

(Draft comments for the Vice President on the proposed
Federal Program Data Bank)

The Federal government is a marvelous instrument. Big as it is, it can respond in time to the needs of the people. It can administer a Social Security system, a Medicare program, fight poverty, build houses, feed school children and improve education.

We spend more than \$30 billion each year on such social welfare programs.

Yet, because the government is so big, and because there are so many programs, we have a hard time knowing if that \$30 billion is being well spent, and in the right places.

No where in the Federal government is there a single repository for statistics on what the problems are in a given area, and what is being done to meet them.

When we want to know if our programs are being properly utilized, there is nowhere to turn to find hard, current information on which to base a judgment.

This isn't to suggest that there aren't plenty of figures floating around the government. We all know better than that. For example, OEO says it has identified no fewer than 560 separate sources of Federal socio-economic statistics on what the problems are.

OEO has now taken 100 of the most important of these sources and is cataloging them on a county basis.

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In any one of the 3,000 U.S. counties, the computers will be able to tell us what the problems are -- income levels, housing standards, unemployment and many more areas of need.

What we must do is to match these needs with the Federal programs that we have available to us.

That is the goal of the information project which OEO has underway. It cannot work unless it has the full cooperation of every Federal agency and department.

OEO is asking that certain data be reported to it monthly on a county-by-county basis. The county was chosen because it is an easily definable unit -- and it is understandable.

There is no question that this system will require some changes on the part of the departments and agencies, which now compile their statistics on a different basis.

Many such reporting systems, while perhaps useful internally, are practically worthless elsewhere because there is no way to bring them together.

Programs to be reported on to OEO will be selected from the "Catalog of Federal Programs for Individuals and Community Improvement," which you all have and which you all helped compile.

There have been some complaints that it is impossible to report on all 263 programs in the book, because they do not all lend themselves to the kind of information wanted which will show their impact on people.

OEO says it does not expect all 263 to be reported on. It believes that 80 or 90 can be selected that will show a direct impact on individuals, ^{+ communities} and it has asked each agency and department to report on those programs they think should be included.

Cooperation in this information program will require changes. It may require some additional manpower and funds.

But when it is completed, the total social and economic picture of any county, group of counties or an entire State can readily be assembled.

Then, when we look at this picture at the local level or here in Washington, we can see whether we are getting \$30 billion worth of art.

If the picture is bright, we can take some pride in it. If it is dim and bleak, we will know where we have gone wrong -- or how we can go right.

Since you all are familiar with the program, I hope you will be able to speedily supply the information by the May 8 initial deadline.

If you cannot do so, please tell us.

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