

A NATION ADRIFT, OR ON WHICH COURSE?

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Some ten or eleven years ago, when I lived in the Netherlands for the first time and began to study Dutch society seriously, I was struck by marked paucity of works analyzing it. There was an apparently endless array of community studies or 'sociographs' — of villages, of urban quarters, of particular provinces or portions of them; but it was impossible for me or anyone else to add these up into a meaningful whole. And at the other extreme one found even more volumes of theoretical analysis, works that clarified the meaning of general concepts or discussed the place of man in the world. Perhaps it is less evident to those who have participated in the progress than to me, an outsider, how much the country's social disciplines have been transformed over the past decade. Today, the Dutch nation in the 20th century, a remarkably interesting object of study for several types of sociologists, for demographers, economists, and political scientists, is no longer routinely passed over by those best equipped to explain it.

A high point in this new trend is *Drift en koers*,¹ a volume commemorating the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Netherlands Sociological Association. On the whole, this is a valuable and stimulating compendium, to which scholars will be referring still when the Association celebrates its 50th anniversary. The publisher is to be especially commended for the attractive and imaginative design. Within the context of its solid worth, the book has of course its lacks and flaws. Seemingly the editors exercised their joint control with a very loose rein, so that the various contributions differ even in such details as the form of footnotes, not to say in the level of discourse. No index is provided, though it would have been particularly useful in this book. Overlap and repetition have not been avoided completely, and some questions, as we shall note, have been passed over or analyzed only in passing. Of those articles actually included, the least useful were those continuing in the earlier tradition, more or less ignoring the specifics of the Dutch scene and concentrating on abstract concepts; thus, Ponsioen on 'social change', Bierens de Haan on 'culture', Groenman on 'integration', Thoenes on 'the elite'. Even when these observations were thoughtful and original (and I did not find all of them so), they might better have appeared elsewhere than in this collection.

The piece with the greatest historical depth, and thus the one with

¹ *Drift en koers: Een halve eeuw sociale verandering in Nederland*. Edited by A. N. J. den Hollander, E. W. Hofstee, J. A. A. van Doorn, and E. V. W. Vercuijsse. Assen: Van Gorcum-Prakke & Prakke, 1961. Pp. viii + 331.

which it is convenient to begin, is 'The Emancipation Movements', by Verwey-Jonker. Her thesis is that the Liberal state of a century ago was attacked, and eventually shattered, by the ideological struggles of four underprivileged groups — (in her order) women and Roman Catholics, workers and *gereformeerden*. The mere conjunction forces every reader (who had perceived some, but only some, of these movements as liberating) to reconsider his preconceptions. Out of the four movements, there developed three political tendencies, which have largely set the tone of political debate. The antithesis between freedom and order, which is the usual content of the progressive-conservative antagonism, in the Netherlands is somewhat overwhelmed by the *general* demand for freedom, defined differently by each group seeking to legitimize its power. The establishment harks back to the war against the Spanish oppressor; the Liberal remnant promises to liberate the people from the all-devouring state; the PvdA cannot divest itself from the socialist rhetoric that it has declared to be obsolete; the *gereformeerden* teach their quite esoteric doctrines in a 'Free' University; the Catholics demand every extension of their power in the name of "emancipation". All are oppressed; none oppresses.

The hiatus where the women's movement had been, which Verwey-Jonker merely touches on, might well have been the topic of another article. There is a pattern composed of such units as the *gezin* (of which there is no precise equivalent in any Western language), the extremely low participation of married women in the Dutch labor force, the present lack in Dutch public life of significant females (of the type of Aletta Jacobs and excluding, of course, the symbol of the royal family), the country's relatively high fertility. Here is an element of Dutch society where "social change" and "emancipation" have been at a minimum. Most of the other demands of the emancipation movements, however extravagant they must have seemed when they were first made, have been realized and overrealized. The past century has been one of 'increasing welfare', to quote the title of a disappointing article by Pen and Bouman. This begins with a long (and surely unnecessary?) exposition of Rostow's simplistic theory of economic development, which has hardly any relevance to the Dutch case. What must be the reaction of a reader, whose most poignant memories are associated with the Nazi occupation, to the notion that wars are a concomitant of the 'Traditional Society' of the past, while during his lifetime progress and growth have been the 'normal condition'? The misery of the mid-19th century is exemplified with the standard citations from Brugmans (I used almost the same sentences in my dissertation); the indices of subsequent growth are spelled out in cumbrous paragraphs, rather than being compiled, parimoniously and conveniently, into a single table; and the authors' prognosis of future economic growth many would find far too optimistic. More or less lacking from this account is an

analysis of the decisive role of the state, from the acquisition of the Limburg mines to today; of the meaning of Indonesian independence for the Dutch economy; of the ambivalence with which both entrepreneurs and workers accept industrialization.

Van Heek's article on social mobility is on a different level altogether. General suffrage, achieved during the second half of the 19th century, was followed by the enactment of an income tax with a steep progression for high incomes. The state used this money in part to enlarge and improve the school system; and more education increasingly afforded entry to higher occupational positions. While the prestige of skilled manual labor rose, that of unskilled office workers declined: the principal gap in any modern Western social structure, that between employees and workers, was markedly reduced. The details of this process often are used, with a slight change of emphasis, to support opposed ideologies. Consider the class endogamy in the Netherlands (a datum that Van Heek cites from Van Tulder): if the occupied population is divided into six strata, 79 percent of the marriages occur either within one stratum or between adjacent ones. One could as well say (or, to stress the contrast with the more structured society of the past, perhaps better say) that even with respect to so important and personal a relation as the formation of new families, 21 percent encompass a rather wide range across the social structure. An important virtue of Van Heek's analysis is that he covers the full complexity of social mobility, concentrating on the Dutch case but bringing in theoretical points or international comparisons when they are relevant, without ever reducing this social process to one or another ideological simplicity.

A more striking consequence of the emancipation movements has been the development of pillarization (how else shall one translate *verzuiling?*), which is analyzed in a rich and provocative article by Kruijt and Goddijn. So far as I know the literature on this subject (and even from a distance of 6,000 miles I have tried to keep up with it), this constitutes the best short description of the phenomenon. The main structural lines are drawn in with appropriate emphasis, but this rough sketch (which is as much as appears in several previous discussions) is then embellished with a wealth of detail. The *vullingsgraad*, or the percentage of the persons who belong to pillarized organizations, calculated on a all who by their religious (or quasi-religious) affiliation and specific activity could be members, is a useful innovation. For such general organizations as the PvdA and the VVD, the base on which one would calculate this ratio constitutes, of course, the whole of the population; and the small figures that result (for example, the only 48 percent who voted for nonpillarized candidates in the 1959 election) suggest how little success the *doorbraak* has had. There is a markedly different proportion belonging to each of the various churches (or equivalents) and to their affiliated primary schools, political parties, communica-

tions and in these terms pillarization is shown to be a very complicated system. Even minor details sometimes reflect the authors' mastery of the subject: for instance, their insistence that 'neutral' is a misnomer and should be replaced in this context by "general".

The interpretation of what their data mean, on the other hand, strikes me as more questionable. With the increasing pillarization over the past three-quarters of a century, they suggest, there has also been some depillarization. It is true, of course, that a certain proportion of those affiliated with the Netherlands Reformed and other modernist Protestant churches have undergone a perceptible secularization; but it is also true that the general, or secular, organizations into which they have moved have themselves become pillarized. What the authors term the '*dwergzuiltje*' of wholly secularized humanists is highly symptomatic in spite of its small size, for it means that these persons have abandoned principled opposition to pillarization as the organizing basis of Dutch society. The PvdA, for instance, was founded in the hope of breaking through the religious structure of political life; today, with the formation of Catholic, *gereformeerde*, and humanist 'working communities' within the party, it has reconstituted itself in imitation of the pillarized society it once opposed. Thus, to quote Kruijt and Goddijn, 'groups that do not participate in the pillarization system remain cut off from certain activities'; and it is my impression that this kind of discrimination is spreading to more and more sectors of society. Before the war, as one important example, the social-welfare organizations associated with churches were inefficient and relatively unimportant; today, the professionally competent social-welfare workers operate increasingly in government-subsidized pillarized units. By Liberal principles of equity, the public institutions of a multicultural society must be governed by universal norms, and thus separated from the specific policies of all the component groups. From the downfall of Thorbecke to the present, the trend has been away from this criterion; there has been no '*ontzuiling*'.

What has been the over-all effect of pillarization on Dutch society? Kruijt and Goddijn discuss its advantages and disadvantages (they borrow Merton's euphemisms, 'functions' and 'dysfunctions') for the churches and for the whole society; but this short passage hardly does justice to so fundamental a question. Nor does Valkhoff's interesting and informative analysis of the 'socialization' of law and state deal with it. In a book reviewing 'a half century of social change', one forgets rather too easily who it was that directed this change. The school fight served as a catalyst that fused the Catholic and Anti-Revolutionary parties into an improbable alliance. From the late 1880's until just before World War II, the Christian coalition was in power almost uninterruptedly. This was the formative period of modern Dutch history, during which Holland's present institutions were either decisively altered

or in many cases actually founded. One reason the Christian parties were able to stay in power was that they gradually instituted — within the framework of their own values — the present social-welfare state, and thus continually undercut Socialist demands for social justice. Only one labor law predates the period of the Christian coalition (the Kinderwetje—Van Houten, 1874); it prohibited the labor of children under the age of 12, except for household and agricultural work. From this rather modest beginning, a full and elaborate labor code was gradually developed, setting the conditions of work for women, for those in dangerous trades, finally for all workers; establishing insurance against accidents, disability, old age, sickness; setting up labor bureaus of various kinds to enforce regulations. The Hooge Raad van de Arbeid, the prototype of the various government advisory bodies that now largely set social policy, was in the main the creation of P. J. M. Aalberse, a Catholic minister of labor in a Christian government. The Labor-Catholic coalitions typical of the postwar period, moreover, have not represented a complete break with this long tradition; for by the division of labor between it and its partner, the Catholic party has inevitably assumed responsibility for the social questions of greatest concern to itself — education, social welfare, and the like, which in Marxist terms are all part of the relatively unimportant 'superstructure'.

By a considerable margin, the longest, and also perhaps the most ambitious, essay in the volume is Hofstee's 'The Growth of the Netherlands Population'.² The contrast between this article and much of the rest of *Drift en koers* is at once apparent. That pillarization is a fundamental characteristic of Dutch society, one that largely distinguishes it from the rest of the world, is at least implicit in most of the other articles. Hofstee begins his with a contrary emphasis.

The differences in the birth rates of the Netherlands and those of 'more or less comparable countries', he writes, are smaller now than before the war. The birth rates of Western countries have shown a certain tendency toward equalization, moving up or down toward 20 per thousand. To quote directly: 'In this perspective the Netherlands no longer constitutes a particular deviation. The opinion still often proclaimed, that the Netherlands has 'the highest birth rate in the Western world', is an obsolete stereotype; already for years the rates of the United States and Canada have been higher'. Actually this 'stereotype', if

² To discuss this fully, it would be necessary to refer also to the subsequent exchange concerning it between Hofstee and Van Heek. See F. van Heek, 'Het Nederlandse geboortepatroon en de godsdienstfactor gedurende de laatste halve eeuw', *Mens en Maatschappij*, 38 : 2 (1963), 81—103; E. W. Hofstee, 'Het proces der geboortendaling in Nederland 1850—1960', *ibid.*, pp. 104—133; Van Heek, 'Nogmaals: laatste halve eeuw', *ibid.*, 38 : 4 (1963), 257—268; Hofstee, 'Nogmaals: Het proces der geboortendaling in Nederland 1850—1960', *ibid.*, pp. 269—277.

one measures Dutch fertility against that of 'more' rather than 'less' comparable countries, is still wholly valid; and when Van Heek demonstrated as much with several tables and a graph, Hofstee had no relevant reply. Indeed, the Netherlands deviates from the rest of Northwest Europe not only with respect to its birth rate, but in all important demographic measures. According to the latest figures cited in the United Nations *Demographic Yearbook*, 1962, the Dutch death rate of 7.9 is the lowest in Northwest Europe, with the others ranging from 9.3 (Norway) to 12.5 (Belgium); the infant mortality rate of 15.3 is equal to Sweden's and lower than any other, with the range from 18.9 (Norway) to 29.2 (West Germany); the annual rate of growth of 1.64 percent³ is the highest, with the range from 1.4 (Switzerland) to 0.5 (Belgium or the United Kingdom) or —0.6 (Ireland); and the population density of 346 persons per square kilometer is the highest, with the range from 301 (Belgium) to 11 (Norway). The Netherlands is still a demographic anomaly within its broad culture area.

Since Hofstee begins by denying this fact, he is hardly in a good position to explain it. He is concerned rather with analyzing how and why Dutch fertility has fallen over the past century. In his view, this decline was brought about, in the Netherlands as in the rest of the Western world, by the transition from a 'traditional' to the 'modern-dynamic' culture system. The essential difference between the two lies in the fact that the attitude toward change is negative in traditional cultures, positive in modern-dynamic ones. Such an opposition between a society of status and one of contract (Henry Maine), between traditional and rational authority (Max Weber), between mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim), between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies), between culture and civilization (MacIver), between sacred and secular society (Becker), between folk and urban society (Redfield), or between tradition-directed and otherdirected character (Riesman), has been posited before. Not all of these terms, of course, are precise synonyms; but one might well ask whether it serves a purpose to add yet another variant to this list. Let us take it as given that in the past, in Max Weber's words, there was a 'belief in the everyday routine as an inviolable norm of conduct', and that in what we term modern societies social change is, on the contrary, often valued for its own sake. How much does this single dimension explain of Holland's anomalous demographic history?

The 'modern-dynamic' culture system need not be a single unit. We had once grown accustomed to seeing it as such; but by now it should be no novelty that such a country as Japan, say, was able *both* to develop its industry and technical power at an unprecedented rate, *and*

³ C.B.S., *Statistisch Zakboek*, 1959; the figure is for 1958.

⁴ Irene B. Taeuber, *The Population of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

to maintain or even to restore such traditional institutions as the emperor and the peasant family. In the long run, it is true, this deviation from what is seen as the conventional over-all pattern entailed special difficulties. The death rate was brought under 'modern' control, while the 'traditional' determinants of family size continued to operate, so that the whole society had to adjust to the rapid growth of Japan's population.⁴ There has been a somewhat similar disparity, I would suggest, between Holland's excellent death control and its markedly less efficient birth control.

This is what I intended to convey by the distinction I made between 'urbanization' and 'urbanism':

The key to Holland's extraordinary population growth... lies in this differentiation. The very low mortality is based fundamentally on the full development of modern public health and medicine, and thus on the science nurtured in cities. Fertility has remained high, on the other hand, because the growth of cities has not been accompanied by the spread of 'urban' attitudes to the same degree as in the West generally.⁵

If Hofstee's objection to this (see footnote 21) is only to the word *urbanism*, he has a certain point, as I tried to suggest by putting 'urban' in quotation marks. One might also note that 'modern' attitudes are to be found in ancient Greece: perhaps no general term is perfect, and I did not think it useful to coin another. With one word or another, the important point is that 'urban' or 'modern-dynamic' culture has been partly accepted and partly rejected in the Netherlands. The reasons for this special pattern are — not surprisingly — the special features of Holland's history: under the Christian coalition, as we have noted, the modernist demands for social welfare were met within the framework of an increasingly pillarized society. A priori, it would have been amazing if pillarization were relevant to almost every other element of Dutch culture but not to family life and fertility, which are of greatest concern to the religious bloc.

Hofstee sees isolation as one of the principal characteristics of the vestigial traditional culture — that is, physical, ecological isolation. But in a pillarized society one can live in cultural isolation in the midst of technical change. Rogier denotes the Dutch Catholic subculture 'almost autarkic'; this is a systeem, he writes, that 'seems to have raised isolation to this degree to a form of life, indeed almost a principle of life.' ⁶ Since I have repeatedly commended in print Hofstee's brilliant analyses of the relation between soil types and fertility trends, perhaps it may be amiss for me to suggest that ecological analysis, though it has its particular virtues, also has its limitations.

⁵ William Petersen, *Planned Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), p. 27.

⁶ L. J. Rogier, *Katholieke herleving* (The Hague: Pax, 1956), p. 613.

In conclusion, *Drift en koers*, like most collections of essays by several authors, varies considerably in interest and quality. In spite of its faults, it is on the whole an excellent work, a detailed analysis of Dutch society today as it developed over the past several generations. The most general lack, in my opinion, is that hardly anyone accepted the implication of the title and mapped out a course for the Dutch nation. Is it useful to continue family subsidies and subsidized emigration? Can one draw a balance between the 'functions' and the 'dysfunctions' of pillarization at a certain point, and thus indicate where to stop? Has the healthy economy been assisted by certain governmental policies, which should thus be continued? And so on. But to answer such questions fully would take another book, and perhaps it is not reasonable to these social analysts merely to suggest what they believe to be good social policy.