

It was my position in committee that the current Farm Improvement Loans Act should have been amended. As the parliamentary secretary has pointed out, the act is available to farmers for the purchase of farm machinery, for the purchase of breeding stock, for the purchase of building and for the purchase of land on a medium-term basis.

Over the course of the life of the Farm Improvement Loans Act, it has been reintroduced at three year intervals and various amendments and improvements have been made to it. The original purpose of the act was to provide loans only for the purchase of farm machinery, but then other items were added. It was only in the last two or three amendments to the act that land was included under the act.

There was a time when the act was amended to allow for major repairs to farm machinery, and now we can also make major repairs to farm buildings. So the act is not just used for the purchase of capital goods by farmers but is also being used, to some extent, for the refurbishing of farms, and it now comes very close to supplying a form of operating credit. If your tractor breaks down and you have a large bill to pay, you can take out a farm improvement loan to have it repaired. Similarly, you can get the loan if a windstorm hits a building.

The amendment which I proposed was ruled out of order as one for an opposition member to present. It was considered to be one that the government should more properly introduce. I am a little disappointed that the government did not see fit to do so. It would not have cost any more by way of increasing the amount of guarantees beyond the budget which was already allocated. We were told in committee that the current guarantees are available on a three-year period up to a limit of \$1,550 million. We were also told that that limit had never been approached. In the last three-year period we were told that the maximum reached was a ceiling of about \$750 million. So we did not quite use half of the allotted funds that were already there. It would not have required an additional amount of global guarantees, so that the amendment would have probably fitted within the funding that the government had indicated it was prepared to allocate.

The amendment would have allowed, in addition to repairs and improvements to farm machinery and buildings, the repair and improvement, if you like, of the farmer's soil and of his breeding stock by way of artificial insemination services, the purchase of fertilizer, herbicides, seed and nursery stock—the kind of things which are very important for the improvement of farms.

● (1420)

In the general mind of the public, I think there is a conception that, because we are dealing with something like farm land, we are dealing with a so-called renewable resource. But if we do not have any funds or do not make certain that there are inputs into that land, the so-called renewable resource will soon die off. I am aware of some soil studies on the prairies which were done by Dr. Rennie of the University of Saskatchewan. They show that the fertility of prairie soils on the average is now approximately half what it was only 60

Safe Containers Act

or 70 years ago. Without some firm programs for farms and assistance for financing such programs to rotate crops and use fertilizers judiciously, the results of the renewable resource to the economy of the country will gradually wind down.

It is important that these loans be allowed for some of the operating expenses incurred by farmers each year, particularly in years such as the one we have just come through where interest rates were quite high and some regions of the country suffered. I am thinking of the potato areas in the maritimes which have suffered three bad marketing years and were having great difficulty financing the seeding of the current crop. We think such guarantees would allow the banks to make further funding available to farmers for seed and fertilizer.

That was the rationale behind the proposal. We are sorry the government did not choose to include it in the amendments. However, we were pleased to hear from the director of the Farm Improvement Loans Act that a study of the whole farm credit field will be put in place. We were not told how it was to be conducted, whether it would be a public inquiry. I ask the parliamentary secretary to use his influence to see that farm groups and farmers have some input into such an inquiry. It is high time that the Farm Improvement Loans Act, the Farm Credit Corporation Act and the acts where government has involved itself in the supply of farm credit be reviewed, updated and become more pertinent to the real needs of today's agriculture.

Motion agreed to and bill read the third time and passed.

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[*Translation*]

SAFE CONTAINERS CONVENTION ACT

MEASURE TO IMPLEMENT INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Transport) moved that Bill C-21, to implement the International Convention for Safe Containers, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Transport, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Pepin moved that the bill be read the third time and do pass.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Bockstael (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the members of the committee that reviewed this bill. It has been brought to the House and almost to completion on four occasions. This is the fourth time it has come before the House. Through this process, it has been duly refined and all the objections seem to have been met. I had indication from both opposition parties that they concurred in this bill. It will bring about the possibility of ratifying the international convention that should be concluded before September, 1982.