

door J. A. BANKS

I was enthusiastic when Siebe Lijftogt first told me about the proposal to launch the *Gids* on an unsuspecting public, and I am still enthusiastic about it today. Indeed, of all the sociological journals I receive it is the one I look forward to most. Of course, I cannot claim always to read it. The labour of working my way, aided by a well-thumbed dictionary, through articles on subjects which do not appeal to me, sometimes means that a whole number goes unread. Nevertheless, looking back over ten years of the *Gids*, I must say that for me the journal has been an outstanding success.

In the first number the 'provisional' editors put forward three tasks which in most respects set the journal apart from all other sociological journals. There were to be 'short' articles, especially by younger Dutch sociologists, 'regular' information about what was going on in sociological circles in Holland and abroad, and 'criticism', intended not as a goal in itself but as a means for spurring the subject forward. Over the years it is clear that the practice, if not the policy, of the editors has changed, at least the emphasis in this programme.

As compared with the early, monthly numbers, when space was restricted and short articles were the rule, longer articles have come to dominate the journal. I must confess that for my part I find this an advantage. Looking back through the past numbers of the *Gids* there is no short article which I can recall, of itself, as impressive. As part of a more general discussion, as in the 'social control' controversy of May, June and July 1954 (vol. 1, nos. 7, 8, and 9), or in the case of Thoenes' reply to van Straten in the 'Anti-Zetterberg' debate of September and December, 1959 (vol. 6, nos. 4 and 6), short articles can make a valuable point.

Looking back in his way what I remember being most impressed by in the *Gids* has been not the short articles but the more than usually long, such as ter Hoeven's study of religious participation in Tilburg, published in March, 1957 (vol. 4, no. 3). Outstanding to my mind, however, are a number of special issues, beginning with that on 'Stratification' in June, 1955 (vol. 2, no. 5) and ending with the 'Mannheim' number of May-June last year (vol. 10, no. 3). Such issues, containing often both long and short articles, seem to me to be particularly useful and I look forward to more of them in the future.

Practice — or is it policy? — has changed also in the publication of information. When the *Gids* was a monthly it was rare not to have

a *Venster* on the course of sociology in another country, or on some event at home. Now the 'foreigner' rarely has a mention. The last time a country other than England was reported on was in July-August, 1962 (vol. 9, no. 4) when Heeren wrote about Tunisia. This, in my view, is a great pity, especially since there has been an unfortunate over-emphasis on English sociology and a grossly insufficient coverage of other countries. Of course, I realise that it is not always a simple matter to obtain articles of this kind, but there does appear some danger at the present time that in this respect at least the *Gids* is beginning to look no different from the usual run of sociological journals. Space which might have been devoted to accounts of what is happening in sociology, is employed for an increasing number of short, and therefore necessarily unsatisfactory, notes on books. I hope this trend is soon reversed.

On the third of its original 'aims' the *Gids* in my view has excelled. In what other journals, for example, would one expect to find a discussion like that on the van Doorn and Lammers book, *Moderne Sociologie*, published this time last year? (vol. 9, no. 1) I personally found this most interesting because I had read the book; and for the same reason my interest was stimulated again in the following number when along with other aspects of the Welfare State, Thoenes' book on the elite, came under fire. Of course, friendly, if at times somewhat devastating criticism, has been evident in the *Gids* from the beginning, but this looks like something of a new departure. I look forward to further issues containing critical discussion of the seminal books of our time, especially when the author is a participant.

Turning now from an appreciation of the sheer 'mechanics' of what has been published, what to an outsider has the *Gids* achieved for the advancement of sociology in the Netherlands? This is not at all an easy question to answer. One of the original reasons for establishing the journal, I believe, was in order that it might provide a place where 'young' sociologists would be able to express their views. Since it is not possible for me to tell from their names alone who are new to the discipline and who are old in this sense, I can write only tentatively about the achievement of this purpose. Nevertheless, one thing seems to me to be clear. Authors whose names are new to me — authors, that is, whose names I do not remember having seen in the *Gids* before — are more often than not found to be discussing theoretical or methodological aspects of sociology when they first write for the journal. They are, indeed, more likely to be writing critically in this respect about the work of other sociologists whose names are familiar, than is the case with any other journal in our discipline that I know. From the point of view of discouraging complacency and of preventing the subject from being dominated by the bland assumptions of a past generation, this is undoubtedly a considerable advancement, but it has the unfortunate result of giving the *Gids* an air of theoretical

preoccupation. Some numbers, to be sure, have been deliberately designed to be abstract, as for example, that on functionalism in March-April, 1961 (vol. 8, no. 2). There is much to be said for such issues. Yet while discussion of theoretical conceptualisation, of methodology, and even of techniques of enquiry are common, accounts of actual sociological findings are rarely to be found in the *Gids*. How often does it contain reports on the results of research like that of Boering and van Bergen on prestige in a football club, published in March-April, 1961? (vol. 7, no. 2).

Fifteen years ago Merton started the fashion of asking for the development of 'theories of the middle-range' in sociology. Most sociologists today, in Holland as elsewhere, pay some lip-service to this idea. Yet, ten years of *Sociologische Gids* has not produced much that may be said to contribute to the development of theories of this sort. This is particularly surprising in view of the fact that many of the regular writers for the *Gids* clearly demonstrate that thinking of this kind comes easily to them. Van Doorn's sociology of organisation, for example, shows an amazing capacity to deal with high-level generalities on the one hand and with meticulous empirical detail on the other. Thoenes' book on the welfare state, although not so versatile, points in the same direction; and there are no doubt many other works with which I am not familiar, but which would qualify their authors for inclusion amongst those who are working to realise Merton's aim.

Of course, I appreciate that space in the *Gids* is limited. Nevertheless, on at least one occasion one issue has contained a contribution of this kind. I refer to the November-December issue of 1960, (vol. 7, no. 6) in which Ter Hoeven made excellent use of other people's work to analyse leadership and power in the modern enterprise, and in which van Zuthem worked over roughly the same ground to develop an 'institutional' critique. In my opinion ter Hoeven made his point but this is not really relevant. What is important is that here was a genuine attempt to develop valid generalisations about a limited area of social life, and the attempt was set in the context of discussion between sociologists. If I have a serious criticism of the *Gids* to make it is that this occurs on too few occasions.

Is this true of Dutch sociology generally? I do not think so, and this is why in some respects it seems to me that the *Gids* does not altogether reflect to the outside world what is best about the contribution of the Netherlands to sociology. As compared with American sociology which, in spite of Parsons, still tends to be a-theoretical if not naively empirical and as compared with European sociology generally which cannot make up its mind whether to continue in the lofty traditions of the founding fathers or to abandon theory altogether for empirical investigations of the statistical sort, Dutch sociology — from what little I know of it — moves easily between theoretical discussion and empirical verification. Perhaps the tradition of learning the English and German

languages has something to do with it, but whatever the explanation it seems clear that the sociologists who write for the *Gids* are probably better placed than anyone for pushing the frontiers of sociology forward.

As against this must be set the unfortunate fact that foreign scholars will not usually take the trouble to learn Dutch. They must be persuaded that the effort is worth while, and I suspect that this will not occur except through the consciousness that sociologists in Holland are working on an important topic for which a knowledge of the language is almost indispensable. For this reason, although admittedly not for this reason alone, I should like to see more work published on Verzuiling, not simply in the form of descriptive accounts of what at first sight appears to be an exclusively Dutch phenomenon, but as a fruitful field for the development of middle-range sociological theories about social conflict, social movements, and the place of ideology in social life. The *Gids* seemed to me to be about to do this in the issues of March-April, and July, 1956, (vol. 3, Nos. 3-4 and 7), but the attempt was never carried through.

The prospects for the future, then, are very good indeed; and the determination of the editors to undertake stocktaking at this time was timely made. I look forward with enthusiasm to the next ten years of the *Gids*. Sociology is on the move everywhere, but nowhere are the chances that genuine scientific advances will be made, greater than they are in the Netherlands. Let us hope that when the next stocktaking is carried out this expectation will have been realised.