

FEATURES

STUDENT LABOR CAMPS

Dutch students had many schemes for the entertainment of foreign countries within the Netherlands this summer. There were recreation camps, tours in tjalken around the waterways (a tjalk is an old Frisian barge) and even a summer session at the University of Leiden.

In many countries of Europe it is impossible to take any currency across the frontier. To give an opportunity for students in such countries to visit Holland, the Netherlands Bureau for Foreign Student Relations (N. B. B. S.) with the assistance of the Dutch Government arranged labour camps. A student could work in such a camp in Holland for three weeks, during which he would be taken on excursions and given lectures and entertainment. At the end of his or her working period, he would have enough money for a nine-day tour of Holland, living in Youth Hostels.

For girl-students the work was assisting with the fruit harvest. The work for the men was much harder.

In 1944, the R. A. F. bombed the dykes which protected the island of Walcheren, in Zeeland, from the sea, after giving the farming population one day's warning. For a year and a half, this once fertile soil was covered with about fifteen feet of sea, which brought with it about two feet of sand. When the land was finally pumped dry, it was a desert, with no usable dwellings, no living trees, no life of any sort.

Nine million people live in this small country, Holland. Every square foot of space is urgently required for lebens-raum. That is why, since the ninth century of our era, the Dutch have been great hydraulic engineers, leading the world in the reclamation of land from the sea. You may have heard the Dutch saying, "God made the world, but the Dutch made Holland."

There was something idealistic in the plan of having foreign students come and help reclaim this salt-drenched, sand-covered soil. The work consisted of shovelling the tightly packed sand into barrows, and pushing the very rickety vehicles a hundred yards or so across the sand on planks four inches wide. The wheels being often eccentric, the barrows slipped off into the sand several times each trip.

As if the work was not hard enough, the blazing heat of Holland's hottest summer on the shadeless sand, and the very poor working conditions contributed to the failure of the scheme. Breakfast and lunch were each a few slices of bread. In the evening, after ten hours of back-breaking work in the scorching heat, the workers were expected to be able to eat a warm (never hot) meal of potatoes and greasy gravy.

These were the conditions under which the ordinary labourers worked, quite happily, it seemed. The system of payment was fantastic. The average depth of soil over a given area was computed, and that area given to a certain gang to clear. The gang was paid by piecework. The proportion of surface area covered by sea-grass was measured. The distance over which the barrows had to be pushed was considered. So many Dutch cents were allowed for every time the planks over which the barrows were pushed had to be moved one meter (the foreman under whom I worked would not allow the planks to be moved until they all had to be moved one meter, which meant that a worker over shallow sand very often had to carry his loaded shovel quite a distance to reach his barrow on the plank.)

From these factors, a wage for the whole gang was calculated, and divided among the workers. The wage for each person was seldom more than one Canadian dollar per day, and from this a certain sum was deducted weekly for the maintenance of shovels, and for the administration.

There were, as can be guessed, many troubles over wages and working conditions. The entire fault could be boiled down to a factor which we seldom perceive. Most Europeans seem unable to achieve a happy medium in organization. The Work Camp was hopelessly over-organized.

I joined a gang one morning which had two Finns, both great strong men, both soldiers in the war against Russia. It is no exaggeration to say that each did the work of any four others in the group. I asked them why they were working so frantically. They grimly replied, "We are getting into condition for Siberia."

Geoffrey Payzant

I MOVE MYSELF

I sat in the summer dusk
And watched — go past —
The land, and lake, and sky —
A cloud that drifted down a valley
A wave that crossed a lake between two hills
A wind that wandered from the night.
These things I saw go past
Though nothing moved me but myself —
For all these things are but myself:
I am burnt earth writhing on the hillsides,
brown wheat beneath the moon,
trees whispering in the woods,
a loon's cry on the water
a mist that creeps across the fields
I am the essence of these and I am earth,
I see myself pass by in the summer dusk,
And I am moved by myself.

Zeitbild

THE LADIES' MUSICAL CLUB

Frances James

Once again we have the pleasure of welcoming the Ladies' Musical Club to Dalhousie. The first concert of this year's series was a most enjoyable one indeed.

The performing artist was soprano Frances James whom many of us had the pleasure of hearing in Healy Willen's new opera "Deirdre of the Sorrows," broadcast last year over the C. B. C.

Miss James opened her programme with a group of three Haydn songs, all of which showed her fine musicianship. However, a slight break was sometimes noticeable between the chest and head tones.

The second group was composed of French songs by Duparc, Debussy and Faure. The Faure songs, "Soir" and "Toujours," were particularly fine. In all five songs of the group, Miss James showed a fine understanding of the French art song. The heavier passages in Duparc's "Chanson Triste" were perhaps a bit too heavy and dramatic.

The third group was most interesting since it comprised three pairs of songs each of which was based on the same text, thereby showing the different conceptions the composers had of the poems. The singer was outstanding in the German songs by Schumann and Wolff on the text "Er ists," ("Spring is Here"). Miss James showed she had the power vocally and artistically to do full justice to the Lied. Hahn's lovely "Si Mes Vers" was sung as an encore at the close of the group and it was one of the finest performances of the evening.

Following the intermission Miss James sang songs by two contemporary composers. Jean Coulthard Adams, and Bernard Naylor.

Her accompanist. The songs by Mr. Naylor, "Beauty's End is in Sight" and "Twenty Weeks Near East" were performed for the first time in public.

The last group of songs opened with "Old Mother Hubbard," something of a parody on earlier musical styles, complete with glorious trills and elegant sustained phrases on one syllable of text. This was perhaps a bit too restrained, and many members of the audience failed to recognize the spirit in which it was composed. Rachmaninoff's very beautiful and extremely difficult song "Here Beauty Dwells" showed the great vocal range and control possessed by Miss James. The song "The Brook" by Dolores

showed another fine bit of singing and a glorious bit of accompaniment from Mr. Naylor. The concluding song, Grieg's "A Dream" was very well performed. As encores Miss James sang an amusing little French Canadian folk song and "Summertime" from Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess." Both selections were very well received.

It seemed unfortunate that Mr. Naylor was not allowed a solo group as his fine piano work appeared to warrant.

May we say congratulations to the Club for such a grand start and we hope the rest of the season will continue to be as successful.

— T. K. BENTLY



Hi There!

right now you're taking
hurdles in your stride...

but the ones ahead are tougher!

Not only tougher! They're sometimes very unexpected! And the man who clears them safely and easily, while others falter, and fail the race, is usually the man who looked ahead...

The man who looked ahead in early youth, and charted a life insurance program that would carry him over those unexpected hurdles... the man who determined that whatever the future might hold — the responsibility of marriage and children, the misfortune of sickness, accident, or loss of income—he would be prepared to take them in his stride.

To such a man, the Mutual Life representative is a welcome friend—a wise and experienced counsellor who has been specially trained in adapting life insurance to the varied needs, desires, and responsibilities of people of all ages and incomes and in all walks of life.

He is ready to help you now... to study your particular circumstances and advise on the type of policy or policy-combinations best suited to your requirements. Make an appointment with him today. Ask him to explain the special features of Mutual low-cost life insurance.

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