



NOVEMBER 1984

WASHINGTON
STATISTICAL
SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Calendar

November 13	Tuesday	Composite Estimation
November 14	Wednesday	Statistical Discrepancies in the International Transaction Accounts
November 15	Thursday	The Role of a Statistician in the Courtroom: The View From One Who Has Been There
December 12	Wednesday	Holiday Party (Fee event - Pre-registration required)

RANDOM BITS - (At the Annual WSS Dinner in June, John Keane, Bureau of the Census, and Janet Norwood, Bureau of Labor Statistics, made presentations on the theme of "Looking Ahead." This month's "Random Bits" prints the text of Janet Norwood's speech at the Annual Dinner. The October issue printed the text of John Keane's speech.)

"The Bureau of Labor Statistics: Present and Future," Remarks of Janet Norwood, Commissioner, at the annual meeting of the Washington Statistical Society, June 12, 1984.

This year, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) celebrates its 100th birthday. It was on June 27, 1984, that President Arthur signed the Bureau's enabling legislation, and Carroll Wright, our first Commissioner, took office in January 1885. It was Wright who established the tradition of "judicious investigation of fact and fearless publication thereof," which has become the BLS hallmark. This year--1984--we at the BLS have been reviewing the past, but we have also been evaluating the present and planning for the future.

We see a world of social and economic change ahead, one in which we must work to ensure that the data we produce continue to be relevant. We see survey techniques and statistical methods moving forward and we know that we must continually modernize and improve the series we produce. And we know that changing technology presents an opportunity to increase our efficiency and accuracy and to change the way in which we do business.

I would like to review with you tonight the four major program areas in which the BLS operates to see where we are and where we need to go.

(Continued on next page)

The Labor Market

Our economy has recently passed through a steep and long recession. Since November 1982, the recovery has been vigorous and continuing. The needed redesign of the Current Population Survey (CPS) is well underway, and the BLS has worked closely--more closely than ever before--with the Census Bureau so that the redesign can benefit from the combined expertise of both agencies. The BLS has also begun a complete modernization of the monthly Federal-State cooperative business survey of employment, hours, and earnings. Testing of new methods of collection, sample design, and evaluation is underway in several states and will result in improving the statistical underpinning of that important program.

But this is not enough. Our country is going through a period of enormous change. The structure of industry in the future will be different from the past. A number of our smokestack industries will recover, but not to the employment levels they had in 1979. And the occupational structure is changing as well. We have always had economic disparity in this country, but I believe the disparity from one area to another will increase. This means that we need to find new ways to examine these differences. The BLS is moving to improve area data on employment by industry. We are working hard on new methodology, which we hope to introduce in a year or so to simplify and improve local area employment rates. We are also searching for ways to learn more about the economic condition of those who are unemployed, especially to find out more about labor force attachment from a CPS supplement, as well as from possible analysis of data from the unemployment insurance program.

Much is also going on in our price program. The continuing Consumer Expenditure Survey is in place, and we look forward to a program of regular publication and analysis based on it. The Producer Price Revision, begun several years ago, should be completed--at least for mining and manufacturers--by next year. We hope to do some work on prices of services if we can find the resources to do so. Our export-import price program now has completed coverage of commodities. And we have begun a new revision of the Consumer Price Index which will continue over the next few years. In addition to selection of a new market basket and city sample, this revision will focus attention on changing pricing techniques, improved rent, and rental processing--all using the newest technology and statistical methodology.

In the wage area, we are making progress in revamping the sample design of the Employment Cost Index and hope, if resources can be secured, to reweight, as well as to expand, the occupational and industrial detail that flows from this important new series. We are also working with our business and labor advisory committees to plan

"The Bureau of Labor Statistics: Present and Future" (Continued)

for the kinds of data needed to serve the current needs of labor and management in collective bargaining negotiations.

We have made a great deal of progress in our fourth major program area--productivity. In addition to output per hour measures for major sectors of the economy, and for a number of important industries, the BLS this year began publication of capital productivity and of multifactor productivity measures. Work is already underway to expand the multifactor work to the steel and automobile industries. We hope to cover other individual industries and other factors of production as resources become available.

In addition, across the entire Bureau we have begun a long-term investment in the uses of new and innovative technology so that further improvements in survey design, estimation, and analysis can be carried out. For example, we are currently using optical scanning in the Producer Price Program (PPI). And a new interactive system (APPRISE) is currently in use for the PPI. The BLS also has begun the development of a local area computer network (LAN), which when completed will permit linkage of our micro-computers no matter where they are located.

The BLS is committed to improving the quality of all the work that we do. The social phenomena that we measure are complex and changing. The statistical art is constantly being improved. A statistical agency that does not move ahead moves backward. We at the BLS, conscious of our 100 year old tradition of producing accurate and relevant data of high quality, plan to continue moving forward.

SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

One of the main topics at the September 25, 1984, meeting of the WSS Board of Directors was whether WSS, as an organization, should make a contribution to the ASA Building and Development Fund. There was considerable sentiment for making a donation for development activities. However, members wanted a better idea of how the money would be used. Ms. Mary Grace Kovar will check with the ASA and report to the next Board meeting.

The Board decided that a December evening session will be held again this year. This will be a social only session rather than honoring a long-time WSS member.

The other major topic of discussion was editorial policy concerning commercial announcements and employment advertisements of nonstatisticians for the WSS Newsletter. The Board wishes to make the monthly newsletter of as much value to WSS members as possible but maintain a standard policy.

ABSTRACTS

TOPIC: Statistical Discrepancies in the International Transaction Accounts
SPEAKERS: Lois Stekler, Federal Reserve Board
Michael Deppler, International Monetary Fund
CHAIR: Bette S. Mahoney, Department of Defense
DISCUSSANT: Donald Curtis, Treasury Department
DATE AND TIME: November 14, 1984, 12:30PM-2:00PM
LOCATION: George Washington University, Room H-202, 2000 G Street, N.W.
ABSTRACT: There is growing concern about the statistical discrepancies in the international transaction accounts. Ms. Stekler will speak about the problems with the U.S. balance of payments statistics and Mr. Deppler, the problems world-wide.

TOPIC: Composite Estimation
SPEAKERS: Robert Tegels, Bureau of the Census
Michael P. Cohen, Bureau of Labor Statistics
CHAIR: David Marker, WESTAT
DISCUSSANT: Robert Fay, Bureau of the Census
DATE AND TIME: November 13, 1984, *1:00PM-2:30PM* (NOTE SPECIAL TIME)
LOCATION: Martin Luther King Memorial Library, Room A5, 901 G Street, N.W.
ABSTRACT: Results from empirical evaluations of alternative composite estimators for the Current Population Survey and the Consumer Population Survey (CPS) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI) will be presented. The CPS composite estimator is used in association with its rotation scheme of overlapping panels to reduce the variability of the estimator of change. A major issue in the selection of the CPS composite estimator is the conflict between the reliability goals for state annual average estimates and the national estimates of month-to-month change. The CPI composite estimator, which has an empirical Bayes interpretation, is used to reduce the average mean square error of the cost weights for local area CPI's. This is a small area estimation problem where the variances of the preliminary estimators are unknown. The alternative estimators address two issues: (1) direct vs. indirect estimation of the variance of the local area estimator, and (2) the use of mean expenditures vs. relative importance.

ABSTRACTS (Continued)

TOPIC: The Role of a Statistician in the Courtroom: The View
From One Who Has Been There
SPEAKER: Barry D. Nussbaum, Environmental Protection Agency
CHAIR: Gary Liberson, Lloyd Associates
DATE AND TIME: November 15, 1984, 12:30PM-2:00PM
LOCATION: Forrestal Building, Room BE-069, 1000
Independence Ave. S.W.
ABSTRACT: The presentation of rather elementary concepts
frequently becomes the toughest portion of the
statistician's job in the courtroom. Lucid
explanations are likely to weigh more heavily than
complex statistical analyses. Certain problems in
defining the population, handling human interference,
designing a random sample, and estimating certain
basic parameters are discussed. An actual courtroom
presentation of statistical information concerning
motor vehicle emissions is reviewed. Ten rules are
suggested to help the statistician retain his proper
perspective during the proceedings.

WSS Holiday Party

DATE AND TIME: December 12, 1984, 6:30PM-9:00PM
LOCATION: George Washington University
(Fee event - additional details next month)

EMPLOYMENT COLUMN

Deadline for inserting notices is five (5) weeks before the month of publication. Send notices and requests to:
Evelyn R. Kay
520-22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20037
(202)331-1153

JOB OPENINGS

SAMPLING STATISTICIAN: Work on design, implementation, and analysis of surveys relating to petroleum, natural gas, coal, electrical, nuclear, and other energy areas. Requires PHd in statistics or equivalent experience in sample design, rotation of samples, estimation, and imputation methods. Prefer knowledge of SAS and IBM 3033. Contact Fran Sparks, Computer Data Systems, Inc., One Curie Court, Rockville, Maryland 20850; (301)921-7079.

(Continued on next page)

JOB OPENINGS (Continued)

PROGRAM MANAGERS: Large health and pension organization is seeking program managers to design and administer programs related to health care costs and utilization. These individuals will design, conduct, and analyze studies about such topics as regional hospital admission patterns, drug utilization among elderly patients, and the success of various cost containment programs. Applicants must have experience and knowledge in health services policy research, including research design and statistics. Skills in applying computer statistical package are required. A graduate degree in health services, a social science, or other appropriate field is required, and prior supervisory/management experience is preferred. Please send resume with salary requirements to: Employment Manager, UMWA Health and Retirement Funds, 2021 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006.

JOB APPLICANTS

Listed below is a brief description of the qualifications of an applicant seeking employment. Employers interested in interviewing applicant should notify Mrs. Kay of their interest by CODE NUMBER. The request should be by mail and should include the employer's name, organization, and telephone number. The applicant will be notified of the employer's interest and initiation of any further contact will be left to the applicant. All contacts will be confidential.

CODE NUMBER: 85-03

Position wanted: Applied statistician in metro area.

Education: M.A., Applied Statistics, California State University at Long Beach, 1978; prior emphasis on social science, linguistics, and zoology.

Experience: Multivariate research, software development. Statistical packages, Fortran, and Basic. Also publishing, teaching, management, and small business.

Area of Interest: Multivariate research, software development.



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