

## Chapter Two - Intentions

Documentation that spells out the intentions of Dutch migrants in general, if ever generated, remains elusive. Nearly all records of intentions were generated after the event, mostly after many decades. Two documents, generated by the G7, are crucially different, because they were written before departure and clearly specify what the group intended to achieve. These two documents are the *Acte van Overeenkomst* and the *Deed of Contract*, and in this chapter, if referred to together, are called the documents. There is no suggestion, in any of the works cited, of any other group of migrants preparing legal or informal documents stating their intentions before emigrating.

The G7 must have had serious intentions to emigrate for some time. The decision to go was not made in haste, but carefully considered. Documentation to show that alternative destinations were considered, or to indicate when the matter began to receive serious consideration, remains elusive.<sup>1</sup> One of the leaders claimed three years after emigrating that discussions began soon after the end of the war and eventually became more intensive, month after month.<sup>2</sup> In the Spring of 1950 their intentions were resolved, and recorded. Four or five weeks later the first passports were issued, and five weeks later the first two arrived in Australia as scouts for the G7.<sup>3</sup>

The documents in which the G7 recorded their intentions were legal documents. They were sufficiently comprehensive to suggest that a model was used and to

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<sup>1</sup> A photo made in February 1950 shows the whole group, at that stage consisting of ten couples. According to the only child in the photo, Guusje van der Laan, Bob Houwen, a certain Zuidland and Fokke Haan were part of the ten but never left Holland. De Haan must have been involved but not yet committed to the group when the photo was taken. He was the builder who joined the group because they needed a builder, but was never a part of the resistance group. The most likely scenario is that de Haan was not part of the group when the Dutch version of the Acte was prepared, then committed to the group when the English version was prepared. Houwen and Zuidland are in the photo because they were part of the resistance group, but they never committed to go. This photo was reprinted in the *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* 22 March 1988 with the accompanying text claiming it was taken in the Laning home in Semarangstraat, which is correct, although the allocation of names is not. The original photo is in the Laning family album, correctly labelled. Fokke Haan was explicitly mentioned, with others, as a member of the group on 7 August 1950, and is not mentioned as stepping out in the rest of the letters.

<sup>2</sup> 'in dat na-oorlogse Nederland ... het duurde niet zo lang of het woord emigratie dook voor de eerste keer op. Maar lieve mensen, wat is er gepraat en gepraat, maand in, maand uit... volgens een weloverwogen plan te emigreren naar Tasmanië ... .' Pinkster in *De Spiegel*, Christelijk National Weekblad, T. van Vliet (redacteur), Wageningen, The Netherlands., No. 7, 14 Nov. 1953. pp. 28-31. and *Trouw* 21 Nov 1953. Author not specified but probably the same for both publications.

<sup>3</sup> Eerke van der Laan and Egbert Pinkster, often abbreviated to vd Laan and Eb, were delegated by the group. Documents, article 18.

confirm that one of the partners, E. vd Laan, had legal training, a point confirmed by the occupation he listed against his name. The documents were dated 16 March 1950, and in nearly 2000 words and 21 articles each version specified who was involved and what they would do at their destination and how they would do this and treat with each other.

The *Acte van Overeenkomst* was obviously the culmination of lengthy discussion and the reaching of mutual accord. It is likely that it was prepared before the nominated date because it is logical and comprehensive and contains negotiated provisions and a hand written correction.<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to know whether a copy was prepared for each partner. An important reason to suggest that it was prepared before the nominated date is because there is an English language version. This version is called a *Deed of Contract*, and has the same date as the Dutch version. The author of the translation is not indicated, but it was possibly a collaboration between E. vd Laan and Eb Pinkster, because they were reasonably fluent in English, as evidenced in the ABC Letters. There are variations between the two versions, which aid understanding of the intentions of the G7.

Some matters are mentioned in only one version, which suggests that after the Dutch version was made, and forward dated, it was circulated for consideration by the partners. At this point an eighth partner was enlisted for the enterprise, the building contractor de Haan.<sup>5</sup> His participation was necessary because none of the others, apart from the painter Folkerts, had any experience in the building industry, and the partners were determined to be in that industry.<sup>6</sup>

The most obvious reason for making this English version was to satisfy any credit provider and possible legal requirements for registering their business. There is a reference to this effect in the ABC letters.<sup>7</sup> These men clearly intended to do business in their new country, and to begin as soon as possible. The purpose of this translation was to remove a possible obstacle to achieving their goal. Creditors and

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<sup>4</sup> article 20.

<sup>5</sup> De Haan is the last mentioned in the *Deed of Contract* and the only one not resident in the city of Groningen. He came from Winsum, a provincial town in the province of Groningen, about 15 kilometers northwest of the capital and at the junction of several main roads. According to Mrs Dineke Laning, he came in response to an advertisement placed by the G7.

<sup>6</sup> article 2.

<sup>7</sup> ABC letters, 07 August 1950, p.50.

bureaucrats would need paperwork of this nature. Importantly, it was the English version which all the partners signed, because this was the one that would need the signatures in Australia.<sup>8</sup> A Dutch version with signatures would be of no use to either a bureaucrat or creditor, except in a Dutch speaking country, which they were severing ties with.

The documents acknowledged a way of doing things, of conforming to some perceived expectations, in this instance for obtaining legal recognition as a corporate body, which in turn enabled access to credit. Conformation to a system of establishing structure was for financial leverage, acknowledging a desire to adopt Australian norms, not for maintenance of ethnicity. The most prosaic motive attributable to this process was the need to earn a living, and not be at the mercy of any arbitrary employer. From their occupations and their roles during the war it can be seen that these men were leaders, not followers. They aimed to exploit the potential of earning a living somewhere in Australia, according to the rules and regulations of their new homeland, whatever those rules and regulations might be.<sup>9</sup> Jupp claims that the Dutch sought freedom, meaning from restrictions, licensing and controls, and Hempel agrees.<sup>10</sup> The G7, on the other hand, demonstrated a desire to conform, to obey a lawful government as they understood the Scriptures commanded.<sup>11</sup>

Making a formal agreement and swearing to uphold it must have seemed strange to this group of men. It was made for commercial reasons, not because they did not trust each other. During the recent Nazi occupation of their country they had exercised friendship to the extent of trusting each other with their lives working together in the Underground.<sup>12</sup> The G7 had mobilized national and pillar ethnicity,<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Three years later, either through faulty memory or mis-reporting, it was claimed that this document was signed by the seven and their wives, whereas it was signed only by the eight men named in clause one. *De Spiegel*, No. 7, 14 Nov. 1953. pp. 28-31, and *Trouw* 21/11/53 (same reporter, citing Pinkster)

<sup>9</sup> article 2

<sup>10</sup> J. Jupp, *Arrivals and Departures*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1966., p.134. In Queensland it was observed that the Dutch were less disciplined in registering their changes of address as required under the Aliens Act, than migrants from other countries of strict police supervision. J. Hempel, *Dutch Migrants in Queensland*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1960, p.2.

<sup>11</sup> Rom.13:1 - 3; 1Tim. 2:2; 1Pet. 2:13.

<sup>12</sup> 'Wij kenden elkaar door en door uit het verzet ...' *De Spiegel*, No. 7, 14 Nov. 1953. pp. 28-31, and *Trouw* 21/11/53

<sup>13</sup> W. Warmbrunn, *The Dutch under German Occupation 1940-1945*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1963, p.271.

without a formal, written legal document. In fact, such a document would never exist as it would place the lives of all of them in jeopardy were it ever found by the enemy.<sup>14</sup>

The English version shows several other major variations from the original. The amount of capital required from each member was increased dramatically, from *Hfl*1000 to *Hfl*2500 per partner.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps on the advice of de Haan, the original amount was considered insufficient to begin a construction business, especially if the first item of business was to tie up this capital in the construction of their own homes. Neither amount bore any relationship to the amount of cash they were permitted to leave the country with.<sup>16</sup> Pinkster found a way of moving his money soon after arriving, which demonstrated a high level of commitment to establishing a new life here and a secondary concern for the safety of his funds.<sup>17</sup>

The other major change from the *Acte van Overeenkomst* to the *Deed of Contract* is that the destination became less specific, open to more options. The reason for the change remains a mystery, as the document was written after the visit by Boot, and in an interview with the G7 published in *The Mercury* of 28 June 1950 they claimed

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<sup>14</sup> article 1.

<sup>15</sup> article 5. At that time 4 guilders (*Hfl*4) was equivalent to about £Aus1/-/-.

<sup>16</sup> Van der Mast claims they were allowed to take no more than £35 per person, plus capital items. W. Van der Mast, *Praktijk en patroon van recente Nederlandse groepsmigraties. Met een suggestie voor een gewijzigde vorm van groepsmigreren: Interlinked migratie*. Noordhoff NV, Groningen, 1963. p.77. Pinkster devised an elaborate scheme to move his money to Australia. To the ABC Club he wrote "As you know, B is interested in \$4000, send to Mr van Gessel at a New York address, who will send a telegram on receipt of the money. Make arrangements with the Amsterdammer regarding where you should deposit the corresponding amount. Take with you a man trusted by both parties. The exchange rate is *f*4.40, total *f*17.600. (about £2000 Aus). Mr van Gessel is to telegraph Boot when the money is paid. Boot will then write a letter to you with instruction to van Rhee to pay us £2000. This is the amount I [Eb] still have. ABC letters, 22 Jun 1950, p.11. [The identity of B and of the Amsterdammer is never revealed] Thirteen days later Bart was instructed to hasten the transfer of the funds '... while it still can be done. The Drentse friend is trustworthy.' ABC letters, 05 July 1950, p.24. Access to capital held in the Netherlands is a constant concern. ABC Letters 19 June 1950, p.9; and 16 August 1950, p.47, for example.

Duyker writes that migrants could export *Hfl*15,000 in cash or *Hfl*25,000 in goods, but did not write the date this was effective from. E. Duyker, *The Dutch in Australia*, AE Press, Melbourne, 1987., p.102. Migrants that departed after 01/01/1953 were permitted to take a maximum of *Hfl*1,500, but less to certain countries, and additional per child. As of this date migrants who had left after 01/01/1950 were permitted to tap the amounts quoted by Duyker subject to certain conditions including the country in which the migrant had established himself, and the purpose to which the money was to be put. Essentially it had to be invested in plant or machinery or property. Advice from the Nederlandsche Bank, N.V., Amsterdam, reprinted in *Mededelingen Ned. Vereniging "Abel Tasman"* #11, April 1953, pp. 1-3.

<sup>17</sup> Because of the mutual commitments the G7 had made he was part of a group and so not subject to the charge 'any migrant on his own in a strange country regards his bank account as his only trustworthy friend.' J.I. Martin, *The Migrant Presence: Australian Responses 1947-1977*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1978. p.162.

that they had chosen Tasmania because of the glowing account given by Dr Boot.<sup>18</sup>

The intention of the G7 was clearly to set up a construction business.<sup>19</sup> This would be known as the Australian Building Corporation (ABC) rather than the originally conceived moniker Tasmanian Building Corporation, a more limiting name. The ABC would firstly build houses for the partners.<sup>20</sup> The partners would commit to each other for at least three years, although provisions were made to enable the severance of ties,<sup>21</sup> and article 7 was specifically designed so that after the first few years it would be easier to make the break. Promises were also made for mutual care in good times and bad.<sup>22</sup> These intangible promises for the partners as reward for their commitment were supplemented by tangible promises such as a home available at cost price, an equal share of the profits, insurance and vital involvement in the decision making process.<sup>23</sup>

Most articles in the document were very formally focussed on commercial arrangements. The intention was clearly to be a professional building organisation, the articles guiding conduct in every eventuality. It was recognised that there might be periodic cash flow problems, for which provision is made. This business was expecting lean and fat years,<sup>24</sup> and was not going to go away when difficulties arose. The articles included contingency plans for surviving downturns in the industry, specified before they started.<sup>25</sup>

The document clearly shows there was no intention to set up a structure for any

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<sup>18</sup> This claim was repeated in *The Australian Women's Weekly* 11/2/1959.

<sup>19</sup> It is possible that they could have conducted such a business in the Netherlands considering the housing shortage there. It is estimated that due to the effects of the war, there was a shortage of 313,000 houses. A. Van Wamel 'Nederland mijn moeder, Australië mijn bruid', Doctoral Thesis, Catholic University, Nijmegen, 1993. p.25. R. Julian suggests that this option was not exercised because of onerous red tape for business start ups, and a high taxation level on business. Julian, 'The Dutch in Tasmania: An Exploration of Ethnicity and Immigrant Adaptation', University of Tasmania, 1989., pp. 111 and 115. It is more likely that this option was not exercised because the construction business was established after the decision to migrate was made.

<sup>20</sup> articles 3.1 and 8.

<sup>21</sup> articles 4, 5, 17, 19, 20.

<sup>22</sup> articles 1 and 10, and put into practice when P. Laning was hospitalised for several years after a bad fall between the water pump and the settlement. The articles are an echo of the Workmen's Compensation Law passed by the Dutch Parliament in October 1899, which Abraham Kuypers, leader of the Calvinist party ARP, advocated, because through insurance it was possible to spread human suffering rather than have the full weight fall on individuals. F. Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuypers: A Biography*, Paideia Press, St. Catherines, 1978. pp. 191-192.

<sup>23</sup> articles 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 21.

<sup>24</sup> A reflection of their experience in business, and from their knowledge of Genesis 41.

<sup>25</sup> articles 5, 9, 16, 19, 20.

purpose other than to earn a living. The structure was not for employing fellow Dutchmen beyond themselves, and even that for only three years after which they were free to establish structures of their own. The documents show they were willing and able when necessary to speak another language, in this case English. They were not establishing a structure that would allow them to maintain use of, daily or otherwise, their native tongue. Watt found that there was very little Dutch used in the workplace, some use of Dutch in Church institutions, and none in the school.<sup>26</sup> He suggests that it was probable that Dutch was used exclusively in domestic situations in the first five years, although he has no evidence for this.<sup>27</sup>

The claims the G7 made about their intentions in their legal documents were not secret or conditional but consistent. There was no hesitation in telling *The Mercury*, in September 1950,<sup>28</sup> that they intended to build their own homes and then to build homes for Tasmanians and to establish a joinery workshop besides. Under the trading name 'Australian Building Corporation' they accepted contracts and erected houses with Australian timber for Australian buyers.<sup>29</sup> Their success acted like a magnet for other migrants because they could be sponsored, guaranteed accommodation and employment. The ABC was willing and able to give men an immediate start, to help them settle down, even to help them start out on their own.<sup>30</sup> Pillar ethnicity favoured the preservation of the Calvinist pillar and the associated way of life. As shown in the introduction, their circle of friends and acquaintances were mostly fellow Calvinists, and so it was from among this group that responses to the immigration call came.

The intentions of the G7 with respect to religion are not easily examined on the basis of documentation created prior to or during their migration. Their convictions encouraged them to develop and exercise their talents and their stewardship of the

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<sup>26</sup> M.G. Watt, 'Little Groningen: Some Aspects of Bilingualism and Acculturation among Dutch Immigrants in Kingborough, Tasmania.' Unpublished (B Ed) Thesis, Uni of Tas, p.30.

<sup>27</sup> The Laning family letter and audio letters held by this author confirm the suspicion held by Watt.

<sup>28</sup> *The Mercury*, 12 September 1950, p.4. This message was consistent with the report printed by *The Mercury* of 27/06/1950, p.4, which reported the meeting of vd Laan and Pinkster with the premier, Mr Cosgrove. The Premier subsequently instructed the Director of Housing to deal with these men concerning the importation of prefabs and Dutch Building trade workers. Tasmanian State Archives File ref No. PCS 1/101, 182/21 - 183/40, 1950. document # 182/35/50 - dated 7/7/1950

<sup>29</sup> *Australian Post* 27/9/1951

<sup>30</sup> *Trouw* 21/11/1953. The structures formed during this period, and the reason for their formation, are beyond the scope of this study.

Creation,<sup>31</sup> but not to hard work and a striving for economic success.<sup>32</sup> There is documentation concerning the immediate years after their arrival, and their responses as thus recorded indicate that their original intention was integration into a local church,<sup>33</sup> consistent with their desire to fully integrate into Tasmanian society. A description and analysis of this attempt at assimilation belongs to the next chapter.

The intentions of the migrants whose memoirs I have found have not been detailed. Memoirs typically describe a vague desire to start afresh somewhere else, often from a sense of adventure, a joining with the emigration fever sweeping the land. Why people do something and what they explain later are seldom identical.<sup>34</sup> Jack van Dongen was impressed by liberation troops and BBC Radio, but he was leaving a place rather than going somewhere.<sup>35</sup> Brandenhorst had no clear intentions in coming to Tasmania, although his NuBake bakery in St Leonards eventually captured 40% of the bread market in northern Tasmania.<sup>36</sup> Van Hoorn, who was also more intent on leaving than arriving, knew no more about Tasmania than was contained on the two pages in a book in his local library. He claims he was allowed to bring in £150 but does not record the year or date of his arrival.<sup>37</sup> Koos Schuur simply had, like so many of those interviewed by Speerstra, vague ideas about better opportunities for his children.<sup>38</sup>

To be absorbed into Australian society, as instructed by their government, seems to be a taken for granted intention of Dutch migrants. The purpose of leaving the Netherlands was to leave it behind and take on a new identity as Australians, as the emigration policy of the Dutch government encouraged.<sup>39</sup> As noted by Peters,

<sup>31</sup> J. Kremer, *Van Zorg en Zegen: De Gereformeerde Kerken en de Emigratie*, Annual Report, Christelijke Emigratie Centrale, Utrecht, December 1956. p.2. "Er is een tekort [in Nederland] aan mogelijkheden om tot levensontplooiing te komen. Er zijn nog tal van gebieden in de wereld, die om 'opvulling' door mensen roepen. Het is onze taak om de ontplooiingsmogelijkheden, die God in de schepping heeft gelegd, ook te gebruiken en tot ontwikkeling te brengen."

<sup>32</sup> Hard work and a striving for economic success are a possible outcome of developing and exercising talents. Julian confuses an effect with the cause. Julian, *op.cit.*, p.126. Matt 25:14-29, Gen 1:28.

<sup>33</sup> Kremer, concerning the establishment of the Reformed Church of Australia claims '... en daarbij zat niet de overweging voor om zich te isoleren van het Australische volk. Nee, zij wilden op deze manier niet anders dan het volk dienen in welks midden zij hun nieuwe levensbestaan gingen opbouwen.' Kremer, *op.cit.*, p.15.

<sup>34</sup> G. Oosterman, et al, *To Find a Better Life: Aspects of Dutch Immigration to Canada and the United States 1920-1970*, National Union of Christian Schools, Grand Rapids, 1975., p.25.

<sup>35</sup> J. Van Dongen, *Why did you do it?*, published by the author, Hobart, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Jones, G., *The First 50 Years*, Tasmaniana Pamphlet, call number TLP 929.2 BRA. 1999.

<sup>37</sup> van Hoorn, E.P., *A new beginning*, Tasmaniana, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> K. Schuur, *De Kookaburra lacht*, Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 1966., p.116.

<sup>39</sup> W. Walker-Birkhead, *Paying our way: private and public meanings of migration* Australian Journal of Anthropology, April 1998., pp.1 and 4.

depression, war and occupation robbed many of a sense of confidence, belonging and future in the country, which led to discontent and an urge to start fresh elsewhere.<sup>40</sup> Lack of promotion possibilities, an excess of bureaucracy, trouble making ends meet, narrow-minded social restrictions and having to work in bitter winter weather were the more tangible provocations to migrate.<sup>41</sup> Some fifteen per cent of migrants saw little prospect of obtaining their own house in Holland and thus emigrated to get a house so they could get married,<sup>42</sup> although there was information available that described a housing shortage in Australia.

It is not possible to verify the claimed intentions, however vivid the memories may be, of the bulk of the migrants, because they were not documented before leaving. Memories will always be informed by the subsequent events. Unstated intentions, however vague, recognised the Biblical command to fill the earth, including underpopulated Australia.<sup>43</sup> As host, Australia required all manner of people, skilled and unskilled, agricultural and industrial workers, employees and entrepreneurs. As long as people intended to work, Australia could absorb them, beside all those considered desirable and thus subsidised by the government to come.<sup>44</sup> Estimates varied wildly, but considered opinion thought that Australia could sustain a population of 60 million. Only an active migration policy could achieve that, for 'it was thought very doubtful that present methods would prove effective to save Australia for the white race and Western culture.'<sup>45</sup> In contrast, farmers sons, with little prospect of owning a farm in the Netherlands, dominated the migration to Canada, with the clear intention of farming.<sup>46</sup> It has been found that individuals have less clear intentions than those migrating as a group, however loosely defined, and have a higher failure rate as migrants.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> N. Peters, *Milk and Honey, but no Gold: post-war migration to Western Australia, 1945-1964*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, 2001. p.51.

<sup>41</sup> Beijer, *op.cit.*, p.42., See also van Dongen, *op.cit.*, E.P. van Hoorn, *A new beginning: Elsienna Pieterella van Hoorn (nee Lindbergh) through years 1950-1965*, edited by T.L.Rowlings, unpublished notes, 1997, held in the Tasmaniana Library.

<sup>42</sup> Beijer, *op.cit.*, p.156., Zierke, *op.cit.*, pp.15, 27, 55, 61, and 111.

<sup>43</sup> Van der Mast, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p.10.

<sup>45</sup> A. Lodewyckx, *People for Australia*, Angus and Robertson, London, 1956. pp.124 and 215.

<sup>46</sup> In the late 1940s they comprised more than 80% of Dutch migrants to Canada. Oosterman, *op.cit.*, p.97

<sup>47</sup> Van der Mast, *op.cit.*, pp.56 and 385 A group can be spread over a large number of years, as long as the intentions are similar. The concept of group does not mean or confer the concept of *enclave* or colony or ghetto. Lack also found that assistance from fellow countrymen and women proved vital to successful migration. J. Lack and J. Templeton, *Bold Experiment*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p.14.