

PREMIER FAMOUS

STATISTICS CANADA SAYS THERE ARE 350,000 PEOPLE OF DUTCH ORIGIN IN THE COUNTRY - 63,000 OF THEM IN B.C., WHICH IS HOME TO PERHAPS THE MOST FAMOUS WOODEN SHOE EX-PATRIATE; PREMIER BILL VANDER ZALM.

THE PREMIER CAME TO CANADA IN 1946 AT AGE 12 TO JOIN HIS FATHER; A TULIP BULB SALESMAN; WHO WAS TRAPPED IN THIS COUNTRY WHEN THE SECOND WORLD WAR BROKE OUT.

LIKE MANY OF THE FIRST WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS OF THE LATE 1940s; WHO CAME TO THIS COUNTRY AFTER THEIR LIBERATION BY CANADIAN TROOPS; VANDER ZALM BECAME INVOLVED IN THE AGRICULTURE BUSINESS.

HE TURNED HIS EARLY GARDENING EXPERIENCE INTO A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR NURSERY BUSINESS THAT LATER LED TO THE CREATION OF FANTASY GARDENS; A GARDEN PARK AND EUROPEAN SHOPPING VILLAGE WHERE THE PREMIER AND HIS WIFE; LILLIAN; LIVE ALONGSIDE A REPLICA DUTCH CASTLE.

VANDER ZALM; WHO STILL SPEAKS WITH A SLIGHT DUTCH ACCENT; WEARS HIS HERITAGE ON HIS SLEEVE. HE HAS TWICE VISITED HOLLAND - WHERE HE IS AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS WIMPIE IN THE TABLOID PRESS - SINCE BECOMING PREMIER TWO YEARS AGO AND WILL STAR IN A SEMI-BIOGRAPHICAL DUTCH CHRISTMAS MOVIE TO BE SHOWN ON TELEVISION THIS DECEMBER.

“CERTAINLY; HE PROMOTES HIS HERITAGE AND HIS CULTURE MORE THAN MANY DUTCH PEOPLE;” SAYS HARRY DE JONG; ONE OF THREE DUTCH-BORN MEMBERS OF VANDER ZALM'S SOCIAL CREDIT CAUCUS. “BUT THAT MAY BE MORE BECAUSE OF THE BUSINESS THE VANDER ZALM'S ARE IN; THE NURSERY BUSINESS. IN THAT RESPECT; HE HAS CLOSER TIES WITH THE NETHERLANDS.”

STANDS OUT

ALBERT VAN DER HEIDE; EDITOR OF THE WINDMILL HERALD; A TWICE-MONTHLY PAPER THAT SERVES THE DUTCH COMMUNITY IN CANADA; AGREES THAT VANDER ZALM MAY BE ATYPICAL.

“THE DUTCH GENERALLY GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS IN A QUIET WAY; WORK HARD; THEY DON'T SAY TOO MUCH;” HE SAID IN AN INTERVIEW. “THEY'RE CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO BLOW FROM THE ROOF TOPS ADVERTISING WHAT THEY'VE DONE.”

WHAT THEY HAVE DONE IS INTEGRATE THEMSELVES FULLY IN A WAY THAT WOULD BE A CLICHE IF IT WAS NOT SO HONEST.

“EVERYBODY IDENTIFIES THE DUTCH WITH HARD WORK; FRUGALITY; INDEPENDENT BUSINESSMEN BUT THAT IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY;” SAID VAN DER HEIDE. “WHAT THEY BRING IS A SET OF VALUES . . . SUCH AS APPRECIATION FOR FAMILY TIES; THE APPRECIATION FOR FREEDOM; APPRECIATION FOR RETAINING ONES VALUES.”

SAYS NICK NASEE; PRESIDENT THE NETHERLANDS BUSINESSMAN'S ASSOCIATION: “I DON'T THINK THERE'S VERY MANY DUTCH PEOPLE WHO ARE FREELoadERS.”

DUTCH INVESTMENT IN CANADA IS \$2.02 BILLION - THE FOURTH LARGEST SOURCE OF DIRECT FOREIGN INVESTMENT. IN 1986; 75,000 DUTCH TOURISTS VISITED CANADA; MANY TO VISIT FRIENDS AND FAMILIES IN THE COUNTRY.