

DIFFERENTIAL FERTILITY IN THE NETHERLANDS¹

THE Netherlands is particularly interesting to students of population problems because it presents the anomaly of a very densely populated country with an exceptionally low death rate and a rather high birth rate. Furthermore, the excellence of its vital statistics permits a closer study of the problems presented than is possible in any, except perhaps the Scandinavian, countries.

Dr. Methorst's monograph on "Differential Fertility in the Netherlands" is a case in point. It presents the results of an unusually detailed survey of differential fertility and child mortality in selected "towns" and "rural" areas. The survey was made as of 1927 and the report is presented as the Netherlands National Committee's contribution to the work of the International Population Union. The findings are compared with those of a survey made along similar lines by the Central Commission for Statistics thirty years earlier.

The data presented indicate that during the thirty years prior to 1927 the fertility of married women declined more rapidly in the towns than in the rural districts, and apparently more rapidly in the upper income classes than in the lower, both in the towns and rural districts.

In both types of communities wives adhering to the Christian Reformed, Roman Catholic, and Reformed churches were more fertile than "Other Protestants" and Jews. The proportion of families in which first births occurred less than nine months after marriage was lowest among the Christian Reformed and Reformed Church people and highest among "Other Protestants" and those who did not adhere to any creed. In general, the interval between marriage and the first birth increased with income status.

The proportion of childless unions was smaller in rural districts than in towns and somewhat smaller in the lower than in the higher income classes. Such families were more frequent among the Protestants than Catholics, and among employers than workers.

The mortality of children under five years of age declined much more rapidly during the thirty years prior to 1927 in the towns than

¹ Methorst, H. W., M.D.: *Differential Fertility; Birth-Rates and Infantile Mortality in the Netherlands*. *Population—Journal of the International Union for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems*. Vol. I, Special Memoir, April, 1935. London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 70 pp. 2s 6d net.