

## **ABSTRACT**

### **Christian Borde (University Littoral Côte-d'Opale) French Chambers of Commerce and the French Ship owners Central Committee conflict and cohesion, 1903-1940.**

Fixed expression in French like « négoce maritimes » (sea traders) or “milieux portuaires” (the sphere of port merchants) may conceal competitive or adversarial relationships among different occupations of the harbour employers. On one part, the machinery of State is prominent in French port organization, especially in organizational infrastructure. On the other part the ship owners (armateurs) can be involved in this machinery, for instance by state subsidies or being completely independent from state and open to international shipping influence.

Among shipping business itself, many adversarial relationships exist as well as trade concurrence: shipping agents vs. consignees' vs. ship broker etc. and the protectionist lobby increases the pressure at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The French ship owners organized in two Federations: the “Syndicat Marseillais de la marine marchande” in 1891 (Marseilles Federation of Merchant shipping) and the “Syndicat des Armateurs du Nord” in 1897 (Northern France Federation of Ship owners). They amalgamated in 1903 to form the “Comité central des Armateurs de France” (The French Ship owners Central Committee)

The paper studies the direct relationship between the French chambers of commerce and the French Shipowners Central Committee (CCAF) in order to emphasize the intermediary role of this federation. It studies one very special conflict between ship owners and shippers (“chargeurs”) on the bill of lading clauses of liability of ship owners. As a maritime lobby the CCAF assumes a certain form of cohesiveness between its own interest and those of local Chambers of Commerce and we can try to understand how these two institutions could cooperate.