

*Department of Transport Act*

left in the fields last fall in the hope that they might be able to get it moved during the winter months.

The whole problem of the distribution and allocation of box cars seems to be a contentious one because in the early part of this year, in fact, on February 17, a series of questions were asked and the Minister of Trade and Commerce stated that he was not responsible for filling the unused capacity; that, of course, was the task of the Minister of Transport through his transport controller, and the Minister of Transport said that the amount of space in our elevators is not a matter that comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Transport. There we had a classic example of the Minister of Trade and Commerce telling the Minister of Transport that it was his task to fill the elevators, and the Minister of Transport saying at the same time, it is no concern of mine whether the elevators are filled or not, my job is just to move the grain. It all becomes very tragic when the minister, within the light of the statement he made to the Alberta wheat pool of December of last year, indicated that there were 100 million bushels of space in the terminals because we were told there was a shortage of box cars.

It was indicated by the return that I referred to just before five o'clock that one of the reasons for the shortage of box cars was that there were 10,000 more Canadian box cars on the United States rail lines than there were United States box cars on Canadian rail lines. I was informed by elevator agents who were in a position to know that they were not being granted authority to load grain into United States box cars which happened to have been spotted at their marketing points. In September of last year I was informed by a reliable source that there was a priority given for box cars out of the western division. The first priority was for lumber. After the railways had fulfilled that commitment of 100 per day they were to use all of their unfits, make them up out of fits to 100 for coal, of all things, in September; then priority on mill orders, Churchill orders and so on down the line. It is a very disappointing spectacle for the farmer in the western part of Canada to see trainload after trainload of empties going through to handle the lumber which, of course, is an important part of our Canadian economy. But at that particular time of the year it was important that we take as much grain as we could from the farms and fill up the terminals so that we would not have 100 million bushels of empty space in those terminals. Of course, Mr. Chairman, that is one of the features which has contributed to the disproportionate number of box cars which are in the United States, because the big 40, the big 2,000-bushel

[Mr. Johnson (Kindersley).]

cars, are the ones that are filled with lumber and taken down to the United States and shuffled around on the United States rail lines, sometimes staying down there for 100 to 190 days before they are returned; whereas if the priority had been given to the shipment of grain at that time I do not think the situation would have been as critical.

We have been very fortunate this year that the Minister of Trade and Commerce has not made the same prediction that he did last year. The committee will recall statements made by the minister, in his perpetual optimism, that we would be sweeping out the bottom of the bin. He modified that by stating that we would have at least an 8-bushel quota. This statement was made by the minister in the middle of July last year. The minister is concerned with other matters at the moment; but that has not stopped the making of silly predictions because we find that his colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, has taken over where he left off. I noticed this afternoon in the *Star-Phoenix*, of Saturday, April 7, the following:

Medicine Hat, Alberta. Agriculture Minister Gardiner said Friday night more orders for Canadian wheat have come "in the last few days than ever before" and the grain glut situation will be cleared up "right away".

Farther along the article reads:

"This crop year will see us taking more cash from our farms than ever before—even if we do not grow any wheat this year".

That, Mr. Chairman, points up one of the terrific jobs that the transport controller is confronted with if he is hoping to make the prediction of the Minister of Agriculture come anywhere near realization. While I am discussing this I think I should caution the minister about making over-optimistic statements because I feel the statement made by the Minister of Trade and Commerce last year that everything was rosy did a lot to induce people to spend the available funds they had without having a view of the critical situation that would develop in the fall when there was a complete cash shortage. I do not think the Minister of Agriculture is adding anything to the economy of agriculture by making it more difficult for the transport controller.

The *Regina Leader-Post* noticed this statement and in an editorial on April 17 said:

The west will believe these encouraging predictions when the record of actual shipments is down in black and white.

Those in charge of the grain movement have a twofold responsibility, to get the grain to the lakehead and other export ports, and to draw it from the prairies in such a way that farm marketing opportunities are as equitable as possible.

This is one time when I can agree with the editorial in the *Regina Leader-Post*. My