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Also, I believe that more care is needed in order to distinguish between these projects which can appropriately and effectively be done by private organizations and those which should be conducted by the government agencies themselves.

In conclusion, on the subject of coordination, I believe that more support and more resources should be provided to the Office of Statistical Standards of the Bureau of the Budget. We have the machinery for coordination; what is needed is to strengthen it.

II. NATIONAL DATA CENTER

When the Committee on Government Statistics and Information Services reviewed the Federal programs in 1933-34 (as I mentioned above), they arrived at the conclusion that there should not be a single, government-wide statistical agency in the Federal Government. They voted for coordination instead. In my judgment that conclusion was sound.

The proposal for a National Data Center is not, as I understand it, a proposal for a single statistical agency, but rather an extension of the present coordinating system. As such, I would support that proposal as an ultimate goal. However, I want to point out that there are many complications to be overcome before such a center can achieve what seems to be expected of it.

The issue of privacy has already been raised. Many of the statistics collected by Federal agencies are obtained on a voluntary basis, accompanied by a pledge of confidentiality. A business firm or individual may willingly report to a statistical agency for public purposes when he would refuse to report to a law-enforcement agency, which might use the information against him. There are many degrees of concern with respect to confidentiality. Many people are sensitive about public knowledge of their incomes. We have all noted recently in the papers the objection of an individual to having his name and address turned over to mailing lists. Of course, many individuals would object to having their names and addresses made available to bill-collecting agencies. I recall in the Bureau of Labor Statistics that sometimes business firms were insistent on making sure that the fact of their participation in a BLS survey was not made known to the industry or to the public generally. That is one of the reasons the BLS has always been most careful to maintain the confidentiality of the names of its sample reporting firms.

I must also express a note of caution against too much optimism as to the usefulness of raw data to the prospective users. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has had experience which has a bearing on this question. When we tabulated the results of the 1960-61 Family Expenditure Surveys, which the Bureau used in the revision of the Consumer Price Index, we put the results on computer tapes and offered to make these available to both government and private agencies. What we found was that the full time of one or more BLS staff members was absolutely essential to service outside agencies in their utilization of the data. Any researcher attempting to use data collected and processed by another agency is bound to have scores of questions arise in the course of his studies. The only available sources are those who conducted the original study. It just isn't possible for an outsider without help to make the most effective use of raw data unsupported by experienced and informed interpretation.

I would recommend that, if and when steps are taken to develop any National Data Center, preliminary action must be taken first, to establish safeguards which insure the confidentiality of the individual records; and second, to provide for the financing of a servicing system by the statistical agencies contributing data to the Center.

With respect to the initial character of the Center, I like the suggestion made by Professor Fred Stephan that the experiment begin on a limited basis, perhaps with the setting up of "A national statistical index and library to serve users as the indexes of medical and legal literature serve their users."

III. ADMINISTRATION OF STATISTICAL PROGRAMS

One of the most trying experiences of a director of research and statistics in a Federal agency is the obtaining of the necessary funds for (a) the maintenance of adequate safeguards for continuing statistical series; and (b) the progressive improvement of those series, that is to say, improvement corresponding to the expanding uses. Any continuing series will deteriorate with time, unless new samples are established, new problems analyzed, and new techniques explored. Tests have to be made from time to time to discover weaknesses.