That is absolute nonsense. It is a falsehood. It is a lie. Those who are uttering this lie day after day in this Chamber should be ashamed of themselves, and I call upon them to stop with their falsehoods.

First of all, their numbers are not correct. They have simply arbitrarily picked them as $300 billion each to try to make them match, but the numbers are not exactly that. This is used to try to mislead the public.

Furthermore, this is not tit-for-tat. The tax cuts are not for the rich, as you hear over and over again, $300 billion in cuts for Medicare to pay for $300 billion in tax cuts for the rich. I happen to think that allowing parents of children to keep $500 more of their money for every child they have, regardless of the income of the parents, is not a tax cut for the rich. Absolutely not.

If you try to analyze the income breakdown of the tax break that was in the tax bill passed by the Republicans, you can verify that only a small percentage of the amount of money will go to the rich. Frankly, it is the rich who pay the most taxes, so anytime you have a tax cut, they are going to get a substantial portion of it back. But it is not a tit-for-tat, and the numbers used on the floor are not accurate.

Furthermore, the statement that we are cutting Medicare by $300 billion to provide money for the tax cuts for the rich is nonsense, because we are not cutting Medicare. Medicare will increase under the Republican proposal that has been adopted. It may not increase at the incredible 10.5-percent rate that it has been increasing at, but that is nearly three times the amount of increase in the private sector health care cost.

We cannot as a Nation continue to pay 2 or 3 times the rate of increase for those on Medicare that we do in the private sector. Clearly there is something wrong with Medicare if costs are going up that rapidly.

The proposal is to try to make Medicare run more efficiently. Our proposal is to try to preserve Medicare, it is to try to protect Medicare, to make sure that it is there for the people who need it.

If we do not take action to cut the rising rate of cost, there will not be any money left in Medicare after the year 2002. It will be bankrupt and people will not have the medical coverage they have come to depend upon.

That is the problem we are trying to address. It is a problem that has to be addressed in a bipartisan fashion by this House, by the Senate, and by the President.

I am very disappointed that in our attempt to begin addressing that issue, the other side of the aisle, including the President, is not addressing the problem with us. They are not sitting down with us and trying to cooperate, but they are rather getting on their high horse, or standing on their soapbox, and saying ''cuts, cuts, cuts'' when we are not cutting, we are only trying to make it more efficient and more responsive to the needs of the people.

As I said at the beginning, I am a person of integrity. I try to be honest, and I have tried to be honest in this statement.

I truly hope that the other side of the aisle, everyone involved in this Chamber, the Senate, and the White House, will get together with us and say, ''Look, we have a serious problem with Medicare.'' The President's own nominees on the trust fund board have said we have a problem with Medicare. Everyone agrees we have a problem with Medicare. Let us sit down as people of good will and say we have a problem. Let us work together to solve it.

My plea is that we all get together and solve this problem so in fact we can preserve, protect and repair the Medicare system so that we will meet the needs of the elderly, not just now and not just in the year 2002 but for all time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. MARTINEZ] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. MARTINEZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, due to an illness, I was forced to miss a vote on Tuesday, May 23. Had I been present, I would have voted ''aye'' on the Brownback amendment, rollcall vote No. 348.

CALL FOR ABOLITION OF DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio [Mr. HOKE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I have a number of things I wanted to discuss with the House today, first of all with respect to the Department of Energy.

Mr. Speaker, as a part of our ongoing effort to both balance the budget and give our children and our grandchildren a better future and to turn back the tide of taxation without representation, which is one of the things that the patriot founders of this country shed their blood for, we have to examine every single program and weed out those that do not provide a vital national service.

By that measure, the Department of Energy should and must be abolished. Under the Clinton administration, the Department failed to adequately meet the minimum requirements of maintaining the operational readiness of our nuclear weapons stockpile. Instead, it appears to have become more of a travel service to satisfy the Secretary of the Energy's wanderlust. Evidence of that failure can be found by simply examining Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary's schedule. Last Wednesday, May 17 she traveled to Paris in order to give the welcoming speech at an international energy conference on Monday, May 22. Then she went to Baku, Azerbaijan, to give the keynote speech at an oil and gas conference. Today Ms. O'Leary is in Florence, Italy, for a luncheon and a dinner banquet at a conference on geothermal energy.

While these world travels are indeed very exciting, it would be interesting to know just how much they cost. I understand that Secretary O'Leary has transferred at least $100,000 from other travel accounts, including accounts used by scientists and technicians in the Department's nuclear safeguards and security program, to pay for this globe trotting.

That is the gist of this, that is the essence of this, not so much that we want to micromanage the Secretary's travel schedule but that we are very concerned that money is being taken from other accounts, particularly the accounts that have to do with the safety, security, oversight, and general management of the nuclear weapons that she is charged with being the steward of to pay for this travel.

Indeed, it is my understanding that a number of offices involved in maintaining the safety, performance, and reliability of our nuclear weapons will run out of funds by July, 3 months before the end of the fiscal year, because of the Secretary's personal travel demands. They will run out of travel funds from those accounts.

While Secretary O'Leary's commitment to personally attend these international alternative and traditional energy conferences may be commendable, I find it very difficult to conceive that her attendance in exotic locales is more important than safeguarding our nuclear deterrent.

For that reason I have sent letters to the chairmen of House Commerce, National Security, and Government Reform and Oversight committees asking them to initiate investigations into the Secretarty's prodigious travel. Here is a copy of the Secretary of Energy's travel schedule for the period that I was describing.

STUDENT LOAN PROGRAM

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak next with respect to the comments of the gentleman from Texas regarding the Student Loan Program.

I have followed this as a member of the Committee on the Budget very closely and I have frankly been astonished at the response of the minority in this case. The issue is whether or not we should subsidize, that is, pay for the interest on student loans during the period of time that a student is in school Or should that money, the interest on that loan, be capitalized and added to the principal amount of the loan at the beginning of the loan period immediately following graduation; I think it is maybe 3 months following graduation.