loans through the Farm Improvement Loans Act, an onus be put on the banks to make this farm improvement loan scheme available to farmers.

There are several different kinds of loans and there are several different reasons for refusals, but usually the refusal is because the banking industry has the ability to make more profit from a different type of loan. Because of the involvement of the government and the guarantees placed by the government on the farm improvement loans, I think it is incumbent upon the government to make a very strong request of the banking community that these loans be extended at all times to farmers who qualify.

I would like to list some of the applications of the Farm Improvement Loans Act and some of the numbers and usages in my province of Saskatchewan. In the year 1978 there were 7,438 purchases of farm implements. There were 276 loans for land clearing under the farm improvement act. There were 238 loans for purchase of livestock. There were 13 loans for major repair and overhaul of implements. There were 1,107 loans made for the purchase of combines, and 179 loans for hay bailers.

When one considers there are 150,000 permit book holders in western Canada and probably 60 per cent of those permit book holders are in the province of Saskatchewan, it is a very small number of people who are taking advantage of the Farm Improvement Loans Act. I know that it is not because they want to pay higher interest rates, but because of the needs of the banking industry—and I recognize it as other people do—to make a profit. Farmers seem to be the only ones who go into something for exercise. The banks do not go into things for exercise; their motive is profit. I think those numbers indicate that there may be a need for the government to request that the banks make these loans available to farmers and cattlemen regardless of the interest rate if they qualify.

I agree with the need for a national food policy, but the people who seem to be the most vocal and most persuasive when it comes to a national food policy are consumers. We realize everyone has to buy food, but the problem is that consumers demand cheap food. Again, I think it is incumbent upon the government—and I know that the Minister of Agriculture believes this—to guarantee a stable agricultural community. One cannot do that with a promise of cheap food.

We have a commitment or a trust placed on those of us in Canada because of our wealth and our natural resource of land to assist in feeding the hungry world. The implication that goes with this is a great challenge to producers. But producers will only assist in the need for feeding a hungry world if, at the same time, they make a profit on their operations. The need for a strong agricultural community, be it grain, hogs, or cattle, demands there must be a profit in order for them to maintain their survival as farmers. In this way we hope to contribute to the hungry of the world.

I do condemn the government, for its cheap food policy and I know the Minister of Agriculture cannot take total responsibility because we know he is a man of good faith and has a deep understanding for the farmers' problems. However, we must have the ability to back up the Minister of Agriculture so that he can make his concerns and the concerns of us all felt in the present government. We find that the present government is lacking greatly in concerns for people of the soil. Whether they be in the hog industry, the cattle industry or in any method of growing food. It is of concern to us and I know it is of concern to the minister. Therefore, we must make a commitment here to assist him if he has any trouble convincing his cabinet colleagues of the needs of agriculture.

● (1540)

I would like to talk briefly about farming and small business. Many people who are not familiar with the business of agriculture do not think of it as a business. Small business and farming go hand in hand. Members of the farm community consider themselves small businessmen. They are like small businessmen in other areas of endeavour who are not asking for a handout. They are not asking for something for nothing. What they are really asking for is the ability to be left to function without the heavy hand of government and without the heavy hand of bureaucracy. They want to be given the tools to do the job of feeding a hungry world. They will be able to do that as long as the red tape, the bureaucracy and some of the large things that come from big government that bother small businessmen, are kept away from small businessmen, which includes farmers. There is no way we can consider the tools needed for big business and those needed for small business in the same breath. That is why the Farm Improvement Loans Act along with the Farm Credit Corporation is of great assistance in agriculture.

The Farm Credit Corporation has served us well in Canada over the last number of years, but there has been a problem in interpretation. It should not be necessary for someone starting in the business of agriculture or farming to provide two half sections to purchase one, to put up double security to enable him to be eligible for a farm credit loan. Farm credit loans are there and are given in good faith.

If there was a young farmer in the minister's district who wanted to start farming and he had a quarter, 200 acres, or however land is measured there, the minister would be able to judge this young farmer or businessman. He would be known in the district. The Minister of Agriculture or anyone else in that community would be able to tell the credit supervisor of the Farm Credit Corporation whether that young person would be a success in business.

I would ask the minister to consider having four neighbours of a young or beginning farmer sign a pledge, and maybe put up a $25 bond that they would guarantee and do what they could to assist the young farmer getting into the business of agriculture, rather than make the young farmer put up a half section or section in order to buy a quarter or another half section. If you limit the need for excessive security and have this type of pledging, it would assist the young farmer in his operation. It would go a long way toward guaranteeing and assisting that young man or woman to be successful in the business. I do not want to carry on too long—