Mr. TALBERT. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, my name is Ansel E. Talbert, and I am appearing as a witness at the specific request of the board of governors of the Overseas Press Club of America, one of the world's two largest press clubs, which has a membership in excess of 3,500, mostly past and present foreign correspondents of American-owned publications and other media. I currently am a member of the board of this club residing in Washington, where I am a managing editor working for the firm of World Aviation Publications, Inc., and was military and aviation editor of the old New York Herald Tribune, serving in Europe, the Far East and many other parts of the world.

Although the Overseas Press Club Board has gone on record officially as opposing the proposed travel tax bill in its present form, I want to stress that none of us quarrels with President Johnson's objectives in seeking to better this Nation's trade balance and overall balance-of-payments situation, and to strengthen the dollar. These are objectives with which no member of the American press or American citizen should take issue.

The real question in our opinion is whether the proposed travel tax in its present form actually will help the situation it is supposed to correct, or have immediate side effects promoting discontent, ill feeling and active opposition both at home and abroad, which in the end would defeat its long-range aims.

The Overseas Press Club particularly would like to express its appreciation and commendation to the Committee on Ways and Means for holding extensive and comprehensive hearings on the proposed travel tax in a manner certain to bring out facts of tremendous constructive value. The testimony and discussions already heard clearly are setting in motion a great many beneficial influences tending to help provide a solution to the real problem behind the travel tax proposal.

This problem is how to encourage sufficient travel from abroad to the United States to balance at least in considerable and increasing part the travel of Americans who want to go overseas for business or pleasure to any part of the world, as they traditionally have done for many, many years.

If the trend already in motion can be stimulated further as a result of these hearings and new and imaginative ways worked out to make the annual tourist migration abroad from the United States more of a two-way street, it may well develop that the travel gap of $2 billion which President Johnson has said he wants reduced as soon as possible by at least $500 million, may turn out to be a steadily disappearing one.

In the interim, we of the American press might undertake to urge our colleagues from nations which for one reason or another have put the dollar under attack, to use their good offices to ease these assaults while the United States puts its house in order with all speed possible.

It is with the objective of being constructive, rather than simply expressing a negative attitude, that the Overseas Press Club has acted to send a representative to these hearings. The deep concern which club members feel over the proposed travel tax is not motivated by direct personal economic considerations.