

persons and groups who think their interests will be affected unfavorably by proposed changes. Much of the difficulty is due to the complexity of the matters to which the data refer. Much of it is due to the fact that data can only be produced at a considerable effort. Accuracy is not always easy to attain. This is true for the unemployed worker, the grocery store manager, the trade union official, the school superintendent, as well as for the controller of a large corporation. Statisticians have worked hard at lightening the burden of reporting data but more can be done to reduce the cost to the respondents of providing needed data.

(4) Through correspondence and conferences, statisticians have made great efforts to determine the needs of users of statistical data and to meet these needs as well as possible. Again and again it turns out that what one user needs is not what another desires. Consequently there are many compromises in selecting and defining the items of information to be obtained and in determining what tabulations and summaries will be produced. Even when the users are themselves the respondents, there are conflicting demands as to what information will be collected, how often, by what means, and for what kind of resulting compilations. Many of the difficulties encountered by users stem from this diversity and incompatibility of their needs. It is clear that government agencies could meet the needs of users still better by greater ingenuity and diligence in finding the best compromises, by obtaining larger appropriations and additional staff with special competence for statistical work, and by winning greater confidence and cooperation from the people who supply the original data. Administrators who need data collected by their own agencies enjoy first priority and users outside government service tend to get what is a byproduct of meeting the needs of those who pay the bill, hire the staff (and provide other incentives to the respondents for filing their reports. Congress may well consider giving greater support in appropriations to the needs of users not in government. This is as worthy of subsidy as preferential postal rates, tax exemptions, and other means of promoting the general welfare.

(5) There is not one best way to organize the statistical work of the Federal Government. I think the organization of the statistical work of the Government reflects the organization of the whole Government and should serve the purposes of the whole Government so that this dependence on the larger problems of organization is a very reasonable and appropriate one.

Certain parts can be centralized but most of it must be located close to the administrative functions it serves and the operations which provide the original reports. A succession of studies have agreed that we should not concentrate statistics in a central bureau. In the light of this consensus, the proposal of a national data center would not appear to be wise if it is to be a consolidation of statistical functions that can be done effectively by the separate agencies engaged in the production of statistical data.

If, on the other hand, it is to be a gradual development of inter-agency cooperation, it could contribute very substantially to the beneficial use of statistics. The form of such an interagency arrangement is, perhaps, less important than the fact of its acceptability to all involved and the skill with which it is managed.