

Executive Office staff improves the decision-making process and should be encouraged. This is true not only for new programs under consideration, but applies as well to programs established years ago which must be regularly reevaluated in terms of current conditions and the future outlook.

Although such projections and plans clearly make good sense for the internal management of the Government, certain questions arise when we consider external publication and use of official projections, particularly if they are set forth in the document which contains the President's official budget requests for the coming year.

Those who are skeptical about publishing long-range budget projections point out that:

- Such projections are almost sure to be inaccurate, since Federal programs and tax measures change from year to year, as part of the normal political process. Distant prospects for agency programs are inevitably highly tentative. The public might not understand or accept the high degree of variability inevitable in such long-range projections, especially if they are produced by the Government itself.
- Projections made for individual programs and agencies cannot simply be added together in arriving at meaningful totals for the Government as a whole. In fact, one of the most important goals of the budget process is trying to achieve a proper balance between the most desirable total level and the always greater sum of the separate demands for funds for specific programs.
- The President should not be made to appear to commit himself years ahead to program levels on which decisions need not, and indeed should not, be irrevocably made now. It may be politically impossible to make desirable changes later, particularly to retreat to lower program levels once a higher level has been projected. Flexibility in planning is both necessary and desirable.
- Looking far ahead might reduce the desirable emphasis on current legislative issues, and unduly shift attention to debates about more distant consequences of immediately urgent matters.
- The existing workload of the Bureau of the Budget for the annual budget presentation is already staggering, and it might not be possible, even with additional manpower resources, to compile and present in a meaningful manner a well-conceived and considered projection as part of the January budget presentation in the time available after the annual budget decisions are finally made.

On balance, however, the Commission finds the case *for* making and publishing longer-term budget projections very persuasive. First, it recognizes that estimates for some programs are already available. Current law requires that drafts of new legislative proposals of the executive branch estimated to cost more than a million dollars a year be accompanied, when submitted to Congress, by estimated appropriation, expenditure, and per-