

As another example, the Bureau of the Census has been trying to use some of the income tax material to develop lists of names to help in the self-enumeration for the 1970 census. The Census Bureau can obtain from administrative records in the Government such as social security, internal revenue, et cetera, lists which they can use to send out census forms. A self-enumeration census improves confidentiality since the respondent will fill out the census return and send it in himself, rather than having a local census taker coming around and asking questions. Such a self-enumeration census will reduce costs and duplication, and will also protect privacy.

Chairman TALMADGE. Do present operating procedures take full advantage of modern techniques, professional specialists, and large-scale machines?

Mr. RUGGLES. We are all learning, and the new computer technology is rather recent. For instance, the IRS is very rapidly increasing its computer use on things like the matching of withholding statements from firms with the tax returns of the individuals in question, and so on. This is obviously not a static situation. I would expect large productivity gains in almost every operational program over the next 3, 4, 5 years.

Chairman TALMADGE. Do you think that much can be done to reduce the lag between the receipt of the information and its availability in usable form?

Mr. RUGGLES. Yes; very much so. I think this is one place where our progress is going to come very fast. The timelag generally resulted from the inability to get the information into the system more rapidly when it had to be done by coding and keypunching, all hand operations.

Today with reading and scanning devices the input of information can be accomplished very much more quickly and much more accurately, so that the computer can produce the results very fast indeed.

Chairman TALMADGE. What are the principal issues concerning centralized versus decentralized statistical systems?

Mr. RUGGLES. I do not consider that a national data center would be a centralized system. It would merely bring together and pool the output of the decentralized system. It would be able to perform many of the functions which a centralized system would have, because it could operate with the raw data in its original form. A decentralized system has the great advantage that the person desiring to use information for operational purposes can construct his data in the way that he wishes. I would hesitate very much before recommending the creation of a centralized system which would specify for all users what information they should have and what information they should not have.

Chairman TALMADGE. Is our system more centralized than those of other modern powers?

Mr. RUGGLES. It is considerably less centralized than most foreign powers.

Chairman TALMADGE. What were the main conclusions of the "Report of the Task Force on the Storage of and Access to Government Statistics"?

Mr. RUGGLES. The task force report recommends essentially that there be an interagency facility which would take the records of the contributing and cooperating agencies and within the proper safe-