

Department of Transport Act

If I may express myself briefly, I think it is essential that we should have somebody in general control of this movement, somebody who has the kind of authority provided for in the legislation. It seems to me to be a difference of opinion. Hon. members opposite seem to think that the authority should start in at an earlier stage in the operation. However, all I can say is that what we are dealing with is legislation that was passed unanimously in the house in 1954. It has been carried out well administratively since then, I think, and what we are now asking is that it be continued for another two years.

Mr. Campbell: The minister has not given the answer I want. As the minister has said, much co-ordination is needed. That is where we are critical, of the lack of co-ordination. In the first place the farmer has to take the grain to the elevator, if there is room.

Mr. Marler: The transport controller is not responsible for that.

Mr. Campbell: There has to be room in the elevator. It seems to me only common sense that if there is to be space provided in the elevator so the farmer can get the grain into the elevator, the grain from the elevator must be moved to a terminal or to a shipping point. Surely the job of the transport controller is to keep all these movements synchronized so the terminal elevators are nearly full. I do not say that they have to be absolutely full, but nearly full. When we have a situation such as we had last fall, what is the cause? Was it because all the cars were being used to take wheat to the shipboard, or what was the reason? That is all I want to know, and I have not had an answer.

Mr. Marler: If I were familiar with the operations of the Canadian wheat board I could answer my hon. friend's question, but that does not relate to the actions of the transport controller. Much as I would like to know all about it, I find that knowing about my own departments is almost more than I can manage.

Mr. Castleden: There is one other point, in which I was trying to be helpful to the minister. I take it from the minister's statement today that the transport controller has not the power to compel railway companies to allocate box cars at specific points or to specific elevators at specific points.

Mr. Marler: I think I made it clear that that was done by the Canadian wheat board.

Mr. Castleden: And the transport controller has not that power, nor the responsibility?

Mr. Marler: I think so.

[Mr. Marler.]

Mr. Castleden: If you can make sure of that it will help everyone a great deal. It is because of the discrimination that exists at delivery points where those cars are spotted that there is, let us say, a great deal of ill feeling against the transport controller and his job. It is assumed that a car is being spotted at an elevator which may have shipping orders, but we may have a point where a line elevator has no space in it and no shipping orders, and there is a wheat pool elevator sitting beside it with 15 shipping orders, and they each get one car.

The Minister of Trade and Commerce told us this afternoon that there is space for some 80 million bushels in western Canada. Why can it not be filled? I guarantee that most of the space, certainly as far as my province is concerned, is in the line elevators, and that when the farmers are able to get through the drifts of snow and the roads are passable for the hauling of grain, the space they are going to be asked to haul the grain to will be in line elevators. The whole situation militates against their organization, and they are compelled to deal with their opposition.

If the transport controller has any authority over that situation I wish he would clear that up. If he has not, I think he ought to be cleared of any responsibility. If the railroad companies are refusing to spot those cars where the orders are, then somebody ought to have the authority to compel them to place the cars where the shipping orders are. It is because of this situation that the transport controller's reputation has been lost. The powers are outlined under section I of this act of 1954, which states:

Notwithstanding anything in any act, the governor in council may make regulations for the purpose of ensuring the prompt, efficient and orderly transport, by means of ships or by a company to which the Railway Act applies, of goods in bulk and, without restricting the generality of the foregoing, may make regulations respecting:

Then it outlines the various powers which could be granted under this act. The minister has told us once this afternoon that he has not those powers. I would suggest to the minister in a spirit of helpfulness that if he can rectify the situation with regard to the allocation of box cars to the places where there are shipping orders, and have them placed there by the railroad company, he would do a great deal to straighten out the situation.

Mr. Low: I wonder if I might ask the minister one more question. I have had a chance, since he directed my attention to P.C. 1954-807, to read it. I believe things are becoming clearer in my own mind with respect to the work that is being done by the transport controller. I just want to get the minister's concurrence in this conclusion I have reached.