

EMPLOYMENT, POPULATION AND INCOME GROWTH
IN THE SOUTH'S METRO-NONMETRO AREAS,
1960-70: A COMMENT

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Mr. Haren's paper is concerned with drawing a series of contrasts in recent growth (1960-70) between the South and non-South and between metro and nonmetro areas within the South. In the paper, growth trends are surveyed for the following factors: aggregate income, per capita income, aggregate employment, employment by major sector, aggregate population, and population by various age groups. In most series it is shown that the South outperformed the rest of the nation during the decade of the 1960's. Within the South, the metro areas generally outperformed the nonmetro areas with the only notable exceptions occurring in per capita income and goods related non-farm employment.

It is obvious that a considerable amount of effort has been expended in collecting and processing data. However, the paper is exclusively addressed to the question of what has happened in the South during the past decade. There is no thesis offered to explain the cause of the different growth experiences reviewed in the paper. Due to the fact that the paper is only concerned with an empirical investigation of recent growth trends and is not concerned with an analytical explanation of differences, it is very difficult to assess the significance of the findings.

The paper tells us what has happened during the past decade but does not tell us why, and, therefore, we cannot determine if this was an atypical decade or whether the growth trends will be extended into the future. For example, it is demonstrated in the paper that there has been very high relative growth in nonfarm goods producing employment in Southern nonmetro areas. In order to gauge the significance of this trend one would have to know something about the cause. Among the questions that would have to be asked would be the following: Does this recent expansion reflect the availability of low-wage labor in Southern rural areas? If so, how long can this be expected to continue? If relatively cheap labor has underscored rural Southern development, has there been any relative upward push in wage rates as industry has moved into these areas and would this push suggest that source of growth was diminishing?

Haren's paper provides much valuable information to those concerned with recent Southern economic growth and his efforts in this direction should be applauded. A number of important issues are surveyed in the paper and numerous avenues for further research suggest themselves. It is hoped that the great volume of empirical evidence provided by Haren will be used as the basis for further analysis of the sources of recent Southern economic growth.

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