

(3) The third important objective of federal data collection relates to the formulation and evaluation of aggregate national policy. In the economic areas we have developed perhaps one of the most sophisticated accounting systems in the world. In a full employment economy, the need for *better, more sensitive, and more consistent* data are most critical because we are operating on a much narrower margin. The need for consistency is demonstrated by the fact that our price data are based on one set of categories and our cost data on another set of categories, while we are trying to determine the relationships among productivity, prices and wages. Of course I don't need to say that an accurate estimate of the impact of fiscal and monetary policy on states and local communities is far from being available.

(4) The fourth area in which the need for statistics exist relates to the whole array of programs of federal assistance to local and state governments. A number of these programs are based on formulas reflecting need—generally through a population criterion—and financial ability—generally through a per capita income criterion. Timely data, perhaps from tax returns, to indicate levels of personal income as of a certain date in the Census tracts and countries is needed. Such data will contribute effectively to the dialogue now developing on the Tax Sharing Plan.

To accomplish the above objectives there is a need to improve statistical series so that they may be interrelated. Statistical information concerning social conditions, political actions and economic results and potentials must be so designed as to be usable in interrelated ways for selected issues. This means that more emphasis must be placed on the development of the micro as well as macro analysis. This may mean emphasis on longitudinal studies which tell us how individuals, families, and group change their status over time and not merely how many are in a different status group at a different point of time. This may mean emphasis on family data, which tells us how many children in the family are educated or have health insurance coverage, and whether the family is with children or is "other" type of family.

This brings me to the central problem: statistical planners need to concentrate more on the "whys" of the situation. Granted, they are hard to obtain, but not impossible. The sources of economic depravity can only be alleviated if they are known. Why do some move out of a given status, while others do not and why do some move into the same status others have left? Answers to questions like these can be found by concentrating on the "whys." This necessary step will make our data more meaningful.

Let me conclude by saying that there is a need to make better use of available information by analyzing and highlighting the operational uses of the data. Also more data is needed to evaluate the operations of federal, state and local governments. For example, government procurement agencies need to provide valid data on the distribution of their purchases by industry and geographic location, and measure its impact on the local economy. Comparability of data among states and localities at a meaningful level of detail is necessary and perhaps may require some coordination. A national data bank proposal is already in the offing. Well organized centers for assembling, collecting and retrieving data for various users will be an important step to provide the users something they need. More important however is to put something worthwhile in it so that users can take it out. This means in one sentence—produce decision oriented data.

These are some of the areas this conference will deliberate on. Now I know you are anxious to hear Congressman Curtis and the other distinguished guests. Congressman Curtis needs no lengthy introduction. He is a ranking Republican on the Joint Economic Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. He is a life trustee of Dartmouth College and as President Eisenhower described him, he is "an exceptional member of Congress." He received the distinguished congressional service award from the American Political Science Association and LL.D., Honors Causa from Westminster College at Fulton, Missouri. Ladies and gentlemen I have the great pleasure of presenting the Honorable Thomas B. Curtis of Missouri.

#### STRENGTHENING THE TOOLS OF ECONOMIC POLICY

(Remarks of Hon. Thomas B. Curtis)

I think that some of the most rewarding and challenging—and, I might add, frustrating—jobs in government are held by those dedicated and highly professional individuals who collect and interpret the numbers we all live by today.