

however, is that these statistics would not necessarily be revealed, that they would have the same status as accounting and managerial records normally not published. Even countries that started with central planning have become increasingly interested in the merits of economic decentralization, the workability of which requires the availability of coordinate statistics for different levels of aggregation. Happily, what has been called "planning" in the United States has typically envisaged continuance of a traditional decentralization; and the contribution of company data to the continued diffusion of decision-making power in an economy that improves in total stability has not gone unrecognized.¹²

The outstanding limitations of the national data base for the purposes of price-wage stabilization should be made better known. Indeed, a Federally-funded educational program would be worth far more than the trivial cost involved; and it deserves consideration as a government effort together with more systematic and sustained macropreachment. The program should aim at upgrading the sophistication not only of the public at large but also of special groups concerned with wage and price decisions.

Everyone, it seems, wants to be different in the same way, and the custodians of decision and their oracular janissaries do not appear exceptional in this regard. Could it not be made fashionable to acknowledge major data gaps and the theoretical difficulties of meaningful measurement? More attention would then be given by the press, government officials, and business and labor executives to needs for statistical remedy. A more wholesome attitude would develop toward estimation of the direction and magnitude of the difference between preferred measures and computable or available compromises. A desirable enterprise would find encouragement: the construction of at least provisional national measures that are technically more appropriate for the joint and co-equal consideration of productivity, wages, and prices.

In short, if guidelines seem necessary, an appreciation that the size of the national data base is not a sign of robustness and relevance ought to be promoted. A more energetic quest for improvement of the statistical supply has to include appropriate research on the less tractable problems of concept and measurement and the enhancement of public understanding of the true state of the art. An educational effort would keep fresh the difference between a mistake and a mystique and help us to leaven technicism and quantification with common sense. This effort would seem attractive on cost-effectiveness grounds.

*Toward Guideline Improvement.*¹³ The fifth point, as indicated earlier, will be

¹² A statement issued by the National Planning Association just before celebration of the first decade of the Employment Act might be recalled here: "We need better private planning by each group to avoid a centrally directed economy. Better planning must be based on better statistical data and estimates." See Gerhard Colm, ed., *The Employment Act: Past and Future* (Washington, D. C.: 1956), p. 83. Many companies, of course, have statistical and economic facilities for the guidance of management.

¹³ Based in part on "Productivity Measures and Forecasts for Employment and Stabilization Policy," in *Dimensions of Manpower Policy*.