

* * * there are still major difficulties in regard to the integration of and availability of statistical data. * * * On the other hand, the advances in statistical methodology and in data processing equipment have made practical enormous advances in the quality, prompt availability, and integration of economic data.⁴

A recent task force, commissioned by the Bureau of the Budget, made the following evaluation in their report:

As it is presently operated, the statistical system is both inadequate—in the sense of failing to do things that should and could be done and inefficient—in the sense of not doing what it does at minimum cost, or getting less for what it spends than might be possible.⁵

The coordination and integration of Government statistical programs involves far more than the organization of Government bureaucracy, although the potential increase in efficiency and resource saving is important in itself. Nothing less than the quality of our public and private economic policies is at stake. In 1957, the National Accounts Review Committee, set up by the National Bureau of Economic Research at the request of the Bureau of the Budget, made the following statement:

Integration of the national economic accounts is desirable from three points of view. First, many economic problems require the use of several different kinds of information, and it is often necessary to move from the information provided by one kind of economic accounts to that provided by another. Second, from a statistical point of view, integrating the various kinds of economic accounts makes best use of the available data, with less duplication and with improvement in statistical accuracy. Finally, for the user of the national economic accounts, a single integrated system is easier to understand and use correctly than a number of different apparently unrelated or overlapping systems.

The potential improvements in efficiency through increased integration are large—not only in terms of the quality and quantity of statistical output, but also in terms of cost reduction for a given output. The estimated budget obligations for fiscal 1968 are \$122 million for current programs and \$163 million for all programs including periodic programs, which do not include the costs and inconvenience imposed on private respondents. It is therefore clear that every effort should be made to obtain maximum use of these data which have been secured at significant cost to the Government and to private firms and individuals.

In view of the Committee's directive, and of such expert opinions as cited, and in recognition of the primary importance of an integrated statistical system, the subcommittee held 4 days of hearings—May 17, 18 and June 7 and 8—on the "Coordination and Integration of Government Statistical Programs." The focus of the hearings was on the following questions:

(1) To what extent is there coordination and integration of our statistical programs?

(2) What are the implications on the efficiency of our statistical system?

⁴James W. Knowles, Executive Director, Letter of transmittal, Dec. 21, 1966, *Productivity, Prices, and Incomes*, materials prepared by the Committee staff for the Joint Economic Committee.

⁵"Report of the Task Force on the Storage of and Access to Government Statistics," Bureau of the Budget, Oct. 1966, p. 5.