

## Department of Transport Act

ports, I think one realizes that the timing of the movement, the nature of the demand, the place where the exports leave the country and the time at which they leave are all factors which influence the immediate availability of box cars.

I think the railroads have been operating under unusually difficult conditions in this particular crop year, Mr. Chairman.

In his evidence before the standing committee on railways and shipping Mr. Gordon said, speaking of the weather conditions:

Our snow plow miles in western Canada were 270,000 compared with an average of 30,000 in some years.

I think that is a clear indication of the difficulties which the railroads have had to meet during the last season. It is significant, Mr. Chairman, that despite these difficulties, which not only affect the country in the west but also in the east, the level of shipment from the Atlantic ports this year reached what I understand to be an all-time high of some 44 million bushels up to the present time.

After listening to the discussion on this resolution I think it is reasonable to say there is a very real misconception as to the powers and duties of the transport controller with regard to the allocation of box cars.

A number of the hon. members who spoke created in my mind at least the impression that they believe it is the responsibility of the transport controller himself to allocate box cars at particular country points. This is not in accordance with the facts nor is it in accordance with the practice and I do not believe it is justified by the terms of the statute.

My understanding is that the only authority for the movement of grain is the Canadian wheat board. The board has power to distribute cars as between grain companies at a country point. It may prohibit the loading to any destination or may instruct that grain of certain grades be loaded to specific destinations. The board issues to the railways a weekly statement showing the number of cars required at each shipping point in western Canada to meet the delivery quota in effect at the point and their instructions to the railways in general are to place cars at those points where the statement indicates the greatest need. These general orders are often countermanded at specific points by orders to ship certain grades of grain required in forward positions to complete sales for export or for domestic use. The grain companies operating grain elevators, both pool and line, receive orders from the wheat board to ship specific quantities of specific grade to specific destinations.

The grain companies decide from what point they wish to ship the required quantity and furnish a list of the proposed shipping points to the Canadian wheat board.

The board approves of the list of shipping points with or without changes and the grain companies then order the cars through the local railway agent at the points. That is the sole method of car distribution for wheat, oats and barley.

The duties of the transport controller are to see that when export sales are made by the Canadian wheat board or other exporters the grain sold will be at the ports required when ocean vessels prepare to load.

To accomplish the duties above mentioned it is necessary for the traffic controller to keep constantly in touch with country elevator shipments, the Canadian wheat board and other exporters, the railway terminals both lakehead and eastern, and vessel companies both inland and ocean going.

As the transport controller has pointed out to me, the fact that over 1,400 million bushels of grain have been shipped for export from Canadian ocean ports without delay or demurrage due to transportation reflects credit on those engaged in working out the problems of the transportation situation in Canada.

I know and the transport controller knows that there were five or six vessels in demurrage in Vancouver in the early part of this year. I understand that the difficulty arose not from any action of the transport controller or the railways but owing to the fact that the grades required were not in position at the appropriate time and this is not the responsibility of the transport controller. I am sure that hon. members will fully understand it is not the responsibility of the railways.

The duties of the transport controller, as I said a moment ago, have never included the distribution of box cars as between stations or between companies at a station but consist solely of the duties I have just outlined. I think that possibly the actions of the transport controller in the past may have perhaps fostered the impression that he did have responsibility for the distribution of cars as between stations or between companies because he tells me that in the belief he could be of assistance he has dealt with hundreds of complaints from stations in western Canada without turning them over to the wheat board, where it seems to me they belong. He tells me that there has never been a communication which he has received which has been neglected or disregarded although no part of this particular function was a part of his duties.