The fact of the matter remains that this particular increase will cost the New England consumer approximately $20 million if it stays status quo. The thing that we are concerned about is, whenever there is an apparent short supply, the price invariably tends to go up. It has always been this way, basically.

We operate under a free enterprise system.

Mr. BUSH. My question really is kind of a two-part question. I just asked the first part. The second part is in paragraph 3, on page 2, you say that "any such legislation would place the Nation in an energy straitjacket which would result in higher petroleum product prices."

We are dealing here primarily with crude oil and I didn't know whether you meant crude oil prices having gone up in this country. From an economic standpoint I think maybe it would be difficult to justify that broad claim. I don't mean to be unsympathetic to the consumer, wherever he is, with increased prices; but we are dealing here essentially with crude oil imports, the magnitude of this problem; and, if domestic crude has not risen and if the legislation in some field would help the problem in terms of our whole import program, would hold at existing levels, how can you conclude from that that the price would go up?

Mr. DE BLOIS. Basically, this: I think that on the present import restrictions which are now administered through the Department of the Interior, the Department of the Interior does have some flexibility in its administration of these particular things.

We, of course, in New England, feel that they have not been free enough. We heard testimony this morning just exactly the opposite. We feel they have been too firm.

However, to legislate this particular thing would take it out of the realm of flexibility and make it basically—well, legislation which would make it the policy of the country that you would be breaking the law to do otherwise, you see.

This would make it inflexible. We feel that with the way it is at the present time there is a flexibility that can be used and has been used, we think wisely, by the Department of the Interior in meeting crises as they come up; for example, this past winter, granting these 12 emergency allocations.

We for sure, Congressman, are for a strong domestic industry. There is no question about that.

Mr. BUSH. You have to be.

Mr. DE BLOIS. We have to be, I agree with you. The domestic industry has shown a certain flexibility in increasing their quotas. However, we do feel that this should be left where it is, with the Department of the Interior, which is in a position to meet the varying crises from different sections of the country better than it would be, say, to have to come in and try to obtain emergency legislation or something like that.

Mr. BUSH. I think the only thing I quarrel with is, you know, a literal interpretation of that comment that "any such legislation would place the Nation in an energy straitjacket which would result in higher petroleum product prices."

Because if you freeze it at existing levels I don't see how that is going to make increased prices. This is getting a little technical but I just don't see your rationale there.