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FOREWORD

In March 1948 Herbert Hoover, Chairman of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government, requested the National Bureau to undertake a survey of Federal statistical agencies, as part of the general appraisal of governmental organization being made by the Commission. The survey was to be completed and a report submitted to the Commission by October 1, 1948. In view of the high public importance of the Commission's enterprise, the critical role of statistical intelligence in the workings of our social economy, and the National Bureau's extensive experience in statistical work, the Executive Committee of the National Bureau agreed to accept Mr. Hoover's invitation.

The severe time limitations on the study made it impractical to recruit a staff outside the ranks of the National Bureau. Despite its reluctance to delay the Bureau's basic research, the Executive Committee turned to Frederick C. Mills who, besides possessing wide knowledge of statistical practice and organization, had the benefit of an earlier experience in appraising the Federal statistical program in its many ramifications. In June 1933 the American Statistical Association and the Social Science Research Council joined in organizing a Committee on Governmental Statistics and Information Services, of which Professor Mills was a member and for a time the Chairman. The Committee functioned through 1935. Its report on *Government Statistics*, published by the Social Science Research Council in 1937, attests a unique contribution to the coordination of the fact-finding activities of government.

In the dozen years that have elapsed since the publication of this report, the Federal statistical services have expanded rapidly. In undertaking to direct the National Bureau's study for the Hoover Commission, Professor Mills had the opportunity to take a fresh look at our far-flung statistical system in the light of accumulated experience. Clarence D. Long, a

member of the Bureau's research staff who has a specialist's knowledge of construction and employment statistics, collaborated with Professor Mills from the beginning. The present report represents their joint effort.

The statistical activities of the civilian agencies of the Federal government now occupy over 10,000 men and cost the taxpayers about 40 million dollars per year. This corps of technicians produces and analyzes tons of statistics concerning the population of the United States, its health and wealth, industry and trade, employment and income, the activities of government, immigration, education, the weather, wild life, and other aspects of national concern. No other country in the world is as well served with statistical records as our own. Professors Mills and Long stress the positive accomplishments of the Federal statistical agencies, but do not gloss over the numerous shortcomings and deficiencies. Their mature appraisal of the Federal statistical system and their constructive suggestions for increasing its efficiency will challenge the thinking of students of government as well as the makers and users of statistics.

ARTHUR F. BURNS

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