

*Department of Transport Act*

mining areas, fishing areas or the other areas that may have transportation problems to speak up for the other products concerned.

There are two principles about which we are concerned in regard to the movement of grain and they can be simply stated. The first one is whether there is actually a sufficient number of box cars to move the grain expeditiously from the country elevators to the terminal points and to put it into a position for shipment as orders arrive. Secondly, we are concerned whether any effort has been made on the part of the transport controller, or those who give him his instructions, to so allocate the available box cars for grain that regard will be had for the principle for which farm organizations, particularly the wheat pools, have been fighting for a long time, namely that every farmer should have the right to deal with the elevator of his own choice. This principle is subscribed to by every producer, whether he belongs to a wheat pool association, the United Grain Growers or any line elevator company. They are all jealous of their right to do business with the elevator of their choice.

But it becomes an even more important principle in respect to the wheat pools because of the fact that these farmers have given 25 or 30 years of their time and energy to the building up of a grain elevator system of their own, and which they have financed out of their own sales of grain. They operate it voluntarily during their spare hours and the majority of them receive no remuneration whatever. They feel that they have acquired an asset in this system of handling grain which is very valuable to them. They are wondering, just as we here are wondering, to what extent the government or the transport controller, who derives his power from the government, is following that principle of adequate and equitable distribution of box cars. What efforts are being made to see to it that the grain elevators that belong to the wheat pool system can obtain their fair share of the available box cars? There has been plenty of evidence given here and in the committee on agriculture to show that there is something wrong somewhere; that even at a particular shipping point there appears to be a fine hand of discrimination creeping in which does not give to the wheat pool elevators their fair share of the available box cars. This results in a certain amount of the grain being forced into the hands of those elevators to which the farmers do not desire to haul their grain.

Now, those are questions which have not yet been answered. I hope that when the minister expands upon his brief statement

[Mr. Zaplitny.]

he will pay more attention to these two principles and give us the answers. I want to add another thought concerning something I have mentioned before in this house and outside, and that is that the government itself could be of more assistance with respect to the movement of grain at a time when there may be a shortage of box cars. At the moment, there seems to be some doubt as to whether there is or is not such a shortage. We have had conflicting reports. In any event if there is an actual shortage of box cars, particularly during the winter season, I think the government would be well advised to provide more storage space for grain. We have now certain terminal facilities for the storage of grain. I believe it is high time the government, either on its own or by advancing moneys to the wheat board, increased the terminal storage facilities in order that more grain could be kept in a shipping position during times when it is not possible to transport grain quickly to the terminals. In addition to the terminal storage space, we should build a system of off-terminal storage facilities. There are many centres where grain is a very important product. My own town is a good example, and the city represented by the hon. member for Brandon-Souris is another good example. There are many places throughout western Canada in which there should be off-terminal storage space.

I want to make it clear that I am not talking about an additional number of country elevators. I have stated before, and I want to say again, that country elevators were built primarily for the purpose of handling grain, of receiving it from the farmers as they bring it in and putting it as quickly as possible into box cars to be shipped away. I believe that is the chief function of the country elevators. They were not designed primarily as storage space, yet in the last ten years or so they have had to serve the dual purpose of being handling facilities for the grain, for which they were originally designed, and also acting as storage bins. In other words, they have played part of the functions of terminal elevators. There should be off-terminal storage space built in strategic towns throughout the prairie provinces in which grain could be stored and put into a position where it could be shipped out as soon as cars were available.

I do not know how familiar the minister is with conditions on the prairies. I am sure the Minister of Trade and Commerce is quite familiar with them, as is the Minister of Agriculture. But perhaps he will be interested in knowing that there are certain conditions under which farmers have to deliver their grain. The conditions are altogether different now from what they were 20 or 25 years ago,