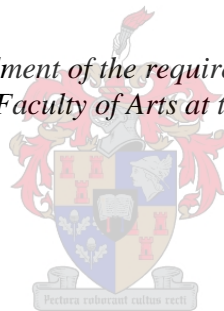


# **A history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, with specific reference to its corporate social responsibility (1885-1929)**

by  
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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Masters of Arts (History) in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Stellenbosch*



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December 2011

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyses corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Belgium in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by making use of a case study on the history of the biscuit company De Beukelaer's Fabrieken between 1885 and 1929. During this period De Beukelaer's Fabrieken managed to establish itself and its brand firmly in the international food industry and, besides its reputation for its products, also became known for its extensive CSR policy.

The thesis analyses and determines the character of the CSR policy implemented at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken by examining the various forms of CSR the company practiced during this period, and which rested on three distinct pillars, namely welfare services, leisure, and educational initiatives. Both in terms of implementation and characteristics the company's policy was certainly not unique.

In addition, the thesis also establishes some of the motives for the implementation of the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy by its owners and management. It is difficult to determine, however, what the exact reasons were for the implementation and development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR. The company's policy was influenced by both the changes and developments that were occurring in its wider environment as well as the changes and developments that occurred within the company, its owners and its management; the company's CSR policy was thus a product of action and reaction, driven by both conscious as well as subconscious motivations that were influenced by various causes, both internal as well as external.

By determining the character, nature and influence of the company's CSR policy, as well as the motivation behind it, the thesis attempts to gain a better understanding of this particular aspect of the company's history, an aspect that formed a significantly defining feature of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken between 1885 and 1929.

## **Opsomming**

Die tesis fokus op korporatiewe sosiale verantwoordelikheid (KSV) in België in die laat 19de en vroeg 20ste eeu deur 'n gevalle studie van die geskiedenis van die Belgiese beskuitjie maatskappy De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 1885-1929. Die maatskappy het in die betrokke periode daaringeslaag om homself en sy handelsmerk in die internasionale voedsel industrie te vestig en afgesien van sy reputasie vir sy produkte ook vir sy uitgebreide inisiatiewe ten opsigte van KSV bekend geword.

Die tesis is 'n studie van die aard, karakter en eienskappe van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken se KSV deur 'n analise van die verskeie vorms waarin dit neerslag gevind het. Die maatskappy se KSV-beleid het op drie elemente, naamlik welsyns dienste, vryetydsbesteding/ontspanning en opvoedkundige inisiatiewe berus. Dit is 'n bevinding van die studie dat ten opsigte van bo genoemde aspekte die maatskappy se beleid nie uniek vir die periode was nie.

Die tesis poog ook om die motivering of motiewe van die maatskappy se eienaars en bestuur vir die implementering van hul KSV vas te stel. Dit is egter moeilik om te bepaal aangesien die maatskappy se KSV-beleid beïnvloed is deur beide die veranderinge en ontwikkelinge in die breër gemeenskap sowel as die in die maatskappy self, sy eienaars en bestuur. Die maatskappy se beleid was dus die produk van aksie en reaksie wat gedryf is deur beide bewustelike as onbewustelike motiverings wat deur 'n verskeidenheid intern en ekstern faktore teweeggebring is.

Die fokus op die motivering vir sowel as aard, karakter en invloed van die maatskappy se KSV is 'n poging om tot groter begrip van dié bepalende aspek van die maatskappy se geskiedenis in die periode te kom.

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In loving memory of Marie-Christine Passemiers

07/10/1953 -28/08/2011

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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Focus and problem statement**

During the late nineteenth century Eduard De Beukelaer, a young artisanal baker operating on the corner of *Sint-Jacobs-* and *Lange Nieuwstraat* in Antwerp, identified a niche market in his local food industry and in 1875, after some years of experimentation, decided to pursue this entrepreneurial opportunity by establishing a biscuit company near the city centre. Eduard's biscuit factory in *Lange Kievitstraat*, first known as 'Ed. De Beukelaer & Co' and later 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen', was Belgium's first industrial biscuit manufacturing company and over the years developed into a profitable business that significantly expanded in both size and production.<sup>1</sup> Besides being known for the quality of its products, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's brand had also become synonymous with the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy that had been implemented by its founder. According to Eduard, the company's CSR had been based upon the *Arbeid Adelt* (Labour Ennobles) ideology.

The idiom *Arbeid Adelt* originated from the Latin *Virtus Nobilitat* and is probably based upon a sonnet written by the Roman poet, Juvenal, who stated in one of his satires: '*Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*' (Virtue is the true and only nobility).<sup>2</sup> This particular ethic, which was propagated by Eduard as his personal motto, was adopted as the company crest of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, and subsequently promoted by Eduard as the foundation upon which the company's CSR policy had been founded. But was *Arbeid Adelt* truly the inspiration for the company's CSR policy, or were there perhaps other motivations for its emergence? What exactly inspired Eduard and later on the members of his family who took over the management of the company after his death to invest such a significant amount of time, effort and finances in the company's CSR policy, as its implementation was not legally required and did not directly increase the company's profits? This subject is a complex but fascinating facet of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's history that needs to be comprehensively investigated and forms the focus of this thesis. By determining what the character, nature and influence of,

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<sup>1</sup> From 1875 until 1906 the factory in *Lange Kievitstraat* was known as 'Ed. De Beukelaer & Co', but from 1906 onwards its name was changed to 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuit & Chocolade, Antwerpen', after it had been transformed into a Limited Liability Company (LLC). For the sake of convenience, the thesis will generally refer the factory during both periods as 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', unless a necessary distinction needs to be made.

<sup>2</sup> H. De Groot, (ed.), *Idioom Woordeboek Van Dalen, Verklaringen en Herkomst van Uitdrukkingen en Gezegden*, 'Arbeid Adelt', 23.

and the motivation for, the company's CSR policy were, the thesis attempts to gain a better understanding of this particular aspect of the company's history, an aspect that formed a significantly defining feature of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken between 1885 and 1929.

The year 1885 was selected as a starting point for the study, since it marks the launch of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's earliest known CSR initiative. The year 1929 was selected as the terminal point for the study as it marks the steady decline of an era of CSR initiatives and services at the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and further signifies the end of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as a business that was completely owned and directed by family members. It is within the above timeframe between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that the company's CSR policy is investigated, and the motivation for its implementation analysed.

The second chapter of the thesis provides a brief depiction of the history of the biscuit industry, as well as the changing role and status of its product, i.e. the biscuit itself. This chapter will assist in sketching the current state of the industry in which Eduard De Beukelaer commenced his venture. The thesis's third chapter discusses the start, evolution and expansion of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as a business in the economic climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Belgium. In addition, the chapter also attempts to reveal something of the life and role of some of the key individuals who shaped and influenced this history. The latter analyses will thus lead to a better understanding of how the company was started and evolved, how it was managed and how it functioned, and finally in what way it affected, and was affected by, Eduard and his family members. The knowledge and information in this chapter will be used as the backdrop for further analysis in Chapter Four.

The fourth chapter of the thesis comprehensively examines the various CSR initiatives that were organised by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken between the years 1885 and 1929. This detailed analysis will enable the reader to gain a thorough understanding of how the company's CSR policy came about, evolved and eventually declined, whilst indicating some of its distinctive characteristics. After presenting a detailed understanding of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy, Chapter Five investigates how unique this company policy was during the period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by briefly investigating and comparing De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy with that of other companies on a local, national and international level. Such a comparison thus positions the CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in a wider context, and examines some of the possible reason for the similarities

between the CSR policies of different companies. Chapter Six investigates how De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy had been implemented and used as a business strategy by linking its emergence and character to the socio-economic and political developments that were occurring in Belgium during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The chapter extends the scope of the thesis beyond the realm of the business world in order to gain a better understanding of how the company and its policy were linked to events occurring in its wider environment. The seventh and final chapter of the thesis investigates some of the more altruistic motives for implementing the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken CSR by analysing the relationship that existed between the employer and employee, as well as examining the influence that the individual personality of Eduard had on the company's CSR policy.

'Unlike neo-classical economists who depict employers and workers as merely 'rational' agents seeking maximum reward for minimum effort',<sup>3</sup> the thesis looks at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken from a more social perspective by investigating how certain business decisions were influenced by, and/or had an impact upon, their wider environment as well as their owners and managers. This in-depth case study of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR initiatives and services thus places the company's policy in a broader context and attempts to show that the company was not a lifeless autonomous entity whose decisions was merely driven by the underlying economic principle of maximising its profit.

## 1.2. Literature review

The actual history of the biscuit is a fascinating topic on its own, but still needs to be further investigated by historians. Besides a small number of brief and often obscure references in books on food history, most of the available information on the history of biscuits seems to exist in the form of publications whose information is usually supplied or commissioned by the biscuit industry itself. Examples of such publications are *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*<sup>4</sup> and *General Biscuit Company 125 jaar ervaring en expansie*.<sup>5</sup> One book, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits, Huntley and Palmers of Reading 1822-1972*,<sup>6</sup> is an exception to this rule as it is an academic work that consists of a good general overview on the history of the biscuit and the associated industry, even though it focuses mainly upon events in the United Kingdom. Besides the latter publication, little or no comprehensive academic work

<sup>3</sup> R. Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management & Industrial Welfare, 1946-1939*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*.

<sup>5</sup> Anonymous (hereafter Anon.), *General Biscuit Company, 125 Ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 Jaar Ervaring en Expansie*.

<sup>6</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits, Huntley and Palmers of Reading 1822-1972*.

seems to have been produced on the history of this topic and the understanding of this industry is thus still limited.

Currently there is also no comprehensive academic work published about De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, even though it was Belgium's first biscuit manufacturing company that developed into a leading corporation in the international biscuit industry. Although *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate*<sup>7</sup> is a brief company history that contains interesting and valuable information, it cannot really be classified as a comprehensive academic work, since it was commissioned by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in 1963. Some of its text is rather biased as a number of unflattering aspects of De Beukelaer's history have been carefully omitted, which has unfortunately resulted in the work becoming hagiographical in nature. The publication itself was also largely pieced together by making use of already existing bits of speeches, as well as featured articles in the company magazine *De Schakel*,<sup>8</sup> which were both commissioned by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and had been written by René Goris when he was working for the company. Regrettably, all further publications that contain a history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken have used the latter work as their main or only source, and no real effort to properly investigate the company's history was undertaken by their authors. Large chunks of the same recycled text can be found in publications such as *General Biscuit Company, 125 ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 jaar ervaring en expansie*,<sup>9</sup> which was commissioned by the General Biscuit Company of which De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was one of the founders, or *Biscuits, a pictorial story of a sweet tradition*,<sup>10</sup> which consists of a brief history of some of Europe's main biscuit manufacturing companies and their advertisements.

A fair amount of literature has, however, been published on companies in Antwerp, Belgium and other industrialised nations that adequately document the subject of CSR. Such publications include, for instance, *Bell Telephone Manufacturing company 1882-1982*<sup>11</sup> and *Arbeid Adelt, een Geschiedenis van de door Lieven Gevaert Opgerichte Fotografische Industrie*<sup>12</sup> for the local comparison; and *Papierfabriek de Naeyer Kroniek van een Bedrijf*,<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate*.

<sup>8</sup> (Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience) (hereafter EHC), *De Schakel* Personeelsblad van de N.V. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken (hereafter *De Schakel*).

<sup>9</sup> Anon., *General Biscuit Company, 125 Ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 Jaar Ervaring en Expansie*.

<sup>10</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*.

<sup>11</sup> Anon., *Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company 1882-1982*.

<sup>12</sup> L. Roosens, W. Janssens, F. Nooyens, and R. Bosseart, (eds.), *Arbeid Adelt, een Geschiedenis van de door Lieven Gevaert Opgerichte Fotografische Industrie*.



*Louis De Naeyer een Monument*<sup>14</sup> and *De Warocqués (1802-1917) van integral kapitalisme tot filantropie, Dossier bij de Gelijksnamige tentoonstelling in het Algemeen Rijksarchief te Brussel van 20 April to 24 Juni 1995*<sup>15</sup> for the national comparison. For the broader international comparison the comprehensive publications of *British Labour Management & Industrial Welfare 1946-1939*,<sup>16</sup> and the equally insightful *Creating the Corporate soul, the rise of public relations and corporate imagery in American Big Business*<sup>17</sup> also proved illuminating.

The thesis further consulted a wide variety of literature on diverse topics that range from labour relations and labour movements, to welfare legislation, industry and culture to explain some of the motives for the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy as a conscious business strategy. Especially useful were the publications, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*<sup>18</sup> and the three-volume *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939*,<sup>19</sup> which provide a good insight into the developments and habits of the Belgian working class during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Although *Creating the Corporate soul, the rise of public relations and corporate imagery in American Big Business*<sup>20</sup> focuses on American business, its detailed insight into how the CSR policies of companies are linked to their public relations and corporate image also proved helpful in understanding a similar relationship in the context of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken.

There is also a wide variety of literature analysing the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy for more altruistic reasons. And the list of books that was consulted included, for instance, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen, Patroons en Arbeiders in de Belgische Textielnijverheid in de 19<sup>e</sup> en 20<sup>e</sup> eeuw*,<sup>21</sup> *Tussen Paternalistische zorg en Zakelijk Management C.J. Honig als Eindpunt van een Persoonsgericht Sociaal Ondernemersgedrag*

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<sup>13</sup> J. Merckx, *Papierfabriek de Naeyer Kroniek van een Bedrijf*.

<sup>14</sup> K. De Decker, *Louis De Naeyer, een Monument*.

<sup>15</sup> M. Van Den Eynde, *De Warocqués (1802-1917) van Integraal Kapitalisme tot Filantropie, Dossier bij de Gelijksnamige tentoonstelling in het Algemeen Rijksarchief te Brussel van 20 April to 24 Juni 1995*.

<sup>16</sup> R. Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management & Industrial Welfare*.

<sup>17</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul, the Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business*.

<sup>18</sup> R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*.

<sup>19</sup> S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939*.

<sup>20</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*.

<sup>21</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen, Patroons en Arbeiders in de Belgische Textielnijverheid in de 19<sup>e</sup> en 20<sup>e</sup> eeuw*.

*in een Zaans Familiebedrijf (1930-1957)*,<sup>22</sup> and *Family firms, Paternalism and Labor Relations*.<sup>23</sup> These publications all adequately described the behaviour of paternalistic employers and their relationship with their employees in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

### 1.3. Sources and methodological challenges

Many of the primary sources on De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's that are used in the thesis can be found at the *Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience* (hereafter EHC) in Antwerp, which houses various sources published by or for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken that provide valuable information about the company and its CSR. The large majority of the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's company records that cover this studied period are preserved at the archive of the *Centrum voor Bedrijfsgeschiedenis Universiteit Antwerpen* (hereafter CBUA). These official documents provide a very good insight into the performance and development of the company as well as some of its CSR initiatives and services. Large parts of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's early records are unfortunately missing from this archive, and it is therefore impossible to reconstruct a complete company history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. A small number of documents on De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR are also stored at Antwerp's *Felix Archief* (hereafter FA), whilst the cadastral records of the *Federale Overheidsdienst financiën, Administratie kadaster* in Antwerp also proved useful in clarifying some of the company's early history. Lastly some correspondence by Eduard De Beukelaer, and his wife Jeanne Vervecken is stored at the *Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven* (hereafter AMVC) also known as *Letterenhuis*, and provides some insight into their lives. Besides acquiring the latter information from libraries and archives in Belgium, other primary sources used in the thesis came from my private collection.

Because I have a family connection to the subject, in that Edward de Beukelaer is my great grandfather and Jeanne Vervecken my great grandmother, I am placed in a advantaged research position to have received a significant amount of information that has been passed down to me. Various documents, photographs and other primary sources are in my possession and allow me to reconstruct parts of the De Beukelaer history which would have been very difficult to reconstruct otherwise. I am fully aware of the ethical questions that this type of personal connection raises, but will consciously distance myself from my subject and

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<sup>22</sup> C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management, C.J. Honig als Eindpunt van een Persoonsgericht Sociaal Ondernemersgedrag in een Zaans Familiebedrijf (1930-1957)*.

<sup>23</sup> H.M. Mueller, and T. Philippon, *Family firms, Paternalism and Labor Relations*.

approach the thesis in a way that upholds the correct academic and scientific standards of the historical field of study with regard to the ideal of objectivity or, in the words of Jordanova, ‘reliable knowledge’.<sup>24</sup>

The methodological problems encountered in Chapter Three are different for each of its three sections. The first section attempts to piece together Eduard’s early life by tracing some of the steps that he undertook before eventually starting up his biscuit factory in the *Lange Kievitstraat*. Most of the information on Eduard De Beukelaer’s early life and first entrepreneurial ventures is unfortunately missing or incoherent. The information that does exist about this early period consists of a series of reflective memories, of which only one, a speech dating from the year 1888, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijlslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*,<sup>25</sup> is stored at the FA, and can be directly linked to Eduard De Beukelaer himself. All other remaining information either come from sources such as his family or employees in the form of texts that were presented at official occasions. To this day no memoirs or diaries by Eduard have been uncovered and much of his early life and first exploits thus remain unknown.

This apparent lack of proper primary information forces one to work with sources such as: *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918. Herinnering aan de viering van zyn vyf en zeventigste verjaardag door zyne familieleden en vertrouwde vrienden*,<sup>26</sup> the official speeches given for the so-called ‘60th anniversary’ of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken which are preserved at the CBUA,<sup>27</sup> and René Goris’s *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer’s fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*.<sup>28</sup> All of the latter sources talk about Eduard’s early life in a somewhat romanticised way by only highlighting his achievements through the spectrum of so-called ‘honest hard work’. From all of the above sources, which contain strong hagiographical undertones, one has to attempt to construct a coherent, relevant and reliable depiction of

<sup>24</sup> L. Jordanova, *History in Practice*, 93-4.

<sup>25</sup> (Felix Archief) (hereafter FA), Modern Archief (hereafter MA) 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijlslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*.

<sup>26</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918. Herinnering aan de viering van zyn vyf en zeventigste verjaardag door zyne familieleden en vertrouwde vrienden*.

<sup>27</sup> (Centrum voor Bedrijfsgeschiedenis Universiteit Antwerpen) (hereafter CBUA), Fonds P2 R. Goris beheerdersarchief De Beukelaer (hereafter P2) 49u, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

<sup>28</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*.

Eduard's life. A daunting task, especially since some of the information and dates mentioned by these sources are inconsistent or contradictory, forcing one to use one's own historical judgment to interpret the existing sources and fill in the missing parts.

The third chapter's first section also investigates the period between the start of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in 1875 until its transformation into a Limited Liability Company (LLC) in 1906, and there are a fair amount of sources that enable one to accurately reconstruct large parts of this particular period of the company's history. Although the cadastral records of the *Federale Overheidsdienst financiën, Administratie kadaster* in Antwerp prove useful in clarifying some of the company's early history, the difficulty with gathering information about Belgian companies dating back from the pre-World War Two era is that many documents were either simply non-existent, or have been lost or destroyed through the ages. The later in time, and the more a company grows and changes into an organised structure such as an LLC, the easier it is to acquire detailed and specific information about its developments from various official sources. When researching the start and early period of Eduard's factory in *Lange Kievitstraat*, one is confronted with incomplete records, as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's earliest records that pre-date the year 1887 are unfortunately lost and have more than likely been destroyed. Those early company records that have survived are preserved at the De Beukelaer's archive located at the CBUA, which houses a complete collection of balance sheet reports of the company's activities starting from the year 1887 to the year 1906, a rather extensive collection of the company's order books, as well as some employee records. Although the CBUA's archival records concerning the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's pre-1930 period are far from complete, the documents that did survive and are available in the archives do offer one a better understanding of how the company developed during its early period. Other information about this period is lost, and the additional history must be scraped together from various sources that include information supplied in commemorative works, as well as newspaper articles, publications by the company, and other secondary and primary sources, which together uncover parts of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's history, but unfortunately leave others closed.

The archive at the CBUA, however, does not house a complete collection of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's balance reports after it became a LLC in 1906, which severely limits the understanding of how the company performed during the period that is discussed in the second section of this chapter. All of the company's balance reports between 1907 and 1917

are missing and become complete again only from 1918 onwards. The sources that are available to reconstruct this part of the company's history are, for instance, the LLC's start-up act and all of the additional changes in its statutes, company structure and capital increases that were reported in *het Belgisch Staatsblad*. Other available sources include transcribed meetings of the Management Committee from 1917 to 1920, which are part of my private collection, balance reports for the years 1918 and 1919, which are stored at the CBUA, as well as various newspaper articles and company publications such as the *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken biscuits & chocolade, naamloze vennootschap Antwerpen*,<sup>29</sup> or *De Bakkerijschool vakblad ten behoeven van de bakkerij en aanverwante nijverheden*,<sup>30</sup> which are stored at the EHC and that can be used to shed some light on this particular period. The third and final section of the third chapter, which examines the period in the De Beukelaer's history after Eduard's death, is the segment that presented the fewest methodological problems, and besides a lack of some more in-depth company records, most of this period in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's history is well documented and stored at the archive of the CBUA.

The two sections of the thesis's fourth chapter also each have their own methodological difficulties. The first section of Chapter Four discusses the company's earliest CSR policy between 1885 and 1919, and makes use of a variety of sources including newspaper articles, company records and secondary sources to uncover these early foundations. Records on the company's *Maatschapij van Onderlingen Bijstand* (Society for Mutual Assistance) are stored at the CBUA archives<sup>31</sup> and contain valuable information about its existence and emergence, which together with other sources such as an early rulebook of the Society for Mutual Assistance *Maatschapij opgericht in de werkhuisen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & C<sup>o</sup>. Algemeen reglement*,<sup>32</sup> stored at Antwerp's FA, and the Management Committee meeting books from my private collection,<sup>33</sup> are rather illuminating. Other primary sources such as, for instance, *De Bakkerijschool vakblad ten behoeven van de bakkerij en aanverwante*

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<sup>29</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken biscuits & chocolade, naamloze vennootschap Antwerpen*.

<sup>30</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool Vakblad ten Behoeven van de Bakkerij en Aanverwante Nijverheden* (hereafter *De Bakkerijschool*).

<sup>31</sup> (CBUA), P2 105c, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903.

<sup>32</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuisen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Cie, Algemeen reglement*.

<sup>33</sup> (Private Collection) (hereafter PC) Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920.

*nijverheden*<sup>34</sup> furthermore contain a large amount of information about not only the start and development of the bakery school itself, but also a number of other internal CSR initiatives at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. Additional snippets of information on the company's early CSR initiatives have been collected from newspaper articles, company publications and photographs, and further assist with developing a better understanding of some of these earlier initiatives.

Although when combined these sources enable a comprehensive insight into the period of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's earlier CSR policy, not all of the information on the De Beukelaer's initiatives has survived the eroding winds of time. It is, for instance, not always clear when exactly certain initiatives were implemented during this early period, or when or why they ceased to exist, and information on their funding and internal workings is often also unfortunately missing. This problem often obstructs one's perspective and leaves a number of questions unanswered. Despite these difficulties, however, it is possible to piece together much of the history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's first period of CSR from the extant sources, and a clear understanding and pattern does emerge when putting together all the pieces of information that have managed to be preserved.

Chapter Four's second subsection, which commences with the start of the *Sekretariaat voor Maatschappelijke Werking* (Secretariat for Social Welfare) in 1921 and ends with the systematic phasing out of the company's CSR initiatives, has its own set of methodological problems. Unlike the position in the first subsection, which covers the company's CSR during Eduard's lifetime, the initiatives implemented during the era of the Secretariat for Social Welfare have been extremely well documented and a large amount of information has been particularly well preserved. Most of this existing information originates from De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's company magazine *Arbeid Adelt, Halfmaandelijksch orgaan van het Sekretariat for Social Welfare ingericht ten bate van het personeel der Naamloze Venootshap, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen* (hereafter *Arbeid Adelt*),<sup>35</sup> of which its entire six-year collection is stored at the EHC. Because of the nature of this particular source, i.e. being a communication channel between the Secretariat for Social Welfare and De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees, the company magazine is a treasure of information that overflows with reports about events, initiatives and services that were

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<sup>34</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*.

<sup>35</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt; Halfmaandelijksch Orgaan van het Sekretariaat voor Maatschappelijke Werking Ingericht ten Bate van het Personeel der Naamloze Venootshap; De Beukelaer's Fabrieken biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen* (hereafter *Arbeid Adelt*).



implemented during this period. The often meticulous information found in *Arbeid Adelt* enables one to form a comprehensive understanding of the emergence, evolution and eventual demise of the different internal CSR initiatives that were implemented at the factory between 1921 and 1926.

Although the company magazine thus serves as a clear window into the period's CSR initiatives, not a large number of additional documents regarding the company's CSR during the later period, especially after 1926, seem to have survived. The reliance upon this one source is therefore great, and demands a cautious approach in making use of it. Similar to the case in the first subsection, understanding the funding of most of these initiatives is again not clear and leaves a number of questions on their internal organisation unanswered. However, the value of the company's magazine *Arbeid Adelt*, in tandem with newspaper articles, transcribed Management Committee meetings from my personal collection and files stored at the CBUA, is that it becomes possible to give a detailed account of what exactly occurred during this particular period in the company's CSR history.

Other company magazines such as Bell Telephone's *Arbeid en Vermaak, Maandblad der Club van het Personeel der Bell Telephone Manufacturing Co*<sup>36</sup> and Minerva Moters' *Minerva Nieuws Maandblad voor het Personeel der N.V. Minerva Moters*<sup>37</sup> can be retrieved from the EHC, and proved to be useful in Chapter Five when comparing De Beukelaer's Fabrieken' CSR policy with the policies of companies in Antwerp, but they should also be approached with the same caution as *Arbeid Adelt*.

The voices of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees, an integral part of the company's CSR policy as they were at the receiving end of the various initiatives and services, have unfortunately been lost. Besides some speeches made by employees on official company occasions such as *Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer opgedragen, bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekafdeeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek*,<sup>38</sup> and passing references in sources such as the company magazine *Arbeid Adelt*,<sup>39</sup> it is unclear how De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's

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<sup>36</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak, Maandblad der Club van het Personeel der Bell Telephone Manufacturing Co* (hereafter *Arbeid en Vermaak*).

<sup>37</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws, Maandblad voor het Personeel der N.V. Minerva Moters* (hereafter *Minerva Nieuws*).

<sup>38</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, *Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer, opgedragen bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekafdeeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek*.

<sup>39</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*.

personnel actually experienced and felt about the company's CSR policy. Those sources that have been recorded and managed to stand the test of time are clouded in the rhetoric of eulogies and official celebratory sentiments. One is thus compelled to approach these sources rather cautiously and in tandem with information supplied by secondary sources dealing with similar topics, and try deduce at least some understanding of how the employees received De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy.

#### **1.4. Theoretical issues and approaches**

In order to comprehend the content of the thesis it is essential to define its basic terminology, methodologies and theoretical concepts. As the thesis is a (i) business history that investigates the emergence and development of (ii) CSR at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, these two concepts thus need to be briefly defined and explained.

Clearly defining business history, however, is a difficult task, as ever since the inception of the discipline the definition has been debated amongst academics and has not been resolved to this day. This difficulty in finding an all-encompassing definition that is generally accepted is probably because business history is a sub-discipline that has been practised by, amongst others, historians, sociologists, economists and managerial scientists, who have all tried to create a definition that fits into the mould of their academic field of study.<sup>40</sup> Thus the boundaries of business history are somewhat blurry, leaving academics to choose the definition that they tend to find relevant to their field of study. The ever-growing and evolving field of the discipline also militates against one fixed definition.

One of the first definitions of business history was formulated by Norman Scot Gras, who defined it as '*the story of how factors of production have been combined by those who seek primarily a profit in the form of money*'.<sup>41</sup> Gras later changed this early definition into '*a history of business administration in action*'.<sup>42</sup> The latter adjustment in Gras's definition was the result of his primary focus on business administration which clearly influenced the way in which he defined what business history should therefore be. From the 1970s until the 1990s Alfred D. Chandler significantly changed the course of the discipline, and his comparative method that was concerned with institutional business history dominated the work of business historians. However, as business history evolved over time and academics from other fields

<sup>40</sup> G. Jones and J. Zeitlin, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History*, 1.

<sup>41</sup> F. De Goey, and G. De Vos, 'Ontstaan en Uitbouw van de Bedrijfsgechiedenis', in C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding voor het schrijven van een bedrijfsgechiedenis*, 47.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*



of study moved away from Chandler's comparative institutional method by also researching different aspects relating to the history of businesses, so did the definitions broaden and became more encompassing. One such broad definition that is more suitable to describe this thesis is that business history researches '*the historical evolution of business systems, entrepreneurs and firms, as well as their interaction with their political and social environment*'.<sup>43</sup> The latter definition thus significantly broadened the spectrum of the discipline and incorporated anything from research concentrating on the history of business institutions, business-government relationships, the history of key business decisions and the process of decision-making, or businessmen and business institutions as generators of change in society.<sup>44</sup> Until fairly recently little effort was made to approach business history from a social perspective,<sup>45</sup> in other words, to show the direct effects that business decisions have had upon the society and culture in which these businesses operate, or to reveal the reciprocity between characteristic forms of social organisation, cultural norms and business policy.<sup>46</sup> In line with this more recent trend, this thesis is a business history that researches the relationship between the implementation and evolution of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy, its wider social environment as well as its owners and managers, and it therefore also approaches its subject from such a social perspective.

Besides noting the fluidity of the definition of business history, a few brief remarks on the methodology and theoretical approach in this thesis are also appropriate. The thesis supports the approach that grounds business history and its methodology in that of the discipline of history. However, in the tradition of the inter-disciplinary character of business history, some methodological tools and approaches from other disciplines will be utilised whenever appropriate. The thesis therefore does not make use of a single methodology to approach its subject and instead utilises a variety of approaches that are each determined by the nature of the sources it uses.

Most of the theories used in business history are borrowed from other disciplines such as economics, sociology or business management, and are adapted into a historical framework, as few or no theoretical ideas, with the possible exception of Chandler's contribution, have

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<sup>43</sup> G. Jones and J. Zeitlin, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> R.W. Hidy, 'Business History: Present Status and Future Needs', *The Business History Review*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Winter, 1970), 483.

<sup>45</sup> P. Fridenson, 'Business History and History', in G. Jones and J. Zeitlin, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History*, 25-27.

<sup>46</sup> R.R. Wohl, 'The Significance of Business History', *The Business History Review*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Jun., 1954), 134.

actually originated from the business history field of study itself.<sup>47</sup> Instead business historians utilise theoretical concepts from other disciplines that are relevant to their own individual studies and incorporate the parts that fit their particular case, whilst disregarding or modifying the parts that do not.<sup>48</sup> To strengthen the move towards such a refinement of techniques, business historians selectively borrow concepts and tools from other disciplines to explain motivations and actions of leaders of firms, of group actions inside firms and industries, and of relations between business groups and other segments of society.<sup>49</sup> With regards to theory, this Chandlerian approach of utilising the necessary aspects of concepts from other disciplines without being captured by them will also be followed in the thesis.<sup>50</sup>

CSR is, just like business history, a difficult concept to define, and ever since the term's popular emergence in the 1950s a wide assortment of definitions has been generated. Academics and researchers from disciplines such as management studies and business ethics have for long been debating what it means for a company to be 'socially responsible', and have all tried to determine where the exact boundaries of this responsibility lie.<sup>51</sup>

Despite this prevailing disagreement, CSR can be interpreted as an ethical concept that calls for the private firm to undertake socially responsible actions that have risen out of a wider demand as to the role that companies should fulfil in society. The boundaries of this responsibility fall outside of the existing legal parameters and have a strong moral grounding. It is the company, interpreted as an institution personified by a number of leading individuals, that is morally responsible for its interaction with society, and it are these individuals that need to take up what they believe to be their responsibility towards that society.<sup>52</sup> In theory, those companies that practice CRS believe that they have a certain ethical responsibility towards both their internal stakeholders (shareholders, managers and employees) as well as their external stakeholders (clients, customers, or society as a whole). The manner in which they translate this social responsibility into action is by implementing initiatives and services

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<sup>47</sup> J.F.E. Bläsing and T. Langenhuyzen, 'De Verhouding Tussen Theorie en Praktijk', in C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een succesvolle onderneming, Handleiding voor het schrijven van een bedrijfsgeschiedenis*, 32-3.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> R.W. Hidy, 'Business History: Present Status and Future Needs', 484.

<sup>50</sup> A.D. Chandler, 'Business History as Institutional History', in T.K. McCraw, (ed.), *The Essential Alfred Chandler, Essays Towards a Historical Theory of Big Business*, 305-6.

<sup>51</sup> A. Crane, A. McWilliams, D. Matten, J. Moon and D. S. Siegel, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 4; 8.

<sup>52</sup> A. Argandoña, and H. vonWeltzein Hoivik, 'Corporate Social Responsibility: One Size Does not Fit all, Collecting Evidence from Europe', IESA Business School University of Navara, "la Caixa" Chair of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Governance, Working Paper, WP-834, November, 2009, 3.

that are not legally compulsory and are not implemented primarily to increase the company's material wealth or reputation.<sup>53</sup> An appropriate definition to thus describe the above practice is that of Armori Struwig, who defines CSR as '*any voluntary behaviour undertaken by organisations in the private sector which directly benefit the wider society of which these organisations are a part off. This behaviour should be undertaken as a voluntary obligation which extends at least partially beyond the legal boundaries laid down by the wider society and which does not necessarily have any direct economic or other gain to the organisation*'.<sup>54</sup> Although in theory CRS is thus an altruistic action of a company on behalf of its society, in reality it is difficult to determine whether a company implemented its CSR for business reasons by, for instance, making the workers more productive or increasing its public image, or whether a company implemented its CSR policy for genuine social reasons by making them better and more constructive members of society, helping to fulfil its needs. Addressing this motivational ambiguity forms an important aspect of the thesis, and is discussed extensively in Chapters Six and Seven.

CSR is also synonymous with a large number of other concepts regarding the relationship between business and society.<sup>55</sup> Theories on corporate citizenship, sustainable business, or corporate responsibility all refer to the same issue of the 'social responsibility' of companies.<sup>56</sup> Such responsibility can be identified throughout history and has always been present, sometimes more obviously than at other times, constantly evolving and operating in wider frameworks that were and are influenced by historical, cultural, political, social, religious, geographical and economic factors that are often unique to a region or a historical period. Thus, despite the fact that CSR itself is a fairly modern concept that only came into usage from the 1950s, and did not form part of the business vocabulary during the period studied by the thesis, there have always been companies in the past that carried out actions that would now be described as CSR.<sup>57</sup> Although other terms such as paternalism or industrial welfare have, for instance, been used to describe the 'social responsibility' of business

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<sup>53</sup> A. Argandoña, and H. vonWeltzein Hoivik, 'Corporate Social Responsibility: One Size Does not Fit all, Collecting Evidence from Europe', 5.

<sup>54</sup> A. Struwig, '*The Attitudes and Expectations of Managers and trade Unions Regarding the Social responsibility activities of Firms*', 4.

<sup>55</sup> A. Argandoña, and H. vonWeltzein Hoivik, 'Corporate Social Responsibility: One Size Does not Fit all, Collecting Evidence from Europe', 2.

<sup>56</sup> A. Crane, A. McWilliams, D. Matten, J. Moon and D. S. Siegel, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Corporate Social Responsibility*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> A. Argandoña, and H. vonWeltzein Hoivik, 'Corporate Social Responsibility: One Size Does not Fit all, Collecting Evidence from Europe', 7.

owners in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, they do not accurately describe the actions undertaken by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in the thesis.

Paternalism, for instance, is based upon a direct relationship between employer and employee, whereby the employer believes that he or she has a 'parental' responsibility towards his or her employees. Although this type of relationship was applicable during the time that Eduard managed the company, after his death in 1919 such direct interaction between employer and employee was replaced by a middle management department. Additionally, the term paternalism is also not applicable to describe the responsibility of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken towards its external stakeholders outside of the company. Even though industrial welfare could be used to describe De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's social responsibility towards its internal stakeholders, it was (like paternalism) not applicable in the case of those social responsibility initiatives directed towards its external stakeholders. Thus CSR, despite its more modern origin, is certainly a more relevant term to describe the 'socially responsible behaviour' that is studied in the thesis, as it refers to the responsibility of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken towards both its internal as well as the external stakeholders, regardless of the relationship that existed between employer and employee.

The concept of CSR can also be divided into three distinct types, namely economic responsibility, social responsibility and environmental responsibility.<sup>58</sup> The thesis, however, investigates only De Beukelaer's social and to some extent economic responsibility, and does not examine environmental responsibility, as during the studied period the company seems not to have necessarily considered the environment as an aspect of its accountability. Besides these three distinct types of CSR, there are also various schools of thought that put CSR into their own unique conceptual framework that each demarcate where the boundaries of CSR start and end. Such CSR theories, however, were conceived after the conception of the term itself and therefore do not necessarily fit in the contextual time frame of the thesis. The so-called managerial view in Struwig's work, also known more commonly as the corporate social performance theory, is a fairly suitable concept to approach the subject of the thesis.

Corporate social performance theory acknowledges that it is important for companies to make a profit so that they can survive and grow. This theory, however, also accepts that business is part of a wider social system, and as a large and significant powerful entity within this system

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<sup>58</sup> A. Argandoña, and H. vonWeltzein Hoivik, 'Corporate Social Responsibility: One Size Does not Fit all, Collecting Evidence from Europe', 1.

it therefore has a certain responsibility to invest in this society, so that both the society as well as the company will benefit from the company's existence.<sup>59</sup> Business and society are thus interdependent and largely need one another to function and exist. It is therefore in the best interest of companies to act in a socially responsible way towards the society in which they function, as the active acknowledgment of this responsibility will secure the future existence of the company. Corporate social performance theory further holds that some of society's problems came about as a result of the rise of large companies, and it is therefore the responsibility as well as duty of these companies to try and solve or alleviate some of these problems by investing in their society. Leaders of such companies often stand in closer relationship to their community, and actions taken by these leaders can have a more direct impact than actions taken by government. Corporate social performance theory also acknowledges that by implementing a CSR policy companies will also often enhance their public image and strengthen their patronage.<sup>60</sup>

The Corporate Social Performance model thus proposes that a company's CSR policy is influenced by the relationship and dependence that exists between business and society, as business and society exist and operate in a shared environment and are interpenetrating. This particular model thus suits the framework of the thesis.

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<sup>59</sup> A. Struwig, *The Attitudes and Expectations of Managers and trade unions Regarding the Social responsibility activities of Firms*, 44.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

## **2. The origins, evolution and characteristics of the European biscuit industry**

This chapter provides a brief description of the history of the European biscuit industry by discussing its origins, evolution and characteristics in order to provide a more lucid understanding of the state of the industry in which Eduard De Beukelaer commenced his career. Before discussing the history of the biscuit manufacturing industry, it is important to first clarify and define what a biscuit is, as well as to differentiate and explain the two main types of biscuits that have been produced over the centuries.

### **2.1. Defining ‘the biscuit’**

The Concise Oxford English dictionary states that the root of the noun ‘biscuit’ is the Latin *bis* (twice) and *coctus*, which is the past participle of *coquere* (to cook). This Latin definition refers to the early process of making biscuits, whereby dough was baked twice so as to completely dry any remaining moisture out of it. By the start of the eighteenth century this old custom of baking biscuits began to disappear and the term ‘biscuit’ was used almost exclusively to refer to products that did not particularly adhere to this baking practice.<sup>1</sup> New methods of baking, like the use of fluffed egg whites,<sup>2</sup> or baking powder also known as soda, made it possible for the biscuits to be baked once instead of twice.<sup>3</sup> Over time such innovations in biscuit baking created new types which began to dominate ‘classic’ biscuit varieties like simnels and cracknels, even though these new methods were not fully in line with the original definition.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the ages different cultures have been producing two main varieties of biscuits for consumption, namely ‘hard tack’ and ‘fancy biscuits’. Although the latter two types are both categorised under the common term ‘biscuit’, their characteristics and uses are completely different from one another.

In the past the ‘hard tack’ variety, also generally referred to as ‘ship biscuit’, was praised for its exceptionally long shelf life as well as reasonably high nutritional value, and was considered to be an excellent equivalent to bread.<sup>5</sup> From early Roman times until the late Victorian era this type of biscuit was consumed by members of the shipping industry, soldiers in the army and adventurers who went on long expeditions across uncharted terrain. ‘Hard tack’ was a low-cost source of basic nutrition that, under the right conditions, could be stored

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<sup>1</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain, From the Stone Age to Recent Times*, 267-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>3</sup> L. Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture, a History of Food and People*, 161.

<sup>4</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 267-8.

<sup>5</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 45.

fairly easily over long periods. Such biscuits needed to be closed off from the weather in tightly lidded cases, since unsuitable storage could cause insect infestation and mould formation, which would spoil the biscuit. If stored properly, however, as in the case of Captain Cook's travels, 'hard tack' could be kept up to three years and, after being re-baked, they were very suitable for consumption again.<sup>6</sup> The latter characteristics thus meant that hard tack was an excellent product to take on long journeys, where food supplies were either scarce or irregular.

This particular type of biscuit was prepared by following a very basic recipe that generally consisted of a flour and water paste, which was baked two or more times in an oven so as to make it completely dry out any moisture that could possibly speed up the process of mould formation and thus spoil the biscuit during its journey. As a result of this rather basic and harsh method of manufacturing, these types of biscuits, as the name might suggest, were rock hard and were rather difficult to digest because of their composition.<sup>7</sup> But, as Naval Surgeon Dr James Lind stated, one pound of 'hard tack' a day, as a ration for the eighteenth-century sailor, was up to two times more solid and substantial than the average bread baked on land.<sup>8</sup> The 'hard tack' variety of biscuit was thus a very bland and basic product of consumption that was valued for its functionality rather than its taste. 'Fancy biscuits', on the other hand, were the complete opposite of the 'hard tack' variety, and were crisp delightful treats that were filled with a mixture of 'fancy' ingredients that were added to enhance their taste. Over the centuries bakers, confectionaries and sometimes even chemists and druggists infused their biscuits with aniseed, coriander or caraway,<sup>9</sup> fragranced them with rose flower water, or added preserved orange and lemon peel.<sup>10</sup> These and other ingredients led to this type of biscuit being considered a sweet delicacy that was particularly popular among the more well-off members of society, who generally served them with drinks, or as part of dessert. In Britain these more refined biscuits began to emerge from Tudor time onwards (1485-1603), when they were commonly eaten as a sweetmeat to accompany *hippocras* (wine flavoured with spices), which was served at the end of the meal during banquets,<sup>11</sup> whilst by the mid-

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<sup>6</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

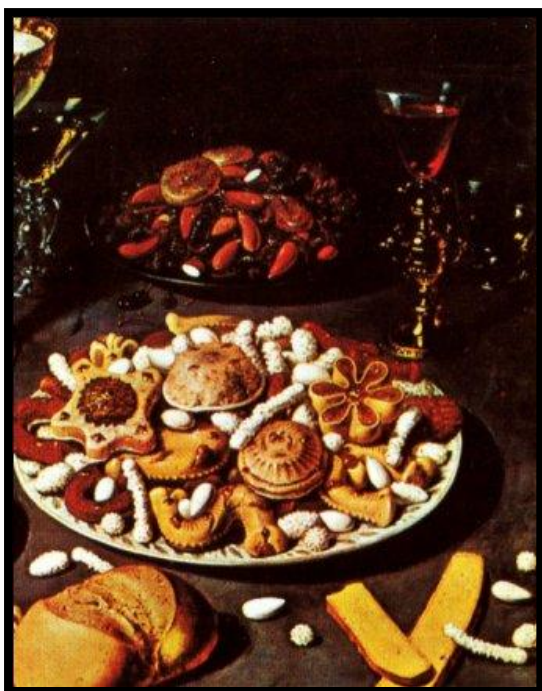
<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 267.

<sup>10</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 48.

<sup>11</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 251.





**Figure 1: Example of early fancy biscuits circa 1650.**  
Retrieved from, A. Alberici, *Biscoti & Biscottini*, 27.

eighteenth century ‘macaroons’ or ‘Naples biscuits’ were used as an ingredient in recipes for trifles.<sup>12</sup>

From the late nineteenth century onwards in Britain the consumption of ‘fancy biscuits’ slowly became customary after the eating routine of breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner became more established. This new eating pattern, together with the emergence of restaurants and teashops in Britain, significantly increased biscuit consumption.<sup>13</sup> From the late nineteenth century onwards large amounts of biscuits were consumed as a small crunchy snack, even though, in the case of the poorer lower and lower-middle class, ‘fancy biscuits’ were still

considered to be a special and rare luxury up until as late as the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> ‘Fancy biscuits’ were thus not hard, bland or difficult to digest, but soft, crisp tasteful delights that were a joy to consume. It is this type of biscuit that Eduard De Beukelaer started to manufacture on an industrial scale in his factory in Antwerp in 1875. But what were the origins of this industry and how did it evolve, develop and eventually end up in Belgium?

## 2.1. The British foundations of the European biscuit industry

The ‘fancy biscuit’ industry, which was fairly dormant up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, came to life when various technical innovations occurred during the first and second industrial revolutions in Britain. This sudden wave of industrialisation significantly transformed the biscuit manufacturing process and propelled production to unprecedented levels. While the origins of the industrialisation of biscuit manufacturing lie in Britain, similar large-scale production began to spread across continental Europe by the end of the nineteenth century, when ‘fancy biscuit’ factories in France, Belgium, Italy and Germany rapidly started to develop.

<sup>12</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 169.

<sup>13</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 76.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.



Before this wave of industrialisation, the production of ‘fancy biscuits’ across Europe was conducted on a pre-industrial scale, and in fact the origins of such biscuit making can be traced back to ancient antiquity. During Roman times cracknel-like biscuits covered in honey and sprinkled with pepper were already being baked, and similar recipes continued to be produced by Western European bakers well into the Middle Ages.<sup>15</sup> This early production of biscuits was primarily seen as the domain of the baker, and from medieval times onwards these and other types of biscuits started to evolve as consumption products amongst the populations of countries such as France, Italy and Britain,<sup>16</sup> where there was historically a strong presence of bakers, confectionaries and pastry cooks. As early as the fifteenth century biscuit manufacturing also started to become part of the trade of confectioners, who sold them alongside their collection of other sweetened articles.<sup>17</sup> In sixteenth-century France some convents even sold biscuits and fritters to raise money for charity,<sup>18</sup> whilst during later Stuart times (1603-1714) English chemists sold biscuits for sliming and medicinal purposes.<sup>19</sup> Early methods of making biscuits generally consisted of baking the dough in bread ovens after the batch of daily loaves had been finished. With the advent of fireplaces as well as coal fires, special separate cupboards specifically created for baking small cakes and biscuits started to be constructed and used.<sup>20</sup> The baking of ‘fancy biscuits’ in pre-nineteenth century Europe thus consisted of very basic manual production methods, and the sale of such biscuits was restricted to fairly small localised markets. The latter limitation meant that the production of ‘fancy biscuits’ was thus not profitable enough as a business on its own and consequently they always needed to be sold as a side product.<sup>21</sup> It is only in the early nineteenth century that the first examples of baking ‘fancy biscuits’ on an industrial scale started to develop and that the first factories that produced exclusively ‘fancy biscuits’ began to emerge.

The emergence of the production of ‘fancy biscuits’ on an industrial scale was more than likely influenced by the technical innovations that occurred in the early nineteenth-century British ‘ship biscuit’ industry. The production of ‘hard tack’ had evolved separately from the development of ‘fancy biscuits’, and ‘ship biscuits’ had been manufactured on a much bigger

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<sup>15</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 235.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>18</sup> L. Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture*, 218.

<sup>19</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 48.

<sup>20</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 269.

<sup>21</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 50-1.

scale. Just like their ‘fancy’ counterpart, ‘hard tack’ had been produced since ancient antiquity, with early examples recorded from Egyptian and Roman times. Later on, during the Middle Ages, bakers started to manufacture ‘ship biscuits’ in the form of ‘rusks’ of bread that were cooked twice in the baker’s oven, while the load of bread for the day was cooling down.<sup>22</sup> In Italy the production of ‘hard tack’ as a supply and replenishment for ships and armies had already been conducted on a fairly large commercial scale during the Middle Ages,<sup>23</sup> and in Britain around the eighteenth century the first small workshops generally consisting of two men – a master baker and his mate – began to manufacture ‘ship biscuits’ on a reasonably industrial scale.<sup>24</sup>

Most of these workshops where hard tack was being manufactured were positioned close to ship wharfs and near busy streams and ports, where they could easily supply the shipping industry with their products.<sup>25</sup> In the eighteenth century the British Royal navy also started to set up its own bakery workshops at naval dockyards, and it was in these naval bakeries that the manufacturing of hard tack started to develop in a more organised way and on a more industrial scale. Large groups of men who worked in small teams were put into assembly line-like formation to bake ship biscuits for the navy. During periods of war, when the demand for biscuits rose significantly, such naval bakeries even implemented day and night shifts in order to manufacture enough ‘hard tack’ to supply their troops and sailors.<sup>26</sup> This particular change in the manufacturing process is one of the earliest known examples of industrial innovation in the manufacturing of biscuit, and it is in the ‘hard tack’ industry that one can find the first methods of mechanised production in the form of rather crude and basic machinery.

The first machine used in the biscuit manufacturing industry was designed by Sir Thomas Grant, a storekeeper at the Clarence Victualling yard at Gosport, who in 1829 invented a device that could mechanically carry out some tasks of ‘hard tack’ production. This particular apparatus, which first saw the light of day in 1832, was a steam-driven piece of equipment that was used to heat nine ovens, as well as power a machine that mixed, rolled and cut the dough. This mechanical innovation changed the biscuit manufacturing industry, as it resulted in the need for fewer employees, had a higher rate of production, and was therefore a more

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<sup>22</sup> C.A. Wilson, *Food and Drink in Britain*, 251.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 47.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

profitable way of baking biscuits.<sup>27</sup> Such early innovations in ‘ship biscuit’ manufacturing could more than likely have inspired ‘fancy biscuit’ producers into adopting similar machinery to increase production and cut costs, especially since some early British ‘fancy biscuit’ manufacturers, like the Irish Jacobs and Co, as well as George Heder Freaun from the English Peak, Freaun and Co, had a background in manufacturing ‘hard tack’.<sup>28</sup> It is, however, not clear to what extent this technology did influence the ‘fancy biscuit’ industry, and it is not until nine years after Sir Thomas’s invention that the first known machine was used in the ‘fancy biscuit’ manufacturing industry.

In 1838 Jonathan Dodgson Carr, a baker’s son who followed in the footsteps of his father, set up shop in Carlisle, where he manufactured bread, cakes and handmade biscuits. In order to speed up the manufacturing process Jonathan designed a very basic machine that was based upon a printing press, which cut and stamped biscuits out of dough.<sup>29</sup> Even though this machine did speed up manufacturing and introduced some form of mechanical innovation in the ‘fancy biscuit’ industry, it was technically a hand-operated device and could thus not match the production speed and capacity of Sir Thomas Grant’s machine.<sup>30</sup> The origins of the first genuinely automatic mechanised production of ‘fancy biscuits’ is credited to the Huntley and Palmers Company.

Huntley and Palmers was founded in 1841 by Thomas Huntley and George Palmer, who decided to form a partnership and produce biscuits and confectionary products in the town of Reading. This Quaker business expanded rapidly and soon became renowned for its superior quality biscuits, as well as for the first tin biscuit casings that had excellent storage capabilities. When their factory needed to expand in 1846, Thomas and George decided to move to a more suitable place. It was in this new factory space that Huntley and Palmers of Reading began to make use of the first continuously running and integrated machinery for biscuit manufacturing.<sup>31</sup> Huntley and Palmers had previously already used various small hand-driven devices for different parts of the production method that ranged from mixing the dough to stamping it with their logo.<sup>32</sup> A reason why it took fancy biscuit manufacturers like Huntley and Palmers so long to create continuously running and

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<sup>27</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 52.

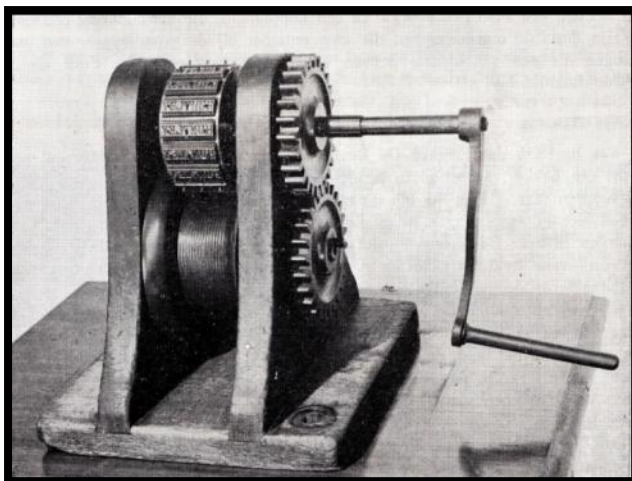
<sup>28</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*, 69.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>30</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 52.

<sup>31</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*, 41.

<sup>32</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 52.



**Figure 2: Early hand-operated stamping device used by Huntley and Palmers.** Retrieved from, R. Goris, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*. 5.

integrated machinery into their factories was that the production of ‘fancy biscuits’ is completely different from that of ‘hard tack’, as each type of ‘fancy biscuit’ has its own unique dough recipe, its own distinctive length of baking and its own special ingredients, whilst ‘ship biscuit’ manufacturers only produced one, at most two, types of biscuit.<sup>33</sup> The latter difference resulted in the need for much more complex machinery that was specifically adjusted to the unique

requirements of each particular type of biscuit. It was Huntley and Palmers who started to design the first of such machines and by 1860 Huntley and Palmers, predominantly as a result of their technological advantage, became Britain’s largest biscuit factory, making its name and products renowned all over the world.<sup>34</sup>

From the first half of the nineteenth century some of these larger British ‘fancy biscuit’ companies also began to export their products away from localised markets and across the world. The advent of the tin biscuit casing, which properly seals off biscuits from any bad weather, was a major breakthrough in exporting this particular product, especially on long journeys to far away colonies.<sup>35</sup> It was this new invention in biscuit storage, as well as the emergence and growing popularity of railway transport, which led to the rapid distribution of biscuits across Britain and the rest of the world, including the European mainland.<sup>36</sup>

### **2.3. The development of the Continental European biscuit industry**

During the first half of the nineteenth century the ‘fancy biscuit’ industry in continental Europe seemed to have been rather underdeveloped, even though in countries such as France and Italy there was already a lengthy history of ‘fancy biscuit’ manufacturing on a semi-industrial scale.<sup>37</sup> These smaller biscuit manufacturers could, however, not compare to some of the large industrialised British companies such as Huntley and Palmers, and Peak, Fren

<sup>33</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 53.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

and Co, who owned large factories with innovative technological advantages. This industrial underrepresentation of continental European biscuit manufacturers meant that in the first half of the nineteenth century European mainland markets were greatly influenced and largely dominated by British biscuit firms who exported their goods across the English Channel.<sup>38</sup> It was only during the later part of the nineteenth century that the first continental European ‘fancy biscuit’ factories started to emerge. The successful emergence of these firms was partially achieved by a steady decline of British imports. From the 1870s onwards many European countries such as France, Belgium and Holland began to increase their import tariffs as a way of protecting their local industries, a policy that consequently resulted in a steady decline of British biscuits sales in continental Europe.<sup>39</sup> This protective economic measure allowed biscuit manufacturers a greater opportunity to gradually build up experience and develop their own factories to modern industrial standards.

A good example to illustrate this evolution in continental European ‘fancy biscuit’ manufacturing would be the case of France’s Lefevre Utile, commonly known as LU. LU was started up by two pastry cooks from Nantes, Monsieur Lefevre and Mademoiselle Utile, who in 1846 opened a pastry business that became recognised for its packaged biscuits. In this early stage the company was not at all an industrial-scale biscuit manufacturing company, but rather a business that like, so many others, sold biscuits as one of its many side products. Change came about only when their son, Louis Lefevre-Utile, transformed the business to what were then modern industrial standards after he went on a research trip to England, where he acquired technical knowledge on industrial-scale ‘fancy biscuit’ manufacturing. In 1887 LU began to fully specialise in the creation of ‘fancy biscuits’, after Louis went into a partnership with his brother-in-law Ernest Lefevre.<sup>40</sup> This brief history of LU clearly indicates a recurring pattern of continental European ‘fancy biscuit’ manufacturers, who up until the later part of the nineteenth century produced biscuits on a pre-industrial scale. It is only after France started to implement import tariffs in the 1870s and after Louis Lefevre Utile acquired some of the British technological advantages, that LU was able to grow into a viable industrial company that began to dominate the French market. A similar history is that of the Italian company D. Lazzaroni & C., Saronno.

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<sup>38</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 83.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>40</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*, 108.

By the end of the eighteenth century the Lazzaroni family owned several coffee houses and confectionary businesses in Milan, where they would also serve various biscuits. In the early nineteenth century Carlo Lazzaroni began to manufacture the ‘amoretti macaroon’, a biscuit that for a couple of centuries had already been credited as a fine local delicacy of Saronno. Carlo began to buy up several of the small local workshops that produced these and other types of biscuits on an already semi-industrial scale. Carlo Lazzaroni’s son, Davide Lazzaroni eventually took over his father’s trade and established Italy’s first real ‘fancy biscuit’ factory that produced a variety of biscuits as well as the Italian cake known as *pinecone*.<sup>41</sup> Carlo’s three sons, Giacinto, Ernesto and Piero, extended their father’s business and made it into a LLC in 1888. After the purchase of some English biscuit machinery, and together with the help of their cousin Luigi, Lazzaroni began to dominate the Italian market and largely overtook British ‘fancy biscuit’ imports in Italy.<sup>42</sup> Belgium’s ‘fancy biscuit’ history is in many ways similar to that of France’s or Italy’s, as it only fully developed in the later part of the nineteenth century.

Not much is known about the pre-nineteenth century production of biscuits in the region of modern-day Belgium, but it is more than likely that a similar history of ‘fancy biscuit’ and ‘hard tack’ manufacturing – like in the case of countries such as England, France and Italy – had been around since the Middle Ages, especially since cities like Bruges and Antwerp were once important centres of trade, with very busy port industries. As with the rest of continental Europe during the nineteenth century, Belgium’s market was initially dominated by British ‘fancy biscuits’, which were reportedly available in a few selected shops in Brussels and Antwerp. Such shops sold these British delicacies at high prices that targeted the more affluent members of society.<sup>43</sup> This dominating British presence in the Belgian market is clearly illustrated when one looks at the case of Huntley and Palmers, who had a strong foothold in Belgium, as the company’s first proper overseas account was with a Brussels firm in 1850.<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, in 1867 Joseph Leete, who worked for Huntley and Palmers, managed to get a royal warrant from France’s Napoleon III and Belgium’s Leopold II. This newly acquired royal prestige was further ‘exploited’ during the 1867 Paris exposition, when Huntley and Palmers created a special line of Napoleon and Leopold biscuits, of which the

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<sup>41</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*, 118.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>43</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 8.

<sup>44</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 82.



biscuit tins bore the tricolour of the respective countries on their side.<sup>45</sup> Just as in the case of France, the implementation of high import taxes by Belgium in the early 1870s had started to limit British imports of biscuits and made it possible for local biscuit manufacturers to start up a new business in a previously foreign-dominated industry, like in the case of Biscuits Parein, Victoria and Delacre.

Edouard Parein, a merchant in American flour, was the founder of an industrial biscuit manufacturing company in Antwerp. In 1890 Edouard had purchased a financially struggling biscuit company from Joseph Cordemans and transformed it into his own biscuit factory known as Biscuits Parein. After some time this rather small business started to grow in size and Edouard was forced to move to a new location in Antwerp. At this new premises Biscuits Parein grew into a large industrial company and in the year 1894 became a LLC which was managed by Edouard Parein, his two sons Pierre and Louis, as well as business partner Jules Plissart.<sup>46</sup> Around the same time as Edouard formed Parein, some of Belgium's other early 'fancy biscuit' manufacturing companies began to emerge in the Brussels region.

One of the first Brussels-based companies was Victoria, which was founded in 1896 by three Brussels pastry makers, Ch. Jeghers, E. Bossaert and J. Carlier. These three men started up a small workshop that slowly grew into a large factory, which produced 'fancy biscuits' on an industrial scale. Production went so well that Victoria even became the first Belgium biscuit manufacturer to expand its business across the national border, as in 1904 they decided to start up a factory in the Dutch city of Dordrecht.<sup>47</sup> Besides Victoria, Belgium's capital was also home to a second large fancy biscuit manufacturer known as Delacre, a company that was started up in 1872 by Charles Delacre, a druggist of profession, who besides his pharmacy initially also owned a chocolate workshop. Over the years Charles Delacre began to further develop chocolate manufacturing and it was not long before his products became reputable for their quality. Eventually Charles needed to relocate his premises to Vilvoorde, where in 1891 he decided to diversify his product range by also producing and selling biscuits on an industrial scale.<sup>48</sup> Such early Belgian 'fancy biscuit' manufacturers thus began to take over this once British-dominated market by the end of the nineteenth century. However, before Parein, Victoria or Delacre had been founded, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had already started manufacturing biscuits on an industrial scale from as early as 1875.

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<sup>45</sup> T.A.B. Corley, *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits*, 85.

<sup>46</sup> Anon., *General Biscuit Company, 125 Ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 Jaar Ervaring en Expansie*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

<sup>48</sup> F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits, a Pictorial Story of a Sweet Tradition*, 16.

## **Conclusion**

It is thus clear that Britain's established fancy biscuit industry had, by the later part of the nineteenth century, clearly influenced the continental European manufacturers to create large industrial-scale factories that made use of modern production techniques. Even though there was already a long historical tradition of pre-industrial 'fancy biscuit' manufacturing in continental Europe, and even though most of the founders of these new companies had a background in 'fancy biscuit' baking, or practised occupations that brought them into contact with biscuit manufacturing, the emergence of continental European industrial 'fancy biscuit' manufacturers only began well after the first British 'fancy biscuit' manufacturers had established themselves as pioneers in this new field of the food production industry. It was only after the implementation of high import tariffs to protect local markets, and the adaptation of the existing British technical knowledge, that continental European biscuit manufacturers such as Eduard De Beukelaer started to develop modern industrial-scale factories that enabled them eventually to dominate their own local markets.



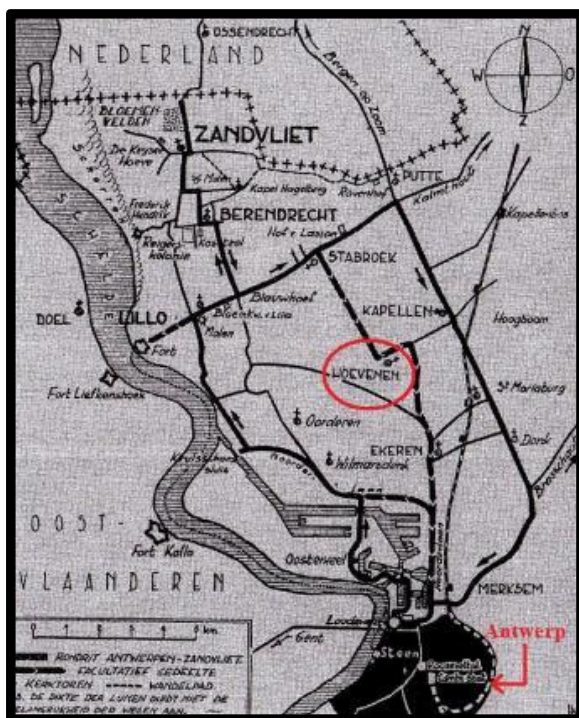
### **3 . The origins, establishment and evolution of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken (1843-1929)**

If one wants to comprehend when, why and how De Beukelaer's Fabrieken implemented its various forms of CSR, a proper understanding of the rise and development of the company is necessary. This chapter discusses the start, evolution and expansion of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as a business in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century entrepreneurial climate in Belgium. In addition, the chapter also attempts to reveal part of the life and role of some of the key individuals who shaped and influenced this history. This analyses will thus produce a better understanding of how the company was started, evolved and managed, and finally in what way it affected, and was affected by, the De Beukelaer family.

This chapter is divided into three chronologically ordered sub-sections that are based upon significant events that occurred in the company's development. The first of these sections discusses Eduard's early life and the various developments that led up to the start of his factory, first known as Ed. De Beukelaer & Co until its transformation into the LLC, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen (1843-1906). The second section of this chapter highlights the period (1906-1919) marking the start of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen until the death of its founder. Because of the nature of this history these two sections also closely investigate the role that Eduard played in this part of the company's history, as he persistently managed the factory in a very direct and paternalistic way up until his death in 1919. The third and final section of this chapter discusses the development and changes that occurred at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken from Eduard's death until the introduction of foreign shareholders and the subsequent breakdown of the company as a business that was completely owned and directed by the family (1919-1929). Part of the focus of this section shifts towards the members of Eduard's extended family who managed the business as well as to Eduard's second wife, Jeanne Vervecken, and their son, Edward De Beukelaer.

### 3.1. The origins, formation and development of, Ed. De Beukelaer & Co (1843-1906)

#### 3.1.1. Eduard De Beukelaer's early life



**Figure 3, Map detailing the village of Hoevenen.** Retrieved from, L. Bredael, *Antwerpen Tussen Polder en Haven*, 73.

Eduard Jacobus De Beukelaer was born in Hoevenen on the 15 March 1843.<sup>1</sup> In the early nineteenth century Hoevenen was a small rural community in the Flemish province of Antwerp that thrived on agriculture made possible by the creation of the fertile ‘polders’ near the banks of the river Scheldt.<sup>2</sup> Eduard’s father, Petrus Laurentius De Beukelaer, a baker, had been born in the Dutch village of Moergestel. Somewhere in his early life Petrus decided to move back to the district of Ekeren, the region where the De Beukelaer family had originally settled down as agriculturalists as early as the seventeenth century, and he became the village baker of the town of Hoevenen.<sup>3</sup> In 1838 Petrus

married his first wife, Anna Lathouwers, with whom he had eight children, one of which was Eduard.<sup>4</sup> Eduard is said to have been the oldest sibling,<sup>5</sup> even though he is listed in the family tree as the third born.<sup>6</sup> This can be explained by the fact that, as some sources state, at least two of Eduard’s brothers and sisters had passed away at an early age. Infant mortality was a common occurrence during this period, especially in small poor agricultural communities like Hoevenen, where general standards of hygiene were low.<sup>7</sup> The first half of the nineteenth century was also a period in Flemish history characterised by the failure of crops such as

<sup>1</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer.

<sup>2</sup> L. Bredael, *Antwerpen Tussen Polder en Haven*, 19-20; 75-6.

<sup>3</sup> Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 246.; (PC), Koningsveld, Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer.

<sup>4</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer.

<sup>5</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 246.

potatoes (1845-6) and rye (1846-7), leading to famine and starvation,<sup>8</sup> and by epidemic outbreaks such as typhus (1847) and cholera (1848), diminishing the population's health and responsible for high levels of mortality.<sup>9</sup> Life at the De Beukelaer's household was reportedly financially problematic and difficult,<sup>10</sup> and a further significant setback to the family occurred in 1854. When Eduard was 11, his mother Maria died at the age of 39, leaving Petrus to take care of the family.<sup>11</sup> This new responsibility would have definitely put extra strain on Petrus as he now needed to manage both his business as well as his household alone. Thus it is not long after, about half a year later, that Petrus De Beukelaer married his second wife, Maria De Bie, with whom he had another seven children.<sup>12</sup> Seeing that Eduard was the oldest sibling in the family, it was a custom during the period for him to take up his responsibility when he reached a more 'mature' age in order to sustain his family by seeking employment. He achieved this by becoming a baker's apprentice in the nearby city of Antwerp.

By the 1850s Belgium had become an important industrialised nation as a result of the rapid expansion and development of its textile, coal and steel industry, as well as the growth of the local and international rail network that connected Belgium to markets across the continent.<sup>13</sup> Antwerp, a city that had always been significant but had been in somewhat of an economic and cultural slumber since its golden era in the sixteenth century, also began to show slow signs of new development from around the mid-1850s onwards, and the city's position as a central trading port was slowly being re-established. Antwerp's increasing port trade, as well as the completion of the important *Antwerp-Keulen* railway line, stimulated local industrial development.<sup>14</sup> This economic revival was speeded up from 1863 onwards, when the toll fees of Antwerp's economic artery to the world, the river Scheldt, were paid by the Belgian government to the Dutch government, and trade could be conducted more freely.<sup>15</sup> In the

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<sup>8</sup> K. Veraghtert, 'Van Waalse Industrieële Revolutie tot Vlaamse Heropstanding', in H. Daems, and J. Degadt, and R. Donckels, *De Belgische Industrie een Profielbeeld*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> M. Van Meerhaeghe, 'de Economie', in M. Lamberty, and R. Lissens, (eds.), *Vlaanderen door de Eeuwen Heen, Eerste Deel*, 267.

<sup>10</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, *Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer*.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> E. Buyst, 'Situering van het Bedrijf in de Economische Structuur en Conjunctuur' in, C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding voor het Schrijven van een Bedrijfs geschiedenis*, 253.

<sup>14</sup> F. Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen, Nederlandsche en Eeste Belgische Periode (1814-1914)*, 40-1.

<sup>15</sup> On the 12 May 1863 a treaty was signed between Belgium and Holland where Belgium had to pay a once of payment of 36 000 000 Bfr. to rid the ships who used the river Scheldt to dock at Antwerp's harbour from paying toll to the Dutch government.

years to follow Antwerp's industry steadily began to develop, with the expansion of older industries such as the tobacco, sugar and diamond industries, and the introduction of new industries such as the rice peeling, soap and candle industries.<sup>16</sup> By the second half of the nineteenth century Antwerp, as a result of this rise in economic activity, experienced a wave of urbanisation, attracting a substantial number of foreign and local migrants to settle down in and around its centre. The local migrants consisted predominantly of people who lived in the nearby countryside and decided to move to the city, as it offered greater employment opportunities in its various growing industrial and tertiary sectors.<sup>17</sup> The economic climate of Antwerp during the second half of the nineteenth century was thus an attractive alternative to the city's surrounding rural areas, which had largely been impoverished during the first half of the nineteenth century.<sup>18</sup> One of these rural migrants who decided to look for employment in Antwerp was the young Eduard, who allegedly left Hoevenen in 1857-8 at the age of 14 or 15 years.<sup>19</sup>

It is not known for certain, but it is more than likely that before Eduard migrated to Antwerp he had already been exposed to the craft of baking by assisting his father in Hoevenen. It was therefore not unusual when, on his arrival in Antwerp, Eduard took on an apprenticeship at a bakery located on the corner of *Sint-Jacobsstraat* and *Lange Nieuwstraat*, which was considered during this period as an important and busy section in the city centre.<sup>20</sup> Here Eduard resided with the couple who owned the bakery and during the next 10 years he fulfilled the normal role of a baker's apprentice by kneading the dough, taking bread in and out of the oven and making deliveries to customers around the neighbourhood.<sup>21</sup> On 15 September 1866, when Eduard was 23 years old, he married the 31-year-old Maria Smets. Soon after his marriage, in 1867-8,<sup>22</sup> Eduard's patron decided it was time to retire. Eduard, who was in his mid-twenties at the time, seized the opportunity to take over the bakery from his patron and became the owner of his first business. It is, however, not known whether Eduard purchased or rented the bakery from his patron.

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<sup>16</sup> F. Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> R. Loyen, 'Demografische Ontwikkeling van de Stad Antwerpen', in Genootschap voor Antwerpsche Geschiedenis, *Antwerpen in de 20ste Eeuw, van Belle Epoque tot Golden Sixties*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> H. Daems, *De Belgische Industrie een Profielbeeld*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> The exact age seems to differ depending on the source. René Goris states 15 years whilst *Huldebetoon aan de heer Eduard De Beukelaer* states 14 years old.

<sup>20</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> The exact age is unclear as René Gorise states 25 years, whilst *Huldebetoon aan de Heer Eduard De Beukelaer* 24 years.



**Figure 4: Eduard's first wife Maria Smets at an older age.** Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, Fotocollectie.

As a business owner Eduard would have been responsible for baking the bread, whilst his wife Maria would more than likely have been standing behind the counter serving the customers. An anecdote referring to this early period tells the story of how Eduard had begun to bake small biscuits, probably much like rusks, from the leftover dough to give to the children who visited his shop. It is difficult to determine if this somewhat 'romantic' tale of Eduard's 'humble' beginning might or might not be true, but it is consistent with the fact that around this time Eduard's interest in baking biscuits began to grow, experimenting with them, and by doing so diversifying his product range.

This account of Eduard's early introduction to biscuits is thus similar to that of other biscuit manufacturers who, as mentioned in the previous chapter, had often first taken up

jobs such as bakers, pastry makers and confectionaries, and who were thus able to experiment with biscuits as a result of their vocational advantage. Eventually these individuals became more aware of the serious commercial potential that biscuits held as a product on their own, and subsequently decided to change their strategy and manufacturing them as their main product.

The same slow shift in interest occurred with Eduard, and the early production of biscuits in his bakery must have taken place on a small manual scale. Eduard, his wife Maria, and Maria Mortelmans, an orphaned niece of Maria who had been taken in by the couple and is said to have assisted in the business, slowly started to manufacture biscuits on a manual scale by cutting out the dough by hand and baking them in small batches in a standard kitchen oven.<sup>23</sup> Early specimens were have said to be crude and disappointing, since Eduard was still trying to refine his product and discover the different skills, techniques and measurements that were needed to manufacture good quality biscuits. Slowly but surely more 'edible' products started to be manufactured and sold in his shop, and it was not long before Eduard decided to

<sup>23</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate*, 8. Although René Goris mentions that this happens in the new bakery, it more than likely occurred in Eduard's first business, a theory that is supported by other sources who mention that it was at his patrons old business that Eduard starts to gain an interest in manufacturing biscuit.



relocate his business to a bigger bakery a few houses away in *Lange Nieuwstraat* 65.<sup>24</sup> The exact reason for this relocation of his business is not known, but René Goris states that it was because of the loss of Eduard and Maria's daughter, who apparently tragically fell down the stairs in the basement workshop of the bakery.<sup>25</sup> Another possible reason for the move that has been mentioned is that Eduard's old bakery became too small to house both his bakery as well as his biscuit production tasks, and a new more spacious location was needed which could create a better opportunity for Eduard to expand his business. It is more than likely that these reasons in tandem contributed to Eduard's relocation to new premises.

### 3.1.2. Eduard's introduction to the biscuit manufacturing industry

The reconstruction of Eduard's introduction into the biscuit manufacturing industry is challenging, as certain dates given by sources such as *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer*,<sup>26</sup> the speeches given for the '60th anniversary' of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken<sup>27</sup> and *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*<sup>28</sup> are often contradictory or highly unlikely. These sources state that Eduard took over his patron's business in 1867-8 and began to develop and interest in manufacturing biscuits, then relocated his business to a new larger location at *Lange Nieuwstraat* 65, where he further developed this interest into a serious venture, and afterwards purchased overseas machinery and build a factory from scratch that was operational by 1869-70 all in the space of two to three years. This, however, seems to be a highly unlikely achievement. All of these sources ignore the earliest known account of Eduard's ventures, which was presented by Eduard himself on 24 November 1888. In *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijlokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek*<sup>29</sup> Eduard clearly mentions that the factory in *Lange Kievitstraat* was erected on the plot 15 years earlier, in other words in 1873. Besides the fact that this is the earliest known account on the history of the factory which was written and presented by the founder himself, this version is confirmed by the cadastral records, which clearly note that Eduard commenced with the construction of a new building on a bare plot of land in *Lange Kievitstraat* in 1874,

<sup>24</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

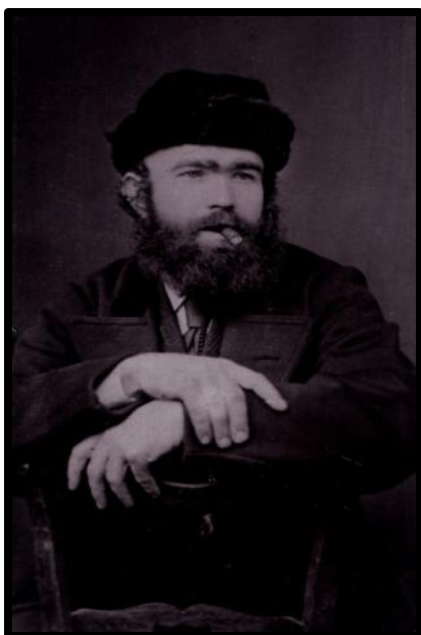
<sup>26</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918*.

<sup>27</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F.

<sup>28</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*.

<sup>29</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijlokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

which in the records is listed as being completed only in 1875, when the nature of the property was noted as being a *beschuitstoomfabriek & tuin* (biscuit-steam-factory & plot).<sup>30</sup> The above timeframe is also far more realistic when one considers the various steps and events that needed to take place between the time that Eduard took over his patron's business and the eventual start of the factory in *Lange Kievitstraat*. The account below thus offers a new understanding of how Eduard De Beukelaer started up his factory in *Lange Kievitstraat*. Although the following account of Eduard's story does not fully match those given by other sources when merely looking at its chronology, it does follow the same narrative.



**Figure 5: A young Eduard De Beukelaer.**  
Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, Fotocollectie.

Around 1869-70 Eduard decided to relocate his business to a new more spacious bakery at *Lange Nieuwstraat* 65, where he and a small group of employees started to further experiment with biscuits. During this early period problems of all kind were encountered in trying to unlock the secrets of making biscuits,<sup>31</sup> as Eduard had to figure out what and how much of each ingredient to use, determine the different times and methods of baking, and master the diverse ways of producing large batches of biscuits in a profitable and productive way. These unknown aspects of biscuit manufacturing needed to be discovered gradually and Eduard continued to sell his normal bakery goods, but became increasingly adamant about pushing further with this new product. As his biscuits became more refined, Eduard's expertise in

manufacturing them at his bakery in *Lange Nieuwstraat* improved, and so the next logic step was to produce quality biscuits on an industrial scale. Edward subsequently decided to purchase an empty plot of land in *Lange Kievitstraat* in 1874 from Anna Mertens, who had inherited the property from her husband Gabriel Held in 1872.<sup>32</sup> This new empty terrain had plenty of space and was strategically located near to the city centre, which would enable Eduard to purchase his ingredients and distribute his goods more easily. With the

<sup>30</sup> (Federale Overheidsdienst Financiën) (hereafter FOF), Administratie van het kadaster – Dienst uittreksels, Dossier nr: 10049439, register 437 Nr. 49439.

<sup>31</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918*, 15-6.

<sup>32</sup> (FOF), Administratie van het kadaster – Dienst uittreksels, Dossier nr: 10049439, register 437 Nr. 49439.

construction of his planned factory underway, Eduard also needed to invest in specialised automatic machinery, and he apparently went in search of technical assistance in England, the birthplace of the fancy biscuit industry.

As indicated in the previous chapter, English fancy biscuit manufacturing was at that time technically and qualitatively far superior to that of their continental European counterparts, and Eduard clearly acknowledged this British supremacy as he was said to have established contact with an English manufacturer that produced fancy biscuit machinery. After some apparent correspondence, Eduard took a big financial gamble and crossed the English Channel to obtain the required specialised machinery that would allow him to significantly increase his output and pursue his new venture to a higher level of production. Eduard, apparently because of a lack of funds, is said to have been able to purchase only an incomplete machine, which was most likely an automatic device to chop shapes out of dough,<sup>33</sup> and then fully assemble it with some of his own self-constructed parts in Antwerp. Eduard had thus finally decided to take the step to dedicate all of his funds, time and energy to manufacturing biscuits as his main product. Somewhere in 1875, and equipped with his newly purchased machinery, Eduard relocated to a basic hangar in *Lange Kievitstraat*.

The period in which Eduard decided to relocate his bakery to *Lange Nieuwstraat* and eventually purchase the plot of land in *Lange Kievitstraat*, where he was to build his new specialised factory, coincided with a very favourable period in the economic history of Antwerp. The era of 1870-3 was a time of economic prosperity for the port city, which was a direct result of the Franco-Prussian war,<sup>34</sup> and trade and industry in Antwerp were booming.<sup>35</sup> This positive entrepreneurial climate would have given Eduard the means and perhaps even the confidence to venture into this new developing industry, a route that was rather uncertain and unknown.

Although Eduard had started up his factory in the *Lange Kievitstraat* and thus had finally managed to create an opportunity to produce biscuits on an industrial scale, he claimed that the road to becoming a recognised quality biscuit manufacture was ‘*not a bed of roses*’,<sup>36</sup> as

<sup>33</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 9.

<sup>34</sup> The Franco-Prussian war lasted from July 1870 until May 1871 and was fought between France and the German states under the leadership of Prussia.

<sup>35</sup> F. Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.



he encountered many technical and financial difficulties along the way. These early setbacks are not particularly surprising, since Eduard entered into an innovative industry that had not yet developed widely, and most of the existing knowledge tended to be safeguarded by British biscuit manufacturers. Producing biscuits manually as a side product on a small scale would have been challenging enough, but producing biscuits on a fully automated industrial scale is a whole other matter completely. In his 1888 speech Eduard clearly acknowledges these early setbacks and mentions that during the first few years of the factory's operations only a small number of employees were housed there and the company struggled to produce good quality biscuits like those of the English imports.<sup>37</sup> He stated that *'at first we knew that we did not produce masterworks ... our employees can probably remember the time, when our creations were unmercifully cast aside for others that were more near perfect'*.<sup>38</sup> Manufacturing biscuit on such a large scale came with its own set of problems ranging from acquiring large quantities of quality ingredients, understanding and maintaining the technical aspects of production to managing the logistics of distribution. Thus as Eduard stated *'the start up of our factory should not be considered as a success story ... We started of humble, with a watchful eye on the future... Each day brought something new in life with the hopeful goal of improvement'*.<sup>39</sup> This troublesome start, as Eduard explained further in his speech, did not only put the factory's reputation at risk, but had also placed such a great financial strain upon the company that its future was in jeopardy.<sup>40</sup> Part of this difficult beginning could have been influenced by the poor economic climate that had come about after 1873, when the world entered into an economic depression. Belgium was not spared and it regained economic stability only from the mid-1890s onwards. This period in Antwerp's history is signified by unstable trade, with sporadic periods of improvement followed by further decline, and Antwerp's industrial sector, despite signs of progress, was still largely behind that of most of Belgium's other provinces; it is only from the 1880s onwards that a notable improvement in the city's industries occurred.<sup>41</sup>

In 1877, during this unstable economic climate, Eduard decided to incorporate an unknown number of partners into his business, which subsequently became known as 'Ed. De

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<sup>37</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> F. Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen*, 53-6; 74-80.

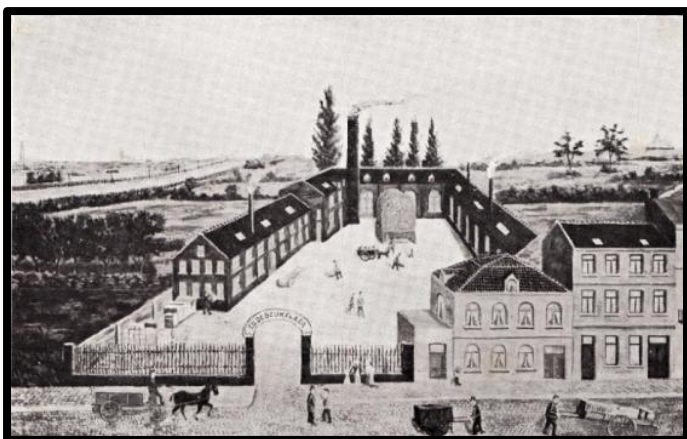


Figure 6: Ed. De Beukelaer & Co circa the late 1870s. Retrieved from, (CBUA) 49U, viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

Beukelaer & Co'.<sup>42</sup> The exact reason why Edward made this decision is not certain, but a possible scenario is that after running into financial difficulties that threatened the existence of his business, something Eduard had mentioned in his speech, he was forced to invite one or a number of

partners to invest in his company to safeguard its future. Another likely scenario is that Eduard decided to introduce such partners into his business to financially assist in further expanding his factory. Although these partners held a financial stake in the company, Eduard was probably responsible for Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's daily management. In 1887 this unclear partnership ended and the ownership of the company was transferred back to Eduard.<sup>43</sup> A clue as to why the partnership might have been terminated may well be linked to Eduard's dislike of outside interference in his company, a sentiment which is revealed in a 1918 letter that Eduard wrote to Mr van den Dungen, a Dutch chocolate manufacturer, who asked Eduard for advice and to whom Eduard replied: *'...having strangers in your business is sickening, and I have experienced it. If you cannot master it on your own then I'd rather try and advise you to get a manager'*.<sup>44</sup> Thus from 1887 until the company's transformation into an LLC in 1906, Eduard was once again the sole owner of his business, which he managed in a very paternalistic manner, and although the partnership had ceased to exist, Eduard decided to retain the name of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co on his products and advertisements, possibly to retain the brand's previously established reputation.

<sup>42</sup> (FOF), Administratie van het kadaster – Dienst uittreksels, Dossier nr: 10049439, register 437 Nr. 49439.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 30/12/1918, 23.

### 3.1.3. The diversification, vertical integration and growth of the company

After these apparent difficulties that occurred during the first few years in *Lange Kievitstraat*, Eduard's knowledge and understanding of biscuit manufacturing evolved and must have improved considerably, as in 1884 a decorating department was started which specialised in putting colourful icing on biscuits.<sup>45</sup> The creation of this department introduced new varieties of biscuits that were different from the



Figure 7: Iced biscuits produced by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, 1932 bestel catalogus, 42-3.

plain dough ones and, for instance, enabled Ed. De Beukelaer & Co to compete with English manufacturers, who were renowned for their iced biscuits, which were colloquially known as *Engels lekkers* (English treats). Around 1888 Ed. De Beukelaer & Co expanded their product range further and besides biscuits also began manufacturing wafers in a separate department. Although initially this department was rather small and production did not follow a set schedule for each day and instead rather produced on demand,<sup>46</sup> the factory's wafer department would grow extensively over the years and by 1929 wafers were reported to be the company's biggest export product.<sup>47</sup>

Not long afterwards, in 1889, Eduard also decided to start up a chocolate department, as it would be both practical as well as profitable for the company to produce and manufacture its own chocolate, since many products of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co contained chocolate or cocoa as an ingredient.<sup>48</sup> The factory would purchase its cocoa beans and butter from different suppliers, and would subsequently process these raw ingredients with others, either using them as a further ingredient in the biscuit department, or as one of the various new chocolate products that ranged from plain or nutty chocolate bars to cocoa powder. At the time this diversification not only enabled Ed. De Beukelaer & Co to become Antwerp's second largest

<sup>45</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F.

<sup>46</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen,' Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat, II'.

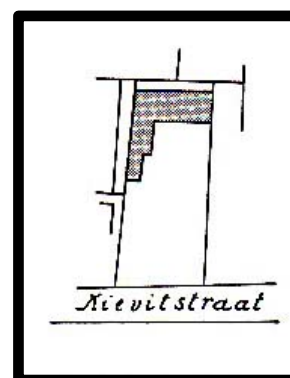
<sup>47</sup> (CBUA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929.

<sup>48</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F.

chocolate manufacturer following the popular Meurisse, but also allowed it to venture into a new market previously untapped by the company.<sup>49</sup> Although chocolate manufacturing was a well established and highly competitive industry, the new venture by Ed. De Beukelaer & Co would prove financially beneficial as it cut out the middle man in the supply chain and opened up a new previously untapped market to the company.

Besides diversifying the product range of the company's biscuit, wafer and chocolate department, Ed. De Beukelaer & Co also introduced vertical integration strategies to reduce costs. Departments such as the tin and wooden box-making station would supply the factory with its own packaging, whilst the smith department would repair and construct the factory's own machinery. The latter departments had been part of the company from as early as 1888. Members working in the tin box department, however, were not yet hired permanently, and once a certain number of boxes had been produced, the workers were forced to look for work somewhere else until new boxes needed to be made.<sup>50</sup> Such departments again purposefully cut out the middle man, a strategy that was used regularly in the factory's further development.

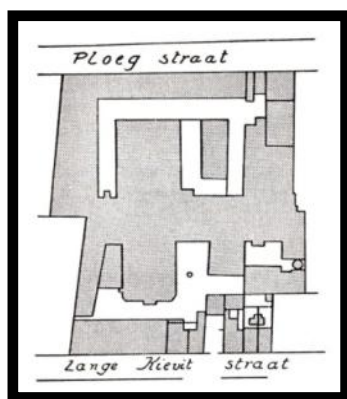
Another way of trying to uncover part of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's development during its early period is by analysing the physical expansion that the factory underwent over the years. The small little hangar on the plot in *Lange Kievitstraat*, which in 1875 had a floor space of 1 480 m<sup>2</sup>, started to transform and expand, and a variety of alterations and extensions were made over the years. By 1881 the factory had a size of 1 860 m<sup>2</sup> and Ed. De Beukelaer & Co. decided to purchase another 1 756 m<sup>2</sup> plot situated to its west for further expansion. This new site allowed Eduard to develop his factory and additional extensions took place during the years to follow. In 1883, 1886 and 1890 the factory purchased more adjacent plots and by 1896 the size of the factory was 3 753 m<sup>2</sup>, whilst the total size of the company's property was 4 336 m<sup>2</sup>. In the following year Ed. De Beukelaer & Co purchased a new plot of land to its north that connected the factory in *Lange Kievitstraat* to *Ploegstraat*. This new plot was 4 230 m<sup>2</sup> and increased the total area owned by Ed. De Beukelaer & Co to



**Figure 8: Ground plan of the factory circa the mid-1870s.** Retrieved from, R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Anon., *General Biscuit Company, 125 Ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 Jaar Ervaring en Expansie*, np.

<sup>50</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen,' *Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat, II*'.



**Figure 9: Ground plan of the factory circa 1906.** Retrieved from, R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 28.

9 845 m<sup>2</sup>. Over the years the factory continued to purchase smaller adjacent plots and houses to further expand their workshops and by 1906 the factory owned 10 369 m<sup>2</sup> with a factory size of 5 902 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>51</sup> Ed. De Beukelaer & Co had thus expanded from a small hangar in 1875 into a large-scale factory by 1906.

The first detailed glimpse of this steadily diversifying and expanding factory in the heart of Antwerp dates back to November 1888, when Ed. De Beukelaer & Co invited some of the local press to tour the factory. The articles that were written about the tour consist of a fairly detailed description concerning

the factory's structure and operations, and partly reveal the way in which the factory was managed. The most detailed of these articles came from the newspaper *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, which ran a three-day report, from 23 November to 25 November, on Ed. De Beukelaer & Co.

In its articles *Het Handelsblad* reported that Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's various departments were spread across two stories, an attic and a basement. To power the factory's machinery, Ed. De Beukelaer & Co made use of a 140-horsepower Lebrun coal-operated engine, which had more than likely been installed the previous year,<sup>52</sup> and an additional electric network was in place that was used to light up the factory, although its previous gas system was still installed. To manufacture their products Ed. De Beukelaer & Co purchased ingredients that originated from across the world and consisted of sugar from Egypt, oranges and fruit from Sicily, rose oil from 'the east', and flour from suppliers across Belgium.<sup>53</sup> Once purchased, some of the ingredients would undergo sample analyses at the factory's laboratory in order to try and stop bad ingredients from entering the manufacturing process. This was a necessary procedure for the reporter to note, as the factory had been implicated as possibly having purchased bad flour from the mill in the nearby district of Merksem and thus needed to reaffirm its reputation of cleanliness.<sup>54</sup> The next step in the production line included such acts as beating eggs, crushing vanilla pods, peeling almonds, and kneading and dough, all of

<sup>51</sup> (FOF), Administratie van het kadaster – Dienst uittreksels, Dossier nr: 10049439, register 437 Nr. 49439.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 23 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, I'.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*



which largely took place mechanically. Each aspect of this manufacturing process was designed and positioned in such a way that it followed the logical flow of production. However, not all of the methods of production were automated, as manual tasks such as cutting out dough, or decorating and moving batches of biscuits around the factory, were still preformed manually.



**Figure 10: Mixed assortment of biscuit produced by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken.** Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, 1932 bestel catalogus, 42-3.

By 1888 the production of a wide assortment of biscuit in different shapes and sizes had been mastered by Ed. De Beukelaer & Co, and it was noted that the factory produced around 160 different types of biscuits that ranged from stars and hearts to square and round biscuits, from iced and buttery to dry and plain. In order to produce this wide variety of biscuits the factory's four ovens were said to have worked 11 hours a day, producing 1000-1500 kilos of

biscuits on a daily basis.<sup>55</sup> The finished products were put on an elevator and moved to the second floor, where they were packed in boxes. Each biscuit box that left the factory was weighed by a female worker who filled in her initials and the date on a red paper that was put into the box. This red piece of paper was printed in a dozen languages – an indication that the exportation of De Beukelaer's products was already rather extensive. When a customer found anything wrong with the box or the biscuits inside, they could send it back to the factory and the product in question was traced to the 'responsible' individual,<sup>56</sup> another example that seems to indicate the company's level of concern about the quality of its products.

Each of the factory's departments and workstations was led by a 'master guest', who would oversee his part of the production process, and each section was connected to the other by an internal telephone network. Eduard De Beukelaer's office looked down upon the machine hall and Eduard would thus easily be able to observe, manage and control the proceedings on the work floor, a reminder of Eduard's omnipresence in his factory, a paternalistic

<sup>55</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 23 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, I'.

<sup>56</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen,' Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, II'.

characteristic that will be discussed in some detail in the following chapters.<sup>57</sup> Eduard had thus managed to overcome the company's early hitches and had begun to expand and diversify his factory.

### 3.1.4. The creation, affirmation and 'exploitation' of the company's brand

Slowly but surely the reputation of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co as a quality biscuit manufacturer also started to grow and became officially recognised for the first time in 1885, when Antwerp hosted Belgium's first World Fair.

Although smaller fairs that celebrated the arts or industry of nations had previously been presented in countries such as France, Germany, Belgium and Holland,<sup>58</sup> the first true World Fair, known as the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, was held in London in the year 1851, and its sheer size and organisation reflected the spirit of a rapidly modernising time.<sup>59</sup> The exhibition was held in Hyde Park and was different from its predecessors as it promoted the display of works from all nations and showcased these in an impressive architectural structure that later became known as the Crystal Palace, a symbol of Britain's imperial achievements at the time.<sup>60</sup> The international character which was promoted in the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London was so popular and impressive that it inspired other nations to compete in hosting the most, the best, the biggest and the most impressive exhibitions. Belgium, despite being one of Europe's smaller countries, certainly did well in the 'most' department, as in less than a century it hosted nine official World Fairs,<sup>61</sup> as well as a series of additional smaller and more specialised exhibitions that did not meet the requirements to truly being called a World Fair.<sup>62</sup> From these nine World Fairs, the city of Antwerp was to host three – one in 1885, one in 1894 and finally its last one in 1930. Such fairs would showcase products of industry, art and culture, architecture and national prestige from around the world, and exhibits were generally displayed in a grand spectacular style. The exhibitors at such fairs consisted of nations, organisations and private owners, who all invested large amounts of money in showcasing their prestigious national wares and

<sup>57</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen,' Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, II'.

<sup>58</sup> P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas, the Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*, 9.

<sup>59</sup> P. Greenhalgh, 'De Traditie van de Wereldtentoonstellingen', in, M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terry, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom, Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 25.

<sup>60</sup> P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, 12.

<sup>61</sup> E. Findling, and K.D. Pelle, (eds.), *Historical Dictionary of World Fairs and Expositions, 1851-1988*, 376-80.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 395-401.

industries, their cultural achievements and arts, or their products and inventions to the world at large. Private companies considered these ‘sensational’ exhibitions as the perfect opportunity to show off the size of their undertaking with extensive displays and pavilions, as well as to affirm the quality and reputation of their products by competing with members of the same class for official recognition. Attaining such official recognition is exactly what Eduard managed to achieve when Ed. De Beukelaer & Co took part in the 1885 Antwerp World Fair.

Antwerp’s 1885 World Fair was a celebration of the city’s revival as a commercial maritime centre. Compared to others, this World Fair was small in size and it was not as impressive as those previously held in London or Paris, but it was certainly popular. Over its course the Fair welcomed about 3.5 million visitors,<sup>63</sup> which largely consisted of members of society who were well off and could afford to stroll around the exposition, or who saw this event as an opportunity to establish new business contacts. The exhibition featured 14 472 stands that were divided into 116 different classes.<sup>64</sup> Ed. De Beukelaer & Co was part of the LXIV class of the sixth group, which was the category of bakery and pastry products.<sup>65</sup> Other competitors in this class manufactured ship biscuits, dessert biscuits (another name for ‘fancy biscuit’), spiced and special breads, or patisserie products, and Eduard’s fellow competitors came from Belgium, France, Italy and Holland.<sup>66</sup> An international jury decided per class which entry was most innovative and would award diplomas and medals accordingly.<sup>67</sup> At the 1885 exhibition the jury decorated Ed. De Beukelaer & Co with a golden medal along with four other contestants of Eduard’s class. These other winners included one Brussels-based baker who produced ship biscuits and normal bakery products, and two French contestants, both of whom produced a variety of biscuits ranging from iced and dry biscuits to the famous buttery *petite fours* (one of whom was the famous Parisian Olibet, registered as a biscuit manufacturer), and finally one Dutch manufacturer known as Nederlandsche Biscuit Fabriek, who was based in Amsterdam and was also listed as being a biscuit manufacturer.<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>63</sup> C. Terry, ‘Van Elitaire Beurs tot Massamedium, Exposanten en Publiek van de Antwerpse Expo’s’, in M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terry, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 71.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Exposition Universelle d’Anvers 1885, Catalogue Officiel*, 21.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 21;124-5.

<sup>67</sup> C. Terry, ‘Van Elitaire Beurs tot Massamedium, Exposanten en Publiek van de Antwerpse Expo’s’, in M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terry, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 71.

<sup>68</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Exposition Universelle d’Anvers 1885, Catalogue Officiel*, 21; 410-1.



medal from the jury was the first official recognition that Eduard received for the company's products and indicated that Ed. De Beukelaer & Co could thus compete on an international level. Besides the award, the company had also managed to get exposure to a wide international audience. An additional recognition of quality came three years later in 1887 when Ed. De Beukelaer & Co was appointed as a royal supplier by Belgium's King Leopold II, a title that was awarded for a second time by King Albert I in 1911.<sup>69</sup> This form of publicity reaffirmed the quality of De Beukelaer's biscuits in a growing national and international market and strengthened its reputation. Such publicity was an important part of Eduard's business strategy and from the early 1890s onwards Ed. De Beukelaer & Co as well as Eduard himself participated in a series of events that were highly publicised. A good example of such publicity was *het landjuweel* in Antwerp in 1892.

*Het landjuweel* of 1892 was an event that was organised by the *Acedemie van Oudheidkunde* and was based on the 1561 *landjuweel*, which was a contest of *rederijkamers* from various nearby cities. The different *rederijkamers* travelled through the streets of Antwerp in a procession and competed against one another for the best display and the best performance. The 1892 version of *het landjuweel* consisted of 14 contemporary organisations; the organisation *Antwerpen's Rubenskring* was to represent '*de pioen van Mechelen*', one of the original 1561 contestants. Eduard, who was a member of the *Rubenskring*, decided to participate in this particular event by supplying some of the horses used in the parade and,<sup>70</sup> together with another member, Eduard made sure that the soldiers and horses were dressed accordingly before the event took place.<sup>71</sup> During the actual procession Eduard formed part of the seventh group of his organisation, which was the cart that resembled a painting in the style of Van Dijck and Rubens. The cart was loaded with emergency supplies and tools, and fodder for the horses; it was also filled with beer, lemonade and wine as well as 'sweetened articles' that were supplied free of charge by Eduard De Beukelaer.<sup>72</sup> For three days this big procession travelled across different parts of the city and this immense spectacle attracted much attention, and was thus an excellent source of advertisement, which Eduard eagerly seized by freely distributing Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's products. However, the most renowned of publicity stunts that Eduard decided to undertake occurred at Antwerp's second World Fair. Eduard De Beukelaer, together with a number of other business men and

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<sup>69</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Achtste Jaargang 1958, Nr. 92, 'Hofleveranciers', np.

<sup>70</sup> C.G. Hansen, *Het Landjuweel in Den Rubenskring*, 13.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

‘prominent members’ of Antwerp society, had started up an initiative committee that was to promote the hosting of Belgium’s second world fair,<sup>73</sup> a goal that was finally achieved in 1894.

Antwerp’s 1894 World Fair is an excellent example of how Eduard tried to ‘exploit’ as much publicity as possible for his growing business by constantly putting both himself as well as Ed. De Beukelaer & Co in the spotlight. Although Eduard did not manage to win any medals or diplomas for his products during this particular Fair, he did manage to attract a huge amount of attention. Ed. De Beukelaer & Co was, for instance, one of a few companies at the exposition to have its own pavilion in the exposition gardens instead of featuring the business by means of a stand in the large communal exhibition halls. These individual pavilions were generally large architecturally impressive buildings that were glamorous and rather pompous, and were a great method of advertising a company by impressing guests and other exhibitors with their grandeur. Ed. De Beukelaer & Co’s pavilion was a good example of this trend and



**Figure 11: Ed De Beukelaer & Co's pavilion in Antwerp's 1894 World Exhibition gardens.** Retrieved from, (EHC), C.H. Bernhoeft, *Exposition Universelle d'Anvers*, np.

was based upon the then popular Moroccan design that clearly inspired many other buildings across the Fair.

The company’s pavilion was designed by the famous Jules Hoffman, architect of a number of other buildings at the exposition; it consisted of a central square building with a kitchen in the back and four towering minarets on each corner, which included a model of a biscuit box of some of the company’s products.<sup>74</sup> The main building of the pavilion was dome shaped and boldly displayed the company’s name across the exposition space. The visitors that were curious enough to enter and see what this ‘mosque’-like pavilion had to offer were met by some of Eduard’s female workers, who were dressed in colourful ‘Moorish’ outfits and

<sup>73</sup> M. Nauwelaerts, ‘De Droom van de Metropool, Antwerpen in de Wereldtentoonstellingen’, in M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terry, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 51.

<sup>74</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 28 Juli 1894, ‘Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Het Pavilioen E. De Beukelaar’, np.

served hot cocoa and biscuits fresh from the kitchen.<sup>75</sup> Besides the latter pavilion, which must already have cost a significant amount of money, Eduard was also closely involved with the exhibition's mock town of *Oud-Antwerpen* (old Antwerp), which was somewhat of a nostalgic fantasy replica of Antwerp's golden age in the sixteenth century.

Although the concept of a decorative mock town had already been featured in the exposition of Turin, London, Vienna, Amsterdam and Paris, Antwerp's version was different from its predecessors. *Oud-Antwerpen* was the first mock town where the buildings were constructed in such a way that they could be permanently occupied during the exposition period by tenants who designed them into shops or used them as special luxurious resorts.<sup>76</sup> This plan of a permanently occupied city had only come about after one of its creator's, Max Rooses, was forced by the exhibition's organising committee to make the project profitable.<sup>77</sup> Eduard, together with a number of small to medium-sized businesses, as well as some members of the nobility, eagerly made use of this exciting opportunity and purchased the 70 or so available buildings that were constructed out of a timber frame and were plastered with *staff* or *litholigniet* (a replica stone that could be cast into various shapes) to give them a realistic finish.<sup>78</sup> The building that Eduard decided to purchase was a replica of *de lakenhal*, which



**Figure 12: De lakenhal in *Oud-Antwerpen*. Note Edward sitting at the table in his 16<sup>th</sup>-century costume.** Retrieved from, M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terryn, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom, Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 265.; (PC), Koningsveld, fotocollectie.

<sup>75</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 28 Juli 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Het Paviljoen E. De Beukelaar', np.

<sup>76</sup> A.K.I. Thijs, 'Oud-Antwerpen 1894, Een Burgerlijke Droomwereld', in M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terryn, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 262.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> P. Uyttenhove, 'De Ruine en het Feest, De Moderniteit van Oud-Antwerpen en Oud België', in Nauwelaerts, and C. Terryn, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 250.

was used as the headquarters of the *Lakenmeeters* Guild in the sixteenth century, and was positioned on the central square in *Oud-Antwerpen* and connected to the town's city hall. The building was rather large and lavish, and Eduard paid 10 000 Bfr. for it, making it one of the five most expensive purchases in *Oud-Antwerpen*.<sup>79</sup> *De lakenhal* had been transformed into a shop with a seating area, where Eduard sold Ed. De Beukelaer & Co.'s products, ranging from bars of chocolate and boxes of biscuits, to people who visited the store, as well as serving hot cocoa and loose biscuits for people who wanted to sit down.<sup>80</sup> During the exhibition the members of *Oud-Antwerpen*, known as the *Poorters*, also decided to create a mayoral committee that would partially manage and organise some of the proceedings that occurred in the town, although its function was mere ceremonial, as the real power remained in the hands of the organising committee of *Oud-Antwerpen*. Eduard was voted by his fellow *Poorters* to fulfil the role of the town's 'outside' mayor, who served as an ambassador and representative of the mock town to the outside world.<sup>81</sup> His duties were chairing the mayoral committees together with the 'inside' mayor, Emiel Raes, a famous butcher from Antwerp, welcoming prominent guests when they visited the town, and fulfilling various ceremonial functions during the many events held in *Oud-Antwerpen*.<sup>82</sup> On the 24 October 1894, when the exposition neared its end and the town would be demolished, Eduard and his fellow *Poorters* decided to form the philanthropic organisation known as *De Ghilde des poorters van Oud-Antwerpen* in the spirit of this event.<sup>83</sup>

Each World Fair also had a unique *clou* (special feature) designed to attract publicity and attention and in the case of Antwerp's 1894 exhibition it was originally going to be two special balloons. One of these was known as the *Bestuurbare Ballon* (mobile balloon) and was invented by Knight Le-Clement de St. Marq and technically coordinated by electrical engineer Leon Champy. Originally the project of the *Bestuurbare Ballon* was financed by an LLC registered under the name *De Naamloze Maatschapij van den bestuurbaren ballon van Antwerpen*, in which the general public could purchase shares.<sup>84</sup> The concept of the project was for the balloon to pick up people at the exhibition and drive them by air across a set route

<sup>79</sup> M. Roosens, and F. van Kuyck, *De Wyk Oud-Antwerpen in de Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894*, 41-2.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-9.

<sup>81</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 3 Juni 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Oud-Antwerpen zitting van 31 Mei', np.

<sup>82</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 7 Juni 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Het groot feest van Oud-Antwerpen, Inhaling van het Maghistreat', np.

<sup>83</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, *Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek*, Stichting van de Ghilde des Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen.

<sup>84</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 September 1893, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, De bestuurbare luchtbal', np.



around the city.<sup>85</sup> The balloon itself was 80 meters long and 16 meters wide. The cabin attached to the balloon was 50 meters long, two meters wide and three meters high, and had a carrying capacity of 20-25 people. To direct the balloon across the route, two gas engines that powered two dynamos producing electricity would be used. The generated electricity would then power a small rotor that steered the balloon around; for the price of five Bfr. the balloon would transport its passengers in a luxurious cabin from the exhibition space to the *Beurs*, travelling over the city at a height of about 100 meters.<sup>86</sup>



**Figure 13: Advertisement poster, illustrating the original design for the *Bestuurbare Ballon*.** Retrieved from, M. Nauwelaerts, C. Terryn, and P. Verbraeken, (eds.), *De Panoramische Droom, Antwerpen en de Wereldtentoonstellingen*, 241.

This type of cigar shaped balloon had been invented by Henri Giffard in 1852, but previous attempts of controlling and steering these balloons had failed dramatically. The launching of the *Bestuurbare Ballon* would thus have been a unique event and a world first.<sup>87</sup> Unfortunately the project was cursed with a series of unfortunate events that started in June, when a leak flattened the balloon when the organisers tried to fill it up with gas.<sup>88</sup> Afterwards once the leak had been repaired, the weather was not favourable and filling the balloon would have been a dangerous affair.<sup>89</sup> Sometime later that month the fabric of the balloon ripped for a second time and gas escaped ones more.<sup>90</sup> After this first series of setbacks the newspaper *Gazet Van Antwerpen* reported on 7 August that Eduard De Beukelaer

decided to take over the project of the *Bestuurbare Ballon* from the LLC so that it could finally be launched.<sup>91</sup> The balloons was filled up once more with gas and air, but on 22 August it was flat again, although this time the newspapers claimed it was sabotage, as the

<sup>85</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 20 December 1893, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Bestuurbare ballon, Lucht-kasteel', np.

<sup>86</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 29 December 1893, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Bestuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>87</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 17 Maart 1894, 'Bestuurbaarheid der ballons, Is zij mogelijk?', np.

<sup>88</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 2 Juni 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Bestuurbare ballon ongeval aan den Ballon', np.

<sup>89</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 9 Juni 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Bestuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>90</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 23 Juni 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Bestuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>91</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 7 Augustus 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, De Bestuurbare ballon', np.



**Figure 14: The *Bestuurbare Ballon* with the text 'E. DE BEUKELAER BISCUITS CACAO CHOCOLADE' advertised on its side. Retrieved from, R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 23.**

machine room where the gas engines were located had allegedly been vandalised with a hammer and the tear in the balloon's fabric was supposedly man-made.<sup>92</sup> Whether these allegations were true or a way of covering up another failed attempt at launching the vessel is not clear, but the incident saw 2 500 Bfr. worth of gas go up in thin air,<sup>93</sup> and the damaged balloon had to be transported to Brussels to be fixed and then brought back to Antwerp.<sup>94</sup> The *Bestuurbare Ballon* was filled up yet again, but the original plan of driving it along a set route was abandoned and the balloon was just launched up high in the air and used as an advertisement,<sup>95</sup> as Eduard had decided to paint the text 'E. DE BEUKELAER BISCUITS CACAO CHOCOLADE' in big seven-meter long letters on its side.<sup>96</sup> Alas, at midday on the 19 September, when the balloon had finally been filled completely and was ready to be launched, tragedy struck once more. The balloon was already 12 meters in the air when some workers were attaching ballast to keep the vessel balanced. The back side of the balloon reportedly had too little ballast and it subsequently flipped onto its nose in a vertically upright position and exploded. The blast blew five workers into the air, but luckily not one was injured.<sup>97</sup> Even though the balloon lay on the floor in pieces, Eduard had thus still managed to get his company some exposure. The last attempt of publicising Ed. De Beukelaer & Co during this world exhibition was during the visit of a Congolese 'delegation' to the factory.

In the beginning of September, when Antwerp's 1894 exhibition was nearing its end and the members of the Congolese village that was put on display during the exposition to represent Belgium's colonial 'achievements' were about to return back home, a group of 30 or so

<sup>92</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 22 Augustus 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, De Bestuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 23 Augustus 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, De Stuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>95</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 3 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling, Bestuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>96</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 1 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, De Bestuurbare ballon', np.

<sup>97</sup> *De Koophandel*, 20 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling, Het einde van den stuurbaren ballon', np.

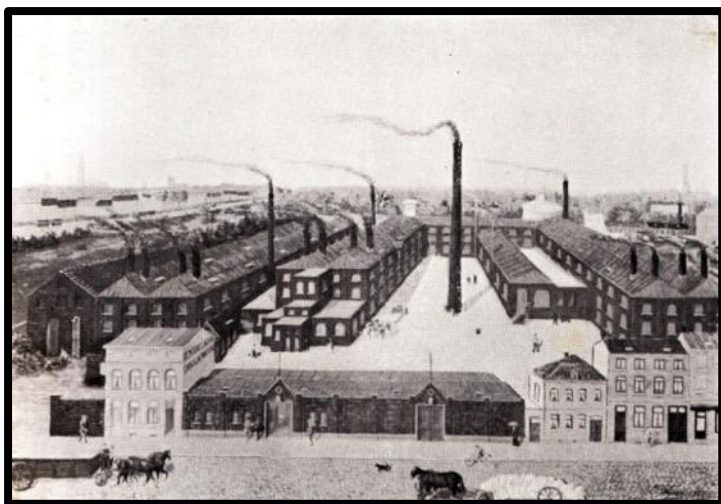


Figure 15: Ed. De Beukelaer & Co around the time the Congolese 'delegation' visited the factory. Retrieved from, R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 16.

prominent Congolese went on a tour of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co under the guidance of Lieutenant Meuse and Mr Robert Mols. The Congolese 'delegation' together with a group of journalists was guided around the factory by Eduard De Beukelaer, his wife Maria Smets and later Managing Director (MD) Alphons Sobry. At the end of the tour the delegates each received a couple of boxes of

biscuits and were offered cigars, beer and champagne, and Chief Ishawélé signed the honorary guest book of the factory. While one should ignore most of the reporter's comments regarding Western and colonial superiority, the article does mention that the whole event had created a large crowd of curious people who came to witness the affair.<sup>98</sup> A week later it was reported that on the 19 September the Congolese 'delegation' had also gone on a national tour around Belgium to visit some of its big industrial factories in Ghent, Brussels and Liege, including a canon foundry and the famous Cockerill Company at Seraing.<sup>99</sup>

Thus despite Ed. De Beukelaer & Co not receiving any prizes or diplomas during the Fair, Eduard did manage to advertise his company's brand extensively by having two large exposition stands, taking on the role of outside mayor of *Oud-Antwerpen* and making use of highly publicised 'exploitation' stunts such as the *Bestuurbare Ballon*, and the Congolese 'delegation' visiting the factory. Eduard had thus made both himself as well as his factory and products known to the wider public, although the financial cost of this exposure must have been substantial. One of the last examples of sensationalist promotional displays by Eduard to show off the company's 'grandeur' occurred at the Brussels exposition of 1897. Here at this fair's own version of *Oud Anwerpen* named *Bruxelles-Kermesse*,<sup>100</sup> Eduard hired his acquaintance, the contractor Victor Merckx-Verellen, who had also built most of the town of *Oud-Antwerpen*, to construct a replica of *het Reuzenhuis*, an old thirteenth-century

<sup>98</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 9 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling, De Congoleezen bij M. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>99</sup> *De Koophandel*, 11 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van Antwerpen, De Congoleezen', np.

<sup>100</sup> E. Findling, (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of World Fairs and Expositions*, 142.



**Figure 16: Replica of het Reuzenhuis in the Brussels exhibition of 1897.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang 1954, Nr. 38, 'Onze Publiciteit in vroeger dagen, Het Reuzenhuis', np.

building in Antwerp that had been owned by knights of the Teutonic order.<sup>101</sup> Eduard's participation at the exposition was, however, a costly affair and the company's balance sheets reported that the exposition had cost the company 57 029.25 Bfr.<sup>102</sup> Thus during the subsequent exhibitions at Liege in 1905, at Brussels in 1910<sup>103</sup> and at Ghent in 1913 Ed. De Beukelaer & Co refrained from building large extravagant and costly displays, and it was not until Antwerp's third and final exposition in 1930 that the company would again invest in a large-scale pavilion.

Clearly these early examples of advertisement by Ed. De Beukelaer & Co were an important feature of Eduard's

marketing strategy, and attempted to enhance and promote both the company's as well as his own reputation and brand.

### **3.1.5. The financial growth of the company's and its owner's rise to the class of industrial bourgeoisie**

How was the Ed De Beukelaer & Co's grand-scale advertisement and the growing reputation of its brand, together with its steadily diversifying product range and its increasing rate of production, reflected in its yearly net profits? What the net profitability of the firm was before 1887 is not known as the available annual balance sheets only commence from 1887, when Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's partnership ended.

During the first few years the company's net profit grew by 251.5 percent from 82 570 Bfr. in 1887 to 290 250 Bfr. in 1892.<sup>104</sup> After a 9.7 percent decrease in 1893, the company's net profit again increased by 125.6 percent to 590 860 Bfr. 1896.<sup>105</sup> This profit increase partly coincides with the end of the international depression.<sup>106</sup> However, a three-year slump in Ed.

<sup>101</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang 1954, Nr. 38, 'Onze Publiciteit in vroeger dagen, Het Reuzenhuis', np.

<sup>102</sup> (CBUA), Ed. De Beukelaer & Co en De Beukelaer's Fabrieken biscuits & chocolade Antwerpen N.V. B26 (hereafter B26) 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 83.

<sup>103</sup> (EHC), Anon., *De Beukelear*, 17-8.

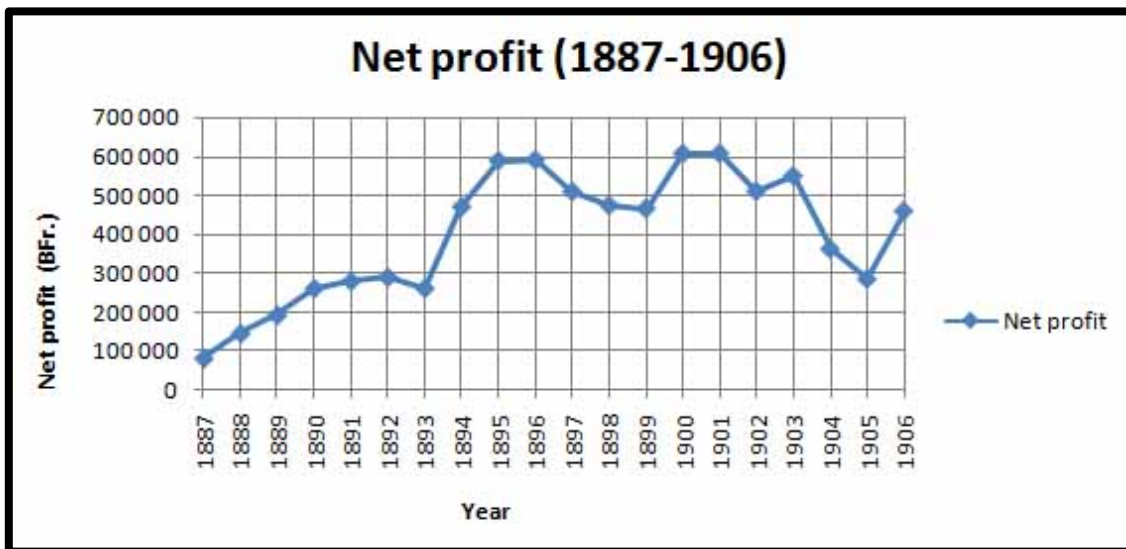
<sup>104</sup> (CBUA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 1-48.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-84.

<sup>106</sup> E. Buyst, 'Situering van het Bedrijf in de Economische Structuur en Conjunctuur' in, C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding voor het Schrijven van een Bedrijfs-geschiedenis*, 254.



De Beukelaer & Co's net profits soon followed and the company's 1896 peak of 590 860 Bfr. dropped by 21 percent to 466 462 Bfr. in 1899.<sup>107</sup> This slump was caused by a general decline in the net profit of both the chocolate as well as the biscuit department, but the reasons for this is unknown. Then, in 1900, Ed. De Beukelaer & Co net profits stabilised, with 607 161 Bfr. in 1900 and 607 313 Bfr. in 1901.<sup>108</sup> This trend was, however, followed up by a new decrease when the company's net profit dropped by 15.7 percent to 510 749 Bfr in 1902, and a small 7.6 percent increase to 549 773 Bfr. in 1903.<sup>109</sup> This small increase was, however, followed by a two consecutive year decreases that saw the company's net profit drop by 47.9 percent to 285 898 Bfr. in 1905,<sup>110</sup> around the same level of net profit it had been in 1891-1892. This serious decline was eventually followed up by a 60.8 percent rise in net profit to 459 887 Bfr. in 1906,<sup>111</sup> marking the end of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co and the start of the LLC De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen. Thus during the period between 1887 and 1906 Eduard's company had remained consistently profitable, although its net profit rate did experience some serious fluctuations.



**Figure 17: Graph detailing Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's net profit between 1887 and 1906.** Data retrieved from, (CBUA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906.

<sup>107</sup> (CBUA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 85-7.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-9.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-1.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-3.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

Though based on net profit Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's had thus never made a loss, a noteworthy trend is noticeable when investigating the company's percentage return on its capital. Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's first known capital figure dates back to 1887, during which it was noted to be 401 853 Bfr,<sup>112</sup> and by 1906 had grown quite substantially to 7 700 381 Bfr.<sup>113</sup> Despite a small dip in returns to 15 percent in 1893, the company had retained an above 20 percent return on its capital until 1895, even reaching as high as 29 percent in 1888. From 1896 onwards, however, the return on the company's capital systematically began to decline from 19 percent in 1896 to 4 percent in 1905. Despite a growing increase in available capital, Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's percentage return had thus been decreasing for nine years and when comparing its overall figures had dropped to a rather low percentage for reasons that are not entirely clear.

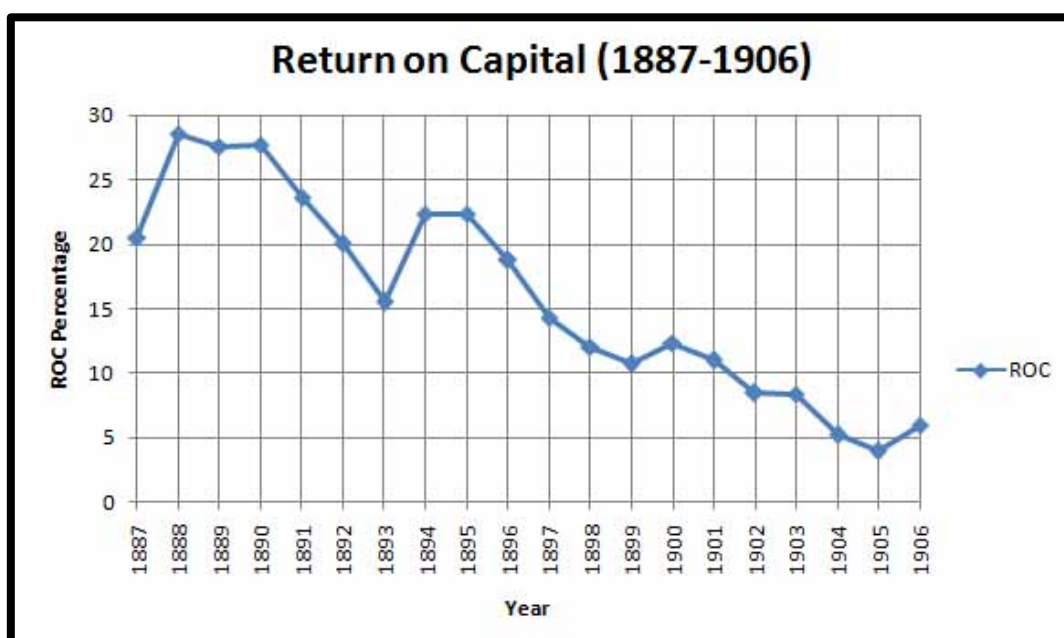


Figure 18: Graph detailing Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's return on capital between 1887 and 1906. Data retrieved from, (CBUA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906.

Despite the negative trend indicated by the company's return on capital, Eduard - as the owner of the company - had earned a substantial amount of money that allowed him to climb the socio-economic ladder at a rapid pace. Thus, in line with the trend of other members of the 'industrial bourgeoisie' of the time, Eduard decided to purchase at least two known large and luxurious properties, one in the city of Antwerp and one in the nearby district of Brasschaat.

<sup>112</sup> (CBUA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.



Figure 19: *Hôtel De Beukelaer* at *Minderbroedersrui 21*. Retrieved from, (EHC) *De Shakel*, derde jaargang 1953, Nr. 36, np.

Previously Eduard seems to have had stayed at a house near the factory, but in 1895 he decided to purchase a big lavish residence at *Minderbroedersrui 21*, which was situated within 10-minutes walking distance from the city centre. The building was a three-storey house that reportedly included many salons and rooms that were luxuriously decorated and displayed some of Eduard's precious art collection. The property subsequently became known as *Hôtel De Beukelaer*,<sup>114</sup> and seems to have been used by Eduard both as a residence and a place to entertain guests with lavish banquets and parties.<sup>115</sup> In 1899 Eduard decided to list the house and its paintings as part of the Ed De Beukelaer & Co's assets, and it was registered in the yearly balance sheet as

having a value of 375 000 Bfr.<sup>116</sup> However, in 1910 Eduard sold the house to the city of Antwerp and some years afterwards it was transformed into a museum for Flemish literature and culture known as *het Letterenhuis*. On 6 March 1896, after his purchase in *Minderbroedersrui*, Eduard also decided to buy an estate of 10 hectares in the nearby green district of Brasschaat, an increasingly popular area which in the later part of the nineteenth century experienced a large influx of wealthy city residents.<sup>117</sup> Eduard transformed the country house that had previously been built on the estate into a small 'castle' known as '*Het Torenhof*'.<sup>118</sup> In 1899 Eduard also registered this estate as a company asset, and in the annual balance sheet it was valued at 350 000 Bfr.<sup>119</sup> The 'castle's' interior was richly decorated and its outside was built in an eclectic style that was typical of the period.<sup>120</sup> The estate was used by Eduard mainly in the summer time, or as a place to host parties and events for guests and family. The grounds with its large pond, gardens and forest also functioned as a place of

<sup>114</sup> The term *Hôtel* was used as to describe large lavish residences in the city.

<sup>115</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 19 October 1897, 'De Poorters van Oud-Dordt', np.

<sup>116</sup> (CBA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 87.

<sup>117</sup> Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 144; 246.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 246.

<sup>119</sup> (CBA), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 87.

<sup>120</sup> Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 245.

tranquillity when Eduard's health started to deteriorate.<sup>121</sup> The latter two symbols of success and status visually personified Eduard's newly acquired prominence in society. Such a bourgeoisie tendency of owning a luxurious *Hôtel Particulier* in the city and a summer estate in the countryside was popular throughout the period of the belle époque,<sup>122</sup> and symbolised and important feature of Eduard's lifestyle.



Figure 20: *Het Torenhof* in Brasschaat. Retrieved from, (PC),Koningsveld, Fotocollectie.

In the 31 years since its start in 1875 the *beschuitstoomfabriek* in *Lange Kievitstraat* had thus grown substantially in size, and Ed. De Beukelaer & Co had steadily expanded its operations. The company successfully gained access to various markets of the food industry by diversifying its product range, and despite fluctuating financial results had managed to remain profitable. Over the period Eduard had been extremely successful in marketing both his company and its products, establishing Ed. De Beukelaer & Co as a trademark in the biscuit industry, and he had also been able to improve his living standard by climbing the socio-economic ladder and establishing himself as a member of society's 'industrial bourgeoisie'. By the end of 1906 Eduard's factory in *Lange Kievitstraat* was about to commence a new chapter in its history.

### 3.2. The formation and development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen (1906-1919)

#### 3.2.1. The ownership and management structure of the company

On 6 December 1906 Ed. De Beukelaer & Co was transformed into a LLC registered under the name De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen.<sup>123</sup> This decision was not unusual as the second industrial revolution was characterised by new structural changes in the way that businesses organised themselves, and during this period an upsurge of LLCs

<sup>121</sup> Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 246.

<sup>122</sup> A. Mommen, *De teloorgang van de Belgische Bourgeoisie*, 26-7.

<sup>123</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 1056.

was noticeable in Belgium. This increase is clearly illustrated when one compares the number of registered LLCs in Belgium during the period covering the first and second industrial revolution. In 1850 only 29 companies were registered as LLCs; in 1873 the number increased to 473, while on the eve of World War I and after the start of the second industrial revolution there were no fewer than 9 000 registered LLCs in Belgium.<sup>124</sup> Ed. De Beukelaer & Co decided to follow this trend and its business structure was changed so that the personal liability of the owners was limited in case of bankruptcy. In the light of the company's decreasing percentage return on its capital, this decision might thus have been made by Eduard to protect his own personal liability, if his business continued to follow the dangerous path that it had been on for the previous nine years. The company's capital was lowered from its previous 7 700 382 Bfr.<sup>125</sup> to a share capital of 3 000 000 Bf., which was subsequently divided into 30 000 shares to the value of a 100 Bfr. each.<sup>126</sup> When comparing the financial report for 1906<sup>127</sup> with the start-up report in January 1907,<sup>128</sup> one figure in particular stands out, and that is the personal account valued at 4 364 964 Bfr.<sup>129</sup> This large sum consisting of personal funds that Eduard and possibly other stakeholders had brought into the business to be used as capital, was subtracted from the 7 700 382 Bfr. and most likely redistributed to its owners – a decision that is in line with the concept of personal liability of an LLC. To further protect the personal liability of Eduard, the LLC also stopped including any private residences, such as Eduard's property in Brasschaat or his house at *Minderbroedersrui* 21, which had previously been listed as part of the company's assets.

The large majority of the existing property, machinery and clientele that was transferred from Ed. De Beukelaer & Co to the LLC had previously been owned by Eduard. In exchange for these assets that were transferred to the new LLC, Eduard was awarded 27 000 fully paid-up shares representing a monetary value of 2 700 000 Bfr. In addition to this substantial share, Eduard also purchased a further 1 020 issued shares, which raised his total share ownership to 93.4 percent of the total share capital.<sup>130</sup> The remaining shareholders of the new LLC consisted of both Eduard's immediate and extended family, which included Maria Mortelmans, the niece of Eduard's wife Maria Smets, who as previously mentioned had been

<sup>124</sup> E. Buyst, 'Situering van het Bedrijf in de Economische Structuur en Conjunctuur' in, C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding voor het Schrijven van een Bedrijfsgeschiedenis*, 257.

<sup>125</sup> (CBAU), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 94.

<sup>126</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 1056-67.

<sup>127</sup> (CBAU), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 95.

<sup>128</sup> (CBAU), B26 8, Grootboek 1907-1911, 5-7.

<sup>129</sup> (CBAU), B26 14, Balansboek 1887-1906, 94.

<sup>130</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 1057.



assisting the couple when Eduard owned his first bakery in the late 1860s. Maria was also the widow of Arthur Van Ossel, who had been employed at the factory from as early as 1888<sup>131</sup> and had held power of attorney for Ed. De Beukelaer & Co, but had passed away in 1901.<sup>132</sup>

<b>Share Holders</b>	<b>shares</b>	<b>%</b>
Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	28020	93.4
Maria Mortelmans, Widow of Arthur Van Ossel	500	1.7
Alphons-Edward Sobry	500	1.7
Joseph De Beukelaer	250	0.8
Louisa De Beukelaer, Widow of Jan De Bie	250	0.8
Theresia De Beukelaer	160	0.5
Paulina De Beukelaer	160	0.5
Maria Voets, Widow of Cornelius De Beukelaer	160	0.5
<b>total</b>	<b>30 000</b>	

**Figure 21: Table illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's, 1906 shareholder listing.** Data retrieved from, Belgisch Staatsblad, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 105-7.

The importance of Arthur's previous standing in the company translated into the high level of shares that his wife Maria possessed, as she was registered as being the owner of 1.7 percent of the issued shares in the LLC, which was the second highest percentage listed.<sup>133</sup> Maria Voets, Widow of Eduard's brother Cornelius De Beukelaer, as well as Paulina De Beukelaer, Eduard's sister, both owned 0.5 percent of the LLC's issued shares.<sup>134</sup> It is more than likely that Theresia De Beukelaer, who owned 0.5 percent of the issued shares, and Louisa De Beukelaer, widow of Jan De Bie, who owned 0.8 percent of the issued shares, were Eduard's sisters, and that Joseph De Beukelaer, who owned 0.8 percent of the issued shares, was Eduard's brother. It seems that only one shareholder, Alphons-Edward Sobry, was probably not related to Eduard De Beukelaer. But despite this, Alphons Sobry did own 1.7 percent of the company's issued shares,<sup>135</sup> the same percentage of distributed shares as Maria Mortelmans, and was listed as holding power of attorney.<sup>136</sup> The latter information, together with the knowledge that Alphons Sobry was already affiliated to the company from as early

<sup>131</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer, opgedragen bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekaafdeeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek.

<sup>132</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Tiende Jaargang 1960, Nr. 109, 'Een Veteraan schrijft een stukje Geschiedenis', np.

<sup>133</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 1057.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 1057.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 1056.

as 1894, when he together with Eduard and his wife Maria had shown around the Congolese ‘delegation’ that visited the factory,<sup>137</sup> indicates that Alphons had held an important position in the factory for many years.

Share Holders	shares	%
Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	17374	46.3
bare ownership of *; usufruct for Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	11988	32.0
Karel Donnez-De Bie	1950	5.2
Edward De Bie-Goemans	1950	5.2
Lodewijk De Bie-Van Ossel	1950	5.2
Jules, Paul and Elsa Sobry; children of Alphons-Edward Sobry	500	1.3
Maria Mortelmans, Widow of Arthur Van Ossel	404	1.1
Louisa De Beukelaer, Widow of Jan De Bie	354	0.9
Joanna Larivière; Widow Joseph De Beukelaer	250	0.7
Lodewijk Van Ossel; usufruct for Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	200	0.5
Theresia De Beukelaer	160	0.4
Paulina De Beukelaer	160	0.4
Felix Van Ossel	100	0.3
Edward De Beukelaer-Melis	100	0.3
Carolina De Beukelaer	30	0.1
Joanna De Beukelaer	30	0.1
<b>total</b>	37500	
*Celine Van Ossel-De Bie, Felix Van Ossel, Lodewijk van Ossel, Emma Van Ossel, Jules Sobry, Paul Sobry, Elsa Sobry		

**Figure 22: Table illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1912 shareholder listing.** Data retrieved from, (CBUA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929. De Beukeaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate, overeenkomst tusschen de aandeelhouders.

In April 1912 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's share capital was further increased by 750 000 Bfr. of newly issued capital, raising the company's total capital to 3 750 000 Bfr.<sup>138</sup> Apart from the previous shareholders, Edward De Bie, Lodewijk De Bie, Karel Donnez De Bie and Jules Sobry, all children of the original 1906 shareholders, emerged as new shareholders, together with a certain Jules Deckers, who seems not to have had any family connection and disappeared from the listing soon after in 1918.<sup>139</sup> Eduard's shares were also noted as having been divided into two large groups. The first group represented 46.3 percent of the share capital, and was registered as the sole property of Eduard, whilst the second group, which represented 32.5 percent of the share capital, consisted of shares over which Celine, Felix, Lodewijk and Emma van Ossel, children of Maria Mortelmans and Arthur Van Ossel, together with Jules, Paul and Elsa Sobry, children of Alphons Sobry, held bare ownership

<sup>137</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 9 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling, De Congoleezen bij M. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>138</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 13 April 1912, act Nr. 2472, 267.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

over,<sup>140</sup> but Eduard could make use of its usufruct.<sup>141</sup> Combined Eduard thus controlled 78.8 percent of the total share capital, which allowed him to maintain a very dominant position in the decision-making process as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's majority shareholder. Besides the latter new shareholders, Edward, Joanna and Carolina De Beukelaer, children of Maria Voets and Cornelius De Beukelaer, together with Joanna Larivière, widow of Joseph De Beukelaer, were also listed on the 1918 shareholders list. Karel Donnez and Edward and Lodewijk De Bie, had also noticeably increased their position in the shareholder listing.<sup>142</sup>

Share Holders	shares	%
Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	28813	57.6
bare ownership of *, usufruct for Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	11988	23.0
Karel Donnez	2102	4.2
Edward De Bie	2102	4.2
Lodewijk De Bie	2102	4.2
Maria Mortelmans, Widow of Arthur Van Ossel	537	1.7
Jules, Paul and Elsa Sobry; children of Alphons-Edward Sobry	500	1.0
Louisa De Beukelaer, Widow of Jan De Bie	474	0.9
Joanna Larivire; Widow of Joseph De Beukelaer	317	0.6
Theresia De Beukelaer	214	0.4
Paulina De Beukelaer	214	0.4
Lodewijk Van Ossel; usufruct for Eduard-Jacobus De Beukelaer	200	0.4
Edward De Beukelaer	135	0.2
Felix Van Ossel	135	0.2
Lodewijk van Ossel	67	0.13
Carolina De Beukelaer	45	0.09
Joanna De Beukelaer	45	0.09
Frans Thuer	10	0.02
<b>total</b>	50000	
*Celine Van Ossel, Felix Van Ossel, Lodewijk van Ossel, Emma Van Ossel, Jules Sobry, Paul Sobry, Elsa Sobry		

Figure 23: Table illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1919 shareholder listing. Data retrieved from, *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 29-30 Junie 1919, act. Nr. 5286, 2883.

After the turbulent period of World War I, which left many of Belgium's industries in disarray, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to increase its pre-World War I share capital of 3 750 000 Bfr. by 250 000 Bfr. newly issued capital, raising De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's

<sup>140</sup> Bare ownership refers to an agreement between two parties whereby one party owns the investment but does not receive any of the usufruct, whilst the other party does not own the investment but receives its usufruct for a period of time that has been agreed on by the two parties.

<sup>141</sup> (CBA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929. De Beukeaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate, overeenkomst tusschen de aandeelhouders.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*



share capital to 5 000 000 Bfr.<sup>143</sup> As per usual Eduard would purchase the large majority of shares, which increased his personal ownership to 57.6 percent of the total share capital, whilst the remaining shares were further divided amongst the family members. One new shareholder, Frans Thuer, who was the new partner of Joanna Larivière (the widow of Joseph De Beukelaer), and who worked at the factory as a clerk, was also listed as having purchased the small number of 17 shares of the newly issued capital.

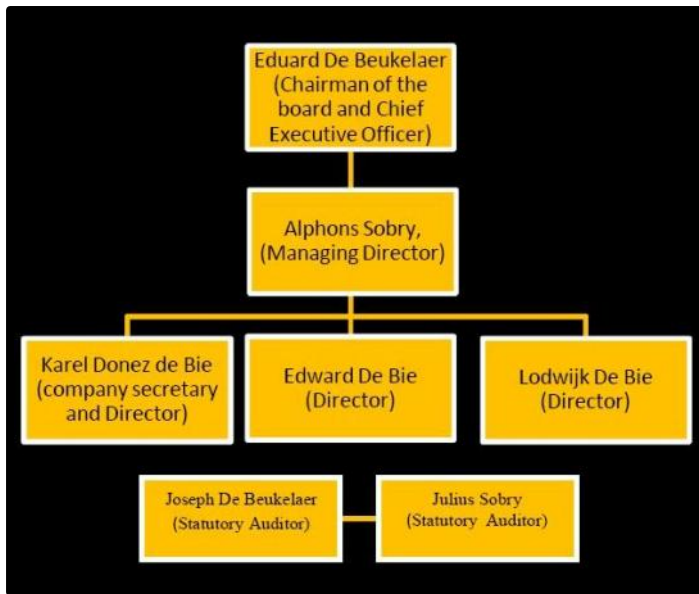


Figure 24: Diagram illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1906 board of directors.

namely Eduard De Beukelaer and Alphons Sobry,<sup>144</sup> whilst the other three members who were chosen to form part of the De Beukelaer's upper management in December 1906 were Louis and Edward De Bie, sons of Widow Jan De Bie and more than likely cousins of Eduard De Beukelaer, as well as Karel Donnez, who had married into the De Bie family.<sup>145</sup> Eduard, unsurprisingly, was elected as chairman of the board,<sup>146</sup> and was appointed as Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the company,<sup>147</sup> whilst Alphons Sobry was allocated the position of MD.<sup>148</sup> Finally Edward and Louis De Bie were voted on as directors, and Karel Donnez was appointed to become director and secretary.<sup>149</sup> The two Statutory Auditors that were

Most of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's shareholders thus either worked in the factory themselves, or had children, brothers or partners who did, and the large majority of them also occupied important positions in the company's managerial structure. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's first board of directors consisted of five members, and was made up of two of the company's major shareholders,

<sup>143</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 29-30 Junie 1919, act. Nr. 5286, 2883.

<sup>144</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 November 1906, act Nr. 6314, 1070.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 November 1906, act Nr. 6315, 1070.

<sup>147</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 November 1906, act Nr. 6316, 1071.

<sup>148</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 November 1906, act Nr. 6315, 1070.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 1071.

appointed to monitor the company's activities were Julius Sobry, the son of Alphons Sobry and a teacher in commercial science, and Joseph De Beukelaer, possibly Eduard's brother.<sup>150</sup>

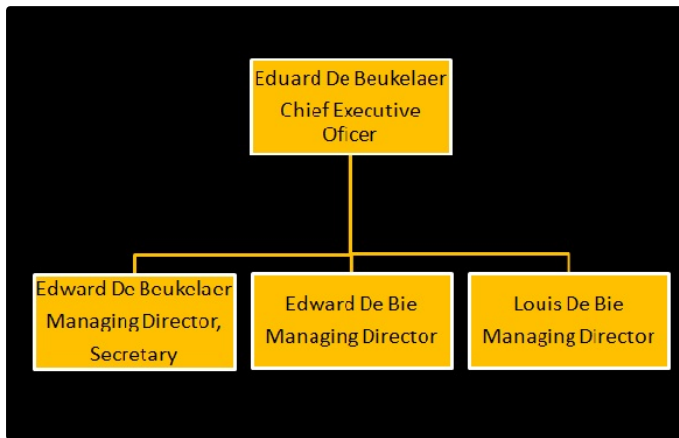


Figure 25: Diagram illustrating the structure of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen's 1917 Management Committee.

On the 24 April 1917, whilst World War I was being fought on the fields of Flanders, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to implement an important structural change that significantly influenced the way in which the company would be managed in the future by creating a Management Committee, which was to take over most of the daily tasks that had previously formed part of the

responsibility and domain of the board of directors. The committee would be in charge of the company's managerial matters, whilst the board of directors would only be responsible for the more official aspects of the business such as the changing of the statutes or increasing the share capital.<sup>151</sup> The creation of such a committee, which consisted of four members, thus implemented a new and more structured management system. However, in true paternalistic fashion, Eduard remained in complete control of all decisions and actions concerning De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen, and the hierarchy of the company's managerial structure largely remained impotent until Eduard passed away in 1919. As in most companies during this period, especially family businesses, most of the daily issues or problems would also be discussed and solved verbally without any form of official report,<sup>152</sup> and De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Management Committee did not feel the need to meet on a regular basis.

At the head of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's first Management Committee stood Eduard De Beukelaer, who was assisted by Edward De Bie, Lodewijk De Bie and Edward De Beukelaer, a nephew of Eduard and the son of Maria Voets and the late Cornelius De Beukelaer. Alphons Sobry was not appointed as a member, and since he did not appear on the

<sup>150</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 November 1906, act Nr. 6315, 1071.

<sup>151</sup> *Wet en Verordenings blad voor de bezette streken van België*, 12 Mei 1917, act Nr. 1598.

<sup>152</sup> H.A. Muntjewerff, *De Spil Waar Alles om Draaid, Opkomst, Bloei en Neegang van de Tilburgse Familie-Onderneming Wolspinnerij Pieter van Dooren*, 14.

company's 1912 or 1918 list of shareholders, he must have retired from his earlier position, ended his employment at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken or passed away. Although retaining his seat on the board of directors, Karel Donnez, who was 43 years old and one of the company's senior managers with a considerable amount of practical experience, was oddly enough not chosen to form part of this committee, and was instead replaced by the 21-year-old Edward De Beukelaer, who allegedly did not have any previous practical experience or training.<sup>153</sup> This rather illogical decision could possibly be explained by examining the appointed members' kinship to Eduard. Edward De Bie, Louis De Bie and Edward De Beukelaer were all nephews of Eduard De Beukelaer, whilst Karel Donnez married into the De Bie family and could thus not be considered to be a direct family member. To a certain extent Eduard thus seem to have decided to structure the company's senior management on the basis of kinship rather than merit, an appointment criterion that is commonly applied in many family businesses.

When analysing the company's share ownership and management structure, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken can thus be classified as a genuine family business. Although scholars continue to debate about where the exact boundaries of a family business lie, a suitably broad definition defines the concept as '*a business where a family owns enough of the equity to be able to exert control over strategy, and is involved in top management positions*'.<sup>154</sup> In the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken this was clearly the case, as Eduard was by far the majority shareholder in the business, while most other shares were owned by Eduard's immediate or related family. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was Eduard's personal enterprise and Eduard, and to a small extent the remaining family members, exercised total control over the company's strategy, as the top level management of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken consisted of, and was controlled by, Eduard and his related family members. This description of the company's ownership and managerial structure thus clearly conforms to the basic elements of the definition of what makes up a family business, and although exact information regarding earlier ownership and management structure is not available, a fairly similar situation could have been in place during the period of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe this type of company structure dominated the world of business and family firms were not seen as something unusual or distinct. It is only during the

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<sup>153</sup> (CBUA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en C<sup>o</sup>, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. besluiten voor: De N.V. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, biscuits en Chocolade, Usines De Beukelaer, Biscuit et Chocolats, Anvers, 3.

<sup>154</sup> A. Colli, 'Family Business', in G. Jones and J. Zeitlin, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business*, 159.

inter-bellum period, when the emergence of separation of ownership and control came about that this type of distinction began to be made by scholars.<sup>155</sup>



**Figure 26: 'Paterfamilias' Eduard De Beukelaer and his family circa 1900.**  
Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, Fotocollectie.

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was also characterised by a strong sense of *familisme*, a concept that relates to the 'interconnected relationship between family interests and business interests, and can be described as the striving of the family of capital owners for the profitability of their own

business, so that the earnings, the image and the social position of the family are maintained and strengthened. The company was seen as the property and main source of income for the family, and one of the chief aims of operating a business was to create a permanent source of income that would ensure a better future for all and could become a symbol of the family's pride and social standing'.<sup>156</sup> The financial support of the family members outside of the firm also imposed a moral obligation for the company owner to fulfil.<sup>157</sup> This concept visibly manifests itself in the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, as the company was the family's support structure, and Eduard fulfilled the role of 'paterfamilias' by providing members of the family with employment or shares in the company, helping them out during difficult times, or supporting them by purchasing products from their respective businesses.<sup>158</sup> The image of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was thus attached to that of Eduard De Beukelaer and to some extent the De Beukelaer family, which manifested itself in a symbiotic relationship where the actions or undertakings of the business and the family mirrored one another.

Eduard was adamant about keeping this support structure in the family's hands, a strategy that is clearly illustrated by an agreement between all shareholders of the company on 3 January 1918. On this day all of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's shareholder agreed to sign a

<sup>155</sup> A. Colli, 'Family Business', in G. Jones and J. Zeitlin, (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business*, 159.

<sup>156</sup> H.A. Muntjewerff, *De Spil Waar Alles om Draaid*, 22-3.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>158</sup> (CBUA), B26 19, Bestelboek "IV" Juli 1899-sept. 1899, 84.

contract that gave first right of preference to members of the family when selling shares. This agreement thus enabled them to keep the company in the tight control of the family.<sup>159</sup> Eduard's preference for a closely-knit family business, and apparent dislike of outside interference in the company's structure, are further highlighted in Eduard's letter to the Dutch chocolate manufacturer Mr Van Den Dungen,<sup>160</sup> in which he wrote, '*Your children get bigger every day and can help you, as having strangers in your business is sickening, and I have experienced it. If you cannot master it on your own then I'd rather try and advise you to get a manager; you can get rid of him whenever you want, and he does not have anything to say, can't dictate any laws to you or make life better*'.<sup>161</sup> Eduard thus clearly treasured the idea of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as a closely-knit family business, an idea that played an important role in the way the factory was managed. Despite Eduard's decision to transform his company into an LLC that was controlled and run by himself and his family, and despite his strong feelings against outside interference and control, it seems that at the same time and in direct contradiction to the above sentiments he was nurturing a much bigger and more ambitious plan for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken that was surprisingly less familial.

From a surviving letter in the De Beukelaer archives as well as additional references in the publication *General Biscuit Company, 125 ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 jaar ervaring en expansie*,<sup>162</sup> it becomes evident that Eduard had for some while wanted to strengthen his position in the local and international biscuit market by fusing together Belgium's three major biscuit manufacturers, namely De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and Biscuits Parein in Antwerp, and Victoria from Koekelberg in Brussels.<sup>163</sup> Eduard's idea, as stated in the 1907 letter written to Emile Bossaert, one of Victoria's founders, was to create one joint LLC, consisting of De Beukelaer, Parein and Victoria, that could form a strong unified block against other competitors on the market.<sup>164</sup> According to Eduard, jointly purchasing supplies, storing and transporting biscuits and having no internal competition, could leave the three companies '*with a nice bit of change in their pockets*',<sup>165</sup> as Eduard so colloquially noted in his letter. This statement is a good indicator that making a profit and eagerly seizing available

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<sup>159</sup> (CBUA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929.

<sup>160</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 30/12/1918, 23.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>162</sup> Anon., *General Biscuit Company, 125 Ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 Jaar Ervaring en Expansie*.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, np.

<sup>164</sup> (CBUA), P2 88, Documenten m.b.t. de aanleiding voor de fusie tss. De Beukelaer en Parein, 1907-1947, 1965. Letter from Eduard De Beukelaer to Mister Bossaerts, 29-10-1907.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*



business opportunities were important characteristics of Eduard's management style. This lucrative business opportunity between the three biscuit companies had been discussed from as early as 1904, but only developed slowly over the years because of an apparent unwillingness by all parties involved to fully give up their control over their individual business interests. One of the first agreements between the three companies was an organisation of joint cooperation dating from 1906, and through the years further agreements between De Beukelaer, Parein and Victoria were systematically concluded to improve and optimise this collaboration.<sup>166</sup> Eduard was, however, not destined to realise his idea of forming a unified LLC that would capture a significant share of the market in his lifetime. It was only in 1960, long after Eduard's death, that the idea of a joint LLC eventually manifested itself in the General Biscuit Company.

### 3.2.2. The growth, diversification and vertical integration of the company, and the ravages of the war



Figure 27: De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen circa 1906. Retrieved from, F.M. Ricci, *Biscuits a pictorial story of a sweet tradition*, np.

After the transformation of Ed. De Beukelaer & Co into De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen in 1906, the adjacent buildings that bordered the factory *Lange Kievitstraat* and *Ploegstraat* were systematically bought by the company. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken also utilised its 10 369 m<sup>2</sup> to further expand, optimise and modernise the factory's buildings and departments.<sup>167</sup> Even though World War I must have severely

affected the company's rate of expansion, in 1918 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to purchase a large new adjacent plot that bordered *Ploegstraat* from the nearby Antwerp Zoo. This new plot was 5 000 m<sup>2</sup> and was to be used for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's further

<sup>166</sup> Anon., *General Biscuit Company, 125 Ans d'experience et d'expansion, 125 Jaar Ervaring en Expansie*, np.

<sup>167</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 28.

development of its already sizable factory.<sup>168</sup> Besides the constant increase in property, the factory itself had also developed quite substantially and over the years new departments were added, while older ones were expanded and became more automated.

From as early as 1909 Eduard had initiated guided tours around the factory, a practice that was popular amongst factory owners across the globe. Industrialists like Eduard ‘took great pride in the size and extent of their factories, which was often considered by themselves as testimony to their entrepreneurial success’.<sup>169</sup> Visitors to De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken would be educated in some of the factory’s technical details by being led around its various departments. During such tours visitors also received a small souvenir booklet that included a map of the factory and a brief explanation of its operations. This booklet, just like the 1888 newspaper report discussed in the previous section, is an excellent source for assessing what the factory looked like and how it had developed. By 1909 De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken consisted of various streets and squares which had been given names such as Wafer Street, Cocoa Street or Chimney Square,<sup>170</sup> and in which the factory’s workshops towered three floors high and housed around 600 employees,<sup>171</sup> a number that did not increase much, since the last record dating back to 1903 noted the number to be 563 employees.<sup>172</sup> To keep the small company ‘town’ operational, the factory had doubled the power of its steam engines to 300 horsepower,<sup>173</sup> and the electricity network had also been significantly expanded since 1888, as two large dynamos with a power of 1100 amp and 110 volts were now used to supply the factory with electricity for the vast network of lights that spanned the factory.<sup>174</sup>

The factory’s biscuit and chocolate department had also increased considerably in size since 1888, and most of their production processes had been further optimised and automated,<sup>175</sup> whilst De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s assortment of biscuits had grown slightly over the years as the factory now produced 200 different varieties.<sup>176</sup> The previously small wafer department had also been automated and improved, and at the time consisted of 12 working ovens that

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<sup>168</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 28.

<sup>169</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 255.

<sup>170</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken*, Grondplan der Fabriek.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>172</sup> (CBUA), P2 105c, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903.

<sup>173</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken*, 7

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 9; 10;11; 18-9; 20.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



produced large batches of wafers throughout the day.<sup>177</sup> The factory's decoration room, despite growing in size, was one of the few departments in the factory where work was still done manually, although it was noted that this department would also be automated in the near future.<sup>178</sup> The smiths department by now employed a staff of roughly 25, and the company had also added a department of painters, carpenters and masons, who were permanently hired to conduct maintenance work and further expand and optimise the factory's workshops.<sup>179</sup> Besides the development of the above departments, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken also continued to diversify its product range. Since the creation of the chocolate department in 1889, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had added on two new departments that allowed the company to gain access to an even bigger share of the food market.

Added to the previous biscuit, chocolate and wafer departments were a crème department, where custard articles that were squirted in shapes and covered in chocolate were manufactured,<sup>180</sup> and a caramel and *hopjes* department, which produced sweet confectionary items and which was the most recent development, since the booklet noted that the department's production still occurred on a small scale and was housed in a temporary building that had only one packing machine.<sup>181</sup> Over the years De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had also continued to implement different strategies to save costs by further expanding its vertical integration. By 1909 the factory housed a cardboard box-making department,<sup>182</sup> and more importantly to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, a printing and publishing department, which had allegedly been founded in the late 1890s<sup>183</sup> and by 1909 contained six large printing presses and various other machines used for publishing.<sup>184</sup> Another innovative strategy for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken to save on costs was the use of rain water, which was collected in large basins and utilised for the heating of the factory's kettles.<sup>185</sup> By 1909 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had thus clearly evolved in size and production by modernising and optimising its departments and further diversifying its product range, implementing new and innovative forms of vertical integration and adapting its management structures to accommodate these

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<sup>177</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken*, 11.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-5.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-2.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

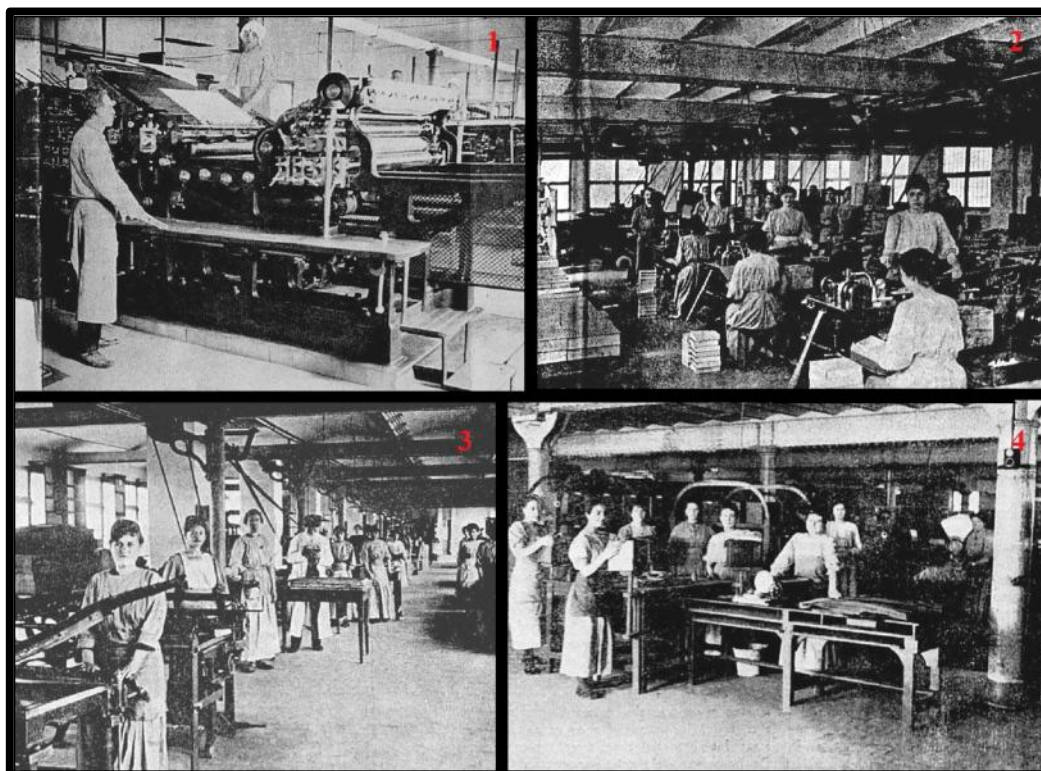
<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>183</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 14, 'De Werkhuizen waar "Arbeid Adelt" gedrukt wordt', 161.

<sup>184</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken*, 15-16.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

strategic changes. Part of this growth and development had been made possible by the period's favourable economic climate.



**Figure 28: Departments at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen circa 1917. 1. Printing department, 2. Caramel department, 3. Cardboard box manufacturing department, 4. Packing department.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 28; 56.; (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 33; 150.

The first decade of the twentieth century can be considered a period when Antwerp's and indeed Belgium's economy was thriving, and which saw the country's trade and industry develop at a steady pace. Although the Belgian economy experienced a slight drop in trade from 1907 onwards, in 1909 it stabilised and during the following years up to the start of World War I Antwerp's industry flourished.<sup>186</sup> Despite the period's positive economic climate, only 30 percent of Antwerp's working population is reported to have been employed in the city's industrial sector, and growing labour demands for social rights translated into a number of major strikes that brought about uncertainty amongst business owners.<sup>187</sup> Around 1911 and 1912 consumer prices in Belgium also increased considerably, which increased the profits of the food industry. In 1913 the *Nijverheidskamer van Antwerpen* (Chamber of Industry) did, however, note in its annual report that the exports of biscuits to neighbouring countries was said to have been low as result of protectionist

<sup>186</sup> F. Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen*, 86-9.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

measures in the form of high import taxes.<sup>188</sup> Alas, this generally prosperous economic period was suddenly and drastically interrupted by the advent of the First World War, which saw the Dutch Government close the mouth of the river Scheldt as part of their neutral status, which together with the German occupation of Belgium stifled the country's trade and left Antwerp's harbour crippled. As a result, the city's trade and industry experienced severe losses and, in tandem with an international trade network that was left in disarray, most food and other basic resources became scarce.<sup>189</sup>

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had always purchased its raw materials from various local and international suppliers whose products originated from countries around the world. When examining the factory's order books, it becomes clear that the availability of raw materials noticeably decreases from August 1914 onwards, a date that corresponds with the German invasion of Belgium on 4 August 1914.<sup>190</sup> Although during the first three years of World War I De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's orders for raw materials were not brought to a complete halt, there was a noticeable decrease in their availability, as certain products such as sugar, fruit and essences were reportedly scarce or unattainable, while others like eggs, wheat and cocoa were hard to come by.<sup>191</sup> From 1917 onwards De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's access to raw materials from international suppliers was almost non-existent and basic products like butter, flour and eggs all originated from local or national suppliers. Most orders placed with international suppliers had ceased completely, and even local orders had largely stopped, as for some months the company did not purchase any of its usual basic ingredients.<sup>192</sup> The supply of cocoa was of particular concern to the factory as most of the good quality cocoa had previously been imported by European suppliers from places such as Java, Accra, Trinidad, Granada, Congo or Machala.<sup>193</sup> During the latter stages of the war the importation of these products had halted, and apart from a few orders for cocoa, the factory was forced to buy small batches of chocolate fondant from suppliers who stocked up on products from other chocolate manufacturers such as Padvinder, Kohler or Kwatta.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> F. Prims, *Geschiedenis van Antwerpen*, 106.

<sup>189</sup> F. Seberechts, 'Antwerpen Tijdens de Twee Wereldoorlogen', in *Genootschap voor Antwerpsche Geschiedenis, Antwerpen in de 20ste Eeuw, van Belle Epoque tot Golden Sixties*, 117-24.

<sup>190</sup> (CBUA), B26 35, Bestelboek 1914.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*; (CBUA), B26 36, Bestelboek 1915.; CBUA B26 37, Bestelboek 1916.

<sup>192</sup> (CBUA), B26 38 Bestelboek 1917.

<sup>193</sup> (CBUA), B26 34, Bestelboek 1913.

<sup>194</sup> (CBUA), B26 38 Bestelboek 1917, 112-22.

The Great War had thus clearly affected the factory's productivity and even though during the first few years of the war De Beukelaer's Fabrieken seem to have marched on with production at a decreased rate, it was not long before the inevitable occurred. In 1918, the last year of World War I, the availability of raw materials came under such strain that for certain periods the factory was forced to shut down production because of a lack of resources, and employees had to be laid off indefinitely until production could be resumed. In November 1918, for instance, scarce supplies of sugar ended production in the chocolate and caramel departments,<sup>195</sup> whilst on 30 December 1918 the factory closed down completely.<sup>196</sup>

During this difficult period De Beukelaer's Fabrieken did, however, manage to obtain fairly large orders from the *Comité Du Nord de la France*, which was a war-time relief committee that distributed food and other products across occupied regions. The committee placed various orders with De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, ranging from 50 000 kg of chocolates to 300 000 kg biscuits, and supplied all the raw materials needed for its production.<sup>197</sup> This contract enabled De Beukelaer's Fabrieken to continue manufacturing during 1917-8, make a small profit and employ some staff, whilst at the same time advertising their products across occupied regions. Despite these occasional orders, the factory was not able to sustain a regular production rate and the scarcity of raw materials and breaks in productivity spilled over into 1919. During the first few months of the aftermath of World War I many factories in Belgium remained closed, or were producing at a reduced rate because of a lack of resources, whilst others had their infrastructure looted or destroyed by the German occupying forces. Until as late as February 1919 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken remained permanently closed as there was neither work nor resources, and the factory only employed a few people to clean up and keep the grounds tidy.<sup>198</sup> The war had thus severely affected production at the factory; this dramatic interruption was clearly reflected in the factory's net profit figures in 1918 – which is the only available balance sheet for the period covered in this section – was a reported low of 347 156 Bfr.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van 't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917- 24 December 1920. Vergadering gehouden den 24ste December 1918, 17.

<sup>196</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 30/12/1918, 23.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 12/12/1918, 21.; (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van 't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917- 24 December 1920. Vergadering gehouden OP 29 Oktober 1917, 9-10.; *Ibid.*, Vergadering gehouden den 24ste December 1918, 17.

<sup>198</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 30/12/1918, 23.

<sup>199</sup> (CBA), P2 8a, Jaarlijksche Venootschapsbelastingen 1918.

### **3.2.3. The birth of the successor and the death of the founder**

During this period in the company's history Eduard also experienced significant changes in his personal life. On 18 February 1907, shortly after the company's transformation into an LLC, Eduard's wife Maria Smets, who had stood beside her husband since the early years, passed away at the age of 72.<sup>200</sup> The tragic accident of their daughter had left Maria and Eduard childless, and Eduard, who himself was getting older, was still without an heir to take over the business. Two years after Maria's death, at the end of 1908, Eduard decided to get married for a second time, this time to Jeanne Verweken.<sup>201</sup> It might be possible that because of Eduard and Maria's inability to beget a successor to the business, Eduard and Jeanne, a 32-year-old younger former employee at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, started a relationship. Little is known about Jeanne's early life, but what is known is that she was born on 20 September 1875 and was the oldest sibling of a small working-class family. Much like Eduard's family history, Jeanne had had the unfortunate experience of losing some of her infant siblings, in



**Figure 29: 18-year old Jeanne Verweken as a member Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's drama society in 1893.** Retrieved from, (AMVC), A 38072/p, Groepsfoto van de toneelafdeling Arbeid Adelt.

her case one brother and two sisters, leaving behind herself and a younger brother.<sup>202</sup> At the factory Jeanne had worked at the packing station at the end of the production line,<sup>203</sup> and the first reference to her employment with De Beukelaer's Fabrieken is in a 1888 handwritten eulogy

given to Eduard by the company's employees, which the 13-year-old Jeanne had also signed. Not long afterwards Jeanne's presence in the factory is once again noted in a 1893 newspaper

<sup>200</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer.

<sup>201</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Studie van den Notaris Alphonse Cols te Antwerpen, akte van den 8ste September 1920 No 16841, Vereffening en deeling der valateurschap van Mijnheer Eduardus Jacobus De Beukelaer, in leven grootnijenaar te Antwerpen.

<sup>202</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Trouwboekje Joannes Ludivicus Verweken.

<sup>203</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Elfde Jaargang 1962, Nr. 133, 'Wie is Wie in de Onderneming? Mevr. Ed. De Beukelaer', np.



article, when she played one of the leading female roles in *Vriend Fitz*, a play in which Jeanne and Eduard had stood next to one another on stage.<sup>204</sup>



**Figure 30: Jeanne and Eduard together with their son Edward.**  
Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Schakel*, Achtste Jaargang 1958, Nr. 91, np.

Since Jeanne was a member of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's drama society, it is likely that she was also involved in some of the company's other CSR initiatives. Jeanne's participation in the factory's drama society also indicates that she must have supported Eduard's ideas regarding CSR in the factory, an argument that is further substantiated by the fact that later

on, after her husband's death, Jeanne together with other members of the family continued to promote, implement and expand De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy. This 'like-mindedness' might have been the fertile soil from which Eduard and Jeanne's relationship grew, and the two were in close contact with one another from as early as 1905, two years before Maria Smets passed away, as a silhouette portrait depicting Eduard and Jeanne had been taken when they were together at the Exhibition in Liege.<sup>205</sup> Despite Eduard's bourgeois lifestyle with the public display of wealth, he never seemed to have practised the popular practice of strategically marrying into rich influential families to enhance his social mobility and further improve his social standing, as Eduard's working-class background appeared to mirror that of his partners. Two years after Maria's death, on 20 October 1909,<sup>206</sup> Jeanne gave birth to Edward Louis De Beukelaer, and Eduard, at the advanced age of 66, finally had a successor for his business, which by then had grown significantly in size.

In March 1918 Eduard, together with family, friends, peers and staff, celebrated his 75th birthday extensively with a variety of festivities that consisted of performances, speeches, gifts and eulogies.<sup>207</sup> However, not long after these celebrations Eduard's health started to

<sup>204</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 12 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>205</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Silhouet-portret Exposition Liege.

<sup>206</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Stamboom van Edward Louis De Beukelaer.

<sup>207</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 40, 'Huldebetoon Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

deteriorate and he became severely ill around February 1919.<sup>208</sup> Four months later, on 12 June 1919, Eduard passed away at his estate in Brasschaat.<sup>209</sup> The exact cause of Eduard's death is not known, but from his correspondence with the Dutch chocolate manufacturer Van Den Dungen, it becomes clear that from around December 1918 many of Eduard's family members had been infected with the Spanish flu, including Edward's wife Jeanne, who had been so severely ill that she was close to dying three times.<sup>210</sup> Eduard noted that if it was not for his general practitioner who made use of water therapy (later in life Eduard seemed to have been attracted to alternative healing techniques such as water therapy and had also reportedly become a vegetarian),<sup>211</sup> Jeanne would have passed away.<sup>212</sup> The Spanish flu epidemic that had struck so close to home months before Eduard became severely ill could thus more than likely have been the cause of his deteriorating health, which eventually led to his passing away at the age of 76.

Eduard Jacobus De Beukelaer's death marked the end of an important chapter in the history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. The rural boy, who had come to Antwerp to seek employment, had grown into a successful businessman and owner of a large industrial company, which had managed to establish itself firmly in the food industry, and had effectively built up a strong image and name for itself. Eduard's role of 'paterfamilias' who ensured and secured the family's interests with his dominant and paternalistic management style had died with him, and it was now the responsibility of the family itself to see that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken would continue to grow.

### **3.3. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen (1919-1929)**

#### **3.3.1. Negotiating Eduard's succession**

After the passing of Eduard, Jeanne Vervecken inherited the majority of the shares in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, and was automatically appointed to take over her late husband's

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<sup>208</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 69, 'M. Eduard De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>209</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 15 Juni 1919, 'Burgerl. Stand van Antwerpen. M. Edward Jacob De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>210</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 12/12/1918, 21-2.

<sup>211</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Vijftiende Jaargang 1965, Nr. 174, 'Affiniteiten', np.

<sup>212</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Brief door Eduard De Beukelaer aan Mr Van Den Dungen, 12/12/1918, 21-2.



position as chair of both the board of directors as well as the Management Committee.<sup>213</sup> Although in theory this appointment meant that Jeanne thus needed to conduct the daily management of the company, in practice Jeanne did not play any significant role in the factory's daily management until 1928. During this period De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was instead, managed by the more experienced family members who had previously made up part of the company's senior management.<sup>214</sup> Even though Jeanne thus gave up her position as head of the committee, since in the first few years and more than likely until 1928 she is never listed as being present to chair any of the monthly management meetings, Jeanne did actively take up her role as chair of the board of directors, a task which would have kept her informed about the general wellbeing and progress of the company.

Jeanne's early position as 'ceremonial' head of the company's Management Committee can be explained by the fact that, despite her previous employment as a packer at Ed. De Beukelaer & Co., at the time she did not have any real experience in managing a large company such as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. On 19 August 1919 at a meeting of the Management Committee, it was noted that, '*Widow Eduard De Beukelaer ... will, when the time is right, become responsible for organising the company's factory tours*'.<sup>215</sup> This seemingly unimportant task could have allowed Jeanne to understand more about the factory's internal workings, whilst at the same time keeping her late husband's legacy and image alive by conveying a familial atmosphere to visiting customers. In later years Jeanne did, however, feel the need to intervene in the daily management of the company by becoming more actively involved in the factory and taking up her position as head of the Management Committee, a task which she would continue to carry out until she passed away on 24 August 1958. The story of Jeanne's introduction into the business world to a certain extent mirrors that of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Belgian businesswomen who 'continued the family firm as daughter, wife or more commonly widow'. 'Belgian society was tolerant and understanding towards woman who were forced to become head of the family business due to 'unfortunate' circumstances, and it became a generally accepted norm under the guise of taking up responsibility that rationalised this normally rather 'unwomanly'

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<sup>213</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van 't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917- 24 December 1920. Vergadering gehouden den 23 Juli 1919, 21.

<sup>214</sup> (CBA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en C<sup>o</sup>, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. Nota betreffende het "Leeuwenaandeel" van verweerder in de voorspoed van de maatschappij, 1-2.

<sup>215</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van 't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917- 24 December 1920. Vergadering gehouden den 19 Augustus 1919, 24-25.

behaviour'.<sup>216</sup> 'Such businesswomen generally acted as temporary caretakers for the wider family until the son or son-in-law could eventually take over the business'.<sup>217</sup> The same can be said of Jeanne, who from 1928 onwards, after internal struggles which will be discussed later in this chapter, began to manage the company in a more direct way in order to ensure that her son's future as successor to his father was secured.



**Figure 31: Edward in his teens.**  
Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, Fotocollectie.

After his father's death, Edward De Beukelaer, Jeanne and Eduard's only son, inherited a large number of his father's shares, over which his mother had custody until he was of legal age.<sup>218</sup> Besides being legally under-age, Edward who was ten at the time of his father's death, was also clearly too young to fulfil any real position in the company's management structure, and thus had to wait before he could take over his father's legacy. Similar to that of his mother, Edwards's position in the factory after Eduard's death initially took on a ceremonial function, and as a young teenager he was present at various official occasions at which he kept the legacy and image of his father alive.<sup>219</sup> From a young age Edward's future had been predetermined by his parents, and after Eduard

passed away, Jeanne continued to groom her son for the day when he would take up his future responsibly as head of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. In order to prepare him for this task, Edward received home schooling from a number of private tutors, one of which, Constant De Clerck, was a trained teacher who had worked at a few newspapers before he was employed at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as the company's librarian and later as a teacher at the company's bakery school.<sup>220</sup> When he was older, Edward received his more formal education at institutions in Fribourg, Switzerland and Seattle, USA.<sup>221</sup> His upbringing, education and

<sup>216</sup> L. Van Molle, 'Zakenvrouwen of Vrouwenzaken? Een Historiografische zoektocht', in L. Van Molle, and P. Heyrman, (eds.), *Vrouwenzakenvrouwen, Facetten van Vrouwelijk Zelfstandig Ondernemerschap in Vlaanderen*, 35.

<sup>217</sup> L. Van Molle, and P. Heyrman, (eds.), *Vrouwenzakenvrouwen, Facetten van Vrouwelijk Zelfstandig Ondernemerschap in Vlaanderen*, 10.

<sup>218</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749.

<sup>219</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr., 4, 'De Opening onzer Tentoonstelling door Zijne Exelentie den Heer R. Moyersoën, Minister van Nijverheid en Arbeid', 49-55.

<sup>220</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Constant De Clerck', 49-50.

<sup>221</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Elfde Jaargang April 1962, Nr. 133, 'De heer Edward De Beukelaer', np.

training were, however, entirely focused on preparing Edward for his future task as successor to his father's business, and in a letter dating January 1928 Jeanne stated that, '*Edward ... is now working daily in the factory and is standing in the chocolaterie where under the supervision of a skilful tradesman he thoroughly learns the trade*'.<sup>222</sup>

With the death of Eduard as the company's majority shareholder, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's shareholder listing also changed quite significantly and its evolution can be used to reconstruct part of these internal transformations that took place in the company in the aftermath of Eduard's death.

### 3.3.2. Changes in the ownership of the company

After Eduard's death Jeanne inherited 33.2 percent of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's share capital of 5 000 000 Bfr., whilst Edward's shares over which Jeanne held legal guardianship amounted to 25.1 percent of the company's total share capital.<sup>223</sup> Combined Jeanne and Edward had thus inherited 58.4 percent of the company's total shares, roughly the same number of shares as Eduard had previously owned, which made Jeanne and her son De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's two new majority shareholders. Eduard's remaining shares – representing 32.5 percent of the share capital of which he had previously made use of the usufruct – were returned to their bare owners and divided up accordingly. The company's senior management, which was comprised of Edward De Bie, Louis De Bie, Karel Donnez and Edward De Beukelaer, had all increased their share holding in the company. In 1918 Edward De Bie and Karel Donnez had been listed as owning 4.2 percent of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's share capital, which increased to 4.7 percent, whilst Louis De Bie, who had also previously owned 4.2 percent, saw his share double to 8.6 percent.<sup>224</sup> This steep increase in Louis De Bie's share holding was more than likely caused by making use of his wife Celine Van Ossel's newly attained shares of which Eduard had previously made use of the usufruct.<sup>225</sup> Edward De Beukelaer, another member of the De Beukelaer's senior management, saw his 0.2 percent of the share capital increase to 3.7 percent. Louis and Felix Van Ossel, sons of Maria Mortelmans and Arthur Van Ossel, also saw their ranking increase

<sup>222</sup> (Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven) (hereafter AMVC), V3915 , 33153/8, Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. [1843-1919] (Mevr.) aan Verhees, Lode, 14/01/1928.

<sup>223</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*; (CBUA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929. Verslagen van beheersvergadering, Overeenkomst tussen de aandeelhouders.

<sup>225</sup> (CBUA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929. Verslagen van beheersvergadering, Overeenkomst tussen de aandeelhouders.

after their shares over which Eduard held usufruct were returned to them. Louis van Ossel's previous share of 0.4 percent grew to 4.0 percent of the share capital, whilst his brother Felix van Ossel's 0.4 percent increased to 3.9 percent of the share capital.<sup>226</sup> By 1921 the Sobry family had disappeared from the share listing for unknown reasons, and the position of the smaller family shareholders had been changed. Finally Albert Lauwers, a diamond merchant from Hoevenen who had married into the De Beukelaer's family, was also newly listed as holding a small percentage of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's shares.<sup>227</sup>

On 15 November 1921 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's share capital, which had previously stood at 5 000 000 Bfr., was increased by an additional 10 000 000 Bfr. of newly raised capital. 5 000 000 Bfr. was as a result of the increased value of the LLC, as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's real value was higher than the registered nominal value of the share capital. Thus

Share Holders	shares	%
Joanna Vervecken, Widow of Eduard De Beukelaer	16633	33.27
Edward De Beukelaer jr.	12586	25.17
Lodewijk De Bie	4342	8.68
Edward De Bie	2392	4.78
Karel Donnez-De Bie	2392	4.78
Lodewijk Van Ossel	2026	4.05
Felix Van Ossel	1988	3.98
Edward De Beukelaer	1861	3.72
Emma Van Ossel	1845	3.69
Elisa; Louisa; Anna De Beukelaer	1763	3.53
Maria Mortelmans, Widow of Arthur Van Ossel	728	1.46
Louisa De Beukelaer, Widow of Jan De Bie	541	1.08
Theresia and Paulina De Beukelaer	491	0.98
Joanna Lariviere; Widow Joseph De Beukelaer	234	0.47
Frans Thuer	85	0.17
Carolina De Beukelaer	47	0.09
Albert Lauwers	46	0.09
	<b>total</b>	50000

Figure 32: Table illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1921 shareholder listing after Eduard's death. Retrieved from, *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749

in order to balance out this inconsistency, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's share capital was doubled, and all of the company's shareholders automatically received one free new share for

<sup>226</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749.; (CBAU), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929. Verslagen van beheersvergadering, Overeenkomst tussen de aandeelhouders.

<sup>227</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749.

each share that they held in the company.<sup>228</sup> Additionally a further 5 000 000 Bfr. worth of newly issued shares were distributed, for which the company's shareholders had to pay and which subsequently raised the total share capital of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in 1921 to 15 000 000 Bfr.<sup>229</sup>

On 11 June 1925 the company's share capital was once again increased by 5 000 000 Bfr. newly issued capital, this time raising De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's total share capital to 20 000 000 Bfr.<sup>230</sup> The latter two capital increases did not, however, bring about much

Share Holders	shares	%
Joanna Verweken, Widow of Eduard De Beukelaer	49899	33.27
Edward De Beukelaer jr.	37758	25.17
Lodewijk De Bie-Van Ossel	13026	8.68
Edward De Bie	7176	4.78
Karel Donnez	7176	4.78
Lodewijk Van Ossel	6078	4.05
Felix Van Ossel	5964	3.98
Emma Van Ossel	5535	3.69
Carolina De Beukelaer	3863	2.58
Maria Mortelmans, Widow of Arthur Van Ossel	2184	1.46
Edward De Beukelaer-Melis	1861	1.24
Elisa De Beukelaer	1763	1.18
Anna De Beukelaer	1763	1.18
Louisa De Beukelaer	1763	1.18
Louisa De Beukelaer, Widow of Jan De Bie	1623	1.08
Theresia De Beukelaer	1473	0.98
Joanna Lariviere; Widow Joseph De Beukelaer	702	0.47
Frans Thuer	255	0.17
Albert Lauwers	138	0.09
	<b>total</b>	150000

Figure 33: Table illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1921 shareholder listing. Retrieved from, *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749.

change to the ranking of shareholders, as with each capital increase the percentage of shares of the various members largely remained the same. However, on 31 January 1929 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's capital increased significantly as it was doubled from its previous 20 000 000 Bfr. to 40 000 000 Bfr., and the company's senior managers Eduard De Bie, Lodewijk De Bie, Karel Donnez and Eduard De Beukelaer were no longer listed as shareholders.<sup>231</sup> The reason for this occurrence will be further discussed in detail later in this

<sup>228</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749-50.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>230</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 27 Junie 1925, act Nr. 8333, 4158.

<sup>231</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 24 Februari 1929, act Nr. 2201, 2149.

chapter. Instead the latter family members had been replaced by two ‘outsiders’, Marius Thoelen, who was the director of the financial department of an unspecified LLC known as La Foncière et Mobilière, whilst the second, Charles Esman, was an exchange agent who represented the company Esman, Warnant et Cie. The LLC Foncière et Mobilière purchased 16.22 percent of the share capital, whilst Esman Warnant et Cie acquired 9.73 percent, making the combined total of these two new shareholders 25.95 percent of the De Beukelaer’s share capital, which in turn meant that they became De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s two largest shareholders after Jeanne and Edward.<sup>232</sup>

Share Holders	shares	%
Joanna Verdecken, Widow of Eduard De Beukelaer	69751	34.88
Edward De Beukelaer jr.	50868	25.43
N.V. La Fonciere et Mobiliere	32440	16.22
Esman, Warnant et. C.	19464	9.73
Lodewijk Van Ossel	8189	4.09
Felix Van Ossel	8034	4.02
Emma Van Ossel	2457	1.23
Theresia De Beukelaer	1834	0.92
Elisa De Beukelaer	1763	0.88
Anna De Beukelaer	1763	0.88
Louisa De Beukelaer	1713	0.86
Joanna Lariviere, Widow Joseph De Beukelaer; Elisa De Beukelaer; Anna De Beukelaer; Louisa De Beukelaer	702	0.35
Maria Mortelmans, Widow of Arthur Van Ossel	442	0.22
Frans Thuer	344	0.17
Albert Lauwers-De Beukelaer	186	0.09
Andre De Ceuleneer	50	0.03
<b>total</b>	<b>200000</b>	

Figure 34: Table illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1929 shareholder listing after N.V. La Fonciere et Mobilière and Esman, Warnant et Cie. became shareholders and before the 20 000 000 Bfr. increase. Retrieved from, *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 2 December 1921, act Nr. 11724, 1749.

The two companies had purchased this large sum of shares from Louis De Bie, Eduard De Bie, Karel Donnez, Edward De Beukelaer, Maria Mortelmans and Emma van Ossel, but as part of the agreement the two new shareholders had to double De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s share capital by a further 20 000 000 Bfr. of newly issued capital, of which 62.5 percent would be contributed by La Foncière et Mobilière and 37.5 percent by Esman, Warnant et Cie. This newly issued capital raised De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s share capital to 40 000 000 Bfr. and the company’s old shareholders, according to the 1918 agreement, were to be given first preference over the newly issued shares so that the family’s dominant position would remain secure.<sup>233</sup> With the departure of the family members and the introduction of these two new major shareholders, De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s board of directors also transformed as Eduard De Bie, Louis De Bie, Karel Donnez and Eduard De Beukelaer resigned when they

<sup>232</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 24 Februari 1929, act Nr. 2201, 2149.

<sup>233</sup> (CBA), P2 18a, Overname van de aandelen door de Launoit e.a., 1928-1929.



sold all of their shares, leaving behind the remaining original board members, namely Jeanne herself and Louis and Felix Van Ossel.<sup>234</sup>

To accommodate the new shareholders the number of board members was subsequently increased to nine members and Jeanne Verweken retained her position as chairperson, Louis van Ossel was appointed as secretary, and Felix Van Ossel retained his position as ordinary board member.<sup>235</sup> New members to the board included René Goris, who had previously been employed by the notary firm used by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, and after working for a short period in the banking sector had been employed at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in 1928, when he was 33.<sup>236</sup> René's brother, the famous Flemish novelist Jan-Albert Goris, who wrote under the 'nom de plume' Marnix Gijzen, was also a close friend of the young Edward De Beukelaer and had accompanied him on his studies to Fribourg and Seattle. Charles Esman, who was the representative for Esman Warnant et Cie, Jean Müsing, a tax inspector who had been employed at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken from as early as 1925,<sup>237</sup> Alphons Ryckmans, a lawyer and senator,<sup>238</sup> Arsène de Lanoit, administrator of companies, and finally Paul Gustin, an engineer, made up the remaining members of the new board of directors.<sup>239</sup> The number of Statutory Auditors was also raised and consisted of Marius Thoelen, Director of the financial department of La Foncière et Mobilière, Frans Thuer, the new partner of widow Cornelius De Beukelaer, and finally, André de Ceuleneer, husband of Louisa De Beukelaer.<sup>240</sup> The breakaway of the De Bies along with Edward De Beukelaer, and the subsequent introduction of two major 'outside' shareholders and a number of non-related directors, thus eliminated a large part of the company's previous familial character and steered De Beukelaer's Fabrieken into previously uncharted terrain, where business interests and family interests were separated from one another.

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<sup>234</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 24 Februari 1929, act Nr. 2201, 2153.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, et. al., (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Goris René', 1344.

<sup>237</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 1, 'Belastingen', 16.; *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 24 Februari 1929, act Nr. 2201, 2153.

<sup>238</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.; *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 24 February 1929, act Nr. 2201, 2153.

<sup>239</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 24 Februari 1929, act Nr. 2201, 2153.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 2149.

### 3.3.3. The management, performance and growth of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in the troublesome post-war era

But how exactly did this split in the family occur and why did most of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's senior managers resign, subsequently handing over control to 'outsiders'? Part of the answer to this question lies in the way in which De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was managed and preformed after Eduard had passed away.

The death of Eduard changed the management style of the company, as from 1919 onwards De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's formerly paternalistic system, which was predominantly controlled, supervised and directed by Eduard himself, was finally replaced by the more

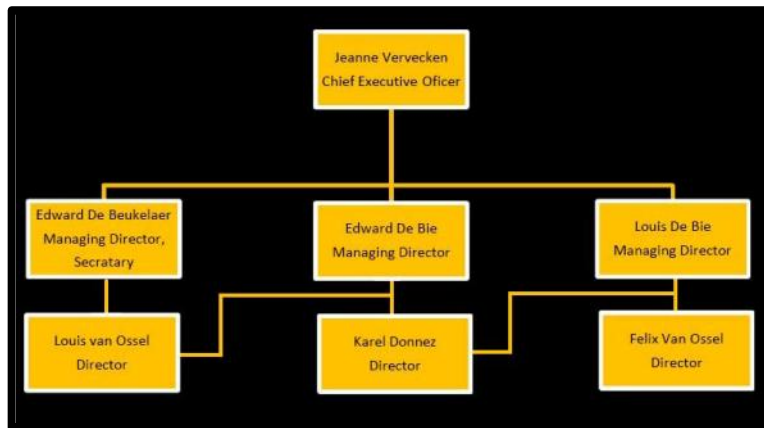


Figure 35: Diagram illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's 1919 Management Committee.

professional and balanced structure of the Management Committee, which had previously been impotent while Eduard had been alive. Despite this managerial transformation towards a more professional approach, the former familial character remained an important aspect of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, as the board of directors as well as the Management Committee were still completely controlled and dominated by Eduard's relatives. The company's three MDs who had been appointed when Eduard was still alive namely, Eduard De Bie, Lodewijk De Bie and Edward De Beukelaer, retained their position as head of the company's three departments, whilst the remaining directors, Karel Donnez, Felix Van Ossel and Louis Van Ossel, all with equal practical experience, worked under their control.<sup>241</sup> The focus of the first department was concerned with the factory's production and related processes such as the purchasing of raw materials. This department also included the chemistry and essence department as well as the hygiene and first aid service, and was directed by Eduard De Bie, who was assisted by Karel Donnez and Louis van Ossel. The focus of the second department was on the factory's more technical and mechanical side, and was concerned with the purchase and sale of all machinery and material, property and buildings, but also included the

<sup>241</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920. Vergadering gehouden den 19 Augustus 1919, 25-7.

factory's advertising, publishing, tin box manufacturing and cardboard box-making departments as well as the company's licensing, the management of the bakery school and all of its 'social organisation', i.e. its CSR initiatives and services. This particular department was led by Louis De Bie, who was assisted by Karel Donnez and Felix Van Ossel. The third department focused on the distribution of the manufactured goods, but also included a variety of administrative and other functions such as the company's finances, accounting, sales, publicity, insurance, transport, offices and wages, and fell under the management of Edward De Beukelaer, who was assisted by Louis Van Ossel.<sup>242</sup>

Although in theory Jeanne had been appointed to become head of the Management Committee, a position which would see her supervise the factory's three MDs, in practice it seems that the Management Committee decided to temporarily give up her position. Instead the more experienced Eduard De Bie was appointed to take on Jeanne's tasks in her absence and was from then on in charge of steering the company in the right direction. All of the appointed MDs and directors had previously formed part of Eduard's senior management and between them shared many years of practical experience in managing and organising De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and its various departments. It was thus only logical that these family members were appointed to take over the company's daily management as there was no other alternative. The actual management of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had thus shifted towards Eduard's extended family, and even though Jeanne was the company's majority shareholder as well as the head of the board of directors and Management Committee, her influence on the factory's daily decision making was limited. The De Bie's together with Edward De Beukelaer formed the company's upper management and were closely followed by the two Van Ossel brothers and Karel Donnez. The family members were thus to determine the future course of the company, a challenging task as the period after World War I was characterised by turbulent economic conditions. It is during this uncertain period that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's new management had the complicated task of maintaining the company's profitability, increasing its size and production, and expanding its share in the market.

The First World War had crippled most of Belgium's economy and left large parts of its industrial infrastructure either damaged or looted by the German occupying forces. The country's exporting sector had also been severely affected, as the government and industry

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<sup>242</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920. Vergadering gehouden den 19 Augustus 1919, 25-7.

faced the difficult task of rebuilding the economy.<sup>243</sup> However, from as early as the latter part of 1919 new investments were made and, despite some minor setbacks, Belgium's GNP reached its pre-World War I levels by the end of 1923.<sup>244</sup> Despite this initial positive growth, the economic policy of Belgium's post-World War I government was now faced with major difficulties, as during the reconstruction period the country suffered from a weakening Belgian franc. These difficulties were especially severe for the period between 1924-1926, when inflation rose, which subsequently led to a decrease in the purchasing power of wages and the rapid growth of national debt. This monetary and budgetary crisis affected local consumers and producers, as consumption prices rose significantly, interest on debt grew, and the Belgian market was faced with major profit and sales difficulties, as imports became extremely expensive, since goods retained their pound or dollar values against the continuously depreciating Belgian franc.<sup>245</sup> Although the first half of the 1920s was thus a period with a relatively comfortable profit margin for export-orientated businesses, those companies that relied upon the country's domestic market as well as on imports for their raw materials suffered as a result of the government's failed policy, as it was unable to resolve the country's economic difficulties. By October 1926 the Belgian franc had stabilised and slowly but surely the Belgian economy started to balance itself out, making way for a short period of prosperity, but this was quickly stifled by the advent of the great economic depression that started in 1929.<sup>246</sup> This unstable economic climate proved to be too challenging for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's new management as they struggled to keep the factory running at a profit, which eventually led to a 'intervention' by Jeanne in 1928.

Edward De Beukelaer's decisions as MD of the department that included the management of the company's finances played a crucial role in the difficulties experienced during this period which led to the 'intervention' by Jeanne in 1928. Edward had retained his position as MD after Eduard passed away and also retained the management of the finances of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as part of his departmental portfolio. This position allowed him to work closely with his nephews Edward and Louis De Bie, with whom Edward managed De Beukelaer's Fabrieken after their uncle's death. Unfortunately for Edward, the time at which he was re-appointed as MD coincided with the unfavourable economic conditions of the

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<sup>243</sup> E. Buyst, 'Situering van het Bedrijf in de Economische Structuur en Conjunctuur' in, C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding voor het Schrijven van een Bedrijfs geschiedenis*, 258.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> K. Verachtert, 'De Industriële Ontwikkeling', in G.L. De Brabander, J. Gadisseur, and R. Gobyn, *De Industrie in België, Twee Eeuwen Ontwikkeling 1780-1980*, 164-5.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*

1920s. The period certainly did create financial difficulties for the company, and the specific details of what occurred at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken at that time were recorded in a report of a later investigation into the performance of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's management, and a court case against Edward De Beukelaer for breach of contract after he resigned as MD and ended his employment at the company. The documents in question claimed that Edward allegedly neglected the company's national market from 1924 onwards, the market that had always been De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's primary focus.<sup>247</sup>

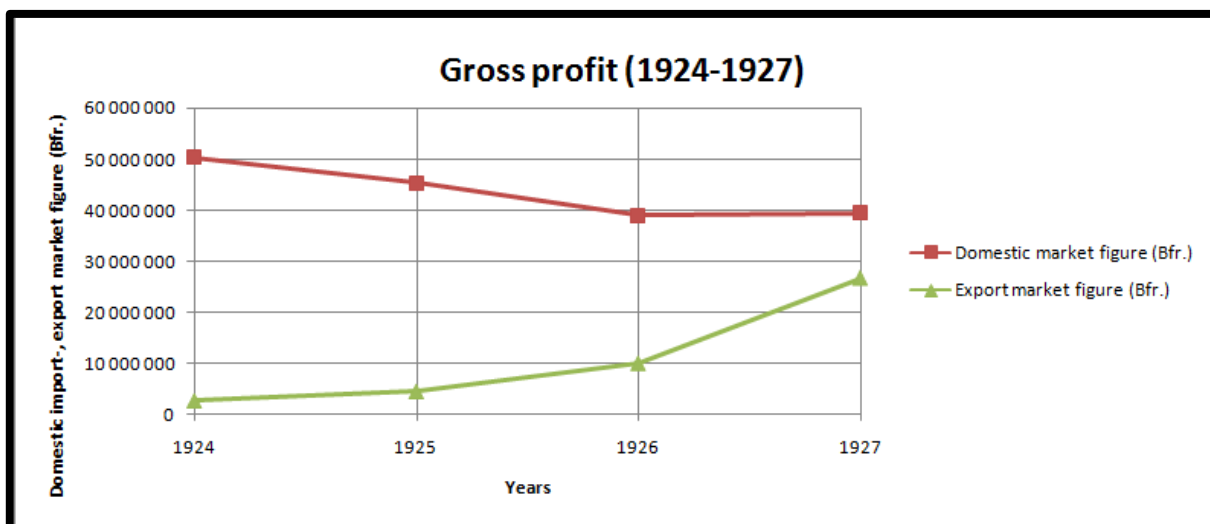


Figure 36: Graph illustrating De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen's gross profit between 1924-1927. Data retrieved from(CBUA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927.

These allegations are partly corroborated by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's sales figures, which indicate that in 1924 the company's gross profit for its domestic market amounted to 50 290 000 Bfr., which in 1925 dropped by 9.8 percent to 45 326 000 Bfr., in 1926 decreased by a further 13.7 percent to 39 100 000 Bfr., and finally in 1927 rose again by 1.1 percent to 39 548 000 Bfr.<sup>248</sup> Jeanne claimed that Edward's success in expanding the company's export market was only because of the advantage gained by the period's inflation rate, as in 1924 the figures for the export market, namely 2 773 225 Bfr., drastically increased by 65.9 percent to 4 601 951 Bfr. in 1925, and by a further 118.3 percent to 10 049 940 Bfr in 1926, and finally in 1927 by 165.1 percent to 26 644 879 Bfr.<sup>249</sup> Edward was furthermore accused of having implemented a financial system that led to dysfunctional performance.<sup>250</sup> The accumulation

<sup>247</sup> (CBUA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. nota aangaande de exportbeweging.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, Nota betreffende het "Leeuwenaandeel" van verweerder in de "voorspoed van de maatschappij, 1.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, nota aangaande de exportbeweging, 2.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

of Edward's allegedly bad managerial decisions had left the company in an unfavourable financial situation that in 1927 included roughly 7 000 000 Bfr. in unpaid debts to third parties.<sup>251</sup>

To what extent the decline in internal markets could actually be attributed to Edward's mismanagement rather than to the economic climate of the day, and to what extent this could or could not have been prevented, is difficult to determine, as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's drop in internal market sales and rise in external market sales correspond to a widespread phenomenon amongst many businesses at the time in Belgium. The pattern of these figures mirror the trend of the period's inflation and devaluation, which had negatively affected the purchasing power of the local market and positively affected exports to foreign markets. The other accusations, such as high debt and an uncontrolled financial system, however, could be considered to be part of Edward's responsibility as he was the MD responsible for the company's finances. Whether truly the fault of Edward or not, the troublesome financial state of her late husband's company had alarmed Jeanne Verweken, who from the beginning of 1928, and with the possible assistance of the two Van Ossel brothers and other employees such as René Goris and Jean Müsing, decided to become actively involved in the day-to-day management of the company. On 11 May 1928, at the request of Edward De Bie, the board of directors decided that an inquiry was needed to investigate the LLC's general health. For this purpose a commission consisting of René Goris, Jean Müsing and Mr Van Den Raadt was set up.<sup>252</sup>

Jeanne's decision to become more directly involved in the daily management of the company in tandem with the blame for the company's previous performance that had fallen on the company's upper management, might have possibly upset Edward De Bie, Louis De Bie and Karel Donnez who had established themselves over the years as the company's decision makers after Eduard passed away and who, with many years of shared practical experience between them, had tried to manage the factory to the best of their knowledge and ability. This theory is partly supported in a later letter written by Eduard De Bie, who states that '*we (Edward De Bie, Louis De Bie and Karel Donnez) took the initiative to leave the company,*

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<sup>251</sup> (CBUA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. nota aangaande de exportbeweging, 2-3.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, Uittreksel uit het verslagboek van den beheerraad der N.V. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits & Chocolate Antwerpen vergadering van 11 mei 1928.



*since cooperation became impossible*'.<sup>253</sup> Such sentiment might also tie in with the principal agent theory, which examines the opposed interests that arise from the process of delegating decision making from the principal (the owner or board members) to the agent (manager) of an enterprise. In a family firm this can translate into the relationship between the working and non-working family members, in this case, the family members who managed the company and Jeanne who gave up her position, as the working family members could have felt that their efforts in the firm only served to benefit the others and were not appreciated and were even unfairly criticised.<sup>254</sup> Edward De Beukelaer, who had been accused of being most responsible for the company's troublesome financial state, was supposedly not fired and, if he wanted, he could have retained his position in the company.<sup>255</sup> Instead Edward decided to follow the decision of his fellow senior managers and stepped down, as working under possibly strict supervision and restricting conditions could have appeared unappealing and difficult. In 1929 the four senior managers of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken thus decided to sell their shares and ended their employment and terminated their positions at the firm.

After their resignation in 1929, the vacancies on the Management Committee had to be filled. Jeanne retained her position as chair, whilst René Goris was appointed as MD and secretary. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's other newly appointed MDs were Jean Müsing and Charles Esman, as well as Felix and Louis Van Ossel, who were the only two new MDs who had a vast amount of practical experience in the management of the factory.<sup>256</sup>

The company's three departments were also further divided into six more specialised departments. Felix van Ossel became director of the biscuit, crème and wafer department, whilst the chocolate and confectionary department along with the department of personal and social issues were assigned to Jeanne. The department that dealt with sales, storage depots, clientele, distribution, exhibitions, visits and insurance fell under the directorship of Louis Van Ossel, whilst purchases, sales prices and De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's publicity and laboratory department became the responsibility of René Goris. Finally, the company's accounting, taxes, finances and trade unions were to become the responsibility of Jean Müsing, whilst the department concerned with establishing new contacts for the company's

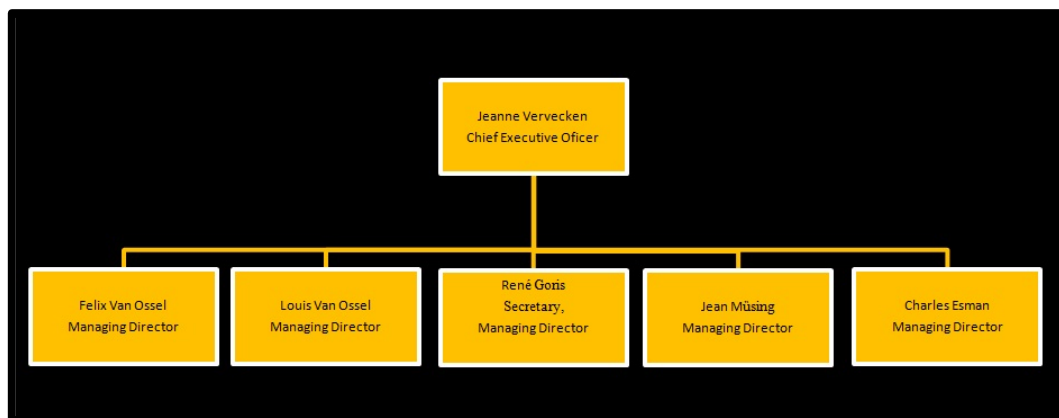
<sup>253</sup> (CBUA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. Brief door Louis De Bie aan Ed. De Beukelaer, 29/8/1935.

<sup>254</sup> D. Arnoldus, *Family, Family Firm and Strategy, Six Dutch Family Firms in the Food Industry 1880-1970*, 62.

<sup>255</sup> (CBUA), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. besluiten voor: De N.V. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, biscuits en Chocolade, Usines De Beukelaer, Biscuit et Chocolats, Anvers, 3.

<sup>256</sup> (CBUA), P2 4a, Verslagen van de bestuursvergadering 1930. samenstelling van het bestuurscomiteit, 8.

purchases and sales was allocated to Charles Esman.<sup>257</sup> This new diverse less familial Management Committee, together with the board of directors that was also made up of a number of ‘outsiders’, thus marked the end of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken as a closely-knit family business.



**Figure 37: Diagram illustrating the structure of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken, Antwerpen’s 1929 Management Committee.**

Considering the above alleged mismanagement and the troublesome financial state of the company, as well as the turbulent economic climate of the period after World War I, De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken performed reasonably well, if one analyses the company’s annual net profits.<sup>258</sup> In 1918 De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken had ended of its financial year with a rather modest net profit of 347 156 Bfr. However, as Belgium’s trade and industry were rekindled with the reconstruction of its post-war economy, the company witnessed some growth when its net profit grew by 288.7 percent to 1 349 649 Bfr. in 1919, which further rose by 168.2 percent to 3 619 936 Bfr. in 1922.<sup>259</sup> Despite this successful start, the country’s macroeconomic imbalance and rapidly depreciating Belgian franc seem to have caught up with the company, and its net profit decreased by 42.2 percent to 2 091 834 Bfr. in 1924.<sup>260</sup> The company’s net profit, however, experienced a new rise, probably as a result of the company’s increased export figures, and rose by 7.9 percent to 2 257 755 Bfr. in 1925 and by 86.2 percent to 4 204 679 Bfr. in 1926,<sup>261</sup> although for reasons unknown a slight drop did

<sup>257</sup> (CBAU), P2 4a, Verslagen van de bestuursvergadering 1930. samenstelling van het bestuurscomiteit., 15.

<sup>258</sup> Due to incomplete data for this period, calculation of the company’s return on equity is not possible, and one has to thus rely on the company’s net profit figures to gain an impression of the company’s financial developments.

<sup>259</sup> (CBAU), P2 8m, Jaarlijksche Venootschapsbelastingen 1920-1934, Boekjaar 1918.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> (CBAU), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. Secondes Conclusion en cause: Edouard De Beukelaer, défendeur c/ Les Usines De Beukelaer, 3.

occur in 1927, when the net profit decreased by 23.1 percent to 3 231 629 Bfr.<sup>262</sup> After Jeanne's intervention the following year De Beukelaer's Fabrieken witnessed a new increase as its net profit rose by 46.9 percent to 4 749 981 Bfr. in 1928,<sup>263</sup> and finally by 56.7 percent to 7 443 941 Bfr. in 1929.<sup>264</sup> This increase in the company's net profit coincided with a short but thriving period of economic growth in Belgium's post-war history that had temporarily turned the economic fate of the country around until it was confronted with the international depression that started in 1929. This evolution in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's net profit during the post-World War I period thus seemed to have followed trends in the country's general economic performance.

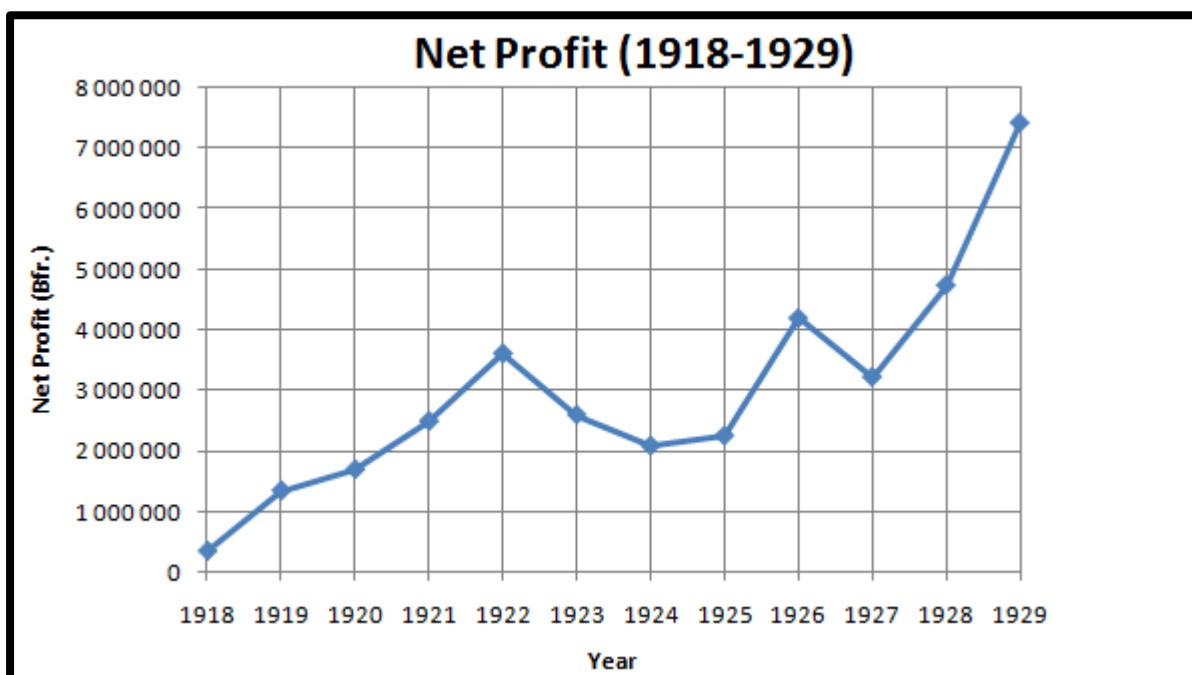


Figure 38: Graph detailing De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen's net profit between 1918-1929. Data retrieved from (C.B.U.A.), P2 8m, Jaarlijksche Venootschapsbelastingen 1920-1934, Boekjaar 1918.; (C.B.U.A.), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927.

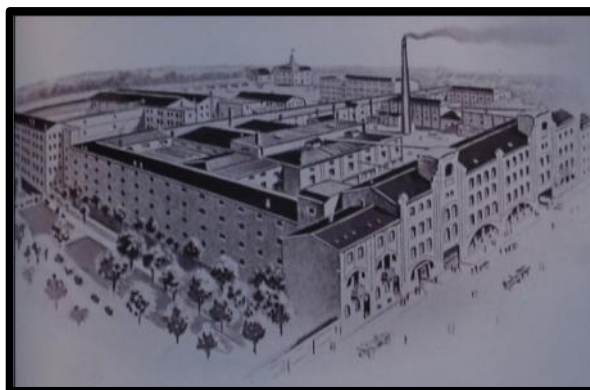
During this period De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had also continued to further expand its property and its factory, and between 1921-1922 the company purchased two new properties, the first of which was 1 000 m<sup>2</sup> in size and the second 500 m<sup>2</sup>, making the total size of the company's property an estimated 17 250 m<sup>2</sup>. By 1924, after obtaining another string of properties, this total size had grown to 18 750 m<sup>2</sup>, whilst by 1929 the size of De Beukelaer's

<sup>262</sup> (C.B.U.A.), P2 84b, Process tussen de D.B.F. en Stevenson en Co, moeilijkheden met de grossier H. Tartakoff, 1927. vente par souscription publique de 200 000 actions nouvelles de 100 Francs des Usines De Beukelaer, Biscuits et Chocolats (De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade) société anonyme.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, Usins De Beukelaer biscuits & Chocolats S.A. Anvers, Bilans 1929.

Fabrieken had grown to roughly 20 000 m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>265</sup> During this period of expansion no new recorded examples of product diversification or forms of vertical integration were noted at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. The factory did, however, further modernise, mechanise and optimise its existing departments, as by 1929 the decorating department had been mechanised, whilst the wafer department had expanded



**Figure 39: De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate circa the late 1920s.** Retrieved from, (CBUA) P2/49u, viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

and contained 25 ovens that were producing a variety of wafer at full capacity.<sup>266</sup> Most of the departments had also grown and in 1929 the factory permanently employed roughly 1 118 employees.<sup>267</sup>

After the turbulent period of World War I and the death of its founder on 12 June 1919, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken managed to maintain a steady growth rate in size and profitability and continued optimising and professionalising its production and management, despite the uncertain and unstable economic climate that characterised the 1920s. Regardless of its positive development, the vacuum left after the end of Eduard's paternal management style resulted in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's managerial structure undergoing dramatic changes that eventually fractured the family structure and eroded the company's traditional familial character.

## Conclusion

On 14 December 1929 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to celebrate its so-called 60th birthday. This highly publicised event was meant to celebrate, advertise and communicate De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's mythical past and prospective bright and prosperous future to the public. The festivities of that day were attended by journalists, representatives of industry and commerce, ministers and other notable guests, and included a tour of the factory, a lavish dinner and various speeches.<sup>268</sup> The occasion further symbolised the start of a new beginning in the history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, which left behind the company's former familial

<sup>265</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate*, 28-9.

<sup>266</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

<sup>267</sup> (CBUA), P2 13b, Belastingen op het tewerkgesteld personeel, 1921-1931/1933-1956.

<sup>268</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

character and embraced a new future where ownership and control were more separate. What had thus once started off as an innovative idea in the mind of the young Eduard De Beukelaer turned over the years into a small one-man business that eventually transformed into a large LLC, which successfully established itself as an industrial institution in Belgium's biscuit industry.

#### **4. The CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken (1885-1929)**

This chapter discusses De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy towards both its internal and external stakeholders between the years 1885 and 1929. Although most of the company's CSR initiatives that were directed towards external stakeholders were in theory managed by Eduard in his personal capacity, in practise the line between owner and company was blurred, and the actions of the one would often reflect upon the other. This quasi-symbiotic relationship meant that Eduard's personal initiatives can thus be interpreted as having been part of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR and should therefore also receive attention.

Although it is plausible that the De Beukelaer's CSR policy pre-dates the year 1885, the latter date marks the start of the first known initiative that was implemented in the factory and is thus used to commence this discussion. The identification and analysis of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy from its start in 1885 up to its demise in the last part of the 1920s is therefore the focus of this chapter. The chapter is divided into two subsections. The first section deals with the start, evolution and development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR initiatives up to Eduard's death (1885-1919), whilst the second section commences with the creation of the Secretariat for Social Welfare up to the downfall of the factory's CSR policy (1921-1929). The latter chronological division of the pre- and post-Eduard era, was made as the two above described periods in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's history coincided, influenced as well as reflected the events that occurred during two distinct episodes in the history of the company's CSR.

Besides dividing De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy into these two phases, the company's various initiatives and services are further classified into three distinct groups. The first group is the largest and refers to those initiatives concerning general employee welfare. The term 'employee welfare' is used to describe various benefits ranging from healthcare and pensions to bathing services and free hot cocoa that were made available to the company's employees. The second and most diverse category groups together the various leisure initiatives, which can be identified as relaxing pastimes for employees. These include such initiatives as the factory's drama society, musical department and gymnastic group. The third group is that of educational initiatives and consists of those projects that were concerned with educating employees in some way or another. This category includes initiatives ranging from De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's company school, its bakery school and its library, to its French classes and educational programme for female employees.



## 4.1. The company's CSR policy during Eduard's lifetime (1885-1919)

### 4.1.1. Employee welfare initiatives

Although Eduard had founded his factory in *Lange Kievitstraat* in 1875, it is not until ten years later that the foundation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's earliest known CSR initiative was implemented. On 1 January 1885 Ed. De Beukelaer & Co established its Society for Mutual Assistance,<sup>1</sup> which was a support structure that was created for the factory's employees by the factory's employees.<sup>2</sup> Although the Society for Mutual Assistance had thus not been conceived by management, and can therefore not be seen as a pure form of CSR, its establishment was allowed and from 1896 onwards the management of the Society was taken over by the company.<sup>3</sup> Any employee working at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken could become a member of the Society and could make use of its mutual fund.<sup>4</sup> This fund allowed sick or injured members to utilise its services, which ranged from having free access to a doctor and medication, to receiving monetary assistance for members who were unable to work.<sup>5</sup> One would, however, have to wait for three months before being able to make full use of the latter benefits. If in these initial three months a member sustained an injury, then he or she had immediate access to its medical services but not to its monetary assistance.<sup>6</sup>

In order to provide its members with medical care the Society for Mutual Assistance employed two doctors,<sup>7</sup> one of which, Dr De Keulenaar, who served as the factory's General Practitioner for many years.<sup>8</sup> Initially, for more specialised cases, members were allowed to make use of an outside specialist, but only after receiving approval from the Society's board.<sup>9</sup> Despite the Society's free medical assistance to its members, the first doctor's visit, as well as the first purchase of medicine was paid for by the members themselves. Any further expenses incurred were fully covered by the fund. Members who became temporarily unemployed

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<sup>1</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 1.

<sup>2</sup> (CBAU), P2 105C, *Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903*. Inlichtingen verschaft aan het ministerie van Nijverheid en Arbeid.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 4.

<sup>8</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

<sup>9</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 9.

because of illness also received a monetary compensation that was paid from the second day of their illness.<sup>10</sup> This compensation was a predetermined amount linked to the member's average wage. For the first three months those sickly members who were unable to work would receive three quarters of their normal wages. For the second three months the Society would pay out a third of their wage and for the following six months members would not receive any further monetary reimbursement, but would still be able to utilise the free medical care.<sup>11</sup> Any assistance needed after sustaining an injury at the factory was fully covered, and in case of contagious diseases members received free medical care at a hospital after receiving the permission of the General Practitioner.<sup>12</sup>

The factory's Society for Mutual Assistance did not, however, assist its members in all instances, as its rulebook listed a number of specific, but also a number of vague, occasions when members would not be able to benefit from its services. Those members who sustained an injury outside of the factory were subjected to the Society's commission for approval, whilst self-inflicted injuries – a category that was not clearly defined and could thus be broadly interpreted – were not reimbursed.<sup>13</sup> If a member was ill when entering into the service at the factory and had not notified the commission, then he or she would also not be entitled to any support. The same rule applied to individuals who became ill due to unchaste behaviour, the over-consumption of alcohol or child labour and any type of effects stemming from these conditions.<sup>14</sup> Fractures were only compensated partially and, although the injured member's first bandage was paid in full by the Society's fund, half of the cost of any further bandages were paid for by the member himself.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, when a member was sick, the General Practitioner would decide whether or not the member should receive medication, and whether he or she should be declared unfit for work.

Besides the latter special cases, there were also a number of rules to which members had to adhere to if they wanted to keep receiving the Society's support. When a member had been declared unfit to work and recuperating, he or she had to report to the commission every day, unless the member lived too far from the factory. During their illness members were also not allowed to enter a pub, nor drink any alcoholic beverages, although entering a tavern with the

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<sup>10</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschappij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuzen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 11.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 12.

intention of drinking a glass of water or milk was allowed. If declared unfit for employment, members were banned from conducting any paid work, and when any of these rules were broken, all further support was terminated. In addition to taking care of its members when they were ill, the factory's Society for Mutual Assistance also implemented a very crude and basic form of assistance for widows. When one of its members passed away, the spouse, parents, brothers or sisters would receive a monetary compensation that was equal to 20 days of fully paid-out wages on the scale earned by the deceased.<sup>16</sup>

In order to finance its various services and pay for the necessary medicine and wages, De Beukelaer's Society for Mutual Assistance implemented a number of ways to sustain its funds. Most of the fund's revenue came from membership fees set at one percent of every one Bfr. earned by a member (excluding overtime), which needed to be paid every second week of the month.<sup>17</sup> Besides this set membership fee, there were also a number of other ways through which the Society generated income. The system of fines, often for petty offences, seem to have been a popular method. Such fines included a two Bfr. penalty for members who were not at home when they had been declared unfit to work,<sup>18</sup> one Bfr. for those who forgot to notify the committee that they had changed address,<sup>19</sup> or a quarter of a Bfr. for those members who did not attend the compulsory meeting held every three months.<sup>20</sup> These fixed rates and fines were deposited into the Society's fund and the fund was audited in January of each year. Five Bfr. per member was left in its coffers and this remaining amount was used by the owners of the factory, who paid five percent interest on the funds or further invested them. The amount taken out of the funds was also used to purchase necessary items for the factory or for the employees after receiving the approval of the Society's members.<sup>21</sup>

Initially the Society for Mutual Assistance was managed by the members of the Society themselves, who in January of each year made use of a secret ballot to elect their committee. This committee consisted of a chair and a deputy chair, a secretary and four commissioners, of which two were males and two females. All the Society's members had the right to vote for their preferred candidates, and voting occurred in two rounds, the first of which was to

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<sup>16</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschappij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 13.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 20.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 21.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 21.

elect the chairperson and deputy chairperson, whilst the second round was to appoint the secretary and the four commissioners. When voting for the four commissioners, only female members were allowed to vote for the two female candidate, and only male members were allowed to vote for the two male candidates.<sup>22</sup> On the Monday at four o'clock after the employee's payday, which occurred every two weeks on the Saturday,<sup>23</sup> the Society's committee met and offered a consultation session, where the complaints of its members were heard and any possible problems discussed.<sup>24</sup> Every three months a report on the financial position of the sick fund was also be presented at the general meeting. This meeting was compulsory for all of the healthy members to attend and at the meeting the names of the members who had made use of the societies services were mentioned.<sup>25</sup>

Initially the members of the Society for Mutual Assistance thus had a high degree of independence with little or no interference from the factory's management. However, for reasons not entirely known, this early system with its surprisingly democratic character, experienced a number of organisational changes that were implemented on 1 January 1896. Eleven years after its conception, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Society for Mutual Assistance was reorganised, its management largely taken over by the company, and its headquarters relocated from an unknown location to the factory grounds at *Ploegstraat 55*.<sup>26</sup> Under this 'new management', the Society for Mutual Assistance experienced a number of noteworthy changes.

Most importantly was its change in membership. Previously employees were free to choose if they wanted to become a member of the Society for Mutual Assistance. According to its new statute, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees automatically become members, irrespective of sex or age.<sup>27</sup> Although this change might seem trivial, it contained certain paternalistic undertones as it took away the employees' previous choice of joining the factory's Society for Mutual Assistance, or to be part of another external organisation with similar benefits or

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<sup>22</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 23.

<sup>23</sup> (CBAU), P2 105a, Foto's van de werklonen, 1903.; *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

<sup>24</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*, Art. 23.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 21.

<sup>26</sup> (CBAU), P2 105C, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903. Rekening voor het jaar 1891.; (CBAU), *Ibid.*, Inlichtingen verschaft aan het ministerie van Nijverheid en Arbeid.

<sup>27</sup> (CBAU), P2 105C, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903. Notas en toelichtingenbetreffende de standregels en werkwijze der ziekenkas "*Arbeid Adelt*" van de firma Ed. De Beukelaer & C<sup>o</sup>.

not part of any Society at all. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees now had to contribute 0.18 Bfr. every second week as well as an additional 0.8 percent for every 100 Bfr. earned to the fund.<sup>28</sup> Calculations based on some surviving statistics indicate that an employee working at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during 1900 and 1903 had to pay an average of 8.6 Bfr. per year to the Society for Mutual Assistance.<sup>29</sup> Besides the requirement for the fixed 'contribution' that was automatically deducted from a workers wage, a new clause was introduced which stated that honorary members, i.e. the owners of the factory, needed to pay 3 Bfr. per year on behalf of each ordinary member.<sup>30</sup> This new arrangement saw Eduard pay an average of 1 672 Bfr. per year between 1900 and 1903, an amount generally higher than stipulated in the Society's statutes.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, new ways of increasing the Society's funds were also implemented. Various earnings such as the income from the sale of old factory equipment, profit generated by the bath service, fines issued in the factory, a somewhat unclear share in small profits given by suppliers, as well as gifts donated by visitors to the factory, were channelled into the Society's fund.<sup>32</sup> By the end of 1906, when Ed. De Beukelaer & Co transformed into an LLC, the system of financing the Society for Mutual Assistance was further expanded, as the memorandum of association and statutes of the LLC noted that three percent of the company's yearly net profit would be used to fund the Society for Mutual Assistance.<sup>33</sup>

The new management also brought about additional benefits for its members, as employees were able to make use of many of the Society's services from their first day of employment, and no longer had to wait for three months before they could receive monetary support in case of illness.<sup>34</sup> The actual medical service was also expanded further, as besides the previous General Practitioner who was permanently employed, members could now make use of a dentist and an ophthalmic surgeon who were employed on a contractual basis, and were

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<sup>28</sup> (CBAU), P2 105C, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903. Notas en toelichtingenbetreffende de standregels en werkwijze der ziekenkas "*Arbeid Adelt*" van de firma Ed. De Beukelaer & C<sup>o</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Rekening voor het Jaar 1900 – Rekening voor het Jaar 1903.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Notas en toelichtingenbetreffende de standregels en werkwijze der ziekenkas "*Arbeid Adelt*" van de firma Ed. De Beukelaer & Co.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Rekening voor het Jaar 1900 – Rekening voor het Jaar 1903.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Notas en toelichtingenbetreffende de standregels en werkwijze der ziekenkas "*Arbeid Adelt*" van de firma Ed. De Beukelaer & Co.

<sup>33</sup> *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 19 December 1906, act Nr. 6313, 1069.

<sup>34</sup> (CBAU), P2 105C, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903. Notas en toelichtingenbetreffende de standregels en werkwijze der ziekenkas "*Arbeid Adelt*" van de firma Ed. De Beukelaer & Co.

paid according to the number of visiting patients.<sup>35</sup> Besides its medical care, the Society's previous basic widow's support was further improved, as in addition to receiving 20 days of fully-paid out wages to the deceased's family, the Society paid half of the costs of the tombstone and donated a small, unspecified amount for the funeral.<sup>36</sup> The De Beukelaer's Society for Mutual Assistance further increased its service package by introducing the option for employees to purchase discounted eggs, wine, cocoa, chocolate, milk and other food sources from the factory,<sup>37</sup> as well as implementing a pension scheme, for which the earliest known reference appears in 1905.<sup>38</sup> Any further concrete details regarding these additional benefits, however, are not known.

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken offered its workforce a number of other services that improved, or at least attempted to improve, their employment conditions at the factory. From as early as November 1888 the factory contained a room where on Sundays employees could congregate after a long week's work. This recreational area, which was located in the building adjacent to Eduard's house in *Lange Kievitstraat*, was describe by a visiting reporter as being a large room with plain walls in which square benches were placed all around.<sup>39</sup> It was noted that only employees were allowed to make use of this space, and it was utilised by the factory workers to meet and socialise, consume some beer, participate in playing games, attend performances,<sup>40</sup> or listen to public speakers.<sup>41</sup> This early leisure room, with its quasi-tavern like atmosphere, clearly tried to emulate the feel of some of the workers' usual after-work hangouts. The factory's recreational area was later relocated to a larger premises at *Ploegstraat 55* (the same room in which the Society for Mutual Assistance operated from 1895 onwards), which roughly seated 400 people, accommodating the growing number of employees.<sup>42</sup> In 1918, with the purchase of the large plot of land from the adjacent Antwerp Zoo, plans for a new recreational hall that could seat allegedly '*at least a thousand*' were also

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<sup>35</sup> (CBAU), P2 105C, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903. Notas en toelichtingenbetreffende de standregels en werkwijze der ziekenkas "*Arbeid Adelt*" van de firma Ed. De Beukelaer & Co.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, Vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

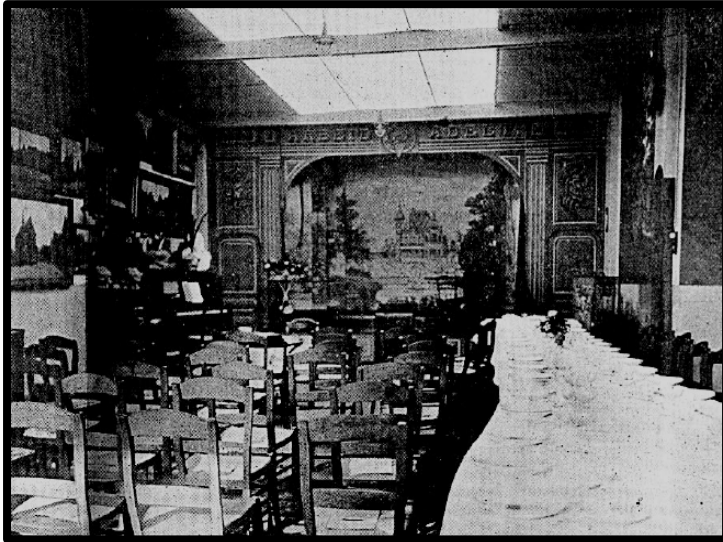
<sup>39</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, Vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>42</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken*, 5.





**Figure 40:** The De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's recreational area during WWI. Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 24.

in the pipeline, but did not see completion during Eduard's lifetime.<sup>43</sup> The relocation also changed the purpose of the area, as the factory's recreational room would no longer serve as a place where employees would congregate at the end of the week to have a drink and a chat, but rather as a space in which the factory's various meetings, performances and parties were hosted, and its various

organisations practised. Eduard also allowed this space to be utilised by a number of organisations that were not affiliated to the factory, and which made use of the room to conduct their meetings, or host parties and events.<sup>44</sup>

Other smaller seemingly less grand but nonetheless noteworthy services for factory employees were also offered by Eduard to his personnel. From as early as 1888 nutritional hot cocoa was prepared at the factory on a daily basis and consumed by the factory's employees for free,<sup>45</sup> and by 1909 a tap that supplied cocoa had been installed in the *Doorsteek*, a little alleyway in the factory, from which employees were able to top up their drinking cups.<sup>46</sup> Around the turn of the nineteenth century employees at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken were also able to make use of seven bathrooms that had been built in a room above the factory's large steam kettle, and made use of the generated heat to warm up the water. During a time when running water was a rare luxury, employees could either take a cold bath for 0.05 Bfr., or a more pleasant warm bath for the price of 0.10 Bfr.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned earlier,

<sup>43</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschappelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Bij de "Antwerpsche Bakkerszonen"', 24.; H. Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond, 150 jaar Muziekleven en Vlaamse Beweging*, 89.; R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging*, 'Beukelaer, Edward de', 490.

<sup>45</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

<sup>46</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

the money collected for this service was paid into the fund of the Society for Mutual Assistance.

The various services that supported employee welfare at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during Eduard's lifetime were not offered only during normal prosperous times. Throughout the turbulent and financially trying period of World War I, when the need for welfare was greater than ever, the factory's Management Committee implemented a series of initiatives that attempted to alleviate some of the difficulties that its employees were facing. From 1917 onwards, when the disastrous socio-economic effects of the Great War were beginning to bite, the factory's newly formed Management Committee decided at its meeting of 26 September to distribute half a litre of soup to its employees for the reasonable price of 0.05 Bfr. per helping.<sup>48</sup> The soup was to be produced in the factory itself and the ingredients that were needed either were supplied by the *Committee De La Nord Du France* or were obtained from the factory's own suppliers. The *Committee De La Nord Du France* would purchase and supply the factory with fat, peas and rice, whilst ingredients such as meat, chervil, leeks, potatoes, celery, carrots, cabbage and parsley were purchased by the factory themselves.<sup>49</sup> The support of the *Committee De La Nord Du France* in supplying part of these ingredients could, however, be linked to the production of their order for chocolate and biscuits. This whole exercise cost the factory a substantial amount, as the loss for the company on a single serving of soup was reported to be 0.30 Bfr.<sup>50</sup> From September 1917 until July 1919, long after the last order by the *Committee De La Nord Du France* had been completed, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken still distributed these food rations amongst its employees.<sup>51</sup>

Besides supplying soup for its employees during a time when access to basic food sources was scarce or costly, the factory's Management Committee also decided to financially assist its workers during the tough economic times during the war when work was scarce and wages low. On 30 May 1918 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken started to reimburse those workers who had been temporarily laid off with unemployment grants. These unemployed workers were divided into four categories, namely married men and women, unmarried men and woman over the age of 20, unmarried men and women under 20, and finally men and woman

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<sup>48</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920, Vergadering gehouden op 25 September 1917, 8.

<sup>49</sup> (CBUA), B26 38, Bestelboek 1917.

<sup>50</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920, Vergadering gehouden op 25 September 1917, 8.

<sup>51</sup> (CBUA), B26 38, Bestelboek 1917.

who both worked at the factory. Furthermore, those employees who were ill – an occurrence which must have been rather common during the last year of World War I as food and life supplies were reportedly scarce and the Spanish flu epidemic was starting to ravage the population's health – were also categorised as unemployed.<sup>52</sup> In addition to financially assisting its sick and unemployed workers, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken further decided to assist employees who were still working at the factory. Those employees who were active in the factory received a weekly grant and were divided into two categories, namely those males who headed a household, and unmarried men and women.<sup>53</sup> The exact amount of these grants was not specified in the Management Committee meeting, however, and so it is not clear how much each category received, nor for how long this system was implemented.

During the time that Eduard headed the company, the factory had thus managed to build up the foundations of a well-established welfare system that attempted to improve the life and employment conditions of its workforce, and these early initiatives formed the basis upon which much of the factory's future employee welfare policy was built.

#### **4.1.2. Leisure initiatives**

Ed. De Beukelaer & Co had also begun to implement a number of CSR initiatives that tried to stimulate 'constructive' leisure activities amongst its employees. The earliest leisure initiative for employees at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was the establishment of the music department, which reportedly presented its first class on 12 December 1887.<sup>54</sup> Unlike the Society for Mutual Assistance, the music department was fully funded and managed by the factory, and all men and boys employed at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken were allowed to join for free. Because of a lack of sources and reports on this particular early initiative, not much is known about its activities or its evolution. What is known and reasonably well documented, however, is that the music department had invested a substantial amount in instruments and matching customised uniforms to equip the factory's first brass band, which in November 1888, one year after its formation, consisted of 45 members, roughly representing 32 percent

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<sup>52</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24December 1920, Vergadering gehouden op 30 Mei 1918, 13.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> (CBAU), MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

of the employees at the time,<sup>55</sup> and was directed by a Mr Flor Corthals.<sup>56</sup> Initially the members of the brass band wore custom-made outfits that consisted of a blue velvet vest with golden buttons, blue pants decorated with black cords and a cap that bore the initials Ed. D. B. & Co. on its front.<sup>57</sup> This large uniformed group of men and boys performed at various occasions organised by the factory, the first known of which was the official opening of the factory school's classroom and initiation of the banner of the music department on 24 November 1888. At the event the band played the *Brabacone* (Belgium's national anthem), as well as a 'solo aria' with a tuba accompanied by the band.<sup>58</sup>



**Figure 41: Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's brass band in their 16th-century-looking uniforms.** Retrieved from, R. Goris, *Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolade*, 19.

The company's brass band continued to function after this joyful event and performed on a number of later reported occasions. In 1894 the members were issued with new sixteenth-century-looking uniforms, which were designed by the painter Frans Van Kuyck, and these uniforms formed part of the attire of the mock town of *Oud-Antwerpen* in which

Eduard had been involved during the 1894 World Exhibition in Antwerp.<sup>59</sup> By 1905 the brass band had also further grown in size and consisted of roughly 70 members.<sup>60</sup> Besides performing at official company occasions, this large and by then somewhat carnivalesque-looking group, also performed at various public concerts in Antwerp and accompanied the employees of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken on some of their annual outings to cities such as Ghent, Bruges and Liege.<sup>61</sup> With their banner bearing the phrase *Arbeid Adelt* waving in the

<sup>55</sup> According to (PC), Koningsveld, Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer, opgedragen bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekafdeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek, there were 140 employees working at Ed. De Beukelaer & Co in 1888.

<sup>56</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, 'Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang 1953, Nr. 33, 'De Harmonie "Arbeid Adelt"', np.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, Vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>61</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang 1953, Nr. 33, 'De Harmonie "Arbeid Adelt"', np.

wind,<sup>62</sup> the brass band would march in uniform through the city streets, moving in the direction of the city's park or main square, where they would perform various music pieces to the public.<sup>63</sup>

Besides performing at company events or public concerts, Eduard also made use of the band for his own personal affairs, as in the case of a visit by a group of delegates from the Dutch city of Dordrecht in 1897. On this particular occasion Eduard and his fellow members of the *Gilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen* had invited their Dutch counterpart, *Het Vroedshap van Oud-Dordrecht* (formed at the World Exhibition of Dordrecht in 1897), to visit Antwerp.<sup>64</sup> For the occasion Eduard had organised the factory's brass band to play the Dutch national anthem upon the arrival of the delegates at the train station,<sup>65</sup> whilst during one of their banquets hosted at Eduard's *Hôtel De Beukelaer* at *Minderbroedersrui* 21, a further private performance by the band was conducted to liven up the festivities and no doubt try and impress his guests.<sup>66</sup> Although De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's brass band thus had an active and popular existence in the later part of the nineteenth century, no further references to its existence during Eduard's lifetime could be traced, and it is more than likely that it ceased to exist. In addition to the all-male brass band, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken also offered another musical initiative in later years, this time directed towards its female employees.



**Figure 42: The female choir of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 58.

Although the exact date is unknown, somewhere around 1918 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken formed a female choir under the leadership of Miss Louisa Van Gelder, an accredited graduate of the Royal Flemish Conservatorium, who had been awarded a first prize for teaching songs in unison.<sup>67</sup> The choir consisted of 32 young female employees working in different departments, who after their

<sup>62</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, 'Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>63</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang 1953, Nr. 33, 'De Harmonie "Arbeid Adelt"', np.

<sup>64</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 17 October 1897, 'De Poorters van Oud-Dordt', np.

<sup>65</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 18 October 1897, 'De Magistraten van Oud-Dordt te Antwerpen', np.

<sup>66</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 20 October 1897, 'De Magistraten van Oud-Dordt te Antwerpen, De vroedschap van Oud-Dordt bij de poorters van Oud-Antwerpen', np.

<sup>67</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschappelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.



shifts had ended came together to practise a variety of Flemish songs.<sup>68</sup> This female equivalent of the brass band performed at various occasions such as at Eduard's 75th birthday celebration at the factory, where they sang a number of songs in his honour.<sup>69</sup>



**Figure 43: Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's drama society.** Retrieved from, (AMVC), A 38072/p, Groepsfoto van de toneelafdeling Arbeid Adelt.

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken further expanded its leisure services for its employees by starting the factory's first drama society, which was also known as *Arbeid Adelt*. The earliest reference to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's drama society dates back to 8 January 1893,<sup>70</sup> but it was most likely founded in 1889.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike the brass band or later the female choir, the membership requirements for the drama society were not gender specific and its demographic makeup consisted of an almost equal number of males and females, young and old. In 1893 the company's drama society consisted of approximately 40 members who performed 18 different plays through the year, most likely performed in the factory's recreational room during special events for employees, especially during the colder winter months.<sup>72</sup> Although little information concerning such early performances by the play society has survived, one particular event, a charity evening organised by Eduard and Maria to raise money for the city's impoverished citizens, was well documented by the local press and offers a fragmentary glimpse of the society's activities.

In 1893, on the eighth day of the winter month of January, Ed. De Beukelaer & Co organised a charity evening aimed at raising funds for the *Union Philantropique*, which was a

<sup>68</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschapelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Huldebetoon Ed. De Beukelaer', 40.

<sup>70</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 12 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>71</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918. Herinnering aan de viering van zyn vyf en zevigste verjaardag door zyne familieleden en vertrouwde vrienden*, 111.

<sup>72</sup> (AMVC), A 38072/p, Groepsfoto van de toneelafdeling Arbeid Adelt.



philanthropic organisation based in Antwerp that tried to alleviate the suffering of the city's poor. The evening in question consisted of a number of performances presented by the factory's drama society; the event had been advertised for weeks by the newspaper *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*.<sup>73</sup> Tickets were sold at the factory for 3, 2 and 1 Bfr.,<sup>74</sup> and when the winter sun had set behind the cathedral of Antwerp and the dial of its clock struck seven, a large audience took their seats in the factory's electrically lit leisure room. That Sunday evening, the performances of *Vriend Fritz* as well as the comical performance *Jaakske met zijn Fluitje*, were presented to the audience by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's drama society. Surely to the surprise and amusement of some of the spectators, Eduard himself performed the lead male role of a Jewish Rabi in the play *Vriend Fritz*, next to the young Jeanne Vervecken, his future wife to be.<sup>75</sup> The successful sold-out performance of 8 January had to be repeated the following Sunday, a day that attracted an equal amount of interest.<sup>76</sup> The combined profit of these two evenings was the generous sum of 1 178 Bfr. and the money was subsequently donated to the *Union Philantopique*, which used it to distribute bread, meat and cabbage vouchers to the poor of the city.<sup>77</sup> Besides the latter account of their performance at the charity event, no further references to the factory's early drama society have surfaced, and although it seems to have been disbanded afterwards, it is not exactly clear as to when or why this initiative was abandoned. Apart from the above quasi-cultural leisure activities offered at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Eduard's interest and support for similar initiatives also went beyond the boundaries of the factory, as he became known for his continued support of initiatives that promoted music to the public.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century Eduard became a fervent supporter of a number of music organisations and initiatives in Antwerp. Institutes such as the *Koninklijk Vlaams Conservatorium* (Royal Flemish Music Conservatory), which in its prime was under the directorship of the famous Flemish composer Peter Benoit and later Jan Blockx,<sup>78</sup> received financial support from Eduard.<sup>79</sup> The *Vlaamse Opera* (Flemish Opera), another similar institute that was partially directed by Henry Fontein and Edward Keurvels, two known

<sup>73</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 2 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>74</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 7 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>75</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 12 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>76</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 21 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

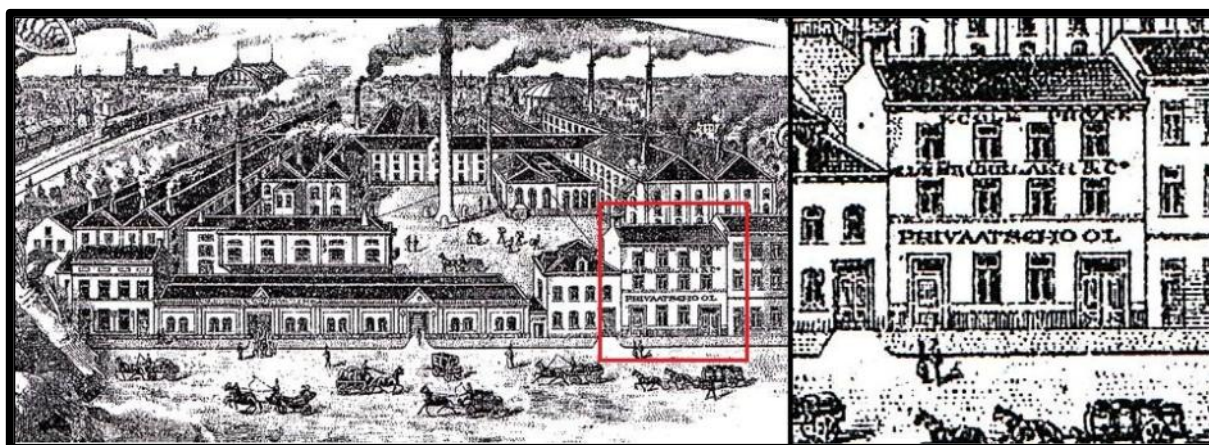
<sup>78</sup> R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Muziek', 2117-21.

<sup>79</sup> *Het Handelsblad Van Antwerpen*, 14 Juni 1919, 'Sterfgevallen, Edward De Beukelaer', np.

acquaintances of Eduard, also received donations and loans.<sup>80</sup> This financial support was meant to promote Flemish music and culture to the public and other similar initiatives, such as the *Liederenavonden voor het Volk* (song evenings for the people) organised by the *Algemeen Nederlands Verbond*, were supported by Eduard, who himself was involved in its internal organisation and occasionally offered the use of his factory's recreational room for rehearsals and meetings.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4.1.3. Educational initiatives

Both the company's as well as Eduard's promotion of leisure activities thus had a cultural and educational character and focus. The educational character of some of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's leisure initiatives was linked to the company's other educational initiatives that formed an important part of the factory's CSR.



**Figure 44: Ed. De Beukelaer & Co's school for employees.** Retrieved from, (AMVC), G 4781, 41810/90, Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. aan De Goedendag, 22/01/1906.

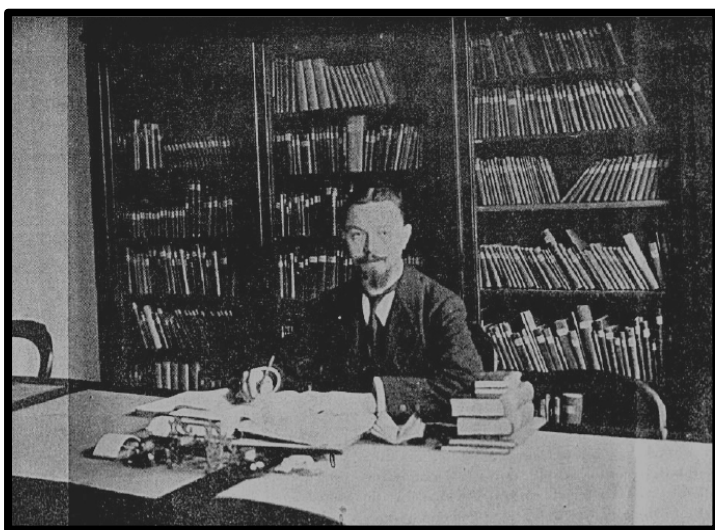
One year after employees could learn to play instruments after a long day's work, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to create a school for those employees who were either illiterate or semi-literate, or who just wanted to improve their general knowledge. Thus by November 1888 the factory decided to provide a classroom located above the recreational hall, where all interested employees at the factory could attend classes after they had finished work at six pm.<sup>82</sup> The school's first year was attended by 37 teenage boys and girls, which

<sup>80</sup> (AMVC), k 376 (Map 805), 112913/805, Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. aan Keurvels, Edward, 5/01/1899.; H.Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond*, 89.; R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Beukelaer, Edward de', 490.

<sup>81</sup> H.Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond*, 89.; R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Beukelaer, Edward de', 490.

<sup>82</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

represented roughly 26 percent of the company's employees at the time.<sup>83</sup> The new classroom consisted of 15 new benches that could each seat two students and were decorated with various geographical maps that tried to emulate the atmosphere of a real school. In front of the classroom stood Mr Vermeulen, a teacher at a public educator school employed by the factory to teach the interested employees calculus, reading and writing, and basic forms of science.<sup>84</sup> Soon after November 1888 the school's class room was further enriched with a library, where employees could borrow a variety of 'decent' books, which according to a reporter, would '*prevent breaking down what had been accomplished by other initiatives*'.<sup>85</sup> When, how often and for how long the factory's school was operational is not known, and besides two contracts with the school's teacher Mr Vermeulen, dating from July 1898 and September 1901,<sup>86</sup> and a reference of its existence in an article about Eduard in the July 1905



**Figure 45: De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's library and its librarian Constant De Clerck.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 30.

issue of the monthly magazine of the *Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, any further information about the company's school has yet to surface. Soon afterwards Eduard decided to end this initiative, as it is not mentioned in any further sources concerning the company's CSR initiatives. The library did continue to exist, however, and by 1916 it had been reorganised and relocated to the factory's new recreational hall in *Ploegstraat 55*.

By 1918 the library had a membership of 150 employees, who had together borrowed 3 000 books the previous year.<sup>87</sup> The educational value of the factory's library consisted of more than merely providing 'decent' reading material to interested workers who wanted to expand their general knowledge, as every month the librarian, Constant De Clerck, conducted evening seminars. At these seminars famous literary works of Flemish writers such as

<sup>83</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

<sup>84</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang December 1953, Nr. 33, 'De Harmonie "Arbeid Adelt"', np.

<sup>85</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, 'Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>86</sup> (CBUA), P2 105e, Overeenkomst met Vermeulen.

<sup>87</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Gezellige Bijeenkomsten', 30.

Hendrik Conscience and Guido Gezelle were presented to, and discussed by, employees and even the factory's senior management and their family members.<sup>88</sup> Although by 1918 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had thus closed down its school, the factory's library indirectly attempted to continue 'educating' its employees.



**Figure 46: The female division of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 32.

Another example of indirect education launched at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken apart from the library and its seminars was the female division of the factory's 'social action'. This particular initiative was launched sometime during the course of World War I, and was only open to female supervisors and candidate supervisors, as other female employees were not eligible to join.<sup>89</sup> The reasoning behind this limiting criterion could be

that the factory management wanted to specifically target those females that fulfilled a leadership position on the factory floor and could potentially be seen by other workers lower in rank as models of inspiration. By 'educating' supervisors to act and conduct themselves 'properly', their 'model' behaviour could potentially rub off on the other female workers and influence them to implement certain changes in their own daily conduct. Each week this small group of supervisors and candidate supervisors met as a study group which discussed the physical, moral and intellectual upliftment of the factory's female employees. Topics such as the development of women and their social task, the woman's role in the alcohol plague and ways to address it, and the role of women in the workers' home were debated.<sup>90</sup> Besides these study groups, classes that further promoted the moral and intellectual development of female employees were also offered during which topics such as self-control, good and bad behaviour, and white lies were discussed. The group additionally received more traditional forms of education without the latter paternalistic undertones, which taught them about history, geography and art, as well as provided a Flemish language course.<sup>91</sup> At the same time

<sup>88</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Gezellige Bijeenkomsten', 30.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. – Sociale Actie', 32.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was 'educating' its female supervisors on how women need to conduct themselves, another much greater and certainly less paternalistic educational initiative was launched at the factory, one that can be considered to be the company's most prominent form of external CSR.



**Figure 47:** *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool*. Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 1.

In 1917, whilst World War I was tightening its devastating grip over most of Western Europe, and trade and industry were suffering in occupied Belgium under German rule, Eduard decided to create the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool* (De Beukelaer's Bakery School) at the time that his factory began to suffer severe losses in production and employment. Between 1917-1919 *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool*, also known as *Tehuis voor Bakers* (Home for Bakers), was located next to the factory's entrance at *Lange Kievitstraat* 105-107, and served as a technical institute that provided vocational instruction to young bakers who wanted to acquire a modern and more technical understanding of their trade.<sup>92</sup>

The two-storey house in *Lange Kievitstraat* consisted of a few classrooms, a small laboratory and, not unimportantly, a fully equipped bakery cellar that had been specially built by De Beukelaer Fabrieken's masonry department.<sup>93</sup> Enrolment and attendance of the school was free, but candidates needed to adhere to a number of basic admission requirements before they were accepted. Applicants had to be employed as baker's apprentices<sup>94</sup> and needed to have passed the entrance exam, which required a good command of the Flemish language as well as a basic understanding of maths, fractions and the metric system.<sup>95</sup> During this two-year course the first- and second-year students received classes every Monday and Friday from 6 to 8 pm, whilst second-year students additionally attended practical classes every Wednesday from 5 to 8 pm.<sup>96</sup>

The students of the school were instructed by a group of educators, who together seemed to share a vast amount of experience in, and knowledge of, the trade of baking, its technical

<sup>92</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Ons Doel en onze Werking', 1.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Onze Bakkerijschool', 168.

<sup>94</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Opening Schooljaar 1918-1919 der Bakkerijschool', 1.

<sup>95</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Vraagbord, n. 31 leergangen der bakkerijschool', 64.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Vraagbord, n. 31 leergangen der bakkerijschool', 64.

aspects and its management as a business. These instructors either came from De Beukelaer's Fabrieken itself, as in the case of the librarian Constant De Clerck and Karel Donnez, Louis Van Ossel and presumably even Eduard himself,<sup>97</sup> or had been specifically hired to conduct classes, as in the case of the engineer Alois Van Loy, Alfred De Kuester, Gustaaf Verheyden, advocate Meas and J. Paymans.<sup>98</sup>

The syllabus for the course dealt with such topics as 'the use of air, water, minerals and organic substances in the baking process', 'the use of different flours that originate from various grains', 'the composition of rye bread and rye bread and its diseases', 'intercepting fake ingredients by means of chemical analysis', and 'yeast and the process of yeasting in baking'. Most of



**Figure 48:** The students of *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool*. Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 3; 11; 22.; (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 168.

the latter classes were conducted at the school's own laboratory, but if students needed to perform larger and more complex chemical experiments or analysis, they made use of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's laboratory.<sup>99</sup> Besides this emphasis upon chemistry and the baking process, students were also taught about the more technical and mechanical side of baking, and were instructed about the use of the latest engines and kneading machines in the modern industry.<sup>100</sup> The two-year course was not entirely focused on just the technical aspect of baking, and students were further educated in more theoretical subjects that dealt with the various processes of natural science occurring in baking, or the required accounting skills needed to manage a bakery.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Groep Leraars en Leerlingen der Bakkerijschool', 3.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*; (EHC), *De Schakel*, Vijfde Jaargang 1955, Nr. 52, 'Onze Public Relations in vroeger dagen, De Bakkerijschool', np.

<sup>99</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Een kijkje in de Bakkerijschool', 11.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Een kijkje in de Bakkerijschool', 22.

<sup>101</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Onze Bakkerijschool', 161.



The *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool's* first 20 students were drawn from areas around the city of Antwerp, but a few of them also came from as far as Sint-Niklaas and Schooten.<sup>102</sup> During the second year of the *Bakkerijschool*, which started in November 1917, there was an increase in the number of students, and 36 new candidates were enrolled at the 'home for bakers'. These new applicants were again doing their apprenticeship at bakeries in the vicinity of Antwerp, but some of them also came from as far afield as Herentals, Waver, Niel, Zwijndrecht and Temsche.<sup>103</sup> The school's third and final year of existence, planned to commence on 14 October 1918, was delayed as a result of the general health conditions of the staff, more than likely caused by the Spanish flu epidemic, as well as the end of the war and the call-up for military service amongst young men in Belgium.<sup>104</sup> These factors delayed the opening of the school's third and final year to January 1919. The war itself had also affected the *Bakkerijschool's* earlier performance, as the practical exams for the final-year students in 1918 were not conducted as a result of the shortage and unavailability of raw materials and had to be postponed to a later undisclosed date.<sup>105</sup>

Besides being an institution offering vocational training to young bakers, *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool* had also taken on a larger more purposeful task. From 6 October 1917, after getting permission from the German government and purchasing the necessary printing material, the factory's Management Committee decided to publish a newspaper for bakers known as *De Bakkerijschool vakblad ten behoeve van de bakkerij en aanverwante nijverheden* (The bakery school trade journal on behalf of the baking and affiliated industries).<sup>106</sup> The first 10 000 copies of the newspaper left the printing presses of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and were distributed amongst bakers as well as friends and customers of the factory around Belgium.<sup>107</sup> For the initial price of one Bfr. per year members could subscribe to receive their issues each Saturday of every second week.<sup>108</sup>

The newspaper described itself as being an organ of the *Bakkerijschool* and stated that, although the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool* offered young bakers vocational training, its educational reach was limited to only a few, and many others who were in search of similar

<sup>102</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Bakkerijschool, namen en adressen van de groep leerlingen der bakkerijschool', 2.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 'De zucht naar vakkennis in de Bakkerij', 9.

<sup>104</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'De Bakkerijschool, Opening der Leergangen', 21.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Uitslagen Examen Bakkerijschool', 5.

<sup>106</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24December 1920, Vergadering gehouden op 25 September 1917, 8.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 1.

information and support were unable to access it and therefore needed a specialised organ.<sup>109</sup> The writers and editors of the newspaper were the teachers of the *Bakkerijschool*, and every second week the magazine published articles on various technical details concerning baking and the baking industry. Each issue the newspaper also assisted artisanal bakers with various technical queries that had been sent in by the readers, creating a supportive dialogue between small traditional bakers and technically trained individuals. Subscribers to the newspaper could also ask for assistance when they needed to conduct sample analysis of their ingredients and were allowed to send in these samples to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's laboratory department, which analysed them for free.

The *Bakkerijschool's* newspaper thus placed a special emphasis upon the small artisanal baker, who were threatened by the rise of the large, modern and more technical and automated industrial bakeries of their time. To protect these 'endangered' tradesmen, the *Bakkerijschool* called for Antwerp's smaller bakers to form organisations that would defend and promote their shared interests. This call for unification partly manifested itself in a number of local initiatives for which the *Bakkerijschool's* newspaper became the unofficial mouthpiece to voice their opinions, frustrations and actions to the outside world. One of these new organisations was the *Antwerpsche Bakkerszonen*, who appointed Eduard as their honorary chairperson. Eduard allowed the *Bakkerszonen* to utilise the factory's recreational room for events and evenings, or invited them on visits to his estate in Brasschaat for a leisure day of walking, playing games and dancing.<sup>110</sup> A similar but much older bakery organisation that Eduard also supported during the time was the *St. Aubertus Maatschappij*, of which Eduard was also appointed an honorary member, and to whom he granted the occasional use of the factory's recreational room.<sup>111</sup>

The *Centrale Bakkersorganisatie* (Central Bakers Organisation), an organisation for bakers in the province of Antwerp, also had its office at the *Bakkerijschool* and had opened a specialised library that contained trade-specific literature including international books and magazines on the baking profession, offering its members a modern and technical insight into the industry.<sup>112</sup> Members also had free access to judicial advice, sample analysis, the *Bakkerijschool's* newspaper, trade exhibitions, study circles and a series of other benefits

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<sup>109</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 1.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Op het "Torenhof" te Brasschaat', 62.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Maatschappij St. Aubertus', 28.

<sup>112</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Centrale Bakkersvereniging, Afdeling: Vakboekery', 57-8.

such as *Hand in Hand*.<sup>113</sup> *Hand in Hand* was a cooperative-like initiative that was started, or at least coordinated, by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and saw the purchase of large quantities of raw materials such as: coal, flour, almonds, cocoa, peaches, cinnamon, sugar and even biscuits and chocolate made by De Beukelaer to be distributed amongst its members at a cheaper, more affordable price.<sup>114</sup>

This emphasis on helping out the small baker was further highlighted by Constant De Clerck who, together with Aloïs van Loy, teacher at the *Bakkerijschool* and editor in chief of its newspaper, began to organise and host discussion evenings at the *Bakkerijschool*, which were free to be attended by members of the various bakery organisations. The focus of these seminars was again directed towards the survival and protection of the smaller artisanal baker, and topics discussed included issues such as 'the purpose and importance of a trade organisation',<sup>115</sup> 'The role of the baker's woman in the death struggle of the small bakery',<sup>116</sup> or 'is the small bakery destined to disappear?'.<sup>117</sup> Such seminars attempted to stimulate and encourage a dialogue between smaller bakers in the hope of trying to unify them into organisations that could survive the growing commercial pressures of the industrial bread factories.

Since its inception in 1917 *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool* had thus grown extensively and became an important centre for the local baking industry of Antwerp. Although initially only offering vocational training to young bakers, the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool* quickly evolved into a centre from which the survival of the struggling, smaller, artisanal baker was actively promoted. Alas, this institute disappeared soon after Eduard passed away on 12 June 1919, as on 5 September that same year De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided during its Management Committee meeting to halt the *Bakkerijschool* and all other social initiatives of the company temporarily.<sup>118</sup> Two weeks later, on 20 September 1919, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken printed the *Bakkerijschool's* newspaper's last issue, and no new school year commenced at the *Bakkerijschool* the following year.<sup>119</sup> The exact reason for this sudden discontinuation is speculative, but it seems that the *Bakkerijschool* was an initiative that had

<sup>113</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Centrale Bakkersvereniging', 64.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Centrale Bakkersvereniging, Samewerkende Maatschappij "Hand in Hand"', 90-1; *Ibid.*, 'Centrale Bakkersvereniging, Maatschappij Samenaankoop "Hand in Hand"', 171-2.

<sup>115</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, "'Vereeniging Antwerpsche Bakkerszonen'", 40.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, "'Vereeniging Antwerpsche Bakkerszonen'", 62.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, "'Vereeniging Antwerpsche Bakkerszonen'", 54.

<sup>118</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920, Vergadering gehouden den 5de Spetember 1919, 28-9.

<sup>119</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1918-1919, 'Bij het laatste nummer', 173.

largely been driven by Eduard, probably due to his own past as a baker. Thus, after Eduard's death, and in the post- World War I economic climate that burdened the country with the difficult task of rebuilding industry to its pre-war levels, a possible lack of enthusiasm and resources for an initiative such as the *Bakkerijschool*, which offered no direct benefit to the company, could have been a deciding factor in the decision of the new management of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken to end this project.

From 1885 onwards Eduard had thus built the foundations of the company's CSR policy, a practice that had been combined with Eduard's own philanthropic funding and support of a number of local cultural institutions and organisations outside of the company. This established practice would be adopted and further promoted by the company's Secretariat for Social Welfare.

#### **4.2. The company's CSR policy after Eduard's death (1921-1929)**

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Secretariat for Social Welfare was introduced to the company's personnel on 1 January 1921. Its office was located at *Lange Kievitstraat* 105-107, the building in which three years earlier the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool* had been operational.<sup>120</sup> The Secretariat served as the think tank from which a vast number of CSR projects, initiatives and services were conceived and initiated during an intense six-year period that eventually lost its momentum by December 1926. The concept for the formation of the Secretariat can be traced back a few years prior to its opening in 1921, as an article in the *Bakkerijschool's* newspaper dating back to 1918 already contained a prophetic reference made by the De Beukelaer's Management Committee. The article announced the proposed creation of one structured administrative centre that would organise the factory's various social initiatives more efficiently. Although the headquarters of the factory's 'Social Action', a predecessor to the *Secretariat for Social Welfare*, had reportedly already been located in the same building as the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool*,<sup>121</sup> the various initiatives that had been operational back then were described as a loose body of independent organisations with no central management. Thus in order to improve the effective administration of these and any future initiatives, De Beukelaer's Management Committee announced its plan to introduce a '*higher level of management of social organisation in which managers and members of each*

<sup>120</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>121</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. –Sociale Actie', 32.

*department would be represented*'.<sup>122</sup> Despite their announcement, the execution of this proposal was shelved because of the socio-economic effects of World War I on the productivity of the factory and the country's industries as a whole.

On 19 August 1919, whilst De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was still experiencing the economic aftershock of the Great War and adjusting to the death of its founder, MD Louis De Bie was appointed by the Management Committee to take responsibility for the company's social initiatives, a task in which he was assisted by Karel Donnez and Felix Van Ossel.<sup>123</sup> Less than a month after Louis's appointment, the committee decided on 5 September that, '*after serious discussions the management has decided that the Bakkerijschool and affiliated institutes, as well as the social organisation, should be temporarily suspended*'.<sup>124</sup> From further Management Committee meetings it is safe to deduce that this decision was influenced by the difficulties experienced in re-establishing the company's pre- World War I levels of productivity and profitability, as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken extensively invested in new materials and significantly increased the wages of its employees.<sup>125</sup> Whilst these investments were systematically implemented, the previously proposed vision of one centralised office for all of the company's social initiatives was temporarily shelved. The launch of a project of this magnitude also needed some time to materialise as its practical and logistical details had to be planned and arranged. On 24 December 1920, one year after the suspension of the company's social initiatives, Louis De Bie in a quasi-Christmas-like spirit, suggested during the Management Committee meeting that they '*do something for the workers*', and announced the introduction of the company's newly devised system of welfare initiatives, which would fall under the directorship of Eduard De Bie, who would be assisted by Rudolf Frijters. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Management Committee unanimously decided to give the initiative a test run of one year, which in affect turned out to be six.<sup>126</sup>

On 1 January 1921, eight days after Eduard De Bie's announcement, the newly formed Secretariat for Social Welfare distributed the first issue of its organ *Arbeid Adelt*, and officially opened the doors of its offices to the company's personnel. Initially the office of the Secretariat was open for consultation after work from 5 to 6 pm for male employees every

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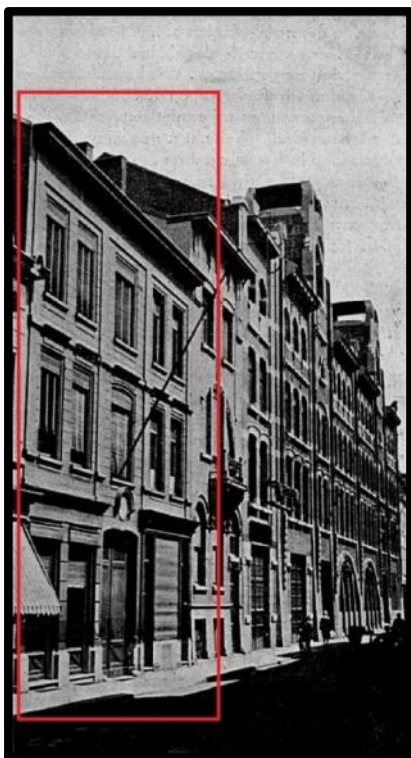
<sup>122</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Sociale Organisatie of Maatschappelijke Inriching van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.

<sup>123</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24December 1920, Vergadering gehouden den 19 Augst 1919, 26.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, Vergadering gehouden den 5de September 1919, 28-9.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-39.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, Vergadering gehouden den 24 December 1920, 39.



**Figure 49: The Secretariat for Social Welfare.** Retrieved from, *De Schakel*, Vijfde Jaargang 1955, Nr. 52, np.

Monday, and from 5 to 6 pm for female employees every Wednesday, but over the years these set days and times regularly changed.<sup>127</sup> In theory, and to some extent in practice, this nerve centre for social welfare became the connection between the factory's 'brain' and its 'muscles', as in the company's hierarchical management structure it was positioned between the factory's upper management and its workforce, conveying the thoughts or feelings of the one to the other. The introduction of the Secretariat was a clear deviation from the previous system in place during Eduard's lifetime, when the organisation of social initiatives was directed by the Management Committee itself. Instead, the factory's Secretariat for Social Welfare was in charge of devising, conceiving and managing all of the proposed initiatives and would then subsequently report to the Management Committee. The complexity of planning and structuring these different

initiatives by the Secretariat was regularly characterised by logistical difficulties, such as establishing a consultation hour that was suitable for all employees. Because of the system in place at the factory whereby employees finishing work at four different hours as a result of the implementation of the 48-hour week and 8-hour working day in 1921, this proved to be virtually impossible.<sup>128</sup> Despite encountering such logistical hurdles, the Secretariat did succeed in launching a whole array of different services from their offices at *Lange Kievitstraat* 105-107. Its success was largely due to the efforts of Rudolf Frijters, a tall broad-shouldered figure, who, besides being in charge of the daily management of the Secretariat, also served as the sole writer and editor-in-chief of its magazine *Arbeid Adelt*.<sup>129</sup>

As the mouthpiece of the Secretariat for Social Welfare, *Arbeid Adelt* was used to communicate with the employees of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. Initially every 15 days, and after its first year of publication once every month, the magazine, printed in the company's

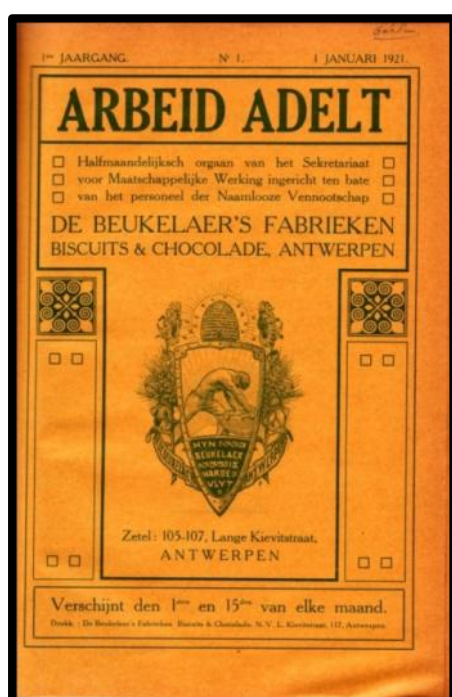
<sup>127</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>128</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 14, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.; (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24December 1920. Vergadering gehouden den 24 December 1920, 39.

<sup>129</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 12, 'Heer Rudolf Frijters, Hoofdopsteller van "Arbeid Adelt" met de groep der afdeeling, en bureeloversten en bedienden', 185.



official colour scheme of yellow and green was handed out free at the entrance of the factory when employees returned home after a long day's work.<sup>130</sup> Each issue commenced with a table of contents followed by a section called *Tijding van het Secretariaat* (News from the Secretariat), which listed any news concerning the company's various initiatives, services and events, and was continued on the second last page. This particular section thus informed the company's employees about new initiatives and projects occurring at the factory, and reported on past or future events.



**Figure 50: The company magazine *Arbeid Adelt*.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1.

The large majority of the magazine's content consisted of articles that explicitly dictated how the factory's employees should live and behave, in a series of special columns for 'parents', 'men', 'women', and finally 'boys and girls'. The proposed 'code of conduct' of these columns discussed topics such as, 'how to teach a child to obey parents',<sup>131</sup> 'morals and religion in the raising of children',<sup>132</sup> and the 'pedagogical duty of parents in the household',<sup>133</sup> for parents; 'restoring the desire for labour' and 'the quenching of thirst' for men;<sup>134</sup> 'modern dance abuse', 'the introduction of women to public life' and 'the general characteristics of the female character' for woman;<sup>135</sup> or 'do not procrastinate' and 'do not be frivolous' for boys and girls.<sup>136</sup> For reasons unknown, after its first year of publication, the separate columns for 'women' and

'men' were removed from *Arbeid Adelt* by the Secretariat, but those directed at 'boys and girls' and 'parents' remained as a monthly feature in its further issues.

Besides these columns that were directed at specific groups of employees, *Arbeid Adelt* also conveyed more general 'advice' and social criticism to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's personnel in its columns on 'outlooks on life', 'knowledge of life' and 'practical knowledge of life'.

<sup>130</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 12, 'Zeer belangrijk bericht', 192.

<sup>131</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 24, 'Ouders en Kinderen', 290.

<sup>132</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 12, 'Inhoudstafel', 201.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 24, 'Mannen', 290.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Vrouwen', 289.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Jongens, Meisjes', 289.

These columns discussed topics such as ‘how we should live’,<sup>137</sup> ‘people who are not civilised’,<sup>138</sup> ‘our decreased working hours and the use of our leisure time’,<sup>139</sup> or ‘which sign should be hung up above every pub’.<sup>140</sup> The latter columns contained the same paternalistic undertones that conveyed strongly conformist ideas and social criticism.

The paternalistic quasi-controlling tone of the content of most of the magazine’s articles is reminiscent of that of the factory’s earlier female division, and was thus not an entirely new approach by the company’s management in engaging with its employees. Some articles in *Arbeid Adelt* did, however, break this mould and offered more neutral advice to employees by addressing certain health issues such as ‘the dangers of nicotine’,<sup>141</sup> or encouraging employees to save,<sup>142</sup> albeit still with some paternalistic connotations attached to them. The general tone of *Arbeid Adelt* was thus overtly controlling and paternalistic, and the magazine was unmistakably used by the Secretariat for Social Welfare to dictate to De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s employees its proposed model of correct conduct at home, in public and at the workplace.

The course, content and style of *Arbeid Adelt* took a dramatic turn from January 1925 onwards. In its fifth year in print it was reported that Rudolf Frijters was allocated six additional writers to assist with the publication.<sup>143</sup> For unclear reasons, the magazine itself was redesigned and the former paternalistic tone that had been so embedded in the content of *Arbeid Adelt* disappeared. Despite the odd article that was somewhat reminiscent of the magazine’s previous character, the large majority of *Arbeid Adelt*’s content now consisted of light amusing, quasi-trivial information, and it even published a joke or two. It also contained weekly cultural features informing its readership about Flemish poets, writers, sculptures, painters and landmarks.<sup>144</sup> Despite this change from a paternalistic to a more neutral and didactic company publication, *Arbeid Adelt* continued to feature as the mouthpiece of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s Secretariat for Social Welfare.

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<sup>137</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 24, ‘Levenskunde’, 292.

<sup>138</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 12, ‘Inhoudstafel’, 191.

<sup>139</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 24, ‘Levenskunde’, 292.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Levensbeshouwingen’, 290.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Mannen’, 290.

<sup>142</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 12, ‘Levenskunst’, 191.

<sup>143</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 1, ‘Ze zijn met zeven’, 3.

<sup>144</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 12, ‘Inhoudstafel’, np.

Besides telling employees how to conduct themselves, *Arbeid Adelt* conveyed vast amount of valuable information about the company's internal CSR policy that makes possible a detailed understanding of the different initiatives occurring at the factory during this period.

#### 4.2.1. Employee welfare initiatives

Much like during the company's earlier period, the majority of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's internal CSR policy covered employee welfare, and on 15 January 1921 did the Secretariat for Social Welfare announce a new and revised system of the company's Society for Mutual Assistance, known as its *Steuninstelling* (Relief Fund).<sup>145</sup> Although this new system had clearly been built upon the foundations of the factory's Society for Mutual Assistance, it can be considered as a general improvement on its predecessor as it did not automatically force employees to subscribe, was free of charge with no fixed fees to pay, and available to all employees working at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken male, female, young and old. Many of these services were also made available to, or specifically directed towards, the member's relatives,<sup>146</sup> a previously absent advantage that must have been an important deciding factor for many employees to join the fund.

After the Secretariat for Social Welfare had determined the rules and regulations as well as received and processed all of its subscriptions from the company's interested employees, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Relief Fund was launched on 15 April 1921. No fewer than 960 employees, roughly representing 96 percent of the company's personnel, signed up.<sup>147</sup> Those employees who failed to meet the Relief Fund's registration deadline of 10 April had to wait until the Secretariat announced its next date of registration, an event that generally occurred every four months. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees thus at once had access to a variety of benefits, the largest and by far the most popular and developed of which was the Relief Fund's sick fund.

The benefits offered by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's new sick fund were similar to those previously offered by the Society for Mutual Assistance. The use of the new sick fund,

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<sup>145</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 2, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>146</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'De Geldelijke Steun door het Beheer onzer Fabriek Kosteloos aan zijn Personeel Verleend', 49-51.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

however, was entirely free; membership was not compulsory for employees, and more importantly its services also extended to members of the family.<sup>148</sup>

The medical service made available by the sick fund allowed all unmarried men and women, married women and their children (excluding their husbands) and married men and their wife and children free medical care when making use of one of a list of doctors who concluded an agreement with the factory. This list contained both General Practitioners as well as a wide variety of specialists, most of whom were stationed around Antwerp and its surrounding suburbs. If a member consulted his or her own doctor who was not associated with the factory, he or she would still receive a compensation of 3 to 4 Bfr. but the difference on the medical bill had to come from the member's own pocket.<sup>149</sup> This list of doctors grew from 150 in 1921<sup>150</sup> to 220 in November 1923,<sup>151</sup> and was constantly adapted throughout the years, as new doctors were added and others were removed. For any pharmaceutical products needed, members only paid a maximum of 1 Bfr. for each prescription.<sup>152</sup> De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's medical service for its personnel was further expanded in September 1924, when the Secretariat for Social Welfare introduced an additional operation fund. After a change in the regulations and tariffs for the free treatment of workers at hospitals, the Secretariat made an arrangement with the St. Vincentius hospital in Antwerp that saw the factory's sick fund pay half of the costs of any operation for its members, and an undefined 'favourable' tariff for operations on his or her relatives who were covered.<sup>153</sup> Any accident that occurred whilst working was also insured by the factory, and any costs incurred were repaid, but only after the factory had launched an investigation into the cause of the accident and had ruled on the validity of the claim.<sup>154</sup> This investigation was thus still not conducted by an independent body and the outcome could be influenced by the willingness of the factory to admit guilt, or to pay out the necessary compensation. From as early as 1923 those employees who were not

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<sup>148</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'De Geldelijke Steun door het Beheer onzer Fabriek Kosteloos aan zijn Personeel Verleend', 49-51.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Genees- en Artsenijkundige Dienst', 50-1.

<sup>150</sup> (EHC), *Tijding van het Secretariaat, Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 13, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>151</sup> (EHC), *Tijding van het Secretariaat, Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 11, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>152</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Genees- en Artsenijkundige Dienst', 50-1.

<sup>153</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 9, 'Het Operatiefonds, een nieuwe maatschappelijke steuninstelling', 129-30.

<sup>154</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Steun Bij Werkongeval', 51.

members of the Relief Fund were automatically insured for accidents on the factory floor, and the same investigation was used to determine the outcome.<sup>155</sup>

Besides these medical and pharmaceutical services, the sick fund also offered monetary compensation for those members who were unable to work because of illness. The Relief Fund's members were divided into two categories, the first of which consisted of unmarried employees, married employees without children, married employees with children older than 16 years, and married women whose husbands were still alive. Those members who were part of this group received a third of their monthly wage during the first three months of their illness, and a sixth of their wage the following three months. The Secretariat also determined that for the first three months the smallest payment by the sick fund for this particular group was to be no less than 4 Bfr., and the following three months 3 Bfr., per working day. The second category of employees consisted of men and widows with children under 16 years, and unmarried members who were breadwinners for their parents and/or brothers or sisters under the age of 16 years, i.e. those members who carried a greater financial responsibility because of dependence on them by others. For this particular group half of the employee's wage was paid during the first three months and a quarter of the wage during the three following months. The smallest payment per working day for this group was determined to be no less than 5 Bfr. during the first three months and no less than 4 Bfr. for the following three months.<sup>156</sup> Although those members who earned less than the minimum amount paid out a day, or those who had a greater financial responsibility, would thus benefit from this particular provision, the overall amount paid out by the new sick fund in case of illness was considerably less than that offered by the company's previous Society for Mutual Assistance. The sick fund also only paid the predetermined remuneration after the third day of the member's illness, and not the second day of the illness, as had been the case with the previous system.<sup>157</sup> Despite these changes, the sick fund was one of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's most used services, and the number of employees receiving paid sick leave over the recorded years was considerable.

An analysis of the data recorded in *Arbeid Adelt* on the number of members who had made use of the sick fund reveals a peculiar trend that needs some further explanation. Despite the steady increase in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's personnel, the average annual number of

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<sup>155</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'Steun Bij Werkongeval', 150.

<sup>156</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Steun bij Ziekte', 50.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

employees who received sick leave decreased considerably from 58 in 1921 to 25 in 1926. This significant drop could be linked to the Secretariat for Social Welfare penalising those members who did not follow the correct procedures when ill, often an overly complex and meticulous process, as well as implementing preventative provisions that tried to limit abuse of its system. It was noted in *Arbeid Adelt* that a large number of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees were rather lax when it came to following the prescribed rules and procedures set out by the Secretariat, and often knowingly or unknowingly abused the sick fund by making unnecessary doctor's appointments, or staying at home when they could work.<sup>158</sup> This alleged misconduct and abuse by members reached such proportions that the factory even decided to hire a trained nurse, who was appointed to make regular rounds, visiting all the ill females and children who were on sick leave,<sup>159</sup> after a provision had already been instituted in 1921 to visit all the sick male employees.<sup>160</sup> Despite these strict regulations De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's sick fund did, however, provide its services to a significant number of people as by February 1923, two years after its formation, it was noted that it had covered the medical care of approximately 2 000 employees and family members.<sup>161</sup>

Besides the sick fund, the previous pension fund was also reintroduced to the factory's employees by the Secretariat for Social Welfare. This type of financial assistance offered to elderly members of the Relief Fund was not, however, determined by the contemporary criterion of age, but rather by the physical ability of its member to work. If an employee felt unable to carry on working, he or she would submit an application, after which the physical ability of the employee in question was subject to an investigation by the factory.<sup>162</sup> When a employee was assessed as no longer being fit to carry on working, he or she was eligible for the pension and would receive a monthly amount that needed to be collected at the Secretariat's office on the last day of each month.<sup>163</sup> Initially this annual amount paid by the factory for male employees was 1 200 Bfr.. For female employees the amount was considerably less, as they would only receive an annual pension of 900 Bfr.<sup>164</sup> Three years later in September 1923 the Secretariat decided to raise the amount for pensions from 900 Bfr. to 1 200 Bfr. for female employees, and from 1 200 Bfr. to 1 800 Bfr. for male

<sup>158</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 9, 'Het Operatiefonds, een nieuwe maatschappelijke steuninstelling', 129.

<sup>159</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>160</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 20, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>161</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 2, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>162</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'De Steun bij Ouderdom', 152.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'De Steun bij Ouderdom', 51.



employees.<sup>165</sup> Despite this substantial rise, the initial inequality in payment between male and female employees had thus even further increased in that the previous difference of 300 Bfr. had doubled to 600 Bfr. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's pensioners, as well as their children under the age of 16 (probably a rare occurrence), could also make use of the Relief Fund's free medical and pharmaceutical care.<sup>166</sup> The number of employees who received such old age support from the company's Relief Fund slowly grew from 22 in 1921 to 37 in 1926, but any information regarding the exact amount which the Relief Fund paid out annually to its pensioners is not available.

The financial assistance offered by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken to those employees who were no longer able to work extended beyond merely offering them a monthly pension. When a pensioner passed away, his or her relatives still received an annual lump sum. To the widow and/or the parents, or children under the age of 16, for whom the deceased pensioner was the breadwinner, the Relief Fund paid an annual amount of 600 Bfr.,<sup>167</sup> which three years later was increased to 900 Bfr.,<sup>168</sup> as well as a once-off payment of 200 Bfr. plus an additional 25 Bfr. per child under the age of 16. The families of those employees who passed away while still working at the factory were also not left in the cold, but instead received a once-off payment of 200 Bfr. plus the additional 25 Bfr. per child under 16.<sup>169</sup> By 1923 this payment was only applicable to employees who had been members of the Relief Fund for more than a year.<sup>170</sup> It was reported that, during the six-year period between 1921 and 1926, the Relief Fund had paid out a total of 26 such grants to the families of its deceased members, but any further specifications or exact figures were never noted.

From June 1923 onwards the relatives of any employee working at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken who served as the sole breadwinner for his or her family were also further assisted by the Relief Fund with a number of specific grants and services that tried to alleviate the family's strained financial situation. When a member was responsible for maintaining his or her parents, children or wife, the Relief Fund offered an additional number of benefits besides the usual compensation in case of illness, under its special parents, widows and orphans fund.<sup>171</sup> When one of the member's parents fell ill, they could make use of the Relief Fund's free

<sup>165</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 9, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>166</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'De Steun bij Ouderdom', 152.

<sup>167</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'De Steun bij Ouderdom', 51.

<sup>168</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 9, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>169</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Steun bij Overlijden', 51.

<sup>170</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'De Steun bij Overlijden', 152

<sup>171</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 6, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

medical care, and when their breadwinner passed away, they received the normal support of 200 Bfr., which was further increased by 25 Bfr. for every father and/or mother and every brother and/or sister under 16 who had been financially dependent on the deceased, as well as in the case of the widow of a pensioner an annual amount of 600 Bfr., later raised to 900 Bfr..<sup>172</sup> The same annual payment was also awarded to a widow whose husband worked at the factory had passed away. In addition, the widow of the deceased also received free medical care for herself and her children as well as the Relief Fund's grant for Holy Communion, a benefit that will be clarified later.<sup>173</sup> It is interesting to that male widowers whose wives had worked at the factory and had served as the sole breadwinner in the family were excluded from receiving such special benefits. Orphans whose father and mother or brother or sister who worked at the factory had passed away received the normal 200 Bfr. plus 25 Bfr per orphan under the age of 16, and those orphans who did not have any breadwinner after theirs had passed away additionally receive an annual amount of 600 Bfr, later increased to 900 Bfr., until they reached the age of 16. They also were further eligible for free medical care while they were under the age of 16 and received the Relief's Fund's Holy Communion support. Those employees whose brothers or sister were orphans younger than 14 additionally received a child-support grant to the value of 10 Bfr. per month for one child, 20 Bfr. for two children, 25 Bfr. for four, 30 Bfr. for five, and 35 Bfr. for six.<sup>174</sup> Concrete data regarding the payment of such special provision for parents, widows and orphans were, however, never recorded in *Arbeid Adelt*, and it is difficult to determine how often the Relief Fund actually needed to pay out these grants.

The service package offered by the Relief Fund contained a further series of payments to its member at various, generally more joyful, occasions occurring in their personal life. This series of specific grants consisted of a maximum of 250 Bfr. for any new-born child of an employee, an amount which was still paid out to those employees who unfortunately gave birth to a still-born baby, 200 Bfr. for the holy communion of a child of an employee, usually paid out during the months of April or May, and finally 200 Bfr. for those employees who got married, an amount that was increased by a further 100 Bfr. when two employees working at the factory married one another.<sup>175</sup> It was stipulated in the Relief Fund's statutes, however,

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<sup>172</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 6, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'Ouders- Weduwen- en Weezenfonds', 156.

<sup>173</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'Ouders- Weduwen- en Weezenfonds', 156.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Steun bij Huwelijk', 50.

that its matrimonial grant was not applicable to those members who married a divorced partner, or who were divorcees themselves, and this specific restriction could be interpreted as an indirect promotion of a 'moral standard' amongst De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's personnel by the Secretariat.<sup>176</sup> From its start in April 1921 until December 1926 the Relief Fund paid out a total of 309 child-birth, 121 holy communion and 483 wedding grants. As with so many of the Relief Fund's benefits, from as early as October 1923 onwards it seems that these grants were available only to those employees who had been a member of the factory's Relief Fund for at least one year.<sup>177</sup>

Similar to the system in place during World War I, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Relief Fund had also offered unemployment grants for those members who were temporarily laid off as a result of the wide fluctuations in Belgium's post-World War I economy. Such a period of unemployment was compensated for by the Secretariat with a grant of 4 or 5 Bfr. per working day, depending on the financial responsibility the unemployed member had towards others.<sup>178</sup> The first time that this grant was issued by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was during the period of 27 June to 2 July 1921. This brief period of unemployment was reportedly caused by a crisis in trade and industry that saw the price of flour decrease dramatically. This decrease meant its availability on the markets became scarce, as flour traders waited for a more profitable rate to sell their product, subsequently halting or reducing the supply to their clients.<sup>179</sup> As one of the key ingredients in manufacturing biscuits is flour, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was also affected by this particular crisis and in order to save costs, the company's upper management decided that some of its employees should temporarily be laid off until the industry had once again restored itself. Thus during the six days in the summer month of June, 36 young employees were forced to stay at home and receive their daily compensation. Two days later, from 4 until 9 July, a further 46 young employees were asked to reduce their work week by one day.<sup>180</sup> Besides this reported incident in the Summer of 1921, no further cases of paying out such an unemployment grant were noted in *Arbeid Adelt*. The occurrence of other similar cases, however, should not completely be ruled out.

From 1 December 1922 the Secretariat also announced the launch of its *Soldatenfonds* (Soldiers Fund), which was a new initiative directed at the company's 18-year-old male

<sup>176</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'De Steun bij Huwelijk', 151.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Steuninstellingen', 150-1.

<sup>178</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Steun bij Werkloosheid', 51.

<sup>179</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 14, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

employees who had been working in the factory for two years or more and who were conscripted by the Belgian army. For each working day recruits received a payment of 1 Bfr. for a bachelor and 2 Bfr. for the breadwinner of a household for the duration of their service to their country. This daily sum had to be collected by the conscript's family on the last day of the month at the Secretariat's office.<sup>181</sup> Soldiers who served as the breadwinners to widowed mothers would received 3 Bfr. per working day.<sup>182</sup> The number of employees who received this payment ranged between seven and 19.

An entirely new and unprecedented benefit introduced by the Secretariat for Social Welfare was De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's savings fund. This initiative allowed employees to deposit a self-determined amount of their wage (though a minimum of 5 Bfr was stipulated)<sup>183</sup> as savings into the factory's specially created fund, which was administered by the Management Committee and the Secretariat for Social Welfare. Employees received an annual interest of six percent, which was automatically transferred into their personal savings account.<sup>184</sup> When employees wanted to withdraw money from their savings account, they had to first hand in a written notice to the Secretariat on Saturday and were only able to receive the requested amount the following Tuesday.<sup>185</sup> When an employee who saved in this way passed away, the balance in his or her account was transferred to their relatives. In case an employee ended his employment at the factory, members received their savings, although it was noted that in special cases the Secretariat could allow a member to keep saving his or her money in the company's saving fund.<sup>186</sup> This particular initiative was launched on 15 April 1921<sup>187</sup> and on the opening day De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees deposited 2 070 Bfr. of their wages into the savings fund, an amount that increased to 12 590 Bfr. on the second day.<sup>188</sup> By December 1926 the last recording of the saving fund was made in *Arbeid Adelt* and the total saved amount stood at a rather impressive 1 825 518 Bfr.,<sup>189</sup> a clear indicator that this initiative fulfilled its specific need. Over the years its membership also grew considerably as in July 1921 it consisted of roughly 200 members,<sup>190</sup> while two years later in February 1923

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<sup>181</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 12, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>182</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 6, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>183</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'Spaarkas', 155.

<sup>184</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>185</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'Spaarkas', 155.

<sup>186</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 24, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>187</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>188</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 9, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>189</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 12, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>190</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 14, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

this number had doubled to 400 members,<sup>191</sup> representing approximately 28 percent of the company's employees at the time. Although the Secretariat had advertised this initiative as an opportunity for employees to *'save for clothes, shoes etc. save for winter supplies, save for your parents or children, save for something that can be needed, useful or pleasant to you, save for a book, save for an outing, for a trip, save for the sad or happy occurrences in life, save for your old age'*,<sup>192</sup> the savings fund may have been started for more practical reasons, such as giving the company access to capital to invest further and/or directly finance its wide variety of CSR initiatives. Regardless of the exact motives for its existence, the fund allowed employees to save part of their wages and 'rewarded' their efforts with an annual interest.

Besides financially benefiting from the savings fund's interest rate, employees working at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken could also earn a 'bonus' from the company's profit-sharing system. This initiative was launched in May 1923 and 'rewarded' those employees who had worked at the factory longer than one year by awarding them a share of the company's profits. Although the exact amount or rate of the employee's share was never specified, it was determined by the general performance of the factory, as well as the number of years that the employee had been employed at the factory.<sup>193</sup> The employee's personal performance (the somewhat vague criterion of merit), as well as his or her 'conduct and moral behaviour' were also reportedly considered. The amount based on the company's profit-sharing scheme was paid out twice a year to its members, once in September for the winter period and once in March for the summer period,<sup>194</sup> and together with the saving fund it formed part of a new type of direct monetary benefit.

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's extensive employee welfare policy had thus evolved significantly since the days of the company's Society for Mutual Assistance. In addition to such old initiatives as its sick, pension and unemployment fund, the Secretariat for Social Welfare further offered a number of new benefits to its employees, such as its soldier and savings fund and its system of profit sharing. Many of the Secretariat's services and benefits had also evolved beyond merely providing services to the factory's employees, as a large number of its benefits offered specific assistance to the family of the employee. Many of the Relief Fund's early grants and services thus gave cognisance to the importance of family, and acknowledged the different existing family structures of its members by offering them special

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<sup>191</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 2, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>192</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>193</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 5, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>194</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 10, 'Arbeidsaandeel', 150.

rates and benefits, although there were discriminatory criteria, such as in the case of pensions, widows and matrimonial support.

#### 4.2.2. Leisure initiatives

The Secretariat for Social Welfare also introduced a number of new leisure initiatives that clearly emulated De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's previous form of encouraging 'constructive' pastimes. Such new initiatives, in tandem with a number of old initiatives that had been reintroduced or further expanded, were described by the Secretariat as forms of '*healthy, pleasant and ennobling recreation*'.<sup>195</sup> The first leisure initiative that was reintroduced to employees was the company's music department, and its brass band and female choir once again created an appropriate ambiance at a variety of company events.

The actual formation of the music department was sluggish, however, as the Secretariat for Social Welfare struggled to find a suitable hour when all interested employees could meet and practise together. By August 1921, after receiving enough applications from employees and finally managing to establish a suitable roster for its members, the Secretariat announced the formation of its separate male and female choirs, with the further possibility of introducing a large mixed and a smaller soloist choir in the future.<sup>196</sup>



**Figure 51: The male choir of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 5, voorpagina.

The female choir was the first to materialise, quickly followed by the male choir, and once all organisational problems had been overcome, the membership of both initiatives grew considerably.<sup>197</sup> These two choirs practised on separate days of the week and its members came together after they had ended their shift to spend 45 minutes of their time learning

<sup>195</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 12, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>196</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 16, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>197</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 18, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.



one song per session.<sup>198</sup> Despite the initial interest among employees for the separate choirs, the launch of the De Beukelaer's mixed choir in October 1921<sup>199</sup> was by far the more popular division of the factory's music department and its membership greatly outnumbered that of any other musical initiative. The company's mixed choir consisted of 150 members by July 1923,<sup>200</sup> and after a new call by the Secretariat to increase its membership, this number doubled to 300 members in August,<sup>201</sup> and eventually reached approximately 500 members in October,<sup>202</sup> roughly representing 28 percent of employees that year. To what extent all these members actually attended their monthly practice sessions at the factory's new recreational hall is not known. The mixed choir's reported popularity could possibly be linked to it being one of the few societies organised by the Secretariat for Social Welfare which both males and females could join, and where the two sexes could meet and mingle after their shift had ended. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees might thus have considered this form of mixed recreation a more enjoyable and exciting way of spending their after-hours time at work.

The previously proposed soloist choir, as well as a choral choir for young women, and a concerto group were also eventually introduced by the Secretariat in 1922,<sup>203</sup> but any further references apart from their participation in a number of company events are few and far between, and any information that does appear is not really illuminating. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's different choirs performed at events organised by the factory throughout the year, and by 1924 their repertoire consisted of over 50 different songs.<sup>204</sup>

The music department was further extended with the re-launch of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's brass band. The band was re-introduced by the Secretariat for Social Welfare in June 1922, and the old sixteenth-century carnivalesque outfits were re-distributed amongst its new members.<sup>205</sup> Despite the previous popularity of this initiative, the factory's new brass band consisted of only 29 members in December 1923,<sup>206</sup> a number that barely represented 2 percent of the company's employees at the time. The interest amongst male employees for this particular initiative had clearly decreased as its membership was half the size of the

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<sup>198</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 19, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>199</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 20, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>200</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 7, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 10, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>205</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 7, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>206</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 12, 'De Inhuldiging onzer Harmonie', 183.

previous group during Eduard's lifetime. Even though De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's new brass band was unable to match the success of its predecessor, they still performed at many celebrations and events organised by the factory, but public performances outside of the factory, which had previously been so popular, were no longer presented.

In an attempt to expand the music department even further the Secretariat for Social Welfare also asked its employees who played violin, piano, or any other snare or wooden instruments to join the symphonic department<sup>207</sup> and decided to start a class that taught its male employees to read music.<sup>208</sup> These initiatives, together with the possible formation of a concerto group, a soloist choir and a number of musical classes, were also referred to in *Arbeid Adelt*,<sup>209</sup> but little is actually known about such smaller divisions, and their existence is sometimes in doubt. Throughout its existence the Secretariat for Social Welfare had thus managed to expand upon the foundations of the De Beukelaer's previous musical department and had revitalised old as well as started new musical initiatives that could be joined by any member of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken for free. Music as a form of after-work leisure was thus clearly promoted by the Secretariat for Social Welfare and formed an important part of the company's CSR policy.

In September 1921 the members of the factory's new drama society, another old initiative that had been revitalised by the Secretariat, also began to rehearse, and all employees who were interested in exploring their theatrical talents were encouraged to join this group.<sup>210</sup> By March the following year it was reported that the society already consisted of 50 members,<sup>211</sup> roughly the same number as the company's old group, which represented approximately four percent of the company's employees during that year. Not much changed about De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's drama society besides its demographic makeup. Whilst during Eduard's lifetime it had consisted of an equal number of men and woman, the drama society was now more popular amongst the company's female employees, as the Secretariat repeatedly attempted to entice male employees to join the society.<sup>212</sup> After its relaunch De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's drama society was also further expanded, with a special elocution

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<sup>207</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 7, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>208</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>209</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 12, 'Onze Maatschappelijke Instellingen', 192.

<sup>210</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 19, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>211</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 17 Maart 1922, 'Eene Private instelling van maatschappelijke werken', np.

<sup>212</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 20, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 23, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

class for female employees,<sup>213</sup> but again hardly any references to the latter initiative could be found.



**Figure 52: The gymnastics group of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate, Antwerpen.** Retrieved from, (PC) Koningsveld, Fotocollectie.

Unlike the music or drama department that had been reintroduced, the factory's gymnastics group was an entirely new leisure initiative that was perceived as a respectable, healthy and noble form of recreation. The Secretariat for Social Welfare decided to create two groups of gymnasts for boys under the age of military service, whilst for those men older than 18 an inquiry into their level of interest was made, but the group seems never to have materialised.<sup>214</sup> The initiative received a fair amount of interest from the factory's younger employees, and its members were divided into several groups that exercised on three days of the week for one hour after work.<sup>215</sup> By March 1922 the company's gymnastics group consisted of approximately 40 young boys,<sup>216</sup> who during the summer months, dressed in their white outfits with a yellow and green band wrapped around their waists, exercised outside on the factory square in the afternoon. During the colder winter months they moved inside to the 'gymnastics hall',<sup>217</sup> which contained a large variety of specialised equipment such as a double bar, rack, sports ladder, halters and rings.<sup>218</sup> Besides practising various gymnastic exercises, the groups also occasionally participated in other sport such as athletics, swimming and soccer, but these types of exercises seem to have been rather rare.

Although the Beukelaer's Fabrieken's gymnastics group had thus mainly been created by the Secretariat to provide after-work recreation for its younger male employees, joining the factory's gymnastics group had additional benefits for both its members as well as the factory

<sup>213</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 23, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>214</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 14, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>215</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 17, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>216</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 17 Maart 1922, 'Eene Private instelling van maatschappelijke werken', np.

<sup>217</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 21, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>218</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 22, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

itself, as it prepared them for military training during their time of conscription into the Belgian army. If a recruit was fit enough, he could get a shorter period of conscription after passing the Ministry of Defence's exam for physical fitness. All males of the age of 18 were allowed to apply and those who passed the exam would receive a reduction of two months from their stay in the army.<sup>219</sup> Joining the company's gymnastics group was thus advantageous for those boys who wanted to shorten their stay in the army, as well as for the company itself, which could then possibly reemploy their experienced workers two months earlier than usual.



Figure 53: An announcement in *Arbeid Adelt* for a company festivity. Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 2, 24-5.

From 1921 onwards De Beukelaer's Fabrieken thus once again offered a very diverse array of leisure initiatives to its employees to join after work. These various recreational groups displayed their skills to their fellow employees at a number of events and festivities that were organised by the Secretariat for Social Welfare throughout the years.

Such events took place during the weekends on a Saturday or a Sunday;<sup>220</sup> they generally commenced in the afternoon and often lasted until the early evening hours. Some of these events, however, were accessible only to employees who were members of one or more of the company's departments or societies, a criterion that would thus 'reward' those who responded to the call by the Secretariat to actively participate in the factory's extramural activities.<sup>221</sup> Employees who felt indifferent about the Secretariat's efforts would be 'punished' by being excluded from such festivities. This particular restriction was not always the rule, however, as an equal number of events were also open to all of the factory's interested employees.

<sup>219</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 15, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.  
<sup>220</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 2, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.  
<sup>221</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 9, 'Openluchtvoorstelling', 146.

Such events during the weekend were either hosted at the factory's new recreational room,<sup>222</sup> the theatre *Vrede Sint Willibrordus* at *Pastorijstraat 23* in Antwerp,<sup>223</sup> or the De Beukelaer's family estate *Het Torenhof* in Brasschaat.<sup>224</sup> These festive afternoons of music, theatre and gymnastic displays occurred regularly throughout the years from late 1921 onwards, and represented an opportunity for the factory's employees to socialise in a more relaxed environment by either participating in, or simply attending, the celebrations of the day. They were also attended by the Secretariat for Social Welfare's management, or in some instances by members the Management Committee itself, and the physical presence of these authorities must have certainly imposed some constraints amongst employees not to act in too uninhibited a way. The extensive repertoire of the musical and drama departments, or the diverse and daring exercises of the factory's gymnastics group, or any combination of the above, would form the entertainment during special festivities such as the celebration of the company's decorated members, the annual prize giving or the company's various cultural evenings. These events were hosted at either *Vrede Sint Willibrordus* or the company's recreational hall.

Company events organised at *Het Torenhof* for the various recreational groups or on certain special occasions were also popular, and occurred during the summer months when the season's weather accommodated the use of the extensive and diverse spaces of the estate. Boarding a large bus or tram that had been organised by the factory, the invited employees were driven to the suburb of Brasschaat to spend the day at the green estate where Jeanne and the young Edward resided.<sup>225</sup> Besides the usual performances by the various invited recreational societies, these excursions also consisted of a number of other events such as extensive walks around the estate's forest and gardens, a visit to its maze, speeches and prize-giving ceremonies, a catered meal and a drink,<sup>226</sup> and once even a broadcast of a radio concert live from the Eifel Tower in Paris.<sup>227</sup> Although the company's brass band, choir and drama society were all occasionally invited by Jeanne to visit the estate, outings to *Het Torenhof* were for the most part reserved for the members of the gymnastics group, who

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<sup>222</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, nr. 11, 'Kunst-Concert', 169.

<sup>223</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, nr. 2, 'Gemengd Kunstfeest', 24-5.

<sup>224</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 9, 'Openluchtvoorstelling', 146.

<sup>225</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 10, 'Kunst- en Natuurschoon', 160-161.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 7, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.



came around at least once a year to practise their skills and host tournaments amongst themselves.<sup>228</sup>

An entirely new, and somewhat unusual, type of leisure initiative organised by the Secretariat for Social Welfare was De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's *Tentoonstelling voor Kunst and Huisvleit in Huis* (Exhibition for Art and Home Industry at Home). The Secretariat described the event as an opportunity for all employees, whether highly skilled or not, to display their artistic abilities or interests outside of the fairly monotonous day-to-day work routine of the factory. This special exhibition would also simultaneously commemorate the late Eduard's passing and celebrate the Secretariat for Social Welfare's first year of existence.<sup>229</sup> The Secretariat's call was answered by a significant number of employees, and De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's first Exhibition for Art and Home Industry at Home was launched on 15 March 1922, a date that symbolically coincided with Eduard's birthday.<sup>230</sup> Because of the initial success of this first exhibition in March 1922, the event was hosted for the following four consecutive years.

De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees were rather industrious in their spare time, because displayed at the exhibition were items such as bedspreads, decorative pin cushions, pillow slopes, curtains, bedside tables, table cloths, shirts, blouses, handkerchiefs, picture frames, pipe racks, bronze statues, birdcages, flower and fruit baskets, carpets, mats, stuffed animals, pinned butterflies, oil and aquarelle paintings, or chalk and pencil drawings.<sup>231</sup> During its first year the exhibition displayed only items that had been sent in by employees, but during the following four years a significant number of objects created by family members of employees were also exhibited.<sup>232</sup> In 1923 Rudolph Frijters set the right example as head of the Secretariat for Social Welfare as a certain P.A. Frijters, more than likely related to Rudolph Frijters, displayed 24 items, which did not form part of the competition.<sup>233</sup> During the same exhibition the 14 year old Edward also participated by displaying four undefined items in the category 'technical drawings and constructions'.<sup>234</sup> The following year Edward displayed a 'miniature radio receiver and transmitter',<sup>235</sup> which was used at the exhibition on

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<sup>228</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 9, 'Een Tornooi der Turners', 137-8.

<sup>229</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 23, 'Eene De Beukelaer's Tentoonstelling', 265-6.

<sup>230</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 1, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>231</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 3, 'Tentoonstellingslijst', 40-4.

<sup>232</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 3, 'Inzendingen buiten Prijskamp', 43.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup> (EHC), Anon., *De Beukelaer's Tentoonstelling voor Huisvlijt en Kunst in Huis, Heriniring aan de Plechtige Opening door zijne Exelentie R. Moyersoer Minister van Nijverheid en Arbeid, op Vrijdag 16 Maart 1923*, 16.

<sup>235</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 3, 'Radio-toestellen', 44.



Sundays to broadcast radio concerts from Paris, London, Berlin and Brussels, and apparently even recorded and broadcast a concert held at the factory.<sup>236</sup> During the company's 1925 exhibition Edward was noted to have once again exhibited a radio receiver and transmitter,<sup>237</sup> but it is not clear whether this entry was any different from that of the previous year. Besides these 'show' entries by family members of the company's management, the annual event was also fairly popular amongst the employees and their relatives, as in the first year of the exhibition there were a reported 225 contestants,<sup>238</sup> a number which grew to 270 in the third year<sup>239</sup> and 450 in the fourth year.<sup>240</sup> During the first exhibition approximately 500 items were displayed,<sup>241</sup> a number that rose to more than 700 in its third year,<sup>242</sup> and finally to 1 000 items in its fifth and final year.<sup>243</sup>

In order to set up and display this vast number of items entered by the growing number of contestants, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's annual Exhibition for Art and Home Industry at Home was set up at the factory's spacious new recreational room and was open to all factory employees after work throughout the week and on Saturday afternoon.<sup>244</sup> Those family members of employees who were curious about the crafts displayed at the exhibition could visit on Sundays, but needed to be accompanied by an employee working at the factory in order to gain access, as the exhibition was noted as not only being open for employees, but also for their family and the press.<sup>245</sup> All of the displayed items also formed part of a competition, and exhibitors had to hand in their name and employee number with their item, so that the jury could score their entrees accordingly.<sup>246</sup> Despite this competitive aspect, all contestants seem to have received some form of prize for their efforts, as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken handed out a series of diplomas, diplomas with distinction, diplomas with great distinction, diplomas with the greatest of distinction, and diplomas with the greatest of distinction and the congratulations of the jury, as well as bronze medals, silver medals and

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<sup>236</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 4, 'Eene ophefmakende Tentoonstelling', 51.

<sup>237</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 3, 'Radio-toestel', 47.

<sup>238</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Het bezoek der Pers aan onze Tentoonstelling voor Huisvlijt en Kunst in Huis', 53.

<sup>239</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 4, 'Eene ophefmakende Tentoonstelling', 51.

<sup>240</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 6, 'Diploma-uitreiking', 96.

<sup>241</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>242</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 4, 'Eene ophefmakende Tentoonstelling', 51.

<sup>243</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 3, 'Onze vijfde Tentoonstelling voor Huisvlijt en Kunst in Huis', 35.

<sup>244</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 3, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>245</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 17 Maart 1922, 'Eene Private instelling van maatschappelijke werken', np.

<sup>246</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.



Figure 54: De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolade, Antwerpen's 1926 *Tentoonstelling voor Kunst and Huisvleit in Huis*. Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 3, 35.

golden medals to the exhibitors.<sup>247</sup>

In 1924 contestants even received the value of their medal in products of the factory, a decision that was more likely influenced by the difficult economic climate of the time.<sup>248</sup>

The company's leisure initiatives introduced by the Secretariat for Social Welfare had clearly continued the tradition of De

Beukelaer's Fabrieken's earlier model of promoting 'constructive' pastimes, as old initiatives such as the brass band and the drama society were re-introduced, whilst other new initiatives were launched to expand the existing offer. Around this vast array of after-hours organisations and societies, a frequent and well-organised custom of presenting events and festivities had grown, which served as a time for employees to socialise in a more relaxed environment.

#### 4.2.3. Educational initiatives

The education of employees, whether direct or indirect, had always formed an integral part of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's internal CSR, and from 1921 onwards the Secretariat for Social Welfare launched a number of new as well as old initiatives that attempted to educate its employees in a variety of ways. One of the first educational initiatives that was introduced by the Secretariat was the factory's library, which had originally been operational for the latter part of the 1880s as an extension of the company school, and was once again upgraded and re-opened for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's personnel.

Those employees who were avid readers or just interested in picking up the occasional novel were asked to apply for membership by registering at the Secretariat's offices in *Lange Kievitstraat*. Having registered their names, employee numbers and addresses, the members received their library card in the post and could pick up the library's catalogue from the

<sup>247</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 5, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>248</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 4, 'Eene ophefmakende Tentoonstelling', 51.

office.<sup>249</sup> The library service itself was reopened on the 20 March 1921<sup>250</sup> and was noted to be rather popular amongst employees,<sup>251</sup> as its membership and assortment of books steadily grew over the years.<sup>252</sup> Although this initiative was open to both males and females, as in the case of so many initiatives, the Secretariat decided to instate separate days for men and woman to pick up their ordered books.<sup>253</sup> By 1 July 1921, three months after its opening, it was reported that the library already had more than 400 members,<sup>254</sup> representing roughly 40 percent of the De Beukelaer's employees at the time. To what extent all these members made extensive use of the library's service or just joined and never bothered to order a book, however, is not entirely clear, but by the end of its first year it was noted that approximately 6 000 books had been borrowed,<sup>255</sup> a number that can be converted to roughly a yearly average of 15 books per member. Despite this apparent success, the library did face the archetypal difficulties of such a service, as it was reported more than once that its members were negligent when it came to following the library's policy in that they tended to return their books late. This behaviour made the library implement stricter rules, and if members did not return their books on time, they were threatened with being excluded from the service.<sup>256</sup>

Three months after the factory's library had opened its doors, the company's reading facilities were further extended, when a *Leestafel* (reading table) for magazines was located at the office of the Secretariat for Social Welfare. On 1 May 1921 the reading table was officially opened and was accessible to all employees, although initially male and female employees could use the table on two separate days, a policy that eventually changed to one common day for both.<sup>257</sup> Employees at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had access to a variety of publications that would normally be rather costly for the average factory worker to subscribe to or purchase on a regular basis.<sup>258</sup> Although the reading of magazines at the table was free, employees could not take any magazines home with them.<sup>259</sup> All employees were allowed to make use of this service and they needed to climb 'only 24 steps' to reach this 'Valhalla' of

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<sup>249</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 3, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>250</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 6, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>251</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 9, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>253</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 17, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>254</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 13, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>255</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 1, 'Het Jaar dat voorbij is', 5.

<sup>256</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 15, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>257</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 9, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>258</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 16, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>259</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

glossy print and newspapers.<sup>260</sup> Here, on the first floor of the Secretariat for Social Welfare's office,<sup>261</sup> visitors could peacefully enjoy their favourite magazine whilst sipping a beverage in a 'well ventilated' room and listening to an occasional tune played on the piano.<sup>262</sup> The table's assortment of magazines consisted of approximately 30 to 40 Flemish and Dutch publications of all kinds, both illustrated as well as non-illustrated,<sup>263</sup> and were regularly updated with the latest issues. The publications covered a range of topics that included art and literature magazines, religious publications, publications on social issues, raising children, gardening and building, technical and engineering magazines, sports and illustrated magazines, and finally for the factory's female employees, publications on fashion and 'woman's issues'.<sup>264</sup>

Reading was further encouraged amongst employees by the Secretariat for Social Welfare with the formation of a reading club. Only library members were allowed to join this group and they had to send in a critique or a short review of the book they had borrowed and read. In order to stimulate employees to participate actively in this initiative diplomas, medals and small monetary gifts were awarded each year to those members who had sent in the finest reviews.<sup>265</sup> Initially this initiative seems not to have been popular,<sup>266</sup> but after a word of encouragement from the Secretariat its membership picked up some momentum.<sup>267</sup> Reading was thus clearly promoted in a variety of ways by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Secretariat for Social Welfare and was seen as an inherent part of self-education.

This call for employees to educate themselves in their spare time was also promoted in *Arbeid Adelt's* first issue, which asked all employees to join the group *Eigen Studie* (Self-study). Members of *Eigen Studie* were acquired to read the various articles available in *Arbeid Adelt* and subsequently send in their preferred quotes to the Secretariat. These thoughts and quotes would then be published with the initials of the employee who had sent them in as part of a special column in the company magazine. The Secretariat advertised this initiative under the motto '*Feed your heart and mind*', and described it as a way of advancing

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<sup>260</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 16, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>261</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 10, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>262</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 16, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>263</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>264</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 16, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>265</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 7, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>266</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 9, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>267</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 14, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

one's self-development and self-education.<sup>268</sup> Similar to the reading club, those members who had contributed the best 'thoughts' received a diploma, medal or monetary gift,<sup>269</sup> and once even a portrait of the late Eduard,<sup>270</sup> as a reward for their efforts. This initiative took a while to gain momentum, but once started it seems to have become reasonably popular with a select number of employees. *Eigen Study* can thus be interpreted as an attempt by the Secretariat to make employees read *Arbeid Adelt's* articles with their paternalistic undertones more closely and possibly implement some of their proposed rules of conduct. Very similar to *Eigen Studie* was the Secretariat's *Wedstrijd voor Zelfontwikkeling* (self-development contest), which once more called for employees to read a selected number of articles in *Arbeid Adelt*, but in this case write an essay that answered one of a number of preset questions.<sup>271</sup>

Besides the latter initiatives that attempted to stimulate self-study amongst the company's personnel, the Secretariat for Social Welfare also promoted initiatives that made use of more traditional educational forms, such as the factory's French classes. The classes were open to all men, women, boys and girls working at the factory, and commenced on 8 December 1922.<sup>272</sup> These French lessons were very popular and it was noted that students needed to be divided up into two separate classes to be able to accommodate the demand. This division once again separated men and woman into two groups, who were instructed on two different days of the week either at the Secretariat's office or at the factory's recreational room after the day's work had ended.<sup>273</sup> The French classes were taught over the course of a few months, but were eventually suspended by the summer of 1923, as the usual logistical difficulties of working in shifts made it impossible to continue conducting the classes at a consistent time.<sup>274</sup> Although the demand for the relaunching of French evening classes was reportedly great, the logistical difficulties of inconsistent hours persisted, and the Secretariat for Social Welfare was unable to re-introduce this popular initiative. Despite their inability to once again offer this service to the company's personnel, the Secretariat did advise those employees who were interested in further improving their French comprehension to visit the

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<sup>268</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Word lid van "Eigen studie"', 12.

<sup>269</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 3, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>270</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>271</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 3, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>272</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 11, 'Avondleergangen', 176.

<sup>273</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 12, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>274</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

Secretariat's office for information regarding other evening schools in the city that also offered French classes.<sup>275</sup>

Similar to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's previous courses in their female division for female supervisors and candidate supervisors, the Secretariat for Social Welfare also introduced a series of classes that emphasised the hierarchical divide on the factory floor. Whilst the company's French classes were being conducted, the Secretariat simultaneously introduced a number of 'specialised' evening classes for the company's office clerks that discussed topics such as 'The business letter, technically and psychologically considered as an art',<sup>276</sup> and 'practical tests for the synthesis of grammatical difficulties in foreign language studies'.<sup>277</sup> Despite these 'reserved' classes, the Secretariat also introduce a similar initiative that was open to all employees.

In 1923, when the winter sun set during the early hour of the evening and employees would leave work and return home in darkness, the Secretariat for Social Welfare offered an 'illuminating' initiative to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's personnel. Any interested employee could attend an hourly 'lecture' session that was illustrated with images projected on the walls of the factory's recreational hall. The topics of these evening seminars varied from art history talks on 'Greek sculptures', 'the hell of Dante', 'the Italian art cities, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Siena and Venice', and 'masters of Flemish painting Van Eyck, Memling and Wuinten Matijs', to other subjects such as 'Ancient Rome', 'volcanoes and earthquakes', 'the destruction of Pompeii and Medina', 'New York and the United States of North America', 'Belgium's Congo' and 'factories and mines'.<sup>278</sup> The Secretariat also organised one lecture that was specifically reserved for factory supervisors, discussing 'our social responsibilities'.<sup>279</sup>

The Secretariat for Social Welfare had thus significantly expanded De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's educational initiatives. Most of these attempts by the Secretariat to educate the

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<sup>275</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 10, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>276</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 12, 'Hooger Onderwijs', 193.

<sup>277</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 1, 'Hooger Onderwijs', 6.

<sup>278</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 11, 'Hoogeschooluitbreiding', 171.; *Ibid.*, 'Voordrachten over Schilder- Bouw- en Beeldhouwkunst', 175.; (EHC), *Ibid.*, 'Voordrachten over Letterkunde', 178.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 12, , 'Hoogeschooluitbreiding', 184; *Ibid.*, , 'Hoogeschooluitbreiding' 189.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 1, 'Hoogeschooluitbreiding', 10.; *Ibid.*, 'Voordrachten over Schilder- Bouw- en Beeldhouwkunst' 15.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 2, 'Hoogeschooluitbreiding', 19.; *Ibid.*, 'Hoogeschooluitbreiding', 22.

<sup>279</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 1, 'Afdeeling van de Arbeidsleiding', 11.



factory's personnel made use of indirect forms of teaching by stimulating reading and writing, and increasing general knowledge in a variety of ways. In some instances such as in the case of *Eigen Studie* and the self development contest, the Secretariat's attempts to educate the company's employees could also be interpreted as an attempt to direct them towards information on daily conduct and behaviour that the Secretariat deemed appropriate.

#### 4.2.4. The decline of the company's CSR policy

Although the first half of the 1920s can thus be described as the pinnacle of internal CSR at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, the second half was marked by a number of changes that altered and transformed its character, and marked the systematic decline of its intensity.

The earliest apparent sign of such change relates to the company magazine itself. In *Arbeid Adelt's* 1925 December issue, it was announced that from the following year the magazine would no longer be handed out to all factory employees when they left the factory's gates on their return home, but would instead only be distributed to those employees who subscribe to it.<sup>280</sup> Although *Arbeid Adelt* was still distributed for free, only those employees who had handed in their subscription before 15 January 1926 received their monthly issue from the factory's gate-keeper on the fifteenth day of each month.<sup>281</sup> This change in policy, as will be explained below, could most likely be attributed to the high cost of printing the company's rather sizable magazine for free, especially since many employees who were not particularly interested would have probably discarded it without even glancing at it. Thus, in order to save on costs, the Management Committee most likely decided to continue to distribute the magazine, but only to those employees who were considered loyal followers of *Arbeid Adelt*, i.e. those who would take the effort of actually subscribing to the magazine. Now only available to a select few, *Arbeid Adelt's* 1926 issues featured a number of prophetic articles that looming winds of change were on the horizon.

The first noteworthy change in *Arbeid Adelt* relates to one of the Relief Fund's most popular provisions, namely its medical service. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's medical service, the use of which had been free of charge for its members for the previous five years, experienced a significant adjustment in March 1926, as it was noted in that month's issue of *Arbeid Adelt* that the then current substantial increases in the fees charged by doctors and pharmacists forced the Secretariat to revise its policy. It was subsequently announced that from 1 April

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<sup>280</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 12, 'Zeer Belangrijk Bericht', 192.

<sup>281</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 8, 'Arbeid Adelt', 128.

1926 this service would no longer be free, and its members would have to pay a part of the doctor's bill themselves.<sup>282</sup> Members making use of the Relief Fund's medical service would still receive a maximum reimbursement of 4 Bfr., but would have to pay the remaining difference of the bill themselves, and for any medicine prescription the members also needed to pay 0.75 Bfr. A consultation with a General Practitioner on the factory's list of doctors was noted as costing a maximum of 5 Bfr., whilst specialists would charge a maximum of up to 8 Bfr. per consultation.<sup>283</sup> In practice this meant that members now had to pay 1 Bfr. for a consultation session with a normal General Practitioner and up to 4 Bfr. in the case of a specialist, and when members visited a doctor who was not listed, these consultation fees could not be guaranteed.<sup>284</sup> Although the cost of part of the medical service was thus still reimbursed by the Relief Fund, employees now needed to pay part of the cost themselves, a financial burden that members of the company's Relief Fund had previously not to bear. Besides this particular adjustment in the policy of the Relief Fund's medical scheme, the really significant change in the company's internal CSR occurred in December 1926.

The 'news from the Secretariat' in *Arbeid Adelt's* December issue of 1926 stated that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's male and female choir, its brass band, its classes for reading music and learning an instrument, as well as its gymnastics society, would be disbanded from January 1927 and all members were consequently asked to hand in any equipment in their possession. Furthermore, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's annual exhibition of Art and Home Industry at Home, which had over the years become a stable and popular feature of the Secretariat for Social Welfare, would no longer be presented.<sup>285</sup> From previous issues it becomes apparent that other initiatives had already slowly faded out over the years, and besides the library and the Relief Fund, which as indicated above had also experienced some changes, the company's internal CSR had been significantly decreased in size and range. This announcement was published in *Arbeid Adelt's* final issue, which after six years and 84 publications serving as the mouthpiece of the Secretariat for Social Welfare, ceased to exist.<sup>286</sup> But why did this drastic decrease in the company's CSR initiatives occur at this particular moment in time? In an attempt to try to identify and understand the cause of this transformation, it is necessary to extend the scope of this thesis beyond the walls of De

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<sup>282</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 3, 'Aan de Leden der Steuninstelling', 48.

<sup>283</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 3, 'Doktersdienst', 48.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 12, 191.

<sup>286</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Vaartwel, Gele en Witte Boekjes', 190-1.

Beukelaer's Fabrieken, as a plausible answer can be linked to a reference made in a similar company magazine *Arbeid en Vermaak*.

In the company magazine *Arbeid en Vermaak* published by the Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company, a large telephone company based in Antwerp, a special bulletin was attached to its December 1926 issue. This bulletin reads: '*Recently, especially since the introduction of the stabilisation of the Belgian Franc, the club saw its expenses increase substantially. Our magazine costs us double than what it cost a few months ago. The expenses of our parties followed the same trend. The rooms in which our ball and play evenings are hosted have more than doubled their prices.*'<sup>287</sup> In short, the country's economic climate had increased the general cost of living and had clearly affected Bell Telephone's CSR activities. In order to overcome this financial stumbling block, the Bell Telephone employee club decided to introduce a membership fee of 2 Bfr. per month from January 1927 onwards to be able to maintain its initiatives, services and organisations. Both De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as well as Bell Telephone thus implemented significant changes at exactly the same period. This similar response, combined with the knowledge that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had already altered its policy on the distribution of *Arbeid Adelt*, almost certainly as a result of the increase in the cost of printing, and changed the Relief Fund's policy, as a result of the rise in doctors' and pharmacists' fees, probably reflects the transformation of Belgium's difficult post-World War I economy. Unlike Bell Telephone, which implemented a membership fee to counter the effects of this economic strain, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to take a different path and simply disbanded the majority of its initiatives. Throughout the years the constant pressure of the problems experienced by Belgium's economy had thus resulted in the appearance of small cracks in the structure of the company's internal CSR, which eventually led to the need for severe adjustments. This growing pressure experienced from the country's economy could have been further intensified by the difficulties experienced in the De Beukelaer's upper management, as explained in Chapter Three, which in tandem affected the feasibility of continuing such a vast and diverse system of internal CSR at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, and eventually forced the company's management to downsize these initiatives to a basic form of employee welfare.

What exactly occurred with De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR from 1927 onwards is not well documented, as any references concerning this matter from then on are extremely scarce. The

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<sup>287</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zevende Jaargang 1926-1927, December Nr. 10, 'Aan Onze Leden!', 11.

little information that is available mentions that the factory's library and its Relief Fund were still accessible to the company's employees (although some of the company's services such as pensions and child care grants slowly began to be taken over, or became more regulated, by the state).<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, a system of handing out bonuses based on merit was also introduced at the factory from 1927 onwards, and there was a new focus on improving the working environment at the factory by implementing better ventilation, cooling, heating and lighting on the factory floor.<sup>289</sup> In 1929, after Eduard and Louis De Bie as well as Karel Donnez and Edward De Beukelaer had left the employment of the factory, Jeanne was appointed by the new Management Committee as being responsible for the company's social initiatives, and was assisted by Rudolph Frijters and Felix van Ossel, two experienced members in this particular field.<sup>290</sup> Besides the remaining basic forms of employee welfare and the introduction of a new management concerned with social issues, the previous traditions of internal CSR which had become so entrenched over the years and reached its climax with the creation of the Secretariat for Social Welfare, slowly started to become a fading memory clouded by time and enshrined in myth.

After the end of World War I and the death of the company's patron and founder in 1919, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had thus managed to further build upon the already entrenched foundations of a system of internal CSR at its factory in *Lange Kievitstraat*, a project that for six years was spearheaded by the Secretariat for Social Welfare which conceived, implemented and managed its every action. During this intense six-year period a vibrant, lively and sometimes educational atmosphere had been created which, together with an extensive and complex web of employee welfare, defined De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's most vigorous period of CSR since its establishment in 1885. Alas, by December 1926 the economic turbulence of the day, possibly in tandem with the company's own internal managerial difficulties, eventually caught up with De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and the company decided to significantly downsize its internal CSR policy to relieve this growing pressure, subsequently ending a defining chapter in its existence.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>288</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 12, 191.

<sup>289</sup> (CBUA), P2 49U, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

<sup>290</sup> (CBUA), P2 4a, Verslagen van de bestuursvergadering 1930. Nieuwe werkverdeling voor de dagelijksche directie.

Since the creation of the Society for Mutual Assistance in 1885, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy slowly evolved and experienced both periods of growth as well as periods of decline, eventually reaching its symbolic end in December 1926 with the closure of the company's Secretariat for Social Welfare and the termination of the large majority of its initiatives. After Eduard's death the company's external CSR policy seems to have been neglected, whilst the Secretariat was vigorously implementing its new policy of internal CSR. During this 41-year period De Beukelaer's Fabrieken managed to create an extremely sturdy and entrenched system of CSR that became a defining feature of the company.

## **5. Determining the uniqueness of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy**

The following chapter will compare the CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken with that of other companies, as the type of extensive CSR policy described in the previous chapter was certainly not unique to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. From as early as the nineteenth and more especially the beginning of the twentieth century, a significant number of companies in Antwerp, Belgium as well as in other industrialised nations such as Holland, England or North America implemented the same or similar types of initiatives and services. Although this practice should thus not be considered as exceptional, it is important to note that it was by no means the norm during this period, as the majority of companies refrained from implementing extensive CSR policies, since they were not legally obliged to do so; such policies also generally required a significant amount of capital and space to implement and did not provide any direct financial gain. Those companies that did decide to implement CSR initiatives and services thus set themselves apart from the mass that refrained from this practice. The many hagiographical works that have been written on companies that did implement a CSR policy during this period therefore often describe the company or the founder in question as 'the first', a 'pioneer' or 'before his time'. Proving the actual validity of such claims is difficult and frankly not important. Acknowledging their existence in the right historical context, on the other hand, is relevant and bears significantly more value. This is no different in the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. Even though Eduard was reasonably early in implementing his CSR policy, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was by no means the first company to do so, and the introduction and evolution of its CSR policy clearly mirrors that of other companies before, during and after Eduard had taken this decision.

This chapter is divided into three subsections, the first of which compares the CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken with three large-scale companies based in Antwerp. The second section extends the comparison of the company's CSR to a national and global context, whilst the third section briefly discusses some of the possible reasons why these similarities in policies could have come about.

### **5.1. Comparing the company's CSR policy in a local context**

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Antwerp was home to a number of large and well-established companies, besides De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, that can be considered as leaders in their respective industries. Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company, Minerva Moters and Lieven Gevaert & Co all emerged around the same period as De Beukelaer's



Fabrieken, and analysing their company policies reveals that they all feature similar CSR initiatives.

Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company was established in 1882 and produced various equipment for the telephone industry.<sup>1</sup> Right from its conception, three years before Eduard allowed his employees to form their Society for Mutual Assistance, Bell Telephone had already offered its personnel the use of a sick fund, monetary assistance in case of hospitalisation and a series of further, unfortunately undefined, grants.<sup>2</sup> It was noted that the company had also introduced a special fund that assisted its employees in the event of accidents on the factory floor, and to which employees needed to donate a percentage of their wage, as was the case with De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Society for Mutual Assistance.<sup>3</sup> By the 1920s these services were further extended with life insurance, a pension and operation fund, medical services and other similar benefits.<sup>4</sup> However, unlike in the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Relief Fund during this time, the use of such benefits at Bell Telephone was not free and members had to pay roughly 7 Bfr. per month to be able to utilise this service.<sup>5</sup> Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company had furthermore arranged for a discount on products at certain selected shops for members of the employees club,<sup>6</sup> a service that was not available to employees at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken.

In 1885 Bell Telephone's employees had also been allowed to form their own employees club, known as the *Telephoniste club*, which organised cultural and sporting activities for its members.<sup>7</sup> It was not until 1912, however, when the club was transformed into the Bell Telephone Athletic and Social Club, that it became properly structured and more efficient.<sup>8</sup> Unlike in the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, the formation and organisation of recreational activities at Bell Telephone seems to have been controlled and organised by the employees themselves instead of by management. The company's employees club was divided into soccer, gymnastics, music and drama divisions, and even launched a cyclist club which, besides making excursions with its members, also participated in early cycling races.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anon., *Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company, 1882-1982*, np.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zesde Jaargang 1925-1926, Nr. 2, 'Onze Mutualiteit', 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zesde Jaargang 1925-1926, Nr. 3, 'Prijzvermindering voor de leden der Club op vertoon hun ledekaart', 61.

<sup>7</sup> Anon., *Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company*, np.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

By the 1920s Bell Telephone had significantly expanded its leisure offerings and further included korfbal,<sup>10</sup> swimming, wrestling and boxing,<sup>11</sup> as well as a chess club,<sup>12</sup> a singing department and a brass band,<sup>13</sup> to its list of recreational initiatives for employees. In 1926 the company even acquired its own sports and recreational fields to accommodate these initiatives.<sup>14</sup> The employees club also organised excursions for Bell Telephone's various recreational groups and hosted a number of festivities including sports days,<sup>15</sup> musical and theatrical performances,<sup>16</sup> and even masked balls.<sup>17</sup> It had also organised a photography contest<sup>18</sup> and offered its employees the use of an extensive array of Flemish<sup>19</sup> and even French and English books in its library.<sup>20</sup>

Despite some leisure initiatives being similar to those at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Bell Telephone seems to have placed a much greater emphasis upon sports as a form of recreation for its employees. By 1909 and 1910 the company also offered technical courses to its personnel,<sup>21</sup> and by 1924 this early initiative had evolved into a well-structured school which was concerned with improving the technical knowledge, skill and ability of its workers.<sup>22</sup> Unlike in the case of the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool*, Bell Telephone's technical school thus educated its own employees in matters that would not only improve their personal abilities, but also potentially improve the production of the company, instead of educating bakers apprentices who did not work at the factory in matters that would improve their skill and technical knowledge, but were of no benefit to the company itself.

On 1 March 1920, one year before De Beukelaer's Fabrieken commenced the publication and distribution of *Arbeid Adelt*, Bell Telephone had already launched its light and informative

<sup>10</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zesde Jaargang 1925-1926, Nr. 4, 'Korfbal-Afdeeling', 74.

<sup>11</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 2, 'Onze Afdeelingen', 20-1.

<sup>12</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zesde Jaargang 1925-1926, Nr. 6, 'Schaken', 113.

<sup>13</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 3, 'Jaarlijkse algemeene vergadering der zangafdeeling', 37.; (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 8, 'Onze Harmonie', 117.

<sup>14</sup> Anon., *Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company*, np.

<sup>15</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 4, 'Ons Sportfeest in Hoboken', 54-5.

<sup>16</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 10, 'Prachtige vertooning en bal', 130.

<sup>17</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zevende Jaargang 1926-1927, Nr. 12, 'Groot Carnavalbal', 2.

<sup>18</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 3, 'Fotograaf-Liefhebbers', 34.

<sup>19</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 1, 'Kataloog der Boekerij berustende bij M.F. Sacré', 12.

<sup>20</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zesde Jaargang 1925-1926, Nr. 3, 'Bibliothèque, Liste de livres français dans la bibliothèque de M. Sacré, Dept, 552', 61.; (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Zesde Jaargang 1925-1926, Nr. 1, 'List of English books in the library of Mr F. Sacré Dep 552', 20.

<sup>21</sup> Anon., *Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company*, np.

<sup>22</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid en Vermaak*, Vijfde Jaargang 1924-1925, Nr. 1, 'Onze School', 2-4.

company magazine *Arbeid en Vermaak*,<sup>23</sup> which, unlike De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's equivalent, was edited by the company's employees club and was strikingly less paternalistic in tone and content. Although the implementation of a CSR policy at Bell Telephone thus preceded that at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, their development of such policies contained many similarities. Bell Telephone's CSR policy, however, also featured distinct differences that can very likely be attributed to the company not being a family business formed and managed by one paternal figure, as well as to the influence of greater input by employees in the actual organisation and development of the company's CSR policy. A similar situation seems to have existed at Minerva Moters.

Minerva Moters was one of Belgium's earlier, and probably most famous, car manufacturers; opened its workshop in Antwerp in 1903.<sup>24</sup> From as early as 1914 the use of a Society for Mutual Assistance, which was known as the *Vereenigde Werklieden der Minerva*, was available to Minerva employees, and for a monthly contributions of 0.85 Bfr. employees received sick and injury pay, as well as a grant offered to the relatives of an ill member,<sup>25</sup> a system that is comparable to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Society for Mutual Assistance during this period. What differed from De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's policy was that members could only make use of the services of a General Practitioner after paying an additional annual contribution,<sup>26</sup> a service that was automatically part of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Society for Mutual Assistance. For an even higher rate this service was further extended to include not only the members themselves but also their families,<sup>27</sup> a policy that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken would only implement from 1921 onwards. By 1924 Minerva Moters's Society for Mutual Assistance had expanded to include its clerks and, for a monthly fee of 2.5 Bfr., also included birth, death, widows and orphans grants, a pension and a savings fund,<sup>28</sup> as well as child and soldier support.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the monthly fee, the various welfare services offered to its employees clearly mirror those of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Relief Fund. From as early as 1914 Minerva had also set up a special support fund, later known as *het Damenkomiteit* (the Women's Committee), which was managed by female employees,

<sup>23</sup> Anon., *Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company*, np.

<sup>24</sup> Y. Kupélian, J. Kupélian, and J. Sirtaine, *De Geschiedenis van de Belgische Auto, Het Fabelachtige Verhaal van Meer dan Honderd Automobielenmerken*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Minerva-moters, Regelement*, 15-6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Mutualiteit der Bedienden', np.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Kindertoeslag', np.; (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Tweede Jaargang 1925-1926, 'Soldatensteun', np.

and assisted male employees who were in need.<sup>30</sup> Similar to Bell Telephone, in the 1920s Minerva Moters also arranged a special discount for its employees when purchasing products such as, coals, shoes or potatoes from certain selected stores.<sup>31</sup>

In the early 1920s Minerva also decided to create a Welfare Department that fulfilled the same function as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Secretariat for Social Welfare which had been introduced in 1921.<sup>32</sup> Not long afterwards, in 1924, four years after the employees club of Bell Telephone had introduced *Arbeid en Vermaak*, and three years after De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Secretariat for Social Welfare had launched *Arbeid Adelt*, Minerva Moters published its own company magazine known as *Minerva Nieuws*.<sup>33</sup> The tone and content of *Minerva Nieuws* lay between those of *Arbeid Adelt* and *Arbeid en Vermaak*. Although some articles were reminiscent of the paternalistic character of *Arbeid Adelt*, *Minerva Nieuws* generally tended to be more neutral, light and informational in content than was the case for *Arbeid en Vermaak*.

From 1924 onwards, and very likely even earlier, various leisure initiatives also began to form an important part of the company's CSR programme. Minerva employees could join the company's swimming,<sup>34</sup> athletics,<sup>35</sup> soccer<sup>36</sup> and korfbal clubs,<sup>37</sup> or could become part of the company's brass band,<sup>38</sup> photography<sup>39</sup> or crafts- club,<sup>40</sup> the English club with its sizable library,<sup>41</sup> and even an Esperanto club, which was reportedly rather popular.<sup>42</sup> Minerva Moters also organised a number of annual parties for its employees for Christmas or Saint Nicholas,<sup>43</sup> and organised various sports events.<sup>44</sup> From as early as March 1920 Minerva also featured its own technical school, where, as in the case of Bell Telephone, employees could learn and

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<sup>30</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Minerva-moters, Regelement*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Ten strijde tegen het duure leven', np.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Maatschappelijke Werken', np.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Kort overzicht sinds het ontstaan onzer vakschool', np.

<sup>34</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Onze Zwemclub', np.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Athletiek', np.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Voetbal', np.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Korfbal', np.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Harmonie Minerva', np.

<sup>39</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Derde Jaargang 1926-1927, 'Fotografische Kring Minerva', np.

<sup>40</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Knutselaars-Club', np.

<sup>41</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Tweede Jaargang 1925-1926, 'Minerva English Club', np.

<sup>42</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Esperanto', np.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Onze Kerstfeesten', n.p.

<sup>44</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Derde Jaargang 1926-1927, 'Minerva Sport- en Athletic Club', np.

improve their technical skills and expertise.<sup>45</sup> Analysing the company's CSR policy shows that Minerva Moters initiatives were thus more similar to those of the Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company than of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's, although clear similarities also did exist with De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. One company's CSR policy that was particularly closely related to that of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was that of Lieven Gevaert & Co.

In 1894 Lieven Gevaert established Lieven Gevaert & Co, a company that produced photographic materials.<sup>46</sup> From as early as 1902<sup>47</sup> Lieven Gevaert, just as Eduard had done a few years before, decided to arrange company excursions with employees to various Belgian cities during the warmer summer months.<sup>48</sup> Around this same period, similar to what was also happening and had been happening at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Lieven Gevaert allowed his employees to utilise the company's recreational hall in the colder winter months, when they would arrange musical or theatrical performances.<sup>49</sup> From 1922 onwards, just as in the case of Minerva Moters, the company organised Christmas parties for the children of employees.<sup>50</sup> Lieven, like Eduard, also attached great value to the education of his employees which, unlike in the case of Minerva Moters or Bell Telephone, did not come in the form of technical education that could improve production, but was instead concerned with teaching basic skills and improving the general knowledge of employees. Eduard had launched his company's school in 1887, and Lieven announced the start of evening classes in 1909. It was not long before a library and magazine section followed,<sup>51</sup> which was first established in 1913 by a number of employees, but was soon taken over by the company's management.<sup>52</sup>

Recreational and educational initiatives were not the only form of CSR that Lieven Gevaert decided to implement at his factory, as throughout the years a system of welfare benefits for employees were also introduced at Lieven Gevaert & Co. On 1 July 1905 a Society for Mutual Assistance known as *De Verenigde Werklieden der Fabriek L. Gevaert & Co.* was founded; its services included sick payment, pensions and a grant for the family of a deceased employee.<sup>53</sup> Gevaert's Society for Mutual Assistance was thus similar to that in place at De

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<sup>45</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Vakschool Minerva, Kort overzicht sinds het ontstaan onzer vakschool', np.

<sup>46</sup> J. Meeus, 'De Opbouw van een Wereldbedrijf', in Anon., *Lieven Gevaert, De Mens en zijn Werk*, 55.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>48</sup> L. Wachters, Lieven Gevaert, 66.

<sup>49</sup> L. Roosens, W. Janssens, F. Nooyens, and R. Bosseart, (eds.), *Arbeid Adelt*, 167.

<sup>50</sup> J. Meeus, 'De Opbouw van een Wereldbedrijf', in Anon., *Lieven Gevaert, De Mens en zijn Werk*, 110.

<sup>51</sup> L. Roosens, W. Janssens, F. Nooyens, and R. Bosseart, (eds.), *Arbeid Adelt*, 175.

<sup>52</sup> J. Meeus, 'De Opbouw van een Wereldbedrijf', in Anon., *Lieven Gevaert, De Mens en zijn Werk*, 113.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Bell Telephone and Minerva at the time. From as early as 1910 Lieven introduced a profit-sharing scheme to company employees,<sup>54</sup> a benefit that would only be implemented at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in 1923. In the following years Lieven Gevaert & Co. launched a widows and orphans fund in 1921, child support in 1923,<sup>55</sup> a medical department in 1925,<sup>56</sup> and a series of other benefits that were also offered by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Relief Fund around the same period.

During the First World War Lieven also attempted to alleviate the suffering of his employees by distributing soup and selling coal at cost or reduced prices.<sup>57</sup> He furthermore implemented a system of monetary support for those employees who had been forced to end their employment indefinitely, or for those who had to work part time.<sup>58</sup> Such wartime relief efforts by Gevaert thus clearly mirror those of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during World War I. After the war, in 1923, Lieven Gevaert also decided to create *het maatschappelijk dienstbetoon*, which was a central office that would manage and organise the company's social initiatives, a comparable task to that of the Secretariat for Social Welfare formed at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in 1921, or the Welfare Department formed at Minerva Moters in the early 1920s.<sup>59</sup>

Besides implementing the above system of internal CSR, Lieven – unlike Bell Telephone or Minerva Moters and similar to Eduard's initiatives – also decided to extend his CSR policy outside of his company. Compared to Eduard, Lieven Gevaert was certainly more driven in this regard, as can be seen by the sheer scope of his CSR policy. He financially supported cultural initiatives such as the Flemish opera,<sup>60</sup> *het Antwerpsche kathedraalensemble*,<sup>61</sup> *het vlaamse volkstoneel*,<sup>62</sup> *het algemeen verbond*,<sup>63</sup> and a large number of other organisations and initiatives. The manner in which Lieven and Eduard managed their companies and the types and development of their CSR policies were thus closely related.

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<sup>54</sup> L. Roosens, W. Janssens, F. Nooyens, and R. Bosseart, (eds.), *Arbeid Adelt*, 170.

<sup>55</sup> J. Meeus, 'De Opbouw van een Wereldbedrijf', in Anon., *Lieven Gevaert, De Mens en zijn Werk*, 108; 111.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>57</sup> L. Roosens, W. Janssens, F. Nooyens, and R. Bosseart, (eds.), *Arbeid Adelt*, 181.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>59</sup> L. Wachters, *Lieven Gevaert*, 81.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>61</sup> W. Janssens, *Lieven Gevaert, Momenten uit zijn Leven*, 149.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.



The immediate environment of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century thus contained a significant number of companies that all implemented extensive CSR policies which in general developed and followed a similar path and consisted of the same types of initiatives.

## 5.2. Comparing the company's CSR policy in a national and international context

Such practices were certainly not restricted to Antwerp alone, as throughout the rest of Belgium comparable initiatives were also evident in many companies, and often had been so for many years. From as early as the first half of the nineteenth century a number of Belgian business owners were noted to also have implemented forms of CSR in their companies. An early example of such a company was the Sint Niklaas-based textile factory owner Louis Janssens, who in 1839, long before Eduard introduced his evening classes, had already opened a school to educate the factory's younger employees.<sup>64</sup>

Another example of early CSR in Belgium was the coal mining company of the Warocqué family. The family business had been formed in the late eighteenth century and expanded significantly over the years, becoming one of the most important and large-scale employers for the region *het Centrum* in the Walloon Provinces. As a result of their growing importance in the region, the Warocqué family managed to produce a long line of mayors for the town of Morlanwelz, where they personally financed many public initiatives ranging from schools and cultural and sports organisations to housing and waterworks.<sup>65</sup> During the period that Arthur Warocqué lead the family business in the late 1860s and 1870s, a series of CSR initiatives were implemented at some of the mines owned by the family. Arthur introduced 'well-ventilated' 'affordable' housing for his employees and provided loans at low interest rates to stimulate the purchase of these houses, introduced cooperative models for the purchasing of goods, sold coal and wood at reduced prices, and created pension funds and Societies for Mutual Assistance. Arthur Warocqué even organised soldier support in 1870 for the families of those employees who had been called up in the emerging threat of the Franco-Prussian War,<sup>66</sup> an initiative that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and Minerva later introduced in the 1920s when conscription was instated.

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<sup>64</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 282.

<sup>65</sup> M. Van Den Eynde, 'Arthur Warocqué (1835-1880) Een Buitengewoon Man', in, M. Van Den Eynde, et. al., *De Warocqués (1802-1917) van Integraal Kapitalisme tot Filantropie, Dossier bij de Gelijknamige Tentoonstelling in het Algemeen Rijksarchief te Brussel van 20 April to 24 Juni 1995*, 28-9.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

Later, in the 1880s and 1890s, leisure CSR initiatives also flourished at the different mines under the leadership of Georges Warocqué. The brass band of the mines in Mariemont and Bascoup organised musical performances for the public in their recreational hall or in their park. A music school was also opened and its members performed concerts and choral performances. Furthermore there was a drama society, a library, company outings and educational presentations, as well as a variety of sports clubs, including pigeon fancying and singing contests for cocks and finches.<sup>67</sup> The mines of the Warocqué family had thus already implemented a fairly extensive CSR policy before Eduard even commenced his.

Another interesting case of a Belgian company with a noteworthy CSR policy is that of Louis De Naeyer, who in 1860 formed the paper manufacturing company De Naeyer et Cie in Willebroek. Similar to Eduard, Louis was born into a large working-class family; after working as a labourer in the paper industry, he eventually decided to launch his own paper manufacturing company that made use of a new innovative technique. Throughout his lifetime Louis managed his business in a very paternalistic manner;<sup>68</sup> he also lived a very similar lifestyle to Eduard, as he too owned a large estate with a castle that not only mirrored one in architectural style, but also later served as a place to meet guests and organise factory events for employees.<sup>69</sup> After his passing away in 1902 his wife, with the help of family members and experienced employees, took over the management of the business,<sup>70</sup> and it was not long before De Naeyer et Cie grew into an internationally recognised business. Besides the similarities in the life of Louis De Naeyer and the development of his business with Eduard and De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, the CSR policies of these two companies also contained many parallels and were introduced around the same time. By 1888 it was noted that De Naeyer et Cie already included a school to educate its younger employees, as well as a music group which received its instruction from a teacher from Brussels,<sup>71</sup> all similar to the De Beukelaer's school for employees and musical classes.

Louis had furthermore organised a shop for his employees, where they could purchase certain products at reduced prices, and provided housing at 'affordable' rates for his workers.<sup>72</sup> In

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<sup>67</sup> M. Van Den Eynde, 'Georges Warocqués (1860-1899) Een Gokker', in M. Van Den Eynde, et. al., *De Warocqués (1802-1917) Van Integraal Kapitalisme tot Filantropie, Dossier bij de Gelijknamige Tentoonstelling in het Algemeen Rijksarchief te Brussel van 20 April to 24 Juni 1995*, 39.

<sup>68</sup> J. Merckx, *Papierfabriek de Naeyer*, 40.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-3.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>71</sup> K, De Decker, *Louis De Naeyer, een Monument*, 52-3.

<sup>72</sup> J. Merckx, *Papierfabriek de Naeyer*, 23-4.

1889 Louis and his wife even started a crèche to take care of the children of their employees, where they were fed, washed, clothed, educated and entertained. Similar to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, De Naeyer et Cie also offered the use of bathing services for its employees and their family,<sup>73</sup> supplied free medical service provided by two doctors for its personnel, and in 1900 created a cost-free Society for Mutual Assistance and a pension fund.<sup>74</sup> From as early as 1901 De Naeyer et Cie, similar to Lieven Gevaert & Co and De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, introduced an early form of profit sharing,<sup>75</sup> but, as was the case with most of these early arrangements, the actual share received by employees was rather small. During World War I De Naeyer et Cie, just like Lieven Geveart & Co and De Beukelaer' Fabrieken, also decided to hand out soup and bread, and provide monetary assistance and coal to its employees.<sup>76</sup> Belgian companies such as those owned by the Warocqué family or Louis De Naeyer thus implemented similar CSR policies to those at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken.

Similar examples of such forms of CSR during the nineteenth and early twentieth century have also been widely identified in other industrialised nations. According to a cautious estimate, between 50 and 60 percent of the labourers working in Dutch nineteenth-century medium-size and large enterprises (a company with more than ten employees) received some form of social aid from their employers, a practice which grew considerably after 1890.<sup>77</sup> The roots of British companies and their CSR policies have been traced back as far as the first cotton mills of Lancashire in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup> This practice became increasingly popular throughout the nineteenth century and gained much publicity during World War I. A good example of such an early British CSR policy was the famous chocolate manufacturer Cadbury, who provided housing, a savings and pension fund, a medical department, education, sports events, social and cultural societies, and youth clubs for its employees,<sup>79</sup> or the confectioner Pascall who, in the 1920s, became known for its extensive sports and recreational facilities.<sup>80</sup> By the turn of the nineteenth century CSR had also emerged in America, with companies such as the National Cash Register Company implementing such policies. John H Patterson, the president of the National Cash Register Company, had managed to acquire something of an international reputation as a leader in

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<sup>73</sup> J. Merckx, *Papierfabriek de Naeyer*, 45.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 24

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>77</sup> D. Arnoldus, *Family, Family Firm and Strategy*, 227.

<sup>78</sup> R. Fitzgerald, *British Labour Management & Industrial Welfare*, 9.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

American CSR around the turn of the twentieth century,<sup>81</sup> most probably as a result of his factory lecture tours, when Patterson extensively and deliberately showed off his company's CSR policy.<sup>82</sup> Most of Paterson's initiatives were implemented between 1893 and 1905 and included female lunchrooms, industrial and domestic education programmes, health and recreation initiatives, an employee suggestion box with prizes, a gardening programme for neighbourhood boys, noon entertainment for workers, neighbourhood beautification programmes, and picnic suppers and recreational activities at his private estate.<sup>83</sup>

### 5.3. Explaining some of the similarities

A significant number of companies in Antwerp, Belgium and other industrialised nations such as Holland, Britain and America thus implemented the same or similar CSR policies before, during or after the time De Beukelaer's Fabrieken introduced its CSR initiatives and services. Part of this widespread trend could be attributed to the professional networks that existed amongst industrialist and business owners of the time, which is clearly illustrated in the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. Eduard, as mentioned earlier, had been a member of the *Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, an organisation that consisted of small to medium-size business owners, craftsmen, artists and musicians, but also industrialists such as Eduard De Beukelaer and Louis De Naeyer. In 1901 both Louis and Eduard were featured in separate articles of the *Antwerpen's Rubenskring's* monthly newspaper in which they were not only praised for their entrepreneurial accomplishments, but also their extensive CSR policies.<sup>84</sup> In 1903, when the *Rubenskring's Arbeidskamer* (Chamber of Labour) together with a number of other employee organisations formed the *Nijverheidskamer Van Antwerpen* (Chamber of Industry of Antwerp),<sup>85</sup> both Eduard as well as Alida Peeters, the widow of Louis De Naeyer, who had taken over her husband's venture, were listed as being among its founding members.<sup>86</sup> Besides De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and De Naeyer et Cie, the *Nijverheidskamer van Antwerpen* also later included representatives of the Bell Telephone Manufacturing

<sup>81</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 17.

<sup>82</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 18.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>84</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, Derde Jaargang Augustus 1903, Nr. 20. 'Panthéon der nijverheid, Louis De Naeyer Koning der Papiernijverheid', np.; (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, Vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>85</sup> G. Devos, and I. Van Damme, *In de Ban van Mercurius, Twee Eeuwen Kamer van Koophandel en Nijverheid van Antwerpen-Waasland, 1802-2002*, 133.

<sup>86</sup> (EHC), Anon., *25ste verjaring der Nijverheidskamer van Antwerpen, 1903-1928, herdenking*, 10-1.

Company and Minerva Moters,<sup>87</sup> whilst in the second half of the 1920s De Beukelaer's Fabrieken also became a member of *het Vlaams Economisch Verbond* (VEV),<sup>88</sup> an employer organisations in which Louis Gevaert had played a central role.<sup>89</sup>

As a member of these different employer organisations, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had thus been in contact with the owners and representatives of De Neayer et Cie, Bell Telephone Manufacturing Company, Minerva Moters and Lieven Gevaert & Co, all companies that, as indicated above, had implemented very extensive CSR policies at their factories. It is almost inconceivable that the members of these organisations had not known about each other's CSR policies and initiatives, or enquired or talked about them amongst one another. These inter-professional networks can thus probably largely account for the distinct similarities in initiatives and developments between the CSR policies of these different companies. The same focus and points of resemblance that existed between the leisure and educational initiatives and the welfare services of these different companies, or the creation of special middle-management departments to organise the internal CSR policies, are good examples of such similarities, and could have come about because of their interaction with one another. Besides having been familiar with the practices of their neighbouring firms, Belgian companies were furthermore knowledgeable about the trends and developments in CSR that prevailed at other companies across the world. In 1924 an article in *Minerva Nieuws* referred to John H. Peterson and described the policy of his National Cash Register Company as the epiphany of welfare work,<sup>90</sup> whilst in a speech for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's so-called 60th birthday in 1929, the cricket fields of Pascall and the sports fields of Cadbury were mentioned and praised.<sup>91</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was thus certainly not unique, as this practice was implemented in many Belgian and international companies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and business owners clearly followed widespread trends by copying, incorporating or adapting one another's policies to suit their own company's needs and capabilities.

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 31; 35.

<sup>88</sup> D. Luyten, 'Sociale Relaties en Arbeidsverhoudingen In en Om het Bedrijf', in C. Vancoppenolle, *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding Voor het Schrijven Van een Bedrijfs-geschiedenis*, 275.

<sup>89</sup> W. Janssens, *Lieven Gevaert, Momenten uit zijn Leven*, 109.

<sup>90</sup> (EHC), *Minerva Nieuws*, Eerste Jaargang 1924-1925, 'Maatschappelijke Werken', np.

<sup>91</sup> (CBUA), P2 49u, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

## **6. The CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as a conscious business strategy**

The focus of this chapter is to determine and explain the possible motivations or reasons for the implementation of a CSR policy by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Companies such as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken were not isolated entities. As an integral part of society, companies were shaped by the social, political and economic context in which they operated, and their existence was closely linked to the plight of the working class who, as employees, were the 'beneficiaries' of their CSR policies. It is thus useful to investigate the social, political and economic situation of the country's working class, as well as to analyse some of the popular social trends and customs that define this period. Such an analysis can shed light on the rationale for the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy. This can determine to what extent it represented a response to this wider context, as well as calibrate the relative weight of the various influences and reasons for the implementation of its policies, and how they were integrated as part of the company's wider business strategy.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section investigates De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy as a measure to avoid potential conflict and labour unrest at the factory. The second section investigates the company's CSR policy as a method of steering its employees away from the, to the company, potentially 'dangerous' influences, of the growing working-class organisations and their ideologies, whilst the third section investigates the creation of a better public image for the company as a rationale for De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy.

### **6.1. CSR as a means to thwart labour unrest**

#### **6.1.1. The mobilisation of the Belgian working class**

One of the likely reasons for the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the systematic organisation and mobilisation of the working class and the political and economical effects of this. Throughout the course of the nineteenth century Belgium's large working class slowly began to defy the establishment by voicing its discontent and demanding an equal and just place in society. Part of this growing dissatisfaction can be ascribed to the nineteenth century being a difficult period for the country's labouring class, as workers were subject to low wages that fluctuated, depending on the development of the economy, nor did they have any welfare legislation to



protect them, and they were also excluded in the country's voting process, something that consequently downgraded them to the status of second-class citizens. These adverse conditions accumulated into a dangerous brew of discontent and frustration that led to the rise of labour movements that expressed itself in heated protests and strikes. But the formation and rise of the labour movement did not occur overnight. It took many years to take shape and structure itself into a powerful force, and an equal amount of time to become an established and influential partner in the country's decision-making process that could bring about actual change.

Since its formation in 1830 Belgium retained a ban on coalitions, a law that had been instated during the regions previous Napoleonic occupation. This ban prohibited the formation of any organisation, whether by employees, employers or tradesmen, that would represent or defend communal interests.<sup>1</sup> Regardless of these strict laws and regulations that were still in place, the country's first employee organisations representing the interests of the working class started to emerge in the 1850s and began to organised labour strikes and protests for better working conditions and wages.<sup>2</sup>

The first traces of a socialist ideology also emerged with the formation of such employee organisations. The earliest socialist-inspired organisations were created by artisans and members of the lower middle class in the 1850s;<sup>3</sup> this movement experienced significant growth in support and membership with the formation of the 'First International Workingmen's Association' during the 1860s, resulting in the first unified socialist organisation in Belgium.<sup>4</sup> Although the movement lost most of its support during the 1870s,<sup>5</sup> it left an enduring legacy that led to the rise and formation of other socialist labour organisations across the country. This new wave of socialist-orientated organisations really picked up momentum from the 1870s onwards, largely due to the country's unstable and turbulent economic climate, which had significantly affected the poor working-class masses.

With their membership growing, labour organisations and their fight for the rights of the country's labouring masses eventually reached a symbolic watershed moment in 1885, when

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<sup>1</sup> G. De Broeck, 'Sociale Wetgeving', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 171.

<sup>2</sup> S.H. Scholl, 'Werkstakingen', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 212.

<sup>3</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I 1830-1905*, 388.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 388-9.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 391.

the country's Socialist Party, the *Belgische Werklieden Partij* (BWP), was formed.<sup>6</sup> The BWP originated from a variety of previously existing socialist-orientated organisations, societies, cooperatives and sick funds, and represented 'the democracy of the streets'.<sup>7</sup> In March 1886, one year after the formation of the BWP and during a period when numerous other smaller socialist organisations were mushrooming around the country,<sup>8</sup> Belgium experienced its most infamous strike in the mining provinces of Liege and Henegouwen. This event symbolised the climax of the growing discontent and frustrations amongst the labouring class during the previous decades.<sup>9</sup> After this moment the BWP's membership and popularity grew significantly and managed to transform itself into the first party that progressively voiced the demands of the labouring class.<sup>10</sup>

Belgium's socialist movement was thus important in creating strong unified organisations for labourers, a task which the early Catholic network of organisations for labourers had been unable to achieve, as their small and often conservative organisations failed to penetrate to the factory floor of the country's industrial sector. After the labour unrest and the rise of the BWP in the mid-1880s, however, the Catholics did see the potential threat of this vast previously untapped source of disgruntled labourers and commenced to redirect their energy towards trying to win over the support of the country's labourers away from the socialist movement.<sup>11</sup> From 1880s onwards the Catholics began forming workmen's *gildes* (guilds) to counter this rise in socialist workers organisations. Unlike their socialist counterparts, such *gildes* were based on a model whereby labourers and patrons worked together to improve labour conditions and represent working-class concerns in a significantly less revolutionary or militant manner.<sup>12</sup> From the early twentieth century onwards, however, this model was largely discarded as new Catholic organisations exclusively for workers were formed which moved away from the previous cooperative model of the *gildes*.<sup>13</sup>

After the formation of the BWP and the strikes of 1886, Belgium's labouring class systematically began to affiliate itself more with workers' organisations. By 1891 it was

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<sup>6</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming, Verbond Van Belgische Ondernemingen*, 18.

<sup>7</sup> E. Witte, and J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 501.

<sup>8</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 511.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>10</sup> E. Witte, and J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 515.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>12</sup> L. Shokkeart, 'Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 126.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

reported that roughly 65 000 employees belonged to a syndicate, and by 1914 the Catholic and Socialist unions together numbered 250 000 members.<sup>14</sup> After World War I had reduced much of the country's trade and industry to rubble, and during a time that unemployment was rife, wages were low and the cost of living was high, Belgium experienced a new nationwide upsurge in strikes by the working class, which demanded an increase in wages.<sup>15</sup> In 1919 there were 366 recorded strikes, a number that grew to 506 in 1920, which affected an estimated 2 329 businesses that year.<sup>16</sup> During these uncertain and troublesome times trade unions membership experienced an unprecedented boost and their number doubled from the 1914 level of 250 000 to more than 500 000 members.<sup>17</sup> This significant increase in post-World War I membership finally forced the Belgian government to acknowledge, recognise and accept workers' unions as a legitimate partner in the debate on welfare legislation.<sup>18</sup> In the business world this realisation was also slowly starting to emerge, although the presence of union representatives in the factory was still often considered by business owners and management as troublesome or complicated, and many were often not willing to negotiate with them.<sup>19</sup> Thus from 1919 onwards the dissatisfied masses had finally managed to find a way of voicing their discontent through labour unions and other worker organisations.

### **6.1.2. Political challenges and changes and the emergence of welfare legislation**

These working-class developments from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards had certainly not gone unnoticed by the Belgian government who, from the 1880s onwards, began to take cognisance of the growing discontent brewing amongst the large majority of its citizens. Belgium's welfare legislation seriously lagged behind that of neighbouring countries such as Britain, France or Germany at the time. This was partly due to the *laissez faire* approach adopted by the Belgian government up until the last two decades of the nineteenth century regarding trade and industry, especially when it came to welfare legislation that was meant to protect labourers.<sup>20</sup> Both the Catholics and Liberals, the two parties that had traditionally dominated the political landscape, had clearly adopted a liberal stance towards

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<sup>14</sup> G. Vanschoenbeek, 'Van Passiviteit tot Sociale Beweging', in G.L. De Brabander, J. Gadisseur, and R. Gobyn, *De Industrie in België, Twee Eeuwen Ontwikkeling 1780-1980*, 139.

<sup>15</sup> P.F. Broeckaert, 'Arbeidsconflicten', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939 Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 218.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>17</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België II 1905-1950*, 989.

<sup>18</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, , 54-5

<sup>19</sup> H. Slomp and T. Van Mierlo, *Arbeidsverhoudingen in België 1*, 152-3.

<sup>20</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 377.

the economy which did not believe in state intervention in matters regarding industry.<sup>21</sup> Instead the parties encouraged a paternalistic company policy that promoted private initiative and the image of a good employer, which in turn could potentially give rise to a good employee.<sup>22</sup> The growing demand for social change and the threat of the ‘dangerous class’ with its revolutionary socialist ideas began to significantly worry the ruling class. As the end of the nineteenth century drew nearer, the old mechanisms of philanthropy and paternalism previously promoted by the government were no longer considered effective enough to counter the growing discontent of the working class. Instead it was believed that this ‘dangerous class’ needed to be guided away from the revolutionary ideals of socialism, not only morally and materially by giving in to some of their demands, but also through attempts to ‘integrate’ them into the prevailing capitalist model of society.<sup>23</sup>

Although from 1850 onwards small traces of welfare legislation had appeared, none of it were very significant,<sup>24</sup> and up until the 1880s little to no proper welfare legislation had been implemented by the government. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, however, a clear change in approach became noticeable, and the Belgian government’s first real attempts at introducing welfare legislation that protected the rights of workers emerged. Initially the social issues of workers had formed part of the portfolio of the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs, but in 1884, one year before the formation of the BWP, the government decided to create a specialised Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Public Works, which in 1895 was further divided into the Ministry of Industry and Labour, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Public Works.<sup>25</sup>

The notorious strikes and riots of 1886 had a clear impact upon the government, as in April 1886, one month after the initial unrest, the government announced the launch of a special commission whose task it was to investigate the conditions of industrial labour. Two years after its formation the commission produced its report, a document that would form the basis on which the country’s first real welfare legislation would be founded.<sup>26</sup> In 1894 the Belgian government also launched its *Dienst voor tewerkstelling* (employment office), which was a

<sup>21</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 105.

<sup>22</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 386.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 566.

<sup>24</sup> G. De Broeck, ‘Sociale Wetgeving’, in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 203.

<sup>25</sup> G. De Broeck, ‘Sociale Wetgeving’, in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Tweede Deel, De Christen-Democratie 1886-1914*, 163.

<sup>26</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 18.

specialised department whose task it was to research and prepare future welfare legislation for labourers.<sup>27</sup>

1894 also marked the year of the first elections in which the system of *het meervoudig stemrecht* (the plural vote) was used. The introduction of the plural vote significantly increased the number of individuals who were eligible to cast their votes from the previous 136 755 to 1 370 687, as all male citizens 25 years and older could now participate in the country's electoral process.<sup>28</sup> Although great strides had been made by extending the vote to include members of the working class, the process was still far from being equal as two or more votes were given to those citizens who paid a certain amount of tax, owned a property above a certain value, had a certain amount saved, or who had obtained a certain educational level. The latter criteria meant that against the 850 000 singular votes there were 1 240 000 multiple votes from people who had met certain criteria.<sup>29</sup> Despite these restrictions, the introduction of the plural vote transformed the country's political landscape and brought about irreversible changes to the political debate.

The Catholic and Liberal Party, who predominantly represented the interests of the ruling class, had previously dominated Belgium's parliament, but with the vote being extended to the working-class masses, the Socialist Party slowly managed to establish itself firmly in the country's parliament and began to form a noteworthy opposition against these two dominant parties. It is from this point onwards that both the Catholic and Liberal Party, which before had always supported the autonomy of industrialists regarding the rules and regulations at the workplace, now steered away from their former *laissez fair* ideology and began to demand changes by calling for specific laws and official policies that were meant to regulate the business world.<sup>30</sup>

This change was clearly evident in the Catholic Party, as concurrent with the establishment of the Socialist Party as a force of national politics in Belgium, a new faction known as the Christian Democrats emerged within the Catholic Party. Previously the Catholic Party had only been concerned with opposing forms of abuse in the workplace and relied on the private initiative of employers as part of their Christian duty. The Christian Democrats, however, believed in a more direct and regulated approach and demanded the introduction of a proper

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<sup>27</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 539.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 19.

welfare legislation that would protect the rights of workers.<sup>31</sup> A number of special Catholic Party congresses were organised in 1886, 1887 and 1890, which were concerned with finding a new direction and solution for these social issues. It is at these congresses that a difference between the Christian Democrats and the more traditional party line of the Catholic Party started to emerge. This new stream of thought gained further support after Pope Leo XIII introduced his Papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891,<sup>32</sup> which supported the Christian Democratic ideal and provided an official outline for it.<sup>33</sup> Within the Liberal Party similar ideological changes were also starting to gain support amongst its members. In the case of the Liberal Party these ideological differences resulted in the formation of the *Progressistische Party* (Progressive Party) in 1886. Although organised as a separate political party, the Progressive Party believed in the same form of state intervention as the Christian Democratic stream within the Catholic Party.<sup>34</sup>

As a result of these ideological changes, the country's first proper welfare legislation was introduced, even though such legislation still had to complete the long route of political opposition and amendments. Up until World War I the country's welfare legislation had either been concerned with the prevention of abuse of labourers through laws regarding working hours, the regulation of wage tariffs, and limitations on labour by woman and children,<sup>35</sup> or the regulation of initiatives that had been implemented to improve the lives of workers, such as in the case of sick and pension funds, or Societies for Mutual Assistance. This second type of welfare legislation was, however, not compulsory by law, and employers were free to choose to implement them or not. If implemented, companies received certain subsidies and benefits from the state. Such subsidised freedom, however, did not yet legally place the financial responsibility of the state onto the employer, unlike what was the case with Bismarck in Germany during this period.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> G. De Broeck, 'Sociale Wetgeving', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Tweede Deel, De Christen-Democratie 1886-1914*, 158.

<sup>32</sup> A Papal encyclical is a letter that is send out by the Pope to all Catholic bishops, and communicates the Popes particular views on some aspect of the Catholic doctrine, in this case of *Rerum Novarum* the relationship between employer, employee and the state.

<sup>33</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 509-510

<sup>34</sup> G. Vanschoenbeek, 'Van Passiviteit tot Sociale Beweging', in G.L. De Brabander, J. Gadisseur, and R. Gobyn, *De Industrie in België, Twee Eeuwen Ontwikeling 1780-1980*, 134.

<sup>35</sup> G. De Broeck, 'Sociale Wetgeving', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Tweede Deel, De Christen-Democratie 1886-1914*, 158-159.

<sup>36</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 575-6.



As a result of the wave of strikes in the wake of World War I, the government finally passed *het algemeen stemrecht* (universal suffrage) in 1919, which extended the vote to all men above the age of 21, but still excluded most women except widows of veterans, and mother widows of soldiers.<sup>37</sup> The introduction of the ‘universal suffrage’ caused a further dramatic increase in support for Socialists and Christian Democrats, and saw the rise of their power in parliament.<sup>38</sup> As a result of this change in power dynamics, a new vigour in the fight for social transformation emerged and new more significant welfare legislation was passed. Laws strengthening the influence of labour unions,<sup>39</sup> the introduction of the eight-hour day and 48-hour week,<sup>40</sup> the implementation of a system that coupled wages to purchasing power,<sup>41</sup> compulsory insurance for employees,<sup>42</sup> and other legislation were pushed forward and passed at a much faster rate than before. The cries expressing the mounting frustrations of the working class, which up until the last two decades of the nineteenth century had fallen on deaf ears, were finally addressed by the Belgian government, which was forced to listen to their complaints and began implementing changes.

### 6.1.3. The reaction of employers to the reduction of their autonomy

Because of this rise in trade unions and government interference in industry, the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century were thus characterised by the systematic reduction of the business owner’s autonomy.<sup>43</sup> This development was generally met with fierce resistance from employers as they did not understand, or did not want to understand, that outsiders could determine what needed to be changed or be implemented in ‘their’ business.<sup>44</sup> As a counteraction to this reduction in autonomy, the nineteenth century experienced a revival in the establishment of employer organisations. The formation of such organisations initially occurred on a local basis,<sup>45</sup> although certain early national trade organisations also existed. At first such organisations had been formed to address the various

<sup>37</sup> T. Luyckx, ‘Groeï van de Politieke Democratie’, in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 143-4.

<sup>38</sup> G. De Broeck, ‘Sociale Wetgeving’, in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 165.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 74.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>42</sup> G. De Broeck, ‘Sociale Wetgeving’, in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 191.

<sup>43</sup> D. Luyten, ‘Sociale Relaties en Arbeidsverhoudingen In en Om het Bedrijf’, in C. Vancoppenolle, (ed.), *Een Succesvolle Onderneming, Handleiding Voor het Schrijven Van een Bedrijfs-geschiedenis*, 267.

<sup>44</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 107.

<sup>45</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 16-7.

problems of their respective fields of trade, and were mainly concerned with regulating the purchase and sale of materials, but they were becoming increasingly popular from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, especially during times of economic crisis. As a result of the growing mobilisation of the working class at the same time as the government was steering away from its previous laissez fair policy, employer organisations also began to look into social issues affecting employees,<sup>46</sup> since, according to employers, the government had become over-protective of the labourers rights and evidently infringed on their own rights.

Thus the formation of stronger more unified employer organisations through which business owners could jointly voice their opinions was seen as essential in trying to protect their autonomy, and larger more organised employer organisations emerged.<sup>47</sup> Belgium's first large employer organisations were the *Comité Central Du Travail Industriel*, which was formed in 1895,<sup>48</sup> and *het Centraal Nijverheidscomitee*, established in 1913.<sup>49</sup> Besides these two examples of early large-scale employer organisations, employers really begin to organise themselves from the 1920s onwards when the need for protection against the growing power of the labour unions and increased government regulation became more urgent. The formation of *het Algemeen Christelijk Verbond Van Werkgevers* in 1925,<sup>50</sup> or *het Vlaams Economisch Verbond* in 1926, for instance, are characteristic of this new type of employer organisation that formed strong lobbies protecting the interests of employers and industry.

The period covered in this study can thus be clearly defined as a time during which tremendous and irreversible socio-economic and political changes occurred. The working class, largely operating under the red banner of the Socialist movement, managed to organise itself into powerful organisations that strove for the rights of labourers. This development reached a critical moment during the mid 1890s and significantly altered the direction of government policy in relation to the country's industry. The party that represented the voice of the masses of labourers in the political dialogue was the Socialist Party, which together with the Christian Democrats and to a certain extent the Progressive Party, began the long laborious process of negotiating change and establishing proper welfare legislation. As the law regarding who is eligible to vote was extended over the years, the bargaining position of these parties improved. This change resulted in an adjustment of the existing power dynamics

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<sup>46</sup> H. Slomp, and T. Van Mierlo, *Arbeidsverhoudingen in België* 1, 28.

<sup>47</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, and J.L. Moreau, T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 20.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

and translated into the implementation of more and better forms of welfare legislation, especially after World War I. After the war the popularity and power of unions also increased, pushing the demand for better working conditions and worker rights to the forefront. As a result of this growing interference by government and unions in regulating and restricting company autonomy and policy, large employer organisations that represented the business world were established.

#### **6.1.4. Crushing labour unrest through ‘kindness’**

When Eduard established his factory in *Kievitstraat* in 1875, the issues of workers’ rights and working conditions were therefore slowly coming to the forefront, and becoming a central part of the public debate at the time. Although the actual implementation of any concrete social changes was still being battled out between those in favour and those against, the debate had been started and was irreversible. Intense protests and strikes, together with the formation and rise to power of the Socialist Party, arose in the year during which De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s Society for Mutual Assistance, its first known CSR initiative, was initiated in 1885.<sup>51</sup> A year after the infamous strikes of 1886, Eduard also launched the company’s music school,<sup>52</sup> and later in 1888 its evening classes.<sup>53</sup> In the following years, as the government’s attitude towards social change began to shift and Belgium’s welfare legislation started to develop, the working class became more organised and powerful, and the autonomy of the business world was subsequently threatened, Eduard decided to further expand his CSR policy by increasing the company’s offer of initiatives. After Eduard had passed away and World War I had ended, the country experienced a new period of working-class discontent that was characterised by heightened labour unrest, the growing importance of trade unions and an increase in the power of the Socialist Party and Christian Democratic stream within the Catholic party, which implemented new and more significant welfare legislation. It is during this change, and one year after Belgium experienced 506 strikes in

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<sup>51</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschapij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen regelement*, Art. 1.

<sup>52</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, ‘Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer’, np.

<sup>53</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

1920,<sup>54</sup> that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken also decided to launch a new chapter in the history of its CSR policy by forming its Secretariat for Social Welfare.<sup>55</sup>

The development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy and the country's socio-economic and political changes regarding workers rights and working conditions in many ways thus ran parallel to one another, and a possible connection between the implementation of CSR initiatives at the factory and the general changing mood and developments of its wider environment should not be ruled out. Studies on companies in other parts of the world have shown how business owners often implemented CSR initiatives during similar periods of strikes and discontent, and have in fact indicated that such a connection does exist.

During the late nineteenth century, for instance, American industrialists like George Pullman, Harold Patterson and Henry John Heinz were confronted with heightened industrial violence and labour militancy, and opted to implement CSR initiatives as a response to this 'problem',<sup>56</sup> whilst during the 1920s American businesses further increased their CSR policies to counter the growing attraction of labour mobilisation<sup>57</sup> – '*setting aside their guns, employers strove to crush labour through kindness*'.<sup>58</sup> Many American employers were even publicly open about their method of '*preferring the carrot over the stick*' to counter labour unrest.<sup>59</sup> The implementation of a CSR policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was thus repeatedly used by American businessmen as 'a defensive strategy, which formed a barrier against labour unrest and unionisation'.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, 'Britain's evolution of social reforms was also driven by material and discursive struggles in society as well as conflicts within the state, and it was the prospect of increased unionisation and Socialist campaigning among the industrial workforce that sharpened interest in CSR policies in Britain during the last two decades of the nineteenth century'.<sup>61</sup>

Research has yet to turn up any evidence of particular cases of labour unrest or strikes at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during this period, and besides a brief reference to the existence of

<sup>54</sup> P.F. Broeckaert, 'Arbeidsconflicten', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939 Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 218.

<sup>55</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917- 24 December 1920. vergadering gehouden den 24 December 1920, 39.

<sup>56</sup> H. M. Mueller and T. Philippon, *Family firms, Paternalism and Labor Relations*, 6-7.

<sup>57</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 114.

<sup>58</sup> H. M. Mueller and T. Philippon, *Family firms, Paternalism and Labor Relations*, 6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 114

<sup>61</sup> J. Melling, 'Welfare Capitalism and the Origins of Welfare States: British Industry, Workplace Welfare and Social Reform, C. 1870-1914', *Social History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Oct., 1992), 454.

union representatives in 1929,<sup>62</sup> little to nothing is known about the influence or power of unions at the factory. It is unlikely, however, that the relationship between employer and employee at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken was totally immune to the changes that were occurring in the broader environment. The increasing unrest of the labour class throughout the period, and the establishment of the position of the Socialist party and the Christian democratic stream in the political and social debate, would not have gone unnoticed by Eduard and the factory's management, and must surely have raised concerns. As biscuit manufacturing is a labour-intensive industry, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken employed a fair number of workers who played an integral part in the success or failure of the company. Avoiding potential strikes or conflict by keeping employees happy was therefore essential in such times of heightened tension. One way of achieving this equilibrium was to create a working environment that was pleasant and employment that was beneficial. The recreational hall of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken,<sup>63</sup> its free hot cocoa and affordable bathing services,<sup>64</sup> as well as its clean and well-lit work floors,<sup>65</sup> and its various leisure initiatives, discussed in Chapter Four, seemed to have tried to break the stereotypical dark, depressing and monotonous environment of hard work at the factory by attempting to create a more pleasant 'homely' atmosphere. During a time of financial uncertainty and the absence of statutorily defined welfare legislation, ex gratia benefits such as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Society for Mutual Assistance,<sup>66</sup> and later its Relief Fund,<sup>67</sup> were certainly beneficial to employees, as it provided them with a form of social security, either at an affordable rate or for free, which they would not have received from the state or the majority of potential employers, whilst the company in turn would receive certain subsidies from the state for the implementation of such benefits.

As indicated in Chapter Four, the company's welfare services were eagerly accepted by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees, with the company's Relief Fund being utilised by roughly 96 percent of the company's personnel. The apparent success of this particular kind

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<sup>62</sup> (CBAU), P2 49u, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929. Programma van de Feestelijkheden.

<sup>63</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat III', np.

<sup>64</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken*, 6; 20.

<sup>65</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat III', np.

<sup>66</sup> (FA), MA 505, *Maatschappij van onderlingen bijstand opgericht in de werkhuizen der heeren E. De Beukelaer & Co. Algemeen reglement*.

<sup>67</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'De Geldelijke Steun door het Beheer onzer Fabriek Kosteloos aan zijn Personeel Verleend', 49-51.

of initiative could very likely be attributed to the fact that welfare initiatives directly brought about certain levels of material or financial security and benefits to the life of the labourer, which, unlike extramural leisure or educational initiatives, did not require a lot of effort on the part of the employee. Despite lacking the instant financial benefits of the welfare services, certain leisure or educational initiatives, such as the company's library or its mixed choir, were also fairly popular and indicate that in part employees did accept the efforts made by the company by making use of them. In some instances, however, employees showed a lack of interest in, or care for, the company's efforts, as they were often lax about following the rules instated for the various initiatives such as in the case of the library or the sick fund.<sup>68</sup> Whether fully accepted by employees or not, in many ways such CSR initiatives seem to have attempted to limit possible conflict or unrest amongst employees by improving their general working conditions and employment, without necessarily affecting the company's rate of production by means of cutting working hours, or lowering its profitability by raising its wages.

Besides trying to keep employees contented, some of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR initiatives also seemed to have attempted to minimise or avoid possible conflict by creating a sense of ownership and responsibility amongst its workers. The system of profit sharing that was introduced in 1923 is particularly interesting in this regard, as it give employees a (largely imaginary) stake in the company's profits.<sup>69</sup> Such a system attempted to create a bond between the employee and the company that was based upon a shared responsibility for its existence and performance, and was an attempt to temper or at least discourage the potentially damaging actions that employees might resort to.

In America company magazines had also become popular around the period of World War I and have been noted to have often emerged in the wake of strikes or extraordinary labour tension or fierce conflict.<sup>70</sup> In such difficult times many of the editors of these company magazines reported that they were eager to create a dialogue between employer and employees by including their workers' input and making it a truly representative publication. In reality, the so-called dialogue in the large majority of these company magazines was a

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<sup>68</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 9, 'Het Operatiefonds, een nieuwe maatschappelijke steuninstelling', 129.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 15, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>69</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>70</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 109.



monologue by its editors, and little actual input or participation from the bottom up could be noted.<sup>71</sup>

In the case of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's company magazine *Arbeid Adelt*, which published its first issue on 1 January 1921,<sup>72</sup> a similar attempt to create a sense of participation amongst the company's employee was promoted. Through *Arbeid Adelt* the Secretariat for Social Welfare encouraged employees to participate in the decision-making process and have their say in the improvement of their employment and working conditions at the factory. The office of the Secretariat for Social Welfare was open for visits on certain days of the week, so that employees could voice their concerns, communicate their thoughts, or ask the necessary questions, whilst on other days they could send in written requests to arrange a possible meeting, all with so-called 'full discretion'.<sup>73</sup> Through *Arbeid Adelt* the Secretariat also asked employees what, according to them, '*could be changed or improved in the factory, in the interest of morality and decency, in the interest of health or to prevent inconveniences or accidents as much as possible, in the interest of order, neatness, beauty or cosiness, in the interest of employment itself*'.<sup>74</sup> The efforts of those employees who, according to the Secretariat, had been extraordinarily active in sending in their thoughts throughout the year were rewarded with a diploma that had been signed by all the members of the board of directors, or received a payment that ranged from 40 Bfr. to 10 Bfr.<sup>75</sup> *Arbeid Adelt* also occasionally included bulletins from the Secretariat for Social Welfare that asked employees what services or initiatives they would like to join or would like to see implemented at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken.<sup>76</sup>

Through the Secretariat for Social Welfare and their publication *Arbeid Adelt*, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken seems thus to have attempted to engage its employees in some form of dialogue about their working conditions, and tried to stimulate their participation by 'rewarding' them for their efforts. To what extent the input of employees was actually taken into consideration is difficult to determine, but there were definitely attempts made to include employees in part of the company's decision-making process, creating the idea that their opinions counted. These efforts could possibly generate a sense of belonging and worth

<sup>71</sup>R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 109.

<sup>72</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1.

<sup>73</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 2, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>74</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>75</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.

<sup>76</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 10, 'Bijgevoegd Bultijn maatschapelijke Werking, Instellingen van Zedelijke en Geestelijke Verdeling', np.

amongst employees that could ease potential tension at the factory, as it promoted the idea that the labourers' voice, which had generally fallen on deaf ears in society, would now be heard and considered. Despite these efforts, an analysis of its content indicates that the majority of *Arbeid Adelt's* communication was one-way, from the top down, with no really significant input from employees noticeable.

The implementation and development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy was thus clearly linked to the country's changing socio-political situation, and its various initiatives seem to have been used to keep its workforce contented in an attempt to create a sense of ownership, responsibility and importance amongst them in the turbulent and restless times that characterised much of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

## **6.2. The company's CSR policy as a means to limit the influence of worker organisations**

### **6.2.1. The leisure, education and welfare provisions of the working class**

A number of leisure, educational and welfare provisions of the working class that were largely linked to the changing socio-political developments described above also seem to have contributed to the implementation of a CSR policy at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and corresponded with its preferred types of initiatives.

One important factor that initiated and manifested many new working-class trends during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was the availability of more leisure time in the lives of labourers. Time to relax after work began to be an increasingly important aspect of the lifestyle of the labouring classes from the late nineteenth century onwards. This development emerged because of changes in the regulation of working hours. Around 1843 the average working day in Belgium was 12 and a half hours or longer.<sup>77</sup> The working class, who over the years had become increasingly vocal in demanding the regulation and reduction of working hours, heavily contested these working hours and the government slowly and rather reluctantly started to give in to their demands. By 1907 the normal working day had been slightly reduced to an average of between 10 to 12 hours,<sup>78</sup> but it was not until 1921, however, with the introduction of an eight-hour day and a 48-hour week, that a really significant increase in leisure time for the working class became a reality. The new 48-hour

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<sup>77</sup> R. Brion, P. Hatry, J.L. Moreau, and T. Peeters, *100 Jaar Actie Voor de Onderneming*, 73.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

week had been determined at a 1919 international convention in Washington and was based on the '3x8' principle of 8 hours of work, 8 hours of leisure and 8 hours of rest in a 24-hour day.<sup>79</sup> Leisure time had thus slowly become more prominent in the daily routine of labourers, and throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the working class had begun to develop a particular fondness for certain recreational activities.

During time off the average labourer generally attended and practised these various forms of recreation at the local pub on a Saturday night or throughout Sunday.<sup>80</sup> Such weekend entertainment at the pub or the dancehall, however, was not always because individuals necessarily enjoyed going there, but because they often did not know where else to go for their entertainment.<sup>81</sup> This practice was fairly similar to what had occurred in England during the age of social dislocation, when the pub was described as being '*a centre for warmth, light and sociability for the urban poor, a haven from the filth and meanness of inadequate and congested housing, a magnet for the disorientated newcomers, and disgruntled regular alike. Public houses provided more than just a drink, they provided a house of call, toilet facilities, refuge from the wet and from the wife, dominoes and cards, reading matter, food and music.*'<sup>82</sup>

Belgium was no different, as the local pub also served as the centre for the working man's leisure after a long day's or week's work,<sup>83</sup> and the emergence of various recreational societies and organisations that had based themselves at their local drinking houses became a widespread phenomenon that was already well established from as early as the 1830s and 1840s.<sup>84</sup> One particular form of such working-class entertainment whose societies generally operated from the local pub was pigeon-fancying. This was a hobby which became increasingly popular around the turn of the nineteenth century, as by 1907 there were roughly 4 000 pigeon-fancying societies in Belgium, and the local railway company transported no

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<sup>79</sup> G. De Broeck, 'Sociale Wetgeving', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 178.

<sup>80</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 165.

<sup>81</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Smith, M.A., 'Social Usages of the Public Drinking House: Changing Aspects of Class and Leisure', *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Sep., 1983), 376.

<sup>83</sup> R. Peeters, 'Volksleven en Volkscultuur', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Khatolieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 99.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

less than 8 500 000 pigeons that year for pigeon races.<sup>85</sup> Besides being places of working-class entertainment and leisure, British public houses have also been noted as having been home to those groups seeking political reform.<sup>86</sup> A similar observation can be made in the case of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Belgium, as some pubs during this period also served as the local Socialist or Liberal *Volkshuis* (House of the People), or the Catholic *Gilde* or *Werkmans Huis* (Guild or Worker's House).

These type of Houses<sup>87</sup> were buildings that the local Socialist, Catholic and Liberal cooperative, workers' organisation, or union would operate from, and served as the centre from which their propaganda was spread, their cultural life was supported, and the wellbeing of its members organised.<sup>88</sup> Located either in a pub, or a specifically allocated building, such Houses ranged in size from small modest buildings to some of the large, almost bombastic, Socialist palaces of the working class. This phenomenon became extremely popular from the late nineteenth century onwards and offers a valuable insight into the social trends and customs of the working class population in Belgium during this period.

Similar to the three ideological pillars contesting their respective legitimacy on the political stage, so did their different organisations based at the local Houses constantly compete with one another to win over the working class to their ideological corner, a goal that was pursued passionately and with equal vigour by all sides. Both Socialist and Catholic, and to a lesser extent Liberal organisations, tried to win over new members of the working class by forming various recreational societies, offering educational initiatives and creating supportive welfare structures.<sup>89</sup>

The type of recreation that was offered by the different organisations at their respective Houses was determined by both established as well as changing customs and trends in society, and song, music and theatre were extremely popular during this period. Amongst the various Socialist organisations the popularity of initiatives such as brass bands, choirs and drama societies grew from the 1870s onwards<sup>90</sup> and was promoted by early Socialist leaders

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<sup>85</sup> J. Verstraelen, 'De Sociale Ontwikkeling', in M. Lamberty, and R. Lissens, (eds.), *Vlaanderen Door de Eeuwen Heen, Eerste Deel*, 305.

<sup>86</sup> Smith, M.A., 'Social Usages of the Public Drinking House: Changing Aspects of Class and Leisure', 376.

<sup>87</sup> For convenience sake the thesis will make use of the term 'Houses' to refer to these different organisational headquarters.

<sup>88</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 71.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>90</sup> A. Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen en omliggende*, 238.

as a noble form of entertainment.<sup>91</sup> Despite the ideological rivalry that existed between the Socialists and Catholics during this period, Catholic organisations also offered the same forms of entertainment to their members, but instead promoted them as a way to shape the morals and values of the masses, and of course to keep them away from the so called ‘dangerous’ influences of the Socialists.<sup>92</sup> These different song, music- and drama societies usually performed at art evenings and festivities, where they would raise funds and generate publicity for their organisations.<sup>93</sup>

Besides music and theatre, gymnastics also became extremely popular from the later part of the nineteenth century onwards, and organisations of all kinds would form their own gymnastic groups. This sudden popularity of gymnastics can be linked to a rising interest in the physical exercise of the body, partly as a result of the mechanisation that the industrial revolution had introduced, as well as a general growing interest in taking care of one’s body. Unlike other popular but expensive noble forms of recreation such as horse riding or fencing, gymnastics was also a sport that was financially viable for the working class.<sup>94</sup> In Catholic circles gymnastics was considered as a powerful tool for the physical and moral cleansing of the masses.<sup>95</sup> It not only strengthened the muscles of workers, but also helped to control their bodies as it provided an appropriate distraction for the remaining bodily energy that would otherwise be damaging,<sup>96</sup> whilst at the same time order and discipline were instilled, and moral and religious behaviour taught. Because of this growing rise in the popularity of gymnastics groups amongst the various Catholic organisations, the Catholic gymnast bond was formed in 1892.<sup>97</sup> The Catholic organisations slowly abandoned gymnastics during the late 1920s as their main form of exercise, marking a shift towards more passive spectator sports such as soccer and cycling, which were no longer concerned with the previous idea of using up the body’s excess energy.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> R. Stallaerts, ‘Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 99.

<sup>92</sup> L. Shokkeart, ‘Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 136.

<sup>93</sup> A. Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen en omliggende*, 241.; R. Stallaerts, ‘Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen’, 99.

<sup>94</sup> L. Shokkeart, ‘Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 139.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century gymnastics had also become extremely popular amid the different Socialist organisations, and the first Socialist gymnastics group emerged in Ghent in 1886. In 1904 the Socialist gymnast federation was formed, which organised its own national tournaments,<sup>99</sup> but after World War I other sports such as cycling, soccer, wrestling and swimming also became increasingly popular amongst socialist organisations, and largely replaced this previous love for gymnastics.<sup>100</sup> Other less traditional forms of recreation that were offered by Socialist organisations around the turn of the nineteenth century included photography clubs, radio evenings and cinematic entertainment, all signs of new forms of entertainment that were linked to the changing times.<sup>101</sup> Unlike their Socialist counterpart, Catholic organisations favoured more traditional forms of recreation and the rise of craft exhibitions for Art and Home Industry became extremely popular from the First World War onwards.<sup>102</sup> Many of these recreational initiatives were used by the various organisations as a means of attracting especially younger individuals who were not particularly interested in politics or ideology. During their practice or stay at the House, such apolitical individuals could then be introduced to the propaganda of the organisation, and possibly won over to their ideological corner.<sup>103</sup> Besides being mere places of entertainment and recreation, the Houses of the different organisations served a broader purpose, as they also were centres of education for the working classes.

The emergence of the use of Houses as a place of learning could be attributed to the low level of education that existed amongst the working classes, as up until the early twentieth century there was a high level of illiteracy amongst the population, especially in the region of Flanders.<sup>104</sup> Belgium made the school-leaving age of 14 compulsory only in 1919, significantly later than any of its neighbouring countries.<sup>105</sup> As a result of this rather lax educational policy, the emergence and rise of evening or adult schools during the second half of the nineteenth century played an important role in the education of the working class by teaching or improving basic skills such as reading and writing, or expanding general

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<sup>99</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 102.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-1.

<sup>102</sup> R. Peeters, 'Volksleven en Volkcultuur', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 105.

<sup>103</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 102.

<sup>104</sup> J.E. Verheyen, 'Onderwijs en Opvoeding Sedert 1830', in M. Lamberty, R. Lissens, and C. Huymans, *Vlaanderen Door de Eeuwen Heen, Eerste Deel*, 327.

<sup>105</sup> E. Witte, and J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België II*, 591.



knowledge on history, geography or science. By 1845 it was noted that 170 000 students were enrolled in 1 069 evening and adult schools in Belgium. During the second half of the nineteenth century the number of students rapidly grew and the concept of evening schooling became even more popular, only to die out after the introduction of the school-leaving age of 14 in 1919.<sup>106</sup> The high level of illiteracy could also be accounted for by the lack of public access to libraries during this period. In 1860 it was noted that there were only 20 public libraries in the entire country,<sup>107</sup> and 55 years later, on the eve of the First World War, many towns still did not feature one.<sup>108</sup> The shortage of public libraries only began to turn around from 1921 onwards, after Belgium's passed its first library law.<sup>109</sup> The lack of proper legislation on education or libraries resulted in a rudimentary standard of education and high levels of illiteracy amongst the working class. Besides the various evening schools to counter this problem, most Socialist and Catholic organisations also began to offer educational opportunities to its members at their local Houses.

From the 1870s onwards Socialist organisations in Belgium started to launch various educational initiatives in an attempt to uplift the labouring class. These initiatives included French and Flemish language classes,<sup>110</sup> educational art evenings,<sup>111</sup> study circles on socialism, and Sunday or evening schooling.<sup>112</sup> Reading was also stimulated by most Socialist organisations, and a library and reading table with a large variety of books, magazines and newspapers became a standard feature in the different Socialist Houses.<sup>113</sup> The intellectual upliftment of the working class by the Socialist movement was of such importance that in 1911 the BWP even proceeded to form the *Centrale voor Arbeidsopvoeding*, (Centre for Labour Education), which was a division that was specially launched to try to stimulate the mental instead of the more common material upliftment of the labouring class.<sup>114</sup> Such educational initiatives thus attempted to uplift the working class by exposing them to

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<sup>106</sup> J.E. Verheyen, 'Onderwijs en Opvoeding Sedert 1830', in M. Lamberty, R. Lissens, and C. Huymans, *Vlaanderen Door de Eeuwen Heen, Eerste Deel*, 327.

<sup>107</sup> R. Peeters, 'Volksleven en Volkcultuur', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 87.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>109</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 97.

<sup>110</sup> A. Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen en omliggende*, 252-3.

<sup>111</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 96.

<sup>112</sup> A. Van Laar, *Geschiedenis van de Arbeidersbeweging te Antwerpen en omliggende*, 252-3.

<sup>113</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 96.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

Socialist ideology, but also improving their general skills and knowledge. Very similar initiatives were also emerging at the Houses of the various Catholic organisations.

An initiative that was especially popular amongst Catholic organisations from the late nineteenth century onwards was lectures on politics, culture, religion, history or geography, which were sometimes accompanied by the use of slides.<sup>115</sup> During the early twentieth century, the social, political and cultural emancipation of the working class had become increasingly important amongst the various Catholic organisations, forming part of the growing Christian Democratic movement. Catholic Houses formed study circles, where members learned about religion and other broader topics, whilst a sense of the arts and aesthetics was further stimulated, and special development evenings for parents, children and women were started.<sup>116</sup> Just as in the case of the Socialist organisations, reading was also encouraged, and libraries, and in some cases reading tables for magazines and newspapers, began to emerge at the various Catholic Houses.<sup>117</sup> Most of these Catholic initiatives had a strong moral and religious basis and tried to shape their members according to Christian ideals.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the various Socialist and Catholic organisations thus also provided a series of educational initiatives to intellectually uplift the working class according to the model of their ideology. This was largely made possible by the working class's need for education that had been created by the inadequate educational provision of the state. Education was not the only area where the state fell short of expectations, however, as welfare provision was equally neglected by government during this period.

During the nineteenth century in Belgium welfare provisions were virtually nonexistent and the lack of official legislation regarding healthcare, pension, and disability pay seriously affected the working classes. Although some laws on welfare provisions had been promulgated from the 1850s onwards,<sup>118</sup> the implementation of proper welfare legislation was further delayed by the dominance of the social-liberal ideology in the late nineteenth century,

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<sup>115</sup> L. Shokkeart, 'Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 156.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-6.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>118</sup> G. De Broeck, 'Sociale Wetgeving', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939 Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 203.

which believed in the economic morality of thriftiness, self-help and prescience,<sup>119</sup> a problem that prevailed well into the early twentieth century. Acquiring some form of welfare provision was thus of particular concern to the working class whose need for financial and social security was greatest. In order to protect themselves against the potential pitfalls of life, various societies for mutual assistance, pension funds, relief funds and cooperatives were established by the members of the working class,<sup>120</sup> usually at their local Socialist, Catholic or Liberal Houses. Although in some cases such initiatives had already existed from as early as the period of Dutch occupation of Belgium,<sup>121</sup> they really became popular from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards. By 1913 an estimated 150 000 families were registered with a cooperative, and 4 000 societies for health insurance, 200 societies for invalids and 25 000 pension societies were in existence.<sup>122</sup> The working class had been forced to take care of its own social security and consequently established a large number of organisations and services to protect themselves.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the various Socialist, Catholic and Liberal organisations had thus all introduced leisure and educational initiatives and implemented extensive systems of welfare provision at their respective Houses. Despite their ideological differences, the constant competition of trying to win over the support of the working class meant that the various organisations tended to offer largely the same initiatives and services to their members. These general trends were not only linked to the pre-existing and changing traditions practised by the working class, but also a consequence of a lack of legislation on the part of the government. It is important to note that many of these trends, however, were not restricted to merely working-class organisations alone, as many organisations that represented the middle class or the self-employed – such as, for instance, *Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, of which Eduard was a member – also offered similar leisure and educational initiatives and welfare services to its members. Although these types of practices were thus deeply entrenched in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Belgian society as they formed part of the daily life of the majority of the population, they were especially popular with the working class at the time, as they offered the working class a sense of

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<sup>119</sup> E. Witte, and J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België II*, 591.

<sup>120</sup> G. Vanschoenbeek, 'Van Passiviteit tot Sociale Beweging', in G.L. De Brabander, J. Gadisseur, and R. Gobyn, *De Industrie in België, Twee Eeuwen Ontwikeling 1780-1980*, 140-1.

<sup>121</sup> P. Gérin, 'Sociaal-katholieke Verenigingen Voor de Arbeiders', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Eerste Deel, Sociaal-Katholicisme 1789-1886*, 225.

<sup>122</sup> G. Vanschoenbeek, 'Van Passiviteit tot Sociale Beweging', in G.L. De Brabander, J. Gadisseur, and R. Gobyn, *De Industrie in België, Twee Eeuwen Ontwikeling 1780-1980*, 140-1.

belonging and security, and supplied them with services and benefits that they could not access in their own personal capacity.<sup>123</sup>

### 6.2.2. Competing with the ‘Houses’ of the working class

When analysing the above working class trends and customs that were provided at the local Houses of various Socialist, Catholic and Liberal workers organisations during this period, clear and distinct similarities with De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s internal CSR policy emerge. De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s internal CSR placed the same emphasis on leisure, education and welfare. The company also implemented the same, or at least very similar, initiatives and services as the various organisations that were created for the working class and were deeply entrenched in their daily lives. Such a clear similarity can hardly be called a coincidence and the existence of such initiatives can thus be considered as providing a possible motive for their implementation at De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken.

As working hours were systematically reduced over the years, and leisure time became more prominent in the daily life of workers, so did their potential exposure to these outside organisations, whose popularity grew rapidly amongst the working-class population.<sup>124</sup> As mentioned above, the different Socialist, Catholic and Liberal groups had attempted to win over the support of the working class for their respective ideological camps by offering the same initiatives and services as an attempt to keep them out of reach of the ideological grip of their ‘opponents’.<sup>125</sup> A similar motive could also be attributed for the creation of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken internal CSR policy in an attempt to keep its employees as far away as possible from the Socialist, Catholic or Liberal workers organisations, cooperatives, societies and unions, which could form a ‘threat’ to the internal stability of the company. Preventing employees from being influenced by these organisations could thus be beneficial in limiting potential conflict or unrest at the factory, and offering and promoting the same extramural leisure and educational initiatives and welfare services was one way of achieving this.

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<sup>123</sup> R. Stallaerts, ‘Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 96.; L. Shokkeart, ‘Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 153-4.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> L. Shokkeart, ‘Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 136.

Besides the creation of the company's brass band and company school for employees, a particularly early practical example of trying to limit such 'harmful' external influences from infiltrating the company occurred in 1888, when Eduard opened up the factory's new recreational hall for his employees. Just as in the case of the many leisure rooms at the different Houses,<sup>126</sup> De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's recreational hall contained a bar, seating area and performance stage, where its members could congregate, drink a beer, play cards or listen to performances.<sup>127</sup> The only difference was that the recreational space of the factory, which was positioned next to Eduard's house at the factory,<sup>128</sup> was a controlled environment, where so-called 'radical' thinking would have been virtually impossible to develop amongst employees. The idea of offering the same initiatives to potentially keep employees away from the different Houses is also particularly well illustrated in a 1921 bulletin that was distributed in *Arbeid Adelt* by the Secretariat for Social Welfare, and which all employees were requested to fill in. One of the questions the bulletin asked was whether employees were a member of any drama society, symphony or brass band, singing organisation, library, trade organisation, savings fund, pension fund, study circle, unemployment fund, sick fund, burial fund, cooperative for winter supply, travelling fund, gymnastics group, sports organisation, or

**AANDACHT! -- Bultijn door IEDEREEN in te vullen!**

1. Nummer : \_\_\_\_\_ Voornaam : \_\_\_\_\_ Familiennaam : \_\_\_\_\_  
 2. Huidig adres : stad of gemeente : \_\_\_\_\_ Straat : \_\_\_\_\_ Nummer : \_\_\_\_\_  
 3. Geboren te \_\_\_\_\_ den (dag, maand en jaar) \_\_\_\_\_  
 4. Ongeluwd, gehuwd (1) : echtgenoot (e), wedrenaar, weduwe.  
 5. Aantal kinderen in leven : \_\_\_\_\_ Ouderdom (in cijfers) van ieder kind : \_\_\_\_\_  
 6. In dienst getreden in de fabriek (dag, maand en jaar zoo mogelijk) \_\_\_\_\_  
 7. Thans werkzaam in (juiste benaming der werkplaats opgeven) \_\_\_\_\_  
 8. Maakt deel van een (2) : tooneelvereniging — symphonie of fanfare — zangvereniging — boekerij — vakvereniging — spaarkas — pensioenkas — studiekring — werkloosenkas — ziekenkas — begrafenisfonds — aankoopvereniging voor wintervoorraad — reukas — turnkring — sportvereniging.  
 9. Volgt lessen of avondleergangen van \_\_\_\_\_  
 10. Drukt den wensch uit dat het Sekretariaat voor maatschappelijke Werking zich beghoede met \_\_\_\_\_

Handteeken \_\_\_\_\_

(1) : Doorschrijven wat er te veel op staat.  
 (2) : \_\_\_\_\_ den \_\_\_\_\_ Januari 1921.

**Figure 55: The 1921 bulletin send out by the Secretariat.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 10, 'Bijgevoegd Bultijn Maatschappelijke Werking, Instellingen van Zedelijke en Geestelijke Verdeling', np.

if they followed any classes or evening school.<sup>129</sup> Such a survey could have been used by the Secretariat for Social Welfare to establish what initiatives and services were practised or utilised outside of the company by its employees, so that they could subsequently offer them directly to employees at the factory, and thus potentially keep them out of the reach of the working-class organisations.

<sup>126</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 95.

<sup>127</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat III', np.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 2, 'Bijgevoegd Bultijn Maatschappelijke Werking, Instellingen van Zedelijke en Geestelijke Verdeling', np.

Throughout the existence of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy the practice sessions, classes and lectures of all of its different leisure and educational initiatives were also conducted after work during the leisure time of employees throughout the week,<sup>130</sup> and the various festivities, company trips or activities during their free time in the weekend.<sup>131</sup> Such an arrangement meant that the lives of those employees who were active participants or members of the various organisations for the most part revolved around the factory, keeping them occupied for most of the week under the watchful eye of management. This idea of keeping employees at the factory for as long as possible is well illustrated by Eduard, who in his 1888 speech stated, *'If we can continue to follow this path had in hand, we shall achieve our goal. The more so, when on Sunday you will be able to spend your spare time here in cordial pleasure.... Your day at our factory has been well spent, you have enjoyed your entertainment, and as a king you place your weary head to rest, so that the day thereafter you can resume work with fresh courage.'*<sup>132</sup>

During the extensive time that employees spend at the factory, Eduard and later the company's management were able to introduce its own less damaging ideology in an attempt to shape the conduct of its 'workers' and turn them into 'employees' with all the right skills and personality characteristics,<sup>133</sup> one who would find fulfilment in his life as the 'employee' of the firm.<sup>134</sup> The idea of shaping workers according to a preferred mould is particularly visible in the same 1888 speech by Eduard, during which he stated that, *'With the treatment of tools also belonged components that are capable of improvement, we mean our employees. Well then, we wanted to instil that which inspired us, when we walked on the long road of progress. ... Whilst the workman after his work gets left behind on his own almost everywhere, and largely because of this, for him, fatal actions occur, we apply ourselves to stop this mistake. ... For years our endeavour has been to counter this human error. And have the seeds, that have been sown with a lavish hand in the soil of our factory not borne the fruits that were expected?... there, yes, is what we should answer. ... And is this surprising? A heart is also housed underneath the clothes of a labourer, and in his head, a mind open to*

<sup>130</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 21, 'Tijding van het Secretariaat', np.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 2, 'Gemengd Kunstfeest', 24.

<sup>131</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 9, 'Openluchtvoorstelling', 146.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 2, 'Gemengd Kunstfeest', 24.

<sup>132</sup>FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>133</sup> D. Reid, 'Industrial Paternalism: Discourse and Practice in Nineteenth-Century French Mining and Metallurgy', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Oct., 1985), 585.

<sup>134</sup>*Ibid.*, 586.



*development ... This has not escaped us, and that is why we have looked for ways to combine the necessary with the pleasant, and to give the workman that what he needs.*<sup>135</sup> Eduard clearly mentions the need to guide his employees and develop them in the way that, according to him, is appropriate and right. This idea further manifested itself in De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's female division, where female supervisors and candidate supervisors were taught about the conduct that is deemed proper for the factory's female employees by discussing their physical, moral and intellectual upliftment.<sup>136</sup>

The idea of shaping employees according to a certain model occurred to an extreme extent from 1921 onwards, when the Secretariat for Social Welfare published *Arbeid Adelt*. Besides its informative content, the large majority of articles in *Arbeid Adelt* focused on the moral, intellectual and cultural upliftment of the labourer according to the company's own model, but, unlike workers' organisations, the articles were careful to leave out any reference to their political emancipation.<sup>137</sup> In its publication the Secretariat for Social Welfare also attempted to create a sense of loyalty and pride in the company and its legacy, and praised the virtues of achieving nobility through labour.<sup>138</sup> Such a discourse by the Secretariat was similar to that of editors of American company magazines at the time, which also 'often utilised their publications to sermonise and moralise on the virtues of loyalty, ambition and the dignity of work'.<sup>139</sup> From as early as the late 1880s De Beukelaer's Fabrieken attempted to instil this ideology in its employees, and based it upon the life motto of its founder and company crest of the company, namely the idiom *Arbeid Adelt*, or Labour Ennobles.

### 6.2.3. 'Preaching' the ideology of *Arbeid Adelt*

Throughout the history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy the slogan *Arbeid Adelt* appeared as the name of the company's Society for Mutual Assistance,<sup>140</sup> its brass band,<sup>141</sup> its drama society<sup>142</sup> and its company magazine;<sup>143</sup> it was written on the wall of the company's

<sup>135</sup>FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>136</sup>(EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-18, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. – Sociale Actie', 32.

<sup>137</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 12, 'Inhoudstafel', 289-292.

<sup>138</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Edward De Beukelaer, Ons Sekretariaat. – Ons Tijdschrift', 1-3.

<sup>139</sup>R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 109.

<sup>140</sup>(CUBA), P2 105c, Lijsten van de ziekenkas 1896-1903.

<sup>141</sup>*Gazet van Antwerpen*, 18October 1897, 'De Magistraten van Oud-Dordt te Antwerpen', np.

<sup>142</sup>(AMVC), A 38072/p, Groepsfoto van de toneelafdeling *Arbeid Adelt*.

<sup>143</sup>(EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*.

recreation hall and on sculptures,<sup>144</sup> and was constantly mentioned in speeches in relation to the company's CSR initiatives and services.<sup>145</sup> *Arbeid Adelt* formed part of the company's crest and was promoted by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as the ideological guideline for its employees.

According to the company, the premise of the *Arbeid Adelt* ideology was that labour was an intrinsic part of human nature, as the whole human body was designed for movement, and if not utilised it would deteriorate and eventually lose its beauty and power. Labour is life and through labour life is expressed in both its mental as well as its physical form. Those who perform labour gain power over their will and develop persistence, as labour enables them to learn to overcome all obstacles and difficulties that they encounter on their path. In hard times all must honour their duty to work by using his or her mental and physical power to create benefits for both themselves as well as their fellow human beings, as labour is a tool that should also be used to serve society. Therefore it is the duty of all to work, an act from which nobody must refrain, neither labourer nor employer, as it forms the foundation of his or her further prosperity and affluence as well as that of society. It also protects one from mischief and vice, moral decay and crime. Labour teaches obedience, patience, self-control and the improvement of one's own moral values. Therefore those who work must hold their heads high and be rightfully proud of their labour, as labour is sacred, a credit to them and an honourable title.<sup>146</sup>

The likely reason why Eduard adopted *Arbeid Adelt* as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's company crest was that to a certain extent it partly reflected his own entrepreneurial achievements and life story. As a simple boy from the countryside, Eduard arrived in Antwerp to become a baker's apprentice who, as the story was described by Eduard and later repeated by the factory management, was able to uplift himself through sheer hard work, persistence and determination; he was able to do this mentally by following evening schooling to improve his skill, gaining valuable knowledge throughout his lifetime about the manufacturing of biscuits, and always being eager to learn more;<sup>147</sup> materially by establishing a large and profitable

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<sup>144</sup> (EHC), Anon., *De Beukelaer's Tentoonstelling voor Huisvlijt en Kunst in Huis*, 7; 11.

<sup>145</sup> MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.; (CBUA), P2 49u, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

<sup>146</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Uw Arbeid Adelt U!', 4-5.

<sup>147</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

company;<sup>148</sup> and morally as throughout his life Eduard had always tried to do good in society and take care of the wellbeing of his employees.<sup>149</sup> In this context Eduard had thus ‘ennobled’ himself through his own labour, making him an all-around better human being who had managed to uplift himself to new moral, mental and material heights.

As a symbol of such ‘noble’ character and achievements, Eduard had been officially rewarded with the title of Knight of the Order of Leopold in 1885,<sup>150</sup> and eventually Officer of the Order of Leopold in 1898,<sup>151</sup> and in a way lived his life like some members of the nobility, with his castle and estate in Brasschaat<sup>152</sup> and his *Hôtel* in the city.<sup>153</sup> The latter titles and property were symbolic acknowledgments of his self-made ‘nobility’. Such an achievement was not unique to Eduard, however, and formed part of a broader mindset of the industrial bourgeoisie of the nineteenth century, who put great emphasis on the public display of wealth and success as symbols of their upward social mobility in society. Since the old traditional nobility still maintained much of their important standing in nineteenth-century Belgian society, the successful entrepreneur wanted to out-class this group of ‘old rich’ by means of their own achievements and material superiority.<sup>154</sup> A new ‘noble’ class thus emerged, one that was based upon personal achievement and earning instead of one’s inherited lineage.<sup>155</sup> Such a distinction between earned ‘nobility’ and inherited ‘nobility’ was also clearly brought to the forefront in a 1918 book that was printed for Eduard’s 75th birthday, which stated, *‘Because this baker, you have guessed it, was our dear uncle, the glory of our tribe, he who, not being of nobility, would ennoble himself with his own noble pursuit of doing good and improving the fate of his fellowman, who would knight himself by practising his own proud motto: “Arbeid Adelt”, and therefore would carry a much more legitimate crest than those who had been awarded assigned titles in their cradle.’*<sup>156</sup>

<sup>148</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, ‘Edward De Beukelaer, Ons Sekretariaat. - Ons Tijdschrift’, 1-2.

<sup>149</sup> R. Goris, *Ontstaan en Ontwikkeling van De Beukelaer’s fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate*, 11-2; 18; 25.

<sup>150</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer opgedragen, bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekafdeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek.

<sup>151</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Gilde Des Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek. Zitting 14 Januari 1898.

<sup>152</sup> Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 246.

<sup>153</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 19 oktober 1897, ‘De poorters van Oud-Dordt’, np.

<sup>154</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 98.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>156</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918*, 10.

Examples of other successful entrepreneurs who gained ‘nobility’ through their own labour were for instance, Lieven Gevaert, who was rewarded as Knight of the Order of the Crown in 1913,<sup>157</sup> and had also adopted *Arbeid Adelt* as his motto,<sup>158</sup> or Louis De Naeyer, who was appointed Commander of the Order of Leopold and throughout his life acquired various other titles.<sup>159</sup> Finding ‘nobility’ in labour was also not restricted merely to members of the upper classes alone, as during the late nineteenth century there was also a workers’ organisation in the region of Charleroi known as the *chevaliers du travail*, which were affiliated to the American noble knights of labour,<sup>160</sup> whilst libraries at some Catholic Houses bore name such as ‘*Arbeid Adelt*’ and ‘*Leren vereert*’ (‘*Learning honours*’).<sup>161</sup> Even the famous French writer Émile Zola constantly made reference to the nobility of labour in the Charles Fourier-inspired utopian socialist society of his 1901 novel *Travail*.<sup>162</sup> Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century the idea of acquiring nobility through labour was a popular notion and probably the source of Eduard’s inspiration to promote it amongst his employees.

In the context of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s discourse, Eduard’s own ‘noble’ achievements, character and lifestyle were used to symbolise the ideology of *Arbeid Adelt*, and became the set example for the company’s employees to follow.<sup>163</sup> Working hard was the duty of both the employer and employees of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken, and served not only to benefit themselves but also others. Eduard, as part of his own noble labour, helped out his employees by providing them with initiatives and services, rewarding them for their loyalty to the company and their daily toil, and giving them the opportunity to also uplift themselves and improve their lives morally, mentally and physically. As a result of their own labour, De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s employees would thus, just like Eduard had, be able to become all-around noble individuals themselves.<sup>164</sup> In the framework of the *Arbeid Adelt* ideology the employees’ labour at the factory furthermore formed a sanctuary that protected them against the vices and bad influences encountered outside of the factory, as Eduard offered them the

<sup>157</sup> L. Wachters, *Lieven Gevaert*, 66.

<sup>158</sup> Anon., *Lieven Gevaert, De Mens en Zijn Werk*, foto 1.

<sup>159</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen’s Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen’s Rubenskring*, Derde Jaargang Augustus 1903, Nr. 20, ‘Panthéon der nijverheid, Louis De Naeyer Koning der Papiernijverheid’, np.

<sup>160</sup> H. Slomp, and T. Van Mierlo, *Arbeidsverhoudingen in België 1*, 66.

<sup>161</sup> L. Shokkeart, ‘Leven na Arbeid, Volksontwikkeling in Katholieke Huizen’, in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 142.

<sup>162</sup> E. Zola, *Work*.

<sup>163</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer opgedragen, bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekafdeeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek.

<sup>164</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

initiatives and services through which they could protect themselves, giving them strength and courage in the process.<sup>165</sup> Such a notion of protection and upliftment through labour was also clearly mentioned by Eduard in his 1888 speech, in which he states, ‘*And when devil of charm would want to capture its prey, then all take a look at your banner, the symbol of loyalty. It will always give your heart courage in times of ordeal. And when the desired result is there, when the peace, that invaluable bliss of man, will forever be accommodated within you all, you will be allowed to say with pride, “We owe this to our banner, that we have captured with the golden slogan: ARBEID ADEL!”*’.<sup>166</sup>

The latter conception of achieving protection through labour, was further visually symbolised by the company’s official logo which depicted iconic images that symbolised hard work, protection and prosperity.<sup>167</sup> In the shield a muscular bare-chested baker that was toiling away kneading dough in his baker’s trough was portrayed with a rising sun in the background, and the words *Mijn Beukelaer is Harde Vlijt* (My Beukelaer is diligence) written underneath him.



**Figure 56: The company’s logo.** Retrieved from, (EHC), Anon., *De Beukelaer’s Tentoonstelling voor Huisvlijt en Kunst in Huis*, 17.

In this context the word ‘Beukelaer’ did not only refer to the name of the company, but also to a type of medieval shield and thus also meant ‘Diligence is my shield’. By working diligently at De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken employees would thus protect themselves from any obstacle or difficulty they encountered. On top of the shield was a beehive with bees flying around it, and another radiant sun in the background, whilst on each side of the shield sunflowers and wheat stood tall.<sup>168</sup> The latter iconic imagery of the company logo symbolised the *Arbeid Adelt* ideology, which believed that hard work would protect the labourer and would bring him or her prosperity.<sup>169</sup> The virtues of toil were thus constantly promoted by

<sup>165</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, ‘Uw Arbeid Adelt U!’, 4-5.

<sup>166</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>167</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1928-1929, ‘Het Fabrieksmerk van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’, 65.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, ‘Het Fabrieksmerk van De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’, 65.

<sup>169</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, ‘Uw Arbeid Adelt U!’, 4-5.

Eduard amongst his employees, whilst any form of lethargy was strongly condemned, resulting in *Arbeid Adelt* becoming the company's official crest.

After Eduard passed away, the ideology of *Arbeid Adelt* continued to be promoted by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken with new vigour, and was described as the source from which the company's CSR policy originated. In its magazine *Arbeid Adelt* the Secretariat for Social Welfare constantly reminded employees to follow the ideology of Eduard, as it formed the basis upon which the company was founded and developed, stating that they should '*never tarnish the crest of your own nobility, as the buildings in which you work are a testimony of he who founded them and who took up "Arbeid Adelt" as his life motto, in the love for this labour he managed to obtain his most beautiful glory and highest praise.*'<sup>170</sup>

Although Eduard was thus still used as the example of the success that the adoption of the *Arbeid Adelt* ideology could bring about, other members of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's upper management had also been awarded similar decorations that symbolised their own 'noble' achievements through labour. Eduard De Bie was, for instance, already a Knight of the Order of the Crown from as early as 1924,<sup>171</sup> whilst Jeanne had become Knight of the Order of the Crown in 1926,<sup>172</sup> and later received a *Kruis van Eerste Clas voor Maatschapelijke Voorzorg* in 1929, the same year in which Louis and Felix van Ossel were knighted in the Order of Leopold II.<sup>173</sup> The company's new upper management was thus again a testimony that labour did 'ennoble', a goal that according to the company could, and indeed should, therefore also be pursued by the company's employees.

Since decorations thus formed an important symbolic visual confirmation of 'noble achievement' of Eduard and the members of the board of directors, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken decided to create a similar confirmation of the efforts of their employees who would adopt the qualities of *Arbeid Adelt*. Those employees who had, for instance, won the competition for the Exhibition for Art and Home Industry at Home in 1923 were rewarded with bronze, silver and golden medals.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, in 1921 *De Beukelaer's Vereenigde Gedecoreerde* had also been formed at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. The *De Beukelaer's Vereenigde Gedecoreerde* was a club that united and honoured those employees who had served for 25

<sup>170</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Uw Arbeid Adelt U!', 5.

<sup>171</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 7, 'Een Vierdubbele Feestviering', 105.

<sup>172</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 12, 'Mevrouw Wwe Edward De Beukelaer', 191.

<sup>173</sup> *De Morgenpost*, 25 November 1929, 'Het zestigjarig jubileum der De Beukelaer's Fabrieken te Antwerpen', np.

<sup>174</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 5, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.



years or more at the factory.<sup>175</sup> When employees had been employed for 25, 35 or other significant number of years at the factory, they were rewarded with official decorations by representatives of the state, a practice that had already been in place from as early as 1896 at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken.<sup>176</sup> Besides this official ceremony for their achievements, the *De Beukelaer's Vereenigde Gedecoreerde* were also honoured by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken itself with festive celebrations at the factory with the employees. The members received champagne and an envelope containing a bonus of 1 000 Bfr., were praised by members of the board of directors in speeches, and honoured with performances by the factory's drama or brass band groups,<sup>177</sup> or invited to the grounds of *Het Torenhof* to spend an afternoon with



Figure 57: *De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Gedecoreerde* being honoured by the company in 1926. Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 7, voorpagina.

their spouse at the estate.<sup>178</sup> The *De Beukelaer's Vereenigde Gedecoreerde* were thus paid tribute to, as their years in service personified *Arbeid Adelt's* values of loyalty and hard work, and their official decorations were regarded as a testimony of their love for their labour. Such a sentiment is clearly expressed in one of *Arbeid Adelt's* 1922 articles that reported on such an occasion and stated that 'These members of our employees

*were not only acknowledged as children of this house but at the same time as knights of their preformed labour.'*<sup>179</sup>

Throughout its history De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had thus clearly attempted to promote the values of *Arbeid Adelt* amongst its employees, and even tried to link them to the implementation of its CSR initiatives. The promotion of an ideology such as *Arbeid Adelt* fitted into De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's context, as it attempted to maintain the company's internal equilibrium and stimulated hard work to achieve a better life not only for oneself, but also for all who worked in the company. It was an ideology that, unlike those preached

<sup>175</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 16, 'De Beukelaer's Vereenigde Gedecoreerden', 182-3.

<sup>176</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 7, 'Onze Honderdste Gedecoreerde!', 101-2.

<sup>177</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 8, 'Eene heugelijke Huldeweek', 115-119.

<sup>178</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 9, 'Openluchtvoorstelling', 146

<sup>179</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 7, 'De Vlaggen uitgestoken en Feest gevierd', 114.

outside at the various workers organisations, did not potentially ‘threaten’ De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s existence, or negatively affect its production or productivity. The ideology of *Arbeid Adelt* and the discourse that emerged around it was used by Eduard and later the company’s management to transform De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken into something of a commune-like entity, that to a great extent attempted to detached itself from the issues and developments that were occurring in the wider society. As such, the employees’ labour at the factory would be the source of their general upliftment and would protect them against the trials and tribulations they would encounter on the outside. It is, however, difficult to determine to what extent Eduard, and later the company’s management, genuinely believed in this ideology themselves, regardless of its likely practical use, or if they only propagated it amongst their employees for strategic reasons.

Equally difficult to establish is to what extent the employees working at De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken themselves believed and followed the ideology of *Arbeid Adelt*. Besides eulogies or speeches by ‘the employees’ at official occasions or festivities, which as a result of their context unfortunately do not reveal much genuine thoughts or feelings, the voice of the labourer at De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken has largely been lost in the darkness of time.

De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s internal CSR policy and the policies of the various Socialist, Catholic and Liberal organisations at their respective Houses were thus similar, as they both made use of popular trends and customs of the working class to attract or win over labourers to their side of the ideological fence. By offering its employees the same initiatives and services as workers’ organisations, limiting their potential exposure to this ‘dangerous’ influence, and trying to instil its own ideology of *Arbeid Adelt*, De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken seems to have attempted to keep its employees as far away from any outside influences that might negatively affect the relationship that existed in the factory.

### **6.3. CSR as a public relations strategy**

The implementation of a CSR policy at a company during a period when workers’ rights and conditions were not high on the agenda of most Belgian employers, but dominated much of the public debate, could also form part of an effective public relations strategy. Such a strategy was used to advertise a company as being innovative and concerned about the wellbeing of its employees, in essence creating a positive image for the owner, his company and its brand. Those companies who implemented a CSR policy set themselves apart from the large majority of those who did not, and were often able to get rid of their perceived

‘soulness’ corporate character, a particularly interesting concept discussed by Roland Marchand in his book *Creating the corporate soul, the rise of public relations and corporate imagery in American Big Business*. Marchand’s theories are also applicable outside of the American context and can be used to explain similar initiatives occurring in Belgium at the time.

The concept of soullessness refers to ‘a perceived lack of conscience on the part of the corporation’<sup>180</sup> that had largely been brought about by ‘the greed and ruthlessness of some of the American entrepreneurs in the 1870s and 1880s’. Famous statements by American businessmen such as JP Morgan, who said ‘*I owe the public nothing*’, or William Vanderbilt’s comment ‘*the public be damned*’, were used to ‘characterise a refusal on the part of the business world to acknowledge any responsibility towards the public and created a perception of soullessness’.<sup>181</sup> Soullessness also refers to ‘the coldness and aloofness’ that had developed within some of the giant business corporations, which had grown so significantly in size that ‘face-to-face contact between employer and employee was lost’. The sheer size of such companies was said to ‘squeeze out the human understanding, sympathy’ and contact between employer and employee, and as a result they evolved into soulless structures.<sup>182</sup> Those companies that were concerned about being labelled as morally irresponsible initiated and publicised CSR initiatives and services for their employees, or ‘associated themselves with a contemporary moral or patriotic cause’<sup>183</sup> in an attempt to create a more appealing image that could set them apart from other companies.

‘Many companies denied that they initiated their CSR policy for such advertisement and public relations purposes’, and although this may have been true, ‘having invested in welfare programmes, employers such as John H. Paterson of the National Cash Register Company, often enjoyed the enhanced public image of both their company and themselves’.<sup>184</sup> In the case of Paterson, everything that the National Cash Register Company did, particularly anything relating to its CSR initiatives or services, were ‘capitalised and exploited by the company’s press bureau’.<sup>185</sup> Others companies, such as International Harvester, also ‘denied that they had implemented their CSR policy as part of their publicity, but nevertheless gained

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<sup>180</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 7.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

significant press coverage from it'.<sup>186</sup> Some entrepreneurs who had a strong and distinctive personality furthermore 'infused the image of their company with their own personality, by participating in newsworthy events'. Henry Ford was a good example of this as he was known to organise car races, support certain public causes such as the fight against the Selden patent,<sup>187</sup> and often epitomised 'pure showmanship'.<sup>188</sup> Such public acts or display of care on the part of the company founder also assisted with further improving the general image of the company. An extensive CSR policy was thus also a good way of advertising one's business as having a heart and a concerned soul.

Similar to such American companies, the CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken seemed also to have formed part of the company's public relations strategy, as a clear connection between the two emerged over the years. From as early as the opening of the company's school for employees in 1888 until as late as its so called 60th birthday in 1929, the company's CSR policy was a highly publicised affair and defined much of the company's public image.

The earliest reference of this type of publicity occurred on 24 November 1888, when Eduard invited a large group of guests, ranging from municipal and provincial representatives and the chairman of the court of justice to educational inspectors and a baron, to attend the opening of the factory's school and new recreational hall together with the introduction of the music school's banner.<sup>189</sup> The presence of such notable public figures attracted much attention from the press, who were also cordially invited by Eduard to join in the celebrations.<sup>190</sup> On arrival, all guests received a booklet indicating the company's wide variety of products as well as (a somewhat out of place) copy of the company's Society for Mutual Assistance's regulations booklet.<sup>191</sup> Eduard led the delegation on an extensive company tour and, besides showing off the sheer size and modernity of his factory and its machinery, also focused a lot of attention on the company's various CSR initiatives and services. When the guests reached the classroom of the company school, Mr Vermeulen, the school's teacher, and a group of

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<sup>186</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 24.

<sup>187</sup> The Selden patent, was a patent for an 'automobile' that was granted in 1895, and was owned by the Selden Motor Vehicle company. Henry Ford fought eight years against the alleged infringement of this patent in a long drawn-out court case that eventually financially crippled Selden and saw Ford win his case.

<sup>188</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 26.

<sup>189</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, 'Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

students were present, and were demonstratively conjugating the verb ‘to work’.<sup>192</sup> Afterwards the group of guests moved to the new recreation hall, which had been decorated with flags, a bust of the Mayor of Antwerp Leopold De Weal and above the stage a banner that said ‘*Long Live Our Mayor*’.<sup>193</sup> The mayor was, however, unable to come to the event.<sup>194</sup> Upon the arrival of the guests at the recreation hall, the company’s recently formed brass band welcomed them by playing the Belgian national anthem, after which the visitors were seated and Eduard made a speech explaining his reasons for the creation of the different initiatives that were being celebrated that day.<sup>195</sup>

The entire event had thus been carefully planned and had placed a significant emphasis on the company’s CSR policy. The reporters of the two local newspapers, *Handelsblad Van Antwerpen* and *De Koophandel van Antwerpen*, who were present reported extensively on the event in their newspapers. Besides describing the sheer size of the factory, much of the content of their articles also included a detailed description of the company’s CSR initiatives, and mentioned its Society for Mutual Benefit, cleverly advertised by distributing its regulation booklet, the company school, the brass band and the recreation hall.<sup>196</sup> The articles attributed the accomplishment of these initiatives to Eduard’s care as an employer and the reporter of *De Koophandel van Antwerpen* concluded his article with the sentence: ‘*It does not often occur that bosses consider and handle their employees as their brothers, and that employees call their patron a friend of the workers.*’<sup>197</sup> The whole event was thus well covered in the local press and portrayed Eduard as an employer with a caring soul, who was concerned about trying to improve the wellbeing of his employees, making the name Ed. De Beukelaer & Co synonymous with a company that, despite its sheer size, still took care of its employees.

In the years to follow Eduard continued to advertise this image to the public by publicising events such as the two charity play evenings that had been organised at the factory’s

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<sup>192</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, ‘Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer’, np.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, ‘Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat III’, np.

<sup>195</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, ‘Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer’, np.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*; *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 23 November 1888, ‘Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat I’, np.; *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, ‘Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat II’, np.; *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, ‘Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat III’, np.

<sup>197</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, ‘Lekkernijfabriek-De Beukelaer’, np.

recreational hall for the *Union Philantopique* in January 1893,<sup>198</sup> or going on various company outings around the country with his employees and the brass band, whose uniforms before 1894 had borne the initials of the company on the front of their caps and whose performances and outings attracted much attention.<sup>199</sup> Later in 1909, when De Beukelaer's Fabrieken organised tours for the public around the factory, visitors received the informational booklet mentioned in Chapter three, the last page of which stated that the factory was founded and had grown as a result of the hard work of Eduard, and that the company was a family business that took care of the 600 men and women who were employed at the factory. The text further mentioned that the board of directors supported initiatives such as a sick fund and a pension fund, and followed the principle of 'care, good work, and good pay'.<sup>200</sup> On the opposite page of this text appeared a rather stately black and white image of Eduard.<sup>201</sup> Besides informing the visiting public about the sheer industrial power and size of the factory, they were also introduced to the so-called more caring and concerned human side of its owners towards its employees.

The same type of formula of emphasising the success of the company with a 'caring' CSR policy was also used in the case of the *De Bakkerijschool vakblad ten behoeve van de bakkerij en aanverwante nijverheden*. Even though this biweekly publication served as a trade journal for the artisanal bakery community, a significant amount of its content consisted of brief articles and illustrative material that described and showed off the industrial modernity of the factory as well as the extent of the company's CSR policy that was linked to the care taken by its owner. Short articles on, for instance, the factory's box-making department,<sup>202</sup> its gas installation,<sup>203</sup> the electrical power plant,<sup>204</sup> the female division,<sup>205</sup> the factory library<sup>206</sup> and the female choir<sup>207</sup> were randomly placed between articles on topics such as the right amount of yeast needed to bake bread,<sup>208</sup> or queries about the preparation of

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<sup>198</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 12 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.; *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 21 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt', np.

<sup>199</sup> (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang December 1953, Nr. 33, 'De Harmonie "Arbeid Adelt"', np.

<sup>200</sup> Anon., *Gids door de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken*, 26.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>202</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Bij de Plaat', 46.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Bij de Plaat De waterstofgasinrichting van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 60.

<sup>204</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Tweede Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De licht- en Kracht-Centrale van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 7.

<sup>205</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. – Sociale Actie', 32.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Gezellige Bijeenkomsten', 30.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschappelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 'Vraagbord', 26.



artificial honey or fruit syrup.<sup>209</sup> This rather random form of information was distributed and further emphasised the company's already established image amongst its readership. Such a public relations strategy could be seen as a way of defending the company against any possible claims of soullessness or a lack of moral concern.

In many ways this early policy of advertising the company's CSR initiatives and the alleged caring nature of its owners can be linked to Eduard's own publicity-oriented business mind, which, as indicated in Chapter Three, was ever present. Besides advertising his company at World Fairs with grand pavilions and impressive publicity stunts to get the name of his company known to the outside world,<sup>210</sup> Eduard also extensively advertised himself and therefore in an indirect manner his company. Eduard's participation in the 1892 *Landjuweel*,<sup>211</sup> and later his somewhat theatrical function as outside Mayor of *Oud-Antwerpen*,<sup>212</sup> were good examples of such showmanship, which together with his support for public causes such as the Flemish Opera,<sup>213</sup> or *Liederenavonden voor het Volk*,<sup>214</sup> further improved the already positive public image the company had managed to establish for itself.

After Eduard passed away in 1919 the practice of publicising the company's CSR initiatives and services continued to be used by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's new management, although less frequently as had been the case with Eduard. The annual Exhibitions for Art and Home Industry at Home, which had been organised from 1922 until 1926, for instance, were used as an opportunity to introduce the Secretariat for Social Welfare's new extensive CSR policy to the public via the local press. Various press representatives were invited by the company to witness the opening of the exhibitions and local newspapers such as *De Gazet Van Antwerpen*,<sup>215</sup> *De Morgendpost*,<sup>216</sup> *De Schelde*,<sup>217</sup> or *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*<sup>218</sup> wrote

<sup>209</sup>(EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Vraagbord', 30.

<sup>210</sup>*Gazet van Antwerpen*, 28 Juli 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Het Paviljoen E. De Beukelaer', np.; M. Roosens, and F. van Kuyck, *De Wyk Oud-Antwerpen in de Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894*, 88-9.; *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 1 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, De Bestuurbare ballon', np.; *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 9 September 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling, De Congoleezen bij M. De Beukelaer', np.; (EHC), *De Schakel*, Derde Jaargang Mei 1954, 'Onze Publiciteit in vroeger dagen, Het Reuzenhuis', np.

<sup>211</sup> C.G. Hansen, *Het Landjuweel in Den Rubenskring*, 44.

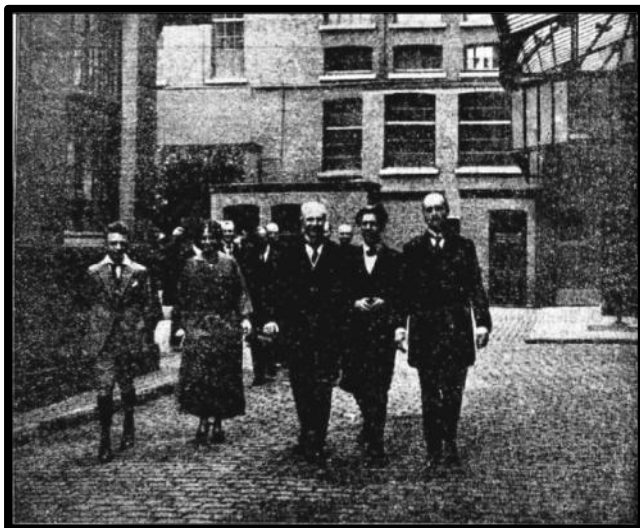
<sup>212</sup>*Gazet van Antwerpen*, 3 Juni 1894, 'Wereldtentoonstelling van 1894, Oud-Antwerpen, zitting van 31 Mei', np.

<sup>213</sup> (AMVC), k 376 (Map 805), 112913/805, Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. aan Keurvels, Edward, 5/01/1899.; H.Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond*, 89.; R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 490.

<sup>214</sup> H.Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond*, 89.; 'Beukelaer, Edward de' in R. De Schryver, and B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Beukelaer, Edward de', 490.

<sup>215</sup>*Gazet van Antwerpen*, 17 Maart 1922, 'Een namiddag bij De Beukelaer', np.; *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 18 Maart 1923, 'De firma Ed. De Beukelaer ontvangt Ministerieel bezoek', np.

articles that mentioned both the size and scope of the factory, as well as all of the company's different educational and leisure initiatives and welfare services that were made available to the employees of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, generally leaving only a small part of the article to write about the actual exhibition itself.



**Figure 58: Minister of Industry and Labour R Moyersoen at the opening of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, Biscuits & Chocolate's 1923 Tentoonstelling voor Kunst en Huisveit in Huis.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 4, 51.

After 1926, when many of the company's CSR initiatives had been disbanded, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken continued to publicise and emphasise its present but also its past CSR endeavours. In 1929, on the so-called 60th birthday of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, when various notable national, provincial and local guest were invited to celebrate the company's anniversary,<sup>219</sup> one of the speeches by the board of directors stated that, '*Mister De Beukelaer... had the same concern and the same trouble as his people, and therefore at any time also did*

*all that was possible to compensate where it was appropriate. He laid the foundation that later would bear the name of social division, with grants for labourers in case of marriage, birth, death, first communion, sick fund, saving fund, support.*'<sup>220</sup> The representatives of the press who were invited to attend the celebrations all reported on the proceedings and praised Eduard's entrepreneurial success and, in some cases, the company's past CSR initiatives.<sup>221</sup> Over the years the image of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken and its CSR policy had thus become inseparable from one another, partly as a result of the constant efforts made by Eduard and later the board of directors to publicise and highlight their achievements.

It seems as if Eduard had developed a fondness for creating publicity about the company's CSR policy, as the sheer number of sources available about its events, initiatives and services

<sup>216</sup> De Morgendpost, 17 Maart 1922, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', np.

<sup>217</sup> De Schelde, 17 Maart 1922, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken Biscuits en Chocolate', np.

<sup>218</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 17 Maart 1922, 'Eene private instelling van maatschappelijke werken', np.

<sup>219</sup> (CBAU), P2 49u, Viering 60-jarig bestaan D.B.F., 1929.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

is certainly not coincidental. After Eduard passed away, this technique was partially adopted by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's new management, who also did not refrain from revealing all the so-called 'good' that the company had done for its employees. Over the years the company's CSR policy and its public image had become so intertwined that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken had secured a public legacy as being a company that cared about the wellbeing of others, a company that had a heart and soul. Although such publicity had thus clearly been pursued by De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, it is difficult to determine whether the company's CSR policy was specifically created and implemented to establish such a public image, or whether the added benefit of good publicity was opportunistically exploited.

### **Conclusion**

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there were thus certainly strategic reasons for the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken to implement a CSR policy. The company's various CSR initiatives and services could not only keep its employees contented about their employment at the factory and create a sense of ownership and worth, but also attempted to keep them away from the detrimental influences and developments occurring outside at the various workers' organisations by offering similar initiatives and services, and introducing its own less threatening ideology of *Arbeid Adelt*. This ideology would retain the existing relationship between employer and employee and maintain the internal equilibrium of the company, all whilst improving De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's public image by setting itself apart as a company with a soul, whose employers cared about the wellbeing of its employees. De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR should therefore be understood in the wider context of what was occurring in Belgium at the time, as its implementation was influenced by the changes and developments that were occurring around it, changes that could potentially influence and affect its stability, productivity and profitability.

## **7. The CSR policy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as part of an altruistic but paternalistic duty**

The following chapter will discuss some of the potentially more genuine and somewhat altruistic motives for the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy that were influenced by Eduard's paternalistic management style as well as by his personality. Since the main focus of a company is generally associated with making a profit, the implementation of any form of CSR policy for more unselfish reasons, especially during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, is often treated or received with scepticism. To an extent such doubts are certainly valid, as in the case of the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken CSR policy it was suggested in the previous chapter that it was implemented as part of a conscious business strategy to deal with specific developments of the time that could have negatively affected the company. Even though there is truth in the latter claim, it is worth investigating the possibility of more selfless reasons for its implementation for equally plausible motives. It is extremely difficult, however, to determine whether a company's CSR policy has been introduced for such genuinely altruistic reasons, since it is impossible to measure this in any empirical way. Historians are thus forced to examine closely the relationship between employer and employee, and analyse the persona of the employer, or the management of the company, if they want to gain more clarity about such a possible motive. From research conducted on other companies from this period it becomes clear that many CSR policies at companies were implemented as a result of a wider paternalistic mindset and relationship that existed between employer and employee during much of the nineteenth century. Although the practice of such 'industrial paternalism' is based upon an unequal relationship between two parties, in principle the dominant party is genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of the other, and it is this relationship and responsibility that are analysed with regard to the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section defines and explains the concept of industrial paternalism; this is followed by the second section which investigates how such paternalism features in Eduard's implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy, and how Eduard's own personality very likely also influenced the contents of this policy. The last section of the chapter discusses how, after the death of Eduard in 1919, the company adapted Eduard's previous paternalistic management style to the structural changes that occurred in the company.

### 7.1. The concept of industrial paternalism

The theories of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century English economist Malthus coupled poverty to population growth, and believed that poverty was ‘the fate of the working class’. Malthus’s idea was often used to justify the earlier forms of abuse in the first industrial revolution, as higher wages and better working and living conditions would not help to improve the situation of labourers, since poverty was their inescapable fate.<sup>1</sup> In an extreme deduction of this theory, the poverty of labourers was even considered as ‘a form of discipline, as their hunger forced them to work harder and more regularly’.<sup>2</sup> But throughout the nineteenth century this paradigm was slowly abandoned, and the belief that addressing the conditions of labourers were part of the moral responsibility of the employer began to manifest itself in the form of a paternalistic mindset amongst industrialists.<sup>3</sup>

According to the concept of industrial paternalism, the responsibility of the employer did not stop at merely providing employment to employees, but was further extended to also include securing and safeguarding their general wellbeing.<sup>4</sup> The employer knew what was best for his or her employees, and experienced it as his or her duty to think for them, believing that as an employer he or she bore the responsibility of improving the employees’ material as well as intellectual and moral condition.<sup>5</sup> ‘The image of the employer’s labouring background, which was in many cases something of a myth’, was frequently linked to this ideology, and if employees would follow the good advice of their employer, they too could improve their socio-economic situation.<sup>6</sup> In exchange for undertaking the responsibly of this guiding role, the employer expected diligence, obedience and loyalty towards the company from his employees.<sup>7</sup> The nature of this relationship cast the employer in the role of the ‘parental’ figure, who would be strict but just,<sup>8</sup> and the employee as a dependable ‘child’.<sup>9</sup> Such a relationship thus represented a personal bond between employer and employee, and did not only promote the internal resolution of conflict, but also connoted harmony, security, authority and stability.<sup>10</sup> Like a true parental figure, the paternal employer would be

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<sup>1</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 103-4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>4</sup> C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>6</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 104.

<sup>7</sup> C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management*, 274.

<sup>8</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 106.

<sup>9</sup> C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> H.M. Mueller, and T. Philippon, *Family firms, Paternalism and Labor Relations*, 7.

knowledgeable of his or her employees' names and family situation, and would help them out in case of need.<sup>11</sup> Such a close relationship, however, also meant that employers would randomly interfere in the personal lives of labourers and their families.<sup>12</sup> Such intrusive actions were justified by the employer, as his or her intentions were for the best, and implementing his or her good advice would give employees the chance to turn their fate around. This type of meddling behaviour often occurred around issues of alcohol use or abuse,<sup>13</sup> or other supposed 'immoral' behaviour that was considered to be the cause of the worker's poor socio-economic conditions during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup>

Such views on questionable moral behaviour amongst the working classes should not, however, be seen as merely the opinion of employers or the middle and ruling class, as early Belgian Socialist leaders also clearly spoke out against alcoholism and other kinds of immoral behaviour and emphasised their link to poverty.<sup>15</sup> Many Socialist Houses, for instance, banned the sale of Jenever, a gin like drink, which in most cases was replaced with beer, whilst in 1921 a march in Brussels was conducted by Socialist women and children under the slogan '*Jenever Vergiftigt*' ('Jenever Poisons').<sup>16</sup> During the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Belgium alcoholism was considered a widespread social problem and even became seen as a 'curable disease' that was caused by 'unfortunate' circumstances such as an individual's background or biology.<sup>17</sup> Thus from the late 1870s onwards various organisations that were concerned with the fight against alcoholism started to emerge in Belgian society.<sup>18</sup> As a way of combating this 'social evil' the government also implemented a number of laws and regulations that were meant to counter the adverse affects of alcoholism upon the working class and society. In 1887 a law against public drunkenness was passed, which was followed by a number of further laws such as a national ban of liquor in brothels because of the perceived link between alcoholism and venereal disease, a licence for selling sprits in small quantities as well as an increase in taxes on spirits. Despite these early efforts, pubs remained a dominant feature in the urban environment, especially in

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<sup>11</sup> C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management*, 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 274.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 278

<sup>14</sup> B. De Wilde, *Witte Boorden, Blouwe Kielen*, 106, 168

<sup>15</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 571.

<sup>16</sup> R. Stallaerts, 'Vrij in Eigen Tempel, Volkshuizen in Vlaanderen', in R. Stallaerts and L. Shokkeart, *Onder Dak, Een Eeuw Volks- en Gildehuizen Volkshuizen*, 94.

<sup>17</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 570.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 571.



neighbourhoods around stations and factories.<sup>19</sup> Then, in 1919, the Vandervelde law was passed which banned serving spirits on the streets.<sup>20</sup> The government also further increased taxes on the sale of spirits and introduced higher fines for offenders.<sup>21</sup> Although the possible negative effects of alcoholism on the productivity of employees probably played an equally important role, the paternal employer's stance against the controlled use of alcohol amongst employees thus also formed part of a wider social movement during this period.

The paternal relationship was thus largely based upon the employer constantly exercising his or her authority over employees and retaining complete control over all aspects of the company. Daily visits around the factory and regular talks with employees was part of the normal routine of many paternalistic employers, and their constant presence at the factory and direct management style further strengthened their authority over employees.<sup>22</sup> Even in the situations where the employer was not present, he or she often made sure that his or her presence was felt indirectly by locating at various points around the factory 'presence-absence signs' such as a bust or reminders of the patron to create the perception that the employer was present around the factory. An awareness of the patron's actual presence was thus replaced by the question of whether or not he really was.<sup>23</sup>

This type of paternalistic ideology slowly began to lose its hold amongst employers from the late nineteenth century onwards, and during the early twentieth century the moral leadership and responsibility of patrons was largely replaced by a more rationally organised system of social management,<sup>24</sup> where the relationship between employers and employees became 'equal' and their wellbeing a rational economically influenced concern.<sup>25</sup> It is important to note, however, that besides such broad changing trends, paternalism in the business world was not necessarily linked to a specific historical period, as the size of a company, the sector within which it operated,<sup>26</sup> and the influence of often rather idiosyncratic founders on the company culture also played an important role in this development.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> E. Witte, J.P. Nandrin, and E. Gubin, *Nieuwe Geschiedenis van België I*, 571.

<sup>20</sup> R. Peeters, 'Volksleven en Volkscultuur', in S.H. Scholl, (ed.), *150 Jaar Katholieke Arbeidsbeweging in België 1789-1939, Derde Deel, De Kath. Arbeidsbeweging 1914-1939*, 98.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>22</sup> D. Reid, 'Industrial Paternalism: Discourse and Practice in Nineteenth-Century French Mining and Metallurgy', 580.; C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management*, 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 581.

<sup>24</sup> D. Arnoldus, Family, *Family Firm and Strategy*, 222.

<sup>25</sup> C. Vancoppenolle, *Tussen Paternalistische Zorg en Zakelijk Management*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> D. Arnoldus, Family, *Family Firm and Strategy*, 222.

<sup>27</sup> R. Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul*, 115.

Besides the unequal relationship that existed between employer and employees, which was largely based upon control and authority, the paternal mindset of paternalistic employers did thus also contain some genuine altruistic motives to ‘do good’.

## **7.2. Eduard’s paternalistic character and personality as a motivation for implementing the company’s CSR**

In many ways Eduard was a true paternalistic employer and the labour relations that prevailed at De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken during his time were characterised by a strong sense of paternalism. Eduard clearly felt responsible for the material, moral and intellectual wellbeing of his employees, and he provided the necessary leisure and education initiatives and welfare services mentioned earlier on to achieve the desired upliftment of the work force, describing this as ‘*our well-meant duty*’.<sup>28</sup> Eduard also attempted to assist his employees in times of need, such as during World War I, when he arranged for the distribution of affordable soup rations during the war and financially assisted those employees who were not working, or who were working at a reduced rate. Eduard genuinely seemed to have considered it his responsibility to try and alleviate some of the suffering that his employees were experiencing as a result of the war; this is because such attempts were not legally required, did not necessarily improve or benefit the company’s production, and often cost the factory a significant amount of money during difficult financial periods. According to Eduard, it was his responsibility to take care of his employees in such difficult times, and rightly so, as Eduard argued, ‘*We also started our career as a labourer ... There was a time, that we, in the capacity as a simple bakers apprentice, settled down in extensive Antwerp. ... Holding out was the motto and, with whatever difficulties we had to struggle with, we bravely stood our ground, because we acted as people who wanted and therefore also could.*’<sup>29</sup>

According to Eduard, his personal transformation from a simple baker’s apprentice to a successful entrepreneur through sheer hard work and determination had thus put him a position as an employer to ‘advise’ and ‘guide’ his employees in the ‘right’ direction. In return for bearing this ‘responsibility’, Eduard expected diligence, discipline and commitment from his employees, emphasising the obligations that his employees had towards the factory by stating that ‘*each understands his duty as labourer, and thus also possesses the notion of*

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<sup>28</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

*self-respect*'.<sup>30</sup> However, if the labourer's end of this 'understanding' was not held up, Eduard, like a father figure, would implement disciplinary measures, generally in the form of various fines, which were subtracted from the wages of the employee.<sup>31</sup> In the case of at least one recorded instance at the decorating department, another more questionable disciplinary practice was also

N 412		Loon	Fines	Zaken	Bet
1902 - 3 Juli		21.96	1.50	36	
17		21.60	1.50	36	
31		21.93	1.50	36	
14 Oogst		18.54	1.50	36	
28		24.02	1.31	36	
11 Sept.		21.96	1.50	36	
25		26.12	2.40	36	10
9 Oct.		21.96	2.26	36	
23		21.96	3.11	36	
6 Nov.		20.07	1.17	36	
20		21.96	1.69	36	
4 Dec		21.60	1.53	36	10
18		27.24	0.65	36	35
30					

N 460		Loon	Fines	Zaken	Bet
1902 - 3 Juli		14.64	2.22	36	
17		14.64	3.23	36	
31		18.62	3.63	36	15
14 Oogst		12.36	2.42	36	
28		13.88	4.70	36	
11 Sept.		14.64	2.92	36	
25		18.07	4.13	36	
9 Oct.		14.64	3.19	36	
23		14.64	4.44	36	
6 Nov.		13.37	4.64	36	
20		14.64	3.52	36	
4 Dec		14.64	4.56	36	
18		14.64	4.56	36	
30		10.16	3.04	36	

**Figure 59: 1902 wage booklet. Note the fifth column indicates the fines issued.** Retrieved from, (CBUA), P2 105a, Foto's van de werklonen, 1903. Betaalboekjes.

noted. A 1888 newspaper articles reported that when the younger workers who were employed at the decorating department were caught eating too much of the sweet icing they were supposed to decorate the biscuits with, they were punished by being given a 'wooden cigar' to put into their mouths, depicting them as having broken the rules and preventing them from any further licking.<sup>32</sup> Controlling the conduct of his employees was thus important to Eduard, who was known to conduct his daily rounds at the factory, so that he was constantly aware of what was occurring in his company.<sup>33</sup> This need for control was further facilitated by the position of Eduard's office, which strategically looked down upon the large machinery hall.<sup>34</sup> Eduard's house next to the factory, and more importantly next to the company's recreational hall, also enabled him to keep a watchful eye on his employees and company,<sup>35</sup> and when Eduard was not physically present he would create an imagined presence, a notion that was further strengthened by the use of other 'presence-absence signs'

<sup>30</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>31</sup> (CBUA), P2 105a, Foto's van de werklonen, 1903. Betaalboekjes.

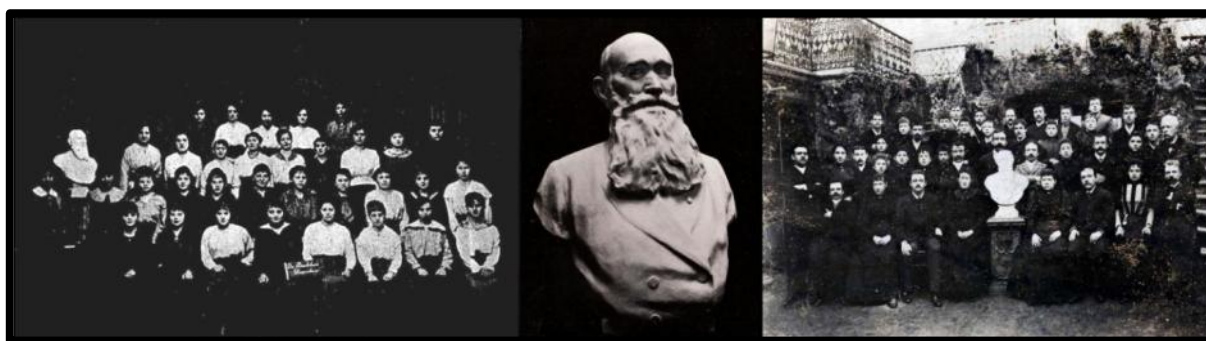
<sup>32</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat II', np.

<sup>33</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>34</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 24 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen,' Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat, II', np.

<sup>35</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievitstraat, III', np.

such as his marble bust which was displayed on several occasions.<sup>36</sup> An article in the *Antwerpen's Rubenskring* also claimed that Eduard knew the names of all those employees who worked at his factory and it was said that *'from contact with them, it is obvious that he knows much more than their names'*.<sup>37</sup> Eduard's knowledge about his employees thus extended beyond merely their performance and wellbeing at the factory, and in true paternal fashion, Eduard interfered in the personal life of his employees by being critical about their behaviour and conduct in their private sphere, albeit disguising this as genuine fatherly concern.



**Figure 60: Eduard's bust used as a presence-absence sign.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschapelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 10, 154.; (AMVC), A 38072/p, Groepsfoto van de toneelafdeling Arbeid Adelt.

A good example of such interfering behaviour is noted in Eduard's 1888 speech, in which he states, *'the faith of the labourer is not taken to heart nearly enough to be generally satisfied with .... many amongst them are addicted to so-called passions that bring about much mischief, from both a moral as well as a material point of view. ... Let us amongst these many passions name only two: namely pigeon-fancying and drunkenness. The first hobby recklessly places the bread, set aside for wife and child, on the gambling table. Profits are rarely made, and if a fortunate prize falls upon the enthusiast, the proceeds are inevitably given away and drunken up by less fortunate competitors. The condition of the inveterate drunk is even worse. This one does not only sacrifice his way to eternal quarrels, poverty and hardship, he must also, to crown it all, become the murderer of himself. And this is how unknowing labourers become bestial in all repelling ways. ... The labourer is allowed, and must be able,*

<sup>36</sup> (AMVC), A 38072/p, Groepsfoto van de toneelafdeling Arbeid Adelt.; (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschapelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.

<sup>37</sup> (EHC), *Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, orgaan van *Antwerpen's Rubenskring*, vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

*to have his leisure. He must not be devoid of the pleasures of which he has the right to enjoy his share. But these amusements must not be sought in the glass of Jenever.*<sup>38</sup>

The archetypal paternalistic concern about alcoholism and so-called questionable immoral activities in the form of gambling on pigeon races shines through in this part of Eduard's speech, during which he strongly condemned such behaviour amongst his labourers. It was therefore the responsibility of the employer to make the employee aware of his drifting behaviour and guide them back onto the 'right' path. In his fight against alcoholism, Eduard banned the consumption of Jenever by the late 1880s, as it was the alleged culprit causing working class misery during this period at the factory, but he allowed them to consume a certain amount of beer.<sup>39</sup> He also made sure that on Sundays his employees could drink beer at the factory's recreational hall instead of the local pub or House,<sup>40</sup> so that their behaviour and consumption could be monitored and regulated, and he furthermore distributed free hot cocoa amongst his employees during working hours.<sup>41</sup> Later, during World War I, the factory's female division also discussed such topics as '*the woman's role in the alcohol plague and the prevention thereof*',<sup>42</sup> and around the same time Eduard also apparently hoped to create an alliance in the fight against alcohol and to promote abstinence.<sup>43</sup> Although the latter initiative never materialised, it was a testimony to Eduard's fixation on preventing or at least regulating alcohol consumption amongst his employees. Besides the concerns Eduard had about the effects of alcoholism and gambling on the personal life of employees, however, he could have also been worried about its possible effect on the productivity of workers at the factory, which would in turn result in a loss of profits. Eduard also did not totally abstain from alcohol himself, and ordered Belgian ciders and champagne for his personal consumption.<sup>44</sup> This characterises the typical paternalistic idea that, although employees needed to be 'guided' in their behaviour because of their 'unknowing' state, the patron was rational enough to be able to control his own actions.

<sup>38</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>39</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 23 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, I', np.

<sup>40</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 25 November 1888, 'Instellingen en gestichten in en rondom Antwerpen, Beschuitfabriek van M. De Beukelaer in de Kievietstraat, III', np.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. – Sociale Actie', 32.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 'De Sociale Organisatie of maatschappelijke Inrichting van de De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 58.

<sup>44</sup> (CUBA), B26 26, Bestelboek 1905.; (CUBA), B26 31, Bestelboek 1910.



During the time that Eduard was alive, a sense of family had also begun to form at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken. The composition of this 'family' consisted of Eduard, who played the role of paterfamilias, with his wife, Maria Smets, and later Jeanne Vervecken standing close by his side, together with his other family members whom he took care of and who were actively involved in the company, and not unimportantly, the company's employees. Eduard as the paterfamilias would lead this artificial family into what, according to him, was the right direction, being closely involved in the planning of its activities and course, intervening when the 'family' wandered off the track, and showing care and concern about its existence and wellbeing. As a real father figure Eduard, for instance, took roles in plays and was present at the various performances by the factory's drama society,<sup>45</sup> or together with his relatives attended the seminars for employees about Flemish literature that were conducted at the factory's library during World War I.<sup>46</sup> Official occasions or festivities, such as the opening of the company's school,<sup>47</sup> or Eduard's 75th birthday, were also celebrated by Eduard and the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 'family',<sup>48</sup> when refreshments were served, speeches and eulogies made, songs sung and gifts presented. For the opening of the company school, for instance, Eduard received a bust of himself, and his wife Maria was given a badge with a depiction of Eduard, apparently from his employees themselves,<sup>49</sup> whilst for his 75th birthday, Eduard gave two weeks extra pay to his employees to a total amount of 17 800.10 Bfr.<sup>50</sup> Despite the latter paternalistic relationship, the approach of many employers was also often an expression of their personality, as it was in the case of Eduard.

Eduard's past and his own character seemed to have influenced the company's CSR policy. Besides being popular trends in broader society and being part of the CSR policy of other companies, a concern with education, music and welfare formed an important part of Eduard's own personal life, which likely also influenced his choice of some of the initiatives that he implemented at the factory.

Eduard himself claimed to have received a very rudimentary level of education when he was younger, stating that, *'Because we were like all other boys who came from the countryside,*

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<sup>45</sup> (EHC), Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring, vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>46</sup> (EHC), *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Gezellige Bijeenkomsten', 30.

<sup>47</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, 'Lekernijfabriek-De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>48</sup> EHC., *De Bakkerijschool*, Eerste Jaargang 1917-1918, 'Huldebetoon Ed. De Beukelaer', 40.

<sup>49</sup> *De Koophandel*, 26 November 1888, 'Lekernijfabriek-De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>50</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917- 24 December 1920, Vergadering gehouden op 30 April 1918, 12.



*we had little to no entitlement to erudition. We soon became aware that education was an unmistakable tool to meet even the slightest of needs. Hence the origin why we did not hesitate, for instance, to follow the classes of an evening school.*<sup>51</sup> Eduard acknowledged the value of education and, like so many individuals during the second half of the nineteenth century, decided to attend evening classes to improve his skill and personal capabilities. Later in life Eduard was also described as being someone who was eager to learn,<sup>52</sup> and his own thirst for education, probably as a result of the previous lack of it, may have well been an influential factor in his choice to make educational initiatives an integral part of the company's CSR policy.

This influence was furthermore evident in the case of the *De Beukelaer's Bakkerijschool*, an initiative that was particularly close to Eduard's heart, and which operated at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during a time that the factory was experiencing severe losses in both production as well as employment.<sup>53</sup> Despite this, Eduard clearly put much of his time, effort and finances into trying to achieve success with this particular initiative, whilst being closely involved in its execution. Eduard's past as a baker's apprentice could possibly account for his extraordinary efforts to supply young baker's apprentices with an institute where they could be educated in a modern and technical way about their trade, whilst his concern about the fate of the small artisanal baker whose existence was being threatened by the rise in large industrial bakeries – a somewhat ironic notion, as De Beukelaer's Fabrieken themselves produced certain bakery products on an industrial scale – might have stemmed from his own brief career as a small artisanal baker. Eduard attached great importance to the value of education, which he genuinely seemed to have believed could bring about intellectual upliftment and improve one's socio-economic position in society, just as it had in his life.

Besides education, Eduard also cherished a love for music, theatre and the arts in general. Throughout his lifetime Eduard was an avid supporter of various cultural initiatives and was, as previously mentioned, known to have financially assisted Antwerp's Flemish Opera;<sup>54</sup> he

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<sup>51</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>52</sup> (EHC), Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring, vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>53</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Notitieboekje van Eduard De Beukelaer 12/8/1918 – 8/2/1919. Letter to Mr. Van Den Dungen, 30/12/1918, 23.

<sup>54</sup> (AMVC), k 376 (Map 805), 112913/805, Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. aan Keurvels, Edward, 5/01/1899.; H.Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond*, 89.; R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Beukelaer, Edward de', 490.

was also involved in the organisation of the city's *Liederenavonden voor het Volk*,<sup>55</sup> and was personally acquainted with influential cultural figures of his time such as Edward Keurvels,<sup>56</sup> Frans Van Kuyck<sup>57</sup> and Max Roose.<sup>58</sup> At the mature age of 53 Eduard began to study playing the harmonium,<sup>59</sup> and also knew how to play the cello.<sup>60</sup> His love for music, song and theatre was further evident during his 75th birthday celebrations with friends and family, during which Eduard's relatives and close friends performed various songs, plays and musical pieces as part of the festivities.<sup>61</sup> Eduard also passionately collected art and managed to acquire an extensive collection which, for instance, included a large variety of old and contemporary paintings from various Flemish artists, porcelain vases from Sévres, a Louis XVI clock, bronze statues, Chinese vases, antique French furniture, and Chinese and Japanese porcelain,<sup>62</sup> all of which Eduard displayed at his different lavishly decorated residences.<sup>63</sup> One artist in whom Eduard was particularly interested was the painter Constant Cap, from whom he commissioned and purchased many works, especially on the subject of *Oud Antwerp*.<sup>64</sup> In December 1897 Eduard, as the head of the charitable organisation *Gilde des Poorters Van Oud-Antwerpen*, organised an art exhibition for the public, where he displayed his collection of Constant Cap's work on *Oud-Antwerpen* at Huis Cuylits in *Leystraat* in Antwerp.<sup>65</sup> One year later, in December 1898, *De Ghilde Des Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen* also organised a performance of the play *Cyrano De Bergerac* at the *Vlaamsche Shouwburg*.<sup>66</sup> Throughout his lifetime Eduard had thus supported various musical, theatrical and artistic initiatives, and showed a personal love for and interest in the wider arts. This

<sup>55</sup> H. Willaert, *Het Lied in Ziel en Mond*, 89.; R. De Schryver, B. De Wever, and G. Durnez, (eds.), *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamsche Beweging*, 'Beukelaer, Edward de', 490.

<sup>56</sup> (AMVC), k 376 (Map 805), 112913/805, Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. aan Keurvels, Edward, 5/01/1899.

<sup>57</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek, Stichting van de Ghilde des Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen.

<sup>58</sup> (AMVC), B 5194 31388/99 Brief door Beukelaer, de, Edward J. aan Roose, Max, 08/01/1906.

<sup>59</sup> (EHC), Antwerpen's Rubenskring, orgaan van Antwerpen's Rubenskring, vijfde Jaargang 1905, Nr. 26, 'Panthéon der Kunstnijverheid, III, Ed. De Beukelaer', np.

<sup>60</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Het bezoek der Pers aan onze Tentoonstelling voor Hijsvlijt en Kunst in Huis', 53.

<sup>61</sup> Anon., *Huldebetoon aan den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter en bestuurder van De Beukelaer's Fabrieken 15 Maart 1918*, 31-33.

<sup>62</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Catalogue des Tableaux: composant la collection de M. Edouard De Beukelaer: dont la vente aura lieu en la Salle Fors, 69, Placé de Meir, à Anvers le 18 Avril 1910* = *Catalogus des schilderijen: de verzameling samenstellende van M. Edouard De Beukelaer waarvan de verkoop zal geschieden in de zaal Forst, 69, Meirplaats, te Antwerpen op 18 April 1910*, np.

<sup>63</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 19 October 1897, 'De Poorters van Oud-Dordt', np.; Anon., *Brasschaat van Heidegrond tot Parkgemeente*, 245.

<sup>64</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Catalogue des Tableaux: composant la collection de M. Edouard De Beukelaer*, np.

<sup>65</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 15 December 1897, 'Bij De 'Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen'', np.

<sup>66</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 21 December 1898, 'Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen', np.

suggests that his own interests very likely influenced his choice in creating the company's many leisure initiatives that were predominantly culturally orientated, and formed part of a genuine attempt to share and spread his own passion about the arts amongst his employees, and in the process culturally uplift them to new heights.

Eduard was also involved in a number of philanthropic activities that tried to alleviate the suffering of the poor or unfortunate. The earliest example of such actions was the organisation of the two charitable theatrical evenings by the factory's drama society that were

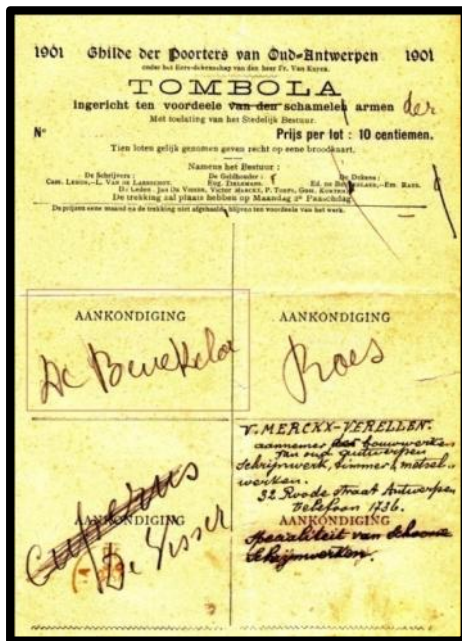


Figure 61: 1901 Raffle ticket of *Gilde des Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen*. Retrieved from, (PC), Koningsveld, *Gilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek*, np.

held at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's recreational hall in January 1893.<sup>67</sup> Later Eduard, as a member of the *Gilde des Poorters Van Oud-Antwerpen*, also regularly distributed vouchers for bread, peas, bacon, potatoes and coals amongst the poor and needy.<sup>68</sup> Throughout its existence the *Gilde Des Poorters Van Oud-Antwerpen* funded six children's cribs,<sup>69</sup> and donated money to the unfortunate victims of disasters such as the sinking of the steamboat *Belgique* in 1900.<sup>70</sup> The funds for these voucher were raised by a series of activities that included yearly banquets for which the organisation's members and their families could purchase tickets,<sup>71</sup> various raffles for the public of which its prizes were donated and tickets sold by, its members,<sup>72</sup> and the publication and sale of an

almanac.<sup>73</sup> Since many members were also small or large business owners, a business sense tended to be not too far away, and on the back of the raffle tickets,<sup>74</sup> or in the almanac,<sup>75</sup> members could also advertise the name of their business for an extra price, an opportunity

<sup>67</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 21 Januari 1893, 'Arbeid Adelt'.

<sup>68</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, *Gilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek*. Zitting van 23 Januari 1895.; *Ibid.*, Zitting van 22 Januari 1897.

<sup>69</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, *Gilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek*. Zitting van 23 Januari 1895.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, Aan de Heeren Voorzitter en Leden der Maatschappij "Gilde der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen". 30 Maart 1900.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, Zitting van 1 October 1897.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, Zitting van 4 October 1895.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Zitting van 24 April 1896.; (EHC), Anon., *Almanak van Oud-Antwerpen*.

<sup>74</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, *Gilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek*. Zitting van 30 November 1897.

<sup>75</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Almanak van Oud-Antwerpen*, np.

that Eduard, amongst others, eagerly seized.<sup>76</sup> During other initiatives such as the 1897 art exhibition of Eduard's collection of paintings on *Oud-Antwerpen* at Huis Cuyllits, the entrance fee paid by the visitors entitled them to a raffle ticket which gave them a chance to win paintings that had been sent in by artists such as Kets, Pulinckx, Boon, Cap and Steppe.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the 355 Bfr. proceeds of the theatrical performance that was organised the following year at the *Vlaamsche Schouwburg*<sup>78</sup> were also used to further fund the organisation's philanthropic initiatives.<sup>79</sup> Eduard, who had been voted the first *Deken* of the *De Ghilde Des Poorters Van Oud-Antwerpen* in 1894,<sup>80</sup> was deeply involved in the organisation, as demonstrated by his punctual attendance of its meetings and his support for its activities throughout its existence. Such philanthropic activities by Eduard thus suggest a genuine sense of altruism that also formed part of Eduard's character, and this mindset probably influenced his decision to implement educational and leisure initiatives and welfare services for his employees in a genuine attempt to improve their employment and life style.

### 7.3. The continuation and re-invention of Eduard's paternalistic legacy

When Eduard passed away on 12 June 1919 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken lost its patriarch, the figure who had defined the development and progress of the company, and had implemented an extensive CSR policy for the benefit of its employees. The paternalistic relationship that had previously existed between employer and employee, and that had defined De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy so significantly, was largely retained, but was reconceived and altered to suit the company's new managerial structure. Although the actual patriarch was no longer in charge of these matters, the paternalistic legacy and style of Eduard was kept alive by the family members who formed part of the board of directors and Management Committee, and who via the Secretariat for Social Welfare filed off some of the rougher and more unpleasant edges of his paternal image to put Eduard on a pedestal both literally as well as figuratively. Since the Secretariat was created to concern itself with the wellbeing of the company's employees, and attempted to establish a 'dialogue' between employer and employee, they communicated most of the image of Eduard as the successful, caring paternal

<sup>76</sup> (EHC), Anon., *Almanak van Oud-Antwerpen*, np.; (PC), Koningsveld, Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek. Zitting van 30 November 1897.

<sup>77</sup> *Het Handelsblad van Antwerpen*, 12 December 1897, 'Herinnering aan Oud-Antwerpen', np.

<sup>78</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek. Zitting van 24 Februari 1899.

<sup>79</sup> *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 21 December 1898, 'Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen', np.; (PC), Koningsveld, Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek. Zitting van 24 Februari 1899.

<sup>80</sup> (PC), Koningsveld, Ghilde Der Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen Verslag-Boek. Stichting van de Ghilde des Poorters van Oud-Antwerpen.

founder of the company through their organ *Arbeid Adelt*.<sup>81</sup> In the first issue of *Arbeid Adelt*, the Secretariat described itself as continuing Eduard's legacy, and explained that 'At our factory, there has always been a spirit of hearty affection for its employees. The blessed memory of Mister Edward De Beukelaer, was the personification of real friendship for his labourers. He never neglected, that what he could achieve to make them cheer up. His fatherly treatment, his simple contact, his striving to improve faith, his love for the arts and the attempts of his high ideals, resulted, by his doing, in the rise of all kinds of initiatives for his people at the time. ... He lived for the dream of his life and wellbeing of his people ... and passed on this love to his kind-hearted spouse Mrs Widow Edward De Beukelaer, onto her beloved son, the young man Edward De Beukelaer, and onto the directors who so diligently take your interests to heart, and whose names are on all of your lips. Through its daily contact with them all, the editors of your organ know, better than you, what they feel for you. ... All of them consider you, think about you, work day and night for you, looking after you and your mental, moral and material interests.'<sup>82</sup>

The legacy of Eduard's love for 'his people', together with his paternal concern, thus allegedly lived on in the hearts of his family members who now managed the company, and their feelings and care were communicated to De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees via the Secretariat for Social Welfare and its organ *Arbeid Adelt*. Throughout its existence *Arbeid Adelt* also regularly included images depicting the late Eduard together with articles, poems and songs that, all in a rather dramatic and theatrical manner, praised his entrepreneurial achievements as well as his fatherly care and loving concern for his employees.<sup>83</sup> 'Presence-absence signs' of Eduard in the form of busts or sculptures<sup>84</sup> were also used to remind employees about the company's patriarch, and were placed around the factory or used at official occasions or festivities such as the winter art festival,<sup>85</sup> to make him part of the celebrations. The only difference from the previous use of depictions of the patron's image was that during these occasions they did not serve to connote a feeling of the omnipresent control of the patriarch, but rather one of the everlasting legacy of his so-called hearty spirit.

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<sup>81</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*.

<sup>82</sup> FA, MA 505, *Een woord van den Heer E. De Beukelaer ter gelegenheid der inhudeging van het onderwijslokaal en van het Vaandel der Muziekafdeling Zijner fabriek Op 24 November 1888*, np.

<sup>83</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 24, 'Edward De Beukelaer', 289.

<sup>84</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Het bezoek der Pers aan onze Tentoonstelling voor Hijsvlijt en Kunst in Huis', 53.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 9, voorpagina.

<sup>85</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 22, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.



A good example of this practice was the new sculpture of Eduard that was unveiled at the factory on 15 March 1921, an event that was treated as something of a festive occasion.<sup>86</sup> Similar to the bust of himself that was made for Eduard in 1888, the sculpture was supposedly donated by the factories employees<sup>87</sup> and depicted the scene of the late Eduard being honoured by receiving a garland of roses from a workman whose muscular physical appearance denoted an iconic image of labour.<sup>88</sup> In later years this sculpture was cemented to the side of a building in the factory's courtyard for all to see,<sup>89</sup> but not before it had made an appearance at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's first Exhibition for Art and Home Industry, an event that in itself had been organised in part as a tribute to the persona, work and ambitions of Eduard.<sup>90</sup> During this event, which symbolically commenced each year on Eduard's



**Figure 62: The sculpture in memory of Eduard.** Retrieved from, (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr 9, voorpagina.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr 10, 155.; (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 53.

birthday, the sculpture formed part of a shrine that was erected in honour of the company's deceased patron, and further included a bust 'illuminated by a golden yellow light',<sup>91</sup> and other artwork and photographs that depicted Eduard. Such imagery of Eduard was surrounded with memories recalling his life and achievements, and included laurel wreaths, silk flags, medals, eulogies, his notebook and handwriting, his glasses, walking cane, decorations, and cello, and finally his cape and regalia as Mayor of *Oud-Antwerpen*.<sup>92</sup> All of these objects were displayed at the shrine as reminders of Eduard's quasi-mythical image as patriarch of the De Beukelaer's Fabrieken family.

<sup>86</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 6, 'Een hulde van ons personeel aan Edward De Beukelaer, den stichter onzer Fabrik', 61-62.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>88</sup> (EHC), Anon., *De Beukelaer's Tentoonstelling voor Huisvljht en Kunst in Huis*, 7.

<sup>89</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 9, front page.

<sup>90</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 4, 'Het bezoek der Pers aan onze Tentoonstelling voor Huisvljht en Kunst in Huis', 53-5.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-5.



Keeping alive the image of the company's deceased patron was also achieved by the yearly commemoration mass for Eduard,<sup>93</sup> an event which employees were strongly encouraged to attend up until as late as 1926,<sup>94</sup> seven years after Eduard had passed away. This annual occasion was a powerful symbolic ceremony that tried to honour the passing of the company's founder in much the same way as employees would commemorate the passing of their own relatives. Furthermore, in 1921, the Secretariat for Social Welfare also decided to publish a tribute to the late Eduard which, in a somewhat macabre fashion contained a picture of the deceased patron lying in his death bed, as well as a praise poem by the Secretariat, and short quotes about Eduard sent in by employees.<sup>95</sup> De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's Secretariat for Social Welfare even formed an archive department that collected and received material on Eduard's life, work and legacy,<sup>96</sup> and considered opening a small museum dealing with the patron in their building.<sup>97</sup> In a way Jeanne and Edward had also become the physical representatives of the late Eduard and were constantly referred to as 'Mrs Widow Edward De Beukelaer' and 'young man Edward De Beukelaer'.<sup>98</sup> Throughout the years Eduard's life and achievements were largely romanticised and even mystified, and Eduard was constantly remembered as the patriarch of the company. His legacy and spirit were purposefully kept alive by his family and the Secretariat for Social Welfare, and was said to have lived on in the company's new CSR policy.

The Secretariat for Social Welfare's reintroduction of some of the old, and implementation of new, CSR initiatives and services, as a representative of the directors, showed a likeminded paternalistic care about, and concern for, the company's employees, stating that '*a Secretariat and a magazine for social welfare have been founded for you, for you and your interests and moral and material concern.*'<sup>99</sup> The idea that these initiatives were created for the employees and their wellbeing was constantly emphasised in *Arbeid Adelt* throughout its

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<sup>93</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 5, 'Verjaardag van het afsterven van wijler den Heer Edward De Beukelaer stichter onzer Fabriek', np.

<sup>94</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 5, 'Oproep aan ons personeel', 80.

<sup>95</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 13, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.; (PC), Koningsveld, Huldeblyk aan de zalige nagedachtenis van onzen diepbetreurde patroon en stichter onzer fabrieken den heer Edward de Beukelaer uit erkentelykheid liefvol opdragen. Het personeel der Beukelaer's Fabrieken Antwerpen, den 12ste Juni 1921.

<sup>96</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 5, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.

<sup>97</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 6, 'Stichting van een De Beukelaer's Museum', 84-5.

<sup>98</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, 'Edward De Beukelaer, Ons Sekretariaat. – Ons Tijdschrift', 2.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

articles, but to what extent these efforts by the Secretariat for Social Welfare were based upon a genuine concern is more difficult to establish.

The Secretariat for Social Welfare significantly expanded the company's welfare services and further invested much of its time and effort in trying to introduce and organise a wide variety of educational and leisure initiatives, which in itself was a logistical nightmare.<sup>100</sup> Despite such difficulties, the Secretariat managed to expand its offer of initiatives, which had largely come about as a result of listening to the requests they had received from employees.<sup>101</sup> For six years the Secretariat maintained an extremely active extramural programme during an uncertain economic period in the country's history and an alarming decrease of its domestic market sales. In some instances where the Secretariat was unable to assist its employees, such as in 1923 when it abandoned its French classes,<sup>102</sup> the Secretariat helped those interested in finding a similar initiative outside of the factory.<sup>103</sup> In April 1925 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken also introduced its *maatschappelijk hulpbetoon*, which was a service that assisted employees by referring them to special organisations around the city in case of familial difficulties such as handicapped children, children with learning difficulties, or a need for temporary housing.<sup>104</sup> Although the exact figures are not known, the cost of printing *Arbeid Adelt*, for instance, or purchasing musical instruments, books and magazines, gymnasts' costumes and equipment, theatrical props or the creation of a recreational hall must have been significant and required substantial investment on the part of the company, which did not necessarily directly benefit its profitability or its productivity. Even after most the company's CSR initiatives were disbanded, it retained its Relief Fund and the library.<sup>105</sup> In many ways the latter commitment to the wellbeing of its employees and even their family members could be an indication of a certain genuine concern on the part of the company's new management, and could be considered as a motive for the further implementation of the company's CSR initiatives, forming part of the same paternalistic mode of care of Eduard that had been instrumental in defining in the past, and that had been inherited by the company's new management. The Van Ossel or the De Bie brothers, Karlel Donnez, or even his wife Jeanne Vervecken had all worked under Eduard at the factory, and as 'paterfamilias' Eduard had taken care of his family members by providing them with work or taking care of them during

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<sup>100</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 13, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr. 8, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.

<sup>103</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vierde Jaargang 1924, Nr. 10, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.

<sup>104</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Vijfde Jaargang 1925, Nr. 4, 'Sociale Instellingen', 50-2.

<sup>105</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Zesde Jaargang 1926, Nr. 12, 191.

difficult times. The members of the family who had taken over the management of the factory after Eduard had passed away were more than likely influenced and shaped by Eduard's behaviour and management style, and they adopted his paternalistic concerns, but decided to convey this concern in a new more structured and 'professional' manner via the Secretariat for Social Welfare.

Much of the paternalistic interference concerning the conduct and wellbeing of employees both inside as well as outside of the factory was also clearly adopted by the Secretariat for Social Welfare, but was not as directly intrusive and personal as was the case with Eduard. In one of *Arbeid Adelt's* articles the Secretariat for Social Welfare stated that '*in all possible aspects and in the most highly principled human manner a considerable importance has been attached to the individual as a human being, to the circumstances of his life, and his existence and that of his family, to his treatment during work and to his working conditions themselves, in short to his entire being in his capacity as employee.*'<sup>106</sup> The later quasi-holistic 'concern' of the Secretariat regarding the wellbeing of the employees working at the factory was also evident in the many articles it published in *Arbeid Adelt*. The company's new management also expected the same discipline and obedience from its employees towards the company, a paternalistic sentiment that was clearly communicated to its employees in a *Arbeid Adelt* article which mentioned that '*there must be an atmosphere ... of order, discipline, devotion to duty, honesty and morality.*'<sup>107</sup> Such an overtly paternalistic tone that dominated the company magazine up until 1924 was intended by the Secretariat for Social Welfare to 'direct' De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's employees according to what it believed to be the right conduct.

Although the paternalistic control of the conduct of employees was thus still present, any divergence from the proposed path at the factory was dealt with in a more professional manner. Instead of fines and questionable disciplinary action, a council for worker rights was formed in August 1921, which investigated any disputes and breaches of the factory regulations, and was also open to receiving and investigating complaints from employees against any wrongdoing.<sup>108</sup> The direct disciplinary action by the patron had thus been abandoned and was replaced by a more official process that was described as being in '*the*

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<sup>106</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Derde Jaargang 1923, Nr.6, 'De Beteekenis van het Arbeidsaandeel', 88.

<sup>107</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 2, 'Het Gouden Jubileum der De Beukelaer's Fabrieken', 14.

<sup>108</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 15, 'Tijding van het Sekretariaat', np.

*spirit of justice and brotherliness*,<sup>109</sup> a more equal but still familial ideal of dealing with disputes.

Despite the growth in size of the factory and the disappearance of much of the direct contact that had existed between employer and employee in the past, the Secretariat for Social Welfare attempted to retain much of the familial character that had been created by Eduard. In *Arbeid Adelt* the Secretariat constantly emphasised such concepts as family and fraternity by making use of words and phrases such as ‘one big family’,<sup>110</sup> ‘children of the house’,<sup>111</sup> or, ‘our factory’,<sup>112</sup> and ‘our Society for Mutual Assistance’.<sup>113</sup> De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken attempted to retain the supposedly warm, loving and caring homely atmosphere, where employer and employee felt connected to one another, that had characterised Eduard’s management style. In much of the same way as during Eduard’s time, the various festivities and events at the company were also celebrated amongst employees and directors, or at least members of the Secretariat for Social Welfare representing them, but the direct participation and involvement that had been such a significant characteristic of Eduard’s paternal spirit seems to have been abandoned. Treating members of the various recreational societies or the *De Beukelaer’s Vereenigde Gedecoreerde* on outings to the estate *Het Torenhof*,<sup>114</sup> the home of ‘Widow De Beukelaer and her young son’, also formed part of establishing a sense of family, as employees were treated in a cordial and homely fashion in the private sphere of their own employer.

After Eduard passed away, the family members who took over the management of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s thus adopted much of Eduard’s paternalistic approach with regard to the relationship and responsibility of employer and employee, and attempted to retain the company’s familial character. The company’s new CSR policy was a clear continuation of Eduard’s old policy, and the founder’s image and legacy were purposefully kept alive by De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s management as the foundation upon which the company’s CSR was build. Although Eduard’s image was somewhat polished by the company’s new management to create a more romanticised version of his legacy, a similar genuine concern about the

<sup>109</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 15, ‘Tijding van het Sekretariaat’, np..

<sup>110</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 2, ‘Het Gouden Jubileum der De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’, 13.

<sup>111</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 7, ‘De Vlaggen uitgestoken en Feest gevierd!’, 114.

<sup>112</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 1, ‘Uw wekelijksch Opofferingsuur’, 13.

<sup>113</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Eerste Jaargang 1921, Nr. 1, ‘Tijding van het Sekretariaat’, np.

<sup>114</sup> (EHC), *Arbeid Adelt*, Tweede Jaargang 1922, Nr. 10, ‘Kunst- en Natuurschoon’, 160-161.

wellbeing of its employees seem also to have prevailed amongst the company's new management.

## **Conclusion**

In many ways De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy was also motivated by selfless reasons and based upon a genuine concern among its owners about the wellbeing of the company's employees. This motivation originated from a wider paternalistic mindset that was popular amongst nineteenth century employers and was clearly evident in Eduard's management style and the relationship with his employees. Such a relationship took on a family pattern, where the employer expressed a fatherly type of care and genuine concern about the wellbeing of his employees, 'guiding' them in the 'appropriate' direction, and steering them back on track if they diverged from its proposed path. In the context of this relationship, the implementation of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's various CSR initiatives and policies formed part of the what Eduard considered to be his 'duty' to improve the life and conditions of his employees in a holistic way. Besides this paternalistic motivation for its implementation, Eduard's own personality and past also affected and influenced the implementation of the CSR policy at his factory and probably shaped the way in which it manifested.

By the time of Eduard's death the paternalistic relationship had become so entrenched at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken that it was largely adopted by the company's new management. Despite some changes between 1921-1926, De Beukelaer's Fabrieken experienced a new and vigorous period of promoting CSR initiatives and services to its employees on an unprecedented scale. Even though much of the paternalistic concern regarding the wellbeing of employees was maintained, most of the direct paternalistic interaction that had been such a prominent characteristic of Eduard's management style was replaced and was implemented indirectly via the Secretary for Social Welfare. After Eduard's death De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, partly following in the footsteps of its founder and partly because of its own genuine concern, expanded much of the company's CSR policy, reflecting in its policy the image and legacy of Eduard which the company's new management purposefully kept alive. Both Eduard as well as the family members who managed the company after his death, were thus also genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of their employees, a concern that was based upon altruistic motives, but that functioned within the framework of paternalism.

## **8. Conclusion**

From 1885 De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy was introduced by Eduard, and over the years the company's founder and its CSR policy had become so synonymous with one another that after Eduard's death in 1919 his family members decided to continue this practice by building upon the CSR foundations that Eduard had laid down. The company's CSR policy had played a defining role in the history of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken during the period studied, and had rested on three distinct pillars, namely welfare services, leisure, and educational initiatives. Although the actual implementation or even the characteristics of such a policy were certainly not unique during this period, it is difficult to determine what the exact reasons were for the implementation and development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR.

Was it the awareness and influence of other companies that implemented similar policies, and with some of whom De Beukelaer's Fabrieken were in contact via the different employers organisations? Or was it the need to keep its employees content with their conditions of employment at the factory in an attempt to deflect possible labour unrest during the uncertain, turbulent and changing socio-economic and political times of the period, a period during which a demand for the rights and better working conditions of the working class began to systematically infringe on the autonomy of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken, potentially affecting its productivity or profitability? Was it to keep its employees away from the 'threatening' ideologies (as far as the company was concerned) regarding the emancipation of the working class that were propagated by the increasingly popular workers organisations, ideologies that could negatively affect the company's internal equilibrium, so that De Beukelaer's Fabrieken themselves could shape its workers according to the ideology of *Arbeid Adelt*? Was the company's CSR policy merely implemented to improve the company's public image by setting itself apart from other companies that refrained from doing so? Or did it all form part of the wider paternalistic ideology that had defined the relationship between employer and employee at De Beukelaer's Fabrieken as shaped by Eduard's own personality and experiences, and thus based upon genuine altruistic care and concern, albeit in a paternalistic context?

All of the above reasons seem to have played a role in the implementation, formation and development of De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR policy, and the thesis has shown that each of these motivations shaped De Beukelaer's Fabrieken's CSR in its own distinct way. But it



is impossible to determine whether one motivation was more influential than the other, as it was rather a combination of all of the above-mentioned reasons, some of which were based on conscious strategic decisions by the company, whilst others originated from a deeper more genuine subconscious desire to ‘do good’, that brought about De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s CSR policy. Although it is thus impossible to state with certainty what exactly motivated De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken to implement its CSR, it has been shown that it was undoubtedly influenced by both wider trends and developments in the business world and society at large, as well as by certain distinct characteristics of the company, its owners and its managers.

From the analysis of De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s CSR policy between 1885 and 1929 in this thesis, it is evident that, contrary to the claims of neo-classical economists, it was not a lifeless autonomous entity that merely based its business decisions on the economic rationale of profit maximisation. De Beukelaer’s Fabrieken’s CSR policy was influenced by both the changes and developments that were occurring in its wider environment as well as the changes and developments that occurred within the company, its owners and its management; the company’s CSR policy was thus a product of action and reaction, driven by both conscious as well as subconscious motivations that were influenced by various causes, both internal as well as external.

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Hulde Den Heere Ed. De Beukelaer, opgedragen bij de plechtige inhuldiging van het onderwijslokaal, en het vaandel der muziekafdeeling, op zaterdag 24 november 1888, door het personeel der fabriek.

Huldeblyk aan de zalige nagedachtenis van onzen diepbetreurde patroon en stichter onzer fabrieken den heer Edward de Beukelaer uit erkentelykheid liefvol opdragen. Het personeel der Beukelaer's fabrieken Antwerpen, den 12ste Juni 1921.

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Studie van den Notaris Alphonse Cols te Antwerpen, akte van den 8ste September 1920 No 16841, Vereffening en deeling der valateurschap van Mijnheer Eduardus Jacobus De Beukelaer, in leven grootnijvenaar te Antwerpen.

Trouwboekje Joannes Ludovicus Vervecken.

Verslagen der vergaderingen van't bestuurskomiteit 24 April 1917 - 24 December 1920.