

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Mr. Chairman and members of the Legislature, we have another example of what continuing to load up fees and taxes can do. A variable gas tax was passed, and Nebraska currently has the highest tax on gasoline in the country and it is thirteen point something per gallon. And when they did that, everybody in the Department of Roads and those who would gain money from this tax, I think were ecstatic; but what they saw happening was that the revenue began to decline because people bought less gas and they drove less. So they picked it up on one end and lost more on the other. Now when Senator Dworak, and he is not the first one to say it, indicates that those who use the parks ought to pay to support them, he should realize that the parks belong to everybody; and in the same way that everybody contributes to the upkeep of the schools whether they have children who use the schools or not; everybody does, in fact, contribute to the upkeep of the roads and the streets even if they don't drive because if a person has to ship things to market and use gasoline as fuel and the fuel costs are high, those costs are passed on ultimately to the consumer. So the cost of gas taxes will be passed on and everybody, even those who don't use the roads will have to pay for them. The police services and the fire services are not paid for by those who use them. There are some things which are considered essential to the well-being of a society and the society as a whole underwrites the cost. The only thing the parks have to offer really is beauty and a bit of solitude on occasion. And beauty in and of itself is useless. It has no utilitarian value whatsoever. The only purpose it can serve is to give solace to the spirit and to the mind. You can't quantify beauty and it is something different to everybody. But a place in a society like the one in America that you can find some of nature uncorrupted, undefiled by large factories would be the parks. And if you are going to take the parks and put a price on them, I say to Senator Dworak, Senator Labeledz and Senator Mahoney that the wrong is not in the amount that is charged. The wrong is in the fact that an amount is charged at all. So even if a penny or two pennies were charged, it would be wrong. In the early days of this country they had a slogan, "millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute." It was the principle and not the amount, and that is what I think we are dealing with here today. Senator Labeledz mentioned that some of the places in the state are available without cost. I would venture to say they are the places that not many people go to so the Game and Parks will throw that in as a sop to give arguing ammunition to Senator Labeledz against people like me who try to keep the fees down. When we talk about the tourists, then Senator Cope is willing to strike out at the