

Ship Owners to apply so frequently between the years 1801 and 1804 to the legislature and government, but their applications were not attended to, though the depression on the Shipping Interest began to be more generally and severely felt.

The rapid discharge of seamen from the navy at the commencement of the late peace was also attended with great injury to the state, from the vast numbers of them who emigrated to France* and other foreign states, in search of employment: many thousand tons of British Shipping were, likewise, obliged to be sold or let to foreigners, under circumstances peculiarly distressing, especially those chartered to the Dutch and French merchants; and the owners of those ships cannot fail to remember the losses they sustained by the want of protection which was on the commencement of this war so unaccountably withheld from them†.

It may perhaps be considered invidious to make any further observations on these transactions; they certainly tended considerably to increase the depression on British Shipping, and though it was difficult, in 1802, to obtain freights for them almost at any rate, *neutral* ships were continued to be employed in the trade of this country, in time of *peace*, under orders in council.

Whatever contrary opinions may have been promulgated on this subject, the navigation laws were certainly violated and infringed by the importations in *neutral* ships under the suspending acts; yet it has been asked, "*where is the evidence that the principle of the navigation law was in the smallest degree violated‡?*" By the 12th Cha. 2. c. 18. the principle was established, of securing to British Ships the exclusive trade to and from the British plantations; and the importation into Great Britain from all parts of the world was confined to British Ships, or to the ships of the countries of which the goods to be imported were the growth, or produce. It is not contended by the Shipping Interest that the navigation laws were established to encourage and secure trade, but to increase shipping and seamen; the object of

* Alley's Vindication of Lord Sheffield's Strictures, p. 55. Also the Petitions to Parliament in 1802.

† See printed Case of the Owners of British Ships which were let on freight during the late peace, to the subjects of the Batavian Republic. Edit 1803.

‡ Mr. Cock's Answer to Lord Sheffield's Strictures, p. 6.