

THE VOICE

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EDITORIALS
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Economic Highlights

"Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

So states the First Amendment to the Constitution. This is the guarantee that we may say and print what we believe to be true, and that in addition we have the right to attempt to convert other people to our ideas—in other words, to influence public opinion.

Even so, a general statement of principle no matter how unequivocal is subject to interpretation when a specific instance is involved. A case which was just decided by the Supreme Court—and which may have historic significance—is in point here.

In 1950, a House of Representatives committee conducted an investigation of lobbying. Among the witnesses summoned was Dr. Edward A. Rumely, executive secretary of an organization known as the Committee for Constitutional Government. This organization had published and sold books which were extremely critical of New Deal philosophies, policies, and acts. Dr. Rumely was ordered to disclose the names of people who had bought books to the value of \$500 or more. He refused. The House, by a narrow vote which generally followed partisan lines, cited him for contempt of Congress. He was found guilty in a Federal District Court and sentenced to a \$1,000 fine and a six-months prison sentence, the latter being suspended.

Dr. Rumely appealed, and the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed his conviction, citing the First Amendment. The Government then took the case to the Supreme Court.

A short time ago this court of last resort held, by a 7 to 0 vote with two Justices not participating, that Dr. Rumely was not guilty, on the grounds that the resolution under which the lobbying committee acted did not empower an investigation into publishing activities. But Justice Douglas, with Justice Black concurring, went much farther in a separate opinion. He dealt with the constitutional issue involved. Here, in part, is what he said: "If the present inquiry were sanctioned the press would be subjected to harassment that in effect might be as serious as censorship. . . . A requirement that a publisher disclose the identity of those who buy his books, pamphlets, or papers is indeed the be-

ginning of surveillance of the press . . .

"The finger of government leveled against the press is ominous. Once the government can demand of a publisher the names of the purchasers of his publications, the free press as we know it disappears.

"Then the spectre of a government agent will look over the shoulder of everyone who reads. The purchase of a book or pamphlet today may result in a subpoena tomorrow . . . The books and pamphlets that are critical of the administration, that preach an unpopular policy in domestic or foreign affairs, that are in dispute in the orthodox school of thought will be suspect and subject to investigation. . . .

"If the lady from Toledo can be required to disclose what she read yesterday and what she will read tomorrow, fear will take the place of freedom in the libraries, bookstores, and homes of the land. Through the harassment of hearings, investigations, reports, and subpoenas government will hold a club over speech and over the press."

Justice Douglas' opinion did not make many headlines. But it may be remembered long after some of the best-publicized events of today are forgotten.

Grass Roots Opinion

ELY, NEVADA, RECORD: "... the foundation for genuine individual security lies in the ownership of a house and land free from confiscation by taxation. This is provided for under the Law of the Lord and the result is described by Micah: 'But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree (typifying the personal security of a privately-owned homestead); and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.' (Micah 4:4.) This is the basis for true social security."

HAGERSTOWN, MD., MORNING HERALD: The fact that most needs to soak in upon all of us right now is this: If we look to our government for security, then we have no security—for what the government can give us the government can also take away."

WALDOBORO, MAINE, PRESS: "Government is made up of services as required by the people of the State. Such services should always be ample but not more than ample. Government expenditures should be made in the

Capitol News

By MELVIN PAUL
 Statehouse Correspondent

The Nebraska Press Association
 LINCOLN—The Legislature continued its efforts this week to hammer together some kind of highway program for Nebraska.

Supporters of a penny-a-gallon increase in the state tax on gasoline decided last week end to "go for broke" and shunned a proposal by Sen. Arthur Carmody of Trenton to halve the increase. The veteran Trenton lawmaker warned his colleagues that it is doubtful the penny boost can muster the 29 votes necessary to pass with the emergency clause. Bills with the clause become effective as soon as they are signed by the governor. Those without it require only 22 votes to pass and become effective three months after the Legislature adjourns. Right now, it appears the session will end about June 1, so non-emergency measures will become law about Sept. 1.

Carmody stressed that if the gas tax bill, LB 258, passes without the emergency clause, Nebraska's heavy vacation traffic this summer will be fueled with gas tared at only a nickel a gallon. A half-cent increase probably could command 29 votes, he said "and we'll get this money this summer."

But his motion was defeated, 27 to 7. The showdown on final passage of the bill probably won't come until next week.

Commission

In arguing for the half-cent proposal, Carmody said he had found that it was often necessary to compromise. This was a reference to his LB 4, the bill to create a state highway commission. Though the measure still bears his name, there's not too much of the original bill left. Instead of a full time commission with administrative powers, as the un-amended measure proposed, the bill now provides for a part-time, advisory commission, a good deal more like the highway "committee" which Sen. Karl Vogel, a longtime enemy of commission bills, suggested.

Sen. Terry Carpenter attempted to make the bill stronger but was defeated. The colorful Scotts-bluff lawmaker cried, "Let's give the commission some authority and some responsibility!" He wanted a fulltime commission of seven members, each to be \$6,000.

Vogel himself lost a battle to require the advisory commission to submit a road program which would be approved by the Legislature. Carpenter scoffed that this would simply mean a 43-member commission instead of one with seven members.

Whether the bill in its present form will meet the objections raised by the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, kingpin in the 1950 battle against revenue measures, is doubtful. The FB, like several other groups, has insisted on the formation of a highway

same way as business expenditures are made, that is, always with an eye to economy and the Government should make certain that a dollar's value is received for every dollar expended."

FRANKLIN, IND., REPUBLICAN: "... virtually all college administrators are leery of wider government aid, feeling that inevitably it will mean federal control of education."

commission before any more money is made available to the Highway Department.

License Fees
 Yet to be debated by the Legislature as a whole is a bill increasing vehicle registration fees, LB 259, a companion to the gas tax bill. With certain exceptions, the bill is pretty much like the one killed in the 1950 referendum.

The new bill raises the fee for passenger cars from \$5 a year to \$6 a year. The 1949 act raised the fee to \$8.

A State Highway Department spokesman estimated the amended measure would bring the state about \$400,000 a year, or about one-fourth what had been expected. Including federal matching funds this would amount to about \$4.8 million less than if the original bill had been voted out.

Multiplying the \$400,000 by 2 to get the income for the biennium and then multiplying that figure by 2 to get the federal matching funds gives a figure of \$1.6 million the license fee change would bring if the Legislature passed it as it was voted out by the committee. The figure would have been an estimated \$6.4 million under the bill as originally written.

The spokesman said this would knock the contemplated construc-

tion program for the next two years from \$36 million to around \$30 million. This will require a revamping of the highway program as outlined to the Legislature by former State Highway Engineer H. L. Aitken.

Diversion
 A quick decision of life or death for the diversion bill was being sought by legislative leaders this week and they had the support of senators on both sides of the issue.

Because it is far and away the most controversial measure before this session, the legislators fear that a binge of vote-swapping will be based on the diversion bill.

The measure came out of the Public Works Committee last week on a 5 to 4 vote after three members of the committee said

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