

FEDERAL RESERVE BANK  
OF NEW YORK

Circular No. 8876  
July 15, 1980

**Sale by Banks of Commercial Paper  
Issued by Bank Holding Companies or Other Nonbank Affiliates**

*To All Banks and Bank Holding Companies  
in the Second Federal Reserve District:*

The sale of bank holding company (or nonbank subsidiary) commercial paper by an affiliated bank to depositors or other investors creates the possibility that individuals may purchase such paper with the misunderstanding that it is an insured deposit or obligation of the selling bank. The Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System believes that the manner in which commercial paper is sold should *not* lead bank customers or investors to construe such commercial paper as an insured bank obligation or an instrument that may be higher in yield but equal in risk to insured bank deposits. All purchasers of commercial paper should clearly understand that such paper is an obligation of the parent company or nonbank subsidiary and that the quality of the investment depends upon the risks and operating characteristics associated with the holding company and its activities.

In light of these considerations, the Board of Governors has ruled that commercial paper obligations issued by holding companies should prominently indicate in bold type on their face (1) that they are not obligations of a bank; and (2) that they are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. In addition — (a) in cases where purchasers do not take physical possession of the obligation, they should be provided with a printed advice that also states that the holding company paper is not an obligation of a bank and is not insured by the FDIC; (b) those employees engaged in the sale of the paper should convey this information orally to each purchaser at the time of the sale; and (c) any commercial banking subsidiary involved in the marketing of holding company commercial paper should separate the sale of such paper from the retail deposit-taking function. Thus, for example, commercial paper should not be sold at teller windows or at areas designated for opening retail deposit accounts. Similar procedures should also be followed for the issuance or sale of commercial paper of nonbank subsidiaries of bank holding companies where the nonbank subsidiary has a name similar to that of any of its affiliate banks or there is a possibility that investors may confuse the obligations of the nonbank subsidiary with those of the holding company or any of its subsidiary banks.

Commercial paper is generally defined as notes, with original maturities not exceeding nine months, that are usually offered and sold to institutional investors, rather than to the general public, in minimum denominations of \$25,000 (although some direct placers sell commercial paper in denominations as low as \$10,000). In order to qualify for the "commercial paper" exemption from the registration requirements of the Securities Act of 1933, the proceeds may be used only for current transactions. Obligations that are payable on demand or have provisions for automatic roll-over do not satisfy the nine-month maturity standard. The Board cautions bank holding companies and nonbank subsidiaries issuing commercial paper that they should issue such paper and use the proceeds only in accordance with the provisions of the Securities Act of 1933.

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Bank holding companies should also note that on March 14, 1980 the Board established interest rate limitations on debt instruments that are issued by a bank holding company in denominations of \$100,000 or less and with original maturities of four years or less. Similar action was taken by the FDIC. These limitations apply only to obligations required to be registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission under the Securities Act of 1933 and, consequently, they do not apply to commercial paper issued by a parent bank holding company. In the Board's view, debt obligations issued by a bank holding company in denominations of less than \$10,000 ordinarily will not qualify for the commercial paper exemption from registration under the Securities Act of 1933. Accordingly, in the absence of any other exemption provision, such debt obligations will be subject to the interest rate limitations set forth in Section 217.7 of Regulation Q and Section 329.6 of the regulations of the FDIC.

Questions on this matter may be directed to our Regulations Division (Tel. No. 212-791-5914).

ANTHONY M. SOLOMON,  
*President.*