

I find it difficult to answer your question very precisely. I am sure if we could, and were to do the things set forth in my statement, it would be used more widely and more usefully.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Let me say this much, Commissioner. I want to commend you for your statement. It is unusual for a bureaucrat to come before this congressional committee and not give five reasons why they can't do something. You have given us five things that you can do with just a little effort and initiative, and I presume with some extra funds from the Congress; you could take the information that you presently have, and with your presently existing staff, convert it into more meaningful and more useful information for the general public, which really, I suppose, is our mission in life.

Mr. ROSS. Yes, sir.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. For that I really want to commend you; for being creative and coming here today with some new ideas, new recommendations, and it indicates, at least to me, that you folks have not merely been collecting data, but have been thinking of ways to communicate with the consumer, so he can convert this information to his own good interest.

Mr. ROSS. We appreciate that comment, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. You do, presently, Commissioner, gather data for the Consumer Price Index in 56 U.S. cities, but publish this information only in 23 cities having a population of a million or more.

Why don't you make the same information available to the other cities, where you collect it, but don't publish it?

Mr. ROSS. Well, there are two answers to that. The most important answer is that in most of these 56 cities, the sample is not sufficiently large as to yield city by city information for all of these diverse items and services.

Another part of the answer is that the policy of the Bureau of the Budget, which, of course, is an important influence on the statistical program of Government agencies, is to limit the publication of area information to the largest areas, I think, on the grounds that if the Government, in addition to its national program, publishes area information beyond the largest areas, there are so many hundreds of them, it might be difficult to know where to stop.

Mr. ROSENTHAL. Do you have any notion of how many private citizens receive the Consumer Price Index either on your mailing list, or some other method of distribution?

Mr. ROSS. I will supply, to the committee, Mr. Chairman, some information about the number of our own publications on the Consumer Price Index that is requested.

(The information referred to follows:)

The Washington office mailing lists for consumer price reports include approximately 10,300 names. In addition, there are about 28,900 names on mailing lists maintained by our six regional offices. Names are put on mailing lists only at the specific request of the person or organization wishing to receive the information regularly.

Mr. ROSS. A lot of the requests come through our regional offices and I don't have that information at my fingertips, but I could obtain it. I would guess, however, that the great majority of private citizens learn about price trends through newspapers, magazines, and other organizations that pick up our material and disseminate it.