

Department of Transport Act

the telephone by trying to "joe" the railway companies into doing the things he would like them to do. If they decide that they want to haul lumber or coal instead of wheat there is nothing much that can be done. I can understand that the duties of the transport controller are very important, but it is quite obvious that there has been a slipshod handling of this whole affair by the department as well as a niggardly approach.

We should be in a position to appoint transport controllers who will handle that job as their sole job, who will work as full-time members of the staff and who will be paid by the department. I would go a step further and submit that this job is so important at this time that we should appoint additional transport controllers to carry on the functions which need to be carried on. I do not think it would be advisable to wait until after the next general election in the hope that additional appointments could be made then. It might be that that occasion would provide an opportunity to retire some war horses, but there again it would be an offside gamble. After all the duties of a transport controller are so important that he should be going about the task of organizing the transportation services of Canada to provide an efficient service to the farmers and businessmen of Canada who are in need of such a service.

Mr. Smith (Battle River-Camrose): Mr. Chairman, we in this group are happy to support this resolution which proposes to introduce a measure into the house at some later date to provide for the continuation for a further period of two years of the authority to make regulations for the control of the transport of goods in bulk. As has already been pointed out in the course of this discussion, there is something radically wrong with the type of control which has been exercised over the movement of grain from the west to coastal and lakehead terminals during the past number of years.

We were told last fall in no uncertain terms that the reason for the inability of farmers of the west to market their wheat was a shortage of box cars in the west. I cannot help but feel that there was something wrong in the Department of Transport that would permit such a situation to arise. Surely the transport controller and the other officials associated with the movement of goods throughout Canada must have been aware months in advance that there would be a great need for box cars to handle the 1955 crop and perhaps the remainder of the 1954 crop to be found in the west.

In my opinion these cars should have been moved out to western points, not in January

or February after this parliament had opened, but early in the fall to enable the smaller elevators in the west to clean out their supplies and allow farmers to bring their wheat to the elevators before the roads became blocked.

However, I do not feel it would be fair to lay all the blame for this situation upon the Department of Transport. I submit that the right hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce must assume some responsibility for the marketing of grain. He should not attempt, as he did last fall, to blame others for the lack of planning which could have been handled quite well in his own department to some extent.

The situation is far from being free from confusion as far as western elevator points are concerned. Some points have a three-bushel quota, others have a four-bushel quota and so on, but there is a lack of uniformity as to how the grain is shipped. For example, I received this letter from a grain handler who has this to say:

In the first place we were told last fall that cars were to be spotted at elevators in accordance with the number of shipping orders held by each elevator. So far as I am concerned this has never been done. I am at present holding 15 orders for carlots and the only other elevator at this point has 5 orders on hand. This should mean that I get two cars to every one of his, but to date cars are spotted one car for each elevator.

Also I have had these orders since last December and have been unable to obtain cars.

That means to me that there is some confusion existing even now. However, I should like through you to thank the present transport controller for the co-operation and courtesy he has extended to me at all times, and I say that in all sincerity. In my opinion there is no use blaming the individual who is called upon to do a job and who is doing it to the best of his ability with the machinery with which he is provided.

However, on the other hand I feel that there is urgent need for a much closer liaison between the Department of Transport, the Department of Trade and Commerce and the Canadian wheat board so that the confusion which has existed these last number of years will be removed. Surely something can be done within the very near future to make certain that a situation such as we found this last year will not be repeated at another time.

It has been pointed out already during this debate that the box car situation apparently is much better along the lines of the Canadian National Railways than it is along the C.P.R. lines. That is true in my area, and it is particularly true as far as C.P.R. branch lines are concerned. Apparently they do not wish to move box cars into those lines unless