

*Department of Transport Act*

or even 15 years ago. There was a time when the farmers used to thresh their grain, during the days of the threshing machine, put their grain into their granaries and then deliver it by sleigh in the winter time or by wagon in the summer time. In other words, there was a trickle of grain continually moving from the farm to the grain elevator. Under those circumstances it was possible for the grain elevators to move the grain out as it came in and there was not the sudden run on box cars and space that there is now.

Conditions have changed. Farming methods have changed. This is the day of the combine, of mass production and quick harvesting. If weather conditions are favourable in the fall the harvest time is cut very short. There is a great production of grain from the fields in a very short time, and the most convenient and least expensive way for the average farmer to deliver his grain today is to take it right from the combine in the field, put it into a truck, deliver it to the elevator and dump it. That is the most efficient and least expensive way of doing it. Of course, in the last five or six years the farmers have not been able to do that to the extent they would like because of the grain congestion, but I am giving the minister the picture so he will realize that there is that problem, that there is need for available space at the time of the year when grain becomes suddenly available on the farms.

There is something else. The winter that is now disappearing on the prairies was an exceptionally severe one. While many of the grain elevators were full to capacity in the fall and there was absolutely no possibility of farmers making deliveries, as the winter wore on and some grain was shipped in box cars to the terminals the roads became blocked. We had the curious situation a month or six weeks ago, perhaps in some instances even now, where the roads were blocked and country elevators were empty, but even though the farmers had a huge amount of grain in their granaries on their farms they could not deliver it because there was no road on which they could drive. There again you have another bottleneck, another delay at a time of the year when every day means a loss to the grain farmer.

For these reasons I believe that the government would be well advised to look into the possibility of increasing terminal storage space in the first place so that grain may be moved as quickly and as continuously as possible to the actual shipping points where it can be loaded on boats and taken away. This is a matter of bringing the whole business of the

movement of grain to a more up-to-date position. We need a more efficient and synchronized way of doing things.

As I mentioned at the beginning of these few words, the resolution calls for the appointment of a controller and one or more deputy controllers and the provision of remuneration for them. Before the resolution passes I should like the minister to tell the committee why he is recommending the appointment of a deputy controller or perhaps more than one deputy controller. Is it because the controller finds that his work has become so heavy that he cannot handle it? Does the government envisage giving the present controller and his deputy more authority than they have had in the past? Are we to expect that the controller is to be given other duties which he does not now possess? These are questions which I think should be answered before the resolution is adopted.

I should also like the minister to answer certain additional questions. For example, I think the committee should be told now in clear and unequivocal terms just what the powers of the present controller are, what they are to be and to what extent he has exercised the powers that have been given to him. We would also like to know how many box cars have actually been allocated in the last twelve months as the result of the powers exercised by the transport controller. We would also like to know if there is an over-all shortage of box cars in Canada taking into consideration the hauling of all bulk goods. We would also like to know if there is any particular reason why the shortage of box cars for grain has been as serious as it apparently has been according to statements made in recent months.

These are some of the things we want to know. I think the minister also should be able to tell us just which minister in the government is the responsible minister with respect to the whole business of the control of the distribution of box cars. We have had various statements made by the Minister of Trade and Commerce. On occasion we have even heard from the Minister of Agriculture. Personally I have not heard very much about it from the Minister of Transport, but it does seem to concern at least those three departments. It may even concern others. It might be a good idea if these three ministers were to set themselves up as a sort of box car committee in the cabinet. It could perhaps be a junior treasury board. They might find a suitable vault in the east block where they could go into hiding and remain in confinement until they have the problem licked.