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General Comment

A. ROSS ECKLER

BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

IN LISTENING to the discussions of the relationships among various economic series as presented in a number of papers, I have been impressed with the extent to which changes in the concepts and definitions used in the preparation of the basic series, as well as changes in industrial composition, can affect the interpretation of the relationships. This leads me to raise the question whether more disaggregation is not needed and whether the tools may not now be at hand which will make possible new and better measures of the relationships among factors. Specifically, the availability of modern electronic equipment makes possible the calculation of ratios for individual establishments to an extent not possible hitherto. Furthermore, the Census Bureau's company statistics program, combining data relating to companies and establishments and tying them to corporation reports in the Internal Revenue Service files, opens the way to much more effective studies of economic development.

It may be noted that as part of the editing program of our last two censuses of manufactures, many ratios for individual establishments were computed and placed on electronic tapes. This file of detailed ratios could be a rich source of research for students concerned with changes in the shares of different factors. Thus far, the only members of the Conference known to have taken advantage of the research possibilities are Richard and Nancy Ruggles and Karl Kaysen. We hope that many others will follow and, like them, will become familiar with our electronic equipment. It is not too much to hope that through such studies, there may be expected a real breakthrough in the analysis of economic processes and relationships.