

Mr. TUPPER. There is, of course, no objection to comply with the motion of the hon. gentleman, with a slight amendment, to which, I believe, the hon. gentleman does not object. I understand the hon. gentleman has no reference to those claims that have not been adjudicated upon, and, therefore, with that alteration, I have no objection to the motion passing, that is, that it be changed so as to read for the years 1886 and 1887, instead of the last two years. In reference to the specific cases which the hon. gentleman has mentioned, I am not familiar with either of them, as they were settled and decided upon before I entered upon the administration of the department. I may point out, however, that out of the 637 claims that were filed by the fishermen of King's County, to which allusion has been made, those claims represented 1,323 fishermen, and of these 637 claims, 602 were allowed, and 35 rejected.

Mr. McINTYRE. When was that?

Mr. TUPPER. That was for 1887, King's County, to which I understand the hon. gentleman alluded. If the facts were as the hon. gentleman mentioned, with regard to the crew of twelve, in which nine Conservatives were paid their bounty, and three Reformers were refused, and upon the grounds he suggested, that would be a course that I would not for a moment defend, and I should certainly look into the case, and ascertain how far the department is responsible, or to what extent any official under the department is responsible for a case of that kind. Then, in reference to dealing with these bounty cheques, that is a practice that is not tolerated or countenanced by the department, but a practice very difficult, indeed, to stop. The fishermen are most anxious, at times, to use the checks paid on the bounty, or use the credit that they gain by having filled the claims, and they are oftentimes induced to obtain a discount on these cheques by some officer in the locality charged with the investigation of the claims. Of course, that practice has been a great abuse in reference to the quasi judicial position of the officer in charge of that settlement, and the officer who reports to the department. There has been only one case specifically brought to my notice, personally, of an officer who does that, and that I am at present investigating. I may mention that, as the hon. gentleman has suggested is quite the case, that the cheques are payable to the party entitled, under the Act regulating the bounties, and under the Order in Council passed under that Act, they are made out in the names of the fishermen, and to be cashed, must be endorsed by the fishermen.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). There can be no doubt that in disposing of so much money, the system may be open to abuse, and sometimes, no doubt, the system has led to abuse. I am aware of one case in my own county that I brought to the notice of the late Minister of Marine and Fisheries last year, which was so evident that the department promised to look into the affair, though I do not know whether they have given it the investigation that was promised. The person who had charge of the distribution of the cheques, or making out the claims, in one section of my county, was a gentleman of good standing, and I did not care to mention his name on the floor of the House; but I told the Minister of Marine at that time, that according to the papers which had been placed in my hands—and they were sworn to—that man, who was a magistrate too, had returned names of parties for bounties that had not been issued at all; he had returned the names of his own sons, who were mere boys in his store, and had obtained checks in that way under various pretences. I did not pretend to say at that time, nor do I now, whether the charge was correct, but I offered to give the department all the particulars, with a view to assisting them in arriving at a correct distribution of the money, which, I have no doubt, is their desire. I am aware since that time that the prac-

tice has been continued, I think very unfortunately, of placing these cheques in the hands of local shopkeepers. I know that within Halifax city a list of the bounties there was placed in the hands of one local shopkeeper, and the fishermen coming in from the outports have come to this man, and he makes out their cheques for them, and I presume—I do not affirm it—they all have dealings with him, and that he receives a certain amount of indirect advantage. It has been stated to me, and I think it is correct, that on several occasions, notably on more than one occasion, people have gone to this man and he has made out their claims, pretending that they had grounds for making their application; where they are Conservatives their claims were always admitted, where they happened, unfortunately for them, to belong to the other side of politics of the day, the shopkeeper and the Government which he represented, did not see their way clear to grant them the same bounty which had been granted to the other fishermen along the side of them. Now, this statement has been made to me over and over again, and an investigation was held in Halifax not very long ago, under circumstances which were rather peculiar, if my information is correct. It was stated then that one man's application was made out and his bounty was granted, when he was proved to have been in the hospital at Halifax all summer. Now I do not say this information is correct, but the best evidence has been brought to prove the charge; but whether it is true or not, the whole system of distribution of the cheques of the fishermen, is open to very grave abuse. It is placed by the Government in the hands of small shopkeepers and men of that kind who are influential in the various districts, and who deal directly or indirectly with the fishermen. It is time the system was changed. The cheques have been distributed at particular times and under particular circumstances, and, as I mentioned last year in the House, during the local election a clerk was sent from the custom house in Halifax to distribute cheques along the shore. He was rather badly treated by the Government, I must confess, because he hired a team in Dartmouth to go along the eastern shore and distribute the cheques, thinking the Government would recompense him. But having lost the election, the Government did not feel inclined to make any further investment in that direction, and so a case has been before the courts in Halifax in regard to team hire.

Mr. TUPPER. Do I understand the hon. gentleman advises me to pay the claim for the horse and team?

Mr. JONES. Will the hon. gentleman act on my advice?

Mr. TUPPER. I will take it into consideration.

Mr. JONES (Halifax). If the hon. gentleman is willing to accept my advice on this point, I hope he will also adopt my suggestions on other points, and under these circumstances we will see an improvement in the administration of the department. I do not bring any accusation against the present Minister of Marine, for this matter relates to the past year. All this is a condition of affairs which, I repeat, calls for an investigation and for a change in the administration of the department. I suppose the Government will always favor their own friends, we expect it, and we have seen it. The Conservative party think not only the revenues of the country belong to them, but the whole country belongs to them, and whenever they obtain any money they take good care to distribute it among their own friends. But we hope they are not altogether beyond public opinion, and they are not too old to learn and improve the administration of the Fisheries Department in this particular. There is no branch of the public service which more needs improvement and change than that connected with the distribution of these bounties among the fishermen.