

FEDERAL STATISTICS USERS' CONFERENCE

This statement is submitted on behalf of the Federal Statistics Users' Conference whose membership is composed of organizations from all sectors of the economy. Our members have a common interest in the development of adequate, reliable, and timely statistics from Federal sources.

The conference appreciates the opportunity to express its views regarding certain statistical materials which provide much of the information upon which the President's Economic Report and the report of his Council of Economic Advisers is based. This vast storehouse of information is used by private as well as public planners and policy-makers in making important decisions that affect the course of the economy. It is important for all of us that our actions and policy decisions are based upon the best measures of the economy that it is possible to obtain.

We consider these two documents and the Federal budget of such importance to our members, and others, that for the third straight year we recently sponsored a 1-day conference at which these documents were discussed by James S. Duesenberry, member of the Council of Economic Advisers and Charles J. Zwick, Director of the Bureau of the Budget. Our purpose is to help raise the level of understanding of the public policy issues involved in these documents and to assist users of them in making more effective use of the information they contain.

The United States is fortunate in having available a vast quantity of demographic, economic and social statistical data. The appendix to the Economic Report of the President contains 90 statistical tables relating to income, employment, and production. Those concerned with policy decisions and the carrying out of Government programs take our wide data base for granted and freely utilize the data in analyzing problems and as a guide to determining positions or actions. However, little attention or concern is given by the majority of these data users to certain inadequacies or weaknesses in some of our statistical data and the need for improving them.

We were pleased to note that President Johnson, in identifying five "longstanding goals" in his recent budget message, included the following: "Providing improved statistics to aid business, labor and government in sustaining economic growth." In his Economic Report, the President said:

Accurate, comprehensive, and timely statistics are essential to the development of sound economic policies by government, business, and labor. Our economic statistics are the best and most comprehensive in the world, but they can be and need to be further improved. The costs will be exceedingly small relative to the benefits.

More specifically, the Economic Report, on pages 91 and 92, outlines its program for improvements in economic statistics. We respect-