

NEW STATISTICS ON JOBS PLANNED

18% Fund Rise Is Asked for Collecting Better Figures on Wages and Industry

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The Government is planning to start collecting new statistics next year that will tell a more accurate and detailed story of how many people are unemployed, which type of workers are getting the biggest wage increases and what industries are the main sources of inflation.

Over-all, funds for the collection and analysis of statistics are budgeted for a rise of 18 per cent in the coming fiscal year, one of the largest percentage increases in the entire budget. The actual dollar amount of the rise is not large as budget figures go, however—a total of \$43.2-million.

Most of the planned new or improved statistical programs are in the economic policy area.

Among those that are not is a brand-new "crime index," which will be based on a sample survey of households and will ultimately tell, on a uniform, national basis, how many persons have been victims of crime, what their typical losses were in the case of thefts and other details about crime's victims.

Most of the new statistics will not be ready for publication for at least a year, and many will require even longer.

The new and expanded economic statistics include the following programs:

¶A test of the desirability of making a national survey of unemployment every week instead of once a month. A weekly survey would be aimed at eliminating aberrations that can occur in the monthly survey—for example, when a holiday falls in the week in which the survey is taken.

¶The creation of a new price index, to be called General Price Index, would measure price changes of all items that move through the private economy. No such measure exists now; the Consumer Price Index and Wholesale Price Index are narrower and the measure of price changes known as the deflator of the Gross National Product is broader.

¶Expanded and improved surveys of hours worked and wages paid, by industry, to provide more such data in industries other than manufacturing, and wages and hours of supervisory workers and those not engaged in actual production.

¶Development of a new Index of Wage-Rate Changes that would give a clearer picture of real wage trends in the economy, by eliminating the effects of overtime pay and sizable movements of workers between industries with substantially different pay scales.

These improvements in wage statistics will "provide information needed to guide economic stabilization politics," a special budget analysis said.

To End Distortions

Other economic statistics scheduled for improvement are the figures on retail sales, on inventories of all types and on nonresidential construction, particularly by state and local governments. Improvements that would eliminate alleged distortions in international trade figures, by adding the cost of freight and transportation to imported products, are also planned.

Each of these areas is one in which economics, in and out of government, have long complained of the inadequacy of the statistics.

As previously indicated, the Government will also start collecting information for its Consumer Price Index on a more current basis. At present, many items are priced only quarterly and others semiannually, although the index, which is supposed to reflect up-to-date price trends, is published monthly.

The new General Price Index, coupled with other statistics

already available, will ultimately make it possible to determine, by broad industrial categories, in which industries price increases are resulting from wage increases, in which ones they are resulting from lagging productivity gains and in which one they are resulting from widened profit margins.

One of the more controversial new statistical programs may be planned weekly survey of unemployment, which would involve adding 26,000 households to the present monthly sample of 52,000.

Developing such a survey and testing its validity compared with the present monthly survey would cost an estimated total of \$8-million over three years, a very large sum of

money for a statistical program. It appeared likely that some members of Congress would feel that this money could be better used for other statistical programs, rather than merely to smooth out occasional major single-month aberrations in the unemployment figures.

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