

The Reclamation of Zuider Zee on Georgist Lines*

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"God made the World, except the Netherlands, which were made by the Dutch."

THE work recently undertaken in Holland, that is the Reclamation of the greater part of the Zuider Zee, is the biggest conquest of Land ever done in a Pacific way! It will cost no blood or tears, but only a lot of money, and if we succeed the gain will not be to a King or Captain or speculating capitalists, but to the People as a whole; at least, that is the aim of the Dutch Land Reclaimers!

The coast line of Holland, which curves from North to East, must originally have been an almost continuous series of dunes, intersected at some points by the estuaries of the great rivers—Rhine, Meuse and Scheldt. At several places, especially in the North, incursions occurred of those dunes, and over great areas the land behind them was washed away or became inundated, and formed big lakes where the elevation was below sea-level. The North Sea Islands have remained as slices of the original coast.

It was after a gradual process, about 1300, that the Zuider Zee acquired its present form, united with the Lake IJssel, situated in the heart of the country, into which Rhine, Yssel and Vecht rivers emptied themselves, and flowed to the North Sea by the Vlie.

Only by means of dykes was it prevented from further invasions by the sea. The greatest depth of the Zuider Zee is about 16 feet, except in some of the narrower channels, where a depth of 20 feet is measured, and increases gradually to the level of the sea in the North. There are four Islands in the Zuider Zee, viz. Wieringen, Urk, Schokland and the well-known Marken, the tourists' Pilgrimage. A large part of the sea-bottom consists of mud, of heavy and medium clay, the most fertile ground we know, forms 80 per cent. of the reclaimed soil.

In the 17th century, what is known in our history books as the Golden Age of Holland, the first plans of reclamation of the inland lakes were proposed and big lakes were emptied by means of windmills; so we find that in North Holland, in 1612, The Beemster Polder; 1622, The Purmer Polder; 1632, The Schermer Polder were dyked in and pumped out. In 1641, the well-known windmill constructor of that time, Leeghwater, issued a pamphlet for the reclamation of land from the biggest of all inland lakes, the Haarlem lake, with a surface of about 45,000 acres, by the aid of 160 windmills, but the job was too big for that time and it was only in 1850 that his plans were realized by a private group of capitalists, but then not by

the help of windmills, but by using three gigantic steam pumps. In 1854, this work was finished and the soil sold by public auction! Another pamphlet issued in 1667, written by the practical Engineer, Hendric Stevin, a man of world-renowned fame, proposed, as he said very emphatically, to "drive out the North Sea from the Netherlands;" he proposed to construct a dyke across all the channels to the North Sea, between the Islands, and reconstruct in this artificial way the original dunes that defended the Frisian coast so long! But the technical difficulties were easier to solve on paper than in reality, and so his gigantic plan remained only a "paper project."

After this period of great activity on all lines, came the reaction in the 18th century, in history known as the "sleeping period" of the Netherland people!

There was no interest in anything that called for energy and will-power! It was the middle of the 19th century before any new interest was awakened for big undertakings. The Canal giving Amsterdam a direct and short connection with the North Sea, the draining of the Haarlem lake, the construction of the new way from Rotterdam to the North Sea, all undertakings crowned by success, opened the minds to still bigger plans, the old plan of Leeghwater was revived and the Government engineer, Van Diggelen, published another project of smaller dimensions in 1849, it reclaimed some one and a quarter millions of acres, and the cost was estimated at 30 million pounds sterling. But this plan also proved to be too great for this period, so it remained practically in abeyance until a financial corporation was established in 1856 which propagated a much smaller plan, comprising only the reclamation of land in the Southern part of the sea. To elaborate this plan two engineers, Beyerink and Stieltjes, were engaged.

This plan appeared in 1866: it proposed to retain the free course of the River Yssel, that has in winter time an excessive amount of water, to the sea, and proposed to reclaim that part from the sea that is situated to the South of this River Yssel. In 1870, a State Commission was instituted to study the aforesaid plan. Three years later the Commission expressed a favorable opinion on it.

The Government proved to be in favor of the reclamation; it expressed, however, the opinion that such an undertaking was not suitable for the granting of a concession to a company; such a work was of the kind that ought to be carried out by the State itself.

This conclusion was applauded very eagerly by all partisans of "the-land-for-the-people" ideas, and they did all that they could to propagate and fix this principle.

The plan was now revised by the Government's Chief Engineer (Leemans), who diverted the direction of the enclosing dykes in such a manner that no sand-bottom would be dyked-in, while the island of Urk would also be kept out of the dykes because of its value as a port for shipping.

*The details of this sketch were derived from a publication of the Association, "The Netherlands Abroad," on this subject.

The total area within the enclosing dyke would comprise about 390,000 acres, and the cost was estimated at some 116 millions of guilders (10 million pounds sterling). This Beyerink-Stieltjes-Leeman plan was introduced in a Bill before Parliament in 1877, but a new Ministry coming into office that same year, the Bill was withdrawn.

From all sides arose new plans, but not one with any merit whatever.

In 1886, by the steady work of the Frisian Member of Parliament, Mr. Buma, there was established a "Zuider Zee Association," having for its object the institution of a technical and financial investigation concerning the enclosing and also the making of preparations for a partial draining of the Zuider Zee, the Wadden and the Lauwer Zee. A technical office was installed and very soon the Civil Engineer, Mr. Lely, was nominated at the head of this Department.

In the course of the years from 1887-1891, eight reports appeared from the hand of this excellent and able man; all technical details of the problem were treated with great care, and explained by comprehensive calculations. It was demonstrated that the proper solution would be to construct, first of all, an enclosing dyke from North Holland, via the Island of Wieringen, to the Frisian coast, and further to proceed to the reclaiming of four Polders, one after another. The extent of those Polders was selected in such manner that, firstly, a sufficient area of water would be retained to allow the Yssel river to empty itself, even at high tide; secondly, the deep channels were to remain outside the dykes; while thirdly, as much clay, and as little sandbottom as possible, was to be dyked in. By means of sluices in the enclosing dyke it would be possible to keep as much water in the new Yssel lake as would supply the needs of the abutting districts for fresh water.

This plan of engineer Lely comprises an enclosing dyke of 18½ miles, cutting from the whole surface of the Zuider Zee about 890,000 acres, of which about 574,000 acres would be reclaimed land, and about 316,000 acres would remain water (Yssel lake with the canals and their small lakes here and there). The land would be divided by canals into four drained sections. The cost was estimated at 190 millions of guilders (16 million pounds sterling), the enclosing dyke alone to cost 42 millions (3½ million pounds sterling).

In 1892, a Commission was appointed to study this plan, and in 1894 the Commission approved, with some slight alterations, the plan.

The time for the construction of the enclosing dyke was estimated at 9 years, and for the entire work 33 years. The Commission agreed that only the Government would be able to execute such a work in the interest of the whole country.

On two occasions, in 1901 and in 1907, Bills were introduced into Parliament, but each time a change of Ministry withdrew them from the list of urgent affairs.

But, fortunately, in 1916 Mr. Lely himself was chosen to act in the Ministry, and soon he was at the head of the Ministry for Public Works. The next year his Zuider Zee plan was proposed for the third time, and was adopted without much difficulty in June, 1918. On the 16th of July, the same year, by Royal Decree, a Zuider Zee Council was instituted for rendering advice and assistance to the Government in the preparation and execution of the great work.

The Act of June, 1918, is based on the plans of the State Commission of 1892 (Lely plan), and Art. 1 lays it down that the work shall be carried out at the expense of the State. Firstly, the construction of the enclosing dyke from North Holland to Friesland as proposed, and secondly the reclaiming of land in such parts of the Zuider Zee as will be chosen. The question of the number and the extension of the Polders being questions that could remain for later investigation.

The preparatory work was commenced in 1919, and in 1920 the actual work began. In 1925 a Bill was passed by Parliament to accelerate the execution of work, one of the reasons being to avoid the heavy burden of interest from becoming overwhelming by a too slow execution of the work which might, in the end, jeopardise the entire scheme.

The acceleration Commission made new estimates, in accordance with the after-War economic conditions of labor and the price of materials, also a slight revision in the direction of the enclosing dyke was accepted, bringing the finishing point at the Frisian coast a little more to the North. The new estimate gave a cost of 55 millions for the dyke, 25 millions of guilders for the sluices, and 10 millions of guilders for other connecting works, total 90 millions (7½ million pounds sterling).

The duration of the work was lessened by 7 to 8 years.

The number of Polders was now fixed at four, as follows:—

One South of Wieringen surface	50,000	acres.
One South of Enkhuizen	140,000	"
One East of Amsterdam	235,000	"
One South of Friesland	130,000	"
	555,000	acres

while the area of the Yssel lake, including the canal between the two Southern Polders and the Ring Canal, is about 285,000 acres.

The whole area of the Kingdom of Holland being about 9,240,000 acres, the total gain in Land will be from 7 to 10 per cent. The name of "New Province" is not an exaggeration, for Holland will count after completion of the scheme 12 instead of 11 Provinces.

Beside the Technical Commission there was instituted an Agricultural Commission. This Commission's opinion

was that a period of 6 to 7 years will have to elapse before the Polders will realize their full value for cultivation.

The Commission calculates that the leasing price of the land cannot be less than 10 to 13 pounds for one hectare (2½ acres) and that the selling price will not be less than 250 pounds sterling for the hectare. The Commission estimates as to the quality of the ground that 70 per cent. will be heavy clay, 10 per cent. medium clay and 10 per cent. sand and peat. In round figures the value of the New Province is estimated at 42½ million pounds sterling. The total cost is estimated at 454 million guilders, the selling price at 510 millions, showing a profit of some 50 to 100 million of guilders.

The Wieringen Polder of 50,000 acres will be dry in 1930, on account of its situation south of the Island Wieringen and it will not be necessary to wait for the pumping out of the water, till the enclosing dyke, with all the connecting works, like sluices, etc., is ready in 1934. The fourth and last Polder will, if all goes as projected, become dry in 1952. That will be the end of the work.

How will this fertile new Province of Holland, created by Government engineers and paid from the money of the whole people be managed?

The only answer that can give entire satisfaction is that all profits that come from this sacred land, not due to personal energy, belong to the people. The only discussion there can reasonably be concerns the best way to handle this big job! In 1926, a Government Commission was installed to solve this question. Some months ago one of our prominent Social-Democrats was nominated president of this Commission, and so we may presume that the SELLING of our New Province will be out of the question.

An Immortal Book

IN explaining the greatness and influence of "Progress and Poverty," we would emphasize, first, the basic fact that like the economic and political writings of John Stuart Mill, it is a work of literature. Its pages were written by a master hand which never faltered in power and beauty from the first page to the last. Secondly, we would emphasize that this book, unlike any other book on economics of which we can think, was dictated and infused by a genuine ethical and spiritual passion. Henry George was not only one of the clearest thinkers who ever lived; he was also one of the noblest prophets. What could be more moving than the heroic march of George's argument in "Progress and Poverty" from the discussion of rent and interest and profits to the far vision of God and immortality? What this immortal book did for us is quite beyond the bounds of adequate expression. Its reading marked the turning point of our thought—the beginning of our sense of justice for mankind..

—JOHN HAYNES HOLMES in *Unity*.

The Neo Georgians

IT should be evident to those who attended the recent meeting at Pittsburgh of The Henry George Foundation of America, that there were some present who properly come under the title which heads this article.

The work "neo" has been prefixed to many names of cults, theories and philosophies. It is a modest little word though, never appearing until subjects which have been vainly threshed over and over appeal to it as a qualifier and vivifier.

The luster of Henry George's name like that of any man who has affected the world's thought will diminish in time. The gradual passing of his disciples who knew him personally will contribute to this. His work will be evaluated by every generation. Before, during and since his time the world has had for consideration several notable libertarian tendencies seeking to enlarge the individual's freedom and obligation. Free Trade, Proportional Representation, Public Ownership of Natural Monopolies, Initiative and Referendum, Woman Suffrage, Free Justice and Home Rule are means to greater individual freedom through justice. Pacifism, Social Insurance against widowhood, old age, unemployment, sickness and accident and Prison Reform are means to human betterment through the application of justice tinctured with love. The Jew emphasizes justice; the Christian love. Like many good things these are made better through combination. We have little use for pure gold; it is more servicable combined with a little copper. Pure iron is likewise improved by the addition of a bit of nickel or manganese. None of our schemes of government-anarchy, socialism, communism, monarchy, democracy work in pure form. [They need a little blending.

We have at present three well marked groups of Georgists. One, represented by The Commonwealth Land Party, wants the entire rental value of the land to be taken by the government. Incensed at the hazy ideas of governments on "mine" and "thine" it speaks to the latter in unequivocal terms as to their first duties; without however, any evidences of governmental conscience qualms. It believes in political action, as its name implies.

Another group desiring the same thing, but willing to take what it can, is known as the "step by steppers." Its members are opportunists. They are cognizant of the glacial-like speed of reform measures.

The third group might be called the Neo-Georgians. Its members admire the spunk of the preceding classes, and while sometimes damning them, yet do so with reservations of great respect. Their philosophy probably contains a greater proportion of love, combined with justice than the alloys of groups one and two. Therefore they have become proponents of pacifism, social insurance and schemes which the ultra-Orthodox Single Taxer thinks unnecessary. They admit that if we had a very large appli-