

Department of Transport Act

attractive return to move grain when it is possible to move lumber, paper and metals and a great many other varieties of goods that carry a much higher freight rate. I imagine that there is some point to the railways' claim that so long as the movement of these other commodities is so profitable they might be excused for ignoring the need for moving this grain and keeping 58 million bushels of space empty in our elevators and keeping the farmers in the position where they cannot sell their grain and cannot prepare for another year's operations.

An increase in the freight rates, as suggested by the railways, in order to give them a profitable return on the movement of grain I am told would "up" the price at least 12 cents a bushel. With our sales in the export market going down month by month and year by year I think it is fairly obvious that we cannot ask the farmers to pay an extra 12 cents a bushel on freight rates. I also think it will be generally agreed that it is not in the best interests of Canada to knock this industry out of the ring entirely. Hence I think it becomes a matter of national concern to see that there is a transport controller who has authority to see that this elevator space is filled and to see that somebody takes responsibility for the injustice which is done to the people in Saskatchewan where 20 per cent of all the shipping points are limited to a one-bushel quota compared with one-quarter of 1 per cent in the province of Manitoba.

I think it is a matter of some concern when we find that the total exports of wheat and flour have been decreasing as substantially as they have been decreasing as reported in the last *Wheat Review*. For the 1954-55 period we find that our total was 152.3 million bushels. This year we are down to 136.7 million bushels. Then to balance that, as of March 1 the item for export and for carry-over has increased from 599.2 million to 697.1 million, an increase of roughly 100 million. Hence before the item carries I think the Minister of Transport or the Minister of Trade and Commerce on behalf of the government should make some commitment with a view to correcting the injustice which is done to the farmers in the province of Saskatchewan.

Before I sit down perhaps I should also ask the Minister of Trade and Commerce to comment on one other question. While he was in Hamilton speaking the other day his parliamentary assistant issued a statement with regard to the international wheat agreement negotiations in which it was pointed out that there is likely to be a reduction of about 50 per cent in the amount that Canada

will be likely to sell under the terms of the international wheat agreement. In view of the fact that over 80 per cent of last year's wheat is still on the farms and in view of the difficulty there is in getting what is on the farms moved, I wonder whether the Minister of Trade and Commerce, as the minister responsible for the marketing of wheat, is prepared to give any indication as to whether the farmers in the prairie provinces should review again their seeding plans for this year and reduce the planting for this crop since so little progress has been made in connection with the solving of the problems of the moving of this grain.

Mr. Quelch: I should like to say just a few words on this resolution. In that part of Alberta which I represent, in the past there has been a good deal of confusion regarding the setting of quotas. In the early part of 1955 the farmers were told that there were plenty of box cars but no orders. Then, later in the year the situation became reversed and apparently there were plenty of orders but no box cars. Now, fortunately, the situation seems to be improving and the number of orders seems to be increasing at all points as well as the number of box cars.

The Alberta Wheat Pool Budget of April 20 gives an optimistic picture of the situation. It says:

Big Grain Movement Foreseen

A start has been made on what may be a record summer grain movement for Canada. With the great lakes and the St. Lawrence open for navigation the tempo of grain exports has been greatly increased. Up to April 4 Canadian exports of wheat totalled 162.2 million bushels but it was conceivable that, barring unforeseen difficulties, this figure could almost be doubled by the end of July. In 1954-55 Canada exported 252 million bushels.

It would appear as though the situation is going to be greatly improved before the end of the crop year. When I found any point which had a quota very much lower than nearby points, I used to write to Mr. Roy Milner. During the last few months it was recommended that I write to the wheat board, so I have been writing the wheat board and I must admit I have received very prompt action on every occasion when I have drawn to their attention that certain towns might have only a one-bushel quota while adjoining towns had a quota of two or three bushels. I found prompt action was taken to try to bring up that town to a similar level to the others. I might say, too, that when I used to write Mr. Milner I also got prompt action. Sometimes I would take it up with somebody in Ottawa, and apparently it was only a lady clerk in town here but I seemed to get good action just the same.