

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FORTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE.

HOUSE.

No. 91.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON SHIPPING INTEREST.

The Committee on Shipping Interest to which was referred so much of the subject as relates to statistics showing the condition of American tonnage now, as compared to the same previous to the war, with such information and suggestions as would be considered pertinent to the matter referred to us, have had the same under consideration and ask leave to report the following statement of facts :

At the beginning of 1861 the United States had reached a position in the first rank among the maritime powers of the world ; her flag was seen in every port upon the globe ; and our merchants were successfully competing for the carrying trade under canvas, of every sea, and participated with profit in this traffic between different parts of the British Empire. Up to that time this great interest had been a source of strength to our government as well as wealth to our people. But since 1861, the almost uninterrupted growth of half a century has been reversed, and a steady decline has been going on and is still in progress, and must continue to go on unless prompt, active and decided measures are adopted for its relief, and the quicker this great interest is looked after and protected, the sooner we shall be in condition to again resume our position as one of the first maritime powers on the globe.

On the 30th of June, 1861, the shipping of the United States had reached in round numbers five and a half million tons, being nearly or quite as large as that of all other nations combined except Great Britain, or to be definite, our tonnage on the 30th of June, 1861, was 5,539,813, and that reported on the 30th of June, 1867, 3,868,615, being a decline for the six years of 1,671,198 tons, or little over 30 per cent.

We will here separate the enrolled and licensed tonnage of the government; that which is engaged upon the rivers and lakes and along the coast, from the registered or foreign tonnage, that we may the better get at the foreign business of the country, this being the only trade coming into competition with our ships. The official report in relation to this subject gives us the following information:

Whole number of tons engaged in the foreign trade in 1861 was 2,642,628, and the tonnage engaged in the same trade in 1867 was 1,354,235, being a balance in favor of the first period of 1,288,393 tons. But we do not see even here the full decline. Since June, 1864, a new method of measuring vessels has been in practice. Space has been measured as a part of the ship's capacity that was not so measured and reckoned at any time prior to that date. This system is considered by best judges to increase the tonnage, without giving any more capacity to the vessel, from twelve to fifteen per cent., but we will call the difference in our calculation 10 per cent., and subtract this amount from the tonnage of 1867, in order to bring it equal to that of 1864, and we have a difference of 1,423,816 tons, or an actual loss of 50 per cent. of all the foreign or registered tonnage of the country, being a decline in six years of nearly one and a half million tons.

In order that we may more fully understand our position in regard to this important matter of commerce, which in the past has been such a source of wealth to the nation, we will get at the number of American and foreign vessels which entered the ports of the United States in 1860 as compared to that of 1866, this being the latest period we have any statistics on this point to work from. We give the number of vessels, their tonnage and the number of men returned as crews.

Whole number of American vessels cleared from the United States to foreign ports in 1860 was 12,682, amounting in tonnage to 6,165,924, and manned by 180,745 men and boys. The number of foreign vessels sailing under a foreign flag for the same time, was 10,912, covering a tonnage of 2,624,005, and being manned by 114,276 men and boys. There were for the same year 12,206 American vessels entered our ports, with a tonnage of 5,921,285, manned with 170,100 men and boys as crews; and for the same time 10,725 vessels under a foreign flag, embracing 2,353,911 tons, and manned with 107,542 men and boys.

This shows a difference in favor of our flag in that year over all

others of 1770, clearing from our ports with an excess of 3,541,919 tons, and 66,469 men, being more than 50 per cent. in favor of our tonnage over all others.

We now pass over a period of six years, and we find a most wonderful change in the situation of our commerce, and, but for the official report, we should be unwilling to accept as truth. The number of American vessels cleared from the United States in 1866 was 8,644, their tonnage being 3,383,176, and manned with 109,545 men. The number of foreign vessels clearing from this country for the same year being 17,490, embracing 4,438,384 tons, with 181,378 men as their crews. The number of American vessels entering our ports from foreign countries during the year 1866 was 8,846, having a tonnage of 3,372,060, with crews consisting of 110,250 men. The number of foreign vessels entering the ports of the United States from foreign countries for the same year was 17,587, their tonnage amounting to 4,410,424, and manned with 183,365 men as crews.

This shows a difference in favor of the foreign flag of 8,846 vessels as clearing from the United States in one year, embracing 1,055,208 tons, or nearly 25 per cent. against our flag. While in 1860 the official report shows that nearly three quarters of all the clearances from this country was under the American flag, demonstrating clearly that, at the present rate, in a very few years the whole foreign carrying trade will be done by foreign bottoms protected by a foreign flag. The American tonnage which promised in 1861 to monopolize a large portion of the carrying trade of the world dwindled down in 1865 as entering all the ports of Great Britain, under the American flag, as follows: In 1861 there entered the ports of England under our flag, 1,932 vessels, registering 1,647,076 tons, but this shipping diminished in 1866 to 343 vessels, registering only 362,760, being a decline of 1,284,316 tons, thus proving beyond contradiction that while our foreign commerce is increasing, its profits are being earned by foreign bottoms. The carrying trade is greater than ever before, but its increase is marked by foreign flags in all our ports, and not by American tonnage, the correctness of which is seen by the dwindling size of our vessels.

We have one other comparative view of the subject to present, which we think is enough for our present purpose, though we might continue our illustration in the same direction to an indefinite period, and we refer to the number of ships and barks that

were built in this country in the twelve years ending in 1866, or extending over a period of six years before the war and the six years from its commencement to June 30th, 1866. We have taken ships and barks only, as this class of vessels *are all, or nearly all,* engaged in the foreign carrying trade of the world. We have not brought the crop of these vessels down to a later date than 1866, for the reason that the report of the Secretary of the Treasury for a later date is not in our hands; but we are of opinion that the official report for the past two years will show a still further decline in our tonnage, so far as this class of vessels is concerned.

In 1855 we produced 381 ships.

“ 1856	“	“	306	“
“ 1857	“	“	251	“
“ 1858	“	“	222	“
“ 1859	“	“	89	“
“ 1860	“	“	110	“

making for these six years, 1,359 “ or an av. of 226 annually.

1861,	there was built in the United States,	110
1862,	“ “ “ “	62
1863,	“ “ “ “	97
1864,	“ “ “ “	112
1865,	“ “ “ “	109
1866,	“ “ “ “	96

Making for these last six years, 586

or an average of only 97 per annum, showing a decline in the last named period as compared with the first, of nearly sixty per cent.

We now turn to the official record of our own State. By reference to the Secretary of the Treasury's Report, we find that there was held by the several districts of this State on the 30th of June, 1860, 802,838 tons, and on the 30th of June, 1866, this large amount of tonnage had dwindled down to 294,469, being a decline of 508,369 tons, or about sixty-four per cent. If we estimate this shipping at \$30 per ton, we find that it amounts in round numbers to fifteen and a quarter million dollars. The cause of this great decline in our commerce must be apparent to every man who has taken the trouble to investigate it.

The expense in building ships has increased so much during the past six years, that it is not profitable for shipbuilders or capitalists to invest their funds in this enterprise, as it is impossible under the present laws and regulations enacted by Congress, to

successfully compete with our neighbors of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Canada.

The cost of building a ship in 1860, per registered ton, did not exceed fifty dollars, when rigged and ready for sea; whereas the cost of such a ship could not be put afloat and rigged, now, less than sixty-five or seventy dollars per ton, thus demonstrating that it is impossible for us to go on the ocean and successfully compete for the carrying trade with the tonnage of other nations, who have this great advantage over us, in the cost and equipment of their ships.

Unless we can be released by Congress of some of the heavy burdens which are now placed upon our ships, we shall be obliged to abandon this enterprise entirely, which has been such a source of wealth to our people, and pride to this nation. If a drawback could be returned to the builders on the dutiable articles entering into the construction of a ship, so as to bring her cost somewhere near the expense of an English built ship, then we might expect, at an early day, to see our numerous shipyards, which are now idle, resound again with that activity and business which characterized them in the years that are past; but unless something is done by Congress for our relief, we shall be forced to the mortifying exhibition of seeing all the foreign business of the world done by ships flying a foreign flag.

We have investigated carefully the duties upon materials going into the construction of a ship and find they amount to about eight dollars per ton in gold, or nearly eleven dollars in currency, and if this amount could be returned to the builder, so as to have the cost of our ships approximate to those of other nations, we could immediately start again this great enterprise, with the hope in a few years of regaining our place as one of the first maritime powers on the globe.

All of which is respectfully submitted,

T. H. CUSHING,	}	<i>Committee on part of Senate.</i>
B. D. METCALF,		
J. P. MORSE,		
G. C. GOSS,	}	<i>Committee on part of House.</i>
JOHN S. CASE,		
ELLERY TURNER,		
ALFRED WATTS,		
C. J. MORRIS,		
S. A. RENDELL,		
JAMES DUNNING.	}	

STATE OF MAINE.

RESOLVE relative to the shipping interest.

WHEREAS, our shipbuilders cannot successfully compete with those of other nations, owing in a degree to the excessive duties imposed upon materials used in the construction of ships, and that it is with deep feelings of regret that we see our tonnage engaged in foreign trade reduced to so great an extent as the accompanying report indicates, and feeling that we cannot regain the position we occupied before the war without our shipping interest is placed on an equal footing with those of other nations, therefore,

Resolved, That this legislature respectfully submits the accompanying report to the consideration of Congress, trusting that in their wisdom and patriotism they will so legislate that our shipping interest may be placed on as favorable a footing as that of other nations.

Resolved, That our senators and representatives are hereby requested to do all they consistently can to further such legislation.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
March 10, 1869. }

Reported from the Joint Special Committee on Shipping Interests, and ordered to be printed.

S. J. CHADBOURNE, *Clerk.*