

is not real sincere interest to do so. And I think this vote may be the first test of that, that is, is there any sort of real cohesion or dedication to the effort to avoid a sales and income tax rate increase by passing a series of bills such as the cigarette tax increase, such as the corporate tax increase, such as the use of gas tax for mass transit? Now perhaps there are those who would just as soon have the Legislature raise the income tax and kill these other bills because a bill like this does offend certain special interest groups, the highway lobby in this case, the road construction people whose demand for funds has grown tremendously over the years perhaps with a little collusion between certain contractors. But at least there is an interest group out there that would oppose this bill. It seems to me that is a question that is facing us with this bill and several other bills and that is, is Governor Thone's package which is designed to provide revenue to the state by raising certain taxes and drawing on certain revenue that certain powerful interest groups oppose, is that the package this Legislature is going to adopt? Or, in fact, is this Legislature to become the agency to raise the sales and income tax on the average citizen in Nebraska? I guess I would say I was surprised that none of those who normally are considered loyalist and supporters of the Governor rose to support his bill in this case. I think it is a concept that is worth considering. I think we are going to be facing in this Legislature a major funding crisis in the area of public transit. The Omaha Metro Area Transit system is going to lose in the next three years 30 percent of its funding because it is going to lose completely all the federal funds. The Lincoln Transit system is in the same situation as are the Senior Handi-Buses in all the counties across the state. Several years ago this Legislature made a commitment to share the cost of public transit like we share the cost of road construction. And now we find ourselves in a situation....

SENATOR CLARK: You have one minute left.

SENATOR FOWLER:where the federal government in its partnership withdrew. The Governor and I are suggesting that this mechanism be allowed to provide funding sources other than the sales and income tax on individuals to help support this. In my view this is the first test of the Thone tax package. It is a signal to the Revenue Committee perhaps as to what sort of support the other proposals would gain. I would hope we would not be afraid of offending certain interest groups like th