

APPENDIX 2.—STATISTICAL EVALUATION REPORT No. 6—REVIEW OF PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL DATA CENTER

(A Report Prepared by Edgar S. Dunn, Jr., Consultant to the Office of
Statistical Standards Bureau of the Budget)

PREFACE

This report "Review of Proposal for a National Data Center" is the sixth of a series presenting the results of a comprehensive review and evaluation of some aspects of the statistics program of the Federal Government. It was prepared by Edgar S. Dunn, Jr., Resources for the Future, Inc., as consultant to the Bureau of the Budget.

The proposal which Mr. Dunn has reviewed stems from the work of a committee established by the Social Science Research Council to study the problems of the preservation and use of economic data. In the spring of 1965 that committee made its report to the SSRC, which presented it to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget. In its report, the Committee on the Preservation and Use of Economic Data, known as the Ruggles committee, summarized its recommendations as follows: "First, * * * that the Bureau of the Budget, in view of its responsibility for the Federal statistics program, immediately take steps to establish a Federal Data Center. * * * Second, that the Office of Statistical Standards * * * place increased emphasis on the systematic preservation in usable form of important data prepared by those agencies engaging in statistical programs. * * * Third, that at an early date the Social Science Research Council convene representatives from research institutions and universities in order to develop an organization which can provide a clearinghouse and coordination of requests for data made by individual scholars from Federal agencies."

In asking Mr. Dunn to examine the proposal, and to study ways of implementing it, we were concerned primarily with the first two of these recommendations. But, while the Ruggles committee represented the interests of the academic and social science research community, we were concerned with the use of statistical data for research, policy and decisionmaking at all levels, both within and outside Government. Mr. Dunn wisely extended it to include consideration of the relationships between the collecting and compiling processes on the one hand and preservation and accessibility for further use on the other hand.

We are indebted to Mr. Dunn for this analysis and report. We are also indebted to the many persons with whom he consulted, particularly those mentioned in his letter of transmittal who assisted by their thoughtful analysis of particular aspects of the entire problem and the preparation of the important appendix material.

RAYMOND T. BOWMAN,
Assistant Director for Statistical Standards.

NOVEMBER 1, 1965.

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DEAR RAY: Transmitted herewith is the final report containing my review of the proposal for a National Data Center.

In seeking to identify ways of implementing this proposal I undertook an intensive period of study and review covering the last 6 months. I had the benefit in this effort of the advice and counsel of numerous others. This assistance was engaged in the following way. I divided the problem into parts that could be considered simultaneously. One part consisted of an informal ad hoc committee which met with me on a number of occasions to discuss the feasibility of establishing a referral-reference function in relation to the files of the Federal