

here. I would like to offer the following related observations: First, there is a major threshold that must be negotiated if we deal meaningfully with the problem and program set at issue here. The kinds of services recommended cannot be subdivided without imposing upon a more limited function, serious functional handicaps, unnecessary expense and, possibly, seriously threatening its chances of success. I am concerned that partial measures may, in the end, do more harm than good. Since such an effort cannot spring into being "full-blown," it will have to be time-phased over a considerable period. However, the program should be considered as a whole.

Second, from an organizational point of view it seems inescapable that whatever initial action is taken, the end result will be a substantial reorganization of the Federal statistical system. It is very important that the organizational vehicle used at the outset does not predetermine the future evolution of the system in a way that limits its ability to implement essential subsequent phases.

Third, it seems to me that in discussing this problem set and proposed program, we are really engaged in a discussion of what kind of Federal statistical system we want to develop in the next generation. I am much less sanguine now about whether it is possible, or even desirable, to keep these issues in the background. I am sufficiently concerned about the abortive potential of solutions that fall short of a critical threshold and organizational arrangements that might inhibit essential lines of development that I feel it important to consider the issues of organization in a straightforward way. I would go further and suggest that every one of the six interim solutions outlined above has serious limitations, although some have a more open-ended character than others. My own preference would be to handle the organizational problem at the outset as a reorganization of the Federal statistical system. There are a number of indications that this might be a favorable time to do so.

Fourth, this predilection is reinforced when I reflect upon the great importance production practice plays in the whole configuration of problems and solutions. I am also inclined to believe that a fundamental improvement in the integration of production practice can offer a constructive solution to the paperwork problem of respondents without jeopardizing important components of a general purpose information system. Another factor reinforcing this inclination is the conviction that some form of integrated leadership can go far in dealing in a creative way with the joint interest of existing Federal programs and agencies whose current large expenditures for data now constitutes a large resource waste.

PRIORITIES

The comprehensive scope of the issues presented here plus the fact preliminary staff work cannot specify and cost explicit program options suggests certain priorities. First, a continuous focus of leadership needs to be generated. The proposal has already been put forward that an interagency committee be established to provide this focus.

Second, wherever the leadership function is vested, it seems to me that the highest priority is to provide this focus with the staff support essential to identify requirements and specify the elements of the system that must be provided for. The earliest requirement is to engage the research-analytic capability identified under item 6 of the recommendations. The development of specific program options, the definition of their specifications, costing these elements, and identifying the essential order of a time-phased program will require early intensive staff support of a very special kind.

Third, a beginning can be made under existing authority upon some of these problems before new programs and organizations can be developed and funded. At least two kinds of effort could be begun right away.

(a) The standards that shape the content of archival records and determine the essential forms of file maintenance and documentation need to be worked out and made a part of ongoing programs. A beginning can also be made in formulating the kinds of standards that will produce statistical building blocks essential to file compatibility.

(b) The 9,000 tape file record identified in the Mendelssohn report constitutes a nuclear archive that can be generated quickly at a very modest cost. Funds should be made available to the agencies to begin the creation of this basic archival record.

The Bureau of the Budget should seek funds to carry out these preliminary measures under its own authority. The staff work and the extended effort applied to statistical standards should be centered in the Office of Statistical