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Legislative Graveyard 1841, Box 142/27
MMN #33691
Date: 1841
Description: Committee on Manufacturing report on silk bounties

State of Maine

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The joint Standing Committee on manufactures to which was referred the petition of Luther Carey and others praying the Legislature to fix a bounty on silk manufactured within this state, have had the same under consideration and ask leave to submit the following,

Report

The committee are fully impressed with the importance and correctness of the policy of protecting, and encouraging the production and manufacture within our own borders of all those necessities of life, which our climate will admit, and of such of the luxuries as the habits and customs of the society have brought into almost universal use, and the use of which society will not be likely to abandon. Of the latter class silk is among the first. The consumption of this article is not confined to any particular

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class in the community, but is used more
or less by almost every individual. Of the
many considerations which strengthen the views
of your committee upon this subject, they will
name only a few. The first is the protective
policy tends to place us as a nation, in a
state of independence in relation to other
powers, to which perhaps without it we
could never hope to arrive. For we can hard-
ly conceive how a nation can be considered
independent, which depends upon foreign
countries for those articles which are necessary
for the comfort and convenience of its
citizens. Again the division and employment
of labor which such a policy tends to produce
has in the opinion of the committee a strong
tendency to add to not only our wealth
but to our independence, and contribute
to the permanence of our institutions. They
believe it will not be denied that it is
safer to rely for the maintenance of good
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If personal is any guarantee for our national independence, we have a still further inducement to foster and protect domestic industry. And we may add to create if necessary and possible employment for that industry. It is believed by your committee that were the ~~subject~~ of national prosperity and independence left entirely out of the question, motives of humanity and good feelings for our fellow beings would be a sufficient inducement for every philanthropist to countenance and aid such a policy. For unless it can be shown that idleness is happiness or that it tends to happiness, then certainly the ~~contrary~~ opposite is true. To illustrate, let us suppose a community exclusively engaged in any laborious pursuit where the very young or old or feeble when in fact none but the most robust can be employed, and compare it to one where, in addition to agriculture, the various mechanic arts are prosecuted, thus giving employment to young, old, robust and feeble, and where each instead of

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suffering the mortification consequent upon
personal, or public dependence for support, knows
and feels that he is supported by the products of
his own labor industry. It is hardly possible
to calculate the difference in the two situations,
aside from the important fact - that industry
is one of the safest barriers against vice and
intemperance, and that the opposite is the most
certain way to engender and produce it.
Believing therefore that the only safe guarantee
we can have for the stability of our free institutions
lies in the virtue, industry and intelligence
of our citizens. It seems to us to be the part
of wisdom to pursue such a policy as shall
in the greatest possible degree tend to
those points. The division of labor among
pursuits of agriculture, the mechanic arts &c
in addition to giving employment to all
affords a better and more ample reward
to those employed, by creating for each a
better, a more and more certain market for
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This protection they think should be given with the view first to enable those who may engage in the manufacture of any new and necessary article to withstand the competition which they must necessarily encounter by having the same article thrown into the market from abroad and from those countries, where the manufacture has arrived to a great degree of perfection, and where labor as compared with our own costs merely nothing, and with the view also of providing employment for all classes ages and conditions in society. They do not believe it is either desirable or necessary that this protection should be perpetual. The character of our people for ingenuity and perseverance is a sufficient guarantee on this point. The history of the cotton manufacture in this country is evidence that if any branch of industry is protected for a period of time sufficient to enable the manufacturer to pay the laborer a just compensation, that Yankee ingenuity will supply the rest.

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The cotton manufactures in this country are
able at the present moment not only to
undersell foreigners in our own market
but to compete successfully with them abroad
while at the same time they pay for their labor
nearly or quite three times as much as is paid
in Europe for labor in the same employ.
This has been accomplished with only a few
years of protection from government and
in the opinion of your committee should
be one of the strongest inducements to
government to afford to other branches of
industry the same aid, and at the same
time it should dispel all fear that
there is any danger that it will be ne-
cessary to make it perpetual. Errors may
and no doubt have been committed by
granting a protection ^{in some instances} beyond what was
necessary to pay the difference in the
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But because these errors have been committed it does not follow that we should abandon the policy. Your committee have reason to believe that this system has not been properly viewed by a portion at least of the community. It has been looked upon as a sort of bounty given to the manufacturer where in fact it is simply enabling him to employ our own laborers at the ordinary price of labor, instead of abandoning his business or employing foreigners at the low price for which they would be obliged to work in their own country, ~~and~~ thereby throwing certain branches of ~~the~~ business into the hands of a population not our own, one which as they believe none would wish to have take the place of our own native citizens. They believe also that this policy should be pursued with a view to national independence by producing at home all the necessaries of life and with particular reference to our position in case of war.

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an exporting instead of an importing
a creditor instead of a debtor
country. Your Committee do not believe
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state legislature but should be left
to the national government. They believe
that any effort on the part of this state
to encourage the manufacture of silk while
some twenty millions worth of silks are
annually brought into the country duty
free, would fail to accomplish the
desired object. It would be like putting to
sea against wind and tide. The
only course of legislation which we believe
it is desirable for this state to pursue
in relation to manufactures is one
which shall put them upon an equal
footing with the manufacturers of other
states. If such a policy should be pursued
it is the opinion of your committee
that the vast water power of this state
(being more than all Spain and Sweden)
with our other natural advantages will
be a sufficient inducement to capitalists
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of investing it in other states where
none of the facilities are better
and where water power is truly
inferior to ours. With these views
your committee would recommend
that the petitions have leave
to withdraw their petitions

S. C. [Signature]
In Senate April 13, 1841
Read & accepted -
Sent down for answer
Daniel Sanborn. Secy

House of Representatives
April 15, 1841
Read & concurred
Geo C. [Signature]

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