Dutch and Australian Government Perspectives on Migration

Joed Elich

Introduction

Dutch emigrants have always thought that the Dutch Government had a strong desire to encourage people to emigrate after World War II. Australians, on the other hand, have always had the idea that their government tried to encourage as many European migrants as possible to come to Australia after the War. Both perspectives are true, but neither nation at the time realized what was happening at the other end of the world. This chapter provides an analysis of Dutch and Australian Government migration policies and deals with non-governmental organizations working on Dutch-Australian migration.

Thomas and Znaniecki, the authors of the famous study 'The Polish Peasant in Europe and America' (1938) showed the importance of studying migrants in both their place of origin and in the area of destination. Although their 'double perspective' is widely praised, their method have hardly ever been followed.

In my research in the 1980s I used the double perspective and was able to interview 289 Dutch migrants in Australia and 124 returnees in the Netherlands. I studied Dutch and Australian migration policies in the respective countries and talked to dozens of migration officials. This chapter draws on those studies. (Elich, 1987)

The Netherlands Perspective

Immediately after World War II, the Netherlands considered itself an overpopulated country due to high birth-rates, relatively low death rates and insufficient means to employ all people. The idea of overpopulation was widespread among government officials, academics and the population at large. The government thought it had several options: annexation of land, birth control and colonization. Just after 1945, annexation of parts of Germany were seriously considered as part of war compensation. This idea disappeared quickly and was replaced by a policy of industrialization and emigration. At the same time as enhancing the industrialization process to help prevent higher unemployment, the Dutch Government pursued a policy of encouraging people to leave the country.

This policy put emphasis on issues of labour market and population processes. Social issues surrounding the question of emigration were not dealt with. Private emigration institutions severely criticised this attitude and started to develop their own policies to help prospective migrants. In 1952, the year the official emigration policy started, three hundred government offices all over the country were authorized to give official emigration information. It is surprising that the official policy started so late, since, as will be discussed a little later, the first plans and the first contract with Australia date from an earlier period. The goal of the official emigration policy was to encourage 60 000 people to emigrate per year. This figure has never been realised. Emigration figures dropped from 48 000 in 1952 to less than 2000 per annum in the 1980s and 1990s.

(Table One about here)

Early Plans

Even before World War II, plans were made to make the Dutch 'prone to emigration'. (Hartland, 1959) At the time the Netherlands was still a very rural country with 17 per cent of the working population employed in agriculture. The migration of young farmers would lift the pressure on the short supply of land. The Ministry of Agriculture, together with unions and employer organizations, started planning campaigns for mass emigration. The War stopped these plans, but the contacts established before 1940 continued. There is a remarkable story of a Dutch representative in Melbourne corresponding with the Dutch Government in Exile in London. Between January and June 1944, this man sent reports about the Australian Government's plans to invite white people to come to Australia. His first letter was dated May 9, 1940 posted in Sydney. In June 1945 this letter was answered in The Hague as follows: "In answer to your letter of November 9, 1940 . . ."

First Dutch Australian Migration Agreement

In 1951 the Netherlands Australia Migration Agreement (NAMA) which provided for Dutch and Australian Government subsidy of certain Dutch migrants, came into effect. Young men and women between eighteen and thirty, labourers and farmers, were eligible under the Agreement for subsidy. Their trip was paid for and they would be received into receptions centres like Wagga Wagga, Bonegilla and Bathurst on

arrival in Australia. In 1953 a new sponsorship programme started for those who did not fulfil the requirements of NAMA. Under this new scheme more farmers as well as more financially secure people went to Australia. Contrary to popular belief in the Netherlands, emigrants to Australia were not always lower class, less educated people although up to the present day in the Netherlands the emigrants from the 1950s and 1960s are still believed to be mainly farmers with low education

(Table Two about here)

The Dutch Government's emigration service (*Nederlandse Emigratie Dienst)* was formed sometime after 1952, but was much reduced by the 1960s. The recruitment of migration officers in the Netherlands was a difficult affair: the government was not used to dealing with social issues and the welfare state was not extensive in the Netherlands at that time. No professional emigration specialists were available and there was no education in emigration issues. Experience had to be acquired through practice itself. Most of the Dutch emigration officials were appointed when the *Nederlandse Emigratie Dienst* began, with little recruitment thereafter. There was little opportunity to change jobs within the service so, although these officials did gain a lot of experience, even though many never had the opportunity to visit emigration countries, the age structure of Dutch emigration officials was very much 'tilted'.

During the same period Australian immigration officials quickly professionalised. This started to cause some problems for the Dutch officials. Informal and personal contacts between Dutch and Australian officials, which used to be important in solving issues relating to particular prospective migrants and in setting migration

quotas, gradually disappeared after 1950. In my interviews, Dutch officials in Australia complained that Australian immigration officials had little feel for migration issues.

Financial Assistance to Migrants

Both the Dutch and the Australian governments subsided migration. Often the Dutch government paid the fare of Dutch migrants to Australia while the Australian government paid landing money. In the 1950s some 90 per cent of Dutch migrants to Australia were subsidized by the Dutch and/or the Australian governments. This proportion was down to 60 per cent in the 1980s. The amount of landing money paid by the Australian government varied over time. In 1958 the average amount was Dfl 670 but this was down to Dfl 386 ten years later. The high organizational costs of distributing such small payments has been the subject of criticism in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, such payments were important since currency controls in the Netherlands during the 1950s prevented emigrants from taking large amounts of money out of the country.

Non Government Emigration Agencies in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, as early as 1847, there were non government agencies dedicated to assisting prospective emigrants. In 1861 the first Dutch emigration act was passed by the Dutch parliament. This Act regulated the migration of those of non-Dutch origin who went to the United States via Rotterdam and Amsterdam. After World WarI non government organizations were established to provide information to prospective

emigrants. In 1936 a law, the *Landverhiszingwet*, which tried to ensure the accuracy of the information provided by these organizations, came into effect. In 1946 a meeting of the *Nederlandse Bond van Landverhiuzing,* a major non government emigration agency, was prevented from going ahead by Dutch police because of concern about the accuracy of the information it was providing.

As a result of regulation, officially approved non government agencies were established. Non government emigration agencies were organized along religious lines. Protestant, Roman Catholic and socialist agencies helped their respective groups to go overseas. Dutch society had been organized along these religious lines since 1917; the so called '*verzuiling'* or pillarisation. Education, sports, interest groups and media were traditionally organised along religious and ideological lines. Each religious or ideological group had their own schools, newspapers, radio stations and sports clubs. In 1952 the Catholic Emigration Foundation and the Christian Emigration Foundation started their work. In 1953 a non-denominational General Emigration Foundation was established. From 1949 till 1965 the Netherlands Women's Committee had its own migration commission to provide information to future migrants. While in 1955 a separate Reformed Emigration Foundation split from the Christian Emigration Foundation.

The denominational emigration agencies contributed to the religious distribution of Dutch migrants in Australia. The concentration of Reformed Church members among Dutch emigrants in Tasmania resulted from chain migration started in 1950 with seven Reform Church emigrant families from the province of Groningen. In Geelong, and later Melbourne, the Dutch Roman Catholic priest Fr Leo Maas supported

hundreds of Dutch Catholic individuals and families and encouraged more to come, resulting in a high proportion of Catholics among Dutch emigrants in the State of Victoria.

The role of the denominational emigration agencies grew throughout the 1950s. While in 1953 they assisted some 35 per cent of Dutch emigrants to Australia, this had grown to 70 per cent in 1960. Other emigrants received assistance from the State Labour Office.

Information and Propaganda

Many Dutch migrants in Australia today complain about the quality of the information they received when they migrated. Although it may be suggested that emigrants only absorbed the information they wanted to hear and that most agencies realized that this was the case, it cannot be denied that information was biased, incomplete and sometimes deceptive. (see Elich, 1987: 121) It is also worth noting that in the 1950s information channels were not as well developed as today: there was no television and library access was limited.

Van Wamel (1993) found that among 100 interviewees 43 per cent considered the information they received insufficient. Another 16 per cent said they received no information. An analysis of six ‘guidance’ brochures showed that some were mere ‘packing instructions’ or cultural guides. Nonetheless, most brochures gave realistic information about housing shortages and problems with work permits. (van Wamel, 1993: 47ff)

Inclination to Emigrate

The inclination to emigration was very high just after the War. More than 30 per cent of the population in 1947 said they wanted to emigrate.

(Table three about here)

Although the wish to emigrate was evident, the number that actually emigrated was much lower. At the height of the emigration wave only 3.6 per cent of the population actually emigrated.

The emigration policy of the Dutch government in the 1950s and 1960s was hardly ever criticized. Caplow, an American researcher, called the Dutch sociologists in those years “obedient servants of the government”. Noted academics such as van Heek, Groenman, Steigenga and Hofstede agreed that the Netherlands was an over-populated country. However, Petersen’s in his 1955 study argued that Dutch emigration policy was not based on rational grounds and that emigration did not contribute to the solution of the population problem. But in 1964 when Hofstede criticised Dutch emigration policy in his thesis, his book was all but ignored by the Dutch government.

Decline in Emigration Numbers

The Dutch government never had any real influence over migration numbers. Very soon after the official migration policy started in 1952, the emigration numbers started to drop due to lack of interest both by emigrants and by immigration countries. There were a number of reasons for this decline in the interest to emigrate:

- The Netherlands industrialized very rapidly; the percentage of agricultural workers dropped from 17 to 11 per cent between 1947 and 1957,
- Australia imposed stricter entry rules for migrants in 1953,
- There were organizational problems resulting from a lack of ships to carry emigrants with some emigrants waiting up to two years before they could board a ship.

In the 1960s and early 1970s more and more people, especially from Mediterranean countries, came to the Netherlands as ‘guest workers’. They were never considered as permanent residents. Nonetheless most did not return. In fact looked at over a longer time span, there has been net immigration to the Netherlands.

(Table four about here)

This increase is all the more remarkable because in the 1950s with a population of just under ten million people the Netherlands considered itself an overpopulated country. Since then the population of the Netherlands has risen to over fifteen million in 1996.

In 1962 the Dutch government was forced by parliament to withdraw from actively encouraging emigration. Employers, in particular, did not wish a policy which on the one hand encouraged working age people to leave the country while on the other hand

encouraged guest workers to come into the country. The changes instituted in 1962 from a so called ‘active policy’ to a so called ‘positive’ policy towards emigration made work for the private emigration agencies very difficult.

Conclusion

The Dutch government tried to establish an ‘emigration climate’ in the Netherlands. However, it is not governments that decide whether emigration will be a success. Actual numbers of emigrants show that the targets for emigration to Australia, and other countries, were never reached. The goals were never met.

In the period just after the Second World War emigration was considered a necessity. The image of emigration created in the 1950s has lasted until today. Articles about emigration are still accompanied by pictures from the 1950s of large ships full of families departing from Rotterdam or Amsterdam, waving goodbye to their relatives. Emigration was a mass movement, but only for a short time. Emigration was considered permanent, but after 1960 more and more migrants returned. Over the period 1945 till 1985 more than 30 per cent who went to Australia returned to the Netherlands for good. In the end net migration was far lower than the numbers predicted in the 1950s.

The Other Side: Australian Perspectives

In 1947 Australia established a Department of Immigration which, with the exception of the period 1974 till 1976 when immigration matters were taken over by the

Department of Labour, has been in existence ever since. Also in 1947 an Immigration Advisory Council was established to advise the government on immigration matters. This Council consisted mainly of academics. An Immigration Planning Council advised on the number of immigrants that Australia would accept each year.

From 1950 the Australian government funded Good Neighbour Councils to support their work assisting migrants in the period immediately after their arrival. It must be said that Dutch immigrants hardly ever used the services provided by the Councils.

By the mid 1960s it was slowly and gradually realised that migrants would be better off maintaining their own cultural heritage rather than being forced to assimilate. Cultural ties with the mother land would help facilitate integration. From the mid 1960s Dutch migrants renewed efforts to organize themselves. Although there were some Dutch clubs and groups dating from the mid 1950s, many more clubs and groups started around this time.

In the early 1970s the intellectual community was paying increased attention to issues surrounding migration and immigrants. In 1972 the Whitlam Labor Government came to office. In 1974 it replaced the Immigration Advisory Council and the Immigration Planning Council, with the Australian Population and Immigration Council under the presidency of Jerzy Zubrzycki, a sociologist from the Australian National University, who, as it happens, ten years earlier had written a study of Dutch immigrants. It also introduced the policy of multiculturalism which, after 1975, was taken up and developed by the Frazer Liberal – National Party government. In 1977 Zubrzycki as Chairman of the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council wrote *Australia as a Multicultural*

Society, which was followed in 1978 by the landmark 'Galbally Report' – '*Australia: Review of Post Arrival Programs and Services to Migrants'*. The report stressed the importance of the freedom of all Australians, no matter where they were born, to express their cultural identity; the need for government to secure equality of opportunity for all residents of Australia and to ensure that all Australian residents have access to all government services. The Galbally Report argued for a strategy of service delivery targeting migrants and involving migrant organizations in the delivery of government services such as those in the area of welfare. It also supported the establishment of a telephone interpreting service and multicultural radio and television stations.

Australian attitudes towards the migration of the Dutch

In Australia just after World War II, the Dutch were seen as a preferred group of migrants. They were considered to assimilate easily and to be industrious. According to former New South Wales Premier Neville Wran, "They pride themselves on fitting in. I prefer Dutch migrants because you don't need to know them." An analysis of the archives of the Immigration Advisory Council shows that there have only been a few difficulties with the migration of the Dutch to Australia over the years. In 1949 there were reports of problems caused by a shortage of transport for prospective Dutch migrants to Australia. In 1957 the Dutch emigration officer B. W. Haveman wanted to start a large campaign to promote Dutch migration to Australia. The Australian authorities were not enthusiastic.

Interestingly, the Indonesian independence struggle did not influence Australian-Dutch migration policy. (Elich, 1987: 207)

> Foreign affairs and immigration policy seemed totally apart from each other. Indonesia was supported in its independence struggle, but at the same time a 'white' immigration policy was followed. There has been at least one incident where the two policies clashed: a Dutch woman of Indonesian descent, Mrs O'Keefe, married to an Australia, was going to be extradited. Under the white Australia policy she could not get a permanent status in Australia, but expelling her from the country would conflict with the pro-Indonesian policy. There was a lot of media attention and Mrs O'Keefe was allowed to stay. (George, 1980: 133)

There have long been rumours of little known and sometimes unofficial agreements between Australian officials and emigration officials in source countries banning or limiting the number of persons from groups thought to be undesirable entering Australia. It is well known that in 1946 Arthur Calwell, Australia's immigration minister, reacting to anti-Semitism in Australia, imposed a quota of twenty five per cent on the proportion of Jews arriving on any one ship coming to Australia (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984: 12) and there have been reports of unofficial agreements effectively banning homosexuals and people with left wing sympathies from entering Australia as migrants. In my research I did not find evidence of any such unofficial agreements. Nonetheless, the number of 'minorities' among the Dutch in Australia is very low. According to the 1996 Australian Census, less than 0.2% of all Dutch born in Australia are Jewish. Among my interviewees were a couple of Jews and homosexuals but they came to Australia in the 1970s. On the other hand quite a few people from the Resistance Movement in the Netherlands emigrated to Australia, though many of them thought that the Labor Party there was not left-wing enough.

Dutch assistance to Dutch migrants in Australia

Shortly after the signing the Netherlands Australia Migration Agreement in 1951, Dutch migration officers were sent to Australia to assist Dutch migrants. They opened offices in all the major Australian cities and operated until the 1980s when their responsibilities were assumed by the Netherlands Embassy in Canberra and the Consulates-General in Sydney and Melbourne.

Private institutions, and especially the churches, also sent their representatives to Australia to assist the immigrants. Among these were Fr Leo Maas, a Dutch Roman Catholic priest who lived in Melbourne from 1949 till his death in 1983. The Protestant churches also sent ministers to assist immigrants in Australia.

Australian assistance to Dutch migrants in Australia

Under the multicultural policy established in 1974, Australia sought to improve migrant access to government services through involving ethnic organizations in the provision of such services and through the establishment of special services for migrants. Initially the Dutch did not see much need for these innovations and it is only in the last decade that they have started to change their mind and for their community organizations to apply for grants to operate welfare services such as aged care and to make use of the opportunities presented by ethnic radio.

Nonetheless, Dutch migrants use Australian services in an ‘ethnic way’. By this I mean they visit pubs and sports matches less than Anglo-Australians and read more

newspapers than the average Australian. They also socialize more with friends and family at home. In particular, the Dutch custom of having a coffee at someone's home has been kept alive.

First generation Dutch migrants have not penetrated into Anglo-Australian strongholds like politics. James Jupp has noted the under representation of ethnic groups like the Italians, Dutch and Greeks in State politics (Jupp, 1984). The Dutch are even less represented than the Italians and Greeks.

Conclusion: Migration as a Paradox

The Dutch left the Netherlands for Australia to forget their Dutchness, but they were confronted with their Dutch heritage in an uncompromising way. In the 1950s the Dutch minister for migration Suurbier said that after marriage emigration is the most important experience in life.

The Dutch in the 1950s never considered themselves as an ethnic group. They thought that they could blend into Australian society quickly without leaving traces of their Dutchness. Both the Dutch and the Australian governments as well as migration bodies in both countries encouraged migrants to assimilate as soon as possible. None considered the 'location-specific capital' of Dutch society. (Thompson, 1978) which seems superficial but is present in many Dutch Australian homes. Jerzy Zubrzycki wrote about this.

> Many Dutch homes are decorated in the traditional Dutch style with dark-coloured furniture and a dark reddish coloured thick tapestry pinned …. over

> the mantelpiece. …. Dutch kitchens are different because of the habit of hanging cooking utensils around the room. Often there is a tea-towel with a Dutch motto pinned up on the kitchen door.
> (Zubrzycki, 1964: 107-8)

One of my interviewees asked the question, has post-War Dutch migration to Australia been effective? Was it worth the effort? On both sides of the world costly migration services were established for the Dutch. It is not difficult to sum up all the disadvantages and emotional problems encountered by migrants. The interviews I conducted were full of tales of broken relationships, illnesses, conflicts and repatriation.

The first generation Dutch in Australia never completely Australianized. Most of them did relatively well, in spite of the difficulties. Neither the Dutch nor Australian governments realized the effects migration had on the people who migrated, the ones who returned to their home country and the family and friends who were left behind. Migration for them was a mere calculation of numbers and economic effects. But when all is said and done the emigration from the Netherlands to Australia has been worthwhile. Ten s of thousands of families found a new future. Australia was glad to receive many new immigrants and the Dutch have contributed to the multicultural society Australia is today.

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Table One: Emigration from the Netherlands

Period	To Australia	Total Emigration	% To Australia
1946-50	11 872	56452	21
1951-55	58 772	188 651	31
1956-60	41 527	132 150	31
1961-65	13 133	49 332	27
1966-70	13 190	44 355	30
1971-75	6 221	23 468	26
1976-80	4 955	18 806	27
1981-85	6 559	20 018	33
1986-90	6 246	41 900	15
1991-95	5 954	41 200	14
Total	**168 429**	**616 332**	**27**

Table 2: Occupation and Education of Dutch Emigrants to Australia (%)

	1949	**1951**	**1969**
Higher Education	-	-	24
Administrative Workers	-	14	17
Services Workers	2	5	8
Agricultural Workers	15	8	6
Craftsmen	62	55	32
Other	21	18	7

Table Three: Inclination to Emigrate (%)

	Percentage saying they wished to Emigrate
1946	22
1947	32
1949	29
1951	26
1953	21
1960	27
1966	11
1971	16
1982	24

Table Four: Population Change 1945-1984

	Australia	The Netherlands
Net Migration	+3 000 000	+370 000
Excess Birth/Deaths	+4 900 000	+4 880 000