

Welcome Speech at the 'Fietsfeest'

Taco Schmidt, President of the Dutch Cyclists' Union 'Fietzersbond',
Postbus 2828, 3500 GV Utrecht, The Netherlands
Info@fietzersbond.nl

Dear friends of cycling from all over the world!

On behalf of Dutch Cyclists Union: A very, very warm welcome at our anniversary party here in Amsterdam. It is really exciting to have so many friends of cycling from all over the world around us.

This year Dutch Cyclists Union is celebrating it's 25 anniversary.

The great bicycle festival that is going on outside is part of that celebration. It shows the almost infinite possibilities of cycling, and stresses the positive side of cycling. Cycling is fun, practical, healthy, inexpensive, a solution to modern traffic problems, socially equal, an impulse for the economy.

The reason most of you are here, the Vélo Mondial 2000 Conference, is another important element, in our anniversary program. We think this conference is also important for Dutch cyclists. To some of you, Holland may seem a cycling paradise, and to some extent, surely it is. But I am sure that we can learn from other countries as well. I have seen inspiring examples in other countries of Europe, and I am sure I will see new inspiring solutions of other parts of the world next week Dutch cyclists will profit from that.

Furthermore, more and more decisions on traffic regulations are made on an international level. Therefore it is important that we can share our experience with you. Together we can workout and promote solutions that are really favorable for cyclists. Dutch cyclist will profit from that, too. So, please, don't support obligations for helmets prescribed by any international organization!

25 years of Dutch cyclists union is really worth to celebrate. 25 years ago there was the position of cycling and cyclists in city- and traffic planning was almost nil. Cycling was not in planning process, not in statistics, not in the head of politicians. I think, I am saying not too much if I say that thanks to Dutch Cyclists Union, this situation has changed dramatically - as you can see here in Amsterdam.

At this point I want to share some of our experience with you.

To achieve such a good climate for cycling, and that something I want to share with you at least for factors are crucial. Together I have named them the **Pact for Cycling**, and I have summarized them on a bookmark, that is now being handed out, and that is our little reminder for you of the Velo Mondial 2000 Conference. To really realize a good climate for cycling, you need:

First: *Political Priority* for cycling, which means a budget, attention, and, where necessary the courage to choose between cycling and other means of transport.



Secondly you also need *Consumer experience*. This I say especially to those of you who are politicians or civil servants. You need the consumer experience, and for that matter, stubbornness and pressure of the cycle movement to really get something going in your community. You cannot create a city for cyclists behind your desk, or by inspection of roads by car.

Thirdly, you need *Technical know-how*. I am sure you will see and hear about a lot of new technical solutions to make cycling more comfortable this conference, and of course this is another necessary aspect of a real pact for cycling.

Very important, and often forgotten, is, **fourth**, *active communication*. To reach the goal of a cycle friendly city everyone in the community should be involved. So, activists should not only address politicians or civil servants. Other cyclists, schools, citizens' initiatives, building companies are for instance also important to have contacts with. Politicians should realize that not only the traffic department has to do with cycling. Town-planning, the police, shopping malls, all have to do with cycling, as have firms where you hire a car, public transport and the like.

I am sure The Velomondial 2000 Conference covers all the aspects of The Pact for cycling. So after attending the conference you will have the necessary luggage as we say in Dutch, to make your own PACT for Cycling. (Also you will have, with the bookmark, a brief summary of the conference, to satisfy your employer if he asks for it.)

However there is one more thing you need. And that is on the backside of our bookmark: Inspiration! I am sure that cycling around in Amsterdam, one of the wealthiest and economically sound cities of the world, will give you that Inspiration. And, is it for that reason I am very glad that the Velomondial Conference could be held with the great support of the city of Amsterdam.

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I wish you a lot of inspiration. Have a good conference!