Mr. Stanfield: Sir, we can have a little fun about these things, but they are deadly serious. The whole performance has been ludicrous. It is certainly a serious matter that the government should have left such a trail of uncertainty and bitterness as the legacy of the road show put on in recent months.

We are no further ahead now than we were two months ago with regard to very important aspects of our petroleum policy, including what the government envisages in the way of a national petroleum corporation. Perhaps this mystique is intended to create the illusion that this national petroleum corporation is some kind of magic wand. Of course, it is not. It is no solution in itself either for our short-term or long-term needs, and it is no substitute for proper arrangements with the producing provinces or appropriate policies to increase Canadian participation in the private sector of the petroleum industry. Let this be very clear: any action the government takes with regard to oil or energy policy goes far beyond simply affecting future supplies of petroleum in this country. The government's actions, its attitudes and its behaviour will have a profound effect on the very future of our country.

In closing, let me return to my opening observations with regard to inflation. The government of Canada says it is impotent to act except, of course, in the long run; unable to protect either the ordinary Canadian or the national interest. I do not want to be unfair. Some people dignify the position taken by the Prime Minister by praising his candour. In my opinion it is not candour on the part of the government; it is callousness. There is no more critical issue confronting this country than the present challenge to our economic system. I say to you, sir, that I am weary of the argument that Canada cannot do anything because, it is said, Great Britain cannot do anything or President Nixon cannot do anything. If income policies are so hollow, if they have proven to be so inappropriate, why does the Liberal Party in Britain, which seems to be making such a come-back, support an incomes policy? I am tired of being told we cannot do something in this country because President Nixon may have failed, or somebody else may have failed.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: Incidentally, the price performance of the United States in the last couple of years has been significantly better than ours in this country. There can be no question that inflation at the rate of 10 per cent or more a year presents a threat to the personal security and well-being of millions of Canadians. And there is surely no one so comfortable and secure as to be protected for long from the consequences of an eroding currency, diminished personal savings and failing public belief in the system of enterprise itself.

Why would anybody, apart from the comfortable few, continue to support an economic system in which the cost of housing escalates beyond their means, in which the cost of essential food and clothing absorbs more and more of personal income and where the value of their savings, in which the investment of their pension or retirement income is continually being diminished, is stolen from them by the rest of the community, in effect? There are many in the political process today who do not believe in the economy of enterprise, and while I do not for a moment question their sincerity, I do question their wisdom. There are others who pay lip service to the system of enterprise but who categorize excessive inflation and high unemployment as either international phenomena or acts of God.

[Mr. Stanfield.]

As far as I am concerned, no government worth its salt can wash its hands of its responsibility to make every effort to redress the hardship which falls upon so many who are otherwise helpless. No government worth its salt can escape its responsibility to muster the general population in a shared national program of restraint, discipline and co-operation which will meet this challenge and overcome it. Surely restraint and discipline must start with the federal government itself. There must be leadership by example. In this new session of parliament we shall demand that new government programs be subject to an inflation test. In the form proposed, will the suggested program contribute to inflation? We have had presented to us today estimates which the President of Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) suggested were about $2 billion higher than the estimates last year. The proper comparison is to compare the estimates introduced today with the original estimates introduced a year ago.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: One then finds that the difference is not some $2 billion—although that is no mean figure, for most of us at least—but it is about $3,629 million.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Stanfield: I want to take a further opportunity to look into these figures before commenting on them at any length, but I just point out that the minister's reference is most misleading. Knowing him as I do, however, I am sure it is quite unintentional.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: In fact, then, the estimates as introduced today are not 10 per cent higher than a year ago; they are about 20 per cent higher—one-fifth higher. We shall again be pressing the government to revise its thinking in relation to certain taxes which have an adverse psychological effect as well as an adverse cost effect in times of high and rising inflation. The Prime Minister, with a shrug or toss of his head, with a wave of his hand maybe, can settle if he likes for a further 10 per cent increase in the cost of living, or 15 per cent, if that is what it should be. Those who are inclined to agree with him—and there are those who are inclined to agree with him, whatever he says—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Stanfield: —must know that such an attitude consigns numbers of Canadians to a shortfall in life's essentials and to the inevitable denial of their reasonable expectation of the benefits of their own labours. This attitude in itself contributes to the inflationary psychology by reinforcing inflationary expectations.