

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 policymakers 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 3 consecutive years we have sponsored 1-day conferences at which these documents were discussed by the chairman, or a member, of the Council of Economic Advisers, and by the Director, or Assistant Director, of the Bureau of the Budget. We plan to hold a fourth annual conference in April or May of this year. 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.

This year, neither the President's Budget Message nor his Economic Report gave even passing mention to the need for improved economic statistics. This is in contrast to last year when President Johnson, in his Budget Message, identified five "long-standing goals" one of which was: "Providing improved statistics to aid business, labor and government in sustaining economic growth." In his Economic Report last year 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." The passing of 1 year has not diminished the accuracy of that statement, nor the necessity for continued emphasis upon improvement of our economic statistics. We urge that the Joint Economic Committee, in its 1969 Report, not overlook stressing these needs.

Last year's Report of the Council of Economic Advisers directed specific attention to improvement in economic statistics and outlined a program for improvements in such statistics. That report carefully spelled out the need as follows:

"That need is accentuated by the current state of the economy and the current aims of policy. Sustaining expansion close to the