

PLANS FOR A NATIONAL SAMPLE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

By

PEYTON STAPP *

The title of my talk is not exactly descriptive of what I plan to say and I hope you have not come with much hope that I would talk to the point. When your distinguished President asked me to address you he suggested Coordination of Statistics as a title. (He also said, hopefully, that I shouldn't speak very long). We are now engaged, as many of you know, in organizing a Sample Household Survey and the problems being encountered are in the front of my mind. So I said I would like to talk about the Survey and out of that grew the title. But any specific statistics job is made up of many highly technical details. Any one of them boring to those not directly concerned and a mass of them deadly to a speaker after such a delightful luncheon in a pleasant setting on a warm afternoon.

Let me try to bridge the two subjects by describing briefly what the National Economic Council is trying to do in setting up the Household Survey and then touch on the place of such a survey in a coordinated statistical system. What I have to say will be more provocative than definitive for coordination basically depends on brotherly love and it is not going to spring full grown upon the statistical scene in the Philippines or anywhere else. It will grow and change as your statistics develop and all of you will have a part to play in shaping it. Mr. Lanuza, in a recent address, made some very perceptive remarks about the place of statistics in the development of economic policy, and it is the growing appreciation and dependence on statistics by policy officials in business, labor and government which has made coordination so much more important in the last few years than ever before.

I am here as part of a team at the request of the Philippine Government. The other members will be arriving over the

* Chief, Statistical Survey Mission, National Economic Council.

tration. We will ask something about the expenditures of families — here we will get less than many people will want to know but it will furnish some very rough estimates and be preliminary training for more intensive surveys in the future. We will try to find out something about cottage industries. We shall even try one or two questions on prices.

And, of course, we will get the information needed for analysis of manpower availability and utilization. What are people doing?

We are also taking advantage of the three-stage sample design, for not only are the households representative of the total population — the municipalities and barrios are typical of all the municipalities and barrios. So we plan to get a description of the barrios. I believe this aspect of the survey alone will be of great value. Such quantitative data as we will get obviously will not take the place of a qualitative understanding which natives of a region have but there is a place for this kind of picture, and I think you will find yourselves studying these data when they become available.

Finally, a few words on coordination. You are just introducing this concept into government statistics with the initiation of the Office of Statistical Coordination and Standards in the NEC. Coordination is not the easy way to do something. A statistical survey which serves two or three purposes is more complicated than one designed to serve only one. Compromises have to be made. Personalities have to be appeased. Today coordination has to be accepted as a necessary evil. Economic activities are interrelated; you must study economic statistics in comparison with other economic and social statistics. And comparability must be built in at a cost of some inconvenience.

Small differences in definitions can affect statistics. Different systems of classification can make comparisons very difficult or, what is sometimes worse, cause you to draw erroneous conclusions because the same words may not cover the same things. Anyone who has worked with foreign trade data fully appreciate these problems, but the same thing is true if you try to match employment and production, retail sales with

PLANS FOR A NATIONAL SAMPLE HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

manufacturing output, prices, physical output and total value of production.

Out of the interagency committees working on planning this survey I expect some advance in cooperation. Economists and statisticians in the different offices will get better acquainted with each other and develop respect and a spirit of give and take. I would also point out the place that the Statistical Training Center holds in this respect through its in-service training courses by bringing together people from all agencies. And, of course, the keystone of a milieu high professional standards and ethics, mutual respect, common efforts toward improving statistics both in and out of government, and continued inspiration to young people entering the statistical profession is the Philippine Statistical Association.

Coordination requires strong leadership but it can only flourish where these conditions exist.



