



UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548



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CIVIL DIVISION

B-146830

JUL 13 1971

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have surveyed the program activities of the Bureau of Domestic Commerce (BDC), Department of Commerce, giving primary attention to the issuance of publications by BDC.

During our survey we noted that some of the BDC publications contained considerable information that duplicated data presented in publications issued by other Government agencies, primarily the Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce. For example, duplicative statistical information was presented in two BDC publications entitled "Construction Review" and "Industry Profiles." We believe that cognizant BDC and Census officials should establish effective coordination to eliminate the duplication of published information. These publications are discussed further in the following paragraphs.

"CONSTRUCTION REVIEW"

This BDC publication is a monthly report on the building materials and construction industries. We were informed by a BDC official that, in earlier years, the report had contained several articles of an analytical nature and had less emphasis on statistical data. Currently the monthly report generally consists of one feature article and statistical data consisting of many tables. For example, the April 1971 issue contains 39 statistical tables which make up 90 percent of the content of the report.

Of the tables in this publication, 10 are very similar to, and are based on, statistical tables published in three reports by Census as part of a series of construction reports and one table is taken from a Census housing report. An additional 11 tables are based on other data obtained from Census. We were not able to readily determine whether the latter data had been published by Census. Source data for eight other tables were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, which also had published the material, and the data, some of which had been published, for the remaining nine tables were received from various Government agencies and private industry.

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About 4,600 copies of the "Construction Review" are printed monthly, of which about 1,000 copies are distributed without charge. The number of copies of the three Census reports ranges from 2,700 to 4,200 copies. BDC estimated that its annual direct cost of preparing the "Construction Review" for publication was \$84,000, comprised primarily of salaries. We did not determine the Government Printing Office's cost of printing the publication or the extent of its profits, if any, from the sale of those copies not distributed free of charge.

We were informed by BDC officials that they considered the "Construction Review" to be more informative than the publications from which the source data had been obtained and that it presented the information in a more convenient manner for the user because it was available in a single report.

"INDUSTRY PROFILES"

BDC designed this annual publication to provide users of industrial data with a convenient single source of comparable general statistics for a 10-year period on the manufacturing industries. BDC estimates that its annual direct cost to prepare this publication is about \$10,000. About 7,500 copies are printed annually.

Census, once every 5 years, publishes an industry series of 80 reports entitled "Census of Manufactures" and in the interim years publishes a report entitled "Annual Survey of Manufactures" which is sold as one volume or in separate chapters. The general statistical information in the Census reports is identical to that in the "Industry Profiles," except that the "Industry Profiles" contains some industry averages and ratios which are not included in the Census publications but could be computed from the data presented therein. The Census reports also contain more refined data which are not included in the "Industry Profiles."

A BDC official informed us that the Census reports were the source of the basic statistical data contained in the BDC publication; however, a user would have to refer to two or three

Census reports to obtain the data for a 10-year period on a particular group of related industries. He also stated that BDC considered its publication to be more convenient because it contained data for all the manufacturing industries in a single report.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

We believe that the preceding examples demonstrate that there is a duplication of information being published by BDC, Census, and other Government agencies. We believe also that, by a cooperative effort, this duplication, especially between BDC and Census, could be avoided and would result in substantial savings to the Department of Commerce. This coordination should include (1) the identification of those publications which contain substantial duplicative information, (2) the joint determination of which publications should be discontinued or consolidated with other publications, and (3) an agreement on the contributions to be made by each of the agencies in the preparation of those publications which are to be continued.

We therefore recommend that the Secretary of Commerce require BDC and Census to establish effective coordination to eliminate the duplication of published information.

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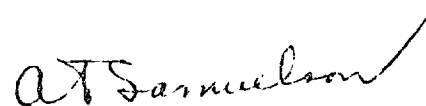
Your attention is invited to section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 which requires that you submit a written statement of the action taken with respect to the recommendation. The statement is to be sent to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations not later than 60 days after the date of this report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations in connection with the first request for appropriations submitted by your agency more than 60 days after the date of this report.

We shall appreciate being advised of the action taken on our recommendation. We shall be pleased to meet with you or members of your staff at your convenience if you wish to discuss this matter further.

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Copies of this report are being furnished to the Chairmen, House and Senate Committees on Government Operations; the Chairmen, House and Senate Committees on Appropriations; the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, the Judiciary, and Related Agencies; and the Director, Office of Management and Budget. Copies are also being furnished to the Assistant Secretary for Domestic and International Business; the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs; the Assistant Secretary for Administration; and the Director, Office of Audits, Department of Commerce.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. T. Samuelson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name of the signatory.

Director, Civil Division

The Honorable
The Secretary of Commerce