

therefore no further expenditures can be made to provide for the safety, comfort, and well-being of sick and distressed seamen, the very reason for which the fund was created. That seems to me to be an untenable position. The case as presented by the hon. member for Guysborough (Mr. Sinclair) seems to me to be unanswerable. I would like to draw the minister's attention to the fact that since 1896 there has been a vast accumulation of these trust funds. The amounts received by the government year after year have been very much in excess of the amounts they have expended. The report for 1910 shows that over \$200,000 of a surplus should be in the hands of the government, and I would like to know where that money is. I cannot find any reference to it among the trust funds mentioned in the Public Accounts. If there is a large amount of money to the credit of this fund, why should it not be expended for the purpose the hon. member for Guysborough has mentioned? The whole question is one of such importance that we should not pass this item until we understand whether or not the minister, in cases where it is obviously impossible to give proper medical care and treatment to sick and distressed seamen, will relax his policy so far as to make proper provision for their care and comfort.

Mr. BRODEUR. We are always doing that. In all cases we take the necessary precaution to give to the seamen proper treatment. But there are a great many abuses in connection with that. Men who pay us a few dollars very often saddle their seamen upon us. We have, therefore, to be very careful in the administration of the law. The shipping interest has represented that they would be in favour of abolishing absolutely the system of paying these dues, and assume the care of their own sick seamen, because they claim that this is an undue tax upon them. There is a great deal in what they represent in that respect; and I do not know but the country will some day put that charge on the vessel owners themselves. If we proposed to make some large expenditures in the construction of marine hospitals, the shipping interest would be certain to be up in arms against it, because it would mean an increased tax upon them. In other countries no such thing exists, but the ship owners look after their own sick seamen.

Mr. CROSBY. I think that the suggestion made by the hon. member for Guysborough is a good one. The difficulty is that our fishermen ought to have some assistance in the way of hospital protection frequently have no chance at all to go

to a hospital either at Halifax or Pictou, because the vessels on which they work do not pay dues.

Mr. SINCLAIR. That is their own fault. They ought to pay dues.

Mr. CROSBY. They are not compelled to pay.

Mr. BRODEUR. They are not, but they might take advantage of the Act and pay them.

Mr. CROSBY. Still that is not the fault of the poor fishermen who ship on these vessels. They do not make it a point to see that the vessel on which they engage pays dues; and the fishermen off one of these vessels who requires hospital treatment is just as much entitled to it as any other man. Take the man who goes on a fishing schooner of from 40 to 100 tons. He does not know that the schooner does not pay the dues. Should he fall sick or be injured, he is put on shore and has no place to go to. Some provision should be made to meet cases of that kind. I quite agree with my hon. friend from Guysborough (Mr. Sinclair) that in Canso and its vicinity, where there is a number of places at which fishing vessels call, some place should be chosen in which to put a marine hospital, also in the vicinity of Digby, and some regulations should be made for the protection of our sick and injured fishermen. I thought that the revenue from these dues was greater than the amount expended.

Mr. BRODEUR. No, we decreased the tax a couple of years ago, and since then there is barely a small surplus, if there is any.

Mr. CROSBY. What are the rates now—2 cents a ton?

Mr. BRODEUR. There was a reduction made two years ago of half a cent.

Mr. CROSBY. That would make it 1½ cent per ton. I think that the minister should accept the suggestion of my hon. friend from Digby (Mr. Jameson), and my hon. friend from Guysborough (Mr. Sinclair) and provide some way for taking care of our fishermen.

Mr. BLAIN. Are the supplies for these hospitals bought by tender?

Mr. BRODEUR. No, the quantity is too small.

Mr. BLAIN. What is the total number in the different hospitals?

Mr. BRODEUR. 3,629.

Mr. BLAIN. The supplies for that number would be considerable.