

## THE VISIBLE HAND OF SHIPPING INTERESTS IN AMERICAN MIGRATION POLICIES 1815-1914<sup>1</sup>

### The visible hand of shipping interests in American migration policies 1880-1914

*As Goldin observed, the perplexing part of us immigration restriction history is that it took so long to close the doors. A key actor in this debate has generally been overlooked. This article argues that shipping interests, including those of the Holland America Line (HAL), were the driving force behind the pro-immigration lobby and successfully helped prevent the early passage of restrictive laws selecting European migrants based on racial prejudices. It also shows that while American authorities improved inspections at the gates, the shipping companies increased their efforts to guarantee the landing of their passengers. The analysis of shipping lines as middlemen between the migrant and the state aims to reassess their influence on migration flows and early migration policies.*

During the Progressive Era (1890-1921), bills containing a literacy test passed one of the US houses of Congress seventeen times without being enacted between 1896 and 1917. In the meantime, seventeen million migrants, mostly from eastern and southern Europe, landed in the United States. Scholars have denoted the shifting interests that created strange bedfellow-coalitions opposed to restrictions. The interest groups discussed are organised labour,

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1. This article is part of a dissertation defended at the European University Institute (Florence) in 2008. In addition to discussing how the shipping companies positioned themselves between the state and the migrant, it also covers the growing pains of transatlantic steam shipping and the transition from sail to steam, the relationship between shipping companies covering the formation and the working of shipping cartels, and finally the management of the widespread agent-network selling ocean passage and providing a wide range of key services to migrants. The dissertation was rewritten for publication, which is forthcoming. I would like to use the opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to the project, in particular: Professors L. Fischer, E. Vanhaute, M. Miller, H.-G. Haupt, B. Yun, D. Gabaccia, C. Strikwerda, P. Weil and Doctors S. Vanfrachem, D. Keeling, S. Hoste, F. Caestecker and H. Krabbendam.

capitalist owners, immigrant communities and rural America.<sup>2</sup> Yet the role of shipping companies, gaining the biggest part of their revenues from migrant transport, remains unexplored. Based on the Holland America Line (HAL) archives, this article argues that the shipping lobby was the driving force behind the pro-immigration coalition. By keeping open the gates, southern and eastern European immigrants increased their political influence. Roedriger labelled these immigrants as ‘in-betweeners’ for not being considered fully white or black. Guglielmo rightly underlined that, despite this status, they never lost their ‘white on arrival’ voting privileges, allowing them to gain political power.<sup>3</sup> At control stations, selections based on various degrees of whiteness criteria gained ground. Once again shipping companies limited their impact. This analysis of the HAL as a middleman between the individual migrant and the state aims to reassess the influence of business interests on migration. This happened when the cornerstones were being laid of what Aristide Zolberg described as: ‘the great global wall to protect industrious nations from the invasion of the world’s poor’.<sup>4</sup> The main question of the article is to assess the impact of shipping companies on the enactment and enforcement of early immigration laws.

### Migration as an international trade matter

With the abolition of the slave trade and a new tradition of diplomatic consultation, the Congress of Vienna created an international regime that stimulated cooperation, free trade, economic integration and international migration. This regime allowed mass migration to unfold and refutes the misconception that the nineteenth-century states adopted a *laissez-faire* policy towards migration.<sup>5</sup> Scholars have overlooked the fact that early migration policies aimed much more at regulating the migrant trade rather than the emigration of citizens or the immigration of aliens. The development of migrant transport into a lucrative and dominant trade on the North-Atlantic triggered a keen

2. Claudia Goldin, ‘The political economy of immigration restriction in the United States 1890-1921’, in: Claudia Goldin and Gary Libecap (eds.), *The regulated economy: A historical approach to political economy* (Chicago 1994) 223-257.

3. Thomas Guglielmo, *White on arrival: Italians, race, color and power in Chicago 1890-1945* (New York 2003) 28-30; David Roedriger, *Working towards whiteness: How America’s immigrants became white* (New York 2005).

4. Aristide Zolberg, ‘Matters of state: Theorizing immigration policy’, in: Charles Hirschman, Philip Kasinitz and Josh Dewind (eds.), *The handbook of international migration: The American experience* (New York 1999) 71-91, 72.

5. Carl Strikwerda, ‘Tides of migrations, currents of history: The state economy and the transatlantic movement of labor in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’, *International Review of Social History* 44 (1994) 367-394, 375.



Albumplaatje, ± 1920 Holland-Amerika Lijn (Rotterdam). Uit een serie Nederlands klederdrachten. Marken. IISG Collectie Reclame Arsenal BG C 17/228.

competition between ports.<sup>6</sup> Most countries with natural migrant gateways passed laws to facilitate the transit of migrants and protect them from abuses. The shipping lobby made sure that legislation passed on both sides of the Atlantic did not interfere with the expansion of their business.

American laws underlined the close relationship between migration and trade. Because migrant transport was a commercial issue, it fell under federal authority. The responsibility for preventing the entrance of paupers and convicts was deemed a police matter and fell under state authority.<sup>7</sup> From 1819 onwards, federal authorities tried to affect the quality and quantity of immigrants through Passenger Acts. These included provisions to decrease ship capacity and increase the cost of shipping human freight. These first remote border control policies, preventing the poorest from leaving Europe, had limited success because the shipping lobby managed to postpone laws, make them void, or limit their impact. On a state level, competition between Atlantic ports to attract the trade also prevented the passage of far-reaching restrictions. Shipping interests closely monitored new measures and often successfully challenged them in court for usurping their authority.<sup>8</sup>

Treaties concluded with other nations and the question of sovereignty also obstructed the authorities. Growing diplomatic relationships and free trade focused the debates on whether nations had the right to unilaterally exclude migrants. Moreover, the jurisdiction of American authorities on foreign flagged ships remained a delicate subject. To avoid that such measures affected relations with other nations, American authorities attempted to establish international laws and courts to regulate migrant transport during the 1860s. An agreement with major sending and transit countries failed to materialise. Transit countries feared that the us would increase its grip on the trade and restrict the number of migrants or direct it to American ships. Representatives of shipping lines assisted the diplomats in dragging out the negotiations to protect their business interests.<sup>9</sup>

By that time, European steamship companies had taken over the migrant transport market from American flagged sailing ships. Steam reduced travel time, risks and costs thereby pushing the number of migrants to unprec-

6. R. Engelsing, *Bremen als Auswandererhafen 1683-1880* (Bremen 1961).

7. Benjamin Klebaner, 'State and the local immigration regulation in the us before 1882', *International Review of Social History* 3 (1958) 269-359.

8. Klebaner, 'State and the local immigration regulation', 272-283; Aristide Zolberg, 'The archaeology of remote control', in: Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (eds.), *Migration control in the North Atlantic World* (New York 2003) 195-222.

9. Maldwyn Jones, 'Immigrants, steamships and governments: The steerage problem in transatlantic diplomacy', in: Harry Allen and Roger Thompson (eds.), *Contrast and connection: Bicentennial essays in Anglo-American History* (London 1976) 178-204; Maldwyn Jones, 'Aspects of North-Atlantic migration: steerage condition and American law 1819-1909', in: Klaus Friedland (ed.), *Maritime aspects of migration* (Cologne 1989) 321-331.

edented levels. It also affected migration patterns as return and repeat movements became more conceivable. Once the Supreme Court moved all migration issues under federal authority midway the 1870s, the pressures on Congress to intervene increased. Reluctance to intervene because of trade agreements and international relations based on reciprocity ebbed away. In Europe and the US the conviction grew that it was the state's own right to control migration to preserve its sovereignty. Debates no longer centred on whether to exclude, but on how and whom to exclude.<sup>10</sup>

Like airline companies today, authorities put the responsibility on passenger lines to check the entry of undesirables. Therefore, the archives of shipping companies represent a unique source for analysing early migration policies. Very few records of these passenger lines from before the First World War were preserved. Attempts to trace these in Belgium were fruitless, whereas in France and Germany only official reports on the meetings with shareholders, boards of administration and directors are available. These reveal little about the organisation of the traffic. The Cunard Line archive in Liverpool contains some fragmented personal correspondence by company officials, but nothing compared to the wealth of materials on the Holland America Line.<sup>11</sup>

From the 1880s onwards, complete books of letters by directors and agents on all sorts of operating issues can be found. It also contains minutes of conferences and correspondence by the shipping cartels that HAL joined. This research is based predominantly on the letters sent from the New York head-agent to the directors. This correspondence between key figures in the company reveals the most about the organisation of the migrant traffic. It is divided into two complete series: general and passage correspondence, respectively dating back to 1884 and 1889. The general correspondence consists of weekly to daily reports about pressing issues regarding freight, passage, infrastructure, personnel, or political situation. The daily passage correspondence deals exclusively with all aspects of first, second and third class passenger traffic.

Both sets of records also contain coded telegrams, attached newspaper articles or pamphlets and sometimes replies of directors or letters by third parties. Of the last category, correspondence with the shipping lobbyists provides inside information on the industry's lobbying strategies to influence the enactment and implementation of immigration policies. During this period the HAL organised lobby campaigns together with its German cartel-partners: the Hamburg American Line (HAPAG) and Nord German Lloyd (NGL). They

10. C. Shanks, *Immigration and the politics of American Sovereignty, 1890-1990* (Ann Arbor 2001) 39.

11. Municipal Archives Rotterdam (MAR), HAL, inv. no. 318.04. This research was made possible by the helpful staff.

each contributed to a joint lobby fund based on the westbound third-class passengers they transported. From 1892 onwards the continental pool agreement fixed these passengers to reduce competitive pressures between its members. The NGL got 44 percent, HAPAG 31 percent, Red Star Line 15 percent and HAL 10 percent. This agreement allowed these continental lines to take ascendance over the previously dominant British lines. The latter were forced to join the continental pool agreements creating the North Atlantic Passenger Conference in 1896. This enhanced harmony between all the North-Atlantic passenger lines.<sup>12</sup> After the turn of the century, they combined the lobby efforts of almost all the lines that contributed, based on the number of passengers carried. Although the HAL was only a small player on the market, much of the information found in its archives applies to the shipping giants HAPAG and NGL. When all the lines joined forces, the information expands to nearly all North-Atlantic passenger transport companies. In short, the HAL archives may be the long sought-after key to a better understanding of the influence of business interests behind transatlantic migration.

### Migration as a matter of national sovereignty

In 1882 US Congress passed the first federal migration laws. First the Passenger Act was amended. A second law excluded Chinese migrants and a third law excluded people likely to become a public charge, idiots and convicts. The alien contract labour law, which prohibited migrants from having a job prearranged before entering, soon followed. Belgian officials considered protesting the restrictions due to a breach of the treaty of commerce and navigation signed by both nations in 1875. It approached other European nations and tried to establish joint action. Most declined because they considered it to be the right of the US to regulate the influx of migrants. Because they were isolated, the Belgian authorities failed to lodge an official protest.<sup>13</sup> This discord also prevented the Dutch authorities from challenging the new Passenger Act.

The Amsterdam-based Royal Netherlands Steamship Co (RNSC; KNSM in Dutch) defied the American authorities and continued using Dutch laws to calculate the number of passengers allowed per ship. This time inspectors strictly implemented the act and imposed fines and jail sentences on the captains. The RNSC initially wanted to fight these in court, questioning the jurisdiction of US authorities on Dutch ships. After warnings by the Dutch

12. Torsten Feys, 'Prepaid tickets to ride to the new world: The New York continental conference and transatlantic steerage fares 1885-1895', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History*, 26: 2 (2008) 173-204.

13. Belgian Ministry of Exterior Archives (Brussels), Emigration, 2961, Belgian labourers in the US (1883-1908).

envoy regarding a long discrediting trial, the company settled out of court. He underlined that nothing obliged RNSC to follow US laws at sea, but nothing prevented the authorities from refusing ships into their ports that did not respect them. More diplomatic, the HAL tried to reopen debates for an international agreement. Yet British and German shipping lines and diplomats had already taken steps to adapt the American act to match their laws. This led to an American congressional commission that harmonised the act in the interests of these two countries. Due to the lack of unity among European states the HAL was forced to abandon its initiative.<sup>14</sup>

The Passenger Act improved the comfort of migrants on ships, but keen competition in the market prevented steamship lines from raising their prices.<sup>15</sup> The Passenger Act did not reduce the influx of Europeans nor did the ineffective immigrant acts. To implement the laws, federal authorities depended on control stations at the ports, which still fell under state jurisdiction. Controls were usually lenient in order to prevent the trade from going to rival ports. Moreover, rumours constantly circulated regarding the venality of inspectors, something which the HAL archives corroborate.

Meanwhile, the Haymarket bombing underlined growing social unrest. Calls for restrictions intensified and became more xenophobic. Terence Powderly, leader of the Knights of Labor, charged that the new groups of migrants were 'semi-barbarian' Italians and Hungarians and consisted mainly of single men who came only to save money and return home. They had no intention of becoming Americans and therefore accepted degrading living and working conditions.<sup>16</sup> The fact that eastern and southern Europeans did not show the same tendency to join unions as the 'old stock' from northern and western Europe contributed to the radicalisation of labour organisation. The intellectual community gave scientific arguments for restrictions. Members of the American Economic Association suggested a literacy test to reduce the number of illiterate migrants from new regions while keeping the gates open for traditional regions.<sup>17</sup>

Expert narratives gained importance during the Progressive Era. They shaped immigration policy together with interest group alliances, global pressures and evolving institutions that regulated migration.<sup>18</sup> In 1889 special immigration committees were established in the House and Senate to study

14. National Archives The Hague, Envoy in the US, 1818-1940, inv. 2.05.13, no. 210, Letters 1882-1884.

15. Feys, 'Prepaid tickets', 180.

16. Terence Powderly, 'A menacing irruption', *North American Review* 74: 2 (1988) 165-174.

17. J. Higham, *Strangers in the land: patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (New Brunswick 1955) 112-113; M. Jones, *American immigration* (Chicago 1992) 188-92; A. Zolberg, *A nation by design: Immigration policy in the fashioning of America* (New York 2006) 194-211.

18. D. Tichenor, *Dividing lines: The politics of immigration control in America* (Princeton 2002) 45.

the working of existing laws and to process the increasing proposals for new bills. The committees opened the door for experts, organisations and executive branch members to give advice.<sup>19</sup> Initially, priority was given to measures guaranteeing the proper implementation of existing laws. This became easier when control stations fell under federal control in 1891. A Commissioner General of Immigration, William Owen, took charge of enforcing the laws and supervising the control stations, which were run by commissioners appointed by the President. Suspicious migrants now appeared before a Board of Special Inquiry. A new law raised the head tax to \$1 per immigrant to help finance the increased inspections. John Weber, the New York Commissioner of Immigration, played a much more active part than his superior in suggesting improvements. Under his impulse, 24 new stations opened on the Mexican and Canadian border. Polygamists and people with contagious diseases were added to the exclusion list. Shipping companies needed to medically inspect, disinfect and vaccinate passengers. They also had to defray the maintenance costs of detainees and the deportation costs of rejected migrants.<sup>20</sup> Newcomers who became a public charge within one year of arrival could now be deported.

This marks a clear shift in control policies by increasing the responsibility of transport companies. It failed to include measures to racially select migrants from Europe. However, as Weber's definition of Likely to become a Public Charge (LPC) illustrates, racial selection occurred at the gates:

The best way to fight the increasing agitation against immigration is by tightening controls at the port of embarkation on the 'desirability' of the migrants. 'Desirability' is a question of mentality and nationality which do not fit in the us; French, Belgians, Dutch, Germans, English, Scandinavians etc are desirable; Italians, Russian Jews, Arabs, Slovaks, etc are undesirable. [...] In America strong and healthy individuals willing to work yet arriving without means are not considered as likely to become a public charge. However, people with means but with a reputation to throw it away – a shabby fellow, is. If a migrant becomes ill and becomes a public charge he will not be sent back if he had no predisposition of catching the disease prior to arrival, otherwise he will.<sup>21</sup>

The lack of clear standards for LPC gave immigrant inspectors a lot of leverage and allowed them to apply stricter controls on the 'undesirable classes'. Since

19. K. Fitzgerald, *The face of the nation: Immigration, the state and national identity* (Chicago 1996) 126.

20. J. Torpey, *The Invention of the passport: Surveillance, citizenship and the state* (Cambridge 2000) 94; Allan Kraut, 'Bodies from abroad: Immigration, health and disease', in: Reed Ueda (ed.), *A companion to American immigration* (Oxford 2006) 105-131, 112.

21. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, Passage 221, Letter 8 October 1891.

cases of contract labourers and polygamists were difficult to prove, inspectors often refused such suspects on the grounds of LPC.<sup>22</sup>

Like other continental shipping companies, the HAL saw its share of desirable passengers reduce rapidly. They were replaced with undesirables as emigration fever spread to eastern and southern Europe. Russians and Hungarians filled the steerage compartments that predominantly Germans and Dutch had filled before them.<sup>23</sup> Most of the reduced numbers of Germans and Dutch that still travelled on the HAL did so in second class. To avoid the extra costs and negative publicity associated with deported undesirables, shipping companies went to great lengths to obtain the right to land for their clients. Through the transatlantic agent-network, the HAL circulated information on immigration laws and, if needed, on how to circumvent them. At the port, company doctors examined the passengers. The sick were held in observation and cured before they were allowed to embark. The incurable chose other destinations, alternative routes or returned home. Names of passengers showing potential risks for being detained were telegraphed to New York. The purser of the ship filled out the passenger manifests used by American inspectors to track down excludables. He screened the answers and adapted those that might raise suspicions. For instance, groups of single men having the same final destination would be subject to suspicion as being contract labourers. HAL stewards informed those passengers of this and gave them advice on how to pass controls. Some companies hired translators to prepare passengers on board for inspections. The crew also encouraged migrants to wash up thoroughly before arrival so as to make the best possible impression on inspectors.<sup>24</sup>

Upon arrival, clerks of the HAL screened the passengers while accompanying them to Ellis Island. They collected information on those most likely to be detained. For the people on the list sent over from Rotterdam and possible detainees, relatives and friends were tracked down. They could send money, post bond or appear before the board of special inquiry to facilitate the migrants' entry. The shipping lines followed these cases and filed appeals on behalf of the passengers. The HAL sometimes paid for railroad transport to send passengers to family or friends. Passengers were strongly encouraged to have their ticket booked to their final destination since this facilitated entry into the US. If relatives or friends could not be traced, the HAL contacted charity associations to assist detainees. Jewish passengers relied extensively on a

22. Joseph Senner, 'How we restrict Immigration', *North American Review* 80: 4 (1894) 494-499, 499.

23. Leo Van der Valk, 'Landverhuizers via Rotterdam in de negentiende eeuw', *Economisch en sociaal-historisch jaarboek* (Amsterdam 1976) 149-171, 165.

24. Herman Schulties, *Report on European immigration to the United States* (Washington 1893) 41-43; MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77 and 221-226.

wide transatlantic network of charity organisations at main transit points and ports. They offered free lodging, paid medical expenses and financed part of the inland or ocean passage.<sup>25</sup>

To prevent foreign authorities from dumping their paupers and US employers from sponsoring newcomers, the new law also prohibited the entry of assisted passengers. Joseph Senner, who succeeded Weber as New York Commissioner of Immigration, extended the clause to include passengers receiving assistance from charitable organisations. HAL first diverted these passengers to Baltimore where controls were more lenient. Later, the company made arrangements with Montifiore, a Rotterdam-based charity association, to send smaller groups through New York using great discretion.<sup>26</sup> The increased inspections did not deter companies from assisting people from the excluded classes. HAL and Guion Line offered special second-class rates to Spence & Co, a migrant agent who controlled the Mormon traffic. Second class was exempt from immigrant inspections. It cost about \$10 more than steerage and was a much-used backdoor.

The cholera outbreak of 1892 turned immigration into a serious threat to American health. Debates followed to incorporate the diplomatic corps into the inspections, as was already the case in China. Authorities used the agitation to take the remote border control policy from the mistrusted shipping companies into their own hands by appointing health inspectors at the ports of embarkation. They supervised inspections at the port of embarkation together with the consuls and imposed five days of quarantine and luggage disinfection on passengers coming from infected regions. Only then did the consul issue a bill of health and certify the passenger manifest needed to gain access to American ports. Despite warnings by the HAL's New York head-agent about increased susceptibility of American authorities towards protests regarding migration matters, shipping representatives and diplomats denounced the arbitrariness of the enforcement of the measure. Some doctors proved overzealous while some consuls overcharged the companies for their services. The system placed the acceptance decision in the hands of one inspector, giving migrants no possibility of appeal. Moreover, the power of American officials over aliens on foreign soil went against all international treaties. Despite stating that 'the right to exclude any or all classes of aliens is an attribute of sovereignty' following a new treaty with Turkey in 1893, the American President was forced to reprimand some consuls and call back health inspectors due to unremitting protests by shipping lines and European diplomats.<sup>27</sup>

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25. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77 and 221-226.

26. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 221-226, Letters 8 March 1892, 7 and 11 December 1894.

27. E. Hutchinson, *Legislative history of American immigration policy 1798-1965* (Philadelphia 1981) 109-112; Torpey, *The Invention of the passport*, 91-97; MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 221-226.

### Migration as a lobby issue

Freeman observed that: ‘immigration tends to produce concentrated benefits and diffuse costs, giving those who benefit from immigration greater incentives to organise it than persons who bear its costs’.<sup>28</sup> Jones and Zolberg stressed the importance of the shipping lobby on US migrant transport laws.<sup>29</sup> Yet the lobby’s influence reached much further. It expanded its activities once federal authorities tightened their grip on the movement and foreign diplomats showed more reluctance to intervene on their behalf. The new laws augmented their involvement in litigation and forced the HAL to hire a lawyer-lobbyist, George Glavis, to deal with them. He also represented the Hamburg America Line (HAPAG) and the North German Lloyd (NGL).<sup>30</sup> He monitored all discussions on migration and maritime issues and conferred with the shipping lines on a line of action.

Glavis distributed arguments against restrictions amongst congressmen. He organised the hearings of the pro-immigration lobby at the immigration committees of Congress. When it seemed likely that a law would pass, the lobby stalled action on it by introducing amendments, bringing up other issues for consideration, filibustering or claiming the need for an investigation commission to collect more information. If this failed, the lines weakened the negative impact of the law as much as possible. Glavis provided congressmen with amendments which safeguarded the interests of steamship companies. At the expense of the shipping lines, the lobbyist organised fancy dinners, distributed gifts and free first class passages to Europe to create goodwill.<sup>31</sup>

Shipping interests also financed the political campaigns of Republicans and Democrats during elections. For instance, when it seemed likely that Republicans would take control of the House, Senate and the White House in 1894, the HAL followed NGL’s example and contributed to their campaign fund. Much more could be obtained before the elections than afterwards. During the subsequent presidential elections, NGL, HAPAG and HAL channelled \$5000 through Glavis to the Republican and Democrat campaign funds. This was to prevent the passage of a literacy test and a differential tariff discriminating foreign lines.<sup>32</sup>

28. Gary Freeman, ‘Modes of immigration politics in liberal democratic states’, *International Migration Review* 29: 4 (1995) 881-902, 885.

29. Jones, ‘Aspects of North-Atlantic migration’, 326; Zolberg, ‘The archaeology of remote control’, 195-220; Zolberg, *A nation by design*, 99-125.

30. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.02, Directors, no. 112, Letters 24 May 1887, 10 April, 26 June, 7 September 1888.

31. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.02, Directors, no. 112-121.

32. *Ibid.*, Letters 3 October 1894 and 9 April 1896.

As congressional missions to investigate the situation in Europe became common, the shipping lobby made sure someone defending their interests travelled along. For instance, Glavis himself accompanied General Spaulding and influenced his report, which was used to promulgate new laws.<sup>33</sup> The shipping lines also appointed a commission that screened the press for newspapers agitating against them. They withdrew all advertisements from papers that openly attacked a company. They hired journalists to answer the hostile articles, write, and collect propaganda to distribute amongst the migrant agents. The agents, some of whom were newspaper editors, published the material and tried to win over restrictionist papers. The press campaigns intensified when Congress debated the topic. The advertisement money paid by shipping lines helped gain the favour of papers.<sup>34</sup>

The shipping lobby had a strong foothold in Washington and in the American press by the time a group of young Harvard intellectuals founded the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) in 1894. Tied up in party politics, previous movements such as the *Know Nothings* and the *American Protective Association* lacked continuity. The IRL recruited members amongst the upper class, transcended party politics and created a lasting and solid platform for restrictionists.<sup>35</sup> It used the same means as the shipping lobby to influence policymakers and public opinion. A screening of the American press produced a list of 500 papers willing to propagate their restrictionist ideals. IRL members organised speeches and distributed pamphlets claiming that the American race and institutions were at stake. The IRL opened an office in Washington. It was headed by James Patten, who distributed information and law proposals amongst congressmen. The lobbyist coordinated the speeches for restrictions at the House and Senate immigration committees. The IRL used scientific arguments and participated in the academic debate. Helped by the continuing economic recession, Senator Henry Lodge, the main spokesman for the movement in Congress, managed to pass the education bill containing a literacy test in the House and Senate in 1896.<sup>36</sup> Simultaneously the biggest labour union, the American Federation of Labour, started to openly support restrictions to protect their members from excessive competition.

That same year, the number of new immigrants surpassed the old one. Moreover, the three North Atlantic shipping cartels, which divided the mar-

33. *Ibid.*, Letter 7 July 1891 28 July 1892.

34. *Ibid.*, Letter 26 October 1892, 5 January 1893; Prescott Hall, 'The Recent history of immigration and immigration restriction', *Journal of Political Economy* 21: 8 (1913) 735-751, 748.

35. Tichenor, 'Dividing lines', 16-17.

36. R. Zeidel, *Immigrants, progressives, and exclusion politics: The Dillingham Commission 1900-1927* (Dekalb 2004) 17; Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 103-107; Tichenor, 'Dividing lines', 76-81.



*Ansicht Holland-Amerika Lijn (Rotterdam), 1928 (Den Haag Lankhout). IISG Collectie Reclame Arsenal BG H13/424.*

ket according to geographic areas into the Mediterranean, Continental and British-Scandinavian, joined forces. The North Atlantic Passenger Conference improved collaboration between all the major lines, thereby increasing market and price stability. Yet British and continental lines still lobbied separately. The former, transporting mainly literate Brits and Scandinavians, only risked losing three percent of their business due to the literacy test. They were less concerned by the bill than the continental lines. The HAL, NGL and HAPAG risked losing thirty percent of their steerage passengers. Within the principal continental lines, the French Line maintained an individual course while NGL, HAPAG, HAL and Red Star Line (RSL) joined forces in 1885. Yet the lobby agenda of the American-owned RSL diverged from the other cartel members. The owners, who also managed the American Line, continuously lobbied to obtain government subsidies or other competitive advantages to revive the American fleet on the North Atlantic. The European lines agitated against maritime policies favouring American ships.<sup>37</sup>

In Europe, most authorities passed laws using migration to promote the national merchant marine. Inspired by American remote border control poli-

37. Torsten Feys, *A business approach to transatlantic migration: The introduction of steam-shiping on the North-Atlantic and its impact on the European Exodus 1840-1914* (dissertation European University Institute 2008).

cies, German authorities let HAPAG and NGL build and manage border control stations after the cholera outbreak. It gave the German lines an effective tool for directing traffic to Bremen and Hamburg.<sup>38</sup> It also passed a law prohibiting the HAI from contracting passengers on German territory.<sup>39</sup> The British Passenger Acts obstructed continental lines from picking up steerage passengers on the westbound route. Italian authorities passed protective measures allowing the establishment of six national lines acquiring half of the direct traffic from and to Italy. Greece, Russia, Austria and Hungary all followed suit.<sup>40</sup> Conversely, American authorities kept to their maritime policies of protecting shipbuilders to the disadvantage of ship-owners. This in spite of the Spanish-American War, raising jingoism, two Presidents and a Republican party that openly supported ship subsidies, and JP Morgan's attempt to monopolise the passenger trade under the American flag with the International Mercantile Marine Co (IMM). Various bills to give American ships control over migrant traffic, such as an extra head tax of \$10 for migrants disembarking off foreign ships, never got approved. Just like the immigration laws, the foreign shipping lobby clearly had a hand in this. However, it remains difficult to measure their impact.<sup>41</sup>

Once the educational bill passed Congress, Glavis reported that President Cleveland would veto the bill if an override seemed unlikely. Helped by a period of economic recovery, the shipping lobby doubled its efforts through the foreign language press to pressure congressmen. The NGL urged German-American associations to tell their congressmen that they would lose their votes during the upcoming elections if the bill was passed. The NGL provided a standard text and defrayed the costs for telegrams. Cleveland vetoed the bill as 'un-American' and the Senate obstructed further action on the bill. Afterwards, the continental lines redirected their lobby efforts, focusing even more on representatives from the sparsely populated southern and western states. They portrayed restrictions as a scheme by eastern states to obstruct

38. Katrien Wüstenbecker, 'Hamburg and the transit of east Europeans', in: Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (eds.), *Migration control in the North Atlantic world* (New York 2003) 223-236; Tobias Brinkmann, 'Travelling with Ballin: The impact of American immigration policies on Jewish transmigration within Central Europe 1880-1914', *International Review of Social History* 53 (2008) 459-484, 469-474.

39. Torsten Feys, 'Where all passenger liners meet: The port of New York as a nodal point for the transatlantic migrant trade 1885-1895', *The International Journal of Maritime History* 19: 2 (2007) 245-272.

40. E. Murken, *Die grossen transatlantischen Linienreederei-Verbande, Pools und Interessengemeinschaften bis zum Ausbruch des Weltkrieges: Ihre Entstehung, Organisation und Wirksamkeit* (Jena 1922) 360-412; Augusta Molinari, 'Porti, trasporti, compagnie', in: Piero Bevilacqua (ed.), *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana: La Partenza* (Rome 2002) 237-256, 240.

41. Feys, A business approach, 238-244, 381-394; V. Vale, *The American Peril, challenge to Britain on the North Atlantic 1901-1904* (Manchester 1984).

their development and underlined the need for a better distribution instead. They also established the Immigration Protective League, representing various religious and ethnic groups, to fight the Immigration Restriction League on humanitarian grounds. The IRL denounced the shipping lobby for sabotaging restrictions for pecuniary gain and for being unconcerned about the country's future. Therefore, the Immigration Protective League had to give the impression that it opposed the shipping companies. They hired Senner, former immigrant commissioner and foreign-editor of the *New Yorker Staatszeitung*, to head the league.<sup>42</sup>

German-American associations led protests against the bill, despite the fact that the literacy test would hardly affect them. The targeted ethnic groups still lacked the organisation and political influence to do so. The HAL, NGL and HAPAG enjoyed a lot of prestige among the German-American community. The shipping lines strengthened those ties through their agent-network and by becoming members of many German-American associations. The lines expanded this strategy to other ethnic groups. The IRL claimed that the support of the German community had been obtained by portraying the bill as an Anglo-Saxon scheme to cripple the power of the German community.<sup>43</sup> The British lines, which increasingly orientated their business toward the expanding southern and eastern European markets, also agitated against the bill. The Cunard Line managed a special 'educational fund' targeting protests by the influential Irish Catholic community.<sup>44</sup> After the elections, the IRL pressed a new version of the educational bill through the Senate. However, President McKinley urged the House to go slow on the matter. Catholics and foreign-born citizens had supported his rise to power. The outbreak of the Spanish-American War helped shift priorities.<sup>45</sup>

### Migration as a racial issue

The role of the IRL has often been played down because of its failure to get the literacy test approved. Yet their influence in keeping restrictions on the agenda, supporting the candidacy of restrictionists in key posts, and the propagation of social Darwinism has often been overlooked. The appointment of Powderly as Commissioner General of Immigration by McKinley was fol-

42. Michael Just, *Ost und sudosteuropaische Amerikawanderung 1881-1914* (Stuttgart 1988) 244; Feys, A business approach, 369-380.

43. Harvard Open Collection Program, Immigration to the United States 1789-1939, IRL circular 24 January 1898.

44. W. Flayhart, *The American Line 1872-1902* (New York 2000) 328.

45. MAR, HAL, 318.02, General Correspondence 112-121, Letters 25 January, 11 March, 13 May 1898; Tichenor, 'Dividing lines', 72-73.

lowed by the introduction of a list of races and people. It classified newcomers not only by country of origin, but also by racial and ethnic background. The differentiation into various degrees of whiteness was based on Ripley's book *Races of Europe*, which attributed superior racial features to old stock immigrants. The IRI used the work to state that the United States was committing racial suicide by keeping the gates open for southern and eastern Europeans. Ripley refuted this, stating that racial qualities could be transformed by the American environment. The Harvard economist pleaded for a progressive social betterment program including education, housing and social security.<sup>46</sup> Also Franz Boas' study for the Dillingham Commission refuted the threat in 1911. Nevertheless, the influential congressional commission advocated the classification and restrictions that blocked the entry of 'primitive' races.<sup>47</sup> Restrictions only materialised in the form of a literacy test and quota acts after the outbreak of the First World War.

In the meantime the new migrants or 'in-betweens', as Roedriger labelled them, initiated a long struggle to get recognition of equality with their predecessors from northern and western Europe and to achieve full 'white status'.<sup>48</sup> Despite varying degrees of whiteness, Thomas Guglielmo emphasised that belonging to the white race was granted upon arrival and was hardly ever questioned. This gave the newcomers unrestricted access to citizenship, allowing them to achieve political influence and climb up the 'socio-ethnic' ladder.<sup>49</sup> Efforts by shipping companies in Washington and at the gates made sure that new immigrant groups received the time to fill their ranks and gain political importance.

Right before the turn of the century, the German-American pro-immigration Representative R. Bartholdt passed a bill forming a commission to investigate and recommend legislation to: 'meet the problems presented by labour, agriculture and capital'. The immigration issue constituted a key element. It froze debates in Congress on the issue until the commission presented its conclusions three years later. During this inactivity, the lines suspended financial support to the Immigrant Protective League, which disappeared from the scene. Claude Bennet, who opened the Congressional Information Bureau, became the main spokesman of the continental lines in Washing-

46. W. Ripley, *The races of Europe: a sociologic study* (New York 1898); William Ripley, 'Race progress and immigration', *Annals of the American Academy of Social and Political Science* 34: 1 (1909) 130-138; M. Grant, *The passing of the great race* (New York 1916); John Higham, 'American immigration policy in historical perspective', *Law and Contemporary Problems* 22: 2 (1956) 213-235, 224; Patrick Weil, 'Races at the gate: Racial distinctions in immigration policy', in: Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron and Patrick Weil (eds.), *Migration control in the North Atlantic world* (New York 2003) 271-297.

47. Dillingham Commission Reports (DCR), Vol. 1, 38 (Washington 1911).

48. Roedriger, 'Working towards whiteness', *passim*.

49. Guglielmo, 'White on arrival', 28-30.

ton after Glavis' sudden death. Once the conclusions reopened the debate in Congress, the shipping companies closed ranks to fight the IRL. A. Anderson, manager of the passenger business of the American Line, now defended the joint interests of all the companies. The lines appointed special committees consisting of one representative of the three sub-cartels: British-Scandinavian, Continental and Mediterranean. With the 'immigration inspection', 'immigration law' and other committees, the passenger lines increased the efficiency of their lobbying efforts.<sup>50</sup>

The shipping lobby managed to mould most of the suggestions made by the commission to their liking because of their good relations with William Shattuc, who chaired the House committee of immigration. Yet he could not prevent restrictionists from adding an amendment for a literacy test to the bill which passed the House. The Senate eventually succumbed to increased pressures by employers, manufacturers, railroad and shipping interests and deleted the literacy test. Shattuc's reaction, recorded in congressional records related to some comments made by Anderson once the bill passed in 1903, indicates the impact of the shipping lobby: 'He wrote most of the bill. He ought to be satisfied with it'.<sup>51</sup> A special committee campaigned to maintain a sentiment of desirability towards immigration in the southern states, whose votes had proven crucial in opposing restrictions.<sup>52</sup> From 1903 onwards, authorities from seven southern states established or reactivated immigration bureaus distributing propaganda, organising conventions and sending recruiting agents to Europe.<sup>53</sup>

The shipping lobby also tried to use increasing attempts to reconcile business with labour interests such as the National Civic Federation. The founder, Senator Mark Hannah, had very close ties with American ship owners. He was the principal advocate of ship subsidies in Congress. The association organised a national conference on immigration to harmonise the standpoints of employers and labour unions on the subject. However, labour unions could not be convinced to drop their restrictionist stance.<sup>54</sup> For the same reasons, President Roosevelt created a Department of Commerce and Labour and the immigration bureau was moved to this department. The Secretary of that department gained a lot of influence on migration policies. The appointment of Oscar Straus, a progressive Jew with German roots who helped found the

50. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77 and 221-226; MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.02, Directors, no. 112-121; Hutchinson, 'Legislative history', 124-125; Zeidel, 'Immigrant progressives', 20.

51. Robert Ward, 'The New Immigration Act', *North American Review* 43: 4 (1907) 587-593, 590.

52. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77, Report of the Immigration Legislation Committee 18 October 1 and letter 26 October 26 1905; Goldin, 'The political', 231.

53. Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 114.

54. Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 115-116; Zolberg, *A nation by design*, 218-229; J. Weinsten, *The corporate ideal in the liberal state* (Boston 1968) 7-39.

Immigration Protective League, played to the advantage of the shipping lines. Once again, as elections neared and the flow of newcomers swelled, the pressures on Congress to pass restrictions increased.

Anderson and S. Neal, legal counsel of the International Mercantile Marine Co (IMM), orchestrated the campaign against restrictions and could count on employer organisations. The latter had remained absent from the debate in the 1890s because of the economic recession. Nonetheless restrictionists once again managed to get a literacy test approved by the Senate. The House committee also advised its adoption despite the efforts of New York Representatives Jacob Ruppert and William Bennet to prevent this. Foreign-born delegations such as the Philadelphia Italian Society, German-American Alliance, a federation of Jewish organisations, and the National Liberal Immigration League travelled to Washington to voice their protest. The speaker of the House and some Republican Representatives managed to replace the literacy test with another congressional commission to investigate the issue and sent the bill back to the committees for consideration. Zeidel rightly argued that the involvement in the House of new representatives instead of the usual anti-restrictionist representatives pointed to the intervention of President Roosevelt, who feared losing the migrant vote. What he overlooked was their connection with shipping interests. Charles Grosvenor and John Canon actively participated in the ship-subsidy debates.<sup>55</sup> The report of the shipping lines' 'immigration legislation committee' underlines this involvement stating that: 'the pressures on Ruppert and speaker John Cannon had borne fruit while asking to contribute another \$45,000 on top of the \$15,000 already spent to make sure the test would not pass'.<sup>56</sup>

Surely letters by the shipping lobbyist and HAL-agent in America to the directors tended to exaggerate the influence of the lobby campaigns in order to justify that the money was well spent. Moreover, lobbying is very hard to measure. Nonetheless, the linking of shipping interests with influential officials, whose motives for opposing restrictions were not always clear, serves as one indicator of their influence. Strategies such as targeting southern states, maximising their close ties with the press, mobilising the foreign-born citizens, etc. underscore the perspicacity and efficiency of the campaigns. IRL sources show that their number one enemy was shipping lines because linking liberals with foreign shipping interests served their cause and, more importantly, because no other interest group showed the same drive and consistency to mobilise the pro-immigration lobby. The IRL sometimes got their hands on evidence exposing the role of shipping lines, but never enough to compromise their efforts.

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55. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77 and 221-226; Zeidel, 'Immigrant progressives', 27-32.

56. MAR, HAL, inv. no., 318.02, no. 112-121, Letter 3 July 1906.

The shipping lobby hid behind the migrant groups they brought in, as their financial contribution to the 'National Liberal Immigration League' underscores. Big businessmen such as Andrew Carnegie also chipped into the association. The NLIIL started off as a Jewish initiative but quickly broadened to include German and Irish representatives. It gained influence through mass meetings, aggressive press campaigns and their lobbyist James Curley. The newly founded American Jewish Committee also discreetly defended liberal policies in the corridors of Capitol Hill. Others joined the fight, including the Catholic Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Hungarian Republican Club and the American Association of Foreign Language Press. The latter claimed that they reached 20 million people. The efforts resulted in a law creating a congressional investigation commission and a division of information to improve the distribution of aliens. The only small but important victory for the IRL was a court decision that judged the immigrant recruiting campaigns of South Carolina to be in violation of contract labour laws. It obstructed the fairly unsuccessful campaigns of southern states where IRL ideals gained ground. After the verdict, southern congressmen leaned more and more towards restrictions in Washington as resolutions aimed at excluding Hungarians, Italians and Jews passed in their home states.<sup>57</sup>

William Bennet, representing liberal interests in the congressional commission known as the Dillingham Commission, pushed to extend the research as far as possible. This delayed action on immigration. Senator Lodge did the opposite for the IRL. In the end, it became one of the biggest researches on record, lasting four years and resulting in a 41 volume report. However, Bennet could not prevent the commission from recommending the literacy test as: 'most feasible single method of restricting undesirable migration'.<sup>58</sup> The economic crisis and growing opposition to trusts threatening the legality of the shipping cartel forced the lobby to increase secrecy. The IRL hired private detectives who tried to expose the shipping lobby. It also investigated congressmen working against them and distributed pamphlets to discredit Bennet. After his failure to be re-elected in the House, Bennet continued working as a lobbyist for the cause:

Bennet, who successfully defeated the Burnett bill last year, will be sent to Washington again for an undetermined period of time [...] and represent us whenever needed proposing measures serving the interests of the steamship lines. Mr. Neal will assist him. Bennet's salary will be paid pro ratio based

57. Zolberg, *A nation by design*, 221-222; Just, *Ost und sudosteuropaische Amerikawanderung*, 200-210; Tichenor, 'Dividing lines', 119-121; National Archives Washington (NAW), Record Group 85: Immigration and Naturalization Service (RINS), 1787-1998, no. 606 771 Immigration to southern States.

58. DCR, vol. I, (Washington 1911) 42; Zeidel, 'Immigrant progressives', 101-114.

on the number of passengers carried by all the lines. According to Bennet [...] there is chance to defeat the bill in the committee already. On the House floor Bennet counts on the support of the sixty five catholic Representatives to counter the agitation of the labor unions.<sup>59</sup>

The Burnett bill was the result of recommendations by the Dillingham Commission. President Taft vetoed it during an electoral year in order to gain support from the foreign-born vote. His internal battle with Roosevelt led to the victory of the progressive Woodrow Wilson. As a former member of the NLLI, the President vetoed the educational bill two more times. A veto override in 1917 allowed the IRL to celebrate and finally push through quota acts. The First World War had a disintegrating effect on the North Atlantic shipping cartel, weakening the visible hand of the shipping lobby. To what extent it facilitated the passage of restrictive laws still needs to be uncovered.

### Migration as a gate issue

An often overlooked fact during this period is the progress that was made to implement laws and sharpen controls. A gradual increase of the head tax per passenger from 50 cent to \$4 swelled the immigrant fund used to finance improvements. Under Powderly, the collection and accuracy of statistical data increased and medical inspections received special attention. By strengthening controls for favus and trachoma, respectively skin and eye diseases, deportations for health reasons boomed (see table). Families arriving with a member afflicted by one of the diseases risked being split. Such stories often appeared in the press to denounce the cruelty of restrictions. To avoid this, the affected member was sent to a hospital where treatment followed at \$2 a day. Powderly billed the costs to the shipping companies, using this as a deterrent for bringing over such passengers. The efforts by the HAL to recuperate the costs from passengers or their families had limited success. Powderly's strategy worked. The HAL hired dermatologists and eye-specialists in Rotterdam to sift out affected migrants. Those with minor affections were cured at the port. The others were redirected through alternative routes or sent back home.<sup>60</sup> The Dillingham commission later confirmed that European ports and German border control stations refused at least the same number of people as control stations on American soil did.<sup>61</sup> The law of 1903 gave the Commissioner of Immigration the right to fine shipping companies \$100 for

59. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.03, Passage, no. 48-58, Letter 12 December 1913.

60. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77; Kraut, 'Bodies from abroad', 116.

61. DCR, vol. 4 (Washington 1911).

bringing passengers with contagious diseases that should have been detected at the port of embarkation.

**TABLE 1** *Debarred aliens and causes at US points of entry 1892 to 1910*<sup>62</sup>

	<i>Immigrants admitted</i>	<i>Aliens Debarred</i>	<i>Ratio</i>	<i>loathsome &amp; contagious diseases</i>	<i>other physical or mental defects</i>	<i>Paupers and LPC</i>	<i>Contract labourers</i>	<i>Other</i>
1892	579.663	2.164	1 to 268	3,7	1,0	46,3	43,1	6,0
1893	439.730	1.053	1 to 418	7,7	1,0	40,9	49,2	1,1
1894	285.631	1.389	1 to 206	1,1	0,6	57,7	39,8	0,7
1895	258.236	2.419	1 to 107	0,0	0,2	70,9	28,7	0,2
1896	343.267	2.799	1 to 123	0,1	0,4	71,8	27,7	0,0
1897	230.832	1.617	1 to 143	0,1	0,4	79,0	20,3	0,2
1898	229.299	3.030	1 to 76	8,5	0,4	74,6	13,8	2,7
1899	311.715	3.798	1 to 82	9,2	0,5	68,4	19,5	2,4
1900	448.572	4.246	1 to 106	9,3	0,8	70,0	19,6	0,3
1901	487.918	3.516	1 to 139	8,8	0,6	79,6	9,3	1,7
1902	648.743	4.974	1 to 130	14,3	0,7	79,3	5,5	0,2
1903	857.046	8.769	1 to 98	20,2	0,3	66,3	12,4	0,8
1904	812.879	7.994	1 to 102	19,5	0,6	60,0	18,8	1,1
1905	1.026.499	11.879	1 to 86	18,5	1,1	66,5	9,8	4,1
1906	1.100.735	12.432	1 to 89	18,3	1,9	56,9	18,6	4,4
1907	1.285.349	13.064	1 to 98	29,3	1,7	52,6	11,0	5,5
1908	782.870	10.902	1 to 72	26,6	11,4	34,0	17,7	10,2
1909	751.786	10.411	1 to 72	22,9	7,0	42,3	11,3	16,6
1910	1.041.570	24.270	1 to 43	12,9	2,8	65,6	7,4	11,3

William Williams, who took over Ellis Island after exposing corruption under his predecessor, Thomas Fitchie, strictly imposed the new law. He also extended the practice introduced by Powderly of fining the lines \$10 for each incorrect manifest. The Commissioner of Immigration considered all newcomers older than 45, especially those without family or friends in the US, as Likely to become a Public Charge (LPC). All migrants possessing less than \$10 were detained to investigate their risks of becoming a public charge. The shipping lines were billed for these detention costs. The new wave of immigrants, which Williams openly qualified as undesirable, suffered from his policy. He introduced on board screening of second-class passengers in order

62. These apply to the fiscal years starting from July 1 1891 to June 10 1892, DCR, vol. 4, (Washington 1911) 73.

to send suspicious cases to Ellis Island for further investigation.<sup>63</sup> Williams also rationalised the control station, clearly defining the rules and tasks of the twelve divisions working on the island. The Commissioner General of Immigration, Frank Sargent, drafted rules for government inspectors and boards of special inquiry to get uniform inspections at the gates.<sup>64</sup> Due to heavy financial burdens, shipping companies established a special committee to take joint action against Williams. The foreign press heavily criticised his administration. Roosevelt, courting the foreign-born vote, did not like the negative publicity. He visited the island and ordered an investigation. Williams gave in to the pressures and resigned in 1905.<sup>65</sup>

His successor, Robert Watchorn, continued strict implementation and closed many backdoors. Besides inspectors, surgeons now also screened second-class passengers. Watchorn urged the standardisation of American citizenship papers in different states in order to facilitate the detection of illegal documents. Many claimed citizenship, yet only had papers of intention. Watchorn wanted all American citizens travelling third class to go through Ellis Island to verify the authenticity of their papers and the true identity of the holders. The papers could easily be passed on to friends or family. Too many pressures obstructed the passage of citizens through the island, but screening at the docks intensified.<sup>66</sup> The commissioner also refined the deportation procedures of minors and disabled passengers, raising the costs charged to shipping companies. Fines were also introduced for deserted sailors. The shipping cartel financed test trials to challenge the legality of these measures. The shipping lines won the case for deserted seamen and reached a compromise regarding deportees outside the court. Due to Watchorn's tolerance of southern and eastern Europeans, the IRI strongly lobbied against him and prevented his reappointment.<sup>67</sup>

President Taft reinstated Williams, who radicalised his authoritarian rule to reduce the influx of migrants. He imposed a sum of \$25 for not being under suspicion of becoming a public charge. He targeted those with prepaid tickets which were now considered assisted migrants. It meant that more than half of all third-class passengers were being detained. It caused major

63. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77.

64. NAW, RINS, no. 624 299, Rules and organization Ellis Island (EI); Report 1904; no. 622706 Problems with primary inspections EI, report 1903.

65. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77, Letters 13, 20 January 1905; New York Times (NYT), 'Roosevelt starts special EI Inquiry' 19 March 1903; NYT, 'Williams Out', 15 January 1905; NYT, 'Four years of progress at EI', February 12 1905; Tichenor, 'Dividing lines', 134-135.

66. MAR, HAL, 318.04, no. 221-226, Letters 12, 13 April 1905; NAW, RINS, no. 51634/5, Illegal landings, Giovanni Guglio; NYT, 'We naturalized the Kaiser', 12 October 1905; NYT, 'La Gascogne Steward accused of bribery', 21 August 1901; NYT, 'Immigration frauds', 28 August 1901.

67. MAR, HAL, inv. no. 318.04, no. 72-77.

congestion at the island. He used this to pressure Taft into expanding the facilities. During the month of July, he deported six percent of all newcomers. Previous yearly averages slightly surpassed one percent. Massive protest by the foreign-born community, which also voiced the protests of the shipping companies, forced Williams to relax the measure. However, he still detained twenty percent of new arrivals, three times more than under Watchorn. Two percent of these eventually got debarred.<sup>68</sup> The foreign-born communities kept up the pressure to get rid of Williams. This led to a special resolution in Congress to investigate his management. The IRL mobilised the labour unions and congressmen to defend the commissioner. It denounced the shipping lines as being behind the scheme, as Representative Burnett testified:

Whenever these shipping companies do not like a member of Congress, there is no mistaking it. I have felt their force in their last campaign. They will send their emissaries all through the country for the purpose of crushing any man who gets in their way. They do it in a secretive, insidious manner. I have no doubt they are trying to crush Mr. Williams.<sup>69</sup>

Yet Williams stayed on and usurped his mandate to select newcomers based on racial prejudices. The adaptation of laws that extended the deportability of unlawful subjects and migrants who became a public charge to three years after arrival, allowed him to extend his policy beyond the gates. He continued to rationalise Ellis Island, increasing migrant inspection times. Williams also urged the improvement of controls at Canadian and Mexican borders, which were used by rejects as backdoors. It shows that the growing bureaucratisation and institutionalisation of immigrant control systems had a bigger impact than was previously ascribed. By the time Congress finally enacted laws to erect a restrictive wall, Immigration Commissioners had already laid the foundations to build it rapidly and to manage it efficiently.<sup>70</sup>

## Conclusion

Based on an econometric analysis of American immigration policies Williamson and Hatton concluded ‘that racism and xenophobia did not seem to have been at work in driving the evolution of policy towards potential

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68. NAW, RINS, no. 627798, Investigation at EI; no. 649 562 Conditions at EI: complaints by Germans.

69. NYT, ‘Names please, says EI boss’, 9 October 1911.

70. NAW, RINS, no. 602 466, Conditions immigration Europe and Mexico 1907; no. 612 571, Marcus Braun European investigation 1904; no. 1089748, Medical examinations EI 1910-1920; illegal landing files.

European Migrants' and that 'eugenics motives never borne out at the end of the first global century'.<sup>71</sup> Jones dates important involvement by business interests against restrictions only after 1905 and, like Higham, he puts immigrants forward as the most strenuous opponents of restrictions.<sup>72</sup> This article argues that the migration debate moved from an international trade matter to a racially loaded issue of national sovereignty before the end of the nineteenth century. The most influential and constant actor in this debate, known for its strange and changing bedfellow coalitions, was the shipping lobby. The Holland America Line was part of this lobby. Their activities influenced the enactment and implementation of migration policies dating back to the beginning of the first global century. These activities intensified towards the end, as pressures to restrict shipping lines' main source of income increased. During the Progressive Era (1890-1921), it instigated opposition by playing out internal political tensions between southern and western states versus eastern and northern states, and by mobilising several old stock and subsequently new immigrant groups against the nativist threat. It also forged alliances with employer organisations. The driving force behind restrictions, the IRL, managed to keep the issue on the political agenda, gained support from the majority of congressmen and spread racist selection to immigrant control stations. The shipping lobby proved more successful at using to their advantage openings created by the fragmentation of power and changing institutional structures in the American governmental system. As authorities expanded the remote border control policy by increasing the responsibility of shipping lines in the selection process, it put the companies in a privileged position of influencing these policies. Commissioners of Immigration improved controls and closed backdoors, but shipping companies opened new ones and refined the assistance it gave to its passengers in order to guarantee the landing. Many immigration inspectors did not consider southern and eastern European migrants as whites. They acquired this constitutional status only when they passed through the gates. That so many eventually did pass through is largely due to the lucrative business they represented for the steam shipping companies that successfully interfered with the enactment and implementation of migration policies. Previous studies have failed to pay attention to the interaction between immigration policies and shipping companies' strategies. This article shows how the HAL joined forces with other shipping companies to form a political lobby that played a crucial role

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71. Jeffrey Williamson and Timothy Hatton, 'International migration in the long run: Positive selection, negative selection and policy', *National Bureau of Economic Research*, Working Paper 10529, (2004) 1-37, 27; J. Williamson and T. Hatton, *Global migration and the world economy: Two centuries of policy and performance* (London 2006) 161-167, 174-177.

72. Higham, *Strangers in the land*, 123; Jones, 'American immigration', 219-224.

in structuring migration and in categorising migrants, thus shaping their identity upon entry.

### **Over de auteur**

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