



Berend Havinga

1892 – 1978

Berend Havinga was born in the village of Haren (Province of Groningen, The Netherlands) on 1 January 1892. He studied biology at the University of Groningen and received his doctor's degree in 1919 on a thesis entitled "*Flora en Fauna van het Zuidlaardermeer*". In 1917 he began his career in the Dutch fishery service, stationed in the city of Harlingen. It was his duty to carry out investigations on fishery matters in the inland and inshore waters and in due course he was appointed head of the section of inland and coastal fisheries in the Netherlands Institute for Fishery Investigations, stationed in the old "Oost Indisch Huis" in the city of Amsterdam.

After the death of Dr P. P. C. Hoek in 1914 – several years after his return from Copenhagen where he served the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea as its first General Secretary – the Dutch fishery institute fell apart in several sections, spread over the country. Most of the sections suffered serious restraints in budget and personnel during the

subsequent years of depression. During this difficult period the section headed by Dr Havinga was by far the most active of all, despite the temporary restraints.

In the early years of his career Dr Havinga paid considerable attention to the problems of the molluscan and crustacean shellfisheries. Early in the century one had witnessed a flourishing lobster fishery along several of the steep dikes in the Zeeland waters in the south-western part of the Netherlands, though lobsters did originally not inhabit the sandy shores of the country. Towards 1920 this lobster fishery showed a serious decline, and Dr Havinga wondered whether the stock of lobsters could not be improved by releasing young bottom stages reared from the egg. He built an installation for rearing lobster larvae in a basin located at the old waterfort at Bergen-op-Zoom and managed to produce tens of thousands of baby lobsters, despite their cannibalistic habits. He released the young bottom stages in the dark of the night along some of the Zeeland dikes and had high hopes that the local lobster fishery would show a revival in due course. Unfortunately this did not happen. It seems questionable whether the young lobsters managed to find sufficient shelter at the foot of the dikes since one had not scattered new riprap there to strengthen the dikes, as was common practice in earlier years.

Dr Havinga also worked on the fishery aspects of the brown shrimp, and his publication "*Der Granat in den Holländischen Gewässern*" is still frequently quoted. He devoted a lot of attention to oyster and mussel farming and wrote two volumes in the well-known series "*Handbuch der Seefischerei Nordeuropas*", viz. "*Krebse und Weichtiere*" (1929) which dealt with the biology of molluscan and crustacean shellfish occurring in the area under consideration, and "*Austern und Muschelkultur*" (1932) in which he described in detail the systems of oyster and mussel farming then practised in the countries of western and northern Europe. These volumes are still frequently consulted as they contain a wealth of information.

Another publication of major importance was "*Der Seehund (Phoca vitulina L.) in den Holländischen Gewässern*" which contains Havinga's scientific findings on the biology of the common harbour seal and on the impact of the stock on the Dutch coastal fishery, especially on the specialized flounder fishery. These investigations were ordered by the Minister to inform him whether it was advisable on behalf of the fishery to keep the stock of seals under control by offering a premium for every seal killed. A keen hunter as Dr Havinga was, he carried out this special task with considerable joy.

The transition from the brackish Zuiderzee into the fresh Lake IJssel, following the construction of the enclosing dam in 1932, was studied by Dr Havinga in considerable detail. His scientific findings are to be found in the various volumes of the series "*Flora en Fauna der Zuiderzee*", whereas he advised the Minister on the more practical aspects of the fishery in that large body of water. He predicted in an early stage, much to the dismay of the fishermen, that the famous Zuiderzee herring, a spring spawner which formerly entered the Zuiderzee each year in considerable numbers in search of a brackish area for spawning, would disappear completely, and that the anchovy, which formerly entered the Zuiderzee in early summer in search of high water temperatures for reproduction, would seriously decline in numbers, since the water of the Waddensea further north would be too cold for successful reproduction in an average summer.

Shortly after the construction of the enclosing dam a tendipedid midge revealed such an explosive reproduction in Lake IJssel that one could rightly speak of a plague, but it was Dr Havinga who forecast that there was no need to be unduly alarmed since one would see in due course that fishes, especially eels, would bring its numbers back to a reasonable level. Dr Havinga did also foresee that the eel fishery would become an industry of major importance in Lake IJssel, and organized research to study the possibilities to facilitate the migration of elvers into this big freshwater lake. This led in due course to an optimal use of the fertility of Lake IJssel.

Dr Havinga realized that every effort should be made to bring together again the different sections of the Netherlands Institute for Fishery Investigations. This finally led to the construction of a brand-new Fisheries Laboratory in IJmuiden, the most important fishery harbour of the Netherlands. This was the first of its kind in western Europe, being built according to the wishes of the fishery biologists. About a year before his official retirement

Dr Havinga entered the fine building as its Director and the unification of the research activities lead to a flourishing new era in the Dutch fishery investigations.

Internationally Dr Havinga was active at the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea as Delegate for the Netherlands from 1945 to 1956, inclusive. His great interest in shellfish matters made him strive towards the setting up of a new scientific committee, which was to be named “Shellfish Committee”. He became its first Chairman (1954–1956) and in that capacity he guided the successful and memorable excursion to the French shellfish areas in the Basin of Arcachon and in the Charente Maritime following the Statutory Meeting in Paris in 1954.

Dr Havinga was from the beginning also Delegate for the Netherlands in the Permanent Commission established under the Convention of 1946, the predecessor of the present North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission. Already during the Statutory Meeting of the Council held in Edinburgh (1949) he had insisted on more research on the herring stocks of the North Sea. Several of his colleagues firmly believed in the inexhaustibility of the North Sea herring, but later they had to admit that a better knowledge of the herring stocks and of the impact of the fishery upon them would have been very useful indeed.

Dr Havinga retired as director of the Netherlands Institute for Fishery Investigations in January 1957, having reached the age of 65 years. Her Majesty the Queen honoured him for his services to the country by knighting him Officer in the Order of Orange Nassau.

P. Korringa