supply of new labour could best be achieved. "Of itself," he wrote, "the ever-diminishing number of slaves in Surinam makes it humane that the losses on the plantations already be filled with free workers brought from elsewhere; should an emancipation of the slaves follow later, the lack of workers on the plantations will then be doubly felt if has not been provided for in time."[491] Le Chevalier and his colleagues in the capital did not share this view of immigration as a solution to their fear of emancipation, but Pahud was not going to let that stop him. At the end of October 1855, he notified Surinam's governor Charles Pierre Schimpf about writing to the Dutch consul in China

> to obtain information concerning the emigration of Chinese to the West Indies and the opportunities that future attempts at the shipment of Chinese farmers to Surinam might offer up. Thus far the owners and parties with interests in Surinamese plantations have shown little inclination to co-operate with the government in obtaining workers; they appear to be of the opinion that the government should provide for this, but that is asking rather a lot.[492]

It is clear, then, that the interested parties in Amsterdam were given the opportunity by the government to consider how the abolition of slavery might be achieved without excessively undermining the labour productivity of the plantations. Pahud tried to overcome one of their objections, the shrinkage of their workforce, in the run-up to his first Emancipation Bill, so that they could no longer use this as an argument to delay the legislation. But he found that they showed little interest as a group in considering his immigration plans. Through the Insingers, though, he would soon learn what their top priority was.

The State Commission reports and the first emancipation bills, 1855-1858

The Insingers adopted a proactive stance in the years of the State Commission's investigative work. The Commission's proposals would form the basis for various parliamentary bills tabled and debated between 1857 and 1861.[493] This time span in itself indicates that the legislative process had to overcome several obstacles. For their part, the Insingers had to deal with a particular trait of Dutch national politics during this period, and one especially affecting the Ministry of the Colonies: most ministers only served short terms in office. Precisely at the time when the legislation on the abolition of slavery was taking shape, executive continuity in the department primarily responsible was a weak link in the legislative process (see the list of ministers in Appendix 2). This meant that the Insingers had to present their case anew to each new minister, both orally and in writing, allowing for an exceptional reconstruction of their lobbying efforts.

Even before any abolition bill could be submitted to the parliament, Pahud received a missive from Insinger & Co in response to the first report of the State Commission. Writing on behalf of the directors of a mortgage fund with investments in the *Zeezigt* plantation on 20 November, 1855, the firm stated that it understood from the latest royal address (troonrede) that the report on Surinam had been completed and a bill was imminent.[494] It then went on to complain that less compensation was planned for people enslaved on cotton plantations than in other sectors. Whereas *f*500 per head was due to be paid to sugar estates, *f*325 for those growing coffee and cocoa and *f*240 for timber, Insinger & Co would receive a mere *f*200 for every enslaved person on his cotton plantations.[495] The directors urged that, if a distinction were to remain, cotton be placed on a par with – or at least not far below – coffee and cocoa.

The most striking thing about this plea is that, with emancipation now seemingly inevitable, it reverses the reasoning found in earlier submissions opposing the abolition of slavery. Back in December 1841, Insinger & Co had signed a petition arguing one universal arrangement would fail to do justice to the diversity of the planted lands in the colonies.[496] But now that a distinction was being drawn between different categories, apparently Surinam estates were not so diverse after all. It is not known whether Pahud replied to this missive, but – as we shall see from their later correspondence – his impending departure from the department did nothing to help the Insingers' cause.

Pahud's successor, Pieter Mijer, did not go down well in Amsterdam at first. This is evident from remarks made by Brugmans to Baud. The core of the problem was that "Mijer, who was still roaming the ocean a year ago on his way home from the East Indies – where he had wasted 22 years – knows about as much about the colony of Surinam as I do about the Moluccas, which is a little more than a monkey knows about baking waffles."[497] A month later came another outpouring from Brugmans, who had now made enquiries about Mijer's record in the Dutch East Indies. "I do not trust Mr P. Mijer. I have been observing some of his doings – I see what he does in public and when I relate that to what he did in the East Indies in 1848, then we have to be careful with him; once free of him we must stay free."[498] Brugmans may here be referring to Mijer's work on a draft penal code for Europeans in the Dutch East Indies. He was not the first minister with experience only of colonial administration in the Asian empire to take on the issue of slavery; Baud and Pahud also were "old Indies hands", as returnees from the Dutch East Indies were known. But Mijer had actually been born in Batavia and spent a large part of his life there, making him a relative outsider in the Dutch elite of the time.

Mijer's arrival at the ministry in The Hague meant a change of course, if only because he was less under Baud's thumb than protégé Pahud had been.[499] Brugmans, as a member of the State Commission and legal adviser to the Amsterdam lobby, regarded the rapid turnover of ministers as an abiding problem of Dutch politics. In his view, "the government [is] in the hands of ephemeral ministers who did not remain in office long enough to know their departments properly"[500] and had to "dance to the tune of 68 mostly pedantic and selfish, if not scheming, dunces. The actual administration of the nation is in the hands of the principal private secretaries, who for years on end have been fabricating the ministries."[501] Clearly, it was harder for the Amsterdam lobby to gain a grip on ministers who relied upon their civil servants instead of their personal contacts in the capital.

For the likes of the Insingers, Mijer's arrival meant that they were now dealing with a minister less inclined than his predecessors to empathise with their grievances. This did not go down well with them. A request made by Baud to Brugmans speaks volumes here. Mijer had studied the report of the State Commission and had a conversation with Baud about it. According to the latter, it was important that the minister be well-prepared for his appearance before parliament and so Baud planned to brief the minister thoroughly, down to the last detail, in order that he might "repel the attacks by the dissenters."[502] He then forwarded the written text he had prepared to Brugmans, with the request that he provide "a concise summary of some salient points, suitable to be imprinted easily in the memory of an uninitiated person who may well be assailed and canvassed by experts on a daily basis."[503]

Mijer himself knew that his lack of knowledge of the situation in Surinam was a weakness shrewd opponents and parliamentarians could exploit. For this reason, he wrote to Suriname's governor asking him urgently for a "coherent survey from your experienced pen on the condition of the colony of Surinam. I request this for use, should the need arise, in the House of Representatives."[504] Schimpf, in turn, felt that in Mijer he had found a willing ear for his wishes concerning the way the enslaved people of Surinam should be freed. "In my opinion," he wrote, "any plan for emancipation that is without fundamental flaws can be implemented if one manages to rise above the outcry from the so-called friends of the slaves – or rather, their false friends – and zealots of all colours."[505] In short, Schimpf's urgent request to Mijer was to leave him "great room for manoeuvre" in the proposal for emancipation.[506]

Mijer proved to be a fast learner from men like Baud, Brugmans, and Schimpf. In March 1856, Van Hoëvell questioned the minister on the floor of the House about the improvement and amendment of the regulation for the treatment of slaves in Surinam, as well as the current state of affairs with regard to emancipation. Brugmans was "most satisfied" with the skilful reply.[507] Mijer himself said he had been greatly assisted by an "important report" on domestic jurisdiction that governor Schimpf had sent him. Nevertheless, the intervention had made the minister realise that the patience of the House was finite now that the State Commission had produced a report: when would the minister finally present a bill? Consequently, the minister now wanted from Schimpf "the requested considerations and advice concerning the proposals of the State Commission, since it is absolutely necessary to bring the issue of emancipation to a desirable solution soon."[508] Just over a year after making this request, Mijer at last submitted his first bill to the States General on 18 July, 1857.[509]

The partners at Insinger & Co were certainly amongst the "experts", as Baud called them, who "assailed and canvassed" Mijer. In September 1857, they wrote him a letter in the company's name, from which we learn that he had already asked them "orally" to set down their objections in more detail on paper. The firm seized this opportunity with both hands. Naturally, it requested that the amounts allocated as compensation in the bill be revised, but the letter also emphasised how difficult negotiations with The Hague had been up until now.[510] The directors feared that the letter they had sent Pahud at the end of November 1855, "never came to the notice of Your Excellency" despite Insinger having been in contact with Mijer on this matter for some time.[511] According to the writers, this must explain why the minister had "passed over with silence the objections we made" in his explanatory memorandum accompanying the bill.[512] Baud's missives of 1843-1844 about the requested liquidation of *Zeezigt* had shown by contrast that he as minister "examined and appreciated the importance of our complaints", but also "how the proposed plans foundered upon the obstinacy or cowardry of the then governor of the colonies [Elias]."[513]

In his submission Mijer had maintained the distinction between the different types of plantations as proposed by Pahud, including the low valuation of the people enslaved on cotton estates. One of the reasons for this was the misconception that they were physically less strong than those growing sugar and coffee. In Insinger's view, however, the minister should take Britain and France as examples: those countries had indemnified "the former owners per head, without any difference of classification, so that, e.g., a Demerara cotton planter received as many pounds sterling per head for his emancipated slaves as a sugar or coffee planter for his."[514] The writers therefore begged Mijer, "with respect, yet with serious urgency", that Section 3 of his bill be "amended so that those concepts of national fair play, which we see honoured on more than one page of the Explanatory Memorandum, are not set aside with regard to the cotton planters of the colony of Surinam, but that justice be done to them also."[515]

Underlying this argument was the firm's own study of several of the British and French colonies.[516] Early in 1853, Jacobus Hermanus Insinger's brother had investigated their numbers of slaves and free labourers as well as the amounts indemnified and their payment, but above all how various attempts were made to restore labour productivity after abolition. With regard to the French territories, he noted that "young people would rather become craftsmen than work in the fields or the factory" – thus threatening a shortage of hands on the plantations.[517] "The indemnity," he continued, "was *f* 430.48 per head, male or female, old or young," and was partly paid in cash, partly in a 5 per cent subscription, and one-eighth of the compensation was retained for a lending and discount bank in each French colony."[518] The British colonies had been offered an immigration loan in 1845, "and later a parliamentary loan, part of which was used for a railway, the rest for immigration."[519]

As far as the productivity of the plantations was concerned, Insinger had read positive reports about the French territories: the 173 plantations still in operation in 1852 produced almost as much sugar as the 214 plantations in use before abolition. He was rather less impressed by the British results. "Sugar remains the only possible principal product," he observed, but immigration by the *right* free workers was essential: "Africans are always the best one could wish for. After that, coolies [Asian labourers], especially if they wish to stay."[520] He took reports of decaying plantations seriously, such as those about the remaining coffee factories and plantations in Berbice, "whose best works [today] are mere memorials to past greatness".[521] Cotton production on the west coast of Berbice had been completely abandoned due to a lack of labourers. "Even the African negroes are buying pieces of land, and all that squatting is completely and utterly ruining the colony."[522] In fact, formerly enslaved people acquiring land was a "problem" Insinger believed had spread throughout British Guiana. The cotton plantations there had been ruined by American competition and the emancipation of 1833, "whereupon their negroes melted into the neighbouring sugar workforces or remained as small farmers on small pieces of land [...] The Creoles would be the best sugar growers without all that wretched squatting."[523] As he saw it, British Guiana faced a particularly bleak future. Despite the fact that large capital sums from Europe were being invested in the immigration of new workers, a huge amount of labour potential was being lost through the sale of cheap agricultural land to what Insinger viewed as an important section of the "workable class", who now instead were excelling in "utter idleness."[524]

As the director of mortgage funds for cotton plantations in Surinam, such as *Wederzorg* and *Zeezigt*, it is understandable that Insinger paid particular attention to the future stability of this type of enterprise. He concluded his study by reflecting on the question of "what is needed on a ground like *Wederzorg* if sugar is to be produced there?"[525] Insinger had heard from his administrator, J. F. Roux, that "with 70,000 guilders he would come a very long way, but then one would also have to take so many negroes from *Zeezigt* in order to send 40 workable persons into the field or the factory every day that less cotton could be produced."[526] Studies containing comparisons and estimates like these helped the Insingers to formulate their claims regarding a "fair" level of compensation for the Dutch slave owners.

Lobbying for compensation

Mijer's emancipation proposal was based largely upon the proposals made by the State Commission. Only the expropriation of plantations – fiercely opposed by Schimpf and the colonists in Surinam – had been made optional. One of the bill's key points was that the freed people would have to recoup the costs of their own emancipation through labour to cover the compensation paid to their former owners. The reactions from the interested parties in Amsterdam show that they particularly objected to this form of financing the process. They no longer bothered to petition the minister, but now submitted their protestations directly to parliament. Since the bill was now due to be debated there, that was only logical. On 14 November, 1857, a letter was received from Insinger & Co, and three days later a petition signed by almost forty other parties in the capital, led by the firm Poncelet & Son.

Insinger & Co, S. P. Labouchere, and G. Tomaschi wrote to the House of Representatives in their capacity as "authorised agents of the owners of the *Zeezigt* cotton plantation in Surinam", the largest such estate in the colony, "occupied by 458 negro slaves."[527] Once again, the Insingers claimed that they "could not discern" why the people enslaved there "might have only 2/5ths of the value of those on a sugar plantation."[528] They would fetch "only two hundred guilders", compared with 500 guilders for those cultivating sugar. Because Mijer's proposal required that the freedmen recoup the costs of their own emancipation, low costing was disadvantageous in yet another way. The authors reasoned that "if wages are high, the cotton negro will very soon be out of debt and free of all work obligations; and if wages are low, he will immediately move to other states where better and higher wages can be paid."[529] From a management point of view, too, the Insingers felt that their surprise at the valuation was understandable.[530] "[M]ost of the negroes had to work for hire, temporarily and by turns, on the [...] plantation Wederzorg, in order to be able to provide for the upkeep of the labour force" and for their fund to again render an income for its investors.[531] In other words, the 458 people enslaved at *Zeezigt* were demonstrably capable of working on a sugar plantation and so should be valued accordingly for the purposes of the compensation scheme.

The petition from Poncelet & Son and its cosignatories followed three days later. Without Insinger amongst them, the only name on this petition with known links to DNB is that of Bunge & Co, a medium-sized discounter at the bank. By now the petitioners were willing "to acknowledge gladly that abolition has become a necessity due to the spirit and needs of the age" – a further shift since 1848, when a previous petition had rejected the whole idea out of hand, and 1852, when the signatories had said they "certainly do not wish the perpetuation of slavery."[532] The latter was a typically cumbersome nineteenth-century way of saying that abolition was unnecessary any time soon. By contrast, its necessity was now accepted, but according to the latest petition there were still numerous shortcomings in Mijer's bill. Not least the matter of compensation.

The signatories fully agreed with what the minister's explanatory memorandum stated about Article 2 of the proposed bill, which had been inspired by the words of British MP George Canning. "Expropriation by the state without compensation would be tantamount to robbery," they wrote. "What is meant by compensation requires no explanation."[533] Nevertheless, they felt that the government had misunderstood the concept. "It is a fixed rule of all expropriations that the amount of the compensation should be higher than the ordinary market price of the property to be expropriated. It is in the nature of the matter that, in the event of a forced relinquishment, the price advantage should not fall to the buyer."[534] The petitioners had searched the report in vain for a reason why the government was valuing their possessions on the basis of their average prices during the decade 1843-1853. In other words, the government should set the amount payable per emancipated person higher than his or her market value so as not to be seen to be striking a bargain for itself.

The fact that the Insingers were now lobbying separately was not the result of any substantive disagreement between the various interest groups. Quite the contrary, in fact: like the Insingers, the other petitioners did not object so much to the plantations being divided into different categories as to the fact that "the valuation of the slaves [was] too low, relative to each other in the categories."[535] The Insingers must therefore have been delighted with the support reiterated in this submission for their complaint that the bill did not take "into account the workability of the cotton negroes, their suitability in the event of diminishing returns from cotton cultivation to be used elsewhere for other and better branches of production."[536] Finally, the petitioners highlighted a category of interested parties the government had so far completely ignored: the owners of securitised plantation loans.

> It is known that considerable sums of money were given in the last century with West Indian property as collateral. Many of those lenders or lending associations have consequently either become enforced owners, by execution of their mortgage rights, or have remained mortgage creditors. Upon what did these loans rely? Upon what else but that upon which every private monetary loan relies, namely the prevailing civil law; in this case the civil law of the colony, which declared slave property and slaves to be legal collateral and, moreover, established that all mortgage rights were indivisible and so attached inseparately to the entire collateral.[537]

In short, the petitioners wanted higher compensation for their legitimate property, be that actual enslaved people or the loans for which they formed the collateral. To achieve a "just" expropriation, therefore, the government needed to take into account not so much the diversity of the plantations as that of this interest group. It consisted in the first instance of the land and slave owners who should be dispossessed of the former in such a way that they were left with enough capital to return the land – of which they could remain owners – to profit by investing in free labour and the necessary machinery. Secondly, though, the government was also to pay greater consideration to the mountain of debt which had accumulated since the mortgaging of the plantations at the end of the eighteenth century.

Until recently, historians have mainly focused on the parliamentary criticism of Mijers' plan from a humanitarian perspective. The House of Representatives took exception to the recognition of the right to compensation, to the fact that the freed slaves had to pay this off themselves, and to the coercive nature of the post-emancipation state supervision of the freedmen, which relegated the term "liberation" to a "sweet-sounding phrase."[538] However, historians Karin Lurvink and Pepijn Brandon have pointed out how influential Insinger's letters actually were. Add to this our knowledge of the petition from Poncelet and his cosignatories and we can show that MPs in fact considered the two submissions in tandem when examining the issue of differential compensation by plantation type in late 1857. In its preliminary response, the House made the following comment.

> There thus appeared to be much in favour of the idea of appraising the field negroes all at the same value, or at least not allowing such a large difference between the value of one and the other. We are minded even more towards such opinions when, for example, we read in one of the addresses submitted to the House that, under certain circumstances, the slaves of the large cotton plantation *Zeezigt* have been hired out to work on a sugar plantation.[539]

From this we see just how much the Insinger letter was taken by parliamentarians as a sign of broader discontent concerning the valuation system. However, the fall of the Van der Brugghen government in March 1858 implied that Mijer was never able to work their wishes, or those of Insinger, Poncelet and the other lobbyists, into a new bill.[540]

The new Minister of the Colonies was Jan Jacob Rochussen, whose appointment also marked the start of a new phase for the Amsterdam lobby. Rochussen had a long record of service, not only in national politics but also in the capital's mercantile community, and in the colonial administration of the Dutch East Indies. He had begun his career as secretary of the Amsterdam Chamber of Commerce, but within two years gave up that position for the directorship of the Amsterdam entrepôt dock. Rochussen's strong track record and extensive network made him the right man to bring order to the public treasury in 1840, as Minister of Finance. Five years later he was made governor-general of the Dutch East Indies. In that capacity, he received Van Hoëvell's petition for the abolition of slavery in the colony in 1847, only to ignore it. Back in the Netherlands, Rochussen took a seat in parliament and there positioned himself as an anti-abolitionist with regard to slavery in the East Indies – a stance he shared with another former governor-general and Minister of the Colonies turned MP, Jean Chrétien Baud. Nevertheless, the Emancipation Act for the Asian colonies came into force on 1 January, 1860.[541] Rochussen's appointment as minister did much to restore the frayed relations between central government and the capital's trading houses of the Mijer years, whilst also maintaining the strong departmental links with the Dutch East Indies – even though his time there, unlike the postings of Baud, Pahud and Mijer, had come after his periods in Amsterdam and The Hague.

As minister, Rochussen used his global network to pilot the emancipation legislation for the Caribbean through the States General. Freshly appointed to his new department, he reported by letter to governor Schimpf: "Who would have thought that I would again come into official contact with [you]. I always remember those [contacts] I had with you on Java; especially in the middle and later months of 1848, when I had almost daily personal conversations with you in the absence of the commander of the army and we had to prepare ourselves for all eventualities."[542] Rochussen is here referring to the harsh military policy he had pursued in the East Indies, dispatching a considerable number of punitive expeditions to bring the outer provinces under Dutch control. The new minister left no doubt as to the biggest task he wanted to complete with Schimpf. He hoped "to bring about the great measure of emancipation – however one may think of it in the abstract – in the next [parliamentary] session."[543] Until abolition had been achieved, moreover, he considered "all lasting improvement for that colony impossible."[544] In the meantime, he promised Schimpf, he would not send any more Chinese migrants to Surinam: "I have no expectations of the Chinese emigration."[545] It is evident that Rochussen intended to continue the close co-operation he and Schimpf had previously enjoyed, even though they were now separated by the Atlantic Ocean. In his first parliamentary bill, tabled on 25 October, 1858, the minister complied with the wishes of the House of Representatives.[546] Gone was the repayment requirement for the emancipated people, along with a previous proposal to organise them into guilds and communities. Added were an immigration scheme and a state bank to arrange it financially, which was given access to two-thirds of the compensation money. In its preliminary response to the bill, parliament expressed its great satisfaction with the intended changes.

In Amsterdam, by contrast, the measures triggered yet another round of missives to the House. This time Poncelet and his cosignatories were ahead of the Insingers with their rebuttal, which addressed both the bill itself and the preliminary response to it. The content of this petition is important because it was the first prelude to DNB's eventual designation as the institution to pay out the compensation. The document first refuted MPs doubts about even recognising the right to compensation and again explained that the estimated amounts were "unfair." The government, it stated, should take as its baseline fifteen times the value of the average of yield lands on which the enslaved worked or the securities to which they were bound. This latter topic had already been discussed at length in the submission of 17 November, 1857, but its "argument has not been the subject of consideration during the deliberations" in the departmental committee meetings of the House.[547] For this reason, a copy of that address was enclosed.

One new aspect to come under fire was the proposed method of payment. Rochussen wanted to found a special colonial bank to distribute the "redress", "and that not even in hard cash, but one-third paid in bills of exchange to be drawn from the colony, payable one month after sight at the Department of Colonies, so always with loss of interest or discount, and the remainder in shares at par."[548] Moreover, those compensated would have to return part of their compensation to the bank because it was from there that the financing for migrant workers was to be collected. The former slave owners would thus become forced shareholders in the colonial bank. The Amsterdam petitioners had little faith in this dedicated new institution. "In and of itself," they wrote, "the word bank revives unhappy memories in the colony of Surinam and is therefore inappropriate to arouse great expectations for the future."[549] And what, they mused, was its true purpose?

> The main reason for the establishment of this bank must be sought in the aim of uplifting owners who have been scantily indemnified, or of preserving a colonial industry and agriculture which have been destroyed by emancipation; it is in the interest of no-one other than the state itself, which in this manner will take back again with one hand what it has distributed parsimoniously with the other, and for itself thus recover from the dispossessed the price of their dispossession, therewith to speculate for its own benefit but at their peril and risk.[550]

In other words, the amount of compensation Rochussen had calculated was too small and the rights holders would not even receive it, instead being required to hand it over to a colonial bank speculating in the interests of the state but without itself as an institution accepting the associated risks. That was because the state was not guaranteeing any interest payments to the new bank.[551]

Insinger & Co and Willem Borski, son of Johanna, together with S.P. Labouchere and G. Tomasachi, Kerkhoven & Coutinho, and Van Halmael & Co, submitted a petition of their own to the House of Representatives on 2 December, 1858. Once again, they presented themselves as parties interested only in receiving fair compensation for the enslaved people on their cotton plantations – meaning that it should be based upon the actual value of the property in question. To underline the strength of their lobby in matters of abolition legislation, they referred to the document the House had received just a few days earlier from Poncelet and his cosignatories; this not just "so as not to descend into repetition", but to emphasise that this group also subscribed to its criticism of the principle behind the proposed compensation scheme as well as the practical and payment arrangements.[552] And in particular its denunciation of the colonial bank, which "serves no other purpose than to deprive the owners of two-thirds of the price of expropriation, or in other words to retain two-thirds for the benefit of the expropriators; [so] that there can be no doubt that this bank will not act in favour of the forced shareholders, but instead will sacrifice their interest to hazardous and hopeless attempts to retain for some further time a shadow or semblance of production in a colony at a stroke plundered through emancipation of its labourers and industry."[553]

Through these objections in their two submissions, the Amsterdam petitioners sowed the seeds for DNB's later designation as the institution responsible for paying their compensation. This demonstrates first and foremost that it was seen as a reliable organisation, and that alternative options considered by the government were rejected by the prospective beneficiaries. Also, there were fierce protests from Surinam against the deductions to be made by the colonial bank under Rochussen's plan. In fact, governor Schimpf resigned in protest at this measure. Even before that, though, he had clashed with Rochussen over the maltreatment and punishment of Chinese immigrants at *Drie Gebroeders* and of enslaved people on a number of plantations.[554]

As a senator in The Hague, Albrecht Frederik Insinger had the opportunity to challenge Rochussen publicly in the Chamber. Two of his speeches in this context merit our attention. Firstly, one from December 1858 in which he asked the minister to "lend his consideration" to "the objections recently submitted by numerous interested parties."[555] This makes it immediately clear that Insinger used his parliamentary platform to draw *all* recent missives from Amsterdam to Rochussen's attention. In anticipation of the minister's revised bill, Insinger begged his accommodation, because

> If I were to anticipate anything, it would be that expropriation of legitimate property should not be done lightly and as if it were purely a token of goodwill. It should also be taken into consideration that the proposed distribution, in part in shares whose monetary value is so difficult to calculate, presents difficulties; and further that in the apportioning of the monies the example of England and France may be called fairer and more reasonable than the principle adopted here by [your] predecessor, namely differentiating the value of the negroes according to the crop of the plantations on which they work.[556]

It seems that Insinger then dared to recapitulate the Amsterdam lobby's wish list in a meeting room at the Binnenhof, the parliamentary complex in The Hague. To compensate the owners fairly, he said, the Netherlands should follow the example of Britain and France: they had paid hard cash and the indemnity per head did not take into account the type of plantation the former slave had worked on.

Insinger received support for his assertions in the Senate from some unexpected quarters. Edmond Willem van Dam van Isselt – a member of the House of Representatives who had presented abolitionist addresses to King William II in 1842 – now tried to strike a business deal with him. "Upon reviewing the lists of interested W.I. [West Indies] parties," the thought had occurred to Van Dam that it might be to their considerable mutual benefit if Insinger were to decide to use the varnish produced by the MP's factory at his properties in Surinam.[557] And anyone who persuaded Insinger could apparently count on more orders from the colony: "Once people in the W. I. have been convinced of the excellent qualities of the varnish, I would become the principal supplier to all the owners of permanent premises."[558] Naturally, such a bold suggestion had to come with an appropriate compliment for Insinger. Van Dam therefore decided to praise his behaviour towards Rochussen. "Our friend Rochussen is being bitterly tested," he wrote, adding that he was "not enamoured" of the minister's plans with regard to the East Indies, either.[559] "If he wishes to be wiser than all the ‘interested experts’, then he is playing a rough game.”[560] Van Dam, however, lacked the knowledge needed to counter Rochussen with any authority in the parliamentary arena – as Insinger had done – even though their “friendly relationship” would have entitled him to do so. So, “I must confine myself to the wish that he will listen to good advice and not allow himself to be diverted from the right path by false self-interest, or by the insinuations of the so-called ‘friends of Java and the Javanese’, who may encourage him in his bad ways and yet would cheer at his fall.”[561] In short, Van Dam sought to enlist Insinger’s help for both his business interests and his riposte to Rochussen during the forthcoming debate on the minister’s plans for the East Indies.

Insinger acted on Van Dam van Isselt’s request to counsel Rochussen wisely in the Senate, as is evident from the official report of the debate of 6 May, 1859 on the regulation of the abolition of slavery in the Dutch East Indies. We have studied Schimpf’s copy in the archives; by then he had already resigned as governor of Surinam, but continued to follow the issue closely. The underlinings he made in pencil indicate that he had spotted the connection between Rochussen and Insinger; even though the senators were supposed to be discussing slavery in the East Indies, Insinger raised the poor state of Surinam, where the insignificant influx of Chinese labourers did not bode well for the impending abolition in that part of the empire. Now that a new governor had taken office in Paramaribo, Insinger wanted the minister to promise “that during the extended period of transition in that colony, the welfare of the black population will be looked after vigorously; but at the same time that the security and prosperity of our compatriots living in those regions, and of the interested parties in the motherland, not be neglected.”[562]

Rochussen provided Insinger with a more expansive answer than we might expect for a subject which “has no direct connection with this bill.”[563] The minister was determined to bring about abolition and to make sure that the capital assigned for this purpose was spent in the best possible way. “Above all else,” he declared, “I must not lose sight of justice, I must also keep in mind fairness. The government has no direct interest in how the capital is spent.”[564] Then the minister appears to invite Insinger to join him in thinking about what course of action could count on a majority in parliament. “If the proposed method is not good, perhaps it can be improved. I seek truth and conviction, and make this solemn declaration: that I will not cling to any proposal merely because it was originally put forward in some way or another by me."[565] De facto, Rochussen was here providing his answer to the comments made in the petitions from Poncelet and Insinger & Co about their right to compensation, its amount, and the method of payment.

Nevertheless, the Insingers must have had mixed feelings about this episode. Rochussen was willing to listen to the Amsterdam trade lobby, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to advocate its interests in line with conservative principles. A.F. Insinger's contribution during the debate on abolition in the East Indies turned out to be the prelude to his senatorial swansong; the provincial assembly decided not to re-elect him in 1859. According to the liberal newspaper *Het Algemeen Handelsblad*, this was due to the fact that "Mr Insinger always distinguished himself in the Chamber as a proponent of the political and commercial status quo."[566] With his departure, Insinger & Co – and all those with a stake in the Surinamese plantation economy – lost an important spokesman in The Hague. He had been right, though, in foreseeing that it would take some time for a new bill on slavery in the West Indies to come before the House of Representatives.

Rochussen took his time and only submitted his second bill on 30 April, 1860. In this, the provisions concerning a colonial bank had disappeared altogether. In December of that year, the directors of the *Zeezigt* plantation mortgage fund recorded with satisfaction how, "by the force of language and emphasis upon reasons," they had agitated against the "insufficient sums usually advanced as compensation for the masters of the cotton slaves" in their petitions submitted between November 1855 and December 1858.[567] "That these remonstrances did not remain without some effect became evident when, in his second bill, minister Rochussen raised the sum to *f* 300 per head; which amount was favourable by comparison at least with the very first proposal from minister Pahud of *f* 200 per cotton negro, considering the type of plantation."[568] On the other hand, the preliminary response from the House of Representatives stated that it considered Rochussen's new plan a "step backwards". As far as MPs were concerned, he had been far too accommodating with regard to the Amsterdam petitioners and should therefore go back to the drawing board.[569] Now that A.F. Insinger no longer had a seat in the Senate from which to remind him of their arguments, he and his brother could do little more than "note with regret that minister Rochussen, in his third bill currently under consideration, has reduced the compensation to a mere *f* 260 for the cotton negroes."[570] Fortunately for Insinger & Co, however, the House also sent that third draft back to Rochussen as unacceptable. And he never ventured a fourth version, since he tendered his resignation after parliament had rejected his budget on 14 December, 1860. His departure prompted the Insingers to conclude that "a sixth governmental bill will not be forthcoming for some time [...] whilst the question of an indemnity for negroes to be declared free appears to have become more uncertain than ever."[571]

The Amsterdam petitions did not go unnoticed in Britain, and as a result not at the Dutch court either. Compared to his father and grandfather, king William III has only played a minor role in our study. According to the latest research, his direct involvement with the issue of abolition extended little further than granting Royal Assent to the eventual act of parliament and then being presented as a paternal sovereign to the freed slaves after 1863.[572] Some years before acquiring this image as a "great emancipator", however, William received an impressively profuse missive from the British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society in London. The British committee felt obliged to protest about the British subjects who had approached the Dutch parliament with a petition setting forth complaints about the proposed compensation payments and the method of their distribution, the establishment of government plantations, the maintenance of labour productivity by tying emancipated people to the plantation lands, and ensuring a sufficient supply of immigrants.

> Were these persons subjects of the King of the Netherlands, interference on the part of the Committee might be unbecoming and intrusive. The memorialists, however, are not only British subjects, but they address the Netherlands Government in that capacity. The committee, therefore, respectfully submit that this fact renders it incumbent upon them, as the representatives of a Society whose object is to accomplish the universal extinction of slavery, to protest in the strongest terms, in their own name, as well as in that of their constituents, against every attempt on the part of their own fellow countrymen, to perpetuate the system in a foreign colony.[573]

This letter was probably dispatched in response to a petition submitted to the House of Representatives in The Hague by six Britons with possessions in Surinam's north-western district of Nickerie, the substance of which falls outside the scope of our research.[574] However, the letter does bear some relevance to the petitions from Amsterdam discussed above. First, it is striking that the four points mentioned from the British address precisely echo some of those raised in the submission from Poncelet. Moreover, the signatories of the latter included Thomas Green.[575] Meanwhile, in November 1857 the Insingers had explained the House of Representatives they were managing *Zeezigt* on behalf of its British proprietors, the heirs of Major R. Cooke and his wife. In short, there was also British involvement in the Amsterdam lobby with links to DNB-affiliated executives and firms. Finally, it is worth pointing out a substantive point in the Dutch abolition bills which drew particular criticism from the British writers: it was, they asserted, a thorn in their side that the petitioners expected such positive results from the post-abolition apprenticeship scheme. "The picture they have drawn of the advantages the Negro would enjoy under the system of Apprenticeship advocated by them [is] purely imaginary. A similar one was painted by the opponents of Emancipation in this Country, but their anticipations of the benefits the system would confer proved utterly delusive."[576]

With this British letter perhaps in mind, the new Minister of the Colonies, Jan Pieter Cornets de Groot, decided to call in the help of experts. One of them was Adriaan David van der Gon Netscher, formerly a planter in British Guiana and thus a person capable of assessing from first-hand experience the truthfulness of references to that colony. For Surinam and Curaçao respectively, "old hands" Charles Pierre Schimpf and Isaäc Johannes Rammelman Elsevier were drafted in.[577] They would eventually present the results of their deliberations to the next minister, James Loudon, who – like Cornets de Groot – was an advocate of a liberal colonial policy. In April 1861, Loudon was able to inform parliament about the core provisions in the latest bill for Surinam. These were the immediate abolition of slavery, the indemnification of the owners, and bringing immigration by contract labourers under state direction and supervision. Van der Gon Netscher had been arguing for this latter measure for years, even publishing a pamphlet on the subject. In British Guiana he had witnessed how labour productivity declined drastically when immigration had to be organised as a private initiative.[578]

DNB and the payment of compensation

De Nederlandsche Bank became involved with the abolition of slavery and its immediate aftermath both as part of its statutory remit and through its board members. In the parliamentary bill, DNB was mentioned by name in Article 15 of the second chapter, which dealt with compensation to owners. In line with the wishes of the interested parties, these payments were to take place in "bills of exchange, guilder for guilder, to be issued by the governer against the Minister of the Colonies and payable one month after inspection at De Nederlandsche Bank in Amsterdam, or, if so desired and insofar as the colonial treasury is able so to do in the opinion of the governer, in legal tender at Paramaribo."[579]

The House of Representatives' preliminary response to the proposal was positive, but Loudon had to leave its final defence in both chambers of the States General to his successor, Gerhard Hendrik Uhlenbeck. Appointed Minister of the Colonies in February 1862, he adopted the bill in its entirety.[580] In the preliminary response, MPs had devoted only a few sentences to the method of indemnification. Unlike the prospective beneficiaries, they remained reluctant "to spend more than ten million guilders from the national treasury for the ransom of the Surinam slaves."[581] The main reason for this was a fear that, "once they have received the compensation or indemnification", the owners of coffee and cotton plantations in particular might "wind up their businesses, so that lands hitherto cultivated will soon turn into wastelands."[582] The House wondered whether there was any way to hinder this alarming prospect. A few members recalled Rochussen's plans to set up a colonial bank in Surinam, with part of the compensation to be dispensed in the form of shares in that institution, but the majority remembered "that the earlier proposal to establish such a bank was condemned by the House and that it seemed unwise to return to it."[583] Without specifically mentioning DNB as the paying agent, then, the preliminary response did comment on the government's choice to abandon the idea of a new colonial bank and instead channel the payments through DNB. Finally, the document also contains a remark concerning claims for compensation from third parties. In this regard, it states, the government had undoubtedly considered the mortgage holders, but "nothing definite is determined concerning their rights."[584] Following the series of petitions they had received from Amsterdam, the MPs were convinced that some arrangement in that respect was desirable "partly because the number of plantations encumbered with mortgages in Surinam is so large, and partly because the claims of mortgage holders will become extremely complicated after the release of the slaves."[585]

Prior to the parliamentary debate on what was now Uhlenbeck's bill, the Amsterdam lobby made itself heard one more time. On 26 June, 1862, the House of Representatives received a petition from several "owners of, representatives of the owners of, mortgagees of, and directors of mortgage funds of plantations in the colony of Surinam."[586] DNB director Insinger was one of the signatories, who

> have observed with regret that in the preliminary response by the rapporteurs on the bill concerning the abolition of slavery in the W. I. [West Indies] colonies, notwithstanding repeated and emphatic representations in various addresses prepared by the undersigned for the House of Representatives of the States General, many members of that body of the state not only remain averse to the idea that the owners of slaves to be expropriated by means of emancipation should be entitled to full compensation, but even feel that the amount to be allowed by law as compensation will still be too high.[587]

Since the debate on the bill was imminent, the signatories kept their arguments short. In any case, this was not the first time they had made such a plea for full compensation. "After all they have put forward in this respect in earlier addresses," they wrote, "the undersigned have no need to prove again that the sum being offered as what in earlier drafts was called compensation (vergoeding) and now, according to the preliminary response, comes under the name amends (tegemoetkoming) is far too low."[588] In addition, the petitioners once again cited "the situation in the colony of Demerara" to illustrate "what one may conceive to be the results of immigration."[589] In that British possession the number of immigrants exceeded the demand for labour, showing that "without sufficient capital" even "that device to alleviate or prevent the ramifications of emancipation [is] entirely in vain."[590] By contrast, there is no mention of the fact that DNB had now been designated as the paying agent of the indemnification. In that respect, after all, the minister had complied with the petitioners' wish to be paid with paper that was as stable as possible in value rather than potentially volatile shares in a new colonial bank. What they were still keen to press home, though, was their claim that *f*300 per "slave head can in no way be called compensation" because the value of their possessions had been reduced to such an extent "that they are unable to provide themselves by other means with the resources" needed to continue their business. As for the DNB's involvement in this particular petition, it should be noted that it was signed both by Insinger & Co as a firm and by Jacobus Hermanus Insinger personally. This suggests that the bank director wanted to attach his own name in order to give the document added weight in The Hague.

When the bill reached the floor of the House, the first speaker in the plenary debate, the Frisian MP Jacob Dirks, immediately criticised its new scheme for disbursing compensation. While Rochussen's original plan had caused a great deal of controversy in both Amsterdam and Surinam because part of the payment of emancipation monies was done in the form of bank shares in the colony, in his view the latest proposal did not represent an adequate alternative.

> This point is now being skirted rather lightly. I do know that there was this great objection to paying with *paper* and not with *money worthy of the name*. But that objection could have been overcome through guarantees and redemptions. During our examination of the previous bill, I submitted a plan which showed that this was possible without great sacrifice. In this Preliminary Response, however, the matter has been dealt with only very briefly. And the means of achieving it successfully has been overlooked. The wind was not yet fair for that plan.[591]

In his explanatory memorandum, the minister had stated that the intention of the previous plan for a colonial bank was for the compensation money to remain in Surinam as capital. Now that DNB was being brought in to dispense it, Dirks wanted to know from Uhlenbeck "whether this payment entirely in specie would not give rise to [...] abandonment of the colony, lock, stock, and barrel."[592]

Uhlenbeck only partially answered Dirks' question about the still indeterminate arrangements for the payout. Rather than commenting on the decision to compensate the owners in cash, he confined himself to the fear this would leave plantation grounds abandoned and dilapidated. "That the absence of the owners is not in the interest of the colonies – indeed, that it is largely hostile to that interest – is incontrovertible, because it is known all too well that a great part of the benefits obtained by the labour of the slave forces does not now serve the development and improvement of the colonies themselves, but is draining away to elsewhere."[593] Emancipation would only perpetuate the absence of those with interests in the colonies, as would the transfer of colonial securities to new holders. Nevertheless, Uhlenbeck expected that the careful distribution of compensation to entitled parties would "of itself" lead to new economic life in the colonies.

None of the other questions MPs had about executing the indemnity clause concerned DNB as the institute responsible for making the payments. However, some MPs were concerned about the formalities the beneficiaries would have to go through in order to establish how much they were entitled to, before they could collect their bills from DNB or receive the specie sent to Surinam. In particular, they were anxious to ensure the numbers of enslaved people declared by owners and or mortgagees as eligible for indemnification were accurate and up to date. So, for instance, after the adoption of two amendments it was determined that owners would not receive compensation for enslaved persons who had absconded or gone missing for more than one month prior to the date on which owners had to submit their documentation. The same applied to children born of enslaved women after the promulgation of the law in Surinam. Claimants were given thirty days after promulgation to lodge the necessary papers with the Ministry of the Colonies, which then verified the information provided with its officials in the colony.[594] In this way, the government ensured that DNB could undertake the disbursement on the basis of accurate documentation.

Another major change to the bill during its passage through parliament was the abandonment of state supervised immigration, a move which would also affect DNB in the near future. Speaking in the debate on 8 July, 1862, MP Isaäc Dignus Fransen van de Putte – a good friend of later DNB official Nicolaas Gerard Pierson (d. 1868-1885; p. 1885-1891) – looked to Java for an insight into the future of Surinam: before the emancipated slaves of that colony were ready for life as free men and women, just like the Javanese before them they would first have to be "apprenticed" under state supervision so that they learnt how to work.[595]

In his response, Uhlenbeck rejected the criticism of state-supervised immigration out of hand; in fact, he believed it essential to make Surinam, in relative terms, "a second Java."[596] But to no avail: MPs Pieter van Bosse and Pieter Jacob Elout van Soeterwoude successfully tabled an amendment to make private enterprise responsible for immigration to Surinam, rather than the state.

The final passage of the bill took quite some time, since each section could first be put to a separate vote if the House so wished. However, the provision designating De Nederlandsche Bank as the institution responsible for paying compensation was adopted without further debate or division. After this section-by-section consideration, Uhlenbeck's bill for Surinam had been substantially amended by MPs and was passed in its final form with 47 votes in favour and 11 against. The equivalent bill for Curaçao and its dependencies was adopted by 45 votes to 7.[597]

In his memoirs, Loudon complained that "his" original bill had been mutilated by the House of Representatives. Uhlenbeck "was no debater" and proved unable to put up an adequate defence against the amendment. "The 'moutons de Panurge' [mindless sheep] formed the majority, the amendment was passed and the law was spoilt!"[598] When the British envoy Sir Andrew Buchanan visited him to ask what exactly the amendment entailed, Loudon was at least able to explain to him his own preference for state-supervised immigration: "After serious study of the subject and after referring to the experience gained in Demerara," the former minister "had arrived at the conviction that – in order to avoid difficulties, misdeeds and maltreatment – immigration should be a matter for government [...] The abominable trade in Chinese coolies was certainly not well-known to the amendment men!"[599] From Uhlenbeck's and Loudon's defences, it is evident once again that the methods of production and the organisation of labour on Java, along with Britain's abolition of slavery, had served as examples for the Dutch policy on this subject.

Behind the scenes, the Amsterdam interested parties did consider trying to block the bill, as amended by the House of Representatives, in the Senate or by appealing directly to the king. Brugmans thought it unwise to do so, however, because it was unlikely that the House would "reconsider its position and the minister, however wretchedly he may have behaved, will not be moved to stigmatise his own cowardly incompetence so openly."[600] Brugmans therefore considered it necessary to act "under the assumption that the amended proposition will now be enacted into law – there is no time to lose."[601] In his view, the main question for the owners at this stage concerned "the extent to which immigration will be needed to supplement what is lacking in the labour of the freed men, but equally whether and by what means immigrants may be obtained."[602] The Senate approved the bill for Surinam by 26 votes to 6 and the one for Curaçao and dependencies by 18 to 13.[603]

Abolition and apprenticeship

The Emancipation Act (Emancipatiewet) came into force on 1 July, 1863. The second chapter of the bill adopted on 8 August 1862, dealt with compensation for slave owners. with compensation for slave owners. According to Article 14 of the act, this was to be paid in the form of bills of exchange issued by the governor against the account of the Minister of the Colonies (see Appendix 1). The holder of such a bill could apply to De Nederlandsche Bank, which would pay out the money one month after it had been presented. Slave owners in Surinam received *f* 300 per enslaved person, irrespective of their age or the type of plantation. This amount was adjusted to *f* 60 if the person concerned had acquired the right to manumission (release by the owner). On Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba, St Eustatius, and Saba, owners received *f* 200 per person. On Sint Maarten the amount was *f* 100. This variance between the colonies was based upon the difference in the market value of the goods produced in each of them.

One year after abolition, a balance sheet of the payments made was drawn up. The total amount disbursed was *f* 9,864,360, of which the largest part (*f* 6,350,000) had been dispensed in the form of bills of exchange.[604] The rest was in cash, but as soon as that currency reached Surinam it was shipped out of the colony again. According to J.F. Zeegelaar, rather than the local merchants settling their overseas debts with bills of exchange, "the coinage itself was packed in barrels and sent to all parts of the world in tightly nailed crates."[605]

Table 7. *Numbers of emancipated people under under the Emancipation Act of 1863.*

	Compensated releases	Government ownership	Total
Surinam	32,972	649	33,621
Curaçao	6,684	67	6,751
Bonaire	151	607	758
Aruba	474	6	480
St Eustatius	1,087	-	1,087
Saba	700	-	700
Sint Maarten	1,878	-	1,878
Total	43,946	1.329	45,275

Source: Encyclopaedie van Nederlandsch West-Indië (1914), 642.

On 1 October, 1863, the system of "state supervision" was inaugurated for a period of ten years. Under the abolition statutes, it was decreed that those men and women between the ages of fifteen and sixty who worked in the fields and boiling houses of the Surinamese plantations would have to sign a contract as an apprentice with an estate of their choice. This scheme was an attempt by the colonial government to maintain agricultural production after abolition. Whilst not a continuation of slavery as such, it occupied a grey area between coercion (signing such a contract was mandatory) and the freedom to choose where to work.[606] The rules were considerably milder for artisans and people living in the city: they had only to conclude a contract for a period of at least three months and after fulfilling this obligation, which could last up to one year, they did not have to enter into a new contract. At the beginning of the apprenticeship, almost everyone who was required to do so did indeed sign a contract. Later, though, the number decreased. By the time the system came to an end, only 15,269 of the 28,744 people originally covered were still under contract. Out of these people, 12,239 worked on plantations.[607]

Amongst the owners, we can distinguish two groups: on the one hand the optimists who believed that plantation production could be maintained during apprenticeship and thanks to immigration plans, and on the other the pessimists who sold their estates as quickly as possible and left the colony with the compensation they had received.[608] Due to the climate and the vulnerability of both the cultivated land and the machinery, the value of abandoned plantations fell rapidly. Many were sold shortly after abolition and this number continued to surge until 1866, when no fewer than 161 plantations and other landholdings changed hands in just one year.[609] Abolition was feared by the owners because they thought it would negatively affect the productivity of their estates – a fear which proved partly justified, although the end of slavery did not spell the end of plantation agriculture as such.

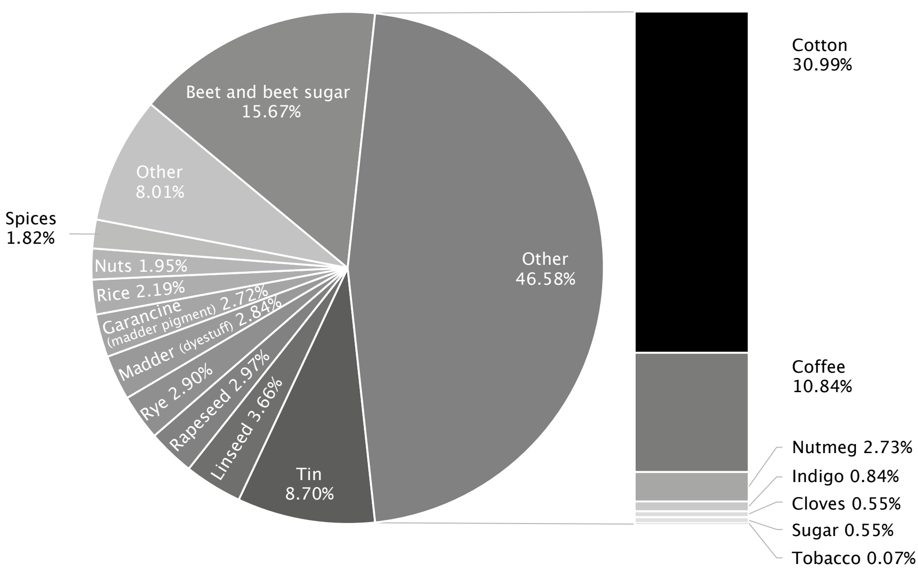
Table 8. *Exports of the plantation products sugar, coffee, cocoa and cotton to the Netherlands and North America, 1860-1874.*

	Sugar (pounds)	Coffee (pounds)	Cocoa (pounds)	Cotton (pounds)
1860	33,375,667	488,069	507,465	561,580
1861	31,723,369	139,735	504,208	478,875
1862	32,775,681	126,021	...	451,920
1863	27,365,364	281,540	615,922	374,155
1864	20,441,708	181,008	760,539	278,150
1865	15,612,805	237,484	661,849	348,353
1866	18,557,325	28,154	912,170	256,044
1867	21,164,179	18,523	1,010,659	482,585
1868	22,593,182	41,908	1,303,760	520,209
1869	19,600,220	15,441	860,422	354,870
1870	22,309,213	16,735	1,068,891	485,608
1871	23,709,797	8,190	1,093,394	222,851
1872	24,581,628	50,365	1,697,190	290,525
1873	25,193,461	71,763	1,675,457	143,835
1874	22,161,132	945	2,232,204	117,034

Source: Slootweg 1987, from colonial reports for 1860-1874. Some of this data is broken down by quarter and by destination in Sypesteyn, Afschaffing der slavernij (1866) 105-106.

What did the abolition of slavery mean for pledges of goods to DNB as collateral for loans? Using the same definition of slave goods as in Chapter 4, Figure 7 shows that these products (now not the result of enslaved labour) still accounted for almost half of all gages in the 1872/73 financial year. Cotton is particularly prominent here, and in fact now tops the list by total value: almost *f* 3 million. Several large pledges from Viervant & Co, Haupe & Wilde, and Steinbacher & Son, amongst others, contributed towards that large share. Coffee, also traditionally well represented, still accounted for more than *f* 1 million. What is most striking, however, is the large amount of Dutch beet sugar now being pledged: this crop did not appear once in our sample years between 1814 and 1863, but in 1872/73 was used to secure credit worth almost *f* 1.5 million. That is more than coffee. The abolition of slavery combined with new industrial innovations enabled the efficient extraction of sugar from Dutch beet, causing this product to appear so suddenly.

Figure 7. *Goods pledged against DNB loans, 1872/73 financial year.*



Only six borrowers pledged beet sugar to DNB in the 1872/73 financial year. Looking at them, it is obvious that a process of centralisation in production had been under way. Traditionally, sugar was processed at small artisanal refineries, but from the late 1860s and into the 1870s, this activity increasingly became a large-scale industrial undertaking.[610] The Internationale Suikerraffinaderij (International Sugar Refinery) on the Lijnbaansgracht in Amsterdam, run by Spakler & Tetterode, and the Hollandsche Suikerraffinaderij NV (Holland Sugar Refinery Ltd), both listed as borrowers from DNB in Table 9, are two striking examples of this trend. For the bank itself, however, such shifts made little difference: it still granted credit against the colonial goods previously produced using enslaved labour. Merely the way in which the goods were produced had changed, but that distinction had never been relevant to DNB in providing its financial services.

Table 9. *Borrowers pledging beet sugar in the 1872/73 financial year.*

Borrower	Total amount loaned in guilders
De Internationale Suikerraffinaderij	811,000
De Hollandsche Suikerraffinaderij NV	535,000
Niehoff & Heybroek	78,000
Van Loon de Ram & Co	38,000
Viehoff & Hoybroek	21,000
Laane, Rogier, Daverveldt & Co	11,000
TOTAL	1,494,000

"The East is important, but so is the West – and it will be even more" – Nicolaas Pierson and the West Indies colonies after 1863

The big question facing the Dutch West Indies after the abolition of slavery was how to maintain labour productivity on the plantations. Before he became director at DNB, Nicolaas Gerard Pierson (d. 1868-1885; p. 1885-1891) had actively engaged with this issue as a banker. As an institution, DNB itself became involved through its financial services for concerned organisations and authorities. We first discuss this aspect, before then turning to Pierson's ideas and activities.

Nicolaas Gerard Pierson. Source: DNB Collection.

After 1858 in particular, the lion's share of DNB's current account balances consisted of state funds. In the wake of abolition, for example, the bank provided services to the Company for the Extraction of Salt on the Island of Sint Maarten (Maatschappij tot Zoutwinning op het Eiland Sint Maarten) through its relationship with the Ministry of the Colonies. When concluding a contract with this firm, DNB sought to ensure this encompassed "security for the repayment of all funds that the company might, in the execution of this contract, prove to owe the Department of the Colonies."[611] This service clearly arose out of DNB's core remit. Within the state funds on its books, the account held by the Netherlands Trading Society (Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij, NHM) was especially important. In the 1863/64 financial year, the bank administered nearly *f*70 million on behalf of this company.[612] Part of that balance was used by the NHM to develop new activities in Surinam, at the instigation of its non-executive directors Albrecht Frederik Insinger and Charles le Chevalier. Although the Dutch government had paid them and other Amsterdam stakeholders compensation for the loss of their enslaved workforce in specie or bills of exchange, the Surinamese planters' need for capital remained; not only did they now have to pay their workers a wage, but in many cases they needed to recruit new ones from abroad. In 1866, the NHM sought to meet this demand for capital by establishing an agency in Surinam.[613] The draft legislation in the run-up to abolition had included provisions concerning the financing of labour migration to the colony. DNB's involvement in the Caribbean during the period of apprenticeship therefore extended beyond paying out compensation.

Pierson's personal involvement with the Surinamese economy offers us a good insight into the way in which people associated with DNB, then or later, attempted to steer West Indies colonial policy in The Hague. His views on slavery in the region were shaped in part by a trip to the United States in 1858-1859. Whilst Britain's example was the guiding light for abolitionists in the Netherlands, including Pierson's own parents, he felt that the situation on the other side of the ocean should give them cause for thought. Indeed, his letters to his parents contain tangible evidence that this future DNB director and president was by no means a principled opponent of slavery ten years before he joined the bank. Observing the practice in the vicinity of New Orleans, he concluded

> that the abolition of slavery in the United States would be the greatest misfortune, at least for the blacks themselves [...] In my opinion, slavery as it exists here is, given the intellectual and moral condition of the slave, the happiest condition for the negro. Whatever may be said about it, this is a fact that everyone who knows the South assures me is true, and I have observed with my own eyes and observe daily that the slaves are treated well.[614]

Pierson did moderate this positive opinion somewhat after witnessing a public sale of enslaved people in New Orleans. Even then, however, he persisted in his conviction that the enslaved, after their emancipation, could only develop into free workers under the guidance of the coloniser.[615] With regard to Pierson's involvement in immigration to Surinam, it is also important to note his observations of the trade in Asian coolies in Cuba, for which the British were responsible. From Havana, Pierson wrote to his parents in March 1859 that

> it [was] quite a bit worse than slavery, that coolie trade; they are treated as badly as the slaves, and whipped just as hard when they do not work well [...] If England wants to remove from itself the blame of performing a comedy play and committing the greatest hypocrisy with its anti-slavery system, then let it abandon its coolie trade.[616]

After his return to the Netherlands, Pierson became embroiled in the public debate surrounding abolition. His stance on how slavery should be ended in the Dutch West Indies was significant in shaping national policy. In 1862, he reviewed a number of treatises on the issue for the periodical *De Gids*, coming down in favour of gradual abolition in exchange for fair compensation for the owners.[617] In this respect he was far from unique, since hardly anyone advocated abolition without financial redress.[618] Although no evidence has been found that his subsequent appointment at DNB was in any way a result of his public calls for compensation, that cannot be ruled out either.

On 19 January, 1865, Pierson and Charles Marc Fraissinet were named joint managing directors of De Surinaamsche Bank, a newly founded bank of circulation that was seen as an important means of tackling the economic malaise in the colony. Its success would depend upon the prosperity of Surinam, which was under threat from the prospect of a shrinking labour force, especially on the sugar plantations. The Ministry of the Colonies had been negotiating – in vain – with the United States about the transfer of former enslaved people to Surinam, "because it seems that men fit for work would be so useful there, and their transport would be less expensive than that of Chinese emigrants."[619] But De Surinaamsche Bank did consider the immigration of workers from the Far East (China, British India, Java) as a viable solution. For this reason, Pierson went on a study and business trip to Liverpool, Manchester, and London at the end of 1864. There he hoped to establish contacts with agencies able to help with the migration of Chinese workers from Hong Kong to Surinam. Back in Amsterdam, Pierson withdrew from the Beckman & Pierson trading company in order to devote himself fully to his new position.[620]

As a managing director of De Surinaamsche Bank, Pierson intervened actively in government policy towards the colony. Formally, his role was confined to overseeing the bank's operations in the Netherlands, but that did not stop him from keeping a close eye on the situation in Surinam itself. This is apparent from another review he wrote for *De Gids*, this time of an "open letter" from Van der Gon Netscher to Minister of the Colonies Fransen van de Putte. In that, the former planter from British Guiana had argued against the new government regulation planned for Surinam and Curaçao. As well as criticising the composition of the colonial administration, Van der Gon Netscher was particularly opposed to leaving the arrangement of immigration into Surinam to private initiatives. This latter point was relevant to Pierson as director of a bank with interests in the colony. "There were currently sugar plantations in Surinam," he wrote, "which, despite being organised according to the best and most modern methods, still led a languishing existence simply because of a lack of workers. Providing Surinam with labourers should therefore be the goal of everyone who wishes to contribute towards the prosperity of the colony."[621] Pierson contested Van der Gon Netscher's view that privately financed immigration into British Guiana had ended in a fiasco, sharing with his readers the lesson that he himself had learnt from the British and would soon apply to the Netherlands. The British government had indeed taken immigration out of the hands of private individuals in British Guiana, placing its own agents in India and China. The necessary capital came from loans raised in the mother country, and the planters were granted generous repayment terms. "In this way," Pierson asserted, "the matter was a most excellent success" and British Guiana was now flourishing as well as it had been before emancipation.[622]

At the initiative of Surinaamsche Bank, the private Surinam Immigration Company (Surinaamsche Immigratie Maatschappij) was founded in May 1865. Pierson's personal involvement in its establishment was significant. "It remains extremely busy, even though the matter of emigration is as good as in order", he wrote hurriedly to Samuel van Houten shortly before it was set up.[623] Plantation owners could submit requests for labourers to the company, which would then bring them in from China. Here too, we also see traces of involvement by DNB director Jacobus Hermanus Insinger. Pierson and Fraissinet, as managing directors of De Surinaamsche Bank, formed the board of the immigration company as well, but one of its six non-executive directors was Maurits Herman Insinger, a son of the DNB director and a partner in the firm Insinger & Co. Moreover, DNB provided the business with financial services during its formative years.[624] In 1865 and 1866, the company lodged a total of 252 securities with DNB, each worth *f*1,000, as collateral against loans, and was charged commission for their custody (for example, 0.5 per cent per mille per half year). This service to the Surinaamsche Immigratie Maatschappij fell within DNB's statutory remit.

Pierson was satisfied with the company's initial trading results. "How well Netscher's prophecies are now coming true!", he wrote excitedly to Fransen van de Putte. "Private immigration was not possible. And our company has earnt 10 per cent net in its first year!"[625] On 1 January, 1866, the new government regulation came into force in Surinam, designed under Fransen van den Putte's auspices as Minister of the Colonies. By October of that year, Pierson was already very enthusiastic about the "excellent fruits" he believed it had started bearing:

> The spirit of enterprise is on the rise. Production in the first half of 1866 shows an increase of 33 per cent and we are counting on even more. This is pleasing, is it not? The East is important, but so is the West – and it will be even more.[626]

But following this promising start-up phase, both the rising trend in Surinamese labour productivity and the company's profitability soon stalled. Over just two years, its dividend fell to a mere 2.5 per cent. The financial resources it had been allocated under the abolition legislation proved insufficient. In line with the amendment pushed through by Elout and Van Bosse in 1862, the government had made *f*1 million available for a system of financial premiums to promote the supply of labour to Surinam. When immigration turned out to be slower than anticipated, Pierson decided to write to his political friends to request an extension of this scheme. The MP Menso Johannes Pijnappel was asked if "you yourself [will] table the amendment", because "it is better that the proposal to amend [Minister of the Colonies Nicolaas] Trakranen's bill not come from the side of the colonial opposition."[627] Maurits Herman Insinger was a member of parliament, too, but he was "too closely associated with Messrs Insinger and Co, who have important interests in Surinam, to be considered able to speak about it with complete impartiality."[628] On the same day Pierson wrote to Fransen van de Putte to say he wished to take advantage "of your leave, so obligingly granted me, to be allowed to intercede in the Chamber in favour of Surinamese interests should the occasion so arise."[629] This strategy succeeded, because a few days later the House of Representatives adopted a proposal tabled by Pijnappel to extend the financial incentive scheme until 1 July, 1873, with 43 votes in favour to 17 against.[630]

Despite extending the government's subsidies, immigration remained a headache for Pierson. In January 1867, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* published a story about "five Chinese accused of violently abducting coolies destined for the Dutch possessions in the West Indies."[631] This report prompted not only a concerned letter from Fransen van de Putte to Pierson, but also a parliamentary question to the minister: was it true that the convicted men had been hired by a person working for an agent in the service of the Surinam Immigration Company? Trakranen was unable to deny this, but felt that the agent in Hong Kong was not to blame for the "most improper pressure" exerted by his subcontractors.[632] In spite of such public scandals, Pierson continued to work assiduously – with the aid of his political connections in The Hague – to ensure the company's success. Separately from the affair with the subcontractors, Van de Putte contacted Pierson as he was eager to discuss "Surinamese interests."[633] The MP had "read the debates in the Colonial States with great interest – although I did not always agree – and wanted to talk with you about certain things."[634] In 1869, Pierson even penned a letter of introduction to Johan Rudolph Thorbecke on behalf of Fergus Castairs, a member of the Colonial States of Surinam. Although the former prime minister and constitutional reformer was now just a backbench MP, Pierson found this a difficult missive to write because he took the risk of being "indiscreet or arrogant" by introducing someone to an elder statesman he himself had only met once before.[635] Carstairs was a strong advocate of expanded immigration. Whether he ever actually met Thorbecke is not clear, but the colonial assembly did subsequently petition the Dutch parliament successfully to enter into a treaty with the United Kingdom to allow labourers from British India to migrate to the colony.[636]

The Surinam Immigration Company did not survive to see the end of the period of apprenticeship. In December 1870, the board put the business into liquidation. By that time, Pierson had been a director of DNB for two years. After taking up that position in 1868, the opportunity arose to exchange his directorship of De Surinaamsche Bank for a non-executive directorship. That was brought about by the death of founding non-executive director Samuel Sarphati, with Pierson taking his place.[637]

Also at DNB, Pierson remained outspoken on abolition and the ensuing period of apprenticeship. In a personal letter to Van Houten in 1871, he summarised his views on the Emancipation Act and the practical repercussions of the apprenticeship system. This document shows his opinions regarding enslavement-based production were more or less unchanged since his visit to the southern United States in the late 1850s. Because Pierson wrote these words during his tenure at DNB, albeit in a personal capacity, they reveal clearly that a member of the bank's executive board was free to continue criticising the emancipation legislation even long after it had been passed by the States General.

> With regard to the negro question, I am still of the same opinion as before. I believe that the negro has a receptive nature, a docile nature, and that the principal means of his development must be sought in bringing him into contact with the white man. Every measure that has the effect of isolating him from the European population must be to the detriment of his civilisation. Now I very much believe that the abolition of apprenticeship will be such a measure [...] In my opinion, the Emancipation Act has always been a failure. It was based upon a false conception and was therefore a leap too far [...] I would have liked: an apprenticeship of 50 years and at the same time compulsory education; an obligation upon the planter to give his negroes some pieces of land *on* or *near* his plantation on long leases, which they would cultivate in their own time; and at the same time a supply of foreign workmen – because Surinam - even if all negroes work - still needs workmen. In this way one would: (1) have grouped the petite culture *around* the grande culture; (2) have given the contact between the negro and the white man a solid basis, which would remain also after the end of apprenticeship; [and] (3) have promoted the development of the negro. Can the wrong still be righted? Perhaps so. The duration of apprenticeship could yet be extended, *under certain conditions.*[638]

In short, Pierson explained to Van Houten that he did not consider the emancipated enslaved people of Surinam, in particular, capable of developing without the help of the white European population there. He therefore regarded the Dutch legislation a failure, since it relied upon this ability to develop being fulfilled within too short a period of apprenticeship. Under the guidance of the planters, the people who they had formerly enslaved could cultivate a piece of land for themselves alongside their labour on the commercial estates. Finally, Pierson repudiated public accusations – including those made by Van Bosse, who was now Minister of the Colonies – that the immigrants thus far brought to Surinam were treated badly. The immigration of extra workers was necessary for the productivity of the plantations, but "this supply need not be a slave trade" as long as those concerned were prepared to adopt the safeguards against that, such as those already tried and tested by the British.[639]

The story of Pierson's involvement in the supply of migrant labour to Surinam is an important part of this final chapter of our book on DNB's involvement in the history of slavery. It shows how a plantation economy based upon slavery had had to make the transition to wage labour and how this in turn had given rise to an acute problem of productivity for which the solution was found in shipping new workers from Asia to the Dutch Caribbean. In his youth, Pierson had reflected upon slavery during his trip to America and had shared his observations with his abolitionist parents. These show that he was not opposed to slavery in principle, nor did he join the abolitionist ranks in his reviews for *De Gids*. But he did disapprove of the coolie trade conducted by the British in Cuba once he had seen with his own eyes the treatment of the immigrants there. Nevertheless, as a director of both De Surinaamsche Bank and the Surinam Immigration Company he found that, in practice, he could not and would not ignore the British in securing immigration to Surinam. From Pierson's observation that the British had taught him certain guarantees could prevent the transportation of labour migrants from becoming a slave trade, the thought arises that - in a certain sense - the conversation between the Netherlands and Britain about the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade had been ongoing since 1814. This makes Pierson's personal views on slavery and his own involvement with labour migration from Asia to the Caribbean a fitting finale to our study of the transformation of the slavery-based production chain. Views on slavery were expressed by DNB officials either in a personal capacity or through the trading firms in which they were involved.

Although DNB as an institution did not shape any policy on this issue, it was involved in the financial services used by slavery-related companies and later also integral to the process whereby slavery was abolished in the Dutch colonial empire.