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ON RURAL LIFE

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*National Monographs*  
*Drawn up by Governments*

THE NETHERLANDS



Interior in Friesland.

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## CONTENTS

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	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	5
I. POPULATION . . . . .	10
II. LAND TENURE SYSTEM . . . . .	13
III. LAND SETTLEMENT . . . . .	15
Damming and Partial Drainage of the Zuyder Zee	17
Cost of Damming and Development of Polders .	21
IV. CONSOLIDATION OF THE ECONOMIC BASIS :	
1. Improvement of Crops . . . . .	23
2. Reduction of Production Costs . . . . .	25
V. CO-OPERATIVES . . . . .	27
VI. CREDIT AND INSURANCE :	
1. Agricultural Credit . . . . .	30
2. Insurance against Agricultural Risks . . . . .	31
VII. EDUCATION . . . . .	32
Elementary Education . . . . .	32
Secondary and Preparatory Higher Education	33
Technical Education . . . . .	33
Instruction in Agronomy . . . . .	36
VIII. PEASANT CULTURE AND FOLK-LORE . . . . .	39
IX. RURAL PLANNING :	
1. Regional Planning : Transport and Com- munications — Water Supply — Electri- city . . . . .	40
2. Local Planning : Communal Centres — Public Libraries and Reading-rooms — Baths in Rural Areas — Playing-grounds — Wash-houses . . . . .	44
3. Housing . . . . .	46

	Page
X. MEDICO-SOCIAL POLICY :	
1. Organisation . . . . .	49
2. Activities : Assistance in the Home — Infant Hygiene — Welfare of Children between the Ages of 1 and 6 Years — Welfare of Children of School Age — Welfare of Delicate Children — Campaign against Tuberculosis — Campaign against Venereal Disease — Mental Hygiene — Local Health Centres — Campaign against Alcoholism — Campaign against Malaria	50
XI. NUTRITION . . . . .	55

# MONOGRAPH ON THE NETHERLANDS

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## INTRODUCTION

The most characteristic region of the Netherlands, bounded by the North Sea and the former Zuyder Zee, is the part best known abroad. It has given its name to the country, but it would be a mistake to imagine that the whole territory is low-lying. The central part consists of a hilly region formed in the glacial period, and the eastern and southern districts merge imperceptibly into the adjacent German and Belgian countryside.

The low-lying area extending along the coasts, along the Rhine and its branches, the Waal and the Yssel, and along the Maas, is characterised by its polders. In this region, the sea and riverwater has to be kept out by dykes and the rainwater drained by means of a complex system of ditches and canals, from which it has to be removed, for the most part artificially, to the waterways communicating directly with the sea.

The central authority is not responsible for the upkeep of the dams or of the canal system, or for operating the machinery used for the removal of the water from the polders. As far back as the early Middle Ages, the landowners found it necessary to work together for this communal purpose, so that bodies were created with regulatory powers administered by persons selected from, and by the landowners whose interests lay in, the region concerned. Conflicting interests and the need for co-operation between these bodies (*Walerschappen*) necessarily led to Government intervention, out of which there developed a complex legal system for the regulation of waterways (*Waterstaatsrecht*). The Government authorities, however, have always, as far as possible, refrained from intervening in the administration and have allowed these bodies the greatest possible amount of autonomy.

Most of these low-lying areas may be said to have been predestined, both by position and the nature of the soil (heavy clay and peat), to be used as pasture land. It is only natural, therefore, that these fertile grass-lands have formed since the earliest times the basis of a stock-raising industry famed throughout the world for its products.

It was only where the influence of the tides was strongly felt and where the clay soil, lightened by admixture with sea sand, was suitable for agriculture that the difference in the water-level was utilised for a natural and better form of drainage. In these districts an unrivalled agricultural industry developed.

Along the whole coast, the constant tendency has been to increase the area of arable land by further reclamation, while lakes and fens, the floors of which were expected to provide fertile arable soil, were also drained.

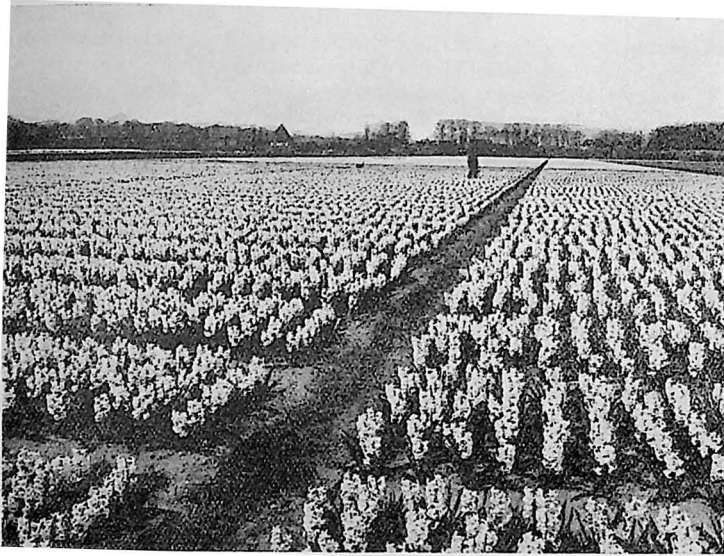
Large sums have been expended in the course of the



Windmill for drawing off water in North Brabant.

centuries on these peaceful conquests, but the outlay has been repaid by the great fertility of the reclaimed areas. The lesson of history has had its influence on our own period and has inspired the greatest achievement of all, the gigantic work of damming and reclaiming the Zuyder Zee. Part of this has already been completed, and still more is in progress.

The development of the higher-lying regions of the Netherlands has differed widely. Here, instead of fertile soil, were moors and sand-drifts. Inferior breeds of cattle were reared on the poor meadow-land near the small streams, flocks of small sheep grazed on the moors, while scanty crops of rye and oats and,



Field of hyacinths in bloom.

later, potatoes, were grown with difficulty on the arable land near the villages.

These districts have been entirely transformed by the introduction of artificial fertilisers.

The poor grass-land became magnificent meadow-land, which was further improved by better drainage. The productivity of the soil was greatly increased and it was made to yield a more varied supply of cattle-fodder, while the area of moorlands steadily declined, so much so that regulations are being made for the preservation of natural scenery to prevent their total disappearance. The high-lying peat soil, formerly inaccessible and uninhabitable swamp, has been worked and it was drained by canalisation and converted into rich soil, supporting an industrious population with a flourishing industry based on local products.

These conditions were also very beneficial to cattle. The improved pasture land and the more plentiful cattle food led to great improvements in the breeds of the sandy districts. The results may be seen in the fine black-and-white cattle of the northern and the red-and-white cattle of the southern sandy districts.

At the same time, pig-breeding, for which the waste products of dairy farming and agriculture were utilised, was developed, and enormous progress was made in poultry farming.

The areas unsuited for agriculture or pasture were also afforested. Private initiative led the way, under the direction of the Nederlandsche Heide Maatschappij, and action was subsequently taken by the State.

The most remarkable feature of this general development was that it was due to the co-operation of the agriculturists in their numerous associations and co-operative societies.

At about the same time, after a beginning had been made by business-men, there arose the co-operative dairy farms, co-operative societies for the purchase of manures and cattle foods and co-operative Raiffeisen Banks. This general co-operative movement has exercised an enormous influence and has yielded most fruitful results. The movement is still growing, either through the building of new premises or through the extension of the organisation.

In addition to the above-mentioned dairy farms, the agriculturists have set up, side by side with those already in existence, co-operative potato-flour factories (which also manufacture starch products), straw-board and paper factories, and sugar factories, which are among the largest and best equipped in Europe.

The pronouncedly maritime nature of the climate along the coast, the complete control of the level of the water-surface, the nature of the soil and the ready supplies of manure available in the adjacent meadow lands led at a very early period to the growth of horticulture.

The large towns of the Netherlands provided a ready market for vegetables and fruit, while the light soils behind the dunes were used for bulb-growing.

With the rise of major industries in the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands themselves, the importance of horticulture constantly increased, so that it finally became mainly an export industry. Ever-increasing specialisation and rationalisation followed, and Dutch horticulture became one of the most advanced in Europe.

This mass production necessarily led to the development of an appropriate selling system, which took the form of the co-operative auction sale (*veilingswezen*).

This general development was clearly bound to affect life in country districts. Old forms of communal work and communal life were replaced by new ones. In this respect, much has been done by the various agricultural organisations, particularly those of the young peasants, who often formed associations of ex-pupils of agricultural and horticultural schools, and those of the young peasant girls who were ex-pupils of agricultural domestic schools.

The spiritual values of the communal life in the countryside have certainly risen a great deal as a result of the above



tendencies, the main cause being the religious nature of most of these associations. The monotony of country life which threatens the continued residence of the modern man in the country has thus been removed, and the peasant population has become increasingly conscious of the significance of the part it plays in the community.

In some cases, this has led to the revival of old popular customs and to the preservation of old forms of dress.

It is to be feared, however, that the importance of these customs will steadily decline as modern dress becomes increasingly popular on account of its more hygienic character and of its greater practicability for working purposes.

Attempts of a non-agrarian character to prevent this tendency receive a cold welcome among the peasantry, as they are considered to be merely an endeavour to preserve the picturesqueness of the countryside. The increased self-consciousness of the young peasants makes them demand that they should be appreciated for other reasons than their ability to attract tourists by imparting atmosphere to the countryside.



Member of a country riding-club.

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## I. POPULATION

In every country, rural life conditions are determined by density of population, intellectual and moral development and economic conditions. The Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries of the world — a circumstance that greatly facilitates the work of the public authorities, because the difficulty of distance is felt less. Moreover, the relatively high cultural level also helps the authorities. Throughout this small monograph, public and private activities will be found side by side. They second each other's efforts, and private initiative often paves the way for public action. The success of measures for the improvement of rural life also depends on the intellectual and moral development of the population.

(a) *Demographic Position.*

The area of the Netherlands is 40,829 square kilometres (only 32,566 square kilometres if the area under water is deducted), with a population of 8,662,600 — *i.e.*, an average of 266 inhabitants per square kilometre. A hundred years ago, the density of the population was only 88 per square kilometre.

The density of the population grouped according to communes is as follows :

	Per square kilometre
Communes with over 100,000 inhabitants . . . .	5,750
Communes with 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants . .	1,050
Communes with 20,000 to 50,000 inhabitants . .	656
Communes with 5,000 to 20,000 inhabitants . . .	177
Communes with less than 5,000 inhabitants . . .	115

Communes with less than 20,000 inhabitants may be regarded as rural communes. In the province of Drenthe, which is the least densely populated and is essentially rural, there are only 91 inhabitants per square kilometre.

(b) *Relationship between Urban and Rural Populations.*

The difference between urban and rural areas is relatively small. There are no isolated rural areas. Towns are always near at hand, and the elaborate system of roads and railways makes them easily accessible.

The fact that many agricultural products are exported and that the peasants have often a direct interest in the export trade<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V on "Co-operatives".

also tends to lessen the difference between towns and rural areas. The rural areas also suffered from the world economic depression, and the Government had to provide large subsidies.

The social insurance laws apply equally to rural areas and to towns. There are, however, special laws for the insurance of horticultural and agricultural workers against accident.



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Friesland farm with cattle.

It will be seen in the chapter on education that, generally speaking, education in the villages does not differ from that in the towns, except in so far as is necessitated by different local conditions.

The laws on poor relief and housing are the same for town and country.

#### *(c) State of Health.*

The very slight difference between the social measures in the towns and in the country is reflected in the state of health. The law on poor relief lays down that each commune shall provide indigent persons with medical and obstetrical assistance.

There are only a very few small communes without a doctor, and even in such communes medical assistance can be obtained from some neighbouring commune near at hand. On January 1st, 1938, there was one doctor per 1,110 inhabitants in communes with a population of over 20,000, and one doctor per 1,974 inhabitants in communes with a population under 20,000.

Although, naturally, large hospitals are situated in the larger towns, the rural areas possess many well-equipped small hospitals where sick persons whose condition is not extremely serious can receive treatment.

The birth rate and death rate are higher in rural districts than in towns. That is a general phenomenon. The differences in death rate are only small, however.

The following table gives the 1907 and 1937 figures for births, infantile mortality, death from tuberculosis and the general death rate, grouped according to the size of population of the communes. The figures show what progress has been achieved in thirty years.

Communes with	Births per 10,000 inhabitants		Deaths of infants under 1 year of age per 1,000 new-born living children		Deaths resulting from tuberculosis per 10,000 inhabitants		General death-rate per 10,000 inhabitants	
	1907	1937	1907	1937	1907	1937	1907	1937
<b>Inhabitants</b>								
Over 100,000 . . .	289	155	103.9	29.5	18.2	4.3	136	86
50,001-100,000 . . .	293	199	111.7	37.5	17.5	4.5	146	80
20,001-50,000 . . .		198		37.5		4.4		82
5,001-20,000 . . .	312	219	117.6	40.4	17.1	5.1	149	90
Under 5,000 . . .	307	223	126.8	43.0		5.3	153	96

## II. LAND TENURE SYSTEM

Agriculture is practised either by the owners of the land or by tenant-farmers. The percentage of agricultural holdings worked under the direction of the owners and the percentage of land cultivated by them are as follows :

Year	Percentage of holdings worked by the owners	Percentage of land
1888 . . . . .	58.5	—
1898 . . . . .	56.5	—
1904 . . . . .	54.4	—
1910 . . . . .	50.8	46.98
1921 . . . . .	56.0	51.74
1930 . . . . .	56.2	50.97

The system of tenant-farming prevails in Friesland, North Holland, South Holland and Zeeland. It already existed in the Middle Ages, when many landowners, both large and small, settled in the numerous small towns, to which they were attracted by the prospect of greater security, lower taxes and trade and shipping facilities.

Fewer towns were able to develop in the sandy districts, and consequently the countryside in those regions remained more isolated. For a long time, the family and communal economic system continued intact and commercial influences had little effect on the country and the farming system. The land therefore remained to a greater extent in the hands of the peasants and peasant communities. The following table shows the variations between the various provinces :

*Percentage of Land cultivated by the Owners in 1930.*

	%		%
Overijssel . . . . .	68.5	Zeeland . . . . .	38.9
Guelders . . . . .	60.5	North Holland . . . .	44.0
Northern Brabant . .	59.4	South Holland . . . .	41.8
Friesland . . . . .	31.0		

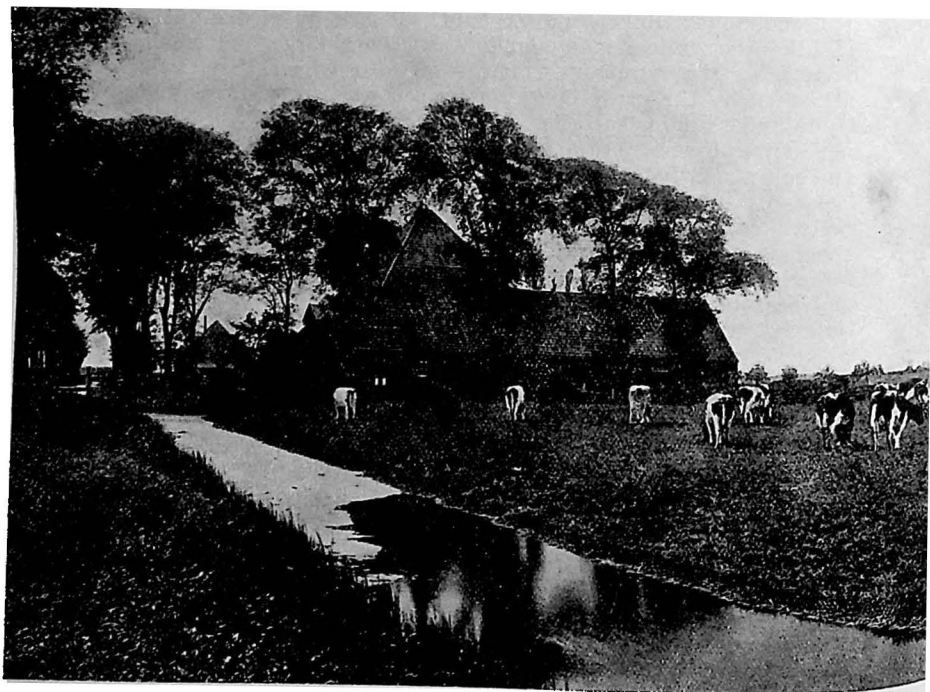
In the province of Groningen, two other forms of land law still exist — namely, “Beklemrecht” and “Stadsmeierrecht”. These two tenures, though of much legal interest, are only of local importance; they are both somewhat similar to an emphyteutic lease. The Beklemrecht, whereby the property is indivisible, has helped to produce a sturdy peasant population, owning prosperous farms. By far the most of the land in the

Netherlands, however, is cultivated by the owners or by tenant-farmers. As the tenant-farming contract for which the civil code provided was no longer in accordance with certain modern ideas, the Government embodied various more detailed rules for such contracts in a law on tenant-farming (Pachtwet) which came into force on November 1st, 1938.

Small or medium-sized holdings predominate, as is shown by the following table :

Area (hectares)	Number of holdings	Area (hectares)	Number of holdings
1-5 . . . . .	110,646	20-50 . . . . .	24,092
5-10 . . . . .	55,500	50-100 . . . . .	2,456
10-20 . . . . .	41,256	100 or more . . . .	195

Most of the small-holdings are in sandy areas and in those where horticulture is the chief form of farming, whereas the majority of the large holdings are in the marine-clay areas along the coast.



Modern farm in North Holland.

### III. LAND SETTLEMENT

Land settlement has been made possible by the reclamation of waste land and the dyking or draining and cultivation of alluvial areas, lakes, marshes and the Zuyder Zee. In that way, something can be done to meet the requirements of the rural population, which is constantly increasing and needs new cultivable land, and to reduce unemployment in the country. Whereas, formerly, the acquisition of new land was often undertaken as a protection against danger from floods, it is now generally carried out with a view to reducing unemployment.

Most of the reclaiming of waste land has been done since the nineteenth century, and often at a financial loss.

Formerly, large tracts of heath-land could not be used for lack of fertilisers; and communal or joint ownership was another obstacle to reclamation. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was still ten times more heath than cultivated land in the Meyerij district (Northern Brabant), and three-quarters of the province of Drenthe was waste. In 1883, there were, throughout the country, 907,000 hectares of waste, or 28% of the total area of land. In 1936, the amount had been reduced to 337,000 hectares. From 1907 to 1911, an average of 7,000 hectares a year were cleared. From 1919 to 1927, the annual area cleared was 5,300 to 8,600 hectares; in 1935, 5,200 hectares; in 1936, 5,600 hectares; in 1937, 5,100 hectares; and, in 1938, 7,900 hectares. In the latter years, much waste land, and land under extensive cultivation, was cleared by land-reclamation companies, which received State subsidies to enable them to give employment. With one exception, the properties of those companies will be transferred to the State. As a result of this reorganisation, the work of reclamation is done exclusively on behalf of, and at the risk of, the State, and the cost of purchasing the land is borne by the Treasury. The communal properties in Limburg and Brabant are in a special position. They are to be cleared by land-reclamation companies on behalf of the commune concerned, with a State subsidy to cover wages paid to workers formerly unemployed.

The reclamation and improvement of the soil by private concerns, which the State subsidises if they employ men formerly out of work, is of great importance for land settlement. Every

year, 2,000-3,000 hectares are so reclaimed in the province of Drenthe. The following cases may be given as examples :

1. Near Vollenhove (Overijssel), a marshy district has been dyked, drained and levelled. The area has been divided up into lots of  $36 \times 400$  metres, and farms have been built. The province and the "Waterschap"<sup>1</sup> have granted subsidies of 160 florins and 80 florins per hectare. The remainder of the cost has been borne by the State, which becomes the owner of the new land. The land-reclamation company known as Het Land van Vollenhove, which had the work in hand, has also carried out the first tilling operations, which have already produced a crop. This new land will provide permanent employment for approximately 750 families.

2. In the centre of the province of Drenthe, more than 1,800 hectares of heath-land have been cleared; and a model village, for which a reasonable economic future appears to be assured, is being developed. The sandy soil has been enriched with artificial manure and compost.<sup>2</sup>

3. The land-reclamation company known as Het Landschap Drenthe has built efficient modern farms in the Zwinder-sche Veld (Drenthe), where 900 hectares of new land will give permanent employment to 150 workers.

These settlements, which are relatively small, are on a much smaller scale than the national scheme of draining the Zuyder Zee. The Wieringermeer is already dried up and settled. (It is dealt with in a special chapter.)

The State encourages land settlement in two further ways. A Law was passed in 1918 to help agricultural labourers to acquire plots of land; and, since 1919, subsidies have been granted to small concerns engaged in reclaiming land. The Agricultural Labourers Law is intended, not to turn these labourers into small farmers, but to raise their standard of living, which is definitely lower than that of industrial workers. By January 1st, 1936, under this Law, 4,892 allotments owned by labourers had been provided — 1,107 in Groningen and 890 in Drenthe. There were relatively few in the south of the country.

The subsidies granted to small land-reclamation undertakings, on the other hand, are intended to promote the establishment of small farms. In this way, 250 small-holdings of 8-15 hectares have been provided mainly in the east and south of the country.

<sup>1</sup> Legally constituted public body controlling the water in a district.

<sup>2</sup> The compost consists mainly of town refuse from The Hague, which is transported in special trains and sorted near Wijster (Drenthe).



## DAMMING AND PARTIAL DRAINAGE OF THE ZUYDER ZEE

In June 1918, a law for the partial drainage of the Zuyder Zee was passed. After initial delays caused by financial difficulties, it was decided, in 1926, in accordance with the report of the Lovink Commission, to speed up the construction of the Zuyder Zee dam, 32½ kilometres in length and about 86 metres wide, and to begin the dyking of the polder in the north-west known as the "Wieringermeer". It was realised that the land obtained would be very brackish, and that special precautions would be necessary when bringing it into cultivation. The Lovink Commission therefore recommended that a "test polder" should be made near the village of Andijk.

(a) *The Test Polder of Andijk.*

The dyking of this polder, approximately 40 hectares in size, was finished in 1927. After completion of the necessary drainage, cultivation was begun in 1929.

On the land thus obtained, test fields were prepared where numerous experiments were carried out on the hydrographic system, methods of manuring, soil friability, choice of vegetables, and many other questions.

The experience thus acquired was of great value in connection with the Wieringermeer. After a few years, experiments were carried out in the Wieringermeer itself. The test polder then became valuable rather as a basis of comparison with the test fields of the Wieringermeer.

It continued to be used as a test polder up to November 1st, 1935, so that the condition of the land after several years of cultivation could be observed. The results were satisfactory. From November 1st, 1935, the test polder was let as an ordinary farm.

(b) *The Wieringermeerpolder.*

The dyking of the north-west polder, the Wieringermeer, begun in 1926, was completed by the end of 1929. At the beginning of the following year, the work of draining off the water, which stretched as far as the eye could see, was started, and it was emptied into the Zuyder Zee, which at that time had not yet been dammed. On August 22nd, 1930, the Wieringermeer was dry, which meant that an area of 20,000 hectares of cultivable land had been added to Netherlands territory. The composition of the polder soil is very varied; it contains both heavy clay, good sandy clay soil and coarse and fine sand. During the first few years after drainage, an agro-geological chart, showing the strata to a depth of 1.5 metres, and an



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Modern farm on the Wieringermeer (drained part of the Zuyder Zee).

agrological chart of the arable stratum were prepared. The two charts together constitute an invaluable document.

Towards the beginning of 1930, a special Department under the Ministry of Public Works ("Waterstaat") was set up to arrange the cultivation and development of the Wieringermeer. Its first task was to organise the drainage system.

Access to the polder was provided by the construction of temporary roads (cycle tracks) over which light motor vehicles could also pass. The larger canals had already been dug by mechanical means before drainage, so that, to complete the process of drying-up the polder as rapidly as possible, all that had to be done was the detailed work of arranging a system of ditches and drainage channels.

The ditches were machine excavated by the Hydraulic Works Department of the Zuyder Zee, and the drainage channels were made by the Department of Agriculture.

The Wieringermeer was divided up in accordance with a plan made out by the Lovink Commission and published in its report. The average size of the sections is 20 hectares (800 × 250 metres). In the south-western portion, they are larger (30-70 hectares).

In front of each section, there is a paved road and, at the back, a canal. The system has therefore ideal means of access, since material and produce can be carried by both road and water. With this form of section, and as the arrangement of the polder was not allowed to be hampered by tradition practices, the agricultural holdings established could be so sited as to reduce to a minimum loss of time through the distance of fields from farms.

In November 1930, a small area of light soil was sown, not so much with a view to obtaining crops as in order to stabilise the light soil. But, from the very first year, the crop proved so satisfactory as to justify confidence in the future. That optimism has not been disappointed.

After a few years, the area of cultivable land became so large that there had to be a special organisation to deal with cultivation. The Wieringermeer Farming Company was founded for the purpose.

The land was brought rapidly into cultivation without undue difficulty. The Wieringermeer lands were found to compare very favourably with similar land in other districts. Great efforts and much hard work were of course required to bring the land into cultivation, and many difficulties had to



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Farm on the Wieringermeer (drained part of the Zuyder Zee).

be overcome. In the end, however, the newly won area has proved a national asset, the value of which it is difficult to estimate in figures. During the preparatory period, the work provided regular employment for an average of 2,000 persons, not to mention all those who benefited from the new polder indirectly.

One of the initial difficulties was the housing of the people engaged on the work; the state of the soil and the tendency to subsidence necessitated special precautions when building.

At the beginning of 1931, the construction of farms was started and, shortly afterwards, the first stone of the first village was laid. Now, the Wieringermeer possesses three villages, at points where roads and canals cross — *i.e.*, at the centres of economic activity. The villagers are for the most part workers engaged in bringing the land into cultivation. A class of small traders has gradually developed. The ground for undertakings of this kind is let on emphyteutic leases. Before people are allowed to start a business in the villages, certain qualifications are required: professional knowledge, some capital and certain personal qualifications. The number of tradespeople allowed to engage in the various forms of business has also been limited. The object of these precautions is to prevent disappointment. Working families engaged for farming or other work must first undergo a medical examination. It is hoped in this way to exercise a certain selection and thereby raise the standard of the population of the polder.

The workpeople are housed in dwellings built in the villages by the Government. The Wieringermeer Housing Office deals with the construction and management of houses built with state aid. The dwellings are simple but well kept, and their average standard of equipment is considerably higher than in other rural areas of the country, particularly as regards water supply and electricity.

Administratively, the Wieringermeer came mainly under the communes of Wieringen and Medemblik until the end of 1937; but, since January 1st, 1938, a new administrative body has been in existence, which may be compared to a commune.

During the first few years after the land had been brought into cultivation, it was farmed on behalf of the State, in order that the farmers should not have to incur the initial risks. As soon as those abnormal risks could be regarded as ended or as reduced to a minimum, the letting of the land began. The first lands to be leased (November 1934) were those which had been longest in cultivation — namely, those with the lightest soil, which had for the most part been used as grazing lands. Although it cannot be said that the farmers showed lack of interest, yet a certain hesitation on their part was noticeable

at the start. It disappeared, however, when the results of private farming could be seen.

Hence, in 1937, only a few of the applications for leases could be granted. Including the last issue of November 1st, 1937, leases for 214 holdings, covering approximately 8,556 hectares, have now been granted.

During the next few years, the allocation of lands will be continued. There are about 10,000 hectares available for letting. The Government has reserved for its own use an area of 1,000 hectares in various parts of the polder. The lands include holdings of different sizes and kinds, averaging 35-40 hectares; tillage farms are generally slightly larger, mixed farms of average size and pasture farms as a rule slightly smaller.

The buildings are constructed at Government expense. An attempt is made to combine simplicity with practical requirements and to reduce expenses as far as possible by standardised production. The results of previous experience are applied, and no improvement is overlooked that is likely to increase the practical value of the buildings.

(c) *North-east Polder.*

After the Zuyder Zee had been dammed and the Wieringermeer drained and brought into cultivation, an interval of several years elapsed before work on the north-east polder was started. The delay was due largely to financial circumstances which made it impossible to continue the drainage of the Zuyder Zee immediately. The scheme was not given up, however, and preparations for dyking the second polder went on. "Go on with the work, but not at all costs", was the Government's watchword. As soon as detailed estimates showed that the cost of draining the north-east polder would not be more than 2,600 florins per hectare, the Government proceeded with the work. The first contracts were given in 1936, and those for dyking the new polder in 1938. The work has been so planned that it should be possible to start evacuating the water in 1940, and bringing the area into cultivation about 1941.

The north-east polder covers an area of approximately 48,000 hectares, of which only about 9,000 consist of sandy land. The remainder is composed of heavier soil which is believed to be eminently suitable for tillage.

COST OF DAMMING AND DEVELOPMENT OF POLDERS

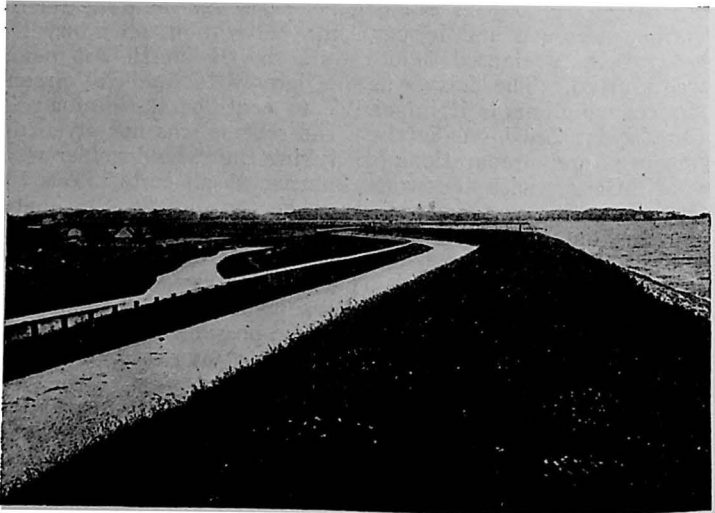
The damming and drainage operations entailed a large financial outlay by the State. The increase in the cost both

of materials and of labour meant that the original estimates were greatly exceeded. Once the work was started, it was difficult to stop, because all the capital invested would have been lost, and cessation of the work would have destroyed the hopes placed both on an increase in the national territory and on an improvement in the hydrographic position in the north-east of the country — benefits which cannot really be calculated in figures.

The damming of the Zuyder Zee cost approximately 140 million florins. The dyking of the Wieringermeer and the test polder cost about 75 millions; and compensation to the Zuyder Zee fishermen (whose interests have suffered heavily through the existence of the dam) and military defence works in the new districts cost several more millions. Part of the expense was met by surpluses in the State budget, so that, ultimately, it was only necessary to borrow 125 million florins.

The north-east polder will cost approximately 126 millions.

The cost of damming and partially draining the Zuyder Zee has been very heavy, but not unduly so, in view of the great direct advantages and incalculable indirect advantages obtained.



*Copyright "Nederland in den Vreemde"*

Polder landscape (North Holland).

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#### IV. CONSOLIDATION OF THE ECONOMIC BASIS

##### 1. IMPROVEMENT OF CROPS

Increase in production has not been the result of great changes in the farming system. Rather, an effort has been made, while retaining the system, to improve net production. That has been achieved by measures connected with the following :

- (a) Improvement of the land :
  - (1) Evacuation of the water, various forms of drainage;
  - (2) Breaking-up and improvement of land under extensive cultivation;
  - (3) Reintegration, improved distribution of holdings through expropriation and improvement of the road system;
- (b) (1) Tillage;
- (2) Fertilisation;
- (c) (1) Examination of land with a view to its suitability for agriculture or stock-raising;
- (2) Plant selection and change of crops;
- (3) Selection and improvement of varieties of crops;
- (4) Selection of seeds;
- (d) Care of plants, abolition of diseases and weeds;
- (e) Harvesting and storage, silos and handling of harvested produce.

With regard to drainage, reference should be made to the chapters on home settlement, and especially to that dealing with the bringing of the Wieringermeer polder into cultivation. Mention should here be made, however, of improvements connected with evacuating the water. In many areas, unsatisfactory arrangements for evacuating the water made it impossible to improve the productivity of the soil : great efforts have been made, especially in recent years, to remedy this state of affairs, and equipment for drawing off the water by means of mills has been installed. The course of small rivers has been rectified, and canals for evacuating the water have been dug. Much of the work has been done by persons who were formerly unemployed.

Although in the Netherlands the need of agrarian reform is not felt, the process of dividing up the land has in many cases been carried too far, and reintegration is an imperative necessity. A law on reintegration, which had been in existence for several years, contributed greatly to the reintegration of certain areas. In order to speed up the process, a new law (Ruilverkavelingswet) has just been promulgated.

Although the climate in the Netherlands is favourable and most of the land is fertile, hardly any country in the world uses more artificial fertilisers in proportion to its size. Experience has shown that, if suitable use is made of fertilisers, money spent on them brings in a higher return than any other form of expenditure which farmers have to make. The use of fertilisers is continually increasing. After some falling-off during the crisis years, they are now used to an even greater extent than before the crisis. The use of nitrate fertilisers, in particular, has done much to increase production.

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the cultivation of new varieties of plants, of higher productive capacity, better quality and greater immunity from disease. Particular importance is attached to obtaining supplies of good seeds. Field inspections (Keuringen te velde), organised by the N.A.K. (Nederlandsche Algemeene Keuringsdienst) have made the cultivation of cereals and seed potatoes more profitable and have done much to encourage the use of good seeds. The result has been an increased use of superior varieties, improvement in the health of the plants, abolition of weeds and an increase in production. These developments are particularly fortunate in that the outlay by the farmer-consumer (which, though remunerative, is heavy) goes into the pocket of the farmer who produces the seeds.

Side by side with efforts to increase quantity, an attempt is being made to improve the quality of agricultural produce. Organisations of those concerned, with or without the collaboration of the authorities, ensure that quality is improved, and that produce for export is controlled, examined and valued.

Although technical progress in agriculture is an important factor, it is the instruction and education of the rural population that forms the basis of all agricultural improvement. Better professional knowledge and an extension of the instruction given to the farming population are conditions precedent to any improvement in the position of the rural areas.

Agricultural instruction is now available for all classes of the population. Among the younger generation, a farmer who has not received a course in agricultural training is becoming an exception. An information service continues the work of the agricultural colleges and courses. Notices, Press news, information given on the spot, demonstrations, experimental



fields and model farms provide a constant means of showing farmers how they can effect improvements.

Farmers' associations play an active part, and often take the initiative in founding organisations to perfect some special branch of farming.

The history of farming down the ages shows that an improvement and increase of agricultural production through better technical methods and an extension of markets have generally resulted in a greater prosperity in the country districts.



Farm on broken-up land at Kilvarembek (Northern Brabant)

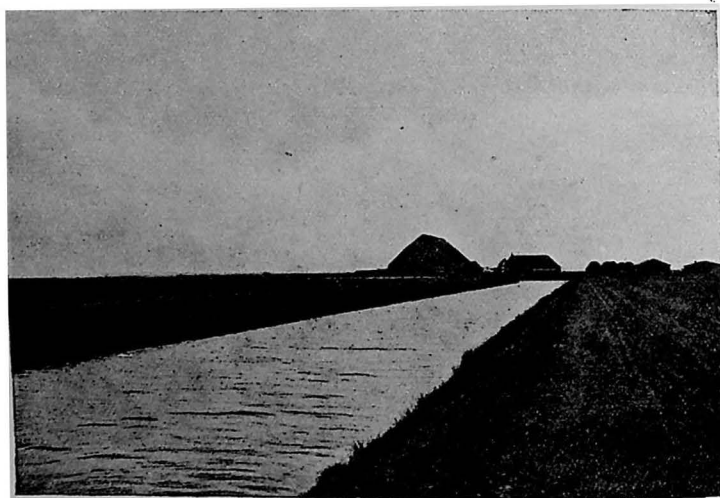
To obviate the disastrous effects of an economic crisis, farmers are trying to obtain a higher return from their work through co-operation, while they are protected by State intervention from large fluctuations in price, export difficulties, etc.

## 2. REDUCTION OF PRODUCTION COSTS

In addition to improving live-stock and crops, farmers have attempted to restore falling profits by reducing their production costs. This development has been particularly noticeable since the 1929 crisis. Work which was not urgent has been left undone, and farming has been rationalised and mechanised.

As a result, unemployment, which was formerly only a seasonal phenomenon, has become worse, and work is no longer found for employees during the slack season.

The movement towards "efficiency" has been carried so far that the reductions in the cost of production, rendered necessary by the crisis, will remain. Machines, implements and raw materials required in agriculture are, to an ever-increasing extent, being purchased through co-operatives. The middle classes in the villages have suffered particularly from that development — especially small dealers in fertilisers, fodder and fuel, and blacksmiths, carpenters, cartwrights and ploughwrights.



Canal and farm on broken-up land at Jipsinghuizen (Groningen).

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## V. CO-OPERATIVES

The co-operative system has developed mainly in the rural areas. Isolated agricultural producers, having few resources of their own, sought to co-operate with those in a similar position in order to cope with commercial interests. Thus there was never any question of a co-operative organisation for farming land. The various industrial co-operative undertakings dealing with the raw materials produced by the peasants comprise mainly dairy-produce factories, potato-starch works, sugar refineries and strawboard factories. Dairy-produce co-operatives are common, but the other co-operative industries exist only in certain areas.

Co-operation for the production and sale of dairy produce has reached its highest development in Friesland, and a description of the industry in that province is given below.

It was economic circumstances that originally helped to develop the co-operative system. Competition in foreign markets necessitated the establishment of central creameries, and the first was opened in 1879 by private initiative.

To avoid remaining dependent on private creameries and hence on speculation, peasants founded the first co-operative creamery at Warga in 1886. Since 1900, a large number of co-operative factories have been opened, and have developed with great rapidity. At present, there are so many that fusion is becoming necessary.

Dairy work was transferred from the farm to the factory. That transfer had important social results. It abolished a laborious form of work for women, who were able to devote the time to domestic work, which increased with the enhanced prosperity resulting from the co-operative system. The advantages arising from work in the farm dairy, however, which used to form a link between the farmers and their employees, disappeared too. The loss of such direct contact in the work of the farmer and his employees was partly counterbalanced, however, by the instruction given at the agricultural domestic schools.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of solidarity and co-operation was not confined to groups of peasants. In order to promote the interests of the co-operative creameries, the co-operative factories grouped themselves into provincial associations, which, in turn, organised themselves into a national federation (F.N.Z.).

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<sup>1</sup> See page 34.

The organisation of co-operative creameries was not sufficient, however, to restore and expand the export of dairy produce from Friesland and ensure that the peasants received a fair return for their work, because the consignment system which was in force at the end of the nineteenth century prevented the producer from controlling the sale of his products. As a remedy, the Friesche Cooperatieve Zuivel Export Vereeniging (Frico) was founded in 1897. The Frico undertook the sale of dairy produce from the factories. In order to get better results, the sale of produce was based on quality. For that purpose, butter from all industrial creameries was examined by the Frico, and it was sold and paid for according to quality. It was stamped with a special mark, and the Frico had agents abroad. Since 1901, it has also been dealing with the export of cheese.

A co-operative bank for financing co-operative dairy-produce factories was founded in 1912. It is affiliated to the Central Raiffeisenbank of Utrecht.<sup>1</sup> Later, it extended its activities beyond the circle of members, and guaranteed loans to agricultural associations and Waterschappen.<sup>2</sup>

In 1916, the co-operative dairy-produce factories opened a co-operative condensed-milk factory. In 1907, a co-operative factory for making rennet and colouring substances was started. Thus, all the branches of the dairy industry in Friesland are in the hands of the peasants themselves and are operated on co-operative lines.

The co-operative system has produced beneficial results, not only in the economic, but also in the social sphere.

In 1917, the establishment of a co-operative pensions insurance fund for employees of co-operative factories did much to better social conditions. Such an insurance system is in the interests both of the employees and of the factories, for the latter are now free to replace old men by vigorous young workers. The premiums are paid by the farmers.

In order to provide similar pensions for members of the dairy co-operative, the Peasants' Mutual Insurance Fund (Boerenverzekeringsfonds) was established in 1922.<sup>3</sup> It is administered by the co-operative insurance fund, and comprises a uniform system of group insurance. The cost is calculated according to the size of members' undertakings. The uniform system is a combined insurance system — namely, capital insurance with payment at the age of 64 or, in case of decease prior to that age, at the time of death.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter VI on agricultural credit.

<sup>2</sup> See note 1 on page 16.

<sup>3</sup> See also Chapter VI on agricultural insurance.

The premium is 15 cents per cow per week. It is paid by deducting that amount from the money due for milk delivered to the factory.

The Boerenverzekeringsfonds has extended its original sphere of activity from Friesland to the dairy-produce factories in North Holland, Drenthe, Guelders and Overijssel. In 1935, members of 105 co-operative factories were able to join the group insurance scheme. By the end of 1935, 1,970 members had joined; and by the middle of 1936 the capital amounted to 6 million florins.

Another sphere in which the co-operative system has developed is in connection with the purchase of material necessary for farming.<sup>1</sup> Many co-operative associations are members of a central organisation, the Centraal Bureau, which buys material wholesale for its affiliated associations.

There are many more associations with a co-operative basis : agricultural credit banks,<sup>2</sup> associations for the insurance of live-stock, insurance against agricultural risks and insurance against fire and hail ; meat exporting co-operatives ; associations for the sale of approved seeds ; associations for the sale of market-garden produce, poultry and eggs, etc. The Nederlandsche Wolfederatie, which deals with the sorting and selling of wool, is another co-operative association. In every sphere, there are co-operative associations which enable farms to be run more economically, and which contribute to the prosperity of the rural population.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 26.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VI.

## VI. CREDIT AND INSURANCE

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### 1. AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

The system of agricultural credits was organised exclusively by peasant associations and agricultural societies. The example set by North Brabant was soon followed by the provincial peasant associations of Limburg, Guelders, North Holland, Overijssel and Utrecht.

The Government has encouraged this development by making grants when co-operative and agricultural credit banks were founded. Two central banks were opened to ensure the co-operation of the local banks — the Central Co-operative Raiffeisen Bank (Centrale Coöperatieve Raiffeisen Bank) at Utrecht and the Central Agricultural Credit Bank (Centrale Boerenleenbank) at Eindhoven, to which all local banks are affiliated. At first (until 1915), these two banks, as well as the regional banks, were subsidised by the State.

As the agricultural credit banks only grant credits for actual farming operations, the need was felt for banks granting long-term credits. For this purpose, the Boerenhypotheekbank at Eindhoven, the Nederlandsche Landbouwbank at Amsterdam, and the Coöperatieve Grondkapitaalbank at Utrecht were founded with the assistance of the Central Agricultural Credit Banks. The Eindhoven bank grants mortgages to members of co-operative agricultural credit banks. The bank at Utrecht, which is administered by the Central Raiffeisen Bank, works on the same lines. That at Amsterdam was founded by the Eindhoven Centrale Boerenleenbank, the Eindhoven Boerenhypotheekbank, and other Catholic organisations. It grants credits to the large peasant associations, so that the agricultural credit banks should not exceed their functions. It also constitutes a link between the ordinary credit market and agricultural credit.

The foregoing particulars relate only to co-operative agricultural credit banks. Other banks also grant credits to farmers. Mortgages are granted, not only by the co-operative banks, but also partly by mortgage banks, and particularly by private persons. The co-operative credit methods have enabled the farmer to obtain credit on reasonable terms.

## 2. INSURANCE AGAINST AGRICULTURAL RISKS

During the last few years, the practice of insurance has greatly developed in agricultural districts, and many co-operative associations engage in this form of activity.

The most important insurance institution against accidents and disease is the Centrale Landbouw Onderlinge, which has special branches for mutual insurance for dairy-farmers (Zuivel Onderlinge) and horticulturists (Tuinbouw Onderlinge). The Boeren- en Tuinders Onderlinge and the Ongevallen Onderlinge of the Catholic Farmers' and Horticulturists' Association are also of considerable importance. The State insurance bank is also active in this connection.

There are many co-operative mutual insurance companies for live-stock. In 1933, 121,000 horses, more than 500,000 head of cattle, and 61,500 swine were insured.

The thirteen co-operative insurance companies against hail had insured 290,000 hectares in 1937, of whom 130,000 were insured with the principal company, the Algemeene Nederlandsche Hagelverzekeringsmaatschappij at The Hague.

The local private companies for insurance against damage caused by fire and hail and against the death of cattle are less important than the co-operative companies.

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## VII. EDUCATION

Ordinary education in rural districts does not differ in principle from that in urban areas. The only differences are those arising out of the difference of environment. As a result of the law on vocational training, special schools (Landbouwhuishoudscholen) may be set up in rural districts, side by side with agricultural schools and technical vocational schools.

### ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Lower elementary education for seven years is compulsory. The curriculum includes reading, writing, arithmetic, Dutch, Dutch history, geography, physics, singing, drawing, gymnastics and, in the case of girls, manual work. There are also several optional subjects during the last year. Advantage is sometimes taken of that fact in rural districts to teach agronomy in the highest class; but this is the exception rather than the rule. The law provides for a certain elasticity as regards the hours devoted to different subjects, so that it is possible to adapt education to regional needs.

In order to help poor parents whose children are obliged as a result of the compulsory school attendance law to walk long distances (more than four kilometres), the commune may make a grant to cover travelling expenses.

State inspectors may exempt children who have regularly attended school for at least six months from attending school for not more than two weeks, to enable them to help their parents in agricultural work. Such exemptions are not granted in the case of children under 11 or of children paid for their labour. The municipal councils determine the conditions in which such exemptions may be granted.

Higher elementary schools contain at least three standards which follow on the sixth standard of the elementary school. They are organised on the same lines as the lower elementary schools.

The number of such schools has greatly increased during the past few years, to the great advantage of rural districts, where this type of school meets the needs of those who, while not requiring a secondary education, desire to receive a form of instruction superior to that given in the lower elementary schools. The bicycle and the omnibus render the higher elementary



schools, which are situated in the large villages, accessible to those living within a radius of 10-15 kilometres from them.

## SECONDARY AND PREPARATORY HIGHER EDUCATION

The growing facilities as regards communications and the increase in the number of secondary schools, gymnasia and *lycées*, several of which have been built in large villages which are favourably situated, have brought such education within the reach of nearly all rural districts.

## TECHNICAL EDUCATION

### (a) *Technical Schools.*

The relatively small differences between life in urban and rural areas are also reflected in the system of technical education. Such education naturally first developed in the towns, where it began about 1875; but practical instruction in workshops and factories was soon supplemented by instruction in night technical schools (night schools for drawing and night handicraft schools). The subjects taught in these schools are technical drawing and draughtsmanship, handicraft theory, the Dutch language, arithmetic, geometry, mechanics, etc. In some of these schools, practical instruction — *e.g.*, in woodwork, painting, ironwork, welding, etc. — is also provided. In 1880, thirty-eight such schools were already in existence; in 1900, there were eighty-three; in 1905, 146; in 1910, 253; in 1920, 326; and, in 1931, 359. In 1937, their number was reduced to 313 as a result of the fusion of a few small schools. The schools are situated in small towns (including very small towns) and in villages.

Technical day-schools first developed in the large towns and subsequently also in less important centres. Their number has risen from two in 1870 to twenty-one in 1900, fifty-two in 1910, sixty-nine in 1920, 106 in 1931 and 112 in 1937. In 1931, out of the 106 schools, twenty-nine were situated in communes with from 20,000 to 5,000 inhabitants and nine in communes with less than 5,000 inhabitants.

In 1934, thirty-two of these schools were situated in communes with 20,000 to 5,000 inhabitants, while there were only nine in communes with less than 5,000 inhabitants. The total number of 112 technical day-schools is sufficient to enable boys from nearly every village to attend them, the usual means of transport being the bicycle. In schools set up in communes with less than 5,000 inhabitants, 48.3% of the pupils come from neighbouring communes; the proportion in schools founded in

communes having between 5,000 and 20,000 inhabitants is 62.2%.

The subjects taught in the schools in the small communes are the same as those taught in the schools in large towns, though the number of pupils entered for the various subjects differs according to local requirements.

(b) *System of Apprenticeship by Contract.*

In the thinly populated province of Drenthe, the Drenthe Association for Instruction in Handicrafts took steps in 1893 to establish a system of apprenticeship for the training of boys unable to attend an industrial school. The boys are apprenticed to an employer who teaches them the handicraft. The contract of apprenticeship is concluded between the employer and the parents or guardians of the pupil in the presence of the Board of the Association. The training, which generally lasts five years, is based on a fixed curriculum. The pupil is obliged to follow theoretical courses and courses in drawing at an evening industrial school. He is paid a wage which increases according to the standard he has reached. After concluding his term of apprenticeship, he has to sit for an examination before a special Commission appointed by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Sciences. If his examination is satisfactory, he is granted a diploma.

Since 1910, the above-mentioned Association has been in receipt of a grant from the State. The Drenthe system has been adopted in western Friesland (province of North Holland) and in southern Limburg. Here, too, the State encourages private initiative by means of grants.

There are also other systems of subsidised apprenticeship; but they are not so particularly concerned with the requirements of rural areas.

(c) *Vocational Training for Girls.*

Vocational training for girls in industrial schools, schools for domestic science or cookery schools is confined to urban districts. In rural districts, another kind of training has developed — viz., rural domestic training (*Landbouwhuishoudonderwijs*). With the improvement in the standard of agriculture after the agricultural crisis of 1880 as a result of training in rural economy, the idea arose of instructing peasant women in order similarly to raise their standard of work.

Such instruction was not intended to be confined to agricultural work, but was to include domestic work as well.

At the outset of the twentieth century, several associations for the improvement of agriculture began to provide such

instruction in the form of a travelling course. A special school, with a section for boarders, was founded at Lierop. The experience soon showed the need for special teachers. In 1913, therefore, the State founded the Landbouwhuishoudschool de Rollecate for the training of teachers. In 1930, this school was transferred to Deventer and is now called "Nieuw Rollecate". A preliminary course of two years has been added. Teachers for agricultural domestic courses are also trained at the Catholic school at Posterholt and the Christine Hermine school at Zetten. The Government attaches great importance to the training of these teachers, on whom the success of the courses depends.

The training is given in the form of courses by travelling women teachers and courses in permanent schools. At the outset, teachers gave a demonstration in a different village on each day of the week. Later on, it became possible to supplement these demonstrations with practical courses. In 1937, 113 courses of about eight hours a week were held.

In districts where courses are regularly given, an improvement was observed which gradually led to the setting-up of schools. The smallest schools contain a hall of  $8 \times 10$  metres (in which cookery, laundry-work and other household activities are taught), a needlework room, a room for theoretical lessons, a room for the head mistress, and various small rooms for provisions, shower-baths, etc. A garden is attached to the school and the pupils are allotted a few square metres of land to cultivate vegetables and flowers. In certain districts, a school of this kind is found every ten kilometres. The total number is ninety.

Side by side with these schools, where courses are only given on a few days in the week or at night, so that what has been learnt one day may be applied at home on the next, there are twelve schools (four of them with boarders) where courses are given on every working day.

As the types of agriculture differ widely in the Netherlands, the courses are adapted to regional requirements. This type of instruction, which has been in existence for fewer than twenty-five years, has already exercised a strong influence on the social and hygienic conditions of the rural population. It has roused the interest of the peasant woman in her duties to the family and to society.

Though about 10,000 pupils receive domestic agricultural instruction every year (a large proportion for a total population of 8,000,000), many women have not yet received any instruction of this kind. The continually diminishing income of the small farmers and agricultural labourers has made such classes on agricultural domestic science more necessary than ever to women. In 1935, the Foundation for Domestic Training in Rural Districts, which is in receipt of State grants as well as

private aid, began to give these groups demonstration lessons in order to teach them to feed and clothe themselves in such a way as to utilise the resources available to the best advantage. These courses have aroused great interest, as the annual attendance figure of 15,000 proves.

#### INSTRUCTION IN AGRONOMY

Higher instruction in agronomy is provided in the School for Higher Agronomical Studies at Wageningen. The curriculum includes agriculture in the Netherlands, colonial agriculture, forestry in the Netherlands, colonial forestry and horticulture. Courses generally last five years. After the degree of agricultural engineer has been acquired, a doctor's degree in agriculture may be obtained by means of a thesis.

Secondary instruction in agronomy is given at Groningen as regards agronomy in the Netherlands, and at Deventer as regards colonial agronomy. There are, in addition, various secondary schools :

(a) The dairy-farming school at Bolsward for future dairy-farm managers, where purely theoretical instruction is given for two years of two semesters each.

(b) Agronomical and horticultural schools, State-owned or belonging to private institutions. These schools are specialised according to the region in which they are situated. The instruction given is of a more elementary kind than in the secondary school for agronomy at Groningen. The courses generally last for two winter terms of half a year.

(c) The Gerard Adriaan van Swieten Horticultural School at Frederiksoord, founded by the Welfare Society of Frederiksoord and subsidised by the State.

(d) The Huis te Lande Preparatory Horticultural School for girls at Rijswijk.

(e) The forestry course organised by the Nederlandsche Heidemaatschappij at Arnhem. This course consists of two sections — section A, an elementary course for foresters and leaders of teams of forestry workers, and section B for the training of foremen. The theoretical course is given at Arnhem and lasts two winter semesters. The summer semesters are devoted to practical work in the State forests.

Elementary instruction in agronomy is given in the following institutions in receipt of State grants :

(a) Elementary agronomical and horticultural schools. — These provide general and technical instruction to young

farmers, horticulturists and agricultural and horticultural labourers.

The instruction includes the general subjects taught in elementary schools, the principles of physics in so far as they affect agriculture or horticulture, the principles of agriculture, stock-raising, dairy-farming and horticulture according to the requirements of the region in which the school is situated, the principles of political organisation and agronomy. The schools are divided into four classes. In general, the courses are only given on two days in the week in the case of the first class, and on one day in the week in the case of the other classes.

(b) Vocational school for cheese manufacturers at Hoorn. — The course consists of instruction on one afternoon a week during two winter semesters.

(c) Schools for fruit-growing and a school for the methods of cultivation in use in the Westland. — These schools are situated in the main fruit-growing centres. Theoretical and practical instruction is provided one day a week for one year.

(d) General courses in agriculture and horticulture, held in the evenings, the oldest and most widespread type of elementary instruction in agriculture. — The courses are intended for young people of not less than 15 years of age, but far older pupils are admitted. They last two or often three winter semesters; and lessons are given on two or three evenings a week. The number of hours varies between 144 and 225 per winter. A few additional lessons are often given in the summer, and excursions are sometimes organised to a model agricultural or horticultural establishment, or to an exhibition.

(e) Courses in agronomy and horticulture for adults, and courses on special branches of agriculture, horticulture, stock-raising, the poultry yard, and agriculture generally. — The object of these courses is to give instruction by means of a series of from six to twelve lessons of two hours each to agriculturists and horticulturists of over 20 years of age on the principles of any special part of their work. Younger men are admitted, if they hold the diploma for a general course in agronomy and horticulture.

The curriculum generally covers the following subjects: fertilisers, fodder, study of crops, fruit-growing, market-gardening, planning and upkeep of gardens, sorting and packing of fruit, tying of flowers, bee-keeping, the rearing of farmyard animals, knowledge of horses, cattle and swine, animal hygiene, the feeding and care of animals, practical

and theoretical knowledge of dairy-farming, knowledge of agricultural machinery.

(f) Farriery courses under the direction of certificated veterinary surgeons, who give lessons in theory. — Practical lessons are given by certificated blacksmiths. After passing an examination before a special commission, the pupils are awarded the State diploma of farriery.

(g) Management courses. — The courses train young men to sit on the boards of co-operative flour-milling undertakings, co-operative associations for the sale of agricultural produce and co-operative dairies, and on their administrative bodies. They last two years. The curriculum includes commerce in general, and trade in agricultural produce and substances necessary for agriculture in particular. The private agricultural organisations<sup>1</sup> have instituted an examination for managers which may be taken by those who have followed the courses.

(h) Courses for milk inspectors.

(i) Courses for inspectors at sales of market-garden produce. — These courses are intended for inspectors who have already taken up their duties. The subjects studied are those required for a detailed inspection of the quality of products intended for export.

Two inspectors are responsible for the inspection of all agricultural instruction — viz., one inspector for instruction in agriculture, stock-raising and dairy-farming, and the other for instruction in horticulture. They are assisted by State experts on agriculture, horticulture, stock-raising and dairy-farming.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V on "Co-operatives".

VIII.  
PEASANT  
CULTURE  
AND  
FOLK-LORE

As in most other Western European countries, peasant arts have greatly declined. Factory products have displaced peasant

products and dwellings are no longer built in accordance with local traditions. Local dress (particularly the beautiful dress of the Zeeland women) is growing rarer, though still found in various districts near the North Sea, around the former Zuyder Zee, in Marken and Urk, and in the rural areas of North Brabant, Guelders, Overijssel and Drenthe.

Fortunately, there are signs of an increased interest in regional and local traditions and history. This tendency is clearly revealed in the creation of many "antiquity rooms" (Oudheidkamers) and local museums, where common antique objects and other articles of historical value are displayed.

There is also a movement for the revival of folk dancing and games, and local manners and customs.



Copyright "Nederland in den Vreemde".  
Axel costumes (Zealand Flanders.)

Marken costumes.

Copyright "Nederland in den Vreemde".



## IX. RURAL PLANNING

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### 1. REGIONAL PLANNING

#### *Transport and Communications.*

The density of the population has led to the construction of a very close network of country roads. Furthermore, the country is indebted to its geographical position for an extensive system of natural navigable waterways supplemented by several navigable artificial waterways. Consequently, no large regions have ever been isolated.

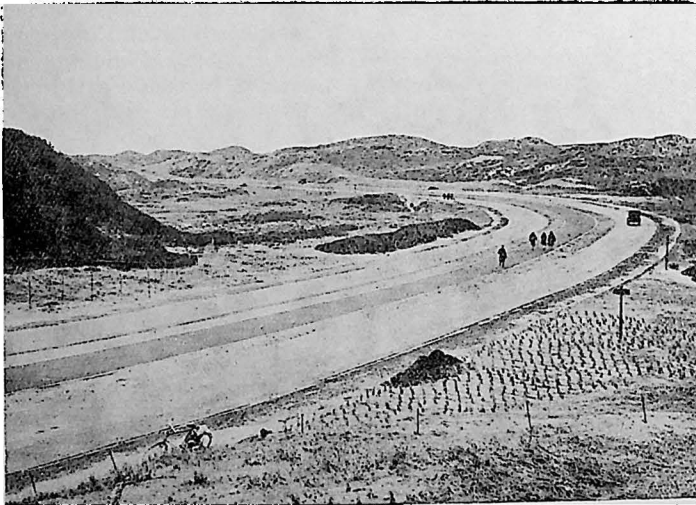
The railways have improved communications between villages and large centres by the construction of a large number of stations along the main railway lines and, in particular, by the construction of about 800 kilometres of local lines. A network of inter-communal tramways has grown up since 1880 and has been particularly developed since 1900 as a result of free loans made by the Government. The maximum length attained by it was 3,000 kilometres.

As the railways and tramways had become responsible for nearly all public passenger transport and for a large part of the goods transport, the country roads were used only for short-distance transport and bicycle traffic, the bicycle being a particularly suitable means of transport for persons travelling short and medium distances. In 1937, the number of bicycles amounted to about 3 millions. The roads in the Netherlands are nearly all provided with special bicycle tracks, and the countryside is crossed by numerous bicycle paths. Passenger transport by water survived only on large rivers and as the means of communication with the islands. Economic factors, however, have continued to encourage the transport of goods by water, so that at present 80% of inland goods transport is by water.

The predominance of railway and tramway communications has been seriously threatened since 1920 by motor transport. The reduction in operating costs and the mobility which enables passengers to board or alight from a motor-bus at the points nearest to their homes have made that vehicle the ideal means of transport in rural areas. In 1937, there were 684 different lines operating a total of 3,800 motor-buses, and 5 million passengers had been carried. This number is steadily increasing. To prevent the unsuitable development of services, the right to operate a motor-bus line is subject to authorisation.



The development of road transport has had two results. First, the revival of road transport has necessitated the improvement of roads. The central government and the provincial and communal governments have all tried to adapt the system of roads to the new requirements. Special roads reserved for motor traffic have been constructed. The network of local roads for motor transport is also increasing. These good roads promote not only transport by motor-bus and lorry, but also the use of private motor-cars, of which there were 90,000 in 1937.



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Main road in the dunes (South Holland).

The second result has been the decline in railways in rural areas. Half of the local railway lines (about 400 kilometres) have been closed to traffic owing to the competition of motor-buses and lorries; 375 stations and halts on the main lines have been closed.

The same tendency has affected goods transport. After replacing the horse transport services to the towns and markets, the motor lorry soon proceeded to take away an ever-increasing share of goods transport in rural areas from the local railway lines, tramways, and even transport which had hitherto been effected by water. In this last case, however, losses were reduced to a minimum by the mechanising of vessels. In 1937, there were more than 49,000 lorries in the Netherlands. The railways are endeavouring to fight this competition by using lorries for the transport of goods in rural areas to the railway

stations. Many tramway services have had to be withdrawn and 800 km. of tramway lines have been taken up.

The aeroplane is another new means of transport. It has greatly facilitated the transport of passengers from a number of islands to large centres. It has also made it possible for certain perishable goods — principally cut flowers and strawberries — to be supplied to markets which formerly could not be reached. Cut flowers are carried by air the whole year round, and strawberries mainly in May and June. Strawberries packed in special cardboard boxes are chiefly sent to London. In 1938, 19,000 kilogrammes of strawberries were supplied in this manner.

Cut flowers are sent not only to the whole of Europe (in 1937, 112,000 kilogrammes to Germany and 30,000 kilogrammes to the Scandinavian countries), but also by the East Indies air route as far as Egypt. The following table gives an idea of the volume of traffic by air :

Year	Cut flowers	Market-garden produce (mainly strawberries)
	Kg.	Kg.
1930 . . . . .	398,880	62,266
1931 . . . . .	454,763	54,004
1932 . . . . .	280,046	25,292
1933 . . . . .	295,092	9,999
1934 . . . . .	324,395	5,628
1935 . . . . .	217,021	4,488
1936 . . . . .	222,521	4,597
1937 . . . . .	243,061	10,070

#### *Water Supply.*

Of the total of 1,056 communes in the country, 70 are urban areas with populations of more than 10,000. All towns and 688 out of 986 rural communes have a main water supply. The total number of inhabitants of communes supplied with laid-on water is 7.3 millions — *i.e.*, 85.7% of the population.

At the beginning of 1938, there were 215 water-supply undertakings, most of which were local undertakings for towns. Several of them have extended their system to include neighbouring communes. The large towns which obtain their vegetable and dairy produce from the surrounding countryside have sometimes found it to their advantage to improve sanitary conditions in the neighbouring districts and to prevent the use of impure ditch and canal water.

The extension of the supply of local water has not, however, solved the problem of the water supply in country districts remote from towns. As the working expenses are high in such cases, the co-operation of the various communes or action by a higher authority is necessary to overcome difficulties. The distances, which are frequently considerable, between built-up areas necessitate much piping. By judicious concentration and

collaboration between the various authorities concerned, various regional water-supply schemes have been carried out, the first of which was brought into operation in 1913. The largest regional service — that of the province of North Holland — which was established in 1920, to-day supplies 106 communes with a total population of more than 430,000. The annual output of water amounts to 14 million cubic metres.

The importance attached to a good water supply is shown by the construction of a complete system in the new Wieringermeer polder,<sup>1</sup> where not even tanks (the only individual means of water supply possible) are permitted.

The State employs various means to maintain a good supply of drinking-water. The Housing Law (Woningwet) compels the communes to issue the necessary regulations to ensure that all dwellings within their area are supplied with drinking-water. Under the Public Health Law a Central Institute for Public Health has been set up, where crude and purified water from all the water supplies in the country is analysed each year. A State Bureau for the Supply of Drinking-water (Rijksbureau voor drinkwatervoorziening), established in 1913, advises the Government on the water supply and places its services at the disposal of the provincial and communal authorities and private persons and corporations if an examination of the supply is desired. In exceptional cases, these services are provided free.

The State has provided financial assistance to several water-supply undertakings.

All the provinces have issued an order prohibiting the establishment of a water-supply service unless the permission of the authorities has first been obtained. In this way, the creation of small local water supplies, which might hinder or prevent the establishment of a regional supply service, may be prevented.

The beneficial effect a good water supply may have on public health in rural areas is shown by the decline in the typhoid mortality figures in North Holland. In 1910, the figures were 55.1 as compared with 33.3 for the whole country; in 1918, 104 as compared with 61.2; after the establishment of the water supply in 1919, the figures were 11.3 as compared with 16.2 in 1926, and 4.2 as compared with 3.7 in 1935.

#### *Electricity.*

The problem of the electrification of rural areas has not been solved on a national scale, but is in the hands of the provinces. Provincial undertakings exist in Groningen, Friesland,

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<sup>1</sup> See special chapter on this subject.

North Holland and Limburg. Six communal undertakings supply electricity to the whole of the province of South Holland. At first, most of the provincial undertakings confined themselves to the generation of electricity, and left the distribution to local undertakings. Later, there was a movement in favour of concentration, and the original system now exists only in Friesland and Overijssel.

The supply mains are laid down by the undertaking itself when this is remunerative; when it is not, endeavours are made to guarantee a minimum consumption by the district which is to be supplied with electricity, the undertaking agreeing to bear certain losses.

These losses are covered by a fund into which are paid such of the undertaking's profits as are not paid out in dividends. Dividends are limited to a maximum of about 6%. Thanks to this system, 99% of the population can obtain electricity without financial aid from the public funds.

It is impossible to give separate figures for the use of electricity in the country and in urban areas. Despite the large number of supply mains connected to the system, not much electricity is used as yet for purposes other than lighting. The consumption is 274 kwh. per head — 348 kwh. per head not counting the electricity used in industry. On December 31st, 1936, there were only seven communes in the Netherlands, containing 13,900 inhabitants, or 0.16% of the population, without electricity.

## 2. LOCAL PLANNING

### *Communal Centres.*

Every commune of more than 10,000 inhabitants is obliged to prepare an extension plan. This was found necessary in order to prevent the chaotic expansion of inhabited districts. In many rural communes, therefore, it is compulsory to prepare these plans. Only in Wieringermeer has a plan been made covering a larger area than one commune.

### *Public Libraries and Reading-rooms.*

Most of the eighty public libraries and reading-rooms in the Netherlands also supply rural areas with books by post. These libraries are organised as provincial associations subsidised by the State or the province. The subsidy is calculated on the basis of the population of the province, other than the inhabitants of towns with a population of more than 20,000.

Readers belonging to a postal library are members of the public library or reading-room to which the postal library is

attached. Those in charge of the system are pastors, priests, head masters, or other interested persons. In 1937, 354,088 books were lent to 7,543 readers by 142 postal centres.

To facilitate the loan of books in areas not covered by the postal lending system, the Central Association of Travelling Libraries (Centrale Vereeniging voor Reizende bibliotheken) sends every autumn to its agents, for six months, small collections of 50-100 books chosen by the librarian of the Association. These agents are usually pastors, priests, head masters, or other interested persons. The readers pay a small subscription, and the communes to which the collections are sent often grant a small subsidy. The Central Association receives a subsidy from the State and from some affiliated associations. It also has at its disposal a central agronomic and technical library from which it lends books throughout the year.

In the autumn of 1937, 177 collections were sent to 174 different places — 1 collection of 130 books, 3 of 125, 1 of 120, 1 of 115, 120 of 100, 1 of 75, 49 of 50, and 1 of 20 books. The number of readers in the year 1936/37 was 4,041, with approximately 57,000 loans.

Private associations also have small libraries — for instance, the Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen and the Vincentius and Pius Libraries.

#### *Baths in Rural Areas.*

In the past ten years, great progress has been made in personal cleanliness. Two factors of modern life have helped to bring this about — hygiene and sport. There are now plenty of open-air swimming-baths. In 1937, they numbered 319, as against 93 in 1927. Unfortunately it is not possible, on account of the climate, to use them for more than seventeen weeks in the year. Many of them were built by the unemployed.

For people who have no bath at home, small bathing-establishments have been built with a bath and shower-baths. The shower-baths are cheaper. Very often, the baths are arranged as an annex to the school. School-children are thus encouraged to acquire the habit of taking baths. Between 1927 and 1937, the number of these bathing-establishments increased from 137 to 176.

#### *Playing-grounds.*

Playing-grounds are very numerous. Although most of them are in the towns, there are some in the country. The 1931 statistics give 165 playing-grounds in North Brabant, of which 123 were in rural communes; in Guelders, these figures were 194 and 109; in North Holland, where there are



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Friesland farm.

many towns, 333 and 77; and in Limburg, 186 and 123. Since 1931, their number has been increasing. In addition, many of the meadows are in regular use for football, though they are not classified as playing-grounds.

### *Wash-houses.*

As there is a good supply of running water, there are no public wash-houses. All the washing is done at home or at the laundry.

### 3. HOUSING

A distinction should be made between farms and agricultural workers' dwellings.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the size and equipment of a farm are dictated by the character of the farm work and the size of the land, the agricultural worker's dwelling depends fundamentally on his wages, which are relatively low.

Apart from southern Limburg, where the Roman type of farm prevails, farms generally consist of a big oblong building, the front part of which is used for living in and the back part as a barn and cowshed. In the old Saxon farms in the east of the country, these two parts were often not even separated by a wall. Such layouts are now prohibited. The midden is usually at the side of the cowshed. More often than not, the hay is stacked some little distance away, on account of the danger of fire. Of course, there exist many local and regional variations of this type; and, naturally, the farm of a peasant who is chiefly a cereal producer differs from that of a cattle-breeder. Thus there are farms with cowsheds, stables and other outhouses of various sizes.

<sup>1</sup> In practice, this distinction is not always very clear, for the difference between the living conditions of the small farmer and those of a worker possessing a little land is often negligible.

The health requirements for the part of the farms used for habitation are laid down (like those of other dwellings) by the Housing Law (Woningwet). This law orders the communes to stipulate the minimum conditions with which dwellings and other buildings must comply. They are naturally not so strict for old houses as they are for new, or for old buildings that have been extensively renovated. As the communal authorities determine the minimum housing requirements, it is possible to establish the differences required to meet local conditions.

The conditions laid down for farm-houses are the same as those for the dwellings of agricultural wage-earners. In this case, it is difficult to comply with the minimum requirements. A new dwelling which does so will be rented at 2.50 or 3 florins per week. This is too dear for many agricultural workers, who earn from 10 to 12 florins a week. The cost of building houses is high, because materials are slightly dearer in the country than in the towns, on account of the additional cost of transport and also because building workers, like workers in other protected trades, have been able to secure a higher standard of living, which makes their labour cost more.

The Housing Law provides for the demolition of slums which no longer fulfil the minimum requirements. Slum families may receive a subsidy of not more than 600 florins from the State or the communes. The rest of the money needed to build a new house may be provided by the Government at a rate of interest of 3½% and repayable in thirty annual instalments.

The Agricultural Workers Law<sup>1</sup> authorises the Government to advance money to agricultural workers for the purchase of a plot of land and a suitable house. The applicant must himself provide 10% of the total costs. He then receives a loan from the State at an interest of 3%, repayable in thirty annual instalments. When he has paid the last instalment, the worker becomes the owner of his land and house. Since 1919, over 5,000 plots of land with houses have been so acquired.

Lastly, in many rural

Old farm in the Twente (Overijssel).



<sup>1</sup> See also Chapter III on "Land Settlement" page 15.

communes, loans can be granted to agricultural workers wishing to have a house built.

It will be seen that several methods have been followed to improve housing conditions in rural areas. The difficulty with agricultural workers is that their wages are relatively low. For this reason, attempts are made to get them to acquire a plot of land where they can cultivate potatoes and vegetables and keep a few farmyard animals, goats, etc., for their own use. An enquiry into the ways of doing this has been undertaken, but its results are not yet available.



Farm in Drenthe.



## X. MEDICO-SOCIAL POLICY

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### 1. ORGANISATION

The principle underlying the organisation of social hygiene in the Netherlands has always been that it is as important to care for health in the country as in the towns. In order to set up an organisation to enable the various branches of medico-social activity to be adequately carried on without exceeding financial resources, co-operation was established between the Public Health Department and the private associations which care for the sick at home and deal with the transport of patients, infant hygiene, the campaign against tuberculosis and venereal disease, mental hygiene and so on.

There are two of these associations — the Green Cross, which is neutral, and the White and Yellow Cross, which is



Branch of the Green Cross in a rural area (Zwijndrecht).

Catholic. They are usually called "Cross Associations". Both of them have a national organisation consisting of a federation of provincial associations which direct the main lines of the activities of the affiliated local associations. Local associations exist in almost all the communes in the country. All this is controlled by the State Public Health Department. The associations receive a State subsidy and sometimes subsidies from the provincial or communal authorities. The remaining costs are borne by the members' contributions and special contributions.

Although the provincial associations often form special committees to deal with certain branches, most of the medico-social work is done by the local associations, which have their own field of activity and their own administrative boards. They also have one or more paid visiting nurses, qualified to administer medical assistance, having passed a special examination in assistance in the home. They are under the supervision of district visiting nurses, of whom there are one or more in each province. The State grants a subsidy towards their salaries. In 1938, there were 1,483 of them working for the associations. The local associations are also equipped with the necessary instruments and material for medical assistance.

## 2. ACTIVITIES

### *Assistance in the Home.*

The visiting nurse visits the sick in her area. She sees that the doctor's orders are properly carried out. The difference between treatment in the home and hospital treatment is taken into account in the preparatory classes for the special examination in home assistance.

### *Infant Hygiene.*

#### (1) *Welfare of Infants under Twelve Months.*

Infantile mortality was formerly much higher than it is now. In 1871, out of 1,000 live births, 225 children died before reaching the age of twelve months. For the period 1880-1884, the figure was 191. In many of the country communes the mortality for children under twelve months of age was 25% to 37% of the live births.

Since 1904, the effects of infant hygiene have made themselves felt, especially in the towns. From 1914 to 1918, when it was difficult to obtain food in the towns, the infantile mortality rate was 67 for every 1,000 live births in the big cities; it was

134 for every 1,000 live births in the southern provinces, which are essentially rural and where there was sufficient food. In 1937, these figures were 29 for the cities and 49 for the provinces. This excellent result is due, not to the infant welfare movement alone, but also to the improvement of housing conditions, laws dealing with children, the supervision of foodstuffs, especially milk, social laws, the campaign against alcoholism, and other factors.

Infant welfare is organised by the Provincial Cross Associations. Every province is divided into one or more districts, each of which has an organisation centre consisting of a specialist in children's ailments and a visiting nurse. The specialist and the nurse are officials of the association. The State refunds to the association part or the whole of their wages.

In the communes, infant welfare consultation bureaux have been founded with the assistance of the local associations. Mothers take their children as soon as possible after birth, and afterwards every week or fortnight, for examination by the doctor in charge, assisted by the district visiting nurse or the local visiting nurse. They receive advice on nutrition and care during the first year of life.

The consultation bureaux are intended, not for the treatment of sick children, but for the supervision of healthy children. If the doctor in charge finds they are sick, he sends them to an ordinary doctor.

Advice is free. The expenses are paid by the local association.

The consultation bureaux have proved to be very useful, especially in the country. Their number is rapidly increasing. In 1914, there were only fourteen of them in the towns only; in 1925, they numbered fifty-seven and in 1937, 934; 85,637 infants, or 50% of all the children born during that year, were registered, and 963,461 mothers received advice.

## (2) *Classes for Mothers.*

These classes are held in rural areas by the district visiting nurse to teach mothers how to care for their babies.

## (3) *Help for Young Mothers.*

A committee to help young mothers, set up by the competent Minister and including representatives of the various organisations which do work of this kind, endeavours to encourage the education of certified midwives, whose help is specially needed in rural districts. In 1938, there were 2,967 certified midwives.

*Welfare of Children between the Ages of 1 and 6 Years.*

Children between the ages of 1 and 6 are cared for by the consultation bureaux, where they remain under supervision. Holiday camps have been formed for delicate children.

*Welfare of Children of School Age.*

School-children run a great risk of infection. To protect them, the big cities possess a service of school doctors. As, in rural areas, it is impossible to pay for these doctors out of communal funds, a number of communes combine to form "districts", with roughly 7,000 school-children, the communes of the district paying jointly the wages of a school doctor. Several of these districts have already been formed.

School-children generally undergo a full examination on admission, after the third year, and on leaving school, and are kept under regular observation at other times.

To protect children against infection from their teachers, a law was passed in 1934 providing that all school teachers, before taking up their post, must have obtained a certificate from an anti-tuberculosis consultation bureau to the effect that they have undergone a medical and X-ray examination and are suffering from no infectious form of tuberculosis.

*Welfare of Delicate Children.*

To send delicate children to holiday homes under medical supervision is a very valuable preventive measure. Experience has shown that there are as many delicate children in the country as in the towns, if not more. In rural areas, the children to be sent to holiday homes are selected by the cross associations. Sick children are not included, and all the children sent must first be medically examined.

In 1937, 27,184 children stayed at holiday homes; this represented a total of 1,217,809 days of treatment. The State and the provincial and communal authorities supply most of the funds.

*Campaign against Tuberculosis.*

Tuberculosis mortality in the Netherlands is one of the lowest in the world, largely because systematic and direct action has been taken to combat the disease. The district consultation bureaux for the campaign against tuberculosis are the kernel of the organisation. Several local consultation bureaux are attached to each district bureau. There are 136 local bureaux. The head of a district bureau is a specialist,

but he also holds consultations on special days in the local bureaux of his district.

The bureaux, which are equipped with up-to-date X-ray apparatus and other accessories, are maintained by the provincial anti-tuberculosis associations, which exist in all the provinces. Besides examining patients, they seek out centres of infection, examine the members of the patient's family, and arrange for patients to enter sanatoria. They give advice free of charge. The expenses are borne entirely by the State. The provincial associations also instruct visiting nurses in tuberculosis treatment, and have a fund to send patients to sanatoria.

Besides the provincial associations, in almost all the communes there are local anti-tuberculosis associations, which are either separate or branches of the local cross association. The local associations are affiliated to the provincial associations, but work independently. They possess a visiting nurse qualified in the treatment of tuberculosis who regularly visits patients under treatment at home and keeps watch on their family after they have been sent to a sanatorium or a hospital. The nurses have to send in detailed reports every month to the medical inspector of the Public Health Service. Their work is supervised by the district visiting nurses. The local association also collects money to send patients to sanatoria, to provide patients with shelters for open-air treatment and with nourishing food, and to improve their dwellings.

The Netherlands Central Anti-tuberculosis Association issues propaganda in the form of speeches, publications, films and a travelling exhibition. It has a tuberculosis study commission.

#### *Campaign against Venereal Disease.*

In practice, the provincial cross associations deal with the campaign against venereal disease. The main features of the organisation are the same as in the case of child welfare and the campaign against tuberculosis — free consultation bureaux run by a specialist, assisted by a female district investigator in seeking out centres of infection in the various districts, etc. As far as possible, the services of the local associations are utilised. The visiting nurse of the local association may be of great help in this respect, as her visits are taken for granted on account of her other health work. It is essential that they should arouse no suspicion.

#### *Mental Hygiene.*

In recent years, much attention has been devoted to mental hygiene. Here again, the cross associations do excellent work.

Consultation bureaux for refractory children have been set up; after-cure treatment is given to the insane. Everything is being done to preserve the mental health of the people.

#### *Local Health Centres.*

In a number of communes, some of them rural, local health centres (*buurthuizen*) have been inaugurated to bring together the various social hygiene services.

#### *Campaign against Alcoholism.*

The campaign against alcoholism, which has been waged for many years, has given good results. The law on alcoholic beverages limits the number of establishments allowed to serve liquors with high or low alcohol content, and, in certain circumstances, the legal maximum may even be reduced. The number of establishments selling alcoholic liquors has greatly declined in consequence of this law. The amount of alcohol consumed and the number of convictions for intoxication on the public highway are still decreasing. This is due to various measures — the law just mentioned, the high excise duty on alcohol, and the work of the associations for the campaign against alcoholism, which has given good results among workers. Modern life, too, with its diversions, such as sport, wireless and so on, has led the younger generation to frequent cabarets less than they did.

#### *Campaign against Malaria.*

The only disease which particularly affected the rural population was malaria, which was endemic in North Holland, where there are great stretches of water. The North Holland Anti-malaria Commission has helped to fight the disease by arranging lectures and distributing posters and literature, and has obtained such good results that malaria in this part of the country now only makes a fitful appearance.

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## XI. NUTRITION

Before the entry into force of the "Warenwet", with its uniform regulations throughout the country for the examination and the supervision of the foodstuffs sold, there was much adulteration, especially in rural districts. This was stopped in 1919, when the above-mentioned law, which was revised in 1935, divided the country into sixteen inspection areas with inspection departments each equipped with a laboratory.

In general, the nutritional condition of the rural communities may be said to be fairly good. The chapter on household education has described the efforts made to improve the diet of the classes where, for financial reasons, it is difficult to maintain an adequate diet.



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Volendam.