

Department of Transport Act

Mr. Castleden: I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Transport. Has the controller power to instruct any railway company to allocate box cars to an elevator at a delivery point? Does that power rest with the controller?

Mr. Marler: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry that some of the hon. members who have participated in the debate seem not to have understood the brief statement I made at the beginning of the discussion which I think set forth in very simple terms the exact purpose of the amendments to the Department of Transport Act that it is contemplated to make when the resolution is adopted. I said that the sole purpose of the resolution and of the amendment to the Department of Transport Act was to extend the life of section 6(a) until the 31st of May, 1958.

I had thought when I said that was the sole purpose that hon. members would understand that it was not contemplated by the resolution or by the legislation to follow that there would be a new appointment of a transport controller or that there would be any enlargement of the powers which he has under the statute to which I referred a moment ago. There is no necessity for a new appointment. I will admit the language of the resolution seems to suggest the appointment of a deputy controller but I am sure if hon. members will refer to the original legislation adopted in 1954 they will see that that legislation made provision for the appointment of one or more deputy controllers. Therefore in that respect, though the resolution may appear to suggest something new, that is already provided for under the existing statute.

Some hon. members spoke during the discussion this afternoon and this evening as if the transport of grain was the only responsibility of the transport controller. The hon. member for Dauphin, who has just spoken, made it clear. I think, that that was not his conception of the situation but other members who preceded him certainly gave the impression that the transport of grain was the only responsibility which the transport controller had to discharge.

Mr. Castleden: That was the one we were complaining about particularly.

Mr. Marler: I am not particularly looking at the hon. member for Yorkton in making these remarks. Perhaps he may find that some of my remarks will fit what he has said and if so perhaps he can put the cap on and wear it.

Mr. Argue: Tell us what the transport controller has done in these other fields.

[Mr. Zaplitny.]

Mr. Marler: If the hon. gentleman will allow me to continue my remarks, I hope that I shall be able to satisfy them. I admit that is perhaps asking a great deal, but I shall try to do so.

Mr. Argue: Tell us what he has done.

Mr. Marler: What I was saying when the hon. member interrupted me was that the transporting of grain is not the sole responsibility of the transport controller. Under the statute he is charged with the responsibility for the carrying out of the prompt, efficient and orderly transportation of goods in bulk; and goods in bulk include a number of items such as grain and grain products, ores and minerals; ferrous metals; iron and steel scrap; sand, stone and gravel; pulpwood; wood pulp; poles and logs; coal and coke; and sulphur and phosphate. I am not suggesting, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. gentlemen opposite are more concerned with those other items than with grain. I fully understand their interest in grain and I fully understand that that appears to be the prime responsibility of the transport controller.

A moment ago, Mr. Chairman, we spoke of the powers of the transport controller. Some hon. gentlemen seem to consider that the powers which he has under the statute are extremely far-reaching. Others seem to think that the powers should be more extensive. The hon. member for Prince Albert suggested that as the powers did not seem to be exercised frequently—because there was not a large number of written directives issued by the transport controller—therefore that suggested that the powers were ineffective. I suggest that if the powers did not exist, the transport controller would be wholly ineffective. It is only because he has the powers that are provided for in the statute that he is able to carry out his duties effectively.

In considering what has taken place in 1955 in the movement of grain and what has taken place say since the beginning of the present crop year, from August 1, 1955 up to the present time, I think there has been on the part of hon. members a disposition to overlook the fact that the year 1955 was one of substantial activity for all forms of transport in Canada. It was a year of substantial activity not only for the railways but for water carriers and air carriers. In fact, in a general sense I think 1955 will go down in history as a good year for transportation.

I think that in a broad sense the railways have done a good job in transporting grain and in carrying out the movement of grain that they have been asked to undertake. I shall not for a moment attempt to conceal from hon. members the fact that, if they take the trouble to look at what might be called