

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITY

Last year, I organized charter flights through the auspices of these associations and sent 1,200 members and their families to Europe.

This year, I had approximately 1,500 members reserved on group flights to Europe and had anticipated a 25 percent increase in members traveling to Europe. Instead, I find I am receiving around a 20 percent to 25 percent drop in business due to cancellations since the proposed tax was announced. Cancellations at normal times average around 8 percent. I feel I would be fortunate to do the same amount of business this year as I did last year, but if the travel tax is passed I can anticipate at least another 25 percent in cancellations.

REACTION FROM MEMBERS

I have received about 80 phone calls and two dozen letters from members and all of them expressed displeasure and dissatisfaction with the Administration's proposed travel tax policy.

Many members feel they cannot cancel since they do serious work in Europe such as attending international congresses in their field, doing research projects, gathering original material on their specialty and toward theses, teaching school, et cetera. Some of the members teach school in Europe during the summer and earn money for this and bring back valuable foreign exchange. Others feel they must travel and speak the tongue of the foreign country of their specialty in order to teach more accurately in their schools here.

All the members that have communicated with me feel the tax would be a financial burden to them.

THOUGHTS ON THE TAX

I think the proposed travel tax is not only financially hard on those people I work with but affects all Americans by restricting their freedom of movement and their choice of how they are to spend their money.

In addition, a travel tax would limit Europeans from earning dollars to spend here on travel, aircraft and parts, manufactured goods and other items. I think if we impose a tax on travel we should logically expect that other countries with travel deficits will impose one in turn on their nationals and that we may begin a chain reaction of reciprocity and retaliation that once started may be impossible to stop.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE TAX

Tourism is one of the cheapest means of earning money that exists. Every country in Western Europe knows this and does a great deal to encourage tourists to their land to spend money. The United States has not learned the lesson of how to compete with other countries on earning relatively inexpensive tourist money. I think if we spent 10 percent of the advertising budget on travel that tobacco companies spend to sell cigarettes, we could go a long ways toward encouraging foreigners to visit one of the most unique places on earth, the United States of America. We do not have to create the Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, the Redwood Forest, or Vermont in October—it has all been done for us.