

(6) The proposal of a national data center is motivated by the desire of many economists and others to obtain data in detail appropriate for their scientific uses both in and out of government. It is also motivated by a desire to exploit the new computer technology promptly and economically. Many agencies are already using computers for statistical data processing. We can anticipate both advantages and disadvantages in concentrating dispersed statistical operations, as it evident in business and government experience with other types of operations. The appropriate pattern and degree of concentration should be determined by systems studies and cost-benefit analyses developed progressively over such period of time as may be necessary to accomplish them soundly. My guess, therefore, is that a limited and more deliberate program of combining data from diverse sources would be more productive than abrupt establishment of a central agency with functions not fully tested or widely accepted.

(7) Coincident with such a progressive development of a centralized data agency, it would be very worthwhile to proceed with certain other closely related developments.

I would recommend:

(a) A counterpart of the Council of Economic Advisers to be concerned with intensive study of noneconomic problems paralleling those economic problems to which the Council and the Joint Economic Committee have so effectively addressed yourselves. This would be another major user of the statistical product of the Federal Government. I might add at this point that only yesterday did I learn that a bill has been introduced by Senator Mondale of somewhat similar nature, and I offer this suggestion, on perhaps a somewhat broader basis, aimed at meeting what seems to be a seriously unfilled need for a thoroughgoing study of noneconomic problems.

(b) A national statistical index and library to serve users as the indexes of medical and legal literature serve their users.

(c) An interagency arrangement for data analysis which would facilitate the sharing of improved methods and facilities and permit cooperative work on common materials. It could also enhance the utilization of specialists by assigning them to temporary duty on major problems wherever they are located.

(d) Joint statistical services for obtaining and processing data when either the sources of the data or the users are benefited by such combinations of related statistical operations.

In a word I am recommending to you that improvement of the Federal statistical system may be achieved by a wisely instituted data center but that it warrants further thinking and experimentation to enhance the chances of its success, enlarge the gains to be derived, and make sure that it attains a high level of public understanding and confidence.

Chairman TALMADGE. Thank you, very much, Professor Stephan.

With your background and experience we are honored indeed to have the recommendations and advice.

My first question is for Mr. Aiken.

Do you have any specific recommendations for improving the lines of communication between users and producers of Government data?

Mr. AIKEN. I can only say that we are trying to utilize as effectively as we can the two means that I mentioned. We have no committee to study this subject and we have nothing in our policy or programs