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THE FLEMISH AND DUTCH MIGRANT PRESS IN CANADA
A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

by Jennifer VRIELINCK

I INTRODUCTION

The fact that Canada has long been a pole of attraction for an important inflow of migrants from places such as Flanders and the Netherlands is evidenced by the extensive social life and press activities which Flemish and Dutch Canadians have managed to develop over time. In this report, we will focus on the evolution of Flemish and Dutch migration to Canada. For a clearer view of the subject, a distinction has been made between Southern Ontario and the rest of Canada: first of all because of the exceptional situation regarding Flemish presence in Southern Ontario, and also because immigration flows between the United States and the other Canadian provinces have traditionally gone through Ontario. Precisely due to this central position, Ontario seems to be closely tied to press and social circles in the United States.

II FLEMISH AND DUTCH MIGRANTS IN CANADA
A BRIEF HISTORY

1927 was undoubtedly the peak year for Flemish and Dutch immigration to Canada, with no less than 2,369 Flemish and more than twice as many Dutch nationals crossing the Atlantic. After 1927 economic hardship forced Canada gradually to close off its borders; meanwhile, the rest of the world was facing massive unemployment. Between 1930 and 1937, barely a hundred of Flemish nationals gained permission to settle in Canada. This state of affairs lasted until the 1938 economic recovery (Verthé, 1974: 174). At the outbreak of World War II, 29,711 Belgians had emigrated to Canada; they were almost exclusively Flemish. Initially, most settled in the West.

2.1 Ontario

In 1910 Flemish immigrants began to settle in the Chatham and Wallaceburg areas. When it became apparent that the tobacco industry offered better prospects, many left the West for Ontario. The most important Flemish settlement was located at the heart of the tobacco-growing region, within the London-Kitchener-Dunnville triangle. Life centered around Delhi and Tillsonburg: Delhi became the hub of social life, while Tillsonburg dominated economic activity.

In the southernmost part of Ontario, on the Leamington-Chatham-Wallaceburg line, Flemish presence remained important despite losses to new tobacco-growing regions starting in 1928. The population there mainly consisted of bricklayers, farmers, and gardeners. Some continued to grow tobacco in addition to their main occupation. This
settlement was without a doubt an important contact point between the so-called Flemish colony in Detroit and the Flemish population in the extended tobacco-growing region around Delhi and Tillsonburg. It also was Ontario’s oldest Flemish settlement: around 1910, the majority of the settlers were sons of farmers who had not been successful in Detroit’s heavy industry. Flemish migrants also went Eastward, away from the prairie provinces whose harsh climate hampered the profitability of work.

In the mid-1920’s, another important settlement developed around Sarnia on Lake Huron. At first, the Flemish were solely active in agriculture. Partly because of its convenient location next to the lake, with Port Huron (US) on the opposite bank, Sarnia rapidly grew into a thriving industrial center. Most of the Flemish migrants were employed as technicians and manual laborers. There also was a small colony of tobacco farmers around Port Hope on Lake Ontario, 100 kilometers to the East of Toronto, the provincial capital. It is thus clear that the economic contribution of the Flemish population lay in the growing of tobacco. Fully half of the 4,500 farms in Ontario were under Flemish ownership. Toronto was home to about 1,000 Flemish natives who were active in a wide range of professions; university records of the time list students of Flemish origin. Several dozen Flemish natives had settled in the national capital, Ottawa, including university professors, journalists, etc. (Verthé, 1974: 175-6).

While we are mostly concerned with Flemish immigration here, it must be said that the number of Dutch immigrants was considerably larger. However, there was something special about the Flemish presence: nowhere else in the world do we encounter such typically Flemish settlements as in Ontario. With regard to profession and place of residence, the Dutch immigrants covered a wider area than the Flemish. In the 1950’s, Dutch migrants were listed as the fifth ethnic group in Ontario with 216,000 individuals, as compared to 25,000 Flemish people (Verthé, 1974: 174-6).

Social life in Ontario developed in a haphazard way. Originally, the migrants were only in need of material security. In 1928, Flemish Capuchin monks came to Ontario with the intention of contributing to the development of Flemish social life (Verthé, 1974: 105). Due to hard times, no action was taken until ten years later. In 1939, a velodrome was built in Delhi, providing Flemish immigrants a place to practice their national sport (Verthé, 1974: 109). During the war years, cycling lost some of its appeal. Nevertheless, several associations were founded at that time. The theater group Voor Huis en Haard (Home and Hearth) was the first step; in 1946 the (Delhi) Belgian Club was founded (Verthé, 1974: 109). Lacking cafes of their own, the Flemish built a Belgian Hall. By the end of the sixties, the club boasted 3,000 members; the liquor license granted by the government – a highly exceptional occurrence in rigidly Protestant Ontario – most certainly accounted for the large membership.

The Belgian Club periodically published club newsletters, exclusively for its members (Verthé, 1974: 119). An actual magazine never appeared, partly due to close family and friendship ties with Detroit, where the Gazette van Detroit (a Dutch-language
newspaper made by and for the Flemish migrants) was available. After all, the Flemish in Southern Ontario had more in common psychologically with the Flemish in Detroit than with those residing in Canada. During the early years, this common bond was strengthened even more by the existence of the Detroit velodromes, which Canada’s Flemish immigrants took full advantage of in order to practice their national sport. The Gazette van Detroit also always included a Canadian page.

Toronto’s Belgian-Canadian Club declined, especially because the migrants only used the capital city of Toronto as a halfway house on their way to a permanent settlement elsewhere. In fact, the role of a major city as a stepping stone is a very common element in migration. The Belgian-Canadian Club originally functioned as a reception center for newly-arrived Flemish immigrants. In Sarnia, the Flemish and Dutch migrant clubs merged into the Canadian-Belgian-Dutch Club; its membership was comprised of 500 families, 25 percent of which were Flemish and 75 percent were Dutch. The Wallaceburg Canadian-Belgian-Dutch Club was a daily meeting point for a pigeon racing union, a card game club and a rifle association. In Tilsonburg, a similar amalgamation of Flemish and Dutch social activities could be found in the Canadian Benelux Unity Club, a soccer club with fluctuating membership, its main activity being the organization of group trips to the Netherlands and Flanders. In Chatham, the Kent Belgian-Dutch Club acted as substitute for Flemish and Dutch cafes and pubs, offering dancing, bowling, archery and parties (Verthé, 1974: 176).

It is clear that Ontario, the Canadian province which borders the great lakes, is unlike any other province with respect to Flemish migration. Thanks to tobacco growing, among other factors, the Flemish contribution was particularly valuable on an economic and social level. However, their cultural contribution was quite small. In fact, especially in the early years, Flemish migrants viewed intellectual education and cultural pursuits as a luxury they could not afford. On the other hand, Dutch immigration was characterized by cultural contributions. The Dutch did not have much use for the Gazette van Detroit, presumably because its “simple Dutch” often lapsed into “pretty Flemish,” and also because the news often related to Flemish families living in the United States.

In 1954, Laura Schippers founded De Nederlandse Courant. This was a bi-weekly magazine comprising various features which always filled up an entire page: De Sport Courant (sports), The Dutch-Canadian Courant, De Reis Courant (travel), De Financiéle Courant (financial) and De Community Calendar. In October 1991, the Dutch Canadian Association created The Link in Ontario. Written both in English and in Dutch, this quarterly magazine mainly featured club news, unlike De Nederlandse Courant, which covered international news (from the Netherlands) and national news (from Ontario).
2.2 The other Canadian provinces

Even though the Flemish showed an interest for Canada early on, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the actual Flemish migration wave into Canada really began. This was mostly due to Canada’s immigration policy. In addition to the propaganda promoting Canada as a land without restrictions, migrants were offered free lots of land. Due to their willingness to work, Flemish migrants were repeatedly defined as a preferred group. However, more often than not, Canada was seen as the legal entry gate into the United States, with Canadian citizenship as the entrance ticket. Most of the Flemish entering Canada were farmers and seasonal workers, often attracted by enticing slogans such as the “Golden West” and the “Granary of the World.” Adventurers and gold diggers were also found in the group.

To appreciate the considerable Flemish presence in Western Canada, one only needs look at the towns in the Pembina hills region. The Flemish migrants played a part in founding Saint-Alphonse (1883), Bruxelles (1892), Mariapolis (1903), Somerset (1907) and Swan Lake (1919) (Verthé, 1974: 204). At the same time, Saint-Boniface developed into the largest Belgian settlement in Canada. Through the efforts of the Capuchin monks, a Belgian Church came into existence and in 1905 Le Club belge/The Belgian Club was founded in order to promote social as well as business life. Moreover, Saint-Boniface was the gateway to the West. Many migrants had passed through Saint-Boniface to settle in Saskatchewan and Alberta, two provinces where thousands of Flemish lived, spread out over the endless plains, in the 1970’s. Social life thrived until 1964, especially because of the Belgian Club in Edmonton. The members lived too far away from each other. Due to the great distances and the rough climate, social ties begin to fall apart. Furthermore, serving alcohol in public places without a license was forbidden in Canada. As Verthé (1974: 230) rightfully wondered: “(...) where on earth do Flemish throats wash down feelings of abandonment or homesickness with Coke or orange juice?”

Very few Flemish immigrants lived in the four maritime provinces of Eastern Canada. The situation was similar in the far North, apart from a number of missionaries, the only ones having made it this far in the beginning of the century. As for British Columbia, Canada’s westernmost province, it boasted a larger number of Flemish immigrants. Most of these came from Belgium after the WWII or from the Congo after 1960. Generally speaking, the richest Flemish Canadians can be found here. The Flemish migrants who managed to amass a small fortune in other parts of Canada also tend to retire in the province, owing to the pleasant, mild climate of the Pacific Ocean (Verthé, 1974: 238). A Belgian Club was established there as well. In comparison with the other Belgian Clubs, this one enjoys much greater independence. This is largely due to the high local standards of living. No appeals for subsidies had to be made to the government or other authorities.

Saint-Boniface is mostly a French-language community: those Flemish people who speak French like to settle there. Moreover, there is a religious reason: Saint-Boniface is a Catholic town, while the region around Winnipeg is considered to be Protestant.
In Montréal (Québec), the Union belge was founded in 1903; in 1966 the Vlaamse Kring (Flemish Circle) came into being. The latter has been sponsoring various events such as the Ijzer Pilgrimage Day and the Breughelian Feasts. Despite the thriving social and cultural life, there are no newspapers published by and for the Flemish. This is understandable, as all Belgian associations in Québec were led by French-speaking individuals. However, there are a number of publications intended for Dutch migrants, especially in British Columbia; they are distributed throughout Canada. According to Verthé (1974: 273), none of these publications are read by Flemish families: "(...) perhaps this can be partly explained by the smooth integration and easy adaptability of our emigrants (...)." The Flemish associations however, especially those in Québec, lacked self-confidence. With the exception of the Vlaamse Kring\(^2\), Belgian associations pay little attention to Dutch or Flemish culture. Therefore, it is necessary to stress the great importance of an association such as Vlaamingen in de Wereld (V.I.W.; Flemish of the World): this association has local clubs in a number of countries and is also active in Canada.

Those among the Dutch migrants known for their patriotic fervor were remarkably active in the publication of their own magazines. The most important newspapers were as follows: in 1954 De Nederlandse Courant and the Hollandia News were founded; in 1958 Good News appeared for the first time and in 1971 the last two titles were merged into The Windmill Herald, published by Vanderheide Publishing. This newspaper was issued twice a month in three editions: Western Canada, Central Canada and the Maritimes, and US and the Overseas. In British Columbia, De Hollandse Krant was founded in 1969: this monthly had a strong focus on the Dutch language and included a large section on Dutch literature. The Link News was created in October 1991 by the Dutch Canadian Association – Ottawa Valley. It is published every four months and is distributed free of charge. In the following section, we will explore in more detail several characteristics regarding content and format of these newspapers.

III THE DUTCH LANGUAGE PRESS IN CANADA

3.1 De Nederlandse Courant

In 1954, when post-war Dutch migration reached its peak, De Nederlandse Courant was founded in Toronto; it was the first Dutch language newspaper in Ontario. Laura Schippers, a Dutch journalist, recognized the need of the newly arrived migrants for news from the Netherlands. The newspaper was launched from a small office in Scarborough. The first issue boasted four pages written by Laura, her husband and a few volunteers. Topics covered concerned the Netherlands and Dutch migrants. Publishing the newspaper monthly and later bi-weekly turned out to be a full-time job

\(^2\) The Vlaamse Kring owes its name to the typical post-war phenomenon of Flemish cultural emancipation. Associations set up by Flemish migrants abroad are no longer called Belgian, but Flemish.
for Laura. The two thousand five hundred subscribers were not only from Ontario, but also from other parts of Canada. At that time, *De Nederlandse Courant* was the only Dutch language newspaper in Canada. In 1959, with the death of Laura Schippers, the task of chief editor was taken over by her husband until 1962. Afterwards, three businessmen bought the newspaper. One of these had a spouse who took charge of editing and layout. After a couple of difficult years, Thea Schryer became owner of the newspaper and took over the editing tasks. As a result of her enthusiasm and drive, the newspaper began to grow. Together with her children, she turned it into a family venture. Her leadership was a success and the newspaper became financially stable, even turning out a profit every now and then.

In the meantime, the Dutch-speaking migrant community was changing. Becoming more affluent. Logically, additional Dutch language newspapers appeared. *De Nederlandse Courant* now totaled twenty pages with features such as *Nieuws van thuis* (News from Home), *Sport Community Nieuws*, *Interviews* and *Reistips* (travel tips). Employed staff provided editorial content, with news from the Netherlands selected from Dutch newspapers providing the balance. Thea Schryer held a readers’ poll regarding the popularity of the newspaper (Deleu, 1994: 306). *De Nederlandse Courant* turned out to be the most popular newspaper thanks to the *Nieuws van thuis* feature. In 1979, a peak of four thousand subscribers was reached. In 1987 *De Nederlandse Courant* was awarded the Lily Munroe Award for Excellence in Journalism owing to its content, layout and contribution in maintaining and promoting multiculturalism in Canada. In the same year, the newspaper also received the Canadian Ethnic Journalist Award as a recognition of its level of professionalism.

In 1991 Thea Schryer sold the newspaper to businessmen Bas Opdenkelder and Theo Luykenaar. The total number of pages increased to approximately 24 pages. The newspaper was now published twenty-six times a year in tabloid format, featuring short articles in English as well as in Dutch. A large section was dedicated to travel news. The newspaper largely focused on Ontario and chose to run positive news coverage about the Netherlands. Thanks to efficient marketing, *De Nederlandse Courant* has continued to grow. In 1994 it had more than 4,000 subscribers and was also distributed in the *Dutch Stores* (shops where Dutch products were sold). The newspaper also tries to appeal to the younger generation. This means more and more articles written in English, even though a lot of attention continues to be given to Dutch language lessons and Dutch cultural events. The present publisher, Theo Luykenaar, sees the newspaper as a business, not a passion (Deleu, 1994: 307). Thanks to this strategy, the future of *De Nederlandse Courant* looks more promising than that of most other Dutch language newspapers in Canada.

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3 We base our summarized description of the content of *De Nederlandse Courant* on the following issues: June 4, 1994: 39(11); August 13, 1994: 39(11); January 11, 1995: 40(3).
3.2 The Link News

The Link News is very recent: it was founded in October 1991 by the Dutch Canadian Association - Ottawa Valley. The magazine is published four times a year and is distributed free of charge to members of the Dutch Canadian Association - Ottawa Valley/Outaouais, but complimentary copies are also available at the Dutch embassy in Ottawa and in about eight stores run by Dutch shop owners. The publication is financed through advertisements. Advertisers mainly include travel agencies, Dutch cafes, Dutch stores and moving companies. The Link News contains articles in both Dutch and English, and totals approximately 23 quarto pages. Black and white photographs illustrate the editorial articles. Besides the leading article and the Coming Events section on the first page, the second page features an editorial: The Editor Speaks. The regular column Nieuws uit Nederland (News from the Netherlands) follows, supplemented with general announcements and letters to the editor. Also, one page is reserved for past events: in 1995 it featured a great number of photographs of celebrations in honor of victims of WWII. In addition, the newspaper includes missing person notices, human interest articles about Dutch Canadians, travel and gardening tips, as well as the Business Notebook with stock exchange news. In short, the articles are very general and rather varied. It is a typical club bulletin focusing on non-members. An indication of this are the various locations where The Link News is available for free.

3.3 The Christian Courier

The Christian Courier is a special case. It was intended from the start for a specific target group and with a well-defined purpose which is unlike that of any of the other newspapers discussed in this report. There are a number of reasons for mentioning it here. Besides typically religious matters, it also covers general news. The Christian Courier, previously the Canadian Calvinist, is now published entirely in English: Dutch has become obsolete. The evolution of this newspaper raises questions with regard to the future of those which are currently still published in Dutch.

On August 6, 1945 appeared the first issue of The Canadian Calvinist, founded by vicar Paul De Koekkoek (Witvoet, 1985a: 3). This issue was completely written in English. The majority of the readership had lived in Canada for 20 years or more and it would be several years before the start of the great immigration wave which was to follow the Second World War. In the first issues, vicar De Koekkoek pointed out the significant progress of Calvinism in Canada. Until January 15, 1946 The Canadian Calvinist was mimeographed. Starting on February 15, 1946, the monthly publication was printed in small format. During its second year of publication, the newspaper was expanded to eight pages, with a circulation of 550 to 1000 copies (Witvoet, 1985b: 5). In February 1948, the editorial team asked whether the magazine should continue to be published entirely in English, or if articles in the Dutch language could be included.

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4 This brief classification of features is based on The Link News, January 10, 1994.
The chief editor refused to take into account the large migration wave of Dutch people to Canada and referred to an existing Dutch publication written in Dutch, namely De Wachter, the Dutch language magazine of the Dutch Church. The Canadian Calvinist thus decided to remain an English language publication. Nevertheless, in the October/November 1948 issue, a section appears in Dutch for the first time (Korte Berichten Holland-Canada – Short News Holland-Canada).

Nineteen forty-nine saw the creation of a new monthly magazine with religious preoccupations called Contact. Its focus was mostly on Ontario, while The Canadian Calvinist was operating from Huntingdon (British Columbia) at that time. The first Contact issue appeared in August 1949 (Witvoet, 1985b: 7). The publication was run by the Christian Reformed Immigration Societies in Eastern Canada, and was written entirely in Dutch. John Vander Vliet was responsible for editing; John Vellinga took care of publishing. The magazine was printed in Chatham (Ontario). From March 1950, the first paid advertisements started to appear in Contact. Also in this issue, an article in English was found for the very first time.

In June 1950, the two publications began discussions towards a potential merger. Both parties understood that there was room for only one Dutch language Calvinist publication in Canada, but were divided regarding the manner in which cooperation should be achieved. The Canadian Calvinist wanted to remain an independent publication, while Contact preferred to be under the control of the migrant associations in order to prevent a take-over by another group. In the meantime, The Canadian Calvinist celebrated its fifth anniversary, having reached a circulation of 3,500 copies (Witvoet, 1985b: 6). When Contact celebrated its first year anniversary, it had a circulation of 2,000 (Witvoet, 1985b: 7). In 1950, 45 percent of Contact's revenue came from advertising and the paper seemed to be generating sufficient funds to exist as an independent publication. From March 1951 Contact was printed in a larger format: The Canadian Calvinist had switched to this format one year before. Now Contact had a circulation of 2,900. The Canadian Calvinist could still count on 400 subscribers. In September 1951 the final issues of both magazines appeared; an agreement had been reached for the founding of one publication: the Calvinist-Contact. The new magazine was published twice a month and was printed in Chatham (Ontario). It featured articles both in Dutch and in English and was under the management of those migrant associations involved. It was especially the influence of Contact which seems to live on in the Calvinist-Contact. As a matter of fact, on the front page the word “Calvinist” was printed in smaller type than the word “Contact.” Thus the first issue of the new Calvinist-Contact appeared on October 15, 1951, with John Vander Vliet as new chief editor: precisely the one person who previously never wanted to cooperate with The Canadian Calvinist – and who in fact quit after one year. He continued to write for the magazine, but was replaced as chief editor by John Gritter, a vicar from London (Ontario) (Witvoet, 1985b: 11). In 1954 the magazine moved to Hamilton, where publication and distribution were done by Bosch & Kcuning Ltd. A new business manager replaced John Vellinga, who went off to found his own newspaper, the Hollandia News. These changes also heralded the end of John
Gritter as chief editor; his successor was professional journalist Adolf Otten. The Christian Immigration Societies retained ownership of the publication, which had 3200 subscribers. Otten introduced many changes in the publication, and in October 1954 the Calvinist-Contact became a weekly magazine published in tabloid format.

After five years at the Calvinist-Contact, Otten decided to leave: his views on life no longer matched the Calvinist outlook of the publication (Witvoet, 1985d: 15). Dick Farenhorst took over as chief editor and retained this position until 1976. Under Farenhorst’s leadership, the magazine experienced a metamorphosis. Originally, the publication was written mainly in Dutch; in order to reach the younger generations, an English supplement of two to four pages was added in 1962: the Christian Courier. Five years later, this was replaced by English Edition, an eight-page supplement. English was used more and more as the working language, and in 1969 even the front page was in English. In 1973 only four pages were still written in the Dutch language. Farenhorst died on July 6, 1976 (Witvoet, 1985e: 17-21). During Farenhorst’s illness Keith Knight gradually took over the latter’s responsibilities, becoming chief editor and retaining the position until 1982. Articles in Dutch became fewer and fewer. In 1977, K. Knight Publishing Limited took over the Calvinist-Contact from the Guardian Publishing Company Ltd. Now Knight was chief editor as well as owner of the magazine. In 1981, Bert Witvoet became assistant chief editor, gradually taking on chief editorship. Knight remained publisher for some time, but then left to become chief editor for another Ontario newspaper. In 1983 the last two pages still written in Dutch were scrapped. The Calvinist-Contact was now a purely English-language publication. The last phase of this transformation occurred in 1992, when the title was changed to the Christian Courier. Now, the newspaper was published every Friday with a circulation of approximately 5,000. Bert Witvoet remained as chief editor and Stan De Jong was still director, a position he had assumed after Knight’s departure. In 1995 the publication celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

For the purpose of illustration, we will briefly look at the content of the new Christian Courier. The articles contain general news from Canada and the Netherlands, as well as religious news. The publication includes an opinion page, an editorial by Bert Witvoet, reserves space for letters from readers. A number of pages feature ecclesiastic world news. Culture is also covered through a movie section. Advertisements may spread over as many as five full pages. These appear throughout the publication and are mainly from Dutch-Canadian advertisers (sometimes including text in Dutch): travel agencies, Dutch bakeries, banks, lawyers offices, senior citizens’ homes, etc. The Christian Courier has undergone a transformation: because of this, it can be considered as a prototype of the other Dutch language immigrant publications. Even though a certain English influence was apparent from the beginning with the first issue of The Canadian Calvinist, we nevertheless see Contact evolve from a true Dutch language publication to a bilingual publication, which takes the final step in the eighties towards an integral English language publication. The editorial content of the Christian Courier is indeed unique because of the extensive coverage of religious

3 Description based on a randomly chosen issue (March 17, 1995: 24-36).
matters. However, and contrary to other publications with the same religious focus, the *Christian Courier* includes a fairly extensive coverage of general news in Canada and the Netherlands as well as world news. Moreover, it has closely followed the evolution of the print media in general and has a sufficiently strong financial base to be able to issue up-to-date information on a weekly basis.

3.4 *De Hollandse Krant*

We mentioned earlier that *De Hollandse Krant* was founded in 1969 as an independent, monthly publication, with Dutch as its working language. The editorial column states that the magazine has no political or religious affiliation. The editorial board aims to provide information which is deemed interesting for Canadians and Americans of Dutch origin. The publication has an original layout, its most striking feature being its two front pages. The front page opens with the feature *Nieuws uit Nederland* (News from the Netherlands). The publication does not contain color photographs; only the title of the magazine is printed in red. The editorial team is comprised of Gerard and Janny Bonekamp, who publish the magazine from Surrey (British Columbia). In addition, the publication employs staff in Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and California. No major changes have been made to the content of the newspaper. Besides the regular feature *Nieuws uit Nederland*, with varied bits of news spread throughout the publication, there is an editorial from editor G. Bonekamp called *Onder Ons* (Between you and I) and letters from readers in the section *Wat anderen ervan denken* (What others think). In addition, the newspaper prints stories in English and in Dutch by well-known writers such as Annie M.G. Schmidt, as well as by readers themselves. It alternates between general news from the Netherlands and literature. *Windschrift* (Writing in the Wind), a literary feature by Maarten Timmer, shows that the editorial team as well as the loyal readership feel that preserving the Dutch language in their community is an important issue. The dissemination of knowledge – in this case the Dutch language – is the primary aim of the publication. This aim is even considered to be more important than providing current and topical news. Attention is also paid to leisure reading; besides literature, there is a small section on postage stamps, a chess column and a “poem of the month.” The advertisements are spread throughout the publication; most of them are bilingual and are mostly from merchants of Dutch origin. The biggest advertisers are airlines, travel agencies selling trips to the Netherlands, the *Holland Shopping Center* (which sells articles from the Netherlands), car rental companies in the Netherlands, international moving companies. *Holland Video Productions* featuring videos of *Het Gouden Huwelijk* (Golden Wedding), *Nederland Oranje* (The Netherlands: House of Orange), *de Elfstedentocht* (the Eleven Cities Skating Race), yearly subscriptions to Dutch magazines. Also, there are one-off advertisements for dolls in traditional Dutch garb, miniature mills for the garden, Dutch pubs, etc.

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When looking at the different functions of the publication, we can conclude that in this case providing current and topical news is out of the question. Instead, providing the reader with leisure reading and general information are the primary objectives. In any case, De Hollandse Krant attains an extra dimension by publishing literary texts which, besides providing leisure reading, disseminate knowledge. It is surely a commendable initiative to help immigrants maintain their knowledge of the Dutch language by providing them with regular features and stories by great Dutch writers.

### 3.5 Hollandia News

In 1954, Hollandia News was founded by John Vellinga as a Dutch language publication for Dutch and Belgian immigrants in Canada and the United States. Vellinga began this publication after seeing – he was unemployed at the time – the Canadian Calvinist and Contact move to Hamilton (Witvoet, 1985c: 9). Four years later, the Hollandia News became Good News; the publication retained this name until 1971. In that year, both in addition to the publication's layout, its name was changed one last time as a result of the sale to The Windmill Herald\(^7\). From then on the publication would be a bi-weekly newspaper.

### 3.6 The Windmill Herald

For years, The Windmill Herald has catered to the younger generation through a supplement published in English. The three editions (Central Canada, US, Maritimes) do not show any notable differences in content. Vanderheide was chief editor as well as publisher of these editions, with staff in Bulkley Valley, Detroit, Grandville, and Winnipeg. The three editions focus on different regions and are part of a strategy to attract more advertisers. In addition, the division results in considerable cost savings: due to the high import taxes from Canada to the United States, it was much more profitable to publish local editions in both countries. The articles are published primarily in Dutch; the articles about the Netherlands are printed in the front part of the newspaper. In some of the issues, there also is some coverage of Belgian news. Newsworthiness standards are much higher. For example, the death of King Boudewijn and the crowning of King Albert II were mentioned, but the reader does not come across any short, general interest news from Belgium. The articles about the Netherlands usually cover the relationship between it and its former colonies; after all, some of the Dutch immigrants came to Canada from one of the colonies, not from the Netherlands. Furthermore, there are news about the Netherlands in relation to the land of migration and about the Netherlands as an EU member state. In addition, there is news about traffic accidents in the Netherlands as well as anywhere else in the world when Dutch people are involved. Here we are looking at what seems to be an informative function, but also at a social function due to the "homeland ties." This is a summary of previously published articles in selected newspapers: a source or journalist is never mentioned.

\(^7\)This information is based on an article in The Windmill Herald, January 7, 1995: 4.
Van stad en platteland in Nederland (City and countryside in the Netherlands), a five-page, regular feature, is typical of this type of publication: very short articles (an average of 17 lines) without a title and using the geographical location of the event as heading. Judging from their letters to the editor, readers seem to like this feature a lot. News from the reader’s native district is usually read first. This letter from reader Tom T. Montrooy speaks volumes:

To receive the Windmill is always a “Red-Letter-day” for me. It perks me up, puts a smile on my face, and I anxiously devour the latest details of what’s going on in my geboorteland (homeland). For sure I skip a lot of minor news that doesn’t concern me. What do I care if a cow fell into a canal somewhere in Friesland, or a barn burned down somewhere in Zeeland. But then I suppose it might be of interest to someone.

In short, the paper has a clear social and leisure function: the news aims to surprise its readers with tidbits of information from their former country of residence. Especially remarkable are the many advertisements interspersed between the short articles. An inventory of the most recurrent advertisers results in the following list: shops carrying Dutch items (herring, licorice, clogs, Delft porcelain, etc.) such as The Wooden Shoe, Dutch Delight, The Dutch Market, Holland Shopping Center, The Netherlands Bazaar; travel agencies selling trips to the Netherlands and car rental agencies there; insurance companies and funeral homes which usually refer to their Dutch background. The advertisements brim over with wooden shoes, tulips and windmills: an image of the Netherlands a century ago. Publisher Vanderheide also capitalizes on this nostalgic trend by regularly advertising commemorative tiles featuring old Dutch engravings and translated classic sayings from the Netherlands and Belgium, printed on his own press...

The Windmill Post, an English-language supplement featuring general information about the Netherlands, can be found in the center of The Windmill Herald. These articles are of a documentary and human interest nature. A few letters from English-speaking readers are even published. Only in the second half of the newspaper do foreign news articles begin to appear: again, these are summaries of material taken from other publications. Remarkably, news from Belgium is quite extensive in consideration of the Belgian-Canadian readership. The resignation of Leo Delcroix and the success of the far-right Vlaams Blok (Flemish Block) can thus be found in the issues we consulted. Besides international news, articles about sport and leisure activities are also included. From these features one can again conclude that the readers are not all that young anymore: such features as Handwerkje van de maand (Handicraft of the month) and Tuinhoekje (Gardening Corner) are followed by primarily European and World Championship sport news. Additional pages include

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8 This passage is an excerpt from the letter of Tom T. Montrooy in The Windmill Herald, January 7, 1995: 14.
The Little Windmill, a classified ad page, and The Family Page filled with announcements of births, engagements, weddings, birthdays, and jubilees.

In short, The Windmill Herald is not different from the other immigration press publications: the current news and information functions are completely absent. What is left is human interest and social-cultural information: homesickness for the homeland is the central theme.

IV DISCUSSION

In conclusion, we can compare Canada with other Anglo-Saxon countries which are similarly considered to be popular immigration countries for the Flemish and Dutch. The United States has the longest history with regard to Dutch-speaking immigrants. Consequently, the oldest publications by and for Flemish and Dutch immigrants can be found there. These publications originated in a time when audio-visual media and communication methods were rather limited or even nonexistent. As a result, the level of newsworthiness of these newspapers was quite high in the beginning. They were after all the sole news channel for most of the newly arrived immigrants, especially regarding news from the “homeland.” These publications lost this superior level of newsworthiness as soon as the audio-visual media began its irrepressible advance and the financially stronger native press in the United States became able to acquire technically superior equipment for the gathering and distribution of news.

In the course of time, the newspapers themselves have nevertheless undergone very little change. The layout has remained more or less the same and now looks outdated. As for news gathering, no positive change can be seen. The first newspaper received their news by mail or by telegraph. In the nineties, news gathering was still done by mail but no longer on the basis of direct sources. Volunteers select and compile news from the newspapers they read themselves. As most of the publications published by Dutch-speaking immigrants gather their news in this manner, we can generalize the loss of the current and topical news function. The more recent newspapers—we could call them the “post-AV (r)evolution” newspapers—were founded after the arrival of radio, television, and fast information transmission technology. These newspapers often seem no more than a mouthpiece for the social life of the Dutch community abroad. A prime example is De Nieuwe Amsterdammer (The New Amsterdammer), which publishes articles based on selected news from Belgian and Dutch newspapers and through a professional editorial team located in New York.

De Nieuwe Amsterdammer, founded in 1990 and the youngest newspaper geared toward Dutch-speaking immigrants in North America, is an independent publication based in New York. At a party held on the occasion of Koningsdag (Queen’s Day) at the New Yorkse Nederlandse Club (the New Yorker Dutch Club), Eleonore Speckens, the owner of the Euronet translation agency on West 39th Street, announced she wanted to publish her own newspaper. For this project she appealed to Benno Groeneveld, journalist at the Tros (Dutch public television broadcasting company), as
well as the Dutch World Broadcasting Service and a number of professional magazines, as well as Yolanda Gerritsen, correspondent for Vara, Veronica, Avro, and VRT (Dutch and Flemish television broadcasting companies). Despite the enthusiasm of the journalists, the project was plagued by problems precisely because of their profession. The first official launch was canceled when President Bush announced the start of the Gulf War and the journalists had to rush off to cover the event. The second editorial meeting was also interrupted by President Bush, this time announcing the end of the Gulf War. Nevertheless, *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* has been a success in more ways than one. According to Benno Groeneveld, this is because there are no other publications for Dutch people living in New York. There is a Dutch club, but it only accepts a certain class of members. The Dutch language broadcasts could be a binding factor within the community, but Groeneveld (Kagie, 1991: 30) disagrees: "...no one listens to them, would you believe I don't either, even though I work for them (...) in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the Dutch immigrants all have their own newspapers."

In Canada there have been changes very similar to those in the United States. Here, a press made by and for immigrants also emerged early on. The objective of the publications was to pass on news from the homeland and to serve as a mouthpiece for immigrated Dutch and Flemish people. Nevertheless, Flemish people in Canada seem to be loyal readers of the *Gazette van Detroit*. The success of this Flemish newspaper in the United States has consequently never been equaled by another Flemish publication in Canada. On the other hand, the Dutch side boasts *The Windmill Herald*, *De Hollandse Krant* and *De Nederlandse Courant*. The latter is currently thriving thanks to the leadership of chief editor T. Luykenaar. It nevertheless faces a problem of aging readership. In order to remedy this phenomenon somewhat, the newspaper has gradually embraced the English language. This gradual change was also discussed in detail in reference to the *Christian Courier*, which is now published only in English and thus has renounced its origins completely.

During the early immigration days, we saw that both in the United States and in Canada the Dutch-speaking migrants had a real need for social clubs and, to a smaller extent, their own newspapers. Clubs such as these helped them tackle their legal and financial problems: the Flemish and Dutch migrants were after all hard workers who had yet to master the English language and who had hardly any formal education. The social dimension of these clubs originated precisely in this group bond: as soon as the immigrants had solved their financial problems and had more leisure time available, they turned to their clubs for all types of extracurricular activities. This led to the establishment of even more clubs, and therefore to a need for a new type of newspapers.

Let us now take a fifty-year leap back in time to the migration wave of Dutch-speakers to Australia and New Zealand: folk dance groups, theater companies and carnival organizations were founded right at the very beginning. We can therefore state that what was happening in the United States and Canada with regard to immigration at the
turn of the century took place in Australia and New Zealand in the fifties. This also had a clear impact on social life and the publications of the Dutch-speaking immigrants in Australia and New Zealand: after all, the clubs and newspapers in the United States and Canada were founded during an era in which audio-visual media and communication methods were still very limited or even nonexistent.

In Australia as well as in New Zealand, the immigrants had various means available for obtaining news from the “homeland” or for communicating with it. There the clubs and publications had a different purpose: fostering a kind of micro-community within the adopted country. Besides, a clear distinction was made between Flemish and Dutch immigrants. This distinction also provides the answer to the question as to why the Flemish, in comparison with the Dutch in the United States and Canada, are more active with regard to their press and social life in Australia and New Zealand. Even though this kind of proposition is hard to prove, we suspect that the national character of the Dutch and the Flemish had something to do with it. Immigrated Flemish people tend to stick together during periods of difficulty and then to spread out without a trace, to anglicize their names, etc. In other words, the “we-feeling” rapidly disappears and makes room for complete integration in the new land. In any case, the immigrants who left at the end of the last century were forced to emigrate. The alternative was to become a victim of hunger and unemployment. Those Flemish people who emigrated later on – especially to Australia and New Zealand because of the migration quotas in the United States and Canada – choose another country of their own free will, thereby ensuring fast integration. On the other hand, the Dutch immigrants are more chauvinistic and consequently more conservative: they will not pass by any opportunity to celebrate the Queen’s Birthday, the Prince’s Birthday, Saint Nicholas, etc. with their fellow Dutchmen. Such activities are best organized within the framework of club life; in turn, these clubs can best present themselves by way of publications. Precisely because of the differences in national character, it is difficult to find a Dutch language publication which is geared towards both Flemish and Dutch immigrants. De Nieuwe Amsterdammer in the United States has been the most successful in this respect, at least as far as coverage is concerned. The title most likely appeals more to the imagination of the Dutch than to that of the Flemish.

Throughout the years, Dutch language newspapers have begun to look a lot like one another, regardless of their original purpose. One of the most noticeable, joint characteristics in the idealization of the mother country where time seems to have stood still. The general image of Flanders and the Netherlands in the newspapers is fifty to one-hundred years old, and heavily idealized: mills, tulips, farms, fields, and clogs are invariable part of the landscape. Another remarkable phenomenon is the use of the Dutch language. In the oldest newspapers, there seemed to be enough input from Flanders and the Netherlands to somewhat maintain certain linguistic standards. English was added in order to expand the readership – that is, to appeal to the second generation. This step inevitably led to a gradual but irreversible “Anglicization” of the newspaper, an occurrence which is discussed in depth in the section on the Christian Courier. On the other hands, for those publications which did not have much contact
with the mother country but were published in Dutch, the transition to English happened gradually and – at least for the publisher – unnoticed. The Dutch as used in such newspapers no longer evolves along with the Dutch spoken in Flanders and the Netherlands: it sounds outdated, with the understanding that “anglicized” Dutch is awfully similar to antiquated Dutch.

Nevertheless, with the exception of De Nieuwe Amsterdammer, “Anglicization” has been irresistible. When speaking with or writing to us, most of the editors admitted that their newspaper had only a few more years to live, or at most the number of years the editors themselves will live. In short, the future of the Dutch migrant press is grim indeed. This threat to the newspapers is not only due to the lack of Dutch-speaking readers: this is a problem that could be solved by a transition to the English language. There is also the matter of content quality, which could be strongly improved, among other things through greater direct input from Flanders or the Netherlands. This could be encouraged by an awareness campaign in the Flemish and Dutch media sponsored by the Flemish and Dutch governments and aimed at the Dutch language press elsewhere in the world. However, the main problem remains the fact that in addition to having lost the use of the Dutch language, the current generations are no longer interested in their roots.
References


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