

This kind of formulation inevitably leads to speculation about the organizational forms that might serve this end. I would like to react to some of the speculation proposals known to me:

(1) A new independent agency; this is certainly the cleanest solution. It could be accomplished with a minimum of "ad-hoc-ery" and would provide maximum flexibility for planning and innovation. It would be unencumbered by many existing agency jealousies and provide the freest opportunity for developing new leadership. At the same time, it might foster a coalition of agency opposition. Given the attitudes both in the Bureau of the Budget and on the Hill about new independent agencies, it might be difficult to manage. Barring this, some existing agency would have to form the vehicle for the program. Several have been mentioned in this context.

(2) GSA-Archives. The General Services Administration and, specifically, Archives, has been pointed to as an agency with already existing interagency authority and concerned with a part of this function. I am extremely dubious about the viability of such a solution. In the first place, this is not primarily an archival problem. It is primarily a complex problem of file management and coordination and rests upon a base of production practice that must be involved in the solution. It must develop a mixed professional staff of reference specialists, statistical specialists, subject matter specialists, system design specialists and programmers and technical services staffs. These resources do not exist even in embryo in these agencies. They would be handicapped by their image in building up the quality intellectual resources the program would need to succeed. Furthermore, these functions would not represent a primary mission from the point of view of the management of these agencies. An even more compelling objection is the fact that it would take the first tentative steps toward some integration of the user services of the Nation's statistical system down an organizational path that might make more difficult the achievement of desirable emergent forms.

(3) One of the existing statistical agencies: I do not believe that any of the existing agencies offer a desirable home for this function. It is true that they have already accumulated some of the expertise and equipment and management services and experiences that a new venture of this type requires. However, their mission concepts are conservative and inhibited in this area. The leadership is lacking. Perhaps more important, old interagency jealousies, etc., would make it more difficult to develop an atmosphere of cooperation.

(4) Compromise between the existing agency and independent agency solution: Of the existing agencies Census is certainly the most logical candidate by virtue of both its mission and the caliber of its professional staff. Many of the disadvantages of assigning this function to a new agency would be offset if Census were made an independent agency itself. If this were done and the user service functions set up parallel and with equal organizational status to the Census function we might have something of the best of both worlds. Something of this type might also have the advantage of being a constructive first step toward some degree of reorganization of the Federal statistical system.

(5) The National Bureau of Standards: It has been pointed out that the Bureau of Standards performs an interagency mission and has an unusual combination of existing legislative authorities to receive funds from and distribute funds to agencies, to set up special institutes, to use visiting scholars, etc. It already has an interagency service tradition and has been explicitly given the responsibility for assisting Federal agencies in planning computer systems. They also have in existence an emerging computer utility that might serve some of the needs.

(6) National Resources Evaluation Center: This agency has been suggested because it is an independent agency in the Executive Office of the President with existing interagency authority and responsibilities that extend beyond the mission of the Office of Emergency Planning where it is housed. It already contains a very large file of integrated Federal data from the various statistical agencies and has built up a staff with more experience in integrating interagency records than any other agency. It has a large computer installation organized for large-scale file management. It has an already existing interagency committee with the major statistical agencies represented and each of the agencies have one or several professional employees assigned full time to the activity. It is a conceivable vehicle if its authorities and functions were extended and removed from OEP.

If an effort to implement such a program goes forward, a great deal of thought and discussion will have to go into reviewing the kinds of options represented