

Summary

‘Approaching’ Dien Hoetink. Biography of an agricultural-lawyer during time of crisis and during World War II.

In this biography about the agricultural-lawyer Dien Hoetink (1904-1945) you will find a description of her legislation-labour for the Dutch agriculture between 1933 and 1945. We try to answer the question to what degree her legislation-labour can be considered as the preliminary-draft of the public-regulation of the Dutch agriculture after Worldwar II.

When describing her work as an agricultural-lawyer we emphatically look to the interference between her personal history and her work. We need these interference to get a deeper understanding of the social and cultural setting of her childhood and her personal life in which she developed her own values and standards by which she created agricultural emergencies acts on behalf of the agricultural depression (1933-1940) and on behalf of the food supply during Worldwar II.

By studying her individual opinions and ways of acting, we reduce a very small part of the Dutch agricultural history to the influence of Dien Hoetink as an *auctor intellectualis*. In consequence of this, this book belongs to the category of the theoretical or conceptional biography. Without further preface this book is an intellectual biography.

But it is more. A woman with an university degree who makes a career in society was rather exceptional in the first half of the twentieth century. Here we probably see an emancipatory perspective. The connections from the Hoetink family with the former Dutch East Indies and their academic relations also gives a clear understanding of the daily life of the upper middle class on the end of the nineteenth and the beginnig of the twentieth century. So, this book also has parts of a social- historical biography in it.

Dien Hoetink was born on 11 January 1904 in The Hague. She was the second child of a physician who had medical qualifications from both the Universities of Leiden (Netherlands) and Heidelberg (Germany). Her father was appointed as a physician to the Deli company (tobacco) in Dutch Indonesia from 1888 till 1901. From then on the family took up their residence in The Hague, a common destination for many Dutch people who came back to the Netherlands from Dutch Indonesia. Here Dien Hoetink attended both the primary and grammar school (Gymnasium Haganum). The

Hague was the first Dutch municipality where young girls were informed about education and work, rather than family and household duties. After grammar school she studied law at Leiden University from her 17th to her 21st.

At Leiden University she was confronted with the historical approach in law studies, covering the period from *Corpus Iuris Civilis* by the Roman emperor Justinianus (527-565 AC) up to the beginning of the 20th century. In the 19th century the Dutch (conservative) statesman and professor of law at Leiden University J.R. Thorbecke introduced the 'organic way' by which public law and public organisations should 'grow'. Later on this 'Thorbecke dogma' became one of the guiding principles in the legal work of Dien Hoetink. At Leiden University she also became acquainted with the Dutch Constitution and its definitions of the public duties of civil organisations.

Her fascination with the 'public interest' can be attributed to the principles she was taught during her upbringing by her parents and relatives. She belonged to an intellectual family with an interest in culture and literature.

After her studies Dien Hoetink was appointed assistant to the management board of a Dutch insurance company (Blom and Van der Aa). Because of the economical crises it was not easy to find a job. For women these problems on the labour market were harder than for men. She visited Dutch Indonesia with the board of Blom and Van der Aa from February until April 1930. Her brother, Henk Hoetink, and his family lived there. He was professor of civil law (1929-1935) at the Dutch Law University of Batavia. A comprehensive correspondence between the families in Dutch Indonesia and the Hague about this period has been saved. In these correspondence we see Dien Hoetink in private life amongst her family. We are introduced in the genealogical interest of the family Hoetink and we are searching for the cultural life and life style of Dien Hoetink by way of books, films and newspapers.

In November 1933, after two years of unemployment and due to her brother's connections in Batavia, Dien Hoetink was appointed as a staff member in the office of the Agricultural Crisis Committee in The Hague. This committee was a non-official part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Within a few years Dien Hoetink managed to work herself up to the position of head of their law department. From 1937 she was legal advisor (on Agricultural affairs) to both the Secretary General and the Secretary of State of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. At the end of 1939 she was appointed

head of the legal department of the Government Organisation for Food Supply during Times of War (RbVVO).

In this position she was responsible for the legislation on food supply during the German occupation. She based this legislation on the articles 152-154 of the Dutch Constitution in order to get a fluent transition to new legislation after the departure of the Germans. Since 1938 these articles of the Constitution gave the Dutch Government the possibilities to make laws by which civil corporations could acquire public competence. Such public industrial organizations were founded for the agriculture in order to regulate the agricultural market during times of war.

During the war, the German occupiers slowly changed their attitudes from co-operation to severe repression. A part of the Dutch harvest was claimed by the Germans for their forces in the Netherlands and for the German market. Meanwhile the RbVVO tried to negotiate with the occupiers to ensure that there remained ample food for the Dutch population. Dien Hoetink 'translated' the results of these negotiations into regulations for Dutch agriculture, both farmers and agricultural industry. She also tried to protect the male personnel of the RbVVO from the *Arbeitseinsatz* (enforced labour for all Dutch men between 18 and 40) in Germany. Meanwhile she founded a social fund that provided financial support for the families of her colleagues who were nevertheless forced to work in Germany. She also tried to send them food parcels.

The Jewish personnel of RbVVO had already been dismissed between the autumn of 1940 and the spring of 1941. The management of the organisation and the Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs did not even try to stop these dismissals. Dien Hoetink and her law department were forced to send these colleagues away. This was a very dark period in the short history of the RbVVO.

The rationing of all agricultural products encouraged private circulation on the black market. A special court of discipline dealt with this kind of 'black circulation'. Starting from the autumn of 1943 the Germans wanted to stop this by excluding the 'black' dealers, for instance by immediate expropriation of farms. Dien Hoetink, however, wanted to uphold the law system with a special court. Her pertinacity annoyed the German occupiers and they arrested her on 3 August 1944. Initially she was sent to the criminal prison in Scheveningen and from 16 August the Germans held her captured in concentration camp 'Vught' (*Konzentrationslager Herzogenbusch*). Here she worked in the so-called 'Philips *Kommando*'. On 6 September 1944 she was taken by cattle train, along with all the female prisoners of Vught, to the

concentration camp Ravensbrück in the neighbourhood of Berlin. They arrived there three days later on the 9 September 1944. Here she was forced to work in the 'Siemens *Kommando*'. The prisoners in Ravensbrück had to work extremely hard and long hours. They had little sleep and food and they suffered from all kinds of diseases. Dien Hoetink herself suffered from typhoid fever. She died on 16 February 1945. She possibly died from exhaustion, but it is more probable that she was gassed by the SS gassing team that came over from concentration camp Auschwitz to Ravensbrück in November 1944.

Dien Hoetink lost her life because of her struggle to maintain important elements of Dutch legal practice during the German occupation. In spite of her tragic death, her role as legal advisor for the RbVVO marked the start of the introduction of public duties for civil organisations in Dutch agriculture. Her main intellectual issue, the importance of the 'public interest', will be remembered.