

Mr. RUGGLES. No. I have no idea how many grantees there are. They give out a considerable number of fellowships a year. I just don't know.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Wouldn't that be a significant factor in asking for taxpayers' money? To create this center for the use of people to do studies? I would think it would be germane to determine how many people might want to use this.

Mr. RUGGLES. You can take three approaches to this. You could have a public opinion poll on it and ask people if they thought this was a good idea.

Mr. GALLAGHER. I would think that would be rejected.

Mr. RUGGLES. You could also go for some sort of referendum and essentially get the people's view on this.

Mr. GALLAGHER. I would like to run on that platform.

Mr. RUGGLES. I think I know how both these would come out. But this is not quite the point. If you are running a company and you decide that you need certain kinds of information in order to make intelligent decisions on costs and prices, you don't ask yourself, "After I get this information, how many people are going to use it?" You ask instead, "What is the usefulness of this sort of information to carry out the things that we want to carry out?"

Mr. GALLAGHER. You don't see a difference between running a company and running the Government? A person with a company can quit.

Mr. RUGGLES. Had the IRS in the case of Joe Pechman's tax model asked in advance, "How many people are going to buy this?" and he said, "Well, only one. I am the only person that I know of at the moment who is interested in it," then on the basis of demand it would obviously be absurd to cater to this whim. But IRS didn't use this as the basis for their decision. Instead, they asked themselves, "What is the merit of this proposal?" It is true that there was only one customer, but the research project was so successful and so useful for public policy and tax research the data were well worth making available. The IRS didn't do it merely because an outsider wanted it, and I am not suggesting that the data center be created to pander to outside interests, academic enterprises, or others. If the Government wants to run its own operation efficiently, it should at least study the merits of the matter and not ask merely how great is the demand in terms of the number of people wanting it.

Mr. GALLAGHER. I think the question is, How is it going to best serve the people, the citizen, and the taxpayer?

Mr. RUGGLES. But not individually.

Mr. GALLAGHER. Yes, individually, because I think you have to consider the cost-benefit ratio of what good this will do against what harm it will cause to the individual citizen.

Mr. RUGGLES. That is correct. With that I agree, but by "individually" I guess I wasn't speaking of the same thing. You should not ask how many people want this particular data, or how much will each individual asking for the data directly benefit from it, or even how many times will individuals use the data.

Mr. GALLAGHER. It could be potentially harmful to a great many individuals. I think it would be essential to establish just what would be the uses that this would serve.