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## A "Listener" Interview

# MILLIONS TO SPEND —MILLIONS TO FEED

**T**HREE Dutchmen flying over here with hundreds of millions of guilders (florins) — but, of course, only a fraction of it, if any, to be spent in New Zealand—gained just three-quarters of an inch notice in our newspapers.

Dr. van Hoogstraten, lean, tall, and aristocratic, the leader of the Mission and Director of Economic Affairs in the Netherland Indies, hearing that I had met his nephew on Java, gave me a gracious welcome. However, it was with his more conventionally Dutch-looking colleagues, van Holst Pellekaan and van der Noorda, that I presently found myself drinking coffee and discussing *Alice in Wonderland*.

"Where have you people come from?" my curiosity presently broke through. "It can't be from Holland or the Indies because both are still in enemy hands. It can't be from Britain because there you would be out of touch with your country. And you can't have set up a Government already in the patches of New Guinea bush coast that McArthur has captured . . ."

"We are in Brisbane," they said, "the 'Nederland Indië' Administration lives there at present, a properly constituted and recognised Refugee Government."

## How Many Million Yards?

"But we do not simply sit waiting in Australia," added van Holst Pellekaan. "We are most busy training personnel for the tasks of return and reconstruction and securing the supplies and plant that they will need."

"Think. Seventy-two million people," said his companion. "They can have had no new cotton clothes to speak of since three years. Even if Japanese factories were not too busy making other things, Japan has not conceivably enough ships to keep supplied so vast an empire as hers is to-day. If we gather and buy enough cloth for only a shirt and shorts for each person—and we plan only for bare necessities—how many million yards of cotton will that be?"

"But how do the people in the Indies exist at all to-day?" I asked. "The Japanese must be able, for example, to use only a fraction of the one-third of the world's rubber that the Indies grew. What do those who used to cultivate it live on now?"

"I do not know," said van Holst Pellekaan. "We never realised how little we knew of our own country until we were shut out from it. It must be difficult enough to keep up contacts across the frontiers with Europe. But across our vast empty seas and jungles it is impossible. We know practically nothing of what is happening in Indië to-day. Of course all plantations except those kept supplying Japan must have run wild. Tea bushes that should be up to my hand will be as high as this ceiling. Coffee and sisal and latex will be all wood and flowers. Export and manufacturing crops altogether will have committed self sabotage, and the native economy of just growing food for them-



**J. VAN HOLST PELLEKAAN**  
"Filling a big bill"

selves will have reasserted itself. We ourselves destroyed the factories before we left. So as we return we must first bring seeds and fish hooks and simple tools to improve local food production so that later on men can be freed for replanting work. For this a million ploughshares that will be tied on wooden handles for water buffaloes to draw will be more use than ten thousand tractors. To rehabilitate the Indies will need simple things—but such quantities of them that you cannot believe."

## Getting Ready in the Dark

I remarked that he had said "as we return" not "when we return."

"It is because we are returning already," he explained. "We never know where the next advance will be until we are asked for a 'crew' just before it happens. We call a 'crew' a group of men trained to take over the district the army occupies—to organise its Government and police, to get labour and food for the troops, to make it again a part of Netherland Indië. Of course the Indies are a very big place and different parts very different from each other. If a crew is trained for Timor conditions and then the General decides to land on Celebes—well, they must just do their best. All our preparation is very much in the dark."

I wondered how much the Japanese had managed to gain native Indonesian co-operation. That led to a discussion of the great advances in Dutch government made in the '30's in particular.

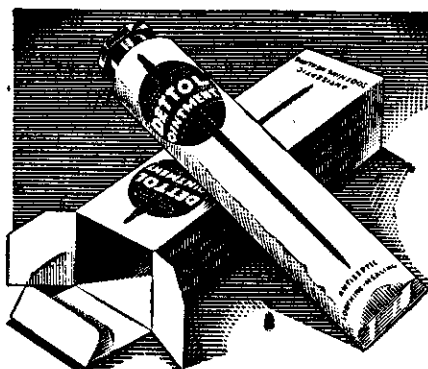
"Since this century began," said van der Noorda, "We have come up from Colony to practically Dominion status. Holland and the Indies now make together the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In Indië a *Folksraad* or People's Council makes the legislation. It has 60 members, about half of whom are elected and half nominated. One

(continued on next page)

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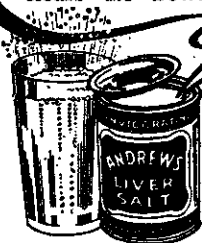
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