

amendment by the Revenue Committee ought to be upheld. At the same time, I don't particularly recognize Senator Hefner's arguments but I do recognize some of the concerns that are legitimately being raised by the newspaper industry in the fact that once you start taxing newspapers, you have the potential for abuse. But abuse is a two-sided sword, and I have been reading, as many of you have, the articles that have recently been run in the Omaha World-Herald, regarding children in trouble in this state, again a two-edged sword. I appreciate very much the World-Herald calling attention to the problems of our children in the State of Nebraska, and trying to call attention to the problems that continue to exist and need to do something about them. But you won't find in here more than an inch or two of positive words about the things that this Legislature has done to achieve improvements and services to children; increases in budgets to try and help protect children with increased caseworkers. You don't hear very much discussed in this article about the good news that this Legislature has accomplished in this area over the last few years, because we care about children and we've tried to do some things. Yes, we have fallen short of our goals but we have tried to do good things and have done some good things in this Legislature. Now why do I raise this issue? I raise the issue because all of us get angry, and upset, and concerned about some articles like I am about some of these. And the fear that I have is once you start the ability to tax newspapers, that anger that I feel can be resulting in some retaliation that I think, in fact, hinders the free press. And so it seems to me the line that needs to be drawn is what is a fair and equitable treatment of the newspapers, of the media, and at the same time protecting their right to freedom of speech, the ability to write articles that you may not agree with but, nevertheless, do serve a public function because a free press, whether you agree or disagree with it, is exactly that. It is free. Their ability to speak freely and clearly in whatever fashion they wish is something that we have upheld in this nation for 200 years. And so it is a balancing act and a difficult one, and I am not quite sure where I come down on this particular issue. I guess what I would ask of the sponsors of the particular Revenue Committee amendment is, how you balance out. That seems to me to be the issue. You can't argue the issue based on, oh, it is too hard on the newspaper industry, and it is too hard on the weekly publications, and all that. Well, taxes are too hard on everybody. Taxes are never easy. The question is, is it equitable? Is it fair? That is the argument that Senator