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Office of the Vice President

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
CHARTBOOK CEREMONY AND ANNIVERSARY OF UNIVAC I
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
WASHINGTON, D. C.

July 1, 1976

Genuine democracy can only function when people are well informed. And decisions within a democracy can be no better than the information on which they are based. Consequently, the communication of information is critical to a modern, free society. This is an altogether fitting time to remember these truths.

This year as we celebrate the Bicentennial, we are also observing the anniversary of a development which has extended our capacity to communicate far beyond anything our Founding Fathers could have imagined.

It was just 25 years ago that computer science came of age, largely with the development of UNIVAC I. The computer has provided means to save lives, expand education, improve transportation, travel in space; control energy, streamline government, strengthen business, and help provide people with better goods and services at lower cost.

And today, President Ford is announcing a major conceptual breakthrough for bringing essential statistics on American life to the public in readily understandable form through the use of this computer science. This development grows out of an unusual coincidence of circumstances.

Both President Ford and I share an intense interest in charts as a uniquely useful means of understanding complex data relating to all facets of life in our country; the social, economic, governmental and other data which is essential to decision-making in the modern world.

In seeking out means of presenting factual data to the President, we learned that the Census Bureau was experimenting with computerized graphics. They were not only storing and analyzing information with computers; they were also using computers to prepare charts which presented this information in easily understandable form.

This computer method was then adopted to prepare weekly briefing notes, in chart form, for the President. This was the first time that anybody had attempted to pull together the basic, essential statistics -- the important social and economic indicators -- in a comprehensive and easily understood form on a regular basis.

In order to put the significance of this development into perspective -- let me mention that some 8,000 Federal employees in over 150 agencies are engaged in the collection, use and publication of statistics.

The computer-drawn charts used in preparing the President's weekly briefing notes were an instant success. They proved a major tool for the President, myself and, increasingly, for other members of his staff in understanding significant trends in this country. They were so successful that it occurred to the President that all Americans ought to have access to this invaluable data.

(MORE)

To carry out the President's objective, an inter-departmental committee was formed, under the direction of the Office of Management and Budget, working with the Census Bureau.

Everyone connected with this committee's work deserves enormous credit. And I convey to all of you the President's deepest gratitude. For out of the President's directive and the committee's efforts has grown the landmark event we are observing today, publication of the first issue of STATUS -- as a monthly chartbook of social and economic conditions.

STATUS will be published monthly by the Office of Management and Budget and the Census Bureau of the Department of Commerce.

STATUS is a remarkable publication. For the first time, the government has pulled invaluable data together in one place in an inter-related, integrated form. Before, you would have had to go through hundreds of publications for this information -- and figure out its inter-relationships yourself.

It is a gold mine of useful information for decision-makers and policy-makers not only in government, but in the business and labor fields, for academics and the news media, and numerous other areas.

For example, how many American families have health insurance? What are food stamps costing the government -- and the taxpayer? What are current housing trends? How many women are entering the work force? How do American families spend their income? This basic data and much more will now be available throughout government and to the public generally in each issue of STATUS magazine.

STATUS will be available to the public at \$3.60 a copy. And, it is hoped that sales will eventually cover the cost of producing the magazine.

The aim of President Ford's administration has been openness and candor right from the start. The publication of STATUS magazine is further evidence of open government in action.

Twenty-five years ago, those involved in developing and promoting UNIVAC I could not have foreseen that its descendants could one day produce something like STATUS. But there are always brilliant people willing to rise to new challenges and eager to extend the frontiers of human knowledge. The people we are honoring today are cast in that mold.

Thanks to President Ford's leadership and initiative in the STATUS project, we have seen the new science to which you have devoted your careers make a new and major contribution to the extension of freedom in this country. You have strengthened the people's ability to know. In so doing, you have strengthened their capacity to better their lives.

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