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Where the West begins, and the misery does not end

*Dutch newspaper representation of Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s*



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1 De Tribune, 13-09-1928

2 <http://immigration-online.org/91-dutch-immigration.html>

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## Introduction

*"I wanted to have adventures. Into the world! I wanted to see strange people, Indians, Chinese, Arabs and even Hottentots, as long as they were different from the people who crossed my path every day. Wild mountainous landscapes, thundering untameable waterfalls, primeval forests, where the lion and the tiger are still masters. Into the world! That was my great dream. Now my dream, at least in part, is going to become reality, a harsh drab reality, with necessity as its background. Now I have to go into the world. Now I have to: in order to find a decent living."*<sup>3</sup> This migrant explicitly states his hopes and dreams as he starts the first letter of a series back home to a local newspaper. At the time of his writing he was about to leave his native country in an attempt to find a new home on the other side of the Atlantic. Canada was his destination.

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<sup>3</sup> Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the "Land of Opportunity"* (Calgary 1999), 131

Canada became an increasingly popular migrant destination in the 1920s. Reasons for this were legislation and colonization. With regard to legislation, the United States had ended its open door immigration policy and had implemented quota legislation. Contrary to this Canada was still fairly easy to get in as an agricultural labourer, therefore many migrants turned to Canada instead. With regard to colonization, the Canadian west was still in the process of being opened up. Canada's two main railway companies, the C.P.R. and C.N.R., were largely responsible for this, for their cause they relied heavily on migrants. As a result, they actively sought to recruit new migrants in European countries such as the Netherlands. In their efforts to attract as many as possible, the railway companies were supported by the Canadian government, they also cooperated with other stakeholders in the migration process such as shipping companies.

As migration rose from a few hundred a year to several thousands, the stories of migrants to Canada started catching the attention of the Dutch public. Migration was deemed as a good way to escape the misery at home. The economic situation in The Netherlands was rather bad due to the post-war depression, added to this was the believe, shared by many, that Holland was overpopulated. Therefore, migration was considered as a possible solution for these problems. Because of this there was a broad interest in migration. Especially the newspapers played an important part in informing people about the migration possibilities, they published; migrant letters, journalist travel reports and in depth articles. The importance of the media in this process cannot be stressed enough. One migrant put it this way: *" I searched all the papers that came within my reach, from A to Z, looking for news about Canada, and I also read a lot of brochures. Naturally these were always in agreement in their praise: It's not profitable for railway and ship transportation companies to criticize the immense, half-populated country on this side of the Ocean. It was different with the newspapers. Often articles appeared which had been sent in by different young people who had already sometime ago put their feet down on the western prairies or in the Ontario bush."*<sup>4</sup> These newspaper articles also provided information about the exploits migrants were vulnerable to, because the Dutch government had no legislation to protect its subjects from swindling agents; many of the warnings were communicated through the media.

Despite the Dutch interest to send migrants, and the Canadian efforts to convince would-be migrants to try their luck in Canada, the number of migrants to Canada in the 1920s remained fairly modest. While taking into account the influence of the media on the migration process; this thesis aims to explore; how did participants of the Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s portray this migration in

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 184

the Dutch newspapers? In this context, participants are the migrants themselves, but also the other interest groups that were involved with the migration. In order to answer the research question, first of all the theory is discussed, afterwards the historiography within which this research is embedded will be explored, followed by an explanation of the used methods and materials. The context within which Dutch migration to Canada took place in the twenties will be discussed in a chapter about 1920s. After that the newspaper coverage with regard to articles that dealt with Canada will be discussed, afterwards the points of view of several journalists who visited Canada to gain an insight in the migration effort will be analyzed, followed by the letters sent back by migrants themselves, these letters will be divided in a chapter that deals with the information they provided and another one with the tone in which they provided their insights.

## **Theory**

Because the foundations of this research are newspaper articles, the discourse used in these articles needs to be analyzed. Therefore, it is important to discuss what discourse actually is. Discourse consists of systems of relational identities; it exists through the process of articulation where it relies on nodal points to provide coherence and stability. The analysis of discourse focuses on the use of style, which means that it looks at things such as grammar, use of routine combinations of words and metaphors. Together, routine combinations of words and nodal points combine the discourse and frame analysis. Frames are clusters of organised knowledge. They constitute a set of themes and claims that when combined tell a coherent story about certain issues. These frames make the text recognisable; because they confirm an existing image they enable the writer to distort information. As such frames play a key

role in the problematisation of issues.<sup>5</sup> An example of this is when a migrant describes his travels to Canada. He starts with high expectations and faces disappointments afterwards. In writing such a story the migrant creates a frame with which people are familiar. Therefore, it seems credible. However, one cannot be sure that the migrant told everything, as a result the migrant can distort the information he provides.

With regard to migration four different frames have been identified that co-exist. These frames problematise migration. The first is an economic one that refers to the costs and benefits of migration. The second is humanitarian, as it refers to morals and values regarding common decency, tradition and Christianity. The third frame deals with the endangering of a group, its security, sovereignty and cohesion. Finally the last refers to a cultural frame that deals with similarity and difference.<sup>6</sup> In this research three main frames stand out. Firstly, the frame that depicts migration as a story of initial hardship, with eventual success. This frame stresses the importance of perseverance and portrays success of migration as inevitability for those who are steadfast. Secondly, the frame that gives a dramatic story of high expectations, with bitter disappointment as a result. This frame gives a rather dramatic representation of migration. It stresses the false information provided to migrants and the suffering that these migrants endure as a result. Both the first and the second frame rely on an economic frame, with the difference being that the first is positive and the second negative. Finally there is the religious frame, this focuses on the risk of losing one his religion in the process of migration. This frame is a combination of an endangering of the group and a humanitarian frame as it stresses the risk of losing religion and group cohesion.

Since this research deals with migration, it is important to start out by defining what it is and what kind of migration we are dealing with. Migration is simply put the movement of people from one area to another; sometimes these movements are temporary, sometimes permanent. In order to grasp the many different aspects of human migration, Patrick Manning developed a typology of Human migration, in this typology he makes a distinction between four different kinds of migration; Home-community mobility, colonization, whole-community migration and cross-community migration. In the case of Dutch migration to Canada in the twenties, the label cross-community migration is

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5 Marlou Schrover, Problematisation and Particularisation: The Bertha Hertogh Story, *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis* Vol.8 No.2 (2011), 5-7

6 Ibidem, 5-7

applicable; “*individuals and groups move to join an existing community, learning its language and customs*”<sup>7</sup> Among migrants, most migrate while using a network. Networks are chains of people who facilitate their movement and their settlement at the end of their journey.<sup>8</sup> These networks are extremely important in the migration process, since they guided it. Besides network the economic aspect of migration is very important, most people will not migrate when their situation will be worse in their new home country. Therefore, the wage differential between the host and sending community is often looked at as an indication of how advantageous migration would be for future migrants. Although the wage differential is an important indicator, it should be noted that for this factor to be useful a network is needed to make sure that would-be migrants are aware and able to use the information to actually get a relatively high wage. Another important aspect is how irreversible a migration move is, those who have no option but to make their migration a success are more likely to make the best of things in their host country even if their situation is not as good as they had hoped it would be.<sup>9</sup>

## **Historiography**

In the historiography, transatlantic migration in the period 1830-1960 is usually described as the era of mass migration, starting in the 1830/40s.<sup>10</sup> It lasted until the outbreak of the First World War. After the war, policies of migration restriction were implemented by the US, the main host country, this prevented

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7 Patrick Manning, ‘Cross-Community Migration: A Distinctive Human Pattern’, *Studies in the Evolution of Human Societies* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2006) 27-28

8 Patrick Manning, ‘Cross-Community Migration: A Distinctive Human Pattern’, *Studies in the Evolution of Human Societies* Vol. 5 No. 2 (2006), 41

9 M. Moretto & S. Vergalli, ‘Migration Dynamics’, *Journal of Economics*, Vol. 93 No. 3 (2008), 224-225

10 Raymond L. Cohn, *Mass Migration Under Sail, European Immigration to the Antebellum United States* (New York 2009), 18-19

migration to become as widespread as in the pre-war era. After the Second World War transatlantic migration started to flourish again, this lasted until roughly 1960.<sup>11</sup>

Within the historiography of Dutch transatlantic migration the point of view taken by most authors is through the framework of the 'pillarized' society. Krabbendam<sup>12</sup> Harinck<sup>13</sup> and Koops<sup>14</sup> described the protestant pillar in their research. Koops focussed on the post war era where he emphasised the existence of a culture of migration. Krabbendam discussed everything before the Second World War and focussed on why the Dutch were able to hold on to their own subculture for such a long time. Van Stekelenburg discussed the Catholic pillar, although it was mainly from a regional point of view since he studied the migration from Noord-Brabant. In his three books he covers the entire time period.<sup>15</sup> The least active pillar, the socialists, also attempted emigration, but this was a more of an ideological experiment than an attempt to move larger groups of people, Mooijweer wrote a book about an attempt to create a socialist Eden in the US. This attempt gives an insight in how the Dutch organised migration along the pillarized lines, even among the pillar that was most reluctant to be one.<sup>16</sup> In the 1920s the roles of these groups was roughly the same, they tried to organise the migration of their people, however, because this was a new migration process, namely to Canada, they were not able to have such a central role as they had in the post WWII era. These histories are mostly about the men who migrated.

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11 Leslie Page Moch, *Moving Europeans, Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Indianapolis 1992), 147-157

12 Hans Krabbendam, *Vrijheid in het Verschiet, Nederlandse Emigratie naar Amerika 1840-1940* (Hilversum 2006)

13 George Harinck, 'Religious Exchange in the Dutch-American Network' in: Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. Van Minnen and Giles Scott-Smith, *Four Centuries of Dutch-American relations* (Middelburg 2009)

14 Enne Koops, *De Dynamiek van een Emigratiecultuur, de emigratie van gereformeerden, hervormden en katholieken naar Noord-Amerika in vergelijkend perspectief(1947-1963)* (Hilversum 2010)

15 Henry van Stekelenburg, *Landverhuizing als regionaal verschijnsel: van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1820-1880* (Tilburg 1991) "*Hier is alles vooruitgang*": *landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996) *De Grote Trek: Landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1947-1963* (Tilburg 2006)

16 Marianne Mooijweer, *De Amerikaanse Droom van Frederik van Eeden* (Amsterdam 1996)

Sinke explored the forgotten role women played in her publications, by focussing on the shifting gender roles among migrant women.<sup>17</sup> In this research it is noticeable that women are a minority among the migrants, therefore it is harder to find information about their experiences, however, this does justify omitting their share in this migration effort. Another often forgotten aspect of migration in this era is the interaction between migration and the maritime companies. Torsten Feys explored the interaction between these networks in his writings.<sup>18</sup> His writing sheds an interesting light on the developments in the twenties, because shipping companies were heavily involved in the recruitment of new migrants and also pressured governments to these ends. Striking in these publications is the lack of interest in the inter-bellum period as it is often seen as a follow up to earlier migration movements.<sup>19</sup>

On Dutch migration in the twenties only a few publications exist. Ganzevoort is the most important one, he wrote his dissertation on "Dutch immigration to Canada: 1892-1940". In this dissertation he focussed on his idea that migrants were mainly motivated by economic reasons. His study is so valuable because it is the only study that gives a detailed overview of Dutch migration to Canada in this time period.<sup>20</sup> Hartland, a man who was in key positions in semi-governmental migration agencies in the twenties, published a book about his experiences in this time period that provides an insight in the options of Dutch migrants and how the system they migrated in functioned.<sup>21</sup> Finally a case study exists by Armstrong and Lewis, they studied passenger lists and questionnaires, based on their research they argue about the influence of savings and in favour of including uncertainty in migration studies, their arguments are not very interesting for this study, however, the materials they present

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17 Suzanne M. Sinke, *Dutch Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920* (Chicago 2002)

18 Torsten Feys, *Maritime Transport and migration: the connections between maritime and migration networks* (St. John's 2007)

19 Hans Krabbendam, *Vrijheid in het Verschiet, Nederlandse Emigratie naar Amerika 1840-1940* (Hilversum 2006)

20 Herman Ganzevoort, *Dutch immigration to Canada; 1892-1940* (Toronto 1975)

21 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959)



provide a valuable insight with regard to what kind of people migrated, what they were going to do and what kind of connections they used to achieve this.<sup>22</sup>

While other studies have focussed on the economic success of migrants or were only interested in broader observations with regard to migration, this research aims to explore a specific aspect of Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s. This thesis aims to explore the image of Dutch migration to Canada that was created in the newspapers, and to explain how this image was articulated. So far, newspaper articles have been used to support broader migration studies, but a newspaper based research on this episode of migration does not yet exist.

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Armstrong and Franklin D. Lewis, *Capital Constraints and European Migration to Canada: Evidence from 1920s Passenger Lists* (2009, unpublished paper)

## **Method and materials**

### Method

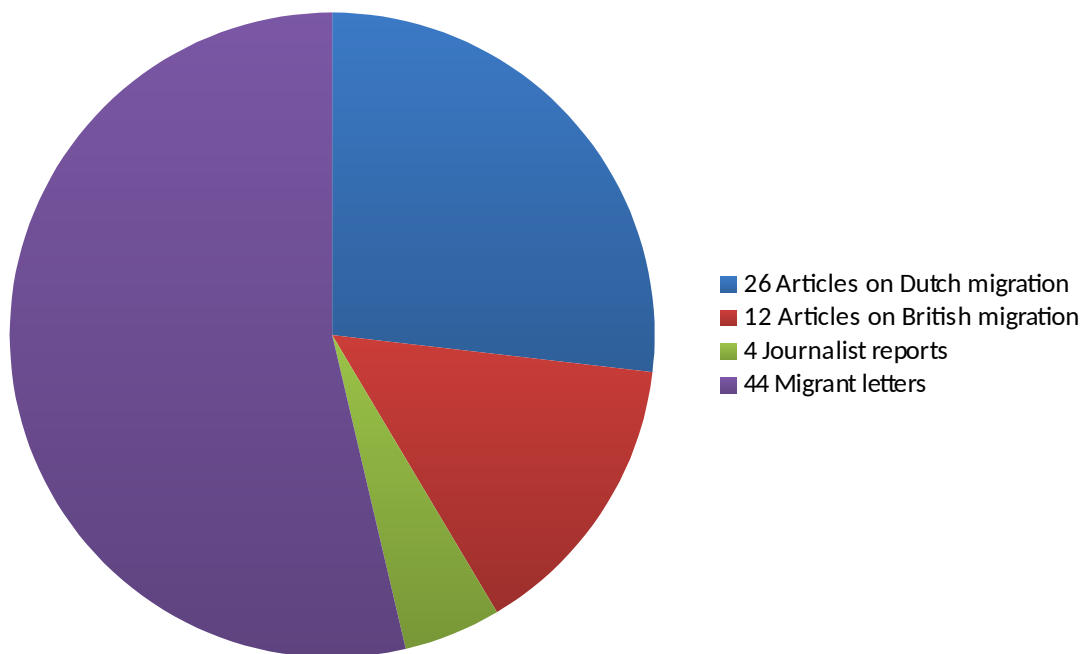
This research aims to answer the following question; how did participants of the Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s portray this migration in the Dutch newspapers? In order to answer this it is important to analyse the different types of information. Therefore, the newspaper articles that were published with regard to migration to Canada will be discussed first, afterwards the accounts of those visiting Canada to explore the condition of the migration effort will be analysed, finally, the letters written by migrants will be discussed.

In order to answer the research question, this research focussed on recognising the use of frames in the articles under analyses. To recognise these frames several things were searched for. Above all it was important to grasp who was writing it and what this person his interests were, as railway company agents and disappointed migrants wrote from rather different perspectives. The use of language was vital in bringing across ones message. Therefore, the use of: words, metaphors, symbolism and routine combinations of words were explored, because these provided the reader with a certain image of migration. The way in which they tried to legitimise their writing was also focussed upon. Many wrote about their own experience or about someone they knew who had experienced migration to Canada. Others were representatives of interest groups; they often chose to provide a whole lot of information from official institutions from for instance the Canadian government in order to legitimise their claims. Numbers and detailed information was used as well to give readers the idea that the writer had a good grasp of the situation on the spot. Many of the claims in these newspapers state a certain amount of money that could be made on a monthly base in Canada, without any way to check whether this was correct. Another thing that was taken into account for this analyses were religious expressions,

since religious organisations were increasingly trying to play a part in this migration it was important to know when religion was involved in an article.

### Materials

For this research, 82 newspaper articles were analysed. Among these newspaper articles there were twenty-six that dealt with Dutch migration to Canada, twelve with British migration to Canada, there were four journalist travel reports and forty-four migrant letters. The pie-chart below shows the distribution of these articles over the different categories.



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The table below gives an insight in where the articles that were analysed came from.

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23 Corpus kranten

Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant	19
Algemeen Handelsblad	7
De Telegraaf	5
De Arnhemsche Courant	4
De Maasbode	4
De Standaard	3
De Avondpost	2
De Tijd	2
Het Haagsche Volk	2
Het Volk	2
Leeuwarder Courant	2
Nieuwsblad van het Noorden	2
Algemeen Nederlands Lanbouw Blad	1
Dagblad van Arnhem	1
De Amsterdammer	1
De Arnhemsche Courant	1
De Avondpost	1
De Enkhuizer Courant	1
De Nederlander	1
De Noord Ooster	1
De Nieuwe Tilburgsche Courant	1
De Standaard	1
De Telegraaf	1
De Tijd	1
De Tribune	1
De Vrije Socialist	1
De Volkskrant	1
Emmer Courant	1
Ermelosche Courant	1
Friesch Dagblad	1
Goesche Courant	1
Het Vaderland	1
Hoogeveensche Courant	1
Limburgse Koerier	1
Nieuwe Arnhemsche Courant	1
Nieuwe Haarlemsche Courant	1
Nieuwe Venlosche Courant	1
Ons Aller Belang (Het orgaan van de Europeesche onderofficiersvereniging)	1
Oprechte Haarlemmer Courant	1
R.K. Boerenbond	1
Schuitemaker's Purmerender Courant	1
Winschoter Courant	1
De Morgen	1*
De Nieuwe Delftsche Courant	1*
Het Huisgezin	1*

(\*The same publication; Straight through Canada)<sup>24</sup>

The materials used in this research rely heavily on two collections; the Ganzevoort-Stallinga collection and the Henry van Stekelenburg Collection, both to be found at the Roosevelt Study Center in Middelburg. The Ganzevoort-Stallinga collection consists of the archives of the two Dutch semi-governmental emigration societies. These societies; the N.V.L (Nederlandse Vereniging Landverhuizing) and the E.C.H. (Emigratie Centrale Holland) aided and monitored Dutch migration overseas in the 20s. Because it was hard to get accurate information on Canada through Canadian authorities and agents, these societies kept records of publications about migrants in overseas regions. Canada was the main destination for Dutch migrants in the 20s, therefore most of the records kept deal with the situation in Canada. These records consist of incidental and series of letters to newspapers to provide a more accurate picture of the situation in Canada. The emigration societies themselves used these letters to grasp what was going on in Canada, because after due time, enough accounts existed to balance out facts to a believable weight. Correspondence between different authorities is also part of this archive. These documents include lists of people who were deported and lists of people who requested repatriation at the consulate. Other day to day interactions between the authorities are also documented. Finally, there's also documentation on the activities of pillared organisations and their attempts to support emigration.<sup>25</sup> Although some of the migrant letters in this archive have been published, no one has analyzed them in order to grasp the image they portrayed of migration to Canada. The Henry van Stekelenburg collection consists of the materials he studied to write his three books on migration from Noord-Brabant to North-America. For this thesis the materials used for his book; "*Hier is alles Vooruitgang: Landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika, 1880-1940*", is the most relevant because it deals with the same time period as this thesis. The most interesting parts of this collection are newspaper clippings and his notes on groups from Noord-Brabant who travelled to Canada. Although these archives have been used before, no one ever studied how newspapers provided these kinds of information and what the motivation of its authors was. Furthermore, the Ganzevoort Stallinga collection has only been used so to provide an insight into the migration in general, no more specific research was published based on this archive.

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24 Corpus archival sources

25 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the "Land of Opportunity"* (Calgary 1999) 14-17

## The roaring twenties

After the First World War, the world had fundamentally changed. The decade that followed was that of jazz, tomboys and the prohibition of alcohol, but also that of the first red scare and migration restrictions. This chapter will discuss the background within which the Dutch migration to Canada took place in a decade known as the roaring twenties.

### Migration

The era of roughly the mid nineteenth century until 1914 is often considered as an age of mass migrations, until recently only the transatlantic migrations were considered to constitute these mass migrations. However, McKeown argued convincingly to see this age of mass migrations on a more global scale, because migration movements of comparable sizes were also taking place in South-East and East Asia. He argued to extent the period of mass migrations to 1940 partly based on the fact that the other migration movements did not slow down as much by the First World War, and partly based on the fact that there was a short lived peak in transatlantic migration in the latter part of the twenties.<sup>26</sup> When taking this into consideration, we can place the movement of Dutch migrants to Canada in the 1920s in the era of mass migration.

It took a while for Canada to be affected by this era of mass migrations. The MacDonald's National Policy of 1878 envisioned an important role for migrants as industrial labourers and farmers on the western frontiers. However, for some time the emigration to the US outdistanced immigration into Canada. A turning point came during the government of Sir Wilfrid Laurier (1896-1911), his immigration minister Clifford Sifton actively encouraged immigration by reorganising the bureaucracy and stimulating American farmers to move into the western Canadian frontier, another more controversial policy of Sifton was to actively recruit Southern and Eastern Europeans, who were usually less preferred as migrants due to the racial ideas of those days. Sifford's controversial policy led to a popular racist backlash which caused his resignation in 1905, afterwards the Canadian policy was more restricted, especially towards non-whites. Until the First World War the migration level to Canada was reasonably high, after the war migration picked up again. An interesting aspect of Canadian immigration policy is the

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26 Adam Mckeown, 'Global Migration, 1846-1940' *Journal of World History*, Vol.2 No.2 155-166

important stake the private sector held; companies such as the Canadian National Railway even had their own colonization agencies.<sup>27</sup>

The Dutch interest in Canada started around 1880 when Dutch investment houses and members of the elite became involved with the Canadian Pacific Railway project that aimed at opening up the Canadian west. Added to this was the fact that the Dutch settlements in the US had reached their limit of arable development, while around the same time the Netherlands had been hit by an agricultural crisis for which one of the solutions was considered to be emigration. As a result of these developments Dutch migration to Canada started in these decades.<sup>28</sup> The first group of Dutch migrants settled in Winnipeg in 1893 followed by a second group that settled in Granum, the first groups came from existing settlements in the US and were followed by migrants from the Netherlands, as these settlements flourished; chain migration was largely responsible for their growth.<sup>29</sup>

### Dutch migration in the twenties

An important stimulus for Dutch migration in the twenties was the economic recession that started in 1921. As a result of this, emigration was seen as a way to counter unemployment, because the costs of welfare posed an increasing burden on the authorities.<sup>30</sup> Most migrants who decided to leave were those who had the least opportunities at home. The majority of them were lower or lower middle class men, unmarried and with for Dutch standards a minimal education. Often they were farmers or farm and industrial labourers and in some occasions small businessmen or artisans, they were the people most

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27 Reg Whitaker "immigration policy" *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*. Ed. Gerald Hallowell. Oxford University Press, 2004. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universiteit Leiden - LUMC. 17 February 2012 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t148.e774>>

28 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the "Land of Opportunity"* (Calgary 1999) 6-7

29 Donald Sinnema, *The first Dutch Settlement in Alberta , Letters from the Pioneer years 1903-14*(Calgary 2005),2-7

30 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959), 24-25

vulnerable for economic fluctuations. The agricultural sector in the Netherlands was especially vulnerable due to the land shortage which meant that it was hard to make a living of the few acres one had. For these people Canada must have seemed an abundant land because of the massive availability of arable land, as a result, many of these people decided to try their luck.<sup>31</sup>

Another important stimulus for migration to Canada was the changing attitude towards migration in the US. The experience of the First World War had convinced many Americans that all evil came either from abroad or from alien elements within. This was expressed during the red scare that took a hold of the US after the First World War.<sup>32</sup> The hostile attitudes towards Japanese immigrants and the campaign in the western US against them also demonstrated the American tendency of isolationism in an attempt to go back to a bygone era.<sup>33</sup> These anti-foreign sentiments resulted in the emergency immigration act of 1921, when worried US politicians issued legislation against migration after Ellis Island appeared to be swamped with new arrivals. Worrying part for the racist politicians of the time was that the majority of these migrants were from the less favored Eastern-and-Southern European background. As a result the legislation issued mainly restricted the entrance of these groups through quotas, the 1921 legislation was succeeded by the National Origins Act in 1924. This act fixed total annual migration quota for immigrant groups based upon the proportion of descendants of the population of each nationality.<sup>34</sup> The effects for the Netherlands were that the quota allowed 3607 Dutchmen entrance in 1921. After the new legislation was implemented in 1924 only 1624 Dutchmen were allowed entrance, the final change to this system in 1929 allowed 3153 Dutchmen.<sup>35</sup> Until 1924 this quota was more than enough for those

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31 Herman Ganzevoort, *Dutch immigration to Canada; 1892-1940* (Toronto 1975), 53-58

32 William E. Leuchtenburg , *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*(Chicago 1993),8

33 Kristofer Allerfeldt, *Beyond the Masses, American Immigration and The Treaty of Versailles* (New York 2006), 202-204

34William E. Leuchtenburg , *The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32*(Chicago 1993), 205-208

35 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959), 134



Dutchmen who wanted to migrate, however, after 1924 with the quota cut in half these quotas led to an increasing interest in Canada.<sup>36</sup>

The government's role in this migration movement can at least be described as half-hearted or even indifferent. It took until 1936 for migration regulations to be implemented by the parliament. Before this legislation, migrants were virtually unprotected. Agents could swindle as much as they wanted and they could not be sued for it.<sup>37</sup> Despite this inactivity with regard to legislation, the need that something had to be done was realised even before WWI. Prior to the First World War the first semi-government emigration society was established, this organisation was in particular for migrants who went to overseas areas that were not part of the Dutch Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> This emigration society; the N.V.L, was founded in 1913 and had as its purpose to inform future migrants and help them where it could in non-financial ways.<sup>39</sup>

'After serious study of the unemployment- and population question of our country we have become convinced that due to an annual population increase of 100.000 people, the annual 40 million guilder cost of unemployment allowance, and no end in sight for the economic crisis, we consider it desirable to organize migration.' This statement was made by the society of trade and industry when the E.C.H. was founded in 1923.<sup>40</sup> This organization was created to perform a set of tasks rather different from the N.V.L. as its statutes allowed it to actively stimulate migration. In order to do this the E.C.H often took a mediating role in order to negotiate proper arrangements for migrants, next to this, they

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36 Hans Krabbendam, *Vrijheid in het Verschiet, Nederlandse Emigratie naar Amerika 1840-1940* (Hilversum 2006), 236

37 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959), 15

38 Ibidem, 45-46

39 Henry van Stekelenburg, "*Hier is alles vooruitgang*": *landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996), 27

40 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959), 55

also provided loans for those who wanted to migrate but lacked the funds to do so.<sup>41</sup> Since the loans were not meant for just anyone with an intention to migrate, the N.V.L. made a selection in order to make sure that only those who were suitable to migrate received the loans.<sup>42</sup> As the E.C.H. asked some money for its mediation and received commission from shipping companies they were often seen as competitors to the agents and bureaus. This proved to be rather bad for its reputation. Eventually the N.V.L. and the E.C.H. merged in 1931 to form the S.L.N.<sup>43</sup>

Next to the semi-governmental organisations, the pillarized groups also became active in supporting migration. They performed a similar task as the semi-governmental organisations, with the difference being that they aimed to keep the members of their pillarized group together as they migrated. These efforts came mainly from pillarized agricultural groups, in the 1925 a Roman Catholic emigration society was founded, the R.K.E.V. This organisation provided information, largely based on the N.V.L. and was not allowed by its statutes to actively promote migration. The protestant pillar also created an emigration society, the G.E.V.(at first known as C.E.C.), founded in 1927. The G.E.V. was created in response to discontent with the existing semi-governmental organisations both in their practical and ideological conduct.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately the lack of experience came back to haunt these organisations. The G.E.V. relied on one of the worst agents they could have possibly picked and was for a long time unwilling to admit their mistake; as a result many migrants suffered the consequences. The R.K.E.V. supported the colonization effort of a priest who would lead the way; instead he vanished with all the money, allegedly to Southern France.<sup>45</sup>

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41 Henry van Stekelenburg, *"Hier is alles vooruitgang": landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996), 27

42 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959), 56

43 Henry van Stekelenburg, *"Hier is alles vooruitgang": landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996), 27

44 Ibidem, 27

45 Ibidem, 92-100

In order to migrate to Canada, Dutch migrants needed to cross the Atlantic and in most cases they also had employment arranged in advance. For these arrangements to be made, migrants usually relied on the services of agents. Sometimes these agents worked independently; sometimes they were connected to the government or to transport agencies. In most cases the process in which people decided to migrate started by contacts with agents. They would try to convince the would-be migrants by portraying Canada as a land of unimaginable possibilities, 'a farm labourer in Holland could be a successful farmer on the Canadian frontier'. If the would-be migrant agreed to migrate, the agent acted as an intermediary to get a ticket for the Atlantic crossing and a train ticket for travelling to the destination in Canada, often at the destination employment was arranged through the railway companies. Especially the commission paid over the tickets was very lucrative for the agents; therefore it was tempting for them to send as many migrants over as possible since that would maximize their profit. As a result of this many migrants were sent overseas with lousy travel arrangements.<sup>46</sup>

The influence of private companies in this migration wave is striking. Due to the immigration restrictions in the US the H.A.L. (Holland Amerika lijn) had to deal with a decrease in their revenues. To counter this they tried to compensate these losses by shipping migrants to Canada, because this was not as satisfactory for them as they hoped H.A.L. negotiated with the authorities to increase migration numbers by lowering the price of tickets while the authorities would provide loans.<sup>47</sup> Other organisations with surprisingly much influence in the migration process were the C.N.R. (Canadian National Railway) and C.P.R. (Canadian Pacific Railway). They were powerful enough to get officials sacked if they considered them a nuisance to their activities; they used this power to get hardliners into the Canadian diplomatic representation in the Netherlands who bypassed the Dutch emigration societies so that these companies could recruit migrants without being hindered.<sup>48</sup>

### Canada as a host-country in the twenties

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46 Herman Ganzevoort, *Dutch immigration to Canada; 1892-1940* (Toronto 1975), 118-124

47 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959), 154-155

48 Herman Ganzevoort, *Dutch immigration to Canada; 1892-1940* (Toronto 1975), 102-107

Although Canada had some economically rough years in after the First World War, migration quickly returned to pre-war levels. Its immigration policy didn't change much, especially farmers were welcomed, as they provided the manpower necessary to bring Canada's huge landmass under cultivation. Restrictions were placed on immigrants who intended to practice another profession than farming, yet the Canadian legislation was nothing like the American. The empire settlement act of 1922 supported about 100.000 thousand British veterans to settle in Canada, while pressure from railway companies opened up the country to Southern and Eastern Europeans, this policy led to the inflow of another 185.000 more migrants in the twenties. This policy was controversial, but did not result in a backlash as had happened with Sir Clifford Sifton because the economic crisis had hit before political opponents had gained enough momentum. The economic crisis effectively stopped migration to Canada.<sup>49</sup> Despite the fact that racist policies towards Southern and Eastern Europeans were suspended, racism against Asians was a different story as Canada implemented a policy similar to the US by issuing the Chinese Immigration Act that basically stopped migration from China.<sup>50</sup>

Unlike the Chinese, the Dutch were welcome immigrants in Canada. Since the Dutch race was considered as a part of the preferred Nordic race the immigration of Dutch people was promoted by the Canadian government. Agents were sent to recruit as many immigrants as possible. The only prerequisite was that the immigrants would work as agricultural labourers. In 1922, in an effort to stimulate migration, the visa requirements for Dutch people were suspended. The only thing Dutch migrants had to do was pass a physical examination. The attitudes of the Canadians to the Dutch were mostly positive. They had the reputation to be good settlers who caused few problems. The only downside the Dutch migrant seemed to have has was that they were considered somewhat arrogant, because many felt superior to Canadian habits an practices and believed that Dutch farming techniques were better. Eventually agencies warned emigrants for egoism and self-conceit, they urged them to adapt to Canadian habits.<sup>51</sup>

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49 Reg Whitaker "immigration policy" *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*. Ed. Gerald Hallowell. Oxford University Press, 2004. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universiteit Leiden - LUMC. 17 February 2012 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t148.e774>>

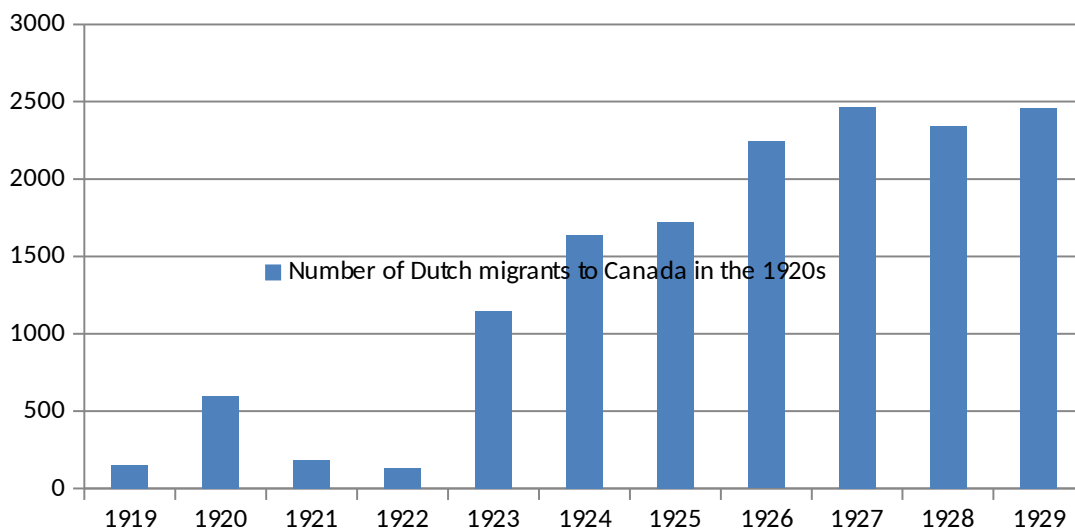
50 Ibidem

51 J.A.A. Hartland, *De geschiedschrijving van de Nederlandse Emigratie tot de Tweede Wereldoorlog* (Den Haag 1959) 149-150

## Dutch migrants in Canada

In order to get an idea of how many people actually migrated to Canada, what kind of opportunities there were for migrants and how migrants went to Canada, this part of the research will deal with some figures that provide an overall view of Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s.

After the First World War Canada became an increasingly popular destination for Dutch migrants. The restrictive policies implemented by the US in 1921 partly diverted the original migration stream from the US to Canada. As the figure below illustrates, from 1923 onward there is a higher level of migration to Canada. The stricter migration legislation issued in the US in 1924 caused another rise in the number of Dutchmen going to Canada. In the years 1926-1929 the number of migrants remained constant. A global economic crisis in the years 1921-1923 in the aftermath of the war slowed down migration considerably.



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One of the important indicators for migration is the wage differential. The wage differential is positive when migrants expect to earn more in the country they migrate to compared to their home country. For all occupations listed below, the wage in Canada would be a lot higher than in the

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52 Ibidem, 23-24

Netherlands especially the difference in wage for skilled labour is striking as it is in all cases over twice the salary earned in Holland The difference in wage in Canadian Dollars between people with similar jobs in Ottawa and Amsterdam is significant, in Canada the wages are substantially higher, therefore the wage differential is positive. As a result it makes sense for Dutch migrants to expect a higher wage in Canada.

Weekly Wages in Ottawa and Amsterdam, 1925

	Construction Trades			Engineering Trades		
	Carpenters	Plumbers	Unskilled	Fitters	Ironmoulders	Unskilled
Amsterdam <sup>a</sup>	\$15.36	\$16.32	\$12.48	\$12.86	\$11.14	\$9.41
Ottawa	\$36.00	\$38.40	\$19.20	\$28.80	\$28.32	\$19.20
Ottawa /Amsterdam						
Exchange Rate	2.34	2.35	1.54	2.24	2.54	2.04

Passenger lists can also be helpful in providing us with a more accurate image of what kind of people migrated. The figure below provides us with data on the occupation of migrants obtained by a study of a passenger list of a ship in 1925. Most migrants were in their twenties and intended to be employed in agriculture. Although the majority probably intended to work in agriculture, a percentage of

90% is rather high, with these statistics it is necessary to take into consideration the Canadian  
**Table 5 Summary Statistics of Dutch Immigrants to Canada 1925 by Occupation in Origin**

very reliable.

s clearly

to Canada:

	Complete Sample	Occupation in Origin		
		Agriculture	White Collar	Blue Collar
Age				
Average	28.3	27.6	31.6	29.5
Standard Deviation	8.5	8.0	11.2	8.3
Median Age	26.0	25.0	27.0	27.0
Average Cash (\$)	185.0	149.0	458.0	194.0
Average Imputed Savings (\$)	333.0	293.6	636.2	334.6
% with Wife	16.5	16.4	20.0	14.9
% with Children	13.4	13.5	15.0	12.1
Contact (%):				
Employer	15.8	18.0	5.0	12.1
Agency	39.2	42.8	35.0	27.0
Family	16.0	14.6	12.5	25.7
Friend	26.6	23.8	40.0	31.1
Other	2.3	1.3	7.5	4.1
Intended Occupation (%):				
Agriculture	90.6	99.7	67.5	64.9
Non-Agriculture	9.4	0.3	32.5	35.1
Percentage of Total	100.0	73.1	9.4	17.4

**Newspaper coverage**

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54 Ibidem, 35

*“The greatest attack on a frontier in America or any part in the world ever attempted, is currently taking place in the outstretched undiscovered area between Labrador and Alaska. It is the fastest pioneer movement the world has ever seen, because it is the first time these explorers can use modern equipment such as cars and airplanes.”*<sup>55</sup> From a Dutch point of view, Canada was an exciting place in the twenties. The quote illustrates one of the reasons for this, namely the conquest of the last North-American frontier. Another reason for an increased interest was the quota legislation in the US which caused a shift in transatlantic migration from the US to Canada. This chapter will focus on the question; how did newspaper articles portray Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s? In order to deal with the newspaper coverage of Canada in the 1920s, firstly the immigration of the British, will be explored, and secondly the comments made about Dutch migration will be discussed.

### British migrants

Similar to The Netherlands, Britain was dealing with high unemployment and perceived overpopulation in the decade after the First World War. Like The Netherlands, Britain sought to solve this problem by using migration. The British found their solution to unemployment and overpopulation in their dominions, and especially in Canada. They set up schemes that aimed to facilitate the migration of British subjects to Canada, among these schemes were the Soldiers and the Family Settlement schemes, the former aimed at veterans who came home from the war and could not find a job, the latter to move poor families to Canada with the thought that they would have better chances there. Dutch newspapers covered these British efforts extensively because a similar discussion raged at home, the basic assumption in both countries was the same; migration could be used as a way to fight unemployment. In reporting about the British attempts to use migration as a solution for unemployment, the Dutch newspapers were looking at an example of something that was being planned in The Netherlands as well; therefore, this paragraph will deal with the question: how did the Dutch newspapers portray British migration schemes that were aimed to relieve unemployment? First the negative comments will be discussed, followed by the positive ones.

First of all it is necessary to grasp what kind of efforts the British government undertook in order to support migration to Canada. One article describes in detail what kind of measures the British government took in 1928 in order to stimulate migration, although every year was different, it is safe to

55 Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant, 07-09-1928



assume that similar programs were launched in other years. The author starts out by explaining that despite the situation in Britain it is still hard to find people who are willing to migrate; “*of the 87 978 people who showed interest at first 37 651 backed down after receiving further information.*” As a result of this the government changed its approach and set up a project that provided training, paid for the trip to Canada, gave a guarantee for two years of employment, promised a certain acreage after these two years and provided a starting capital of 1200 guilders. If the migrant failed the journey back was also paid by the British government.<sup>56</sup> This article gives an insight in the British supported migration policy, it clearly shows the extent to which the British government was willing to go in order to fight unemployment.

“*The expulsion of unemployed miners to Canada, an unheard scandal.*”<sup>57</sup> One of the headlines stated about the situation of British miners who were sent to Canada. The outcry in Dutch newspapers was great when the fates of these migrants who left with government support came to their attention. Another article deals with the story of 21 miners who claimed that they had been deceived and began a march from Saskatchewan to Montreal in protest.<sup>58</sup> One of the big efforts to bring British miners over is also discussed in the newspapers, it is described as a great failure that cost the British treasury a lot of money, of the 9000 who left for Canada, less than 3000 remained at the time the article was written.<sup>59</sup> Overall, the majority of newspaper reports on these supported British migration attempts was very negative, in Canada this development was not met with much enthusiasm either, one Dutch immigrant wrote home that the Canadians did not like the British because they were considered paupers who had been imported from Britain.<sup>60</sup> Altogether three newspaper articles wrote very negatively about the British migration to Canada.

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56 Leeuwarder Nieuwsblad 28-08-1926

57 De Tribune, 13-09-1928

58 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 01-09-1928

59 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 13-01-1929

60 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 188

Despite this negative attention, some good news also reached The Netherlands about these migration schemes. One of these articles discusses a report that was written by a research commission on the migration of miners to Canada, they came to the following conclusions:"

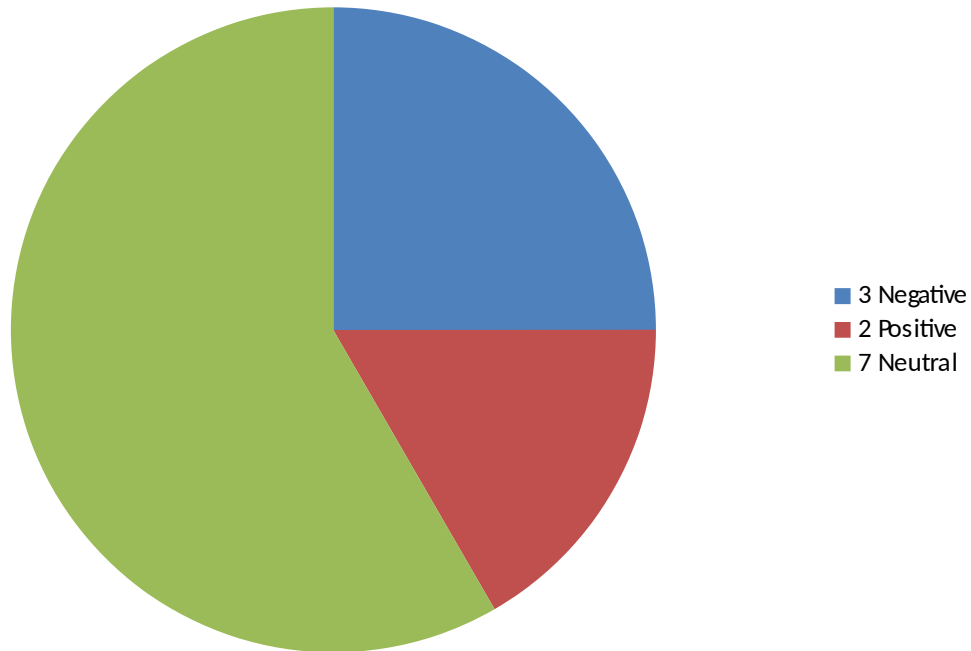
1. *The plan to send miners to Canada had not been prepared well enough.*
2. *Some of the people who were sent over were not physically fit enough for the work.*
3. *There were occasions of injustice that could have been prevented.*
4. *A majority of the miners had no issues and stayed to work in Canada"*

Although the article illustrates the shortcomings of the program, it stresses that most immigrants actually ended up quite well.<sup>61</sup> Other articles also stress the more positive developments, one describes the story of British miners who were now earning a good wage of 5 dollars a day. Despite this salary several hundred still returned to Britain, but this author also stresses that roughly 5000 of these miners were to stay in Canada.<sup>62</sup> These reports show that some more positive developments were also covered by the Dutch newspapers. Only two articles wrote in a very positive fashion about the British migration effort, however, the great majority, seven, wrote in a balanced way about these British Schemes. This shows that the newspapers were more interested in discussing the positive and negative aspects of migration, than passing a judgement on these developments.

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61 Het Volk, 13-10-1928

62 Maasbode, 19-09-1928



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In conclusion it can be stated that the image given of British migration to Canada was predominantly neutral. Although some of the articles focussed on the misery of the migrants and others on the great prospects, the majority of these articles made a balanced judgement of the positive and negative aspects of these developments. The insights this British migration could provide for the Dutch problems at the time were the main interest of most journalists.

#### Dutch Migration to Canada

Migration to Canada was frequently discussed in Dutch newspapers. Many tried to exert influence through the media, therefore this paragraph will illuminate; which organisations wrote about Dutch migration to Canada and what were their interests? In order to do this first an article with C.P.R. backing will be discussed followed by an article to which the N.V.L. responded; finally a discussion about legislation will be explored.

*“Similar to what we have set up in Neerlandia and Edmonton, I also believe, now that I am working in Holland, that our people who wish to migrate should have certainties regarding to their spiritual life.”* This is how mister Van Ark starts out his writing in a Dutch Protestant newspaper about

63 Corpus archival sources

migration to Canada. He explains that it is his intention to place people in the proximity of existing settlements so that new migrants will not need to do any pioneering and have the certainty of a religious community nearby. These placements will also take into consideration the infrastructure so that the new migrants will not have to deal with transport issues. Although these placements will be near Dutch settlements, Van Ark emphasizes that this does not mean that these people will not become Canadians. He expected this policy to result in the creation of many new Dutch settlements.<sup>64</sup> Van Ark was spot on at playing his audience, the main concern of the Dutch Protestants with migration to Canada had always been the loss of spiritual well being, and they feared that their members would lose faith once they moved to Canada. Presenting these plans Van Ark attempted to take away the biggest fear of one of the bigger groups of potential migrants. As the article stated at its beginning, Van Ark was the director of the C.P.R. department of colonisation in Rotterdam at the time of his writing. Besides that Ganzevoort names him repeatedly as the epitome of the worst possible migration agent.<sup>65</sup>

*"The information provided is always too positive, without hardly any exception, all who arrive here are disappointed."* This is one of the claims an article makes about life in Canada, the writer discusses all the hardships migrants need to go through as migrants. He stresses the need of migrants to have agricultural experience as he states; *"not all wood is lumber"*, with which he meant to indicate that people who grew up in an urban setting, should not expect themselves to be fit for life in the Canadian countryside.<sup>66</sup> Altogether, this article sketches a rather bad image of migration to Canada. Therefore it was not surprising that a response to this article appeared. This response came as a letter to the editor from Mister Sandberg, the secretary of the N.V.L. The N.V.L. was the organisation that was largely responsible for providing migrants with adequate information about the situation in Canada, as such this response is hardly surprising. In this letter to the editor Sandberg addresses every single point made by the writer of the other article and counters them.<sup>67</sup> This example illustrates how a semi-governmental organisation focussed on guiding migration tried to exert influence on the public.

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64 De Standaard, 06-22-1926

65 Herman Ganzevoort, *Dutch immigration to Canada; 1892-1940* (Toronto 1975), 152

66 De Standaard, 01-1924

67 De Standaard 16-01-1924

In the course of the twenties, more and more articles appeared about the sad fates Dutch migrant met in Canada. One of these articles was written by Sandberg. He explains that at the time there was a growing interest in migration from the Netherlands; however, most of the interest was encouraged by stakeholders in the migration process. As a result many migrants were at risk of being taken advantage off; this was exacerbated by outdated migration legislation that only protected stakeholders and did little for migrants. The only law that dealt with migration, was the; "*law on the passage and transport of migrants*", implemented in 1861. The problem with this law was that because it was made for a very different time, when most migrants were trans-migrants from other European countries, it only protected Dutch interests, which at that point were only the transport companies. As a result of this, migrants were not legally protected against exploitative agents. Therefore Sandberg suggested to follow 'other civilised' European countries and adapt the migration legislation to the situation in the twenties.<sup>68</sup> As stories of misfortune and exploitation kept reaching the Netherlands and the public debate raged on, as a result these questions were asked in parliament:

1. Q: *'Has the government noticed the many complaints expressed in the press over the last month with regard to the deceptive and false information provided to our fellow countrymen who were thereby convinced to migrate, this is especially true for recruitment for Canada?'*

A: *'The government confirms knowing of this issue.'*

2. Q: *'Is the government aware of the numerous organisation and individuals, at least 18 agencies, who provide openly dangerous information and recruit people for migration to several countries, including the numerous "secret agents" who are spread out across our country to support this effort, and that even a bureau of a foreign government is involved with this propaganda?'*

A: *'The government is aware of the propaganda and recruitment efforts for migration of numerous organisations and individuals that are considered not well suited for these activities. The government is unaware of the negative influence of any foreign government in this matter.'*

3. Q: *'is the government aware of the consequences of this completely uncontrolled recruitment effort that has resulted in many tragic experiences and hardships for so many of our countrymen, which has resulted in such fierce allegations to a particular bureau in The Hague that resulted in its closure?'*

A: *'The government is unaware of this'*

4. Q: *' Does the government agree that this situation of lawlessness with regard to migration, which is unthinkable in most other European countries because almost all countries have issued*

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68 De Maasbode 08-03-1924

*legislation that places propaganda and recruitment under state control and excludes stakeholders from this process, is due to the backwardness of Dutch migration legislation?'*

*A: 'The government agrees that the legislation regarding migration needs to be updated'*

5. *Q: Does the government agree that a revision of this obsolete law will cost too much time and will lead to a continuation of the undesirable situation in which these disturbing circumstances will afflict more migrants and that therefore an emergency law is needed, in which recruitment and propaganda is subject to government control and only allowed under certain conditions and not to stakeholders?*

*A: 'The development of a new migration law is an advanced state of preparation, therefore the issuing of an emergency law is deemed unnecessary by the government.'<sup>69</sup>*

These questions and answers clearly demonstrate the interaction between media and politics. Sandberg of the N.V.L. actively wrote to newspapers informing them of his point of view which makes sense since his organisation was virtually powerless to do anything against the exploitation of migrants as long as the existing legislation was in place.

Stakeholders such as the C.P.R. and semi-governmental organisations such as the N.V.L. actively sought to influence newspaper writing in order to further their cause. The C.P.R. did so out of commercial interest while the N.V.L. was more interested in consolidating its position as an organisation that supported migration. The example of the discussion about the migration legislation demonstrates the interaction between newspaper coverage and politics. The frame used by Van Ark is a combination of an endangering and a humanitarian frame. He used both negative frames to turn them around by portraying a situation in which both the group cohesion is secured while he also emphasizes the Christian aspect of these settlements. Contrary to this, the N.V.L. uses an economic frame that is meant to show the exploitation migrants can be vulnerable to because of the lack in legislation. These organisations had polar opposite interests, and they both used different frames to convince the migrants of their point of view.

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69 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant 25-04-1925

### **Journalist impression of Canada**

Journalists are always an important source of information. As a result of the information that reached Holland regarding Dutch migrants in Canada, several newspapers decided to send their reporters overseas to find out what was actually going on. One of the migrants writing home described newspaper articles as; 'the most reliable scraps of information', therefore this chapter aims to explore; how did journalists provide an image of migration to Canada in these travel reports? In order to answer this question four different article series were analyzed, by firstly looking at their conclusion and secondly at how they came to their judgement.

### Straight through Canada

*'No nationals are more welcome in Canada than Dutchmen. I have been assured of this in every possible way, no matter how unpleasant it is for the patriotic heart, overpopulation forces us to lose these good citizens. Eventually it will be seen as a satisfaction that we have contributed to the rise of this young and powerful empire of the new world: Canada!'*<sup>70</sup> These are the final sentences of a series of articles written by a Dutch journalist who traveled all across Canada. His adventure had lasted for eight weeks and had convinced him of the possibilities that existed for Dutch migrants in Canada. This series of articles was published in several newspapers; Het Huisgezin, De Morgen and De Nieuwe Delftsche Coutant.<sup>71</sup>

Due to the time of the year this journalist was traveling, he started out his journey in New York, contrary to most migrants who landed in Halifax. The reason for this was that he could make his way west as quickly as possible in order to visit the Prairie Provinces before the start of winter. From New York he travelled to Ottawa where he switched trains to go to Winnipeg. In Winnipeg his exploration of the migrant life started. He described the ones suitable for migration as those who: *'have strong willpower that will get them through rough times, are not lazy and are able to adapt.'* In the Prairie Provinces he visited multiple Dutch settlements; Plumas, Tofield, Neerlandia and Edam.<sup>72</sup> In Plumas he visited the Dutch Catholic migration effort, guided by Father Cox. Plumas seemed to be doing well since the first harvest had been really good and the location was advantageously located near a railway station. This colony had only recently come into existence and the journalist extensively described the process how this was achieved. Eventually he concludes that Plumas is a good place to go to for the Dutch Catholics, but that it is necessary to: *'have some money, a good health and practical agricultural experience'*.<sup>73</sup> Edam is an older Colony as such the journalist met up with a migrant that had left for Canada over twenty years prior to their meeting. This migrant; mister Wouters, was eager to talk about his success story, as he states: *'we came here dirt poor almost bragging to each other who was the poorest'* and *'When I look around now at my own house and into my own garden and at the houses of my children, all healthy and wealthy, than I bless the day I left the old world for the new.'* The journalist

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70 Het Huisgezin, 06-10-1928 tot 09-01-1929

71 Ibidem

72 Ibidem

73 Ibidem



also mentions the current occupation of mister Wouters as being a rentier.<sup>74</sup> After his visits to Dutch colonies the journalist heads back to Winnipeg where he stays for a while and describes the infrastructure available to smoothen migration, although he also praises other organisation; he is especially positive towards the H.A.L. office which he describes as a '*beacon of light for migrants lost in this massive country*'.<sup>75</sup> Finally at the end of his travels the journalist leaves Canada from Halifax convinced that those who hear less positive rumours about migration to Canada should keep in mind that those who failed are louder than the successful masses.<sup>76</sup>

In all it is clear that these articles are heavily biased and misleading. The settlement he visited in Plumas ended as a failure widely discussed in the newspapers. The land turned out to be worthless, the migrants faced many hardships and when time was most dire father Cox abandoned the settlement with the money of the migrants and left for southern France. As such this case marked the end for Catholic migration efforts in the 1920s. Edam is a different story, unlike Plumas it had been founded decades earlier. Therefore, visiting this settlement is not very relevant for a journalist who wants to explore the possibilities for migrants in Canada at that time. Although he mentions some early hardships, he strongly emphasizes the eventual success and the wealth achieved by these migrants. In doing so he creates an image of a land of possibilities that is there for anyone willing to work hard. Next to this frame he also deals with the humanitarian one as he shows the success of different religious groups, these reports take away the fear many had for the loss of religion due to migration. It also seems that the migrants he talked to besides the ones in Plumas are not new arrivals but are people who already made it in Canada. Many people went to Canada in the twenties with the mediation of agencies that often provided work as agricultural labourers; none of them appear in his writing. As a result it seems that the journalist just selected some success stories to write home about. Another disturbing factor in his writings is the influence he seems to have had from stake holding companies. About the railway companies he says that; 'he admires the leaders of the railway industry and that he recommends Dutch migrants to have complete faith in them and that they; '*are only interested in the capable migrants because they can only make a profit of them*', in this statement he forgets to mention that the unsuccessful migrants also purchase train tickets and often land from these railway companies, so either way these companies are

74 Ibidem

75 Ibidem

76 Ibidem

going to make a profit on every single migrant.<sup>77</sup> Eventually the journalist comes up with advice as of where to get information and he sends his readers directly to stake holding companies with an office in Rotterdam, namely; the C.N.R. and the H.A.L. After carefully reading through his report it is very clear that this journalist was heavily influenced by companies that had stakes in the migration business, therefore it can be considered as propaganda.

### To the west

*'Be carefull is therefore the main message, one can avoid all risk by asking the aid of the Christian migration agency..... The notion that providing adequate information and guidance, plus looking after the spiritual and material well being of the migrants has been strongly enforced during my journey.'*<sup>78</sup>

These are the conclusions of Taeke Cnossen, a journalist that worked for the protestant Christian newspaper; De Standaard. He had been a migrant to Canada himself before the start of the First World War, but had returned as a volunteer for the Dutch armed forces.<sup>79</sup> The influence of the authors background is very clear, he is part of the protestant pillar and as expected he advices his readers to ask 'their' migration agencies aid when they decide to migrate.

As a good protestant Christian, one of his first warnings for migrants is that; *'the biggest mistake migrants make is focussing on the material well-being instead of on the spiritual and that many come to regret this.'* The entire trip made by Cnossen is based upon his religious background. He visits places all across Canada, but he only visits settlements with people of his own religious denomination. He started his journey through Canada in Halifax; from there on he went to Montreal followed by southern Ontario. There he starts his inquiry into Dutch migration to Canada. He visits settlements around Windsor, Hamilton, London and Chatham and wrote extensively about them, he had especially much attention for the religious life in these places. He also met some migrants in the area who told him of their experiences, an example of this is the account of a baker: *'Traveling around in a Volendam style folklore outfit he managed to make a living, Canadians believed their stereotype and were willing to pay to see a 'real' Dutchmen . After a while he got tired of making money this way and since he had familiarised*

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77 Ibidem

78 De Standaard, 13-07-1929 tot 15-02-1930

79 Henry van Stekelenburg, *"Hier is alles vooruitgang": landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996), 43

himself with the country he decided to pick up his old occupation as a baker. Although it was hard at first he managed to set up his own bakery and make a decent living.' Typical for a Dutch protestant newspaper is the explanation for his success; 'although the man faced setbacks and hardships, he managed to pull through due to his unwavering faith.' After his time in southern Ontario, Cnossen travelled to Winnipeg. In the Winnipeg area he went through a similar routine as he had done in southern Ontario. He visited several settlements and discussed the religious life. Again he came in touch with several migrants who told them about their experiences, one of these stories was by a recently arrived couple; 'they had arrived in Shackleton in May 1928, the harvest had been incredibly tough, but seemed excellent in size. Unfortunately for Geert and Grietje Salomon a hailstorm destroyed their entire harvest. Despite this setback did not give up and with some help from others they managed to sow seed corn on their fields and collect a modest harvest nonetheless.'<sup>80</sup> After visiting Shackleton Cnossen went farther west and visited Dutch settlements near Edmonton, he continued his journey through the Rockies to Vancouver where he got in touch with the local Dutch population. Vancouver was the last place he explored; after he was done he took the fastest route back to Holland. Despite his enthusiasm throughout his writing Cnossen decides to end on a more negative note as he describes a rather negative experience of some Dutchmen; the experience of two elderly people who got deprived of a hundred guilders for an 8 minute cab ride.<sup>81</sup>

In his article series Cnossen seems to give a fair account of what the migrant experiences. He stresses their hardship and the need to be strong willed to succeed. All the migrant stories he wrote down record the hardships that need to be endured before success. In doing this he uses the economic frame which he turns around as he describes that migrants encountered hardship but that they eventually overcame them. The other frame he uses is a combination of the endangering and the humanitarian frame as he stresses the success of the Dutch Protestant settlements, with these examples he counters the fear for loss of religion, and the loss of group cohesion. Van Stekelenburg was right to emphasize the treachery of this objectivity. The trip Cnossen made was paid for by the C.P.R. and C.N.R.<sup>82</sup> by writing a more critical piece he was able to come across as being a reliable source of information,

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80 De Standaard, 13-07-1929 tot 15-02-1930

81 Ibidem

82 Henry van Stekelenburg, "*Hier is alles vooruitgang*": *landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996),43

while he was actually providing the railway companies with excellent propaganda. Cnossen met with the two directors of the colonization departments of both the C.P.R. and the C.N.R. , about this meeting he wrote the following; *'Both important men, in charge of immigration, were full of praise about the hard working Dutch migrants. Besides compliments these two men also expressed their interest in the colonization schemes of Dutch migrants around their own churches and full cooperation was promised.'*<sup>83</sup> His praise of the railway companies is balanced; therefore it does not affect his reliability. In all his stories the migrant is a person who faces hardships, perseveres through hard work and faith and as a result never fails. By repeating a similar story again and again the reader is made to believe that he can make it too in Canada as long as he is willing to work hard enough. Added to this is the fact that he does not discuss failures. Hindsight provides us with an interesting final comment on his writing. As the first quote in this paragraph stated he advised the using the help of the Christian Immigration Agency to avoid any risk. In fact, this organisation made many mistakes in looking after the people they sent to Canada. They relied too heavily on an agent, mister Van Ark, a man who was described by Ganzevoort as the worst of all swindling agents. As a result of this, the Christian Emigration Agency sent many people who were not really suitable for migration to places where there was little work for them which resulted in a dramatic experience for many.<sup>84</sup> Despite his apparent reliability Cnossen was clearly biased, therefore his article series can be considered as well concealed propaganda.

### Romanticism of Canada

*'He, who ever visits Canada, be it as a colonist or as a tourist.... he will testify that it was and always will be 'love at first sight'!*<sup>85</sup> In the most vivid language this journalist tried to capture Canada's natural beauty in words, where the other journalists focussed on migration, for this correspondent migration is only part of the story. For him it was above all a travel account. Nonetheless, he made some insightful comments on migration.

The young romanticist and his companion made a journey through all of Canada, Starting in New York, travelling first to Montreal, followed by Ottawa and afterwards to the gateway of the west,

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83 De Standaard, 13-07-1929 tot 15-02-1930

84 Henry van Stekelenburg, *"Hier is alles vooruitgang": landverhuizing van Noord-Brabant naar Noord-Amerika 1880-1940* (Tilburg 1996),43

85 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 02-06-1929 tot 13-06-1929

Winnipeg. Around Winnipeg he explores the migrant existence there by visiting Edam, about which he comments that; He also comments that *'when travelling through Edam no one can imagine the past hardships that eventually made the place flourish'*. There he also quoted a migrant on how he felt about his migration in hindsight: *"In Holland you have to work hard and you have little chance to rise from being in someone's service to being independent. In Canada you have to work really hard, but for anyone who is suitable, not lazy and has a good conduct, there is a mathematical certainty to success."* Eventually, the journalist overdoes his romanticism and states that: *'no one who ever tasted the unlimited possibilities of this country wants to return to the old homeland'*. Despite these chances for success the journalist also emphasizes the loneliness of Prairie life and how hard that must be for new migrants. After he finished his affairs in Winnipeg, he travelled on through the Prairies and through the Rockies to Jasper on the Pacific coast. During these travels he is mainly interested in the landscape and Native Americans he saw. After Jasper he takes the train all the way to the Maritimes in the east, he goes on to Quebec and finally ends up in Toronto. In Toronto he meets up with one of Canada's most influential bankers, Joseph Flavelle, with him he discusses the richness of the land as he states that; *'whenever a company does not find what it hoped for in a certain plot of land, they are always able to cover the costs because they will come across something they never dared to hope for.'*<sup>86</sup>

Although the writer is more of a romanticist than a journalist covering the state of affairs in Canada, he does make some insightful comments on Dutch migration to Canada. He stresses the hardships, the loneliness of Prairie life and gives an impression on what the country is like. Unfortunately he seems a bit too much influenced by the success stories of the migrants and also by the banker as he makes some exaggerated statements about the mathematical certainty of success and the wealth of the land. In all this article gives a fairly credible impression because the author overdoes it with the romanticism, therefore you can tell by the exaggerated style that one needs to see his comments within that framework.

### Study trip

*"When we said goodbye to her, she - the honest woman- emphasized one more time that she did not want to be promoting Dutch migration to Canada. Who wants to go there should know exactly what they are getting into. And because of that I will not make things seem better or worse. When people arrive, at first, the terrible feeling of loneliness far away from the homeland always gives them a hard time."* This is

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86 Ibidem

the conclusion of an interview published in a newspaper; the journalists interviewed a woman, Miss Veenstra, who had visited over 80 farms while travelling through Canada. In the interview she shares her experiences.<sup>87</sup>

Similar to the conclusion, she starts out by stating that she does not want to be the one promoting Dutch migration to Canada. She strongly emphasizes that migration to Canada is above all for agriculturalists, since people of other occupations are not certain to find employment. Miss Veenstra also stresses the Canadian governmental support for Dutch migration. About the chances for farm labourers with little money she says that; *'after four year, a farm help will have saved enough money to buy his own plot of land. On this land he would then build his own shack and live in a very rudimentary fashion until he had earned enough money through farming to build a decent farm. All this would take many years.'* According to Miss Veenstra chances are plentiful in Canada, therefore she states about failures that; *'those are the ones who fail through their own stupidity since they are the ones that do not listen to good advice'*. Furthermore she advises on the kind of farming methods to use and she shares some of her personal experiences with farming life in Canada, for instance how she lived in one of those shacks for a week.<sup>88</sup>

Miss Veenstra seemed to give a fair account of the situation in Canada, she stressed the hardships and the importance of agricultural experience for those who wanted to migrate. Despite here repeated claim that she does not want to promote migration to Canada, the things she says make one believe otherwise. About those who fail she bluntly states that they are the stupid ones. The road to success however, seems certain whenever someone is willing to work hard and face hardships, the bottom line of her account is actually that anyone can be an owner of their own farm in Canada as long as they are willing to work hard to achieve it. In doing this she effectively tried to turn around the economic frame in which the migrants hardship is stressed, she acknowledges these hardships and stresses that those who really want to will overcome them. Obviously this representation of migration to Canada is too optimistic as it does not deal with risks the migrants face. One of these risks is that of corrupt bureaus. Miss Veenstra seems to be part of one of those since the Bureau Veenstra was one of the most notorious bureaus in Holland that sent migrants to Canada to work under poor circumstances for a meager wage. As a result of migrants writing back home about their experiences this bureau was

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87 Algemeen Handelsblad, 10-10-1927 tot 17-10-1927

88 Ibidem,

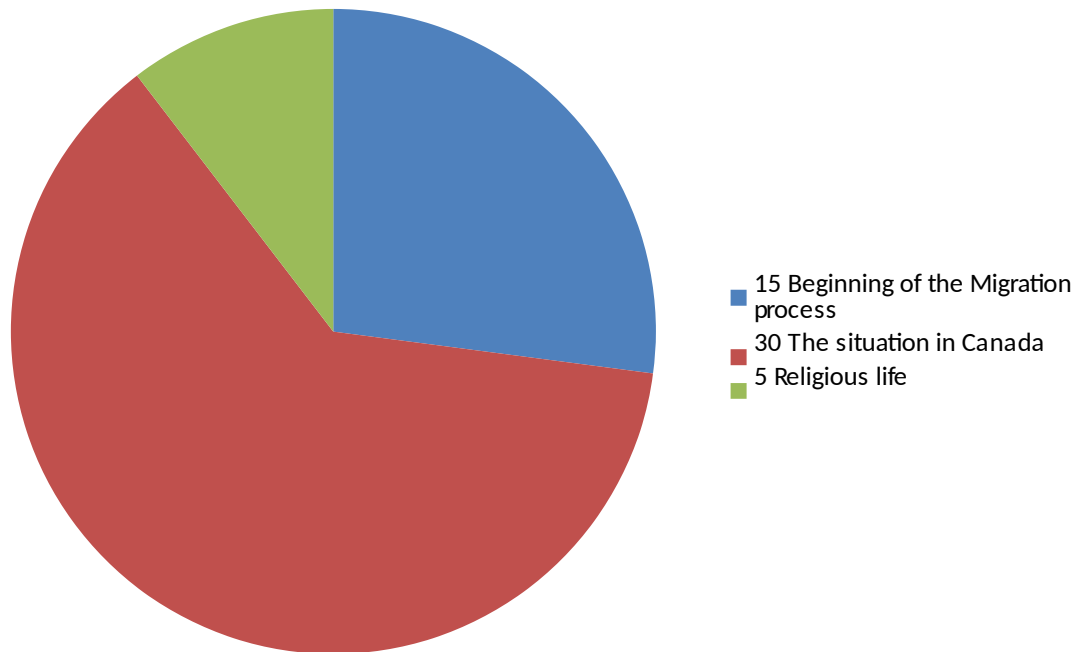
eventually forced to shut down. Due to this information acquired through hindsight it becomes clear that Miss Veenstra was actually trying to promote migration to Canada.

### Conclusion

The images that these reports give about migration to Canada are all similar. All reports stress how welcome Dutch migrants are and that the Canadian Government is actively pursuing a policy to convince more Dutchmen to migrate to Canada. These reports also provide a similar vision of the migrant as someone who needs to be a strong willed agriculturalist who is capable to take on many hardships. If the migrant is steadfast enough and perseveres his success is almost guaranteed and after years of hard labour the migrant will be the proud owner of his own farm in the new world. In bringing forth this positive economic frame the reports are unanimous, however, they are probably not credible for three reasons; firstly, because of the influence exerted on these reports by stakeholders. The first two article series were clearly influenced by the Canadian railway companies. The first was rather blatant in its praise, while the second was more critical, and because of this perhaps even more misleading since there was still a lot of propaganda in his writing. The third report discussed was least influenced by stakeholders although he did meet with an influential banker. The final report was probably the worst as it was supposed to be an interview with a woman who travelled throughout Canada and had visited many farms while she was actually part of a bureau that placed Dutch migrants in lousy situations in Canada. Secondly, due to the influence on the reporting exercised by the existing Dutch Settlements. With the exception of the last report all other reports visited similar Dutch settlements in Canada, most notably Edam which all three visited. The people they met all told stories of their initial hardship and eventual success, one can imagine that these Dutch settlers also had their reasons to come up with a positive story, either to reassure their families at home that they were doing well or in order to attract more migrants to expand their settlement. Furthermore, because they all visited the same colonies there is a certain misrepresentation of what migration to Canada was actually like, because the group that migrated to Canada in the 1920s spread out all over the country and only part of them ended up in these Dutch settlements. Thirdly, because of the group of migrants that was not covered by these reports. Many migrants left with the support of various agencies to work as day labourers in the Canadian countryside, these migrants were not clustered together in Dutch settlements and they are completely invisible in these accounts. What is also striking is that no failed migrants are discussed while it is obvious that after all the hardships that are being described some must have given up.

## Migrant letters and the information they provided

Many migrants wrote back home with all kinds of information, sometimes about the beautiful scenery other times on what Canadians were like, this Chapter focuses on; what kind of image did the migrants create of their experience with migration to Canada in the 1920s? In order to answer this question, first the beginning of the migration process will be discussed, followed by the situation in Canada as portrayed by these migrants and finally the religious life will be explored. The pie-chart below shows the distribution of the letters along these lines.



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*(The total number of migrant letters is less than the sum because several letters gave information on more than one of the aspects discussed)*

### Beginning of the migration process

Of the migrant letters under analyses, 11 discuss topics that fit in the category general migration process. Therefore this paragraph will deal with the experiences of these migrants starting with their journey to Canada, followed by how they managed after arrival, after that their discussion of who is suitable to be a migrant to Canada is discussed, afterwards the way in which these letters provided needed reliable

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89 Corpus archival sources



information for future migrants and finally, the insight these letters give us on the migrant network will be discussed.

Nearly all aspects of the migrant his trip to Canada was covered by these letters. One of the migrants explains step by step how it is first needed to get exemption for return exercises for those who have been enlisted in the army and the need to get a receipt from the tax office that indicates that you have paid all your taxes. Afterwards he gives a detailed description of how he travelled to Canada and what the costs of transportation were.<sup>90</sup> Frans van Waeterstadt starts out by describing the first part of his travel; *As soon as I stepped on the Leeuwarden station platform, on the last Monday of March, I recognized my traveling companions. A group of men and a few women were standing clustered together, surrounded by a large number of suitcases and packages which seemed to form a fence around them. There were some new suitcases but most had been better days.*<sup>91</sup> With the suitcases that had seen better days the writer illustrates an economic frame as he emphasizes the poverty of the migrants. Another migrant wrote happily about his experiences on board of a ship heading for Canada as he stated; *“at the end of the journey I had grown roughly 7 pounds.”* He described the 3<sup>rd</sup> class in which he was travelling as really good, it was clean and the beds were comfortable.<sup>92</sup> The final inspection before admission to Canada is also captured in one of Van Waeterstadt his writings as he describes; *“first we passed by an eye doctor, who rapidly examined us and held back an occasional one in order to take a more careful look at his eyes. After that we were dealt with by another official who checked our papers and asked how much money we had. He was delighted with any answer. A limburger had two dollars left in his pocket and he declared three hundred! All you need is a little nerve!”*<sup>93</sup> These examples all illustrate fine detail in which the migrant letters illuminate almost every part of the trip to Canada one can think of.

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90 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 100-102

91 Ibidem, 132

92 Emmer Courant, 23-02-1926

93 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 136

After arrival all migrants travelled to their destination in Canada where they hoped or expected to find employment. Most had arranged employment through the mediation of agents or agencies. Some were more fortunate with their pre-arranged employment than others. 'One migrant described how he was generously welcomed by his new boss, that he had a nice room in their house and that the biggest problem was the language barrier. About the work he said that the days were long and the pay was not too good but he was satisfied for now.'<sup>94</sup> Van Waeterstadt was also more fortunate, he was placed somewhere by a bureau and was employed immediately, his experience gives an interesting insight in the wage negotiations as he describes how; 'the employer tried to get him to work for 50 cents a day saying that there is another migrant willing to work for him for that price, eventually 75 cents for a year employment was agreed upon, after his noviciate had ended he managed to get a wage of a dollar a day.'<sup>95</sup> Others were not that lucky with their placement. A man was told by the C.P.R. office that he and his wife could easily make 60 dollars if they went to Winnipeg. Furthermore, employment would be arranged for them. Upon arrival there was no work and in Winnipeg there was lots of unemployment, as a result they were sent to Saskatchewan where they were placed at a farm where they earned 35 dollar a month between the two of them. After quitting they received a month less of their salary because the farmer claimed they should have a given a month notice before quitting.<sup>96</sup> Another group of migrants was also not too pleased as they gave their money to an E.C.H. official to safeguard, the agent was supposed to put it on a bank account and help the migrants out with employment, instead he just took the money.<sup>97</sup> These accounts show a very wide variety in experiences with regard to the economic frame, but one thing is similar for all of them; they seem to have earned less than they expected. In The Netherlands many were interested to know what kind of people were suitable for migration to Canada, therefore many migrants discuss this in their correspondence. A migrant from a protestant settlement in the Prairie provinces remarked that; '*Above all one should not be lazy, have the willpower to get through*

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94 Emmer Courant, 23-02-1926

95 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the "Land of Opportunity"* (Calgary 1999), 139-140

96 Ibidem, 128-129

97 Nieuwe Venlosche Courant, 10-01-1928

*rough times and have the wit to not expect fried turkeys flying in ones mouth shortly after arrival.*<sup>98</sup>

Another migrant advises not to go if one has a wife and children and suggests applying to the United States as a better option.<sup>99</sup> A Frisian migrant stresses that those who hesitate should not try their luck in Canada because it is only for those who are determined to go.<sup>100</sup> All writers agree that migration is mainly an option for agriculturalists, trying to exercise another vocation is possible but comes with many uncertainties. Most also felt the need to emphasize the hard work and suffering one has to endure to be successful. In all most migrants are in agreement on what kind of people are suitable to migrate to Canada, the key is hard work.

An interesting aspect of these migrant letters is the communication these migrants still have with those they left behind. This gives us insight in the functioning of migrant networks. One of the letters that is published is actually from someone his cousin who is in Canada.<sup>101</sup> Another migrant is a former military man who is writing about his experiences in a military paper, many of his comrades sent him letters which he tries to answer in his letters, he explains that; *“after receiving another 13 letters he requested the paper to provide him with some space to answer the questions”*.<sup>102</sup> There is also a migrant from Zeeland who states that he is; *“always willing to provide more information or answer more questions.”*<sup>103</sup> As such these migrants became an important source of information, because those who migrated actively contacted them in an effort to find reliable information.

#### Situation in Canada

Loads of information was published about the situation in Canada through brochure advertisements and other means of propaganda, yet these were obviously biased and therefore deemed unreliable. As a

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98 De Standaard, 22-09-1927

99 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 12-08-1929

100 De Enkhuizer Courant, 17-09-1929

101 Ibidem,

102 Ons Aller Belang, 15-02-1930

103 Goesche Courant, 14-09-1927

result many looked at the letters of migrants who were already in Canada to get an idea of what the situation was actually like the editors of a series of migrant letters explains their motivation to publish these letters as; “many are still under the impression that they were not objectively informed” therefore they reason that placing these letters in their newspaper will also show the negative aspects of migration which enabled their readers to get a more accurate idea of what the situation is like in Canada.<sup>104</sup> A total of 30 migrant letters dealt with the situation in Canada, therefore this can be seen as the most important subject the migrants wrote about. In order to grasp the situation in Canada as portrayed by the migrants this paragraph will first deal with the labour market, followed by housing issues, afterwards the lives of women in this migration will be discussed, and finally the experiences of migrants who continued their journey to the US will be explored.

The comments made regarding the labour market are rather diverse. A migrant who returned home due to personal circumstances was so enthusiastic about the chances in Canada that he concluded his writing with; ‘I am so convinced that Canada provides the conditions for a decent living, that I am certain to return once the circumstances that forced my return have changed’<sup>105</sup> Two other migrants independently from one another state that they advise; ‘young Dutchmen to come to Canada in groups of about three to five men to work first for someone else in order to gain experience and save some money so that afterwards they could buy their own land and become farmers themselves.’<sup>106</sup> Other migrants were less positive about the labour possibilities in Canada. As one describes how ‘in Edmonton there were between 5 and 6000 unemployed while the trains kept bringing in new migrants on a daily basis.’<sup>107</sup> Another migrant explains how he visited every single Canadian province and encountered the same misery everywhere; “hundreds of them gathered at the placement bureaus, they waited for days or weeks for a modestly paid job.”<sup>108</sup> Those who were unlucky and failed to assure a job ended up in the poorhouse, a Dutch migrant who ended up there “had to lumber for 8 hours a day in order to get a 2

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104 Emmer Courant, 23-02-1926

105 Het Haagsche Volk, 08-06-1926

106 De Noord Ooster, 15-01-1929 en R.K. Boerenbond, 20-02-1926

107 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 04-12-1928

108 Limburger Koerier, 25-09-1928

dollar voucher to buy groceries.”<sup>109</sup> Besides the positive and the disappointed there were also migrants that were more balanced in their judgement of the situation. Frans Niermeier says about Canada that; “unemployment is not so widespread here in Canada, and then only primarily among the working class. A peculiar situation: there’s a shortage of labour everywhere in the countryside and people have to come from foreign lands, and in big cities there’s unemployment.”<sup>110</sup> A man who travelled all around North-America advises those bound for Canada to pass by Ontario and go straight for the prairies because that was where well paid employment was to be found.<sup>111</sup> A young Dutch migrant gives an insight in what mattered for those who went to Canada with two stories of other migrants; ‘One had enjoyed a decent education (h.b.s.) and had the hardest time to make ends meet while the other was a carpenter and was earning a lot of money.’ This illustrates that there was especially a need for lower educated people. All writers were in agreement that the most chances for employment were there for agriculturalists. All the articles focus on an economic frame, but their experiences vary strongly some suffered the stereotypical economic frame of the exploited migrant while others strongly believed in their ability to make things work.

“The farmer for whom we worked was poor. The sleeping accommodations and the other workers were dirty and the nearest store, five hours away. And so we soon left.”<sup>112</sup> This is the account of a migrant less satisfied with his accommodation, despite his criticism most migrants were quite content with where they lived. Most lacked the resources to live on their own and therefore lived in with their employer. Usually they did this for a few years until they had saved enough money to start on their own. Frans van Waeterstadt his story is a typical example of this, in the first two years of his time in Canada he lived in with several of his employers, but at the end he could proudly state; “I’ve rented a small farm.”<sup>113</sup>

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109 Arnhemsche Courant, 03-02-1928

110 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 32

111 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 07-12-1929

112 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 103

113 Ibidem, 186

A migrant family followed a similar path as they started out living in with their employer, the man worked for the farmer and the woman did chores around the house, after a while they got to live in their own shack which was not all that great but at least they had their own place.<sup>114</sup> In general most migrants were positive about their accommodation since most of them were saving to start on their own and they knew it was hard for labourers to acquire an own place in the remote countryside.

Only a few of the Dutch migrants to Canada in the twenties were women, because of this they rarely show up in the records. One migrant exclaims; “*and the prospect of the young women!*”, when he is complaining about the bad situation on the labour market. Fortunately the letters of two female writers survived, these letters give some insight in their existence. One of them was mainly interested in what happened in a household and how it was structured. Because personal information about this person is missing Ganzevoort suggested that there is a possibility that this is a gay migrant.<sup>115</sup> However, regarding the tasks this person performs in daily life there is no reason to assume this, therefore this paper will assume that this person is a woman. She is especially interested in showing what life is like for a housewife in Canada, she describes the position of the housewife in the following way; “*it’s made the American and Canadian housewife handy and spry. She’s the boss in her own home and husband and wife are true, brave friends, even in the carrying out of those less pleasant household chores.*”<sup>116</sup> An interesting aspect of this woman’s experience is that her life is taking place in an urban setting while most other Dutch migrants were living in the countryside. The other woman who wrote about her experiences in Canada was living in the countryside together with her husband and their son. She gives a good look into the migrants woman’s existence as she describes the houses she lives in and the chores she does, and how she does them, as such other women who were planning to migrate with their husbands could get a fair idea of what awaited them in their new homeland.<sup>117</sup> The interesting aspect of these female migrants is that they used a rare frame, they were mainly concerned with discussing the

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114 Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 17-02-1930 until 05-08-1931

115 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 18-19

116 Ibidem, 190-194

117 Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 17-02-1930 until 05-08-1931

similarities and differences they saw in Canada, so while most other authors deal with economic or religious issues, these women are more concerned with cultural differences.

*“He made me work in the manure the entire day, I had to transport it for 2 miles and distribute it there. Eventually I threw away the fork as far as I could and told my boss I quit, you should have seen the look on his face. I then went to pick up my friend Gijs and told him; we’re going! He asked; where? And I said to America!”* Quite a few of the migrants that went to Canada actually aimed to go to the United States, due to the quota legislation they tried their luck through Canada. The quote from a letter written by two Frisians who were so fed up with their work on a Canadian farm that they took the risk of crossing the border, in which they succeeded in order to start a living the US.<sup>118</sup> The idea that the US was a better destination than Canada seems to have been widespread at the time, this is illustrated by Frans van Waeterstadt who asked his barber what the best place in Canada was to which the barber responded Windsor, Van Waeterstadt knew that was the place where most attempted to cross the border to the US.<sup>119</sup> Others also warn for this practice as according to one migrant it takes longer to get a visa from Canada than from the Netherlands. The risk of being caught was there as well; upon getting caught one was forced to return to his home country.<sup>120</sup> For this aspect of migration, the migrants clearly decided to use the endangering frame as they strongly stress the risk of being caught by the US customs.

### Religious life

*“I’ve been to a “nigger church” in Toronto. The organist, my companion and I were the only whites. The preacher was extraordinarily black. He preached very nicely and spoke very clearly until he got wound up, this easily happens to Negroes, then he gibbered and jabbered confusingly and not at all understandably.”*<sup>121</sup> This is one of the experiences with religious life as encountered by a Dutch woman living in Toronto. Despite this being a rather different experience compared to a regular Dutch church,

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118 Leeuwarder Nieuwsblad, 15-02-1928

119 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 147

120 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 04-12-1928

121 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the “Land of Opportunity”* (Calgary 1999), 188-189

many of the migrants remained loyal to their own congregation or joined a North-American version of it. Therefore, this paragraph will first deal with the catholic religious life, followed by the protestant religious life.

Catholics were not major players in Dutch migration to Canada, besides the failed attempt at Plumas, no colonization attempts were undertaken in the twenties. The only migrant letter that deals with catholic migration is one written by a priest who advises on migration to Canada. According to this priest the best idea for Catholics is to migrate as a group, he warns against creating a state within a state as he emphasizes that migrants should be aware of the fact that they are living in a British dominion. The option of sending Dutch priests to Canada who would travel around and visit families in different places is something this priest strongly opposes because; *“through my own experience I know how these Catholics tend to become religiously unsuitable.”* Finally he ends his writing by stating; *“what if a man wins all treasures but damages his soul.”*<sup>122</sup> The image portrayed for Catholic migration is therefore not very positive, the chances are little because the religious infrastructure to support migrants simply does not exist, as such the priest basically advises people not to come.

Contrary to the Catholics, the Protestants were well represented among the migrants to Canada in the 1920s. Three of them wrote about the religious life. One was especially insightful in comparing what he saw in Canada to what he was used to; *“Every church has its own minister and the member join the church where they feel most at home, because of this the churchgoers know one another which is very good for the atmosphere.”* The same migrant also gives an indication of all the groups that have churches in the Winnipeg region and concludes that religious life is flourishing there; he also notes the existence of a small Dutch religious community.<sup>123</sup> The other two who wrote about the Protestant life focussed mainly on Alberta and the growth of the Dutch communities there and the growth of religious life that accompanied this development. One of them explains that there are 4 or 5 Dutch churches in Alberta. All these churches are part of the Holland Reformed Church, a religious organisation that is active throughout North-America and closely resembles the Dutch Protestant churches. Although this church is perfectly suitable for practitioners, plans are being made to establish a Calvinist church in Alberta. For more information the author refers to mister Van Ark, one of the most notorious swindling

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122 De Tijd, 19-12-1928

123 De Nederlander 23-04-1929



agents.<sup>124</sup> The other migrant focussed mainly on the community in Edmonton which is looking at ways to expand by creating a new colony. What follows is a description of the kind of people they consider suitable for their new colony.<sup>125</sup> The image portrayed about the Protestant churches in Canada is one of growth and possibility, there is an existing infrastructure for religious life and they are keen to expand this. The striking difference between the frames used by the Protestants and the Catholics is that the Protestants see possibilities while the Catholics cling on to the loss of religion frame.

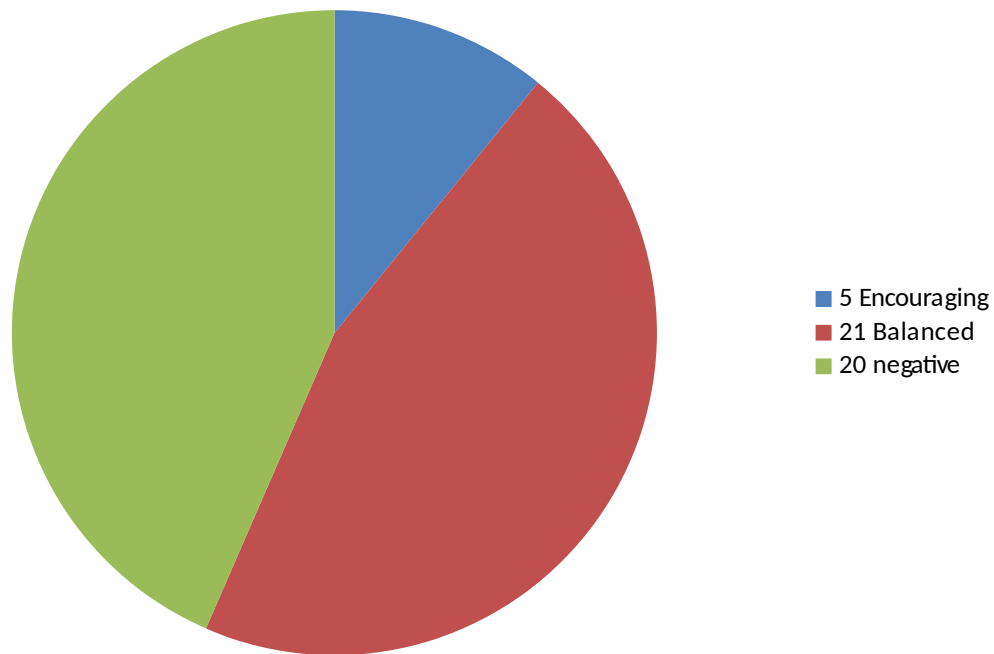
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124 Friesch Dagblad, 28-12-1927 until 18-02-1928

125 De Standaard, 22-09-1927

### Tone of migrant letters

The question this chapter focuses on; why did the migrants use the particular tone they used in order to illuminate their migration experience to Canada in the 1920s? In order to explore this question, first the encouraging migrant letters will be discussed, followed by the more balanced or neutral ones, finally those who warned not to go will be discussed. The pie-char below shows the distribution of migrant letters along these lines.



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*(The total number of migrant letters is less than the sum because several letters gave information on more than one of the aspects discussed)*

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126 Corpus archival sources

## Encouraging

Some of the migrants wrote letters back with encouraging stories about their experiences in Canada. This paragraph deals with five of these letters. Two of this author wrote with a clear self interest while the three others were simply migrants with a positive experience. First the ones with self interest will be discussed, followed by the ones with a positive experience.

“Ten days ago we bought a second hand Ford, those things are remarkably cheap here.” This one of the statement with which the migrant slightly brags about his success. He left the Netherlands with his wife and three older children to work as a gardener in Canada. Now he is renting a large plot of land for five years with the option of buying it afterwards, he is making a lot of money and recommends his fellow countrymen to follow in his footsteps since Dutchmen are extremely wanted there.<sup>127</sup> The information this migrant provides is simply incomparable to any other. Being able to buy a car within a year and renting such a plot of land after such a short time is unheard of. The only logical explanation is that more migrants are needed in his place and that he tries to recruit them by writing about his own success story, it is possible that what he tells is true, however, the part he is not telling seems to be the most interesting one. Another migrant with a clear own agenda is one that describes the Dutch Protestant community in Edmonton. First he explains how they are trying to expand their community and afterwards he starts describing the success stories of others that are already there. He urges families with young children to wait while he advises those with older children to try their luck since their children will be a great help. He concludes that this was; “*the information vicar Selles had told me, which I have seen with my own eyes.*” This author is not even trying to conceal the fact that they are trying to increase the amount of Dutch Protestants in the region; therefore his enthusiasm is easily explained.<sup>128</sup>

“In November I had already saved 300 dollars and that’s after buying my winter outfit.” This migrant was quite happy about his life, after about half a year in Canada he had earned a fair amount of money and he was hopeful for the future. He explained that during the summer employment was easily found, the winter was unfortunately a different story, but this could still be overcome. Being a lumberjack was a possibility, but unfortunately that was hard work for which one needed experience, he envied the Swedes for having that skill. As a result the best thing a Dutchmen could do was to get room

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127 De Noord Ooster, 15-01-1929

128 De Standaard, 22-09-1927

and board at a farmers place while doing chores in exchange. Despite this setback in winter he was full of confidence of his success.<sup>129</sup> Another migrant described how he traveled from place to place doing seasonal labour while seeing most of Canada along the way, despite some setbacks he remains spirited and very enthusiastic about his adventures.<sup>130</sup> A somewhat less reliable migrant was especially struck by how people were judged by their merits and that recommendations did not really matter for the farmers he encountered. In his writings this man also answered the questions of readers. On the question; “*can one be assured of employment upon arrival?*” he answered; “*yes, the C.P.R. can arrange that for you.*” On the one hand he is right, the C.P.R. did provide this service, but since he was an experienced migrant he should have known about the reputation of the C.P.R. at the time of his writing, most other migrants advise those interested to get information at the E.C.H. He is also asked what he thinks of settling in Alberta, although he admits that he knows fairly little about Alberta since he has not been there for too long, he wrote down a long story of how fertile and economically viable Alberta was, in doing so he contradicts himself.<sup>131</sup>

These letters back home give a very positive image of Canada. Although some of the letters are less reliable, others clearly show migrants with good experiences that were doing well. The frame they all used was that of hard working migrants that who were able to succeed due to their effort. What undermines the credibility of the accounts and the impact they will have had on the general public is the fact that there are only a few accounts that were almost purely positive.

### Balanced

The reason for most migrants to write letters to newspapers was to inform others who were considering to migrate to Canada about their experiences. As a result many of these letters, 21 to be precise, held a balanced point of view. In order to illustrate more of the tone these letters were written in, this paragraph will deal with question why did these migrants use a balanced tone? In order to answer this question first a pedantic migrant his letter will be discussed, followed by several advising letters, afterwards some letters that were above all descriptive will be discussed and finally the letters that dealt with the positive and the negative aspects of migration will be discussed.

129 Het Haagsche Volk, 08-06-1926

130 Emmer Courant, 23-02-1926

131 Friesch Dagblad, 28-12-1927 until 18-02-1928

*“Another thing the farmers do not understand was the full knowledge of the farming business which is necessary to succeed.”* This quote clearly illustrates the thoughts of one migrant writing home who was convinced that the Canadians were clueless about what they were doing. In his letter home he stressed the need for diversification of the farmers produce, he suggested that just like in The Netherlands different things of agriculture should be mixed together. What follows is an entire essay on how much better of the Canadians would be with a mixed system.<sup>132</sup> This article is most interesting because the migrant exhibits exactly the behaviour some of the migration agencies warned against, namely that a migrant comes to Canada and thinks that he knows what is better for his bosses. This was noted as one of the problems that were encountered with Dutch migrant. From the migrant point of view it is not strange that he thought this way since he was used to a different situation in The Netherlands and compared that to Canada. At work he saw that in the winter there was little work because everything was focussed on the corn harvest, therefore he thought the Dutch system he knew would be better.

Many of the migrant who were writing home are writing to tell others what to do. Two of them advice future migrants go to the Prairie Provinces<sup>133</sup>, while another explains to his old brothers in arms how and when it is best to migrate.<sup>134</sup> This advising tone is not very surprising. These migrants often received letters of interested readers or friends at home asking them to inform them how they are and what life is like as a migrant. The former soldier who was writing for his old comrades is a good example of this as he explained that he waited with writing in order to be sure that the letters sent by his friends on remote Indonesian islands would also have arrived.<sup>135</sup>

Other migrants are extremely descriptive in their writing. The two women who wrote about their experiences in Canada are examples of this. Both give elaborate descriptions of what their surroundings looked like and how everything functioned in this strange new environment. Especially the woman who wrote from Toronto was so descriptive about what she was doing that it was completely

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132 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 27-01-1925

133 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 07-12-1929 and, Ermeloesche Courant, 20-03-1925

134 Ons Aller Belang, 15-02-1930

135 Ibidem

unclear who she actually was. Ganzevoort even wondered whether this was a woman or a gay man writing. These descriptive writings did contribute majorly to the image of migration to Canada because they both captured a point of view that was lacking; the life of a woman who migrated with her husband to the countryside and an impression of the urban life. The reason for this descriptive tone of their writing is because they were asked to do so, as the woman in Toronto starts here series of letters with; "My lady friends have often asked me;"How is one of those American (Canadian) households run without servants?"<sup>136</sup>

Frans van Waeterstadt was one of the migrants who wrote for a long time about his experiences and gave a broad mix of opinions on Canada. On the one hand he explained how he was talked into working for a lower wage than he should have earned for his first job, while on the other hand he enthusiastically ends his letter series with the announcement that he managed to rent his own farm. Throughout the entire time he is writing he is open about the good and the bad things that happen to him.<sup>137</sup> Another source tried very hard to mimic this tone; this migrant who wrote from the far west was doing his best to provide his reader with both sides of the story, however, when he was asked about the prospects for Alberta he comes with such an obviously biased plea that it is hard to believe his story in hindsight.<sup>138</sup> Van Waeterstadt wrote for several years about his life in Canada and never failed to give a balanced point of view on the affairs as they were. His balanced tone came across as very credible compared to many of the other reports that appeared at the time. Therefore it is not surprising that some people with interest in the migration process tried to acquire a similar tone in order to convince people to migrate, the migrant who was writing from the far west was probably an example of one of those.

In conclusion it can be stated that the tone used by this group was mainly neutral because they were asked to write home in an effort to inform people in The Netherlands about aspects of their lives as migrants. The frame they used for this was an economic one in which they gave insight into the trouble they ran into but also the possibilities. The pedantic migrant may have written out of a sense of

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136 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the "Land of Opportunity"* (Calgary 1999), 187

137 Ibidem, 184-186

138 Friesch Dagblad, 28-12-1927 until 18-02-1928

frustration or vanity since he thought that he knew how things could be done better, while the migrant writing from the far west seems to have been more inspired by ulterior motives. Nonetheless, the other migrants seem to have written home without any other reason than informing people in the Netherlands.

### Negative

Frustration or disappointment was also a reason for many migrants to write home. A total of 20 migrant letters held a very negative point of view with regard to their migration to Canada. Therefore this paragraph aims to explore; why did these migrants use such a negative tone in their writing? In order to answer this question, firstly the story of migrants who wrote a dramatic story will be explored. Secondly, those who wrote back home in order to warn others will be discussed.

The sad fates of migrants were often told in dramatic letters written home. In one of these the stories are told of a man that walked 3200 kilometers in search for work and collapsed along the way but was fortunately saved by other Dutchmen, another story in this letter deals with the fate of a woman and her husband who ended up in a Canadian poor house. The writers of this letter comes up with a striking comparison as he recalls that work in the Baaksche Beek, an unemployment relief project, was considered inhuman.<sup>139</sup> With this comment he meant to imply that the fates of those who tried to make a living in Canada were actually worse.<sup>140</sup> Another letter sent home was written by a group of young Dutchmen in Ontario, they tell about the great unemployment due to the steady influx of new migrants and of the ways in which they were being taken advantage of by Canadian farmers. They end their plea by stating that had the return ticket home been as cheap as the initial journey they would have returned home long ago.<sup>141</sup> A group of Dutch migrants how they were exploited by the agent of the E.C.H. they write how one man was sent to the north to work there, he could not find employment walked around for several weeks and had to be hospitalized with frostbite. The most tragic part was that his wife and children had no income and suffered in poverty. The same agent also took the money of the migrants in

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139<http://geheugenvannederland.nl/?/nl/items/SFA03:SFA001003018/&p=1&i=5&st=werkverschaffing&sc=%28werkverschaffing%29/&wst=werkverschaffing>

140 Arnhemsche Courant, 03-02-1928

141 Herman Ganzevoort, *The Last Illusion, Letters from Dutch Immigrants in the "Land of Opportunity"* (Calgary 1999), 53

order to put it on a bank account; they never saw the money again. In general these dramatic tones were used to make the story more powerful and to give of a string warning against migration to Canada. However, some of the migrants seem to have had other objectives as well, one group addressed the problem of expensive return tickets which they wanted to bring to the reader his attention, while the victims of the E.C.H. agent end their statement with; “*Let us hope that the E.C.H. sends us a man of honour who we can trust.*”

Most of the letters with a negative tone wrote with a warning tone. Some of them had religious motives that worried them. Both the Catholics as the Protestants who wrote home warned for the loss of religion. The Roman Catholic priest warns that he had seen how good people were turned religiously inadequate through the rough migrant life<sup>142</sup>, while the Protestant warns for an overemphasis on the material over the spiritual.<sup>143</sup> False information however, was the most common theme of these warnings. Articles with titles such as; “*Where the west begins...and the misery does not end*”<sup>144</sup>, set a very negative tone from the very beginning and what followed was usually a series of complaints of all the lies that had been told by the stakeholders in order to lure as many new migrants as possible to migrate to Canada. The economic situation was also an issue for which many warned; especially with regard to unemployment many letters were written. One headline states; “*urgent warning for all who wish to migrate to Canada*”, after this rather negative eye catcher, the author explains that he had visited many regions in Canada but that the sad fate of migrants was the same everywhere, they could not find employment and were therefore crowding the placement bureau in a desperate attempt to find employment.<sup>145</sup> Warnings were also issued for those fortune seekers who wanted to get into the US through Canada. One article; “*Warning words from Canada*”, explains that it was easier to get a visa in the Netherlands than in the US and that there were many risks for those who planned to cross the border illegally.<sup>146</sup> Most of the warning letters used this tone to genuinely warn would-be migrants for

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142 De Tijd, 19-12-1928

143 De Standaard, 22-09-1927

144 De Tribune, 15-04-1930

145 Limburger Koerier, 25-09-1928

146 Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant, 04-12-1928



the situation in Canada since the reality was often different than the information given to these people made them believe. Some of the letters had a certain self interest in warning their readers, the letters sent by both the Catholics and the Protestants were infested with a certain doctrine aimed at reminding their readers that religion was a very important aspect of their lives and that this should not be forgotten.

In conclusion it can be stated that the tone used by these migrants was mainly to enforce their story. The stronger the warning or the more dramatic the story, the more likely it was people picked it up and remembered, in order to do this they used a strongly negative economic frame. Most migrants were genuine in their attempt to warn others not to make the same mistakes as they had made, nonetheless, some had their own agenda and used a negative tone for their own interests.

## **Conclusion**

The participants of Dutch migration to Canada in the 1920s portrayed this migration in wide variety of different ways in newspapers. The writers of articles, travel reports and migrant letters were all influenced by very different factors. The writers of articles seem to have been mainly influenced by interest groups at home, while the travel reports were strongly influenced by stakeholders. The migrants were least influenced, most were motivated by a desire to share their experience, however, it should be noted that quite a few of these migrants were influenced by stakeholder and interest groups, or had their own agenda. For the portrayal of Dutch migration to Canada, the writers mainly used three frames; hardship with eventual success, high hopes followed by disappointment and the religious frame.

The migrant arrives at his final destination, at first he is at a loss in these new surroundings, but after a while he gets used to the new situation. He faces hardships in the first few years, however, through his strong will and perseverance he eventually became a successful farmer. This is in short the frame of hardship with eventual success. It was used especially by the journalists in their travel reports from Canada. All of them used this frame. Twenty-one migrants also used this frame, however, they did use it in a different way since most migrants believed to be somewhere in the process of this frame. As a result their representation of this frame is different. They described how they were doing well after several set backs or how they had just endured some bad luck but were confident that they would make it in the end.

Typical was also the story of the migrant who came to Canada with enormous expectations, which were dashed shortly after arrival when he found out that he was not going to get a high wage, that employment was all but certain and that the conditions for migrants in general was bad. This is the high hopes followed by disappointment frame. This frame was used in migrant letters with a negative tone, twenty in total. While the previous frame can be seen as neutral to a certain extent, this frame was very powerful in its negative depiction of migration to Canada. Together with the previous frame this frame was the most represented by the sources. As a result, the way in which Dutch migration to Canada was represented in newspapers was one of tension between this frame and the previous one.

Loss of religion is the final major frame that was used. Striking is the difference in approach between the Catholics and the Protestants. The Catholics were only a minor player in this migration process, as a result only one of the letters home specifically deals with Catholic migration. This letter written by a priest fits within the general attitude of Catholic migration. Similar to the Catholic emigration society that was not allowed to stimulate migration, this priest advises against going to Canada because he fears the loss of religion among migrants. The Protestants were more represented in this migration movement, four letters specifically dealt with protestant migration. Added to this were two of the travel reports of journalists. These sources provide an image of Protestant life in Canada that is still under construction. They warned against stressing the materialistic aspects of migration over the spiritual ones, but above all emphasise the possibilities for the development of Protestant communities.

This research demonstrates the interaction between politics, migration and the media. In the 1920s a migration process took place that was unregulated, although after a few years more and more organisations came into existence to regulate this, they did not really succeed in doing this. Added to this was the fact that the migration legislation was outdated and provided virtually no protection for the

migrants. Because of the lack of reliable information, newspapers started playing a role in the migration process by providing more information. They did this through publishing articles, journalist travel reports and migrant letters. Politics responded to the public debate as was seen in the example of questions that were asked about migration in parliament. As a result of this, it can be said that in times of unregulated migration, the media picks up on the exploits and makes creates public awareness, which than forces a reaction from politicians.

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