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The Abandoned Ocean: A History of United States Maritime Policy

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and decent annotation, this work will make a welcome addition to the library of the naval specialist, professor, and armchair admiral alike.

Today's naval powers operate in a global theater. Padfield's research not only demonstrates the origins of this global maritime arena but reinforces the importance of maintaining a nation's maritime heritage, diversity, and power. The book's dust jacket calls the United States of America the "ultimate successor" to this maritime past. If the United States is to maintain the position Padfield claims its maritime history has granted it, then its naval leadership—if not its citizenry—should be reading this work, to understand the past and prepare for the future.

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Gibson, Andrew, and Arthur Donovan. *The Abandoned Ocean: A History of United States Maritime Policy*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 2000. 362pp. \$39.95

The Abandoned Ocean has been published at an opportune time in the history of the U.S. merchant marine. The latter half of the twentieth century has seen the flags of the traditional maritime nations of Europe and the United States almost disappear from the sea. The fleets of developed nations operated under national regulation. Competing with shipping lines under foreign registry that paid minimal registry fees in lieu of national taxes, employed cheaper crews, and obtained and maintained their ships at fluctuating world market prices rather than in conformance to engineering and safety standards, the merchant fleets of developed nations were increasingly at a

disadvantage. When the Western European shipping lines found they were unable to operate their vessels under existing national regulations, many legislatures eased those standards by allowing the formation of international registries that established conditions similar to those of their competitors. Some countries, such as France and Great Britain, established ship registries in their colonies that provided similar competitive conditions.

The Abandoned Ocean is a historical study of American shipping policy over the past two hundred years. It was drafted in the hope that it would help future maritime policy makers to understand better the competitive environment that exists today.

As might be expected, given the academic background of its authors, the book will be equally valuable to students of maritime affairs. It is a case study of the strategic, economic, and political issues that have influenced American policy makers at the highest level from the colonial period. Readers are provided with the essential facts about what has, and what has not, been beneficial to U.S. maritime industry. They may draw their own conclusions.

The book is divided into three parts. The first, "Free Trade and American Enterprise," addresses the years 1600 to 1914, the period of the greatest growth of the American merchant marine, and of its steep decline following the Civil War. The second part, "War-Impelled Industries," guides the reader from 1914 to 1960, discussing the issues that gave rise to the great merchant fleets of both world wars, and the New Deal legislation culminating in the Merchant Marine Act of 1936. The third part, "The Approaching

End,” covering 1960 to 1990, will be of greatest interest to the serious student.

The senior author, Andrew Gibson, sailed as master of a Liberty ship in World War II and rose in the maritime industry to become the senior vice president of the Grace Line and president of the Delta Line. In government, he served as administrator of the U.S. Maritime Administration and assistant secretary of commerce. Gibson held the Emory S. Land Chair of Merchant Marine Affairs at the Naval War College, in Newport, Rhode Island, and he continues there as an Advanced Research Fellow.

Arthur Donovan is a teacher of maritime history at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Kings Point, New York. He has been published widely on the history of science and technology.

The authors contend that present American maritime policy was designed to solve specific problems. The policy, beneficial at the time it was implemented, has since been manipulated in a contest between shippers, shipowners, shipbuilders, and representatives of labor to the detriment of the whole. As a consequence, the industry does not speak with one voice; it rarely has been able to agree upon a common policy, because proponents and opposition groups exist in the executive

branch and in both houses of Congress. All are influenced by an extensive group of lobbyists and trade associations operating in the interests of their respective constituencies.

The authors conclude: “In all maritime nations except the United States it is accepted that the sole purpose of a merchant ship is to make a reasonable net return on invested capital. In the United States political considerations tend to dominate because there are many beneficiaries other than investors. The government is compelled to continue payments to make sure that the expectations of these many other recipients are satisfied. . . . Anyone familiar with America’s proud record of maritime preeminence must be saddened by this prospect of final decline. . . . But in the absence of a truly new departure, of strong leadership and collective commitment to fundamental renovation, extinction is the most likely outcome.”

The Abandoned Ocean should be read by those who wish to comprehend the issues facing U.S. maritime policy makers in the restructuring of an American merchant marine for the twenty-first century.

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