

form the President of program shortcomings, and advise him on social priorities.

2) Have the President deliver an annual report to the Congress on the state of the nation's "social health."

3) Establish a joint congressional committee to review the report and make soundings of its own.

The spirit of cost-benefit analysis pervades Mondale's plan. He wants to cut across departmental lines to find out, for example, how all programs for the prevention of crime are doing together. And he wants to know which projects in the spectrum of agency efforts are most effective. He also thinks that the government, with all its studies, often lacks vital information. He notes, for instance, that former Consumer Counsel Esther Peterson says there is no reliable information on the costs of living for the elderly, and he wonders how well a government without such data can aid the aged.

On paper, the proposal looks attractive, but there are problems. The germ for the bill came from an appreciation of the role that the Council of Economic Advisers is now playing in the making of economic policy. But social problems and social statistics are by their very nature much broader in scope and far more ambiguous in nature than economic problems and statistics.

Not only that, but statistical reports alone often serve only to keep the government printers busy. The Council of Economic Advisers, born in 1946, did not emerge as a truly powerful force until it won the confidence of President Kennedy. A new Council of Social Advisers might court Presidential favor, but then again it might not. After all, the Bureau of the Budget has been doing much (though not all) of the practical job Mondale suggests for the new council—that is, sorting out different program approaches and recommending the best alternative.

Moreover, the mere placing of the new council in the Executive, even if it had the President's support, presents problems. As Mondale put it, "We can't create an institution that will directly embarrass the President." Nor, presumably, would the President, who appoints the members of the council, allow it to embarrass him.

Daniel P. Moynihan, former Assistant Secretary of Labor and now head of the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint



Senator Walter T. Mondale

Center for Urban Studies, has focused on many of the problems raised by Mondale but has proposed a slightly different solution. What troubles Moynihan, among other things, is that, "up until now, the executive branch of the federal government, and the executive branch in American government in general, has had a virtual monopoly on evaluative research."

Moynihan wants the market opened up. "Too often, the executive is exposed to the temptation to release only those findings that suit its purposes; there is no one to keep them honest," he told a congressional subcommittee last fall. Subsequently, Senator Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn.), the subcommittee's chairman, sponsored legislation embodying Moynihan's proposal for an Office of Legislative Evaluation. Staffed by social scientists, the office would review program and "PPBS" (Programming-Planning-Budgeting System) decisions by the Executive. (PPBS is one of the techniques introduced by Defense Secretary McNamara and now spreading to other parts of government.) The object, in Moynihan's words, is "to 'evaluate the evaluators' and in this way maintain and improve the quality of regular ongoing work of the executive departments. . . ."

Though the Moynihan and Mondale proposals are not identical and not necessarily mutually exclusive, in practice they would face similar obstacles. The first is that of any "overview" approach to government programs: the executive agencies and, to a lesser extent, Congress both have

what Mondale terms "channel vision"; that is, committees and agencies naturally concentrate on their own projects and responsibilities for oversight. This decentralization guarantees specialization, but also assures that the committees and agencies will take, more often than not, a "narrow" view of their own efforts and defend themselves against "comprehensive" evaluators from the outside.

The second problem concerns the limits of research findings. As Moynihan told Ribicoff's subcommittee, the government's "commitment to evaluation research is fundamentally ambivalent. This is so, not only because research can blow up in an administrator's face when it turns out that his programs show little or none of the effects they are supposed to achieve, but more important because, in areas of social policy, facts are simply not neutral—they are inescapably political."

It may be some time before the theory underlying these two proposals is put to the test. Hearings on Mondale's bill, for example, will open in late July, but the Senator concedes that passage next session would be "lucky." In the interim, other questions—the real need for new evaluators, a possible confusion of roles between councils of economic and of social advisers—will arise. But, if a council is ever created, its ultimate importance may lie not so much in the statistics it produces as in the men it brings to government and the weight given their advice.

—ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

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## RECENT DEATHS

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**Gilbert W. Heublein**, 58; a member of the senior radiological staff at Hartford Hospital, Canton, Conn., and visiting clinical professor of radiology at Jefferson Medical College and Medicine Center; 27 May.

**Richard Kudo**, 81; professor emeritus of zoology, University of Illinois, and visiting professor of zoology, Southern Illinois University; 1 June.

**Leo Loewe**, 70; clinical assistant professor emeritus of medicine, State University College of Medicine, New York, and former editor of the journal *Angiology*; 30 May.

**Preston Lowrance**, 51; former associate professor of internal medicine, University of Virginia Medical School; 30 May.