

My name is Paul J. C. Friedlander, I am travel editor of the New York Times; I am also president of the New York Travel Writers Association.

While I appear as travel editor of the New York Times, I do not pretend to represent the editorial opinion of the New York Times as set forth in its editorial page. John B. Oakes is editor of the editorial page of the Times and he needs no help from me to make his position clear on travel taxes or other matters.

As you may know, he originally favored in his page a travel tax until he saw the amorphous proposal that the administration dropped in your laps, whereupon his enthusiasm cooled rapidly.

I will make one other point in explanation. I am probably the only person with a nonvested interest to testify before your committee on this subject.

Regardless of how your committee or Congress votes or does not vote on the travel tax, the New York Times will in all probability be continuing to function as a daily and Sunday newspaper, and as far as I know I should continue to function as its travel editor without any increase and with no decrease in salary. At least that's the way it was when I left the office yesterday.

So when I speak in opposition to the administration's tax proposals, I speak for the traveling public and for myself as objectively as I can on a subject upon which I have a strong feeling, but no economic or political self-interest.

I do not bring you a long statement full of statistics. It seems to me you gentlemen have been most patient in listening for the last couple of weeks to tables of statistics and arguments based on millions of tourists and millions of dollars.

I do not want to impose upon your patience further, especially since most people who know anything about the travel industry recognize that most of the statistics that are bandied about have very little validity.

They are guesses and estimates and most of them are made, alas, on too little information to be considered even good "guesstimates." Even the officials who have been besieging you with these statistics and arguments will admit privately, not in public, if you press them hard enough, that this is true.

I refer you to the report of the task force to the President of the United States which polished this off in one sentence:

Further improvement is also needed in the quality of statistics which are used in estimating the travel accounts in our balance of payments.

This report did go on to quote further the Bernstein report which has commented previously on the poor quality of Government's fiscal and travel and balance-of-payments statistics upon which you are asked to act.

A working committee of the task force was not quite so polite, and you have seen that report published in the Congressional Record of February 5, and I will quote three little paragraphs. It says:

Statistics in the travel field, especially from the U.S. government, leave a great deal to be desired.

Major decisions of national policy are being made on the basis of statistics on the national travel gap, etc., that expert observers believe have a high degree of error.