

*Canada Grain Act*

By this bill we are asking that farmers in western Canada have that fundamental freedom restored to them.

I suppose that members from non-prairie provinces may say they do not take any interest in this measure. But I suggest that the principle involved in this measure is far more fundamental than whether a number of box cars should go to one prairie elevator or another. The extremely important principle is that no group of Canadians should be denied something that I suggest every member of parliament must believe is a democratic, basic Canadian right. The right is that any Canadian, when he decides to sell his produce—whether it be agricultural produce or whether it be his labour—has a right to sell that product to the firm of his own choosing. To say that western farmers today have that freedom would be to deny the truth of the statements by thousands of farmers that have been received by members of parliament and by the government.

The wheat pool set out in some detail the type of amendment they are seeking. In addition to this general, broad method of determining the distribution of box cars, they say that if the wheat board must order out of turn box cars, those additional out of turn box cars must also be calculated in the formula. I would suggest one further amendment that might be placed in the statute or might be provided for by regulation. That is, if, because of the out of turn box cars, within the full year period the exact apportionment has not taken place according to the farmers' own wishes, whatever extra box cars an elevator may have obtained should be carried forward into the next year and be treated in the next year's formula. If that were done the apportionment could be made absolutely in keeping with the farmers' own wishes.

We have been at this problem now for a number of years. We expected that we would get it solved when the transport controller was appointed. The transport controller had his powers extended in the 1953-54 session. Under that statute the transport controller has power, in my judgment, to do everything that we are now asking be done in the way of the distribution of box cars. However, he has never cared to exercise the authority to allocate box cars that parliament has provided.

As I have said in previous debates, he does not really allocate box cars at all. If a member or someone else gets a complaint that a given point is not getting sufficient box cars, and if the transport controller is asked to do something about the situation, he will

bring it to the attention of the railway company in the hope that the railway company will provide additional cars at that marketing point; but at no time does he allocate box cars among the elevator companies on the basis of the farmers' own choice.

To solve this problem we have tried the transport controller, and that has been a complete failure. The minister has said in the past that the car order book, a provision that has been in the Canada Grain Act for a great many years, was sufficient to give farmers the right to deliver grain to the elevator of their own choice. For example, in the debate on December 15, 1953, the Minister of Trade and Commerce had this to say, as found at page 937 of *Hansard*:

I do not think enough attention is being paid to the car order book.

Then he went on to explain the provisions of the car order book. He said the car order book is a method by which the farmers can determine where box cars shall be spotted, and by that method can provide for their use sufficient space in the elevator where they wish to market their grain. Of course the fallacy of that argument is that the car order book has already been tried. The car order book has a lot of merit and can do a job in many instances, but as soon as the farmers at a local marketing point have the car order book in effect, and as soon as other farmers at other marketing points across western Canada have the car order book in effect, what happens? The transport controller steps in, uses his wide powers and suspends the operation of the car order book. Farmers are then back in exactly the same position they were in before they began using the car order book.

In other words, instead of the transport controller and the government assisting the farmers to market their grain at the elevator of their own choice they have taken away in many instances the one provision which was placed on the statute books of the country long ago so the farmers might have that right. Instead of helping the farmers to use this fundamental right the government helped take it away.

We thought we were making some progress last year. We had a long discussion in the standing committee on agriculture. We had witnesses from the various grain companies. We had the minister saying that he was considering the implementation of a car cycle whereby the government, the transport controller, whoever was in charge, would take a period following the war in which there was little congestion, and on the basis of the business done by each elevator company at the marketing point would apportion box