

Department of Transport Act

Mr. Johnson (Kindersley): Knowing that Mr. Milner is a man who likes to get things done, I thought perhaps he had.

It disturbed me when the minister pointed out that the final authority in the allocation of box cars rests with the Canadian wheat board. I was under the impression that the transport controller played a very significant part in allocating box cars between marketing and divisional points in connection with the railways. If, as the minister says, the Canadian wheat board has the complete responsibility for allocating box cars and loading them, then I would begin to wonder where the transport controller fits into the picture. The Canadian wheat board will give shipping orders to individual elevator companies dependent on the shipping orders or the sales which they have had.

Mr. Marler: I think so.

Mr. Johnson (Kindersley): If the wheat board in allocating shipping orders to country or terminal elevators is basing that on the immediate sales, then the transport controller, if that is the only function he has, is fulfilling a very slim duty indeed, because in due time the railway cars will end up at the terminal, that grain which has been spoken for will be put in position and it will be there to load the boats.

I think the minister would be well advised to review the functions he outlined as being those of the transport controller, because when the Canadian wheat board allocates a shipping order to an elevator point there is no guarantee that the railway is going to spot cars there.

I think the Saskatchewan wheat pool association shares with me the impression that the transport controller has the responsibility of assisting the Canadian wheat board in seeing that these railway cars are spotted to fill a shipping order that has been placed. There are stations in the west where as many as 70 shipping orders have been sitting at elevator points for as long as two months without any cars being spotted, while neighbouring points with 20 shipping orders have received perhaps 10 or 15 cars.

I think the transport controller should accept the function of seeing that the railway companies spot cars in proportion to those allocated by the Canadian wheat board. In that way he would be of greater service to western agriculture than by sitting as an unpaid official taking credit for shipments the Canadian wheat board has made.

I would like the minister to give a further explanation of the functions of the transport controller. Surely his functions must extend beyond simply taking credit for the amount

[Mr. Marler.]

of shipments which have been put in position at the terminals and at the lakehead.

Mr. Knight: Mr. Chairman, I have been interested in this discussion, perhaps because I was a member of the railway committee. The hon. member for Kindersley has raised a couple of questions. I think it would be interesting to put on the record Mr. Gordon's reaction to those two particular questions. At the bottom of page 222 of the report of the proceedings of the committee I am reported as follows:

As I understood it, in the old days, at least, because I remember loading my own enough over the platform, a man had the privilege of ordering from the railroad company a car. Is that still the way the thing works? Can I ask you to spot a car for me at a certain elevator, and do you do it?

Mr. Gordon made the following reply:

No. The wheat board has to make the decision as to what cars they want and for what area. They tell us the number of cars to put into the particular areas, and we try to carry out those instructions. It is the wheat board's responsibility.

There is another statement by Mr. Gordon which I should like to put on the record:

It is vital in the whole picture that the railways in making that effort should get complete co-operation in the matter of unloads.

Mr. Gordon put a great deal of emphasis on that fact. He said that if they could not get the unloads in proper time it interfered with their operations. Then there was a question as to the duties of the transport controller and Mr. Gordon went on to describe his functions. He has been asked whether the controller gave them any definite or written directives, and he replied as follows:

Well, when you realize that you are dealing with 5,000 country elevator points you will know that formality has to be reduced to a minimum, and in point of fact, while we do not have written or formal directives, the transport controller is in touch with our railway officers day by day and sometimes hour by hour.

He went on to explain that these telephonic communications between the transport and railway men went on hour by hour. Apparently that is the way it is handled. There is one last comment by Mr. Gordon I should like to put on the record. I know that the Minister of Transport has quoted Mr. Gordon, the parts that he wished to quote and which were relevant to the questions asked, but I could not help but wonder whether Mr. Gordon was furnishing ideas to the Minister of Transport or whether the Minister of Transport was furnishing ideas to Mr. Gordon.

Mr. Marler: I even pick up some from the opposition.