

of data being reported into Social Security Administration or the Social Rehabilitation Service.

Mr. ADAMS. I see.

Then that control should be in the field. Is that what you are suggesting. But it still should be controlled.

Mr. CROWTHER. Yes. It still should be controlled.

Mr. ADAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

That's all I have.

Mr. STAATS. Mr. Chairman, may I just say this before we conclude. As you can see from the figures we have presented here today, the growth in the Federal costs involved in drug procurement has been very dramatic over the last few years. The potential is here for additional expenditures such as the inclusion of payment for certain drugs under the medicare program and the possibility of national health insurance.

This subject takes on even greater significance than it has had in the past, so we commend you for your interest in this area. We want to continue to do work in this field. We think some real progress has been made since we last appeared before your committee.

We think also there is a great deal of potential for savings here and improved quality of drug care.

Senator NELSON. There have been, as you know, proposals made and amendments offered on the floor that would cover all drugs in medicare, medicaid, or other proposals to cover in a more limited fashion drugs that are used on a continuing basis.

But in any event, if you would cover them all, you are looking at figures estimated at a couple of billion dollars. Have you done any studying or made any computations to indicate how much money would be saved if you achieved the ideal of purchasing all drugs at the lowest price of that compound, whether it was brand or generic name—the lowest price of that compound that was available?

Do you have any notion as to what that might mean in the program of the size we are now involved in? I realize it is a growing program.

Mr. STAATS. We can do it for individual drugs, but to take the whole universe, it would be a very, very major undertaking to try to develop anything like a reasonable estimate.

Mr. Ahart or Mr. Crowther may have something to add to that.

Mr. AHART. No. We have not really tried to come up with any figure like that; and I am not sure it would be possible, Mr. Chairman. As you indicated by some of the statistics on individual transactions that you have put on the record here, sometimes you really have a difficult time even finding out what is the lowest price at which a particular product might be available.

Mr. STAATS. I personally think if you can take several good examples, the point is made without having to go through the effort to come up with an overall total.

Senator NELSON. I suppose we do not even know what amount—or do we—what amount of money is spent under Federal programs for the, or, 25 or 40 most widely prescribed drugs.