

in the other types of fuel. If there were some way that we could hold down the cost of petroleum by taking the tax off the petroleum and finding some other way to fund our highways I would be for it but we all know, ladies and gentlemen, that the cost of gasoline is going to continue to increase. It has been one of the major contributing factors to the inflationary problem which we face today. I do not think that the addition of another one half cent over and above the Nichol amendment is going to detour those individuals who have something to say about establishing the price of petroleum but I do believe it is an attempt to be realistic insofar as the cost of our own Department of Roads is concerned. I want to point out one additional thing. As an example and because someone will sometimes find it out and point out that Schmit has a conflict of interest, there is a bridge that has been closed between my home and my farm and if these bridges are going to remain closed we will find many hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars that will be expended as a result of individuals having to drive more miles because the original routes were closed due to unsafe bridges. I visited with Mr. Coolidge from the Department of Roads and he has pointed out to me that the department is now looking at the possibility of constructing new bridges in areas where formerly it was felt that it was not economical to construct a bridge. They found that it may be more economical to construct a new road as a shortcut because there are road projects that can be justified today with dollar and twenty-five cent gasoline and dollar and fifteen cent diesel fuel that we could not justify when the prices were much less than that. I would hope the day would come when we can say that gas taxes are too high. We do not need the money. Let's take them down but I think that we want to look at the fact that as a total percentage of the cost of gasoline that cost has decreased from almost 30% when I first came to this body, 30% of the cost of a gallon of gasoline went for taxes. To this time it is about 11½ or 12%. So your percentage of the cost of the product that goes for tax has decreased substantially yet we have asked our Department of Roads to try to maintain these road systems with that diminished kind of base. I think it has not been fair to the State of Nebraska Department of Roads. It has not been fair to the counties and it has not been fair to the cities. LB 722 which is also, I think, a very fine piece of legislation does not deal with the problem of allocation of funds to cities and counties. I support the bill. I would support it more enthusiastically if the funds were divided between the counties and the cities as well as the state, on the same proportion as our other road funds but I think 722 is definitely a step in the right direction but I feel that in order to give some immediate relief to cities and counties we need