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The First Hundred Years of the Bureau of Labor Statistics

Joseph P. Goldberg and William T. Moye



Foreword

This volume reports on the first century of a government agency whose founders hoped that, by publishing facts about economic conditions, the agency would help end strife between capital and labor.

The Bureau's early work included studies of depressions, tariffs, immigrants, and alcoholism and many assignments to investigate and mediate disputes between labor and management. Most of these functions—especially those involving formulation of policy—passed on to other agencies. The Bureau today remains one of the Nation's principal economic factfinders.

This account of the Bureau's history is based on 4 years of research by two historians, Joseph P. Goldberg and William T. Moye. Dr. Goldberg holds degrees in history and economics from the City College of New York and Columbia University and has written extensively on the maritime industry, collective bargaining, labor law, and labor history. He has served as special assistant to the Commissioner of Labor Statistics since 1955. Dr. Moye holds degrees from Davidson College and the University of North Carolina and has been with the U.S. Department of Labor since 1976, specializing in the history of the Department and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

In conducting their research, Drs. Goldberg and Moye had full access to the records of the Bureau and of the Department of Labor and also used the collections of the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and other public and private institutions. In addition, the authors conducted interviews with recent Commissioners and Secretaries of Labor and others familiar with the work of the Bureau. At the Archives, Jerry N. Hess and Joseph B. Howerton provided valuable assistance, as did Henry P. Guzda of the Department of Labor Historical Office.

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Rosalie K. Epstein, the book's editor, worked closely with the authors in helping them fashion their voluminous research into a book-size manuscript.

Several expert readers helped improve the work through thoughtful critiques. They included Richard B. Morris, Gouverneur Morris Professor of History Emeritus, Columbia University; Professor Irving Bernstein, Department of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles; Dr. Jonathan Grossman, Historian, U.S. Department of Labor, from 1962 to 1982; Dr. H.M. Douty, author and economic consultant; Dr. Herbert C. Morton, Director, Office of Scholarly Communications and Technology, American Council of Learned Societies; and several members of the staff of the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Book design was supervised by Richard Mathews. Scenobia G. Easterly and Elizabeth M. Johnson assisted with manuscript preparation.

In writing the book, Drs. Goldberg and Moye had full freedom to interpret events in accordance with their judgments as historians, without conformance to an "official" view of institutional history. Given the perspective made possible by passing years, the authors offer broader evaluations of the Bureau's early history than of contemporary events.

Henry Lowenstern
Associate Commissioner, Office of Publications
Bureau of Labor Statistics

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