

DISCUSSION

Richard A. Lester, Princeton University

It would have been helpful if Mr. Suffa had spent less time on the mechanics and more on the limits and advantages of the data for research and analysis. One would have preferred more discussion of the important questions that might be answered by the data. Too much attention to the mere collection of statistics and insufficient thought about their usefulness for particular purposes (including evaluation of the training results and efficiency of the program) may mean less valuable data for the money spent on their collection.

Mr. Aller's paper is an excellent report from a person whose inside position gave him special advantages in discussing "Congressional expectations." I would only take issue with Mr. Aller on his caution with respect to "basic research." The labor field has not had enough basic research. For public policy purposes, there is nothing more practical than, say, fundamental analysis of labor mobility. One of the reasons that "present resources for manpower research are relatively meagre" is that the field during the past decade has lacked enough basic study and, therefore, new concepts, techniques, and ideas, to make it an attractive research area for younger scholars.

The Stern-Johnson paper should help to answer some important questions about mobility and the creation of non-competing groups. I hope they will put

their study in a broad framework. On the supply side, it would be interesting to know, with respect to blue-collar workers, what attracts them to or repels them from, white-collar jobs such as foremen or draftsmen. On the demand side, the barriers that employers place upon mobility through personnel policies (as in the draftsman case that Stern-Johnson mention) should be carefully analyzed.

Since employment expansion has been and will be largely in the low-wage, low-benefit service areas, it would be interesting to discover the extent to which the terms of employment and social status serve to retard worker movement from blue-collar to white-collar and other service jobs. The Stern-Johnson statement that employers' educational and experience "standards are different" for upward mobility in the "internal labor market" from those in "external markets" raises interesting questions of fact and public policy.

The Stern-Johnson study appears to be well conceived and designed. There is, however, a question about the validity of job data, including wages, collected by interviews that require recall of such data for the previous 10 years. Some previous studies have checked the validity of such interview material, and the authors should at least consider that limitation to their data.