

Operating Ratios of Member Banks in the Second Federal Reserve District for the Year 1955

To all Member Banks in the Second Federal Reserve District:

Net profits of all member banks in the Second Federal Reserve District, after all charges but before dividend payments (item 3), declined from an average of 8.3 per cent of capital funds in 1954 to 6.5 per cent in 1955 despite a substantial increase in current operating income. The decline in net profits was general, and it affected banks in all size-groups. At most banks this decline resulted primarily from losses on securities and additions to valuation reserves; however, a few banks in the smallest size-group, those with deposits under 2 million dollars, also had larger losses on loans in 1955 than in 1954.

The security-sales losses in 1955 reflected the growing pressure of credit demands against the available supply of funds, which was limited by the shift in Federal Reserve credit policy during the year from ease to restraint. As credit conditions tightened, interest rates rose, security prices declined, and many banks found it necessary to sell securities in a declining market in order to meet the heavy demand for loans. Also, some of the losses on securities resulted from "switching" operations, undertaken to establish losses for tax purposes; banks sold securities at a loss and used the proceeds to buy other, comparable issues at comparable prices.

OPERATING INCOME

Total earnings of most member banks in the Second Federal Reserve District increased substantially in 1955. The ratio of total earnings to total assets (item 5) rose from a District average of 3.33 per cent in 1954 to 3.47 per cent in 1955, the highest level reached since 1939 when the ratio was 3.50 per cent. Banks in all size-groups had an increase in total earnings in 1955.

The most important source of increased earnings was the rise in earnings on loans. Banks in the Second District expanded their loan portfolios by an average of 12 per cent in 1955, compared with 1954, and income from loans increased 15 per cent. Although many banks raised the interest and discount rates charged borrowers during 1955, the increases generally came in the latter part of the year, and the expansion of earnings from loans was due less to the increase in rates and more to increased lending activity and a shift in the composition of loan portfolios to a relatively higher proportion of higher-yielding loans, such as consumer and real estate. Although many banks in all size-groups had a higher effective rate of return on loans in 1955 (item 28), New York City (Manhattan) banks and banks outside New York City in the 2-5 million dollar deposit size-group increased earnings on loans more than the District average.

Average holdings of United States Government securities decreased in all but the smallest size-group of banks outside New York City. Most of the net

sales of Government securities were made by New York City banks. The total amount of Government securities held by these banks averaged 9 per cent less in 1955 than in 1954, while banks outside New York City reduced their portfolios of Government securities an average of less than 1 per cent. Reductions in the size of portfolios of Government securities did not result in a corresponding loss of income, however. The rate of return on Government securities (item 25) rose in all size-groups of banks except Group I, and the increase more than compensated for the decline in average holdings of Government securities. Consequently, income from this source increased moderately for most banks, including the New York City banks where security portfolio reductions were relatively great. But interest on Government securities accounted for a smaller percentage of total earnings (item 9) among banks in all size-groups in 1955 than in 1954.

Member banks' average holdings of "other securities", principally municipal obligations, increased throughout the District in 1955, but the rise was small among New York City banks. Measured as a percentage of total assets (item 31), average holdings of "other securities" declined for Groups V and VI New York City banks and at the smallest size-group of banks in the District. Rates of return on "other securities" (item 26) showed mixed changes in 1955, and for the District as a whole the average rate showed only a minor change, decreasing from 2.28 per cent in 1954 to 2.24 per cent in 1955.

OPERATING EXPENSES

Total operating expenses of member banks in the Second District increased by 10 per cent in 1955. Banks generally paid higher wages and salaries, higher interest rates on time deposits and borrowed money, and higher taxes other than income taxes. Total operating expenses (item 6) in 1955 averaged 2.42 per cent of total assets, compared with 2.35 per cent in 1954. Since total earnings expanded more than total expenses, however, the average ratio of total expenses to total earnings (item 19) declined slightly, from 70.3 per cent in 1954 to 69.8 per cent in 1955. The decrease in the ratio of total expenses to total earnings tended to be greater among New York City banks in Groups V and VII, while the ratio actually increased for banks in the smallest size-group outside New York City and in Group VI in New York City.

The New York City banks' expenditures for wages and salaries rose 8.6 per cent in 1955 and those of other Second District banks, 7.8 per cent. Since the number of bank employees was up only slightly in 1955, the rise in wage and salary expenses was due primarily to higher rates of pay.

Interest paid on time deposits continued to increase in 1955, but especially at banks outside New York

City. Interest on time deposits averaged 16.8 per cent of total earnings for the Second District member banks in 1955, compared with 16.1 per cent in 1954. The 1955 ratio was the largest since 1940. The average effective rate paid on time deposits (item 39) by Second District banks rose from 1.29 per cent in 1954 to 1.39 per cent in 1955.

NONRECURRING ITEMS

Although net current earnings rose in 1955 (item 7), net profits (item 8) declined for Second District banks in all size-groups, mainly because of losses on security transactions and additions to valuation reserves, although a limited number of banks experienced greater loan losses in 1955 than in 1954.

Generally, banks that took profits on securities in 1954 took losses in 1955. As reflected in item 27 (net profits and recoveries or losses on total securities), average losses on securities of Second District member banks were 0.17 per cent of total securities in 1955, compared with profits and recoveries of 0.28 per cent the year before. The change from profit to loss on securities transactions, measured as a percentage of total earnings, tended to vary directly with the size of the bank. Total net profits and recoveries or losses (item 21), of which security profits or losses are the main component, fell from an average profit of 2.3 per cent of total earnings in 1954 to an average loss of 3.8 per cent in 1955. The change was most marked among the larger New York City banks (Group VII) where the ratio changed from a profit of

profits are somewhat higher than they would have been if larger transfers to reserves had been made. To permit banks to make a more accurate comparison of selected ratios with the group averages, a supplementary table of selected ratios is provided for all member banks outside New York City. Banks with and without valuation reserves have been divided into separate categories in this table.

The table shows that all but the largest size-group of banks outside New York City added larger amounts to their reserves in 1955 than they did the year before. However, most banks in Group IV and the banks in New York City made smaller net additions to reserves in 1955, because these banks took relatively large losses on securities which were charged to their reserves.

Many member banks continued in 1955 to take advantage of the more liberal provisions of the 1954 revision of the Internal Revenue Service's special method for computing reasonable additions to the reserve for bad debts. Under this revision, banks are permitted to increase their reserves to the new maximum by spreading charges against income over a three-year period.

TAXES, DIVIDENDS, AND RETAINED EARNINGS

Income tax liabilities of member banks were generally lower throughout the District in 1955 because of the reduction in net profits before taxes. Measured as a percentage of total earnings, income taxes fell from 9.8 per cent in 1954 to 8.5 per cent in 1955.

**Selected Ratios of Banks Outside Manhattan, New York City
With and Without Valuation Reserves—1955**

Group average	Number of banks		In per cent of total earnings									
			Net current earnings before income taxes		Net profits and recoveries (+) or losses (-)		Net increase (-) or decrease (+) in valuation reserves		Taxes on net income		Net profits	
			1954	1955	1954	1955	1954	1955	1954	1955	1954	1955
Banks With Valuation Reserves at Year End												
Group I—Deposits under \$2 million.....	41	35	31.9	30.0	-1.6	-2.7	-0.8	-3.0	8.8	7.2	20.7	17.1
Group II—Deposits of \$2-5 million.....	119	107	29.9	31.1	+0.9	-2.5	-1.6	-3.2	8.4	8.7	20.8	16.7
Group III—Deposits of \$5-20 million.....	212	197	28.7	29.3	+3.6	-3.4	-2.2	-2.9	10.0	8.5	20.1	14.5
Group IV—Deposits over \$20 million.....	101	101	29.1	30.4	+3.7	-4.9	-4.4	-3.8	10.9	7.8	17.5	13.9
Banks Without Valuation Reserves at Year End												
Group I—Deposits under \$2 million.....	53	45	27.9	28.0	*	-9.8	0	0	8.1	8.3	19.8	9.9
Group II—Deposits of \$2-5 million.....	79	71	30.0	29.9	+1.2	-1.9	+0.2	0	8.1	8.1	23.3	19.9
Group III—Deposits of \$5-20 million.....	42	40	29.7	30.9	+1.6	-3.5	0	+0.2	10.2	9.2	21.1	18.4
Group IV—Deposits over \$20 million.....	4	3	31.2	30.3	+4.7	-5.7	0	0	11.8	7.6	24.1	17.0

* Ratio less than 0.05 per cent.

7.8 per cent in 1954 to a loss of 5.0 per cent in 1955. Some of the losses sustained on securities transactions resulted from portfolio liquidation to obtain funds to expand loans, while some resulted from "switching" operations undertaken to establish losses for tax purposes; this was especially true in the case of the larger banks. Net losses on loans (item 29) generally were less in 1955 than in 1954, except in the smallest size-group of banks, where substantial losses by a few banks increased the group average significantly. In addition, banks in Group IV, the largest size-group outside New York City, tended to have slightly higher loan losses in 1955 than in 1954.

Although their number is decreasing, many smaller banks in the Second District do not maintain valuation reserves for losses on loans and securities. Consequently, their average increase in reserves was relatively small (item 22), and their indicated net

In spite of reduced profits, dividend payments continued to rise moderately in 1955. However, measured as a percentage of capital accounts (item 4), there was little change from the previous year, the ratio remaining at 2.7 per cent of total capital for all Second District banks. The average ratio of capital funds to deposits (item 37) increased slightly from 9.5 per cent in 1954 to 9.6 per cent in 1955, but capital funds as a percentage of "risk" assets (total assets less United States Government securities and cash—item 36) declined from a District average of 19.1 per cent in 1954 to a new postwar low of 18.5 per cent in 1955, owing to the substantial increase in loans. The decrease in this latter ratio was most marked among New York City banks.

ALLAN SPROUL,
President.

**DISTRIBUTION OF SECOND DISTRICT MEMBER BANKS OUTSIDE NEW YORK CITY
ACCORDING TO SIZE OF CERTAIN KEY RATIOS
1955**

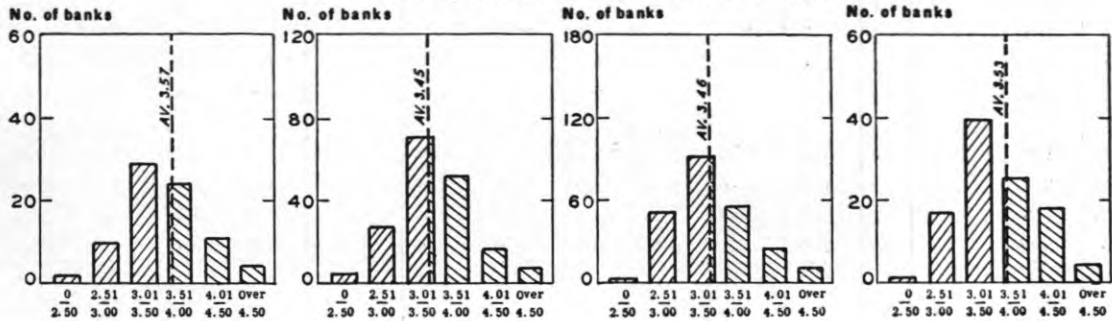
GROUP I*

GROUP II*

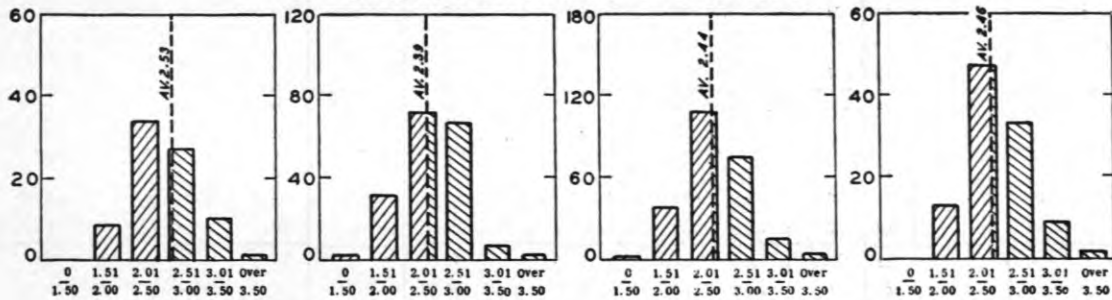
GROUP III*

GROUP IV*

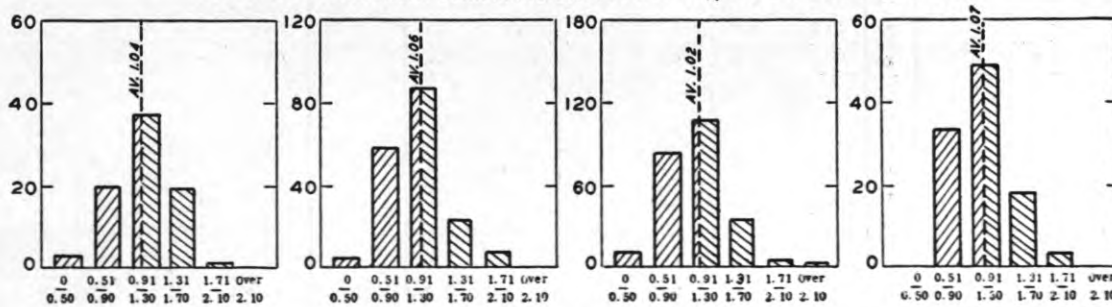
RATIO OF TOTAL CURRENT EARNINGS TO TOTAL ASSETS



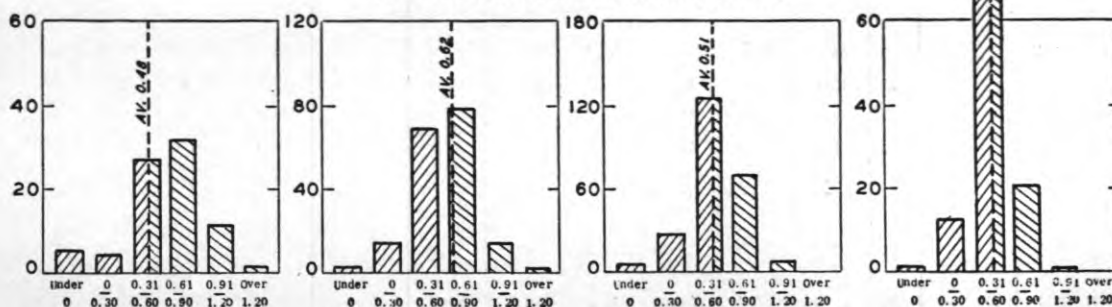
RATIO OF TOTAL EXPENSES TO TOTAL ASSETS



RATIO OF NET CURRENT EARNINGS BEFORE INCOME TAXES TO TOTAL ASSETS



RATIO OF NET PROFITS TO TOTAL ASSETS



* Banks with total deposits under \$2 million

* Banks with total deposits \$2 million to \$5 million

* Banks with total deposits \$5 million to \$20 million

* Banks with total deposits over \$20 million