

Supply—Transport

a very exceptional season in the west, one of the worst I have ever experienced. I believe that with the government-owned facilities at Churchill, and the wheat board operating directly under government direction now, somebody has fumbled this thing rather badly. We covered the question fairly well last night. I was not too clear on this box car business. I shall read the minister's statement and check that situation. This morning I received a lot of correspondence from points in my own riding because the people are still alarmed about this damp grain and the shortage of box cars.

Mr. Wright: I cannot accept the minister's statement that the wheat board has all the responsibility with respect to box cars.

Mr. Chevrier: I made no such statement as that. Please do not misquote me to that extent. The Canadian wheat board has no responsibility whatever with reference to box cars. This board has the direction for the movement of wheat, not of box cars.

Mr. Wright: That is the point I was trying to make. Whoever is responsible, and I believe the minister's department has the allocation of box cars to the various commodities, there should be some more box cars allocated to moving this wheat up to the port of Churchill. Certainly if the minister will supply the box cars the wheat board will see that they are used to the best advantage, whether that is in the movement of this grain to Churchill or to some other point. The wheat board will decide according to the quota of box cars that you people make available to them. That is the point I am raising, and I believe that is the point the hon. member for Souris is raising.

Mr. Chevrier: Surely the hon. member is not suggesting that the Department of Transport has jurisdiction over the movement of box cars. It is not as simple as that. The owners of the box cars surely must have something to do with them and with their use. The shippers must have something to do with it. In wartime the government had a transport controller who had something to do with it, but that post has been abolished. As I said the other evening, until a transport controller is appointed in the United States it would be very difficult to control the movement of box cars from one country to the other.

What I did say was that a committee existed, composed of railway, steamship and wheat board representatives, as well as other shippers. This committee is now dealing with the present box car shortage. It is because of the work of this committee I was able to

put on *Hansard* last night a statement showing the present box car position, which has considerably ameliorated in the last few weeks. Had it not been for the work of this committee, I do not think the chairman of the wheat board would have been able to report on April 9 that 1,000 box cars had been made available for the movement of wheat in western Canada.

Mr. Wright: One thousand box cars daily?

Mr. Chevrier: That is daily, yes; and the following day his letter indicated that 800 cars had been made available. He expressed the hope that if the railways carried on with that movement, the position would remedy itself very quickly.

Mr. Knight: I should like to revert for a moment to this matter of the drying capacity. I should like to ask the minister if it is not a fact that the drying capacity has never been used at all? So far as I know there has never been a bushel of grain put through, except as a means of testing the equipment. I recall once asking the Minister of Trade and Commerce why the facilities we have at Saskatoon for the storage of 5.5 million bushels of wheat had at that time only 1,600 bushels. I asked him why those facilities were not used more than they were. He said it was worth the expense to this nation to keep that place as insurance against the day when we might need it. I would suggest that he might have said the same thing about this drying equipment, that it was insurance against the day when we might need it.

As I suggested to you, sir, last night, I think that day has come. We should cash in upon the premium of that particular insurance policy. I do not see why this grain could not have been taken up to Churchill. The capacity of the drying equipment is enormous. It is the finest grain drying equipment in this country. Last night it was revealed that this plant will dry the almost unbelievable quantity of 20,000 bushels in a twenty-four-hour period, or 15,000 to 20,000 bushels in accordance with the percentage of water in the grain. There seems to be some justification for the criticism. In a year when we know there is going to be a carry-over of wheat and it has to be stored somewhere, I do not see why, unless it is as the member for Melfort suggests, the absence of box cars, the grain could not have been taken up to Churchill where it could have been dried at this rather colossal rate and stored in these bins, rather than leave it in this wet condition in the granaries and on the farms in northern Saskatchewan.

When the shipping season opens next year, we hope there will be 2 million bushels of