

## 6. Other reform proposals

The multifaceted personality of Henri Lambert always found food for thought concerning the facts of society. This is clear to see from the analysis below of three examples in which Henri Lambert, armed with his philosophy of history and his key reading, reacts directly to movements in society as diverse as workers' incentive, primary education, railways, and even the radical reform of the electoral system: all this in just a few months.

### 1. Bill on "labour shares" (1913)

This bill (Belgium) in 1913 sought to connect more closely the interests of wages and workers to capital and thereby to interest the workers in business. Henri Lambert reacts and suggests that it should be the unions and not the individual workers that are involved. This, provided that the unions are transformed and that the law on professional associations which had created the kinds of "modern and secular congregations of combat, Labour institutions of chivalry, unable to survive except in an atmosphere of struggle," should be abolished. They would become thereby the kind of associations defined in his reflections on the law of association, "*Worker Companies*".

In this conception, the "*Worker Companies*" would be interested – or would be interested if they wanted to – financially in the businesses, at the same time as they provided their labour wholesale, by way of collective bargaining agreements. They would take part in the running of businesses, a part and an influence commensurate with the capital they have entrusted to them. Over time, this part and this influence would grow in importance and useful results; they could become dominant because by means of such necessary moral and material guarantees, capital will be attracted at fixed interest to workers companies. Thus brought together, the workers would rise to the rank of capitalist entrepreneurs, industrialists.”

### 2. Primary education (1914)

Under the pseudonym of Aristidion, Henri Lambert published in early 1914 a pamphlet entitled *The Problem of Primary Education. The Liberal Solution*. Belgian Landernau politics was shaken by the proposal of the Catholic Minister, Poulet Prosper (1868-1937), who wanted to make primary education compulsory and free. This "Poulet law" promulgated on May 19, 1914, was passed by the Catholics in order to maintain the independence of their teaching. For Henri Lambert, the liberal and individualistic organisation of teaching must satisfy three principles:

1. Education must be free and instruction compulsory.
2. The state must provide "good schooling" to the poor.
3. Municipalities must supplement with neutral instruction any education not provided by private initiative.

### 3. Railways (1914)

In the spring of 1914, given the financial constraints faced by the Belgian railways, major reforms seemed likely to be imposed. This was the recommendation of the Central Committee of Industrial Work to the Ministry of Railways. Henri Lambert proposed, as was his wont, a project that was clearly structured, right into the details. It included his humanistic and free

trade principles, "put in place in order to stimulate personal interest and personal responsibility, community involvement in the profitable results (not losses) from the exploitation of collective wealth; decentralisation of everything that is capable of being divided, centralisation of what it is advantageous to unify."