

Department of Transport Act

discussions in this house during the past few years concerning the equitable allocation of box cars. I am not going to go into that question in any great detail tonight. We have had representations before the agriculture committee on this question during the past three sessions and various solutions have been proposed. Judging from the correspondence I still continue to receive on the matter from farm areas, from elevator operators and particularly from pool elevator groups, we still have not solved this difficulty of the fair distribution of box cars amongst the various elevator companies and particularly in the various areas. For example, it has been mentioned that there is unequal distribution between elevators located on main lines and elevators located on branch lines. During a period of grain congestion such as we have faced in recent years there is obviously no legislative solution to the problem. It would seem that the responsibility falls entirely upon the transport controller. If our problem is one of allocation and distribution rather than one of absolute shortage, it seems obvious to me that there is a real necessity for a continuation of the measure that we have before us. In fact, there is an even greater necessity than there ever has been heretofore.

Perhaps I might end my remarks on a more optimistic note and possibly re-echo the sentiments that have been coming from the Minister of Trade and Commerce and the Minister of Agriculture in recent days by referring to the fact that we have been told that the problem of the movement of our grain is being solved quite nicely. According to a press dispatch the Minister of Agriculture was very confident at a meeting in the city of Medicine Hat recently that Canada's grain glut is going to be cleared away during the current year.

I have looked into the question to see just how close to reality optimistic pronouncements of that kind may be. If it is going to be possible to clear up the backlog of grain accumulation that resulted in the tie-up last fall it looks as though a miracle will have to take place. In March the farm union of the prairies presented a memorandum to Mr. Milner, the transport controller, on the question of the provision of transportation in order to get our congested grain to market. They came up with the answer that from now until the end of the crop year 1,085 box cars are going to be needed daily if we are to equal the delivery level of last year. I believe that number of cars is almost a prohibitive figure when we take into consideration the number of box cars available for this purpose in Canada.

I should like to break down these figures into concrete terms. These statistics, I may say, are taken from the 1954-55 Sanford Evans grain trade year book, a very reliable source. Total deliveries of wheat in the crop year 1954-55 were 312.3 million bushels, and the total for wheat and all other grains was 514.7 million bushels, a very large delivery total. Canadian wheat board statistics for deliveries in the current year up to the week ended February 1, 1956, give us the following picture. Total wheat deliveries were 111 million bushels and the grand total for all grains was 199 million bushels.

These figures suggest that if we are going to beat the record of last year—and we will have to go away over last year's total to make any impression on the surplus—if the optimistic predictions of the Minister of Trade and Commerce and the Minister of Agriculture are going to be realized, we still have 315.7 million bushels of grain to be delivered before July 31, 1956. Of this total 201.3 million bushels consist of wheat. On the basis of 1,700 bushels of wheat per box car this means an average of 4,554 cars per week will be required in the period from February 1 to July 31, 1956. Using a six day week, the average daily requirement for wheat movement alone will be 759 box cars. Then there are the coarse grains to be delivered. These total 114.4 million bushels if we are going to equal last year's figure, and on the basis of 2,250 bushels per box car this means an average of 1,956 box cars per week or 326 per day are required in the period from February 1 to July 31, 1956. These figures give the grand total of 1,085 box cars per day.

It is because of concrete evidence of this kind that I heartily support the resolution before the house at the present time. I would again repeat the questions I have asked. Do we have a real shortage? Is it a problem of allocation only? If it is a problem of allocation, the transport controller will certainly have his hands full to cope with the situation facing us at the present time.

Mr. Bryson: Mr. Chairman, I should like to add a few remarks to those already made with respect to the resolution before us providing for the appointment of a transport controller. At the same time I am sure we all feel that if he is not going to be any more effective in so far as the movement of grain is concerned than the present transport controller then we would like to know just what his duties are going to be. I hope when the minister speaks he will describe those duties quite fully.

The hon. member for Kindersley mentioned the terrific spoilage of grain that is