

148 COORDINATION OF GOVERNMENT STATISTICAL PROGRAMS

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STATISTICS"

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be the Chairman of a conference which has such a distinguished list of participants. Our hope is that this conference will develop the much needed dialogue about the needs for new data and some information about its uses.

What are some of the issues for us to discuss today? For the record let me state these issues.¹

(1) To me the most important issue in the data collection field is to develop data to evaluate program effectiveness of recent legislation. The 89th Congress, in which you, Mr. Curtis, participated with such distinction, created a variety of historic legislations. The Nation now needs to know whether these laws are fulfilling its purposes. For this we need to refine our demographic data, as well as to develop quality data. For example, now one year after the medicare legislation, one needs to know not only the hospital utilization patterns and the number of physician visits per person, but also the quality of such care received. Statistical planners should involve themselves in value judgments and provide answers to questions like these—What is an adequate medical care standard for a family? What are the adequate standards of preventive medical treatment? What percentage price increase in wholesale prices will demonstrate inflationary pressure etc.? The time is here when we need further orientation in this direction. An important step has been taken by the Bureau of the Budget which ordered all Federal agencies to develop across the board planning, programming and a budgeting system. This is useful as it will measure performance against objectives. Without this we may make progress without direction. The federal statisticians have made a tremendous improvement in the art of sample design, training of interviewers, Interviewer's Manual, transcription and coding manuals, etc. The sampling problems, however, are a means to an end and we should never lose sight of the end. We as researchers will all benefit by learning whether we are getting our dollar's worth and fulfilling our objectives. The cost effectiveness and cost benefit analysis, perhaps will tell researchers just that.

Perhaps establishment of an office of program planning and evaluation as an arm of Congress, an idea I discussed with you, Mr. Curtis, will demonstrate the usefulness of this approach.

(2) The second important area that is commanding attention now and requires even more attention deals with the administration of federal programs as they affect state and local governments. Information is required for two kinds of impact: Firstly, what are the resources of local political jurisdiction and localized labor markets. The implementation of legislation such as the Economic Development Act would be made more meaningful with these kinds of information. For example, a major concept imbedded in this Act is the concept of the economic growth center, that is to put emphasis on economic assistance in areas which have economic growth potential and which in turn can draw upon the resources of and feed income out to the depressed areas around its periphery. To implement this concept data on available resources must be developed. The other information which should be available is the impact of such programs as space and defense or medical research on local communities. When these large programs move rapidly up or down it is important for the state and local communities to have available the kind of information which will allow them to make reasonable forecasts of the impact of these changes on their local economy.

Another area in which local communities, states and the federal government need to join hands is to develop data for decisions as well as for deliberation. Unfortunately, at the present time data collection at all levels suffers from this weakness. No business will survive today or in the future by developing data which will provide no options for decisions of the management. All levels of government need to orient themselves towards obtaining data that will help them provide options and trade-offs. For example, trade-offs between urban freeways and urban mass transit will require information specifically highlighting the area of "options."

¹ The views presented here are that of the author and not of the National Center for Health Statistics.