

ening of information on the training and employment of scientific manpower. Information on scientists and engineers is collected in a variety of ways, often as part of a data collection system which cover much broader groups—for example, the population censuses or reports on college enrollments. In order to obtain help in our coordinating functions and in recognition of its unique and specialized interests, we asked the National Science Foundation to undertake a focal agency assignment in this area.

The other major development is the strengthening of occupational wage rate information. The BLS has been conducting a special survey of salaries in selected professional, administrative, technical and clerical occupations in private industry to provide wage data for comparison with Federal employee compensation. The Bureau of the Budget has cooperated with BLS and CSC in planning these surveys, and about three years ago it employed a consultant firm to evaluate the adequacy of the survey. This evaluation resulted in an expansion of the survey to include non-metropolitan areas and smaller establishments, as well as other improvements.

#### *Construction, Production, Distribution, and Transportation*

Our statistical information relating to construction, production, distribution, and transportation is a continuing description of the Nation's economic activities. It should provide consistent interrelated information.

Estimates of the value of construction activity are incorporated directly into the product side of the national economic accounts. This component of economic activity accounts for over ten percent of GNP. Reliability of estimates for various types of construction—residential, industrial, and commercial—and by ownership—public and private—is of paramount importance in analyzing the state of the economy and in the study of economic growth and additions to our capital stock. Our statistical measures of construction for a variety of reasons have long been among the weaker of our statistics. The inherent difficulty of collecting meaningful data on construction activity was heightened before 1959 by a division of responsibility for collecting the data among three agencies: Business and Defense Services Administration, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Bureau of the Census. At that time we recognized, promoted and accomplished the centralization of responsibility for construction statistics in the Bureau of the Census as a necessary prerequisite to a consistent, long-range program to improve these data.

Because construction activity itself is very decentralized, there are numerous difficult conceptual problems to be faced in developing a meaningful set of measures. In addition the collection of data is expensive and burdensome on respondents. Progress in improvement has been disappointingly slow. Nevertheless, we have made some noteworthy progress. The series on building permits is far more inclusive than it was in 1959. The measure of housing starts is a more accurate reflection of reality than it was, because of the instituting of actual reporting for such starts. The monthly measure of private, nonresidential construction *put-in-place* is even more difficult. Repairs and rehabilitation of residential structures also presented special difficulties but despite some setbacks, progress in measurement of this element has been improved. Nevertheless, construction activity statistics leaves much to be desired and our measures of current construction activity are still unsatisfactory in promptness and accuracy. Furthermore, we have made almost no progress in developing measures of construction prices and the failure to secure appropriations for a mid-decade Housing Inventory cost the Nation an important mid-decade benchmark of changes taking place in the stock of housing for its citizens.

The program for further improvements in the construction activity series in the near future includes updating the patterns which are used to translate value of work started on one- to four-family residential structures into work put-in-place, and the initiation of progress reporting for larger residential structures. Also funds are requested in the 1968 budget to expand reporting from building permit jurisdictions so that monthly construction figures can be published for 100 standard metropolitan statistical areas.

When the Bureau effected the transfer of the monthly *Survey of Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories and Orders* from OBE to Census in 1958, Census was charged with responsibility for strengthening the series and for achieving consistency with other measures for individual manufacturing industries. The sample of reporters has been expanded and many of the large companies report on a "divisional" basis thus permitting better and more comparable measures by industry.