

untary basis, including questions on education, employment, housing and income. If this legislation is passed, there is a good possibility that it would eliminate data on a block basis; it would severely limit, or perhaps completely eliminate certain data on a census tract or county basis; and that it would severely reduce, or make questionable, the reliability of data for larger cities, SMSA's, larger counties, and even for some States. Officials concerned with urban and rural problems have a crying need for more and better information on the economic characteristics of the population at these various subnational levels. The need for data for very small areas has grown rapidly as more and more communities analyze their own problems and make plans for dealing with them, neighborhood by neighborhood. Their ability to deal with these problems would be severely impaired if certain types of data are denied them at the desired area levels.

A second proposal would place all questions contained in the 5-year economic censuses on a voluntary basis. If this is done, then there is a real danger that the comparability of data as between censuses would be greatly diminished and especially at subnational levels. There is even a possibility that some of the economic censuses would be of no value whatsoever because it might not be possible to obtain meaningful totals for certain industries. This could result, for example, if several major firms in an industry category should decide not to participate in the census.

We must also point out that there is a great deal of misinformation and misunderstanding about the purposes of these censuses and the valuable contribution they make toward a better understanding of the nature and composition of our economy and society. Those who are proposing a curtailment of the population, housing and economic censuses need to be made aware of the serious effect such proposals would have on the continued collection of adequate, reliable, and comparable data that have been so carefully developed over the years to aid us in dealing with the myriad of problems that beset this Nation today. In our opinion, passage of this type of legislation would be the most damaging step Congress could take regarding our statistical system and it would reverse the intent and policy of the Congress which has been repeatedly expressed over the long history of the census.

On the more positive side, we agree with the Report of the Council of Economic Advisers which says: "Although there are still gaps in economic statistics, considerable progress has been made in recent years by the Department of Commerce, the Department of Labor, and other Federal Government agencies in increasing the quantity and improving the quality of statistical data available for assessing the performance of the economy."

We believe that the following examples of recent accomplishments are worthy of note:

By the *Bureau of the Census*.—Launching of a new publication, *Defense Indicators*, which replaces the Department of Defense publication, *Selected Economic Indicators*; enlargement and improvement of *Business Conditions Digest* (formerly *Business Cycle Developments*); extension of the business censuses and greater use of administrative records to minimize reporting burden; initiation of first census of construction industries to be taken since 1939; and initiation of a new monthly report of Export and Import Merchandise.